

AUGUST 27 SATURDAY READER

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SEVEN CENTS.

THE GREAT FIRE AT QUEBEC.

ON the morning of the 15th instant, we were startled with the following brief telegram: "Yesterday another terrible fire took place at Quebec. Fifteen hundred houses were burnt, including the greater part of St. Roch and St. Saveru suburbs." The intelligence filled every humane heart with dismay; and the citizens of Montreal, with that pure and generous philanthropy, which prompted them in the comparatively recent calamitous fire at Portland, to regard the sufferers there as their friends and brethren, convened, through the Mayor of Montreal, a public meeting, to raise a fund for the relief of the Quebec sufferers. That they will nobly act there will be no doubt.

Our chronicle of the fire cannot be better given than by extracts from the appeal issued by the Executive Committee to the people of Canada, and to those of the Mother Country, and to the generous-hearted of every land. It is an urgent and moving entreaty, and we can but express the hope that it will be nobly and generously responded to:—

"On Sunday last, at about half-past four o'clock in the morning, fire broke out on the west side of Crown street, on the limit of the quarter whence proceeded the conflagration of 1845, destroying all that lay before it to the eastward of the same street, for a length of over a mile, and covering a width of about half a

mile. The easterly wind, blowing a furious hurricane, carried the fire in every direction with desolating rapidity, and hurling to great distances the burning materials, multiplied the centres of destruction to such a degree as to baffle every expedient, and render futile all efforts to stay the terrible ravages of the destroying element.

"In a great number of localities, blowing up with powder was had recourse to, in the hope, by creating wide breaches, to isolate and circumscribe the fire, but without success, for the flames did their work of ruin with the impetuosity of a torrent, bounding from place to place, as if to avoid all obstacles, and overleap distance.

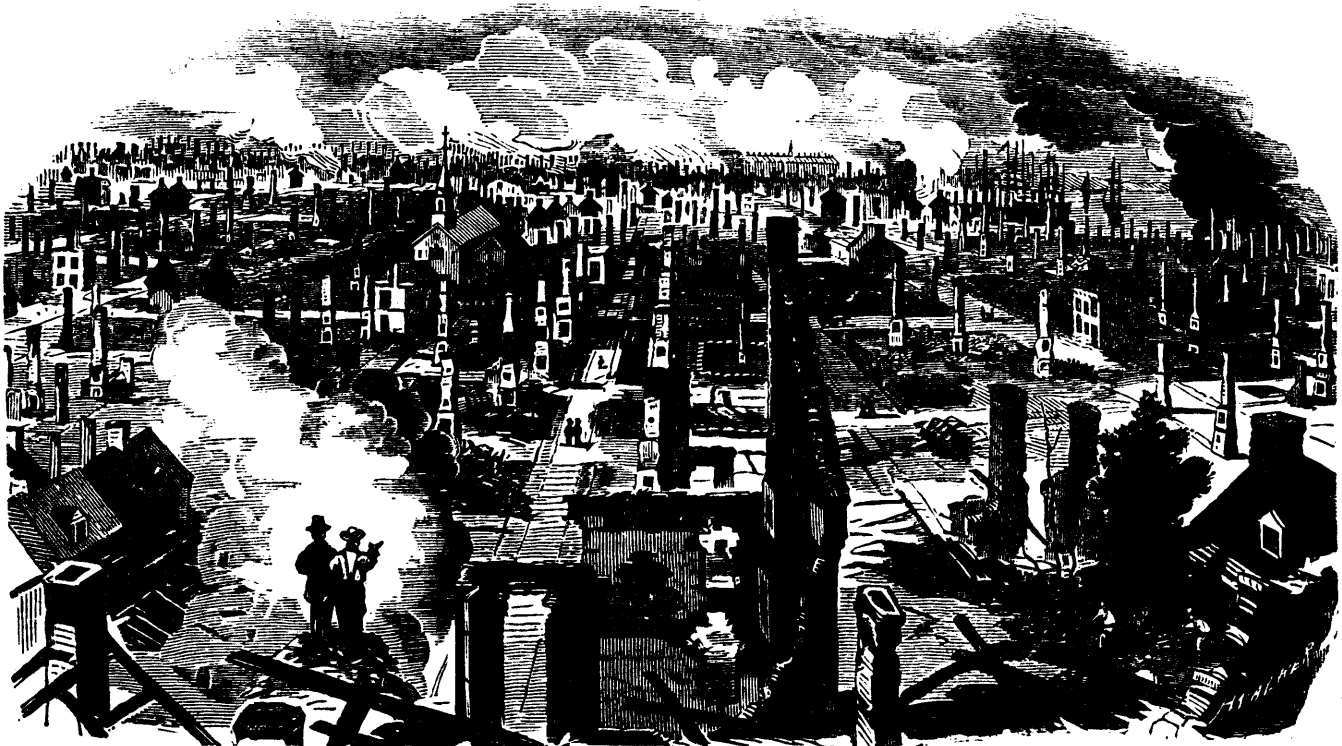
"Almost 2500 dwellings were thus reduced to ashes in a little less than twelve hours, and from fifteen to eighteen thousand persons, at the approach of a rigorous winter, left without food, without clothing, and without shelter. Many even perished in the flames, whose calcined skeletons were rescued from the smoking ruins after the day's destruction was over.

"The heart bleeds at the sight of so much desolation, and of so many thousand unfortunates clamouring for bread, shelter and warmth.

"To the generous-hearted of all countries, then, we direct our appeal, and in the recollection of the compassion bestowed upon us in 1845, we place our hopes to be enabled to surmount the appalling misfortune of 1866."

When the great city of the plain was destroyed, it, says the sacred narrative, would have been saved through the earnest entreaty of the patriarch, if ten righteous persons were found in it. Had ten earnest men, after the sad experience twenty-one years ago in Quebec, set resolutely to work to obtain a proper water supply and fire brigade, and fire telegraph system, in all human probability this evil would not now have fallen upon their city. We do not make these remarks with an uncharitable spirit, but the reflection is forced upon us when we remember the supineness of the Quebecers in this regard. We desire to move the hearts of all to render those deeds of hospitality which were so sacred even amongst the ancient Greeks and Romans. *Ælian* records a law of the ancient *Lucanians*, that if a stranger came to them after sunset, and wanted to take shelter under any one's roof, and was not received, the master of the house was to be fined, and branded with the infamous name of an *INHOSPITABLE*. Now, in order that no single person in the cities and towns of Canada may deserve that name, we respectfully propose a house to house subscription; or what would be perhaps more effective, for the Corporations of each city or town to get an order in Council to levy a rate upon the inhabitants, so that none may escape the sacred obligation of charity.

The accompanying engraving is from a photograph of the ruins, taken specially for the "READER," by Mr. Smeaton of Quebec.



Sketch of the Burnt District.