

## The Empire Palace in Danger Sheffield Ball Room in Flames Fire at the Empire Buildings

A fire which for a time placed in jeopardy the Empire Music Hall in Charles Street, Sheffield, was discovered early this morning in Pinstone Street. The principal entrances to the Empire Palace are on Charles Street. The stage door is on Union Street, and here are also entrances and exits for the gallery and pit. On the Pinstone Street side are the Empire Buildings, consisting of a series of lock-up saleshops, over which are suites of rooms used for dances and concerts and a billiard saloon. It was in one of these rooms that the outbreak occurred.

The Empire Rooms, the name given to the rooms over the Pinstone Street saleshops, are occupied by Mr. E C. Lockwood. The whole of the apartments on the first floor are adapted for billiards, while the rooms on the second floor are utilised for other social purposes. The whole of these apartments back close up to the Empire Palace.

Last night a private dance, organised by the Master Butchers Association, was held in one of the upper rooms, which was specially furnished and decorated for the occasion. The function concluded about one o'clock, and half an hour later Mr. Lockwood left the building, everything then being apparently safe. At half-past six this morning, Police-constable (114) Widdowson was walking along Pinstone Street, when he saw flames coming out of one of the front windows of the upper storey. That the matter was serious there was no doubt, and the officer, without delay, gave the signal for assistance. The Fire Brigade were quickly on the scene with horse escape and two tenders, and an entry being effected, it was found that the ballroom was all ablaze. The flames had got such a hold that there was considerable apprehension for the safety of the Empire itself. The firemen, however, worked with a will, and in half an hour had the satisfaction of subduing the flames.

Considerable damage, however, had been done. The floor and ceiling of the ballroom were burned through, furniture and decorations were destroyed, much damage had been done by smoke, and altogether the bright and attractive appearance of the ballroom of the previous night had given place to a scene of desolation. Fortunately the billiard-rooms escaped serious injury, and the business of this department will not be interfered with. The damage, which luckily is covered by insurance, is rather serious, and some weeks must elapse before the whole of the injury can be repaired.

The case of the fire is a mystery. The upper floors are heated by two gas stoves, but these are some distance from the place where the fire originated. The supposition is that the fusing of an electric wire was responsible for the outbreak. The damage is estimated at between £300 and £400.