

EUROPE.

ENGLAND.

THE RUINS OF THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

INSPECTION BY THEIR MAJESTIES.

On Saturday evening at three o'clock, their Majesties went to the Speaker's for the purpose of seeing the ruins occasioned by the recent devastating fire. The visit was made in the most private manner; so privately was it conducted, that with the exception of the Speaker's family and some officers about the establishment, no one knew any thing of the expected arrivals; indeed, the several workmen about the ruins, engaged in the removal of rubbish or of fallen timbers and dilapidated furniture, and the policemen were deliberately walking about at the station allotted to them, when the appearance of their Majesties and the few attendants they had with them at the windows of one of the preserved rooms in the Speaker's house, gave the first note of the character of the company present. They came in two plain, chocolate-coloured, unadorned carriages, with a pair of horses to each, and the servants were in dark-coloured, common liveries. Their Majesties were accompanied by Lord A. Fitzclarence, Lord Albemarle, Sir A. Barnard, &c. His Majesty was dressed in black, and the Queen wore a dark-coloured silk dress, plain bonnet, black veil, &c. There was no other lady of the party. When the carriages passed to the Speaker's house through the gateway in Palace-yard, none knew that they contained any portion of the Royal Family. On their arrival at the entrance to the Speaker's house, the Right Hon. Gentleman, Sir C. M. Sutton, Mr. Sutton, his son and Secretary, Sir J. C. Hobhouse, as Woods and Forests' Commissioner, &c., were in attendance to receive their Majesties and company, and to attend them in the survey. They first went into the few remaining rooms of the Speaker's house, those preserved in a line with the cloisters or Speaker's gallery, and near to the Exchequer offices. They remain in the state of confusion in which they were left on the occasion of the fire, except that a good deal of the furniture that had been saved from other apartments and carried into the garden between the house and the Thames had been, somewhat unconsciously, conveyed into these rooms.

Having surveyed these, some of which are partly burnt, affording space to view portions of the ruins of the House, the lobbies, &c., and having from the windows, contemplated all that could thence be seen of the fallen or injured buildings, their Majesties and attendants descended to the dining rooms and cloisters, which being on a level with the garden, may be termed the ground floor. These cloisters are well known to the curious about the antiquities of St. Stephen's Chapel, and the renovations that took place some years ago, when these beautiful specimens of ancient architecture and the House were put into condition for an official residence. The cloisters are as beautiful, and more tasteful and agreeable in their appearance than those of Westminster Abbey, but the square is not so large; and instead of having iron railings, they are enclosed so as to constitute galleries. They were communications between the Houses, and to different arched rooms under the Commons. Here their Majesties had, for the first time, the opportunity of forming some general idea of the real extent of the ruins which they were about to view. From the southern side of this cloister or gallery, the whole of which has been preserved, in consequence of the old arched work, they could see the walls of the house of Commons, the rooms under them, and the tottering buildings by the side of them; they saw, in fact, the site of what had constituted the House of Commons' chamber, the lobby and the "Speaker's chamber," the vote office and the ancient door-way and passage through which the Speaker passed in state to and from the House, proceeding across the lobby.

The immense height of the walls, the quantity of the fallen buildings filling up different divisions, the fine specimens of architecture still remaining, though dreadfully burnt and shattered, together with the arched rooms under the House, lobby, &c., richly wrought and carved and still also preserved, present extended and varied mass of ruins that evidently astonished and grieved his Majesty so as to keep him fixed to the spot for some time, without apparently the power of making any observation. Her Majesty was also evidently much affected and amazed at the extent of the devastations, and at the fury of those flames which could have hurled so much destruction through and over these enormous buildings, and in many instan-

ces terrifically thick old stone walls. The Speaker and Sir J. Hobhouse very carefully described the positions of the buildings, so as to give an idea of the places and chambers that had been destroyed, and also had to answer many inquiries made particularly by his Majesty. The manner in which a vast quantity of the highly decorated arched work, consisting of rooms, cellars, as well as that forming the cloister galleries, had obviously withstood the fury of the flames, and the falling of many walls that had formed partitions, Committee rooms by where Bellamy's coffeehouse was formerly stationed, called forth the expression of wonder that must be uttered by all who view the really extraordinary and terrific scene. The perfect state of the arched work is really astonishing. Within the square of the cloisters there is still a fire engine, and it was playing while the Royal party were on the premises, for the fallen timbers mingled with the rubbish were sending forth so much smoke and flame as to render this operation prudent.

From the cloisters the Royal party returned to the Speaker's rooms, and entered those with the ancient starred ceilings, still preserved in the Exchequer offices. These are the rooms at which the fire stopped in this direction, but they have not escaped injury, being much damaged, shattered, and partly burnt. Their Majesties had now to come out into the Speaker's garden, or lawn, which runs along the bank of the Thames from this point, by the House of Commons and to Cotton garden, past the Commons' library, the Lords and the Lords' Parliament offices. Here preparations were made, by placing carpets and matting, of which there was a bountiful supply on the green, boarding, tarpauling, &c., so as to keep the party out of the wet and sludge, as well as could be done in the few minutes that had been afforded for the preparation. This brought them before the river front of the House of Commons. As heretofore stated, the walls of St. Stephen's remain, and of course the work of the windows which had been improved or covered, by modern compositions, is once more visible, its covering having caked off by the heat of the fire. It displays, burnt as it is, such beautiful specimens of the original style of highly-wrought architecture that several artists have taken sketches of them. The same indeed, may be remarked, en passant respecting several other specimens of the old architecture now brought prominently forward by the destruction of many modern obstructions, there are artists in various parts, not only taking sketches of them, but of the general appearance of the ruins, and particular portions of them,—of the remains of the painted chamber and of St. Stephen's especially. To return however, to their Majesties; at this point they could take another view of the general appearance of the ruins, as they could here see those of the Speaker's house, the House of Commons, the Commons' library, the modern walls of which remain, and the end of the painted chamber, which in its ruins is a beautiful architectural object. The Queen accompanied by Sir J. C. Hobhouse, &c. travelled over the rubbish on the terrace and into the Speaker's official dining-room, of the antiquity and curiosity of which we have before spoken. The room too, was occupied with no ordinary quantity of rubbish, water, and sludge; but its curiously and beautifully arched and decorated character, many of the worked stone ornaments being exquisitely inlaid with gold mingled with other colours, together with the remarkable circumstances of its preservation, having had the burning ruins of the House of Commons on its shoulders, evidently excited a good deal of surprise in her Majesty's mind, so as to induce her to examine it still more closely. His Majesty approached the window frames and looked into the room, but he did not attempt to pass over the piles of rubbish fallen here; indeed the room itself, doubtless, his Majesty has often previously seen. The gratification of the curiosity was a work of some peril, at least till the room is entered, for there experience has proved its safety and the strength of its arched ceilings; but the peril is in standing on the outside and in front of the House, for the tall naked walls, which here run to a good height, do not appear remarkably safe, all the wood and frame work and other apparent support being away, though in reality they are safe enough. His Majesty remained here a long time, with painful anxiety looking at every portion of these ruins, continuing in the closest conversation or rather inquiries, with Sir C. Sutton, which inquiries the Speaker answered in so satisfactory and bland a manner as evidently to increase the interest his Majesty felt in contemplating the appalling ruins of so

remarkable, a building. His Majesty lingered here longer than at any other point; and he walked from it very gradually, stopping several times, and turning round to take still another view of the frightful and terrific devastation of a spot that had been the scene of so many remarkable events and the proceedings in which place were so identified with the political history and struggles of this country. It was obvious that His Majesty was deeply affected by what he saw. That quickness of observation and inquiry which characterise His Majesty here eventually failed him: inquisitiveness as regards minor objects seemed to merge in the one painful feeling of afflicting thought on the ruin of so politically sacred a spot. The concern and interest evinced by the Queen quite equalled his Majesty's; she seemed as if she could hardly remain there too long. And it is doubtful whether their Majesties would have quitted this spot so soon but for a recognition that his Majesty made while turning round and lingering at the scene. Among the very few persons who were present, with the exception of the numerous workmen and the police, His Majesty saw Lord Beverley and a lady, recognised his Lordship, spoke to him for some time, and then the party moved on.

By the aid of tarpauling, planks, &c. they were enabled to proceed over the wet and mud, and arrived at the Thames front of the ruins of the Commons' library and the painted chamber. The contemplation of the latter view, which, as already stated, is an exceedingly interesting object, also occupied much attention. They then proceeded to the Royal gallery, by the Lord Great Chamberlain's entrance, two-thirds of which gallery remain entire; that portion of it adjoining to the painted chamber, the first cupola over the one of the scagliola columns only are destroyed, though much of the rest of Scane's minutely decorated work is much and grievously injured. From this point their Majesties were enabled to see the extent of the ruins occasioned by the destruction of the robing rooms, the House of Lords, &c.

They then returned to their carriages, but not till nearly half-past four o'clock; and quitted the scene of these extensive, and still astounding devastations, with nearly as much privacy as they came. Only very few persons on the outside, and they were connected with police or the military, and therefore did not talk much on the subject, knew even at last of the presence of their Majesties; and as to the public, there being high palings and barriers, they had no opportunity of seeing any thing of the company moving about within; indeed so quietly managed was the whole affair, that the inhabitants of the houses opposite, in Palace-yard, evidently knew nothing of the company near, as when their Majesties and attendants were by the Royal entrance fronting Abingdon-street, there were no persons at the windows, as there would have been, had they known any thing of their Majesties' presence.

On Saturday the Lords' officers were busily occupied in superintending the bringing back of the books belonging to the library of the House of Lords. They were, it appears, removed during the raging of the fire from the Committee rooms in which they had been deposited on the occasion of the repairs in the library to the houses of some of the clerks, as far off as Milbank street. Mr. W. Walmisley, one of the clerks, had in particular actively exerted himself to rescue these books from all chances of destruction, and therefore had them removed to his house. They have sustained much less injury than, under the circumstances of so unceremonious, confused, and rough a removal, might have been expected; nor is it ascertained that there have been very serious losses—dreadful, even frightful as was the plunder in many other directions.

One very curious document, however, is at present missing—namely the original warrant for the execution of Charles I. When the Parliament office was in Abingdon street, this document, placed in a small frame, was kept in the round stone tower, where the Acts of Parliament are still regularly deposited after each Session, and when the examination of the prints from them are completed. The warrant, being deemed a record of Parliament, was deposited in this Records' Tower. Mr. Dyke, who for years has had the care of the Acts thus preserved, also for years has had the keeping of this remarkable document; and it used to be shown as a rarity, as well as a curiosity, to those who perhaps went for no other purpose than to consult the originals of old Acts, or to see some of the autographs of our former Sovereigns. The size of the warrant is well known from the fact

miles of it that have often been printed, and are numerous before the public. On the removal of the Parliamentary offices, though the Round Tower is, as already intimated, still used for the preservation of the Acts; and on the formation of the Lords' library, this warrant was framed and glazed, and removed to and hung up in the library as a curious decoration. There was some remonstrance against this mode of transferring a record from the customary place of keeping; but the higher powers prevailed, and the warrant was thus removed. After its new destination, it, of course, became an object of increased attention and curiosity. It was removed with other removals to make way for the repairs of the library; but as all the librarian's things (he having apartments in the House) were confusedly removed, injured, or destroyed, like every thing else, he has not been able as yet to find this warrant. The belief, however, is that it is somewhere carefully locked up, which, of course, leads to the hope that it is not lost, or rather destroyed, although it cannot now be found, or remembered where it may have been placed. The hope is strengthened from the circumstance that the librarian (Mr. Leary) is a very particular and careful man.

The Acts of the last Session, which, it is generally known, are engrossed on parchment and formed into rolls, narrowly escaped destruction, not from fire but water.

Judging from all we could learn, the exertions made at the Lords were of the most extraordinary, prompt and extensive character. Every clerk, it appears, was at his post within a quarter of an hour after the bursting out of the flames; and immediately made the most decided personal efforts to save the books and papers. Curiously enough one of the leading clerks, Mr. R. Walmisley, was returning home from a long country excursion, passing near Story's gate, when the fire had become conspicuous. Seeing in what quarter the fire was bursting forth he hurried forward, thinking it might be his own house in flames: it proved to be close to his own office, as his room was in the projecting tower near Howard's Coffeehouse, near to which place the fire first broke out.

With respect to the cause of the fire, the inquiries are still going on. The Privy Council has examined parties, and has had submitted to it the results of inquiries at the Lords; and though we cannot detail the particulars of the examinations and proceedings, we may state it to be the opinion, as yet, that the fire did not result from any criminal design, however severely the charge of negligence and heedlessness may attach. Nor is there any evidence to disturb the belief of all those who were earliest at the spot, that the fire broke out at one place, namely, as was described in Saturday's Herald, from and over the flues by Black Rod's box, which is situated by the door at which Counsel, witnesses, and attorneys approached the bar. All the flames came from that one direction, as Mr. Wibley, of the Board of Works, ascertained, he being the first to open the great doors at the lower end of the House; and how they so rapidly spread in three directions—1, up the House to the octagonal tower and painted Chamber; 2, to the wing, or "Bellamy's" tower; 3, to the Commons, we have before accounted for. There was nothing to impede the flames in any one of the three directions; on the contrary, the light, open, dry wood work afforded facilities for the rapid extension, and for the subsequent impression that the fire broke out in several places nearly about the same time. There is no proof whatever of the assertion that the fire broke out in several places at once, although it rapidly spread to, and enveloped itself in several places; nor is there any doubt that the overcharged flues caused the fire, and that the gross negligence and idle heedlessness and impetuosity produced the cause.

The Commons' officers and clerks suffered most severely in the loss of their papers, account books, precedents, &c. Mr. Rose had an immense mass of papers of precedents, &c., the result of a life's devotion to the subject; also a complete set of private Acts; Messrs. Jones and Walmisley are similarly circumstanced; but all were destroyed, and it is doubtful whether there be now in existence a complete set of private Acts of Parliament. The parties were unable to get to their offices, so speedily did the bursting forth of the flames from the great door cut off communication with the lobby and Commons. The body of the House of Commons was a long time before it took fire.

An immense number of Peers, Members, &c. went on Saturday to see the ruins. Among them were Lord Mulgrave, Lord Hill, Lord Farnborough, Mr. W. Whitmore, Mr. Herries, Mr. Bonham, Sir Horace St. Paul, &c.

COLONIAL.

NOVA SCOTIA.

Halifax, 3rd Dec. 1834.

At two o'clock on Thursday, His Excellency Sir Colin Campbell, attended by his Suite, came down to the Council Chamber, and after the usual formalities, opened the Session with the following Speech:

Mr. President, and Gentlemen of His Majesty's Council,
Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the House of Assembly,

His Majesty having been graciously pleased to appoint me to the civil government of this Province, it affords me great pleasure in meeting you in general Assembly.

My most anxious desire in the Administration of my Government is, to conduct it impartially, and upon just and constitutional principles, promoting, to the best of my ability, such measures as are conducive to the general prosperity of the Province, and to the happiness and comfort of the people.

I have been directed to take the earliest opportunity to express the regret which His Majesty has felt that the offers made to the House of Assembly at the commencement of last session, respecting the surrender of the Revenue belonging to the Crown, had not been more favourably received; and as the variety of views entertained upon the subject, and the difficulty of adjusting conflicting opinions appears to forbid the hope of any satisfactory agreement, I have in consequence received His Majesty's commands not to repeat the offer of surrendering the casual and territorial Revenues in exchange for a permanent Civil List.

No other resource within the Province is available to His Majesty, except the Quit Rents, which are reserved to the Crown in the grants under which the proprietors of land hold their respective titles; and although this branch of the Royal Revenue had the advantage of operating very equally upon every part of the Province, is light and moderate in itself, and is so justly apportioned upon the Landholders according to the number of acres that they possess, yet the collection of it has been deferred for several years, with the hope that some substitute would be provided for it by the Legislature; but all proposals which have been made for that purpose have failed, and the effect has been to deprive His Majesty, during the period while they remained under discussion, of the revenues, due to the crown from this source.

His Majesty has now no choice left but to direct the Quit Rents to be collected. It is not without much reluctance that His Majesty has recourse to this measure, but the necessity of the case is apparent. The indispensable officers of the government must be provided for, and if, after a consideration which has extended over years, no other resource can be found by the Legislature of Nova Scotia, His Majesty must enforce his just rights to the Quit Rents, rather than suffer the affairs of the Colony to fall into confusion for want of sufficient means to maintain institutions which are necessary to the existence of every community. I have the satisfaction, however, to acquaint you that I am still authorized to abstain from levying the Quit Rents should the Assembly make in lieu of them a permanent grant to the Crown of two thousand pounds sterling per annum. Should you, Gentlemen, deem it desirable so to commute them it would be the means of freeing the Landholders from the payment of a rent of nearly triple the amount, the collection of which might prove irksome and inconvenient to them. But should you deem that inexpedient, I have no choice left but to comply with my instructions, and order their immediate collection.

I have desired the annual value of the Quit Rents, and of the arrears due to the Crown since midsummer, 1831, to which period they had been remitted by His Majesty, to be laid before you, so as to enable you to come to a just, and I trust, final arrangement with respect to them.

I have thought it best to state frankly in this my first communication with you, the object for which you are brought together. In all our subsequent intercourse, I trust you will find me equally candid and open; and as we have now met for the despatch of business, I have deemed it right to bring at once under your consideration that business which has occasioned your being convened at an earlier period than usual.

It will be a source of pride and gratification to me, if, at the commencement of my government I am enabled, through your means, to extricate my administration from the difficulties with which it is at present threatened.

I cannot allow myself to anticipate, that the Assembly of Nova Scotia, a body always distinguished for its moderation and loyalty, will expose His Majesty to the grave inconvenience of having no means to pay to the officers of the Government their accustomed remuneration, which is now nearly one year in arrear. There are many other important matters which will engage your attention during the Session. Such as I find it my duty to convey to you, I shall do so by message, and I feel persuaded you will give them your best consideration.

This Province, I regret to say, has not altogether been exempted from feeling commercial distress; it has equally pervaded other countries, but our commerce, though diminished, has not suffered in any material degree, but which in a great measure may be remedied by your public spirit and vigilance, and by enacting such laws as may check the illicit trade which is carried on to a great extent, to the detriment of the revenue, and to the loss and prejudice of the merchant and fair dealer.

It has pleased the Almighty to bless this Province with an abundant harvest, which cannot fail to secure to the inhabitants plenty and independence.