

As to the police force, without which there would be no security for human life one hour upon the gold-field, owing to the mixture of races thrown together—the adventurers and off-scourings of all countries, and the number of escaped and freed convicts from Van Dieman's Land and Sydney, many of whom take the name and occupation of digger to cover that of thief and assassin, it required a vigilant and well-kept-up mounted force. It was true, here the digger who found fault with unnecessary expenditure, had some little cause for complaint; for there were too many police officers employed—inspectors and sub-inspectors—almost an officer for every half dozen troopers, generally young, shallow-brained fellows, proud of their uniform, treating the diggers overbearingly, and bringing down invectives upon the Government through its servants. An experienced sergeant would have done the duty with greater satisfaction to the digging population. As there are always demagogues found ready to seize upon any public feeling of discontent, and fan it to a flame, it was not long before the suppressed murmurs of the diggers rose to threats, and threatened to come to blows. Meetings were held at Bendigo, Ballarat, McIvor, Castlemaine, Goulbourne, and finally at the Ovens. Speeches were made, and resolutions passed, not to pay the license tax, and to resist, if an attempt were made to force them. Petitions were sent to the Governor and Council, praying that it might be done away with, and that, as a body, they might have representation in Council.

As the Bendigo delegates, who presented the petition to His Excellency, reported him wanting in courtesy and unsatisfactory in his replies to them, the diggers, burning to revenge what they considered as fresh proof of hard usage and insult, refused to await the decision of Council, and