

meating with a passage between the pit and the box doors, when about twenty people rushed past him and escaped. He fell in the passage from the effects of a light-coloured vapour, but retaining his presence of mind he did not get up again, but crawled out of the pit door on his hands and knees, and saw the light cloud passing into the body of the house. He next ran for a light to the guard-room near, and got one; when taken inside the box door, dreadful screams and cries for help were suddenly uttered from a mass of human beings struggling, writhing, and interlocked on the ground and up the steep wooden stair.

The cause of their being in this situation is as follows. A number of people were clustered round the door at the head of the stair waiting to hear "Yankee Doodle" played. When the alarm was given of fire, Miss Brown, a schoolmistress, dashed past these people and fell head foremost from the top to the bottom of the stair. Her friends went down immediately to her assistance and kept the crowd back. While doing this, a rush of burning vapour and flame caused those in the rear to crush against those people stooping down over Miss Brown, pushed against the door, which opened inwards, and the whole became irretrievably mixed together.

The money-taker's table and the lamp at the door were overturned. Two or three strong men at the top of the stair rolled down over the faces of the mass and were dragged out. Mr. Macdonald, the editor of the *Canadian*, a stout person, was squeezed out of the mass by the pressure around him, and escaped; the rest, men, women, and children, were closely wedged together, and though their heads and arms were mostly out, yet their lower extremities were firmly fixed.

There was no more screaming heard after the first burst. The helpless sufferers saw that vigorous efforts were made for their relief, and kept quiet. An axe was got, and an attempt was made to knock down a partition which separated the stair from the ladies' cloak-room below. Lieut. Pison, of the Royal Artillery, who had been walking near the theatre when the alarm was given, after several vain efforts, dragged out a Mrs. Stansfield. Lieut. Leslie Skynner, 89th Regiment, was also on the spot and assisted the others. Mr. Hardie, an oil and colour merchant, assisted by Mr. Kimlin, the Editor of the *Quebec Mercury*, and others, (Messrs. Shea, MacDonald, Todd, Lepper, Beck, Bennet, Stewart, Captain Von Zuille, commander of the 'Ocean Queen,' &c.) released, by powerful exertions, Mrs. Wheatley and Mrs. Roy. Mr. Hardie remarked among the crowd of sufferers Lieut. Hamilton of the 14th Regt., who had gone to the theatre with two daughters of Assistant-Commissary-General Rea, to the elder of the two (Julia) he was about to be married in a few days. That morning she had been arranging her wedding clothes. The younger sister was lying farthest out, and Lieut. Hamilton's arms being free, Mr. Hardie said "Assist me to get out this young lady. Hamilton did so, and she was pulled out with difficulty. Mr. Hardie then said, as he carried her out, "I'll come back and try to release the other;" Hamilton said "For God's sake do so!" but it was too late. Mr. Stewart Scott, an advocate and clerk of the Court of Appeals, and father of a large family, was in the crush with a little daughter; his brother tried, with others, in vain to free him and the child. One of Mr. Scott's arms was actually pulled out of the socket. He said "Save the child! it is useless to try to save me!" It was a most heart-rending scene. Both were obliged to be abandoned. Mr. Hardie and Mr. Kimlin were both seized by sufferers and nearly dragged among them, and were obliged to strike to release themselves. One in the lower tier offered me all his worldly wealth for release

A little boy had previously made a singular escape. He had been sent to the theatre with a maid who was accompanied by a young man who was attached to her. The boy fell sleepy before the performance was over, and said "One of these big lamps will fall down and burn us! I want to go home." The young man took him home, returned, and he and the young woman were now in the dead crush.

Comparatively few people were present to assist. The sentry outside and the policemen thought at first that all had escaped, before the flames appeared at the doors and windows, but all this time they were raging round the interior; the wooden lining of the walls (the building had once been used as a racket court) quickly caught fire, also the sloping floor and benches; black and stifling smoke from the camphine rolled down the fatal stair and hid the victims for a moment, and drove those courageously assisting outside, then the smoke would roll back and disclose the agonized countenances of those doomed to destruction; then at once a stream of flame ran down from the top to the bottom of the stair, every head seemed on fire, and they were painfully and helplessly moved about, the swollen tongues preventing utterance; it was an appalling sight. Again, another cloud of smoke, the roof fell in, and forty-five human beings, lately in health, ceased to exist.

The Rev. Mr. O'Reilly, a Roman Catholic priest, in the conscientious discharge of his sacred office, stood in the doorway, and prayed over them to the last. To the last they were sensible. How fearful must have been their mental agonies!

Living at the time in St. Lewis Street, I was soon at the scene of the dreadful calamity; though I was not aware at first that any one had been left in the theatre. I saw the horses and carriages saved from the livery stables which the fire was approaching. The bells began tolling and the bugles blew loudly 'The Assembly.' I worked at first with the 89th Regt. (which was quartered in town in the Jesuits' barracks), to get water for the military engines. Colonel Walker, R.A., the Commandant of the Garrison, was on the spot. Colonel Thorpe, commanding the 89th, was actively directing the energies of his men, and was ably seconded by his Adjutant, Lieut. Knappe.

At first there was a great delay in getting water. The fire companies brought up their engines, but they were useless for some time; at last the neighbouring wells were tapped, and water-carts brought up a supply from the river. A good deal of struggling now took place between the military and the civilians in their eagerness to get water, each party for their own engines; no blows were struck, there was only an excess of zeal. Mr. Okill Stuart, the Mayor, was present and busily engaged, as were Mr. McCord, and Mr. Russell with the police force, and Mr. Wells, the Inspector of the Fire Department.

I met Lieut. Armstrong in the crowd after his escape; he told me of those burning inside. I ran round to the south gable where ladders were being planted. Some British sailor had, with an axe, knocked out a hole in the wall near the box door, but the opening was made too late to be of use; but those who made it are deserving of every praise. I saw Mr. Alexander Bell, a merchant, and Mr. Jessopp, a collector of customs, carrying a young lady (Miss Rea) down a ladder. I ascended another and carried down a respectable looking woman, who was scorched, yet who in the midst of her agitation cried out for her bonnet! I saw a poor man, near the door, who had been rescued, crying in despair for a young woman with whom he had gone to the theatre, and who was nowhere to be seen. The building was white and red with flames inside. The

charred victims of the fire were in a heap inside, and the smell of roasted flesh was sickening.

A strong detachment of the 14th Regiment came from the citadel with the engines, hooks, and ladders. Major Watson, commanding the regiment, was present with most of the other officers. The men, in conjunction with the Royal Artillery and 89th Regiment, formed streets to pass supplies of water, and by means of their united efforts with the hooks and ladders, they dragged the roof off the stables, and saved the guard-house. Among them worked vigorously Captain Ingall, Deputy-Assistant Quartermaster-General. Nothing could exceed the devotion and energy of the soldiers; they fearlessly exposed themselves to danger from falling timber and their clothes to injury; and it is the opinion of those who lost relatives on this occasion, that if the soldiers had been present to assist those who so courageously tried to save the sufferers, that all might have been got out.

The wing of the chateau began to smoke. I was interested about it, to preserve it as a relic of the palmy days of Quebec. On the outer wall is a cross of St. John of Jerusalem, cut in stone, and with the date 1647. I got an axe, and hewed down part of a wooden spout at an angle, to prevent the fire from running up to the roof. I was immediately surrounded by three of the corporation, who thought there was no danger; but danger there was, for a ladder on the roof quickly caught fire from the sparks brought by the fire-wind which began to rise, though before this the night was fortunately calm and the moon shining brightly on the scene. I ran upstairs, with an active corporal (Garlin, 14th): we found that the fire was not inside. A bold fireman, Thomas Andrews, climbing on the roof, cut away the burning ladder, and hurled it over the eaves. Water thrown on the windows prevented further danger.

The appearance of the fire and the surrounding objects was now awfully grand. Under the black canopy of smoke, the flames rose high in the air, illuminating the tin-covered roofs and spires of the churches and buildings around, and showing the large body of military at work, the helmeted firemen and their bright painted engines, and a great multitude of anxious spectators in the Place d'Armes. Among them were those who ran about, and who cried distractedly for their lost relatives or friends—for those who were never again to cheer the domestic hearth.

The progress of the fire was most rapid, yet it was at last got under, when there was nothing left to burn. The gongs of the engines signalled for more water ever and anon; and, about two in the morning, one by one they left off working, each company, unnecessarily, giving three cheers; silence was best after such a scene of distress.

The energetic magistrate, Mr. R. Symes, had directed that the bodies should not be touched till daylight. I went to bed for a few hours, and rose early to search for my brother officer. The blackened remains of the sufferers were brought out, and laid on the grass of a small terrace at the south gable of the theatre. Forty-three at first were found in a heap, ten feet long, four broad, and four in height; two others were afterwards found but mere trunks: forty-five victims in all.

Most of the heads, the chests, and the arms were consumed by the fire; the lowest of all were tolerably entire; the legs were twisted and distorted in every possible manner, some drawn up to the chest, others stretched out, the feet and legs in one line; in some the clothes were almost all burned off, in others the gowns and trousers were entire. By the dresses and shoes and boots the bodies were made out. One body, that of a man, was covered with long brown hair,