

Let him that stole steal no more.

MEN WHO ARE NOT SOCIALISTS.

III. THE POLICE.

(Concluded.)

I have known a number of policemen intimately, and have, by condescending to the level of their intelligence and sympathies, gained from them a deal of knowledge of human nature. To fraternise in this way properly with a policeman, one must contrive to meet them in a friendly way in a country public-house after the authorised closing time. I have spent many a sociable hour with them on such occasions, and have noticed how soon all their official characteristics except their clothes disappear under the influence of Scotch whisky. I've got them to join in singing the "Marseillaise," dance the "Carmagnole," and toast the "Social Revolution!"

I remember a sergeant of police with whom I got on friendly terms in this way. He knew I was a Socialist, and I knew that he procured smuggled tobacco, and occasionally accepted hares and rabbits which had been poached on a neighbouring preserve. There was thus a magnetism between us as it were. We used to walk arm-in-arm down a country road after leaving the tavern at midnight, when he confided to me suppressed information about the crimes and scandals of the well-to-do people in the district, and revealed to me many of the secrets of his profession. Having been many years a city constable, his information regarding the theory and practice of "law-n'-order" was extensive and interesting.

He was much perplexed regarding some points of religion, and seemed to derive much consolation from my exegetical remarks. He was especially interested in the bearing of scientific investigation upon the question of the six day's creation, the flood, and similar old-

fashioned points of biblical controversy. I had a deal of trouble in persuading him to give up the orthodox notion of eternal torment. We stood, I remember, some two hours under the moonlight one night arguing the point, and as I bade him "Good morning!" he pressed my hand warmly, and with emotion told me that a new light had dawned upon his soul, and that I had made him a happy man; he then pulled a flask from his hip-pocket, and we drank affectionately and separated.

He was removed to another district shortly afterwards, because a local pawnbroker, who was also a Justice of the Peace, had taken a set against him for discovering some valuable stolen property on his shelves. He was much hurt at this, for, as he explained to me, he was forced to make the discovery against his inclination, and he had befriended the pawnbroker many a time at great risk to himself. Before leaving he assured me that if the Socialists could have given him a salary to go round the country denouncing the police system—as the Irish National party had done in the case of several Irish constables—he would most readily have resigned; and he begged of me, should a favourable opportunity occur, to mention the matter to Morris or Hyndman.

My acquaintance with policemen in their ordinary mortal capacity led me in the early stages of my propagandist career to regard them as not unfavourable material for operating upon, and for a time I had great ideas of converting them to Socialism wholesale, as the Spaniards converted the Moors to Christianity. I conjured visions of the ranks of the constabulary becoming honeycombed with our proselytes, who would refuse to act in case of a strike or popular revolt. I used, therefore, to direct my remarks so that the policemen who decorated the fringe of the crowd might be conciliated and attracted towards our principles. Oftentimes I was certain that I observed beneath their affected indifference or disdain, a glimmer of sympathy twinkle in their lordly souls. When I had occasion to pass near them I looked kindly in their

faces, and if perchance I received a nod of friendly recognition my heart bounded within me. I contrived sometimes to get into conversation with them, and esteemed the vaguest expression of sympathy from one of them as of more importance than an avowal of full acceptance from twenty common citizens.

But it was all a hallucination! Ere long I discovered that their sympathy was without substance—and that I was only making an ass of myself. All my subsequent experience of them confirms this notion, and convinces me that it is as hard for a policeman to be a Socialist as for a bishop to be a Christian or a politician a patriot.

I never attempt to convert policemen now—I have, I hope, become a wiser man. I have reasoned the matter impartially, and have concluded that even if we could convert a few here and there—and we could not hope to do more—it would serve no useful purpose. If, after being converted, they remained in the force, they would not be men worth converting, and if they left the force others would take their place, and our proselytes being then no longer policemen, we would only have gained a few additional ordinary members—and not likely very good ones either. Besides, I think the fact of policemen becoming Socialists would tend to lower the moral and intellectual status of the movement. They may do all very well for the Salvation Army and other Christian bodies, where the acquisition of heathens and sinners adds lustre to their names and money to their treasuries; but in the Socialist movement we find that the acquisition of honest and intelligent men serves and pays best. We can look at things from a business point of view as well as our neighbours!

So much, indeed, have my sentiments changed, that I now feel quite uncomfortable when I think my speeches are making a favourable impression upon any of them. The thought suggests issues that are perplexing. It seems unfair to enlist a policeman's sympathy towards us to-day and perhaps have to heave bricks at him to-morrow. It mars the field and spoils the fight. Of course, if a police-

man insists upon becoming a socialist we cannot prevent him; but it would be better if he didn't. Not that I have any animosity against them personally—none in the least. Although I regard them as destroyers of the public peace, devourers of public rights, maltreaters of the poor, and hired hacks of the privileged class; although I regard them as being mostly ignorant, lazy, bullying, cowardly, conceited rascals; and although at the beginning of this paper I expressed delight in witnessing their public execution—yet I bear them no malice. Why should I? Are they not victims of civilisation like the rest of us? They are bad, but why should we thirst for their gore? Nay, I regard them rather as Stanley regards Congo niggers—as obstacles in the path of progress; and may not I delight in seeing policemen annihilated in the abstract for freedom's sake, just as Stanley delights to kill Congo niggers in the concrete for civilisation's sake—without bearing any ill-will against them? Thank heaven! I have enough philosophy in me to enable me to fight and even kill a man without hating him in the least?

When the revolution is accomplished we shall be glad to open our doors to "all that is left of them"; meanwhile let them keep at a respectable fighting distance. If they don't meddle with us we won't meddle with them; if they do meddle with us, then heaven help their poor widows and orphans!

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