

The Times. November 21, 1868.

Court of Common Council.

Yesterday a meeting of the Common Council, the first in the new Mayoralty, was held at Guildhall for the despatch of business, and there was a large attendance of members. The gallery assigned to the use of strangers was also crowded.

The LORD MAYOR (Alderman James Lawrence) went in State from the mansion-house, attended by the Sword and Mace bearers of the corporation, and escorted by the Sheriffs and Under-Sheriffs in their State carriages. On entering the Council Chamber he was cheered, and again on taking his seat. Addressing the Court, he said, –Gentlemen, in occupying this chair for the first time I am quite sure it will be unnecessary for me to appeal to every member of this assembly to support me in the preservation of order or to assist me in the despatch of business. I know you are all most desirous that the business connected with this great corporation should be properly conducted and expedited, and I shall be ready to convene as many meetings as may be necessary for the furtherance of that object. This Court has long been remarkable for the ability of many of its members, especially for the business aptitude shown by it on all occasions, and in that and other respects the Corporation of London has set an example to every municipal body in the kingdom. I trust also that in the preservation of order this Court may hold out a similar example, and that during my year of office its deliberations may be marked by an absence of all personal attacks, by which absence I believe its reputation will be consulted; for such attacks never raise the character of any deliberative assembly, even in its own estimation, and much less, in this case, in the estimation of the citizens. I have no doubt I shall, on all occasions, receive from the officers all the assistance I may require. They will always receive from me the greatest courtesy and consideration, and I trust that during my mayoralty every department of the corporation will be inspired by one common feeling to work together with the greatest harmony in carrying out the great public objects for which this municipality was established. (Cheers.) I will endeavour, so far as I am concerned, to preserve intact the rights and privileges of every branch of it—those of the Lord Mayor, the Aldermen and Common Council, as well as of the Livery of London—so that when my successor shall have been elected I may have the satisfaction of knowing that neither with respect to the discharge of duty, the despatch of business, nor in the dignity and luster which attach to it, has the office I have no the honour to hold suffered in my hands. (Cheers.)

The Retiring Lord Mayor.

Deputy Tegg, amid some interruption, moved,– "That the best thanks to this Court are hereby presented to the Right Hon. William Ferneley Allen, late Lord Mayor of this city, for the manner in which he has discharged the arduous duties of chief magistrate, by which he has given satisfaction to the mercantile and other classes of his

fellow-citizens who sought for justice during his year of office; for the impartiality with which he has presided over the debates of this Court, the punctual and constant discharge of his important duties at its several meetings; for his firmness in preserving the rights and privileges of all branches of the corporation, and the desire he has always displayed to promote the usefulness and extend the advantages of the municipal institutions of this ancient city." He trusted the ebullition of feeling shown at the last Common Hall, when a similar motion was proposed, had subsided, and that the resolution would be carried unanimously.

Deputy ELLIOT, in seconding the motion, said the late Lord Mayor had displayed in some degree a virtue which was not very common in this world,—the virtue of thinking for himself. (Hear, hear.) He had said a great many things which he (Mr. Elliot) thought were true, but not popular. (Hear, hear.) Among other things he had dared to say what men who sought popularity would not have said. On one occasion, in reference to the increase of crime of a certain description, he had the courage to say that a good deal of that crime was to be referred to the short hours of labour of late years. ("Oh, oh!") Whether it was right or wrong was another question, but he said what he believed, and what a great many people in the city believed. (Hear.)

Mr. LAWLEY said if he stood along he should hold up his hand against the motion. (Cheers.) If a vote of thanks was to have any value it should not be passed indiscriminately, or as a matter of course; least of all should it be accorded to one who was not thought to have done well. He did not ascribe the possession of such extraordinary virtue, either in the conduct of public or private affairs, or in the discharge of duty, as was now sought to be attributed to the late Lord mayor, and he for one should oppose the motion.

Mr. BURNELL said it was unfortunate the mover of the resolution had not put it in writing beforehand, and placed it as a notice on the paper of business. A vote of thanks lost half its value if it was kept like a telegram in the pocket of a messenger until the last moment. He for one could not compliment the late Lord Mayor for the manner in which he had presided over the Common Council, knowing as he did that on several occasions great disorder had arisen and he should therefore treat the motion as a matter of course.

The motion was strenuously opposed by Mr. SLOWMAN; and Mr. JOHN RICHARDSON, replying to Deputy Elliott, the seconder, said many of the merchants and thinking men in the city, so far from being of the same opinion as the late Lord Mayor, held that the early closing movement had been in many respects a great boon. He also reminded the Court that on one important occasion the late Lord Mayor had claimed to speak for the corporation in a manner and to an extent which they repudiated on its coming to their knowledge.

Mr. SYMONDS, chairman of the City Lands Committee, submitted that it was not consistent with the dignity of the Court to continue discussion. No man, he said, could

discharge the duties of Lord Mayor except at much sacrifice of time and personal comfort. The motion was moderately worded, and the Court might well adopt it.

Mr. COCKERELL trusted for the honour of the Court, and having regard to men who had previously filled the office of Lord Mayor, as well as to those who might be called to assume it in future, that the motion would not be carried. It would be setting a bad example, and the Court would stultify itself.

Dr. SAUNDERS, amid much interruption, defended the late Lord Mayor, and ascribed the opposition to the motion to political animosity and spite.

Deputy FRY said a man who held a public position was not be an automaton; and such a body as the Common Council should put a charitable construction on the actions of a public man, unless he had done anything which was derogatory or had disgraced his office. That being so, he did not think they should go out of the ordinary course and refuse the retiring Lord Mayor a vote of thanks.

Mr. HORA opposed the motion, reminding the Court that the late Lord Mayor had the audacity to request the Head Master of the City of London School to submit to his perusal a sermon which he had preached in Westminster Abbey, and which was supposed to have given umbrage, constituting himself in that respect an ecclesiastical censor; that on the Head Master declining he refused at first to distribute the prizes at the school, and only presided at last in a most ungracious manner.

The LORD MAYOR said the Court would probably concur with him in thinking that a vote of thanks should be truthful, and that a man should be thanked for what he had done and not for what he might have done. If the motion were confined to subjects on which the Court agreed, a truthful vote might be passed.

Mr. SIMPSON said the motion was couched in moderate terms, and he had not heard one word that had tended to impeach the honour or independence of the late Lord Mayor.

On a division the vote of thanks, as proposed by Mr. Tegg, was carried by a majority of 22 in a Court of 152 members.

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