

Lady day in the North The Dungannon Riot (Wednesday 18th August,1880)

From our reporter Dungannon ,Tuesday

All is quiet today in Dungannon.From morning till evening nothing has occurred to interrupt the ordinary quietude of the town and were it not for the broken windows ,shot and bullet marked walls and parties of constabulary continually passing through the streets or on guard in the market square nothing would remind one of the scene of riot and bloodshed yesterday enacted in this town. Business is resumed and looking on the peaceful picture of provincial life ,the change that within a few hours has come over the state of affairs seems as extraordinary as it undoubtedly is pleasing .Before describing the riot of yesterday it may perhaps be of interest to relate an extraordinary occurrence which took place on Saturday last at a little village in the townland of Listamlaght ,which may ,perhaps throw some light on the events of yesterday .It appears that a party of Orangemen were returning home about half past 11 o'clock at night from a drumming expedition ,They were guarded by an escort of eight police .On their way they passed through Listamlaght ,which is principally inhabited by Catholics ,and as they were going along a shot was fired at them .Then commenced a scene which ,perhaps could never have been witnessed in any other civilized country .To use the words of my informant ,a gentleman of good position ,they simply "sacked" the village .Most of the inhabitants were in bed and quite unprepared for an attack ,and but small resistance was offered to the invading party ,They smashed the windows broke the doors and rushing into the cottages ,dealt destruction round them ,right and left ,on all the crockery and other articles easily broken .The police interfered but the wreckers brooked no interference .They turned on the constabulary and beat them ,driving them back towards Moy ,and dangerously wounding two .as soon as information reached Moy ,the Resident Magistrate (Capt L'Estrange) and Sub-Inspector Locke and subsequently Sub –Inspector Webb in command of a party of police arrived with rifles and buckshot and set out on cars to the scene of the outrage .The Orangemen were,however gone when the constabulary arrived .The appearance presented by the village was at once curious and pitiable .In the dark ,moonless night the people were gathered on the roadway in groups ,or were standing in front of their wrecked houses ,while the women and children were wrought up by fear to a high pitch of excitement .Not content with laying about ,them and smashing everything breakable they could find ,the midnight rioters ,to complete the work of destruction ,set fire to one of the houses ,belonging to a man Patrick Fox ;but the wind not being high ,the flames were fortunately extinguished before the cottage was burned down .The only arrests made in connection with the affair are those of two men named Dobson ,both residents of the village of Killyman .They were brought before Dr Elliott RM Moy yesterday ,Capt L'Estrange being absent in command of a party of Police at Benburb near Moy .They were remanded .By some it is supposed that the disturbance of yesterday was in retaliation for the attack on the village .but how far this may be accurate it is difficult to say .Too much stress should however ,not be laid upon a feeling of indignation ,as the motive for it appears to be that ten days ago in Dungannon ,a nationalist procession smashed windows in Market square ,Church street ,Perry street and Northland row and indeed house wrecking does not appear in this neighbourhood at least to be a popular amusement . So far as can at present be learned it appears that yesterday evening a small procession of

Catholics, headed by a band and carrying a banner, marched from the rendezvous to the railway station, where they joined several other contingents arrived by train, with bands and banners, some bearing green costumes, and others merely green sashes, emblazoned with the significant crest of a bloody hand. The combined parties marched through a back street leading from the station to the Protestant quarter. Passing along their route without molestation, they wheeled into the main street of the neighbourhood in which they then were – Church street – and marched through it into the Market Square, from whence, with music still playing lively airs, the processionists moved through the town, and afterwards to Donaghmore Field, a place some miles distant from Dungannon.

In the evening, about four o'clock, they returned, the main body advancing through Irish Street, which, it should be explained, forms a continuation with Church street, the lower end of the square intervening, and a somewhat less numerous contingent through Scotch street, which leads from the central portion of the lower end of the square, and is at right angles to the two former roads. A party of police numbering 30, under command of Mr Ryan, R.M., and Sub-Inspector John M'Govern, of Mohill, were stationed across the entrance to Church Street, as if with the intention of preventing the procession taking that line of route. However, as the processionist advanced, the line of police drew to one side, and allowed them to pass. All the party, however, did not march forward, a large body remaining in Irish street and other portions of the Catholic quarter. The police at Church street, thinking the whole procession had passed, followed pretty close upon the rear, so as to prevent any disturbance that might arise from a collision between the two factions, and also to guard against the possibility of an attack being made upon the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, situated farther down the street. For a few minutes it seemed as if all were about to pass off peaceably, when suddenly a scene of dire confusion ensued. So far as can be gathered from a careful sifting of various accounts, it appears that the procession was marching gaily by, flaunting their banners, one of which bore the names of the heroic achievements formerly inscribed upon the colours of the Irish Brigade, and playing enlivening national airs, when one of some half dozen Orangemen that had collected on the pavements rushed forward and endeavoured to burst in the head of the big drum. At once he was set upon by the bandsmen, and several of his comrades running to his assistance, in another second there was a general *melee*, although, as might be imagined, no doubt could exist as to which side would be victorious.

Not satisfied with protecting themselves and their property, the Catholics commenced to smash the glass in the windows in the houses in the street, and for some time the greatest consternation prevailed. As many of the inhabitants as could hurriedly put up their shutters, for many remembered the "sack" of Listamlaght and feared that it was about to be indiscriminately avenged by mob violence. Sub-Inspector M'Govern ordered the police to fix bayonets, and formed them in two files across the road in order to prevent the processionists returning to join their comrades in the square, where already the firing of shots and the throwing of stones could be heard. The rioters having at length been driven down the streets, and two of their number arrested, John Smith and Charles Hagan, both of Armagh, the former being captured by the subinspector,

and the latter by Constable Rawe, the police formed a hollow square, in the centre of which were the prisoners, and moved down towards the square, whither Mr Ryan had already gone at the urgent request of Sub-Inspector Webb stationed there. In the meanwhile that portion of the procession which had not passed through Church street had commenced a desperate onslaught on a party of 25 police who were drawn up in the square, under the command of Sub-Inspector Webb, near the corner of Church street and the square. Suddenly perceiving a rush of the crowd into the lower end of Church street, Sub-Inspector Webb ran round the corner, and, finding a large number of processionists beating a man whom they had surrounded, endeavoured, with a few of his men armed with batons, to rescue him. Immediately the mob commenced to fling stones at the police, the missiles coming in showers.

A large and excited crowd were by this time seen advancing from Irish street, while another equally large body of processionists were observed rapidly moving up the ascent of Scotch street into the lower end of the square, all animated by the one design. The assembled contingents helped their comrades in stoning the police. Sub-Inspector Webb having without avail called on the people to disperse ordered his men to fix bayonets and charge, but the mob merely retreated a short distance so as to avoid the gathering line of steel, while remaining sufficiently near for

their stones to take effect. A shot was then fired by them on the police, upon which, after driving them a few yards further on at the point of the bayonet, the sub-inspector called a halt, and, advancing alone, amid a shower of stones, thirty of forty yards, towards the rioters, besought them to disperse and go home. They however would not listen to him, and the only answer he received was volley after volley of stones that simply rained upon him and his men. Emboldened by their efforts many of the rioters then drew revolvers and opened fire on the constabulary. Perceiving that expostulation was useless, and that he was but heedlessly exposing his life by remaining any longer where he was, the sub-inspector returned to his men, and sent a messenger to ask the presence of Mr Ryan, the magistrate. The stones continued to pour without intermission, and the ominous sound of pistol shots to be heard, and four or five of the police fell stricken to the ground. In the midst of the confusion the church bells rang out loudly and clearly what was supposed by very many to be a summons to the Orangemen to arm and hasten to the conflict. But if such was the intent of the ringers the alarm was wisely disobeyed, and merely served to excite the fears of the rioters without causing the disastrous result that might so easily have been occasioned had the Protestant party attacked the Catholics. Others, however, say that the bells were not heard in the Orange neighbourhood, owing to a contrary wind that blew. Mr Ryan still not arriving, a second messenger was sent for him, and in a few moments afterwards he came.

By this time the police had been drawn nearer the corner of the square, but the stones and shots continued to be fired, and the sub-inspector was repeatedly struck. Mr Ryan ordered the police to again charge the mob with the bayonet, but it failed to disperse them. Indeed the charge seemed rather to irritate than alarm, for many rushed desperately amongst the points of the bayonets. Mr Ryan then read the Riot Act, and again called on the people to disperse. They replied by a volley of stones, and then he gave the order to fire. The police loaded with buckshot, and fired six or seven rounds. The mob retired a little down Irish street, but rushed back, and the constabulary then fired about a dozen shots, but without deterring the rioters. The police again fired on them, taking aim at the three great divisions of the people – those in the square, in Irish street, and in Scotch street. William O'Rourke, who was killed, was standing among the party at the corner of the square and Thomas street, which runs parallel to but higher up the square than Irish street, and was struck by a bullet in the thigh. He ran backwards about twenty yards and then fell. Evidently at length cowed by the determined attitude of the police, the mob began to cease throwing stones, upon which Sub-Inspector Webb ordered his men to stop firing. The people then began to disperse and the riot had practically ended. About twenty processionists were injured, and it is feared that in the case of three there are small hopes of recovery – one Tanney, especially being dangerously wounded. Judging from the marks on the walls of the houses in the square, the Police must evidently have fired in the greater number of cases above the heads of the people. The following are the names of the constabulary injured; Sub-Inspector Webb (badly bruised), Sub-inspector McGovern (a tooth knocked out), constable Plant and Rymes and Sub-constable Daly, Toole, Brown, Farrelly, Naughten, McEvey, McGowran, and Dodd. Had not the constabulary acted with great forbearance, as they incontestably did, the result of the riot would indubitably have been ten fold worse, than it had been. Today the two prisoners Smith and Hagan were brought before Captain L'Estrange and were each sentenced to two months imprisonment with hard labour. The young man Joseph McGuirk who had been seen by a tradesman named Simpson throwing stones at the Police and had been quietly captured by him and retained in custody in his house till the riot was over, received a similar sentence.

The inquest

Shortly before one o'clock this afternoon an inquest was held in the courthouse, Dungannon, by Dr Hamilton, Cookstown coroner, on the body of William O'Rourke, who had been shot dead yesterday

on the streets of this town .The following were in the jury : Thomas H Aikin (foreman)Charles Hagan ,Charles McShane ,Joseph McGladrigan ,Bernard Kelly ,David Loughrane,James Hagan ,Francis Hart,John Cleland ,S Kyle ,James Kelly ,Henry Haydock,Henry Frayell,Robert W Hancock,James Creagh,J Laugblands,Francis Henderson,Christopher Cavanagh,Edward Hurson ,Peter Hart ,John Compton,Thomas W Reynolds and James C Shuter

Sub –Inspector McGovern and Webb watched the case on behalf of the constabulary authorities .Mr Reynolds appeared on behalf of the next of kin .

DrThomas Brown was examined .and deposed in reply to the coroner –About half-past four o'clock yesterday afternoon Iwas called to see the deceased who was at the time lying wounded in a yardway .I did not know his name at the time

What was the nature of the injuries ?.I saw a wound in the right cheek and another below the right ear .There was no hemorrhage from those wounds .Seeing the state he was in –he was blanched and insensible –I stripped him to see what other wounds he had .

He was speechless ?yes ; speechless and exhausted .In fact the man was dying ,You could just feel the pulse and that was all .I saw a wound in his chest .When I opened his clothes the blood flowed out in a stream .The blood was arterial and I came to the conclusion that the femoral artery had been severed .There was a wound on the right groin .I Believe that was the fatal wound

That was the immediate cause of death ?I think so .

How soon after you saw him for the last time did he die ?I at once stopped the haemorrhage by digital pressure .The deceased just rallied for a minute ,muttering something ,and moved one of his legs –that was the only sign of life .He sank in 15 or 20 minutes .

I presume the immediate cause of death was the quantity of blood he lost ?Exhaustion and loss of blood .Dr Twigg had been with me ,but left to procure his instruments ,and before he returned the man had died .If the man had all shown signs of rallying we would have tried to make a ligature of the artery .Today I made a further and fuller examination of the deceased .I found a superficial incised wound about an inch long ,on the back of the right thigh .I do not consider it of consequence .I found no foreign body in any of the wounds ,but there may be and if so a complete examination will show it .If the deceased had been removed from where we found him he would at once have succumbed.He was about 68 years of age and a strong ,musculary –built man ,

Mr Reynolds asked that an order should be made for a full post mortem examination .

The coroner assented to the application ,and the inquiry was then adjourned till ten o'clock tomorrow morning .

During the afternoon the post mortem examination was held by Dr Brown ,with the result of a pellet being found embedded in the deceased's right thigh bone .The town is at present filled with constabulary ,large reinforcements having been drafted in from surrounding districts ,among which are parties under the command of Colonel Burke and Mr Becket .Numerous patrols constantly pass through the streets,it is rumoured on information has been lodged against a merchant of the town ,who is alleged to have shot the deceased O'Rourke .About eleven o'clock tonight as two policemen were passing through Irish street ,four shots were fired at them from a corner house .Immediately the alarm was given at the barracks about a hundred men turned out and remained on guard in Irish street for a considerable time ,but as no further firing took place a number of them returned to quarters .At the present moment armed pickets are as they were last night stationed at the corners of the streets ,while the footpaths of the square are almost completely lined with constabulary lying on the flags.Lest it be found necessary to require additional assistance to maintain the peace, a picket of the Mid Ulster Artillery under the command of Lieutenant Brown was in readiness till a late hour to turn out when ever called upon