

meeting was accordingly held, to deliberate on the best means of shutting themselves in; and at the meeting almost all the adult male inhabitants attended, with the exception of the gentlemen in the commission of the peace, and the town officials, who, though quite prepared to wink hard at our irregularities, failed to see that, on any grounds tenable in the eye of the law, they themselves could take a share in them.

Our meeting at first threatened to be stormy. The extra Liberals, who, in the previous ecclesiastical struggle, had taken part to a man with the Gaelic people, as they did, in the subsequent church controversy, with the Court of Session, began by an attack on the town Justices. We might all see now, said a Liberal writer lad who addressed us, how little these people were our friends. Now when the place was threatened by the pestilence, they would do nothing for us; they would not even so much as countenance our meeting; we saw there was not one of them present: in short, they cared nothing at all about us, or whether we died or lived. But he and his friends would stand by us to the last; nay, while the magistrates were evidently afraid, with all their wealth, to move in the matter, terrified, no doubt, by the prosecutions for damages which might be instituted against them were they to stop the highways, and turn back travellers, he himself, though far from rich, would be our security against all legal processes whatever. This, of course, was very noble; all the more noble from the circumstance that the speaker could not, as the *Gazette* informed us, meet his own actual liabilities at the time, and yet was fully prepared, notwithstanding, to meet with all our possible ones. Up started, however, almost ere he had done speaking, a friend of the Justices, and made so angry a speech in their defence, that the meeting threatened to fall into two parties, and explode in a squabble. I rose in the extremity, and, though unhappily no orator, addressed my town-folk in a few homely sentences. Cholera, I reminded them, was too evidently of neither party; and the magistrates were, I was sure, nearly as much frightened as we were. But they really could do nothing for us. In matters of life and death,