

Great-Britain.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, FEB. 5.

The address in reply to His Majesty's speech being under consideration,

Mr. PEEL addressed the House. He would say, that there was, under present circumstances, less of evil, and less of danger in considering the whole condition of Ireland, than in any other course which he could point out—[Hear, hear.] He pretended to no new lights on the Catholic Question. He retained the opinion which he formerly expressed in reference to that question. He saw the dangers which he heretofore felt, as connected with that subject; but he had no hesitation in saying, that the pressure of present circumstances was so great, that he was willing to incur those dangers, rather than, in the existing state and situation of the country, to endure not only the continuance, but the aggravation of the present system.—To oppose concession would be to stand against an actual majority of the House, and any administration formed upon the principle of eternal and uncompromising resistance to the Catholic claims must ever have found itself in passive minorities—[Hear.] The opinions which he now expressed were formed more than six months ago, almost immediately after the conclusion of the last session of Parliament. At that time he communicated with his noble friend at the head of His Majesty's Government, and after an attentive consideration of the state of Ireland, they were then of opinion that it was not for the King's service, for the dignity of the crown, nor for the welfare of the country, that hostility to concessions to the Roman Catholics should still be persisted in. They were of opinion that the time was come for a serious consideration of the question, and there would be less evil in considering the question than in persevering to oppose it—[Hear, hear.] The adoption of the measure was after much painful sacrifice. He [Mr. Peel] had done all in his power to free himself from any engagements which might prevent him in exercising the most unfettered judgment with respect to this vital question, and he considered the path which led to a satisfactory settlement of it to be, under all the circumstances of the country, the course most free from peril—[Cheers];—and whatever part he might have taken on former occasions with respect to this question, he considered it to be his duty, as a member of that House, and as the servant of the Crown, to do all he could to fulfil the solemn injunctions of His Majesty, and to leave nothing untried to contribute to a deliberate and dispassionate consideration of this question, with a view to a final settlement—[Cheers.]

FEBRUARY 10.

THE ADDRESS.

Mr. Secretary Peel stated that the address of the House had been presented to His Majesty, and His Majesty had been graciously pleased to return an answer to the following effect:

"His Majesty received with great satisfaction their loyal and dutiful Address, and it should be the great object of his life, to promote the happiness of his subjects. He relied upon their co-operation in his efforts to advance the interests of the country, and to maintain its high character amongst the nations of the world."

HOUSE OF LORDS, FEB. 10.

Various Petitions were presented by the Bishop of Durham, The Duke of Rutland, and the Earl of Longford, against any further concessions to the Catholics. In reply to their observations,

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON said, My Lords, I cannot avoid troubling your Lordships with a few observations on what fell from my Noble Friend, particularly at the latter part of the remarks he addressed to your Lordships. I shall take care to avoid all discussions of what is called Catholic Emancipation, till I submit to your Lordships those measures it will be my duty in a short time to propose; but I must say a few words, my Lords, on what fell from my Noble Relative, at the close of his address to your Lordships. My Lords, I ask my Noble Relation, who has discussed this question so much at large, and who is, as well as many other Noble Lords, well acquainted with the situation of Ireland, I ask him if he has any measure to propose, if he has ever contemplated any measure which would be a remedy for the various evils under which that country labours? In the opinion of my Noble Relation, something must be done. [Loud and continued cries of hear, hear.] When he blames us for having humbly sub-

mitted to His Majesty our advice, that it was desirable that the question should be recommended to the consideration of Parliament, has he considered what he, or what any body, could propose on this subject, except that Parliament should entertain "the proposition?" [Hear, hear.] My Lords, my Noble Relative complains of the concealment of my sentiments on this occasion. But my Noble Relative cannot, if he recollects himself, say that I have concealed my sentiments—for I have declared repeatedly before your Lordships that I wished to see this question fully settled. [Loud cries of hear, hear, hear.]—I beg, however, to inform my Noble Relative, that though it was my wish to see this question settled, it was my determination—I may have a peculiar taste in this—but it has long been my determination never to vote for Catholic Emancipation, if it were not brought before Parliament for consideration by the Government, acting as a Government. My Noble Relative ought to know, that ever since 1840 the Government of this country has been formed on a principle which prevented the Government from bringing this subject under the consideration of Parliament. The first thing I had to do was to obtain the consent of that individual who is more interested by his inclinations, more interested by his duty, and more interested by his obligations, than any other individual in this kingdom in having the question settled; it was necessary that I should obtain the consent of that individual, before the Ministers of the Government could consider the question as a Government. Would it have been proper in me, my Lords, to have taken my measures to bring the subject under consideration, till I had obtained that individual's consent to refer the subject to Parliament? I call on my Noble Relative to answer this question. When he blames me on this subject, because since last July or August, when I had formed my opinion, I kept silence, talking to no man on the subject, except with the consent of the individual I have alluded to, and not till I had obtained his consent to form a Government on the principle of taking this question into consideration—my Noble Relative ought to place himself in my situation—he ought to see what was expected of me; and then, instead of blaming me for acting as I have done, he would see that if I had acted otherwise I should have been highly blameable. [Hear, hear.]—When the question had been decided—when I received the permission, so as to be enabled to make a declaration, on not having made which alone the accusation of surprise can be founded, the Session was so near that it was impossible to make known what had occurred earlier, or in any other manner than by the Speech from the Throne. I thank my Noble Friend for having given me this opportunity to state these circumstances to your Lordships. The fact is as I have stated it: and it was a reason why I never before stated any of the circumstances whatever. A Noble Friend of mine, now sitting near my Noble Relation, reproached me on a former occasion with the publication of a letter of mine. With the publication of that letter I had nothing to do, and the writing it had been better let alone. Indeed I shall take care not to write such a letter again to such an individual; but as to the publication of that letter having deceived any body, or that it is at all different from what I have stated to the House, I totally deny.—[Hear, hear.]

GLASGOW, FEB. 14.

TO THE REVEREND THE VICE-CHANCELLOR OF OXFORD.

(Copy.)

Whitehall, Feb. 4, 1829.

My Dear Sir—I take the very first opportunity of which I am at liberty to avail myself, to make a communication to you, which is most distressing to my feelings.

I have considered it to be my duty as one of the responsible advisers of the King, humbly to signify to His Majesty the opinion on which I have formed, in entire concurrence with all my colleagues in the Government, that the period is arrived when His Majesty's servants must take in their collective capacity some decisive line with regard to the state of Ireland, and to the various subjects affecting the tranquillity of that country, which are involved in what is called the Catholic Question.

After maturely weighing the present position of affairs, and the prospects of the future—adverting to opinions repeatedly expressed by majorities in the House of Commons to the difficulties which must arise, in the present state of Ireland, from continued division in the Councils of His Majesty, and disunion between the two Houses of Parliament—it has appeared to His Majesty's Government that there is less of evil and less of danger, under the existing circumstances of the country, in the attempt to make some satisfactory adjustment of the Catholic Question, than in any

other course which we can suggest. In the offer of my advice to His Majesty, as one of his confidential and responsible servants, I have been compelled to exclude every consideration but that of the interests and necessities of the country.

No sooner, however, had I fulfilled the obligations of my duty to His Majesty, than I began maturely to reflect on the relation in which I stand to the University of Oxford.

I cannot doubt that the resistance which I have hitherto offered to the claims of the Roman Catholics has been one of the main grounds upon which I have been entitled to the confidence and support of a very large body of my constituents, and although I discontinue that resistance solely from the firm belief that perseverance in it would be not only unavailing, but would be injurious to those interests which it is my especial duty to uphold, yet I consider myself bound to surrender to the University, without delay, the trust which they have confided to me.

I take the liberty of requesting that you will communicate this letter to those leading Members of the University with whom you may think proper to confer, and that you will consult with them as to the period at which it will be most convenient to the University that my seat in Parliament should be vacated.

I will be guided by the suggestion with which you may favour me in this respect, in making my application to the Crown for some nominal appointment, which may vacate my seat.

By this painful sacrifice—by the forfeiture of that high distinction, which I have prized much more than any other object of ambition—I shall, at least, give a decisive proof I have not taken my present course without the most mature deliberations, and that I have not suffered myself to be influenced by any other motive than that of an overpowering sense of public duty.

My present relation to the University will be terminated; but, believe me, that to the last hour of my existence, I shall never be unmindful of the confidence with which I have been honoured—and of the kindness and indulgence which I have invariably experienced—and that I shall study to maintain, with unabated zeal, the privileges and interests of the University and of the Church of England notwithstanding the dissolution of those ties which have more immediately bound me to their service.

I have the honour to be, my dear Sir, with every sentiment of respect and regard,

Your most faithful servant,

ROBERT PEEL.

Burning of York Minster.—This celebrated edifice, one of the chief architectural glories of England, and one of the most magnificent structures in Europe, has been nearly destroyed by fire. It was discovered to be in flames between six and seven in the morning, and in a very extraordinary manner. A boy, one of the choristers, passing through the Minster Yard, and stepping on a piece of ice, was thrown on his back. Thus placed he saw smoke issuing from several parts of the roof. When the building was entered, a dense mass of smoke was found to pervade it, and the beautiful wood work of the choir to be extensively on fire. The Minster being lit with gas, the fire was at first unjustly imputed to it. It, in fact, originated in one of the Vestries, and was the result of accident alone. The wood work of the choir, together with the invaluable organ, was soon a heap of ruins. Communication with the roof was not at first apprehended; but the whole wood work was speedily in one general conflagration. Notwithstanding every exertion, the flames got through the roof of the choir, about half past eight; and the devouring element, rising above the majestic building, and threatening it with desolation, presented an awful picture. The effect of light on the stained glass of the windows was beyond description. About nine o'clock the roof of the choir fell in. The roofs of the side aisles were smoking when this account went to press; but there was reason to believe that the fire had been checked and would be ultimately got under. Great pains were taken to save the beautiful east window; but it had suffered much; and the monuments have been seriously injured.—Another account says that all was then still, except the engines at work in the interior. The damage may be summed up thus:—The roof of the choir quite gone, the wood work on each side consumed, the matchless organ entirely destroyed, many monuments broken, and the communion plate melted. But the east window, says this account, is entire, to the surprise of every one; the screen is uninjured, and the records and the antique curiosities saved. Farther inquiry leads to the suspicion that this lamentable event is indeed imputable to incendiary malice. Rumour estimates the damage at £70,000.