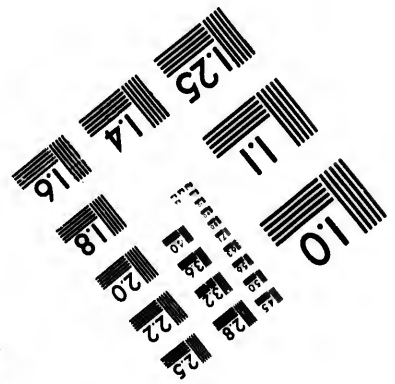
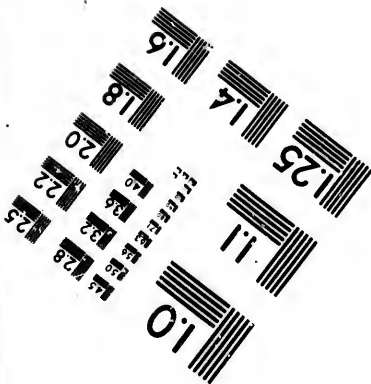
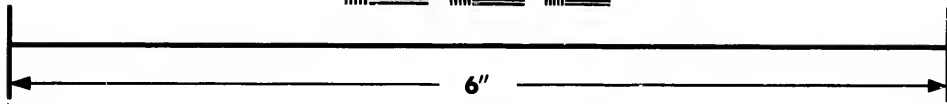
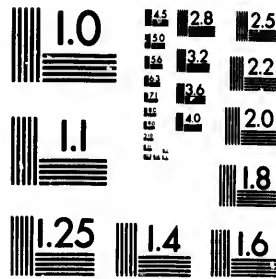


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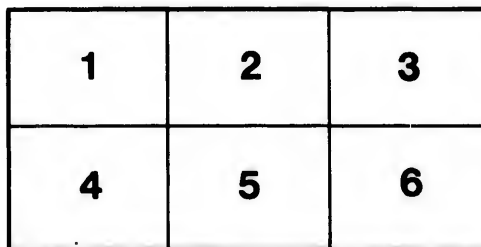
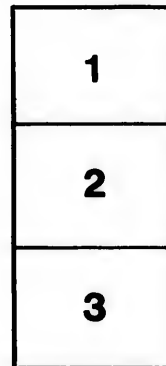
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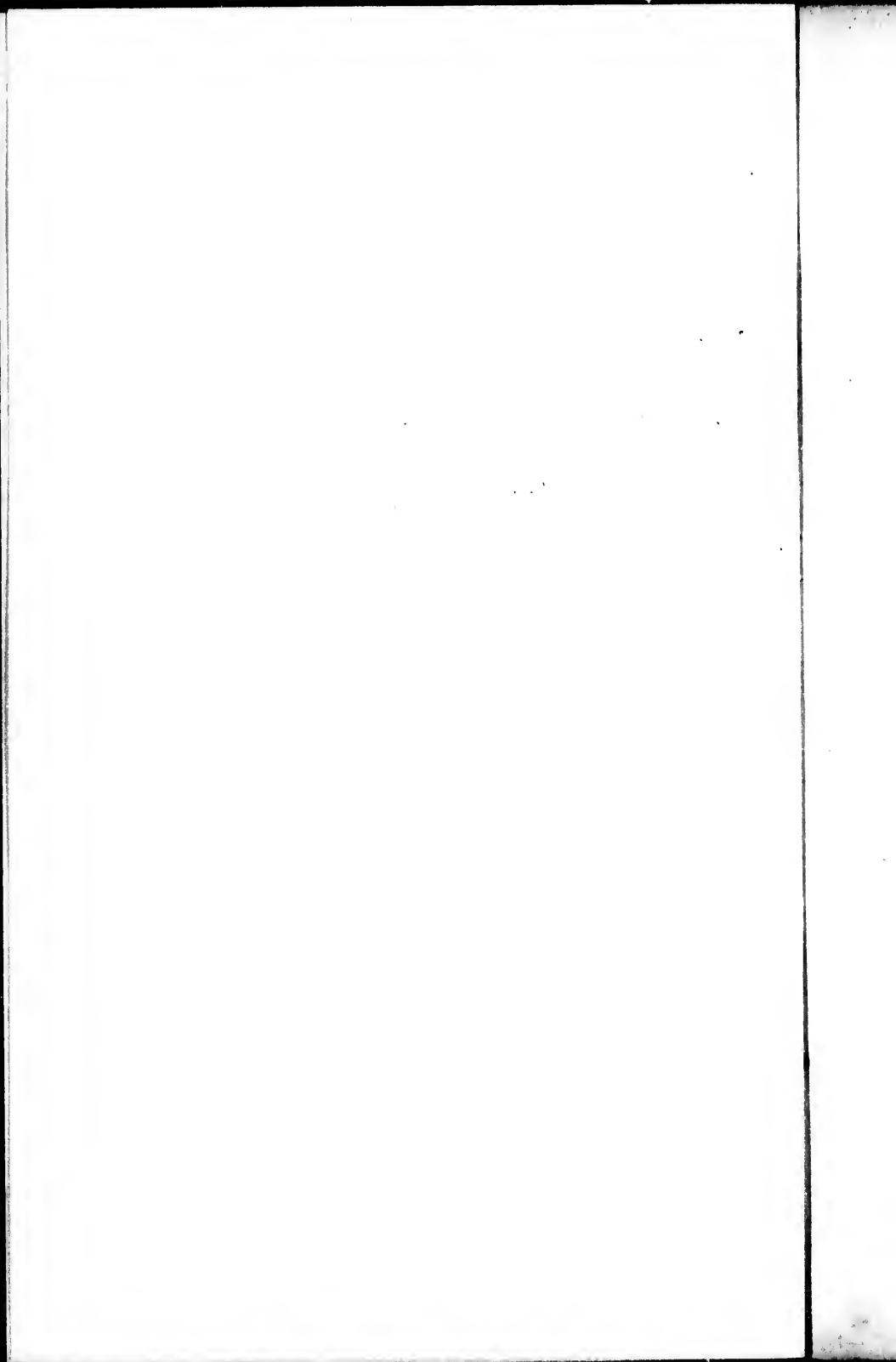
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LORD DURHAM'S SPEECH

ON THE

REFORM BILL.

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THE
SPEECH
OF
LORD DURHAM

IN THE
HOUSE OF LORDS, MONDAY, MARCH 28, 1831,

ON THE
REFORM BILL.

LONDON:
JAMES RIDGWAY, 169, PICCADILLY.

—
MDCCCXXXI.

LONDON:
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HOUSE OF LORDS,

MONDAY, MARCH 28, 1831.



MY LORDS,

I CAN assure the Noble Viscount (Sidmouth) that I should not have persisted, under ordinary circumstances, in claiming to be heard before him ; but under the peculiar circumstances of the case, connected, as I am, with the Administration who have originated the measure of Reform now before the other House of Parliament, I feel called upon to reply to my Noble Friend ; otherwise, I would most readily have given way to a Member of your Lordship's House, of much less experience, and of less character than the Noble Viscount. I am glad, however, that an opportunity has been afforded to my Noble and Learned Friend (the Lord Chancellor) to show that the Noble Viscount was much more out of order in adopting the line of conduct which he did than my Noble Friend, whose speech he declared

to be so disorderly ; for, I would ask, what can be more irregular—what more contrary to justice—what more opposed to fairness and impartiality of debate—than, after hearing a long and able speech against a certain measure, to stand up and declare that, to listen to a reply in defence of that measure, would be disorderly, and contrary to all the usages and customs of Parliament ?

But my Noble and Learned Friend on the Woolsack has so ably exposed the inconsistency—nay, the gross injustice of this attempt to induce your Lordships to stop at the present stage of the proceedings, and the general sense of the House has been so strongly marked on the occasion, that I need say no more on the subject.

Now, with regard to the speech of my Noble Friend opposite, I certainly shall not attempt to answer in detail all the points on which he dwelt, as I have neither health nor inclination to do so now. I am delighted, however, that an opportunity has been afforded me of disabusing the mind of my Noble Friend, and of many of your Lordships, with respect to certain misrepresentations and misconceptions which have been so industriously propagated. Before I enter on the consideration of the principle and details of the Bill, against which my Noble Friend, with so much zeal and ability, has raised his voice, I feel myself bound to declare that I believe my Noble Friend to

he actuated in his opposition by nothing approaching either to factious or party motives. I have known my Noble Friend too long, not to be well aware that he is only actuated by a sense of public duty for the promotion of what he conceives to be the public interest. The Noble Lord and myself have long served together in Parliament, and from the experience of him, which I have had an opportunity of acquiring during our intercourse, I am satisfied that whatever interest he may have in supporting the present system, as proprietor of the borough of Bossiney, it is impossible to attribute the conduct which the Noble Lord may pursue to any motive of a personal nature.

The Noble Lord has complained of the language used by the public press, and of the violence and zeal with which the writers of it have advocated the great measure of Reform which Ministers have brought before the other House. My Noble Friend complains of the inflammatory nature of that language, but is he not aware that this is only a warning of the strength of public opinion, and of the consequent folly of an obstinate resistance to it? He must know that the press is but the echo of public opinion, deriving nearly all its strength from it, and that by means of it a statesman can judge with tolerable accuracy of the force and current of the public mind. The public press is a most useful guide of the strength and direction of the voice of

the people, on questions of great interest. When it is general in its advocacy of any great measure, it is so because the feelings of the public are deeply interested in its success; and so it is with the great measure of Reform, and the manner in which it has been treated by the Press. If a proof be wanting of the sentiments of the nation with respect to this measure, your Lordships may discover it in what my Noble Friend complains of—the general unanimity—for the exceptions are too few, and of too low a character, to be taken into account—the unanimity with which every Journal distinguished for talent, extensive circulation, or character, has advocated, not merely the principle of a Reform of Parliament, but the particular plan brought forward by His Majesty's Ministers. Why does this unanimity exist, I repeat, unless public opinion is directly in favour of it? Even my Noble Friend has admitted, that the irresistible force of public feeling has compelled him—the enemy of every species of Parliamentary Reform all his life—to admit that some measure of Reform is necessary, and can no longer be withheld.

Here let me refer to the charges brought by my Noble Friend, against the advocates of this Bill, of having sanctioned an unfair use of the King's name. This has been made a ground of serious complaint, but I think that very little is necessary to show how extravagant such a charge is. If

the name of the Sovereign has been so introduced, it has not been by his Ministers—nor was it even necessary that we should. The fact of the King's approbation of the measure was evident when we proposed it to Parliament, which we could not have done without his consent. If the name of the King was introduced at all by other advocates of the measure, it was only in consequence of the attempts made with such industry, by its opponents, to excite a belief that His Majesty was opposed to Reform. The introduction of the King's name at all was not our act, and I most distinctly deny, on the part of the Government, that we ever sanctioned or used that sacred name with a view to influence the conduct of any individual. The present Ministry accepted office on the condition of bringing forward a measure of Reform, of which they received His Majesty's sanction and support; the importance of which sanction my Noble Friend has fully recognised, by admitting, that, after His Majesty allowed my Noble Relation to form an Administration on the principle of Reform, the question could no longer be resisted.

Now, let me remind your Lordships of the peculiar circumstances under which the present Administration accepted the seals of office. The late Government of the Noble Duke opposite fell, not from a want of inclination to retain the reins

of power—not from any factious opposition or party combination on the part of those who had been for years excluded from office—not in consequence of the division on the Civil List—but from a want of confidence in the public in its capability to manage the affairs of the country—a want of confidence loudly expressed at the General Election, and increased by the emphatic declaration of the Noble Duke against all Reform whatever. This declaration it was, more than any thing else, that led to the fall of the Noble Duke's Government, by depriving it of the support of the public. I heard the Noble Duke make that declaration—I heard him say, also, that he not only thought Parliamentary Reform unnecessary, but that if he had himself to frame a constitution he could not organize one more perfect than that now in existence; and never shall I forget the impression which it made on my mind, and on the mind of the nation at large. It was on account of this declaration of the Noble Duke, I repeat, and not in consequence of any party hostility—it was not his defeat on the Civil List—it was not in consequence of any particular vote of this or the other House of Parliament, but because many, I believe all, of the Colleagues of the Noble Duke were anxious to resign their places, as they saw that the Government could not be safely carried on after the declaration of his opinion on the

subject of Reform, that his Administration was dissolved. Never was a Ministry less exposed to the attacks of the party out of power, than the late Ministry was—never did an Administration fall so completely from a want of confidence in itself, arising from the absence of public support.

I am sure that neither the Noble Duke, or your Lordships, can forget the conduct of my Noble Relative near me, and his Colleagues now in office, when the Catholic Relief Bill was brought forward. The advocacy of that great measure had excluded us from political power—the just object of every Englishman's ambition—their opposition to it had enabled our political adversaries to retain office for a long series of years. And yet, what did we do when the Noble Duke, avowedly through intimidation and fear, brought forward the very measure for advocating which, on the sound principle of political justice, we were excluded from office? We not only suffered him to carry away all the credit of the measure at the very last moment, but we did so when we and he knew, that unless he succeeded in carrying it, his Administration was at an end. Nay more; had we been actuated by any motives of party or factious hostility to the Government, we might have taken a stand on the proposition to disfranchise the forty-shilling freeholders; for it is well known that many of us entertained strong feelings against the pro-

priety of that measure—but consulting only the public interest and the welfare of the country, which we knew would be promoted by the success of that great question, of which we had been the early and zealous advocates — we did not oppose the Disfranchisement Bill, knowing that if we did, the great Relief Bill would be defeated. This conduct shows how little the fall of the Noble Duke's Government was influenced by party hostility, and how wholly it was owing to the effect of the withdrawal of public confidence, consequent upon his declaration against Parliamentary Reform.

Now, my Lords, let me take the liberty of replying to the charge of precipitate rashness urged by my Noble Friend, against my Noble Relation, for having brought forward this question so soon after his acceptance of office. I would ask him to recollect the state the country was in at that period. We found several districts seriously disturbed—the public mind in a ferment—no confidence in the civil power—a spirit of combination ripe among the workmen in the manufacturing towns, and the population of six of the most important counties in the south of England—namely, Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Berkshire, Hampshire, and Wiltshire, in a state of almost open insurrection and rebellion—a ready prey to incendiaries, and plunderers of every de-

scription. We found, moreover, the civil power without energy or direction—the magistrates in the disturbed districts afraid to act, and the King's peaceable subjects either besieged in their houses by night, or openly maltreated and plundered in the day. We found a still more dangerous state of things in the unwillingness of the middle classes to support the Government in the suppression of these disturbances—an unwillingness which we found carried to such a pitch on our accession to office, that I am confident even so experienced a military Commander as the Noble Duke himself would have found it no easy matter, by the mere aid of an armed soldiery, to pacify the disturbed districts, unaided, or at best but feebly and coldly supported, by that important body in every free state—the middle classes. This was the state of the country, not only in the disturbed districts in the South of England, but in the large towns in the manufacturing districts of the North. In this almost desperate situation did our predecessors leave the country, when they resigned their offices! What, then, did we do, and with what success? We first won back the confidence and support of the middle classes. This important body we found alienated from the civil power by the declaration of the Noble Duke against Reform;—that alienation was removed by the open and uncompromising pledge of my Noble Relation in favour of Reform.

Having thus produced this important effect on the public mind—having enlisted the confidence of the country in our intentions to administer, on right principles, the affairs of this great empire, and having firmly, yet mercifully, asserted the majesty of the law, public tranquillity was restored, and the way was prepared for that internal improvement and amelioration which is now so generally perceptible.

Having then, on our accession to office, given a pledge in favour of Reform, the question was as to the manner and period of our fulfilling it. I need not tell your Lordships that, if Ministers had contented themselves with barely redeeming their pledge by some small measure of Reform, just sufficient to fulfil the promise they had given, this would not have satisfied the just wishes and expectations of the public. Such a course would not have been fulfilling the spirit of the pledge given, nor would it have been what the people had a just right to expect. It would not have strengthened the Administration—but it would have weakened it, by sowing the seeds of future discontent and agitation, and would have further increased that want of confidence in the sincerity of statesmen which has so long prevailed, with the worst effects, in the public mind. Besides, I know that there is no policy more blindly mischievous than an obstinate resistance to the just

claims of the people: your Lordships well know that no lesson of history has been more frequently taught than that the ill-timed refusal of such demands of a nation have no other effect than to raise them higher and higher, till you are compelled to yield, without thanks, what, if timely granted, would have been received with gratitude. Ministers knew and felt this, and therefore were determined that their measure of Reform should be one, from its broad basis, and from its adaptation to the just demands of the people, of permanent settlement. My Noble Friend, it is true, denies that the measure will be a permanent one; but his denial is only an assertion entirely unsupported by facts or reasoning. We on the other hand affirm, that by our plan an end will be put at once and for ever to the rotten-borough system, and the elective franchise bestowed on a large and important class which at present are denied it—in other words, we at one blow remove a great abuse and provide an efficient remedy—we enable all those who possess sufficient property to insure their independence to exercise the elective right; and, without yielding to extravagant demands, we satisfy the just claims of the people. There is no principle of our Constitution—there is no principle affecting the representative system—that has not property for its basis, and I am warranted in saying, that the plan of Ministers is of

this nature. It is, therefore, I contend, of a permanent character, and I know that it has been so considered by all classes of the community. I think that I may venture, without the fear of contradiction, to assert, that the measure has been hailed as wise and beneficial by the enlightened and respectable portion of the people—that the middle classes have been unanimous in its favour, and that the great body of the people regard it with satisfaction. If we consider the almost countless petitions that have been laid on the table of this House in favour of it from all parts of the country, and from all classes—if we look to the proceedings of the various public meetings in England and Scotland—if we refer to the emphatic declaration in its favour by the first commercial body in the world—I mean the merchants and bankers of the city of London—if we remember that the great organ, the public press, has generally and ably supported it, and advocated its immediate adoption—in fact, in whatever way the opinion of the public on the subject is investigated, it will be found that the plan of Government has satisfied the just expectations of the country, and that we have honourably, consistently, and boldly redeemed the pledge we gave on coming into office.

I now come to the Bill itself, which, rather irregularly, I own, has been so unsparingly discussed

and criticised by my Noble Friend—but I do not complain of this proceeding on his part—on the contrary, I rejoice at every opportunity that is afforded His Majesty's Ministers of explaining and defending, here, the measure which is now pending in the other House. The first part of the Bill to which my Noble Friend objects, is that which cuts off the rotten boroughs; and he is pleased to call this a breach of the Constitution of the House of Commons. Now, I cannot conceive that any measure, short of lopping off altogether these rotten boroughs, can produce those beneficial results which we anticipate from the present Bill. These boroughs are so monstrous an abuse—they are so wholly indefensible—that it is hardly necessary for me to detain your Lordships by entering into a detail of the hideous defects of the system, and the gross bribery and corruption to which it leads. We have had so many proofs daily before our eyes of these abuses—we have them in the printed records of the evidence, given at our Bar, in the cases of Penryn, Grampound, and East Retford, in which bribery and corruption were as notorious as the sun at noon-day—that it is almost a waste of time to do more than mention them. Have your Lordships forgotten the evidence to which I have just alluded? My Noble Friend, at any rate, has not; for he has complained that this House, by its strict adherence to the rules of evidence, in these cases, has

prevented the adoption of a trifling and "bit-by-bit" Reform, and thus produced this universal demand for a more comprehensive measure. Then as to the notorious corruption of the rotten-borough system? Do you not know that persons of every description buy and sell seats in the other House of Parliament? That Jews as well as Christians deal in the right to nominate Members of the Legislature? Has the threat of a Noble Boroughmonger been forgotten, that he would put his own menial in Parliament—as a representative, forsooth, of the people of England—a threat which was not fulfilled; not from want of power on the part of the proprietor, but from his individual discretion? I myself heard the fact of nominee-ship—that libel on the representation of a free people—distinctly avowed, not long since, in the other House of Parliament; and, in common with, I am sure, many who now hear me, I heard of sales of seats in the other House being a matter of daily occurrence;—that, for example, 1200*l.* a-year was sometimes paid to a borough-dealing attorney for the representation of some rotten borough, of which the person elected, perhaps, had never heard before, and which he would never visit. But the abuses of the rotten-borough system are notorious, and their continuance would be disgraceful. Even in the more open boroughs, need your Lordships be informed of what you have in evidence on your own journals—extorted, it is true,

by the most unjust and inquisitorial process, but yet there recorded—and, I fear, too well known by practice to some of your Lordships individually—the disgraceful bribery and corruption of which they are almost invariably the scene under the present system? These facts are matters of public notoriety, and no Reform can possibly satisfy the public mind that permits their continuance. How then, I would ask, could Ministers, in justice to themselves and the country, shrink from boldly and impartially proposing to disfranchise, at once, all those boroughs where such gross abuses exist? We hesitated not for one moment; and determined to propose the extinction of every one borough which could not be purified by the practicable infusion of independent electors. My Noble Friend has urged some objections to the line which has been drawn in disfranchising those boroughs. I confess I do not think that we could have adopted any fairer course than that which we did. I will enter into a short explanation on this point, as the view His Majesty's Ministers took of the case has been misunderstood in this House as well as elsewhere. In fixing upon a population of 2000 inhabitants in 1821, as the line within which all boroughs should be disfranchised, our object was to cut off all those rotten boroughs for which there could be no purifying remedy by way of extension of franchise. It was not because the boroughs, the population of which was under 2000 in 1821, con-

tained but few electors, that we proposed to extinguish them entirely ; but because we could not possibly extend the franchise in them so as to do away with the evils of the system, without absorbing in them nearly the whole county representation. It was because that line accurately described them—because it included them all—and if the line of 2000 had not effected this, we should have proposed 3000, or any other number which could have effectually accomplished this purpose. This was the reason that we fixed upon the population returns of 1821—not from any attachment to a particular number or theory—and in founding upon them our line of disfranchisement we were wholly influenced by a regard to the general good of the community at large, without consideration of personal detriment, or advantage to friends or enemies.

And here I hope I may be permitted to say a few words in reference to myself, impure motives having been imputed to me, which it is but fair to allow me to refute, the rather as my situation in the Government requires such refutation to be explicit. It has been insinuated, that I used my official influence in favour of the county with which I had the honour of being connected, in procuring for it additional members, to which it would not otherwise have been entitled. No language which I can summon to my aid can express my contempt for the baseness of this insinuation, nor can I find words to express my pity for the understandings

which could suggest or harbour such an imputation. Need I disclaim being actuated by such low, paltry motives of self-aggrandisement? I feel that I need not; for I know that in considering this Bill all merely personal or party feelings were absorbed in a desire to promote the general interest of the country. But how does the matter stand as regards the county of Durham? Simply that it contains 50,000 persons more than the number which has been fixed as the line above which the counties were to receive an additional member. If, therefore, you refrain from granting to Durham additional members, the exclusion, on the same ground, must extend to ten other counties, and the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire, which are now included in this Bill. It was proposed that Durham should have new members, because it fell within the line of wealth and population which had been fixed upon as a just ground for an extended representation. If, therefore, you exclude Durham, you must also exclude Shropshire, Gloucestershire, Suffolk, Cumberland, Northamptonshire, Sussex, Nottinghamshire, Hampshire, Worcestershire, and Leicestershire.

With respect to the three towns in that county which will return members under the Ministerial plan of Reform, all that I need say is, that their population is considerably above the line of population and property which has been, after due deliberation, fixed upon as the basis of extend-

ing the representation to large towns. The population of Sunderland and the two Wearmouths is 33,000;—of Shields, 16,000;—and of Gateshead, 11,000; so that, if you do not allow these places to return members, you will exclude many others. With two of these places I never had any further connexion than that which arose from my being Member for the county in which they are situated. With Sunderland I certainly have commercial relations, but not more than my Noble Friend who expressed his opposition to this plan of Reform a few evenings ago, and who has also property and influence in the neighbourhood. Indeed, I should be ashamed to stand up in this House, if such an unworthy motive could, for one moment, have actuated me. I have no parliamentary influence, and therefore exercise none. I have never sought the possession of such influence, contenting myself with having, in my own person, and at an immense cost, asserted the cause of independence in a contested election in my native county. I have no doubt that voters, not elevated to a certain rank of life, might easily have been induced to support my political views—but it never has been an object of desire with me, to establish a parliamentary influence. If, however, I had been accidentally possessed of it, let the extent be what it might, I should be glad to relinquish it, for the sake of the great and beneficial change which the Bill before the House is intended to accomplish. I shall

say nothing more with respect to the insinuation which has been attempted, so unfairly and unjustly, to be cast upon me.

Having explained to your Lordships the principle on which we proposed to disfranchise all Boroughs, where the population was less than 2000 in 1821, I now come to those in Schedule B. That class consists of those which may be retained, after purification, by the admission of 10% Householders. But, it was found that, even under the operation of the Bill, several of these boroughs would not possess more than from fifty to eighty electors; hence the necessity of the provision which adds to them the adjoining districts, so as to ensure a constituency of, at least 300. We have thus drawn a distinct and most important line between the curable and the incurable boroughs: the incurable we lop off as rotten branches; the curable we protect against disease by an efficient constituency. They are both defined by the population returns of 1821; but I beg to assure your Lordships, that if, in the list of either, it is found that exceptions ought to be made, owing to any incorrectness in those returns, His Majesty's Ministers will deem it their duty to see them rectified.

The next question is, as to the unrepresented towns on which it would be expedient to bestow the choice of representatives. And here, again, Ministers take population and wealth as their

guide for the measure of an efficient and independent representation; and in doing so, we have adhered closely to the ancient principle of our representative system. My Noble Friend says, in allusion to the time at which his own borough was erected, that then the amount of population was not attended to—and that it is not, therefore, the principle on which representation was originally granted. This is undoubtedly true, as regards that particular period, because the object then was, to strengthen the King and the Aristocracy; but, had my Noble Friend gone a step further back in his inquiries, he would have seen that the primary object of representation was, to give population, wealth, and intelligence their due share of weight and influence in the decisions of the Legislature—an influence not allowed them under the present system. He would have found that originally (before it became an object with Kings and Nobles to obtain personal influence in Parliament) writs were always issued to populous and wealthy towns—and for the plainest and most obvious reason—supplies of money were wanted for the service of the State, and from those sources alone could they be derived. My Noble Friend has read an extract from a work by Lord John Russell, on this point. Will your Lordships allow me to cite an authority—greater he will admit—without supposing that I under-

value that to which he has alluded—I mean, Mr. Locke.

“ Things of this world (said Locke) are in so constant a flux, that nothing remains long in the same state. Thus people, riches, trade, power change their stations, flourishing mighty cities come to ruin, and prove in time neglected desolate corners, whilst other unfrequented places grow into populous countries, filled with wealth and inhabitants. But things not always changing equally, and private interest often keeping up customs and privileges, when the reasons of them have ceased, it often comes to pass that in Governments, where part of the Legislature consists of representatives chosen by the people, that in tract of time this representation becomes very unequal and disproportionate to the reasons it was first established upon.”

After commenting on the absurdity of places without inhabitants returning Members to Parliament, the same great authority proceeds thus:—

“ *Salus populi suprema lex* is certainly so just and fundamental a rule, that he who sincerely follows it cannot dangerously err. If, therefore, the Executive, who has the power of convoking the Legislature, observing rather the true proportion than fashion of representation, regulates, not by old custom, but true reason, the number of Members in all places that have a right to be

“ distinctly represented, which no part of the
 “ people, however incorporated, can pretend to,
 “ but in proportion to the assistance which it
 “ affords to the Public, it cannot be judged to
 “ have set up a new Legislative, but to have re-
 “ stored the old and true one, and to have rectified
 “ the disorders which succession of time had in-
 “ sensibly as well as inevitably introduced.”

Upon this principle, and upon no other, have Ministers proceeded; and they have, therefore, enfranchised the largest and most populous towns of Great Britain.

I now come to that part of the question which has so much alarmed my Noble Friend—namely, the class of voters who are to be allowed by this Bill. Your Lordships will take into consideration that the 10% householders are possessed of sufficient independence and property to ensure a permanent interest in the prosperity of the country, that they are free from undue influence on the one hand, and factious excitement on the other; and that, therefore, we could not have selected a better class of people in whom to vest this important privilege. The Noble Lord, it appears, has at present in his employment a labourer, who happens to be a householder to that amount; but what inference are we to draw from such a fact? Why, that the Noble Lord is a good master, and that his labourer is well-conducted and industrious; and it appears to me

matter of congratulation to the Noble Lord, that he has the opportunity now offered to him, by which he may confer such an invaluable privilege on so respectable a person. But why should not this individual have a right to vote, if in other respects eligible? I really cannot admit, that the fact of being a labourer, can be a just reason for excluding him from the exercise of the elective franchise. The right of householders to vote at elections has been repeatedly asserted to be the ancient right of the people of England. It has been recognised by a resolution of the House of Commons, which declared, that "where no custom by charter of incorporation existed, there the right of franchise was in the householders;" and, therefore, we do not go further, by adopting this measure, than we are justified in doing, either by this resolution, or upon constitutional principles. Anciently, all possessors of any property, however small, had the right of voting—all freemen—from the earliest ages until the time of Henry VI., when those rights were most arbitrarily narrowed. We, therefore, do not propose to give the right of voting to any class of persons whose claims have not been already recognised by the Legislature itself. Consequently, I repeat, that, in giving the franchise to these classes, we have not introduced any thing new or unknown to our Constitution.

My Noble Friend founds one of his arguments upon the incorrectness, which he states to exist, in

the Tax-office returns upon which this measure proceeds; but, until I am shown to the contrary, I must hold that the returns, made by the proper officers of the Crown, are as likely to be correct as any assertion of the Noble Lord's can be; and, certainly, if we are to judge by the Noble Lord's own statement in regard to the voters of Liverpool, his calculations are founded in error. Now, let us see what proportion the amount of the population in England and Wales bears to the numbers of the enfranchised electors. In 1821 it was more than 12,000,000; it now must be more than 14,000,000. According to the Tax-Office returns, it appears that the number of persons in England and Wales, now rated at 10*l.* and upwards, is only 378,786; it cannot, therefore, be said that the suffrage is too extensively diffused. Of these 378,786, 116,030 are rated between 10*l.* and 15*l.*; so that one-third only of these householders in England and Wales are of the lowest description of voters. In Scotland there are 380,000 houses; but the number of persons to be entitled to vote is only 36,700, of whom 17,900 are of the minor or lower class, rated at from 10*l.* to 15*l.* Now, I do think, unless we presume that the most gross and palpable mistakes have been made in the returns to which I have alluded, that we are not liable to the charge brought against us by my Noble Friend, of creating an enormous constituency; but that, on the contrary, we have called forth a body of

electors which will include all the respectability and intelligence of the most independent classes of society. And how has the Noble Lord attempted to show the extent to which this Bill will confer the right of exercising the elective franchise? My Lords, he refers us to the case of Liverpool; and states, that the number of persons there who will enjoy the privilege of the elective franchise, under the operation of the proposed measure, will be 25,000; but does the Noble lord know that the number of houses in Liverpool is only 19,000? Has the Noble Lord forgotten, too, that the non-resident voters are to be disfranchised?

LORD WHARNCLIFFE.—No; I admit that.

LORD DURHAM.—If the Noble Lord gives up that point, I say his calculations are then proved to be completely erroneous.

I now come to what I confidently hope will be the advantages arising from the adoption of this measure. If it be true, as the Noble Lord and others have stated, that there is a spirit of discontent abroad, among the lower classes, hostile to the institutions of the country, and tending to the destruction of the monarchy; if there be this spirit abroad (which I deny), I should like to know in what class will the supporters of the Constitution find greater friends henceforward, or more steadfast allies, than among the middle classes? And what measure can be wiser than that which goes to secure the affections, and consult the interests of

those classes? How important must it be to attach them to our cause! The lower orders of the people have ever been set in motion by their superiors; and in almost all cases they have chosen their leaders from men moving in another sphere. From the multitude, therefore, we take the body from whence they derived their leaders, and the direction of their movements. To property and good order we attach numbers; and the issue of a conflict, if any should ever occur, cannot be doubtful. But I cannot make these observations without stating, that I do not believe such a spirit exists as that which we have been told of. I believe, on the contrary, my Lords, that the lower orders are attached most sincerely to the Monarchy, and to the maintenance of the three estates, King, Lords, and Commons, as the sources of their welfare and security—and that, of all the nations in the world, the lower orders of England would be least disposed to change for a theoretical republic, or a pure despotism. To give security to the three estates is the object of our Bill. We leave the Peers in possession of all their privileges; the Crown in the enjoyment of all its prerogatives; but give to the people at large that share in the Government, of which, by the lapse of time and the progress of corruption, they have long been deprived.

The principle of the Bill being the extension, not contraction of the Elective Franchise, we have felt it right, disfranchising only the rotten

boroughs, to preserve all existing rights, although, in many instances, the exercise of those rights has been grossly abused! but we certainly have not thought it consistent, in these cases, to extend this great privilege beyond the present possessors. True it is, my Lords, the opponents of the Bill, sympathizing for the first time with them, have endeavoured to excite alarm and jealousy on the part of the potwallopers and burgesses—but those bodies disclaim all community of feeling with the anti-reformers, and petition generally in favour of the measure. Driven from this strong hold, the Opposition have now changed their ground, and profess similar alarm for the privileges of the apprentices. How that body might act under such circumstances, it is not for me to say: but, judging from the manner in which others have performed their part, I have no doubt that they likewise will emulate such an example, and that they will not interfere to deprive the country of the benefit of a measure in which they will participate themselves, and by which they will be gainers. I regret very deeply that I have to weary your Lordships by going into these details; but I have felt it necessary to take some notice of the remarks advanced by the Noble Lord (Lord Wharncliffe) upon the details of the measure, and to state such observations as have occurred to me upon them. I shall not pursue them at present

any further, contenting myself with simply observing, that in this Bill we have also amply provided for the diminution of expense at Elections—which will be effected by the enforcement of residence—the registration of votes—and taking the poll in Counties in districts. Before I leave this part of the subject, I would state with regard to the observation, made rather sarcastically, by the Noble Lord, as to the power which it is proposed to give to the Privy Council—the reasons why we have made this provision in the Bill. We felt it necessary that power should be given to alter the limits of boroughs, in order to ensure a numerous and independent constituency, and to make the necessary divisions in counties, for the purposes of lessening the expenses of County Elections; and we felt that, in order to effect this, we could not go to a body more responsible, better known, or more confided in by the country, than the members of the Privy Council; among whom are individuals unconnected with the Administration—men eminent for talent and character, whose decisions could not possibly be impugned as that of interested parties, and who were, therefore, liable to no misconstruction of motives or imputations similar to those which have been already directed against myself and others of my Colleagues, on the discussion of this question. It was upon these grounds that we considered

the Privy Council the best and most impartial power to apply to, entertaining, however, no wish to give any undue influence to that particular body.

My Lords, I now come to almost the last subject upon which I have to make any observations, and it is one of the gravest importance. The Noble Lord (Lord Wharnccliffe) has said that, though he will not charge us with being revolutionists, yet that we are guilty of introducing a great change in the existing Constitution, and that we shall subvert our present happy form of Government; in short, my Lords, though he disclaims the word "revolutionary," still that is the term which the Noble Lord, by his arguments and insinuations, does really apply to us. If, however, he has been sparing of the term, he is unlike others, both in and out of this House; we have been assailed by them, and that in no measured terms, with reproaches of the most bitter and vituperative description. We have been told that we are destroying the Constitution, and perniciously changing all the relations which have heretofore subsisted between each branch of it.

I am not to be scared by a nickname, or discountenanced by a word. Undoubtedly any change effected in the Government of a State may be deemed a Revolution. The glorious events of 1688 bear that name—yet they are hallowed in the breast of every true Englishman. I

have often heard that memorable Revolution termed a glorious event by the same persons who now use the word for the purpose of denunciation and opprobrium. This Revolution of 1688 was upheld by none more warmly than by the Noble Lords opposite during the discussion of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill: it was then never mentioned but in terms of approbation and reverence—because it suited their political purposes—and yet the Noble Lord and others now use the word “Revolution,” in order to frighten us from the adoption of the proposed measure. Revolution, it seems, is, at the present day, no longer glorious, but horrible; and it is now no longer associated with the recollections of 1688, but with those of the Revolution which occurred in France forty years ago—all its horrors are dressed up in the most vivid colours—for the purpose of scaring weak, timid, and short-sighted alarmists—and the effects produced by the operation of different causes made applicable to a state of things now utterly and entirely dissimilar. My Lords, I ask how is that Revolution to be assimilated to the present period in England? The people then massacred their superiors, it is true; but for what cause? Not in consequence of their just claims having been granted, but because they were wrongfully denied, and pertinaciously withheld. The populace were hurried into criminal enormities, not in the exultation of success, but

in the recklessness of despair. It is this very state of things we wish to avoid—this very crisis we would avert—by granting to the people those claims which they have a right to make—and by refusing which, we must inevitably leave the power in the hands of those who would plunge us into all the evils of a civil war. Such a deplorable consummation it is our object to prevent; and the measure which has been proposed, so far from leading to anarchy or revolutionary excesses, will conciliate the disaffected, if such there be, while it strengthens and consolidates the fabric of the Constitution. But my Noble Friend tells us that this Bill will destroy the Constitution—that I most peremptorily deny. It involves no departure whatever from the principles on which the Constitution was established in 1688. It is an enforcement of them—not in violation of, but complete conformity with, them. In fact, it is the final settlement of that great work, which in this respect was avowedly left defective.

It may be known to your Lordships that it was a matter of grave charge against the authors of the Revolution of 1688, that they did not do that which we are now going to do by this Bill. It is stated by Lord Bolingbroke, that the authors of the Revolution ought not only to have made the act of settlement, but that they ought also to have secured the independence of Parliament.

In his Dissertation on Parties, after alluding to

the conduct of the authors of the Revolution, he says, "They ought to have been more attentive
 " to take the glorious opportunity that was fur-
 " nished them by a new settlement of the Crown
 " and of the Constitution, to secure the indepen-
 " dency of Parliaments for the future. Machiavel
 " observes, and makes it a title of one of his dis-
 " courses, ' That a free Government, in order to
 " ' maintain itself free, hath need every day of
 " ' some new provision in favour of liberty.' "

After affirming the truth of this assertion, and illustrating it by reference to Roman history, he uses these remarkable words:—" If a spirit like
 " this had prevailed among us at the time we
 " speak of, something like this would have been
 " done—and surely something like it ought to
 " have been done. For the Revolution was in
 " many instances, and it ought to have been so in
 " all, one of those renovations of the Constitution
 " which we have often mentioned. If it had been
 " such with respect to the electing of Members to
 " serve in Parliament, these elections might have
 " been drawn back to the ancient principle on
 " which they had been established, and the rule
 " of property which was followed anciently, and
 " was perverted by innumerable changes, which
 " length of time produced, might have been
 " restored, by which the communities to whom
 " the right of electing was trusted, as well as the
 " qualifications of the electors and elected, might

“ have been settled in proportion to the then
 “ state of things. Such a remedy might have
 “ wrought a radical cure of the evil which
 “ threatens our Constitution—whereas it is much
 “ to be apprehended, even from experience, that
 “ all others are merely palliative.”

But, my Lords, I should like to know from whom the charge against us proceeds, of making innovations upon this Constitution of 1688? Why, it has been mainly advanced by the promoters of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill! If this measure be an alteration of the Constitution,—what was the Roman Catholic Relief Bill? Certainly that relief was most wisely afforded. But is it for those to object so loudly to the introduction of change, who have so materially altered the Constitution by the admission of Roman Catholics to privileges which they had not before enjoyed since the Revolution so often referred to? The policy adopted in reference to that portion of our fellow-countrymen was wise and judicious undeniably, but still was it not a change in the Constitution? It was urged then, with a good deal of clamour and not a little of pertinacity, that emancipation would alter the three estates of the realm—would violate the Coronation Oath—would annihilate the Church, and destroy the liberties of the people. And yet, my Lords, those very persons who then stoutly resisted this clamour, are now struck with horror and amazement at any proposal which goes to affect the in-

violability of that Constitution which they themselves had fundamentally altered only two years ago.

But, my Lords, let me not be misunderstood ; I think those changes were of the greatest importance to the welfare of the country, and events have proved that the change effected by the Catholic Relief Bill has been essentially beneficial. It has admitted within our walls noblemen who have long been deprived of their rights—it has opened the doors of the other House of Parliament to as loyal, as honest, and as respectable men as are to be found in the country—and it has erased that foul blot of religious and political intolerance which had so long disgraced our Constitution.

My Lords, I believe that I have, now, to the best of my ability, gone through all the arguments of the Noble Lord opposite. I do not offer any opposition to the motion. On the contrary, I assure the Noble Lord that it is the wish of His Majesty's Ministers to produce every information that can facilitate the most strict examination into all the various points which bear on the question, convinced, as we are, that the more the subject is probed, the more the measure will be found entitled to the approbation of the country. I must declare, on the part of His Majesty's Government, that, so far from being influenced by a wish to change the Institutions of the Country, we are

anxious to protect and strengthen them. We propose to enable your Lordships to exercise your high privileges, consistently with the legitimate rights of the People, and the real interests of the State. We do not permit even the smallest jewel to be extracted from the Crown—bu' we add to its grace and lustre. We secure to the Monarch the undisturbed enjoyment of all his dignities and prerogatives, sustained and cherished by the love of an affectionate people—and on them we propose to confer the noblest gift which can be presented to Freemen—the power of choosing Representatives, in whom is vested the maintenance of their properties, rights, and liberties.

FINIS.

