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Downing Street, November 17, 1866.

THE following despatches descriptive of the effects of the hurricane at the Bahamas and Turks Island have been received at the Colonial Office :—

Governor Rawson to the Earl of Carnarvon.

*Government House, Nassau,
October 17, 1866.*

MY LORD,

I AM much grieved to have occasion to inform your Lordship that a violent and very destructive hurricane has just swept over these islands. It was undoubtedly a cyclone. The centre passed over New Providence on the 1st instant. The destruction of property, on land and at sea, has been very great throughout all the islands, and especially in New Providence. Happily the loss of life has been comparatively small. On this island only three deaths have been reported. On some of the out islands it has been greater. Considering the number of vessels, colonial and foreign, which have been wrecked throughout the Archipelago, it is surprising how few of the crews have been lost. I estimate the number, including five whole crews, two of colonial and three of foreign vessels, at between sixty and seventy persons.

2. Last year, only two or three days earlier, a hurricane, scarcely less violent, passed to the southward and westward of New Providence, and included the islands to the westward in its radius. On that occasion the lighthouse yacht "Georgina" was cast ashore and lost. But the inhabitants of this and the other islands do not appear to have taken warning from its occurrence; and the city of Nassau has for so many years enjoyed an immunity from visitations of this nature that they had ceased to apprehend one, and to take precautions against its violence.

3. The great hurricane of 1813 is said to have been as violent, but not nearly so destructive; partly, perhaps, on account of the great increase of property since that date. It is also said that the hurricane of 1796, which occurred on the 2nd of October, approached the nearest in violence to this one.

4. On Sunday evening, the 30th September, at Nassau, the wind, which had been blowing for some time from the north-east, began to freshen. During the night it increased. At 10 A.M. on the following day it was blowing with fearful violence from the same quarter, or from north; and from noon to 6 P.M. the hurricane raged without intermission. A deluge of rain accompanied the wind. At 7 o'clock the wind moderated and the rain ceased. At 7:30 P.M. there was a dead calm, and the stars

appeared. The wind during that period had shifted to south, and at 9 P.M. it had risen again, with gradually-increasing violence, and accompanied with torrents of rain, and continued to blow until 2 A.M. when it moderated, and the rain ceased.

5. At daybreak a melancholy spectacle broke upon the inhabitants. In the harbour, every vessel and boat, except one, was driven ashore or had foundered. The road along the coast to the eastward was blocked up with colonial craft cast up high and dry. Her Majesty's ship "Nimble" was ashore in 6-feet water, having been driven from her moorings at 1 P.M. Of the two steam-tugs, one had foundered in the harbour, the other, the "General Clinch," respecting which I have had occasion to write,* as the last of the three vessels which the Government of the United States claimed as the property of the late Confederate Government, had been dashed into countless pieces against the public wharf, after having crushed and inflicted a similar fate upon a colonial schooner. Fortunately the number of foreign vessels in the harbour was at the time small; but of colonial vessels and boats the number was great. Of the craft in the harbour†—

92 have been totally destroyed;
97 " badly injured;
43 " slightly injured.

Upon these vessels a considerable portion of the population depended for their income, derived from fishing, sponging, and wrecking, and for the daily supplies of fish and of market-produce brought from from the out islands.

6. On shore the city exhibited a scene scarcely less distressing. It would hardly have suffered so much from a bombardment. The streets were choked with the *débris* of fallen and unroofed houses and with prostrate trees.

7. Of the military buildings, one wing of the main barracks had been entirely unroofed. A considerable portion of the Ordnance storehouses had been levelled with the ground. The military hospital, just repaired and improved, had been unroofed, and parts of its walls blown down. One portion of the Commandant's residence had been blown down, the rest unroofed and greatly injured. Of the officers' quarters a considerable portion had been unroofed and their inmates (ten in number) dislodged.

8. All the public buildings have been more or less injured. The main building, containing the Court House and Council Chamber, has been unroofed; the old gaol was unroofed; the new one,

* December 14, 1865. † See Inclosure No. 1.