

2 PAPERS RELATIVE TO THE LATE ELECTION, MONTREAL.

The polling booths were fixed in the centre of streets running at right angles with two great thoroughfares. Strong barriers were erected at the polling booths to prevent the collision of the contending parties, there being an understanding between the candidates, made at the suggestion of the returning officer, that their respective voters should approach the polling booths at the opposite ends of the street.

At each booth two magistrates and a strong body of special constables were posted, to assist the deputy returning officer in maintaining peace.

In this order all the polls were opened.

I was occupied throughout the two days in continually visiting the several polling places, and in no instance except that hereinafter mentioned, did I perceive any difficulty whatever to the free and peaceable access of voters to the polls.

Two days previous to the polling, information reached the returning officer that bodies of strangers were expected from the Gore of Chatham and Quebec to endeavour to carry the election by violence, and arrangements were made to prevent them, if possible, from entering the city.

I can confidently assert that no bodies of men came from the former place, as I had placed police on the road and at the landing-places to ascertain the fact. Two hundred men, however, apparently Irish labourers, arrived in Montreal in the steam-boat "Charleroi," from Quebec.

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On the morning of the first day of polling an unusually large body of strangers, evidently Irish labourers, congregated in M'Gill-street, one of the largest thoroughfares, and flanking the streets leading to the polling-booths in the Queen's Ward, one of the principal wards in the city.

Amongst these people I recognized a large number of labourers from the Lachine Canal, non-voters; and it was very evident from their manner and local disposition that they meditated an attack on the booth, with a view of taking and keeping forcible possession of it,—a plan which they had successfully practised at the last election for Montreal.

Shortly after the poll was opened an attack was made by these people on the voters of Mr. Moffatt, who had assembled near the poll, at the Queen's Ward, in the street assigned to them, and the deputy returning-officer found it necessary to call in the troops.

The riot was speedily repressed, and the troops were retained in the vicinity of the poll to allow free access to it, and prevent further rioting.

Polling continued throughout the day uninterruptedly.

On the close of the poll on the first day an attempt was again made by the labourers to create a disturbance by attacking the voters of the opposite party, which was again checked.

The labourers finding their object defeated, returned to the canal, and in passing through Griffon Town demolished the windows of a Wesleyan chapel, besides committing various other depredations.

During the night it was thought necessary to place detachments of troops in different parts of the town, to protect the property of individuals of both parties who had taken prominent parts in the election.

On the second day the polling commenced at the usual hour, and continued without interruption.

Early on that day I received information from the police stationed on the line of canal that agents for Mr. Drummond had proceeded along the line of canal, stating to the labourers (many of whom had returned to their work), among other inflammatory matter, that "the Tories had burned the Recollet (an Irish Roman-catholic church), and that their comrades had been abused and were bleeding in the streets, and urging them to proceed to Montreal immediately.

A party amounting to between 300 and 400, many of whom were armed, marched in military array, with scouts and flankers, on Montreal, augmenting their numbers as they proceeded; this body made their appearance at the foot of M'Gill-street, and continued their march in the direction of the polling-place in the Queen's Ward; and refusing, on the commands of the magistrates, to halt, the Riot Act was read, and the cavalry directed to disperse the crowd, and assist the civil power in the capture of as many as possible. Thirty men were arrested and committed to gaol.

Although I believe that the several deputy returning-officers found it necessary to require the presence of troops in the vicinity of their respective polling-places, yet they were not called upon to act offensively except in this instance, and then, I am happy to say, without any loss of life or serious injuries being inflicted.

The same military protection of property was afforded during the night on the requisition of the returning officer, and was continued until the final close of the election, and the city now remains in a state of apparent tranquillity.

There can be no doubt that riot and bloodshed to a frightful extent would have ensued, and the election could not have been proceeded in, but for the admirable and humane arrangements of the returning officer, and the timely and temperate interference of the troops.

In proof of the necessity for military assistance in this contest, I would remark that Mr. Drummond spoke to me a few days previous to the election on the propriety of commencing polling under military protection, a measure to which the returning officer would not consent until all ordinary means had failed, and in no case was military aid resorted to until then.