

HOUSE OF COMMONS—MONDAY.

[From the *Wexford Independent*, April 20.]

IRISH DISTURBANCE BILL.

On the question that the house do resolve itself into a committee of supply.

Mr. O'CONNELL said that he saw no person present connected with the Irish government, but he wished to have information, which he could not help moving for, with respect to the proclamations lately issued by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland under the bill which deprived that county of the constitution. It was strongly intimated on the passing of that bill that there was no disposition to carry it into effect, so that it never could be carried into effect, except under the pressure of absolute necessity. In spite of this assurance the most wanton outrageous act has been committed under the bill, which sufficiently showed the truth of what he had often said, that despotic power could not be entrusted in the hands of any man. Possession was itself a temptation to abuse it. The bill had hardly arrived in Ireland before the county of Kilkenny was out of the pale of the law. Part of that county was, he acknowledged, in a disturbed state; but there was a considerable part of it perfectly tranquil, and which was punished indiscriminately with the rest. What he principally relied on was, that the county of the city of Kilkenny had also been put under the operation of the act, although there was not the slightest appearance of insubordination in that part of the county to justify the doing so; for, if he were rightly informed, the crimes committed there within the last 12 months amounted only to 5 the most serious of which was a petty larceny case. The reasons given for this were ludicrous; one was that the officers who were to form the courts martial could have better accommodation in the hotels of the city of Kilkenny, than they could in any disturbed part of the county. For this reason it was, a city which had committed no offence, and which contained a population of 24,000 souls, had been put out of the pale of the law. He concluded by moving that there be laid before the house copies of all proclamations issued by the Lord Lieutenant under the Irish coercive bill; the reasons given for the same, and the amount of crime committed within the last twelve months in the city of Kilkenny.

Lord ALTHORP begged to suggest to the honourable member the expediency of his withdrawing his motion till the right honourable the secretary of Ireland took his seat to-morrow. He fully concurred in the observation of the hon. and learned gentleman, that the house, having granted these extraordinary powers to the government, was bound to keep a jealous eye on the exercise of them.

Mr. O'CONNELL withdrew his motion to-morrow.

WEDNESDAY.—Mr. O'CONNELL rose to call the attention of the House to the proceedings which had already taken place under the Act recently passed, authorizing the Lord Lieutenant in Council to suspend the Constitution in any county in Ireland which he might please to declare in a state of insurrection. It was known that a proclamation had been recently issued by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland declaring two counties to be in a state of insubordination. The one was the county of Kilkenny, part of which only was disturbed; and the other the county of the city including the city of Kilkenny. In the city of Kilkenny it was not pretended that any disturbance had taken place. There had been some Whitefeet outrages in the suburbs of that city, but the city itself was perfectly quiet. The city contained a population of 25,000 inhabitants. The number of commitments in it during the last year was only five, and the highest offence of these five was petty larceny. Yet this tranquil city had been selected by the Lord Lieutenant as a place fit for the operation of this Act. The night before the proclamation was to take effect, being the last night of freedom in the city the people met; and with a sort of melancholy merriment, in which they indulge in that country under its most severe inflictions, they paraded the town with bands of music playing the most melancholy airs, and taking, as it were, their leave of the privilege of walking out of their houses after sunset. The next night all was still, by the effect of what he must call, this brutal proclamation. But what were the reasons assigned for the proclamation of the city of Kilkenny? They would be found in the two Dublin papers—the *Monitors* of the Castle; the writers of which—of one at least were in the pay of the Castle. One of those alleged reasons was, that the parties who had committed or who might commit, outrage in the county might find shelter in the city, if it were not proclaimed also: as if they could only by law be sheltered in any unproclaimed district for offences committed in one which was proclaimed. The real reason for including the city of Kilkenny was to give the military officers an opportunity of fixing their quarters in a place where there were good hotels to resort to; and he believed that if the dispatch was produced that reason would be found: stated on the face of it. The Hon and Learned Member then moved for the following papers:—Copies of all proclamations and orders issued by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland under the Statute of William IV. chap. 4; return of the number of persons committed to the goal of the county of the city of Kilkenny, for the last twelve months, specifying the crimes or offences for which each person was committed,—the time and place where

committed,—how many were indicted, and the result of each trial; copy of every dispatch or letter from the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, or his Secretary, stating the reasons for proclaiming the county of the city of Kilkenny to be in a state of insubordination or disturbance, pursuant to the Act of the 3d W. IV. chap. 4. He did not anticipate that any objection would be made to the production of any of the returns, except the last, and in that case the cause of the objection must be the reason of proclaiming the city of Kilkenny would appear in the dispatch to be justified as he had stated.

Sir J. HOBHOUSE said he had probed before him of the melancholy state in which the county of Kilkenny had been, not for the last two or three months only but for the last year. During the last twelve months there had been more offences committed in the county of Kilkenny than in the whole province of Leinster put together; and from the 1st to the 14th of March, there had been no less than 114 outrages committed in that county: This, then was a justification for proclaiming the county, but he asked the House, what would have been the use of this application of the powers of the Act if the city of Kilkenny which was situated in the very heart of the county, was exempted from the proclamation? Understanding, soon after he accepted the office he had now the honor to hold, that it was in contemplation to proclaim the county of Kilkenny, he lost no time in writing to Ireland to recommend that the city should not, if possible, be included in the proclamation, and the answer he received was to the following effect:—that the Irish Government had at first entertained the wish not to include the city, but that it was found that a great number of those persons who were not only suspected but known to be implicated in the Whitefoot outrages, were known to be inhabitants of Kilkenny and its suburbs; and therefore if the town was not included in the proclamation it would become a refuge for these individuals, and there would exist no means of putting a stop to those outrages which it was the object of the Act to repress. The last return which the Hon. and Learned Member had moved for was not in his power to grant; and he hoped he would not press the matter to a division: He could assure the Hon. and Learned gentleman that the reasons which induced the Irish Government to include the city of Kilkenny in the proclamation, were such as he had stated to the House, and in no communication proceeding from the Irish Government would be any thing which could lead to the supposition that the city was proclaimed in order that the military officers might be accommodated with good quarters. If the Hon. and Learned member wished to put down Whitefeet outrages, he could do nothing which would more de-