

Parliament Building At The Federal Capital Is Destroyed By Fire

Flames Started in the Reading Room at Nine O'clock And Spread With Lightning Rapidity---Six Lives Believed to Have Been Lost---Several M. P.'s Declared That They Heard Explosions And Believe the Fire Was Set by Alien Enemies---Loss Will Run Into Millions.

OTTAWA, Feb. 3.—Fire, which broke out in the reading room of the House of Commons at 10 minutes to 9 tonight, spread with appalling rapidity and resulted two hours afterwards in the destruction of the greater part of the magnificent Gothic building.

The library, with its inestimable treasure of books and public documents, and a part of the Senate wing on the east side of the magnificent Parliament building, were saved through fire walls and the efforts of firemen.

The Commons chamber, all the Commons offices, the restaurant, the Speaker's chambers and almost the whole of the west wing, were completely gutted, only the walls and a small portion of the interior of the building remaining intact.

Many valuable records in the various offices were destroyed. It will take months to repair the damage.

The loss will probably be at least \$1,500,000, but no accurate estimate can be given tonight. Meanwhile the Commons will have to continue its labors either in the Senate chambers or in some public edifice in Ottawa.

At the time of writing the fire was still in progress in the central and western portion of the building, and was creeping to the senate side. The central portion, and in the west wing, very little except the stone walls is left to consume. It was a spectacular fire. For a time it was feared that a number of lives had been lost, so rapidly did the fire spread with its pall of smoke through the drafty corridors.

But although the Speaker's wife and a number of the typists and female employees on the upper stories of the building had to be taken down ladders, or jump into fire nets spread by the firemen, it is thought that there were no fatalities among those who were in the building except Madame Morin and Madame Bray, of Quebec, guests of Madame Sevigny, who were caught in the Speaker's chambers.

Four men are reported to be buried in the ruins, but the fierceness of the fire has so far prevented search for the bodies. They were buried by a falling wall and are either firemen or soldiers on duty.

The origin of the fire is a mystery. It may never be known. There were suspicions last night of incendiarism, possibly by a German agent, but as policemen were on guard at both doors of the room where the fire started and others in the room itself, it would have been difficult for anyone to deliberately set the fire without being detected. Those early on the scene told of explosions.

One Minister of the Crown, Hon. Martin Burrell, whose office was just off the reading room, where the fire started, was badly burned about the face in making his escape. When he opened his office door the flames from newspapers and other inflammable material in the room, burst into his face and he had to rush out into the Commons corridor through blinding smoke and flying cinders.

Within five minutes from the time the fire started, the whole place was full of dense smoke.

The Commons, which was in session at the time, with Mr. Loggie of Northumberland, speaking on the question of the encouragement of fish transport to the western provinces, was hurriedly emptied. So rapidly did the pall of smoke rush in that the startled members could with difficulty grope their way out. They did not even have time to get their coats in the lockers, adjacent to the reading room, or to go to their rooms for them. Many of them had to rush outside without overcoats and stand in the freezing weather outside. The Prime Minister himself was among those who had to make his exit hurriedly without overcoat or hat.

Poor Water Pressure.

Although there were supposed to be fire walls, the big roomy corridors provided a fine draught for the flames, and the firemen, owing to poor water pressure and the size of the building, soon lost control.

The fire raged with fury for four hours, making an appalling but splendid spectacle for tens of thousands who crowded upon the hill. General Sir Sam Hughes, who was early on the spot, promptly called out the 77th Battalion, who formed a fire cordon about the building. All the available fire appliances in the city were brought to play. Ambulances, to look after those overcome by smoke or who were injured, were rushed to the scene.

Jumped into fire nets.

In the Speaker's chamber, just adjacent to the reading room, Madame Sevigny, the wife of the Speaker, and her two children, had to be taken out through the windows. Madame Sevigny herself jumped into a fire net a few feet below the window, but escaped injury.

Two ladies of the stenographic staff also were obliged to jump from second story windows into the fire nets, but landed safely. One of the female assistants in the restaurant, who was also carried down a ladder, was so overcome by smoke that the pulmonologist had to be brought into play, and it was an hour or so before she recovered consciousness.

The fire was fought by the firemen both from inside and outside. Soon it was seen that the flames had made their way through the ceiling partitions into the Speaker's quarters and on to the west wing. It got into the elevator shafts and up into the second and third stories.

Wind Fanned Flames.

A strong wind blowing from the

east side. The Red Chamber itself is doomed, but the firemen still hope to check the flames in the extreme east and west portions of the building.

General Sir Sam Hughes, Minister of Militia, pending an official investigation of the fire, is not inclined to attribute it to incendiary work by some alien enemy.

According to the story told by the policeman just adjacent to the reading room, the fire started among some files of papers. At first it looked like merely a small blaze, and he tried to extinguish it with a chemical extinguisher. However, just at that moment, he says, the door leading into the Senate rooms was opened and a strong draught of air blew through, fanning the flames among the piles of papers.

Four Men Missing.

It is feared at 1.30 this morning that four more deaths must be added to the toll of the fire. Two Dominion policemen and two employees of the House are definitely reported missing. They are Robert Fanning, attached to the Speaker's staff; Alfred Desjardins, in the Commons post office department, and two Dominion policemen whose names are not yet available.

This brings the known fatalities to six. The four men with several others were helping to fight the fire in the rooms below the Speaker's Chamber when the roof fell in. They have not been since seen and others working with them who managed to escape are certain that they were caught in the falling debris. It will be impossible to look for the bodies until some time tomorrow.

The East and West blocks, departmental buildings, separate from the main building, are unscathed.

Tower Collapsed.

The roof of the tower collapsed at 1.30 and fell to the northeast with a roar, sending a shower of sparks and embers into the sky.

The main building of the House of Parliament is doomed to total destruction. The loss cannot be estimated in money. The building was valued at about \$1,500,000, but the contents are of inestimable value. There is no insurance.

The Parliamentary library at the rear will likely be saved, although soldiers are busy carrying out the valuable volumes.

Two of the spectacular incidents of

WHY EYESIGHT FAILS

By a Specialist

Poor sight and bad teeth are due to the same cause—neglect. We neglect our teeth and they decay; we neglect our eyes and our sight grows dim. Most people know how to preserve their teeth, but few know what to do for their eyes. Some who carefully clean their teeth do nothing to help their eyes carry the awful strain put upon them by modern life.

Our eyes need care, and if we refuse to give it to them we pay the penalty in suffering and poor eyesight. A soothing, cleansing, healing lotion for the eyes that 25¢ out of a hundred should use twice a day or oftener is made after this prescription: Dissolve 5 grains Bon-Opto in 1/2 glass of water; use as an eye bath. It sharpens the vision, relieves irritation, allays inflammation, makes the eyes feel smooth and fine as if well lubricated. Many who use it find their great surprise that they do not need glasses. They regain perfect sight and eye comfort. Used early in the morning it makes the eyes feel fresh and smooth; used at night it brings comfort and a soothing sense of sweet relief from strain. After an automobile ride or a picture show; a day of close, hard work or an hour's reading that tires the eyes, an application of this solution soothes, comforts and rests the eyes. Your druggist can fill this prescription, or the Valmus Drug Co. of Toronto will fill it for you by mail. Any physician familiar with the formula, even if he has never prescribed it, will tell you that it is perfectly harmless.

A prominent City Physician to whom the above article was submitted, said: "Bon-Opto is a very remarkable remedy. Its constituent ingredients are well known to eminent eye specialists and widely prescribed by them. It can be obtained from any good druggist and is one of the very few preparations I feel should be kept on hand for regular use in almost every family."

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It is, as a rule, not dangerous, but is very irritating and annoying to the sufferer on account of the terrible itching and burning sensation it causes.

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The fire were the escape of one of the employees in the boiler room through a tunnel with his clothes on fire, and the carrying of one of the restaurant girls who had fainted down the stairs from the top story through the smoke by John Corrigan, assistant steward of the restaurant.

Grave fears are entertained for the safety of J. B. Laplante, assistant clerk of the House.

Mederic Martin's Story.

Mayor Mederic Martin, of Montreal, told his story to the Canadian Press shortly after his arrival at the Chateau Laurier. He escaped uninjured, but was mourning the loss of his fur coat, cap and other apparel.

"I was on my way from the chamber to my room, which is near the library," said Mayor Martin, "and had gone through the door on the east side of the House of Commons chamber, when I heard an explosion. Instantaneously flames shot out from the reading room and I realized there was a blaze. My first thought was of the fire extinguisher, which was near by, but policemen were then endeavoring to press in to service and I turned and ran into the chamber.

"Deputy Speaker Rhodes was in the chair and all was tranquil until I dashed through the door and shouted: 'Fire—and a big one!' I turned toward my room again, but by that time the corridor was filled with smoke and flames. I called for the members to get out and ran around by room 16, giving the alarm there and escaping into the open air. I saw them helping one of the ministers, I think it was Mr. Burrell, out of his room, and later I saw Dr. Clark, who had been burned about the face and hands.

"I put in an order for the Montreal fire brigade. I notified Chief Tremblay to send as many men as possible. The flames shot along the corridors at an awful rate. There was not much confusion on the floor of the House and to this many of the members probably owe their escape."

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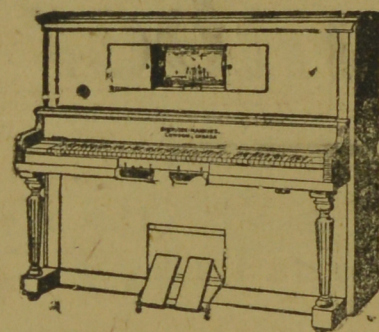
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