



A
Descriptive Account
of the
PALACE of WESTMINSTER
WITH
ILLUSTRATIONS
and Coloured Plan

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GUIDE TO

THE PALACE

OF

WESTMINSTER.

NEW EDITION.

BY PERMISSION OF THE LORD GREAT CHAMBERLAIN

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Printers and Publishers
23, GARRICK STREET
LONDON, W.C. 2.



NOTICE.

The Palace of Westminster is open to Visitors on Saturdays, and on Easter Monday and Easter Tuesday, and on Whit Monday and Whit Tuesday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., if neither House of Parliament is sitting.

Admission at the Norman Porch, House of Lords, on the above-mentioned days from 10 a.m. to 3.30 p.m.

PORTIONS OF THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER
ON VIEW TO THE PUBLIC.

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| THE VICTORIA TOWER. | THE PEERS' CORRIDOR. |
| THE NORMAN PORCH. | THE CENTRAL HALL. |
| THE KING'S ROBIN ROOM. | THE COMMONS CORRIDOR. |
| THE ROYAL GALLERY. | THE COMMONS LOBBY. |
| THE PRINCES' CHAMBER. | THE HOUSE OF COMMONS. |
| THE HOUSE OF LORDS. | ST. STEPHEN'S HALL. |
| THE PEERS' LOBBY. | THE CRYPT. |

WESTMINSTER HALL.

The Apartments described in the book not shown to the Public are marked (*) and bracketed.



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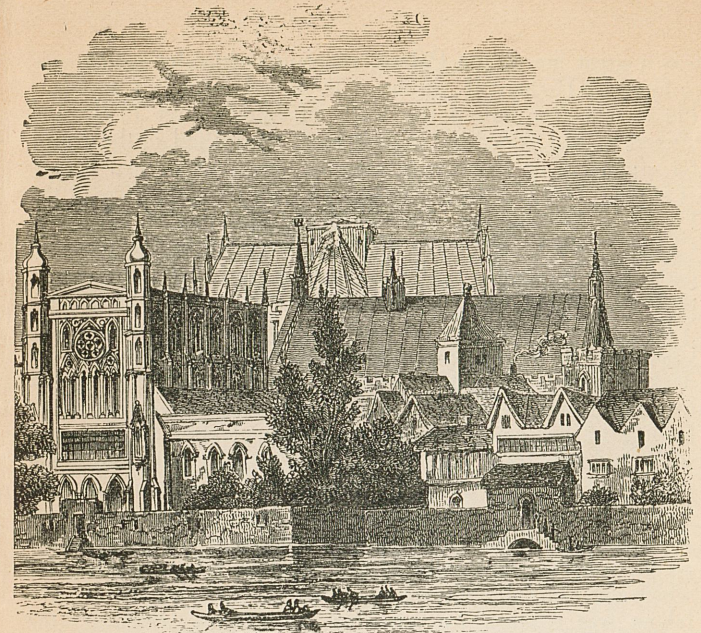
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Houses of Parliament.—Temp. Charles II.

The Palace of Westminster,

which is now entirely appropriated to the use of the Houses of Legislature, stands on the same site on which a Royal Palace has existed since the time of Edward the Confessor, who, we are told by Ingulph of Croyland, often held his court here; the Palace was added to by William the Conqueror, and his successor William II. built further additions, among which was the Great Hall of Westminster. This was done in 1097 and the King held his Christmas in the new Hall in 1099. In 1163 Thomas à Becket, then Chancellor of England, superintended further repairs, which were much needed, for Stowe tells us that at this time "it was ready to have fallen down," but he mentions that after this many banquets were held there, specially one on New Year's Day 1236, when Henry III. feasted six thousand poor people, and when "triginta millia" (30,000) meat dishes were put on the table. In 1299 there

Page Nine.

was a great fire at the Palace, the injury done by which was restored by Richard II., in the style of architecture of his time. He it was who raised the walls of Westminster Hall, and altered it, and added the present roof, unequalled in the world for originality of conception, scientific construction, and beauty of effect. In 1512 there was again a very destructive fire at the Palace of Westminster, from which the Hall and St. Stephen's Chapel, with its crypt and cloisters, were practically the only parts that escaped. The ravages of this fire were never repaired. Some buildings were, however, added by Henry VIII., who is supposed to have erected the famous Star Chamber, so called, says Stowe, "from the ceiling being decked with stars, gilt," although portions of this were evidently done at a later time, since a doorway and stairs leading to this once dreaded court existed after the last fire, with the date 1602 over the door. A tablet now marks the position of this doorway. In forming the foundations for the New Palace, many foundations and relics of the old buildings were discovered, of which accurate drawings have been made; all the work was composed of that excellent rubble masonry for which our old buildings are so remarkable, so that the greatest labour was required for removing the remains, especially the old river wall extending the entire length of the building, but which was considerably less advanced into the river than that of the new Palace. A plan of the old Palace is engraved in Vol. 5, of the *Vetusta Monumenta*, measured in 1823. There is also an interesting one in Smith's *History of Westminster*.

After the destructive fire in 1834 it was determined from consideration of the great amount of traditional and historical interest which attached to the site, and after much deliberation and the consideration of numerous suggestions on the subject, to erect the New Palace on the same spot; and at the opening of the ensuing Parliament one of the earliest measures decided upon was, "that a Select Committee be appointed to consider and report upon such plans as may be most fitting and convenient for the permanent accommodation of the Houses of Parliament."

It was at first contemplated that the old building might be so far retained that, with additions and improvements, the Houses of Parliament might again assemble in them; but on due consideration, this idea was abandoned. By many it was

considered that this country had never yet possessed such 'Houses of Parliament' as could, from every point of view, be deemed worthy of the age and nation; the old Houses were neither suitable from an architectural point of view, nor, as concerned the convenience of the Members of Parliament, constructed in such a way as to be suitable for the great amount and importance of the business. The original buildings, confined and incommodious, had been so altered from time to time that the whole structure was a mass of patchwork.

The Committee made a report in June, 1835, in which, after giving the evidence they had obtained, they came to a series of thirty-four resolutions, referring to the construction of the new Houses of Parliament, in which they stated,

"That it is expedient that the design for the re-building of the Houses of Parliament be left open to general competition, and that the style of the building be either Gothic or Elizabethan; that the plans be delivered in to the office of the Woods and Buildings, on or before the first day of November, 1835. Moreover, that in order more effectually to secure a correct decision upon the merits of the several plans, it is expedient that an humble Address be presented to His Majesty, requesting him to appoint five Commissioners to examine and report generally to both Houses of Parliament upon the plans offered by competition; and that such Commissioners shall select and classify such of the plans, being not less than three, or not more than five in number, as shall seem to them most worthy of attention, and shall state, if required, the grounds upon which the propriety of such selection and classification is founded."

It having been finally resolved that a structure should be raised which should be as perfect in all its arrangements and details as possible, whilst it should give scope for the development of national architectural ability, plans were advertised for, and as many as ninety-seven sets of designs were sent. The Committee, after much consultation, selected the plan by Sir Charles (then Mr.) Barry, to which the Commissioners had awarded the first premium, and in May, 1836, reported to the House of Commons that they considered themselves warranted in recommending this plan for adoption. Subsequently to the award, however, some alterations were made at the suggestion of the Commissioners, as well as of the architect himself, which they considered calculated to improve materially the original.

The commencement of the present magnificent structure, which affords, for the first time, a place of meeting for the Parliament worthy of England, was made in the year 1837, when the coffer dam was commenced.

With a view to the selection of the proper stone to be employed in the erection of the new building, the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury authorised, in the autumn of 1838, a commission, including Sir C. Barry, the architect, to make a tour of inspection to the various stone quarries in the kingdom, and also to examine the different stone which had been used in the erection of public and other buildings. An elaborate report was published of the result of their labours, in which they recommended that the most fit and proper material to be employed was the stone from Bolsover Moor and its neighbourhood. This quarry, however, did not yield the quantity required, and the hard magnesian limestone from Anston, in Yorkshire, which is part of the same formation and of like quality, has been used by recommendation of the same Commission for the exterior of the building, with Caen stone for the interior.

In 1840, the river wall having been erected in Aberdeen granite, and some other necessary foundations made, the first stone of the superstructure, which is that forming the south-east angle of the plinth of the Speaker's House, was laid on the 27th of April without any public ceremony. From this time the building progressed till on the 15th of April, 1847, the House of Peers and its adjoining Lobbies were used for the first time. On the 3rd of February, 1852, Queen Victoria opened Parliament in person; the commencement of the Session of 1852 was the first official occupation of the new House of Commons, with which most of the public portions of the building were also opened for their destined use.

In 1841 a Select Committee was appointed "to take into consideration the promotion of the Fine Arts of this country in connexion with the re-building of the New Houses of Parliament"; and in a Report issued shortly after they stated that they had examined during that year many persons well acquainted with the progress and position of the arts, both at home and abroad, and the result of the enquiry tended to direct them to select the FRESKO style as the most eligible and best adapted for the decoration of public buildings; but they had not been able to satisfy themselves that the art of Fresco

Painting had been sufficiently cultivated in this country to induce them at once to recommend that it should be adopted for the New Houses of Parliament. In order, therefore, to assist them in forming a judgment in this matter, they proposed that artists should be invited to enter into a competition in cartoons, and prepared a draft of an announcement offering premiums of public money, to which they requested the sanction of Her Majesty, which was most graciously accorded.

It was proposed (and subsequently sanctioned by the Lords of the Treasury) that six compartments in the House of Lords should be decorated with Fresco Paintings; that the subject of each should be illustrative of the functions of the House of Lords, and of the relation in which it stands to the Sovereign; that the subjects of three of the said Fresco Paintings should personify in abstract representations Religion, Justice, and the Spirit of Chivalry; and that the three remaining subjects should correspond with such representations, and express the relation of the sovereign to the Church, to the Law, and, as the fountain of power, to the State.

Sculpture was also duly considered, and Sir C. Barry reported respecting the localities in the new Houses of Parliament which might be adapted for the reception of works in sculpture, by which it appears that there were niches in the whole building provided for the purpose of receiving statues, as follows:— In Westminster Hall, twelve; in the Royal Gallery, eight; in the Queen's Porch, four; in the House of Lords, eighteen; in St. Stephen's Hall, twenty-four; Norman Porch, sixteen; in the Central Hall, forty-eight, making altogether 130, averaging seven feet high. Sir Charles also stated that according to his proposed arrangements, "the entire number of public monuments that the building and its quadrangles could accommodate would be, in isolated monuments or statues, two hundred and seventy, and in mural monuments and tablets about four hundred, or, in the whole, six hundred and seventy monuments of all kinds."

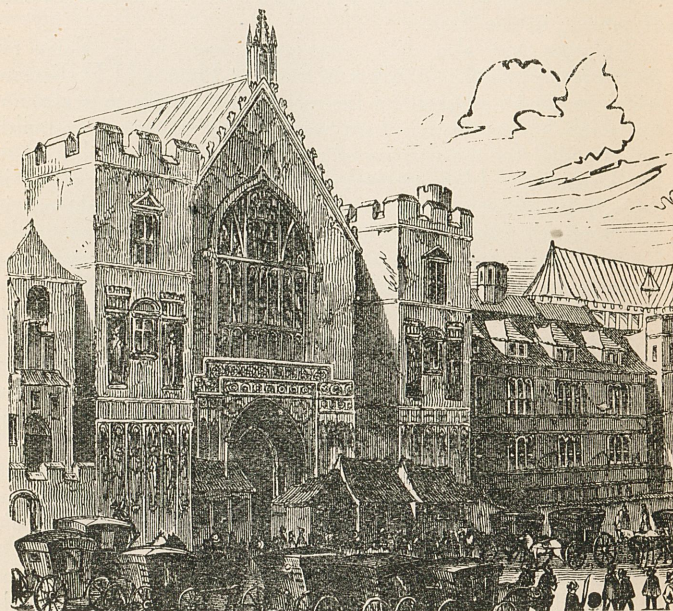
In a subsequent Report the Commissioners were of opinion that six insulated marble statues might be conveniently placed in St. Stephen's Porch, and twelve such statues in St. Stephen's Hall.

The principal portions of the New Palace which it was proposed to decorate were the Royal Gallery, St. Stephen's Hall, St. Stephen's Porch, the Queen's (now the King's) Robing

Room, the Guard Room, the Peers' Robing Room, the Prince's Chamber, the Peers' and Commons' Corridors, &c., &c., in many of which the decorations have been duly completed.

The Palace of Westminster occupies an area of about eight acres, has four principal fronts—the eastern one being that toward the river—and contains within its area no less than 13 quadrangles or courts for the admission of light and air to the numberless rooms, residences, and offices, of which, besides the two Houses and their adjuncts, it is made up.

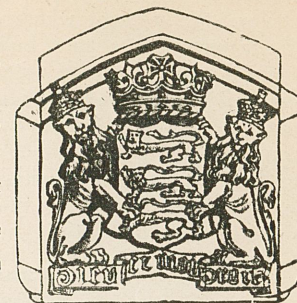
Some idea may be formed of the intricacy and extent of its plan when it is considered that it contains no less than 500 rooms of all kinds, with separate residences (some of them of large size) for 18 different officers of the Houses of Lords and Commons; the principal of these are residences for the Speaker, the Clerk of the House of Commons, and the Serjeant-at-Arms. There is also within the building a suitable Chapel formed in St. Stephen's Crypt.



Westminster Hall (from an old print)

The Exterior

WE propose in the following pages, for the guidance of visitors, to describe in order all the principal parts of the New Palace of Westminster, the Houses of Lords and Commons; also those portions of the interior to which the public are not admitted.



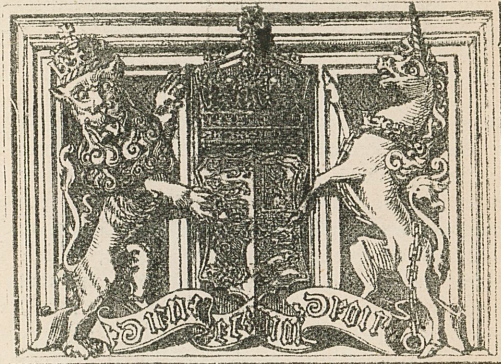
Arms of England in Royal Court

RIVER FRONT.

The most important façade may be said to be that towards the river, the East Front; it is in all 940 feet in length, of which the projecting portions in wings at the extremities are each 120 feet in length, leaving between them a fine paved terrace overlooking the water, 700 feet long and 33 feet wide. This façade consists of five portions; the centre, which has three stories above the ground floor, and the north and south curtains, which each have two stories only above that level, while the wing towers (the beautiful design of which is best seen from the river) are the most lofty portions. The portion of this front which is between the wing towers is composed of bays, separated by hexagonal buttresses the entire height of the building, neatly panelled, terminated in hexagonal open-worked pinnacles, carrying gilt vanes. The carved decorations have, as is the case throughout the building, historical significance; the rich band of carving between the windows of the principal and one-pair floors is composed of a succession of the Royal Arms of England in each reign, from William I. to Queen Victoria.* These arms have their appropriate supporters under each dynasty, except in those which precede the time of Richard II., when there were no heraldic supporters to the royal coat, and this want is supplied by human figures, expressing in some way the leading events which mark the various reigns, as, for

*Up to the date of the Coronation of Their Majesties, King George V. and Queen Mary, June 22nd, 1911, the Arms of King Edward VII. had not been added.

instance, the figure supporting the arms of Rufus bears a model of Westminster Hall, as being founded by him; the supporter to that of Edward III. is a figure of St. George and the Dragon, the order of which was instituted by him—the others in like manner. The band below the principal floor windows has inscriptions bearing the date of each sovereign's accession and decease, while the panels on each side of the coat of arms have sceptres and labels with appropriate badges and inscriptions. In the parapet of each bay is a niche with the figure of an angel bearing a shield. The carved panels to the oriel windows, of which there are six in this front, have the coat of arms of Queen Victoria, which ends the series, in order to

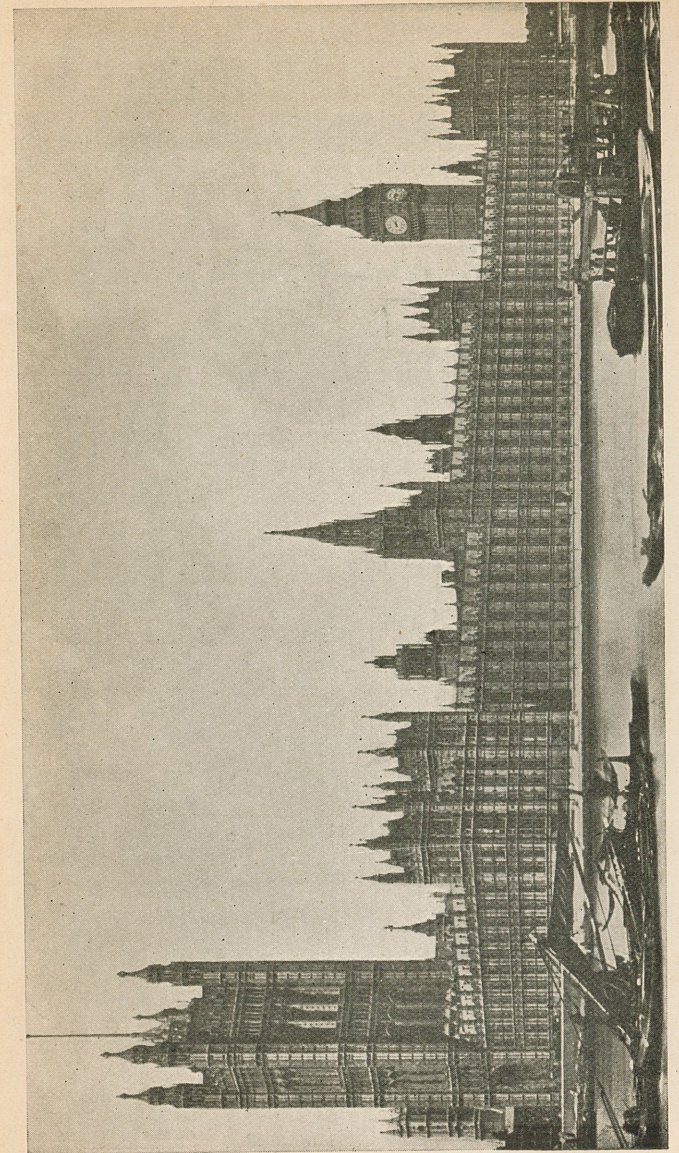


Royal Arms on River Front.

indicate that the building was erected during Her reign. The wing towers are grouped most harmoniously together, and rise considerably above the rest of the roofs; at each angle are rich octagonal stone pinnacles, while the towers themselves are surmounted with steep roofs, with elaborately perforated ornaments in iron at the angles and tops, reminding one of the steep picturesque roofs of some of the chateaux and belfry towers on the Continent, especially in the Low countries.

It may be mentioned here that the roofs of the entire building are of iron framing, involving in many parts most interesting and peculiar construction, and the covering plates are also of iron, galvanised to protect them from rust, so that the principle of making the New Palace as nearly fire-proof as possible, as far as the roofs are concerned has been carried out thoroughly.

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THE RIVER FRONT.

NORTH FRONT.

The NORTH FRONT towards Westminster Bridge has bays and buttresses similar in disposition to that of the River Front, and the strings, windows, &c., range with those, but there are here two lofty windows in place of one in each bay, the band between them, as before, having coats of arms, which in this part bear the quarterings of the Kings of England between the Heptarchy and the Conquest (thereby keeping up the above historical illustrations) with inscriptions of the dates of accession. Niches which divide the windows laterally in each bay have effigies of the Sovereigns whose arms are below. This front terminates to the west with the lofty Clock Tower which will be described hereafter.

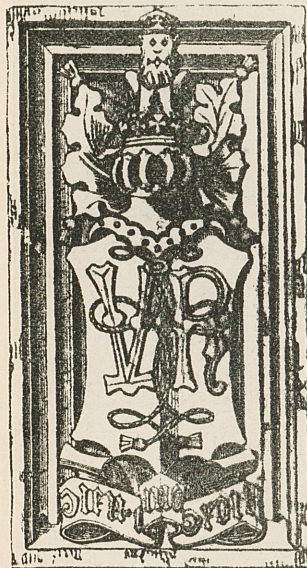
SOUTH FRONT.

The SOUTH FRONT is of similar design to the North, has similar decorations arranged chronologically, and it terminates westward with the great Victoria Tower.

WEST FRONT.

The LAND OR WEST FRONT is more broken than any of the rest, and presents a striking effect, chiefly from its picturesque appearance and the varieties of light and shade produced, while on the other hand the River Front is impressive from its extent and uniform symmetry. This land front embraces the area of the Law Courts which formerly stood there, and the space is now occupied by the addition of rooms and offices of more immediate connection with the business of Parliament.

This portion fronting New Palace Yard, was completed in 1888, together with the alteration and improvement of the south gable, of Westminster Hall, St. Margaret's Porch, etc. The pictorial effect of this front has been greatly improved by the



Carving on North Front.

Page Eighteen.

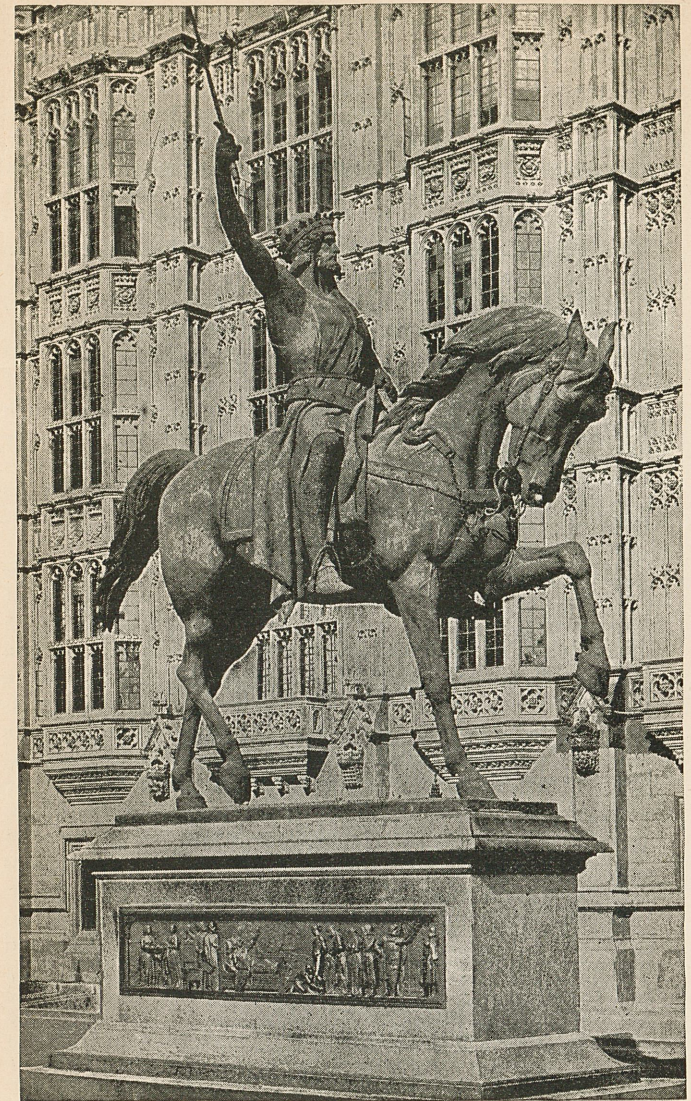


Photo York & Son.

STATUE OF RICHARD CŒUR DE LION.

alterations made under the superintendence of John L. PEARSON, R.A.

An imposing statue of Oliver Cromwell, by HAMO THORNYCROFT, has been erected in the narrow portion of the yard facing Parliament Square. The Lord Protector stands bareheaded, stern of mien and feature, with left foot advanced, and right hand resting on the hilt of his sword, upon a high pedestal at the foot of which is a boldly-chiselled lion couchant.

The Stone Carving both of the interior and exterior of the New Palace was executed by the late J. THOMAS.

The New Palace Yard FRONT is composed of bays, divided by boldly projecting square buttresses, terminating, as elsewhere, in rich pinnacles; this portion of the building is devoted to the official residences of the chief officers of the House of Commons. The figures in the niches of this façade will contain statues of Kings and Queens. By the removal of the houses on the south side of Bridge Street, New Palace Yard was entirely incorporated with the Building, and enclosed by a handsome iron-railing surmounted at short distances by ornamental globe gas-lights richly gilt.*

The portion of this side opposite Henry VIII's Chapel is called St. Margaret's Porch, and adjoins the new gable of Westminster Hall, which has been erected considerably south of the old gable, and the great window which was therein has been moved and replaced in the new wall, thus forming a magnificent Porch at the end of Westminster Hall (see St. Stephen's Porch.) The façade between this point and the Victoria Tower is different in design from the other parts, although accordant in character and disposition; it contains the entrance for the Peers to the House of Lords, Lord Chancellor's apartments, Parliament offices, &c. At the back of Westminster Hall, facing Henry the Seventh's Chapel, stands Baron Marchetti's equestrian statue of Richard Cœur de Lion. A model of this grand work was shown at the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park in 1851, and a number of noblemen and

* "The new Palace Yard being anciently enclosed by a wall, there were four gates therein, the only one at present remaining is that on the east side leading to Westminster Stairs—the three others which were demolished were that on the north which led to Woolstaple, that on the west called Highgate, a very beautiful and stately edifice, situate at the east end of Union Street, it was taken down in the year 1706, as was also the third at the north end of St. Margaret's Lane, Anno 1731." Maitland ed., 1739.



THE VICTORIA TOWER.

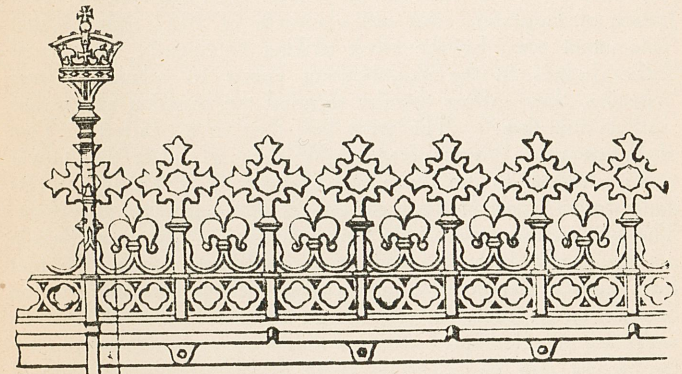
gentlemen subscribed upwards of £3,000 for the purpose of having the statue cast in bronze and presented to the nation. The internal courts, of varied design and most picturesque effect, more plainly treated than the external façades, admit light and air to the innumerable rooms in this wonderful building, while, by means of archways connecting these courts, there is afforded facility of access by carriages, &c., to all parts of the interior. Numberless towers, oriels, and turrets add to the effect of the sky-line of the building, whether viewed from the exterior or from the courts; but the three most important towers which deserve special remark, are the VICTORIA TOWER, at the south-west angle, the CLOCK TOWER at the north-west extremity, and the CENTRAL TOWER, connecting and balancing as it were the other two.

VICTORIA TOWER.

The Victoria Tower is the largest and highest square tower in the world, being 75 feet square and 336 feet high to the top of the pinnacles, and over 400 feet to the top of the flag staff, intended (when the Sovereign is within the walls) to bear a Royal Standard of 12 yards long and 9 yards wide. The flagstaff flies the Union Jack in the daytime when Parliament is sitting. The light in the Clock Tower indicates at night when Parliament is sitting: see page 21. The Tower's great mass rendered necessary the utmost care and scientific treatment of the very treacherous ground of its foundation: this is made of solid concrete 9 feet 6 inches in depth, with solid brickwork over that, the whole enclosed and strengthened by piling. The lower part, which is entered by a gigantic archway to the west, fifty feet high, is appropriated to the sole use of the Sovereign, who, when opening or proroguing parliament always enters here, the Royal Carriage being driven under the Tower to the foot of the Royal Staircase within the Tower. Colossal Statues of the Lion of England, bearing the National Standard, flank the portal, while carving, rich and emblematical, adorns the walls and groined roof of the interior. Within the porch and over the Archway on the east side are niches containing statues of the Guardian Saints of the United Kingdom; St. George of England, St. Andrew of Scotland, and St. Patrick of Ireland. The similar archway on the north side, which forms the access to the Royal Staircase, has niches of accordant design, containing a colossal figure of Queen Victoria in the centre. The

Page Twenty-two.

archways on either side contain allegorical figures of Justice and Mercy, as the two best prerogatives of the British Crown. Recurring to the exterior of the Tower, immediately over the great entrance, as well as on the south side, is a row of rich niches, the centre one higher than the rest and containing a statue of Queen Victoria, while the others are occupied by her Parents, the Duke and Duchess of Kent, and other members of the Royal Family. Above these, deeply recessed and lofty windows rise, and over them a delicately beautiful tier of arcade work divides them from a second tier of windows above. These have ogee canopies richly carved, and are more deeply recessed in the walls; each of these windows has a balcony, from whence may be obtained views of the river and of the surrounding country, and above these windows again rises an arcade of small openings similar to that below. The TOWER is completed by a pierced parapet of appropriate design, and finishes



Ironwork on Roof.

harmoniously the elaborate richness of every part of its wall surfaces. The roof resembles those to the towers of the river front, and from the centre rises the flag-staff before-mentioned from which the Royal Standard is hoisted upon the occasion of the opening or proroguing of Parliament by the Monarch.

Page Twenty-three.

The whole of the interior of the Tower above the groining over the entrance is fitted up with numerous fire-proof floors to receive Parliamentary records and documents; the lowest of these floors being fitted as a sorting room, from whence a circular staircase leads to the several rooms in each floor. Access to these rooms is obtained by the staircase turret at the South-east corner of the Tower, as well as by a special door in the Peers' Façade.

THE CLOCK TOWER.

The CLOCK TOWER is a structure equally original, but quite differing in design. It is situated at the north-west angle of the building in the New Palace Yard, and it is a curious circumstance, and one evidencing the desire of the architect to perpetuate the traditions of this interesting spot, that the well-known Clock Tower of the old Palace (which has been engraved by Hollar) stood almost on the site of the present one; this structure was built in the reign of Edward I., and its expense defrayed from a fine imposed on Ralph de Hingham, a Chief Justice of England. An old chronicle of 1657 tells us that "its intent was, by the clock striking continually, to remind the Judges in the neighbouring courts to administer true justice, they calling thereby to mind the occasion and means of its building." The great bell then in it, called "Tom of Westminster," was given by William III. after the Tower was destroyed, to the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's, and its metal forms a part of the great bell of that Cathedral at present. The plan of the new Clock Tower is square, and its altitude is not far short of that of the Victoria Tower, being 316 feet from high water mark (Trinity standard) to the top of the Sceptre on its roof; but its design is totally dissimilar. Its walls are panelled and buttressed delicately, yet with simplicity, the richest part of its design being in and above the stage of the great Clock, with the beautiful lantern spire which surmounts the whole.

The signal light in the lantern on the Clock Tower is kept burning whenever the House is sitting, and was used in its new form for the first time at the beginning of the session 1893. Previously it was only visible over the Western districts, but it has since been made to show a light in every direction, by the

introduction of dioptric lenses, which increased very greatly the illuminating power. The light is two hundred and fifty feet high, and the Clock Tower is a powerful light-house, throwing a beam visible many miles in all directions. The system is the same as has been adapted to many of our light-houses by Messrs. Edmundsons, of Westminster and Dublin. Since this was written electric light has been substituted for the gas burners, but the lenses are still there.

The roof of the Clock Tower is of cast and wrought iron, after the style and appearance of the other roofs of the Palace, but more fully developed in its ornaments and finishing, gilding and colour being introduced to an extent not to be seen elsewhere in this country, and producing a most striking effect.

The Clock itself is, of course, the chief feature in the composition. It is by far the largest, most powerful, and most accurate public clock in the world. It was constructed, in 1854 by Frederick Dent, of 61, Strand and Royal Exchange, London, to designs submitted to Mr. Airey, Astronomer Royal, and fixed in the Clock Tower in 1859.

Some of the proportions of this truly wonderful clock will be interesting. The frame is $15\frac{1}{2}$ ft. long, and 4 ft. 7 in. wide, and the bulk of the space within is occupied by the mechanism for striking the hours and quarters. The frames are carried upon a separate shaft, forming a well 174 ft. high from the ground for the weights. The pendulum, which beats once every two seconds, is 13 ft. long and weighs 685 lbs., it is suspended by a steel spring only $\frac{1}{16}$ of an inch in thickness, and is cased in a special chamber to protect it from the action of the wind. The escapement is of the gravity form upon the principles discovered by the late J. M. Bloxam, Q.C.

Surrounding the room containing the clock works are passages running at the foot of the four dials. It is only upon passing through these passages that the magnitude of the dials can be realised. Each dial is 22 ft. 6 in. in diameter, and is made of sections of iron bolted together, and glazed with opal glass. The minute spaces are a foot square, and the figures 2 ft. long. The illumination is effected by electric lights attached to the whitened walls 5 ft. behind the dials. The hands are made of copper, accurately poised by means of weights within, and run upon roller bearings. The friction is so slight that when detached from the clock the hands can be

set spinning from within by quite a gentle pressure upon the bevel wheel. The minute hands are 14 ft. long, and weigh, with their counterpoises, about 2 cwt. each.

Above the clock room is the crank room, through which pass the wire ropes which raise the hammers of the bells above, and immediately over this is the bell chamber. There, suspended from a massive iron girder in the centre, is the famous "Big Ben," surrounded by the four smaller bells upon which the quarters are struck. The first great bell, which was cast in 1856, called familiarly "Big Ben," from Sir Benjamin Hall, a former First Commissioner of Works, was broken by its own hammer, while temporarily suspended in a timber framework at the foot of the Tower for experiments on its sound and quality. The second Great Bell, cast in 1858 from a design supplied by A. Ashpitel, Esq., architect, by Messrs. Mears, the well-known bell-founders, was equally unfortunate, for, shortly after being hoisted into its proper place, at great labour and expense, it met with the same fate as its predecessor. The crack, however, did not spread, and, after being silent for some time, it is the one now in use.

"Big Ben" weighs $13\frac{1}{2}$ tons, and the quarter bells total nearly $8\frac{1}{2}$ tons. The hammer, which has to be raised and discharged by the powerful machinery of the clock to strike upon Big Ben, weighs 4 cwt.

The clock is provided with an automatic apparatus by which it reports itself by telegraph twice a day to The Royal Observatory at Greenwich, and its reliability as a standard of Greenwich time can be verified by reference to the Annual Reports of the Astronomer Royal to the Board of Visitors. The arrangement of the striking mechanism is unique. The discharge is so accurately arranged that the hammer actually strikes the bell at the true moment of the completion of each hour. Therefore, as the chimes give timely warning, it is only necessary to listen for the first blow of the hour to obtain an observation practically always within one to two seconds of Greenwich mean time; at a distance the velocity of sound (about $4\frac{1}{2}$ secs. to a mile), must, of course, be allowed for.

The weight upon the going train, *i.e.*, the part driving the hands, weighs only about $2\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. The weights upon the striking parts, one for the chimes and one for the hour, weigh together nearly $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons. The winding up is now effected by electric motor.

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CENTRAL TOWER.

The CENTRAL TOWER, occupying, as its name imports, the centre of this great building, is different in design from either of the foregoing. It is a marvellous piece of construction, containing the largest octagon gothic vault known where a centre pillar is not used, as is the case in most of the larger chapter-houses of our cathedral cities. The Tower is occupied entirely in the lower part by the Central Hall, of which a description will be found elsewhere. Above its stone vault rises a great cone of bricks, faced with stone, which carries the light and beautiful open lantern, rising far above the roofs; this portion of the Tower is used as the air shaft or outlet for the ventilation of the whole of the great building, evincing how possible it may be to convert a necessary and not usually ornamental appendage into a most original and attractive feature.

Besides the Three Towers above described are many others of varying design and great beauty and character, forming, from all points of view from the Courts of the building, pleasing and appropriate features. To complete our survey of the exterior of the building it is necessary to walk through the Courts. They are called, beginning at the north end of the building: 1. The Speaker's Court, so named from its giving access to the splendid official residence of the Speaker of the House of Commons; 2. The Commons' Court; 3. The Commons' Inner Court. Then passing the centre of the building, and still in direct communication with the last, we enter, 4. The Peers' Inner Court; 5. The Peers' Court; and lastly, passing under the Bishops' Tower, the Royal Court, from which access is obtained either to the south façade of the building, or to the Victoria Tower. There is a second range of inner Courts parallel to the last, and to the west of them, going through them from the Royal Court, in a direction from south to north. These are called:— 1. The Peers' Carriage Court; 2. The State Officers' Court; 3. St. Stephen's Court; 4. The Cloister Court; 5. The Star Chamber Court; the last giving access, by means of a double carriage archway, into New Palace Yard.

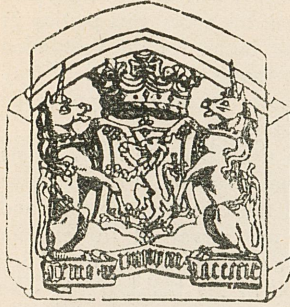
Having thus hurriedly called the attention of the visitor to the principal parts of the exterior, we shall proceed to notice some of the State Apartments of this Royal and National Palace (although the public are not admitted to some few of the apartments here described) to make the series complete.

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Interior.

VICTORIA TOWER, THE NORMAN PORCH, THE KING'S ROBING ROOM. THE ROYAL GALLERY, THE PRINCE'S CHAMBER, THE HOUSE OF LORDS, THE PEERS' LOBBY, CENTRAL HALL, HOUSE OF COMMONS, ETC.

THE VICTORIA TOWER AND NORMAN PORCH.



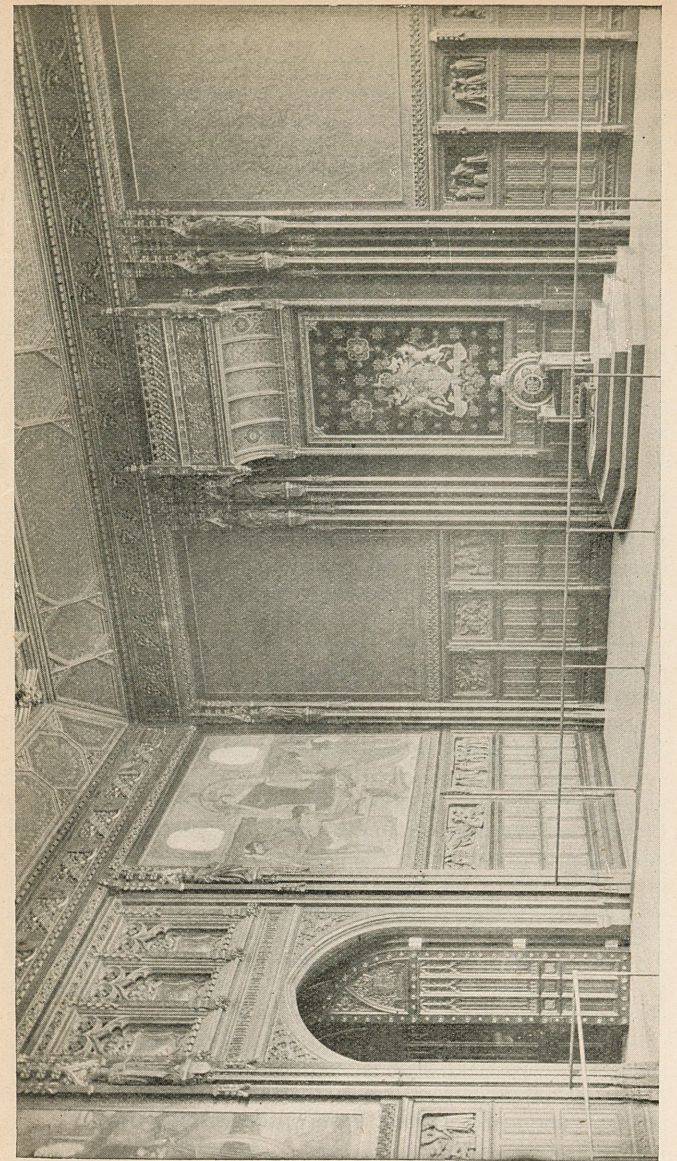
Arms of Scotland in Royal Court. place therein statues of our Norman Sovereigns on the various pedestals, as well as to adorn the panels of the walls with fresco painting of the subjects taken from this period of English history. The beautifully clustered centre shaft and the carved groined ceiling of this apartment deserve attention. The paving of this chamber is inlaid with Devonshire and Irish marble and encaustic tiles, while the seats in the recesses are formed of Purbeck marble, and the risers of Devonshire marble. The door on the right hand leads into the

KING'S ROBING ROOM.

This magnificent apartment is situated at the Southern end of the Palace, and has two entrances, one from the Norman Porch, the other from the Royal Gallery. It is about 54 feet in length, 37 feet in width, and about 25 feet high, lighted from the South by six windows filled with stained glass.

At the East end of the room, raised upon a dais approached by three steps, is a Chair of State beneath a handsome canopy of carved oak, panelled, and enriched in the soffit with Rose,

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KING'S ROBING ROOM.

Photo Erftt.

Shamrock and Thistle, the badges of England, Scotland, and Ireland, with Queen Victoria's monogram in the adjoining panels. The front of the canopy has the arms corresponding to the monograms beneath.

Behind the Chair, and forming a back to the canopy, is a beautiful piece of tapestry with Stars, V.R. and knots, the Royal Arms being in the centre; the whole handsomely embroidered. The cushion and back of the Chair are similarly embroidered on velvet.

The most striking features of the room are the fresco paintings by the late W. Dyce, R.A., illustrative of the benefits of Chivalry, the subjects being from "The Legend of King Arthur."

The largest painting is that between the doorways on the north side, representing "Hospitality," the admission of Sir Tristram to the fellowship of the Round Table; to the right of this is the picture of "Mercy," "Sir Gawaine swearing to be merciful, and to never be against ladies."

Over the fireplace at the end opposite to the canopy is represented "Religion," "the vision of Sir Galahad and his Company"; on the right of which is "Generosity," "King Arthur unhorsed is spared by his adversary"; and on the left is "Courtesy," "Sir Tristram harping to La Belle Isidore."

The arms blazoned on the shields in the frieze about the pictures are of the knights of King Arthur's Round Table, and, of course, apocryphal.

In order to throw some light upon this subject we insert the following brief notice of the Arthur of history.

He is said to have succeeded his father, when fifteen years old, as Pendragon or elective sovereign over the chiefs of Britain, and to have vigorously attacked the Saxons, against whom he fought twelve battles successfully. Afterwards he proceeded against his nephew who had revolted, and who was slain in the conflict. Arthur himself, being mortally wounded, was conveyed to Glastonbury, where he died and was buried. The date of these events is from about A.D. 500 to A.D. 547. Upon this history of the British Chief has been founded the Romance from which the subjects of the pictures are taken. In one of his battles he is said to have slain four hundred and seventy men with his good sword Excalibur and his lance Rou. He is also described as having destroyed the Pagan Temples of the Saxons, and restored the Christian Churches.

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Below the frescoes, to a height of 6 feet all round the walls of the room, is a handsome panelled dado, with very beautiful bratticing.

The upper Compartments of the dado panelling are on three sides of the room filled with carvings illustrative of the life of King Arthur, in the following order:—"Birth of King Arthur"—"Arthur delivered unto Merlin"—"Arthur recognised as King"—"Arthur crowned King"—"Bataille with King Lot"—"How King Arthur gate his sword Excalibur"—"King Arthur wedded to Guinever"—"King Arthur conquering the marvailous giant"—"The Knights of the Round Table vowing to seek the Sangreall"—"The Misadventure of the adder—beginning of the bataille"—"Sir Mordred slain—King Arthur wounded to death"—"King Arthur carried in a barge to Avilion, attended by Queenes"—"Sir Launcelot leaving Dame Elaine"—"Sir Galahad brought unto the siege perillous,"—"Receives the sword with strange girdels"—"Sir Galahad—Sir Percivale—Sir Bors"—"Sir Galahad imprisoned by the tyrant"—"Sir Galahad's soul borne to Heaven."

In the corresponding compartments between the windows, are panels with arms blazoned.

The ceiling is panelled very richly and decorated with badges of the Monarchs of England, and heraldic devices as bosses carved on the ribs. The ground of the ceiling is principally blue.

The fireplace is of Purbeck marble, having a canopy on each side under which is a metal figure; one representing St. George in combat with the Dragon, the other St. George wearing the robe of Victory, with the dragon lifeless at his feet.

The doors are very elaborate, and with their hinges and metal work are worthy of notice, as also is the border of the oak floor, which is decorated with heraldic badges, the portcullis and rose at the sides of the floor, with lions at the angles. The floor is inlaid with various woods.

*THE PEERS' ENTRANCE.

Not open to the Public.

Is in the centre of the front towards Old Palace Yard, and is entered from thence under a massive and ornate Carriage Porch with stone groining; from it the visitor enters the outer

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Hall or Vestibule communicating through a screen to an inner Hall used also as a Cloak Room. This inner Hall is divided into central and side aisles, as it were, by clustered pillars and groins, and has, from this cause, a somewhat ecclesiastical effect. The windows of the Hall, as well as the panels and windows of the staircase, are appropriately filled with the emblazoned arms of the Peers of the Realm, with the dates of their creation—the earliest may be seen in the windows immediately opposite the Porch. Under an archway at the south east corner of the inner Hall is seen the Peers' Staircase, from whence, through a Corridor at the east end, an entrance is obtained to the Prince's Chamber, and at the west end to the rooms of the Lord Chancellor and various other officers connected with the House of Lords. From this staircase, through a screen on the north side, is a corridor leading to the Peers' Robing Room.

THE ROYAL GALLERY.

A magnificent apartment, 110 feet in length, 45 feet in width and 45 feet high; not yet complete in its finishings. To this Gallery admission is obtained from the office of the Lord Great Chamberlain to view the Royal procession on its way from the Robing Room to the House of Peers when His Majesty opens or prorogues Parliament. Seats rising one above the other extend along its entire length on these occasions. The walls above these seats are to be decorated with a chronologically arranged series of subjects from English history—two fresco paintings by D. Maclise, R.A., "The Meeting of Wellington and Blucher, after Waterloo," and "The Death of Nelson," have already been completed in the large panels (see appendix)—while a band of shields emblazoned with the arms of the Kings of England and Scotland runs immediately below the windows. These windows are filled with stained glass of appropriate design, while a splendidly panelled and decorated ceiling crowns the whole. In the niches of the doorways and bay windows are placed gilded statues of the English Kings and Queens as follows—

SOUTH DOOR.

Henry V. and Elizabeth.

NORTH DOOR.

Alfred and William I.

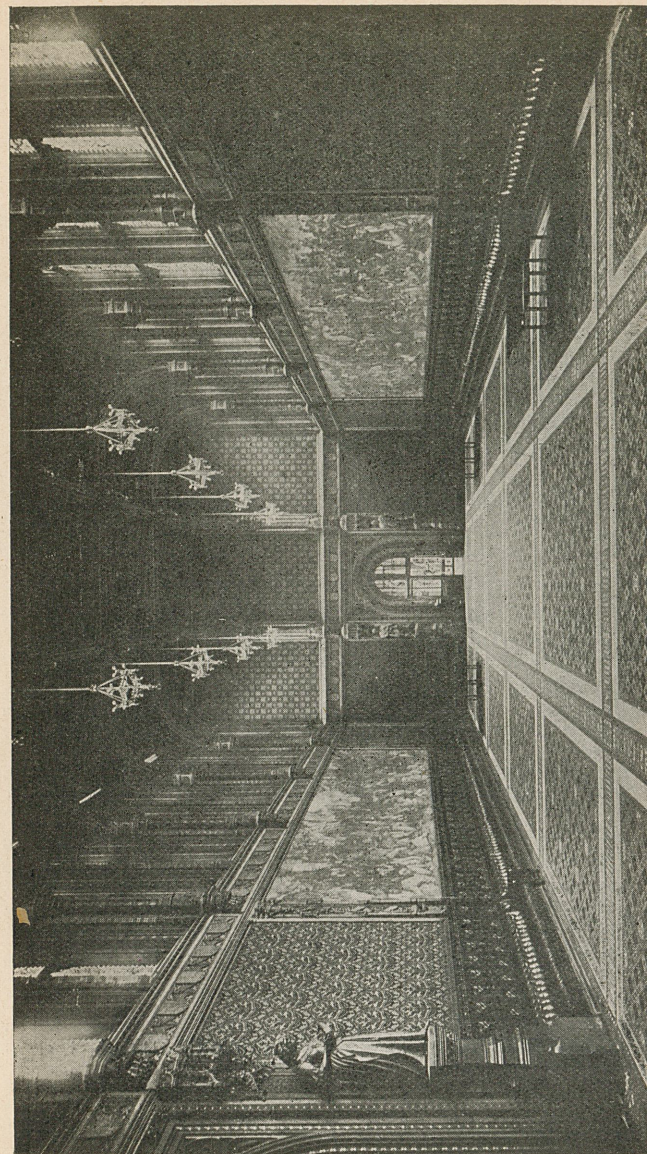
WEST DOOR.

William III. and Anne.

BAY WINDOW.

Richard I. and Edward III.

B. PHILIP, Sculptor



THE ROYAL GALLERY