

SAINT JOHN'S NEWFOUNDLAND.

No. 1.

(No. 38.)

COPY of a DESPATCH from Governor Sir JOHN HARVEY, K.C.B., to the
Right Honourable W. E. GLADSTONE.

NEWFOUNDLAND.

No. 1.
Governor
Sir J. Harvey
to
Mr. Secretary
Gladstone,
10th June 1846.

Sir,

Newfoundland, Government House, St. John's,
10th June 1846.

It has pleased the Almighty to visit this Colony with a great Calamity. An awful and irresistible Conflagration has suddenly swept away Three Fourths of this so lately wealthy and prosperous City.

A Fire broke out at Half-past Eight o'Clock Yesterday Morning in the Western Section of the City; and owing to the Prevalence of a Westerly Gale of Wind, which unhappily continued to increase in Violence, before the Close of the Day most of its public Buildings, and the whole (with One single Exception) of its Wharves, Storehouses, and mercantile Establishments, upwards of a Mile in Extent, had been reduced to Ashes.

It is estimated that 2,000 Houses, and Property to the Amount of from 600,000*l.* to 1,000,000*l.* Sterling has been destroyed, and that 12,000 Persons are now houseless.

Much as the Hopes of the mercantile and the Sufferings of the labouring Classes claim our Sympathies, yet should our deepest Commiseration rest upon the middle Classes, who, accustomed to comparative Ease and Comfort, find themselves and their helpless Families suddenly reduced to a State of the most absolute Destitution. Every Effort dependent upon the Local Government will be made and is making for their Relief and that of the lower Orders; and even under Circumstances so apparently desperate, and with a Scene of such affecting Desolation before my Eyes, still do I indulge a sanguine Hope that, if promptly aided by the Benevolence and Liberality of the British People, of the Legislature and People of the neighbouring Colonies, but, above all, by the British Government and Parliament, not only will present Distress be at once alleviated, but the fine Site of the provincial Capital of this ancient and valuable Possession of the British Crown (which as a commercial Town may be said for the present almost to have ceased to exist) will again be occupied by Buildings, of so secure and durable a Description, laid out upon a Plan so judicious and well considered as, at no remote Period, to convert the Calamity which is now pressing so heavily upon its Inhabitants, into a great and inappreciable Blessing.

A similar Calamity, though not to the same Extent, was thus turned into a vast Benefit, even by the almost unaided Efforts of the Province itself, during the Period of my Administration of the Government of New Brunswick some Years ago.

In order to meet the pressing Emergency of our Situation I have adopted the following Measures:—

1st. I have, by Proclamation, convened the Local Legislature to meet in Six Days, viz. on the 16th instant.

2d. I have issued a Proclamation, laying an Embargo, for a limited Period, upon the Exportation of Provisions, other than such as are required for the Use of the Crews, Passengers, and the Fisheries.

3. I have issued a Proclamation, warning all Persons against the Re-construction of wooden Buildings upon the burnt District before the Intentions of the Local Legislature on the Subject shall be declared.

4th. I have addressed a circular Letter to the Governor General and the Lieutenant Governors of all the British American Colonies, and to Her Majesty's Consul at New York, of which Copies are enclosed.

5th. I have authorized the chartering of Two Vessels, one to Halifax and the other to New York, for Provisions.

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