

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX (A.)

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(Note.—The Evidence of Lord Ashburton has been placed in the Appendix in consequence of his Lordship not having been sworn when examined.)

Die Veneris, 14^o Aprilis 1848.

The LORD PRESIDENT in the Chair.

The LORD ASHBURTON, a Member of the Committee, is examined as follows :

Evidence of the Lord Ashburton.

14th April 1848.

3323. HAVE you any Statement which you are desirous of making to the Committee of Information received by you relative to the Proceedings of the Bank of France ?

Having observed that the Committee were desirous of knowing something about the Construction of the Direction of the Bank of France, and of the Conduct of that Bank with respect to the several Circumstances which have been Matters of Inquiry here connected with the Bank of England, I took the opportunity of making Inquiry of a Gentleman who was in London about Ten Days ago, who was a Director of the Bank of France, and who would readily have come and given Evidence himself if he had not been under the Necessity of immediately returning to his own Country. The Inquiry I made of that Gentleman related, first of all, to the Construction of the Direction of the Bank of France, and to what Extent that Direction was considered to work well. Then I made Inquiry upon some of the Points more immediately connected with the Subject of our Inquiries, namely, the Conduct of the Bank of France with respect to its Discounts, with respect to the Charge of Interest, and with respect to any Limitation or Regulation that may be put upon the Operations of the Bank analogous to those which are imposed upon the Transactions of our own Bank. I will first of all state to the Committee the Facts with respect to the Construction of the Bank Direction. The Bank of France, as probably most of your Lordships know, has existed since 1803 ; it was established quite at the Beginning of the Power of Napoleon, and is constituted to this Day under the same Administration ; and I think it may be stated, that under all the different Variations of Government, and the Difficulties through which that Country has passed, the Management of the Bank has been singularly successful and fortunate. There has been at no Time any Suspension of its Payments or any material Difficulties of any kind ; and it seems to have answered perfectly well the Object for which that Bank, like our own, was instituted, namely, as a Bank to give proper Facilities to the Circulation and Commerce of the Country, and at the same Time to be the Bankers of the Government, and to give every proper and legitimate Facility to the Operations of the Government. The Direction is formed in this Manner: There is, first of all, a Governor, who has a House and 60,000 Francs a Year. There are then Two Sub-Governors, each with 30,000 Francs a Year. The Governor and Sub-Governors are both named by the Government, and, it is understood, removable by the Government, but in point of fact they never are removed. The present Governor, Monsieur D'Argout, is the Third Governor of the Bank of France in Forty-five Years ; so that it has been generally considered that, though legally removable by the Government, practically they have not been removed. Then, besides this Governor and Two Sub-Governors, there are Three Receivers General. Your Lordships are probably aware what the Position of Receivers General is in the financial Economy of France. Those Three Receivers General are selected by the Proprietors out of the Class of the Receivers General ; but the Receivers General are naturally more or less connected with the Government and Finance Department of the Country. There are then Three Censors, who are to be elected from the "Etat Industriel" of Paris,—what we should call the Manufacturers of Paris. It is so regulated by the Charter that they must be taken from that Class of Persons ; but although they are called Censors, I do not find that they have to perform any Duty in the Direction but the same which is performed by the other Directors. Then in addition to those there are Twelve ordinary Directors, elected in the Way in which our Bank Directors are elected.

3324. Are the Directors generally paid ?

None of them are paid but the Governor and the Two Sub-Governors, except that there is, I think, Ten Francs paid upon each Attendance, merely for the Purpose of marking the Attendance of Persons to their Duty, but no Amount of Payment that can be of any Importance. The Twelve Directors are taken from the Body of Merchants, Bankers, and