

An Account of the **SPEECHES, &c.**, at the great

Reform Meeting

Held at DURHAM, on Monday the 31st of Oct., 1831.

The Meeting was held in front of the Court, and the doors were opened at 10/00. There were several flags displayed
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THE High Sheriff having taken the chair, said it had fallen to his lot to call them together on this occasion, by a requisition very numerously and respectably signed. He was at Alnwick when it was presented to him, and he objected to that little word OR, it stuck in his throat, [uproar, and cries of swallow it] it might have been to form a rail road, or to get an act for paving and lighting Durham. I stated this to Mr Wilkinson, and he said he saw my objection and said it was to present an address to his Majesty. I then signed the requisition myself and called the meeting.

Mr Wilkinson of Harperly, said before he proceeded to move the first resolution, he begged to say a few words to the chairman, that gentleman, to show his boroughmongering principles, had quarrelled with a few words in the requisition, and the little word or, stuck in his throat, and that at a meeting so convened we might proceed to get an act to pave and light Durham, but he considered the wording of the requisition clear enough, and might be understood by any one who had sense enough to walk through the streets without knocking his head against every lamp post he came to: but he would not trouble himself further with such trumpery, but proceed to move the first resolution and the address to his Majesty. The cause of corruption has triumphed for a while, but our cause will in a short time be victorious. and to make that certain we must begin with the lords. The regeneration of that house must be effected. Time is a great physician, and two months may do a great deal, it may instil a healthy vigour into their bodies. there are some of them at present no better than the gingerbread nobles of our children. But we must wait a little longer before we apply severer measures—extreme remedies are only to be applied when other constitutional measures fail. If the king stands firm, and he will stand firm, (applause) our victory is certain. If the lever in the royal hands should fail, then the screw in the hands of the people must be applied; to screw them to the sticking point. (applause.) What is our sheet anchor? Why our representatives—we must call upon them, and that firmly, to refuse the supplies. (applause.)

During the time Mr Wilkinson was speaking, there was an attempt made to throw the meeting into confusion, by about a dozen drunken Durham Freemen, but they were ultimately carried out of the crowd, and received such chastisement as completely reformed their manners.

Mr Harland stepped forward to second the resolution, and said, he regretted that they had occasion to meet once more to advocate their rights. We must distrust all moderate—bit and bit—reformers, and place confidence in our patriotic king and his ministers. The opposition they had received had been solely to embarrass ministers, and to get back into office. For seventy years have the people been striving to gain their just rights and privileges, and in every reasonable expectation frustrated by the party factions, and private interests of a domineering aristocracy. But the day of retribution is at hand, the energies of the people have become as a flood damned back and swelled to that pitch, that unless relieved it will burst its banks, carrying as it rolls in its course indiscriminate destruction and confusion. (applause) To the present ministry we owe much—they accepted office when the boroughmongers no longer could go on—when the midnight incendiary stalked abroad—and stand pledged to carry the question of reform. And that reform once had, if it does not give you cheap bread, at all events it will leave more money in your pockets to buy it with. To be free we have only to prove ourselves worthy of freedom—and England's gay jubilee will shine out yet—and our monarch shall have the highest tribute that can be given to a monarch—love from the heart that loves liberty. (immense applause)

Mr Rippon moved the second resolution and said, the bill that the king and his ministers had proposed exceeded his expectation, and had no doubt that the next one would be equally as efficient. Would any one dare to insinuate that the king would desert the people's cause? If any there be I pronounce him a traitor and a traducer of one of the very best of kings. It is impossible for any friend here to disguise from themselves that we are at this moment on the very brink of a most important era. And I hope the people will assert their power, and call firmly and loudly for their rights. These lords have shown that they are willing to bury their own order under the ruins of their country. What do they offer us, revelling as they are with the plunder of an exhausted country, they offer us a civil war. Will the people suffer themselves to be trampled upon by 300 of their equals—no, they will let them know that there is blood enough in their veins to make a noble stand. I bid them remember that the people deserve something from them. Should they continue to resist the just wishes of the people, they will meet with contempt, disgrace & war. (applause.) There was a time when to mention the Bench of Bishops without reverence you would have been met with disdain, but where will the individual be found to vindicate the Bishops on a late occasion. [cheers.] They profess to be ministers of peace, but they have made themselves instruments of civil discord. They are in that house to protect the state, but instead of that, they protect nothing but their own interests. I am glad of the vote they gave on a late occasion, for I think by that vote they have benefitted reform. [applause] A reformed parliament will effect much, it will cause these

Bishops to retire for ever from the political counsels of the nation— [cheers] Look to these reverend prelates—they have ever been wedded to tyranny and oppression—ever first to sanction any law that would fetter the people. They have been the same in other countries, look to the hooded monks of France, the worthy brothers of these right reverend prelates; [cheers] they stuck by the tyrant Charles, to the last. And the Bishops in this country supported James in his tyrannical government. [cheers.] I believe the bill will pass, and it is the bounden duty of all to remain firm and peaceable, waiting the event, and should the people's hopes be once more frustrated. They will not accept the bill from other hands than the present ministers, but look up to God and themselves. [loud cheering]

Mr Shafto seconded the resolution.

Mr Lambton stepped forward and said, he was much disappointed, as he had been told there was to be an opposition to overturn the whole of their proceedings, that the Marquis of Londonderry, Mr Hardinge, and Mr Trevor were to be here, but the whole had turned out to be a dozen drunk London freemen. [cheers and laughter] Much had been said about the lords, but he hoped they would look to the minority in that house, amongst whom were Earl Grey and Lord Brougham, and truly it might be said of them, that they had earned the civic crown, and well deserved the epithet of Saviours of their country. And when over their fire sides discussing the matter, and mentioning the Bench of Bishops with abhorrence and disgust he hoped they would not forget the two of that body, the Bishop of Norwich and Chichester, who had voted for the people's rights. That bench had forgot that the large revenues which they swallowed up belonged to the people. [cheers] That Cathedral belongs to the people and not to the Bishop, he is no more than a tenant at will. The revenues of the prelates are fifty thousand more than any other country. He sincerely hoped and trusted that they would speedily retrace their steps and sin no more.---[Laughter and applause.] The boroughmongers held it black ingratitude of us to look for reform. But I say they are no more the source of our prosperity than the common sewer which runs beneath our feet is the source of the Weir. Supposing it could speak, it would say, "O! ye banks of the Weir, I am the source of your prosperity! O! ye ungrateful shipowners of Sunderland; without me, your ships would be left dry upon the beach and useless!"—How stands the fact? What did these boroughmongers give us? They gave us a long and fruitless war; and what did that war give us? It gave us the national debt!---(Cheers.)

Mr. Granger said he was not astonished at the opposition and observations made by the High Sheriff: but there were some people that would straiten at a gnat and would swallow a camel. When we meet in small numbers, they tell us a reaction has taken place; and when we meet in thousands, they tell us we are credulous fools, and led away by insinuating demagogues. Some, after using strong language, tell us in the language of intimidation, but he openly avowed the language of intimidation. He had no doubt, that had these reverend prelates listened to Mr. Rippon's speech, they would tell you it was not a warning, but intimidation.—(Applause.) Reform has not advanced one single step by any other means than intimidation. What made Wellington change his opinion with regard to the catholic question?—Why, intimidation!—(Cheers.) You will not, I am convinced, drive a huxter's bargain with these boroughmongers, who would give you a part that they might keep the rest.—(Cries of "Never!") You will not be like a Newcastle fishwife, to ask twice as much as you will take. You will not accept it from this duke, because he can say, "I am the Hero of Waterloo, and was never beaten by any but Daniel O'Connell.—(Laughter.) Threaten a little longer and a little louder, and make me your minister again, and I am the man that will grant it."—(Laughter.) You will not tamely look on and see Lord Eldon picking Earl Grey's pocket of his bill.—(Laughter.) Ministers did not make reform, reform made them ministers; and should the people forget reform and let the question die, they would be left like the wreck upon the beach after a storm.---[Cheers.]

Mr. Russell said he was grateful to hear those cheers, as they proved they were satisfied with his conduct, and that he had done his duty. The battle was to fight over again, and he would be found at his post. [Cheers] It was lamentable to think of the labour and time spent in the people's house to carry this question of reform, and to have it thrown back by a few boroughmongers.---[Cheers] I say the bishops have no business in the house of lords: the clergy are excluded from the house of commons, and why should the bishops sit in the house of lords?---[Cheers.] He wished one noble lord had made his appearance here this day, that he might answer him regarding the censures thrown out by him in the house of lords. The question would be carried next time, for he had no doubt that many noble lords who were now skulking about the country would be convinced of the necessity of reform.---(Cheers.)

The meeting was also addressed by Sir H. Williamson, Mr. Chaytor, Mr. Silvertop, and Mr. Attwood. Cheers were given for the king and his ministers, and three horrible groans for the boroughmongers. The people then dispersed in good order.

Stephenson, Printer, Gateshead.