

to Mel- Gold
ng of
a who
Donald
he who
cessful
ar the
ded to
wever,
August
of these
ms of
10th
upon
y ne
distric
urching
e same
almost
joining
which
richest
d, was
arked
l-work.
d from
worked
of blue,
slate,
almost
covery
head of
world.
Creek,
almost
y some
of Dr.
usands
lose of
a total
PREVIOUS
N.
utbreak
se who
re inti-
to such
etrating
existing
the ap-
ers and
ther in
rment.
als were
er for a
elatives
g since
out about
or had
n could
foolscap
in, and
it was
Indeed
ard of
stomed
ation—
place to
incap-
incapa-
existed
Mere
ver the
a lot of
lected,
en Tas-
cruel,
incited
quiet, in-
rity, to
vere al-
ts and
ages of
ould be
ing for
ere boy-
ains or
mid-day
for no
aving a
These
eekers;
ooks of
repair,
d that
taken
being
signed
er by
ending
n who
s, and
de to

The Ovens, I think, was the scene of the first outbreak. This was early in 1853, when a man named Myers, who had managed to get the appointment of Assistant Commissioner, and who was as much fitted for the post as he would have been to take charge of a Channel fleet, was seized by a score of diggers, who, but for the interference of those more inclined to be submissive to the authorities, would have hung him to the branch of the nearest tree at hand. Myers escaped death, but was so roughly handled that it was thought prudent to withdraw him from all office. Bad rule prevailed for several years after this, the Government of Melbourne still obstinately refusing to see the coming outbreak. Then, in July of 1854, a serious disturbance broke out at Forest Creek. Like master like man, the police in their every dealing with the diggers acted as ruffians. There were, as might have been expected, many sly grog shanties spread over the fields. The existence of these was made known to the diggers by the holding of a red-coloured pocket handkerchief, and it is certain that many a robbery, many a deed of violence, and not a few murders were committed in these canvas and calico dens of debauchery. Wherever one of these shanties was thought to exist, the police made short work of it. The spirits were taken away, and the tents burned to the ground. This might have been right, although it was a rough law. But it came to this pass that men's tents were fired from motives of revenge to the inmates, which were not grog shanties, nor fences for receiving stolen goods. The spirits carried away were presumed to be emptied on to the ground, but it was well known this was seldom done. The casks and jars with the contents were, in most instances, sold to those shanty holders who had managed to find favour with the police. These men, many of them whose pay did not exceed twelve shillings a-day, afterwards became the owners of large and costly hotels, which were built from money made, as it afterwards came to light, by the most infamous means. Some of the police brought up women from Melbourne and Geelong, and established brothels under the eyes of the Commissioners, but it paid these officials not to notice them.

At this time the gold got by the diggers was sent down by armed and mounted escort, but the separate bags when they were deposited in the treasury at Melbourne or Geelong, were, when applied for, always found to be deficient in weight. No one was held to be responsible for this; and the consequence was many diggers, instead of depositing their gold with the Commissioners, would incur the danger of being stuck up and murdered, by taking it down to the towns and lodging it at the bank. The number of men who left the field with stores of gold in their belts, and who never returned, and never were more heard of, cannot now be told.

There was a man named McMahon who kept a large boarding-house, partly constructed of wooden slabs and partly of canvas. McMahon, with his wife and family managed the place, and nothing wrong was known of them. But against this house one Mangan, an informer of infamous notoriety, and a trooper named Christian, lodged a complaint, and the place was razed to the ground; McMahon, his family, and the lodgers being not only grossly insulted, but, at the same time, subjected to much violence. McMahon preferred a charge in so definite a manner that it was impossible for it to be disregarded by the Commissioners, and it was made a police-office case. It was early one Sunday morning that the following notice was posted about Forest Creek:—

"MEN OF CASTLEMAINE,

"Meet on the hill behind the Baptist Chapel to discuss matters relative to the proceedings of the officials, on Saturday night. Chair to be taken at four o'clock to-day. N.B.—The sheriff has been invited to attend. You are requested to attend the Police Court on Monday, and watch the proceedings."

The magistrates investigated the charge, and held McMahon to have been quite innocent of having harboured improper characters, or having kept anything else but a respectable boarding-house. The informer Mangan and trooper Christian were given into custody, charged with perjury. But McMahon never received one penny in compensation for the great injustice which had been done him. Nor did the two perjurers meet with their well-merited punishment.

Then the diggers, store-keepers, and keepers of lodging-booths came to see that neither life nor property were safe from the police, encouraged as they were by the Commissioners, who again were permitted, if, indeed, they were not encouraged, to exercise the most arbitrary and unrestrained powers by the Government at Melbourne. And they revolted. The day after the charge had been heard at the Police Court another notice was posted throughout the field. It read:—

"Down with the trooper Christian and shoot him!

"Down with oppression!

"Diggers, avenge your wrongs and demand your rights, or otherwise you will live and die all slaves.

"Down with the camp! Up with Christian! Cry 'No quarter!' and shew no mercy!"

Some three thousand men attended this meeting, and the Government could not but have known, from the unanimous expression of feeling, that the people were aroused to a determination to resist their wrongs no matter at what cost of life. But such warnings were unheeded. It was about this time also that a wide-spread dissatisfaction against the Government existed in the Bendigo goldfields. A number of meetings following in rapid succession were convened. Protests were forwarded to the Government, strongly but still respectfully worded, asking for an inquiry into the conduct of the officials; but petitions and memorials were alike treated with contempt by Governor La Trobe. A reduction of the heavy licence fee of 30s a month was asked, but refused. Digger hunting was as much in force as ever, and the colony was in the utmost danger.

At length Mr La Trobe went his way home, and Sir Charles Hotham succeeded him. The new Governor was received with a welcome such as has never since been accorded to any other in these colonies. He was to put all things to right, settle all disputes, and quiet all differences. But he did nothing of the kind. He had not the ability, and he had not the inclination. For the deck of a man-of-war he was admirably suited; but to govern a goldfields colony he was worse than useless. He looked upon it that the people were made for a Governor, and not the Governor for the people. He was a martinet, avaricious, penurious, and grasping. When, however, he found that the diggers were not men-of-war sailors, and either laughed at his manifestoes or defied them, he took the thing to heart. He became irritable; then sick; then he took to his bed, and never again moved from it until carried to his last resting place.

It was during his term of Governorship that the Ballarat rebellion, with all its attendant horrors and great bloodshed occurred. The dissatisfaction at the arrogance of the Government officials increased the irritation of the diggers. The same venal appointments continued to be made, and each officer, in the order of his succession, was, if it were possible, more insolent, more over-bearing, and more oppressive than he who had preceded him. These men had no knowledge of the requirements demanded of them for the government of the diggers. They traded on their own account, and anyone opposing them on the field, however legitimately, was marked, and run to earth. Complaints over and over again were forwarded to Sir Charles Hotham, but he treated them as he would have treated the complaints of a cabin boy preferred against his first lieutenant. He believed that a Government official could do no wrong, unless, indeed, to his superiors. Ministers at the time entertained nearly the same feeling. They proceeded according to their own views of the fitness of things. The diggers became more and more exasperated; but the more they complained the more they were hunted and oppressed; the more men were chained to trees, the more arbitrary regulations were issued, and then in November, 1853, was seen the outcome in the Eureka riots.

(To be continued.)

[By "SNYDER."]

THE BALLARAT REBELLION.

THIS event, not altogether unlooked for, came at last. The diggers, hunted down by the police, maltreated by the Government officials, refused justice by the magistrates, robbed of their gold, and no protection to life and property offered, were determined that either justice should be done them, and the prayer of their many petitions heard, or they would arm and revolt. The authorities were blind to the dangers which threatened them, and were deaf to all warnings.

The first outbreak of popular indignation occurred in consequence of the exposure of one of those cases of undue partiality exhibited by the camp officials. There was a man named Bentley, who early in 1854 erected a public-house, not very far from the Old Golden Point. No one appeared to know anything of Bentley, or who he was. He had not been a digger, nor had he resided long on the ground; but this much was known upon very good evidence, that Bentley built the public-house with the money of one of the magistrates located on the goldfield, and that this magistrate shared in the profits derived from the hotel. There was, I think, very little doubt whatever about this.

I was at the time of the outbreak which I am about to relate, at Ballarat upon business in connection with the starting of a newspaper, and I was lodging in the tent of a storekeeper of the name of Richards, situated some fifty yards from Bentley's hotel, in the midst of many claims which were in full working. One night, at a late hour, some diggers knocked at Bentley's door, and asked to be served with drinks. Two of these were very intoxicated and very noisy. Bentley answered the door by telling the men he would not let them in, nor would he serve them. The men kicked violently at the door, and swore that if not immediately served, they would break it in. Bentley then, calling for the assistance of some men who were lodging with him, rushed out and made a violent attack upon the diggers. There was a desperate fight, and a man named Scobie received a blow from a shovel, which proved fatal. The next morning he was found stark dead in front of the hotel. The affair was too serious to pass over, and the officials were compelled to hold an investigation. Bentley was arrested and brought before the Bench, presided over by the same magistrate who was known to be interested pecuniarily in the hotel. A short enquiry was held, and the evidence shewed in the most convincing manner that Bentley was the man who had killed Scobie, but nevertheless the case was dismissed, and Bentley set at liberty.

Then public indignation was aroused to a pitch never before expressed in such violent terms. Proofs were adduced of the magistrate who heard the charge being in business partnership with Bentley. A few days after, a meeting was held on the spot where the body of the murdered man was found. It is estimated that nearly 5000 diggers and others resident on the goldfield were present. Strong and revolutionary was the language used on the occasion, but nothing more at the moment was contemplated than the drawing of one more petition, asking the Government to make official enquiry into the grievances which the diggers complained of.

It was unfortunate that the spot on which the meeting had been convened was close to Bentley's hotel. The mob became excited as the speakers one by one pointed out that on the ground on which they were then standing, the blood of one of their mates had been shed; that the fountain of justice was impure at its source, and there was none to arise and deal out vengeance.

There was then a cry went up from among the vast gathering of excited men to "secure Bentley and deliver him over again to justice." The hotel was surrounded, but Bentley, who had been warned of what was likely to take place, secured a horse and escaped to the rear of the building. He saved his life, but the hotel and all it contained was burnt to the ground. A military force came up when it was too late. The mob dispersed quietly, but declared that they had only begun that which would not end there. Subsequently, for this outrage three men, named Fletcher, McIntyre, and Weatherly were arrested, committed for trial, when a most reluctant verdict of "guilty" was returned against Fletcher and Weatherly, but with a strong recommendation to mercy, the jury adding a rider to the effect that they would never have had their painful duty to perform if those entrusted with the government of Ballarat had done their duty. This direct censure upon Sir Charles Hotham and his Ministers was received in a densely-crowded Court with loud and prolonged cheering, which neither Judge nor the Court officials were able to suppress.

Bentley had again been taken into custody to protect him from the popular fury. He had sought refuge in the officers' camp, and to arrest him was the only means of preventing his life falling a sacrifice to the mob. Bentley was tried for the murder of Scobie, and brought in guilty of manslaughter.

Again the Government were warned of the imminent danger of a general outbreak on the diggings. Ministers had been told repeatedly of the detestation the officials were held in for their mal-administration. The attack on Bentley's hotel was but the sign of a coming tempest—the prelude of the fearful drama that was to be so shortly enacted. The diggers had, as the leading journal in Melbourne urged, sufficient power to oppose any force which might be brought against them. There was no doubt now as to the danger the Government had placed themselves in.

The strong sentiment of loyalty, the over-bearing conduct of the popular leaders of the disaffected, coupled with the decision of the military in the first instance, and the mild character of Sir Robert Mickle, the commanding officer, who afterwards used every exertion to tranquillise the excited diggers, prevented a general outbreak in all the goldfields, if not, indeed, throughout the whole of the Australian colonies. A deputation waited upon the Governor to demand the release of the men who had been imprisoned for the burning of Bentley's Hotel. These were Humfray, Black, and Kennedy, all representatives of the diggers. The Governor, perhaps very properly, objected to the word "demand." Being the representative of Her Majesty, he could not allow the use of the term. But the deputation had been instructed they were not to substitute any softer word. In consequence of this no official reply was returned. The deputation was informed that a proper memorial on behalf of the prisoners would be entertained, but that nothing might be expected from a demand. At the close of the interview Mr. Kennedy earnestly entreated His Excellency to allow the two prisoners to be liberated and return with them, in order to prevent a riot, but he was informed that the course suggested would be destructive of the authority of the Government. No such thing could be allowed. In order to be prepared for any disturbance, the Executive began to concentrate all the forces they could command at Ballarat, and it was as the military marched along the line of road that the hostility of the diggers was shewn. Collisions, resulting in bloodshed, occurred in several places. On the 29th of November, a party of soldiers, belonging to the 40th, who were marching along the Geelong Road to Ballarat, were assaulted by the people. The soldiers were commanded to charge the mob, but were beaten back, and compelled to make an ignominious retreat. The fact was that the soldiers sympathised with the diggers. The day this occurred witnessed a similar scene near the Eureka, where a detachment of military were attacked. Several soldiers were wounded, and a retreat was beaten.

On the day following this a large, armed mass meeting was held at Ballarat. Here resolutions were passed denouncing the licence fee, and declaring that the people would pay no obnoxious tax no longer, but take immediate steps to abolish it by burning all their licences. The meeting strongly protested against the bodies of armed men marching through the diggings, and firing upon the people without previously reading the Riot Act.

The Government officials, so far from being intimidated by this meeting, sent detachments of soldiers through the principal leads of the diggings, and several skirmishes occurred. The camp was barricaded by breast-works of sand-bags, and the whole of the military and the police were kept under arms. The roads between Geelong and Ballarat and between Melbourne and Ballarat were lined with soldiers and mounted and foot police hastening to strengthen the position of the Government. The diggers when they burned their licences and refused to renew them, were not ignorant as to what would likely be the outcome. Sir Charles Hotham did not think it at all necessary to listen to the well-founded complaints of the diggers. Shoo them down, burn their tents, scatter and confound them first, was the order, and they do justice to them if they have not already had a full measure of this meted out to them.

The demands of the diggers in the first instance were no more than reasonable. But these being refused, and believing they could overawe the Government, they came to make demands which were not reasonable, and which no Government could submit to without humiliation. It was when violent cowards guided the movements of the disaffected diggers, that a number of the more moderate left them, and the legitimate objects of the agitation appear to have been completely lost sight of. The desire of the disaffected was now nothing less than at any sacrifice of life to overturn the Government of Victoria. Sir Charles Hotham was taken prisoner, and held captive. The Commissioners were to be hunted off the goldfield, and the members of the Constabulary