

Mason -v- Rynd Match, Dublin 1888

James Mason was born in Kilkenny on the 19th November 1849. His original name has been the source of much conjecture. It may well have been changed when at eleven years-old he immigrated with his family to the United States. He became one of the leading chess players there, winning the Fourth American Congress held 1876 in Philadelphia. Two years later he returned across the Atlantic, settled in England and competed in many of the top European tournaments, his best performance probably being his third place in Vienna 1882, a point behind the joint-winners, Steinitz and Winawer.

James Alexander Rynd was born on the 6th April 1846. He was a relatively minor member of the organising team of the 1865 Dublin Chess Congress and won its No.3 tournament confined to Irish amateurs – which has a strong claim for being regarded as the first Irish Chess Championship. He entered King's Inn in Dublin in 1869, training to become a barrister. Rynd had returned to chess after an absence of about a dozen years in 1884, having in the interim acquired the extra name Porterfield, and was one of the prime movers in the founding of the Irish Chess Association the following year.

Irish chess was experiencing a boom in the late 1880s and an opportunity arose for Mason to benefit from the increasing interest in the game by taking an engagement as the resident chess professional at a new chess resort in Dublin. The Dublin morning newspapers publicised Mason's appearance in the city:

"CHESS CELEBRITY IN DUBLIN

Mr James Mason, the chess-player, is in Dublin and can be seen daily in play in the newly opened Chess Divan and Café of Mr J. Morphy at No. 79 Grafton Street. In addition to simultaneous games and general play, Mr Mason has undertaken a match of "the first five games up" with a Dublin amateur Mr Mason is an Irishman, having been born in Kilkenny some thirty odd years ago. He is well known as a most highly accurate and finished strategist, and also, like many chess players, he is a man of comprehensive reading and research. Quite recently he won second prize in a handicap at Simpson's Divan (after which the Dublin Divan) is fashioned), and as he competitors included amongst them Zukertort, Gunsberg, Bird, Pollock, Lee and many other experts the result confirmed Mr Mason's reputation as an odds player as well as even-player." [Irish Times, 23 vii 1888]

"[Mason] is now playing at Mr. J. Morphy's newly opened Chess Divan and Café, 79 Grafton Street, Dublin. He has engaged in a match of "the first five games up" with a strong Dublin amateur, in which more than ordinary interest will be taken on account of the fact that both players are intending competitors for the forthcoming International Tournament at Bradford. Besides the match in question. Mr Mason at the Divan every day engages in general play, and, as the proprietor of the divan has left the admission free of charge, it is expected that many Dublin amateurs will avail themselves of the opportunity so seldom afforded in Dublin of beholding or participating in the play of an acknowledged master." [Dublin Daily Express, 23 vii 1888]

Both newspapers omitted to give the name of the "Dublin amateur" and indeed throughout the course of the match the local dailies appear to have retained this veil of anonymity. However the Belfast News-Letter chess column for 2nd August and the English magazine "Chess Monthly", in its August 1888 edition, revealed Mason's opponent to be Porterfield Rynd. They also set out the match conditions as being first five games up with a time-limit of fifteen moves per hour.

Starting on Monday 23rd July, five games were played on consecutive evenings at Morphy's Divan.

**James Mason - J.A. Porterfield Rynd 0–1
Match Dublin (Game 1), 23 vii 1888**

Mr Mason, the American Champion, played the first game of his match with the Dublin Amateur yesterday evening. Having won the right of first move, he opened with the English opening, the first move being **1.c4** There was a large attendance of interested spectators throughout. The game began at 7 pm, and finished at 11 pm in favour of the Dubliner. Mr Mason lost a pawn on the 12th move, and on the 20th move another, but, the combinations being most complicated, it was hard to predict the result. The second game will be played this afternoon and admission is free. The match, as already announced, will be won by whoever wins five games first.

[Dublin Daily Express, 24 vii 1888]

**J.A. Porterfield Rynd - James Mason ½–½
Match Dublin (Game 2), 24 vii 1888**

The second game in the match between Mr James Mason, of New York and the Dublin Amateur was played yesterday evening at the Divan before a numerous assemblage of chess players. The Amateur opened with] **1.e4** whereupon the American replied with **1...e6** and a French defence ensued. In the opening the Dubliner fared second best, and for a long time seemed to be fighting against hope. However, ultimately he created a diversion, and succeeded in making a draw. The score stands - Amateur 1; Mason 0; Drawn 1. The third game will be played tomorrow evening, commencing at 7 o'clock.

[Dublin Daily Express, 25 vii 1888]

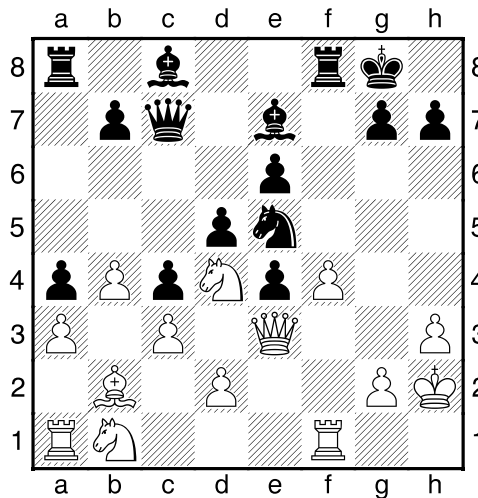
**James Mason - J.A. Porterfield Rynd [C00] 0–1
Match Dublin (Game 3), 25 vii 1888**

The third game of the match between Mr Mason and an amateur was played last evening at the Divan, 79 Grafton Street. Mr Mason had the move, and played **1.e4** to which his opponent replied **1...e6** [(the French defence). The game proceeded **2.e5 d5 3.c3 c5 4.f4**. Several well-known enthusiasts were present, and took great interest in the proceedings. The game gradually assumed a favourable aspect for the Dublin amateur, and after two hours play resulted in his favour.

[Dublin Daily Express, 26 vii 1888]

4...Nc6 5.Bd3? f5 6.Nf3 Be7 7.0–0 Nh6 8.a3 0–0 9.b4 Qb6 10.Kh1 c4 11.Bc2 a5 12.Bb2 Ng4 13.Qe2 Bc5! 14.h3 Nf2+ 15.Kh2 Ne4 16.Bxe4 fxe4 17.Ne1

a4 18.Nc2 Be7 19.Qe3 Qc7 20.Nd4 Nxe5 [Diagram]



The final position is a curiosity. If Black's Knight be captured, he gains a Rook for it, and hopefully locks in White's Queen's side pieces. If the Knight be not captured, then it obtains indefeasible possession of the important post at d3, so as to lock in for all eternity - should the game so long last - all White's Queen's side pieces. White seeing the futility of any further efforts to free or save his game gracefully resigns.

[Full game-score and concluding note by Rynd: Dublin Saturday Herald 9 ix 1893]

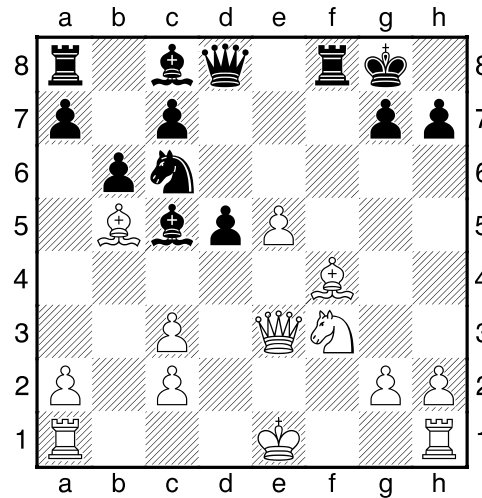
**J.A. Porterfield Rynd - James Mason 0–1
Match Dublin (Game 4), 26 vii 1888**

The fourth and as yet the most keenly contested struggle took place yesterday evening. The opening was with the Dubliner, who played a Vienna game, introducing an unsound variation of Paulsen's. Mr Mason emerged with much the better game. Step by step, however, his opponent extricated himself almost to the point of obtaining an advantage. The attack and counter-attack were well kept up, and in the end a draw might have resulted but that Mr Mason made the most of his superior position, and won after four and a half hours' fighting. The score now stands - Amateur 2; Mason 1; drawn 1. The fifth game will be played at Mr Morphy's Divan, 79 Grafton street, this evening. [Dublin Daily Express, 27 vii 1888]

1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 The more usual 2...Nc6 is so apt to give rise to complicated and highly critical positions very early in the game (mostly with a *practical* tendency in favour of the attack) that it is yet a question whether the move here adopted should not really be given the preference.**3.f4 d5 4.fxe5 Nxe4 5.Qe2** This strikes us as inferior to 5.Nf3 **5...Nxc3** If 5...Qh4+ 6.g3 Nxc3 7.Qf2 Nf5 8.Qxh4 Nxh4 9.Nxd5 &c. Perhaps it was in view of matters taking some such turn that Mr Rynd ventured the rather faulty 5. Qe2.

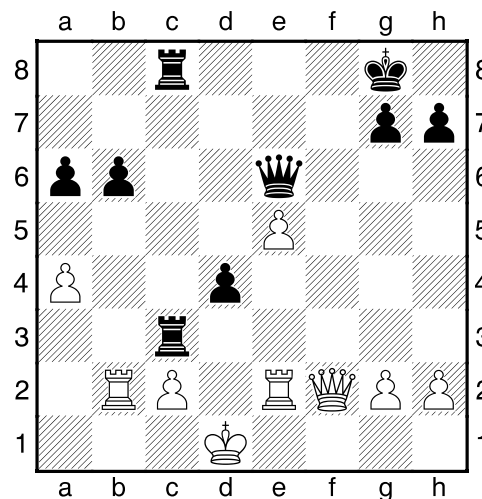
6.bxc3 Nc6 7.d4 Be7 8.Nf3 0–0 9.Bf4 f6 10.Qe3 The situation is now full of peril for White. The forced opening of the f-file, added to the inconvenient position of his Queen, unite in rendering early Castling extremely problematical. And early Castling

seems, in the circumstances, to be almost necessary to the maintenance of his game.
10...fxe5 11.dxe5 b6 12.Bb5 Bc5 [Diagram]



13.Nd4 An error, the consequences of which prove fatal. 13.Qd2 was a far better move. **13...Nxd4 14.cxd4 Bb4+** Compelling White to move his King or submit to material loss. **15.Kd1** For if 15.c3 then 15...Bxc3+ 16.Qxc3 Rxf4 &c. From this point the game is virtually in the hands of the second player, who presses his advantage with great vigour.

15...c5 16.dxc5 Bg4+ 17.Kc1 Bxc5 18.Qg3 Be6 19.Bd3 Qd7 20.a4 a6 21.Be3 Bf5 22.Re1 Rac8 23.Bxf5 Qxf5 24.Bxc5 Rxc5 25.Ra2 Rfc8 26.Re2 d4 27.Kd1 Rc3 28.Qf2 Qe6 29.Rb2 There seems no better move, though this gives Mr. Mason an opportunity of bringing the contest to a neat and speedy termination. [Diagram]



29...d3! 30.cxd3 Rxd3+ 31.Red2 Qg4+ 32.Qe2 Qxa4+ 33.Ke1 Rc1+ 34.Kf2 Qf4+ 35.Qf3 Rxd2+

[Game score and annotations from the Chess Monthly, Volume X, pages 54-55; ; the date given there for the game – July 27 – is incorrect]

**James Mason - J.A. Porterfield Rynd 1–0
Match Dublin (Game 5), 27 vii 1888**

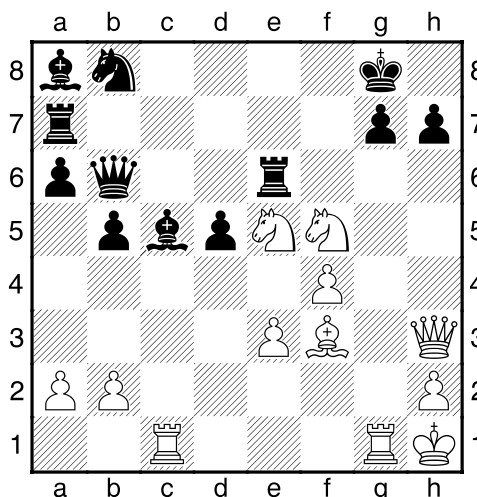
The fifth game was played at the Divan yesterday evening. The American champion adopted Van't Kruys opening - the moves being 1. e3 Nf6 2. d4 d5 - after which the game assumed the position of a Queen's Gambit declined. The Dubliner developed a Queen's Fianchetto, but afterwards blocked it by advancing his c-pawn only one square, from the cramping effects of which he never recovered. The interesting play which ensued was attentively studied by a large group of chessists, who at the conclusion were amply rewarded by the pretty finish of Mr Mason. Play in the match will now be suspended till Tuesday evening. [Dublin Daily Express, 28 vii 1888]

1.e3 The opening derives its name from the Dutch player Van't Kruys, who adopted it against Anderssen in 1851. **1...Nf6 2.d4 d5 3.c4 e6 4.Nc3 b6 5.Nf3 Bb7 6.cxd5 exd5** This appears to be opposed to the idea underlying the development of the Bishop at b7, and has the further effect of making the management of the position on the Queen's side more difficult than need be. 6...Nxd5 would be better; as it might be followed up by c5 at an opportune moment.

7.Bd2 Be7 8.Be2 0–0 9.0–0 c6 Most of Black's subsequent troubles may be directly referred to this and his next succeeding move. **10.Rc1 Qd6 11.Ne5** It is clear that even this early White has much the superior game.

11...Nfd7 12.f4 f6 13.Nd3 f5 Necessary to prevent the advance of the adverse f-pawn, followed by Nf4–e6, which would render his position on the King's side all but untenable. **14.Ne5 Nf6 15.g4** Safe enough! Black can do little but await the coming attack and parry as best may be. **15...Ne4 16.gxf5 Nxd2 17.Qxd2 Rxf5 18.Kh1 b5** Surely there was no time for this.

19.Bg4 Rf6 20.Rg1 a6 21.Qg2 Threatening to win at least a piece. **21...Bf8** Of course, if 21...Kh8 the answer would be 22.Bc8 **22.Ne2 Ra7 23.Ng3 Ba8 24.Nh5 Rh6 25.Ng3 Qd8 26.Bf3 Qb6 27.Nf5 Re6 28.Qh3 c5 29.dxc5 Bxc5** [Diagram]



30.Rxc5 Decisive.**30...Qxc5 31.Nxg7 Rg6 32.Qe6+! Kh8** If 32...Rxe6 then 33.Nxe6+ Kh8 34.Nxc5 with a piece ahead. **33.Nxg6+ hxg6 34.Qe8+** If 34...Kxg7 35.Rxg6+ and Qg8 mate.

[Game score and annotations from the Chess Monthly, Volume X, pages 52-53; the date given there for the game – July 7 – is incorrect]

At this point the original plan for the match seems to have been re-jigged. The Dublin Daily Express for Monday 30th July reported

“The amateur who fought so well during the week, and who stands on an equal footing with Mr Mason, was unable to be present to play the game which is to decide the match, having been obliged to leave town on professional business, but it will be played out on his return.”

So it appears the suspension of the match until the Tuesday of the second week, as mentioned in the report on Game 5, was not as anticipated in the original schedule. Further the match condition of five games up had been abandoned with all now depending on the result of a sixth and final deciding game.

However the loss of any play in the Match was compensated by Mason taking on a select band of Dublin amateurs. The Dublin Daily Express for the Monday also reported that a “very large number of chess players” had witnessed a simultaneous exhibition by Mason “against seven champions, including some of considerable repute.” After three hours play, the professional had won four games against Black, Kenny, Dick and Hogg with those against Soffe, Wolseley and Cook being drawn.

The “professional business” that caused Porterfield Rynd to absent himself from the Match was a matter that created much more publicity at the time than his chess. It involved a future Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the leader of the Unionist cause in the early 20th century.

On the 9th July, a couple of weeks before the Match had started, there had a criminal prosecution in Tralee arising out of a dispute between two mill owners (and Justices of the Peace), Richard Latchford and Robert McCowen over a dispute as to their right to obtain water from the Big River. On the 25th June supporters of each turned up and a very serious faction fight broke out amongst them. 27 people, including Latchford and 22 of his supporters, were charged with riot and were tried before two Resident Magistrates, one of whom was called Cecil Roche (who had what might be termed “history” with Latchford) instead of receiving trial by jury. The case against Latchford was heard first and he was convicted and sentenced to one month’s imprisonment. A case against McCowen’s son and two of his employees was then dismissed. The cases of Latchford’s supporters were then adjourned and appear eventually to have been abandoned or dismissed.

The case became a cause célèbre with questions being asked in Parliament. On the 12th July, in the House of Commons, the MP for Kerry West, Edward Harrington raised

the Latchford case in a question to Arthur Balfour, the Chief Secretary of Ireland (and later U.K. Prime Minister from 1902 to 1905). Harrington was a member of Parnell's Irish National League brother. The purpose of Harrington's question was raise a two-fold complaint – that (a) despite this case arising out of a business quarrel Latchford had been denied trial by jury under the Irish Crimes Act 1887 which had been introduced alongside other legislation by Balfour as a method of dealing with the agrarian protest movement (known as the Plan of Campaign) and (b) that Latchford had previously attended a meeting against the conduct of the RM Roche in ordering a baton charge on people gathered at an earlier meeting – one held in support of Harrington after his conviction in connection with his activities supporting the Plan of Campaign - and that Roche had then reported Latchford for that to the Lord Chancellor (the head of the judiciary). Now not only had Roche heard the criminal prosecution of Latchford and convicted him but he was also refusing to allow any mechanism for an appeal. [Harrington also had history with McCowen – the latter had been a member of the Grand Jury which had preferred the charges against the MP].

It was this case that required Porterfield Rynd's services as a barrister. His absence from Dublin was probably because he had to travel to Tralee to take instructions from Latchford.

Meanwhile the Dublin Daily Express was reporting that back in Dublin on Monday evening, "owing to the indisposition of Mr Mason" a further simultaneous display had to be abandoned. Nevertheless a "considerable number of spectators" watched "a number of interesting gamesplayed by some of the best Dublin amateurs". The Express also indicated that the Match would be resumed on that evening (i.e. Tuesday 31st July):

"One game only remains to be played, and, as the score is at present even, each player will, doubtless, exert himself to the fullest."

Unfortunately, it was not to be. The Express reported in its Wednesday 1st August edition:

"A large number of chess players and other interested spectators assembled last evening at Mr Morphy's Chess Divanto see the final struggle between the visitor and the Dublin amateurOwing, however, to a professional engagement the latter was unable to fulfil the appointment, but those who were present were well rewarded by witnessing Mr Mason's skill as an accomplished strategist – he having undertaken, singlehanded, to vanquish 13 players. This he succeeded in doing in a meritorious manner, having won twelve, the remaining one being drawn."

We cannot say whether this professional engagement was in respect of the Latchford case or possibly some knock-on effect to his professional duties from Rynd having to leave Dublin for Tralee. However the consequence seems clear enough – the Match would not even be finished under the revised conditions.

On the evening of Wednesday 1st August Mason was again hard at work, in what

appears to have been another simultaneous display although the report in Friday's Express is not absolutely clear about this.

"Mr Mason again on Wednesday evening encountered some of the strongest of the Dublin amateurs. A very considerable number of interested spectators closely watched the attacks and defence on the different boards; but Mr Mason's superior skill soon became manifest by the resignation of his opponents, whose strength as chess players was, however, cordially acknowledged by the champion."

On this occasion there is no sign of Rynd nor any mention of the Match, so this can probably be taken as confirmation that the battle between Mason and Rynd was definitely not going to be resumed. There was no reported mention in the press of either Mason's or Rynd's doings on the Thursday - however, in that day's edition of both the Irish Times and the Dublin Daily Express an advertisement for a new attraction featuring Mason appeared:

CITY CHESS CLUB, DUBLIN COFFEE PALACE, 6 TOWNSEND STREET

By kind permission of Mr Morphy, of the Dublin Chess Divan, Mr Mason, American Chess Champion, will play 25 games simultaneously in the Coffee Palace Hall on Friday evening, commencing at 8 o'clock. Amateurs wishing to play will please send their names before 7 o'clock on Friday evening to the Chess Committee.

The City Chess Club had only been established late the previous year and Porterfield Rynd was one of its leading lights. Perhaps he had arranged this exhibition not only to publicise the fledgling club but also as a reparation to Mason and Murphy for his enforced absence from the Divan, which had led to the inconclusive end to the Match.

On the Friday, Rynd was occupied in the Exchequer Division of the High Court in Dublin with the Latchford case. However there was no affidavit (a statement sworn under oath) from Latchford setting out his case. Chief Baron Palles, widely regarded as one of the finest judges of his (or indeed any) time ruled that either Latchford should swear an affidavit or his Solicitor should show in an affidavit that Latchford had been prevented from making one. However if this issue was dealt with, the court would sit on the Saturday.

On the Friday evening, as advertised, Mason commenced his simultaneous display in the Lecture Hall of the Coffee Palace at 8 o'clock. Both the Irish Times and Dublin Daily Express covered the events in their Monday 6th August editions. The reports are worded in near identical fashion – the only significant difference being that the Express states the exhibition occurred on the Saturday. This is almost certainly an error – the exhibition was widely advertised for Friday and no mention of a postponement is made in the Express – we therefore prefer the Irish Times version of events that Mason's final appearance in his Dublin stay was on the Friday. The professional faced 20 amateurs, both members of the City Club and visitors, including the Rev Mr Adams of the Sussex Chess Association.

"The twenty opponents of the champion were:- 1, Mr Campbell; 2, Mr Kenny; 3, Mr Young; 4, Mr Prentice; 5, Mr Wilson; 6, Mr Woodham; 7, Mr Davy; 8, Mr Napier; 9, Mr Hogg; 10, Mr McGrade; 11, Mr Humphreys, 12, Mr Thompson; 13, Mr Walsh; 14, Mr Samson; 15, Mr Cassan; 16, Mr C. Thompson; 17, Rev. Mr. Adams; 18, Rev. Mr Fleury; 19, Professor Oldham; 20, Mr S. Johnston. The contests became interesting and animated at an early stage, and afforded much pleasure to the onlookers. Many prominent supporters of the game were present, including Mr Parker Dunscombe, Mr Chetmode Crawley, Mr Porterfield Rynd, Mr Soffe, Mr Wolseley, Dr. W. A. Murray, Mr Morphy. When play ceased at 11 o'clock it was found that only Mr Young drew, and the champion won all the other games. Considering the strength and caution of the players pitted against him, Mr Mason's victory was all the more signal. At the conclusion, Mr Rynd, on behalf of the City Chess Clubthanked Mr Mason for his goodness in coming to give them the exhibition of his great powers, and thanked Mr Morphy, the proprietor of the Chess Divan in Grafton street, for his permission in the matter."

On the Saturday morning, Porterfield Rynd was back in front of Chief Baron Palles in the Exchequer Court. An affidavit which had been sworn the previous day by Latchford was now available and Rynd set out to Palles the facts as averred by his client. Essentially his case was that a riot had not taken place and in fact he had cautioned his men in advance not to commit any assault. Further, as all the other persons charged over the incident had either been acquitted or the prosecution against them had been abandoned by the prosecution, Rynd argued that one person could not constitute a riot. Rynd was seeking an order for a writ of habeas corpus – which, if granted, would require his gaoler to produce Latchford physically before the court and set out when Latchford had been imprisoned and the reasons for it (known as making the return), so that the court could then adjudicate on the lawfulness of the imprisonment. At this stage the application was being made *ex parte*, i.e. without notice to the other interested parties in the case and consequently without facing any counter evidence or submissions. The Chief Baron granted the order sought on the ground that there was no sufficient or legal charge of riot set forth in the conviction. The case (with all parties present) would be heard on Monday 6th August and Palles directed that notice be served on the Crown Solicitor, Mr Coll and a telegram also be sent to the governor of the jail at Tralee and the prosecutor there.

On the afternoon of Monday 6th August, the final determination of Latchford's application was heard by a three-judge court comprising Chief Baron Palles, Baron Dowse and Mr Justice Andrews. Mr Coll had instructed Edward Carson to represent the Governor of Tralee Jail. In the Irish context Carson is most famous as the leader of the Ulster Unonst Party and the leading opponent of Home Rule some quarter of a century after these events. In 1888 Carson was still a junior barrister like Porterfield Rynd. He took silk the following year and later became a prominent member of the English Bar. In 1895 appeared for the Marquess of Queensbury in the criminal libel claim brought by Oscar Wilde and which ended disastrously for Wilde. In 1910 Carson

also successfully defended the young naval cadet, Archer Shee – a case which was dramatised as “The Winslow Boy” by the playwright Terence Rattigan.

This however was not to be one of Carson’s finest hours. Although Latchford had been brought to court in his prison clothes, no return had been made to the warrant. Carson had to indicate that he had only received his brief that morning but that the matter would be regularised. At this point Baron Dowse decided to have a little fun at Carson’s expense. He first asked Carson, “Is the prisoner a moonlighter?” which was greeted with laughter. Carson’s reply, said to be made testily in the report in the Freeman’s Journal, was that he knew nothing of the case except what was contained in the court order. Baron Dowse then asked “was not the ordinary law sufficient to grapple with the case without bringing it under the Crimes Act.” Carson played a straight bat to all this but things were looking good for Latchford’s case. When called on to reply, Porterfield Rynd concentrated on the legal technicalities – that it was not sufficient to state in the conviction that the accused had taken part in a riot; the particulars of the crime should be distinctly stated. Prompted by Baron Dowse, if such was needed, he augmented this by making the point that a man could not commit a riot on his own.

The three Judges then gave their decisions, all finding in favour of Latchford. By this time the return had been prepared and after inspecting it Chief Baron Palles ordered Latchford’s release, the JP leaving court with a number of friends to change from his prison clothes before being cheered as he passed through the main hall of the court.

Latchford then returned by train to Tralee the following evening where, according to the Freeman’s Journal, he was met by an immense crowd and a large force of constabulary. He was cheered the entire way from the train station to his offices, where he addressed the crowd while a police shorthand writer conspicuously took notes.

The outcome of the Latchford case might be seen as a small victory for the cause of Irish nationalism. It is therefore ironic that Porterfield Rynd, the man entrusted with securing his release, did not share that political standpoint and twenty years later was a prominent Unionist campaigner.

While Porterfield Rynd had been following his profession on the afternoon of the 6th August, James Mason was also engaged in his, commencing play at 2.30pm in Round 1 of the Bradford International Chess Tournament and playing out an uneventful 18-move draw with Taubenhaus. He went on to share third place, the prizewinners’ scores being: 1. I. Gunsberg 13.5; 2.G.H. Mackenzie 12.0; 3=4. C. von Bardeleben, J. Mason 11.0; 5. A. Burn 10.5; 6=7. J.H. Blackburne, M. Weiss 10.5.

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