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OLIVE LAMPS SE FIRE PERISH IN THE FLAMES

Appalling Disaster at Boyertown, Pa., in Which 50 to 75 People Were Burned to Death or Crushed in Frantic Battle to Reach the Exits - Many Children in the Crowd.

DOZENS JUMPED FROM BALCONY WINDOWS

BOYERTOWN, Pa., Jan. 13.—Between 5 and 75 persons were burned to death to-night in a fire which completely destroyed Rhodes' Opera House in this place.

The opera house was crowded with the members of St. John's Lutheran Sunday School, who were attending a benefit given for the church.

While the show was in progress, a tank exploded. The actors endeavored to quiet the audience, but in their anxiety to make themselves heard and to avoid the awful stampede of the women and children, the oil lamps which were used as the footlights were overturned, setting the place on fire.

The flames, fed by the oil, shot almost to the ceiling and there was a wild rush of the 700 persons to escape from the burning building.

Scores of women and children were trampled on and several who escaped being burned to death died after being dragged from the opera house.

In many cases, it is said, entire families have been wiped out.

The scene which followed the explosion is indescribable.

Scores of persons who were in the balcony at the time of the explosion, jumped from the windows and sustained fatal injuries.

To add to the terrible disaster the fire apparatus became disabled and the structure was left entirely to the mercy of the seething flames.

It is almost certain not a vestige of the bodies of the unfortunate who were overcome by the smoke and perspiration ever will be found.

Assistance was asked from Pottstown, but before the fire apparatus from that city reached this place the entire centre of the structure was a roaring furnace.

Had the women and children heeded the warning of the cooler heads in the audience the horrible loss of life might have been avoided, but there was the usual panic and stampede which invariably follows at such a catastrophe.

The flames spread rapidly and communicated to the other parts of the theatre.

Men, women and children rushed for the many exits and the weaker sex and the children were trampled and maimed in the mad rush to gain the street.

Medical Assistance Sought.

Assistance was at once asked of both Reading and Pottstown and special trains carrying nurses and doctors were rushed to the scene of the disaster.

Every home within a radius of half a dozen blocks of the opera house was made a temporary hospital, where the wounded were rushed by carriages and other means of conveyance.

Boyertown is a borough with a population of about 2500, and is located about midway between Pottstown and Reading.

The fire is not yet—midnight—under control, but it is thought it will be completely extinguished by the fire department.

Parents Distracted.

Hundreds of persons surrounded the burning structure, apparently unconscious of the pending danger from falling walls.

Many parents who had children in the opera house are pacing to and fro almost maddened by the awful sight.

The night was one of wailing and anguish. The shrieks of mothers who had rushed to the scene as soon as they learned of the fire was pitiful. As the night wore on the crowds surrounding the building grew to such proportions that it was almost impossible for the police force, which had been augmented by a score of men from Pottstown and Reading, to keep the people back. One woman, who said she had lost her entire family in the theatre, was with difficulty restrained from throwing herself into the roaring flames.

LATER: At 1 o'clock this (Tuesday) morning a special train from Reading, carrying physicians and nurses, reached here, but there was little for them to do, as the injured, who had dashed themselves to the physicians, as- sisted by the Pottstown relief corps. A few minutes after midnight the rear wall of the theatre collapsed. The flames broke out anew, and those who had vainly hoped to be able to find the remains of some of their loved ones turned in despair from the scene of the awful catastrophe.

Injured Number 75.

It is estimated that at least seventy-five persons were injured by being trampled upon, either on the stairway or by jumping from the windows of the burning structure. Of this number at least a score were fatally injured, and at least half a dozen succumbed to their injuries after being hurried to one of the temporary hospitals.

Three children, ranging in age from 8 to 12 years, and one woman, who were dragged from the building by persons who had rushed to the rescue, had been trampled almost to a pulp, the skull of one of the unfortunate children having been crushed as by an eggshell.

The fire was under control shortly before 1 o'clock, but it was absolutely impossible to attempt to make a search of the ruins before to-morrow.

The Toronto World

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28TH YEAR

CONFESSES TO SHOOTING BOTH

Italian Arrested Here Admits Murder—Contemplated Another at Falls.

After successfully evading discovery for two years, Charles Primross, the Italian arrested by Detective McKinney Saturday afternoon, has confessed to shooting and killing two men at Minola, N. Y., on Christmas Eve, 1905.

Primross, who immediately identified him as the man wanted, he persisted in denying that he had ever seen or heard of the New York suburb, but when confronted by the sheriff he nonchalantly admitted the whole affair and waived extradition.

Further, he coolly declares that it was to commit murder that he went to Niagara Falls Friday last, due to jealousy, the same cause of his brutally beating in Toronto an unfortunate woman who has followed his fortunes for many days ago that she was discharged from the hospital.

"I feared that she had gone to find that other man, and I followed to kill him. It was for that I took the revolver," I shot him yesterday.

He declares that he failed to find either the man or the woman, who has disappeared from the city. The police are trying to locate her, fearing he may have killed her.

Primross' account of the shooting at Minola is graphic. He says:

"We were playing a game in a house, Rocco Suppa drew a revolver and pointed it at me in a row which happened. I shot him. Then I chased Filippo Niri out into the yard. I fired at him but missed him. He turned around and I shot him in the forehead."

Primross is said to be a member of the Black Hand order, and fearing that an attempt might be made to rescue him, he will be kept here until a guard of two more men arrives from New York.

Detective McKinney is being congratulated by his comrades on the arrest, which was made on the street from a description of the man. Although armed with a revolver and a dirk, the man submitted quietly to arrest.

Semlge Rouy, an Italian living at 114 Elm-street, was identified by the constable as the man who was going around the street with a dirk and a revolver in his pocket he secured the gun and took the man into custody.



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CONSERVATIVES WHAT NOT SEE ORIGINALS

Right of Inspection of Public Papers Refused After an All-Day Discussion.

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The opposition contended that the public was entitled to the originals if it desired them and that failure to produce increased suspicions of wrongdoing.

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Hon. Frank Oliver, who had conducted the deputy minister as to the practice in such cases. In some instances original documents were taken from the department and returned, the department being put to considerable inconvenience in consequence. He advised the government to resist the request.

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Mr. Oliver observed tartly that all Mr. Ames had to do was to allege that he had not been followed by the government, and that he was not a gentleman.

"And how can he do that without seeing the originals," interjected Mr. Northrup amidst opposition cheers. "If he does not desire to do that," retorted the minister of the interior with a glare, "ask him to go to the devil and not make insinuations."

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H. B. Ames of St. Antoine division of Montreal moved for the production of certain papers in connection with the granting of timber limits in the west, and during the greater part of the afternoon and all the evening session the debate was continued.

The minister of the interior opposed the motion on the ground that it was the practice to produce only copies.

The opposition contended that the public was entitled to the originals if it desired them and that failure to produce increased suspicions of wrongdoing.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier challenged the opposition to make a charge that the papers had on the table were not the exact copies. This the latter refused to do, but more than one member unhesitatingly asserted that he believed they had been tampered with. Mr. Ames said the 500 more pages, he was anxious to inspect the originals of only nine, and he appealed to the government not to lay down the principle that the papers were not to be open to the inspection of the representatives of the people.

Hon. Frank Oliver, who had conducted the deputy minister as to the practice in such cases. In some instances original documents were taken from the department and returned, the department being put to considerable inconvenience in consequence. He advised the government to resist the request.

Mr. Foster combated the theory of the minister that the papers were the exclusive property of the employees of the department. The 214 members representing the Ontario division of Canada were he would imagine, superior to the deputy minister.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier called to the support of the minister of the interior the rule of the house that no papers may be taken from the departments unless sufficient reasons were given for the removal of the documents.

R. L. Borden charged that members of the opposition were tampering with the immigration documents in the immigration department, a right that was accorded government inspectors.

Mr. Ames concluded the debate. He said the statement was frequently heard in this country that the government had every possible opportunity to examine documentary evidence, and if they didn't discover anything it showed that they were under a misapprehension of the government. Mr. Oliver therefore advised him that he should proceed to the original by means of a subpoena.

Mr. Oliver observed tartly that all Mr. Ames had to do was to allege that he had not been followed by the government, and that he was not a gentleman.

"And how can he do that without seeing the originals," interjected Mr. Northrup amidst opposition cheers. "If he does not desire to do that," retorted the minister of the interior with a glare, "ask him to go to the devil and not make insinuations."

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