

DREADFUL FIRE IN THE TOWER OF LONDON.

The first discovery of the fire was made about half past ten o'clock by the sentry on duty at the jewel-office, who perceived a bright light issuing from the windows of the tower, which is situated at the Northern extremity of the building, and immediately attached to the grand storehouse of armoury. The engines stationed in the Tower (of which there are several) were immediately on the spot, and were quickly followed by those of the neighbouring parishes, and almost immediately after by those of the brigade establishment. The flames had by this time gained a fearful ascendancy, and the fire had made its way from the round table tower to the centre of the grand armory, and burst forth from several windows with extraordinary fury, rapidly extending both East and West. The greatest difficulty was experienced in obtaining a supply of water, and it was not until the hose had been conveyed to the water's edge that any thing like a sufficient quantity was obtained, and even then the distance was so great to the burning pile, that the labors of the firemen were frequently retarded for long intervals.

In the grand armory, which is stated to have been the largest room in Europe, were deposited 280,000 stands of arms, besides a vast quantity of military carriages, bombs, and other spoils of war, captured by our troops in various parts of the world. The flames having once penetrated the hall, no hope existed that any portion of it would be saved, and the exertions of the firemen were confined to the preservation of the surrounding buildings, upon which they played with all the water they could obtain. At this crisis the greatest apprehensions were entertained for the safety of the crown jewels deposited in the regalia office, which closely adjoins the Eastern extremity of the grand armory; and the yeomen of the guard, under the direction of their captain, were deputed to undertake the removal. This service was safely performed without accident, and the whole of the valuables, including the beautiful model of the white tower, were consigned to the care of the governor, and placed in the vaults beneath his residence. The heat from the pile burning had now become so excessive that the firemen could no longer act in the centre square, and it was quite impossible to attempt to save any portion of the arms, &c. contained in the great storehouse.

About one o'clock the appearance of the burning mass was surpassingly grand: the flames having at that time extended to nearly the whole length of the armory. Shortly after, the roof, being completely burned through, fell in with a tremendous crash, the flames rising with a lurid glare far above the towers of the citadel. At this time it was feared that the whole of the Southern side would fall a prey to the flames, but by the judicious exertions of the brigade establishment, they were prevented from extending across the narrow avenue between the outer wall and the round tower, and hopes were entertained that no other portion of the building would be sacrificed. This expectation happily proved correct. The fire was not subdued, however, until near five o'clock, and the mass of ruins was burning fiercely throughout the whole of yesterday. It was hoped that this calamity had been unattended with loss of life, but we regret to record the death of a fireman named Richard Wivel, of the brigade establishment, a fine young man, aged 24, who was killed by the fall of a mass of stone from the top of a wall, under which he was holding the branch.

Many rumours are in circulation as to the origin of the fire: but nothing is known at present on which confidence can be placed. Over-heated flues are stated to have caused the disaster, by some; while others attribute it to the act of an incendiary. An inquiry will be, no doubt, set on foot by the Government.

It would be utterly impossible to estimate with any thing approaching to exactness the extent of loss the country will suffer by this disastrous event. To say nothing of the national trophies which it is impracticable to restore; but there can be no doubt that the damage sustained by the building, together with the arms destroyed, cannot be replaced for less than one million sterling.

REMOVAL OF THE JEWELS.

Notwithstanding the great heat which pervaded the jewel room, Mr. Superintendent Pearce of the H division, having broken the iron bars in front of the regalia, succeeded in handing the

new imperial crown and other portions of the regalia to Mr. Swifte, the keeper of the regalia, by whom they were placed in the custody of the several wardens, as follows:—Although there was much excitement at the time, Mr. Swifte carefully placed the crown in its case in the same way as when it is conveyed to the House of Lords on state occasions. This crown was conveyed to the house of Major Ellington, the fort-major; it is termed the new imperial crown, and made for the coronation of her present Majesty. It is of imperial form, with nearly pointed arches supporting a gorgeous diamond orb, surmounted with a cross of the same precious materials, adorned with three remarkably large pearls. In the front is a large Jesus-don crown, entirely frosted with brilliants. In the centre a magnificent sapphire of the deepest azure, nearly two inches square; it stood within a revolving plate-glass bell.

The celebrated six sceptres and gold walking-stick were carried by Mr. Dorrington. These comprised the King's sceptre and cross, which is covered with precious stones, beneath which is a fine amethyst, the pommel similarly ornamented, and the head formed of triple leaves of jewellery; the well known King's sceptre and dove, the cross, centre, and pommel richly decorated with jewels; the Queen's sceptre and cross, fancifully ornamented with large diamonds—it was made for the coronation of Mary, the Queen of William III.; an ancient sceptre, discovered in the jewel office, in 1814, and was supposed to have belonged to William III.; it was adorned with several valuable jewels; the ivory sceptre, which belonged to the Queen of James II., mounted in gold, surmounted by a dove, composed of white onyx; the elegant simplicity of this ornament has excited general admiration. The staff of Edward the Confessor, formed of pure gold, 4 feet 8 inches in length, and weighing nearly 9 lbs. The golden model of the white tower, which is also called the "state salt-cellar," and was used at the coronation of George IV. It is fancifully set with jewels, and adorned with cannons and other figures at the base, and its weight, we are informed, is nearly half a hundred weight.

The two golden tankards, which are richly chased and very massive, and from which his late Majesty William IV. drank at his coronation. The Queen's diadem, entirely composed of pearls and diamonds, made for the consort of William III.; the golden chalice, and the golden sacramental dishes, on one of which is engraved in fine *alto relievo*, "The last Supper," and on the other the royal arms of England, and which are used at the coronation. The golden salt-cellars, the rest of the sacramental plate, consisting of golden plates, spoons, &c. The ampulla, or golden eagle, from which our Sovereigns are anointed at their coronation, and which was brought from Sens Abbey, in France, by Thomas a Becket—it had been there revered as the gift of an angel from Heaven—the sword of mercy, and some other articles. The Prince of Wales' crown, which is of plain gold, without any jewels. It is usually placed on a velvet cushion in the House of Lords, before the seat of the heir apparent. The ancient imperial crown, the arches, flowers and fillets, covered with large jewels of every colour, inclosing a purple velvet cap, laced with treble rows of ermine; as also the golden orb, six inches in diameter, fringed with matchless pearls and precious stones, (beneath the cross is a remarkably large amethyst, which is placed in the Sovereign's left hand at the coronation.)

The golden baptismal font, a magnificent piece of workmanship, upwards of four feet in height, used for the issue of the royal family; and also one of the sword of justice; the other, together with the small golden orb, called the Queen's, the celebrated golden wine fountain, which at coronations and other state banquets throws four beautiful jets of wine in several divisions. It is nearly three feet in height, and a foot in diameter; this was the last article that remained. The ancient golden spoon, which is of equal antiquity with, and receives the oil from the ampulla, when required for the purpose of anointing the bosoms of our monarchs; the golden spurs, which are buckled on the King's heels at a coronation; and the Queen's enamelled bracelets, some salt-cellars, several golden spoons, some loose jewels, and many other valuables, Mr. Swifte had previously deposited in his pocket for safety. All the sceptres were carefully enclosed in blankets provided

for that purpose, but the crown and larger articles were, of necessity, carried openly in front of the parade, while the fire was raging, and had a singularly interesting appearance, caused by the reflection of the flames.

During the operation of breaking down the bars of the jewel chamber, and in getting them out, the soldiers stationed at the entrance became unable to endure the heat of the flames, and the keeper of the jewels was clamorously pressed to retire and leave the last remaining article (the wine fountain,) to its fate, as the destruction of the entire of this building then appeared inevitable.

Mr. Swifte states that, having seen the last article of his charge out of the jewel chamber, which had become itself almost like a furnace, he with difficulty effected his escape, for the flames from the armory completely crossed the court yard from the Eastern gable to his dwelling, the doors of which were blistering quite fast. He made the best of his way to the house of the governor, and having again examined the regalia, (particularly her Majesty's crown,) he found that not the minutest particle was missing.

Mr. Swifte states that the intrinsic value of the regalia is at least upwards of a million sterling, which, of course, is far under the amount, looking upon them as relics of antiquity.

One of those coincidences which occasionally occur, although in themselves unimportant, is, that the pass-word used on the night of the fire was the same as that at Moscow; and for some hours the fearful scene which took place in the capital of Russia had every appearance of being realized in London; for it appears that there were four hundred boxes of gunpowder in the Magazine attached to the White Tower, and had this part unfortunately caught, it would have been one of the most calamitous events that has occurred in the history of our country.

Upwards of one hundred officers and constables of the City Police force were actively engaged during the fire at the Tower; and we regret to hear that the Surgeon reports six of them as incapable of performing duty. Sergeant Patterson dislocated his wrist, two constables were injured in their eyes, and the other three were suffering from very serious colds.

THE TOWER ARMOURY.

In this magnificent apartment, which is now one heap of ashes, were deposited upward of 150,000 stand of arms, fit for immediate use, besides several hundreds which have fallen into desuetude. They were placed in racks ranged in longitudinal and transverse rows, and reached from the floor to the ceiling. A tasteful and ornamental cornice was composed of the breast-plates of old armour, pistols, and other weapons. In the space between the windows, the arrangements were so complicated as to baffle description, no two compartments being alike. On each side of the door was a representation of the sun; on the east side as rising, and on the west as setting. These were placed in chequered frames of brass-handled hangers, with dog-head pommels, which were used by the marines when serving as regiments. In the middle of the room were four columns, 22 feet high, and round these were hung numerous pistols, some of which also formed an oval on the ceiling above.

On a table, within a glass case in the centre of this armory, were the sword and sash of the late Duke of York, and opposite to it was a curious cannon taken by the French at Malta, in June, 1798, and brought to this country by Captain Poote, who, as commander of the Sea Horse frigate, captured the French frigate *Le Sensible*, in which it was found. The cannon was made of a mixed metal resembling gold, and on it, represented in bas relief, was the head of a grand master of Malta, with two genii as supporters. The carriage on which it was mounted was likewise exceedingly curious, the centre or groove of the wheel representing the sun, and the spokes its rays. The date, as appears from the inscription, was 1773.

Among the miscellaneous contents of this room, most of which fell victims to the flames, may be enumerated the arms taken from Sir William Peikins, and other parties concerned in the intended assassination of King William the Third at Turnham-green—a number of arms taken from the Scotch rebels in 1715—two swords, one of justice, the other of mercy, which were carried before the Pretender when proclaimed the same year in