The committee proceeded to inquire into the causes of the late fire in the War and Treasury departments.

REPORT.

That they have taken the depositions of all the persons from whom they thought to expect any information; and herewith report them: Those marked (A.) relate to the fire in the war office; and those marked (B.) to the fire in the Treasury department.

The committee having been an affection in a paper called the Cabinet, that during the fire in the Treasury Department, persons were discovered in some of the rooms of that department, in circumstances which excited suspicion, the committee called on the Editor of that paper, and requested to be informed whether he could, from the premises of any persons who were witnesses of that fact, or any other relating to the fires. By him they were referred to Lawson Pearson, and Salem Bentley, of Philadelphia, and the deposition of John Woodside, (among the papers marked B.) it appears that the persons thus discovered were clerks of the department, employed in taking care of the books and papers.

It having been mentioned in the depositions of some of the witnesses, from whom the committee were taught to expect information, that Mr. Wolcott, the late Secretary of the treasury, was seen at one end of the treasury department, during the fire therein, loading a cart with books and papers, the committee examined into a circumstance which might be made to excite suspicion, and believing it was due to Mr. Wolcott to investigate thoroughly a fact of this nature, which if found to be truly delivered by their means, have taken several depositions on that subject, which are herewith reported, marked (C.) From these depositions no suspicion can remain that the boxes and cables were not Mr. Wolcott's private property.

The committee do not think it necessary to make a minute report of their opinion on the fires, as the several cases of the depositions themselves will afford more satisfactory information: They report, as the general result of their enquiries—

That it is probable the fire in the War Department was communicated from the fire place in the adjoining house, and that there is no evidence whatever on which to found a suspicion of its originating in negligence or design.

That as to the origin of the fire in the Treasury Department, they have neither no evidence which enables them to form a conjecture satisfactory to themselves; it would only be in their power to make an abstract of the testimony; and in doing this, they might add to or diminish its force, and therefore think it best to report, only in the words of the witnesses themselves.

A

Mr. Lorenzo, a clerk in the war department states that on the night of the 6th November, 1800, (the evening of which the office was burnt) he was engaged in filling and arranging the papers of the office, (which was very much deranged in consequence of removing first from Philadelphia, and afterwards from the place commonly known by the name of *Lear's* store, in the city of Washington) a building in which he had employed all his hours which were not immediately necessary for the routine of business common in the office; that having on that day nearly finished, he had determined to continue until he had completed the work, as he was anxious to have them arranged; that in consequence he remained an hour or an hour and an half after the other gentlemen of the department had left; that when he had finished the business he was engaged in, which was after three o'clock, he locked the door of the room and carried the key therefrom to the room of the messenger, which was in the kitchen; That the day having been uncommonly warm for the season, the fire had been reduced at about eleven o'clock in the morning, and that the door which led into the room usually occupied by the Secretary, was ordered by the chief clerk to be opened, in order to admit the air, (there having been no fire in that room on that day, or for three weeks and upwards prior to it) that no more fire was made in the room in which he was employed that day, and that, on leaving the room, he doubts whether there was fire enough on the hearth to have kindled a candle; That his usual home to dine, and believed every thing was perfectly secure in the office, as he locked into the Secretary's room to see if the windows were shut, and finding them to be so, he thought over every thing was safe.

That in the evening about (he believes) six o'clock, or perhaps a little after, Mr. Brown, a clerk to the Accountant, came over to his lodging, and informed the gentlemen that the War-Office was on fire; that Mr. Wolcott and every other man in the house immediately ran over; that when we approached the house, we observed the light very strong from the window over the door of the entrance of the house immediately adjoining the library, which was arranged along the partition wall of that building and the adjoining house occupied by Mr. Jackson; and against which the chimney of Mr. Jackson's house stood; that he, with Mr. Wolcott, went immediately up stairs, and he, Mr. Lorenzo, finding some of the room generally occupied by the chief clerk, viz. the room immediately in the rear of the Secretary's (the door which was on fire) that when he opened it, the force of the smoke was so great as to stagger him; he however recovered himself and made a second attempt, but to no purpose; finding it impossible to penetrate any thing on that floor, he immediately left the house and went to the Treasury office for the engine, which he with assistance he brought to the fire, but the door being so fast a thing, it proved ineffectual. That on the morning after the fire (Sunday) he went over before breakfast, to examine the partition wall; that he ascertained no near to be a wall, which were seen to scattering, would admit, and examined particularly as to the structure of the chimney;—that in viewing the partition wall, he did not doubt but there was communication from the chimney of the next house, as the partition was very thin, and the evident appearance of wooden blocks or bricks interspersed in it, and that it appeared to him that the wall was only the thickness of the length of a brick from the frill floor to the second, and the thickness of the width of a brick from the second floor up to the roof, and knowing that a large library was extended along that wall, and upon the lower shelf of the library, about eight inches from the floor, fixed a number of large trunks, boxes, and which (for convenience) many pamphlets and loose papers were thrown; and he has no hesitation in saying, that he firmly believes it was from these causes the fire was communicated.

With respect to the Treasury Department Mr. L. has very little to say which can give information or throw light upon it, he has only to observe, that at about five o'clock, in the evening of the January, he, agreeably to an appointment, had made with Mr. Steele, left the hotel in which he lodged, directly opposite to the Treasury, to call for Mr. Steele, who was writing in his office; that as he crossed the street, he saw large columns of smoke issuing from the two footbreadth alley-way, and that he immediately entered the East door which led to the center of the building through a narrow passage; that in pulling through this passage he observed the smoke issuing from under the fire-place on the left side of the passage; that he did not stop to open either of them, his object being to get the engine out which blood in the hall; that in not more than two minutes persons were with him at the time, and that with the assistance of one of them he broke open the front door and put the engine into the street. Proceeding on alone, he thinks he returned into the passage where he discovered several persons rending the middle door (or that which led to Mr. Farrell's room) which they immediately succeeded in, and soon in the door was opened the flames and smoke rushed out in a diagonal line from the back of Mr. Farrell's room where his cases stood, which was the part of the room opposite to his fire-place. This is all he can say respecting it, as his whole attention and exertions were to check and conquer the flames; which, with great exertions on his part, he was finally accomplished.

Sworn before me the subscriber, one of the justices of the peace for Prince George county, this 23d day of February 1801.

RICHARD FORESTY.

On the evening of the 8th November last, about 7 o'clock, P. M. I was alarmed with the cry of fire, and on enquiry there was the War-Office; I immediately alarmed Mr. Hodgson and Mr. Wood, delivered them to bring with them buckets, and I unhung my gutter gate, that free access might be had to my pump; I gave order to fill all the buckets and tubs that was about the house, took with me two buckets of water; when I got to the War-Office the flames was flashing out of the front windows like a cloud; soon afterwards the flames broke out of the front window over the front door; I was then asked by Mr. Watson, a clerk, for to assist him in getting a ladder, but before that we could procure the ladder the fire broke out at the back side of the house. I assisted about half an hour to save the papers, but on feeling that my own house was in danger I left the fire and went home. The next day (sunday) I went to see Mr. Markward, to make enquiry how the fire originated, (Col. Burrows was with me) he, Mr.—could give me no satisfaction; we then went to the burnt house, and on examining the walls, were of opinion that it had been communicated from the back of Mr. Jonathan Jackson's chimnies, to the library; and on further examination we saw a number of places where wood had been let into the wall, and near the back of the chimney of Mr. Jackson's house I saw a light through the wall, (and mentioned it to Col. Burrows) which I supposed was the place that the fire got through to the library, and was further convinced, for the back part of the place is but 4½ inch thick. And further this deponent saith not.

W. O'NEALE.

City of Washington, Feb. 23, 1800.

The above deposition was taken by the committee, the 25th Feb. 1801.—William O'Neale, Esq. Mayor of the City.

JOHN NICHOLAS, *Chairman.*

THOMAS Y. SPROGLE, being first sworn, deposeth and saith, that at about 6 o'clock, P. M. of the day on which the war-office was confumed, he afficted in laying out the corpse of a Mr. Jackson, who died in the room adjoining to the room occupied by the secretary of war, in which the fire appeared to originate; that at that time there was so little fire in the hearth, that he, this deponent could with difficulty see the corpse, enough to correct the effect of the body on the air of the room.—That while the house was on fire he returned into the room where the corpse was laid, and found the fire totally extinguished to all appearance; that he was informed a fire had been kindled in the interval of his two visits to the room, and that it had been extinguished because it had a bad effect on the corpse.

THOMAS Y. SPROGLE.

Sworn to before me, this 27th day of Feb. 1801.

JOHN NICHOLAS, Chairman.

(B.)

The testimony of Patrick Ferral, principal clerk in the office of the Auditor of the Treasury, relative to the fire that took place on the 20th of January last.

Having received a letter by the mail of the 19th, from a mercantile house in Philadelphia, that required an answer by the return of post, not being enabled from the official duties of the office, to write the answer during office hours of the 20th. On leaving the office between 4 and 5 o'clock, and not being Eagle the messenger, in the hall, I mentioned to one of the other messengers, to inform him when he came in to leave the key, as I should call back after dinner to write a letter. I returned between 3 and 4 o'clock and found the key of the Auditor's room, which I opened and went into the room to write the letter, which I had to write that day; after which I locked the door, and went to the house occupied by the messenger, delivered him the key and the letter, desiring him to place it at the post-office, before 5 o'clock. At my going in and during my stay in the office, I observed not the least appearance of fire, but what was in the fire-place of the room where I was writing, which at the time was very low, and being the remainder of that made in the early part of the day. After delivering the key to the messenger I went home to dinner, in the neighbourhood where a billiard table is kept, where I remained until the cry of fire was heard, when the whole of the persons that were there ran over to the office. On my return home found the door locked. I called on the messenger by name, who immediately appeared and delivered the key of the Auditor's room, which I unlocked and took to the door that opened into the room in which I had been writing. On which I returned into the entry and requested some persons that were there to open open the door (on this being shut) they perceived that the great body of the fire proceeded from three large cases which were placed back of the fire-place in the room occupied by the Auditor—on which I saw that means this unfortunate accident took place, I do not deem myself competent to decide, but this I will say, I had neither hand nor deed in it.

P. FERRALL.

Sworn to before me, this 23d day of Feb. 1801. JOHN NICHOLAS, Chairman of the Committee.

The representation of Albright Fogle messenger to the Auditor's Office, respecting the fire which took place in the Treasury Department, on the 20th January, 1801.

The Auditor's Office was represented to me that a little before 4 o'clock, when the fire in the stove was reduced to low that the office covered it close up, over which I placed the letter.

Mr. P. Ferral left his room at about half past 4 o'clock, and found the door locked, when his fire was also low. I covered it somewhat closely with the ashes, and locked the doors. The key leading to Mr. Ferrall's room, was left by the room, if in a certain place where he could have access to it after dinner.

I returned to the room at about half after 6 o'clock, and found the door of Ferrall's room, open, I cleared the ashes from the fire, which he refused. About 20 minutes before 6 o'clock he called up me at my house, delivered me the key of the room, and desired me to put it in the post-office; I then hastened to the office, examined the fire in the Auditor's room, raked up the remains of the fire in Mr. Ferrall's room, covered it with the tender, and secured the windows and doors; at which time every thing appeared as usual, very safe from fire—About dusk, and some time after my return home, I was alarmed by the sudden cry of fire, and on opening the door of the Auditor's room I did not perceive any fire, but a vast quantity of smoke issuing from the fire-place in it; at that time; the door of Mr. Ferrall's room was then forced open, when the large cases and furniture in it which flood close to the wall adjoining the Auditor's room, were all in the fire; at that time I did not perceive any thing on fire at the other end of this room near the fire-place.

ALBRIGHT FOGLE.

Sworn to before me, this 23d of February 1801.

JOHN NICHOLAS.

Chairman of the Committee.

FOR SALE, or RENT.

TWO Brick dwelling houses, situated on the Pennsylvania-avenue near the President's house; with contiguous two handsome parlours and pafsages on the first floor, four lodging rooms, including garrets, all private, kitchen and cellar; the whole will be completely finished in four months; the yards front published and fed in pavers; the walks to the street paved or gravelled, which will render the house as comfortable a dwelling as any in this City for a private family, and will be sold for less than any gentleman can have the same built for. A family of respectability taken in part payment, or Lots will be exchanged for Slaves. For particulars enquire on the Premises of

OWEN ROBERTS.

March 11, 1801 tf

To be sold to the highest bidder, at Montgomery Court-house Maryland, on Monday the 6th April next, and terms made known on said day.

THE following Tracts of Land adjoining, well adapted to farming and planting with a sufficiency of wood, and a branch that runs half thy part of the Country, 4 miles from the above named Court House, and 18 from the City of Washington. One called Kendall containing 307 Acres, on which is a framed dwelling house 34 by 16 feet, with two brick chimneys, a Barn 60 by 40 feet, Corn crib and Stable all round, a Kitchen and other convenient houses—Apple and Peach Orchards of 12 or 14 Acres of Meadow, which yields tolerable, and more can be made. The other Wickham's goodwill, containing 271½ Acres, on which is a Framed Dwelling House, 30 by 16 feet, Kitchen, Stable, with Corn 12 feet square—Tobacco and other houses, 12 or 15 Acres of Meadow well fet in timothy, and 30 more can be made. The Dwelling House Plantation runs through laid land, so that the meadows may be watered with ease.

Also on the 1st day of May next, will be offered at Mr. Tunnicliff's Tavern; one, the most Westerly of the Old Six buildings in the City of Wallington, now occupied by Mr. John Boyle.

HONORE MARTIN.

Montgomery County, 4th March 1801. 4M

WANTED a large handsome MARE of a Bay or Chestnut color well formed to draw in Harness, not more than seven years old, for which a GUILDING will be given in exchange and the difference of value if any paid Cash. Enquire of M. Dunn, at the Capitol. Wallington, Feb. 18, 1801.

TEN CENTS REWARD.

RAN away yesterday, my Apprentice boy, WILLIAM BOYLE, he is about Nine years of age, stout built, but of a bad disposition, having (though young) robbed me repeatedly. I do hereby forewarn all Persons from harbouring or hiring away said apprentice, as I am determined to prosecute them according to law. I will pay the above Reward and no charges, for delivering him to me.

JOHN MINCHIN.

New Jersey Avenue, near the Capitol. Wallington City, March 19, 1801. 3t