

K 54/11.823 Reg 25 Oct 1854

Date 22 Oct

Acting C.C. Police reports his arrival at Ballarat and steps taken by him in reference to recent disturbance. K11823 Ballarat

October 22nd/54

Sir, I have the honor to report for His Excellency's information that I arrived at this Camp at 2pm yesterday in company with Mr. Sturt P.M & Mr. Richards 40th Regt. & found that considerable excitement prevailed in consequence of two of the Leaders in the late disturbance having been apprehended & committed by the Bench to stand their trial at Geelong a large mob principally composed of the idle class of Diggers together with a great number of bad characters had assembled in the neighbourhood of the camp & were excited by several speakers to rescue the two prisoners who had been committed by the bench AS this took place within a few minutes after our arrival & the Resident Commissioner having been absent for the moment on duty from the Camp I had determined to start the prisoners off for Geelong through the bush so as if possible to get rid of the cause of excitement but before I could carry out the plan I had devised the mob approached the camp & sent a deputation of the men to beg the prisoners should be released as the Foot Constables had not arrived from Geelong our force was too much on a par with the mob command respect without causing a very discreditable & serious loss of life I agreed with a suggestion of Mr Sturts that he should inform the deputation that he had been sent up from Melbourne for the special purpose of investigating the matter & that he was willing to accept Bail for the appearance of the two prisoners at Geelong to which they at once agreed & after some difference of opinion among the Magistrates to the amount it was settled at two securities of £250 & themselves in £500 on which Bail the prisoners were released for some time the mob continued to conduct themselves in a very noisy & insolent manner but all the available ? of Police being under arms & loaded & the Military ready to fall in the matter passed off without coming to blows though on several occasions it appeared almost unavoidable . I regret however to say there is a sort of bullying spirit prevalent among the population of the Gold Fields & they do not hold the authority of the Government in proper respect. The death of Scobie thought the present cause of excitement is not the sole one as they are only anxious of a good opportunity of shewing their feelings. I know a couple of men in whom I can place implicit confidence being among the Diggers. Their report is that had the Diggers not been admitted on Bail their release would most certainly have been attempted by violence during the night. I also find that most of the mob are armed with revolvers, that arms of that description have been in demand during the last few days. I found that warrants for the arrest of 15 or 16 other parties implicated in the destruction of the Hotel had been issued by the Bench but do not consider it advisable to put them in effect till the arrival of the reinforcement of the 12th which I hope may be soon. I think it would then be advisable to make some further arrests as threats are held out of some of the Hotels being set on fire & it is necessary to shew that such conduct can not be permitted with impunity should a collision ensue which I shall endeavour by every means in my power to avoid I will immediately forward an express to acquaint His Excellency of the circumstances

A very large meeting is to be held today by the Roman Catholics relative to some circumstances which occurred in the arrest of the Priests Servant for not having a licence & assaulting other Police but I do not think it will lead to anything I am happy to say that the constabulary have conducted themselves in a very creditable manner & can be relied on should anything happen.

I have the honor to be Sir, Your most Obedt. Servant C. MacMahon

The Hon.the Col. Secretary