

Great-Britain.

LONDON, FEBRUARY 23.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

THE CATHOLIC QUESTION.

The DUKE OF CLARENCE said—My lords, I rise to address your Lordships under feelings of no ordinary nature. It was my intention to have delivered my opinions upon this subject to which the Marquis [of Londonderry] has just referred, in the course of this evening, in a more regular course, when, as I have been given to understand, your Lordships will receive the reports of the Committee on the Bill for suppressing the Catholic Association—a measure of which I believe no man in his senses but must decidedly approve. But more of that hereafter. But, My Lords, I rise thus early in consequence of what has just fallen from my Noble Friend—I hope he will allow me to call him so—who has expressed his pleasure that this measure is now to be a unanimous measure on the part of His Majesty's Government, who had heretofore been generally opposed to it. This is, my Lords, the cause of my now rising to address you, otherwise I should have waited to have delivered my sentiments upon the Bill you are about to be called on to consider in one of its stages. My Lords, I consider this unanimity with reference to the condition of Ireland to be of more consequence than all the petitions, *pro* and *con*, that have been laid upon the Table of this House—petitions of which those who have signed them knew no more about than the paper on which they were written. God knows I feel this to be the fact. But I rise, my Lords, now, because His Majesty's Ministers have become united. I wish to God that His Majesty's Ministers, or rather His Majesty's Administration that might have been formed in the year 1804, could have been united on this subject. From that hour my opinions were in favour of what is falsely called Catholic Concession, for it is not concession, My Lords; it is the taking away a degradation; and I pledge myself, I pledge my life, that it is not a concession to the Catholics, but the removal of a degradation—it is the binding in strength together of eight millions of His Majesty's subjects. Now I am up, I will state how much pleasure I feel this day in supporting the Noble Duke and his colleagues, who have been so unjustly, for I will not say so infamously, attacked. My Lords, if His Majesty's Ministers are, fortunately for the Country, united upon a measure of such deep importance, I thank them from the very bottom of my heart. I think it will be hardly possible for any man who hears me this day to doubt that I am deeply and thoroughly interested in the welfare of my Country. [Hear.] It will be forty years next month since I have had a Seat in this House, and I trust in God I have never given a vote here, that I have had reason to regret; but certain I am that I have never given any vote with half so much pleasure and satisfaction, as I shall give, at every stage of it, to the measure now contemplated by the Noble Duke. I consider it, my Lords, a fortunate circumstance for England and for Europe, that His Majesty's Cabinet are united in a measure which every man of common sense must look upon for the interest of England, and if for the interest of England, also for the interest of Europe; for the interest of Europe is so closely connected with the interests of England, that every thing which conduces to her welfare, conduces to the interest of Europe. It is then, I say, a fortunate thing for this country, that the Noble Duke has been selected by His Majesty, and placed at the head of its affairs. I rejoice, my Lords, to see him there, and so long as he continues the course he is now pursuing, so long shall he have my support. My Lords, in the only conversation that has taken place between the Noble Lord on the woolsack, and myself, which took place when I resigned office, (and which resignation it pleased His Majesty graciously to accept,) I told that Noble and Learned Lord that I would never form one of a factious opposition to the Government—that I considered such a line of conduct to be my bounden duty. I appeal to the noble Lord to confirm my words. [The Lord Chancellor bowed.] I trust these words have not been falsified by an action of mine; and, indeed nothing but the absolute conviction of the importance of the present crisis to this country, and the necessity of supporting the noble Duke and his Administration in the course in which they have had the boldness, the fairness, and the candour to pursue, should have induced me to come forward, thus publicly, before God and before man to declare my sentiments. Professionally educated as I have been, it has fallen to my lot to have visited Ireland, and I should be the most ungrateful

of men were I ever to forget the reception I there met with. During all my professional experience, I can bear testimony to the character, to the bravery, to the energy, and to the thorough good humour of Irishmen. If the venerable Duncan, who gained immortal fame by his victorious action with the Dutch, but who had served his Country more by the energy and discipline with which he kept his fleet at sea at the time of the mutiny at the Nore, were in existence—if Earl Saint Vincent, whose blockade of Cadiz reflected the highest honor on him, were living—or if one who was more dear to me than any other officer in the service, (I mean the great Nelson, the hero of the Nile)—were in being, would they not hold up their hands in admiration, and say, that the dawn of peace, happiness, and tranquillity in Ireland had arrived—that justice was about to be done to the country of those men who had been fighting the battles of the Empire on the lower decks of the ships which they commanded? However I might on one occasion, have had the misfortune to differ from the noble individual at the head of His Majesty's Government, nothing can ever induce me to alter the exalted opinion I entertain of his great personal worth and high military talent, when I recollect the victories achieved by the illustrious Duke, from as it were the first dawn of his great military talent,—when I recollect the brilliant circumstances attendant upon his first charge, at the time he commanded a column in India, and contributed so materially to the destruction of the power of the celebrated Tippu Saib,—when I recollect all his splendid achievements, from his first victory of Vimeria down to the glorious day of Waterloo—that day which for a length of time had closed the horoscope of Europe. The Noble Duke is a soldier; and, when he bears in mind the regiments that fought under his command, he must consider that he is now only discharging a debt of gratitude, which, as a soldier, he owes to those brave and gallant men, who achieved his victories, and contributed to raise him to his present exalted situation. The Noble Duke has brought forward the question when he possesses the full power to carry it. It is recommended in the Speech from the Throne, and it is announced at length from such high authority, that the thing can be done with perfect safety to the country—as it is my firm conviction that it can be so done, not only consistently with the safety of the country, but with its future security and advantage. [Hear.] At present I have no more to say, but I trust I have said enough to convince your Lordships and the country, that I seriously intend to give my cordial support to those just measures of relief in favor of His Majesty's Roman Catholic Subjects. I am convinced, indeed, that every thing which can be done for the good of the country, and the prosperity of the people, will be done by that Noble Duke, and I shall therefore make no further observations at present on this subject. I trust, however, I have said enough this evening, to convince the House and the country, that I am serious in the support I intend on all occasions to give His Majesty's Government, in their endeavours to settle this question. [Cheers.] I shall have a great deal more to say, however, when the measure intended by the Noble Duke is regularly before your Lordships. The subject is one to which I have repeatedly turned my mind, and which I have at various times considered for the last twenty years, in all its bearings, and with reference to England as well as Ireland. It may, I have no doubt, be said, that if your opinions were always in favor of concession to the Roman Catholics, why is it that you have not before avowed them? My reason, my Lords, is this—the settlement of the Catholic question has not, until now, been made a measure of Government—[Hear]—and although I had been uniformly in opposition for a long period, and connected in early life with many of the distinguished leaders of opposition who espoused the cause of the Catholics, this consideration withheld me from declaring my opinions. In the year 1807, however, when it pleased the Almighty to produce that concurrence of circumstances which called his present Majesty to the Regency of this country, I felt myself bound, under the peculiar situation in which I was placed, to support His Majesty's Government—and having continued to do so until the present moment, I could not with the opinion I held upon this subject, come forward and express my sentiments in favour of the Catholics, as long as the Members of His Majesty's Government were not united upon the expediency of granting the claims of the Catholics. I saw, however, that the policy of granting their claims was every year gaining fresh advocates—I saw that the disunion existing upon the subject of concession among the Members of His Majesty's Government was, every year, becoming of greater consequence—and I felt that I should do harm, instead of good, by an interference in a point which must ultimately

ly be conceded, but which I felt never could be conceded with security, or with propriety, unless through the medium of the Ministers of the Crown. So convinced am I indeed of the propriety of this course, that if the Noble Duke had come down to your Lordship's house and declared that he had a Government unanimous in their opinions that the claims of the Catholics should be resisted, I feel I must have adhered to the same line of policy. My opinions upon the propriety of concession to those claims might and would have remained unaltered, but I should have always felt it to be my duty to resist their being factiously brought forward; for until the opinions of the Members of the Government were united upon the subject, I could not bring myself to believe that the proper time was arrived for an attempt to accomplish the object of our wishes. Nevertheless, I thank God, the day is altered, and I trust we shall join heart and soul in the furtherance of those measures contemplated by the Noble Duke, but which I, not being in the secret, cannot pretend to describe. I hope, however, they will prove, when laid before the House, to be infinitely less objectionable than some noble Lords seem to imagine. I trust, too, that in the interval between the passing of the Bill which we are to consider tonight, and the announcement of those measures by which the Noble Duke proposes to effect this most desirable object, that the Right Reverend Prelates will apply themselves seriously, deliberately, and without the mixture of any unseemly passion or prejudice, to the consideration of the condition in which we are now placed, and what would be the result of its continuance. [Hear.] I trust in this deliberation they will call to their mind that they are the appointed Ministers of peace. I trust they will also call to their recollection what might be the situation of Great Britain if those events which are every day taking place upon the Continent of Europe, and which begin to assume an appearance of greater interest to this country, should, by any possibility, give rise to such difficulties as would involve us in war. I would ask the Right Reverend Prelates whether they can, conscientiously, bring themselves to oppose that measure which may place us in a situation to avoid all hostilities in the present situation of Europe; and I would ask them still further, whether, knowing that by opposing it they may be the means of introducing hostilities abroad, and enmity at home—I ask them how they can dare to call themselves the Ministers of Peace? [Hear, hear, hear.] I feel I ought to ask pardon of your Lordships for detaining you so long at the present moment, and the more so, as I shall very often be obliged to trouble the House in the discussions which must take place upon the measures which the Noble Duke intends to propose. I could not, however, avoid congratulating your Lordships upon the prospect before you, and expressing my pleasure and satisfaction that the door of the Constitution is at last to be opened to the People of what ought to be the dearest, as I believe it to be the richest province of our united empire.

Colonial.

MONTREAL, APRIL 2.

NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

The March Monthly Meeting of this Society was held at its rooms on Monday evening the 30th instant, ALEX. SKAKEL, Esq. V. P. in the Chair.

The Committee appointed to select for conversation and discussion, made a second report, wherein they suggested the propriety of limiting all private business to one hour, so as to give more time for the discussion of the subject selected for the evening—that the Secretary do notify the subject of discussion in writing to the Members—that the subjects for essays or discussions recommended by this Committee be entered in a book for that purpose—and that medals be annually offered for prize essays, the competition not being limited to the Members of the Society, but open to the public generally. The Committee also suggested several subjects for discussion. Specific motions founded on the suggestion of the Committee were then introduced and are to be discussed at the next meeting.

The Corresponding Secretary read letters from Paul S. H. Lee, Esq., of Charleston, and Capt. Bonnycastle, R. E. Kingston, on their election as Corresponding Members, and from Jasper Curtis, Esq., St. Albans, and Dr. William Belin Hochelaga, both accompanied by donations.

The Report of the Council announced that the Bill granting an aid to the Society had received the assent of His Majesty's Representative on the 14th instant and became a law, and that the Council would immediately take proper steps to obtain possession of the £200 voted. The