

Workers' Herald.

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PRICE ONE PENNY.

Nobody but a bishop or a bank director can ever be rogue enough to deserve hanging.—
RUSKIN.

MEN WHO ARE NOT SOCIALISTS.

VI. THE POLICE.

The only sensible thing acted in our theatres nowadays is the harlequinade, and I never miss seeing it. It is so thoroughly socialistic—from the stealing of hams and sausages out of the butcher's shop, to the dipping of the policeman in a barrel of treacle, burning him with a red-hot poker, and passing him through a mangle! It is the Social Revolution in miniature, and I enjoy it immensely—especially the treatment of the policeman. It is so full of instruction, too, and moral benefit to the young. When I have a family, I will take the youngsters regularly to see the harlequinade, and also to witness labour and free speech riots, and if they do not play a lively part in the Social Revolution it won't be the fault of their early impressions.

In olden times people walked in lonely places at night-time in dread of evil spirits—warlocks, witches, and goblins; nowadays, alike in the day-time and night-time, and in busy and lonely places, they go about in terror of the police. The presence of a policeman at his door, or the touch of a policeman's hand on his shoulder, excites as much apprehension in the breast of a free-born Britain to-day as the sight of the horns of the devil peeping over a peat-stack did to his serf-bound ancestor.

In olden times when folk suffered no skaith from evil-disposed persons, when they found their horses safe in their stalls and the grain unbroken in their barns, they held that they had been warded by

good spirits; nowadays when people live without molestation, when their houses are not entered by thieves, or their children stripped of their clothes in the streets, they attribute their good fortune to the ministrations of the police.

The inhabitants of these islands have thus devised a new superstition; they have become a police-fearing and a police-trusting people. Mankind has sought out many inventions of idolatry and demonolity—there has been stone-worship, tree-worship, bird-worship, serpent-worship, crocodile-worship, cat-worship, and cow-worship; but surely police-worship is the lowest and will be the last.

The cry of "Police!" lies at the bottom of the heart of every Briton, and becomes articulate upon his lips in every case of public alarm or fear of violence to his own or his neighbour's person or property. If anyone assaults him he screams "Police!" and if he sees another assaulted he screams "Police!" If two drunk people fight, if a fire breaks out, if a child is run down, if an old lady trips over her poodle, if a wild bull or a mad dog rushes down the street, if some one attempts suicide by leaping over a bridge, if a purse is stolen, a window broken, or a water-main bursts—the cry of "Police!" announces the occurrence, and puts the neighbourhood in a panic. Yes, the cry of "Police!" is as instinctive to the adult Briton as the cry of "Ma!" was to him when a child, and it leaps forth spontaneously, oftentimes on the most untoward and compromising occasions.

During the miners' riot at Blantyre some years ago, when a number of shops were looted, an old man was seen trudging up the street with a cheese in his arms, of which he had become possessed as his portion of the "general divide" of a grocery store. On his way some miner's wives, wishing to still further extend the application of the temporarily triumphant Socialist principle, ran after him demanding shares, on observing which the poor fellow clasped the cheese desparingly to his bosom and took to his heels, yelling "Police! Police! Police!"

So habituated have people become to depending upon the police for protection,

that they have surrendered the right of protecting themselves, and have ceased to recognise their own and their neighbour's duty to preserve the public peace and guard the commonweal. They have grown so familiar with the intrusion and interference of the police in the concerns and discipline of public life, that they are no longer conscious of the powers which the police have usurped. They allow the police to bully them in the streets, overawe them in their workshops and dwellings, and coerce them into submission to the most degrading restrictions and behests of class tyranny; and have actually convinced themselves that their own and the common well-being depends upon their submission, and that without the presence and dominion of the police, Commerce, Art, Science, and life itself would be impossible in a civilised community. A man may publicly disavow belief in God, the Constitution, and the Church, and no one expresses disapproval or surprise, but if he dares deny the necessary existence of the police he is laughed at as a lunatic or denounced as a scoundrel. I have seen an audience of working men greet with applause the assertion that society could endure without landlords, capitalists, lawyers, doctors, clerks, and commercial travellers, but when the speaker added policemen, the applause ceased, a murmur passed round the crowd, and in a few minutes the apparently most sensible and intelligent portion of the audience had disappeared in disgust.

Still, although it seems almost blasphemous to say so, the police are merely men, having heads that will crack if belaboured with a truncheon, and necks that will break if suspended by a rope, just like yours or mine. Yes, stripped of their blue clothes, their helmets, and their tackety books, policemen are not differently formed in body and not differently constituted in mind from peers, members of Parliament, lawyers, judges, burglars, parsons, editors, or tramps. The recognition of this fact enables us to consider the habits and functions of the police without that superstitious awe that clouds the perception and perverts the judgment of our fellows.