



DIABOLICAL OUTRAGES

INCENDIARISM IN BLOOMFIELD, 1849

Transcribed by David Byers, February 2020

Armagh Guardian, Monday 01 January 1849, page 4

INCENDIARISM IN THE COUNTY DOWN. — We regret to say that, on Christmas night last, the flax-mill and corn-kiln, in Ballyknockan, Parish of Saintfield, held by Mr. Alexander Porter, were set on fire, by some evil-disposed person or persons, who are, as yet, unknown.
— *Northern Whig*.

Banner of Ulster, Tuesday 02 January 1849, page 3

DIABOLICAL OUTRAGES.

ATTEMPTS TO DESTROY BY FIRE THE PROPERTY OF A LARGE NUMBER OF FARMERS IN THE COUNTY DOWN.

One, or rather a series, of those diabolical outrages which are unfortunately of too common occurrence in the southern and western districts of this unfortunate country, but which, happily, are rarely perpetrated in Ulster, has caused the most intense excitement and alarm throughout the county Down, and in this neighbourhood, since Saturday night last. Between the hours of seven and nine o'clock on that evening, an almost simultaneous attempt was made to destroy by fire the property of six of the most respectable farmers in the county of Down, namely:—Mr. John Anderson, Lisnabreen; J. [sic] Boyd, Esq., Bloomfield; Mr. John Martin, Carnamuck; Mr. Robert McConnell, Castlereagh; Mrs. Dinnen, Cabin Hill; and Mr. S. Carson, Ballymescaw [sic], near Dundonald.

It appears that about seven o'clock, stack corn was discovered to be on fire at Mr. R. McConnell's, Castlereagh. The next appearance of fire was Mr. J. Martin's, half an hour later in the evening, where a stack of wheat was destroyed; and, shortly afterwards, the properties of the other individuals were enveloped in flames. Immediately upon the discovery of the fires in the various localities every exertion was made by the proprietors to keep down the devouring element, and it is gratifying to be able to state that (with the assistance of the neighbours in their various localities, who rendered every assistance) their efforts were successful in confining the fires to the property originally ignited. Providentially a dead calm prevailed at the time, otherwise doubt could not have been entertained that the whole of the properties would have been totally consumed. No power of man could have saved them, the miscreants who did the deed had, in every instance, evidently with practised hand, fired the quarter by which there was the greatest likelihood of the flames spreading.

It is not possible to give at present a correct statement of the loss by sustained the parties. A stack of hay value for about £70, belonging to Mrs. Dinnen, Cabin Hill, was totally

destroyed. Mr. Carson had a stack of corn destroyed, and Mr. Anderson's office-houses partly burnt. Mr. McConnell had also a stack of corn, J. Boyd, Esq., a stack of oats, and Mr. Martin a stack of hay, partly or altogether consumed. We are not aware whether any of the sufferers are insured.

We trust the knowledge of such a daring outrage on property will arouse the gentlemen of the counties of both Down and Antrim to a sense of their danger, and that both landlords and tenants will, conjointly with the public authorities, see the necessity of taking most active and constant steps in the way of finding out the perpetrators of so reckless an outrage, in a heretofore most peaceable and orderly district of an orderly and peaceable county; and we would also strongly urge upon the consideration of all the well disposed inhabitants of Antrim and Down, the propriety of immediately calling a public meeting in a central place (say Belfast), in order to adopt measures towards subscribing a reward for the discovery of the incendiaries.

It is the firm conviction of the inhabitants of the districts where the outrages have occurred, that the incendiarism has been the work of strangers to the locality, in fact of parties engaged upon the county Down railway.

We have heard that shortly before the fires were discovered, two suspicious characters were observed standing near Mrs. Dinnin's [sic] gate and a number of persons in the avenue; and that about the same time two other ruffianly-looking characters were seen standing under a hedge near Mr. McConnell's house. Three individuals of a similar character were met at a short distance from Mr. Carson's while the conflagration was raging. No clue, however, has yet been obtained to lead to the discovery of the perpetrators.

The Weekly Vindicator, Saturday 06 January 1849, page 4

ACCIDENTS, OFFENCES, &c.

INCENDIARISM IN THE COUNTY DOWN.— On Saturday night last, the stack-yards of several persons in the neighbourhood of Belfast were fired, and would have been utterly destroyed but for the exertions of the neighbouring farmers. Shortly after four o'clock, a stack of hay, the property of Mr. Robert M'Connell, Castlereagh, was observed to be on fire, and, though every effort was made to stay the progress of the flames, the stack was consumed. About half-an-hour after, an outhouse and stack of oats, belonging to Mr. John Anderson, Lisnabreeney, were fired and partially destroyed. At half-past five o'clock, Mr Martin, of Carnamuck, discovered his hay-stack on fire, and by great exertions saved a portion of it.

Again, shortly after seven o'clock, a stack of wheat — the centre one of twenty-seven — in the farm yard of Mr. Boyd, of Bloomfield, was observed to be on fire, and was consumed, notwithstanding the exertions of the people in the neighbourhood. Fortunately, the flames did not reach any of the other stacks. About the same hour, a stack of hay was burned, the property of Mrs. Dinnen, Cabin Hill, and a stack of oats partially burned, the property of Mrs Carson, Ballymiscaw, near Dundonald.

No cause can be assigned for the commission of these wanton outrages, as the parties who are the sufferers are all much respected. The fire at Bloomfield was observed by one of the sub-constables stationed in Ballymacarrett, when returning from duty, and reported by him to Head-Constable McIntyre, who, with all the men under his command (five) scoured the country as far as Newtonards [sic] and Comber, but failed in apprehending any person to whom suspicion could be attached.

On Sunday night, the police again went out on patrol, in coloured clothes, and, when approaching Mrs Dinnen's house, were fired at by the watchman on the premises, who appeared to have mistaken them for some of the incendiaries. Fortunately the shot did not take effect.

On Monday evening, between five and six o'clock, a fire was observed breaking out in the stack yard of the Rev. Adam Hudson of Castlereagh, but timely assistance having been procured it was extinguished, without much damage, we understand. Three of the Ballymacarrett constabulary, who had been out on patrol, came up shortly afterwards, and after deliberation it was deemed necessary that they and three of Mr. Hudson's servants should remain in concealment for some time about the premises, suspecting that the incendiaries might return and complete their wicked design. After watching for several hours, they did not think it necessary to stop longer and went away. Towards morning, however, the stack-yard was again set on fire, and we have been informed nearly all destroyed, thus showing that the ruffians watched closely the movements of the constabulary, and took immediate advantage of their absence from the place. On the same evening a hay-stack, the property of Mr. McIlwaine, near Dundonald, was also set on fire and consumed.

INCENDIARISM – On Friday evening last, about five o'clock, two ricks of hay, the property of Mr Duffield, who resides about half a mile beyond the Shankhill grave-yard, were maliciously set on fire and totally consumed. On the same evening, a rick of hay on the farm of Mr. James Kirkwood, of Ballygomartin, was also maliciously set on fire, but saved before much damage was done. Mr Duffield's loss amounts to between six and seven tons weight.

Belfast News-Letter, Friday 05 January 1849, page 2

INCENDIARISM IN THE COUNTY DOWN.

It deeply pains us to state that the practice of incendiarism, which has so suddenly and strangely exhibited itself in the adjoining county, has not yet received that check which might be expected from so vigilant and determined a population as that of Down and Antrim. In addition to the incendiary fires reported in our last, we learn that three fires were discovered on Monday evening last, all occurring about seven o'clock.

The first was in the stack-yard of the Rev. A. Hudson, Marymount, Castlereagh; the second in that of Mr. McIlwaine, of Killarn mill, near Dundonald, where a large hay stack was fired and consumed; and the third in that of Mr. McMurray, who resides between the house of Mr. McIlwaine and Newtownards. We have also learned that several men were discovered, on the same evening, in the haggard of Mr. Wightman, Ballymiscaw, who were fired upon by the

caretaker, McCracken, upon which they fled into Mrs. Cleland's glen. A fellow was discovered, on Tuesday night, about the hayyard of Mr. McCracken, Killeen, and was also shot at as he ran off, but unfortunately, without effect.

A few evenings ago Mr. McCutcheon, who lives near Dundonald, with several of his men, was keeping watch on his premises, when they observed a party of suspicious-looking fellows on the road, who stopped on approaching his house, and held a close consultation for a short time. Mr. McCutcheon, having desired his men to 'look to their priming', and follow him, suddenly advanced towards the party, upon which the fellows instantly decamped. It is to be regretted that Mr. McCutcheon was so precipitate, else, in all probability, we should have had the pleasure of stating that a few of these ruffians had been 'winged' in their flight. In reference to the fires discovered on Saturday night, and reported in our last, we have received the following, additional particulars:-

The fires were observed in almost every direction about eight o'clock. The country-people, who were greatly alarmed, collected, after arming themselves well, in large bodies, in different localities. At the hill of Killeen, near the residence of Mrs. Cleland, of Stormont, about a hundred well-armed men were stationed all night; and we have learned from one of their number that the general impression on their minds was, that the Repealers had formed an army, and were burning and destroying all before them. Meanwhile, the farmers residing in the immediate locality of the fires, with their families and servants, rendered every assistance to stop the progress of the devastation. Nothing could exceed their vigorous and most friendly exertions – a part which speaks well for the harmony and kindness existing between all classes in this most peaceable and prosperous part of the country.

The labourers were, if possible, more active than their masters; for miles around they had gathered together to render assistance. All kinds of reports have been in circulation as to the perpetrators of these dastardly and criminal outrages. No one, so far as we have heard, blames the lower classes residing in the district. These are, with few exceptions, Protestants – generally Presbyterians – as most of them loyal intelligent men. In none of the districts has any dissatisfaction been evinced among them as to the treatment they receive from the proprietors or farmers. They are receiving the same amount of wages they formerly received, and the markets are, extremely low. The labouring population, indeed, are as much alarmed as the farmers and the gentry.

Who, then, are the incendiaries? We are strongly inclined to accept the common rumour, and say, the *Ribbonmen*. Large masses of these pests of society – or, at least, of persons supposed to be Ribbonmen – have, for the last two years, been drafted from the South and West to the neighbourhood of Belfast, to the public works, and it is quite possible – nay, very probable – that they are now employed to spread outrage and destruction throughout the peaceable surrounding districts. It gives us great pleasure to find, however, that the most active steps are being taken for the discovery and punishment of the perpetrators of these infamous and atrocious outrages. It will be seen that a most influential meeting of the inhabitants of the parish of Knockbreda, assembled on Wednesday at Castlereagh, the Marquis of Downshire in the chair, at which resolutions were passed, well calculated to clear the fair fame of the county Down from the stigma which would attach to it, were these heinous offences against the laws the acts of its resident inhabitants, and to bring the perpetrators into the hands of justice. A subscription list is to be opened for the purpose of offering an adequate reward to those whose information may lead to the discovery of the miscreant gang, and each townland is recommended to establish night-watches, and a special constable force. A similar meeting

was held at Dundonald on Tuesday. These exertions, we trust, will prove successful; but much will depend upon the personal vigilance and courage of the yeomanry themselves. One successful *sortie* may lead to the unravelment of the whole mystery. For it is more than probable that the incendiaries are not numerous. Let it be shown promptly and proudly that the county Down – itself free from the stain of lawlessness and insubordination – will not endure the imported villany of the West and South.

There have been no further incendiary fires in the neighbouring districts since Monday night – a circumstance perhaps attributable to the clear moonlight which has prevailed on the last three evenings.

Dublin Evening Post, Saturday 13 January 1849, page 2

INCENDIARISM IN ULSTER — PREVENTIVE MEASURES.

— We stated some time ago that, through Lord Castlereagh, the Lieutenant of the county, an application had been made by the Marquis of Downshire and other magistrates of Down to his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant to have a police force stationed at Dundonald. A letter has been received from Lord Castlereagh, stating that the application was favourably received by his Excellency, and that a police station would be forthwith established at Dundonald. In addition to the exertions of the resident proprietors and the farmers of the county, 125 special constables have been sworn in at Dundonald. — *Banner of Ulster*.

Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier, Tuesday 16 January 1849, page 4

INCENDIARISM IN THE NORTH,

A statement, having been made apparently without any foundation by some of the rabid Northern prints that some of the railway labourers employed on the Belfast and Down Railway are concerned in the incendiary crimes that have recently been committed in the North of Ireland, Mr. Dargan, the contractor of the works has offered a reward of £100 for the prosecution to conviction of any of the persons concerned in the outrages, or £50 for such information as may lead to that result. On the subject of the hasty and slanderous imputations that have been cast on the navvies by the paper alluded to the *Northern Whig* observes: –

‘When we find a fire occurring at four o’clock in the afternoon, we have a strong reason for believing that the incendiary is not any man engaged on the railway, the nearest part of which is more than a mile distant. Men cannot so easily quit their work. Mr. Dargan informs us, that of all the men whom he has had in his employment in his Northern works, he does not think there have been more than one hundred who did not belong to Ulster. Southerners were employed upon his Southern works. Whilst his conduct, in this instance, must be highly appreciated, it is but fair towards the industrious men under him not hastily to fix upon them imputations which are, at present, apparently improbable, and which ought not to be believed without distinct proof.’

Banner of Ulster, Tuesday 23 January 1849, page 3

FURTHER INCENDIARISM IN THE NORTH.

Two additional cases of incendiarism| have been reported to us since our last, the firing of a haystack, belonging to a farmer named James Ferguson, of Dunleady, near Dundonald; and, on the same evening, and about the same hour, a cornstack, the property of Miss Simms, residing about a mile out of Holywood. In both cases the fire was subdued before much damage was done. In addition to John Simpson, who, it appears by our Police Report, has been committed for trial, as an incendiary, a suspicious-looking character, named Jeremiah McCarthy, found in the neighbourhood of Holywood, on Thursday night last, has been remanded until today on a similar charge. It is stated that one of the daughters of Widow Lindsay, who was among the earliest sufferers, will be able to identify him as one of the party who visited her mother's house on the night of the fire.

Elgin Courier, Friday 02 February 1849, page 4

INCENDIARISM IN ULSTER, AND FEMALE HEROISM.

No less than five incendiary fires occurred on the previous Wednesday night, in the neighbourhood of Dunmurry, within from three to four miles of Belfast. There is nothing in the most remote degree connected with the parties whose properties were fired to suggest an explanation of the outrages. Several of them are amongst the most respected inhabitants of the district, and they are so varied in their circumstances, avocations, and connections, that any particular cause could scarcely be conceived to explain the occurrence. The *Belfast News Letter* relates an extraordinary instance of female gallantry and heroism in connection with one of these acts of incendiarism.

On Wednesday evening a farmer in respectable circumstances, Mr Orr McVeagh, residing at Ballylenahan, in the vicinity of Newtonbreda, rather more than three miles and a half from Belfast, had seen, about 8 o'clock, two men, respectably dressed, in a field adjoining his stackyard. His two daughters, Grace and Margaret, were with their father at the time, these three individuals, with a servant, comprising the whole of the family. The eldest girl, Grace, a fine, handsome, high-spirited girl, at once challenged the men, asking them what they were doing there?

One of them replied — 'I beg pardon, we are watchmen, and are going in the direction of Knockbraken. You may go to bed, and feel quite safe, for we will keep watch for you.'

'We cannot do that', said Grace McVeagh, 'for we, too, are paid for watching, and must remain up.' Suspecting the appearance and intentions of the fellows, the family did not go to bed, but continued maintaining active and vigilant look-out, until midnight, when the father being tired, went to bed, leaving his daughters (who had armed themselves well) to watch the premises.

About one o'clock the girls distinctly heard the sound of a jaunting-car coming along the Belfast and Saintfield road, and stopping nearly opposite McVeagh's house, which is distant about 15 perches from the roadside. In the course of a few minutes, they heard a number of

persons speaking together, in an adjoining field. Breathless with attention and anxiety, they listened to the conversation, and suddenly they heard a cry from the party of ‘Watch, watch! David Catherwood’s and David Husgrove’s stacks are in flames!’

Miss McVeagh immediately suspected this to be a *ruse* to withdraw them from their watch, or to ascertain whether any watch was really being kept; so the two girls never uttered a word, nor stirred a step from the spot where they stood concealed.

Two men then approached the stack-yard.

The fellow who was foremost then took out a match-box and proceeded to strike a light, but he did not succeed. He next tried another, but with no better success. He then went into the ditch, pulled down an old barrow which was on the top of the hedge, and stood upon it, and proceeded to strike a number of matches at once. All these movements were distinctly visible to the two trembling, yet courageous girls, from the place of their concealment: and just as the ruffian was about to apply the light he had at last succeeded in striking to the haystack, Grace McVeagh (we had almost written *Grace Darling*) exclaimed, ‘What is this — what are you doing?’

The fellow made no reply, but drew back. Miss McVeagh cried out ‘Stand!’ and immediately fired with the musket with which she was provided, and which was double charged with swan drops, slugs, and small pebbles. The man instantly fell back without uttering a groan. His comrade, who had left the rest the party with him to fire the stack, then rushed forward, crying ‘If the devil himself was there, I would set it on fire!’

As he came over towards the stack, Margaret McVeagh met him, full front, armed with an old bayonet fastened at the end of a pole, and made several thrusts at his face, wounding him severely. He, too, fell back, exclaiming, ‘D--- you, d--- you, I will not leave a stapple [sic] of thatch but I will burn!’

The rest of the party, seven in number, then made a rush towards the young heroines, who still bravely stood their ground, and one of the miscreants discharged a pistol at Miss McVeagh, just as, suspecting his intention, she had drawn herself within the temporary cover which she had used for the purpose of keeping watch, but she was so near the shot, notwithstanding, that one of her hands is so deeply marked with the stain of the powder, that she has since been unable wash it out.

The party then raised up their fallen comrades, one of whom must have been killed by the discharge of Miss McVeagh’s musket, dragging the latter to a heap of stones, which lay a few yards distant, where they laid him down.

Meanwhile, Miss McVeagh, who still kept her position, cried out, ‘Stand, or I will fire again; I have a brace of pistols!’

Hearing this, the entire party fled from the field, leaving the dead or dying man behind them on the heap of stones. At length, dreading the return of the ruffians — but not till this moment — did the two gallant girls, half fainting with fatigue and excitement, return to the house to arouse their father, who was still asleep.

On getting up and learning the circumstances, he sent a messenger to inform the police at Newtonbreda, and Constable Boyd, who was just returned from patrolling the neighbourhood of Drumbo, at once turned out his party, and proceeded to the scene. Before the arrival of the police, however, Mr McVeagh and some of his neighbours, who had assembled at the place, found a cap on the spot where the man whom his daughter shot had fallen. It is of a military style, with high crown and deep peak, of blue cloth. It was perfectly riddled, apparently with rough pebbles, one which had passed through the part where the end of the peak was stitched to the cloth, immediately over the left temple. Other slugs or pebbles had passed through the crown. The inside of the cap was saturated with blood. Along with the cap was also found a quantity of lucifer matches, a number of the newly invented 'firelights', and a razor in a case, perfectly new.

Before, however, Mr McVeagh or any of his family had gone out of the house a second time, the incendiaries had contrived to remove the body of their associate. Traces of blood were observed from the stack-yard to the road-side, and where they had rested the body previous to placing it on a car, which had been waiting, and had conveyed away the whole party (as was evident from no marks being seen beyond the spot), large pools of gore were discovered.

From the sound of the wheels and the lightness of the movement, it was conjectured that the vehicle was a jaunting-car, but whether an inside or outside one, from the darkness of the night, could not be ascertained. The excitement which prevails throughout the neighbourhood of Newtonbreda, and, indeed, wherever the circumstances have been related, is intense, and this excitement is universally mingled with admiration of the courage and heroism displayed on the trying occasion by McVeagh's daughters.

On Saturday an investigation into the circumstances connected with the recent attempt at incendiarism at Newtonbreda, was held in the house of Mr McVeagh, immediately after the close of the Petty Sessions business in that locality. Five magistrates were present, viz. Mr McCance, R.M., Mr T. Verner, Mr William Coates, Mr Getty, and Mr R. Batt. The two daughters of Mr McVeagh, whose heroic conduct has been the theme of such universal encomium, were examined at great length, and their original statement was amply confirmed.

The result of this investigation was, that the magistrates have forwarded a memorial to the Castle, suggesting to the Lord-Lieutenant the expediency of ordering a special guard to be placed on Mr McVeagh's premises at night; and, in the meantime, two of the Newtonbreda constabulary are discharging this duty, until his Excellency's commands are made known. No traces of the perpetrators of the intended outrage, or of the body of the man who is supposed to have been mortally wounded, have as yet been found.

Banner of Ulster, Tuesday 13 February 1849, page 3

THE LATE FIRES. — CONFESSION OF AN INCENDIARY.

Since we noticed the committal of James Simpson for trial at the Quarter Sessions, charged, under very suspicious circumstances, with having been concerned in the late atrocious outrages in the counties of Antrim and Down, the police of this neighbourhood, and those of the districts in which the fires occurred, have been most actively engaged in endeavouring to

trace out the villainous perpetrators. So far they have been successful. In consequence of information which they received, Simpson was yesterday brought from jail in the custody of the police, and, after an examination, before the Mayor, of a number of highly respectable witnesses, confessed that he had fired the premises of Messrs. Hamill and Wylie, in the neighbourhood of Dunmurry, having been induced by do so by some parties who made him drunk for the purpose. He did not give the name of the parties who had induced him to commit the crime. The evidence submitted on this occasion before the Mayor and Captain Jenkins, R.M., was, without the use of much extraneous matter, as follows:

John Anderson, the first witness examined, stated that he was a farmer, residing in Lisnabreen; that about four o'clock, on the evening of the 30th December last, a vacant house belonging to him was maliciously destroyed by fire; that about twenty minutes or half-an-hour previous to the burning he saw the prisoner proceeding in the direction of the house which was consumed, and which was but a short distance from his own dwelling-house.

Jane Crighton was in John Anderson's house on the night of the 30th December. The prisoner was in the house about twenty or thirty minutes before the vacant premises were burned. She left Simpson in the dwelling-house, and saw him in about half-an-hour afterwards, in a lane convenient to the house which was fired. The fire was got under at this time. She did not suspect the prisoner, as she had frequently seen him begging through the country.

Wm. M'Glash deposed that he resided in Lisnabreen; that on the evening of the fire alluded to by the previous witnesses he observed the prisoner contiguous to the premises which were afterwards consumed. The prisoner moved off when he saw witness. The house was on fire about twenty minutes afterwards. The fire occurred about four o'clock.

Hugh McCutcheon, a respectable farmer, residing in the townland of Ballybreen, stated that he recollected the night on which the stack-yards of John Boyd, Esq., Bloomfield, Mrs. Dinnen, Cabin Hill, and Mr. S. Carson, Ballymescan, were fired. All the fires occurred early on the evening of the 30th of December. When in his own stackyard between ten and eleven o'clock on that evening, he saw the prisoner passing by the road. He proceeded to the road and laid hold of the prisoner, but afterwards let him go. He had seen the prisoner on many occasions begging from house to house, but he never saw him working.

Thomas Curry, a farmer, residing in Ballylishendan, stated that he recollected the night on which the fire took place at Mr. McIlwaine's. A very short time after the fire he observed Simpson coming from the direction of Mr. McIlwaine's house. The prisoner was then proceeding in the direction of Belfast. Witness did not speak to him. It was then sometime between six and seven o'clock in the evening.

David Orr, on being sworn, stated that was a labourer; that he lived in Edenderry, in the county Antrim; that, about an hour previous to the stackyard of Mrs. Blair having been set on fire, and about 150 perches from the place, he saw the prisoner. The prisoner was making for the stackyard. This was about half-past four o'clock on the evening of the 5th of January last. The stackyard is situated at Wheatfield, in the county Antrim, and is the property of Mrs. Blair.

Thomas Marshall, labourer, who was in company with the previous witness, corroborated his testimony, adding that the prisoner when he observed him, was walking with his hand under his coat skirt behind his back.

Mary Anne Orr, wife of David Orr, also gave corroborative evidence. She saw the prisoner on a bye road leading from Mrs. Blair's. The haystack was on fire at the time. The prisoner was a considerable distance off at the time.

Sarah George deposed that she belonged to Ballygomartin; that she recollected the night of Mr. Duffield's fire. She lived within a quarter of a mile of Mr. Duffield's house. Saw the prisoner on the evening of the fire next door to the premises. She asked him what he was doing, and he replied merely that he was coming across the fields. This was about half an hour after Mr. Duffield's hay was consumed. The prisoner shortly afterwards went away towards Ballygomartin. She observed the same man begging on various occasions, but she never recollects having seen him at labour.

The Mayor having asked the prisoner whether he had anything to say with regard to himself, at the same time cautioning him not to say anything, without he was so disposed, which could be used against him on a future occasion,

The prisoner doggedly replied that he had set fire to none of the places sworn to by the witnesses. He had, he said, fired the premises of John Hamill and Mr. Wylie. was made drunk to do it, but had not fired any place in the county Down.

The Mayor having asked him who had given him the drink, the prisoner hesitatingly replied that he did not know.

The case then closed.

Simpson who was at first supposed to have been hardly right in his mind, has since been proved to be attempting an imposition on the public. He is a knowing scoundrel, whose mendicant habits for upwards of ten years in this town and neighbourhood, and whose idiotic expression of countenance, added to a knavish tact, have rendered him an accomplished agent for carrying out the designs of the conspirators. We trust that this confession will be followed by a revelation of the conspirators, of whose existence we entertain not the slightest doubt.

However, on the same page of that newspaper, another instance was reported:

Banner of Ulster, Tuesday 13 February 1849, page 3

MORE INCENDIARISM — The epidemic of incendiarism still rages. On Thursday, about one o'clock in the day, a hay-stack belonging to Mr. Samuel Moore, of Ballysallagh, between four and five miles from Belfast, was discovered to be in flames. No one was observed coming to, or going from, the premises, and the firing is, of course, involved in the same mystery which characterised the previous occurrences of the same kind. Fortunately for Mr. Moore, the fire was extinguished without much damage being done.