

Theater Fires From The Salt Lake Point Of View.

ECHOES OF WALKER OPERA HOUSE FIRE.

Destruction of the Building Thirteen Years Ago Vividly Recalled.

NOW CONFLAGRATION STARTED.

Flames Broke Out After a Midsummer Production of a "Held by the Enemy" Performance.

COMMON CAUSES OF SUCH FIRES.

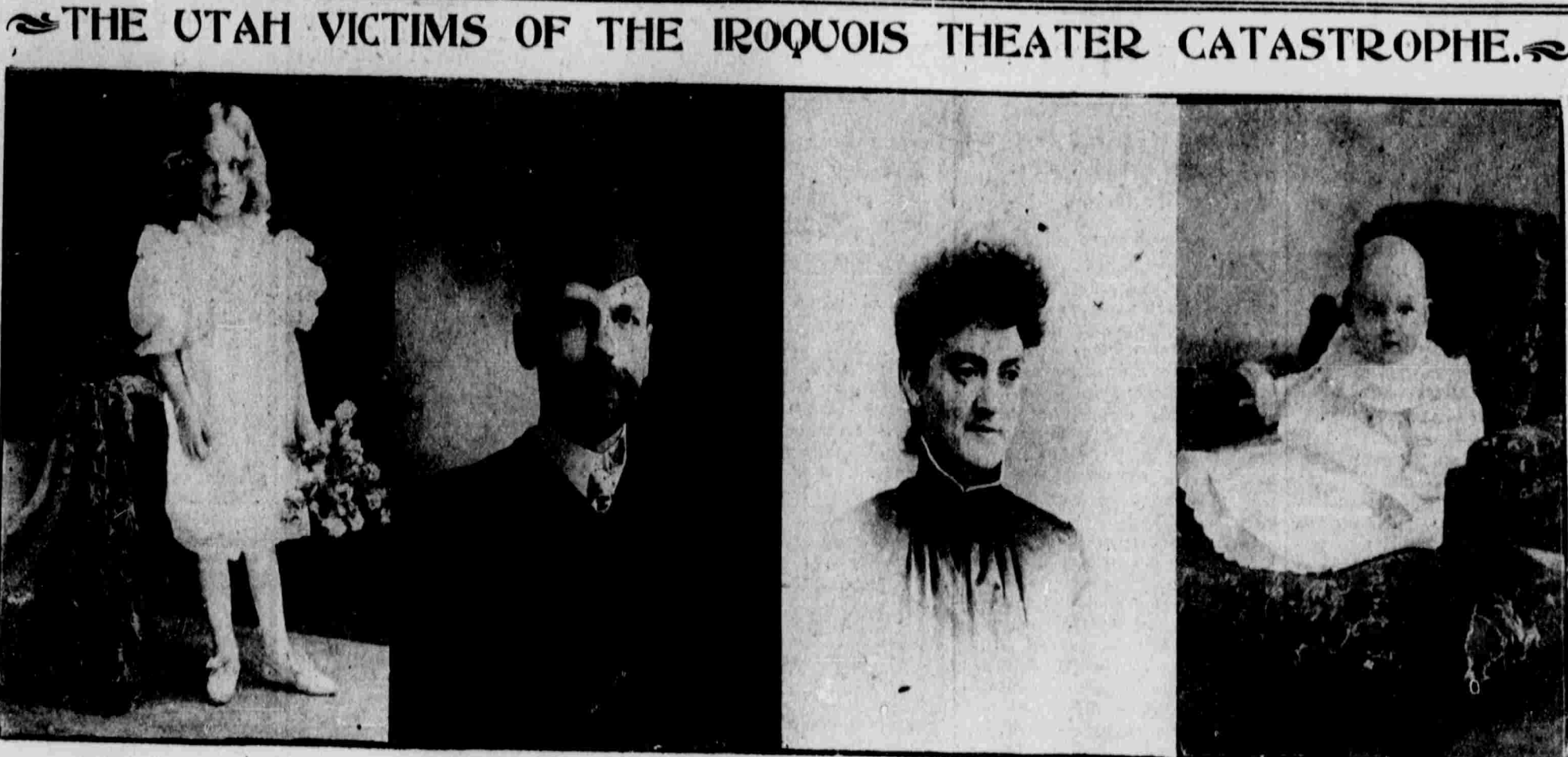
Something of the Customary Precautions, the Conditions of the Salt Lake and Grand Theaters.

It was more than 13 years ago that Salt Lake experienced its first and only serious theater fire—the destruction of the Walker Opera House, which stood on the site of the present Atlas block. There was no loss of life, but the property loss was heavy. The play was over and only the stage hands remained in the building when a piece of scenery was ignited by a gas "border-light" and in an incredibly short time the whole stage was a mass of flames. After five hours, a few fragments of wall were all that remained of the building. One theory, strongly advanced, as to the origin of the Iroquois horror in Chicago is almost exactly the same as in the case of the Salt Lake fire. It is blamed by the performers of the "Mr. Bluebeard" company that sparks from a calcium, or arc light, set fire to a flimsy border, with the horrible result that is still being told. It is conceded that the result would have been different if the asbestos curtain had not failed to work.

WALKER OPERA HOUSE FIRE.
The Walker Opera House, owing to the limited facilities of that day, was lighted by gas exclusively. The rows of lights hanging over the stage were partially protected by a trough shaped piece of tin, which served also as a reflector. On the night of July 3, 1890, "Held by the Enemy" was presented. The performance was over and the scenery was being taken out. A stage hand opened a rear door just as the men in the flies were lowering a light cloth border. The draft caught the flimsy material and it swayed against the border-light. In an instant it was ablaze. It was still possible to avert the fire by cutting the rope that held the blazing border, which would bring it to the stage, and dousing it. But nowhere could a hatchet, axe or blade of any description be found, until finally somebody rushed up stairs with a pocket knife and began sawing the rope with it. Of course it was too late. Other pieces had caught and the fly gallery was all in flames.

A FAULTY PRECAUTION.
There was just one hope left. The manager, W. J. Burgess, in a stroke of enterprise, had equipped the stage with percolated tin sprinklers. One turn of a crank and the whole stage would be drenched. As is usual in such cases, it failed to work at this particular crisis. It had not been tested since its first installation and was quite as useless as the asbestos curtain in the Iroquois. A professor who was to give a picture show in the opera house had from 20 to 30 tanks of calcium gas stored away, and these exploded, adding to the havoc which the flames had already spread. Mr. Burgess, who was manager of the Walker, is now managing Boyd's theater in Omaha, and is interested in several other properties. He has had, in his career, several disastrous fires in his career as a manager.

PRESENT DAY CONDITIONS.
A repetition of the Walker Opera



MELBA ALEXANDER, Eight Years Last March (Dead).

DR. W. G. ALEXANDER, Whose Whole Family Was Killed.

MRS. LULU BOYER ALEXANDER, Who Perished With Her Children, Aged 37.

BOYER ALEXANDER, From Baby Photo; Aged Four (Dead).

House fire would be next to impossible in Salt Lake at the present time, because of the excellent precautions taken by the management of each house. Both the Salt Lake Theater and the Grand are fully provided with modern appliances. One of the first things each did was to place broad-axes, "as sharp as razors," in the fly loft. The managers had in mind the fate of the Walker Opera House. Then there are all sorts of chemical extinguishers; water buckets are plentiful and in the proper places, exits are numerous and, best of all, the employes work under cast iron rules that would prevent any catastrophe, except in the case of a man going hopelessly out of his mind. The old practice of filling the aisles with chairs, when the demand for seats warranted it, has fortunately been done away with. The ushers, water boys and program boys are compelled to stay in close proximity to the exits, to push them open—all the doors open outward, in compliance with the city ordinance—in case of alarm.

THEATER FIRE CAUSES.
The three common cause of theater fires are: Fire and electrical effects on the stage, defective wiring and smoking behind the scenes. It is a common thing to discover an actor smoking in his dressing room, although it is in direct violation of the rules of every theater and opera house in the United States. If the actor is a star, he simply ignores the various placards announcing in bold letters that smoking is prohibited. A lesser light smokes just as often, but draws his door close and makes more of a secret of it. If a house employe detects anybody in the act, it is his duty to inform the house manager at once, and frequently great hub-bub has been raised between the house manager and the company manager because of the violation of this rule. The latter cures not half so much as the manager of the house, naturally, for he does not own the theater. He is interested, if at all, only in his scenery and costumes. It is a common practice for chorus girls to "hunch up" in one room and inaugurate a wholesale cigarette bee. They find it safer than to smoke in all of the various rooms assigned to them, for detection means either a fine or discharge.

SOME NARROW ESCAPES.
A few instances of narrow escapes here in Salt Lake, without reference to any house, will indicate how easily trouble can spring from trivial causes, and how careful wise managers are to allow no intimation of danger to reach the audience.
A comic opera was being presented at a certain house. The tenor was in his dressing room cleaning some white gloves with gasoline. When he had finished, he threw what gasoline was left in the saucer into a water pail beside his dresser, and went on for his next scene. When he returned to the room he casually lit a cigarette and threw the burning match into the water pail. Instantly the gasoline flared up. In his fright, the only method of extinguishing it that occurred to him was to kick the bucket over. When he did so, the carpet took fire, the flames spread to the curtain and the room was soon filled with smoke. About that time a flag hand, detecting the fumes, rushed on the scene with a chemical extinguisher and was successful in putting out the blaze. The tenor was fined \$25 when the circumstances were made known to his manager.
The roof of one of the theaters caught

fire once from the chimney during a performance and although the fire department was called out and there was a great clang and clatter outside, not a person inside the theater was aware of anything unusual, for the very good reason that the door-keepers would allow nobody to enter until the thing was over.

PYPER WAS COOL.
Manager Pyper of the Salt Lake theater adopted a cool-headed course on the night of the university fire something over a year ago. Up on the hill the holocaust was raging. Inside the theater the University Dramatic club was giving a play. The house was packed to the doors by students of the institution. Fearing that if word of the fire should reach the inside, the students would create a panic, Mr. Pyper closed the doors and allowed absolutely nobody to enter. Nor did the audience hear of the fire until it was discovered by themselves after reaching the sidewalk.

MANAGER PYPER TALKS.
"A man said to me the other day," remarked Manager Pyper, "There should be a law forbidding people to fire. That is nonsense, you can't legislate fools out of existence. Here is an example of foolishness that might have caused a panic at our house at the time of the University blaze. When the fire broke out a man rushed frantically into the lobby and said, 'I want to announce to the audience that the University is on fire.' Mr. Gibson, the doorkeeper, and I had to forcibly eject him to prevent a panic."

"FAST MAIL" DANGER.
A melodrama called "The Fast Mail" has a railroad scene in which an engine dished by at terrific speed, supposedly, worked by a man who carries it in front of him and runs across the stage. It spatters and spits fire and choo-choos for further orders. A fool stage hand on the occasion in question, after safely landing the train's passengers on the opposite side of the stage, carefully laid the locomotive, with its fiery smokestack, against a "wood wing" (cotton-duck No. 2). In another instant the scenery would have been in flames, but the stage carpenter was standing nearby and dashed the contents of a water bucket over the threatened spot. And then, the danger over, the company's stage manager actually took the local man to task "for wetting the scenery."

ON BACKS OF SEATS.
William S. McCarthy, stage manager for the Salt Lake Hardware company, in course of conversation, taking notice of some suggestions that might be followed locally, "The public is a creature of habit," he declared. "Once fix a thing in its mind and it will do it instinctively and unwittingly. For instance if a seat car were printed and attached to the back of every seat and something like this, 'This theater can be emptied in three minutes—do as you watch. Your nearest exit is (a hand indicating the direction)'. After seeing this notice night after night the legend would become fixed in the mind and people would instinctively do as requested. Then, too, every exit of the theaters should be used nightly and the habitual theater goers would instinctively make for the nearest without all crowding for the main exit. I would also suggest that an iron grill be run down the center of each section of the parquet. This would teach the public to take the aisle nearest and not all crowd to the center aisle. Two hundred persons so educated would hold any theater crowd steady."

ABOUT ASBESTOS CURTAINS.
If there is one important feature of protection against fire that the Salt Lake play houses are lacking, it is the asbestos curtain. It is too early now to speculate with any degree of accuracy as to the effect of the Iroquois disaster on the local houses, but it seems reasonably certain that it will result in asbestos curtains being installed here, as well as in every city in the country.
In the case of the Iroquois, the asbestos curtains were really a menace, instead of a protecting feature, forming as it did a perfect blow-off for the fire. But there is no doubt of its value. Mayor Harrison has ordered about 20 theaters closed in Chicago because they lack this method of protection, and it is believed that in other large cities some similar action is likely to result. Europe recognizes the unflammable curtain by national laws, and all theaters are required to perform and lower it twice during each performance, as a test of its condition.

MAYOR THOMPSON ON FIRE PRECAUTIONS.

Mayor Ezra Thompson is a firm believer in legislation that will make the rules governing theaters and other public resorts even more strict than they are now, especially since the Chicago horror.

"I believe with that architect of the Iroquois," says the mayor, "that every house should be as nearly fire-proof as human ingenuity can make it; that even wood should be abolished in the furnishings. This Chicago affair is enough to make all of us fanatics on the question. God knows! 'In every house there should be a sufficient number of exits. That is most important of all. Exits! Exits! You may not be able to avert a panic in a crowd, that scents, or sees, danger, but if you have enough exits to let them out as rapidly as they can go, you can sit back and laugh at the panic. I stopped one house from filling the aisles with chairs. Think what the result would have been had the Iroquois aisles been so stuffed.'"

SCHOOL HOUSE FIRES.

What is Done in Salt Lake to Protect Children—Drills Abandoned.

The terrible fire in Chicago with its appalling attendant loss of life, has occasioned in the minds of many people in this city the query as to what precautions have been taken to insure the safety of the public school children should fire at any time break out in any of the buildings. To ascertain the exact condition the "News" today sought an interview with Supt. Christensen, who stated that the school buildings—those recently erected—had been built to comply with the city ordinance; that the buildings had double doors which opened outward and had at least three exits, which made possible a complete dismissal in between two and three minutes. Mr. Christensen further stated Mr. Pinney, superintendent of school buildings, had directed the utmost precaution against fire, and had spared no expense to make the structures as nearly fire-proof as possible. The schools, said he, are well supplied with fire extinguishers, and the principals and teachers are fully informed as to what to do in case such an emergency should arise. Fire drills, which once were a feature of the public schools, have been discontinued for obvious reasons, the chief reason being that it worked the pupils up to such a high tension that it had a decided effect in unfitting them for school work. However, general drill work is still attended to and the discipline is such that should a fire occur the pupils can all safely be dismissed in short order. Again the buildings are nearly all heated by steam and so thorough has been the attention given to the merest detail that fire, thought Mr. Christensen, was well nigh an impossibility.

BELLS TOLL FOR CHICAGO'S DEAD.

Chicago, Jan. 2.—Church bells tolling at noon, business activity checked, many celebrations proposed and long lines of funerals making their way to the outlying districts where the cemeteries are situated—these circumstances today evidenced Chicago's outward grief for the victims of the Iroquois theater disaster. Priests and ministers of the gospel went from funeral to funeral today, as they will tomorrow and Monday. The unidentified dead will be kept as long as possible at the morgues. If no one then comes to lay claim to the bodies they will be buried at the city's expense. By common assent of the clergy, "Lead, Kindly Light," the hymn written by Cardinal Newman, is being sung at all funerals.
The city hall, except absolutely necessary departments, was closed today. The board of trade closed an hour earlier than usual and a number of mercantile and manufacturing establishments also closed early. The large

retail dry goods stores were a notable exception. The managers concluded that the extraordinary demand for mourning goods would work a hardship to the bereaved friends of the dead should these stores close. The banks were open as usual.
Thirty-four teachers in the public schools are known to have lost their lives in the fire and the schools will be closed Monday in their memory.
The tolling of bells at noon for an hour was in response to an expressed wish of Mayor Harrison. The mayor said: "Tolling the church bells throughout the city on Chicago's day of mourning for the dead who perished in the fire at the Iroquois theater would be an appropriate expression of grief. The suggestion was made to me by a clergyman and I wish it to be published so that pastors may carry it out. I strongly urge them to begin the tolling of bells at noon and to let the mournful sound continue for an hour. Such an expression of sorrow would bring to the hearts and minds of everyone the memory of Chicago's terrible loss."

CORPSES RECOVERED, 536.

Chicago, Jan. 2.—The total number of corpses recovered from the Iroquois theater fire stands today at 536, as compared with 532 yesterday. Of these 25 remain unidentified.
Clarence J. Thompson, Miss Gertrude Fitzpatrick, Harry Ludwig, Mrs. Lulu Greenwald and Nancy Hanson, the last named of Grandville, Mich., were identified today.
The unidentified body of a woman was found at Jordan's morgue. A ticket was found on the body "Detroit to Chicago."
A thorough analysis of the composition of the "asbestos" curtain of the Iroquois is being made by the city chemists.
The curtain was consumed by the flames, although the ordinance requires it be proof against such genuine asbestos material.
Among the missing reported today, are the following:
Mrs. William O. Reynolds.
Mrs. A. G. Stravinsky.
Josephine Reynolds, 7 years old.
James Frazer, Peoria, Ill.

DAVIS AND POWERS ARRESTED.

Chicago, Jan. 2.—The Inter Ocean this morning says that warrants have been issued for the arrest of Will J. Davis and Harry Powers, proprietors and managers of the Iroquois theater, and George Williams, city building inspector, on the criminal charge of manslaughter.
The warrants were issued by Justice George W. Underwood at his residence after 11 o'clock last night and the charges were sworn to by Arthur E. Hull of 34 Oakwood boulevard, who lost his wife and three children in the fire.
Mrs. Hull's maid also perished.
The warrants, the Inter Ocean says, were not served in the regular manner. The three men accused were notified by telephone that the warrants had been issued and were directed to appear at 11 o'clock this morning at Justice Underwood's court and give bonds. The attorneys for Messrs. Powers and Davis assured the justice that their clients would appear at the stated hour. Mr. Hull, the complaining witness, is connected with a Chicago commercial agency.

Tomorrow he will leave Chicago with the bodies of the four members of his family for his wife's former home, Troy, N. Y., where they will be buried. Mr. Hull stated that he would return immediately after the funeral to prosecute the charge. His entire family was wiped out in the fire.
The complainant, Mr. Hull, said: "My wife and my children, all I ever had to live for, are gone. All that remains is for me to make someone pay for this carelessness."
A few carpenters and stage hands have been arrested. Men who sang in the chorus are in jail. Such an indignation is a cruel mockery. The men who are responsible are allowed to walk the streets untouched, while a few laborers are arrested.
"This has been the greatest calamity in the city's history and the authorities must understand that those who have suffered will not wait for them to daily along. There must not be any politics or favoritism in this investigation."

The lateness of the hour at which the warrants were issued, the Inter Ocean night, caused the complainant's attorney and Justice Underwood that it would be sufficient for detectives to serve the warrants over the telephone.
Mrs. Powers answered to the telephone call at her husband's home in Grand boulevard. Detective James W. Cody requested her to tell Mr. Powers to hurry to Justice George W. Underwood's residence. Mrs. Powers immediately became hysterical.
"Oh, he could not help that terrible accident," she wailed over the telephone. "Our own little boy was there and he would not have been there if we had not thought the theater safe."
She was quieted and promised to inform both Mr. Powers and Mr. Davis, who were at the Powers theater, of the summary action which had been taken against them. Detective Cody assured her that if they came to the house the confusion of arresting them at their homes would be avoided.
City Building Inspector Williams was reached at his home in Rhodes avenue,

"It's no surprise to me, but don't worry about me paying town to dodge the consequences," he announced briefly. "Can't I arrange to prepare and give bonds some time tomorrow?"
To bring Inspector Williams to the residence on South Park boulevard would have compelled the justice to remain up until early morning. A continuation was therefore agreed to. A few minutes later came a call from the Powers residence.
"Father just came home with a physician and has been taken to bed," said the voice of a young man. It was agreed that the three accused should appear today at Justice Underwood's court and give bonds.
Formerly charged with manslaughter, Managers Will J. Davis and Harry J. Powers of the Iroquois theater, with City Building Commissioner Williams, were today held under bonds of \$10,000 each.
Colonel William Pinkerton and Charles H. Plamondon furnished bonds for Davis and Powers.
Andrew J. Graham, a banker, furnished bond for Commissioner Williams.

Arthur E. Hull, whose family perished in the fire, and who was the complainant, was present when the two theater managers and the city official underwent the ordeal of facing the charges. The hearing of the cases was set for Jan. 12.

TWO PROSPECTORS KILLED BY PIUTES.

Chicago, Ill., Jan. 2.—A dispatch to the Tribune from Clifton, Nev., says: Word has just reached here of the killing of two prospectors, William Jones and Henry Alexander, by Piute Indians, who are threatening revolt against the whites. The prospectors were working in the Arrow canyon range. Henry Stowe and James Dunlap, two other prospectors, passed their way through the bodies of the men lying near the ashes of a camp fire. They had been shot and their bodies afterward slightly mutilated.
The murder is laid to Piute Indians from the Moapa reservation, who are roving about committing depredations on ranches and camps of surveyors or prospectors. A general uprising is feared.
The trouble started over the passing of sentence of death on a Piute boy who killed William Williams near Logans in August last year. The Indians threaten a wholesale killing of whites if the sentence of death is carried out.

Funeral of Rev. Father Deshon.

New York, Jan. 2.—Services over the body of the Rev. Father George Deshon, superior-general and one of the founders of the missionary society of the Paulist Fathers, were held at the church of St. Paul the Apostle today. The Very Rev. Michael J. Lavelle, vicar-general, presided, and the final absolution was pronounced by Archbishop Farley. The body was placed in the crypt of the church.
The cadets at the West Point Military academy, of which Father Deshon was a graduate and classmate of Gen. Grant, sent a wreath of immortelles.

MANAGERS JONES AND HAMMER, Grand Theater.

"In common with all other houses that are conscientiously managed, we have aimed to protect our patrons against fires or scares in every way that is possible. We have three exits on the east side of the house down stairs and the main exit. There are three exits from the gallery, one on each side of the rotunda and the one recently completed on the west side of the building.
"The rules of the Grand are so strict, both in front and behind the scenes, that an outbreak of fire would seem to us little short of a miracle. We have a regular inspector who goes over every inch of the electrical wiring once a week, and sees that it is in first-class condition. We prohibit smoking in all parts of the theater, no matter who is the violator of the rule, or what his standing, and we have on one occasion at least refused to ring up the curtain because of a short-sighted company manager who persisted in smoking behind the scenes.
"The doors of the Grand open outwardly and during a performance we keep the employes of the front of the house near the exits, to throw them open in case of any alarm. We have time and again demonstrated that we can empty the house of its capacity in four minutes. That is to say, this is the time ordinarily required. In a case of 'hurry' barring the people becoming panic-stricken, it might be done in half that time.
"The Grand is well equipped with water buckets, tanks and extinguishing apparatus, and the knives, hatchets, axes and similar implements that are so essential to the successful handling of a fire are in the fly-loft the appearance of a hardware store.
"No, I do not believe that Salt Lake play-houses are in danger of catastrophe. The horrible affair at Chicago is enough to make the people stop and think, of course, but in no city that I have ever visited were the theaters better equipped to cope with fire, nor was ever greater precaution exercised against it than here."

RUSSIA REFUSES JAPAN'S PROPOSALS

Foreign Ministers of Either Country Confer With a View to An Amicable Adjustment.

SITUATION IS MOST SERIOUS.

Lansdowne Fears That the War Party Is in the Ascendant in Czar's Empire.

A SQUADRON SENT TO MASAMPAO.

Warlike Preparations Proceed With Unprecedented Speed at Japanese Arsenal.

St. Petersburg, Jan. 2.—It appears to be true that Russia has declined not to accept Japan's precise proposals but the foreign office today informed the Associated Press that Foreign Minister Lamsdorff and the Japanese minister, Kurino, are still conferring with the view of arriving at an amicable settlement.
Unofficially, the situation is regarded as being most serious.

WAR IS EXPECTED.

London, Jan. 2.—No word has yet been received here tending to show when the Russian reply to Japan may be expected. Foreign Secretary Lansdowne has informed Baron Hayashi, the Japanese minister, that he fears that the war party in Russia is in the ascendant and that he has faint hopes of Japan receiving a favorable reply.
Baron Hayashi says he has received no news of the intended dispatch of a Japanese squadron to Masampo. The last news he heard was that a Russian cruiser was there. The minister pointed out that the dispatch of a squadron to Masampo would not necessarily be a warlike action, though it could scarcely help being regarded in the line of other precautions which Japan has openly taken.

The weekly papers here share in the general feeling of alarm, current in Great Britain. The Spectator says war draws ever nearer and adds: "If we are dragged into this war, as we may be, the country will not be divided in sympathy, despite of Russia being as strong among the nations of our population as it was in 1855."
The paper surmises that Russia may keep her ships in the harbors, as she did during the Crimean war, thereby forcing land actions or a dangerous attempt by Japan to seize Port Arthur and Vladivostok.

The Saturday Review adopts a somewhat similar tone, saying that the likelihood of Chinese intervention menaces the commercial interest of all Europe and the United States.
Information has been received in London diplomatic quarters unfriendly to Russia that M. Bezobrazov, who was recently raised by the czar to a secretaryship of state, is the power behind the scenes of the Russo-Japanese negotiations. M. Bezobrazov, according to this source of information, who is now the prime favorite of the czar and the leader of the war party, is president of the Yalu River Timber company; is largely interested in commercial enterprises in Korea, and is the bosom friend of General Alekseeff. Though the news is evidently partial, it receives some credit, and adds to the alarmist feeling.

SQUADRON SENT TO MASAMPAO.

Tokio, Jan. 2.—The report is current that the Japanese squadron of six armored cruisers under Admiral Kamimura, now at Sasebo, will seize the port of Masampo, Corea, and that its departure has been fixed for Jan. 4. In well informed circles, however, it is doubted that Japan would seize Masampo or any Korean port except to forestall Russia in the event of the latter showing evidence of an intention to take such a step, or in the event of the negotiations between the two countries finally ending in failure.

Great activity prevails and the forces of warlike preparation have been increased at the Osaka arsenal. The holidays of the arsenal operatives have been curtailed in order to hurry up the work in hand.