

g) August 1 Editorial from Kilkenny Journal "A Fraudulent Minute" regarding The Bachelor's Walk shootings

The Kilkenny Journal
SATURDAY, AUGUST 1, 1914.

A FRAUDULENT MINUTE.

The callous indifference of Irish officialism towards the maintenance of peace, where the lives and liberties of Catholics and Nationalists are concerned, is emphasised by the latest revelations of the events which immediately preceded and followed Sunday's massacre. We have it now on the authority of Mr. Birrell, whose guilt is only second to that of Mr. Harrel and the Scottish mercenaries, that the minute prohibiting the employment of the soldiery, is nothing less than an elaborate fraud. It will be remembered that when the news of the landing of arms reached the Metropolitan police headquarters, Mr. Harrel phoned to the Under-Secretary, who arranged to meet him in Dublin Castle at 2.45 p.m. We do not know what exactly are the relations of the two officials, nor is it ever possible to fix responsibility on heads of Departments in this Board-ridden country. At all events, Mr. Harrel did not decline to see Sir James Dougherty, though it is quite obvious he had no intention of keeping the appointment, being at the time, according to the information of Mr. John Dillon, at Kildare Street Club, "the headquarters of the Unionist Party," which is probably more directly in touch with the military centres of the city, than the Castle itself, and where nothing would certainly be said to discourage the policeman's intention to bring soldiers and civilians into conflict. Presumably, Sir James Dougherty knew as well as Mr. Birrell or Lord Aberdeen, that the settled policy of Dublin Castle was that there should be no interference with armed Volunteers. Either Mr. Harrel, who must have been as well aware of this policy as the most ignorant peasant in Ireland, did not desire to have his knowledge of it officially confirmed, or he was acting under an authority which he conceived to be higher than that of the official heads of the Government. We do not, of course, refer to the King, who seems to have played the part of a pawn in this game, but to the military junta, of whose previous proceedings at the Curragh his Majesty approved, to the extent, at least, of sanctioning re-instatement of disloyal officers. From Mr. Birrell's statement in the House of Commons on Monday, the

"public" was absolutely led to believe that the minute which implicated Mr. Harrel, while exonerating the Under-Secretary and the Lord Lieutenant, and which prohibited, not alone the employment of the soldiery, but interference with the National Volunteers, was written in a fit of indignation by Sir James Dougherty, and immediately despatched in quest of the Divisional Commissioner. The minute itself bears internal evidence of this view. It states: "His Excellency (Lord Aberdeen) is advised that forcible disarmament of the men now marching into Dublin. . . should not be attempted." Then followed some minor directions, and the pregnant sentence: "His Excellency cannot authorise any further steps in the matter at present." All this was deliberately calculated to save the officials and deceive an over-credulous Chief Secretary. But, unfortunately for deceitful officialism, there was a subsequent leakage of facts—perhaps through the Kildare Street Club, the members of which should be sympathisers with Mr. Harrel—and the Unionist Party got hold of them. On Wednesday, in the House of Commons, in answer to Mr. Bonar Law, it transpired through the lips of the Chief Secretary, that the minute containing instructions to Mr. Harrel that the butchery which he had, consciously or unconsciously arranged, should not take place, was not signed until 5 o'clock. At that time the Volunteers certainly were not marching into Dublin, and at that time, too, the bodies of three victims of the King's Own Scottish Borderers, were lying rigid in death. We find now that information was received at the headquarters of the D.M.P. at 2 o'clock; that the appointment at Dublin Castle forty-five minutes later, was not kept by Harrel, who was then alleged to have been at the headquarters of the military junta in Dublin. Pray, what does the Under-Secretary mean by sending to Harrel at five o'clock in the evening, a message alleging to anticipate his course of conduct earlier in the day? Now, Dublin was in a state of turmoil on Sunday, and between 2.45 and 5 o'clock the city must have been ringing with the sounds of strife. When the belated and hypocritical message from the Castle was delivered, it found the Chief Commissioner of Police at his official headquarters. Harrel was at Amiens St. Station, having deserted the enterprise which he set on foot. What was the Under-Secretary doing between 2.45 and 5 o'clock?

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Was there not plenty of time to track Harrel down and avert the tragedy, and even if Sir James Dougherty did not feel equal to the task himself, could he not have commissioned someone possessed of the necessary physical endurance or courage to undertake it? To do Harrel justice, we believe that in the dastardly events of Sunday, he was simply made the instrument of a criminal coterie. He will not suffer; of that we may be sure. The man who gave the order to shoot at Mitchelstown was, in after life, a special protege of the Tory Government. There is plenty of room for Harrel in other spheres of life. In Dublin, on Sunday last, there were three responsible officials of State. One of them was Sir James Dougherty, who has been convicted by the Chief Secretary of the issue of a fraudulent state document; another is Sir John Ross, the Chief Commissioner of Police, who was in Dublin during all those stirring and tragic events, and apparently wanted to figure in the film as little as possible. The third was Lord Aberdeen, the direct representative of King George in Ireland. Nobody seems to have considered it worth while to consult him during the hours which intervened between the telephonic conversation between the Under-Secretary and Mr. Harrel, and the massacre of the people by the Scottish Borderers. Why?