

ing 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, into a terrace, enclosed with a railing, and which, from the charm 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, 43d, 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 audience, if necessary; so that, with the stage door, the passage under the stage, the pit and box door, and the windows over them, the officers had arranged six outlets from the theatre, in case of an alarm; and whilst they found that, with the box or original door, only open it took half an hour to empty the house of a full audience, or 300, yet, with both pit and box doors open, three minutes sufficed to get every one out.

No accident had ever occurred during any of the garrison performances; the camphene lamps were then placed under the charge of a man who knew well how to manage them; there were always a fatigue party of strong Artillerymen in attendance, and plenty of water; and no doors were locked.

On the 8th of June last, a Canadian artist, Mr. M. R. Harrington, hired the St. Louis Theatre from the Corporation of Quebec, for the exhibition of 'illuminated dioramas.' For this purpose the pit was boarded over, and the floor sloped upwards from the orchestra to the back part of the house; a centre passage was left as before between the seats, and from the upper and back part of the house a steep wooden stair, three and a half feet wide, led to the box door.

To illuminate his dioramas, Mr. Harrison unfortunately did not take into his employ the person who understood the management of camphene lamps; he merely hired four of his lamps, to be used with 200 oil lamps. The camphene which is used in North America, is generally prepared by distilling turpentine, and is a very dangerous fluid to handle; it is very light, floats on water, spreads rapidly all about if spilled, and water thrown on it only increases the danger without extinguishing the flame. The insurance companies in Quebec will not now grant policies for buildings where camphene is used.

On the evening of the 12th of June, the theatre was crowded to the door,—at least 300 people were present; the price of admission had been reduced to a quarter of a dollar. The audience was very respectable; heads of families who would have hesitated to attend a theatrical exhibition, took their children to witness these interesting illuminated pictures. It was very properly objected by some that the awful scene of the crucifixion should not have been exhibited, with its accompanying darkness, gleams of light, &c.; yet an aged couple, named Tardif, who had charge of the Court House, were rich, and had never been in a theatre before, went to see the dioramas solely from religious motives.

At 10 o'clock, the exhibition having finished, the band played the National Anthem, the audience were retiring well pleased with what they had witnessed, and a few young men at the upper part of the house were calling out, as a joke, for 'Yankee Doodle,' when a strong light was observed behind the green curtain—a camphene lamp had been upset by a boy, and the flame began to communicate with the baize. Some of the audience in the front rows sat for a short time watching the progress of the flames. Lieut. Armstrong, 14th Regt., leapt on the stage and assisted to extinguish them, but nothing could master the camphene. The leader of the band, Mr. Savageau, quietly collected his music and instruments, and retired under the flames, telling his son to follow him. So little danger did Mr. Savageau apprehend, that missing a favorite piece of music, he returned for it, and again retired in safety; but not so his son.

About 240 people had already quitted the house by the only door left open for them, namely, that by which they had entered the box

door; and now, when the thick camphene smoke began to roll round the walls, the 60 people who still remained on the front rows, now suddenly got up, without uttering a word, and made their way to the stair. They seemed awe-struck—their silence was fearful.

M. Dupuis, a French Canadian, who was present with his wife, now showed great presence of mind. When he was entering the house, he had remarked the porch over the pit door, which door was not used to admit any one, and now seeing a rush towards the box door, he thought to try another mode of escape. Where he had seen a porch he thought there must be a door; he therefore took his wife, who was greatly agitated, to a dark passage on the left, and found the pit door, but it was locked; he felt for the key; it was on a nail near; he applied it to the lock, the door opened, and he found himself inside the closed porch; but he soon kicked out a panel, and got himself and his wife out. Lieut. Armstrong also escaped by the same door. A boy, twelve years of age, named Shaw, who had taken his two little brothers with him to see the dioramas, also maintained his self possession, and when the rush to the back part of the house took place, he held the children, and said 'Stop! we won't go there and be killed; we'll go out another way.' And they did so in safety.

Armstrong now ran round to the box door with some others; it was found closed; it was pushed open and all was darkness inside: he returned to the pit calling out 'fire!' which cry was carried on by others; he again entered the theatre, the flames were among the scenery, though the stage was still clear. Armstrong then kicked down a door communicating 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, wreathing, 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 of fire was given, Miss Brown, a schoolmistress, dashed past those 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 upon 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. Pilon, 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 Regt., 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, Back, Bennet, Stewart, Captain Von Zuile, Commander of the 'Ocean Queen,' &c.) released, by powerful exertions, Mrs. Wheatly 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 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 furthest 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, a 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 felt 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, be-