

THE POLICE & THE PUBLIC.

REMEMBER TRAFALGAR SQUARE.

Fellow Citizens,

Since the middle of October the police have been used to break up peaceable and orderly meetings, to assault harmless citizens engaged in the exercise of the constitutional rights of meeting and procession, and generally to terrorise the poorer classes of the community. On November 13th in Trafalgar Square and in the roads leading thereto they bludgeoned men, women, and children, treating alike demonstrators and spectators, sending their horses at full gallop into dense masses of people, using the most brutal and unnecessary violence, destroying banners and musical instruments which poor men had bought, and generally behaving more like savages than decent Englishmen. Many workmen, among them an old man of 65, had their arms broken and hundreds were cut and otherwise injured. All this was done under cover of a proclamation by King Charles Warren, which has since been given up by Mr. Poland, Solicitor to the Treasury, as mere waste paper.

In the afternoon and evening of November 13th, policemen, *within the police stations*, set on the helpless prisoners and beat them savagely. One man had a tooth broken; another had his eyes blackened; a third was beaten till he streamed with blood; a fourth was knocked senseless; but it is useless to recapitulate all the cases.

On November 14th, witnesses for the defence in three cases, to my own knowledge, were kept out of court by the police, until the men on whose behalf they came, had been sentenced inside. I say nothing yet of the perjury by which convictions were obtained, while the evidence which would have shown the perjury was violently kept from the court.

On November the 20th, in defiance of King Charles Warren's Gracious pledge that processions should be permitted to pass unmolested along certain routes, two of these licensed processions were attacked by the police, their instruments broken, some of their members arrested, and charged on November 21st, with assault.

On the same day a young man who was standing quietly, but who wrote down the number of a policeman who committed an unprovoked assault on another person, was set on by a band of uniformed ruffians and beaten senseless so that he had to be conveyed to the hospital shockingly injured in the head and face. Such are a few of the acts which have been committed during the last fortnight by the "guardians of the peace". How are we to deal with this army of men, who are permitted, if not ordered by their superiors to thus terrorise peaceful citizens and render the streets dangerous for law-abiding men and women? We cannot fight them; for we are not organised for physical resistance. We cannot dismiss them; for they are not under the control of any authority elected by the citizens of London. One thing we can do; shun them and hold no intercourse with them, save such intemperate as may be necessary to rescue our comrades out of their hands. Some smarting under personal injuries, are, I fear, meditating personal vengeance on individual policemen. Earnestly I implore such not to let their just resentment lead them into crime. Far more dignified and more effective is the moral reprobation shown by refusing to have fellowship with the offenders. If it is said this would be hard on the decent members of the force, our answer is that we cannot distinguish among them for comradeship, any more than they distinguish among us in breaking our heads. To be a policeman now is to be a man who sells himself to maltreat his brethren at the orders of the new Tzar at Scotland Yard, and if such a man ranges himself against the people, the people must treat him like an enemy. Till the police resume their proper function as guardians, not breakers of the peace, till they again devote themselves to their proper duties of arresting criminals instead of honest workers, let the London workers show their resentment and their indignation by excluding them from their company and abstaining from all communication with them.

November 27th, 1887.

ANNIE BESANT.

Printed by Annie Besant, 19 Avenue Road, London, N. W.

