



Excerpts from-*The Full Particulars of the late Riots, With a View of the Burning of the Catholic Churches, St. Michaels & St. Augustine. Philadelphia, 1844.*

Our whole community was excited to an ungovernable pitch, by a most bloody and terrible riot, which occurred in the district of Kensington. We have never heard of a transaction in our city in which so much savage feeling and brutal ferocity were displayed. There was a new element at work in the causes which led to the riot, one, which, when excited into action, is productive of most serious consequences. Such, unfortunately, was the case attended with the distressing and deplorable consequences following, but no one will hesitate to say that the Native American party having called a public meeting, had a perfect right to carry on their proceedings in peace, undisturbed by any persons, and that the disturbance they met with, from persons opposed to the objects of the meeting, was as gross an outrage as was ever perpetrated upon the rights of any body of free citizens. The citizens who composed the meeting were assembled in the exercise of a right which is guaranteed to them by the Constitution, and it has come to a pretty as if, availing themselves of their constitutional rights, they are to be assailed by others, and their lives sacrificed in the streets. [4]

They were assembled by public call, their object being a perfect legal one, and the presumption is that those who were opposed to the meeting were attracted there from some mischievous motive. They were not embraced in the call, they could have had no proper object in being present at or in the neighborhood of the meeting, and the consequences which resulted, indicate very plainly the folly, if not to say the wickedness of their designs, in going in numbers to the place. The presumption that mischief was intended is confirmed by the conduct of a reckless set of ruffians, who, a few evenings before, broke up a meeting assembled for a similar purpose. Such conduct as this is not to be tolerated with impunity in any country, much less in ours, where the hand of fellowship and good feeling has always been extended to the emigrant from other shores, and political equality so liberally offered them. [5]

NATIVE AMERICANS

The American Republicans of the city and county of Philadelphia, who are determined to support the NATIVE AMERICANS in their Constitutional Rights of peaceably assembling to express their opinions on any questions of Public Policy, and to SUSTAIN THEM AGAINST THE ASSAULTS OF ALIENS AND FOREIGNERS are requested to assemble on MONDAY AFTFRNOON, May 6th, 1844 at 4 o'clock, at the corner of Master and Second street, Kensington, to express their indignation at the outrage on Friday evening last, which [6]

was perpetrated by the Irish Catholics, in tearing and trampling under their feet the American Flag, to take the necessary steps to prevent a repetition of it.

THE MASS MEETING

(From the Native American)

Agreeably to a call of the Native American Republicans of the city and county of Philadelphia, a Mass Meeting was held at the corner of Master and Second streets, in the district of Kensington. After certain preliminaries having been settled, Mr. Kramer was called for by the meeting, appeared, and addressed the concourse of citizens assembled, in a speech which elicited much applause. Gen. Smith being introduced, entertained them for some time, by a very pertinent speech, the people upon the subject of the principles which guide the Native Republicans, in the course they have marked out for themselves on the great leading and important question of foreign influence upon the civil, political and religious institutions of our country. After which, Mr. Levin was introduced upon the stand, and was about proceeding to speak upon the deleterious effects of Popish interference in the elective franchise, and her consequence upon American liberty, through their minions of the poor degraded slaves of the church, when a storm blew up, and the rain began to pour down. A motion was then made and carried, to adjourn to the Market House. The meeting being there organized, and the speaker about to proceed in his speech, an onslaught was made by a band of Irishmen, said to be all Catholics, upon the citizens composing the meeting and effort made to disband and break it up. A large number of determined spirits being present, an attempt was made to defend and resist the outrage of the Roman Catholics, and to retaliate upon the Priest's menials in their effort to violate the constitutional rights of American citizens. [8] [9]

The scene which presented itself beggars all description. A general and indiscriminate fight between the Irish Catholics and the American Citizens. All kinds of weapons of defence and offence were used which could be collected within the vicinity of the meeting During the throwing of brickbats and stones, several of the Native Republicans were struck, and so seriously injured that they were carried off the ground into houses of citizens of the neighborhood, their wounds dressed, and themselves properly taken care of.

During the hottest of the fight several reports of fire arms were heard, and the groans of men who proved to be wounded, and the lamentable exclamations of their friends, together with the cries for vengeance from all quarters, were truly terrific and appalling. One man named Patrick Fisher, on the side of the Native Americans, was carried out by four men, Mr. Albright at the head, shouting "American Citizens Arouse,—defend yourselves! one of your number has been wounded; shot down in the street." Fisher was taken to the Drug store of Dr. Davis, and his face and neck which were found to be wounded by buck-shot or slugs was dressed,

and he was afterwards taken to his home.

Immediately followed another crowd of persons a portion of whom were carrying the dying body of a Native American, named George Shiffler, a morocco dresser, residing in St. John street below Beaver, who was shot with a whole charge of buck-shot in the right side of the breast. The scene which exhibited itself around this dying man was too much for every one possessing the ordinary feelings of sympathy to bear without shedding a tear. The old and the young appeared to be weeping; and the lamentations, appeared to be contagious, for the whole crowd wept, in sorrow. One grey headed old man, in the midst of his tears, raised his staff aloft, and exclaimed in the fullness of his heart, "On, on Americans! Liberty or death." At this [10] thrilling cry the old man led off, and the whole crowd followed him to avenge the death of their fellow citizen.

MORE MURDERS

More Americans shot Down.

The Hibernia Hose House was then attacked, and the hose carriage taken end shattered into fragments, and used some of the pieces as a [12] means of defence, from the attacks of Catholics. During this fight, the fires from the Irish came fast and thick, and several of the Americans were wounded... A small number of the Natives who were armed, surprised the Irish, who had possession of the market house, charged home upon them, when they precipitately fled the ground. The military are now on their way to the scene of bloodshed, having two field pieces.

HALF PAST EIGHT O'CLOCK, P. M.

The alarm of fire at this moment was caused by the burning of a row of frame buildings in Cadwallader street, in the neighborhood of Master street. These houses, it is said, were occupied by some Irish and burned to the ground. A rope maker in the district of Southwark, whose name we could not get, was shot dead. — Keyser, brother to Mr. Keyser who keeps a tavern near Market street wharf, was seriously wounded. A boy, [13] name unknown, was shot in the left shoulder, while standing in the street.

ELEVEN O'CLOCK P.M.

The Hibernia Hose house was the first place where the fire was discovered. That building was burned to the earth, and the contiguous houses caught, and the flames spread with fearful and alarming rapidity. About thirty houses, north of the Hibernia Hose house, have already been consumed; and the fire is still raging. What became of the inmates no one can tell. Probably a number have been consumed in the flames. The excitement is intense. The military, to the number of several hundred, are upon the ground, looking passively on, endeavoring to keep the people from rushing forward.

TWELVE O'CLOCK.

All is quiet. The fire is nearly out. The military are still upon the ground. Two Irishmen are reported as having been burned to death.

On the evening of the 7th the military were called out by order of the Sheriff, when the Natives had got their blood fully up, and were fast

gaining the ascendancy, the peace officers thought it high time to interpose the authority of the law.

The district on the early part of the 8th presented quite a peaceable aspect, and order reigned throughout. But towards the middle of the day, crowds of persons from the adjoining and other districts, and from the city, flocked there by thousands, perhaps more from motives of curiosity than for any thing else. Congregating in different parts, and coming in contact, discussions arose upon the all absorbing subject of the riots; and inflammatory language being used, the excitement again broke out with redoubled fury, and the consequences are lamentable to record.

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The entire row of houses on Cadwalader street, most of which were frames, extending from Master to Jefferson street, in addition to one or two on Master street, were destroyed; and four on Washington street. From all of these houses guns were fired by the Irish. Nothing remains of the Market house but the brick pillars.

Large numbers of individuals about this time were collecting around the Seminary, and at St. Michael's Church.

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At 3 o'clock St. Michael's Church was fired, and with such rapidity did the flames spread that the church was enveloped and consumed in an incredible short period of time. Thousands gazed upon the burning edifice in silence, and not one effort was made to save it. The firemen who were upon the ground put their apparatus in motion, but played only on the buildings south of the church. From the church the raging element communicated itself to the dwelling of the Priest, Mr. Donahue, on the north, which was totally consumed.

The Seminary on the corner of Phoenix and Second streets, was about the same time discovered to be on fire, together with the buildings on the opposite corner occupied by a man named Corr, who kept a grocery, and was reported to have sold ammunition to the Irish. The Seminary and the other building were burned to the ground. Whilst these buildings were burning the Volunteers of the 1st and 3d Brigade, commanded by Generals Cadwallader and Hubbell, and headed by the city troop, marched and arrested further operations by the mob, in this portion of the district. The military kept parading in all quarters, where an outbreak was anticipated; but Alderman Clarke, who, we believe, is a Catholic, and suspected of having instigated and urged upon the poor priest-ridden souls to commit the first outbreak at the meeting on Monday last, appeared to be an object of revenge for the mob. They sought this residence, made an attack upon it, as well as upon the adjoining house occupied by his brother Patrick, and the furniture of both were thrown into the street, the windows and shutters broken; sash and doors demolished, and the houses themselves left untenanted wrecks.

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Out of the windows of nearly every Native American and Protestant Irishman in the district, hung the American and tri-colored flags. This was regarded as sufficient protection from the mob. Upon some of the doors

were observed the words "Native American," written with charcoal, and on others were posted the "Native American" newspaper—regarding these as a better protection than arms or the military. They were indeed a full protection, for instead of violence being offered to property bearing evidence of the Native principles of the occupant, the persons were greeted with cheers of approbation.

During the afternoon hundreds of families of Catholics moved out the district; and we observed women and children piled high up on furniture cars upon their goods apparently delighted to escape the scenes of turmoil and bloodshed which presented themselves to their eyes for the last three days. [19]

About half past 9 o'clock the throwing of stones and bricks commenced with unceasing rapidity until the windows and doors were forced amid the echoing shouts of the enormous multitude, when some entered the Church regardless of the troops and police. At about ten minutes before ten o'clock fire was communicated to one of the window curtains, and we believe the other parts of the Church. A boy it is said but eleven years of age was the incendiary, the fire increased with great rapidity, and dense masses of smoke curled out from every window, and the incense which presented the most beautiful yet terrifying appearance we ever witnessed before of the kind, in a few minutes the flames reached the belfry and burst out from the upper windows in broad sheets, the whole steeple was soon wrapt in the devouring element and presented a terrific aspect, the clock struck ten while the fire was raging in its utmost fury. [20]

At twenty minutes past ten o'clock, the cross which surmounted the steeple, and which remained unhurt fell with a loud crash, amid the plaudits of a large portion of the spectators, in ten minutes afterwards the steeple, which had stood until burnt to a mere skeleton fell, throwing up a mass of cinders which fell like a shower of gold upon the buildings and streets. Northeast of the church the heat during the height of the fire was so intense, that persons could, hardly look at the flames at the distance of half a square or more, and the light was so brilliant as to dim even the gas lamps. [22]

May the 9th, Fourth day of the Riot.

Today the excitement throughout the city is very great, the feeling of the people, as exhibited on Tuesday in Kensington, seemed to have caught the people of the City. Nothing but confusion and dismay prevailed throughout the whole day. In the early part of the day, large crowds of persons collected in the vicinity of the Roman Catholic Church in 13th street above Chestnut, the military, however, guarded it, and saved it from the fury of the mob. Two pieces of artillery charged with grape were posted at the gates, and these perhaps, were more efficient in deterring the mob from making an onslaught upon the church than any other cause. [23]

All the property of value in the different Catholic Churches was early in the day removed to several private quarters in the City and County.