



How Does 'Cotton Famine Poetry' Depict The Effects Of The American Civil War 1861-1865 On The Cotton-Workers Of Lancashire?

By Peter Grihault: Student I.D. 20195201

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Abstract

Based on a search and review of the available literature, it became apparent that no previous author has focused on how the poetry written during the Lancashire Cotton Famine 1861-1865, depicts the effects of the American Civil War on the cotton-workers of Lancashire. This project analysis a small selection of one-hundred Cotton Famine poems, which can be found on the University of Exeter website, and focuses on the themes of: Attitudes towards America and slavery, the distress suffered by the cotton-workers of Lancashire and the poetry which aims to appeal for help during this crisis. The project revealed many interesting facets of Lancashire life during this period and, as this is the first project of its kind, it can be used as a platform on which to build a body of work regarding the Cotton Famine Poetry.

Introduction

This dissertation is a product of research based on the Lancashire Cotton Famine 1861-1865. After much research, it is apparent that there is relatively little literature dedicated purely to the Cotton Famine itself. Contemporary chroniclers such as; Arthur Arnold (1865) *The History of the Cotton Famine, from the Fall of Sumter to the Passing of the Public Works Act*, John Watts (1866) *The Facts of the Cotton Famine* and Edwin Waugh (1867) *Home-Life of the Lancashire Factory Folk During the Cotton Famine* give first-hand accounts of the effects of the American Civil War on the people of Lancashire, whilst Norman Longmate (1978), who asserts in his foreword to *The Hungry Mills: The Story of The Cotton Famine 1861-1865*, that the shortage of literature regarding the Cotton Famine is what inspired him to write about it, gives an informative second-hand account.

There is, however, no literature available that seeks to bring to the fore how the Cotton Famine Poetry, written during the period 1861-1865 depicts the effects of the American Civil War on the cotton-workers of Lancashire, which not only reveals the perspective of those suffering first-hand on issues such as America, the Civil War and slavery, the state of the operative's homes and lifestyle and the appeals for help, but also gives credit to the operatives who are writing crafted poems with complex structures, rhyme schemes and metres, in addition to the skill of penning some of these poems in local dialect, making the poetry even more profound.

It is, of course, impossible to do it justice in the mere 10,000 words afforded to me as part of this project, but what I hope to add to the body of work already available, regarding the Cotton Famine, is to examine it through the lens of those who were so affected by it that they were driven to take up a pen or pencil and put into words their thoughts, feelings and emotions in the form of poetry and provide a platform on which others, or myself, may build on in the future.

From o'er the broad Atlantic wave
A note of terror comes;
Which brings despair to English hearts,
And dearth to English homes.
Our mills are closed, our Looms are still,
Our engines silent rust,
Our massive bales of wares are left
To moulder in the dust;
While pallid forms, with aching hands,
Press close their fever'd brow;
For evil days are drawing near –
God help the workmen now!

This first stanza of *Hard Times* (1862) written by John Plummer perfectly encapsulates the situation on which this dissertation is based. Written by a Lancashire poet, the verse, with a metre of alternating iambic tetrameter and trimeter and a complex rhyme scheme of ABCBDEFEGHIH succinctly describes the events which are to lead to the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people. Chronicled in the words of the Lancastrians themselves, the Cotton Famine Poetry which will be analysed as part of this dissertation, depicts how the events of the American Civil War affected the cotton-workers of Lancashire.

Chapter One

America and the Civil War: The Cause of the Cotton Famine.

At just before 4.30am on April 12th, 1861, the American Civil War began with the firing of shots on Fort Sumter. This was the beginning of a conflict which would cost the lives of almost 800,000 people, change the lives those who survived beyond recognition and change the United States of America indefinitely. (Moody, 2016: 2). Seven days later, on April 19th 1861, the newly elected President Lincoln issued an executive proclamation declaring a naval blockade against those states said to be in insurrection against the Union government. Known as the Anaconda Plan, and designed to cut off the southern states from foreign trade and military support, the blockade attempted to control the ports of Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, a total of 3500 miles. (Lanning, 2006: 103). As a direct result of the ports being blockaded, the supply of vital goods such as cotton was restricted, leading to what is now known as 'The Cotton Famine', which spawned a genre of poetry known as 'Cotton Famine Poetry' which chronicles the effects of the American Civil War on the cotton operatives of Lancashire.

Lancashire, it was often said, was clothier to the world and mill-owners liked to dazzle visitors by displaying the enormous range of qualities and designs contained in their pattern book. Because cloth-making involved so many different processes of widely varying degrees of skill, it offered employment to both sexes and all ages. The 1861 census showed 384,000 people employed in the cotton factories of Lancashire, and the total in some form of textile manufacture as 426,000, but, including warehousemen, mechanics, stevedores and others working almost exclusively for the cotton trade, the number for whom it provided work was thought to be around a million. Counting about three dependents to every employee, The Economist concluded, in January 1861, that "We may safely assume that nearer four than three million are dependent for their daily bread on this branch of our industry", with some estimating the total even higher at five million, in a total United Kingdom population of twenty-one million. (Longmate, 1978: 43).

It is easy to see, with such a high proportion of the population condensed into a relatively small area, and dependent on the American cotton supply for survival, that any upset to the status quo would have catastrophic consequences. The American Civil War was the catalyst, and the ensuing suffering as a result of the dependence of Britain on a single cotton supplier is addressed in *John Bull in Trouble* (1862). Consisting of thirteen quatrain stanzas, a regular rhyming scheme of ABAB, and a fixed metre of iambic tetrameter, the speaker satirises the problems that Britain is facing as a result of the cotton shortage. Personifying Britain as John Bull and America as 'a cousin' (5), the speaker extends the metaphor of family relations to suggest that Britain, whose misguided fondness for one cousin (America) has led him to neglect alternative trading partners, such as India. 'He turned his eye to "Indy" (16) 'For cotton there, it now is said/ He might have had quite plenty/ But through his stupid foolish head/ His workshops now are empty' (17-20).

Due to the nature of Britain's abundance of raw material at cheap prices coming from America, 'cotton was everything, and every man, no matter what his business, who could scrape together a little capital, made haste to turn it into spindles and looms wherewith to convert America's staple into cloth for man's use' (Longmate, 1978: 36). It is worth noting, however, that the reason, as alluded to in *John Bull in Trouble* (1861), the merchants chose American cotton over Indian cotton was not just price, but quality. 'Surat' as it was known, a short-fibre cotton was 'a poor product in comparison to that of American cotton, prone to breakage and, due to the Indian folk not employing consistent means of harvesting the crop, the weight is often made up of stones hidden in the crop, making it half as profitable for the merchants as American cotton' (Arnold, 1865: 37). It is apparent, then, why the cotton mill owners were keen to forego Indian cotton in favour of the American crop. In 1850 the export of American cotton was 4,578,598,117lbs which had risen to 8,403,993,728lbs by 1860, (Bernard, 1870: 10), illuminating the degree to which Britain was dependent on American cotton.

Whilst the American Civil War's root was slavery, which Britain had outlawed as a trade in 1807, due to its abhorrent nature, the statute left the foreign slave trade untouched, resulting in slave labour continuing in many nations, including America (Clarkson, 2018: 4). The merchants of Lancashire realised, however, that without it, and the supply of cotton forthwith, their industry would suffer and many would potentially die. As a result, a conflict

of interests arose in whom to support as part of the war effort, the abolitionist-North or the cotton-supplying-South. Queen Victoria, however, issued a declaration of neutrality, 'without a violation of the principles of international law which it is most important for Great Britain to maintain' (Buckle, 1923: 23) which Lincoln 'inadvertently interpreted as support for the Confederacy, leading to hostile relations between the two' (Merli, 2004: 9). *Notice to the North* (1861) responds to this hostility.

With a structure of four sestet stanzas, a regular metre and rhyming scheme of ABABCC, the title being directly addressed to the North, meaning the northern states of America, leaves no ambiguity of the implied reader. Beginning with the imperative exclamatory 'Yankee beware!' the tone is very much one of warning. Narrated in the first-person and including the plural pronoun 'we' throughout, the speaker asserts that they are speaking on behalf of a group of people. In this instance it is not clear if this is a message on behalf of the British people, or the people of Lancashire, although the inclusion of 'England' in line 12 is suggestive of being representative of a national opinion.

The speaker uses metaphoric language in accusing the North of 'throwing substantial mud' (14) in an attempt to force Britain to support them in the American Civil War. The clear message from the speaker, however is that they do not want to join the war effort 'we are averse/ but not afraid to fight...'if to war you make us go/ By Jove, we'll try to let you know' (1-2 & 23-24). This clearly shows Britain's reluctance to enter the war effort.

From Washington's viewpoint, asserts Merli (1970: 12), 'without England's support in the war a serious threat was posed to the future of the United States', whilst the Confederate states were confident that Britain would support them, as they supplied virtually all of Britain's cotton, which, in turn supported some 5 million people. The leader of the Confederate states, Jefferson Davis 'was far from displeased at seeing the export of cotton interrupted, by whatever means believing that cotton was king in England and that the old country could not do without it and would be forced, in order to secure its release, to side with those that kept it prisoner' (Longmate, 1978: 58). A notion exemplified in American news paper *The Charleston Mercury* on 4th June 1861 'The cards are in our hands and we intend to play them out to the bankruptcy of every cotton factory in Great Britain...or the acknowledgement of our independence' (cited in Jones, 2009: 215). Whilst Britain intended

to remain neutral in the war, it is clear that both the North and the South believed that Britain should support their cause.

As it became clear that the war was being fought on the premise of the abolition of slavery, Cotton Famine Poetry depicts that the cotton-workers of Lancashire, even though they themselves suffering, support this cause. Those whom were affected as a direct result of the Civil War portrayed their views of the North and the South, offering support for one and condemnation for the other. For example, in *South and North – Snake and Lion* (1864), a poem of eight stanzas, with each stanza comprising of octets with a fixed and regular rhyme scheme of ABABABCC, the speaker employs metonymy, a conceptual process in which one conceptual entity is mentally accessible by means of another conceptual entity, (Panther & Radden, 1999: 9), to concisely symbolise their views to the reader.

The North, symbolised as 'Freedom' (1,) and the South as 'Tyranny' (1) are personified as 'maddened monsters in a bloody fray' (2). This use of abstract nouns manipulates the reader into conceptualising what each army represents, creating an immediate sense of support for one, and a disdain for the other. The speaker further compounds this imagery by referring to the South as a snake with 'fiend-made poison' (10) and the North as a lion, 'raised a threatening paw/ and in a tone expressive of opinion/ Bade the Snake keep within its own dominion'. (14-16).

An understanding of the use of the animal symbolism helps to envisage the speaker's point of view regarding the northern and southern states. The imagery of the serpent as a symbol of the South comprises a semantic field which has connotations of death and of murder: 'fiend-made poison' (10), 'treacherous guile' (19), 'venomed tooth' (20), 'sought to crust and smother' (21) 'serpent's blood' (22), and 'viper-brood foul Hydra-headed' (23).

Snakes come in many forms, from the South American constrictors which kill their prey by restricting their airway, leading them to suffocate to death, which could be representative of the way in which the speaker is suggesting that the Southern states are killing the cotton-picking slaves by restricting their movement and freedom. It is likely, however, as the majority of the population in Britain during this period are religious Christians, that the snake may be symbolic of The Fall of Man, which, in Christian belief, is the cataclysmic event in which Eve succumbs to temptation within the Garden of Eden, creating the notion of

Original Sin. Humans often struggle to understand why their lives are marred by hatred, brutality and tragedy. In the Christian worldview, 'human evil is contrasted to the goodness of the divine creation and the hope of divine redemption' (Wiley, 2002: 14). This metaphor, then, can be further extended to symbolise and encompass the snake as a warning of the evil actions of the leaders of the Southern states being responsible for the fall of the innocent African people in their desire for wealth and prosperity in the cotton plantations in America, and if one is to find redemption then the use of slave labour must be abolished.

This notion is supported by examples from poems which address slavery as a concept and explicitly link it to God or to the notion of redemption from sin. An example is; *Counsel To The Americans* (1863) which has a structure of a single thirteen-line stanza, and a rhyme scheme consisting of ABCCADDDEEED. However, the irregular metre, numerous exclamatories, and archaic biblical lexical field give the poem a tone allusive of an angry sermon.

The poem begins with the imperative exclamatory 'Abolish Slavery!' A direct order to the reader, who as the title alludes, is 'The Americans'. Interestingly, there is no specific mention of whether this is directed at the northern or southern states, so one must conclude that it is a generic message aimed at all Americans. In regard of the poem reaffirming the message that slavery must be abolished in order to receive redemption, the speaker comments that the 'multitudinous murdering of brothers' (2)... 'are works of hell!' (5) and 'Heaven's holy purpose' (7) is to 'Cease from these deeds of darkness and death' (11). The appeal to one's religious moral compass regarding slavery is also explored in *England And The American War* (1863).

With a structure of four nine-line stanzas and a regular rhyming scheme of ABABCDCCD, the speaker employs a second-person narration directing their appeal to 'rid the world/ of slavery's curse' (11-12), directly to God. 'Lord, send thine aid, and purge the nation/ From this foul stain...we pray for freedom for the slave!' (28-29). Ending with 'Lord, cause the bondsman's chains to fall' (36). Given that the poetry is written during a period in which events in the world are primarily understood as acts of God, a notion supported by Hughes (2010: 142) who comments that in Victorian poetry 'a poetical view of things is a duty, with a bid to colour all things with hues of faith, to see a Divine meaning in every event', it is little

wonder that the act of enslaving is sinful and therefore an act of Man, but the power to free the slaves is redeeming and therefore an act of God.

The symbolism of the serpent and the relation of this to religion, the Garden of Eden and Original Sin in *South and North – Snake and Lion* (1864), is contrasted with the symbolism of the lion to represent the North. Animals are 'often used as national symbols to represent empires' (Burk, 2012: 8), for example America is often represented as an eagle, whilst India is often represented as a Tiger, and Britain as a lion. Interestingly, the speaker of *South and North* chooses to incorporate the lion as a symbol of North American states, which could be interpreted as a symbol recognising that the American and British empires must join forces in order to free the 'millions bound in chains' (50) from slavery. The speaker employs anthropomorphology in giving the lion positive human attributes 'raised a threatening paw' (14), 'On then, brave Lion in thy noble cause'(49) 'Generous and just' (54) which emphasises that the speaker's point of view is supportive of the North American states in the Civil War and depicts their belief that a nation seeking to end slavery will possess the qualities of being brave, generous and just.

As the northern states of America are presided over by Abraham Lincoln, it is logical to surmise that the poetry supporting the North is indicative of the support for Lincoln, known as The Great Emancipator, due to his stance on the liberation of slaves and the total abolishment of slavery. *Abraham Lincoln, Assassinated April 14th, 1865* depicts the feelings the cotton operatives towards him. Narrated in the third person, and consisting of sixty-six lines, it is written in the form of an elegy, a response to his assassination, a form commonly associated with 'mortal loss and consolation' (Hurley & O'Neil, 2012: 100), although, due to its celebratory nature, is allusive of an ode. An example of this is in line one with the inclusion of two exclamatories; 'O jubilant bells! O glorious bells!' which is undoubtedly a reference to the passing bells which are rung to signify a death or funeral, but the modifiers 'jubilant' and 'glorious' are somewhat celebratory as opposed to melancholy.

It is worth noting that the speaker is not celebrating the death of Lincoln, but depicting a celebration of his standpoint with regard to the emancipation of slaves. The 'glorious bells/ that rung in the land of the free/ when the galling bands on a brother's hands were broken in '63' (3-4) The galling bands are both literal and symbolic of the restrictions of the slaves which were 'broken in 63' due to Lincoln's *Proclamation of Emancipation* on the first of

January 1863, 'the most revolutionary pronouncement ever signed by an American president, striking the legal shackles from four million black slaves and setting the nation's face towards the total abolition of slavery within three years' (Guelzo, 2004: 3). Whilst the emancipation of slaves is undoubtedly something to be celebrated, the political standpoint from which the proclamation was issued is contentious, with some interrogating Lincoln's motives suggesting that it was merely a political move to win the war.

For example, Holzer *et al* (2006: xiv) questions whether 'Lincoln is the embodiment of the American National character, either at its best and most optimistic or at its worst and most pessimistic', whilst Lind asserts that Lincoln was, above all, a 'white supremacist for whom emancipation was always supposed to be accompanied by the mass deportation of African-Americans. (Lind, 2007: 9). This defamatory notion by Lind is supported by Magness & Page (2011) after an extensive study to locate an elusive document from Lincoln's presidency which uncovered the details as follows:

On June 13th 1863, an agent bearing credentials from the British government sat with Lincoln for a highly secretive interview at the White House. Following a brief discussion, the president handed over a document, drafted by James Mitchell, the government's commissioner of emigration, outlining a proposal in which he sought to 'transport the newly emancipated slaves of the United States to a colony in British Honduras. There they would be provided with acreage, dwellings, and tools to begin life anew as free agricultural labourers under the supervision of the British government' furthermore, further studies revealed that this was part of a much larger operation in which American and British governments sought to populate the West Indies with ex-slaves from the United States (Magness & Page, 2011: 27).

Furthermore, Bennett (2000) asserts Lincoln, in proposing the abolishment of slavery, to be interested only in winning the war 'by any means necessary, whilst entertaining the idea of deporting slaves, therefore creating an all-white nation (Bennett, 2000: 17). It appears then, that whilst Lincoln is regarded as 'The Great Emancipator', his motives in becoming one were not as noble as one might have presumed.

Never the less, Foner, (2013) asserts that the story of four million slaves from bondage to citizenship, a time of profound political, legal, economic and racial transformation has

‘failed to establish itself with a full depth of understanding’. In the aforementioned attitudes towards Lincoln and his motives for the Emancipation Proclamation, Foner argues that Lincoln ‘did not live in a vacuum. Undoubtedly his opinions and attitudes changed while he was in office, in line with the societal attitudes that developed around him. In the beginning he certainly did not support the freedom of the slaves, but towards the end he did and was sincere when he offered them rights’ (Foner, 2013: 131).

Whilst there is much literature regarding the motives in which Lincoln declared his Emancipation Proclamation, history has proved that it was the first major step which resulted in the abolishment of slavery, which is undoubtedly one of the most important and positive actions in human history and justifies Lincoln being dubbed The Great Emancipator but which, unfortunately led to the distress of thousands of innocent cotton-mill workers.

It is possible to see how the Cotton Famine poetry depicts the effect of the American Civil War on the cotton-workers in their response to the abolishment of slavery. Incorporating symbolism of the Lion to show support for the North and the Serpent to show condemnation of the slave-owning South, the desire to support the abolishment of slavery clearly outweighed the desire to end the war at any cost.

Chapter Two

Lancashire Distress: The Effects Of The Cotton Famine.

By 1862, distress and suffering was taking its toll on the cotton-workers of Lancashire. Many Cotton Famine Poems depict the suffering felt by the many. Contemporary Historian and critic Arthur Arnold remarks that during the year of 1862, 'many people were feeling the pinch and in need of relief' (Arnold, 1865: 56). One poem depicting this suffering is *Lancashire Distress* (1862). With a structure of eight stanzas, each an octet, comprised of a fixed rhyme scheme ABABCD and a metre of iambic tetrameter, the intricate form serves to highlight the intelligence of the writer. Written in dialect, which 'exhibits a pride by retaining and expressing distinctive customs and modes of speech of individual towns and villages in which people from the cotton towns valued their outspoken independence, humour and lack of pretension' (Walton, 1987: 305) it serves to represent a closeness to the speaker in attempting to imitate the phonetic sounds and idiolectal features of the Lancashire people whom the poem represents.

The title of the poem depicts that the distress of the time is being felt by the people of the county of Lancashire as a whole, rather than it being isolated to a specific town or community within a township. Distress, which the Cambridge English Dictionary defines as a 'feeling of extreme worry, sadness, or pain or a situation in which you are suffering or are in great danger and therefore in urgent need of help' (Online, 2019), is a lexical choice which serves to depict the state of suffering of Lancastrians at this time, setting the tone of desperation.

Narrated in the first-person, the inclusion of the plural pronouns 'we' in 'Loike cadgers, we a cadgering poke' (4) serves to highlight, in addition to the title, the suffering is not only felt by the narrator, but a whole community. The verb 'cadgering' is a dialectal word meaning 'to beg'. In line one the speaker uses the pre-modifiers 'honest' and 'workin'' to describe the people of Lancashire who have found themselves to be 'Reawnd th' Poor Law office'

The Poor Law office is an establishment designed for the relief of the poor. The Poor Law amendment act 1834 is the 'single most important piece of social legislation ever enacted

affecting almost every aspect of life and labour in Victorian Britain' (Englander, 2013: 6). Before this time, The 'Old Poor Law', codified with the Acts of Elizabeth 1st 1598-1601, established a clear and legal obligation for parishes to deal applicants for relief. These included the old and the blind and as such were unable to work, orphans, widows, the sick and elderly. However, those who were able to work, but had not the means with which to maintain themselves were set to work in order that they are not given aid freely. Those refusing to work, including vagabonds and rogues were 'whipped or otherwise punished and returned to their birthplace' (Williams, 2011: 9). This resulted in people having to work, carrying out tasks such as oakum picking or stone breaking and, as a result, the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act sought to make claiming relief a last resort for people.

The notion of forcing the poor to complete degrading tasks to receive aid was initiated by Jeremy Bentham, who argued that people would 'do what was pleasant and would tend to claim relief rather than working' (Bentham, 1789, cited in Burns & Hart 1970: 37). This notion led to the elimination of outdoor-relief, whereby people got money and food to supplement wages whilst not being forced into an institution such as the Workhouse, a system that was 'by its nature, subject to an immense deal of fraud as there is no inspection preventing gross impositions belonging to this mode of relief' (Miller, 1833, cited in Fowler, 2014: 3). Furthermore, the conditions inside workhouses were intentionally made to be horrendous, based on the notion that the public should choose to work and support themselves, rather than enter the workhouse, and therefore ease the burden on the parish and tax-payer.

A parliamentary enquiry at one workhouse found appalling cruelty as one inmate recalled on finding a fresh bone 'it appeared to be a little moist, we were almost ready to fight over it, so much so that I felt obliged to hide it that I might eat it when I was alone' (Fowler, 2014: 10). The treatment of inmates was such in the Workhouse, people would rather die than be taken there. This notion is expressed in Dickens' contemporary novel *Our Mutual Friend* (1864: 237) 'Kill me sooner than take me there. Throw this pretty child under cart-horses feet and a loaded waggon, sooner than take him there. Come to us and find us all a-dying and set a light to us all where we lie and let us blaze away sooner than move a corpse of us there'. The workhouse was designed to solve the societal problem of pauperism. As a deterrent, however, it was 'too successful in light of the Cotton Famine in that people would

rather suffer than ask for help for fear of being placed in one' (Longmate, 1974: 84). Evidence of how desperate the Lancashire operatives became before asking for help is witnessed by contemporary journalist Edwin Waugh (1867: p 22). It is the case of an old man, an over-looker of a cotton mill.

His family was thirteen in number, three of the children were under ten years of age, seven of the rest were factory operatives, but the whole family had been out of work for several months. When in full employment the joint earnings amounted to 80s a week; but after struggling on in the hope of better times, and exhausting their savings, they had been brought down to the receipt of charity at last. For sixteen weeks gone by the whole thirteen had been living upon 6s a week'.

They were lucky compared to a widow with five young children, whom Arnold visited

'In a dingy little hovel, up a dark court, in one of the poorest parts of town, where they huddled together about a fireless grate, to keep one another warm, they had nothing left but two rickety chairs and a table reared against a wall because one of the legs was gone. Her husband died of sheer starvation, as was pronounced by the jury inquest. The poor woman pointed to one corner 'He dee'd I' that corner with nothing to lie upon but the ground and nothing to cover him in that fireless hovel. His wife and children crept about him to watch him die. When the relief committee found them their entire clothing for seven persons weighed eight pounds and sold for fivepence as rags'.

Which explains the disdain of the speaker, in *Lancashire Distress* not only in being forced to do the work but more importantly of being associated with the type of person who would normally be claiming relief 'Aw hate this pooing oakum wark/ An breakin stones for t' get relief (9-10) and uses the adjectives 'scurvy' 'fawnin' and 'whinin' (15) to describe the people the speaker is forced to work with, but that it is a necessary evil to be endured as 'it's hard to clem' (starve) (16) although suffering through starvation is 'as bad' as being forced to be classed as a 'cadger' (beggar) and ask for relief. Stanza 3 highlights that the only reason the speaker is prepared to undergo the embarrassment of cadging 'reawnd the Poor Law office' is to provide for their children.

An for myself aw wouldne do't.
Aw'd starve until aw sunk to th' floor
Bo th' little childer bring me to 't
And would do th' best I'th' lond ow'm sure.
If folks han childer starving theer,
An still keep eawt, they're noan so good;
Aw've mony a oime felt rather queer,
Bo then aw knew they must ha food.

During the cotton famine parental love and responsibility, whilst feeling helpless in the fact that they cannot provide for their children or protect them, is a theme that is prevalent in Cotton Famine Poetry as highlighted in *A Mother's Wail* (1862). In the voice of a woman, although written by a man, the poet attempts to represent what it is like to be a mother, and the emotion and the suffering that is entailed during this period of crisis. With a structure of four twelve-line stanzas, the rhyming scheme, whilst fixed, is complex ABCBDEDEFGFG which represents the complex nature of the situation that the speaker is in regarding the cotton-famine and the way it affects her daughter.

The tone of the poem is indicated in the title, containing the verb 'wail', with all its negative connotations of sadness, immediately highlights that the poem is almost certainly not going to portray a message of happiness. That each stanza begins with the exclamatory triadic structure, 'Dead – dead – dead!' reinforces this point further.

The reader can immediately infer, because of the pronoun 'mother' in the title and the triadic 'Dead-dead-dead' that one of the mother's children has died. The lexis is simplistic, with 249 monosyllabic, 48 bisyllabic and 5 trisyllabic choices, and interestingly, no polysyllabic choices. The effect of this is to represent the simple nature of the mother, given that she is possibly uneducated, furthermore it could be said to represent the nature of the voice when one is extremely distressed and attempting to breathe and talk simultaneously, and often words that are spoken due to the shallowness of breathing are often broken or monosyllabic.

The effect depicted is one of extreme grief from the speaker, however, the speaker uses shock tactics in line 2 which highlights the extreme position that females find themselves in under desperate conditions 'Far better it should be so;/ To lie in a pauper's coffin there,/'

than sin's temptation to know' (2-4). The temptation to which the speaker is referring is prostitution.

During the nineteenth century, prostitution whilst not illegal was an 'extremely dangerous trade' (Fisher, 1997: 6). Suffering from social marginalisation, threats of violence, sexually transmitted disease and, in extreme cases death as a direct result of the degrading nature of being abused at the hands of men, it is little wonder that the speaker felt it better for her daughter to be 'starved to death' (14), than to have had to enter the trade of prostitution. Prostitution and poverty go hand in hand, and many women carry out the trade out of necessity and desperation rather than out of choice.

Contemporary historian, William Sanger, carried out a study *History of Prostitution, its Extent, Causes and Effects* (1859) in which he witnessed first-hand the relationship between unpaid labour, as in the case with the cotton famine workers, and prostitution. He recounts: 'A remarkably fine-looking young woman, whose character for sobriety, honesty and industry was vouched for by a number of witnesses, however, as times became hard and she, unwilling to go to the work-house, was driven by indigence onto the streets. She was, however, struck with remorse and shame from the disgrace of her condition and prayed for death many times over' (Sanger, 1859: 328), which are the sentiments depicted in *A Mother's Wail*.

Sanger (1859: 37) depicts an image of factory life being generally miserable for all, regardless of whether there is full-time work or not, arguing that 'the factory children of England are the offspring of the poorest of the community, whose only heritage is pauperism. With wages at no time too good, they are often at starvation point. The miserable earnings of the factory operatives are still further reduced by constant strikes, which creates a greater need for the children to work due to the dependence on their earnings to provide enough bread to eat'. It is this sense of responsibility that is placed on the children that forces them to even consider prostitution as a necessity to survive.

This is not a view shared by all, however, as contemporary historian and chronicler of the Cotton Famine, Watts (1866) remarks; 'the average wages earned from working in the mills, is as follows; men, eighteen shillings and sixpence, women ten shillings and two-pence, boys

seven shillings and girls five shilling, making a general average of ten shillings and three-pence halfpenny per person per week' (Watts, 1866: 46), and for an average family of four people in full-time work a total of approximately 40 shillings could be earned. This, as Arnold (1865: 71) points out is a healthy wage, and 'often much more than the clergy men of the time earn'. It is possible to see however, that children were put to work as young as 4, not just because of the money they generate for the household, but because there is no one at home to look after them at any rate. As *Lancashire Distress* progresses into stanza 4, the speaker reflects on their efforts to prevent the inevitable suffering and the topic changes to the state of the family home.

When wark fell off aw did my best
To keep myself and family clear;
My wants aw've never forrud prest
For pity is a thing aw fear.
My little savings soon were done

'When wark fell off' (25) a local colloquialism, refers to the lack of available work. Arnold (1865: 57) explicitly describes how this affects the mill owners in addition to the cotton operatives. 'Short time means short wages and much compulsory idleness, less food and less pleasuring to the operative. It means to the manufacturer without capital a serious reduction of income. It means short profit, long credit and perhaps many bad debts to the working-class shopkeeper. Watts (1866: 117), however, suggests that even though 'many people were already living on their savings, the situation was not alarming.' It is perhaps, easy for one to comment that it is 'not alarming' when one is not suffering themselves. By the end of 1861 '119 mills in Lancashire were on half-time, 49 had stopped work altogether and 8053 operatives were known to be out of work. By December 1862, however, there were somewhere near 30,000 in Blackburn alone' (Arnold, 1865: 59). These figures suggest that the situation is beyond alarming. Once the 'savings soon were done' (29), events took a turn for the worse.

Un then aw sowl my twoth'ry things
My books and bookcase o' are gone,
My mother's pitcher, too, fun wings.
A bacco box wi two queer lids,
Sent whoam from Indy by Jim Bell,
My fuschia plants and pots, my birds
And cages too, aw'm forced to sell;
My feyther's rockin cheer's gone,

My Mother's corner cubbert, too:
An th' eight-days clock has followed, mon-
What con a hungry body do?

After listing items that are perceived as mundane items, by today's standards, such as 'books' (31) and 'bookcase' (31), fuschia plants and pots (35) as well as items that are potentially of great sentimental value, such as the 'bacco box' (33) and 'feyther's rockin cheer' (37) the speaker addresses the reader with the rhetorical question 'What con a hungry body do?'. This depicts the effects of the American Civil War which is the absolute desperate state that not only the speaker is in, in having to sell or pawn their personal belongings, but also the people of Lancashire as a whole.

As Stanza 6 progresses the list continues of things that the speaker has to sell adding a sense of depth to the despair. The list begins with prized possessions such as 'Gronny's silver cup' (43) and 'uncle Robin's flute' (44). Given that they are assigned proper nouns, which are family members 'Gronny' and 'Uncle Robin', respectively, it is possible to infer that the items contain great sentimental value in addition to monetary value to the speaker. Eventually, however, the items become more mundane in nature. From tables and beds to 'blankets, sheets as weel' (46), until eventually the situation grows so bad that the speaker is left with only 'straw' to 'rest eawr yeads' (47). The effect of the speaker beginning with valuable items which decrease in value enables the reader to envisage the scale of the situation and the desperation experienced by the speaker, which is representative of thousands of operatives across Lancashire.

The state of the operative's home and the need to sell personal household items in order to survive due to dire need of food is a theme that is prevalent in the poetry of the Lancashire cotton-workers during this period. For example, in *The Operatives' Home* (1863), with a structure of ten sestet-stanzas, and fixed rhyming scheme ABCABC, the first thing that is brought to one's attention upon reading this poem is the speaker's pride and unwillingness to complain. Examples of this are, 'I am loth to complain' (7), 'I have battled with want...And been silent, till silence seemed crime' (13/15). As with *Lancashire Distress* (1862), the speaker also reflects on the gradual demise of the state of the home where they live, commenting on how times were once good, and luxuries were plentiful. This is achieved by

incorporating past-tense modal verbs. 'These walls *were* once hung/ with triumphs of art' (31/32), This pantry with plenty *was* stored'. (33). This is immediately proceeded by the personification of 'Happiness', who 'flung her rich light on the heart of the dear ones who sat at this board' (33/34). Interestingly, this depicts the simple nature of the cotton-workers of Lancashire, who are clearly happy to have food on their table and satisfied with their basic needs being met. Ultimately, the starvation leads to death, as in many of the stories told in the Cotton Famine Poetry, which is highlighted in stanza 7:

Those dear ones are dead
Though it cost me a tear
To tell how they drew their last breath
Be it so – want of bread
Brought on famine, I fear,
And fever and famine brought death

From the embarrassment of claiming poor-relief, to the degrading act of having to sell all household items in an attempt to feed themselves and their children, eventually resulting in having to suffer the death of their children, the effects of the American Civil War on the people of Lancashire, the suffering it caused and the desperate situation many found themselves in is clearly depicted in the poetry written during this period. Eventually, however, the people of Lancashire could withstand it no longer and they began to appeal for help.

Chapter Three

The Appeal For Help: Easing The Burden Of The Cotton Famine.

As it became apparent that the war was going to last longer than expected, and as a result of the suffering endured during this period, a prevalent theme to emerge in the Cotton Famine poetry is that of appeal. Appealing to God and appealing to those who are in a position, politically or financially to help. *The Lancashire Operative's Appeal* (1862), is a prime example of this. Each of its eight stanzas begins with the imperative 'help us, we are starving' and the use of repetition depicts the effects of the American Civil War which is the need to appeal for help on the basis of a lack of sustenance. Narrated in the first- person and including the plural pronouns 'us' and 'we', the imperative depicts a message, not just on behalf of the speaker, but of a collection of people. In this case, the whole cotton workforce of Lancashire.

Importantly, the imperative 'help us' is pre-modified with the verb 'pray'. It might be expected that in place of the verb 'pray' the adverb 'please' may be used as a direct appeal, hence 'please help us', rather than 'pray help us'. The verb pray, then, is a lexical choice, appealing to the reader's conscience and sense of Christian or moral responsibility to help those who are in need. This attempt to persuade the reader to help is emphasised in line 3 as the speaker iterates; 'God only knows that anguish/ that in our hearts doth dwell', in addition to the repetition of the imperative at the beginning of each stanza. Furthermore, this is compounded with the use of repetition in the final stanza as the imperative is repeated on three of the four lines.

Pray help us, we are starving;
Pray help us in our need;
Pray help us now and freely
And God will bless the deed.

In order to provide some sustenance to the poor, relief committees funded soup-kitchens. Contemporary chronicler, Watts (1866: 137) remarked on what he saw in Preston. 'The soup- kitchen opens at five in the morning and there is always a crowd waiting to get in. I was told that they often deliver 3000 quarts of soup at this kitchen in two hours. The

superintendent of the bread department informed me that he had served out two thousand loaves of 3lb 11oz each that morning'. The variety of utensils the people brought, in which to pour the soup, highlighted even further the desperation that the people suffered, as was the remark that 'a woman, who had been there since 5.30am, had walked four miles for some coffee'. The soup-kitchens are a result of cotton-worker's appeals. They provide a small, but much-needed, amount of comfort when compared to the vast suffering across the whole of Lancashire.

Even during this period of want, need and suffering, the soup-kitchens had their critics. For example, Sir Charles Trevelyan, as reported in the *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* (1873: 8) asserts that 'Increased destitution provokes more abundant relief, and more abundant relief encourages those habits which lead to further aggravation of the destitution', adding, 'The Lancashire Cotton Famine soup-kitchens, are a rough and ready mode of preserving life in a general calamity, but if the factory workers had been encouraged to expect them every winter, the whole district might continue to be pauperised'. It is worth noting, however, that as 1st Baronet, Trevelyan lived an extremely privileged and comfortable life. It is little wonder, then, that he cannot contemplate the dire situation in which the honest and hard-working people of Lancashire succumbed during the Cotton Famine. Whilst the theme of trust in God and in divine intervention is prominent in the poetry that focuses on appealing for help, it is important to note that the cotton-operatives are not the only ones suffering during the Cotton Famine.

When the cotton workers are idle due to short-time, or worse still, no work at all, it is also the working-class shopkeepers who suffer as a result of giving credit to their customers. This is an effect of the American Civil War which is depicted in *A Droylsden Shopkeeper's Lament* (1863). Narrated in the first-person with a structure of 7 quatrain stanzas, a fixed meter of alternating iambic tetrameter and trimeter and a fixed rhyming scheme of ABAB, the speaker incorporates the metaphor of life-as-a-journey, in this instance an arduous journey, travelled in a sailing vessel. Examples are; 'I'd sailed through every trying storm/ and battled every wave' (7-8), 'And who shall save my little crew/ My children and my wife?' (13-14). In employing the metaphor of a vessel sailing through a storm, the speaker depicts the struggles that the shopkeeper is facing, as a result of the American Civil War.

Furthermore, during this period, the sailing vessel is the means by which the shopkeeper is able to run and maintain his business, literally and metaphorically, it is his 'lifeboat' (18). This is because many household items that the shopkeeper may stock relied on ingredients that are transported to England via ship, such as soap, which was first mass-produced during the Victorian period. Lever's soap, Sunlight, had a formula of palm kernel oil, cottonseed oil, resin and tallow (Macqueen, 2005), which are ingredients transported via large sea-faring trading vessels. Other items such tea, coffee and sugar, are also transported into England from abroad. The tone of the poem as alluded to in the title depicts grief and sorrow, which is exemplified in stanza 3;

But now, alas! Where is my stock
Where is my little bark?
Tis lost, tis shivered on a rock,
And all around is dark.

The extended metaphor used throughout the poem of life as a sailing vessel enduring a storm, symbolises the nature of the shopkeeper's inability to control his/her own destiny. As a ship that has lost control and ended up moored uncontrolled 'on a rock', the shopkeeper's destiny is at the mercy of Nature, as they have no means to support themselves, given that cotton-workers have no money to spend in their establishment. This notion is supported as Waugh (1867: 155) reflects; 'When I was at Rochdale the other day, there was a poor woman who kept a shop. She sold the Sunday clothes for her son to pay the poor-rate and she received a relief-ticket... the shop-keeping class are descending to the rank of the operatives. Withdraw the custom of 7,000,000 pounds per annum, which has ceased to be paid in wages, from the shopkeepers and the consequence must present itself to any rational mind'. It is possible to see, then, with no indication of the war ending, resulting in the cotton-workers having no money to spend, why shopkeepers are lamenting and are not in control of their own fate at this time, which are effects of the American Civil War depicted in the Cotton Famine poetry.

This situation became so dire that it needed to be addressed. December 1862 approached and with it the government faced the greatest crisis of the whole cotton famine. The numbers seeking relief soared alarmingly as the total of those who were technically paupers peaked at this time, with an increase of 372%. The number of people claiming relief was

271,983 in addition to the 12,527 workhouse inmates, which, at a cost of more than 20,000 pounds a week was unsustainable. By the end of December, 'just under half a million men, women and children in the distressed districts were known to be supported by parochial or charitable funds, nearly one-in-four of the whole population of Lancashire (Longmate, 1978: 151). Two primary charity funds were set up; Lord Derby's Central Relief Committee, which raised £40,000 and the Manchester's Cotton Operative's Relief Fund, which raised £20,000 (Longmate, 1978: 128). *A Droylsden Shopkeeper's Lament* addresses one of the key issues with the Relief funds.

Whilst the mood depicted in *A Droylsden Shopkeeper's Lament* is one of suffering and self-pity, the initial six stanzas expressing this mood, with rhetorical phrases such as 'Must we all starve, and bid adieu, / unto the storms of life?' (15-16), the final stanza marks a change of tone. This volta is prevalent due to the repeated exclamatories 'O!' in lines 24 and 25, which are followed by the insulting adjectives 'unfeeling' and 'ruthless', respectively, which are used to describe the metaphoric 'lifeboat crew', (25) the 'Droylsden gents' (26). The speaker accuses the Droylsden gents of acting in a manner that is deceptive and untrustworthy, which is evident in the lexical choice of the colloquial verb 'screw' in the phrase 'Each Droylsden shopkeeper ye screw, / And more than one laments' (27-28).

Clearly the speaker addresses a situation that affects not only themselves, but in 'more than one laments' (28), also others in the same situation. This concern and anger directed at the 'Droylsden gents' (26), who are symbolic of the gentry across Lancashire is a reflection of some opinions regarding the Relief Fund Committees across Lancashire. An example of this is Lord Derby's Executive Committee, which 'encountered a good deal of ill-will' (Longmate, 1978: 129). The concern stemmed from the notion that the money raised was not reaching the people for whom it was intended, and whilst the relief funds were set up in order to relieve the poor, the money raised was not distributed freely.

Ironically, this is in part due to each one competing for recognition of their acts of 'kindness' and, as a result, not working together for the good of the people. This is addressed by Arnold (1865: 145) who asserts 'There is danger, lest the public sympathy for Lancashire, now becoming so pronounced, should not be utilised to the greatest possible extent, with

one committee of land-owners and another of mercantile business men, sitting to further the same objects but without concurrent action'. Furthermore, Longmate (1978: 130) asserts that the Relief Fund, 'designed to help the working-class, was subtly but unmistakably converted, party at least, into one for subsidising the middle and upper-class ratepayer', which explains the disdain, expressed by the speaker, in their attitude towards the Droylsden gents, who symbolise the Relief committees.

There were murmurings that whilst the war still raged, it would not last forever, and when it did end, the work would return and the mill-owners would be in need of a healthy workforce. This led to an appeal directly to the mill-owners themselves. *Food or Work* (1864) directly addresses this notion. Consisting of four quatrain stanzas, a fixed rhyming scheme of ABAB, and narration that includes second-person, direct address, the tone is one of warning. This is directly addressed to the mill-owners, to whom the speaker addresses in line one with an exclamatory; 'Cotton Lords! Lords of creation' (1). The use of caesura, with the exclamation mark, creates a sense of authority in the speaker and forces the reader, who is being directly addressed to take notice of the imperative which follows in line two, 'Feed the slaves which made your wealth' (2). Not only is this a direct order telling them to feed the starving cotton-mill workers, but, interestingly, the speaker refers to them as 'slaves'. This is important as the root of the Cotton Famine, and therefore the suffering is due to the attempt to abolish slavery in America, in which the African-Americans are forced to work for free, yet the workers in Britain, who possibly believe they are free, are technically slaves to Capitalism, fuelled by the Industrial Revolution.

The speaker asserts that feeding the workers is not only beneficial, but is essential forward-planning for the time when the Cotton Famine ends, for both the mill-owners and the workers. Incorporating the future-tense modal verb 'will' in; 'The time will come' and the contracted version 'you'll' in when you'll be buying' (9), the speaker talks of a certain time in the future when the mill owners will once again be buying 'Cotton for to work each slave, / Food or work for they are dying, / save them from an early grave' (10-12).

It may seem logical, not only as a Christian, as the speaker asks the reader 'Is this not a Christian nation?' (3), but as a human being with the means to help those suffering 'Those that has, it is their duty, / For to help at such a time' (15-16), that the cotton-mill owners will

naturally help those in need. This, however, does not appear to have happened. Evidence to support this notion can be found in *The Times* (1862, cited in Longmate, 1978: 56), which reports; 'The cotton no longer comes. The fingers are idle, the people are starving and if there is one person in the whole world who does not know what to do, who says not a word, and makes no sign, it is the mill owner. The great cotton lords have disappeared with their own cotton...they sit as cold as their boilers...there is no help in them'.

There is evidence to suggest that some business owners did not believe the suffering of the cotton workers was their concern, whilst others duly gave something, but given that they had made such high profits in the years leading up to the Cotton Famine, the amounts were 'derisory to say the least. In Preston the owners of seventy-one mills had contributed only £1800 between them; in Blackburn ninety-one manufacturers could muster only £700,' (Longmate, 1978: 131), which, is a paltry sum, however Waugh (1867: 175) goes some way in defending the mill-owners in this decision in asserting; 'I call your attention to the fact that, in addition to the sacrifices they are making, the mill-owners are themselves, to a large extent the owners of cottages, and I believe, without exception, they are at the present moment receiving no rent, thereby losing a large amount of income which they had a right to count upon'. It is possible, then, if the mill-owners who own property which they would, under normal circumstances expect to receive rent, and allow tenants to stay without being evicted, that they should be praised somewhat, as a roof over ones head is as important, if not more so under such circumstances, particularly for the very young and the very old, as being given cash relief.

It is worth noting that, despite the relatively low amount of financial contributions of the mill-owners themselves, there was considerable help received from those not connected with the town. There are examples of poetry written specifically with the aim of raising money for the relief of the cotton-workers. For example, *The Smokeless Chimney* (1862), written under the pseudonym 'A Lancashire Lady' was, in fact, Mrs E.J. Bellasis, the wife of a leading lawyer. Narrated in the third person, comprising a structure of 21 quatrain stanzas and a fixed rhyme scheme of ABCB, the rhythmic iambic tetrameter could be said to mimic that of the rhythm of the train as it travels along the track. In order to grab the reader's attention, line one begins with the graphologically deviant 'STRANGER!', a wholly capitalised

exclamatory, in which the speaker makes it extremely clear that they are attempting to gain the attention of those unfamiliar, both to them and their cause.

The generic address 'STRANGER' in line one, is made more specific at the beginning of stanza two 'Traveller on the Northern Railway!'. This 'target audience' is an important choice, as the reader meets certain criteria on two counts. Firstly, they will naturally pass through Lancashire on the Northern Railway, and therefore witness the scenes described in the poetry and secondly, the traveller who is to 'buy art willingly' (1) is almost certainly in a financial position to donate towards the cause of the relief of the cotton-workers.

Dominating the landscape during the nineteenth-century, the railway turned the 'Industrial Revolution into a social revolution that had an impact far beyond the routes where the tracks took the trains' (Wolmar, 2007: 4), which resulted in connecting people, and allowing travellers to visit places and witness scenes they previously could only read or hear about, which explains why the poet chooses to target users of the railway to raise awareness of the Cotton Famine and depict the effects of the American Civil War on the cotton-workers of Lancashire.

A technique incorporated by the speaker, in an attempt to highlight the plight of the people of Lancashire is the dichotomy of what one sees as a spectator from afar, as they travel through Lancashire on a train, and the reality of what is actually happening beyond what the eye perceives. The speaker compares what may be perceived; 'See the hundred smokeless chimneys' (7), 'Perchance, the landscape fairer/ charms your taste, your artist-eye' (9-10), 'How much prettier is this county' (13) and wholly summed up in stanza 5 as speech marks are incorporated to represent the comments that travellers may remark as they travel through Lancashire on the train.

"Better far it were, most surely,
"Never more such clouds to see,
"Brining taint o'er nature's beauty,
"With their foul obscurity"

This juxtaposes the reality of what is happening beyond that which can be seen. 'Learn their tale of cheerless need' (8), 'Little do you guess how dearly/ Costs that now unclouded sky' (11-12), The effect of this juxtaposition is designed to manipulate the implied reader into

questioning why the chimneys are smokeless, and the declarative 'From yon chimney/ floats the golden breath of life' (21-22), incorporating the dialectal 'yon' depicts the voice of the Lancashire folk and the reality that without the chimneys smoking, the mills are not running, which in turn leads to the death of its people. This is concisely expressed in stanza 20 as the speaker remarks;

Let no more the smokeless chimneys
Draw from you one word of praise
Think, oh, think upon the thousands
Who are moaning out their days.

The poem was printed on card and sold, primarily at railway stations, in order to directly appeal to wealthy travellers and to raise awareness of the plight of the poor operatives. It proved popular and raised an astonishing sum of £160. (Longmate, 1978: 145), which is an incredible amount, purely from the sale of postcards, depicting the effect that poetry can have in appealing to the nature of travelling strangers.

Whilst the art of poetry raised money for the cotton-operatives, so did art in the form of painting. Contemporary artist, Richard Ansdell offered the Central Relief Fund one of his finest works, *The Hunted Slave*, which was raffled, and raised £693, which prompted The New Society of Painters in Water-colours to contribute works of art which raised £1,900 at auction. Donations of £2,000 were even received from the Queen, and from the Prince of Wales £1,000. It is noteworthy that the Manchester Relief committee also received a donation of three ship-loads of flour sent by sympathisers in the United States (Longmate, 1978: pp 147-148). As awareness of the plight of the working-class operatives of Lancashire grew, so did the amount donated.

According to Waugh (1867: 176), the amount raised summed approximately 540,000 pounds. 'Of that amount we received 40,000 pounds from the colonies, from the rest of the United Kingdom; 100,000 pounds and from the county of Lancaster itself, in round numbers, 400,000 pounds'. Arnold (1865: 323) however, asserts that whilst there was a considerable amount of money raised in the relief effort, 'the expenditure of the relief funds and the poor-rates amounted to approximately £1,250, 000, which excludes all consideration of

losses incurred owing to the Cotton Famine. In wages alone, this had amounted to around £10,000,000, while in the profits of wholesale and retail trade, the loss must have been twice as much'. These figures are astounding and serve to highlight that whilst Lancashire received what appears to be considerable support, the amount raised of just over half-a-million pounds was nothing in comparison to the approximate eleven and a quarter million pounds lost in wages, production and retail, which explains why the levels of suffering were as extreme as depicted in the Cotton Famine poetry.

The Cotton Famine ended gradually, as it had begun, and by June 1865 was clearly over. In April 1865, Lincoln was assassinated, marking the end of the American Civil War and with it the supply of cotton returned to the levels similar to those before the war began. As the mills resumed work the numbers on relief declined sharply. From its peak in which nearly half-a-million people sought relief, in July 1864 the figure had dropped for the first time below 100,000 to 85,910. By May 1865, the relief committees were responsible for just 160 adult males, 101 boys under the age of 15 and just 547 women and girls, prompting *The Times* to declare in its review that 'The Cotton Famine is now a matter of history; it has become a thing of the past' (Cited in Longmate, 1978: 276). Despite the terrible suffering endured by the Lancashire cotton-workers as a direct result of the American Civil War, some good did come of it. On January 31st 1865, the 'Thirteenth Amendment was passed and ratified which abolished slavery throughout the United States' (Samito, 2015: 22) beginning a long process which would see African-American people being freed from the shackles of slavery and being regarded as equals to White Americans, in law at least.

Conclusion

It is clear that the American Civil War greatly affected the cotton-workers of Lancashire and, as a result, they felt compelled to depict the effects in the form of poetry. On the theme of America, the Civil War and slavery, they incorporated symbolism to depict support for the abolitionist North, whilst expressing condemnation for the pro-slavery South. On the theme of distress suffered on a personal level, the Cotton Famine poetry depicts the decline of the family home, the embarrassment in being forced to ask for relief, or in having to be associated with the 'cadgers' in the Workhouse, picking oakum or breaking stones, with the worst cases depicting the death of loved ones. On the theme of appeal, the Cotton Famine poetry depicts the appeal to God, the mill-owners and the gentry, and it goes so far as to depict the effect on those who are not directly suffering, but feel obliged to write poetry, depicting the suffering of others, in the aim of raising much-needed funds. There are one-hundred poems in the Cotton Famine Poetry database, and this project has incorporated just thirteen. Future projects may explore how other themes are depicted, or how the themes covered in this project are depicted in other Cotton Famine poems.

Total Word Count: 10,394

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Appendix

All poems have been accessed at: <http://cottonfaminepoetry.exeter.ac.uk/> accessed 27/06/2018 – 18/05/2019.

John Bull in Trouble (1862).

Notice to the North (1861).

South and North – Snake and Lion (1864).

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The Operatives' Home (1863).

The Lancashire Operative's Appeal (1862).

A Droylsden Shopkeeper's Lament (1863).

Food or Work (1864).

The Smokeless Chimney (1862).