

EUROPE.

ENGLAND.

BATH ELECTION.

PUBLIC MEETING OF THE FRIENDS OF MR. ROEBUCK.

A Public Meeting of the Electors of the City of Bath was held on Thursday last at the upper Rooms, for the purpose of meeting Mr. Roebuck, the new Candidate for the Representation of the City, and of ascertaining his principles, and the grounds on which he had offered himself to the notice of the Electors. The meeting was held in the great room, which was crowded to excess. Shortly after one o'clock, the time appointed for commencing the proceedings, Mr. Roebuck, accompanied by Mr. Hume and several other gentlemen, entered the room amid the cheers of the assembly, and the business of the meeting was immediately opened by Alexander Falconer, Esq. moving that Mr. William Hunt do take the Chair which was carried by acclamation.

Mr. HUNT on assuming that situation, said,—"At a meeting of this character and importance, I should not have presumed to take this Chair, had it not been with your sanction and at your desire. I trust that this will secure me from any imputation of vanity or officious forwardness.—While I acknowledge the honour you have done me, I feel all the importance of this meeting. This is not the whisper of a faction, nor will this room be the arena for the conflict of political prejudices; but, I trust, a theatre for the declaration of our honest convictions, and a temple for the sacrifice of every consideration that comes between a regard to the welfare of this city and the interests of the country.

The great object of our meeting is to exercise our elective franchise, and I think we should do this not only with the exercise of our judgment, but to the satisfaction of our conscience. (Applause.) I say, our conscience; because, while I look upon the elective franchise as a just accession of political power, I also feel that it brings with it an accession of political responsibility. I feel that whatever influence it gives in the construction and character of the House of Commons, to the same extent it makes us responsible for the laws which that House shall enact, or the principles it shall adopt in matters of foreign and domestic policy.

Both the power and the responsibility of the elective franchise are something new in this city, at least as to the number of those who are in possession of such a trust; and if we have any satisfaction in reflecting how long this right was monopolized from us, it can only be in the thought that we are no way responsible for the errors and evils that resulted from the partial and interested exercise of that monopolized right. But whatever may have been the state of things in time past, it is now certain that we have no corporate monopoly to urge against our political responsibility. The elective franchise has been, with all the solemnity of law, deposited in our own hands. We are now free to choose our Representatives. We have now an organ for our sentiments and feelings. We may now obtain a hearing in the House of Commons. Possessing the elective franchise, we can no longer be guiltless of oppression, of injustice, of any abuses, corruptions, or exactions, if we do not exercise that franchise to stem and repress these evils. (Immense applause.)

What then is obviously our duty, but to choose a man for our Representative, who has a sympathy with our principles and sentiments, and who has the ability and courage to declare and maintain them; Such a man, I cordially believe, is Mr. Roebuck; and to such a man I believe we may safely and profitably entrust our interests. (Ascending cheers.) It is true, he is not a native of this city, he is not one of our every day acquaintance; nor am I aware that he has any property in this city. But none of these things enter into the qualifications that ought to be held indispensable in our Parliamentary Representative. The nativity of Mr. Roebuck will be of no account in a Parliamentary debate; if we think so, we had better get the nativity of the several Candidates cast, and only send him to Parliament who has been born under a lucky star. The Speaker of the House of Commons will never say, Mr. Roebuck, I can't entertain your motion, because you have no houses in Milsom street; nor will the House of Commons estimate his views and sentiments by the number of dinners he has given in Bath.

No! these are not the qualifications for a Reformed Parliament. A convivial spirit, a glow of ambition, and the prepossession of partial friends, will be regarded in that Parliament as poor substitutes for political education and talent. Neither will a meagre experience in pecuniary transactions be held adequate to the purposes of national legislation. (Applause.) On this I conceive our member should possess qualifications something beyond these. His subjects should have been exercised upon political subjects; and he should be acquainted with the science of Government. He should be one who not only sees the abuses that are in the land, and our institutions, but who has the courage to trace them to their sources, and the courage to lop off the bad, should be a juring the parent trunk. He, the great man who will not start aside from giving questions he must grapple with, nor the up the interests of his constituents in a ease of silence and insignificance. In word, a man that has been fitted by education, by mental discipline, and by severe pursuits, for this work; and these qualifications, this is the fitness that Mr. Roebuck possesses. (Cheers.) This gentleman has not just issued from domestic, commercial life, nor just entered upon

first course of political studies. On the contrary, for years past he has been occupied in acquiring that knowledge and ability so indispensable to a useful member of Parliament. There is nothing novel to him in the enormities of slavery, in the impolicy of the Corn Laws, in the importance of the currency, in the advantage of general education, the necessity of Church Reform, or in the problem of Taxation. These subjects have again and again occupied his thoughts and his pen; so that we may fairly conclude, his opinions have not been hastily formed, but are the results of elaborate thought and patient abour.

If then we are in earnest for legitimate qualifications in our Candidate, we cannot despise the claims of Mr. Roebuck; and without meaning to disparage any other Candidate, I do think that, in this respect at least, he is entitled to our preference and deserves our votes.

And the importance of qualifications is especially evident when we consider the great questions that must shortly be discussed in Parliament. And ought we to send any man who will merely beat the air and fight uncertainly in such a field of battle, and in such a battle of interests? Is Slavery, for instance, a question to be lightly dealt with? After nearly every remonstrance of the crown with the West-India Planter has been despised and disobeyed; after the mockery of a protecting council has been detected; while whipping, from 10 to 39 lashes, may still be inflicted without responsibility; after Grand Juries have ignored bills of the just character, and thus shut the portals of common justice against the oppressed; after the ministers of religion have been brutally abused, religion despised, and negroes punished for being seen at prayer! (Shame, shame!)—after these things, I say, are we not to send a man to Parliament who has the clearest idea of these wrongs, who will throw himself as a champion between the oppressor and the oppressed, and rescue us from the personal guilt of sanctioning these enormities?—(Immense cheering.) He has said that he shall consider the extinction of Slavery 'a holy duty,' and I shall understand by that, that he will take the first possible opportunity to contend for emancipation.

It is satisfactory also to see the just importance that Mr. R. gives to general education. This appears especially needed, when we hear that, from a canvass recently made in Herefordshire by the Bible Society, it appeared that out of 42,000 persons there were 22,000 unable to read. I trust that education will be conducted upon a plan that has been proved to be excellent through a long course of experience—I mean the system of the British and Foreign School Society, by which the children receive an ordinary and scriptural education, and no distinctions of sect or persuasion are admitted. (Applause.)

For the domestic happiness of the people, Mr. R. is decided upon the fate of the assessed taxes, and he considers that he shall best promote the general comfort and satisfaction by their total repeal.—(Cheers.)

Besides these, there are various other points,—such as the Corn Laws, the Currency, the Bank and East-India questions,—all requiring the aid of sound political knowledge; and as these now press all together upon the government for disposal, we may easily perceive that the vessel of the state is in a track of very difficult and dangerous navigation. It is true our political horizon is yet unclouded. It may not, however, long remain so; and it is awful to contemplate in what position and circumstances a storm might place the State. And what, when the waves of clashing opinions come rolling in upon her, when the tempest of conflicting interests make her quiver to her keel, and public mistrust, like destructive shoals, appear in the distance,—what then will give us hope and satisfaction but the thought that we have given to Parliament that man who of those that solicited our suffrages was best qualified to render some effectual assistance? (Loud cheers.) And surely it is no mean testimony to the merits of Mr. Roebuck, that he has earned the recommendation of Mr. Hume, a gentleman who has gained a most just and honourable reputation by an undeviating course of political rectitude. As an individual, I feel grateful for the interest he has taken in our election, and I rejoice to see him amongst us, if it were only to say, how highly we appreciate his indefatigable, his disinterested, his patriotic exertions.

I say, then, that this Gentleman has recommended Mr. Roebuck to our support; and I feel persuaded that he has only done so from a deep conviction that Mr. Roebuck is qualified to fulfil the duties of a representative, and to do good to his country. It is upon the same principle, and from the same impression, that I conceive we ought to support him. I think the question between the Candidates is more a question of qualification than any other; and I certainly think, if the matter is to be decided upon that ground, that Mr. Roebuck will gain his election. In justice to ourselves and our country, we ought to take no other ground; and all minor considerations should be sacrificed to the demands of public duty. If we adopt this principle, we shall be secure; for if our judgment should, by a possibility, deceive us, our conscience will be satisfied.—I will now call upon Mr. Hume to testify to the merits of Mr. Roebuck.

JOSEPH HUME, Esq. M. P., then rose amid immense cheering, and said:—"Mr. Chairman, and Electors of the City of Bath; in the first instance, let me explain why I, not having the honour to be an elector of this City, am here before you. I have been for fifteen years, as you are well aware, the uncompromising advo-

cate for a Reform in Parliament; and, from continued and often laborious inquiry into the state of the Country and the machinery of Government, I came to the conclusion, that while this or that measure might be productive of beneficial effects to this or that interest, no substantial good could result to the Country and the community at large, but from such a Reform in Parliament as would give the people a direct control over every shilling taken from their pockets by taxation. (Cheers.) Gentlemen, if you will allow me, I will ask you a simple question—How would you act in your private affairs with regard to employing persons to do such things as it is impossible you should yourselves do? Would you not expect such persons to be responsible to you? Now if you would allow your judgment to direct you, on the same principle, in the selection of Members of the House of Commons, it would be impossible that men so chosen could be guilty of any very great mistake. If any one hire a servant, does he not inquire what is his character? what are his capabilities? You have but to apply the same test to your Representatives;—to act with them as you do in the every-day transactions of life;—to apply the same principles, which you privately apply to matters affecting you only in a private pecuniary point of view, to subjects that affect your interests yet more widely; and not only your interests, but your liberties and your lives. On my first entering into political life, the course of reasoning which led me to become a Reformer was this,—I found it to be impossible to apply to the present system of Government the principle that taxation and representation should go hand in hand [cheers]; this being the point upon which the only Representative system rests. I will put a question;—what is or should be the object of government? the protection of person and of property, and the establishment of such laws as shall tend to give to the community the greatest possible happiness extended to the greatest possible number. (Cheers.) Ought then any set of men, purporting to represent the wishes of the Country, to be placed in such a situation as shall give them the power of imposing unlimited taxation—at least, unlimited but by the power of the people to pay; for that, I am sorry to say, has been the only limit.—[hear, and a laugh] ought they to have the power of taking money from the pockets of the people to such an extent, and to apply it to other purposes than that only legitimate one, the public benefit? [No.] Will any Anti-Reformer say that such is the right principle? I beg pardon, will any one say that it is so? for, gentlemen, we have not now an Anti-Reformer in all England! They have all become Reformers! [Laughter.] Having come, by very few and very simple steps, to these conclusions upon Reform, or rather I would say upon the Reform Bill, for Reform is yet to be effected, and the Bill is but the instrument by which we hope to effect all the changes which we desire to see effected; and I congratulate you heartily upon that Bill, because I believe it will be the means of extending good government throughout the world—having come to these conclusions; give me leave to state, that I am here in consequence of a requisition from many very respectable electors of your city, requiring to know if I could point out an individual perfectly unconnected with the two great parties who have so long divided the country between them, and not alone the country, but,—a more material affair,—the loaves and fishes too [cheers and laughter]; to which system, gentlemen, you must put an end, or Reform will be useless—having, I say, been solicited to point out such an individual, one perfectly capable of filling the office of your Representative, one not to be biased on the right hand or on the left, but determined to go straight-forward to the Reformation of all abuses;—I, upon the maturest consideration, ventured to return this answer:—Having served an apprenticeship of fifteen years to the principles of the Reform Bill, and give all my endeavours to ensure the success of that measure; I am ready to render any service in my power to assist any part of the country in their endeavours to make the Bill efficient. (Cheers.) To this I added, If you expect a Candidate to waste a fortune in a contested election before he can hope to obtain the honour of representing you;—if you will not pledge yourselves to elect him free of expense;—I will not be the person to recommend any man to you. (Cheers.) These preliminaries settled, Gentlemen, in a manner highly honourable to your city, I did recommend Mr. Roebuck to you, as a man in whose hands any constituency would be safe; and, after some other inquiries directed by parties totally unknown to me, the applicants invited that Gentleman to offer himself as a Candidate for the City of Bath. As to my connection with Mr. Roebuck, I have known him several years; and have been allied with him in the operations of a Society for the Promotion and Diffusion of Education. (Cheers.) And why education?—Because I have been told by those who have so long stood in the way of Reform, that it was neither proper nor safe to trust political power in the hands of the ignorant; and thus I have had the want of education held up to me as a bar to any extension of the elective franchise—a franchise which, I feel, every man has a right to enjoy.—(Cheers.)—not for his own benefit, nor for his single individual advantage, but in trust for the whole community of which he forms but an individual member: be it then his care to be cautious to whom he devolves a trust which may lead, as it is abused or held sacred to the misery or the happiness of the country. (Cheers.) I therefore conceive the education of the

people to be a most important consideration in the cause of Reform; for, as the rising sun scatters the mists of the morning, so will education dispel the clouds of error, enable men to distinguish truth from falsehood, and make them more calculated to effect Reform—more able to enjoy it. (Cheers.) To this important subject Mr. Roebuck brings the most perfect co-operation, and the ability necessary to successful exertion. Gentlemen, (Cheers;) and that, I assure you, is a point of immense importance; for let us not forget that marvellous changes have lately taken place in the opinion of individuals, and that on every side we see them anxious to make that Bill efficient now it is carried, which, when it was in progress, they would have risked even a civil war to prevent.—[Cheers and Laughter.] The correctness of Mr. Roebuck's principles on the question of education is sufficiently proved by the manner in which he has advocated the repeal of the taxes on Knowledge. He has pointed out with the most commendable zeal the advantages which would arise to the people from the removal of those imposts, forming as they do so serious an obstacle to the diffusion of education.

It is true; that among all whom I knew to be worthy of the attention of a free constituency, I might have recommended many who would have done honour to the choice of the electors of Bath; and it is equally true, that Mr. Roebuck never asked me once to interfere in his behalf; but in looking round, that I might be enabled to reply to an application so honourable to myself and to you, and convinced that from a city so intellectual as Bath the application was founded upon the best of principles, I conceived that I could not better discharge the duty you had imposed upon me than in recommending my friend Mr. Roebuck to your notice. Gentlemen, he had been for some time ill, and the first thing which I did, on sending for him, was to assure myself that he was in a condition to serve you, by asking him how he was? and on receiving for an answer that he was better; the next question I put to him was, whether he was willing to devote these abilities which I know he possessed to your services; and this, remember, was not previous, but subsequent to your application to me. (Cheers.) The illness of Mr. Roebuck, I wish you to understand, proceeded from his exertions in the cause of liberty. Hear, hear. His mind is too great for his physical powers; he has laboured too hard for the people; and his exertions in their favour have endangered that health which I hope he will soon fully recover for the public benefit.

But it is from the dissemination of knowledge alone that we can hope to see those two great parties to which I have before alluded superseded by the party of the people; and my firm conviction is, that it will ultimately tend as much to the benefit of those who seek to withhold our rights as to those who are strong to obtain them. (Cheers.) And, with the hopes that it may prove so, do I introduce to you a gentleman who, by talents, independence, and integrity, is eminently qualified to represent you in Parliament.

I may be asked, what qualifications I consider to be essential for the recommendation of a candidate to your notice? and I will answer, that they are not exactly based upon the principles professed by the present ministry. In saying this, let me not be misunderstood. I have hitherto been their steady supporter; and so long as they advocate and support those measures which are for the public good, I will continue to support them; but if they forget those principles, if they shrink from any one of those pledges which they have given, whether in Church or State, in Finance or in Law, I will support them no longer. (Cheers.) I will perform my duty, and I hope you will do yours by attaching yourselves not to men, but to principles.

To enter even but slightly into the various questions on which I conceive it to be of the highest importance that you should ascertain the sentiments of such Gentlemen as may offer themselves to your notice, would occupy too much of your time;—as they affect many institutions in themselves of the utmost value to society, and without which society itself would be dissolved. I have, however, noted down a few of them—it is almost as long as a tailor's bill. (Laughter.) Indeed gentlemen, it is no laughing matter. I regret to say that the subject has been treated entirely on the same principle as that on which the wolves acted when they demanded that the sheep should dress in their watch dogs. (Hear.) The doctrines of those who have monopolized power has been, whenever a man or carpenter has risked an opinion on a political subject to check him with a—"This can be no business of yours; let your betters decide it." (A laugh.) Indeed I have never, in the whole course of my political existence, known any other language applied by "Squire Thomas to Farmer John, when he presumed to speak upon the subject, than—"Leave that to us" (excessive laughter); and I dare say there is many a tightlaced gentleman strolling at times in Milsom street, who while he is living on your labour,—and I think I could point out some such characters, would make use of the same expressions to you. (Hear, hear.) It is by listening, and I am sorry to say not only listening but attending to such recommendations, that reform has been so long delayed; and those who gave the advice have acted as any steward would have acted to whom the management of property was entrusted without any responsibility—they have acted for their own interests. We, however, begin to see at length what fools we have been.—And what are we now to do? We are to take advantage of the power which the Bill has placed in our hands to effect a reform of this system; for I look upon the Bill only as a means by which we shall be enabled to carry into effect all that is desirable; and to do this, you are now called upon to give your votes not from fear, favor, or affection. If you give away your money, I challenge you not;—but do not give away your vote, because the person who asks you for it is your next-door neighbour, or because you have a cash

account in his books. (Hear, laughter, and cries of "That's the Hobhouse.") If you were placed in a jury-box, would you listen to the suggestions of any party concerned in the issue to bias your verdict? You would shudder at the monstrous proposition. If then, you scruple to do such a thing when the interest of but one person is concerned, how much more should you shrink from such a course when the interests of millions are perilled! I wish you not to be led away by the specious argument, that pledges ought not to be demanded; for how is it possible that you are to know what the principles of a Candidate unless you question him? and what better method can you employ to prevent his deceiving you than by binding him down in such a manner that he cannot recede without dishonour? (Hear, hear.) Gentlemen, it is of the highest importance that you should know how far you can trust a man before you give him a seven years' lease of your liberties. I am one who think that lease too long. (Applause.) I therefore hope that you will require a pledge, from whoever you may honour with your choice, that he shall vote for a repeal of the Septennial Act. (Cheers.) I never preach what I do not practise; and it has therefore been my pride to resort to my constituents at the end of each Session of Parliament, that they may have a free opportunity of censuring me either for acts of omission or commission of sins; and I hold that every Representative of the people ought thus to bring himself into contact with his constituents, that he might learn from themselves what are their wishes. (Cheers.) I approved very much of his Majesty's Ministers not mixing up with the Reform Bill either vote by ballot or any alteration in the duration of Parliaments; because, knowing how nicely parties were balanced, I dreaded that it might fright some cold or timid friends from our side, and thus endanger the success of the great measure. But now we have succeeded,—no thanks to our opponents, it is our business to leave no opportunity untaken to render the Bill efficient. The best check that I know of against your being deceived by Candidates is, to have a public avowal of their principles, and a distinct pledge as to the course they intend to pursue. In Scotland,—and, by the way, they know well how to catechise in Scotland,—they have carried the system of catechising Candidates to perfection; indeed, so strict has it been, that the Tories, I understand, are nearly all frightened from the field. (Cheers.) One great advantage of the new system is, that it confronts the Elector and the Electee face to face; and therefore I think that Parliaments should be shorter,—though I am not prepared to limit them to a shorter space than three years. [Cries of "Triennial Parliaments."] I think that any further limitation would be far from beneficial. I am for every man being able to give a free, unbiassed vote; and therefore I am bound to declare, that the ballot is essential to protect the voters not only from the great who have power to injure them, but from the poor—who may be prejudiced, and who have no such power; because in my opinion, the class with whom the franchise is chiefly entrusted—the tradesmen—if uninfluenced, is most likely to give an honest and consistent vote. (Cheers.) So that if a man would not pledge himself to promote the Ballot,—he should have no support of mine. (Cheers.) I believe Mr. Roebuck will advocate this measure also. I have been ready to wait without pressing the Ballot until I saw how the new system would work; but from the loud complaints which have from all parts reached me, I am constrained to believe that it is essential to the freedom of election. I will not occupy your time much longer in reading and commenting upon the list which I hold in my hand; but with regard to the taxes on knowledge, I see with regret a parliamentary return of 135 persons committed to prison for various terms for selling cheap publications. Now, looking at the criminal code of England, when I see the means of distinguishing right from wrong withheld,—bringing before my recollection the fact that, of 159 persons tried for the Hampshire riots, about one in ten only of them could read,—I am compelled to say that the law is fashioned first to brutalize the poor man, and then to punish him for being brutish. [Loud cheers, and cries of Shame.] Let the rich have their gilded volumes; but do not prevent the poor man from spending a penny in works of instruction because he cannot afford to lay out sixpence! [Cheers.] If a law were made, denying the privilege of wearing shoes to any man who did not pay ten shillings and sixpence for them, how monstrous would that be!—it would confine the wearing of shoes to those who could afford that sum: the operation of the law is in each case the same. I would never stand forth to advocate the cause of any man who would not struggle to remove such an evil; and Mr. Roebuck will strive to the utmost to do so.

I think, gentlemen, that a pledge ought to be required from every Candidate to support the cause of Civil and Religious Liberty.—We can all frame rules for our civil conduct; but who, gentlemen, should act as blasphemously as to interfere between the mind and its Creator? It may be proper that the dissemination of such doctrines as might be dangerous to the state of society; but as a general principle, it should be laid down, that the conscience of man should be left entirely free to follow its own dictates. (Applause.) We hear much of Negro Slavery; but the men who talk loudest of its evils seem to forget that there exists a slavery and a cruelty equally bad in this country, in the imprisonment of seamen, and the flogging in our armies. (Cheers.) Why, gentlemen, what an infamous thing it is that a man should be torn from his home, and compelled to serve on board ship! and if the despotic countries of Russia, of Prussia, and of Austria, can manage their armies without the whip, what is there in an Englishman, a Scotchman, or an Irishman, that he should not be equally open to reason? Negro Slavery, imprisonment of seamen, and flogging of soldiers, are three enormities which I hope and trust to see abolished altogether. (Loud cheers.)

We want a reform in the Law; and Mr. Roebuck has been bred to that profession; he understands its first principles, and when he seeks to reform it, he will not introduce a patchwork reform.

I wish to remove all monopolies, because they are the bane of the country; and first I would do away with the monopoly of close corporations. (Cheers.) Doubtless they were useful in their day, and intended by Government to protect the people from the Aristocracy; but we are no longer a nation of helots; and their use is gone by. I believe there is no country so cursed with close corporations as Scotland; and they have themselves lately met and empowered delegates to draw up a Bill throwing them all open, and placing the election of them in the hands of the people.—On this point also, I know that Mr. Roebuck's opinion coincides with my own. (Hear.) I look upon the Corn Laws to be as injurious to