

## Great-Britain.

## IMPERIAL PARLIAMENT.

## CATHOLIC RELIEF BILL.—APRIL 2.

The Duke of WELLINGTON moved the order of the day for the second reading of the Catholic relief Bill, and the order having been read, His Grace addressed their Lordships as follows:—It is now my duty, my Lords, to move your Lordships, that this bill be read a second time, and to explain to your Lordships the grounds on which I recommend this measure to your consideration. I may be under the necessity of requiring a larger portion of your Lordship's time and attention on this occasion than I have hitherto been in the habit of doing; but I assure you, my Lords, that it is not my intention to take up one instant of your time with respect to myself, or my own conduct on this discussion, any further than to express the regret I feel in differing on the subject from so many of those for whom I entertain so much respect and regard. I consider the part I have taken as the performance of a public duty, absolutely incumbent upon me; and I must say, that no private considerations, no respect for the opinion of any noble Lord, could induce me to depart, for one moment, from what I consider to be my duty on this occasion. [Hear.] I must say likewise to those who compare my opinions with those of others on this subject, that during the period I have been in office I have had an opportunity of forming a judgment which others have not possessed; and I think I may claim some confidence, that I should not have adopted the opinions which I have now the honor to express, if I had not been intimately and firmly persuaded that those opinions were fully justified by necessity. [Cries of hear, hear, hear.] The point which I shall first bring under your Lordships' consideration is the state of Ireland.—[Hear, hear, hear.]—I know by some it is considered that the state of Ireland has nothing to do with the question; that is a subject which they would have left entirely out of consideration.—They say "Ireland has been disturbed for the last thirty years—to those disturbances we are accustomed, and they do not alter the circumstances of the case as it appears to this House." It is true, my Lords, that Ireland has been disturbed during the long period to which I have alluded; but, my Lords, there have been circumstances of considerable aggravation in the disturbances which have taken place within the two last years. [Hear, hear, hear.] Political circumstances have, no doubt, occasioned, in a considerable degree, that agitation; but I must say, (though I had not positive legal proof of the fact,) that there has been an organization of the people for the purposes of mischief. That organization appears to me to be proved, not only by the declarations of those by whom it was managed, but likewise by the effects it produced in the election of church wardens throughout the country—by the circumstances attending elections there especially—by the circumstances attending the late election at Clare—by the circumstances which have followed that election, in the proceedings of a gentleman who went at the head of a body of men into the North of Ireland—in the simultaneous proceedings of a variety of persons in the South of Ireland—in the proceedings at Templemore, at Clare, at Dundalk, at Waterford, at Clonmel, and at other places—in the proceedings of another gentleman in the King's County—and by the proceedings of other persons from the Catholic Association. Under all these circumstances, it appeared to me, my Lords, that there was an organization and direction from some superior authority, and that organization has certainly produced a state of things in Ireland, such as we have not hitherto witnessed, and an aggravation of the evils which have hitherto afflicted that unfortunate country. [Hear, hear, hear.] Will any man say that a people in this situation are not merging towards that state in which it is impossible that they can perform the duties of jurymen, affording the protection of the law between man and man, and guarding, by its proper administration, the lives and properties of His Majesty's subjects? This, my Lords, is the state of things to which I wish to draw your Lordships' attention, and for which it is necessary that parliament should provide some remedy. Before I proceed to consider what that remedy should be, I wish to show you what effect this state of society had upon the King's prerogative. The King, my Lords, could not create a peer; and the reason he could not create a peer was this:—His Majesty's servants could not venture to allow him to incur the risk of an election in another part of the country, and the risk which might also attend the progress of that election—I mean the shedding of blood. Such a disaster, which was but too probable, might have been the

immediate cause of a civil war in the country; not only for that reason did I refrain from giving that advice, but because I had a strong objection to give another trial to the Roman Catholic Association. [Hear, hear.] We are asked, my Lords, why we did not carry into execution the laws that had been passed. My Lords, we could not execute the laws. There was no resistance to the laws. Except in the proceeding in the North of Ireland, there was no opposition whatever to the King's troops, and there was no instance in which the laws could be carried into execution; and when, therefore, we hear gentlemen reproach the Government for not carrying the laws into execution in Ireland, as the laws are carried into execution in England, the observation shows that they do not understand the state of things that exists in Ireland. [Loud cheers.] The truth is, that when the law was carried into execution, in the year 1819, a large body of persons assembled for illegal purposes; they resisted the order of the magistrates to disperse, and having resisted the civil authority, the magistrates ordered the troops to disperse them; but in these cases no order had been given to the people to disperse, because no magistrate appeared on the ground, and even if they had appeared, and had given the order, and had been disobeyed, they had no soldiers to disperse the assembly. The truth is that the state of Ireland rendered these events so probable in every part of Ireland, that it was not possible for the Magistrates to be every where. These proceedings, my Lords, were an injury and a disgrace to the country in which they took place; and neither the law nor the means possessed by the Government, were such as enabled it to put an end to this state of things. It was necessary for the Government to come to Parliament. What chance was there that we should put an end to this state of things by coming to Parliament? We all know, my Lords, what is the opinion of the majority in another place as to the remedy for this state of things. [Hear, hear.] It is a repeal of the civil disabilities which affect His Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects. [Cheers.] We might have come and asked Parliament to enable us to put down the Catholic Association; but what chance was there that we should prevail with Parliament to pass such a Bill without coming forward and stating that we were ready to consider the whole condition of Ireland, with a view to remedy that which the Parliament had already stated as the cause of the discontent. [Cheers.] Suppose, my Lords, that the Parliament had given us a Bill to put down the Roman Catholic Association—I ask your Lordships whether any such law as you might pass this year would be a remedy to the state of things which I have already spoken of as existing, or towards remedying those mischiefs in which it originated? I answer, my Lords, that it would not; and that we must do something towards getting into a better state of things in Ireland with a view to put an end to the disaffection in Ireland. But it is said, my Lords, if these things will not do, let us proceed to blows. What is meant by proceeding to blows is a civil war. We are, therefore, told to go into a 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 disposal, in case it should become necessary; and, above all, it must repress all resistance to the laws in case of disaffection, or in any case where any ill disposed persons are inclined to resist the sentence of the law, or the authority of Government.

But in this case I have already stated that there was no resistance to the laws—nay more, I will go further, and say that I am positively certain that this state of things, bordering on civil war, with nearly all the evils of civil war, might have continued for a year and a half or for a considerable time longer, to the great injury and decay of the country; and that those who managed this state of things would prevent that resistance which would alone create or justify a civil war. They know as well as I do that they are not strong enough to wrestle with the King's Government—they know that they would be the first victims of any attempt of that kind; and knowing this, and being, as I believe them to be, able and sensible men, and being perfectly aware of the nature of the materials with which they were working, I say I do not doubt that this state of things might have continued for years, and your Lordships would never have had the opportunity of putting it down by force. But even if I were certain that we possessed any such means, I should certainly wish to avoid using them, if possible. My Lords, I am one of those who have passed the larger portion of their lives in war, and I may say, in some respects, in civil war; and if I could avoid, by any sacrifice whatever—if I could avoid, even for a moment, a civil war in a country to which I am attached, I would do so. [Cheers.] I would sacrifice my life to do it. [Loud

cheering.] There is nothing, my Lords, which destroys the prosperity of a country to such a degree as a civil war—in which the hand of one man is raised against another—in which neighbour strikes at neighbour—in which a son is ranged against the father, the servant betrays his master, and the whole scene ends in confusion and devastation. [Hear, hear.] Yet this is the resource to which we are told to look—this is spoken of as the best resource which we can adopt, to put an end to the state of things I have described, if we do not bring forward a measure like that for which I this day render myself responsible. [Cheers.] But let us look a little further, my Lords. If civil war is so bad when it is occasioned by resistance to the Government;—if it is so much to be avoided, even when springing from such a cause—how much more is it to be avoided when we are compelled to array one part of the people against another, for such a cause as the present? There is not a man who hears me who would not shudder with horror—whose blood would not turn cold, if the proposal was made to him as the course which he ought to adopt, at the same time that it is admitted to be our only resource if we continue to pursue the same line of conduct as that which we have hitherto adopted. Let us, my Lords, look at the period when this country was before in a position similar to the present. I am old enough, my Lords, to remember the rebellion of 1798. I was at that time in employment, not in this country; but in a distant part of the world; but, if I am not mistaken, the Parliament of Ireland at that time went to the Lord Lieutenant with an unanimous address, beseeching His Excellency to take every means to put down that unnatural rebellion, and promising the full support of the country to carry those measures into execution. The Lord Lieutenant did take those measures, and did succeed in putting down that rebellion. What happened then, my Lords? Why, in the very next session, the government proposed to put an end to that Parliament, and to unite the two kingdoms for the purpose—he principal purpose, at least of proposing this very measure [loud cheering.] which, in point of fact, was the very first measure which was proposed after the legislative union had taken place. [Cheers.] I say, that in point of fact, after the union had succeeded, and after the rebellion had been put down, the very first measure brought forward was the measure which I now propose for your Lordships' consideration. [Cheers.] Is it possible to suppose that noble lords could believe that such a contest could be carried on, much less conducted to a conclusion without this measure having been resolved on by one or both houses of Parliament? My Lords, I am certain that when you look at the division of opinion which now exists upon this subject in both houses of Parliament—when you look at the division of opinion which prevails in every family in this kingdom and in Ireland, from those of the most eminent station down to the lowest—when you look at the division of opinion among the Protestants of Ireland themselves, you will see the vast difference between a contest now and that which took place on a former occasion. I hope you will recollect that when there was a plot against the security of Ireland in 1798, the Parliament was unanimous in supporting the Government; but lately, so far from unanimity being manifested in support of the authority of the government, in the event of a contest, we must look for feelings of distrust, if not of opposition. My Lords, we have lately had a declaration from the Protestants themselves, signed by seven marquises, seventeen earls, a vast number of peers, and not less than 2000 Protestant gentlemen, asking for this measure. Under these circumstances, it appears that this contest would be carried on under circumstances totally different from those which occurred on the former occasion. But I ask is it possible to believe that Parliament would allow such contest? that Parliament, having this state of things before them—seeing the opinion of the other house—of a number of Protestants in Ireland—the opinion of every statesman for the last forty years—is it possible to believe, that seeing all these things, this house would continue to oppose itself to this measure, which so many persons deemed to be absolutely necessary? It is impossible that we can go on longer in this course without increasing the difficulties that have been brought on the country; and still less is it possible, when we consider what at the benefits supposed to be derived from it. The cause for which all these evils are to be encountered is, we are told, the preservation of the principles of the constitution of 1688. The preservation of the principles of the constitution of 1688 is, we are told, the permanent exclusion of Roman Catholics from Parliament; and that that being permanent, it is necessary that we should incur all these evils to keep up the exclusion. [Hear.] I wish that noble Lords who