

REMOVAL OF THE POLICE COMMISSIONERS OF BALTIMORE CITY.

On the 18th of October last, a memorial was submitted to this Department, signed by four thousand three hundred citizens of Baltimore, praying the removal of the Police Commissioners of that city, on various charges stated by them. The acts complained of occurred during the election for Mayor and members of the City Council, which took place on the 10th of October last, resulting in the election of the present incumbents, and throwing the government of the city into the hands of officers, representing less than one-fourth of the registered voters of that corporation. As serious apprehensions seemed to be entertained by many, of a probable outbreak on the day of election, and as a contingency might have arisen, requiring an application to the Executive of the State, I called upon the Attorney General for his legal opinion upon the questions then at issue.

This opinion, I deem it proper to state, was procured by me, with no intention of taking any part in the municipal election, but solely with a view to my own guidance, in case the authorities of the State had been appealed to.

The act relating to the registration of the voters of the State, passed March 24th, 1865, places the limitation within which the returns of the officers of registration were required to be made, beyond the period appointed by law for holding the municipal elections of the City of Baltimore. This virtually disfranchised, according to the opinion of the Attorney General of the State, more than one half of its voting population. That the Legislature could not have contemplated any such construction of the law, I am fully convinced; and the omission to name an earlier day, for the returns of the Officers of Registration, so as to include the municipal election, strengthened the belief that the law was not meant to apply to corporations, but only to general State elections. Some of the most eminent jurists in the State entertained this view. In an aggregate voting population of 24,000, duly qualified under the act of registration, in the City of Baltimore, the successful city officers, now in charge of the city and its property, represent scarcely one-fourth of this registered vote. Such flagrant injustice to the people of Baltimore could not fail to result in the most embittered feeling; and coupled as it was, with the extraordinary conduct of the Police Board, in the selection of the Judges of election and special policemen, who officiated on that occasion, it may be well doubted whether any despotism could have been devised, more thorough and complete, to retain by force and management, the power which this combination so defiantly held in their grasp. The report of the trial of these Commissioners, and the subsequent proceedings in Baltimore, attending the arrest of the new