

DREADFUL ACCIDENT AT EDINBURGH.

Account of the dreadful accident which took place on Saturday at Picardy Place Edinburgh, at the Sale of Lord Eldin's splendid collection of Pictures, when the Floor of the Auction Room gave way, and 150 Persons were buried in the ruins.

CALAMITOUS ACCIDENT AT THE SALE OF THE ELDIN PICTURES.

A dreadful accident occurred at the sale of the Eldin Collection of pictures on Saturday, and, but for some providential circumstances, might have been attended with results as tragical and calamitous as those which, several years ago, followed the fall of a portion of the gallery in the church of Kirkcaldy. About twenty minutes or half an hour past two o'clock on Saturday, while Mr Winstanley was in the act of disposing of an exquisite Teniers, one of Lord Eldin's principal favourites, a crash was heard which evidently announced some accident, but at the instant no one was aware whence it proceeded, or had the least idea of the extent of the calamity of which it was the forerunner. It was only when a dense cloud of dust arose, accompanied with the wild shrieks and screams of the sufferers, that the fearful extent of the calamity was understood, and it became distinctly known that a portion of the floor had given way. The scene which was thus produced may be imagined, but can scarcely be described in an adequate manner. In a few moments of time, from 30 to a 100 persons, ladies as well as gentlemen, were precipitated in one mass, amidst broken joists, bindings, lath, plaster, pictures, furniture, into an apartment immediately below, filled with china and articles of vertu; and considering the circumstances of the accident itself, the height of the fall, the dangerous nature of the materials in the lower apartment, and the crowded mass of human beings suddenly thrown into it, many of them head foremost, it seems truly astonishing that so few fatal or serious casualties occurred. The cries and shrieks, intermixed with exclamations and ejaculations of distress, were truly heart-rending; and what added to the unutterable agony of that awful moment, the density of the cloud of dust, impervious to the rays of light, produced total darkness, diffusing a choking atmosphere, which nearly stifled the terrified multitude; and in this state of horrible suspense they remained for several minutes. At length as the door of the apartment had not only been locked but jammed up by the fallen fragments of the flooring, the sound of a sledge hammer was heard forcing an entrance; and from this all knew that they must wait with what patience they could;—only one or two individuals, by scrambling up some book-shelves in the room below, having succeeded, with the assistance they received from those above, in regaining the broken floor. Although many precious lives were in imminent peril on this occasion, yet only one individual suffered fatally—Alexander Smith, Esq. banker. A few minutes before the accident occurred Mr Smith was in the side-room with some friends but not liking his situation, which afforded only a partial view of the company, he entered the drawing-room, and, mixing with the crowd, gradually reached the fatal spot where he was doomed to be hurried as it were in a moment, into the land of spirits. But when the door of the lower apartment (into which the people had fallen) was burst open, and the sufferers extricated from their awful situation, Mr Smith was still alive, and able to say in a faint voice to the person who raised him up from among the rubbish, 'Oh, move me easily, I am very much hurt.' He was carried to a couch in the dining-room, where in a few minutes after he expired apparently without a struggle. Mr Smith had received a severe contusion in the forehead probably from a fragment of the hearthstone which was found near the place where he lay; a chest of drawers which had stood near him in the drawing-room, also fell upon him; and, besides all this a heap of persons appear to have tumbled above him. His unhappy fate will be generally and sincerely lamented. Few persons in Edinburgh were better known or more cordially esteemed. His unobtrusive character, gentlemanly manners, and great private worth, rendered him a favourite with all who knew him, and it may with truth be said of him, that

he had not a personal enemy in the world. As soon as the people were disentangled from the rubbish, and liberated from the horrid imprisonment where they were in imminent danger of being suffocated, and where, in fact, death from this cause would have ensued had a few minutes more elapsed before an entrance was forced, those who had suffered most were removed into the dining-room, lobby, and other places adjacent. Their appearance at this time was altogether most deplorable, and the scene of distress such as must have been seen to be understood. Their clothes were in many instances literally torn from their persons, or hanging in tatters around them, and they were so begrimed with dust that they scarcely looked like human creatures; while the choking sensation from which all had suffered, combined with the alarm necessarily produced by the accident itself, and the actual pain occasioned by contusions and injuries, rendered their appearance and expression alike melancholy and appalling. All the aid, however, which in the circumstances could be procured, were afforded them, and in little more than an hour the whole were removed to their respective homes. When the floor gave way the room was exceedingly crowded, and many distinguished persons were present. Among those who went down with it, but happily escaped without material injury, were Lord Moncrieff and his son; Sir James Riddell, Bart. of Ardnarmurchan; Sir Archibald Campbell of Succoth, Bart.; R. Jamieson, Esq. advocate, and the Rev. and kind-hearted old gentleman his father; J. Keay, Esq. of Snaigo, advocate, and his lady; T. Sivright, Esq. of Meggetland; Robert Allan, Esq. advocate, and many others whose names we have not ascertained. Among the individuals who have been more or less hurt, are Mr George Thomson of the Trustees Office; a boy of the name of Ross, who had his leg fractured; Mr Lorimer, Elm Row, who had his arm fractured and was otherwise much hurt; Mrs John Anderson, Mansfield Place; Mr Younie, bookkeeper to Messrs Gibson-Craigs, Wardlaw, and Dalziel; Mr William Lang, Depute Clerk of Session; Mr James Macdonell, W. S.; Mr David Smith, Mr John Howell, Thistle Street; Mr Robert Dewar, upholsterer; Dr Maclagan, George Street, injured on the knee; Alex. Marjoribanks, Esq. of Marjoribanks, Carlton Place; Mr Smellie Watson, Forth Street; Mr Patrick Dal-mahoy, W. S.; Mr J. F. Williams has three ribs broken; Mr Gibb, artist, has his arm fractured in several places; Mr John Johnston, printer, Strichen's Close, severely bruised about the head and limbs; Mr T. A. Forrest, Thistle Street; Alex. E. Monteith, Esq. advocate; Mr Stewart of the Customs; Dr Spens, Drummond Place; Mr Belches, accountant, Greenside Street who has had two ribs broken, and received several severe contusions; and others whose names have not yet been ascertained. Few of the injuries sustained, however, are of a dangerous nature; and we have been confidently assured that none is likely to prove fatal. The carpet, which had not been removed from the floor, broke the fall to many, and this, no doubt, contributed to prevent many casualties which would otherwise have occurred. The door of the lower apartment has very properly been secured, and two policemen are stationed in the house. It is probable, indeed, that considerable property, such as money, watches, and the like, is still in the room, more especially as the persons injured had their clothes literally torn to shreds. The police officers have under their charge in the house thirty hats, several umbrellas and canes or walking sticks, a pair of silver spectacles, a black veil torn in pieces, and various other articles. It is to be presumed that most of the gentlemen who left their hats were more or less injured. In one of the hats we observed a silver pencil case, of which the officer in attendance took charge. The body of Mr Smith was removed to his own house in Moray Place, between eight and nine o'clock on Saturday night—a sorrowful spectacle to his afflicted and desolate family, upon whom this lamentable and distressing visitation has fallen.

The cause of the accident was the breaking of a large beam which extended across the centre of the room, and supported the flooring. It appears to have been insufficient from the first, and the joiner was evidently aware of its weakness, for intending to strengthen it, he had joined to it a piece of wood by means of an iron bolt and screw, but this served still farther to weaken it, for the bolt passed through a large knot in the wood, and thus the beam was liable to give way whenever there was any great weight on the floor.

