

OPENING
OF THE
NEW GOLDSMITHS' HALL.

From *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 1835.

THE Goldsmiths' Company having for many years determined upon rebuilding their hall, delayed the execution of the plan until they had accumulated a fund sufficient to enable them to erect a building on a scale to render it an ornament to the Metropolis, and worthy of one of the first Companies of the City of London. In 1829 the Company considered their funds ample enough for this purpose, and in 1830 the old hall, together with some adjoining houses, was removed, and the site prepared for the present edifice, under the superintendence of Mr. Hardwick, the architect of the Company, by whom the building has been erected. On entering by the great western door, facing the Post Office, in Foster Lane, the visitor ascends a stone staircase, which is unquestionably one of the finest compositions of modern art. The centre flight of steps leads to a spacious landing, on which is seen an admirable bust of the present King by Chantry. On pedestals, formed by the angles of this flight, are placed four graceful and spirited figures of boys, representing the seasons, the workmanship of

Mr. Nixon. At present those striking figures are only modelled in clay; it is to be hoped they will soon appear in marble. From the great landing, to the right and left, spring staircases leading to two broad galleries, and communicating with the principal apartments: these are decorated with scagliola columns and pilasters. In the centre of four columns on one side stands a figure of Apollo, and a copy of the celebrated *Diane à la Biche* occupies a similar place on the other side. Above this noble staircase rises a finely proportioned and gracefully ornamented dome, supported by four arches springing from an Ionic entablature, the spandrels enriched by four coats of arms—those of the present King, of Richard II., by whom the Company was incorporated, of the City of London, and of the Goldsmiths' Company. In the centre of one side of the staircase is a picture of George IV., by Northcote, and on each side of it are placed portraits of George III. and his Queen, the gifts of his present Majesty. Over the doors leading into the apartments are the arms of the principal benefactors of the Company, emblazoned in their proper colours. The west front of the building, which is 150 long, contains four rooms communicating with each other by large folding doors, an ante-room, a court-room, a drawing-room, and a dining-room for the court of assistants. The sides of the court-room and dining-room are handsomely fitted up with wainscot, and the ceilings richly ornamented; the style of the enrichment being that in use about the time of Charles II. In the court-room is a fine picture of Sir Hugh Myddelton, by Cornelius Jansen. The drawing-room is fitted up in exquisite taste—the mouldings are white and gold, the walls are arranged in panel lined with crimson silk, to correspond with the curtains. The whole of the fittings-up of this apartment is somewhat in the style of Louis XIV., and is scarcely surpassed in beauty by any room at St. Cloud or Versailles. On the east front is the large banqueting-room, or livery hall; it is about 70 feet by 40, and 35 feet high. The sides of this spacious and splendid room are decorated with twelve Corinthian columns and pilasters, standing on a simple granite basement, which is continued

round the room, the line being broken only by the entrance doors. The ceiling is enriched with ornamental panels. At one end is a screen and music-gallery; at the other is a circular recess, lighted from above, for the purpose of displaying the plate of the Company. On the east side are five large circular-headed windows; the three centre ones contain the arms of the present members of the Court. In the centre compartment of the west side of the hall is a whole length portrait of George III., painted by Thompson. Two very large and splendid mirrors decorate the upper end of the hall; they are surmounted by figures of boys, wreaths of flowers, and fruit, carved in bold relief and richly gilt. The room is lighted by five glass chandeliers of great size and brilliancy, especially the centre one, which cannot well be surpassed. The furniture of the hall and the other apartments is in the richest and most costly style, consistent with that good taste which pervades all the arrangements of this admirable building. We cannot close our imperfect description of this edifice without expressing our admiration of the taste and talents displayed by the architect (Mr. Hardwick) in every part of the building, and the spirit and liberality of those members of the Court under whose direction this noble work of art has been erected. The Goldsmiths' Hall is a credit to the Company by which it has been built, and an honour to the city which it adorns.

On Wednesday the hall was opened by a grand dinner, to which a number of distinguished guests were invited. Among the visitors on this occasion we observed the Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Peel, Marquis Camden, Lords Maryborough, Bexley, and Abinger, Sir H. Hardinge, the Vice-Chancellor, Sir F. Pollock, and Sir T. Fremantle.

Shortly after seven o'clock the chair was taken by Mr. J. B. Smith Prime Warden of the Company. About 250 persons sat down to dinner.

The Coldstream band, which was stationed in the gallery, played a number of pleasing airs and pieces of music during the entertainment, and the festivity of the occasion was further promoted by the exertions of a numerous corps of vocalists, including Messrs. Atkins, Bellamy, Broadhurst,

Chapman, Fitzwilliam, Goulden, Hobbs, and Turle ; Masters Coward and Howe.

The Prime Warden and Wardens having drank to the health of the Company, and bade them welcome to the new hall,

The Chairman proposed "The health of the King, Master of the Goldsmiths' Company," and in doing so, referred to his Majesty's gracious condescension in enrolling himself a member of their body—an honour not enjoyed by any other Company in London. (Cheers.)

The toast was received with acclamations.

The Chairman, in proposing the health of the Queen, observed that no Queen who ever sat upon the throne had more ingratiated herself with the people of this country by her virtues than her present Majesty, and such being the case, the toast would no doubt be received as it deserved.

The next toast was "The Princess Victoria and the rest of the Royal Family," which was received in the same manner as those which preceded it.

The Chairman then, in proposing the health of the Duke of Wellington, briefly, but in appropriate terms, drew the attention of the company to the glorious achievements of his Grace in the field of battle, which had redounded so much to the glory of this country, as also to his Grace's exertions in the Cabinet. He concluded by giving the health of the Duke of Wellington—an individual distinguished by loyalty to his King, fidelity to his country, and unshaken valour displayed against its enemies. (Loud cheering.)

The toast was drunk with the greatest enthusiasm.

The Duke of Wellington begged leave to return thanks for the honour conferred on him by drinking his health, and wished they might long possess the means of hospitably entertaining within those walls the friends of social order and good government. (Cheers.) His Grace concluded by drinking the health of all present.

The Chairman next proposed, "The health of the Marquis Camden," and alluded to the relinquishment of a large income for the service of the country, as well as the

honour recently conferred on that nobleman by his installation as Chancellor of Cambridge.

The noble lord's health was then drunk amidst great applause.

The Marquis Camden, in returning thanks, expressed the deep sense he felt of the honour conferred on him. He had retired from public life, and for some years had no claim on their attention beyond that of a private gentleman. He felt proud, however, whenever his conduct met with the approval of so respectable a body of gentlemen as those then present, and he would not conceal from them that he likewise felt highly proud of the honour which had just been conferred on him at Cambridge. It was not his first visit to the Goldsmiths' Company, although it was to their new hall. He perhaps could boast of as early an acquaintance with the Company as any present. At the old hall, in 1784, he had been invited by the officers of the Company to meet them on an occasion when the times called forth an expression of loyal attachment to the throne. It was a period somewhat different, but equally critical and important to the present, when factious dissensions strove to disturb the government. Owing to the talents of Mr. Pitt, that political excitement was allayed; the principle of government then acted on he had ever since, from succeeding events, reason to admire, and he trusted they would still be acted on. One thing he could safely congratulate the Company on, and that was, the presence of more than one distinguished statesman, who would ever resist to the utmost all inroads on the old and invaluable institutions of the country. (Loud cheers.)

The Chairman, in rising to propose the next toast, observed that it afforded him infinite satisfaction in proposing the health of a Right Hon. gentleman who was closely identified with the welfare of the British nation. He need hardly say he alluded to Sir Robert Peel. (Loud cheers.)

The health of the Right Hon. Bart., was then drunk with three times three, and amidst loud and long continued cheers.

Sir Robert Peel, in returning thanks, assured the company that he felt himself placed in an unaffected difficulty

in doing justice to his own feelings, in acknowledging the partial manner in which any services of his had been alluded to by the worthy Chairman. He felt quite inadequate to make an excuse; if he said he had had little experience in making a speech, it would be instantly pronounced an untruth, for, unfortunately, for the last five or six months, he "had been kept so much in wind" that such excuse would avail him nought. (Laughter.) He was also placed in a novel position, he had a majority in his favour (renewed laughter), and he had recently been so accustomed to meet hostile and angry antagonists in debate, that he felt quite at a loss how to acknowledge the partial applause of his kind and indulgent friends. (Cheers.) It was not the first time he had had the pleasure of meeting the Goldsmiths' Company. He could not date his acquaintance from so early a date as his noble friend (the Marquis Camden), nor would he say that he regretted it, because 1784 would have added many years to his age (hear, and laughter); but he fully recollected being present at an entertainment given to the late Earl of Liverpool. He must congratulate the Company that the ravages of time had produced so little deterioration or alteration in their affairs, and he considered they had acted most wisely in building on their ancient foundation. (Cheers.) Might they long remain in possession of those privileges, of which they proved they made so good use. After alluding to the new building, which the Right Hon. Baronet pronounced as not only a monument to the British Metropolis, but as forming a lasting encouragement to uphold the character and respectability of the merchant and trader; he concluded by expressing his satisfaction at being present on that occasion, which nothing short of urgent public duty should have deprived him of the pleasure of enjoying. (Cheers.)

The Duke of Wellington proposed the health of J. Bogle Smith, Esq., the Prime Warden, which was drunk with great applause.

The worthy Chairman in returning thanks, observed that however splendid the new hall undoubtedly was, it must be satisfactory to know that it had not been erected or completed

by any encroachment on the permanent funds of the Company, much less those devoted to charitable purposes. (Hear.) Not one charitable gift had been withdrawn, not one pension reduced, or one petition rejected on account of this outlay.

Sir Robert Peel proposed the healths of the Three Wardens, Messrs. Bateman, Copeland, and Twining.

Mr. Bateman returned thanks.

The health of the architect was then drunk.

Mr. Hardwick returned thanks in a suitable address.

The Duke of Wellington and principal guests left the hall at a quarter before twelve o'clock, and were followed by the rest of the company. His Grace was loudly cheered on ascending his carriage.

The whole arrangements were very ably executed.