

Petition of Mary Fildes of Manchester

House of Commons, Votes and Proceedings, 15 May 1821

Transcribed by Lauren Jaye Gradwell

(No. 616)

A Petition of *Mary Fildes*, of *Manchester*, in the County of *Lancaster*, was presented, and read; setting forth, That the Petitioner has been long a resident in *Manchester*, and on the 16th of August 1819, a Meeting having been convened by public advertisement in *St. Peter's Field*, in *Manchester* aforesaid, for the purpose of considering the most legal and effective means of obtaining a Reform in the Representation of the House, the Petitioner went to the ground about one o'clock; and having ascended an elevated situation for the purpose of hearing more distinctly the proceedings of the Meeting, to the utter astonishment of the Petitioner; a quarter of an hour had scarcely elapsed, when she perceived a troop of Yeomanry Cavalry, without the least provocation or cause (as the Petitioner verily believes) on the part of the assembled multitude, ride furiously over the people, cutting and slashing with their sabres, right and left, men, women, and children; in a few minutes after this dreadful havock had commenced, the Petitioner was rudely and violently assailed by a person of the name of *Heiffor*, a Special Constable, who knocked the Petitioner down with a truncheon heavily weighted, as the Petitioner verily believes for the purpose of destruction, the blows of this man being followed up even after the Petitioner was struck prostrate to the ground; the said *Heiffor* then forcibly wrenched out of the Petitioner's hand a pocket-handkerchief, with which she was wiping the blood from her forehead, and accompanying the act with the most dreadful oath, put the handkerchief into his own pocket, and which the said Constable has never yet returned; the Petitioner, in a state of the utmost exhaustion, then attempted to make her escape from the horrid carnage that presented on every side; the Petitioner had only stepped a few yards, when a violent sabre blow was directed at her head, but which was warded off by the truncheon of a Constable who happened to recognize the person of the Petitioner; were it possible to pourtray the countless acts of outrage witnessed by the Petitioner, the House would shudder at the recital of the dreadful tragedy; nevertheless the Petitioner cannot refrain from calling the attention of the House to a small portion of deliberate cruelty which it was the heart-rending lot of the Petitioner to have witnessed; the Petitioner in making her way through the crowd, heard with horror the shrieks and cries of the dying and the wounded, and in one instance, the Petitioner's notice was drawn towards an aged man, whom the Petitioner saw fall under a sabre blow, inflicted on his bald head by one of the *Manchester* Yeomanry Cavalry; the poor man's name is *Scholefield*; the grey hairs, terminating the lower part of his head, were drenched with blood; the House will conceive that the Petitioner, unused to such sanguinary scenes, must, at this appalling sight, have sunk to the earth; the Petitioner's ears were then assailed by the voice of one *Meagher*, a trumpeter belonging to the troop of *Manchester* Yeomanry Cavalry, who with the most horrid oaths and imprecations, was ordering two men belonging to the same troop, "to cut away;" from this scene of slaughter it was with difficulty she could reach her own home, and was so disabled she could not leave her room for more than a fortnight; the Petitioner therefore humbly prays, That the House will forthwith institute a solemn inquiry into these transactions, which alone can calm the feelings of an injured and abused people.