

of Irish laborers, and between both of these and the Germans. On the first of January 1838, a riot occurred at Old Town, when according to the testimony given by Mr Fisk, to the committee of ways and means in 1838, upwards of four hundred laborers, after marching twelve miles for that purpose, tore down buildings, and committed other outrages in the presence of many inhabitants of the place. Ten of the ringleaders were arrested by the civil authorities and committed to jail, but were all released on the 29th of the following month, by a nolle prosequere from the Executive, at the instance of G. M. Thurston, William Carroll, A. Brown, Alpheus Beall, G. Beall, Thomas A. Healy and others; who describing the names, ages, and families of the prisoners, and representing that the persons named had, "suffered considerable punishment by confinement in Alleghany County jail: that the Court would not be held until the third Monday of April; that to keep said prisoners confined until that time would be attended with a heavy expense to the County, and that as far as they could ascertain, a severe check had been given to that disposition to riot, but too prevalent on the line of the Chesapeake & Ohio canal".

The Gentlemen who signed the petition for the prisoners asked for their release on condition of their leaving the State, and paying a certain amount of damages for property injured or destroyed in the riot. The circumstances and reasons set forth in the petition, forming, no doubt, a sufficient ground for Executive interference; which however was made the cause or pretext of excitement in Alleghany County, as appears from the following letter of Michael G. Spragg Esquire, addressed to Gov^l Weagy, and dated 28th April 1838.

Dear Sir.

"I have just understood that an effort is making to create an excitement, and reflect on the Executive for granting a nolle prosequere to the Irish lately imprisoned for the riot at Old Town, on the 1st January last. The apparent object is to make a party matter of it, in the hope of gaining over to the loss for cause, all, who from fear of the Irish, or prejudice towards them, are dissatisfied about their release. So far I have not hesitated to take at least my proportion of the responsibility, and to relieve the Executive from any blame, that may be attached to it. But that there may be a proper understanding of the subject, I must ask the favour of you to forward me, the petition in their behalf by the return of the mail if possible, or as early as convenient. It shall be returned if required. - In great haste.

I am very respectfully,

(Yr ob^t Serv^t)

(signed) M. G. Spragg