

Caledonian Mercury 27 June 1850. SERIOUS DISTURBANCES IN DUNFERMLINE

The burgh of Dunfermline and its neighbourhood have for the last few days been in a state of unusual excitement and disorder, arising from a continued and ill-suppressed jealousy between the Scotch and Irish inhabitants, and resulting in a series of riotous and lawless proceedings, in which several persons have sustained serious injury, one of whom is not expected to recover.

Of late years there has been a considerable influx of Irish into Dunfermline in common with other towns, and since the railway works, which attracted a great number of labourers to the locality, have been approaching completion, the Irish have gradually settled down in the town in a variety of occupations. The greater part of them have conducted themselves very peaceably and industriously, but have incurred the dislike of the inhabitants, not only from increasing the labour in the market, but from taking work at much lower wages. In the coal districts situated to the west, north and east sides of Dunfermline, a number of discharged labourers have been seeking, and some have obtained, occupations as miners; and during the late feverish and discontented state of the mining districts in the west of Scotland emissaries were sent to endeavour to obtain the co-operation and simultaneous strike of the colliers around Dunfermline, who, however, found an obstacle in the Irish who were ready to step in if they struck work, while those in employment would not unite in the movement. This, of course, engendered much jealousy between the two classes; the native miners have frequently threatened the Irish with eviction, and sundry disturbances have of late taken place between them.

The last gang of labourers, nearly all Irish, on the works of the Stirling and Dunfermline Railway at the top of the town, where the line unites with the Thornton section of the Edinburgh, Perth, and Dundee, were paid off on Saturday evening, and with their month's pay most of them betook themselves to the public-houses. There, as might be expected, they were noisy but no breach of the peace was apprehended, and at eleven o'clock the town was perfectly quiet. The navvies however, had, either then or previously, determined to meet to revenge in a summary manner the insults they believe they had received from the Scotch, and a party of them, intoxicated and excited, congregated about half-past eleven at the head of Bruce Street, numbers of them armed with bludgeons, sticks and other heavy weapons. They first commenced a sham fight amongst themselves, and naturally attracted a number of the townspeople around them, on whom they immediately turned and maltreated them in an unmerciful and brutal manner. One unfortunate man, a weaver, who had recently come from Dysart to Dunfermline, was attacked while going peaceably homeward, thrown down, and kicked and beat in a most cruel manner. One fellow kicked him on the chin with his heavy boot, while his spine and neck were so severely injured, that he was taken up, quite insensible, and though he was alive yesterday he was not expected to recover. The navvies, on hearing that some of the burgh police were approaching, and observing the inhabitants turning out against them in great numbers, then thought it time to fly, and scampered off in all directions, but through the exertions of Mr. Lambert, the superintendent of the police, and his force, no less than thirteen of the most active rioters were apprehended and lodged in jail in a short time; and it is expected that serious charges will be brought home to some of them.

This outbreak occasioned a great sensation in Dunfermline and its neighbourhood on Sunday, and it is stated that a fight took place at Baldrige Burn, about a mile to the north, but nothing serious occurred.

These vindictive proceedings of the Irish labourers exasperated the Scotch part of the operative classes, while the colliers seemed to think the outbreak justified them in immediately carrying out their threatened expulsion of the Irish. Accordingly, a series of movements, designed with great secrecy, and executed with the utmost promptitude and unanimity, were commenced on Monday morning, by a meeting of from one to two thousand people, chiefly weavers, at the head of Bruce Street, between ten and eleven, and a consequent suspension of work took place at the factories and looms. The mob speedily proceeded northwards about a mile to Townhill Collieries, by way of Golfdrum and Baldrige Burn, and commenced the process of ejection by seizing every Irishman and dragging him from his work or his fireside. A panic ensued among the devoted Irish, many of whom fled by back windows, and through fields and bye-ways, and were closely followed by their exasperated pursuers. Several made a stout resistance at their doors, but were soon overpowered; and although the women and children were not touched by the invaders, they followed their husbands and parents, and were all marched in a column along with the mob who now came back to town. Mr. Stewart, the district inspector of the county police, immediately hurried to town and reported the matter to Mr. Sheriffs, the Sheriff-Substitute for the Western District, and to the Burgh Magistrate, who met the crowd on their return, admonished them as to the impropriety of their conduct, and urged them to disperse. They made a feint of obeying the injunction, while the Magistrates proceeded to the Town-House to swear in special constables in case of any emergency. Information was speedily brought to them that the multitude after dispersing about the railway works, and north part of the town, had re-assembled with more victims at the head of the New Row, and that they were preparing to take them all to North Queensferry, and then send them across to the other side. With the utmost celerity all the factories, workshops, and houses in the north and east of the town were visited by the excited mob, and every Irishman, however steady and peaceable his conduct, or however lengthened his residence might have been, was summarily evicted and marched with his family into the column, and closely guarded by the multitude on either side, which had now increased to about 2,000, Provost Kinnis, Bailies Johnstone and Ireland, and Mr. Sheriffs, followed the mob, along with fifty or sixty special constables, but they could do little against such over-powering numbers, while the ejections were carried on so speedily that in a short time the whole part was beyond the magistrates' bounds on their way to North Queensferry, driving about forty Irish families like sheep before them.

A special messenger had been by this time sent off to Mr. Earle Monteith, the Sheriff of the county, asking military assistance, and Mr. Sheriffs, along with Mr. McDonald, the county Procurator-Fiscal, and Mr. Stewart, took a drosky to North Ferry to anticipate the arrival of the crowd. Mr. Stewart immediately collected a number of men from the quarries at Carlin Knowes, who readily acted as special constables, and on the fugitives, who were in front, coming up, they were turned into a large quarry, or excavation on the face of the hill, while their pursuers were confronted by Mr. Sheriffs, Provost Spittal of Inverkeithing and others, who ordered them on their peril not to advance another step. The mob, which had

by this time diminished to about 200, hovered about the locality for about two hours, and then returned to Dunfermline.

Meanwhile information was sent into town of more evictions at Townhill Collieries, and Bailie Johnstone and Mr. Kilgour, town-clerk, proceeded to the spot, where they found about 300 weavers had been assisting the Scotch colliers in the expulsion of the Irish, until Mr. Mungall, the manager, going up in a determined manner and threatening to shoot the leader with a pair of pistols he held in his hands if they did not desist, somewhat quelled them. They also seemed to have some hint of the approach of the authorities, for before they came up, numbers were seen coming into town by by-roads to evade them. A number of neutral parties were here sworn in by Bailie Johnstone as special constables, and left in charge of the place, but by this time about 30 out of 60 Irish families in the neighbourhood had been unhoused and had fled the locality.

The express reached Edinburgh before three o'clock, and a detachment of about forty of the 13th Light Dragoons were despatched from Piershill about 7 o'clock, and along with Sheriff Monteith, reached the North Ferry shortly after eight. The Irish, to whom a quantity of bread had been supplied after their journey, now returned to Dunfermline with the military (with the exception of one or two, who so much afraid that they preferred being shipped to the South Ferry). It was about ten o'clock when they reached Dunfermline, and the poor creatures, afraid to go home, asked permission to sleep in the Town-Hall, which was readily granted, and they accordingly lay down on the flags of the Old Jail, which for the last few years has been occupied as the Town House.

The military was then despatched to Townhill, where, it is reported, a great number of colliers had assembled from the Elgin and Halbeath collieries, but after a few threats they scampered off on hearing the hoofs of the Dragoons' horses. The Cavalry finding all quiet returned, and were billeted over the town.

In the course of the ejectment several persons received serious injury. While an Irishman was standing on the threshold of his door, flourishing an axe above his head to keep off his aggressors, one of the latter stepped forward, and moving back the arm of the former, made the hatchet cut open his scalp and injure him severely. Another who made great resistance, and was well aided by his dog, was overpowered by his assailants, one of whom maliciously cut the faithful animals' throat. On the road to the ferry, three poor fellows tried to escape by passing into a road leading to Burntisland, but were immediately pursued like strayed sheep, and very cruelly treated, until they rejoined their countrymen. A number of other malignant and barbarous acts characterised the conduct of the pursuing party.

On Tuesday morning, between four and five, the most of the unfortunate refugees crept quietly back to their own houses, many of which they found plundered of the little furniture they had not been able to carry away with them. The town was quiet all day, and although the colliery villages were in rather an excited state, there was very little actual disturbance. Warrants were issued in the course of the day for the apprehension of some of the leaders of the mob on the previous day, some of whom were speedily arrested. Mr.

Monteith returned to Edinburgh, and Mr. Sheriffs was occupied all day in precognosing witnesses and examining prisoners.

Edinburgh Share List.

Table of share prices for various companies including British Bank, Commercial Bank, and others.

RAILWAY TRAFFIC RETURNS.

Table showing railway traffic returns for various lines like Aberdeen Railway, Glasgow Railway, etc.

RAILWAY PASSENGER ASSURANCE COMPANY.

Text regarding the Railway Passenger Assurance Company and its operations.

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SERIOUS DISTURBANCES IN DUNFERMLINE.

Article describing the serious disturbances in Dunfermline, involving the Irish population and local authorities.

ESTABLISHED PRESBYTERY OF EDINBURGH.

Article detailing the proceedings and decisions of the Established Presbytery of Edinburgh.

EDINBURGH GAZETTE.

Official notices and legal announcements from the Edinburgh Gazette.

PROPOSED PARK FOR FISHERY.

Article discussing the proposed park for fishery and the interests of the local community.

REVENUE OF THE CITY OF EDINBURGH.

Article reporting on the revenue of the City of Edinburgh for the current year.

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HAY AND STRAW.

Table listing prices for hay and straw.

PRICES OF TALLOW, SOAP, & FRESH BUTTER.

Table listing prices for tallow, soap, and fresh butter.

ROP MARKET.

Table listing prices for rope market.

LONDON SUGAR MARKET.

Table listing prices for London sugar market.

EDINBURGH MARKETS.

Table listing prices for various commodities in the Edinburgh markets.

EDINBURGH GRAIN MARKET.

Table listing prices for grain in the Edinburgh market.

EDINBURGH SHEEP MARKET.

Table listing prices for sheep in the Edinburgh market.

EDINBURGH CATTLE MARKET.

Table listing prices for cattle in the Edinburgh market.

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DEBTERS.

Text regarding debtors and legal notices.

SCOTCH WOOL.

Text regarding the Scotch wool market.

LEIDS WOOL MARKET.

Text regarding the Leids wool market.

LONDON PRODUCE MARKET.

Text regarding the London produce market.

GLASGOW PRODUCE MARKET.

Text regarding the Glasgow produce market.

LIVERPOOL COGNAC MARKET.

Text regarding the Liverpool cognac market.

LIVERPOOL CATTLE MARKET.

Text regarding the Liverpool cattle market.

LIVERPOOL SHEEP MARKET.

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STATS OF TRADE.

Text regarding trade statistics.

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