

however, when laws and magistrates failed to protect quiet people, the people were justified in asserting the natural right to protect themselves ; and, whatever laws and lawyers might urge to the contrary, that right was now ours. In a neighboring county, the inhabitants of certain infected villages were fairly shut up amid their dwellings by the countryfolk around, who could themselves show a clean bill of health ; and we, if in the circumstances of these villagers, would very possibly be treated after the same manner. And what remained to us in our actual circumstances was just to anticipate the process of being ourselves bottled in, by bottling the country out. The town, situated on a promontory, and approachable at only a few points, could easily be guarded ; and, instead of squabbling about the merits of Justices of the Peace,—very likely somewhat Conservative in their leanings,—or of spirited Reformers who would like very well to be Justices of the Peace too, and would doubtless make very excellent ones, I thought it would be far better for us immediately to form ourselves into a Defence Association, and proceed to regulate our watches and set our guards. My short speech was remarkably well received. There was a poor man immediately beside me, who was in great dread of cholera, and who actually proved one of its first victims in the place,—for in little more than a week after, he was in his grave,—who backed me by an especially vigorous Hear, hear !—and the answering Hear, hears, of the meeting bore down all reply. We accordingly at once formed our Defence Association ; and ere midnight our rounds and stations were marked out, and the watches set. All power passed at once out of the hands of the magistrates ; but the worthy men themselves said very little about it ; and we had the satisfaction of knowing that their families—especially their wives and laughters—were very friendly indeed both to the Association and the temporary suspension of the law, and that, on both their own account and ours, they wished us all manner of success.

We kept guard for several days. All vagabonds and trampers were turned back without remorse ; but there was a respectable class of travellers from whom there was less danger