

SUPPLEMENT TO THE PLANET

CHATHAM, ONT., DECEMBER 31st, 1903

FIVE HUNDRED KILLED.

Holocaust in a Chi- cago Theatre.

FIRE AND EXPLOSION.

Many Slain in Mad Fight to Escape.

FIRE ESCAPED DEATH TRAPS.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN TRAPPED INTO PULP MAY NEVER BE IDENTIFIED— BODIES PILED UP IN AD- JACENT BUILDINGS AND ON THE STREET.

Chicago, Dec. 31.—Five hundred and fifty people were killed and ninety-two injured within ten minutes yesterday during a fire in the Iroquois Theatre, the newest, the largest, and, as far as human power could make it, the safest, theatre in Chicago. The theatre is on Randolph street.

A few of these people were burned to death, many were suffocated by gas, and scores were trampled to death in the panic that followed the mad plunge of the frightened audience for the exits. There are bodies lying by the dozens in the undertaking rooms, in the police stations, and in the hospitals, from which nearly everything that could reveal their identity to those who knew them best, is gone. Their clothing is torn to rags or burned to cinders, and their faces have been trampled into an unrecognizable pulp by the crowds that fought and trampled them down as they fled for safety.

The fire broke out during the second act of the play, "Mr. Blue Beard," the first production in the theatre since its opening. The theatrical company, which was very large, escaped to the street in safety, nearly all of them, however, being compelled to flee from the show with no clothing but their stage costumes. A few members of the company sustained minor injuries, but none were seriously hurt. The accounts of the origin of the fire are conflicting, and none of them certain, but the best reason given is that an electric wire near the lower part of a piece of drop-scenery broke and grounded, setting the scenery ablaze.

The fire spread rapidly toward the front of the stage, causing the members of the chorus who were then engaged in the performance to flee to the wings, with screams of terror. The fire in itself, up to this time, was not serious, and possibly could have been checked had not the asbestos curtain failed to work. As soon as the fire was discovered, Eddie Foy, the comedian of the company, shouted to lower the curtain. It descended about half way, and then stuck. The fire was then given, precisely, a flue, through which a strong draught set to the doors, which had been thrown open in the front of the theatre. With a roar and a bound the flames shot out through the opening, and over the heads of the people on the first floor, and up to those in the first balcony, catching them and burning them to death. Immediately following this rush of flames there came an explosion which lifted the entire roof of the theatre from its walls, shattering the great skylight into fragments.

As soon as the flames first appeared beyond the curtain a man in the rear of the hall shouted "Fire! Fire!" and the entire audience rose as one person and made for the doors. It is believed that the explosion was caused by the flames coming in contact with the gas reservoirs of the theatre, causing them to burst. Will J. Davis, manager of the theatre, said after the catastrophe that if the people had remained in their seats, and not been excited by the cry of "Fire!" not a life would have been lost. This, however, is contradicted by the statements of the firemen, who found the bodies of numbers of persons sitting in their seats, their faces directed toward the stage, as if the performance were still going on. The opinion of the firemen is that these people were suffocated at once by the flow of gas and fire which came from behind the asbestos curtain.

As nearly as can be estimated, about 1,300 people were in the theatre. Three hundred of these were on the ground floor, the balance being in the two upper balconies and in the hallways back of them. The theatre is modelled after the Opera Comique in Paris, and from the rear of each balcony there are three doors leading out to passage-ways towards the front of the theatre. Two of these doorways are at the end of the balcony, and one being in the centre. The audience, in its rush for the outer air, seems to have for the greater part, chosen to flee to the left entrance, and to attempt to make its way down the eastern stairway, leading into the lobby of the theatre.

Outside of the people burned and suffocated by gas, it was in these two doorways, on the first and second balconies, that the greatest loss of life occurred. When the firemen entered the building the dead were found

stretched in a pile, reaching from the head of the stairway, at least eight feet from the door, back to a point about five feet in the rear of the door. This mass of dead bodies in the centre of the doorway reached to within two feet of the top of the passageway. All of the corpses at this point were women and children.

The fight for life which must have taken place at these two points is something that is simply beyond human power to adequately describe. Only a faint idea of its horror could be derived from the aspect of the bodies as they lay. Women on top of these masses of dead had been overtaken by death as they were crawling on their hands and knees over the bodies of those who had died before. Others lay with arms stretched out in the direction toward which lay life and safety, holding in their hands fragments of garments, evidently torn from others, whom they had endeavored to pull down and trample underfoot as they fought for their own lives.

As the police removed layer after layer of dead in these doorways, the sight became too much even for the police and firemen, hardened as they are to scenes of death. The bodies were in such an inextricable mass, and so tightly were they jammed between the sides of the door and walls, that it was impossible to lift them one by one and carry them out. The only possible thing to do was to seize a limb, or some other portion of the body, and pull with main strength. Men worked at the task with tears running down their cheeks, and the sobs of the rescuers could be heard even in the hall below where this awful scene was being enacted. A number of men were compelled to abandon their task and give it over to others whose nerves had not yet been shaken.

One by one the bodies were dragged out of the water-soaked and smouldering mass of corpses, and the spectacle became more and more heart-rending. There were women whose clothing was torn completely from their bodies above the waist, whose bosoms had been trampled into a pulp, and whose faces were marred beyond all power of identification.

Bodies lay in the first and second balconies in great numbers. In some places they were piled up in the aisles three and four deep, where they had fallen and others tripped over the prostrate forms, and all had died where they lay, evidently suffocated by gas. Others were bent over backs of seats, where they had been thrown by the rush of people for the doors, and killed with hardly a chance to rise from their chairs.

One man was found with his back bent nearly double, his spinal column having been fractured as he was thrown backwards. A woman was found cut nearly in half by the back of the seat, she having been forced over it, face downwards. In the aisles nearest to the doors the scenes were harrowing in the extreme. Bodies lay in every conceivable attitude, half naked, the look on their faces revealing some of the agony which must have preceded their death. There were scores and scores of people whose faces had literally been trampled completely off by the heels of those who rushed over them.

In one aisle the body of a man was found, with hardly a vestige of clothing or flesh above his waist-line. The entire upper portion of his body had been cut into mince-meat and carried away by the feet of those who trampled him. A search was carefully made, with the hope of finding his head, but at a late hour to-night it had not been discovered, and all will ever tell his friends who he is, is the color and appearance of his clothing on the lower limbs, and this is in such a condition as to be hardly recognizable.

The theatre had been constructed but a short time, and all its equipment was not yet in place. This was, unfortunately, the case with a fire-escape in the rear of the building. The small iron balcony to which the iron ladders were to be attached were up, but the ladders had not yet been constructed. When the panic was at its height a great number of women ran for these fire escapes, only to find as they emerged from the doorway upon the little iron platform that they were thirty to fifty feet from the ground. Those who reached the platform first endeavored to hold their footing and to keep back the crowd that pressed upon them from the rear. The effort was utterly useless, and in a few moments the iron ladders were jammed with crowds of women, who screamed, fought and tore at each other like maniacs. It is believed that a brief time, and the rush from the interior of the building became so violent that many of them were crowded off and fell to the granite pavement below. Others leaped from the platform, fracturing legs and arms, and two were picked up at this point with fractured skulls, having been instantly killed.

George H. Elliott, Secretary of the Ogden Gas Company, was in a building directly opposite the theatre, across across the alley. When he reached the street the women already were dropping into the alley, and Elliott immediately rushed for a ladder, in an effort to save as many as possible. No ladder was available, and the only method of assistance they were able to devise was to hurriedly lash some planks together and throw them across to the affrighted women on the platform, with instructions to place the end firmly on the iron framework. Women were pushed every instant into the alley, and by the time the bridge was constructed but few remained to take advantage of it. However, about two dozen, it is believed, made their way across this narrow causeway. The members of the theatrical company, being on the first floor, had comparatively little difficulty in reaching the street, although their situation was for a moment highly critical because of the speed with which the flames swept through the mass of scenery in the flies and on the stage.

Rarely in the history of Chicago has its people been so stirred as by the calamity of to-day. Next to the Chicago fire this is the greatest catastrophe that has ever occurred here. The news spread with great rapidity, and in a short time hundreds of men, women and children were rushing to- ward the theatre. The building in which the calamity occurred stands midway between State and Dearborn streets on the north side of Randolph street. Although every available policeman within the call of the department was hurried to the spot and the men placed in lines at the end of the block, allowing nobody to enter Randolph street from either Dearborn or State, it was found for a time almost impossible to hold back the frenzied crowd that pressed forward, many of them having friends or relatives in the theatre anxious to learn some thing of them. The conduct of the police deserves all praise. In spite of the efforts of the police, however, a large number of people succeeded in breaking through the lines and entering the theatre, and in many cases did heroic work in rescuing the injured and carrying out the dead.

The building was so full of smoke when the firemen first arrived that the extent of the catastrophe was not immediately grasped until a fireman and a newspaper man crawled up the stairs leading to the balcony, holding handkerchiefs over their mouths to avoid suffocation. As they reached the doorway the fireman seized his companion by the arm, exclaiming, "Good God, man, don't walk on their faces!"

The two men tried vainly to get through the door, which was jammed with dead women piled higher than either of their heads. All the lights in the theatre were necessarily out, and the only illumination came through the cloud of smoke that hung between the interior of the theatre and the street. The two men hurried to the floor below, and informed Chief Musham that the dead bodies were piled high in the balcony and prompt assistance must be rendered.

The chief at once called upon all his men in the vicinity to abandon work on the fire and come at once to the rescue. The building was so dark and the smoke so thick that it was found impossible to accomplish anything until lights had been secured. Over 200 lights were quickly carried into the building, and the work of rescue commenced. So rapidly were the bodies brought down that for over an hour there were two streets of men passing in and out of the doorway, the one carrying bodies, the other composed of men to get more. The bodies were carried into Thompson's restaurant, which adjoins the theatre, on the east. The dead and wounded were placed upon chairs, tables and counters. Although all the patrol wagons and every ambulance owned by the city were pressed into service, they were utterly inadequate to carry away the dead, and in a short time there was a line fifty feet long of corpses piled two and three high on the sidewalk in front of the theatre.

It was found necessary, in order to convey the bodies rapidly to the morgue, to press the various undertaking establishments to press trucks into service, and in these the dead were hauled away. The merchants in the vicinity of the theatre rose to the emergency in splendid fashion. Marshall Field & Company, Mandel Bros., Schlesinger & Meyer, Carson, Pirie, Scott & Company, and other large dry goods stores sent wagon loads after wagon loads of blankets, rolls of linen and packages of cotton to be used in binding up the wounds of the injured and to cover the dead. Doctors and trained nurses were on the ground by the score within half an hour after the extent of the calamity was known. A number of doctors waited at the entrance to the theatre with stethoscopes in hand to examine the bodies which were brought out for signs of life.

One large truck, ordinarily used for conveying freight to depots, was so heavily loaded with dead in front of the theatre that the two large horses attached to it were unable to start, and the police were compelled to assist by tugging at the wheels. It was the presence of the children, hundreds of them in the audience, and the efforts of their frantic mothers to save them, that caused much of the pandemonium. A young girl, twelve years of age, was found impaled on the iron railing of the first balcony. She evidently had been thrown over from the second balcony above. With all of its clothing torn from it but a pair of baby's shoes, the body of a child about one year old was found in a far corner of the second balcony. It had evidently been knocked from its mother's arms and was trampled beyond all recognition.

The following is a partial list of the dead, the residence, when not specified, being Chicago:—Hortense Lang, aged 16; Irene Lang, aged 11 years, sister of Hortense; E. A. Wilson, Mrs. W. T. Marsh, Miss Gladys Stretton, Alpena, Mich.; Louise Bushnell; Mrs. A. Lake, 35 years old; Miss A. Donaldson, 18 years; J. Rattey, died at hospital; two boys with him thought to have perished; Mrs. Patrick O'Donnell, wife of President of O'Donnell & Duer Brewing Company; Mrs. Bessie Clinger; Otto Wattman; R. H. Coutts; Miss D. Howard; Miss Horton; Helen McCaughan; Mrs. E. A. Morrill; Mrs. A. Sullivan; Mrs. Minwegen; Mrs. Harbaugh; Ann Fitzgibbon; C. W. Forbush and family; Anna Sterling; three stage hands; Floraine, a German aerial performer; Mel Blackman, 13 years old; Mrs. Cavanaugh; an uncared boy, eight years old; two unknown women met death jumping from rear fire escape; Louise Burchay; Marie Walsh; Mrs. James D. Maloney; Miss Spencer; Ethel Jones,

daughter of S. P. Jones, attended the theatre with brothers and sister, two of whom are missing and three accounted for; reported at Vaughan's seed store, where body was taken, that the mother, an invalid, dropped dead when she received the tidings of daughter's death; Mrs. John C. Kling; Lillian Phillipson, six years old; boy, lived at Lafayette, Ind.; Mrs. Foreman, Wm. Rattey, J. C. Johnson, Wm. M. Reed, Waukegan, Ill.; Hoyt Fox, Mrs. L. R. Butler, S. Ward, Edmund W. Morton, — Newby, J. A. Kockens, Mrs. Stern, H. Donaldson; the Rev. Howard Studley, pastor of All Saints' Church; Mrs. I. H. Dodd, Delaware, O.; Miss V. Delee, daughter of the late lieutenant of police; W. W. Hooper, Kenosha, Wis.; five children of H. S. Van Ingen of Kenosha (probable); father became separated from them and is among the injured; C. W. Turbush and family; Mildred Merriam, three years old, rescued by her father, but died on reaching the street; Bernice Bailey, A. Mende; C. A. Wells, Burr, Scott, Furnetta Peterson, Harvey Kieley, St. Louis, Mo.; Thomas J. Flannigan, Indianapolis, Ind.; Mrs. M. A. Henry, Rose K. Rogers, H. P. Moore, C. I. Cooper, May Curran; Martin, a boy of fifteen years; E. Moses, H. W. Williams, B. Reagenburg, Ellen Linden; Henning, a boy; Walter, B. E. Richard, and Allen Holst; Harold Martin, Pullman, Ill.; John Holland, Lul Shabard, W. N. Sprang, Charles H. Koll, Mrs. Dawson, Whitefox, a boy.

One of the marvellous escapes was that of the members of a theatre party given by Miss Charlotte A. Plamondon of Chicago. The party was made up of a number of prominent society people. Miss Plamondon said: "I could see little girls and boys in the orchestra chairs pointing upward to the slowly-moving line of flame along the curtain. One of the stage hands and Eddie Foy requested the audience to keep their seats. Pieces of the smoldering curtain fell into the orchestra pits. I looked over the faces of the audience and remarked how many children were present. Their faces were filled with interest as they watched the burning curtain. Just then the people in the balcony rose to their feet and crowded forward to obtain a better view of the fire. Eddie Foy rushed to the centre of the stage and waved his arms to the people to be seated. At that instant a woman in the rear of the place screamed 'fire,' and the entire audience of women and children rose to their feet, filled with uncontrollable terror.

"In another instant there was a roar made by thousands of people as they rushed madly from the danger. On the stage the chorus girls turned to flee. Several of them fell to the floor, and I saw the men carry them off the stage. Miss Elsie Elmore was the first to leave our box. The upholstery on the railing was then on fire, and we were compelled to brush fragments of the burning curtain from our clothing. Then there came a great roar and a great draught of air, and the flames shot out over the parquet, until it seemed to me as though they must reach the front walls. There were but few men in the audience, but I saw several of them pulling and pushing women and children aside as they fought like maniacs to reach the exits. I saw a number of little children trampled under foot and none of them arose again. In the balcony the scene was beyond my power to describe. There was a big, black crush of human beings, each one apparently fighting everybody else. The balcony was so steep that they fell before they had left the first four rows of seats. The exits to the fire escapes were choked, and those in the rear rushed with all the strength they possessed upon those who were nearer the doorway. It was almost incredible the speed with which the flames ran through the scenery, and although I was but a second after Miss Elmore in jumping over the railing of our box to the aisle in front of the stage, it was a mass of flame.

"As I started up the aisle a man rushed into me and knocked me down. I was so terror-stricken that I gave way and sank into one of the orchestra chairs, and after that I hardly remember anything. I saw my way reached the main entrance, where men were kicking against the door and shattering the glass and panels in their attempts to afford a large space for exit. Many fell as they reached the doors, where a few steps more would have carried them to fresh air and safety. As I look at it now, I must have been walking on prostrate bodies as I struggled through the opening. All of our party escaped in about the same manner as I did."

THE SALOON EVIL.

An Appeal by Archbishop Bruchesi of Montreal.

Montreal, Dec. 31.—Archbishop Bruchesi has written a letter to the Police Committee making an appeal for the lessening of the saloon evil. He suggests that it would be a great benefit if saloons were to close earlier, especially on the eve of feast days or of Sunday. He closes as follows:—"In the name of our people's most sacred interests, I entreat you, gentlemen, to make a strong effort to check the progress of intemperance, and of the evils which are its inevitable consequences. In doing so you will secure the gratitude of our families, of our whole city, and particularly of yours very truly, Paul, Archbishop of Montreal."

AN ITALIAN STABBED.

Niagara Falls, Dec. 31.—A serious and probably fatal stabbing affray occurred yesterday afternoon on St. David's road between Marsh's wine factory and St. David's village. Two Italians named Jim Rosso and Antonio Barlo, employed at Lowery's stone quarry, quarrelled and Rosso stabbed Barlo several times, twice in the back about the shoulder and near the kidneys, also in the face and across the hand. Rosso's face was punched by Barlo. The fracas took place about 4.30 o'clock. At 7.30 last evening officers Kelly and Monahan had Rosso locked up. Barlo is in a serious condition and may die.

BRIDES WAITED IN VAIN.

TWO BROTHERS INJURED ON WAY TO BE MARRIED.

One Died in the Hospital at Ot- tawa and the Other May Not Re- cover.

Arnprior, Dec. 31.—Alex. Drummond, a prominent young farmer of Bristol, is dead, and his brother George lies between life and death in the hospital at Ottawa, as a result of an accident that occurred while they were driving across country to be married this afternoon to two well-known ladies living some miles from this town.

The cutter containing the two young men was approaching the Hugh street track, when the team, becoming frightened at the approaching train, became unmanageable, and, despite the efforts of the drivers to cross, dashed into the engine, throwing one brother on the cow-catcher and the other over the baggage car. Both were picked up in an unconscious state, and were so badly mangled and bruised that after an examination by the local doctors they were taken on the train to the General Hospital, Ottawa. Alexander Drummond died in the hospital during the afternoon, his skull having been fearfully crushed. George, also injured, was thought at first to have suffered only a slight scalp wound, but later examination revealed that a piece of bone was pressing on the skull. An operation was performed, and, while he has a chance for recovery, his case is serious.

DRIFTING INTO WAR.

Official Reports Show Crisis Has Been Reached.

Tokio, Dec. 31.—Yesterday's ordinance empowers the Government to employ for war purposes all the funds in special accounts, amounting to over one hundred million yen. The ordinance also sanctions short loans and exchequer bonds.

St. Petersburg, Dec. 31.—The foreign despatches received here yesterday afternoon are reflected in more pessimistic editorials. The Novoye Vremya begins its leader with "There is no war to-day. To-morrow there may be war." The paper rather fatistically directs attention to the fact that wars marked the opening of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Novoye Vremya, nevertheless, still professes faith in a peaceful settlement, saying: "We believe Japan will not place Russia in a position where to yield would appear to be a renunciation of the defence of her vital interests in the far east. Russia does not desire war, but nobody in Russia will permit the Japanese or other friends to execute a diplomatic dance upon Russia's peaceful disposition. In firm consciousness of her power, Russia will await events."

London, Dec. 31.—The Times states that the two cruisers built at Genoa for Argentina were sold to Japan for one million and a half pounds sterling. Japan last evening completed the purchase of the Argentine warships Moreno and Rivadavia, building at Genoa, Italy, for which Russia also was negotiating.

Baron Hayashi, the Japanese Minister, said he was aware the French Foreign Minister was making strenuous efforts for peace. So far as Baron Hayashi knew, the war had not yet been crowned with success. Referring to the statement in Paris that war would be averted, he said:—"If they are honest in saying they do not believe there is danger of war, they must be pretty certain Russia will agree at least to the spirit of the Japanese proposals. Up to now we have had no indication of this, and unless Russia does agree, there scarcely seems any way of averting war. I only trust that M. Delcasse will be successful."

Minister Hayashi definitely said that the Russian evacuation of Manchuria is not one of the Japanese cardinal demands.

TELEGRAPH BREVITIES.

Three stores at Glencoe were robbed. The damaged steamer Amur has arrived at Victoria, B.C.

The Government has decided in favor of two-story steel sheds at the Montreal wharves.

Spain is hesitating as to whether she should enter into an alliance with Britain or France.

Ottawa cashmen are reaping a rich harvest owing to the street railway power plant being disabled.

Rev. David Watson, M.A., D.D., pastor of St. Andrew's Church, Beaverfoot for nearly fifty years, is dead.

A son of Mr. John Easton of Glenora was burned to death during his mother's absence from the house.

Dr. James McClurg has been appointed jail surgeon at Sault Ste. Marie in the place of Dr. Adams, who resigned.

It is reported that the White Star Line has ordered a steamer 755 feet long, thirty feet longer than the Baltic, now the largest steamer in the world.

After three days' debate in the Transvaal Legislative Council, a motion in favor of the introduction of Asiatic labor in South Africa was carried by a vote of 22 to 4.

The Temiskaming Railway Commissioners have awarded the contract for steel rails to Chas. Cammell & Co., Sheffield, Eng., notwithstanding a lower tender from the United States Steel Trust.

Two additional writs have been issued by Ames & Co. against former clients of that firm, the claims being made for balances due on stock transactions. Benjamin F. Honsinger is sued for a balance of \$2,867. His transactions with Ames & Co. were in Canadian Pacific and Twin City, and totalled \$81,400. H. P. Ostrosser is also sued by Ames & Co. for \$312, a balance due on stock transactions totaling \$84,418.

RATS DIED OF PLAGUE.

Therefore German Steamer is Held in Quarantine For Developments.

Hamburg, Germany, Dec. 31.—The inquiry into the mortality among the rats on the German steamer Cordoba, from Santos, Brazil, confirms the report that they died of bubonic plague. The vessel has been towed to Strandhufen and quarantined. There is no sickness among the crew.

THE MARKET REPORTS.

Wheat is Firmer—The Live Stock Trade—Latest Quotations. Wednesday Evening, Dec. 30.

Toronto St. Lawrence Market.

Receipts were again light at St. Lawrence market and trade was quiet. The grain sold on the street amounted to 600 bushels.

Wheat—Three hundred bushels of goose sold with an easier tone at 74c to 74½c per bushel.

Barley—One hundred a.4 fifty-bushels sold about steady at 48c to 49c per bushel. Oats—Two hundred bushels sold unchanged at 35½c to 36c per bushel.

Dressed Hogs—Quotations are unchanged at 47 per cwt for choice lightweight \$4.50 for heavier.

Hay—About 25 loads were on the market. No. 1 timothy sold firm at \$10 to \$11 per ton and mixed or clover at \$7 to \$8. Straw—One load sold at \$10 per ton.

Montreal Live Stock.

Montreal, Dec. 30.—There was very little business done to-day at the East End Cattle Market. About 300 head of butchers' cattle were offered for sale, but as only a few local butchers turned up at the market there was little demand. A few good medium beasts sold at 4c per lb. while common stock sold at from 3½c to 3½c. Bulls sold at from 2½c to 2½c per lb. and lean cows at 1½c to 2c per lb. Young calves sold at from \$2.50 to \$4 each. Sheep sold at 3c to 3½c per lb. and lambs at 4½c to 4½c per lb. Fat hogs sold at from 5c to 5½c per lb.

East Buffalo Cattle Markets.

East Buffalo, Dec. 30.—Sheep and lambs—Receipts, 10,000 head; sheep steady and lambs 10c higher at \$5 to \$6.75; yearlings, \$4.50 to \$5; wethers, \$4 to \$4.50; ewes, \$3.75 to \$4; sheep, mixed, \$3.25 to \$4.25.

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NOV. 23rd, 1903.

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the world famous

Hungarian Court Orchestra

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