

EUROPEAN NEWS.

SIR ROBERT PEEL ON THE CORN LAWS.

Sir R. PEEL said he should not trouble the House at any length, as it had been engaged for another purpose :—

"The House has been engaged to-night for the benefit of those who generally perform at Covent Garden—(cheers and laughter)—and it is with great reluctance I interpose at all to prevent them from having the full advantage of their benefit—(Cheers). I am sorry that, during an early portion of the performance, the opposite bench was not occupied—(Laughter). For a considerable portion of the evening those places were without a single tenant, and it was not until the gallant admiral (Sir C. Napier) entered, and took his seat, that they could boast even one spectator—(Cheers). I trust that the assistance given by the honourable member for Stockport and his friends, at my benefit the other night—(laughter)—has not been the cause of depriving them of so important a part of their audience—(loud laughter)—but I only refer to the fact of the extreme thinness of the benches in the earlier portion of the evening as a proof that what a particular class of gentlemen have before rehearsed on another stage—(laughter)—does not meet with entire approbation off that stage."

The members of the League complained of the abuse cast on them. Did they never look to its exciting origin ?—

"I think, sir, that, if there be any party in this House which has dealt largely in fixing odious motives on those who have differed from them, it is the very party to which the hon. gentleman belongs—(Cheers). I don't defend the practice, but an example once set is calculated to provoke retaliation. Those who set the example must be subject to the retaliation, although they may be the first to declare that the calling of names ought to be distinguished from legitimate argument, and that the practice itself ought to be abolished. As, however, the honourable gentlemen were the first to set the bad example in practice, I hope they will be the first to abolish it—(Hear, hear). In my opinion, Sir, the Anti-Corn-law League have greatly diminished their power and influence by the instruments to which they have resorted. I believe that they have provoked among the tenants and the farmers a large amount of indignation by the free use of unfounded imputations, and that the practice of attributing base and self-fish motives to honourable members has provoked much of the combination against themselves—(Cheers)."

He did not dispute the truth of the general principles of free trade, but he denied their immediate application to the existing state of things :—

I believe it to be the interest of all classes, commercial and manufacturing, that we should in our artificial state of society deal most cautiously and carefully in the removal of protection. I believe that the advantage will be more sure; we can accomplish this without grievously affecting existing interests. I look at the capital employed in agriculture, I look at the condition of Ireland—(Opposition Cheers)—I look at the supply derived from our domestic agriculture, I see that nine tenths of our supply is derived from domestic agriculture. I look at the condition of the labourer, and I oppose this motion. I know that with regard to the principle of political economy I cannot contest the point with you, if I overlook the condition of the country and the interests which have grown up under our present system. If I am asked to speak mathematically, I admit that your principles may be true—(Opposition cheers). It may be true that the population, if the protection be withdrawn, may apply themselves to other avocations. But is your proposition practically true ?—(Cheers). If I do not act as a mere philosopher, if I consider the interests of the great masses of human beings, I cannot assent to your policy. I cannot agree to it from considerations of the interests, not only of the tenants who have leases, but of the farmers generally, and of the labourers, knowing that there will be opportunities of applying the capital to other branches of industry. It is no doubt true that the labourers of Kerry and of Galway may transfer their labour to the manufactures of Manchester and of Coventry; but, though this may be true in theory, it is not true practically. The labourer, whose father and whose grandfather have been employed in the cultivation of land, who knows nothing of any other labour, whose industry has depended on the cultivation of the land, cannot so transfer himself, if he be turned out suddenly from his employ, without great suffering. You may apply the strict principle of a rigid philosophy, and of a practical economy, but when it will endanger the peace and happiness of the people I cannot give it my assent. Looking at the long protection which has existed, looking at the nature of the population, and at the peculiar interests involved, without any regard to the interests of the landlords, or of the tenants, but with regard to the comprehensive interests of all classes of the community, I must give my decided and unqualified opposition to the proposal for a total and immediate repeal of the corn-laws—(Cheers)."

He thought the Government were entitled to the support of the noble lord opposite (J. Russell), though it seemed he meant to absent himself from the division :—

The noble lord says that he is in favour of agricultural protection; he says also that he is not in favour of agriculture given by the corn-laws. On what ground, then, does the noble lord withhold the light of his countenance and his advice from those who vote against this proposition ?—(Cheers). The noble lord says that he is in the same position that I recently described the Government to be, not certainly in an enviable position; but, at any rate, I met the position, I gave my vote; I did not settle the difficulty by running away—(Cheers and laughter). What objection does the noble lord urge to voting against the honourable gentleman's resolution? The noble lord says that, because my honourable friend has moved a resolution to maintain the present corn-laws, he cannot vote with us. The noble lord, how-

ever, has not always been so squeamish as to the company he has kept. It was but the other night that the noble lord, in giving his opinion on another subject, said that he never would have been able to carry the Reform Bill, or other important bills, if he had not voted with those from whom he differed on many points, yet with whom he concurred in the approval or disapproval of a particular vote. Now, the noble lord does with us disapprove of a particular vote he has given his reasons against, and against being supposed to join in our views, and yet he will not vote with us against what he disapproves."

They were told by the supporters of the motion that the corn-laws would surely ruin trade and commerce. Did those who now made the assertion remember their predictions in 1842 ?—

"Now, does the honourable member for Stockport remember his prediction with respect to commerce and manufactures? Does he recollect that in 1842 he scarcely heard with patience my request to the House not to conclude that the commerce and manufactures of this country would be ruined? He declared that we should go on from bad to worse—that reviving prosperity was utterly incompatible with the new corn-law. He said, 'Don't flatter yourselves that there will ever be a revival of trade.' Well, now compare the year 1843—without saying that is what I wish the state of prosperity to be—but, looking back at the predictions of 1842, at any rate they have been completely falsified. The honourable gentleman said we were not aware of the danger that was pending, and he ventured the prediction that society in the manufacturing districts within six months would be in a state of dissolution."

Mr. CORDEN : And it was so.

Sir R. PEEL : Very good, it was so. Then let us just compare—(The remainder of the sentence was lost in loud cheers). We passed the corn-law concurrently with that state of the society in the manufacturing districts—a state of absolute dissolution—and, I ask you, what is the present state? Has there not been a great improvement? Has the prediction of the honourable gentleman—the prediction that prosperity was incompatible with the restrictions on agricultural produce—been verified? Take the cotton manufacture in 1843, as compared with 1842; it was £16,200,000 in that year, and £13,900,000 in the previous. It was said then that the export of yarn was increasing, instead of which it had diminished. The export of earthenware in 1842 had increased from £5,550 to £6,290 in 1843. Glass had increased, hardware, silk, and linen manufactures had increased during the existence of this law, which is said to be fatal to the commercial prosperity. Of all the great branches of manufactures, the export in 1843, as compared with 1842, had greatly increased. The noble lord says, take care of your imports: he draws a great distinction between exports and imports, which I have never been able to understand; for whether it be exports or imports there will be a corresponding increase in the other branches. But the noble lord will find that there has been a great increase in the imports of the last year. In point of official value, the imports of 1842, £65,204,000, under the operation of the corn-law had increased in 1843 to £70,093,000.

The right honourable baronet concluded by expressing his belief that the present Corn Bill had worked well, and by saying emphatically, "I repeat the declaration which I made at the commencement of the session on the part of the Government, that we do not intend to diminish the protection which the existing corn-laws give to agriculture" (Cheers).

Mr. ELLICE, Mr. P. BORTHWICK, Mr. BRIGHT, Colonel SMITHORP, and Mr. VALLIERS followed amid expressions of impatience for a division.

Mr. FERRAND withdrew his amendment, and the House divided on the original motion. The numbers were, For the motion, 124; against it, 328: majority against the motion, 204.

The House adjourned at a quarter to two.

CORN LAW DEBATE—CAPTAIN LAYARD ON MR. D'ISRAELI AND SIR ROBERT PEEL.—Captain LAYARD supported Mr. Villiers's motion, and took occasion to make a humorous allusion to the division in the Conservative ranks :—

The honourable member for Shrewsbury might, in his (Captain Layard's) opinion, be compared to a clock having went pretty regularly for some time, but, not having been oiled, at length began to go irregularly. The hands at one time were supposed—the clock having gone three hours, not only by Shrewsbury time, but by the clock of the House of Commons, in a dull monotonous tick, without stopping, upon foreign policy—to point to some diplomatic appointment abroad—(Loud laughter) But the right honourable baronet, knowing the maker; knowing too, that it was no tried chronometer, would have nothing to do with it—(Laughter). It had been hinted that the Shrewsbury clock, though it had not yet aspired to be clock at the Horse Guards, by which all the other clocks are regulated, had certainly been disappointed at not being the clock at the Admiralty—(renewed laughter)—where times does not require to be so exactly kept; at last it became quite irregular, no longer chiming in with the right honourable baronet. He attacked him for taking the liberty of talking about the gentleman who gave notice to the public that on a certain day he would squeeze himself into a quart bottle—(Laughter). The honourable member for Shrewsbury being, no doubt, perfectly aware how unpleasant a situation it was to try to squeeze oneself into any place however small, and not to be able to effect it; this, no doubt, was what made the honourable member take the part of the *Bottle Imp* against the right honourable baronet—

"A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind."

—(Laughter from all parts of the House.)

The course pursued by Sir R. Peel reminded him of a popular operatic performance :—

Some short time ago he (Captain Layard), being at the Opera, had the pleasure of seeing the right honourable baronet at the head of her Majesty's Government taking some relaxation, which

he well earned, from the fatigues and toils of office. And it struck him that the beautiful ballet of "Ondine," which was then being performed, was a fair representation of what was passing in the mind of the right honourable baronet with regard to this subject—(Loud laughter). The graceful Cerito seemed a fair and lovely representation of free trade, flitting and dancing as it continually is before the mental vision of the right honourable baronet. And when the *Ondine* in her moonlight flitting across the stage, is startled and alarmed at her own shadow, how just a representation, though certainly a more elegant one, of what happened to the right honourable baronet when he, coming out of the shade, first ventured to broach free-trade principles! How he started back, not indeed so gracefully as the fair Cerito, when he saw, not indeed his own shadow, but the shade which came over the mournful countenances of the agricultural members! For his (Captain Layard's) part, he trusted and believed that the right hon. baronet would give up coquetting, after the manner of Cerito, with the shadow, and that becoming completely enamoured, when he opened his arms to embrace it, it would be found he had clasped the reality and not the shadow of free trade.

MR. CORDEN ON THE CONSERVATIVE STRENGTH.—He had heard persons say that there were 200 Conservatives and 150 Liberals who would like to be sitting under the same leader, if it was not for the difficulty of adjusting the rival pretensions of opposing leaders. There were some persons who thought that such a coalition as that was desirable; but what was the coalition the other night? Whiggery on one side, and the most interested and bigoted monopolists on the other. Lord John Russell with his Whig party, and Lord John Manners with "Young England" after him, going out into the same lobby—(Cheers and laughter). Had the Opposition succeeded in turning out the Ministry, the Whigs could not have gone on for a week, and Sir Robert Peel and his party would have been reinstated. It was absurd to talk of turning out a Government that had a working majority on all party questions of ninety. If the majority were only some ten or twenty, their opponents might hope to change the present relative position of the two parties, but there could be no hope of success against a majority of between ninety and a hundred. The way for Lord John Russell and the Whig party to get into power was not by joining the ultra and bigoted monopolists; that policy did not answer even in France, where the public mind was less informed, and the people more easily led away, than in this country. If Lord J. Russell was anxious to return to power, let him work with his strength out of doors to increase his power in Parliament—(cheers)—and to do that he must himself advocate the real and true principles of free trade, and, taking his stand upon those principles, stand or fall by them.

The practice of opening letters at the Postoffice, which was brought before the House of Commons three weeks ago, has been again under discussion in both Houses of Parliament. In the former instance the practice was made public by a petition from Signor Mazzini, an Italian gentleman of high literary character, and an exile from the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom. Signor Mazzini, asserts, that from sixty to seventy letters, addressed to him, have been opened since the beginning of March last; that while residing in London, in perfect security and good faith, the *Augsburg Gazette*, four months ago, announced, by apparent authority, that he was living under the surveillance of the London police, and he has since found that during all this time his letters were opened at the Postoffice. The second case was that of a Polish exile, who states in his petition that his letters have also been opened, and denies, like Signor Mazzini, that the correspondence contained anything to warrant such espionage. In both instances it is asserted, that in opening the letters every care had been taken to avoid suspicion; that impressions had been taken from the seals; that with these impressions the opened letters had been resealed, and that the cut was made so clean, that a microscope was necessary to discover it. In addition to these cases a rumour was mentioned by Captain Bernal, in the course of the debate, and not contradicted, that the Irish correspondence was habitually violated; and a general impression is abroad that the practice has been in operation for a considerable period, and has been extensively used by Sir James Graham since his appointment to the Home-office. In the course of the debate Ministers defended themselves by relying on an act of Parliament, which gives authority to the Secretary of State to issue warrants for opening letters; but they declined to give any explanation of the circumstances which led to the exercise of this power on the recent occasions. On the other hand, the practice was denounced by men of all parties as un-English and odious; and, among others, by the Lord Chief Justice, who declared that it is not a question of expediency or in expediency, but a question of right or wrong; and that a power so exercised as to involve not merely concealment, but something very like forgery, is so odious, that it cannot longer be endured without modification. *Willmer's News Letter*.

THE LATE THOMAS CAMPBELL, Esq.—The remains of this celebrated poet will be interred in the Poets' Corner, in Westminster Abbey, on Wednesday, the 3d of July, at half-past seven o'clock A.M. The late Mr. Campbell, in his will, bequeathed two articles as "the jewels of his property." These consisted a silver bowl, presented to him by the students of Glasgow, he was rector of that University; and a copy of the engraved portrait of Queen Victoria, with her Majesty's autograph given to him by her Majesty.

CHINESE RANSOM.—The *Wanderer*, sloop, 16, Commanded by G. H. Seymour, arrived at Spithead on Wednesday, from Fuzina, bringing home one million of dollars, part of another installment of the Chinese ransom.