

misage
Pardon
of Canal
Rioters.

If efforts were made in 1838 to "give over to the loco foco cause, all who from fear of the Irish, or vindictiveness towards them, were dissatisfied with their release", it is not surprising that attempts should have been made in 1840, to bring over to the Whig cause, all who entertained similar feelings towards the Irish, and who were desirous of seeing them punished. Independent of party excitement, it was natural that the pardon of those engaged in the last riot, should produce some dissatisfaction: especially as the disorders on the Canal in 1839, might have been considered the consequences of the lenient course pursued towards the prisoners arrested at Old Town in 1838. It could not have been otherwise, than that a strong prejudice should have been excited against the whole body of Irish laborers, on account of the outrages committed at different times on the levee of the Canal; but this feeling, though just and natural, was not calculated to secure to the parties arraigned, that fair and impartial trial to which every man is entitled.

The prisoners were tried for offences, committed on the 11th day of August 1839: but they belonged to a class of men, against whom a long account of real or imaginary crimes had been accumulating for years. Many of them were convicted on slight and doubtful testimony, and witnesses unanimous to prove their innocence, were arrested as criminals, and involved in the same punishment, which was exceedingly severe, even if the charges against them, had been conclusively proved.

The first case presented to me, was that of Edward Kelly, a wheelwright by trade, who was arrested while attending as a witness, and sentenced to the penitentiary for fifteen years and eight months. This petition was presented to me, on the 25th Decr 1839, by his sister, an Irish woman, who had recently arrived in this country, with her family of five children. She had lost her husband some months before, and had come to America at the request of Edward Kelly; who having no family of his own, had promised to do what he could for her support. When she arrived in Baltimore, she heard that her brother was in the Penitentiary, and found herself in a strange country without a friend, and without the means of obtaining bread for her children. She was advised to bring out her oldest child, a boy of twelve years of age, who suddenly disappeared from his new home, and could not be found; and in this distressing condition, she came to Annapolis to solicit her brother's pardon.

I refused however to interfere because the representation in his behalf, came from Citizens of Baltimore, who were ignorant of the circumstances of his trial. When the Legislature met, I had an opportunity of consulting respectable citizens of
— Allegany