

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

Reflections on Current Events by the Boarders.

"A howl arose lately from a section of this community," said Brown, "because a policeman in self-defence used his baton upon the head of a prisoner, and there were many who not only applauded the Mayor's action in suspending the man but actually demanded that the right of the police to carry and use clubs should be revoked. Without going into the merits of this case, I merely wish to point out that every man on the force must be able to read and write and produce a first-class certificate of character before he is enrolled. After he becomes a policeman he is responsible to the Chief, the Mayor, or Police Committee for each and every one of his official acts; the fact of his being an officer does not preclude any citizen from entering an action in our courts of law for any injury or wrong that he may have suffered at his hands. He is then doubly responsible for any abuse of power with which he may be invested; responsible to his superior and the elected representatives of the people in the City Council, and responsible to the laws of the land. Under such circumstances it is not likely that even the most pugilistically inclined "Bobby" will greatly abuse the power he holds; not only is his bread and butter at stake but such a course might ultimately land him in prison. Of great deal more importance to the community and of greater danger to the State is the power vested in irresponsible magistrates, any three of whom may, upon demand, call out the militia and let 'slip the dogs of war' upon any community no matter how peaceably inclined. This was done on the Hereford Railway three years ago, when the troops were called out to assist a swindling contractor in robbing his men of three months' pay, and is repeated to-day in Hull, where the militia is being used to intimidate lumbermen into working for starvation wages. There is not an elective official to-day in Canada from a two-penny-half-penny town clerk to a responsible Minister of the Crown who, if he had the power, dare call out the militia upon so little provocation and for such nefarious purpose as was deemed good and sufficient to the magistrates of Hull and Cookshire. It may be highly patriotic to 'sit on' a policeman for abusing his power, but what about the magistrates who so flagrantly abuse their power?"

"The whole fact of the matter is that not ten out of every hundred of our justices of the peace understand the duties of their office," said Phil, "or yet are competent to intelligently discharge them. Neither is this anything to be surprised at when you consider the indiscriminate way in which they are appointed. Why, we have had men appointed who couldn't write their own name or yet read it if it was written in letters as big as a barn door, and whose only qualification was that they had lent the Government a hand during election times, and often in a very questionable manner at that, and these are the men who hold the power to declare civil war among us. Nothing occurred at either Cookshire or Hull which half a dozen constables with a little tact and common sense could not have settled satisfactorily, yet in the former place it almost created a revolution, with an expenditure of eight thousand dollars, and at the latter place no man living can say what the outcome may be. Should this unwarranted calling out of the militia result in riot and bloodshed, in destruction of property or loss of life, there is positively outside of Judge Lynch's code, no law under which you could punish the magistrates who signed the warrant for their inconsiderate and hasty action. The militia is an organization maintained at the expense of the State, and should only be called out as a last re-

sort when all other efforts of the local authorities to maintain order had failed, and no one but the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, who is responsible to the country, should have the power to call it out. If the office of justice of the peace was ever intended to be anything more than an honorary title thrown into the maw of ambitious and vain glorious politicians, it should be made elective; if not, the present incapable incumbents should be shorn of the power to plunge the country into a civil war."

"It just amounts to this," said Gas-kill, "that if the militia is to be used for no other purpose than that of intimidating labor it is high time that labor took steps to disband an organization which acts the part of bumbailiff for greedy capitalists. As a matter of fact, I can't understand why workingmen have not devoted more attention to this question in the past. I have never yet read or heard of a single instance where the militia was called out for the purpose of protecting labor or to shoot down capitalistic robbers, and until I do hear it or see it done I shall advocate as a measure of first importance the disbanding of all troops whether they be regulars or volunteers. I don't believe in picking the stick which is to be used on my own back."

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