

**PERSONAL RIGHTS:  
SPEECHES OF  
P.A. TAYLOR ESQ.**

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Personal Rights: Speeches of P.A. Taylor Esq. by Peter Alfred Taylor

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**PETER ALFRED TAYLOR**

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PERSONAL RIGHTS.

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“SPEECHES

OF

P. A. TAYLOR, ESQ.,

(LATE M.P. FOR LEICESTER.)

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## RETIREMENT OF MR. P. A. TAYLOR.

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### INTRODUCTION.\*

IN these days of Liberal lip-service, when party is everything and ideas are nothing—when he who is foremost on the Treasury Bench is "Lord, Lord" to those who sit on the same side, be his measures what they may, the retirement of a man like Mr. P. A. Taylor from Parliamentary life is a calamity. At a time when Opportunism, long triumphant at the head of the Government, has so effectually taught the nation to accept the shadow for the substance and words for things, that constituencies select their representatives, not for their personal character or convictions, but even as the butchers choose the silly sheep at market by the well-known brands (L or C) upon their fleecy sides; and these representatives flock right and left with about as much individual initiative as sheep crowding into the accustomed fold—the withdrawal from the political field of one who for nearly a quarter of a century has openly despised party and defied Opportunism and given both Ministers and the public assurance of a Man, is a National loss. As the *Leicester Daily Post* (June 21, 1884), truly says: "There never was a question in Mr. Taylor's mind as to the side to be taken on any subject but the question of Justice, which he determined according to the best of his judgment, acting upon the conclusion at all risks." The same journal adds that he "will never be forgotten in Leicester" (we believe he will never be forgotten in England) "his devotion to truth and justice; his fearless and outspoken independence of character; his readiness to

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\* Reprinted from the *Journal of the Vigilance Association*, July 15, 1884.

encounter all sorts of obloquy in defending the oppressed or advocating an unpopular cause, have endeared him to many, and especially to the labouring classes. An honest man never breathed."

Mr. Taylor was already a conspicuous politician before he was elected member for Leicester in 1862, having become known to friends and foes as an indomitable Radical when working by his father's side in the Anti-Corn-Law and Church Rate Agitations before he was first scoffed at, then listened to and ultimately respected even in the cynical atmosphere of St. Stephen's as "the leader of Forlorn hopes," the "Champion of forgotten rights" and the "Redresser of unheeded wrongs." He enjoyed the friendship of men like Peronnet Thompson, W. J. Fox and J. S. Mill, with whom he shared the labour and expense of the attempt to bring General Eyre to justice.

A sincere believer in the sacredness of nationality, Mr. Taylor was the life-long friend of Joseph Mazzini, and in his unflinching obedience to Principle at any cost and unswerving faith in Justice, *quand même*, it is easy to recognise the influence of the great Italian at whose bidding during the short triumvirate the national decrees were issued "in the name of God and the People." This ideal of Republican equality has, in fact, governed Mr. Taylor's political life, and since it has but small resemblance to the ideas which govern what are called politics in England at the present day, we cannot but regard it as a satisfactory and encouraging fact that a man so dissimilar from the vast majority of those among whom his political lot was cast, should, by his simple, dignified persistence in carrying out his own notion of duty, have won the cordial respect even of those members of the House most hostile to him in opinion. From being at first sneered at as "the revolutionary," then marvelled at as "the eccentric member for Leicester," Mr. Taylor came to be spoken of as "the incorruptible of the House."



The following is a condensed record of Mr. Taylor's Parliamentary speeches, as well as those specially addressed to the Vigilance Association. Although he no longer regards himself as physically fit for the labour of representing Leicester, Mr. Taylor, so long as he draws breath, will ever be, in the very highest sense, a representative of the people, and especially of that portion of the people, male or female, who are still left politically voiceless. For ourselves, we are well assured that his sympathy, aid and counsel will be ours whenever they are needed; but the loss to the people through Mr. Taylor's retirement is something much more than this. It is a light gone out; for it is the loss of the fearless example of one who, high above the waves of party strife, has stood steadfast like a beacon, upholding in the eyes of the nation the noble old device—*Fais ce que dois, advienne que pourra.*

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## CONTENTS.

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	PAGE
THE GAME LAWS ... ..	7
THE HARES AND RABBITS BILL ... ..	12
PAYMENT OF MEMBERS ... ..	13
SUNDAY TRADING ... ..	23
SUNDAY OPENING OF MUSEUMS ... ..	29
THE MUTINY ACTS ... ..	43
OFFENCES AGAINST THE PERSON BILL ... ..	45
CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN THE NAVY ... ..	48
OFFENCES AGAINST THE PERSON BILL (No. 2.) ... ..	51
COMPULSORY VACCINATION ... ..	55
LETTERS TO HIS CONSTITUENTS ... ..	75

## MR. TAYLOR'S PARLIAMENTARY SPEECHES.

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### GAME LAWS.

MR. TAYLOR first spoke upon this subject in the House of Commons, in April, 1869, in opposition to Mr. Lock's motion for a Select Committee on the question. He pointed out that the question had been thoroughly sifted by the Select Committee of 1845-46, which had issued an exhaustive Report upon it, extending to 1,598 pages, and containing 26,603 questions. Not one of the ameliorative recommendations of the Committee had been carried out, but one recommendation had been carried into effect, which, as Mr. Taylor remarked, was not surprising, considering the constitution of that House, viz., that hunting and coursing should be allowed without a license. . . . A minority report was also drawn up, and the views of the minority were:—That the police should not be employed in enforcing the Game Laws; that the Night Poaching Act should be repealed; that there should be no limitation of time for killing, and that owners and occupiers should have the same absolute right in dealing with game as they now exercised in regard to any other product of the soil; that persons who preserved game on their own lands should be liable for the damage done on the lands of other persons; and that no time should be lost in repealing laws so *injurious to agriculture and demoralising to labour*. These recommendations remained untouched, and by the Act passed in 1862 for the purpose of enabling the police to assist in the preservation of game, the old constitutional principle of supposing a man innocent till he is proved guilty was distinctly violated. . . . Important as was the question with respect to the interest of