



A BRIEF
HISTORICAL ACCOUNT
OF
The Guildhall.

PREPARED ON THE OCCASION OF
THE GRAND BALL,
GIVEN BY THE
CORPORATION OF LONDON,
TO CELEBRATE THE OPENING OF THE
Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations,

BY THE ORDER OF
HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY THE QUEEN,

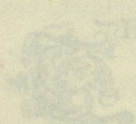
9th JULY, 1851.



Wintworth Hills

2 Gds
1754
25

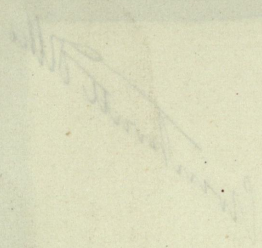
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THE GUILDHALL



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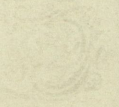


LONDON

THE GUILDHALL

A BRIEF ACCOUNT

THE GUILDHALL



HPJ
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his executors, was a considerable benefactor to the work; and other eminent citizens also contributed liberally towards it. Some of the most striking events connected with the history of the present Guildhall, independently of those of municipal or local interest only, are the following:—

1182—The crafty attempt of Richard III. (through the Duke of Buckingham) to deprive the City of London of its ancient rights and usurpation of the royal dignity.


1316—The trial of the youthful and accomplished Anne Askew on a charge of heresy, and her martyrdom in the flames of Smithfield.

1317—The trial of the Earl of Surrey, one who was distinguished by every accomplishment which became a scholar, a courtier, and a soldier, and

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THE GUILDHALL.

 HERE are but few structures within the City of London of equal antiquity with the Guildhall, and probably none possessing such diversified historical associations. Although erected chiefly for the various purposes incident to the municipal system of government which London has always enjoyed, it has, in the progress of ages, been the scene of events of far wider interest and more general importance.

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Some of the most striking events connected with the history of the present Guildhall, independently of those of municipal or local interest only, are the following:

1483.—The crafty attempt of Richard III. (through the Duke of Buckingham) to beguile the assembled citizens into an approval of his usurpation of the regal dignity.

1546.—The trial of the youthful and accomplished Anne Askew on a charge of heresy, preferred by command of Henry VIII., Bishop Bonner, and others of his bigoted councillors, which ended in her condemnation, her torture on the rack, and her martyrdom in the flames of Smithfield.

1547.—The trial of the Earl of Surrey, one who was distinguished by every accomplishment which become a scholar, a courtier, and a soldier, and who, to gratify the malice of Henry VIII., was convicted of high treason.

1553.—The trial and condemnation of the ill fated Lady Jane Grey and her husband.

1554.—The trial of Sir Nicholas Throgmorton on a charge of being implicated in Sir Thomas Wyatt's rebellion against Queen Mary; a trial which is described as the most interesting perhaps on record, for the exhibition of intellectual power, and remarkable for the courage displayed by the jury in returning a verdict in opposition to the despotic wishes of the Court, though at the expense of imprisonment and fines.

1606.—The trial of the Jesuit Garnet for participating in the Gunpowder Plot of Guido Fawkes and his associates.

1642.—Charles I. attended at a Common Council, and claimed their assistance in apprehending Hampden and the four other members of the House of Commons, whose patriotic opposition to the King's measures had led him to denounce them as guilty of high treason, and who had taken shelter in the City to avoid arrest.

During the Civil War and the time of the Commonwealth, the Guildhall became the arena of many an important incident connected with the political events of the times; and at a later period, when the government of James II. had become so intolerable that he was forced to abdicate, Guildhall was the spot where the Lords of Parliament assembled and agreed on a declaration in favour of the assumption of regal authority by the Prince of Orange, afterwards William III.

Being the place where the citizens have for ages been accustomed to assemble, not only to transact municipal business, but also freely to discuss public grievances, to consider and suggest remedies for great social evils, and to promote the general interests of humanity,—many other events of deep public interest and importance might, if space allowed, be mentioned as having emanated from this celebrated spot.

Guildhall has been famous also for the many sumptuous entertainments which have been given in it to royalty and other personages of distinction at various times, apart from the annual festivity which marks the entrance into office of each Lord Mayor. From the banquet given in 1421 to Henry V. and his Queen, on the successful termination of his campaigns in France,—when Sir Richard Whittington, in addition to the luxuries provided for his royal guests, is said to have gratified and astonished the King by throwing into a fire bonds for which he was indebted to the citizens to the amount of £60,000—down to the reign of her present Majesty, nearly every sovereign of this country has honoured the City by accepting of its hospitality in the Guildhall. Charles II. showed so much fondness for the civic entertainments, that he dined there as many as nine times in the course of his reign.

The most sumptuous and costly entertainments hitherto given there by the City have been the following:—

1814.—To the Prince Regent and the Allied Sovereigns, the Emperor of Russia, and the King of Prussia.

In the same year, on July 9th, to Field-Marshal the Duke of Wellington.

1831.—To the Members of the Legislature and others who promoted and supported Parliamentary Reform.

1837.—To Her present Majesty the Queen, on Her accession to the throne.

1838.—To the Foreign Ambassadors, etc., in celebration of Her Majesty's Coronation.

The ample dimensions of the great Hall and the several commodious apartments which are connected with it, furnish peculiar facilities for festive entertainments on a scale of great magnitude; while the resources of the Corporation enable them to secure every auxiliary to completeness and magnificence.

On the present occasion, the nature of the entertainment itself (differing as it does from all which have preceded it in the same place), combined with the peculiar and happy circumstances out of which it has arisen, have induced the introduction of arrangements in the style of fitting and decorating the Hall very different from any which have been before adopted.

THE PORCH.

The chief approach to the Hall is by the spacious Porch on the south side, erected in the reign of Henry VI., the interior of which retains all its ancient richness of style; the walls are divided into gothic compartments, and the roof is handsomely groined with stone ribs, and enriched at the intersections with sculptured bosses.

THE GUILDHALL.

The Porch leads at once into what is emphatically called **THE GUILDHALL**, a noble apartment, which possesses many features of architectural interest. Its length is 153 feet, breadth 50 feet, and height 55 feet.

The side walls are architecturally divided into eight spaces, by clusters of columns surmounted by a cornice, above which originally rose an elaborate

roof of woodwork, which was destroyed in the great Fire of London, in 1666, and which it is to be regretted was not restored in harmony with the rest of the building. The handsome gothic compartments into which these spaces are subdivided, have been, for the present entertainment, filled in with pictorial representations of distinguished works of art which have been contributed by different countries to the Great Exhibition, and with other figures and emblems illustrative of the history or products of each particular country. As for instance, in the division dedicated to America, will be found depicted two pieces of sculpture, Power's Greek Slave, and a Fisher Boy; portraits of General Washington and Lafayette; an allegorical figure with the shield of arms of the United States, and an American Indian.

Similar illustrations will be found under the heads of other countries, the names of which, with their armorial shields and appropriate flags and banners, are placed over the centre of each division in the following order, viz. :

On the North Side of the Hall.—Belgium—Russia—Egypt and Tunis—Persia and Arabia—Switzerland—Italy—Denmark—and Northern Germany.

On the South Side.—Spain and Portugal—Norway and Sweden—France—Austria—the Zollverein—Prussia—America—and China.

At each end of the building is a large gothic window, occupying the whole width, the details of which will be found worthy of attentive examination. That at the east end contains the royal arms, and the western one the arms of the City, in painted glass. Beneath the eastern window, under appropriate canopies, and at the back of the spot where the ancient Court of Hustings is still holden, are statues of King Edward VI., Queen Elizabeth, and King Charles I.; and in the angles at the opposite end of the hall, on lofty octagonal pedestals, are the celebrated colossal figures of the Giants Gog and Magog, which are about fourteen feet six inches each in height.

Three of the compartments on the north side of the Hall, and one on the south, contain sculptured monuments, erected at the expense of the Corporation to the following distinguished persons, viz. : Admiral Lord

Nelson, by J. Smith (1810); Alderman Beckford, Lord Mayor in 1762 and 1769, by Moore;—the Earl of Chatham, by Bacon (1782),—and the Right Honourable William Pitt, by Bubb (1813).

THE CRYPT.

Beneath the eastern portion of the Hall is a beautiful Crypt, which is considered the finest and most extensive now remaining in London. It is remarkable both for the elegance of its design, and the perfect condition of nearly all its members.

It is divided into three aisles by clustered columns, from which spring the stone-ribbed groins of the vaulting, the principal intersections being covered with carved bosses of flowers or heads, and shields. The north and south aisles had formerly mullioned windows, now walled-up; at the eastern end is an early English arched entrance, in good preservation. The height from the ground to the crown of the arches is about thirteen feet. This interesting relic having been recently rescued from its undeserved obscurity, and undergone some restorations, has become an object of great attraction. On the present occasion it has been prepared and fitted up in the style of an ancient baronial hall, and being provided with suitable furniture and embellishments, has been specially appropriated for the service of Her Most Gracious Majesty as a refreshment-room.

ROOMS ABOVE STAIRS.

The flight of steps on the north side of the great Hall, opposite to the entrance, leads to a number of spacious rooms and offices, which are used for many important civic purposes, and are connected with each other by a long corridor and diverging passages.

One near to the head of the stairs is called the

COURT OF EXCHEQUER.

It ranks next in antiquity to the great Hall, having been built immediately

after it, in the reign of Henry VI., for the Court of Civic Judicature, called the Mayor's Court, the sittings of which are still held there. There are some few paintings in it, and among them a large picture presented by the late King of the French, representing the reception of an address from the City on his visiting this country in 1844.

The offices of the Chamberlain (one of the most important functionaries of the City) are contiguous to this spot. In one department his duties as Treasurer to the Corporation are performed, and in another he presides for the admission and swearing in of all freemen, as members of the body corporate, the enrolment of apprentices, and the settlement of disputes between them and their masters. Some of these offices, being advantageously situated for private access to and from that part of the Hall where the Royal Throne is stationed, have been specially allotted and appropriately fitted up for the service of her Majesty, as withdrawing-rooms.

Near to the Court of Aldermen's room the Corridor expands into a large lobby or vestibule, where, on the present occasion, will be found several fine specimens of sculpture, including a statue of her Majesty, by Lough—Bacchus, a group by the same artist—Love Triumphant, by Mac Dowell—and an equestrian figure of the Duke of Wellington in bronze, by Jones.

The room known as the

COURT OF ALDERMEN.

from its being used for the sittings of that body for the transaction of such business as pertains peculiarly to them, was erected in 1614. It is a noble apartment; the walls of which are panelled in oak, though originally covered with tapestry. The ceiling is particularly rich and elaborate; and in the centre and four other compartments are emblematical paintings by Sir James Thornhill, who also executed that in chiaro-oscuro over the chimney-piece. The Royal arms, and those of the City, and of several past Lord Mayors, will be found in different parts of this room.

Amongst the sculpture which has been temporarily placed here are the following works by Mr. Marshall, viz., Eurydice—Sabrina—the Whisper of Love—the Broken Pitcher—Little Red Riding Hood—and a Mermaid; and the Return of the Prodigal Son, by Mr. Theed. Mr. Baily's celebrated group of the Graces may also be seen from the windows at the side of the room, in a recess fitted up for its reception, the foreground of which is occupied by choice plants and flowers; and the windows at the west end of the room afford a view of another recess, occupied by Mr. Lough's fine colossal figure of Satan, meditating, after his expulsion from heaven, the destruction of the state of innocence and happiness which our first parents enjoyed in Eden. The subject is taken from Milton's Paradise Lost, book iv., line 23, etc.

In a SMALL ANTE-ROOM, which connects the Court of Aldermen with the Common Council Chamber, are placed the following works of art by Mr. Theed, viz., a figure of a Huntress—Narcissus at the Fountain—Psyche—Venus—Juno—Apollo—Minerva—and Ariadne.

THE COMMON COUNCIL CHAMBER.

A more modern apartment than the Court of Aldermen, may not improperly be called the House of Legislature of the City, the court which assembles in it being composed unitedly of the Lord Mayor, the Aldermen, and the Common Councilmen, and possessing the chief legislative power of the Corporation, besides a general control of its affairs and property. The sculpture and paintings in this room have a permanent place here. Among the former are, Chantrey's statue of George III.—with busts of the Duke of Wellington—Lord Nelson—Granville Sharp—and R. L. Jones, Esq.; and among the latter are, Copley's Siege of Gibraltar—Northcote's Death of Wat Tyler—Opie's Murder of David Rizzio, and several interesting portraits, including one of Alderman Boydell, to whose liberality the Corporation were indebted for the gift of several of the pictures which are to be found in this and other rooms about the Hall.

In the lobby to the Council Chamber, and which joins the corridor from the great Hall near the entrance to the Court of Aldermen, have been placed, in appropriate niches, the following figures by Mr. Marshall, a Dancing Girl—a Group of Nymphs—and Hebe rejected.

Mention has thus been made of some of the principal rooms attached to the Guildhall, and there are many others which, although not enumerated here, are of some consequence from the important official business which is ordinarily transacted in them. But it may not be inappropriate to add, that among the aggregated buildings which compose this seat of civic authority, are included

A RICHLY-STORED LIBRARY,
A READING ROOM FOR PERIODICAL LITERATURE,
AND A MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES,

all of which have been established and are maintained at the expense of the Corporation.



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- A Reading Room for Periodical Literature,
- A Museum of Antiquities,
- A Richly-stored Library,

all of which have been established and are maintained at the expense of the Corporation.

The Corporation, inasmuch as it is the Court of the City, the court which assembles in each year to elect the Mayor, the Aldermen, and the Common Council, and possessing the chief legislative power of the Corporation, has a great and valuable interest in the preservation of the Corporation's Hall, and in the erection of a new and more commodious one. Among the former the Duke of Wellington, Lord Nelson, and K. L. James, Esq.; and among the latter the Duke of Devonshire, and several interesting portraits, including that of the Duke of Devonshire, the Corporation were indebted for the gift of several of the pictures which are to be found in this and other



LONDON.

If glorious deeds deserve a song,
Then, London, one to thee!
Thine ancient name all tongues proclaim
The watchword of the Free:
Where'er the flag of Liberty
Is righteously unfurl'd,
There London is;—her mighty heart
Beats through the civil world.
Then ho! for London, brave and high,
Which she shall ever be,
While Justice rules within her walls,
And Honour guides the Free.

Of conquering Peace the pioneers
Her dauntless merchants are;
Her ships are found the world around,
Her sons 'neath every star.
Her sheltering tree of Liberty
Spreads hourly more and more;
Its roots run under every sea,
It blooms on every shore.
Unfading youth, untarnished truth,
Great London! bide with thee;
Of cities,—Queen, supreme, serene,
The leader of the Free.

In days of dread, she boldly stood
 Undaunted, though alone,
 To guard with might the people's right
 Invaded by the Throne;
 And yet when civil fury raged,
 And Loyalty took wing,
 Her gallant bands, with bows and brands,
 Defended well their king.
 Then ho! for London, Might and Right,
 With her twin brothers be;
 To curb with right the despot might,
 Exalting still the Free!

The wandering King of crown bereft,
 The Patriot, lone, exiled;
 Alike find refuge and repose
 Where Freedom ever smiled;
 And evermore she spreads her store
 The exile to maintain,
 And what has been her pride before,
 Shall be her pride again.
 Then ho! for London, ward and guard
 To all who refuge seek;
 A terror to the tyrant strong,
 A shelter to the weak.

And now within her ancient Halls,
 Where Freemen ever stand,
 She welcomes men from every clime,
 With open heart and hand;
 She welcomes men of every creed,
 The brave, the wise, the good;
 And bids all nations form indeed
 A noble brotherhood.
 Clasped hand in hand, let all mankind
 Like loving brothers be;
 From pole to pole, let every soul
 United be—and free.

B.

Francis Bennett

