

House of Commons, JUNE 2.

EXPLANATION OF MINISTERS.

Shortly before the Speaker called upon Mr. Tennyson to move the Order of the Day, for the Committee on the East Retford Disfranchisement Bill, the Ministers who had not vacated their seats entered the House in a body and took their seats on the Treasury Bench. Immediately afterwards Mr. Huskisson took his seat on the Bench from which ex-Ministers usually address the House. In a few minutes after the House became completely crowded, Mr. Tennyson in moving the Order of the Day, expressed his regret that this question had led to the late resignations, and hoped Mr. Huskisson would favour the House with some explanations—he was satisfied the resignations had lately arisen from other causes than the one assigned.—Mr. Huskisson entered into a long explanation of the circumstances connected with his removal from office, and denied that he had resigned.—It had been resolved by Ministers, that as the boroughs of Penryn and East Retford were likely to be disfranchised, the right of election should be transferred from Penryn to a large manufacturing town—Manchester—and the franchise of East Retford should be extended to the adjoining Hundred.—In the course of the debate on the 21st of March, he (Mr. Huskisson) had stated, that as there were two Boroughs to deal with, he thought the franchise of one should be transferred to a large manufacturing town, and that of the other extended to the Hundred—thus giving two votes to the Commercial, and two to the Agricultural Interests—but that if there had been but one borough to be disfranchised, he should vote for giving the right of election to a large trading town. As subsequently there was a general feeling amongst the Peers, that the evidence adduced in support of the Bill for disfranchising Penryn had so far failed, as to render it improbable the Lords would consent wholly to disfranchise that borough, in the course of the debate on the East Retford Bill, which took place in the House on the 19th May, Lord Sandon reminded him (Mr. Huskisson) of the declaration before mentioned, and claimed his vote in favour of transferring the franchise to Birmingham. Thus appealed to, he felt himself compelled to vote against Mr. Peel, the Ministerial leader, after having in vain requested him to adjourn the debate. On his retiring from the House, after having given this unfortunate vote, the significant looks of some of the Ministerial Members, and the audible whispers of others, made him sensible of what might be the consequences of the vote he had given. On his return home, at two o'clock in the morning, of the 20th May, he wrote to the Duke of Wellington, that after the vote he had found himself compelled to give, he lost no time in giving the Duke an opportunity of placing another person in the situation he (Mr. Huskisson) held, in order to prevent injury to the King's service by the appearance of disunion in the Cabinet.—This letter, which was marked "Private and Confidential," the Duke thought proper to regard as an absolute resignation, and as such laid it before the King. On learning this Mr. Huskisson explained to Earl Dudley, that he had not meant to resign, but merely to inform the Duke, that if his Grace thought the vote given by him (Mr. Huskisson) was considered by the Duke a sufficient ground for his quitting office, he was ready to do so. This explanation he afterwards made in writing, to the Duke, but his Grace persisted in considering that he (Mr. H.) intended to resign; saying to Lord Dudley—"It is no mistake; it can be no mistake, and it shall be no mistake." In these sentiments the Duke persisted, notwithstanding all the endeavours made to deceive him. Finding he could not come to an explanation with the Duke, he (Mr. H.) solicited an audience of the King; but this was not granted until his successor was appointed. In conclusion, Mr. Huskisson, alluded to the exultation expressed by the Ultra Tories, (especially by Lord Eldon at the recent meeting of the Pitt Club, at which the Duke of Wellington was present,) at his removal from office, and drew the inference, that he was taken into office merely to enable the Duke to get on for a few months, and that as soon as it was thought the Duke could do without him, the opportunity of getting rid of him was eagerly seized on, in order to propitiate and secure the support of the Ultra Tory Aristocracy; though the price of that support was to see England again debased in

her situation in the civilized world; to render the principles of the Holly Alliance again triumphant; to put down free discussion and the liberty of the press, and to assist in enchainning the minds of men beneath the influence of an illiberal and intolerant party.—Mr. Secretary Peel replied to Mr. Huskisson; he denied that there was any intention of getting rid of Mr. Huskisson, previously to his vote on the East Retford case; he asserted that this vote would not have been considered an insurmountable objection to his continuing in office, had he not written the letter, tendering his resignation, to the Duke; and contended that his Grace could not have acted otherwise than he had done. He denied that any intention of courting the support of any party was entertained, and said there was no purpose of changing the foreign or domestic policy of the country. For his own part, he was attached to no political nicknames; he was bound by no preconceived notions or rules of conduct, but would reserve the privilege of deciding on each case that arose, on its own merits, without tying himself down to any set of principles. The recent change of Ministers had not been occasioned by any differences of opinion on important points of policy, and he was well assured that the Illustrious Duke at the head of the Government would pursue the same course of moderation and firmness that had hitherto characterized his Administration. He knew the difficulties of the situation in which Ministers were placed, but he should meet them fearlessly and regardless of calumny.—Lord Palmerston addressed the house, and explained the cause of his having voted with Mr. Huskisson, on the East Retford question, and contended that it was evident the Duke of Wellington was anxious to get rid of Mr. Huskisson and the liberal portion of the Cabinet, to conciliate the Ultra Tories, whose exultation at the success of their manœuvres knew no bounds; they talked of cleansing the Augean stable; of "turning out of his Majesty's Government those who had been admitted in a moment of liberality."—He was glad to hear that the policy of the country was not to undergo a change, but he could not hide from himself that there were prognostics of malignant influence; evil omens were abroad, and voices of inauspicious tone and character were heard. He trusted these omens; these signs; these voices would pass harmlessly away, and that his Majesty's Government would not league themselves with the assertors of arbitrary principles or the ascendancy of a faction; but that they would find their claims to the approbation of the people, by maintaining, not in this country alone, but wherever their measures may extend, the ascendancy of liberal, wise, and enlightened principles. Mr. Brougham said he was not disposed to comment on the explanations that had been given; the character and intentions of the new Government was of far greater importance to the house and the country. The Government was very differently composed from the preceding one, but he should wait and watch its proceedings; he hoped the Noble Duke at its head would bring forward measures of retrenchment that would satisfy England, and adopt a system of conciliation that would pacify Ireland.

The House, having resolved itself in a Committee, Mr. Calvert moved a resolution for extending the elective franchise from East Retford to the adjoining hundred of Bassettlaw. Mr. Huskisson moved an amendment, that the Resolution should simply declare the corruption of East Retford, leaving the record open to future discussion. Mr. C. Wood said Mr. Peel was bound by his pledge to support the transfer of the franchise to a large town, as the bill for disfranchising Penryn had failed in the Lords.—Mr. Banks opposed the amendment.—The House divided.—For Mr. Calvert's resolution, 258.—For Mr. Huskisson's amendment, 152.—Majority for Ministers 106.—Mr. Peel said, if the House of Lords should not disfranchise Penryn, he would then vote according to his pledge, for transferring the right of voting from one of the two boroughs to a manufacturing town. A conversation took place between Mr. Tennyson, Mr. Calvert, Lord Howick, and Mr. Hobhouse, who regretted the Right hon. Gentleman had not made the statement of that evening on a former occasion, if he had, much conception would have been avoided. He would rather drop the unlucky measure which had upset one Government, and would upset another, than agree to transfer the franchise to the adjacent hundred.—Mr. Tennyson moved that the debate be adjourned, which motion was opposed by Mr. Peel.—The House divided.—For the adjournment, 24—

For Mr. Peel's proposition to go on 221.—Majority, 197.—Mr. Peel said that notwithstanding the majority in his favour, he should abide by his original proposition.—Lord Nugent would depend on the pledge given by the Right hon. Home Secretary, that in the event of the Penryn Bill meeting with a fate different from that contemplated by the House, he would place the House on its former footing with respect to the East Retford Bill.—The amendments were then read and agreed to, pro forma. The House resumed and the Report was ordered to be taken into consideration on Monday next.—The other Orders of the Day were disposed of, and the house adjourned at one o'clock.

The following is the correspondence between his Grace the Duke of Wellington, and Mr. Huskisson, which was submitted by the latter to the House of Commons.

No. 1.

Downing Street, Tuesday Morning,
2. a. m. May 20.

My dear Duke,—After the Vote, which, in regard to my own consistency and personal character, I have found myself from the course of this Evening's debate, compelled to give on the East Retford question, I owe it to you, as the head of the Administration, and to Mr. Peel, as the Leader of the House of Commons, to lose no time in affording you an opportunity of placing my office in other hands as the only means in my power of preventing the injury to the King's Service which may ensue from the appearance of disunion in his Majesty's Councils, however unfounded in reality, or however unfounded in itself the question which has given rise to that appearance.

Regretting the necessity of troubling you with this Communication,

Believe me, my dear Duke,
ever truly yours.

(Signed)

W. HUSKISSON.

No. 2.

London, May 20, 1828.

My dear Huskisson,—Your letter of two this morning, which I received at ten, has surprised me much, and has given me great concern.

I have considered it my duty to lay it before the King.

Ever yours, most sincerely,

(Signed)

WELLINGTON.

The Rt. Hon. W. Huskisson.

No. 3.

Downing Street, May 20, 1821.
Half-past 6, p. m.

My dear Duke,—Having understood from Lord Dudley and Lord Palmerston, that you had laid my letter of last night before the King under a different impression from that which it was intended to convey, I feel it due, both to you and myself to say, my object in writing that Letter was, not to express any intentions of my own, but to relieve you from any delicacy which you might feel towards me, if you should think that the interests of his Majesty's Service would be prejudiced by my remaining in office, after giving a vote, in respect to which, from the turn which the latter part of the debate had taken, a sense of personal honour left me no alternative.

Believe me, my dear Duke,

yours most sincerely,

(Signed)

W. HUSKISSON.

No. 4.

London, May 20, 1828.

My dear Huskisson,—I have received your Letter of this evening. I certainly did not understand your letter of two o'clock this morning as offering me any option; nor do I understand the one of this evening as leaving me any, excepting that of submitting myself and His Majesty's Government to the necessity of soliciting you to remain in your office, or of incurring the loss of your valuable assistance to His Majesty's Service. However sensible I may be of this loss, I am convinced that, in these times, any loss is better than that of character, which is the foundation of public confidence.

In this view of the case, I have put out of it altogether every consideration of the discredit resulting from the scene of last night; of the extent of which you could not but have been sensible when you thought proper, as a remedy for it, to send me the offer of placing your office in other hands.

Ever my dear Huskisson,

Yours most sincerely,

(Signed)

WELLINGTON.

The Right Hon. W. Huskisson.