

be with regard to carrying on the business of the country.

To His Royal Highness,  
The Governor General in Council.

The Right Hon. the Prime Minister, on behalf of the members of the Government, desires to express to Your Royal Highness their deep regret at the sudden and appalling disaster which resulted in the almost complete destruction of the Parliament Buildings last evening.

They especially deplore the loss of life with which this calamitous event was attended.

The destruction of this historic building removes a land-mark which was created even before the birth of Confederation; and the loss of many valuable records touching the transactions of Parliament for half a century is particularly unfortunate.

There has been no opportunity as yet to make a thorough investigation into the origin of the fire which is still obscure and uncertain, but every possible endeavour will be made to ascertain the cause.

Temporary accommodation for the House of Commons and the Senate can be arranged in the Victoria Memorial Museum, and steps for that purpose have already been taken by the Minister of Public Works. It is proposed that the House of Commons will meet at the customary hour to-day in that building. The Minister of Public Works, together with the members of the Internal Economy Commission of the House of Commons, will act as a Subcommittee of Council for the purpose of making all necessary arrangements for the temporary accommodation of Parliament.

All of which is respectfully submitted for the information of your Royal Highness.

Rodolphe Boudreau.

I endeavoured to procure from such officers as might have means of knowledge a report for the information of Parliament to-day. Owing to the very great activities of Col. Sherwood, Superintendent of Dominion Police, and the insistent demands on his time during the forenoon, his report has not yet been forthcoming. I hope such a report, giving what information is available with regard to the origin of the fire, will be presented to the House on Monday. In the meantime, the sergeant-at-arms, at my request, has given me his report. I do not know that it gives much information not already in the possession of hon. gentlemen, but it may not be amiss that I should read it:

Memorandum for the information of the Right Hon. the Prime Minister.

The fire commenced in the reading room of the House of Commons; from there it spread with the greatest rapidity up the corridors of the House and through the second flat, such dense and suffocating volumes of smoke preceding the actual fire as prevented all efforts to effectively fight the fire from the inside. Many members and officers and employees of the House were unable even to get their hats and overcoats.

[Sir Robert Borden.]

The fire first destroyed the House and its offices and then spread rapidly to the Senate. A short time was therefore afforded for saving some of the property in the Senate side of the building,—the Senate Mace and many valuable oil paintings from the lobbies were saved, together with some furniture, but I am not able at the present time to ascertain exactly what records have been saved. I fear very few, except those that have been kept in vaults.

The fire having started in the reading room, with the wind blowing from a northerly direction, the flames were carried away from the Library, and although it was once or twice in very imminent danger, the building and its contents have been saved, except in so far as they may have been damaged by water. The firemen, the officers of the Library, and the Ottawa Garrison worked most strenuously and a large number of volumes were removed with the aid of the military motor lorries and placed in the Government garage.

This complete loss was due to the extraordinary rapidity with which the fire spread through the lobbies and long corridors, the ceilings of which were of wood, and also to the smoke which made it quite impossible for any person to enter the upper parts of the building. It may be possible that the contents of one or two offices may be saved as from the external appearance of the windows, one or two rooms appear to have escaped very serious injury; but it is impossible at the present time to make any examination. The House of Commons' Mace is missing.

Henry R. Smith,  
Sergeant-at-Arms.

Ottawa, Feb. 4, 1916.

It is, I am sure, a very great satisfaction to all the members of the House to know that so little damage has been done to the Library. I believe, however, that the loss may be somewhat greater than is expressed in the report of the Sergeant-at-Arms, if I may judge from a conversation which I had with Mr. Martin Griffin, one of the joint librarians, while on my way to the House. He feared at that time that about 30,000 volumes had either been destroyed or very seriously damaged.

The appalling suddenness of this calamity must, I am sure, have impressed itself on every member who was within the precincts of the House at the time the fire occurred. Those who were not actually present within the building will hardly believe with what startling suddenness the volumes of smoke and the gusts of flame came into the corridors. When I went down the corridor leading past the press room, the smoke and flames were rolling through the corridor which led to the reading room in an appalling volume; and the fire and smoke seemed to be accompanied by a series of short, sharp explosions, indicating the fierceness with which the fire was making its headway. I know that many hon. members of the