

MEETING FOR THE RELIEF OF THE POLISH REFUGEES.

On Saturday last a highly interesting and respectable meeting of the friends of the Polish Exiles in this country, was held in Freemasons' Hall, to consider and adopt beneficial measures for the support of the brave and unfortunate men, who are at present destitute, in the metropolis and in other parts of the kingdom.

T. WENTWORTH BEAUMONT, Esq., was voted to the chair. The Hon. Member was supported by Lord Morpeth, Lord Sandon, Lord Lumley, Lord James Stuart, Lord Dudley Stuart, Mr. Cutlar Fergusson, Mr. Hume, Mr. John Smith, Mr. Fitzstephen French, Mr. C. K. Tynte, Mr. Edward Romilly, Mr. Wilson Patten, Mr. Buckingham, Mr. John Blackburne, the Hon. Col. Butler, Mr. O'Connell, Mr. Sheil, Sir R. Nagle, J. B. Monck, Esq., Sir John Halsham, Henry Gally Knight, Esq., several Polish Noblemen and members of the Literary Association of the Friends of Poland.

Mr. HUME stated that those who had the direction, and others, interested in the success of the meeting, had delayed assembling at the appointed hour in expectation of several well wishers to the Association arriving, but they thought it due to those assembled there to commence business.

The CHAIRMAN stated that several of their most zealous friends were absent in consequence of other meetings being held that day, at which their presence was required, but he had no doubt that during the proceedings they would be in attendance. They had met to afford the British public an opportunity of expressing their sympathy with the brave but unfortunate Poles. He wished to say a few words in answer to objections that had been raised against assisting those who had joined the seditions against good Government. He did not stand up to vindicate those who had pursued seditious courses; but to show how different the conduct of the Poles had been in endeavouring to obtain those rights which had been guaranteed to them on the faith of treaties, and which had been shamefully trodden down, and attempted to be utterly destroyed—(cheers). Again it was said that they (the Association) were offering a premium to others to come to this country, but he thought the small amount of the subscriptions and the pittance afforded to the refugees would be a sufficient answer. It was not likely, after the decision of the Government, that they would leave France or other parts of the continent, where they had found a home, to risk the chance of assistance from funds already exhausted.

Lord MORPETH said that, in rising to move the first resolution, "That the Polish refugees in England, who have sacrificed every thing in defending the rights, liberties, and existence of their country, are eminently deserving of the sympathy of the British public, and of that assistance which their forlorn situation so urgently requires," he would have complained of the rules of the Committee, if they were not irreversible, of being placed in the van to advocate the cause, and it was a melancholy duty, of the unfortunate but brave Poles. He would, however, endeavour to touch the chords of their feelings, and sure he was he should find a response. Their sad history was too well known, and the results too obvious to need detail. Though the subject was exhausted, yet he trusted the sympathy of the British public was not for the brave men now in banishment. That was not the place or the occasion for him to enter into a political discussion; there was another arena for him—the House of Commons. He need not remind them of that land of chivalry, Poland—of the country of Kosciuski and Sobieski—of the men of a nation who made the bravest stand for Christendom, and who beat back the enemy from the gates of Vienna—(cheers)—of a nation that gave warriors and statesmen, and men of literature, to stimulate, improve, and enlighten Europe before Moscow had a church or St. Petersburg an existence. —(loud cheers).—He did not call upon the assembly he was addressing to decide upon what was passing in Russia, Poland, or Siberia—(hear), or at what point a people ought first to commence resistance to a Government trampling upon their rights—but his object was to arouse their sympathies and to implore them to support the great cause of humanity they had met to further—(cheers). He trusted that the inhabitants of the greatest and most civilized metropolis on the face of the globe—who were in the enjoyment of riches, mirth, and revelry, would not allow brave and good men to starve—to die in their streets—(cheers).—In the name of humanity, and for the honour of the British nation, he called upon them to succour and relieve the Polish refugees. He could have wished the assembly had been more numerous, but it would incite the public, through the means of the Press, to a more full display of British philanthropy.

E. ROMILLY, Esq., M. P., in seconding the resolution, said the meeting would serve as a nucleus for a more extended sphere of benevolence.

The resolution was put and carried unanimously.

Mr. HUME, M.P., said that, in the absence of an Hon. Friend, Mr. C. Fergusson, who had not then arrived on account of important public business, he had been requested to move the second resolution—"That a fund be immediately raised for the relief of the distressed Polish refugees in England, whose peaceable and respectable conduct shall continue to give them a claim upon our support." He felt great pleasure in proposing that resolution, more especially as his Majesty's Government had not thought proper to afford any relief; and he regretted that they had not been of an opinion that they ought not. He recollected the time, and with satisfaction, when emigrants from France, Holland, Spain, and Portugal—(hear, hear), had been received and encouraged by the Government, and their wants liberally supplied. Many of the emigrants he referred to were still pensioners—(hear), although they might, and ought, to return to their native land—(hear, hear). The American loyalists also still received support. He could not, therefore, understand why assistance from the Treasury should not be granted to the brave, unfortunate Poles—(cheers). The subscriptions in contemplation were not only for them, but involved the support of liberty, for which the Poles had fought and lost their all. It was not alone the cause of the Poles, but of freedom and good Government all over the world. When in this country they were reforming their institutions, should the English people refuse to stretch out the hand of friendship to their brethren, who had the same purpose in view. Every man in the British empire ought to feel bound to take up the cause on a broad and general principle involving their dearest rights—(cheers).

Mr. W. ADAMS SMITH, in seconding the resolution, said the Poles were not placed in their present situation by any fault of their own; they were not a discontented people revolting against a legitimate Government, but an oppressed people resisting a usurpation. The speaker then recapitulated at length the treaty of Vienna, to which Great Britain was a party by the assenting signature of Lord Castlereagh—(hear), the character of Prince Metternich, and the dominating power of the three Northern Powers—contending that, even if Poland had given up her Diet, the people their freedom, and had allowed banishment and the infliction of the knout, yet still it would have been the duty of Englishmen to have raised up their hands against such conduct. But how differently had the noble Poles behaved! they had never consented to the partition and spoliation of their fine country—(cheers), and to the last had fought for her independence—(loud cheers). As they could not ask Government to come forward, or if they did, it would be of no avail; and as they could not re-establish the rights of the Poles, let them come forward to relieve their distress and diminish their sufferings—(great applause).

Lord SANDON said that the resolution he had to propose was a necessary consequence of the others. He hoped that his Hon. Friend (Mr. Hume) would be as successful in raising supplies for the purposes they had that day met to obtain, as he had been in opposing extravagance in supplies in another quarter. He felt a difficulty in addressing the ladies and gentlemen before him, not from want of zeal or subject matter, but hardly knew how to enforce the inestimable blessings of liberty of which the Poles were deprived. Sure he was they would not leave these gallant men, who, it would be recollected, had no legal claim to support, or entrance into our charitable institutions, to perish in the streets. He (Lord Sandon) had vindicated their political rights elsewhere, but it was not a party question, but one the British nation were called upon deeply to consider, and if reasons of State stood in the way, the Polish exiles were still more entitled to British benevolence. He implored every individual member of that assembly to use his exertions in relieving the wants of noble men of liberal acquirements. In conclusion, his Lordship moved, "That a Committee be appointed to investigate the claims, and ascertain the proper conduct of the Polish refugees to whom assistance shall be given, and that T. Wentworth Beaumont, Esq., M.P., Lord Dudley Stewart, M.P., E. Romilly, Esq., M.P., K. Mackenzie, and Dr. Szymra, be requested to compose the Committee, with power to add to their number, should it be thought desirable."

WILSON PATTEN, Esq., M.P., seconded the resolution, stating that he would only add to what had been so eloquently expressed, that he had had the pleasure of passing many months of his time in the provinces of Poland, and the warmth of feeling and the hospitality of the inhabitants to all foreigners, could never be forgotten by those who enjoyed it.

Mr. ROMILLY, M.P., moved the fourth resolution, "That the Polish Associations in the different parts of the kingdom be requested by the London parent association to call public meetings in furtherance of the charitable object of the meeting, and to remit the amount of the subscriptions to the bankers whom the meeting shall appoint to receive them." The resolution, he (Mr. R.) thought, spoke for itself, and its necessity was apparent, but if there could be a better distribution in the provinces of course there would be no objection. The Hon. Member then went on to state the atrocities committed by the Russians upon the Poles, observing that no language could adequately describe them, and that a detailed recital would harrow the mind. The Poles were the victims of a violated treaty—(hear), to which this country was more than a party—(loud cries of "hear"), and which, whether through carelessness or ignorance on the part of the Government of Britain, this country was the more bound to support the people of that unhappy country—(cheers). It had been asserted that the Association they were met to support would be the cause of bringing more refugees to this country; but the price of provisions in this country, as compared with the much lower charges on the Continent, was a sufficient answer; added to which he would mention the fact that when he solicited a Polish Count, who had saved a little out of the wreck of a great property which had been seized upon by Russia, to come to England, he declined, the exile stating that he had means to procure subsistence where he was, but might not in England. It had been also said that the Poles were men ready to join the

turbulent of the metropolis—a sufficient answer to that was given in the proceedings of the Trades' Union a few days since. No, the men of a nation that had been the bulwark of Europe against the usurpation of the rulers of the West in early ages, were not to be induced to lend their aid for factious purposes—(loud cheers). He (Mr. Romilly) thought—it might sound strange to English ears—but he was of opinion that the insurrection in Poland was fomented by Russia—(cries of "hear, hear"), for what purpose need hardly be stated. In conclusion he would state that a very careful investigation of the claims of every applicant would be entered into.

Mr. SHEIL, M.P., seconded the motion, contending that the Treaty of 1813, giving the Poles a Constitution, and signed by Lord Castlereagh at Vienna, was a gross fraud, and not assented to by the Polish nation. Even if it had, it had been violated, first, by the acts of that viper Constantine, who appeared to have had the spirit of Nero—(cheers). The Hon. Member detailed the further violations of the Treaty. Lord Palmerston, the English Minister for Foreign Affairs, had come forward with convenient expressions of sympathy, *talking much of pity*, but (said Mr. Sheil, slapping his pocket) *no money*—(cheers and laughter).—From all sides of the House of Commons—from all parties—had there been expressions in favour of the Poles; but on the divisions upon motions for their relief, what were the result?—A minority—(Hear, hear). The Hon. Member continued in a vehement tone (which rendered many of his sentences indistinct) to urge that the subject should be continually forced upon Government, and asked why his Hon. Friend (Mr. Cutlar Fergusson) had not continued to press it?

The CHAIRMAN was about to put the motion of Mr. Romilly, when a foreign gentleman, decorated with an order of merit, said that he should move as an amendment that branch associations be established.

Mr. HUME explained that the Committee of the Association had already that power.

The amendment was withdrawn—motion carried.

Lord DUDLEY STUART, M.P., moved "That the thanks of the meeting be given to the inhabitants of Portsmouth and its vicinity, who so generously came forward to support the distressed Polish exiles who were compelled to land on their shore." His Lordship gave an affecting narrative of the sufferings of these men. They had made good their retreat into Prussia, and maintained their ground in spite of the attempts made to drive them back. They were then forcibly shipped on board a Prussian vessel to be transported to the wilds of America; but a storm drove the ship into Portsmouth harbour, where of necessity they were obliged to land. Being once on shore and free, they refused to obey any directions of the Captain. An application was made to the Government for relief, but it was refused. The inhabitants of Portsmouth then entered into a subscription for their subsistence—the soldiers of the garrison, the children at the schools contributing, and the ladies and poor women making clothes for them. As soon as their wants were known more extensively, the inhabitants of the districts around, and of the Isle of Wight, assisted in the good work—(loud cheers). In looking over the public papers he found that the Government at former times had been liberal, indeed lavish, in supporting emigrants—the French, the Corsican, the Dutch, the Americans, the Spanish, the Portuguese, and the Italian; but the Treasury had not a single farthing for the Poles. There might be State reasons for the Government refusing, upon matters of diplomacy, perhaps (a laugh), but good reasons ought to have been adduced. All the members of the Government, however, whatever they might do in their collective wisdom (a laugh), were not callous to the call of humanity, for the Marquis of Lansdowne, the President of the Council, had sent a subscription of 50/—(cheers). He could not help adverting to the splendid subscriptions raised on behalf of the Spaniards some years since, amounting to upwards of 10,000/ a-year—(hear, hear). Recollecting such things he could not but call their attention to the more glorious achievements of the Poles, their magnanimity and sacrifices—(cheers). The tyrant Governments of Russia, Prussia, and Austria would fain blot out the name of Poland from the map of Europe—(cheers). He (Lord Stuart), upon that topic, would inform the meeting that that day, the 3d of May, was the anniversary of a glorious epoch in the history of Poland, for on the 3d of May, 43 years ago, a mighty Constitution was established for that nation—(cheers)—a Constitution which had been the theme of praise by writers of every civilised country—(loud cheers). His Lordship concluded a long and able address in enforcing the objects of the motion.

Mr. CUTLAR FERGUSSON, M.P., in rising to second the resolution, was received with enthusiasm. The conduct of the inhabitants of Portsmouth and its vicinity could not be spoken of too highly, but it was the same upon every shore, even in the countries of the despots who were most hostile to the Poles and free institutions—(cheers). The Hon. Gentleman with much energy and feeling replied to the remarks of the Hon. Member for Tipperary, observing that he had three times brought the subject of the Polish nation, and of the distressed Poles, before the House of Commons—that fact, he believed, was known to all the world—(repeated cheers). Mr. Fergusson then detailed his interviews with Lord Palmerston, and the vacillating policy of his Lordship, already before the public. He trusted it might be made known to the Emperor Nicholas that not one out of the 658 members of the British House of Commons had raised his voice in favour of the spoliating policy of Russia, or of the ruthless oppression of that noble nation—Poland—(cheers). A Noble Friend who had preceded him said there might be State reasons which prevented Government from coming forward with pecuniary aid; but had reasons of State prevented the French Government through the Chamber of Deputies affording a munificent grant?—(cheers). The question was a national one, and he was sure the people of England would not allow their country to be disgraced by not succouring the brave and the honourable. The exiles wanted little, and he had no doubt effectual aid would yet be extended to them—(cheers).

Mr. BUCKINGHAM also spoke to his interviews with Lord Althorp, in confirmation of the statements of the previous speaker; adding that he had seen the Polish soldiers at Portsmouth, and that their conduct was of the most exemplary description. They were upwards of 100 in number, and their high spirit could not be too much admired when they refused to fight in an unholy quarrel, or be the mercenaries of the contending brothers in Portugal.

Mr. O'CONNELL, M.P., congratulated the meeting, if not upon numbers, upon the phalanx of talent around him—men of high station and of all parties—men who had no general community of feeling upon political questions, but who were united in the holy cause of humanity, patriotism, and freedom. He was glad to find that his Hon. Friend (the Member for Tipperary) had been satisfactorily answered—(hear, hear). From the Ministers of the Government they had a higher source to appeal to—a greater authority—that of the British people. Poland had not fallen by any act of her own, but by Russian domination. The Hon. Member then expatiated upon the treaty of Vienna, and its result, and delivered an eloquent philippic against the contracting parties and the conduct of the British Government; from which he proceeded to a detail of the horrible outrages of the Russians at Warsaw and in other parts of Poland, instancing the banishment of the Nobles to Siberia—the inhuman punishment inflicted upon their wives, females of the highest rank—and the still more barbarous separation of infant and grown children from their parents. His exclamation of the "Monster Miscreant Nero Nicholas" was received with an indescribable shout of indignation, execration, and cheering, at the applicability of the epithet. The Hon. Gent. contended that much good would result from periodical publications upon Polish matters—it would arouse the feelings of the English people and the nations of Europe struggling to be free. After drawing a contrast between the gigantic power of Napoleon and the grasping despotism of the Autocrat of Russia, he (Mr. O'Connell) asked what difference there was between the two in their attempts to cripple—ay, to destroy England? Did not "the miscreant monster"—(cheers) press as much on our commerce as he could—more than he should have been allowed to attempt?—(hear). Had he not seized the keys of the Dardanelles?—(loud cries of hear.) Look to his extended empire—one day's march only from India—(repeated cries of "hear"). Yet there was a possibility—a practicability of establishing Poland again as a nation—(Great cheering). The Hon. Gent. concluded by moving "That this meeting highly approve of the Literary Polish Association to undertake a periodical publication which may contain authentic statements of the actual condition of Poland, and an account of all public proceedings which may affect the interests of that country."

Mr. JOHN SMITH, M.P., seconded the resolution.

HUNTER GORDON, Esq., moved that Messrs. Cocks, Biddulph, and Biddulph, and Messrs. Smith, Payne, and Co., be appointed the Bankers of the Association.

Capt. DORAN seconded the motion.

It was moved by G. YOUNG, Esq., and seconded by — CARDEN, Esq., that the amount of all subscriptions should be advertised in the principal London and provincial Journals.

The thanks of the Meeting were voted with acclamation to the CHAIRMAN, who expressed his acknowledgments, and the Meeting separated, after a liberal subscription had been entered into, in which the ladies were foremost with their contribution.

The following Subscriptions were received—	
Marquis of Lansdowne, Esq., M.P.	250 0
James Morrison, Esq., M.P.	25 0
George Evans, Esq., M.P.	25 0
Wynne Ellis, Esq., M.P.	10 0
John Maxwell, Esq., M.P.	10 0
John Abel Smith, Esq., M.P.	5 0
Lord James Stuart, M.P.	5 0
Henry Labouchere, Esq., M.P.	10 0
Lord Sandon, M.P.	20 0
Lord Morpeth, M.P.	10 0
J. Wilson Patten, Esq., M.P.	20 0
Josh. Hume, Esq., M.P.	5 0
Dan. O'Connell, Esq., M.P.	5 0
J. S. Buckingham, Esq., M.P.	1 1
John Smith, Esq., M.P.	20 0
T. Wentworth Beaumont, Esq., M.P.	20 0
Col. J. B. Bratsitz, Esq.	5 5
Lord Lumley, M.P.	5 0
R. L. Sheil, Esq., M.P.	3 0
E. Romilly, Esq., M.P.	5 0
Sir John Walsham	1 0
Miss Romilly	1 0
Mrs. Beaumont	10 0
Henry Gally Knight, Esq.	10 0
John Blackburne, Esq.	5 0
M.P.	3 0
Fitzstephen French, Esq.	1 0
M.P.	1 0
Sir R. Nagle, Bart., M.P.	1 0
Lord Dudley Stuart, M.P.	10 0
Charles Morris, jun., Esq.	10 0
Mrs. Marcet	5 0
Adam Smith, Esq.	1 0
John B. Monck, Esq.	5 5
Captain Jelfe Sharpe, of Twickenham	1 1
W. Horton Lloyd, Esq.	1 0
John Taylor, Esq.	2 2
H. Masterson, Esq.	1 0
A Friend	0 10
Total	£331 8

As the above sum is quite inadequate for the relief of the distressed Poles, the number of whom in London alone is above 100, subscriptions will be received at the Bankers' of the Association, Messrs. Smith, Payne, and Smiths, and Messrs. Cocks, Biddulph, and Co.; or by the Secretary, at their Chambers, 10, Duke-street, St. James's.

By order of the Council,
K. F. H. MACKENZIE, Hon. Sec.

Dr. L. B. Hawley