day week last I gave notice that I would move a resolution founded upon the principles in this petition, as an Amendment upon the Order of the Day for going into Committee of Supply on Monday next. I now find there is no supply for that night; therefore, unless the noble Lord at the head of the Government will be kind enough to allow me to bring it forward the first question on Monday, I cannot give the hon. Gentleman any answer as to the time when I shall be able to do so. The noble Lord is aware that the petition is one of great importance to some millions of the people; and I ask this from him as a privilege, upon the undertaking that I at least shall not detain the House long upon it. If the hon. Member had not put the question to me, I should myself have asked the noble Lord for permission to bring the measure forward—a measure upon which, as a matter of course, there is great excitement both in and out of this House. If the noble Lord does not grant the indulgence I ask for, then I must look for another open night; but on Monday I shall present the petition.

Lord J. RUSSELL: I should be very unwilling, Sir, that a petition so numerously signed as the hon. Gentleman has declared the petition he has to present will be, should not be received, and meet with every consideration from the House. I do not, however, think it would be right, because certain business is fixed for that day, and there are other matters to come on to which I will not allude, that the Government should give up Monday to the consideration of the petition. But, considering the importance of a petition presented by such numbers of the people, and that a petition so signed ought to have early consideration, I shall be ready, having at the same time regard to public convenience, to consent that the hon. Gentleman shall bring on his Motion on Friday next.

Mr. F. O'CONNOR: I am most thankful to the noble Lord.

BELGIUM.

Mr. URQUHART asked the noble Lord if Her Majesty's Government had entered into a guarantee of the Crown of Belgium, or in any way had compromised themselves in engagements to maintain, in consequence of recent events on the Continent, the existing state of things?

Viscount PALMERSTON: Her Majesty's Government have entered into no new engagements whatever with regard to Belgium, or any other portion of the Continent. The House is in possession of the Treaties of 1831 and 1839, which contain certain engagements and guarantees upon the part of the Five Powers—France, Austria, Russia, Prussia, and Britain, with regard to Belgium.

THE INTENDED CHARTIST DEMONSTRATION.

Mr. BRIGHT: I wish to put a question to the Government with regard to the notice that has been published, touching the meeting proposed to be held on Monday. I wish to know whether it is intended to refer to both the meeting and the procession, or only to the procession. I ask this question because very intelligent persons, to my certain knowledge, have differed in opinion, and even the newspapers do not agree in the interpretation they have put upon it. I am very much afraid that difficulty may arise if there is any misunderstanding on this point. If the people may meet quietly it is one thing: if they are permitted, or not permitted, to come through the streets in immense numbers, it is a very different thing. I think, then, there should be no misunderstanding; for if there be, there might probably be risk of collision and disturbance, which every Member of this House would be anxious to avoid.

Sir G. GREY: The Government endeavoured in the notice which was publicly issued yesterday to state what was the common law of this country, and what was the statute law with respect to assemblages, for whatever purpose convened, when those assemblages were attended by circumstances calculated to strike terror and alarm in the minds of Her Majesty's loyal and peaceable subjects; and the Government also pointed out in the notice what was the particular statute applicable to the case of tumultuous assemblages gathered upon pretence of preparing or presenting petitions to either House of Parliament, and accompanied with excessive numbers of people. The hon. Gentleman asks whether the meeting convened to assemble on Kennington Common is separate and independent from the proposed procession, which is illegal. That would entirely depend upon the circumstances under which the meeting was held. Any meeting that may be held, be the purpose of it whatsoever it may, which is accompanied with the circumstances to which I have

just alluded—circumstances calculated to inspire just terror and alarm into the minds of Her Majesty's loyal and peaceable subjects—would, I apprehend, be against the common law of England. If, on the other hand, a meeting be held for the purpose of forming or organising a procession, and that procession is contrary to the statute law, being for the purpose of presenting a petition to either House of Parliament, accompanied by excessive numbers of people, then I apprehend that that meeting would be identified with and form part of the procession, and therefore come within the provisions of the law applicable to such a procession. These questions, however, with respect to the legality or illegality of meetings, must depend upon the circumstances of each particular case; and I cannot undertake to answer whether a certain meeting convened to be held in a particular place for a particular object, may or may not be illegal without consideration of the special circumstances attending it. While I am answering this question, I will take the opportunity of reading to the House what I think it is desirable should be generally known. It is the dictum of Lord Mansfield, one of the most eminent Judges that ever graced the bench, upon the law applicable to these cases. It was delivered on the trial of Lord George Gordon, in 1781. Lord Mansfield, in summing up, says—

"A doubt has faintly been thrown out from the bar whether it is lawful to attend a petition to the House of Commons with more than ten persons. Upon dear-bought experience of the consequences of tumultuous assemblies, under pretence of carrying and supporting petitions, an Act of Parliament passed in the reign of King Charles II., forbidding, under a penalty, more than ten persons to attend a petition to the King or either House of Parliament; but it is said, that law is repealed by the Bill of Rights. I speak the joint opinion of us all, that the Act of Charles II. is in full force; there is not the colour of a doubt. The Bill of Rights does not mean to meddle with it at all; it asserts the right of the subject to petition the King, and that there ought to be no commitment for such petitioning; which alluded to the case of the bishops in King James's reign, who petitioned the King, and were committed for it. But neither the Bill of Rights nor any other statute repeals this Act of Charles II.; and Mr. Justice Blackstone, in his *Commentaries*, treats of this Act as in full force, and, as I have told you, we are all of that opinion; and consequently the attending a petition to the House of Commons by more than ten persons is criminal and illegal."

I would also refer hon. Members desirous of reading the constitutional law in these cases to the twelfth volume of the *State Trials*, containing the trial of the seven bishops in 1688, in which they will find the subject discussed between two Judges, Mr. Justice Allybone and Mr. Justice Powell, the first a high prerogative lawyer, but the second a man who was dismissed from his office, having given offence by too liberal opinions as to the right of the people to petition. Mr. Justice Powell, nevertheless, draws a marked distinction between petitioning merely, and petitioning accompanied with tumultuous assemblies—the one being the undoubted right of the people, but the other illegal. That opinion has, I believe, been held by every constitutional lawyer; and I hope it will not go forth to the world that the intention of Her Majesty's Government in these proceedings has been to interrupt in the slightest degree the just right of any portion of the people of this country to petition this House.

In answer to Lord R. GROSVENOR,

SIR G. GREY said: All I know of the meeting on Kennington Common is stated in the notice already published throughout England, namely, that the meeting is convened. I take the fact from the public announcement of such convention published by the Chartist Association, and signed by three gentlemen, one of them calling himself "secretary," and in which it is stated —and the fact is not disavowed by the hon. Gentleman himself, who, I understand, is a leader of the association—that he is to marshal the people there assembled, to the number, it is said in some quarters, of 300,000, though I express no opinion upon that, in order that a grand demonstration of physical force may accompany the petition to the door of this House. [Mr. O'CONNOR: Has the right hon. Gentleman received a deputation from the parties concerned in getting up this meeting?] I was engaged in public business at the time I received an intimation that three gentlemen, who stated themselves to be a deputation from the National Convention, were at the Home Office, and wished to make a communication to me. They saw the Under Secretary, in the presence of the Attorney General and Mr. Hall, the chief magistrate. I was not present; but they addressed a letter to me, which, if it will be any satisfaction to the hon. Gentleman, I will read. The hon. Gentleman was not one of those who attended at the Home Office, and I have no reason to know whether or not he participates in the sentiments of this letter. The right hon. Baronet read the letter, which was to the

effect that the undersigned delegates appointed by the National Convention begged to inform the Home Secretary that they had never avowed, but, on the contrary, they repudiated, the idea of an armed assemblage, and assured him they entirely discountenanced any attempt to create disorder, or to break the public peace. They assured him that the procession for the purpose of presenting the petition to the House of Commons would take place, but that, should any disturbance occur, it would not be promoted or encouraged on their parts.

Sir R. H. INGLIS: Sir, I wish to ask the question of the right hon. Baronet whether he, as Secretary of State for the Home Department, has acknowledged a National Convention sitting in London? I ask this question very respectfully, both towards this House and my right hon. Friend. I wish to know if the Secretary of State for the Home Department has recognised the existence of a National Convention sitting in London, by condescending to receive a letter from persons representing that body?

Sir G. GREY: I can have no hesitation in saying that the three gentlemen who attended at the Home Office were not recognised as delegates of any National Convention. The Under Secretary distinctly stated to them that he could not receive them in the capacity of national representatives, but only as persons coming from a meeting held in a certain house, and in that character only.

Mr. WAKLEY: The meeting on Kennington Common has been publicly advertised during the last month, and it was publicly stated that 500,000 persons would probably attend the procession. [*Laughter.*] Gentlemen may laugh, but there are 500,000 persons and more in this country who do not consider themselves represented here. During the last month this meeting has been advertised, and it has been publicly stated that 500,000 people would probably be on Kennington Common, and come thence in procession to this House. Now, if these facts were known to the Government, and if it was known to them also that the meeting and procession were illegal, why were the people not informed of it before?

Sir G. GREY: Because I had not the information which the hon. Member, better informed than the Secretary of State, possessed. I certainly knew that which it was my duty to know, from information which it was my duty to obtain, namely, that at meetings held in certain parts of this metropolis speeches were made to small numbers of persons, in which such an intention was vaguely announced, and in which it was stated that in the course of the next week—about the 10th or 11th of April—there would be a great public demonstration to attend a petition that was to be presented to this House. But the first public advertisement of this intention was that now lying before me, which I received the day before yesterday; upon which the Cabinet directly deliberated, and upon that deliberation the notice was immediately published.

Mr. WAKLEY: As the right hon. Gentleman has given something more than an answer to my question, and as the cheers which he has elicited—

Mr. SPEAKER: If the hon. Member for Finsbury is going to put another question to the right hon. Gentleman, he is quite in order; but he cannot debate any subject, there being now properly no question before the House.

Mr. WAKLEY: Then, Sir, I move that this House do now adjourn; and now, I think, we have a question before us. The right hon. Baronet, in the first part of his reply to my question, intimated that I had a better knowledge on this subject than he possessed. Now, I beg to state positively that I have attended no meeting whatever in relation to the petition which is to be presented on Monday to this House; that I have not attended the public assembly regarding it; and that I have had no direct communication from the persons calling themselves "The National Convention" with respect to that petition. I derived my information solely from a public newspaper, that public newspaper being the property of an hon. Member of this House. I derived my information from no other source whatever; and I do therefore think that the people have been somewhat unjustly treated in being allured into the supposition—["Oh, oh!"]—I say in being allured into the supposition that they could safely assemble in large numbers, and that they could legally present their petition to this House in large numbers, throughout so long a period as that which has elapsed since the announcement in the public journal to which I have alluded. The proprietor of that journal is an hon. and learned Member of this House; he is a member of the legal profession; and surely the people had a right to con-

sider that he was well acquainted with the law on the subject. I do say, then, that I think the Government have acted, to say the least, with negligence, on such a question, in not having given the people an earlier intimation that they would be acting illegally in assembling on Kennington Common in large numbers, and in attending in a large procession on the presentation of a petition to the House of Commons. I regret exceedingly the turn which events have taken, because it is my belief that this prohibition is likely to be followed by a great public calamity.

Mr. F. O'CONNOR, in seconding the Motion, said: As this subject has been mooted, I beg leave to state distinctly that I have not attended any public meeting in London in connexion with the getting up of this demonstration, though I have, I admit, been present as a delegate at that Convention which is now sitting. We have been told to look back to precedent in this matter; and let us, therefore, see if some indulgence was not allowed to the people when the right hon. Baronet the Member for Tamworth was in office. In 1843 a large procession was marshalled and paraded through London; that procession was announced in precisely the same language as has been used in the document referred to by the right hon. Baronet; and as a Judge of the land, the present Chief Baron said, such language is not to be misconstrued by a judge or jury as approving or advocating physical rather than moral force, inasmuch as it is language which any party is at liberty to use. I last night pointed out that on a former occasion a procession of 150,000 men walked with a petition for reform to the Home Office; in 1833 I saw a procession consisting of 100,000 men bring up a petition in favour of the Dorchester labourers to this House. The right hon. Gentleman will not forget that a large procession of sailors passed close to the House not long since, and when, too, the House was sitting, on their way to Downing-street; and, as the people have never before been prevented from making demonstrations of this kind, I do say that it is now taking them rather by surprise to declare that they must not look to the common custom hitherto as a guarantee of their right to meet and walk in procession as they contemplated. It never was intended to bring the petition to the doors of the House of Commons. The right hon. Gentleman has given me credit for possessing some influence with these parties; and certainly I had that much influence to prevent them bringing the petition in procession to the House, though the other petition to which I have referred, which was while the right hon. Baronet the Member for Tamworth was in office, was brought to the House and presented by the hon. Member for Finsbury in that way. The people are entitled now, when a Liberal Government is in office, to exercise the same privilege; but, at the same time, I solemnly declare that, if it had been known early to these persons (many of whom are not now to be prevented in their purpose) that it was the intention of the Government to interfere, they would never have decided upon the procession. These millions of men are only petitioning for the rights which were promised to them by the Gentlemen who are now sitting on the Treasury bench. These Gentlemen told them, among other things, that taxation without representation was tyranny; and it is hard indeed now, that the schoolmasters should contradict the instruction which they themselves gave to their pupils. I, for my part, will not shrink from any responsibility that may now be imposed upon me. I should be sorry, having been a party to a proposition, to attempt, like a coward, to shrink from the consequences. My intention is to attend this meeting. My intention is to come, in the procession, not to the House of Commons, but over Westminster-bridge, with that petition; and it is my determination to use all my power, as heretofore I have done, to prevent the slightest infraction of the peace. I will add, that if I thought there was any view of endangering the peace, I would not present that petition. I have never been a party to palm any delusion on this House. I have acted in this cause, and shall continue so to act; but I have not lived on the cause, and I have never pandered to any bad or foolish prejudices. I learned my lessons from the noble Lord (Lord J. Russell), and the right hon. Baronet the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Hobhouse); and I would now appeal to them if they should be the men, at the eleventh hour, to oppose the project of these hundreds of thousands of people, who in my conscience I believe to have no more notion of disturbing the peace than I have. I repeat, they have no more notion of disturbing the peace than I have; and I declare that I have no notion of disturbing the peace. I have borne my share of per-

secution, which I have endured very calmly, and I will never shrink from the responsibility I have incurred. I have received a letter informing me of the danger to my own person; and the worthy and hon. alderman (Alderman Thompson) has told me that I would certainly be shot if I appeared on Monday. I have no such apprehension; but, if I had, I consider that when a man has brought others into a position where there is danger, he is bound to take himself the lion's share of it. I will only say, in conclusion, that I agree with the hon. Member for Finsbury that the Government have been guilty of great negligence in this matter; for, though they may have had no official information, they must have been sufficiently aware of the intentions of the people; and I beg the noble Lord and the right hon. Gentleman to be satisfied that the parties who are getting up this demonstration are not getting it up with any view to endanger the peace of the country, or to violate the law of the land.

Sir J. GRAHAM: The hon. Gentleman who has just sat down has said, and said truly, that the House attaches great value to precedents; and I think that the precedent which is now in question is of great importance. I understood the hon. Gentleman to say, that in the year 1843, when my right hon. Friend below me was at the head of the Government, and when I had the honour of filling the situation which my right hon. Friend now fills, the hon. Member for Finsbury, who at that time presented a petition most numerously signed on behalf of the Chartists, presented that petition in a manner identical with the plan proposed for the petition from the meeting at Kennington Common on Monday next, when, according to the proclamation referred to by my right hon. Friend, a procession is to take place which the hon. Member for Nottingham (Mr. F. O'Connor) observes is identical with that which took place in 1843. Now, I speak with confidence, certainly, but still only from recollection, there are two points of distinctive difference in what occurred in 1843, and what is intended to take place on Monday next. In the first place, that petition did not emanate from a meeting convened by notice, in the immediate neighbourhood of the metropolis, under circumstances such as those which my right hon. Friend has notified he has reason to believe will attend the meeting called for on Monday at Kennington. That petition, in 1843, was brought from a private house; it did not come from a public open meeting. [Mr. O'Connor: It came from Lincoln's-inn Fields. The procession was marshalled there.] I speak from recollection, and I do not think that that petition was adopted in Lincoln's-inn Fields. I think it had been previously prepared. Again, there is another great distinction. I do not think there was given out, at the time, any intention to come to this House in procession from any place where that meeting was to have been held. Certainly I do remember that a considerable number of persons did come with the petition, and, I believe, to the doors of the House. No previous notice, however, had been given of that circumstance; and, if my recollection do not deceive me, nothing like what is purposed on Monday next took place on that occasion. And assuredly I now consider I should have failed in my duty, being responsible then, as my right hon. Friend now is, for the peace of the metropolis, if I and the Government of which I was a Member had been consenting parties to such a meeting as that announced for Monday next on Kennington Common. Such a procession as that contemplated has been pronounced illegal, and I am glad that it will not be countenanced by the authorities.

Mr. HORSMAN: I think the House would be acting an unjust and an ungenerous part towards Her Majesty's Government, to allow it to go forth, on the authority of the hon. Gentleman opposite, that they are now imposing upon the subject's privilege of meeting and petitioning restrictions greater than those imposed by previous Governments. It is not a question of meeting in great numbers only: we must remember all the circumstances; and it is impossible to forget the fact alluded to by the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary for the Home Department, that, whether well founded or not, the announcement of this intended procession has, in the minds of many people, created very considerable apprehension. If we look merely to the eager discussion now going on in this House, and to the questions put and the anxiety with which the answers have been listened to, we can understand the interest out of doors; and, whatever we may ourselves think, we are bound to have consideration for the fears of the right-minded and peaceful men of the country. The hon. Member for Nottingham has offered to guarantee the peace of the metropolis,

As far as he is concerned, I will do him justice, and admit that all I have seen of him in this House has prepossessed me in his favour. At the same time it is not to be denied that neither he nor any other man can undertake to answer for the conduct of 50,000 men marching through the streets. I think he would endeavour to preserve the peace, and I deem these fears ill-founded, because I am satisfied that among the mass there is a conviction that they enjoy a greater degree of rational liberty than is accorded to any other people in Europe; but I do not consider that I am a free agent at such a moment. Her Majesty's Government are under great responsibility. We must sympathise with them; and it would be unmanly and ungenerous if we did not now unanimously support them. I discard my own feelings altogether. I am ready, for one, to place full reliance in them, and to incur with them the responsibility of any measures, however unpopular, which they suppose indispensable for the security of peace and order. I do not see, after what has happened, why the procession should be persevered in, and I sincerely hope that the idea will be given up.

Mr. Alderman THOMPSON: Every Member of this House will concur in the observations which have just been made. The hon. Member for Nottingham has stated that he has received a notification from some individual that if he attended the procession on Monday, fatal consequences would ensue. I beg to say that I am not the individual who furnished that information. I was surprised to hear from the hon. Member (Mr. O'Connor), that he had taken no part in any meeting for getting up the procession on Monday next. I was surprised, also, at his declaration that he entertained no apprehension of any breach of the public peace on that occasion. I will put the question to the hon. Member—Did he attend a meeting last Monday night at Cartwright's Coffee-house, Cripplegate, in the city of London? [Mr. O'Connor: I went from this House to a tea-party in a room there, and there were only 40 people present.] I am quite aware that that meeting was not popularly attended; but it was not the less important on that account, and I wanted to ascertain from the hon. Member if the report was true that he was there? The meeting was unquestionably composed of those who are supposed to be the leading Chartists; and I will venture to say that the language made use of by the hon. Member for Nottingham on that occasion was anything but calculated to allay alarm and promote peace and good order. I have obtained a report of the speech of the hon. Member for Nottingham, taken as a deposition from a person of veracity present, by one of the most respectable professional men in London. The individuals who attended called themselves "The Irish Confederate and Democratic Society." Mr. O'Connor said that—

"He had just come from the House of Commons, where he had left them discussing the Jew Relief Bill; that it was a base Parliament; that it was of no use petitioning and praying any longer; that they must do as the Americans did—shake off the yoke; that it was better to die on the scaffold than to perish from starvation; that the people of Ireland would not be satisfied with a repeal of the Union—they must have an independent republic; that moral force was sufficient to put down physical force; that he hoped the meeting would remember the 10th of April; that it would be a glorious day; that he was for fair play to the Catholic priesthood, inasmuch as they were much better able than the Protestants to assist them (the Democratic Society); that they ought at once to do away with all titles, as the French had done; and that they must put down Royalty, for it was too great an expense to the country."

I felt it my duty (continued Alderman Thompson) to place the report of this address of the hon. Member for Nottingham in the hands of the right hon. Baronet the Secretary for the Home Department; and I considered it right, after the statement of the hon. Member himself here, to lay it before the House.

Mr. F. O'CONNOR begged to be allowed to declare, of which he would give the hon. Gentleman the most ample proof, that he had never mentioned the topics to which he was reported to have adverted at the meeting in question. He had always confessed himself an anti-republican; he had published article after article against the republican form of government; and, as even the report read admitted, he had advocated moral force in preference to physical force. He was not for repeal of the Union, but for separation; and he begged to declare most solemnly that he had never said a word about the abolition of titles, or about the destruction of Royalty. He would prove this by the evidence of men who had been present.

Mr. HUME said, they had known that at many meetings on former occasions speeches had been misrepresented; he should hope, therefore, that the hon. Alderman would produce a shorthand wri-

ter's notes of what had taken place, and not accuse a Member of that House on loose information. He could not conceal from himself that the daily newspapers had reported speeches made in different parts of the country, which, if they were correctly reported, contained passages which no friend to peace could support or justify. But he did not give credit to such representations. This was a matter of the utmost importance to the hon. Member for Nottingham, and there ought to be a Select Committee of that House who would afford him an opportunity to call the persons referred to by the hon. Alderman before them. There might be spies abroad, as in former times, poisoning the minds of Her Majesty's Ministers. He had in former times himself seized a person of this kind in a room, and brought him to the office of Lord Sidmouth, but Lord Sidmouth dismissed him. That was the third spy he had been accessory to seizing. This was in former times; he did not believe Her Majesty's Ministers resorted to these means, or he would soon change sides in that House. He, therefore, protested against proceeding in this way; and he asked the Government if they were — as the hon. Alderman said — in possession of affidavits, that they would proceed immediately to appoint a Committee in order to prevent any further misunderstanding in this matter.

Sir De L. EVANS was bound, on the part of the constituency he represented, to rise and state the peculiar circumstances in which they stood with regard to the meditated procession. He had associated with many processions, and had presented many popular petitions; but with regard to this, there was a peculiarity which he defied any Gentleman to say did not exist; it was this — there had been already two meetings recently of a similar kind: one at Trafalgar Square, apparently of a contemptible character contrasted with that of which notice had been given; and the other in the same locality where the proposed meeting was to assemble; and, notwithstanding their trifling character, it was his duty to inform the House, on the part of his constituents, that those meetings had occasioned very great alarm and terror. He had been in various parts of the city he represented, and he could assure the House that there was a feeling there of extreme alarm and terror; and not only that, but that parties had declared to him that they had suffered materially in their trade and business for ome days before and after those two occasions. This alarm and terror now existed to an extent which he had never known before; and he considered it to be his bounden duty to entreat Her Majesty's Government to protect, at least, his constituents against losses which they were at this moment very ill able to bear. As to the course pursued by his hon. Friend the Member for Montrose, all he should say was, that he did not understand it. He entirely concurred in what had fallen from the hon. Member for Cockermouth (Mr. Horsman); and he did think, looking at the present condition both of foreign and domestic affairs, that every man — every honest man, and especially every one belonging to the Liberal party — was bound to declare to which side his efforts and exertions should be given, and his should be given in support of Her Majesty's Ministers.

Lord J. RUSSELL: Sir, I shall not allude to anything that may have fallen from the hon. Member for Nottingham out of this House, but I shall address myself solely to matters which he has referred to in the House. The hon. Member has said that it was not intended that the procession to which allusion had been made should come to the House of Commons. Now, there has been recently issued, in print, a notice, signed by two persons on the part of those who are connected with this meeting, distinctly stating that the procession was to pass through the metropolis, and accompany the petition to "the door of the House of Commons." That is a printed declaration of these parties; and yet the hon. Member for Nottingham says it was never intended. Why, what would have been the case if, as the hon. Member for Finsbury had suggested, we had issued our notice a fortnight ago? Would it not then have been said that no such intention existed — that we had nothing but vague and groundless notions of what was going to happen? But when this printed notice has been issued and placarded, can it be said that the notice of the Government was unnecessary, and that no such intention was ever entertained as that of carrying the petition to the door of the House of Commons? Sir, I cannot say, that in every case of this kind such interference on the part of the Government is necessary. These cases depend very much upon the nature of their circumstances. I admit that there are occasions in which it is unnecessary to enforce the strict letter of the law; there are others in which, at particular times and under parti-

cular circumstances, great disquiet and alarm would be excited by such processions; and I put it to the House, whether this case falls within the former or the latter category? The hon. Member must know that such processions, which are calculated to spread alarm and terror amongst the peaceable and loyal subjects of Her Majesty, may have illegal objects. The hon. Member himself tells us that he has been reprobated. Reprobated for what? For his attachment to monarchy. The political society with which he consorts have reprobated him, he says, because he is a friend to monarchy. The hon. Member has said that other processions have been permitted. In this case the Government consulted the opinions of those who were competent to advise them as to the law; and, looking at the declaration to which I have referred, they thought it necessary to announce that the law forbade such a procession, and to warn all peaceable and loyal subjects against attending it. Has there not been sufficient notice given? There were three days, during which the hon. Member had ample time to reconsider the subject of the meeting. There might be cases in which, though parties may transgress the strict letter of the law, if their proceedings are cautious and prudent, they would not necessarily be prohibited; but where they are not only illegal, but of a nature to produce terror and alarm, it is the duty of the Government to interfere. I say, then, is it not the duty of the hon. Member for Nottingham, especially if, as he says, it was never intended to bring down the petition to the door of this House; to dissuade those with whom he is connected from a proceeding so pregnant with alarm, and to tell them, as he may with truth, that their petition will be respectfully received by the House of Commons, and that every fair opportunity will be given for the deliberate discussion of what is termed the People's Charter; to advise them to proceed cautiously and properly, and not by illegal means endeavour to terrify and overawe the deliberations of Parliament?

Sir R. PEEL: Sir, this is a discussion which I am not at all disposed to prolong, and I should not have risen if it had not been that my name has been mentioned by the hon. Member for Nottingham, and that he considers the conduct pursued by the Government with which I was connected, in the year 1843, ought to be regarded as a precedent by Her Majesty's Government for governing the case now before us. Sir, I have not the slightest recollection that I was a party to any proceeding in the year 1843 which ought to fetter the discretion of Her Majesty's Government at this time. I am aware that there have been many occasions on which numbers of persons have been permitted to approach the House of Commons, and I rejoice that it is so. I think we ought to be as indulgent as possible, without straining the law, in such cases, when it can be done without danger. I know that Spitalfields weavers, in large numbers, have been allowed to approach this House; and in 1843 persons, in numbers prohibited by law, were allowed to approach it. But I think that those cases were entirely different from this. I think Her Majesty's Government act prudently in not too readily interfering in such cases; and I think, with the noble Lord, that where there is no formal intention to infringe the law, and to menace the House of Commons, it is wise to show as much forbearance as we can. But I have no hesitation in saying that, whatever may be the precedent of 1843, considering the events that are taking place in foreign countries, and considering the excited state of the public mind at home, where a procession of this kind has been publicly announced, the persons composing which may be accidentally excited to disturbances of which it is impossible to foresee the consequences, I think the Government were fully justified in issuing the notice; and I think considerations of humanity, as well as of law, imposed upon them the duty of taking precautions against consequences we must all shudder at contemplating; and if the Government had not taken these precautions, and such consequences had followed, those who condemn and denounce them now, would have denounced them with ten times more vehemence, and with much more justice.

Motion for the House to adjourn withdrawn.

SECURITY OF THE CROWN.

Sir G. GREY said: I deeply regret that the spirit which has recently manifested itself in some parts of the United Kingdom —that the seditious and treasonable designs which have been openly avowed by too many persons, at least in one part of the United Kingdom, encouraging open hostility to the peace of society and the supremacy of the law, and exciting to the subversion of the existing institutions of the country—have rendered it necessary, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, tha