

**THE SUBSTANCE OF AN ADDRESS, DELIVERED
AT A PUBLIC MEETING, ON THE 11TH, 12TH,
AND 18TH OF DECEMBER, 1843; CONTAINING
A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CORPORATION OF
LONDON AS THE ASYLUM OF ENGLISH
FREEDOM IN PAST AGES**

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The Substance of an Address, Delivered at a Public Meeting, on the 11th, 12th, and 18th of December, 1843; Containing a Brief History of the Corporation of London as the Asylum of English Freedom in Past Ages by Charles Pearson

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CHARLES PEARSON

**THE SUBSTANCE OF AN ADDRESS, DELIVERED
AT A PUBLIC MEETING, ON THE 11TH, 12TH,
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THE SUBSTANCE OF
AN ADDRESS
DELIVERED BY
CHARLES PEARSON, ESQ.
AT A PUBLIC MEETING,

ON THE 11TH, 12TH, AND 18TH OF DECEMBER, 1843,

THE LATE JOHN TRAVERS, ESQ., IN THE CHAIR,

CONTAINING

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CORPORATION OF LONDON AS THE
ASYLUM OF ENGLISH FREEDOM IN PAST AGES, WITH A STATE-
MENT OF ITS PUBLIC SERVICES IN MORE MODERN TIMES.

IT LIKEWISE DETAILS

VARIOUS IMPORTANT REFORMS WHICH, UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC
OPINION, HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN HER INSTITUTIONS DURING THE
TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS HE HAS BEEN CONNECTED WITH THE CITY;
PROVING, AS HE CONTENDS, THE ADVANTAGES OF OUR OLD ENGLISH
SYSTEM OF CORPORATE GOVERNMENT, BASED ON POPULAR REPRESENTATION,
IN PREFERENCE TO THE CENTRALISING INSTITUTIONS OF
ARBITRARY AND DESPOTIC STATES.

ALSO

THE PROCEEDINGS AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE
MEETING,

VINDICATING MR. PEARSON FROM CERTAIN ANONYMOUS IMPUTATIONS UPON
HIS POLITICAL CONSISTENCY AND OFFICIAL CONDUCT.

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TO THE SUBSCRIBERS

TO

THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW.

GENTLEMEN,—Towards the close of the last year I discovered that Mr. William Hickson was the author of a coarse and scurrilous handbill, extensively and gratuitously distributed through the City of London, which, together with an article in "The Westminster Review" therein advertised, imputed to me in my public character hypocrisy, apostasy and mendacity*, and while it charged me with obtaining in my official capacity an enormous income by the persecution of the poor, called upon the freemen of London to demand the abolition of the office, which, under the Corporation, I have the honour to hold.

I had never, knowingly, offended Mr. Hickson; in fact, I had no knowledge of him except that I had heard him described by mutual friends as an intelligent public-spirited individual, who had carried on business for years as a respectable shoe-manufacturer in Smithfield, and who having satisfactorily executed the duties of a sub-commissioner of Inquiry under the late Whig government, was desirous of obtaining a similar employment. I was of course much surprised at this wanton and unprovoked attack proceeding from such a

* Mr. Hickson I understand pretends to palliate the application to me of such expressions as "mendacious assertions" by saying that *I* also can use *hard* words: he will be pleased to note the distinguishing difference between his conduct and mine in this particular; *his* attacks were secret and assassin-like, made against a man who had given him no provocation, and who was supposed to be bound by the duties of his office to sit silent under the attacks: whereas when *I* applied hard words to Mr. Hickson, it was in his presence and hearing, and in return for the grossest provocation. Let him further understand, that in my life I never applied such expressions to any man behind his back, and never published a line against any human being that did not involve my personal responsibility by carrying upon its face *my name*.

quarter, and determined to seek from Mr. Hickson an explanation of the strange proceeding; I however first spoke upon the subject to some gentlemen to whom he was better known, when his latent motive was brought to light. I then learnt for the first time that Mr. Hickson had recently quitted trade and purchased the copy-right of "The Westminster Review," which, as a mere money speculation, he made it his business *per fas aut nefas* to force into circulation.

As to the handbill, it was intended, they said, as an advertisement, and my name had been used merely to attract attention and sell his book. He had, I was assured by those who had known him long, no more thought of me in the matter, or of my character, or of my feelings, or of my family, or my friends, than the Turkish huckster had thought of Mahomet, when, to vend his wares, he cried at the top of his voice, "in the name of the Prophet, figs."

All this seemed a reasonable explanation of Mr. Hickson's otherwise motiveless conduct—but it afforded me no satisfaction; I could not tell how far such a spirit might lead him, or to what extent of injury I might be subjected by the continued secret dissemination of such scandalous imputations upon my conduct; I therefore thought it right to avail myself of the columns of the daily press to challenge Mr. Hickson to a public discussion of the statements contained in his papers, so far at least as I was concerned.

The following pages contain a faithful abstract of the Address, which, upon that occasion, I had the honour to deliver to the Meeting; they also contain Mr. Hickson's two extenuating letters, which, at his desire, were read.

Had Mr. Hickson complied with my request, to furnish me with your names and address, I should have invited you to honour me with your presence at the Meeting, if your inclinations and convenience would have allowed: as he refused me that privilege, I take leave to request the favour of your perusing the following pages, that you may judge what degree of truth belongs to Mr. Hickson's general statements, and how far in my public and official character I deserve to lose that place in public estimation which he admits it was once my good fortune to deserve.

On each of the days occupied by the delivery of my Ad-

dress, the Meeting was attended by between three and four hundred persons, comprising Members of Parliament and individuals of influence and respectability of every shade of political party and opinion; Mr. Hickson, together with members of his family and gentlemen who had known him from his youth, were in daily attendance. The amiable, honourable, and intelligent John Travers presided, and was accompanied to the Meeting by several gentlemen, who like himself entertained strong prejudices against the administration of the Corporation, and had contributed to defray the expense of publishing the pamphlet under discussion. An audience more favourable to a fair and full investigation of truth could not have been selected; if any way, its bias must have been against my views. Although I have been unaccustomed to public speaking for several years, and have no longer any relish for such pursuits, I contrived to make myself thoroughly understood by what Mr. Hickson is pleased to call an "admiring audience." By repeated friendly invitations, interspersed with what he calls "vituperative" epithets, I tried to induce him either to recant his statements, or to rise and support them; but it was all in vain: Mr. Hickson thought "'twere better to bear the ills we have, than fly to others that we know not of"; for there he sat during the whole of the three days a mute and motionless monument of detected misrepresentation, looking like a "guilty creature on a fearful summons"; quailing beneath the lash of my excited indignation, without the candour to confess his errors or the courage to defend them.

Let it not be inferred from Mr. Hickson's silence, that if truth could have supplied him with the weapons of defence he lacked either the ability or the self-confidence to wield them. No; for Mr. Hickson was in early life a disciple of Mr. *****, one of the most powerful speakers that ever mounted a public platform; in the sect which he founded "every man was his own clergyman," and William Hickson was a frequent holder-forth;—

" A man who served them in a double
Capacity, to preach and cobble;
Who out of all doctrines could cut use,
And mend men's lives as well as shoes."

At the hebdomadal Meetings of this sect the widest range of discussion was indulged in: I happened to be present at one, and heard some speeches capital of their *sort*, they were *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis*, commingling in one mighty amalgam the most divers subjects—subjects theological and satirical—metaphysical and personal—and uniting at once the grave, the gay, the lively and severe. Whatever might have been the other uses of these discussions, they certainly appeared to me well-qualified to impart to those who engaged in them a volubility of words and a confidence of face, of both of which Mr. William Hickson was pre-eminently successful I understand in obtaining for himself a very large share.

But to return to my subject,—at the close of my Address Mr. Travers read to the Meeting a long explanatory letter which Mr. Hickson had placed in his hands. After a short address from a gentleman who called himself one of Mr. Hickson's friends, deprecating the passing of any Resolutions, Mr. Travers, with his customary kindness and moderation, and to prevent any stronger Resolutions against Mr. Hickson being proposed by others, himself suggested the following, which he had penned: they were duly moved and seconded by volunteers in different parts of the room, and were unanimously adopted by the Meeting:—

- 1st. "That in the opinion of this Meeting Mr. Pearson has successfully vindicated his integrity and consistency as a public man from the imputations cast upon him by an article in the Westminster Review of May last." (*Hear, hear.*)
- 2nd. "That they are moreover of opinion that the amount and sources of Mr. Pearson's income and emoluments stated in that Review are, as explained by him, at variance with the facts, and so far as they are able to judge, do not exceed that fair and proper remuneration which is necessary to maintain the character and position of a gentleman and a high public officer." (*Hear, hear.*)
- 3rd. "That this Meeting are indebted to Mr. Pearson for a large amount of information, which, in detailing his long connexion with the Corporation of London, he has communicated, and that his statements have corrected many prevailing errors, as well as proved the great advantages that may be derived from a good

system of local government, based upon a representative principle." (*Hear, hear.*)

It will be seen by a letter which is inserted in the following pages (p. 4), that I had originally proposed, if Mr. Hickson would pay half the printer's and short-hand writer's charges, that a copy of the proceedings should be published, "subject to such verbal corrections and curtailment as we might mutually agree upon, to put it in a readable form." Mr. Hickson refused to pay a shilling of the expense, and therefore left it to my own discretion, as to the amount of curtailment which, from pecuniary considerations alone, I should think it proper to adopt in the publication of my Address.

The following pages contain I believe in every respect a fair and faithful account in a compressed form of every part of the proceedings; I am satisfied there is not any substantive fact omitted which was introduced in my Speech, neither was there any statement made which is here omitted*.

Having been always a rapid and entirely extemporaneous speaker, there would have been found at all times in any observations made by me a number of needless expletives and repetitions, the printing of which would have largely increased the expense of printing and equally augmented the labor of the reader: these have to a considerable extent been expunged, though many will I fear be found still to exist. These are evils which in a greater or less degree belong to the extemporaneous speeches of all but very first-rate men.

It remains for me now to account for the non-publication of the Address for so many months, as well as for its appearance at the present time.

Shortly after the Meeting took place I was attacked by serious indisposition; and the accumulation of business it left upon my shoulders delayed the preparation of the sheets for the press for some time: the whole however, as far as p. 192, was printed off as early as the month of February last. Unavoidable delays, from the pressure of official business and

* I should have excepted from this remark my observations upon Mr. Hickson's statement respecting the Poor Law Unions in the City: as the Corporation is not in any way connected with their administration, I did not think it necessary to incur the expense of printing those observations: if Mr. Hickson thinks it will in any way serve his cause, and he will contribute a moiety of the short-hand writer's transcript and the cost of printing, they shall be published, "subject to such verbal correction and curtailment as we may mutually agree upon, to put them in a readable form."—C. P.