

## CATHOLIC RELIEF BILL.

The Duke of Wellington moved the Order of the Day for the second reading of the Bill to relieve the Roman Catholics from certain civil disabilities.

The Order having been read,

The Duke of Wellington expressed his regret that he should differ in opinion, on this subject, from so many of those for whom he entertained the highest respect and regard; but he considered the part which he had taken upon this subject as the performance of a public duty, and absolutely incumbent upon him; and he must say that no private regard, no respect for the opinion of any noble Lord, would have induced him to depart from the course which he had considered it his duty to adopt.

My Lords, said the Duke, the point which I shall first bring under your consideration is the state of Ireland. It is said that Ireland has been disturbed for the last thirty years—that it is a disturbance we have been accustomed to—and that it does not at all alter the circumstances of the case, as they have hitherto appeared to the House. My Lords, it is perfectly true that Ireland has been disturbed during the long period I have stated; but within the last year or two, political circumstances have, in no small degree, increased that agitation. Besides that, my Lords, I must say, although I have no positive legal proof of the fact, that, I have every reason to believe that there has been a considerable organization for the purposes of mischief. This organization appears to be proved, not only by the declarations of those who formed and who arranged it, but likewise by the effects which it has produced in the election of Churchwardens throughout the country.

The Duke here referred to particular instances of alarming disorder which threatened the peace of the country. But, said he, it is asked, why don't you carry the law into execution? Why, my Lords, in all that I have stated hitherto there was no resistance to the law. The magistrates were terrified, and did nothing; the troops did not happen immediately to be upon the spot, and there was no resistance. When we hear noble Lords reproaching the Government for not carrying into execution the law in Ireland, as it was carried into execution in England, the observation shows that they do not understand the state of things in Ireland. The truth of the matter is, that in England, when the law was carried into execution in the year 1819, a large body of persons assembled for an illegal purpose; they resisted the order of the magistrates to disperse, and, having resisted that order, the magistrates ordered the troops to disperse them; but in this case there were no circumstances of that kind, no order was given to disperse, no order could be given to disperse, because no magistrates were present; and, if they had been present, there were no troops to disperse. The truth is, the state of society was such as rendered these events possible every hour; and it was impossible the magistrates could be at every spot and at all times, to put an end to these outrages, which really are a disgrace to the country in which they exist. But, my Lords, neither the form nor the means in the possession of Government enabled Government to put an end to these things. It was necessary, therefore, to come to Parliament. Now let us see what chance there was for providing a remedy for this state of things by coming to Parliament. My Lords, we all recollect perfectly well that the opinion of a majority in another place is, that the remedy for this state of things in Ireland is a repeal of the disabilities affecting his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects. We might have gone and asked Parliament to enable us to put down the Roman Catholic Association; but what chance had we of prevailing upon Parliament to pass such a bill, without being prepared to come forward and state that we were ready to consider the whole condition of Ireland? With a view to apply a remedy to that which Parliament had stated to be the cause of the disease, suppose that Parliament had given us the bill to put down the Roman Catholic Association, would such a law as that which has passed this year be a remedy for the state of things which I have already described to your Lordships as existing in Ireland? Would it do any thing towards putting an end to the organization which I have stated to your Lordships exists? towards putting down the mischiefs which are the consequences of that organization—towards giving you the means of getting the better of the state of things existing in Ireland, without some further measure to be adopted? But, my Lords, it is said, if that will not do, let us proceed to blows. What is meant by proceeding to blows is coming to civil war. Now I believe that every government must be prepared to carry into execution the laws of the country by the force placed at its disposition—by the military force, in case that should be necessary; but as I have already stated to your Lordships, there was no resistance of the law: nay, more, I will go further, and will say that I am positively certain that this state of things existing in Ireland for the last year and a half, bordering upon civil war (being attended by nearly all the evils of civil war) might have continued a considerable time longer, to the great injury and disgrace of the country, and those who managed the State. They know, as well as I do, they are not strong enough to wrestle with the King's Government, backed by the law; they know perfectly well they would have been the first victims of that resistance; but knowing that, and knowing, as I do, that they are sensible able men, and perfectly aware of the

materials upon which they have to work, I have not the smallest doubt that the state of things which I have stated to your Lordships would have continued, and that you would never have had an opportunity of putting it down in the manner some noble Lords imagined. But, my Lords, even if I had been certain of such means of putting it down, I should have considered it my duty to avoid those means. I am one of those who have probably passed a longer period of my life engaged in war than most men, and principally, I may say, in civil war; and I must say this, that if I could avoid, by any sacrifice whatever, even one month of civil war in the country to which I was attached, I would sacrifice my life in order to do it. There is nothing which destroys property & prosperity, and demoralizes character, to the degree that civil war does; by it, the hand of man is raised against his neighbor, against his brother, and against his father; servant betrays master, and the whole scene ends in confusion and disorder. Yes, my Lords, this is the resource to which we must have looked—these are the means to which we must have applied, in order to have put an end to this state of things, if we had not made the option of bringing forward the measures for which I say I am responsible.

And if civil war is so bad when it is occasioned by resistance to the Government; if it is so bad in the case I have stated, and so much to be avoided; how much more is it to be avoided when we are to arm the people in order that they may conquer one party by exciting the other part against them? My Lords, I am sure there is not a man, who hears me, whose blood would not shudder at such a proposition; if it were made to him; and yet that is the resource to which we should be pushed at last, by continuing the course we have been adopting for the last few years. I entreat your Lordships to revert a little to what passed on a former similar occasion. My Lords I am old enough to remember the rebellion of 1798. I was employed in another part of the dominions; but, my Lords, if I am not mistaken, the Parliament of Ireland at that time walked up to my Lord Lieutenant with a unanimous address, beseeching his Excellency to take every means to put down that unnatural rebellion, and promising their full support, in order to carry the measure into execution. The Lord Lieutenant did take those measures, and did succeed in putting down that rebellion. Well, my Lords, what happened in the very next Session? The Government proposed to put an end to the Parliament, and to form a legislative union between the two kingdoms, for the principal purpose of proposing this very measure—and, in point of fact, the very first measure that was proposed after this legislative union, after those successful endeavors to put down this rebellion, was the very measure with which I am now about to trouble your Lordships. Is it possible Noble Lords can believe that if there was such a contest as that which I have anticipated, that it could be carried on by one House of Parliament? I am certain, my Lords, that when you look at the division of opinion which prevails in the two Houses of Parliament—when you look at the division which prevails in every family of this kingdom and of Ireland—in every family, I say, from the most eminent in station down to the lowest in this country—when you look at the division of opinion that prevails among the Protestants of Ireland on this subject—I am convinced you will see that there would be a vast difference in a contest carried on now, and that which was carried on on former occasions. My Lords, I beg you will recollect that, upon a recent occasion, there was a Protestant declaration of the sentiments of Ireland. As I said before, the Parliament of Ireland, in the year 1798, with the exception of one or two gentlemen, were unanimous; and, on a recent occasion, there were 7 Marquises, 27 Earls, a vast number of Peers of other ranks, and not less than 2,000 Protestant gentlemen of property in the country, who signed the declaration, stating the absolute necessity of making these concessions. Under these circumstances it is that this contest has been carried on—circumstances totally different from those which existed at the time before alluded to. But is it possible to believe that Parliament would allow such a contest to go on? that it would continue to oppose itself to measures brought forward for its settlement? It appears to me absolutely impossible that we could have gone on longer without increasing difficulties being brought on the country. But it is very desirable that we should look a little to what benefit is to be derived to any one class in the State by continuing the disabilities, and only taking those coercive measures which will have all the evils I have stated. We are told that the benefit will be to preserve the principles of the Constitution of 1688—that the acts of 1688 permanently excluded Roman Catholics from Parliament—and that, they being permanently excluded from Parliament, it is necessary to have recourse to all those evils, in order to keep up that permanent exclusion. Now, I wish very much that Noble Lords would take upon themselves the trouble I have taken, to see how the matter stands as to the permanent exclusion of Roman Catholics from Parliament. My Lords, in the Bill of Rights, there are some things permanently enacted, which I sincerely hope will be permanent—those are the liberties of the People—the security for the Protestantism of the person on the throne of these kingdoms, and that he shall not be married to a Papist. Then there is an oath of allegiance and supremacy to be taken by all those of whom that oath of allegiance is required, which is also permanent; but there is no declaration against transubstantiation. There is also an oath of allegiance different from that which is to be taken by a member of Parliament. I beg your Lordships will observe that, although this

oath of allegiance was declared permanent, it was altered in the reign of William and Mary. This shows what that permanent act was. Then, with respect to the oaths to be taken by members of Parliament, I beg your Lordships to observe that these oaths, the declaration against transubstantiation and the imprecation of the Mass, are not in the act William III.—they are in the act of 30th Charles II. During the reign of Charles II. there were certain oaths imposed, first on Dissenters of the Church of England, by the 13th and 14th Charles II., and to exclude Roman Catholics, the 25th Charles II., and 30th Charles II. At the period of the revolution, when King William came, he thought proper to extend the basis of his Government, and he repealed the oaths affecting the Dissenters from the Church of England, imposed by the 13th and 14th Charles II., and likewise that permanent part of the oath of supremacy, which Dissenters from the Church of England could not take. That is the history of the alteration of these oaths by William III., from the time of Charles II. But, my Lords, the remainder of the oath could be taken by Dissenters, but could not be taken by Roman Catholics. The danger, with respect to Roman Catholics, had originated in the time of Charles II., and these oaths still existed in the time of William III., but the oath was altered, because one of the great principles of the revolution was to limit the exclusion from the benefits of the Constitution as far as it was possible.

The Duke here took notice of several other acts and oaths called permanent, which had been heretofore altered, and could be altered at pleasure.

The great question, said the Duke, is whether you will, as guardians of the public welfare, relieve the country from the improper influence exercised over such a portion of his Majesty's subject by the Catholic Priesthood? I have already stated how this exclusive system tended to embarrass the measures of Government, and to excite divisions and disturbances in every part of the country, and, indeed in every family; but I have not yet called your Lordships' attention to the dangers to which the Church itself is exposed, in consequence of this disunion. The Church of Ireland is in a peculiar situation. The Clergy of the Established Church there have but the minority under their charge; at the same time, I must say, that a more exemplary, a more pious, and learned set of men do not exist. That Church certainly enjoys the affections of those whom they have been sent to instruct to the same degree with their brethren in England; and the Protestants of both countries would shed the last drop of their blood in defence of the doctrines of the Church. But if the case comes to that point, if they were obliged to have recourse to violence, was not that likely to affect the interests of the Church?—And I will ask whether it were more likely that such violence might be prevented by an united Government, an united Parliament, and an united people; or a disunited Government, a disunited Parliament or a disunited people? No man who attends to the subject can fail to see the situation of Ireland; and must wish to see a measure carried into effect which will tend so much to the peace and tranquility of the country.

Having thus, my Lords, shown the necessity of some change in the system of Government, I shall now proceed briefly to state the general provisions of the Bill.

Here the Duke recited the several provisions of the bill, observing, that having seen the consequences resulting from the former imperfect acts of 1782 and 1793 giving partial relief only, it encouraged them to rise in their demands, and to arm them with fresh power to enforce them. I have thought it my duty to make the concession as large as any reasonable man could expect—to leave nothing behind which could form a pretence for fresh demands, or for disturbing the peace or tranquility of the country. The conceding to them the right of sitting in Parliament I do not conceive can be objected to on any good grounds of policy or reason. It cannot in any manner influence any question that comes before Parliament to the prejudice of the Church of England.

It must be recollected that when the act of the 30th of Charles II., and the other act at the period of the Revolution, were passed, they were not enacted for the security of the Church. It was not the Church but the State which was in danger. For what were these laws enacted? Was it not because the Sovereign was a concealed Papist, and his successor an avowed one? and because, on that account, the safety of the State was threatened? But, besides this, danger was to be apprehended then, not from the Catholics but the Dissenters. Any one who has attended to the history of those times must see that it was not the Catholics, but the Dissenters, that were dreaded, and that the privileges granted to the Dissenters contributed to the Revolution. I hardly think it can be necessary for me to show that no danger can be apprehended from admitting Catholics to seats in Parliament. In the time of Charles II. they had seats in both Houses. By the proposed law they are not required to take the oath of supremacy; but an oath of allegiance has been framed, in which a great part of the oath of supremacy has been retained, and which will answer sufficiently that particular purpose. So far, then, this act is much better than that of Charles II. On another subject, my Lords, I wish to say a few words. Many in this House, as well as throughout the country—and I confess I was of that opinion myself—have contended that the State ought to have some security for the Protestant Church against the encroachments of the Catholic Clergy; but I confess, on examining the question, and looking more minutely than before at the foundation on which the security of

the Church and State rests, I could find no security which would be satisfactory. The bill, I think, my Lords, as it stands, affords more security than any that could have been received either from the Catholic Clergy or a foreign Potentate. In order to explain this, it may be necessary to refer to other States; and I beg your Lordships' attention to that subject for a few moments. The King of Prussia exercises a power over the Roman Catholics in his dominion, under different Concordats entered into with the Pope. The House of Austria exercises a similar power, and on the same grounds. The territories on the left bank of the Rhine are likewise bound by a Concordat with the Pope, agreed to in the time of Bonaparte; and those of the right bank by Concordats entered into by their respective sovereigns. But in the event of a Concordat being entered into between the British Government and the Pope, that would be admitting the Pope to have some power in this country; and that, I say, is a point which we never will yield. No foreign Sovereign, be he who he may—no Prince or Potentate—has a right to interfere between his Majesty and his subjects; and from all such transactions, I trust, every Government in this country will steer clear. Even the Veto I should not consider any security; and that could not be assumed by the Sovereign, without, in some way or other, impairing his authority and dignity, and admitting the Pope to have some right to interfere in the internal affairs of the State. Suppose the King to have the nomination of the Bishops, he has sworn to preserve the Protestant Church, the Bishops and Clergy, and every thing belonging to them. Now, how could he appoint a Catholic Bishop without giving him a diocese? And if he did, would not the Church of England rise against such an attempt on the part of his Majesty?—

With regard to some security against correspondence with Rome, and the necessity of supervising all communications, in order to prevent inconvenience or injury to this country, I must say that, on that point also, there are great objections. I do not see how it would be possible, nor do I think it necessary to make the attempt at present, to watch over all such correspondence. It turns, no doubt, solely on spiritual affairs. It would be found quite impossible to prevent it, and by making the attempt I am convinced that we should be doing more harm to the constitution and the Established Church than by allowing the Catholics to carry on their correspondence as they had hitherto done. If this indulgence is abused, and the conduct of any of the parties should render the interference of Government necessary, I shall come down to the House, and claim additional power to ensure a result to that interference which shall be satisfactory to the House and the country. Another part of the bill relates to the Jesuits. An act was passed against that body in 1791, and which was probably thought at the same time as secure as any law could be on the subject. I do not mean to impute any blame to the noble Lord who framed that bill, but every one knows that it has been without effect, and that not only in Ireland, but in this country, large establishments have sprung up, notwithstanding the provisions of that bill. The measure resorted to in this bill, I trust, will be effectual in suppressing all such societies, without pressing hard on any individual. No one, my Lords, would be more reluctant than myself to impose any hardships on any individuals; but I have not the smallest doubt that, if this clause in the bill is not carried, we shall soon see this country and Ireland inundated by Jesuits, sent from all the other parts of Europe, and establishing themselves in the British dominions.

The Duke observed, if I am not mistaken the difference between the Episcopal Church of England and the Kirk of Scotland, at a former period, were as injurious to the well-being and security of the Constitution as the present state of Ireland. Abroad we know there are no such distinctions of Protestants and Catholics as the same in the best regulated Catholic countries, and I am not aware that any danger has arisen from such a state of things. In order to show the effect of such a divided interest in this country in former times, it is only necessary to refer to the state of society in Scotland previous to the Union; and I cannot give your Lordships a better idea of it, than by reading a petition which has this day been put into my hands, presented more than 100 years ago to the Scottish Parliament against granting toleration to Episcopacy in that country. This petition is almost word for word a copy of many that have been presented to this House against Popery. That petition promised nothing but ruin to the Kirk of Scotland and the Constitution of that country; and I have little doubt that, when this bill has passed, the dangers anticipated from it will be found as groundless as those which formerly prevailed in Scotland. The petitioners prayed that Parliament would not grant toleration to Episcopacy in Scotland in the then state of that Church. Such a toleration would be unavailing and ruinous; it would sap the foundations of the Church and Constitution; it would overwhelm the laws established in the country, and needlessly destroy the peace and tranquility of the nation. It would alienate from his Majesty the hearts of his best subjects, weaken the loyalty of the People, open a door to Prelacy and Popery, and bring the nation back to that state of misery and pollution from which it has so lately emerged. The petitioners, therefore, humbly entreated Parliament to uphold the laws then existing; refuse all legal toleration because they were persuaded that, if toleration were granted it would lead to the establishment of Popery, and produce the most dreadful

effect on the institutions of the Church and State.

Now I sincerely hope, continued the Noble Duke, that as the prophecy made respecting Episcopacy in that country has not been fulfilled, the prophecy contained in some of the petitions against concessions to Catholics will in the result, be found equally without foundation. But there are still other grounds for granting Emancipation. There can be no doubt, after the Roman Catholics have been put on the same footing with their Protestant fellow-subjects, they will have no separate interests, and can therefore, have no grounds for continuing the suspicions, which are entertained against them. They can execute nothing in this or the other House of Parliament. Parliament will look to them with the same eye with which it has watched Scotland. I have no doubt that in a short time the same amity and kindly feeling will prevail there. It however, we should be disappointed of the hopes of tranquillity, and attempts to create dissension should be renewed, I will without delay come down to lay the state of affairs before Parliament in order to enable the Government to meet the danger; and I am confident, my Lords, that on such an occasion, as well as on this, I shall meet with your Lordships' support and confidence. Having, my Lords, explained the grounds for the measure—the state of Ireland, the inconvenience arising from a constant recurrence of discussion on this question, the difficulties, which are imposed on the Government, in consequence of the divided state of public opinion, and the divided sentiments of both Houses of Parliament—and having also stated the nature of the measure—I have nothing further to add than to entreat your Lordships to give a subject of such importance the most full, most impartial, and most serious consideration. [Cheers.]

## VERY LATE FROM EUROPE.

New-York, May 13.

### CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION ACCOMPLISHED.

The Catholic Relief Bill passed the House of Lords on the 10th of April by a majority of one hundred and four, and received the Royal Assent, by Commission on the 13th of April. The Bill for the Qualification of Irish Freeholders (the 21st Bill,) also passed on the 10th and received the Royal assent on the 13th. On the passage of the Relief Bill the votes stood—Contents—Present, 149—Proxies, 64—213. Non-Contents—Present, 76—Proxies, 33—109.

Of the twenty-eight Protestant Bishops, ten voted for the bill.

The London Courier of April 13th furnishes the following:

**House of Lords.—This Evening.**—At quarter before four o'clock, the Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Shaftesbury, and Lord Ellenborough, appeared in their robes at his Majesty's Commissioners.

A message having been sent for the attendance of the Commons, after a short time.

The Speaker and a considerable number of Members appeared at the Bar.

The Lords Commissioners then gave his Majesty's Royal assent to the Roman Catholic Relief Bill, Irish Forty Shilling Freeholders Disfranchisement Bill, and a number of Private Bills; and thus has the measure become the law of the land.

Forty or fifty Peers were present. The Duke of Norfolk was in attendance.

**House of Commons.—This evening.**—The Speaker took the Chair to-day at half past three, and was shortly after summoned to the House of Lords, to hear the royal assent given, by Commission, to certain bills. The Speaker immediately proceeded to the Lords, attended by more than a hundred members. On the return of the Speaker, the announcement by him that the royal assent had been given to the Roman Catholic Relief Bill, was received with the loudest cheers we ever heard within the walls of this House.

The Bill became operative on the 23d April. (St. George's Day.) Long ere this the English Catholic Peers have taken their seats in the House of Lords. There are eight in number, viz:—the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Shrewsbury, Lord Clifford, Lord Arundel, Lord Downer, Lord Petre, Lord Stafford, Lord Stourton. The Irish Catholic Peers can only sit in the House of Lords as Representatives; but on foregoing certain privileges, they may, like Protestant Irish Peers sit in the House of Commons, on being elected for any place in England.

The Earl of Surrey (eldest son of the Duke of Norfolk the Premier Peer of England) is shortly to take a seat in the House of Commons for the borough of Horsham.

### State of Manufactures.

Great distress prevails in the manufacturing districts. The Sheffield Courier says—"The state of trade in almost all the manufacturing districts is such as to excite the most fearful apprehensions. In our own town, the demand for its manufactures was scarcely ever so dull, and though our streets are not yet filled with half-famished workmen, there is too much reason to believe such an appalling sight will ere long present itself. The price at which manufactured goods are sold do not, in some instances, exceed the value of the raw material, and the wages paid for labor are necessarily so very low as to reduce the workmen almost to the condition of paupers. Still under these circumstances, it is with difficulty any sales are effected, and large stocks are consequently accumulated. This order of things, however, cannot exist long, and unless a revival of trade takes place very shortly we almost tremble for the consequences."

**Spitalfields.**—The distress in this district exceeds all description. Thousands are actually starving and unless speedy relief be afforded, famine will soon accomplish its work in pestilence and death.