

THE BURNING OF THE ST. LOUIS THEATRE, QUEBEC.

A RECORD OF THE EMINENT SERVICES OF THE MILITARY.

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"Quos deus vult perdere prius dementat."

IN the upper town of Quebec,—the queen of North American cities, and looking down from its rocky site on the broad St. Lawrence, whilst extensive plains, scattered villages, and distant mountain ranges greeted the eye on all sides,—stood the Castle of St. Louis, the residence of the Governors-General of Canada; this interesting edifice was burned to the ground in 1831; subsequently the Earl of Durham caused the ruins to be levelled, and converted into a terrace, enclosed with a railing, and which from the charming prospect it commands up and down the river (in summer alive with shipping), became the favourite promenade of the inhabitants.

A wing of the old chateau still remained, also the castle guard-house at the entrance; adjoining it were the Governor's stables, which were let to a livery stable keeper, and next to them the St. Louis Theatre, formerly a riding-house built by Sir James Craig; this was lately the scene of a fearful calamity, with which it pleased Divine Providence again to afflict Quebec, so severely chastened by the great fires of May and June, 1845. These, it will be remembered, laid in ashes the greater part of the suburbs, and deprived 20,000 of the inhabitants, or two-thirds of the population, of their homes. The seas of fire raged round the walls of the upper town on these fearful occasions, when the exertions of the military, under General Sir James Hope, the Royal Artillery, the 14th, 43rd, and 89th Regts., were so very conspicuous, and so eminently useful in saving the upper town from falling a prey to the flames. The soldiers pulled down and blew up houses, drove before them those who still uselessly clung to their property, and saved the lives of many helpless women and children. The flames quite overpowered the firemen and the engines.

The St. Louis Theatre was a stone building, 80 feet by 40, and the walls about 30 feet high; the roof was covered with sheets of iron; along the upper part of the walls, and close under the eaves, were ten windows on each side of the building; there were no windows near the ground. Riding-houses have not usually windows below. When the officers of the garrison were allowed to fit up the building as a theatre, they found only two doors, one in the north gable, and another in one of the side walls. To gain access to the theatre, and also to prevent danger in case of fire, and give a readier exit, they got leave to make a third door in the side wall; they also suggested to the Corporation the expediency of having a fourth door in the opposite wall, but this was never carried into effect. However, over the two side doors the officers placed strong porches, so that a person dropping on them from the windows above could easily save his life on an emergency; also below the stage there was an easy exit for the musicians and for the pit