

Dublin Notes.

(From the National papers.)

THE coroner's inquest has practically brought the whole truth about Mitchelstown into light. We do not lay most stress upon the evidence of the independent witnesses—of Mr. Coubrough, of Miss Manders, of Mr. Ennis. That stands alone sufficient for all ear-minded men as a withering proof of the wanton and murderous conduct of the police. What we do think phenomenal is the evidence, extracted by the skilful examination of Mr. Harrington, from the police themselves. Such an exhibition of constabulary swearing was probably never afforded to the sight of common men. Every constable who has got into the box has given the lie direct to the constable who went before him. One swore that there was no crowd in front of the barrack when the first shot was fired; another that after the first shot was fired the crowd dispersed, not before; another that each of the several shots he fired was only fired in response to a volley of stones, and so on. Perhaps the most significant swearing of all was that of Sergeant Kirwan and Sergeant Ryder. The former officer swore that at the inspection of pouches after the firing the latter lent him three cartridges, which he returned when the inspection was over. When Sergeant Ryder came on the table the following passage ensued:—"Then it is absolutely false for Sergeant Kirwan to swear that you lent him cartridges? Quite so. And it is quite false for him to say he gave them back to you after the inspection on parade? Quite so." The only thing that all of them have agreed in swearing, is that they tried to kill when they fired, and the upshot of the whole evidence so far is, that the police on that day acted as a pack of panic-stricken murderers, and, that since they have been acting like a pack of murderers trying to evade the grip of the law.

Every fact dragged into light at the Mitchelstown inquest reveals all the more glaringly the atrocity of the fusillade, and the shameless lying with which it was sought to be bolstered up by its author and his instruments. The apology of the Chief Secretary for the bloody holocaust is now shown to have rested upon a tissue of the most abominable falsehoods. His one hundred and sixty panes of smashed glass have dwindled down to six, on the showing of the police themselves; and of these, three, they confess, were broken by their rifle-muzzles or the bullets they fired from them with such murderous effect. Furthermore, it appears from their evidence that there was not the smallest danger to the barrack at any time of the disturbance. Some of the men who fired were produced for examination. They were Sergeant Kirwan, Sergeant Ryder, Constable Doran, and Constable Gavin. They gave their own versions of the day's work, and were cross-examined by Mr. Harrington, B.L., M.P., with great ability. Their bearing towards that gentleman was insolent and bullying beyond all limits of decency. The first-named sergeant (Kirwan) in his evidence gave an idea of the true spirit of the men who embark in such shocking work as this, though armed with a rifle, he admitted he was, when engaged in the scrimmage with the crowd, afraid to fire, and ran away, but did fire without fear or hesitation when he got to the barrack door, and when he got upstairs he also fired. He got no orders to do so from anyone. Amongst the witnesses examined was an English lady who was present at the meeting, Miss Manders. She deposed to the perfectly peaceable and orderly character of the meeting, and the utterly wanton and pre-meditated action of the police in attacking it. The whole story, as it is slowly unfolded, reveals one of the darkest chapters in the annals of brutal despotism that the world has ever witnessed.

The striking fact that every one of the ten independent non-Irish witnesses who happened to be in Mitchelstown and saw from various points of vantage the proceedings of the day, contradict the version of the police and corroborate the testimony of Mr. Dillon is hardly laid sufficient stress on. It is the most important and conspicuous fact by far in connection with this melancholy business. The police have not a single independent witness to support their case. On the other hand, every independent witness in the town, and there were a number of them in all, not counting National members of Parliament, bear out the case of what Mr. Balfour calls "the mob." The most plausible lie that ever was told could not stand up long against such an array of champions for the truth.

Why is not Head-Constable O'Sullivan under arrest, instead of walking the streets of Mitchelstown a free man and lord of the town? The murdered boy, Casey, made a dying deposition that he was his murderer. The policeman who had his skull fractured made a deposition declaring that a respectable farmer named Gould had struck him. Mr. Gould was immediately arrested, and bail has been rigorously refused. It would be superfluous to comment on this specimen of Castle law.

Fact after fact drives home with irresistible force the terrible conclusion that the disturbance and the ensuing bloodshed were deliberately provoked. "It would be too humiliating," quoth the Chief Secretary, "for the police-spy on this occasion to adopt what has been the invariable custom, and to make peaceful application for accommodation at the meeting." "It was this man's right," the Irish Attorney-General gravely stated, "to crush his way at the head of an armed force to the heart of a peaceful and legal meeting." Challenged on this astounding statement, he faltered and went back. He was no precedent, he confessed, for the monstrous proposition. It is easy to detect running through the articles in the Coercion Press a horrible exultation in the bloody and cowardly work done in Mitchelstown. There is a leader in the *St. James Gazette*, quoted with approval in the *Daily Express* and *Liarish Times*, which might have been a speech of Mr. Balfour's with such truculent delight does it dwell on the atrocities. "If there be any moral for Mr. Balfour in the affair," says the infamous journal, "it is to take to heart that excellent remark of Napoleon's about not firing blank cartridges on a mob." The benevolent writer in *St. James* is dissatisfied at the limited amount of slaughter: "Defence or apology," he continues, "the authorities do not need, and we trust will not offer, if, instead of two men, two

score or two hundred had been shot down." To this language the *Express* and *Liarish Times* gives all prominence in their columns.

The Government scarcely like the trouble of concealing their purpose, only too culpable, of maddening Ireland into a rebellion which may be quenched in blood. The debates all point in the same direction. Mr. Gladstone, with the sanction of his genius, his fifty years' service of his country, proclaims the Irish leaders just fled in their vindication of the right of free speech, and denounces the illegal outrages of the police. Mr. Balfour's answer is the prison and the plank-bed, the baton and the rifle. Let the English people understand these men are criminals in Ireland because they share the views and vindicate the doctrines of Mr. Gladstone. Mr. Balfour can see no distinction in the matter of degrading punishment between political opponents and pickpockets. He has made the police the judges in their own case—the irresponsible executors of their own bloody retribution. The refusal of a judicial inquiry into the Mitchelstown massacre is explainable only on the one hypothesis that such an inquiry would blow to pieces the monstrous falsehoods of which he was the willing mouthpiece in the House of Commons.

The *Lanshire Evening Post* of Monday, September 19, contains a report of a religious service of a character altogether unique in the history of the relations between this country and England. In the Unitarian Chapel of that town, on Sunday evening, September 18, the Rev. W. Sharman, Unitarian minister, held this service, which was a special one, in memory of the men shot at Mitchelstown, and preached a special sermon on the subject—a sermon full of pathos and deep manly feeling, in the course of which he said—"Wherever the English tongue was spoken, and wherever the exiles of Erin found a shelter, those men were no more nameless, and wherever the rites of Christ's Catholic Church were said, the prayer goes up—God rest the souls of Lonergan, Shinnick, and Casey.

"Chanted in song and remembered in story,

Sunk but to rise, like the sun in the wave,

Grandly the fallen now sleep in their glory,

Sadly their country now weeps by their grave.

Holy their names shall be,

Blest by the brave and free,

Kept like a saint's day the day when they died."

The Coroner's Court is, perhaps, the most ancient known to the law. Consider how it is regarded in England. It works without a hitch. A murder is committed; the police find a dead body. Straightway the town constable busies himself preparing for the coroner, summons a jury, musters the evidence, has everything ready when the coroner arrives. So it is in Ireland, whenever the coroner has the good fortune to enjoy the favour of the R.I.C. The head-constable never waits for the coroner's orders to summon a jury; they are not necessary; neither are formal written summonses necessary. For this ancient court, which was in being before the English law was reduced to writing, it is sufficient to summon a juror by word of mouth. When the coroner's side-car pulls up opposite the court-house door, the head constable is in attendance with all the preliminaries settled, and in five minutes the inquest can begin. But what has happened to Coroner Rice since his court returned a policeman for trial for wilful murder, and since the constabulary boycott was decreed against him? Several times he has complained of it from the bench. When he has arrived to hold an inquest he has found no policemen in his court, and no jury summoned. He has had to hunt up the head-constable, and the head-constable has bluntly refused to summon a jury for him until compelled to do so by the coroner's going through every semi-obsolete form of the law. Coroner Rice, ever since the Youghal inquest, has, consequently, had to issue a formal precept to the head-constable before that functionary would budge. He has been kept hours waiting in his court for a jury. This happened in the case of the present inquest at Mitchelstown.

We publish a vital piece of evidence in connection with the Mitchelstown massacre. The pretext for that deliberately planned outrage was the alleged necessity which the police were under of forcing a Government reporter through the thickest part of the meeting under the protection of an armed guard. Everybody knows that the usual practice until Mitchelstown has been for the police quietly to ask the promoters of the meeting for accommodation for their reporter on the platform. But everybody does not know that this has not only been the practice but the rule which the police were bound to observe, and that in following out that orderly and common-sense policy they were acting on positive instructions from the Castle. The following circular, which has been in force for the past seven years, will be read with the deepest interest in connection with the Chief Secretary's statement that he knew nothing of such a rule, and that to lay it down as a course for the Government to follow "appeared to him a most monstrous and unheard-of proposition."—"Circular—Land League Meetings.—R.I. Constabulary Office, Dublin Castle, September 30th, 1880.—Referring to circular of the 21st inst., it is directed that in all cases in which Constabulary shorthand reporters attend Land League meetings the local Constabulary officers are in future to request the permission of the chairman to afford them accommodation on the platform. If this is acceded to, no truncheon party for their protection need accompany them.—G. E. HULLBER, Inspector General."—It would be impossible to exaggerate the importance of this document. It disposes of the whole case of the police. It throws a white light on the present methods and policy of the Government. Even the "most monstrous and unheard-of" ignorance of the reckless Chief Secretary, which at another time would be an interesting subject for comment, pales into insignificance beside the issue it raises.

In the first place, we have it established that the police, in riotously forcing their reporter through the dense meeting, and thus leading to the tragedy that ensued, were acting in distinct and deliberate violation of a written rule of their own which they had always carefully followed previously. Now, why did they break this rule at Mitchelstown? and by whose orders did they act in breaking it? These are questions which, now that Parliament is not sitting, we trust the English Press and the English people will insist on having answered by the Government. It is they who are answerable for the