

BELFAST RIOTS COMMISSION, 1886.

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REPORT

OF THE

BELFAST RIOTS COMMISSIONERS.

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*Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.*

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# BELFAST RIOTS COMMISSION.

## REPORT.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY CHARLES STEWART, MARQUESS OF  
LONDONDERRY,

LORD LIEUTENANT-GENERAL AND GENERAL GOVERNOR OF IRELAND.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

On the 25th day of August, 1886, their Excellencies the then Lords Justices of Ireland, issued their Warrant to four of our number—Sir Edward Bulwer, K.C.B., Frederick Le Poer Trench, Q.C., Richard Adams, B.L., and Commander Wallace M'Hardy, R.N., whereby, after reciting that certain riots and disturbances of a serious character had in the months of June, July, and August, 1886, taken place in the borough of Belfast, they authorized and directed us to "inquire into the origin and circumstances of the said riots and disturbances, and the cause of their continuance, "the existing local arrangements for the preservation of the peace of the town "of Belfast, the magisterial jurisdiction exercised within it, and the amount and "constitution and efficiency of the police force usually available there, and the "proceedings undertaken by the magistrates, stipendiary and local, and other authorities, "and the police force, on the occasion of the said riots and disturbances; and whether "these authorities and the existing police force are adequate to the future maintenance of "order and tranquility within the town, and whether any and what steps ought to be "taken, and whether any and what changes ought to be made in the local, magisterial, "and police jurisdiction arrangements and establishment, with a view to the better "preservation of the public peace, and the prevention or prompt suppression of riot and "disorder."

On the 25th September, 1886, your Excellency issued a further warrant appointing as an additional member and President of the Commission, the Honourable Mr. Justice Day, and after declaring that certain riots and disturbances had taken place in Belfast since the 25th August, 1886, you authorized and empowered us "to inquire into all "matters connected with the said last-mentioned riots and disturbances in as full and "ample a manner as we were authorized and directed to inquire into all matters "connected with the riots and disturbances mentioned in the Commission of 25th "August, 1886."

Previous to the issue of the second warrant an Act of Parliament had received the Royal Assent, by which our Commission was authorized to summon all such persons as we should think fit to give evidence before us; to examine all such persons upon oath; to require the production of all documents we should think proper to call for; and to commit persons for any contempt of court of which we should adjudge them to be guilty.

In obedience to the aforesaid warrants, and by virtue of the Act of Parliament already recited, we, at the hour of 12 o'clock on Monday, the 4th October, 1886, opened an inquiry at Belfast, in the Court House of the County of Antrim, in that town. At the commencement of the sitting the President explained the scope and conditions of the inquiry. Several members of the legal profession of both branches attended, and some discussion ensued as to their status and position. This incident is fully detailed in the minutes of our proceedings.

We then proceeded with the inquiry, and continued it uninterruptedly, with the exception of the intervening Sundays, until Monday, the 25th day of October, 1886; on which day we closed our proceedings. During this period we examined 201 witnesses, including the Mayor of Belfast, a number of magistrates, resident and borough, who had been engaged in suppressing the riots, or had information to give us

as to magisterial and police action, several military officers, officers of police of all ranks, and a number of citizens of Belfast,—fairly representing, as we believe, all classes, interests, and religious parties, in the community. We did not terminate our inquiry until we had satisfied ourselves that we had thoroughly probed and investigated the weighty matters with inquiry into which we were charged, and obtained all testimony which could throw any light thereon. We may add that at the close of the inquiry no further evidence was suggested to us by any persons.

We now proceed to lay before your Excellency the results of our inquiry.

The Warrant in the first place charges us with the duty of inquiring into "the origin and circumstances, and the causes of the continuance of the riots and disturbances" which disgraced Belfast, in the months of June, July, August, and September, 1886, and which, up to the time of our holding the inquiry, had caused a loss of at least twenty-nine lives, and a destruction of property, direct and indirect, which one witness estimated at £90,000, but the exact amount of which it is at present impossible to calculate.

Belfast is a great manufacturing town, which in progress and wealth enjoys a foremost place among the centres of population of the United Kingdom. Its population in 1881, according to the Census returns, was 308,123, and since that time has probably increased to about 330,000. It has an area of 6,805 acres, and a valuation of £604,537.

The town is, in its present proportions, of very recent growth; and the result is that the poorer classes, instead of, as in other cities, occupying tenements in large houses, reside mainly in separate cottages or small houses. The western district of Belfast is covered with these small dwellings of the artisan and labourer; and this district was the main theatre of the riots of 1886.

The extremity to which party and religious feeling has grown in Belfast is shown strikingly by the fact that the people of the artisan and labouring class, disregarding the ordinary considerations of convenience, dwell to a large extent in separate quarters, each of which is almost entirely given up to persons of one particular faith, and the boundaries of which are sharply defined. In the district of West Belfast, the great thoroughfare of Shankill-road, with the network of streets running into it, and the side streets connecting those lateral branches, is an almost purely Protestant district; and the parties referred to in the evidence as "the Shankill mob," are a Protestant mob. The great Catholic quarter is due south of the Shankill district, and consists of the thoroughfare known as the Falls-road, and the streets running south of it; and the parties referred to in the testimony before us as the "Falls-road mob," are therefore a Catholic mob. Due south of the Falls district is Grosvenor-street; almost entirely inhabited by Protestants, so that the Catholic quarter lies between two Protestant districts. The Shankill-road and Falls-road are both largely inhabited by shopkeepers who supply the wants of the population, and whose houses are sometimes large and comfortable. The streets running off these thoroughfares consist of long rows of cottages of artisans and labourers. The great points of danger to the peace of the town are open spaces in the border land between the two quarters; and two of those spaces—the Brickfields and Springfield—will be found to have been the theatres of some of the worst scenes of the riots.

The great number of working people who dwell in the districts we have described are, at ordinary times, a most peaceable and industrious community. But unfortunately a spirit has grown up amongst those people, which has resulted in that, on three previous occasions within the last thirty years, in 1857, 1864, and 1872, the town was the scene of disturbances and long-continued riots.

Under another head of our Inquiry detailed information will be given as to the police and magisterial system of Belfast. In order, however, to make our report as to the origin and circumstances of the riot intelligible, it will be useful here to summarise, in a few words, the leading features of the magisterial and police arrangements in Belfast.

The Mayor is an *ex-officio* magistrate; and is recognised from his position as the Chief Magistrate of the town. There are between eighty and ninety gentlemen in the Commission of the Peace for the Borough of Belfast; and there are two resident magistrates, who are paid by the Crown, and have jurisdiction similar to, and in some instances more extensive than, the Borough Magistrates. The police force of the town is supplied by the Royal Irish Constabulary; which, as is well known, is a national, as distinguished from a local force. The men of the force carry batons as their ordinary weapons; but each man has a rifle and bayonet at his barrack. At the time of the breaking out of the riots, the actual effective force of police in Belfast was about 525. This force included a Town Inspector, *ex-officio* a magistrate, four District Inspectors, and twelve Head Constables; and it was stationed in twenty-two barracks.

The month of June, 1886, opened in Belfast upon a condition of great excitement and

Vale, Police  
Returns.  
Mottis,  
11941.

Black, 7367.

Ewart,  
12649 to  
12673.  
Townsend,  
1436.  
McClelland,  
5869.

Carr, 67 to  
75.

Carr, 775

Cullen, 1088

Forbes,  
4129, 4130.

Carr, 13, 15,  
17.  
Cullen, 919.

Reed, 4801.  
Bailey, 8113

high party feeling. The Home Rule Bill was then before Parliament; and the measure evoked strong feeling in Belfast. The Catholics, as a body, supported the Bill. The Protestants, as a body, regarded it with hostility. The result was that this apparently political question evoked the spirit of sectarian animosity. A general election was regarded as inevitable; and in one of the Divisions of Belfast, parties were so equally balanced, that a keen and close contest was certain.

Having thus stated the general condition of the town in the beginning of the month of June, we shall now shortly recount the leading events of the riots, the details of which will be found in the Minutes of Evidence. Having regard to the great duration of the riots, and the vast number of independent incidents, we have confined ourselves to a general sketch of the leading features, and do not pretend to descend to every particular occurrence.

The incident which led to the first explosion of the recent riots was shortly this:—The river Lagan divides the town of Belfast from the suburb of Ballymacarrett. On the east or Ballymacarrett bank of the river, at a place called the Queen's Island, is the large shipbuilding yard of Messrs. Harland, Wolff, and Co. At the beginning of June there were employed on the Island some 3,500 men, of whom the vast majority were Protestants. The Island men are a well paid, intelligent, and for the most part, and at ordinary times a well behaved body of men; but the evidence shows that in times of excitement a strong sectarian spirit exists amongst the Protestant workmen.

On the 3rd June another body of workmen, inferior to the Island men in numbers and in status, was also engaged on the banks of the Lagan. This second body consisted of labourers employed in the construction of the Alexandra Dock, which is some little distance further down the river than the Queen's Island Works. They numbered about 100, and were mostly Catholics, but a fair proportion of them were Protestants. One squad of fifteen men contained three or four Protestants. Catholic and Protestant seem to have worked side by side in perfect harmony, and there is no evidence to show that at any time a member of the Protestant minority working at the Alexandra Dock received, on account of his faith, any persecution, trouble or annoyance.

On the 3rd of June, among the men working at Alexandra Dock, was a Protestant named Blakely, and a Catholic family named Murphy—a father and three sons. A quarrel arose between Blakely and two of the Murphys, in the course of which one of them struck Blakely and made use of the phrase "That neither he (Blakely) nor any of his sort should get leave to work there, or earn a loaf there or any other place." After the quarrel between Blakely and the Murphys, they left their work at the Dock. Either on the evening of the 3rd or the morning of the 4th of June some account of the affair appears to have reached the Queen's Island men; and at their dinner hour—about one o'clock—on the 4th of June a body of the Queen's Island workmen left the Queen's Island works, armed with sticks and various missiles, and rushed to the Alexandra Dock. Their numbers were very large. One witness estimated that 200 had entered the Alexandra Dock works before he ran away from them; and the police estimate numbered the actual assailants at 100, and the body which followed them at a thousand men. There were about 100 labourers at the dock, many, it is stated, old men and boys. When the Island men poured into the works, the labourers do not appear to have made any resistance whatever. A few stood their ground and some of them were badly beaten by the Island men. Several had to be taken to the hospital for treatment. The majority of them however, sought refuge in the Lagan, which runs by the dock. About twenty got on a raft. Others tried to escape by swimming. Some of the fugitives, who had either slipped off the raft or got tired from swimming, were soon in danger of drowning. One man returned to the shore and was badly beaten by the Island men, who also continued throwing stones at the men in the water. In the result one lad named Carran was drowned.

Such was the deplorable incident of the 4th of June.

The Island men, after their raid on the Docks, returned to the island, and some little time elapsed before the police were made aware of what had taken place. Town Inspector Carr was soon on the spot with a force of police; but all was then over, and the police authorities confined themselves for that evening to taking precautions to prevent any attack being made on the Queen's Islanders on their road home, which traverses the greater portion of the town of Belfast—most of the Island men living on the Shankill-road and the Old Lodge-road, while they worked, as already stated, at the other side of the river. All passed over quietly that evening, save that there was some hostile demonstration directed against the Islanders at Peter's hill—a Catholic district—through which their route home lay.

On the 5th June the excitement in Belfast became very marked, and the Island men on their way home were objects of such hostility in the Catholic districts through which

Carr, 47, 49,  
50.  
Harland,  
7770.  
Preston,  
8731.  
Harris,  
9420.

Harland,  
7582, 7584.

Carr, 520.  
Harland,  
7593.  
MacGregor,  
13892,  
13917.

Hale,  
10330.  
10344.  
10385 to  
10391.  
John Reid,  
10840.

Blakely,  
10178.  
10189,  
10190.

4th June.

Hale,  
10335.  
10348.

Carr, 526.  
Hale,  
10344.

John Reid,  
10835.

Hale,  
10348.  
10341.  
J. Reid,  
10351.

Hale,  
10335,  
10354,  
10355.  
Carr, 63.

Townsend,  
1393.

Carr, 80, 81.

5th June.  
Carr, 80.

Carr, 81. they passed that the police with great difficulty averted a serious riot. In several parts of the town it became evident that the feeling had become more and more bitter. In two or three places some slight rioting did take place; but the police were always able to keep the hostile parties separate.

6th June.  
Townsend, 1303.  
Ball, 1818.  
Forbes, 4025.  
Carr, 82, et seq.  
Stitch, 3309.  
Carr, 89.  
Stitch, 3305.  
Carr, 85, 90, 91, 190, 188.  
Stitch, 3314.  
Carr, 96-191.  
Forbes, 4025.  
Carr, 96. On the following day, Sunday, 6th June, the boy Curran, who had been drowned at the Alexandra Dock, was buried. His funeral has been described as a procession. On the one hand, it does not seem that any bands, banners, or insignia appeared at the funeral; but on the other hand, the exceedingly large attendance, which is said to have amounted to several thousand persons, showed that the fate of the unfortunate lad had excited deep emotions amongst the Catholics of Belfast. The route of the funeral lay by the Brickfields, an open space already described, which lies on the frontier line between the Catholic district of the Falls-road and the Protestant district of the Shankill-road. A large Protestant crowd had collected on this spot, and as the funeral passed there were shouts and defiant cries, and a pistol was fired by some one in the funeral procession, rather, it would appear, out of bravado than with any deliberate intention of doing mischief. Immediately after the shot was fired a number of people from the procession rushed at the Protestant crowd assembled at the Brickfields, but the police, who were present in force, succeeded in preventing a collision. A few stones were thrown, but no one was hurt.

Later on in the day, when the crowd returned from the funeral, the Protestant and Catholic parties made an attempt to get at each other at a place called the Broadway, but the police there also succeeded in preventing a serious collision, and in keeping back the people with their batons. Other minor attempts were made by the mobs to attack each other; and the duties of the police did not close until a very late hour at night; having through a most trying day completely succeeded in preventing serious riot.

The day of Monday, 7th June, passed quietly; but with the night came trouble of a very serious kind. In a Protestant street called Percy-street, resided a Catholic publican named Duffy. Duffy's house was, after nightfall of the 7th June "attacked by a Protestant mob," and a determined attempt was made to wreck it. Town-Inspector Carr, upon hearing of the attack upon Duffy's house, at once started for the scene of action, at the head of a large force of police, to disperse the rioters. The latter, however, showed a strong resistance to the police who advanced up Percy-street under a shower of stones. Two constables were very seriously injured, and others received slighter hurts. Later on the Town-Inspector and his men were attacked by the Shankill road mob, and had to charge the crowd. On the same night another mob from Shankill-road stoned very severely a party of police in Dover-street. In a word, all through the night of the 7th June there was a very determined spirit of hostility shown by the Shankill-road mob to the police.

This action of the Shankill-road mob on the 7th June is, in our opinion, matter of grave importance. The case against the police authorities at the investigation largely assumed the shape of assertion that the intense hostility with which the Shankill-road party regarded the police arose from two reasons—irritation at the introduction of country policemen into the town, and anger at the use of firearms by the constables.

When we come to speak of the sad events of the 9th June we shall have to touch upon this subject again, but here call attention to the fact that on the 7th June, when this hostility was so strongly displayed against the police, not a shot had been fired, nor had a single country policeman been brought into the town. The force in Belfast on the 7th June consisted solely of the ordinary town force; and it is right to observe that that force was mainly officered by Protestants, and out of a total strength of 598 men, there were in it 330 Protestants and 268 Catholics.

In the afternoon of the 7th June affairs looked so serious that a resolution of great importance was taken by the authorities. A consultation took place between Mr. McCarthy, R.M.; Colonel Forbes, R.M.; Mr. Cullen, Divisional Magistrate and Assistant Inspector General, and Town-Inspector Carr, and it was determined to apply to headquarters in Dublin for reinforcements of police. The Mayor was at the time away from home, and could not be communicated with. Mr. Cullen accordingly telegraphed to Dublin, to the Inspector-General of Constabulary, for a reinforcement of 400 men; and it appears that in due course the Inspector-General ordered the required force to Belfast—drawing the reinforcements from the counties of Derry, Tyrone, Donegal, Monaghan, and Westmeath.

8th June.  
Carr, 113. The day of the 8th June passed off quietly; but in the evening rioting on the Shankill-road assumed the most formidable dimensions. The incidents of that evening are too numerous to be all narrated in detail, and we confine ourselves to the more

salient facts. It is in the first place to be observed that in the course of the day the country police who had been ordered to Belfast, as reinforcements arrived to the number of 480. The most serious incident of the night of the 8th June was the renewal of the attack of the Protestant mob upon the house of Duffy, the Catholic publican, in Percy-street. This attack was so determined and successful that the small force of police who were detailed to defend the place were driven away, and the mob got possession of the premises. At about 9 o'clock in the evening, or shortly afterwards, news of this event reached Town Inspector Carr. That officer instantly set off at the head of a party of about thirty men, for the scene of action. *En route* he fell in with another force, and hurried on towards Percy-street. On reaching that street he found that the mob had looted Duffy's house. The taps in the barrels were all turned on, everything in the place was floating about, and the house completely wrecked. Mr. Carr and his party, as they advanced up the street, were furiously attacked by the mob, which numbered some hundreds of people. They poured on the police heavy showers of stones and bottles. The police—a number of whom had firearms—charged, by Mr. Carr's orders, three times; once with fixed bayonets; but the mob kept up the attack with unabated fierceness. Some of the streets of Belfast are paved with small paving stones, popularly called "kidneys," and these formidable missiles were rooted from the street by the women and handed to the men.

Almost every policeman in Mr. Carr's party was struck with stones, by the tremendous fusillade of these weapons which was kept up by the mob. In the third charge Mr. Carr received some injuries of great severity; almost at the same moment one stone striking him on the leg, a second splitting his thumb, while the third struck him on the forehead, knocking him down and inflicting a painful wound. These injuries stunned Mr. Carr for about half a minute; and when he recovered he found his men had been broken up, under the showers of stones poured upon them. He read the Riot Act, and called on the crowd to disperse—and especially warned the women and children to retire out of danger. The furious attack of the mob continuing, he, as a last resource, ordered fourteen of the police to load, and, after a pause, gave the word to three of them to fire in succession. As a matter of fact nine of the men fired; but there seems no reason to doubt the explanation given by Mr. Carr that in the great confusion and uproar which prevailed some few men continued the firing under a misapprehension of the order. The volley checked the rioting for a moment, so that Mr. Carr was able to extricate his men, and fall back on the neighbouring open space at the Brickfields. His wounds were there attended to, and found to be so severe that he was unable to resume duty for twenty-four days. District Inspector Townsend, his second in command, was struck seven or eight times with stones on the same occasion, and badly wounded, and hardly a man in the party escaped injury. At no time during the riots were the police attacked with greater ferocity and savagery than on this occasion. Similar attacks were made in other districts, in one of which District Inspector Stritch received a wound of a desperate character. The Shankhill-road mob on the same night attacked the house of O'Hare, a Catholic publican, and fiercely assailed a party of police which sought to defend the house, the attacking party uttering shouts of "murder the 'Fenian whores," and "Morley's murderers."

In dealing with the events of the following day, the 9th June, we must go to some extent into detail, for the following reasons:—First, that the riotous and disorderly conduct of the mob resident in the Shankhill-road district assumed a very aggravated character; secondly, because in the opinion of some of the witnesses who gave evidence before us, the conduct of the police upon this occasion conduced to prolong the subsequent riots.

We have already described the geographical situation of the Shankhill-road. On that road is situated a police barrack, which is called the "Bower's-hill" Barrack. On the afternoon of the 9th June there was considerable disturbance, and stone-throwing on the Shankhill-road, and in the neighbourhood of the barrack. At about 5 P.M. District Inspector Mulliner, who (as already stated), had arrived in Belfast on the previous evening with a detachment of police from the county Westmeath, proceeded, by orders, with some of his men, and some of the ordinary town force, to the Shankhill-road. At this time there were only two policemen in Bower's-hill Barrack. No sooner had Mr. Mulliner and his party arrived at the barrack than stones were thrown at them from various places. Many of the stones were thrown by unseen persons, from round corners, and over houses, which "mob tactic" appears to be a feature in Belfast rioting. At this time O'Hare's public-house, which had been the object of attack on the previous day, was again assailed by a stone-throwing mob from the Shankhill district. Mr. Mulliner proceeded with his party of police to the protection of this house. As they were going

Mulliner,  
2171.  
Carr, 125,  
Townsend,  
1933.  
Sullivan,  
2594.

Carr, 123,  
125, 126,  
127, 261,  
265.  
Carr, 126,  
137.  
Townsend,  
1303.

Brown,  
8936.  
Harland,  
7580.

Carr, 374,  
375.  
Townsend,  
1633.

Forbes,  
4145.

Caddell,  
5975, 5976.  
Carr, 264.  
Townsend,  
1308.

Carr, 127,  
Townsend,  
1306, 1307,  
1308.

Townsend,  
1303.  
Townsend,  
1309.

Townsend,  
1306, 1307.

Townsend,  
1518.  
Stritch,  
3360.

Townsend,  
1308.

Carr, 263  
Gerard,  
3652.  
9th June.

Rath,  
2367, et seq.  
Greene, 2937,  
2938.

Mulliner,  
2173, 2177.

Mulliner,  
2178, 2185,  
2186.

M'Leod, 2806, 2810.  
Greene, 2957.  
Mulliner, 2187.  
Greene, 2954, et seq.  
Mulliner, 2188.  
M'Leod, 2810.

there, and when they arrived, they were severely stoned, and were obliged to charge the mob several times in different directions, and to telegraph for reinforcements.

Ewart, 2057.

Mulliner, 2189.  
M'Leod, 2815.  
Ewart, 2453.

After a short time Mr. M'Leod, R.M., and Mr. Greene, District Inspector, arrived upon the scene; and apparently by the orders of Mr. Greene, nearly all the police were withdrawn into the Bower's-hill barracks. The police had not been any length of time in the barracks when a report arrived that a small party which had remained outside to protect O'Hare's public-house were being savagely attacked, and the house itself gutted by the Shankhill-road mob. Mr. Mulliner proceeded with a party of his own force to the spot and found that a much larger mob than before had collected, that some were throwing stones at the house, that others inside were throwing things out of the windows, and that others had set fire to the beds and other property in the house and were throwing out the burning debris into the street. Mr. Mulliner had to charge the mob frequently under a continual shower of stones. After some short time a kind of consultation appears to have been held between the Rev. Dr. Hanna, the Rev. Dr. Johnston (who were upon the scene and endeavouring to calm the rioters), Messrs. M'Leod, R.M.; Lavina Ewart, and George Horner, a county magistrate, and Mr. Greene, the result of which consultation was that Mr. Mulliner was ordered to take his men back to the barracks.

Hanna, 9428.  
M'Leod, 2815.

We here feel it our duty to state—although some of the witnesses who were examined before us have formed a different opinion—that this retreat of the police was most injudicious and disastrous, inasmuch as its natural tendency would be, and in our opinion its effect was, to lead the rioters to think that they had mastered the police, and therefore to encourage them to make the desperate attack which they subsequently did upon the Bower's-hill barracks.

Mulliner, 2184, 2182.  
Sullivan, 2607.

There was some confusion consequent upon the retreat of the police force into the barracks: the barracks was a small house, not originally intended or constructed for any such purpose, and the entrance door and passage were both very narrow. As the police were endeavouring to effect their entrance showers of stones were flung at them. Some of the men shouted "turn out and fire," and a few of those in and about the door fired on the mob. The police then succeeded in getting into the barracks and the door was shut. After they had retreated into the barracks showers of stones were thrown at the building, and a great quantity of them went through the windows.

Greene, 3007.  
Sullivan, 2607.  
M'Leod, 2815.

Sullivan, 2607.

During these assaults on the barracks, some shots were fired out of the windows by the constables and by two of their officers. Whilst the police were being thus besieged in the Bower's-hill barracks, a message was delivered to Mr. Sullivan, District Inspector (who had arrived in Belfast on the evening of the 8th of June, with a detachment of police from the County Donegal, and who with his men was at this time stationed at the Riversdale National School), to the effect that he should bring up his men to the Bower's-hill barracks. Mr. Sullivan did as he was ordered and proceeded down Agnes-street, which lies at right angles with Shankhill-road. This was about a quarter or half past eight o'clock in the evening. Mr. Sullivan found Agnes-street crowded and the Shankhill-road "black with people." As the police proceeded down Agnes-street, they were stoned by the mob from before and behind, and shots from revolvers were also fired at them. The police ran through the crowd; and turned the corner into the Shankhill-road. Stones were thrown at them from every direction; but at length they succeeded in gaining entrance to the barracks. Evidence was given, and we have no reason to doubt its veracity, that Mr. Sullivan and his party would not have got safely into the barracks without themselves inflicting serious loss of life upon the crowd, except for the firing from the barracks windows, which to a certain extent kept back the people. An attempt was made to telegraph to head quarters for assistance, but it was found that the wire had been injured by the stones thrown by the mob, and that the communication was thus interrupted. Mr. Sullivan, Sergeant M'Gusty and Constable Farrell, then volunteered to proceed to head quarters for relief; and, at considerable risk, they did so. When they left the barracks there was a large crowd of people on their right hand side, a large crowd on their left, and there were also crowds in some of the by-streets; and volleys of stones were thrown at them; the Riot Act was then read by Mr. M'Leod. Ultimately, however, they succeeded in reaching head quarters, where Mr. Sullivan obtained a reinforcement of police, and secured the assistance of a body of the Highland Light Infantry, in charge of Mr. MacCarthy, &c. They all proceeded to the barracks at Bower's-hill, and when they arrived there, the Riot Act was again read by Mr. MacCarthy. Shortly after the arrival of the military and reinforcements of police, the crowd which still surrounded the barracks scattered and went off.

Sullivan, 2614.  
M'Leod, 2815.  
Sullivan, 2602.  
M'Leod, 2825.

Sullivan, 2653.

We have now, as shortly as possible, described the character of the riot upon the Shankhill-road, and the attack upon the Bower's-hill Barracks on the 9th June. A good deal of evidence was given to us with the view of showing that some of the firing by



the police was unnecessary and unjustifiable. A number of shots, amounting to at least 261, consisting partly of buckshot and partly of ball, were undoubtedly fired; and we are by no means prepared to say that every individual shot was justified or necessary. The evidence also distinctly points to a want of organization and order within the barrack. But we have no hesitation in saying that the resort to fire-arms by the police was justified under the circumstances, and that, but for it, the mob would probably have stormed the barrack and attempted to set it on fire, when greater loss of life would most probably have ensued. We deeply deplore that lives were lost upon this occasion by the firing of the police; and, in some instances, the lives of innocent people.

Riots of a more or less serious nature occurred during this day in other portions of the town. A desperate attack was made upon the Albert-street barrack at about the hour of 10 p.m., on which occasion Sergeant Carnaghan, R.I.C., seeing that the people were determined to wreck the barrack, was compelled to order three of his men to fire.

Another event occurred upon the 9th of June, to which we desire to call your Excellency's attention, as it was much commented upon before us as evidence of misconduct on the part of the police, and as a cause of the subsequent continuance of the riots. Messrs. Coombe and Barbour have a large establishment in North Howard-street which runs into the Shankhill-road. They employ a great number of persons, both of the Protestant and Catholic religions. On leaving the works the Protestant workmen proceed in the direction of Shankhill-road, and the Catholics, mainly in the opposite direction. On the evening of the 9th June, while the Protestant workmen were departing from the establishment, and proceeding rapidly, and to a great extent in a compact body, towards the Shankhill-road, the police charged and dispersed them. It is alleged that this charge was wholly unjustifiable; and directed at persons who were in no way breakers of the peace. Here, again, we are not prepared to say, although the evidence is contradictory, that the police may not have made a mistake in this charge; still we are of opinion, having regard to the very disturbed state of the Shankhill-road adjoining North Howard-street, and the neighbouring localities at the time the charge took place, and having regard to the rapid manner in which the workmen of Messrs. Coombe and Barbour left the establishment, that it was a mistake, if mistake at all, on the part of the police thoroughly excusable. Very trifling injury was done to anyone by this charge of the police; and we do not think it could be reasonably considered as any ground whatever for the very serious and repeated attacks subsequently made on the constabulary.

We are further of opinion (as already stated) that having regard to the rioting which took place on the 4th, 6th, 7th, 8th, and the earlier portion of the 9th June, as already detailed by us, that it is neither a reasonable nor a fair assumption to make that the riots which occurred subsequently to the 9th June were caused by the firing of the police at and from the Bower's-hill barrack on the evening of the 9th June.

We have now stated the circumstances connected with the disturbances of the 9th June, and for a more detailed account we respectfully refer to the shorthand writers' report of the evidence, set out in the Appendix. We shall now refer your Excellency, still more shortly, to the circumstances connected with the subsequent riots.

Upon the 10th of June rioting broke out in the neighbourhood of Great Victoria-street and the Dublin-road, and the windows of some houses were broken. This occurred at about half-past eight in the evening. On the same day there were serious disturbances in York-street, and the police were attacked by a large mob with stones and pieces of iron. The house of a publican, named McCluskey, was wrecked, and several of the police were severely injured. Upon this occasion the sergeant in charge was compelled to order some of his force to fire, which had the effect of partially quelling the riot. We regret to say that upon this occasion two Catholic clergymen appear to have been severely maltreated by the mob. On this same day there was a very serious riot again upon the Shankhill-road, on which occasion stones were thrown at the Bower's-hill barrack; a party of military had to be called out, and while protecting some policemen who had arrested a prisoner, they were stoned, several of the men were knocked down, and the military had to charge the mob several times. Prior to dispersion of the mob by the military, so threatening was its attitude that several Protestant Clergymen, and one or two local gentlemen, who had some influence with the people, formed, as they described it, "a living wall" between the mob and the barrack, and exerted themselves to keep back the people from attacking it until the military came.

Comparative quiet prevailed in the town until the 7th July, upon which date some rioting took place in the Ballymacarrett District, on the County Down side of the river Lagan. The disturbance was caused by the playing of two bands belonging to rival parties, and upon this occasion some glass was broken in the windows of the Catholic presbytery and church.

Greene,  
3010.

Carnaghan,  
3921.

Coombe,  
8617.

Johnston,  
6402.  
Smith,  
9008.

Whitehead,  
10157-  
10765.  
Seaton,  
10706-  
10790.  
Brennan,  
15114-  
15136.

10th June.  
Ball, 1821.  
McLeod,  
2850.  
Guan, 4539.  
Mont-  
gomery,  
4725, 4726.

Mont-  
gomery,  
4723.  
Gordon,  
5791.  
Looms,  
5880-5881.  
Johnston,  
6448.  
Seaver,  
9798.

7th July,  
Ball, 1823,  
et seq.

8th and  
10th July.  
Forbes,  
4031, 4033.

Some disturbances took place on the 8th and 10th July. They were of no great moment, save as showing that a spirit of hostility was still at work between the rival factions in the town.

On the 12th July the usual Orange procession took place in Belfast, and about 10,000 persons marched through the streets. There was some slight disturbance, but upon the whole everything passed off quietly.

13th July.  
Walker,  
10677,  
10678,  
Carr, 273,  
Cullen, 301,  
Scott, 4845,  
Carr, 283,  
Forbes,  
4032.

On the 13th July the foundation stone was about to be laid of an Orange hall at a place called Ballinacoy, a suburb of Belfast, in the direction of the Ormeau-road. A band was accompanying several persons who were proceeding to the proposed site, when they came into collision with a Catholic party on the Grosvenor-road. A desperate fight ensued, and an enormous number of bricks and stones were thrown. Upon the same day a very serious riot also occurred at the Brickfields, which, as we have already stated, borders more or less upon both the Protestant and Catholic districts. At about half-past seven p.m., Mr. Carr, the Town Inspector, proceeded there and found some thousands of people had collected on the Falls-road which is a Catholic district. There was also a very large number of people, presumably a Protestant mob, in the street leading from the Shankill-road to the Brickfields. Some mounted Constabulary, supported by infantry police, exerted themselves to keep the mobs apart. Amongst the infantry police were some men under the charge of Mr. McCarthy, R.M., who had some short time before been attacked and stoned by a mob in the same neighbourhood. The police charged the mobs with batons, and endeavoured to disperse them. While doing so they were attacked with stones, a revolver shot being also fired at them. On consultation with Colonel Forbes, R.M., the Riot Act having been read, Mr. Carr ordered his men to load and "come to the ready." He kept them in that position for fully ten minutes, when two more revolver shots were fired from the Shankill-road mob, by one of which a mounted policeman was wounded. Mr. Carr then ordered his men to fire four rounds of buckshot, one after another, with intervals between each shot. After the first shot had been fired, another shot came from the same mob. Some farther reinforcements of police arrived, and the rival mobs were kept pretty well asunder. Mr. Carr had to send a number of his men to Northumberland-street, where there was also serious rioting going on. The military who had been sent for fortunately arrived—both cavalry and infantry—at this period, and were able to prevent the people from coming into collision. At about midnight three shots were fired in quick succession at the police and military from the Shankill-road mob. Head-Constable Gardiner was shot and died next morning. Private Hughes was shot and also died, and Acting-Sergeant Brady was wounded and taken to hospital. These shots were fired by some one or two persons who were in the riotous crowds; but as we understood that certain persons had been returned for trial in relation to those occurrences we did not think it becoming on our part to inquire more minutely into the circumstances.

Carr, 284,  
285.

Carr, 284.

Carr, 285.  
Borrell,  
5834,  
Carr, 285.

Carr, 285.

Forbes,  
4032,  
Carr, 287.

Bull, 1567,  
et seq.

On the same night there were serious disturbances in other localities, for instance, in the neighbourhood of the Boyne Bridge, a bridge crossing the Great Northern Railway, where a considerable number of shots were fired by a Protestant mob at the police, and at a Catholic mob, which had collected in the vicinity of Pound-street. Durham-street, and Grosvenor-road were also theatres of furious rioting between rival mobs. In these latter places the police were severely stoned, and had to charge several times. A number of them were injured by the stone-throwing—some severely; and one sergeant received a shot from a revolver. His life was for some time in danger, but, as we understand, he ultimately recovered. Three shots were fired by the police at this time, acting under the orders of their officer.

14th July.  
Forbes,  
4180,  
Bowling,  
15583.

On the next day, the 14th July, there was a good deal of excitement in the neighbourhood of Percy-street, on the Shankill-road, and also on the Falls-road. The Catholics were, however, kept well in check by their clergyman—the Rev. Mr. Magee, to whom much praise is due for his conduct during the riots. At about 10.30 p.m. a serious riot broke out in Conway-street, and the police were severely stoned, one of them having his frontal bone broken, under which injury he was still suffering at the time of our inquiry. The police, however, succeeded in dispersing the rioters, and the district became quiet at about midnight.

31st July.

Although the hostile feeling between the rival religious factions, and the still more bitter feeling of the Protestant rioters against the police, still continued, as evidenced by occasional outbreaks, there were no events to which we think it necessary to call your Excellency's special attention until those which occurred on the 31st July. Upon this date there were some excursions of Protestant school children. It was proved in evidence before us, that at this summer period of the year, a number of school fetes are held; that the children are in the habit of assembling at their respective schools, and

Carr, 425,  
Cullen, 318,  
1153,  
Bull, 2145.

marching through the town to some one or other of the railway stations, from which they proceed into the country to spend the day, and that upon their return they march in a similar manner from the railway stations to the districts in which they reside. These excursions are usually accompanied by bands, and banners are carried by the excursionists. It is right to say that it was proved that the banners so carried at these school fetes bore no party emblems or mottoes, but in some instances texts of Scripture. At the same time it appears clear upon the evidence that a large crowd of roughs usually gather when these bands are playing, and that stone-throwing between the parties of opposite religions is too often the result.

Upon this 31st July the Rev. Dr. Hanna had organized a trip for his school children; but in consequence of communications which were made to him by the magistrates and police, the usual arrangements were departed from, and no bands or banners accompanied the excursionists to the County Down railway station, from which they proceeded into the country. In the evening the children returned, and broke up into parties at the station; but unfortunately one, if not two, bands joined some of the returning excursionists, and played them through the town, and a large crowd collected along the route. At Carrick-hill, which is a point where there have been frequent encounters between the Protestant and Catholic mobs, a small rival party appeared, and very general rioting ensued all over that district during the evening. Both Colonel Forbes, R.M., and District Inspector Townsend received on this occasion very severe injuries.

On the same night the public house of a man named M'Glade, a Catholic residing in the Shankhill, a mainly Protestant district, was fiercely assailed, and the mob broke into, and to a considerable extent looted it. A picket of military fortunately arrived at the place and was drawn up across the street on one side of M'Glade's house, and the police on the other. Nevertheless, the stonethrowing continued from the corners of the different streets and over the houses; bottles were also thrown which had evidently been taken from M'Glade's public house. During the attack several of the soldiers were struck with various missiles. A few rounds of buckshot were fired by the police, and fifty-seven arrests were made.

On the following day, the 1st August, about 8 P.M., there was serious rioting in Park-street and Lime-street. In the latter street Mr. Bull, District Inspector, was struck with stones and seven of his men more or less injured. Mr. Bull called upon the mob to disperse, and the reply he got was a volley of stones. A second volley was thrown, and then Mr. Bull ordered one of his men to fire, and he did so. Another volley of stones was thrown at the police and some of them were struck, when Mr. Bull ordered the police again to fire. Three rounds in all were fired under orders, and we consider this firing quite justifiable. The mob dispersed from Lime-street into the Shankhill-road. When Mr. Bull arrived at the corner of the Shankhill-road and Lime-street he found nearly all the windows in the publichouse of a man named Daly broken. There proved to have been a great number of stones, some of them large paving stones, thrown into the house.

On the same night the publichouse of a man named Hassan living in Agnes-street was wrecked and gutted—the furniture all broken, the gas pipes torn down, the tables smashed, the liquor taps turned on and a large quantity of stones thrown into the house. Hassan is a Catholic residing in a mainly Protestant district.

We think we may at this part of our narrative of these unfortunate occurrences briefly state to your Excellency, that the evidence leads us to believe that the riots, at a very early period, and certainly from and after the 8th June assumed, to a great extent, the aspect of a determined attack by the Protestant mobs upon the police, and upon the places of business of Catholics residing in Protestant quarters of the town. Of the cause of this we shall come to speak when we have to deal with other matters into which your Excellency's Warrant directs us to inquire. But in this instance of Hassan's publichouse, and in several others to which we have drawn attention, the attack was undoubtedly made by Protestant mobs against the property of Catholic traders.

Of course there were retaliation and faults on both sides, but so far as we can judge from the evidence twenty-eight publichouses owned by Catholics were assailed and looted during the course of the riots, and only one or two publichouses owned by Protestants. This state of affairs may to a considerable extent be accounted for by the fact that the vast majority of the publichouses in Belfast are owned by Catholics, and that when once rioting begins those engaged in the pursuit are but too prone to attack any house in which intoxicating drinks can be procured. But at the same time these incidents seemed to show, and we have arrived at the opinion, that for a considerable period, at all events, from the 8th of June to the 19th September (of which date we must hereafter speak) the principal actors in the rioting were what is known as the Protestant mob.

Forbes,  
4118.  
Johnston,  
6725.  
Reed, 6872.  
Hanna,  
9578, et seq.

Hanna,  
9434, 9445,  
9585.  
Townsend,  
1318.  
Cullen, 918.  
Hastings,  
8956.

Cullen, 922.  
9434, 9445,  
9585.  
Carr, 294,  
297.

1st August.  
Bull, 1325,  
1386, et seq.

Bull, 1393.

Bull, 1398.

Cullen, 923.

- Cullen, 411  
McClelland, 8870.  
Reed, 6397  
Cullen, 914  
Miller, 6498  
Montgomery, 9931.  
Barry, 4934
- Mr. Cullen informed us that up to this date, the 19th September, the Catholic party behaved remarkably well, and Mr. McClelland, a Protestant magistrate, stated to us that the endurance and patience of the Catholics during the riots was simply wonderful. We are of opinion that the comparative good conduct of the Catholics must be largely attributed to the zealous exertions of the Catholic Bishop and clergy, who, during the riots, laboured persistently in the cause of peace, and who exercised over their people a great and most beneficial influence.
- On the same night, the 1st August, there was considerable rioting in the Shankhill-road district, and in the neighbourhood of M'Glade's publichouse several of the police were struck with stones and some of them severely injured. Two rounds of buckshot were fired by the police, acting under the orders of their superior officer. The police then charged and the mob dispersed, but only to return and attack Daly's publichouse as before described.
- 2nd August.  
Forbes, 4051.  
Carr, 302.
- Upon the second of August, there was a Catholic school trip which went into the country by the Northern Counties Railway. The excursionists did not march to the station or carry banners, nor did any band accompany them. Upon the return of the members of the school trip they appear to have, as far as practicable, disbanded, and either proceeded to walk to their homes, or to drive thither on cars. In this state of things a very wanton attack was made upon some of the party. Upon one car sat a young boy and some girls. The boy without giving any provocation that we can see was struck in the mouth with some missile. There being, of course, in the neighbourhood, sympathisers as well with the Catholic party upon whom this uncalled-for attack was made, as with the aggressors, York-street immediately became the scene of a serious riot. Both the military and the police had to charge. Several shots were fired by the police, and so great was the disturbance that although there were about 800 constabulary and military on the spot, the rioting went on for about two hours, and during that time two publichouses—one owned by a Protestant and the other by a Catholic—were wrecked and looted.
- 4th August.
- On the 4th August, considerable disturbances took place in the Ballymacarrett District on the County Down side of the river Lagan, and some stones were thrown at the police. One of the missiles, a large brick, struck one of the crowd on the head. This man was injured and had to be taken to hospital. The brick was evidently thrown by the Catholic crowd at the police, but injured one of their own party by mistake. Upon the same evening considerable rioting took place on the Shankhill-road and Mr. Keogh, R.M., proceeded there, with a party of military and police. Several stones were thrown from the side streets. Mr. Keogh was himself struck, and a savage attack was made upon the Constabulary, both stones and iron bolts and nuts being thrown with great violence. A large mob fronted the police.
- Keogh, 6350
- Ultimately he gave the order to fire, when about six shots were discharged, which caused the mob to break and disperse. For some time comparative peace prevailed upon the Shankhill-road, although there were several knots still collected about. But before very long another crowd assembled, and Mr. Keogh went forward and endeavoured to reason with the mob, but without effect. He then read the Riot Act, and whilst doing so received a severe wound in the side of his head, either from a knife or some other sharp weapon. Immediately after this, a very violent attack was made by the mob upon the police, showers of stones being thrown at them. The evidence would seem to show that in this instance, as in many others, stones were thrown, not only from the streets, but also from the windows of the houses, and over the houses, also that small missiles, such as iron screws and nuts, and articles of that kind were discharged from catapults, both from the streets and from windows of houses. Mr. Keogh finding himself suffering from loss of blood from the wound which he had received, gave over the charge of the police and arrangements to Major Broderick, a military magistrate, and, by the assistance of a party of cavalry, peace was after some time restored. The mob which attacked Captain Keogh presumably belonged to the Shankhill-road party. Colonel Miller, R.M., was also injured upon this day in the neighbourhood of Durham street. There were two conflicting parties—the Protestants from the lower end of Durham-street and Sandy-row, and the Catholics from Killen-street and the adjoining courts. Colonel Miller, who had only arrived in town a few hours before, was in charge of a party of police, and separated these two contending mobs. The Catholic mob, to whom he appears to have first directed his attention, were more amenable to reason and returned to their own streets; but the Protestant mob had to be, and were, dispersed with a charge of batons, and whilst that was going on, Colonel Miller was knocked down by the blow of a stone; his eye was nearly put out, and he was unable to do duty afterwards.
- Miller, 6452
- 5th August.
- On the following evening there were new disturbances on the county Down side of

the Lagan. A party of policemen and two sergeants were placed by Mr. Bull as guard upon the public-house of a person of the name of Gallagher, which had been attacked upon the previous evening. These policemen were assailed by a mob. Mr. Bull, hearing of the assault, proceeded with a Head-Constable to Gallagher's, and was very severely stoned. Mr. Bull and the men with him were struck several times with large paving stones, and before they arrived the police had been very badly treated, and were compelled to fire on the mob. There was also upon this evening again very serious rioting in the neighbourhood of McGlade's public-house, which had been before attacked. Stones were thrown freely by the Shankhill mob, and the military had to render assistance.

On the 6th of August, shortly after 6 o'clock, p.m., large crowds began to gather on Dunville's field, at the head of Grosvenor-street and Falls-road—a place where it seems to have been usual for the rival crowds to assemble during disturbed times. A large body of police mustered in the neighbourhood of the Drew Memorial Church, where they were stoned from all directions. A shot was fired at the police from a rifle, and Sergeant Dempsey ordered two of the constables under him to load. The stone-throwing continued. Another shot was fired by the people and struck the gable of a house very close to one of the policemen. Sergeant Dempsey then ordered the two men whom he had before told to load, to fire, and they did so. A man in the crowd was also firing a revolver from Mullhouse-street, and five or six revolver shots, at least, were so fired by some person or persons involved in the riot. One of the constables, by order, fired at once in that direction. Throughout the police were severely stoned, nearly all of them being struck, and the streets in the neighbourhood of the Drew Memorial Church would seem to have presented the appearance of "being covered with stones, bottles and other weapons." The evidence satisfies us that all the shots that were fired by the police, namely, nine in number—six being of buckshot and three of ball—were fired steadily, under the order of the sergeant in charge, and that they were necessary and justifiable. It would appear that upon this occasion some shots penetrated the windows of what is known as the Mullhouse factory belonging to Messrs. Lindsay, Thompson & Co. We have no sufficient evidence before us to enable us to say (if indeed it were part of our duty to enter into it), whether the shots that so took effect upon the factory were fired by the police or by the people; but it would appear that three rounds of ball alone were fired by the police, whereas there was evidence before us that at least five bullets entered the windows of the factory.

We cannot pass by this incident without observing upon a circumstance which occurred, an instance of several similar occurrences during the course of these riots, namely—an unjustifiable interference by civilians with the police when in the discharge of their duty at very critical and difficult crises. Upon this occasion, and almost immediately after the firing by the people and by the police, which we have described, two civilians, of the names of Wagner and McCracken, accosted the sergeant who had been in command of the police, with the desire to obtain the names of the constables who had fired. We regret to say that they were assisted in this by a head constable—McFarland—who had come up, and who was superior in rank to the sergeant. By his orders the men paraded on the foot-path, and he took the names of those who had fired in such a manner as apparently and intentionally to assist one of these civilians—namely, Mr. Wagner, to write them into a note-book which he carried. It is right in passing to say that the mob upon which Sergeant Dempsey felt himself compelled to fire was of the Protestant religion, and he swore (the truth of which statement we have no reason to doubt) that he had not the slightest idea as to what religion they belonged to, having only arrived in Belfast on the 4th of July, and never having been there before.

On Saturday, the 7th of August, there was considerable disturbance again in the Ballymacarrett district. The street lamps were turned out by the mob, a course which they pursued upon several other occasions. The rioters had to be charged several times, and some arrests were made. Upon the same afternoon, when the Island men were returning from the works, a troop of cavalry escorted them through a portion of the town to prevent them from attacking any houses, and also for the purpose of preventing their being attacked. There was a company of infantry facing the Island men as they came up, and a force of police facing a rival mob which had collected, to prevent them from throwing stones at the Island men when passing. A collision was averted at these points, but when the Island men arrived in the neighbourhood of Sherburn-street they and their friends who had come to meet them stoned a party of police who were stationed there, and the cavalry had to charge with drawn swords. Later on, at about half-past five o'clock, another disturbance occurred between the two parties at North Boundary-street, and an attack was made upon a body of police, and upon a public-house owned by a person named Mulholland. The rioters had again to be dis-

Bull, 1925

Bull, 1930,  
1936

Stokes, 6105

6th August.  
Walker,  
10888 to  
10897.  
Alexander,  
12150.  
Wagner,  
12143.  
Dempsey,  
15528.Dempsey,  
15547.Walker,  
10890.Dempsey,  
15541.  
Mason,  
14836,  
14857.  
McFarland,  
15522,  
et seq.Dempsey,  
15555.7th August.  
Bull, 1942.Stokes,  
6108.

Ly's, 8697.

persed by the military. Later on the military had to be brought to Dover-street, where an attack was being made upon the police. The mob was dispersed. While there word came that rioting was going on in North Boundary-street again, and when Mr. Stokes, R.M., arrived there with the military he found the two factions engaged in rival stone-throwing. Bayonets were fixed by the military, and the Protestant mob was first charged up into the Shankhill-road, and then the Catholic mob were charged and forced down into the Falls-road.

The military remained in this district, keeping the rear rank facing the Shankhill-road and the front rank facing in the direction of the Falls-road, until about 4.30 a.m. when things became tranquil. On the same evening there was very serious stone-throwing in the neighbourhood of Diamond-street. A person was arrested and when being taken to the Bower's-hill barrack a large mob assembled and stoned the police and military very brutally. Some of the police were knocked down, and two of them, with the prisoner, took shelter in a house. The mob began to attack and wreck the house. The Riot Act was read by Mr. Lyle, J.P., and whilst doing so, he received a blow of a stone on the arm and was also struck with a stone in the face. In order to avoid loss of lives he deemed it advisable to release the prisoner. The stone-throwing nevertheless, became so intolerable, that Lieutenant Gordon, H.L.I., gave orders to the military to charge the mob, which they did with effect and cleared the street. There was on this evening also a party of police in Diamond-street, a street opening out into the Shankhill-road, and from that party a number of shots were fired in the direction of the Shankhill road. The house of a resident on the Shankhill-road suffered from the effects of the firing, but fortunately none of the inmates were injured. This is another instance in which we are unable to say whether every shot was justified. The evidence before us was very conflicting, but it was apparent that many of the witnesses who gave evidence, directed towards implicating the police, could not have seen all that occurred. It was equally clear that the party of police who fired had been for a considerable time before they fired the victims of very ill usage at the hands of the mobs. There were several other disturbances upon this night, but it would incumber our report too much to go into them in detail.

We come now to speak of some of the events of the 8th of August, but before doing so, must for a moment digress. At an early period of the riots a consultative committee, consisting of Resident Magistrates, was formed. These gentlemen met from time to time to arrange as to what should be done for the preservation of the peace. Later on, a larger committee was formed, including the Mayor and all the magistrates of Belfast. It appeared in evidence that deputations waited upon this committee, from time to time, consisting of clergymen of the Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and other Protestant Churches, and of other gentlemen to lay their views before the Committee.

Great pressure was from time to time put upon the Committee to entirely withdraw the police from their ordinary duties on the Shankhill-road and district, in consequence of the intense hostility evinced by the people resident in that quarter against them. Prior to the 8th of August the police had been withdrawn from the Shankhill-road and district, and the military thenceforward acted, to a great extent, as policemen. We have been unable accurately to trace by whose orders this step was taken. The circumstances of the case were undoubtedly very exceptional, as we are not aware of any other period at which the animosity of a vast number of the Protestant community of Belfast, many of them persons in a respectable walk in life, was so fiercely directed against the Constabulary. At the same time we doubt the wisdom of this movement, as we are inclined to think that the law, and the police as the guardians of the law, should have been protected at any cost, and by any force necessary.

Upon the evening of this 8th of August there was a party of police in Hassan's public-house on the Old Lodge-road, a street running nearly parallel to the Shankhill-road. An attack was made upon them, and upon the house. They were compelled to fire in self-defence. The windows of the house were smashed into fragments—the glass, sashes, and the furniture in the room were destroyed. Several stones came through the windows, and one was imbedded in the partition on the opposite side of the room. As we shall have hereafter, in answer to one of your Excellency's questions, to refer to the conduct of the police, we do not discuss that matter now, but we may here state that a report was made to the Inspector-General of Constabulary (who arrived the day before in Belfast and took supreme command of the police) that this party of men who were inside and protecting Hassan's house (apparently in furtherance of the order to keep the police as much as possible from appearing in the streets) were drunk. The Inspector-General proceeded to the house forthwith. The sergeant, and all the men who were alleged to be drunk, were paraded and carefully examined when it was made clearly manifest that

they were all perfectly sober. This was done in the presence of the Inspector-General, Town Inspector Carr, Mr. Lawther, a borough magistrate, and others.

After the attack on Hassan's public house, a very serious riot occurred further up the road, and there was great shouting and yelling, and throwing of stones and bottles, some of the latter being filled with liquids which had apparently been extracted from McGlade's public house, looted that morning. These missiles were thrown at the police. The Riot Act was read by Mr. Thynne, R.M., who was in charge of a picket of military in the locality, and three shots were fired by the police at the rioters. We have every reason to believe that these shots were justifiable.

On the night of the 9th of August, there were disturbances in the Ballymacarrett district, and Mr. Bull, District Inspector, was severely injured by a blow of a large paving stone. On the morning of the same day, the police were stoned by some of the workmen employed in the foundry of Messrs. Coombe and Barbour.

On the 13th of August, a very scandalous matter occurred at the Queen's Island. John Johnston, one of the few Catholic workmen who were there, was attacked by his Protestant fellow-workmen, assaulted and covered with a large quantity of tar. It would appear that this man, with other Catholics had worked on the island for many years without molestation, and the attack on him evidenced the bitter rancour and ill-feeling which permeated a section of the population of Belfast at this time. We have no reason to believe that this man, Johnston, gave any provocation for the savage attack that was made upon him; or that there was any cause for it, save the fact that he belonged to the Catholic Church.

On the next day, the 14th of August, there was renewed rioting at the Old Lodge-road, when the public house of Mc'Kenna, a Catholic, was attacked by a Protestant mob. On the same night, there was a very serious conflict between the rival mobs in the neighbourhood of the Brickfield, but for some reason or other, not made very clear to us, neither the police nor the military seemed to have been made aware of it—a firing with rifles, as it was explained, lasting several hours. On the 23rd of August, there was very serious rioting on, and in the neighbourhood of, the Old Lodge-road. Sergeant Carey, R.C., charged a very large mob with nine men under his command armed with batons. Sergeant Carey, with two men, charged this mob down Stanhope-street and Lime-street, and through other streets until they ultimately arrested the individual indicated. In conveying their prisoner to the barrack, the police were very seriously stoned, and Sergeant Carey had to charge the mob several times in order to prevent a rescue. The barrack itself, was afterwards attacked and all the windows smashed. We do not desire to burden our report with any more minute details of this occurrence, but (if it be not overstepping our province) we do wish to draw your Excellency's attention to the prudent and gallant manner in which this police officer performed his duty. The evidence of this officer is sufficient to show what an effective weapon a baton is, provided the constable is properly trained to its use, and wields it with energy and resolution.

On the 25th of August there was an attack made upon the Peter's-hill barrack and upon the public-house of a Mr. Daly. The gas lamps were turned out by the mob, and a large chain was drawn across the road for the purpose of hindering the military and constabulary.

On the night of the 28th August there was a large mob collected about the house of a Mr. McAleese, a Catholic residing in the Shankill district. There were no police on duty there (they having been withdrawn from their ordinary beats, as we have already mentioned) but a picket of military, under the command of Colonel Wallace, ably performed police duty, and averted any actual attack upon the house.

On the 1st September the Constabulary were replaced for ordinary night duty on the Shankill-road. They were pelted with stones, and shots from revolvers were fired at them; but they pursued the rioters into back streets and arrested several of them.

On the afternoon of the 4th September a paragraph appeared in the *Evening Telegraph*, to the effect that the following afternoon the funeral of a Protestant and Orangeman would take place, and that the remains would be interred in the Borough Cemetery.

At about 3, P.M., on the 5th this funeral proceeded up Grosvenor-road, and along the Falls-road. Large groups of roughs belonging to the Catholic section assembled on the Falls-road. Stones were thrown at, and a serious attack made upon, the Protestant party, but they appear to have acted with great forbearance, and not to have in any way retaliated.

On the 19th of September a very serious attack was made upon the Divis-street police barrack by a Catholic mob. This seems to have originated in a prisoner, charged with an assault upon the police, being taken to the barrack. When the prisoner arrived at the barrack stones were thrown at it, and the crowd about the barrack

Lowther,  
7901, 7902,  
7933.  
Carr, 340.

Thynne,  
9220.

28th August  
Bell, 1943,  
1945.

Walsh,  
9389.

13th August  
Cullen,  
1001, 1002.

Johnston,  
13703.

Johnson,  
13617.

14th August.  
Cullen,  
1004.

Snodgrass,  
10944.

23rd August.  
Leathem,  
15395.

Carey,  
15411.

Derlin,  
13095.

25th August  
Reed, 6837,  
6838.

Cullen,  
1009.

28th August  
Reed, 6839

1st Sept.  
Cullen,  
1010.

Coddell,  
5915.

4th Sept.  
Chancellor,  
5812.

5th Sept.  
Chancellor,  
5812.

19th Sept.  
Cullen,  
1018-1020.

Whelan,  
5427, 5428,  
5442, 5505.

were shooting and yelling, and endeavouring to force in the door. The sergeant in charge tried to get at the arms-rack but could not, owing to the shower of stones through the smashed windows. He, however, obtained a rifle from upstairs, and some shots were fired at the crowd. Reinforcements both of military and police arrived, and after some time order was restored. Some of the Catholic mob were injured by this firing of the police, and one man was killed. This is the incident to which we have already referred as showing the first period at which the riots changed their aspect from being mainly an attack by the Protestant mobs upon the police to being a similar attack by the Catholic populace. We have no doubt whatever that the firing of the police was, in this instance, necessary, as there was great danger of the barrack being stormed, and the arms and ammunition taken from it. After this event the Catholic mob appears to have become as hostile to the police as the Protestant mobs had been throughout, and on the 21st of September a party of police, under District Inspectors Gilman and Holmes, were severely stoned by a Catholic mob. This was the last serious incident of the riots.

We are inclined to think that this event of 19th September—inasmuch as some Catholics were shot by the Police—effectually put an end to the insane idea which had taken deep root in the minds of some of the people, that Her Majesty's Government had selected police from outside Belfast, with the intent and for the purpose of coercing the Protestant population of Belfast into an acceptance of the Home Rule scheme.

We have now laid before your Excellency, the leading features of these riots. Though our narrative of them may be somewhat lengthy, it will appear by the printed evidence that it has but touched on the more salient points, and has necessarily left much of the melancholy story untold.

We now call your Excellency's attention to the prevalent custom in the town of Belfast, of processions passing through the streets accompanied by bands and banners bearing, more or less, party emblems or colours. The custom also prevails of erecting arches in the streets of a party character, at periods when party feeling is liable to show itself. It was also proved before us that, during the occurrences of the riots with which we have been dealing, bonfires were lighted by the people in the public thoroughfare to celebrate the return to Parliament of the gentlemen whose candidature the rival mobs respectively endorsed. It was made manifest to us, upon the testimony of the most respectable witnesses of all classes and creeds, that these processions, erection of arches, and bonfires are a fruitful cause of rioting and disturbance. To such an extent does the inflammability of the populace seem to extend, that even an excursion through the town of school children (such as we have before described), if accompanied by a band, appears effectually to lead to an attack either by the excursionists or the mobs who collect on hearing the band. The question of prohibiting these processions through the streets, and of preventing the erection of arches and the lighting of bonfires is no doubt one of some difficulty. Some of the witnesses examined before us suggested that a different law should not be made for Belfast than for the rest of Ireland. It is no part of our duty, under your Excellency's warrant, to express any opinion with reference to the rest of Ireland, but the evidence before us seemed clearly to prove that religious and political animosity attains, at times, such intensity in Belfast as to necessitate some recommendation on these heads.

We do not think it incumbent upon us to express an opinion as to how these processions and other acts, likely as they are to lead to a breach of the peace, can, as the law at present stands, be stopped; but we are most decidedly of opinion that summary power should be given to the person having the responsibility of keeping the Queen's peace in the town of Belfast to prevent all processions through the town, accompanied by bands and banners, and the erection of arches, if any such proceedings should be, in his opinion, calculated to lead to a breach of the peace.

We are further charged by your Excellency with reporting on the cause of the continuance of these deplorable disturbances, the origin of which we have sketched. This head of our inquiry we may briefly pass by—we have plainly indicated many of our views as to the reasons of their prolonged continuance. We attribute the extraordinary persistence of the riots largely to the intensity of feeling in Belfast during the period covered by them, a fact admitted upon all sides. The weakness of parleying with, and yielding to the mob did much harm. Had the police not been withdrawn on the 9th of June the tumult of the night would, in our opinion, have been suppressed with comparative ease, and the heavy loss of life which caused so much exasperation, would have been avoided. Unquestionably, however, a main cause of the prolonged continuance of the disturbances was the wild and unreasoning hostility exhibited by a large section of the Protestants of Belfast against the police. As early as the 8th of June the cry of "Morley's murderers" was raised against the police by the Shankill-road mob, and upon a vast number of occasions during the

Whelan,  
5429,  
5430,  
5442.

21st Sept.  
Cullen,  
1623.

Carr, 431,  
809, 510.  
Cullen,  
1159.  
Townsend,  
1334, 1697.  
Bull, 2146-  
2149.  
Strick,  
3568.  
Forbes,  
4143.  
Clare, 5038.  
Keogh,  
4607.  
Read, 5868-  
6876, 7177,  
et seq., 7251.  
Johnston,  
6723.  
Harward,  
7579, 7795-  
7799.  
Bailey,  
8153.  
Ross, 8264.  
McCliland,  
8870.  
As to  
arches,  
Ross, 8265,  
8266, 8267.  
McCliland,  
8893-8899.  
Brown,  
8941.

Seaver,  
2801.  
Pm, 11388.

Todd,  
14457.  
Carr, 225,  
226, 234,  
311, et seq.



troubles the same cry was heard. It was an expression of the extraordinary belief which so largely prevailed amongst Belfast Protestants—a belief that the late Government of the Queen was packing the town of Belfast with Catholic policemen, carefully selected from certain southern counties, and charged with the duty of shooting down the Protestants. There can be no doubt that this belief was honestly held by large sections of the humbler Protestants in Belfast, and was the secret of the bitter hostility shown against the Royal Irish Constabulary, and especially against the drafts from the country. As a curious instance of the popular delusion on this subject we may mention that when a draft came from any particular county it was generally believed that the men thus drafted were natives of that county. As a matter of fact, one thing certain about the composition of the force was that there was not a native of that particular county among them, for one of the rules of the Royal Irish Constabulary forbids the employment in a county of any natives thereof. It is profoundly to be regretted that no authoritative voice was raised to dispel these unhappy beliefs until Inspector-General Reed, on the 7th of August, explained, at a meeting of magistrates, that the late Chief Secretary for Ireland had nothing whatever to do with the selection of extra police for Belfast, that he (Mr. Reed) was alone responsible for that selection, and that, of course, he was actuated in his choice solely by the necessities of the public service. The explanation of Mr. Reed—with reference to which steps were taken to secure newspaper publicity—did much good. We are sorry to add that certain persons having great influence in Belfast, thought proper, at various periods during the riots, to indulge in language, written and spoken, well calculated to maintain excitement at a time when all men of influence should have tried to assuage it. Mr. Cullen, the divisional magistrate of Ulster and others, laid before us certain specimens of these utterances, some of which we print in appendix D, and which speak for themselves. We feel it our duty to draw special attention to a letter of the 4th day of August, 1886, written by Mr. De Cobain, Member of Parliament for one of the divisions of the town—a letter the publication of which the Mayor of Belfast most properly brought under the notice of the Government. Another cause of the continuance of the riots was the unhappy sympathy with which, at certain stages, the well-to-do classes of Protestants regarded the proceedings of the rioters. At one stage of the riots it seemed as if the greater part of the population of the Shankhill district united against the police. This is the more to be regretted as it was on all sides admitted that no more valuable aid could have been given to the police than that afforded by respectable and influential people of the localities in which the troubles arose.

A most important cause of the continuance of the disturbances were certain serious defects in the magisterial and police arrangements of the town, and these defects we will now set out in fulfilment of that part of the warrant in which we are directed to report upon the constitution and efficiency of the magisterial arrangements of the town.

The magisterial jurisdiction exercised within the town of Belfast is a matter which may be very briefly stated. As already mentioned, the Mayor is an *ex-officio* magistrate and is recognised, from his position, as the Chief Magistrate. There are in the town between eighty and ninety borough magistrates, that is to say Justices of the Peace for the municipal borough of Belfast. There were also, at the time of the breaking out of the riots, two resident magistrates, who belong to a body of gentlemen peculiar to Ireland, being paid magistrates who are attached to no particular locality, but are moved from place to place as the necessities of the public service require. The Petty Sessions of Belfast, or as it is called the Police Court, sit daily, and there are two courts sitting concurrently, one being for the trial of custody charges, the other of summonses. The resident and borough magistrates sit indifferently in these courts, two or more borough magistrates being a frequent tribunal. The magistrates do not possess any special powers of any kind, and are therefore unable to deal summarily with such offences as riot, persons charged with which can only be sent for trial before a jury. During the riots the ordinary magistracy of Belfast was largely reinforced by resident magistrates drafted in from various parts of the country, and at one time at least twenty of these gentlemen were in the town.

We now turn to a statement of the amount, constitution, and efficiency of the police force usually available in Belfast. The police force of the town is entirely composed of men of the Royal Irish Constabulary, a force having its head quarters in Dublin and forming the police of all Ireland, save the city of Dublin itself, which has a local force. On the breaking out of the riots in June, the normal force of police in Belfast was, on paper, 21 officers (including Head-Constables) and 590 men. These officers consisted of Mr. Cullen, Assistant Inspector-General of Constabulary, and Divisional Magistrate, an office which involved the command of ten counties, and of the relation of which to

378, 418,  
454, 458,  
549 *et seq.*  
Cullen, 858,  
859, 859,  
870, 871,  
924, 928,  
1048, 1055,  
1079, 1090,  
1173.  
Curr, 578,  
574, 577.  
Cullen,  
1153, 1221,  
1222, 1223.  
Garnard,  
3653.  
Moore, 5595  
*et seq.*  
Harland,  
7643.  
Hanna,  
9557-9559.  
Cullen,  
1147, 1168,  
1226, 1257.  
McLinn,  
2201.  
Sullivan,  
3784.  
Reed, 5800,  
5801, 7008,  
7009.  
Cullen, 901,  
907, 1147,  
1256.  
Moore, 5582.  
Harland,  
7697.  
Hanna,  
9870.  
Tollin,  
14452.  
Cullen, 1151  
Tollin,  
14456.  
Harland,  
7507.  
Cullen,  
1010, 1011.  
Bull, 2052.  
Barry, 4978,  
4980.  
Moore,  
5581, 5582.  
Curr, 143,  
64, *et seq.*  
Thyana,  
9257.  
Cullen, 858.  
McCarthy,  
4352, *et seq.*  
Lawther,  
7811, *et seq.*  
Cullen, 1253  
Curr, 15, *et seq.*  
Reed, 5854,  
5855.  
Curr, 24, 26,  
27.  
Cullen, 835,  
Q

the police system of Belfast we shall have occasion to speak hereafter; six District Inspectors, 12 Head Constables, and 590 Sergeants, Acting-Sergeants and Constables. Two of the District Inspectors are on the staff of the Divisional Magistrate, the other four have each a district under them. The officers carry swords; the men are armed at ordinary times with a baton, but in times of riot a certain number, as directed from time to time, carry a rifle and bayonet, which each man has in his barrack. The barracks, at the breaking out of the riots, were 22 in number. At this period the effective force was 79 below its complement through illness and other causes; 44 men were guarding the various barracks, 9 were engaged on duty at the police calls, and 10 on clerical duties. It will thus be seen that there was a very wide difference between the nominal and the effective strength of the Belfast force available for actual street duty at the time of the outbreak of the disturbances. Twelve men of the force, it may be added, were employed as a detective or plain clothes force, and eighteen were mounted men. The police force of Belfast is drawn, in the ordinary way, from recruits from all parts of Ireland, who are trained at the Depot in Dublin, and who have served elsewhere for at least three years. Practically it seems that the Belfast force is in the same position as the force in any county in Ireland. No attempt is made to give it a local or urban character. The District Inspectors and Head Constables in Belfast are promoted as occasion arises, and go to other parts of Ireland, but in the case of Sergeants or the lower grades the men are promoted in Belfast, and are only moved out of the town when they prove unfit for civic duty or get married; the wisdom of removal for the latter cause, with reference to a large town like Belfast, we think may well be doubted. It only remains to be added that the Belfast force is governed by the same code or set of regulations as the rest of the Royal Irish Constabulary.

The efficiency of the normal force at Belfast is, of course, a matter of the first importance. We are of opinion that the personnel of the force is admirable, but that there are certain defects in its organization.

In pointing out these defects, we think it better to fix on certain large and salient features and not descend to details of a minor character. Anyone who has perused our narrative of the riots will see, that in a town like Belfast, nothing is so important as that the control of the force should be in the hands of a single individual entrusted with full powers, occupying an unquestioned position of command and responsible for the peace of the town. There can be no doubt that the relations between the Divisional Magistrate and the Town Inspector were ill-defined, and that it was generally difficult to say who was in command in Belfast. It requires no argument to show that a system under which such doubts could arise is not an efficient one; and one of the first and most imperatively needed reforms is a termination of the system of divided command in Belfast, and the establishment of a scheme under which the Chief of the police in the town will be armed with full and complete authority and charged with responsibility for the maintenance of order.

A vital question as to the efficiency of the Belfast force is that of numbers. The force is unquestionably strong enough for the town in its ordinary condition—a town where in quiet times offences against person and property are so very rare. But Belfast is, as its history shows, a place where riots of the most formidable kind may at any moment break out, and it is plain that the strength of the police force must be regulated with regard to this. The reasons for having a numerous force in case of riot are obvious. In the first place it is plain that the critical moment in a riot is the moment in which it commences. To stamp it out then would be comparatively easy, if the force of police was sufficiently strong for the purpose. It is true that, after a short time, the Belfast police can be, and are in periods of riot, reinforced in great numbers by the military, and by police drawn from other parts of Ireland. Neither of these forces, however, should be relied on as the ordinary reinforcement of a town police. The military are only trained to act together in large numbers, and should not be used as a police, but should be looked upon as a reserve kept near at hand to be used only when necessary. The county police, when brought up to Belfast in times of disturbance are in many ways ineffective. Ignorance of localities in a great town, the general plan of which is very puzzling, render them unable to act in small bodies, or to use any strategy by cutting off or surrounding their assailants, while ignorance of the people prevents their recognising rioters and having them summoned and punished. A great body of evidence was given before us pointing in the direction of a permanent increase of the force in Belfast. This would, no doubt, augment the burthen of the taxpayers of the town, but we are assured by the Mayor, that this burthen would be willingly borne, in the hope that a moderate increase of the police force may avert the heavy losses which riots bring on the town. We are, therefore, in favour of a moderate increase in the normal police force of the town, so that it may contain within itself its

Carr, 30.  
Carr, 49, d  
402.

Carr, 683,  
1146.

Carr, 458.

Callen,  
1055, d of  
Harland,  
7565.

Carr, 472,  
759, 780,  
781, 799.

Callen,  
1138, 1218.  
Townsend,  
1566.  
Bull, 3087,  
3047.  
Stokes,  
6310.  
Reed, 6846.  
Harland,  
7565.  
Bulley, 8128.  
Thyane,  
9255.

Harland,  
7169, 7564.  
Callen, 1281.  
Townsend,  
1566

own supports; but we do not pledge ourselves to the adoption of any particular number; a duty which, in our opinion, should be left to the Executive Government to determine from time to time.

In connexion with this matter of an increased number of police, we may here dispose of a very important suggestion, namely, whether a reserve can be found in the employment of special constables. Upon this point opinion in Belfast appears to be singularly unanimous. Our minutes contain a mass of testimony given by men of every class and party and calling, all showing how general is the belief among sensible people in Belfast, that the use of special constables would not be a successful arrangement for preserving the peace of the town. The strong party and sectarian feelings which prevail in the place would, in the opinion of those witnesses, render impossible that hearty co-operation of all in support of the law, which alone would render the use of special constables an advantage; and much as we should like to see special constables helping to keep order, this is a matter upon which we regard local opinion as most valuable, and we are further, ourselves, of opinion that the troubles of the place would only be increased by any attempt to force a system of special constables on an unwilling population. Some few witnesses appeared to think that it was desirable to organise a kind of vigilance committee consisting of respectable men acting solely in their own localities and among their own co-religionists. Such proposals are more specious than feasible, and the efforts of many of the peace-makers in Belfast during the riots did more harm than good. At the same time we direct attention to the evidence of Mr. Combe (of the firm of Combe, Barber, and Combe), which shows plainly that in large works it is perfectly possible to make such arrangements as will tend to keep order among the workmen, and to prevent religious difficulties interfering with the earning of a livelihood. We regretted to find that in some other large works no effort was made to check cruelty and intolerance, and that in one, the workmen freely carried away large numbers of iron bolts and nuts, which they and others afterwards used in the riots; nor was any effort made to check such misconduct.

We are also of opinion that the efficiency of the police force of Belfast would be increased by the substitution for the ordinary Constabulary Code of a special set of regulations for the town. The Royal Irish Constabulary is notoriously of a quasi-military character, and its present regulations fit it rather for rural than urban duties. A special Belfast code would secure that the force in the town should assume, as far as possible, a civic form; that the men should perform duties such as in other great cities and towns are performed by the police, and that they should be taught the art of dealing discreetly and with tact with an urban population—to rely, save in the last extremity, on the baton, instead of the rifle. Minor reforms there are, which would greatly increase the efficiency of the police—better barracks should be provided (the barracks accommodation at present being extremely bad), the telephone should be utilised to place all barracks in close intercommunication, the number of mounted police should be increased, as also the number of detectives.

The proceedings and action, taken by the magistrates, stipendiary and local, during the riots, form one of the topics on which your Excellency requires our views. There can be no doubt that one of the best methods of checking riots is sharp punishments inflicted in the early time of the troubles. We have reason to think that the bench in Belfast was in those early days rather weak with regard to punishments, and that a wholesome severity would have done much good. Again, while on the one hand there was no evidence before us to prove that the borough magistrates acted with partiality, unquestionably, in the atmosphere of Belfast, they are regarded by the rival parties with suspicion, which enormously militates against the weight of any decisions they may give. Further, public inconvenience is caused by their fluctuating attendances on the bench; and during the riots this was most unfortunate, as the varying character of the tribunal rendered punishments unequal, at a time when it was most desirable that they should be, at once, equal and severe.

Upon this point, as on that of the special constables, there was a very strong body of opinion given before us in favour of relieving the borough magistrates from duty at the Petty Sessions Court, and we fully share in those views. We think that the duty of administering justice at the Belfast Petty Sessions Court should be entrusted to two paid magistrates, who should have no duties in the streets, as nothing could be more objectionable than the present system, under which the resident magistrates one day take part in suppression of disturbances, and the next preside in the courts. Passing from the administration of justice in the courts to the action of the magistrates in the streets, we wish, in the first place, to say a word as to the resident magistrates. These gentlemen were brought up to Belfast in great numbers during the outbreak. They behaved, undoubtedly, very well, but here also we notice the absence of headship which

Bull, 2020, 2021,  
2024, 2025, 2100,  
2129, 2130

Strain, 2131-2135.  
Stokes, 2134.  
McCarthy, 1428.  
Keogh, 6389, 6390.  
Forbes, 4181.  
Johnston, 6443.  
Moore, 5623, et seq.  
Harland, 7094.  
Gardner, 9371.  
Stokes, 6324.  
Bailey, 8187.  
Renn, 8249.  
Miller, 6500.  
Reed, 7054-7057.  
Carr, 749.  
Cullen, 1381.

Combe, 2673, et seq.  
Carr, 845, 862.  
Harland, 7354,  
7661.

John Johnston,  
13767, et seq.  
Murphy, 13819,  
et seq.  
MacGregor, 13892  
et seq.  
Townsend, 1632.  
McLellan, 18948, et seq.  
Benton, 14314,  
et seq.

Townsend, 1641.  
Ryan, 1474.  
Gerrard, 3656.  
Curran, 3265.  
Reed, 6801, 8847.  
Harland, 7375.  
Bailey, 8113.  
Barr, 14608.  
Hale, 1, 15136.  
Townsend, 1696.  
Moore, 5630.  
Coddell, 5997.

Reed, 6350, 6352.  
Carr, 735, 800.  
Bull, 2010, 2054.  
Coddell, 5990.  
Cullen, 1196, 1197.  
Townsend, 1502-  
1507, 1628, 1732.  
Cullen, 1208-1206.  
Bull, 2069, 2070.  
Forbes, 4181, et seq.  
Keogh, 6404-6406.  
Townsend, 1505,  
1507.

Miller, 6467.  
Forbes, 4131, 4137  
4291, 4292.  
MacCarthy, 4401-  
4406, 4416-4425.  
Harris, 3454.  
Denney, 11493,  
11495.  
Tobin, 14456.  
McLellan, 8915,  
8934.  
Reeve, 8942-8945.  
Reed, 8352, 8355.

Betherford, 6539 to 6544.  
 Reed, 6862, *et seq.*  
 Lewther, 7836, 7864.  
 Ross, 8302.

helped so much to prolong the riots. Each resident magistrate appears to enjoy an equal amount of authority with his fellows, and this tends to produce that absence of an intelligible, consistent, and determined plan of action which is to be observed in the course taken to suppress the disturbances. When to the fifteen or twenty resident magistrates we add the borough magistrates, all with equal authority, it will be seen that the police of Belfast had, during the riots, some hundred masters, and it is not strange that such an arrangement did not work well. At a time when action was all important it is to be feared that too much time was lost in discussion.

At one of the most trying moments of the riots a meeting was held at which no less than fifty-two magistrates attended, and we may well believe the statement of one who was present, and who assured us that "there was a good deal of confusion, a great deal of talk, and very little business done." The executive council, which was afterwards established, also indulged in long discussions, and was not a body from which prompt and vigorous action was to be expected. We thoroughly concur with the military witness who was examined before us, and who told us that what was wanted at Belfast was some head—some individual chief who would act promptly and decisively, without any communications or consultations, and who would be perfectly willing to take all the responsibility of any action which he might think fit to direct. We also concur in the view which was taken by an experienced resident magistrate who gave evidence before us. This gentleman attributed the duration of the riots altogether to "the divided authority," not, he added—and we agree with him—to the absence of good will on the part of the persons who acted under whoever was leading them, but to the divided authority which prevailed. Believing, as we do, that the borough magistrates acted with good intentions, we shall not analyze their operations with parties of police, but we must say that we believe that the action of magistrates in holding communications between the police and the people, at moments when what was wanted was strong and immediate action, was most unfortunate. As a striking illustration of the difficulty of governing a town like Belfast in a state of riot by a number of magistrates, we may draw attention to one fact, namely, that magistrates took charge of military and police so as to give the order to fire or otherwise to act against the mobs as should become necessary, and that the magistrate who had charge of such an armed party at one important point on the 7th of August, was a gentleman who had a conscientious objection to taking human life under any circumstances. This gentleman is no doubt an estimable magistrate, but the wisdom of placing him in command of armed bodies of men is doubtful.

With regard to the action of other authorities on the occasion of the riots, we have only to say a word on the aid given by the military to the town authorities. This aid was most valuable and freely given. General Moore, and the officers and men under him, deserve the highest praise for their indefatigable services, rendered under circumstances of great difficulty, and exposing them to much labour and privation. As we have already said, while we think that the military should not be used as police—if it be necessary to invoke their aid and to use firearms, then firearms should be used indifferently by all engaged in the work of suppressing riotous resistance to authority.

We now turn to another of the points to which the warrant directs our inquiries—namely, the proceedings and action of the police force on the occasion of the riots. Our opinion on this subject has been plainly indicated in the preceding pages of our report. We heard at great length the case which was made against the police, and supported by very many witnesses. As we have already intimated, we deem it probable that policemen, in the course of those troubles, made mistakes—nay more—did acts which cannot be defended. We do not, however, deem it our duty to notice particular charges, especially as some of them await legal inquiry. We think it our duty merely to pass judgment to the best of our ability upon the action of the Royal Irish Constabulary during the Belfast Riots, viewing that action as a whole. We are of opinion that they were subjected to almost unparalleled trials; that they passed well through the ordeal; that nothing occurred during the riots to impair the high reputation which the Royal Irish Constabulary has at all times borne for courage, discipline, and humanity; and that the charge made against the police of having acted with cruelty towards Protestants from sectarian motives was proved to be without a shadow of foundation. The police acted towards both sides with the strictest impartiality; and if crowds on one side suffered more severely than on the other it was owing to the folly of their own persistence in attacks upon the police.

One fact as to the action of the Royal Irish Constabulary during the riots, places in a strong light their good conduct under trying and difficult circumstances. The riots

hated, in all, close upon four months, with intermittent periods. The number of police in the town rose, at one time, to about 2,000. During this period they were subjected to the most grievous inconvenience, danger to life and limb, overwork, insufficient food, and bad lodgings. Their action was exposed to a vigilant and unceasing criticism; and yet we found only a single case during this long period, and under these trying circumstances, in which any reliable evidence was given that any member of the Royal Irish Constabulary was found under the influence of drink. The hostility against the police, which actuated certain classes of the community, was shown in a very striking manner by the number of unfounded charges of intemperance—all but one of which—and that against a young constable, disappeared under a little careful inquiry.

While, however, we are of opinion that the conduct of the police was, as a whole, excellent, we cannot say that their action during the riots was as efficient as it might have been. The magistrates claim to control the police, and the want of unity of action on the part of the magistracy has already been commented upon. The chief command of the police was also more than once changed. Hence their action in many cases exhibited marks of the absence of single and efficient headship. The county police, as has been already pointed out, were rendered comparatively useless by absence of local knowledge, which often rendered them powerless against the tactics of a local mob, remarkable for cunning as well as persistency in their operations.

We now come to the last of the duties which your Excellency has laid upon us; we have already intimated to your Excellency that in our opinion the local authority and existing police force in the town of Belfast are not adequate to the future maintenance of order and tranquillity therein. Before, however, submitting to your Excellency any recommendations, we wish to draw your Excellency's attention to certain important suggestions which were made to us, but which we do not feel ourselves at liberty to endorse.

We wish in the first place to say, that although the formation of a local force of police was suggested by more than one of the witnesses examined before us, yet the general consensus of opinion was entirely in favour of the continuance of the Royal Irish Constabulary as the police force of the town. We cannot forget the experience of the past in Belfast, and that when a local force did exist, it was, for very good reasons abolished. We would be very sorry to interfere in any way with the municipal liberties and right of self-government of Belfast; but as to the maintenance of law and order, we think that in a city where such violent party feuds exist, it is most desirable that the police should remain a portion of a national force, selected from all parts of the country, removable at pleasure, and secured as far as possible from local influences. We cannot approve of the proposal which emanated from the Town Council of Belfast, and which both from its origin and intrinsic importance, commended itself to our most careful consideration. That suggestion was that, while the Belfast force remained part of the Royal Irish Constabulary, the Chief of the force should, from time to time report to, and take instructions from a local committee, which it was suggested should be composed of the Mayor, four members of the Town Council, two Borough Magistrates, two Resident Magistrates, the Assistant Inspector-General, and the General in command of the district. We cannot advise the formation of any such committee. In our opinion the unhappy dissensions of Belfast would render it most difficult to form any committee which would command the confidence of the general body of the inhabitants. But even if such a committee could be formed, we think its establishment would be most injurious. We have already stated that, in our opinion, the great need in Belfast is, that the police force of the town should be placed under the command of a single head, and that upon him should be cast the responsibility of preserving the public peace. We are of opinion that to appoint a committee with power to advise, without controlling the Chief of the police, would be to perpetuate the causes which helped to prolong the riots—divided responsibility, absence of headship, and time wasted in discussion which should have been spent in action.

We are happy to believe that there already exists in Belfast a machinery for bringing into communication the police and the municipality. The Town Council has a "Law and Police Committee" which has on various occasions communicated with the police authorities. We have had ample evidence before us that the chief officer of police in Belfast has always deemed it his duty to give the most sedulous attention to all suggestions coming from this Committee, and falling within the proper scope of their authority. And we are confident that any chief officer of police in Belfast in the future will act in the same spirit.

We were also urged to recommend the punishment of flogging for rioters in Belfast. We doubt whether any such proposal would be likely to meet with acceptance.

Fitzsimons,  
14253,  
et seq.

Cullen,  
509.

Carr, 467.  
Reed, 6868.

Reed, 6854.  
Hanna,  
2613.  
Harland,  
7632.

Dempsey,  
11470,  
11471.  
Tobin,  
14436,  
14437.

Black,  
7341.  
Carr,  
15835,  
15834.

Black,  
7345.  
McCarthy,  
4329.

We think that comparatively short terms of imprisonment, promptly imposed in the early days of the riots, would have a better effect than heavy punishments inflicted after all the trouble is over, and at a time when such punishments can have no immediate deterrent effect.

There can be no doubt that the peculiar way in which the streets of the disturbed districts in Belfast are paved helped to prolong the riots, by supplying the rioters with an inexhaustible supply of dangerous and easily procured missiles. We do not, however, think that the matter is one which can be dealt with by legislation. We were assured, and have no reason to doubt, that the Town Council have been, as time and circumstances allowed, repaving those streets in such a manner as to prevent the pavement being used for the purposes of riot in the future. And we trust that this work will be pushed on with all the despatch which circumstances, pecuniary and otherwise, permit.

The question of police firearms was discussed by several witnesses. With regard to the arming of the police, we are of opinion that a police armed with carbines, which, except under extraordinary circumstances, they do not use, are not in a position to deal at first efficiently with a crowd which it is intended to disperse; and we think that the utility of the constabulary for the repression of riots would be greatly increased by the ordinary use of the baton—parties of constabulary armed with carbines; or of soldiery, being at hand as a support or reserve. Should it be considered necessary to arm the baton party, we think that the revolver would be the most useful weapon to adopt, as this can be conveniently carried while the baton is being used.

Returning then to the duty of stating what, if any, changes are required in the police and magisterial arrangements of the town, we recommend the following:—

We are of opinion that the Royal Irish Constabulary should be maintained as the police force of Belfast.

We are of opinion that the Chief Officer of Police for the town of Belfast should be entirely independent of all police authority—save and except the Inspector-General of the Royal Irish Constabulary.

We recommend that such officer should have absolute control of the police force of the town, and the sole responsibility of maintaining the peace, free from any magisterial or other control, save that of the Executive Government and the Inspector-General.

We recommend that a special Code be instituted for the police force of Belfast, having for its object the impression upon such force of a civil and urban character; and we further recommend that the changes in that force should be as few as consistent with the exigencies of the service.

Power should be vested in the Chief Officer of Police of Belfast to forbid processions, bands, and the erection of arches, when, in his opinion, they are calculated to lead to a breach of the peace.

That the Chief Police Officer of Belfast shall have full power from time to time to transfer to the Head Quarters of the Royal Irish Constabulary all such officers and constables as may, in his judgment, prove unfitted for the discharge of urban duties as required in Belfast; that no officers or men shall be otherwise removable, except with their consent; that the Chief Police Officer shall have sole control of promotion among the constables under his command; and that the promotion of the officers shall, as far as may be, be dependent upon his recommendation. The object we propose hereby is to secure for the police force to be employed in Belfast thorough fitness and continuity of material, and unity of control and direction, subject to the intervention of the Inspector-General and the Executive Government.

The number of the normal police force of the town should be increased to such extent as the Executive Government shall determine; so as to render the force as far as possible complete in itself, and competent to deal with rioting, without any assistance from outside police forces; and the military garrison of Belfast should be maintained at such strength as will render recourse to police aid from outside Belfast unnecessary at any time.

The Borough Magistrates should be relieved of the duty of attending the Petty Sessions Court of Belfast.

The sole jurisdiction at the Petty Sessions should be conferred upon two paid Magistrates, who should either be Barristers of a certain standing, or selected for this duty from the general body of Resident Magistrates. If Resident Magistrates are appointed, their sole duties should be judicial, and they should not interfere actively against rioters in the streets.

Special jurisdiction should be given to the Belfast Petty Sessions to deal summarily with cases of riot, unlawful assembly, and affray, and in our opinion that jurisdiction should provide for the punishment of offenders convicted of such crimes, or any crime against order in the town, by substantial and serious punishment.

Another matter was brought under our attention, as having a bearing on the preservation of the peace in the town—namely, the difficulty, under the existing state of the law, in obtaining compensation for malicious injuries inflicted upon person or property. With regard to the first question, that of malicious injury inflicted upon persons, it would appear that by the existing law in Ireland, a police officer who is maliciously injured while acting in the discharge of his duty, can obtain from the Grand Jury of the County in which the act occurred, compensation for his injuries which is levied off such district as the Grand Jury deem right, having regard to the persons who were most likely to have inflicted the injury. Belfast, which is by Act of Parliament separated from the County of Antrim, is placed by this separation in the peculiar position that no compensation for injury to person can be levied in the town of Belfast. We are of opinion that some legislation in this respect ought to be made in order to put Belfast in the same position as other parts of Ireland.

As regards injury to property, as the law at present exists, if damage is maliciously done, the inquiry as to the amount of compensation to be given comes before the Town Council, and the amount must be levied on the entire of the Municipal Borough of Belfast. We are of opinion that it would be more in the interest of all concerned, and would tend to insure general confidence, if an entirely independent tribunal, such as a Government or other arbitration, could be formed, in order to deal primarily with the amount of compensation to be awarded for such malicious injuries as in the last two paragraphs referred to, with a power of appeal to some higher tribunal, such as the going Judge of Assize for the County of Antrim. We also think that it would be advisable to give this tribunal, so suggested by us, power if they thought it advisable, to apportion the amount of compensation over a more limited area than the municipal boundary of Belfast.

We are also of opinion that the law as at present existing enabling the police authorities to search for arms in the possession of persons unauthorized to possess them is wholly inadequate, and practically useless, and that the authorities should be armed with adequate powers for this purpose. Carr, 812, 813.

Such are the recommendations and opinions which we feel it our duty to lay before your Excellency. We, however, do not conceal from your Excellency an opinion that alterations in the law or in its administration cannot produce the complete good results we desire until a great change takes place in public opinion in Belfast. We earnestly hope and trust that one beneficial effect of the recent riots and of our inquiry will be to render all classes of the population of Belfast thoroughly ashamed of the disgrace these disturbances have brought upon their great and prosperous town, and that they will combine by every conceivable exertion, public and private, to terminate the disastrous feuds and bitter animosities which now prevail in Belfast, and to avert the renewal of such calamitous and disgraceful transactions as it has been our duty to investigate.

We regret that our colleague, Commander M'Hardy, is unable to agree with our report, and proposes to present a separate report to Your Excellency.

We have the honour to be,

Your Excellency's obedient Servants,

J. C. DAY.

E. G. BULWER, *Major-General*.

F. LE POER TRENCH.

RICHARD ADAMS.

R. M. HENNESSY,

*Secretary*

January, 1887

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