

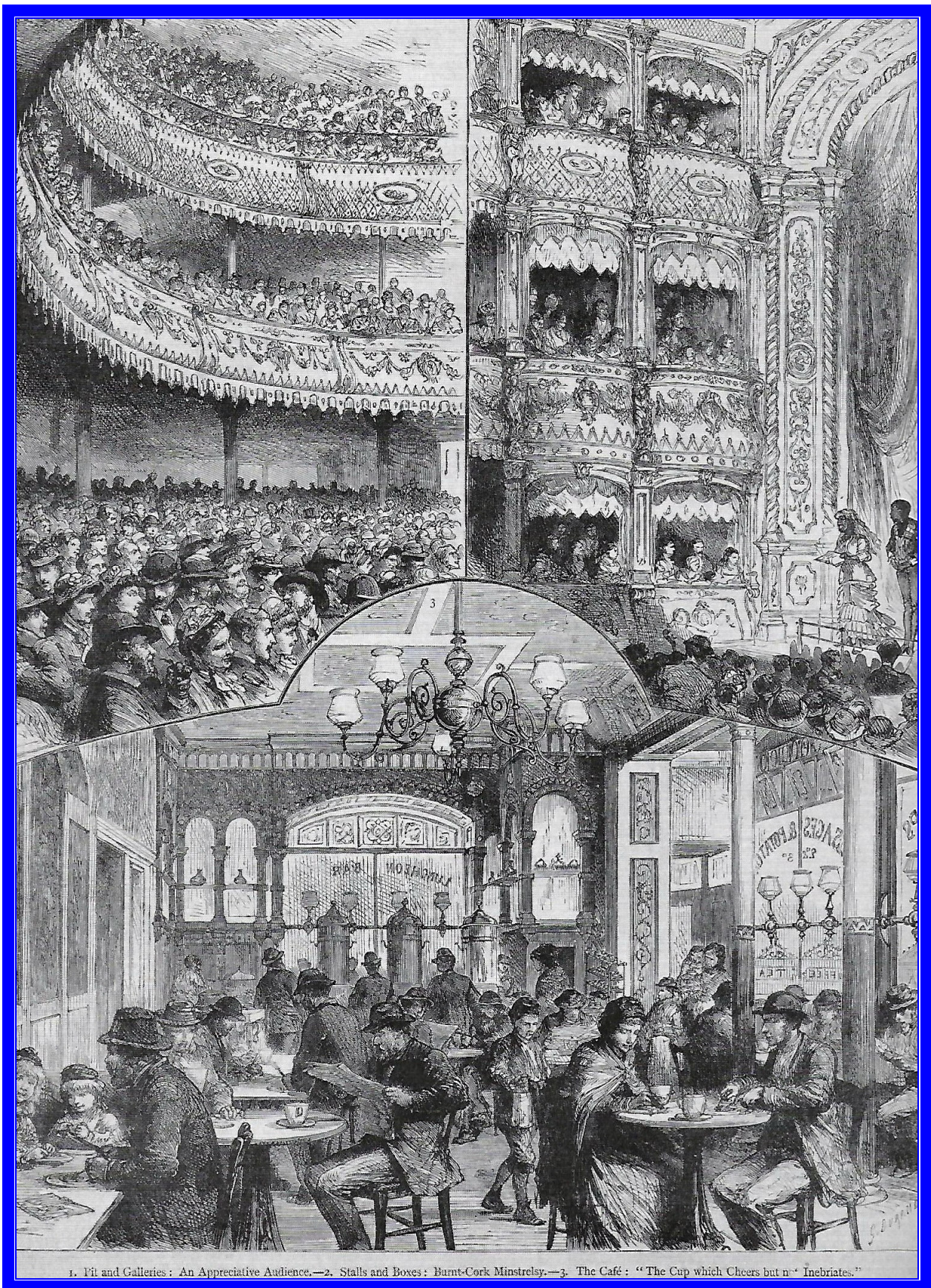


THEATRES

**Means of Escape
Fire Regulations
Theatre Fires
The Safety Curtain
Machinery**

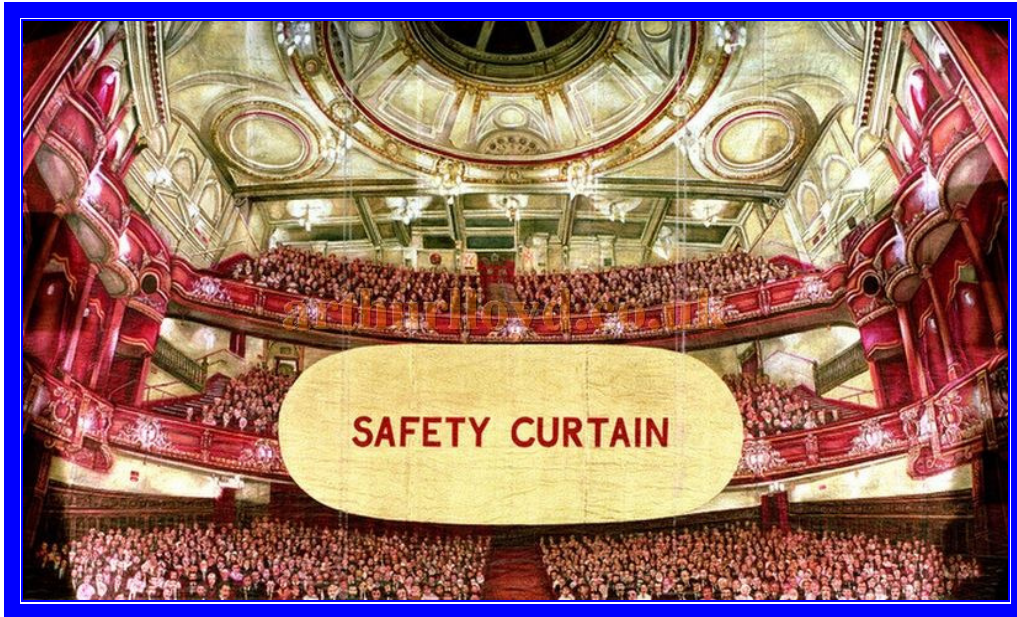
Pictures from the Past

CIBSE HERITAGE GROUP



*The Old Vic 1871 (top): Later The Royal Victoria Hall & Coffee Tavern 1880 (bottom) London
(Victorian & Edwardian Theatres)*

Front cover : Poster for the Palace Theatre of Varieties, London, c.1895



Victoria Palace London 1911

T H E A T R E S

**Means of Escape
Fire Regulations
Theatre Fires
The Safety Curtain
Machinery**

Pictures from the Past

**Eur Ing BRIAN ROBERTS CEng Hon.FCIBSE
Life Member ASHRAE**

MEANS OF ESCAPE



*Safety poster at Morton's Theatre, Greenwich c.1884
The "Out" signs were intended to show how safe the place was in the event of fire
(British Theatres and Music Halls)*

THEATRES

FIRE SAFETY

LIST OF THEATRES

- 1613 **Globe Theatre, London**
- 1805 **Theatre Royal, Bath**
- 1809 **Drury Lane Theatre, London**
- 1811 **Theatre Royal, Plymouth**
- 1816 **Covent Garden Theatre, London**
- 1856 **Royal Opera House, London**
- 1864 **Marylebone Theatre, London**
- 1871 **Old Vic, London**
- 1876 **Brooklyn Theatre, New York**
- 1878 **Her Majesty's Theatre, Glasgow**
- 1878 **The Colosseum, Liverpool**
- 1880 **The Royal Victoria Hall, London**
- 1881 **Comedy Theatre, London**
- 1884 **Morton's Theatre, Greenwich**
- 1887 **Royal Theatre, Exeter**
- 1896 **Drury Lane Theatre Royal, London**
- 1903 **Iroquois Theatre, Chicago**
- 1904 **London Coliseum**
- 1905 **Strand Theatre, London**
- 1906 **King's Theatre, Edinburgh**
- 1907 **Queen's Theatre, London**
- 1911 **Palace Theatre, London**
- 1911 **Victoria Palace, London**
- 1916 **St Martins Theatre, London**
- 1918, **London Palladium**
- 1925 **Rialto Theatre, Glen Falls**
- 1929 **Savoy Theatre, London**
- 1931 **Westminster Theatre, London**
- 1933 **Lyric Theatre, London**
- 1964 **Cochrane Theatre, London**

*Note: Dates are indicative only as many theatres changed name and were rebuilt/reconstructed
Except for dates under illustrations of fires or posters, dates under photographs relate to age of theatre
not to date of picture*

FIRE REGULATIONS

*Introduced at Meeting on 5 Feb 1864
by Mr. Cave of the Marylebone Theatre*

NOTICE!

WHEREAS, ACCIDENTS BY FIRE, of an alarming nature, having lately occurred at several of the London Theatres, owing to the indiscretion and want of proper precaution on the part of its different Members, particularly as regards THE BALLET; Mr. CAVE begs to call the attention of the Members of his Company to the following Rules and Regulations, which he desires may be implicitly observed, as under no pretence whatever will they be deviated from.

1. Any Lady going beyond the proscenium wing in Dancing, &c.—First offence 1s. Second offence, Instant Dismissal.

2. Any Lady Crossing the Stage to get to her situation, after the Gas is Lighted—first offence. 1s. Second offence, Instant Dismissal.

3. Any Lady, after the Scene is over, attempting to make an exit at a Wing until the Men holding the Coloured Fires have entirely cleared away—Instant Dismissal.

4. Any Lady having Garlands or other Properties to carry on the Stage, catching them on Fire, (the Gas having been placed above their heads,)—Instant Dismissal.

5. No Fires allowed in the Dressing Rooms of the Ballet Ladies. Any Lady, attempting to light one—Instant Dismissal.

6. Any Ballet Lady not obeying the Carpenters or any other person employed on the Stage, in reference as to danger by Fire—Instant Dismissal.

7. Any Lady or Gentleman seeing the above Rules infringed, will oblige Mr. CAVE, by giving immediate information to the Stage Manager or Prompter.

Printed by Nowell's (late Peel's) Steam Machine, 74, New Cut, Lambeth.

FIRE REGULATIONS

REGULATIONS

FOR THE BETTER

Protection against Accidents by Fire at Theatres,

Licensed by the Lord Chamberlain.

I.

All fixed and ordinary GAS BURNERS to be furnished with efficient Guards. Moveable and occasional Lights to be, when possible, protected in the same manner, or put under charge of persons responsible for lighting, watching, and extinguishing them.

II.

The FLOATS to be protected by a Wire Guard. The first Ground-Line to be always without Gas, and unconnected with Gas, whether at the Wings or elsewhere. Sufficient space to be left between each Ground-Line, so as to lessen risk from accident to all persons standing or moving among such lines.

III.

The rows or lines of GAS BURNERS at Wings to commence Four Feet at least from the level of the Stage.

IV.

WET BLANKETS or RUGS, with BUCKETS or WATER-POTS to be always kept in the Wings; and attention to be directed to them by PLACARDS legibly printed or painted, and fixed immediately above them. As in Rule I., some person to be responsible for keeping the Blankets, Buckets, &c., ready for immediate use.

V.

These REGULATIONS to be always posted in some conspicuous place, so that all persons belonging to the Theatre may be acquainted with their contents; every Breach or Neglect of them, or any act of carelessness as regards Fire, to be punished by Fines or Dismissal by the Managers.

SYDNEY,

Lord Chamberlain.

Lord Chamberlain's Office,
St. James's Palace,

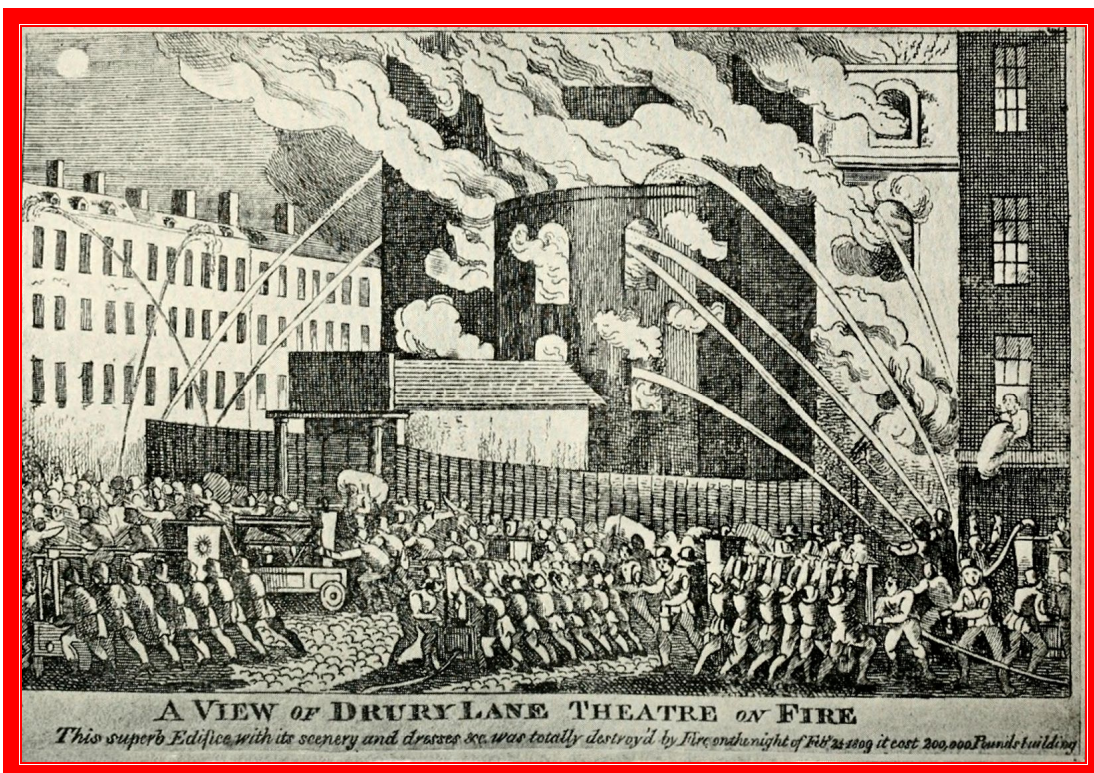
February 5, 1864.

Printed by Harrison and Sons, St. Martin's Lane.

THEATRE FIRES



The Globe Theatre, London 1613

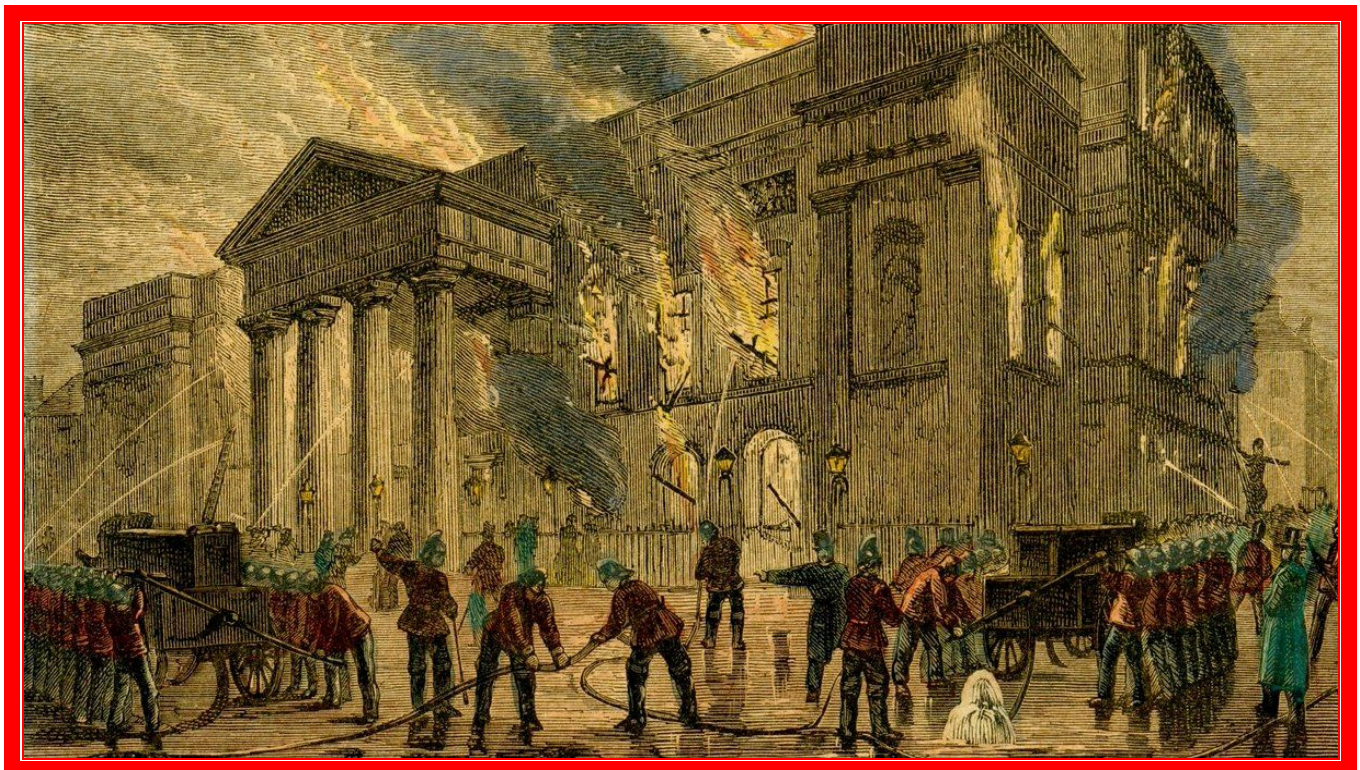


Drury Lane Theatre, London 1809

THEATRE FIRES



Covent Garden Theatre, London 1809, on fire 1856



Royal Opera House Covent Garden, London 1856

THEATRE FIRES

HARPER'S WEEKLY

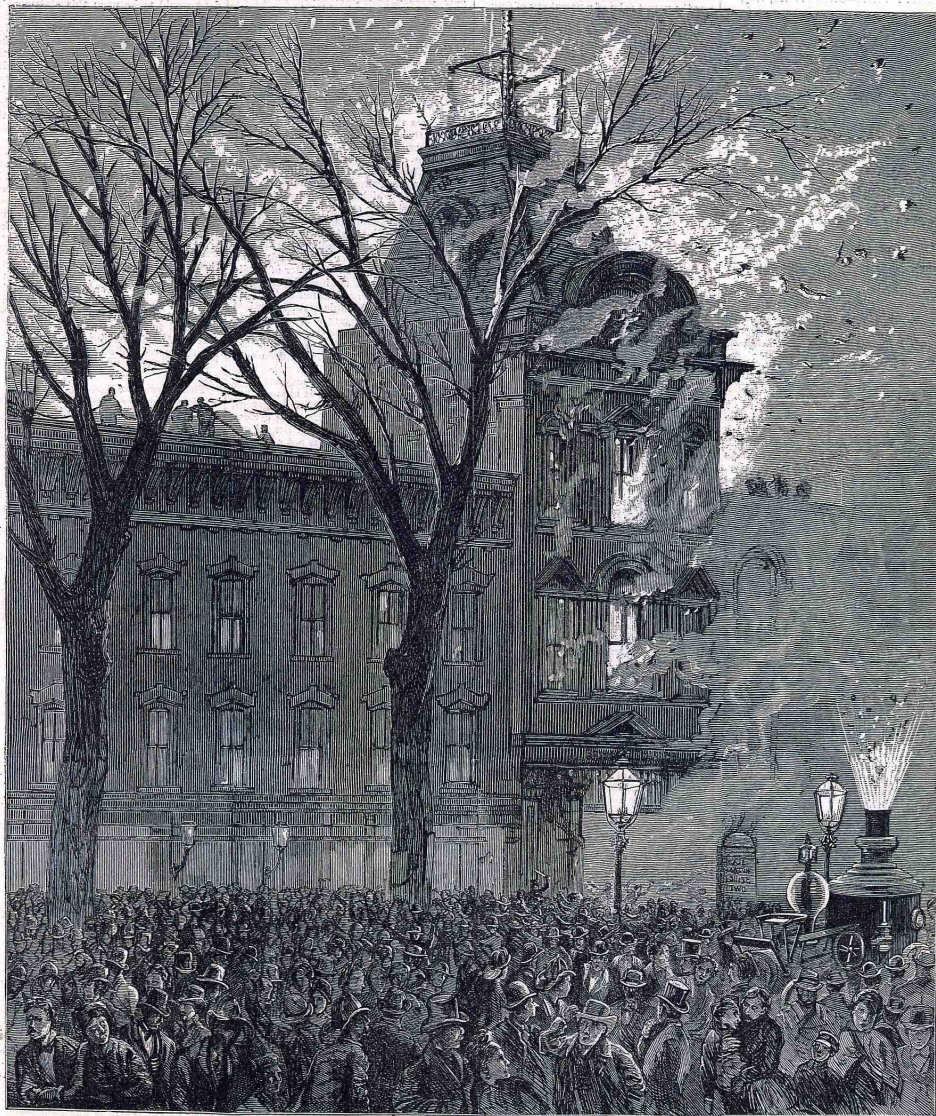
A JOURNAL OF CIVILIZATION

Vol. XX.—No. 1043.]

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1876.

[WITH A SUPPLEMENT.
PRICE 10¢ PER COPY.]

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the Year 1876, by Harper & Brothers, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.



BURNING OF THE BROOKLYN THEATRE.—SCENE AT THE WASHINGTON STREET ENTRANCE.—FROM A SKETCH BY GRANVILLE PERKINS.—[SEE PAGE 1042.]

Brooklyn Theatre, New York 1876

THEATRE FIRES



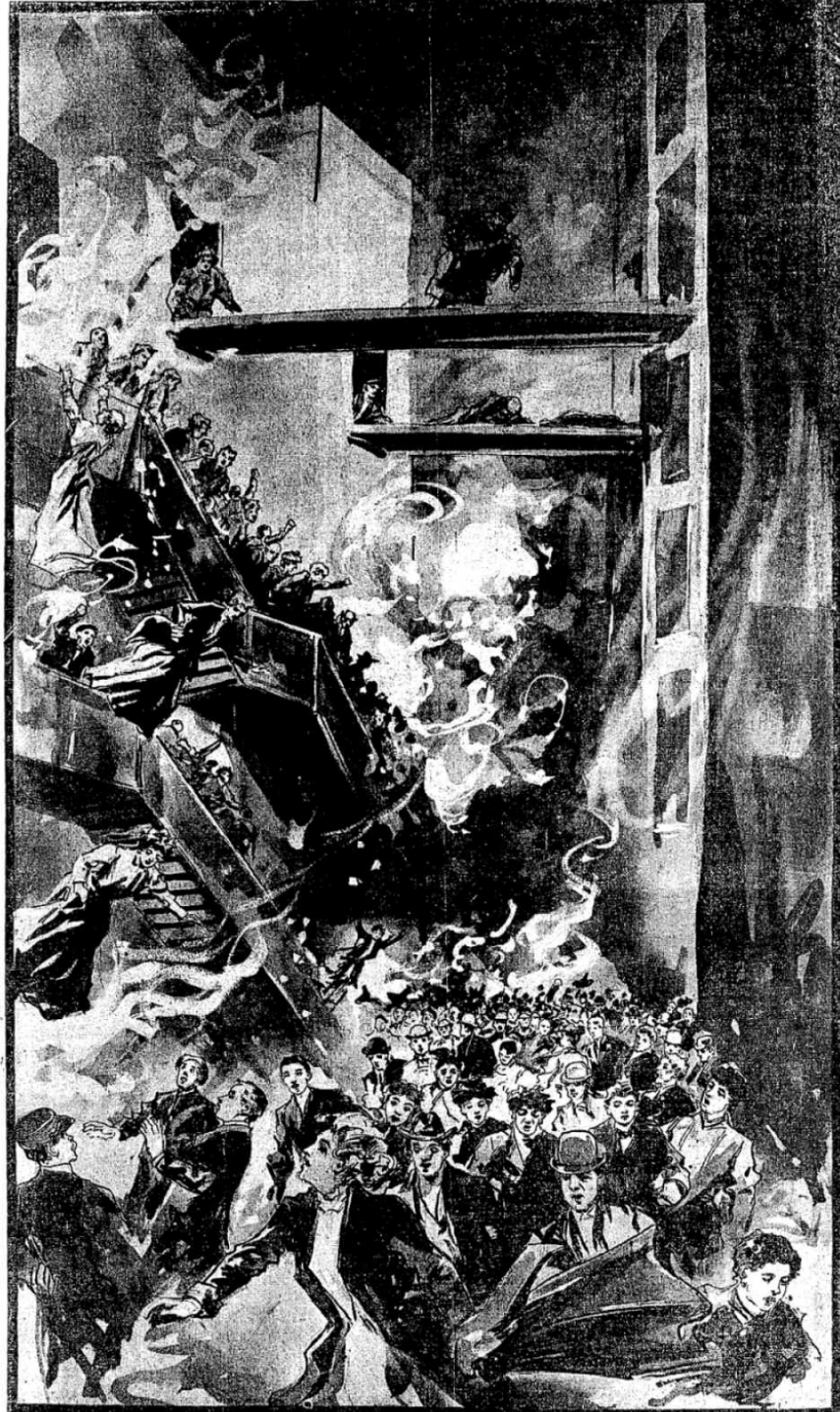
Royal Theatre, Exeter 1887

THEATRE FIRES

THE CHICAGO DAILY TRIBUNE: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1903.

IN THE ALLEY OF DEATH AND MUTILATION.

JUMPING FROM THE FIRE ESCAPES TO ESCAPE THE FLAMES.



Iroquois Theatre, Chicago 1903

THEATRE FIRES

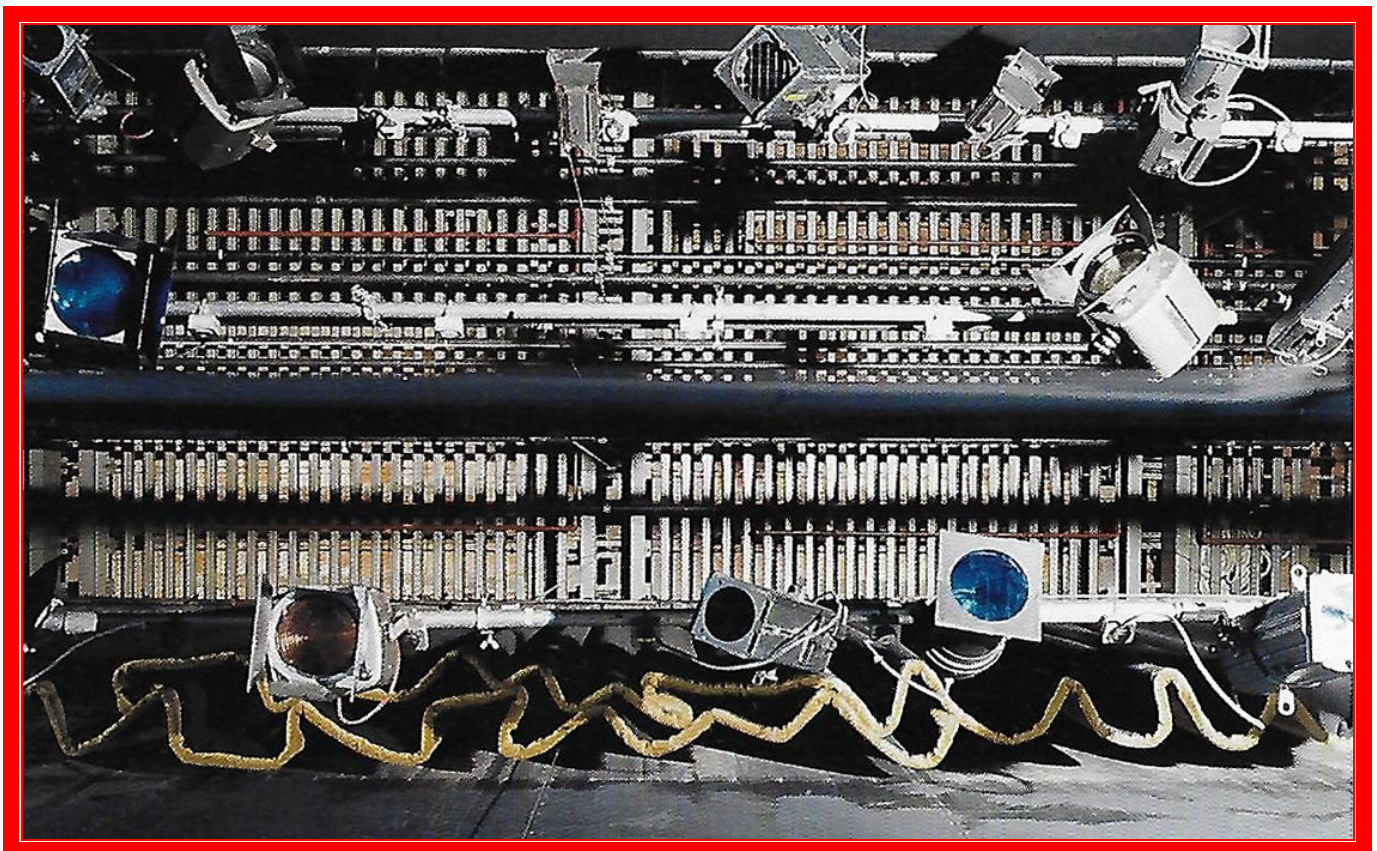


Rialto Theatre Glen Falls, New York State 1925

THE SAFETY CURTAIN

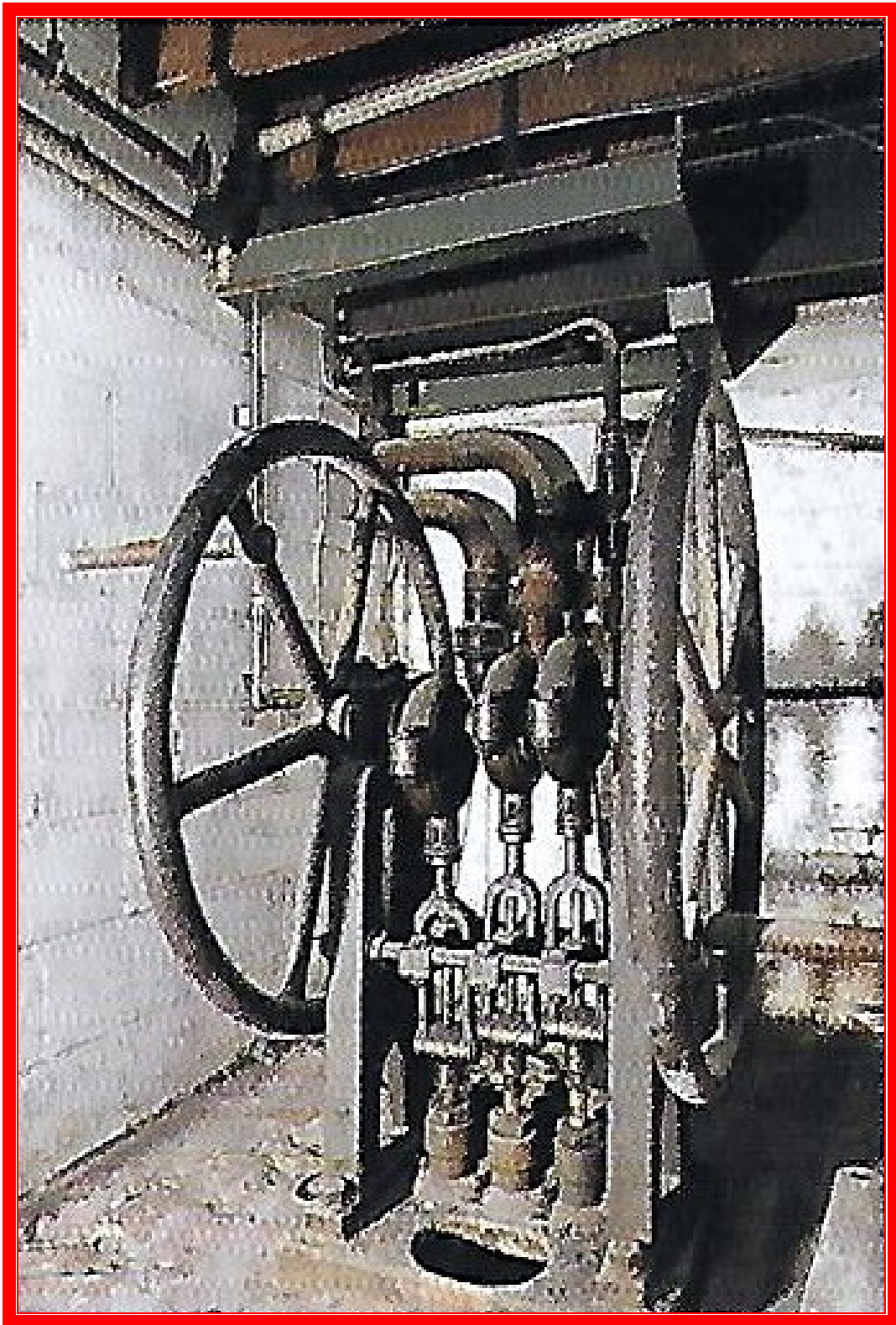


Asbestos safety fire curtain in old theatre installed to prevent or delay a stage fire entering the auditorium giving the audience time to exit the theatre in safety

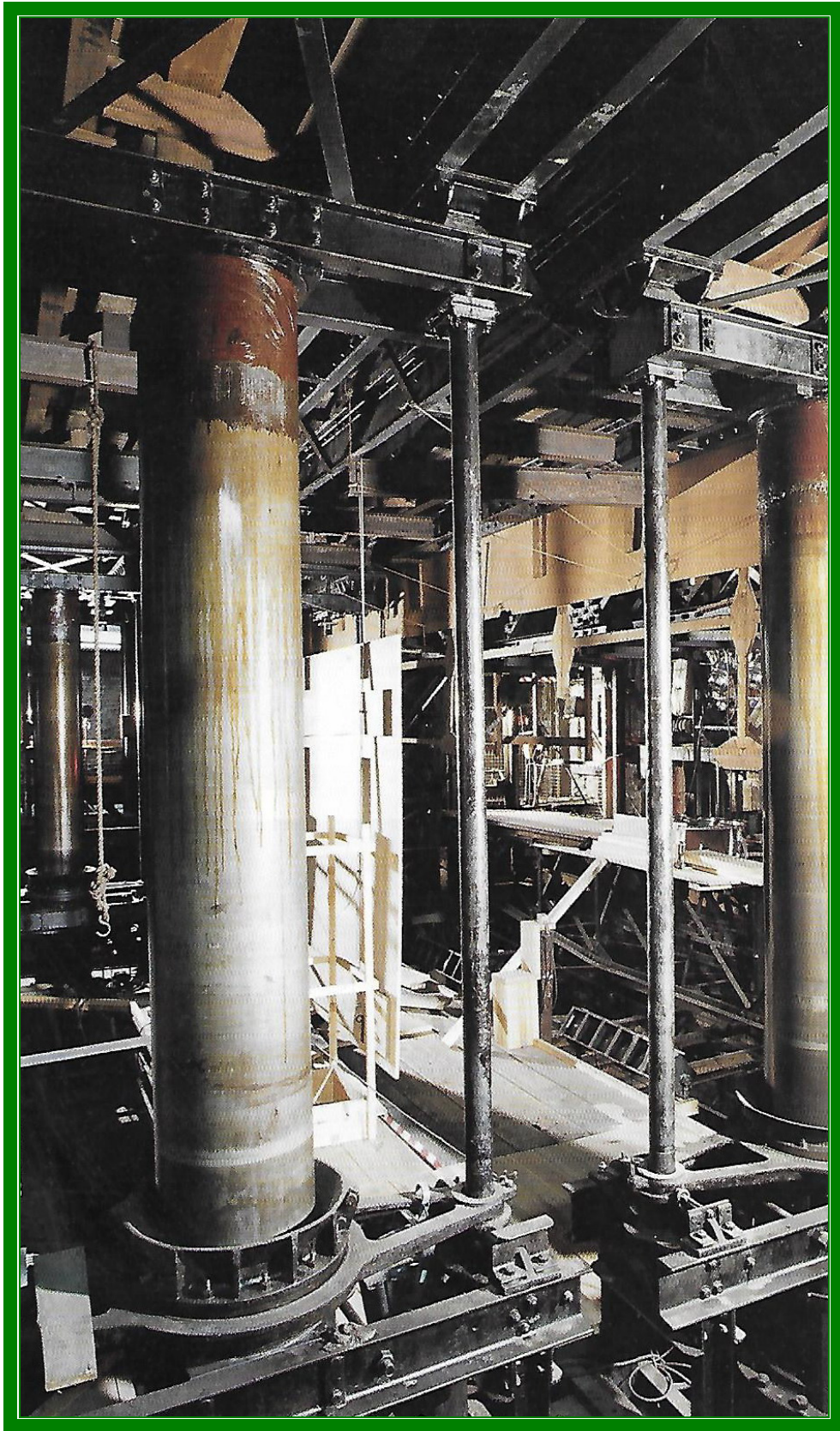


Metal safety curtain complete with drencher pipe, Cochrane Theatre, London 1964 (Scene/Unseen)

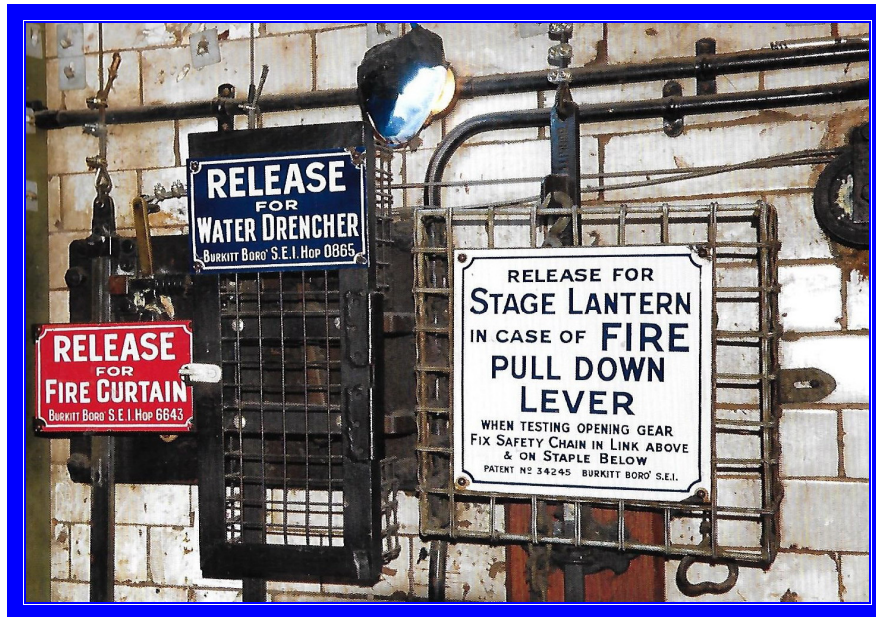
THE SAFETY CURTAIN



Lyric Theatre, London reconstructed 1933. Hand operated standby pump that worked the heavy iron safety curtain if the main supply failed (Scene/Unseen)



*Hydraulic ram used to raise/lower bridges 1896, Drury Lane Theatre Royal.
(Scene/Unseen)*



Instructions in event of fire, Palace Theatre, London 1911 (London Theatres)

T H E A T R E S

MACHINERY

Traps
Bridges
Grids and Rollers
Safety Curtain
Fly Towers
Smoke Ventilation

MACHINERY

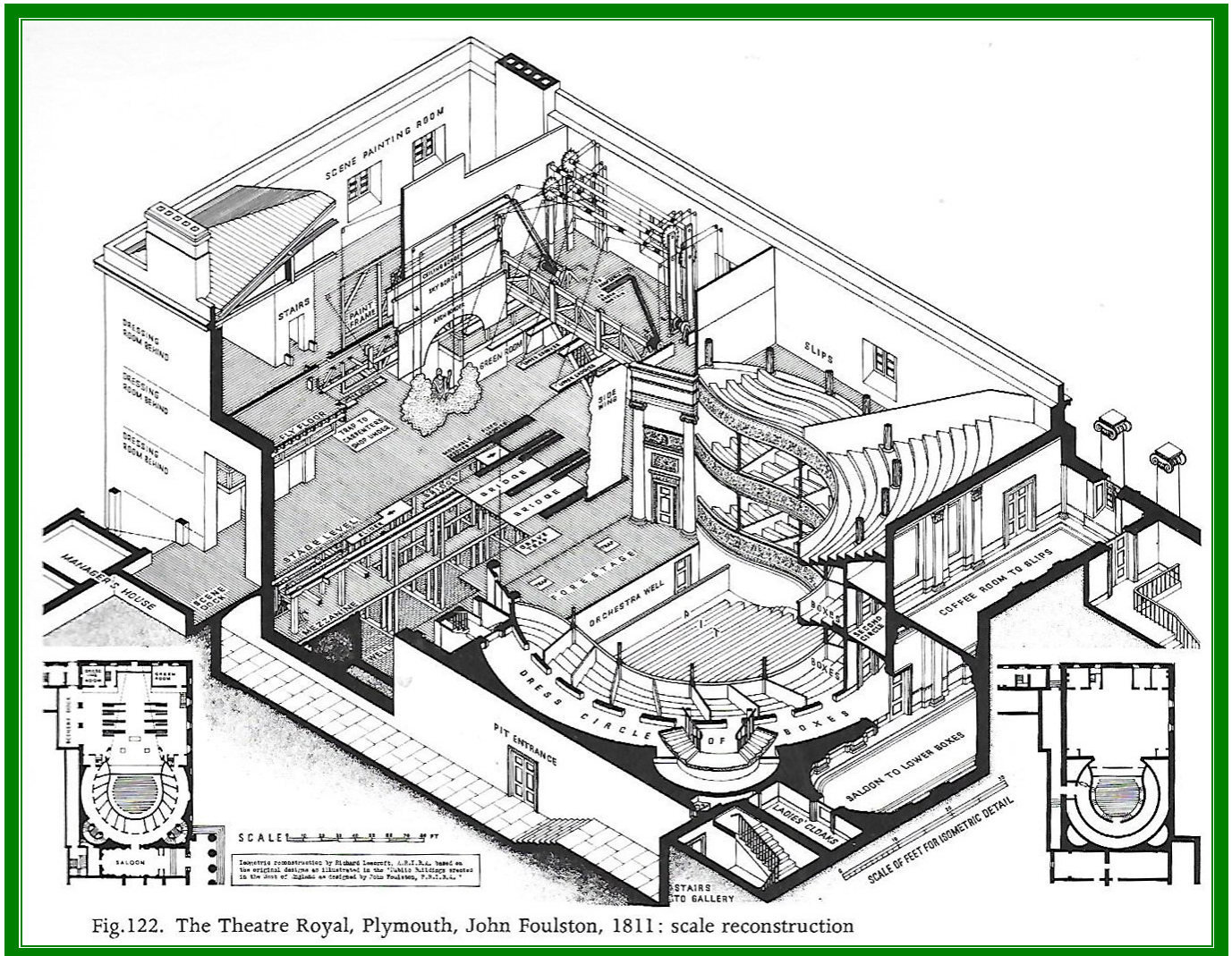


Fig.122. The Theatre Royal, Plymouth, John Foulston, 1811: scale reconstruction

*The Theatre Royal, Plymouth 1811 (The Development of the English Playhouse)
Diagram shows Traps and Bridges and other items*

MACHINERY

Fig.123. The stage of the Theatre Royal, Plymouth: detail of Fig.122

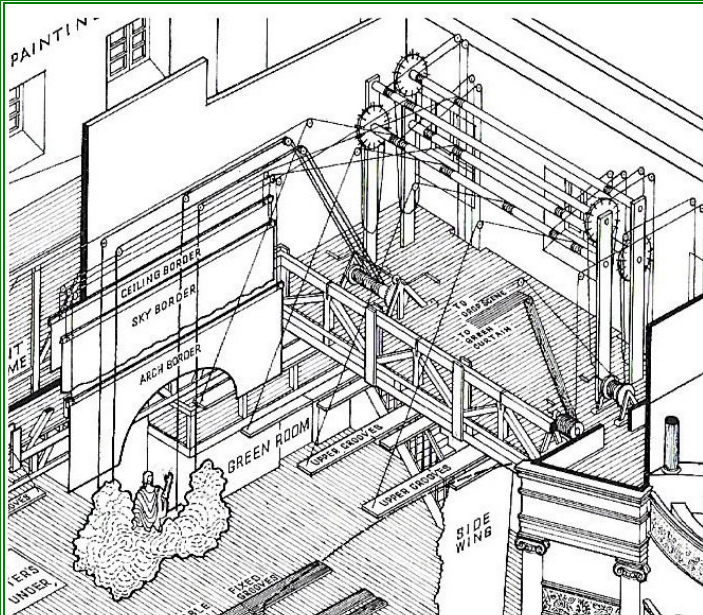
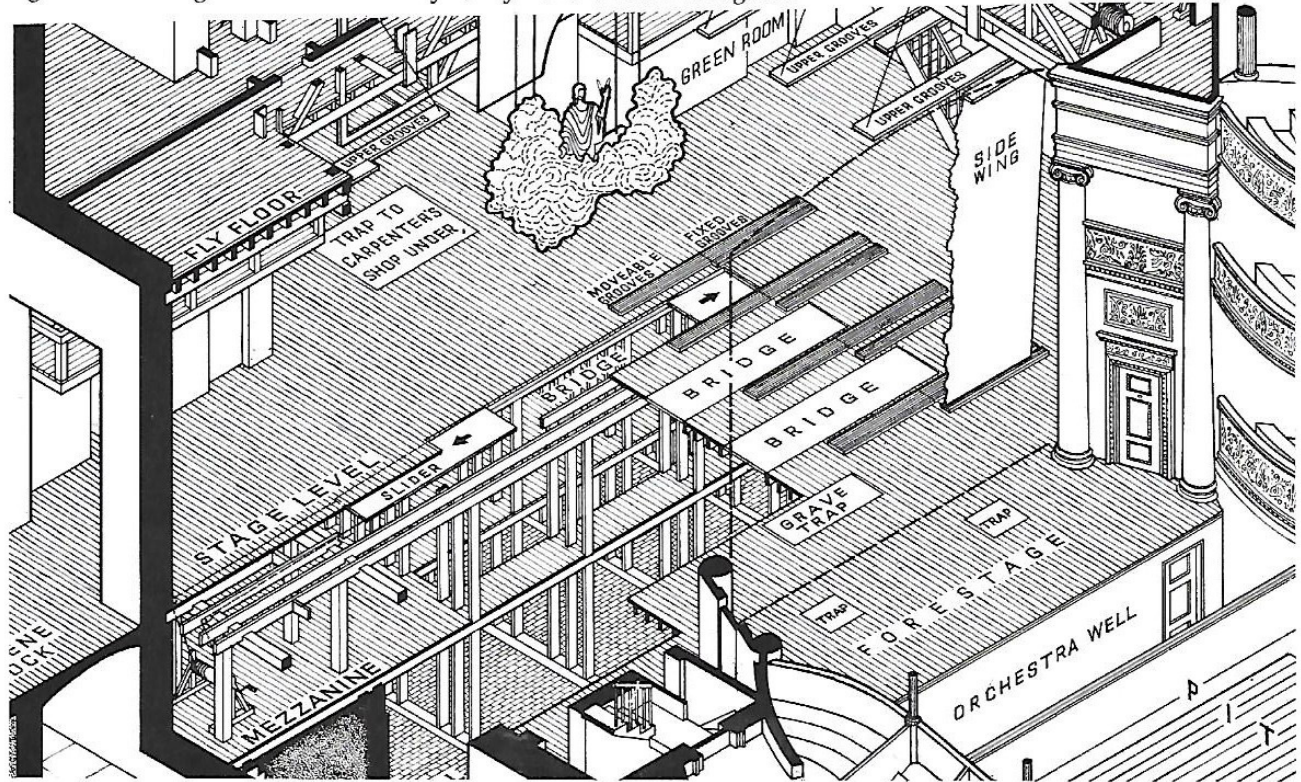


Fig.124. Prompt side fly gallery and machinery: detail of Fig.122

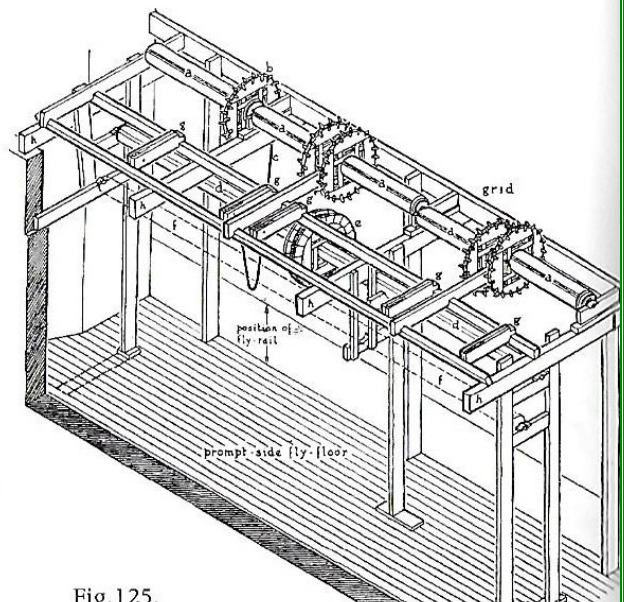
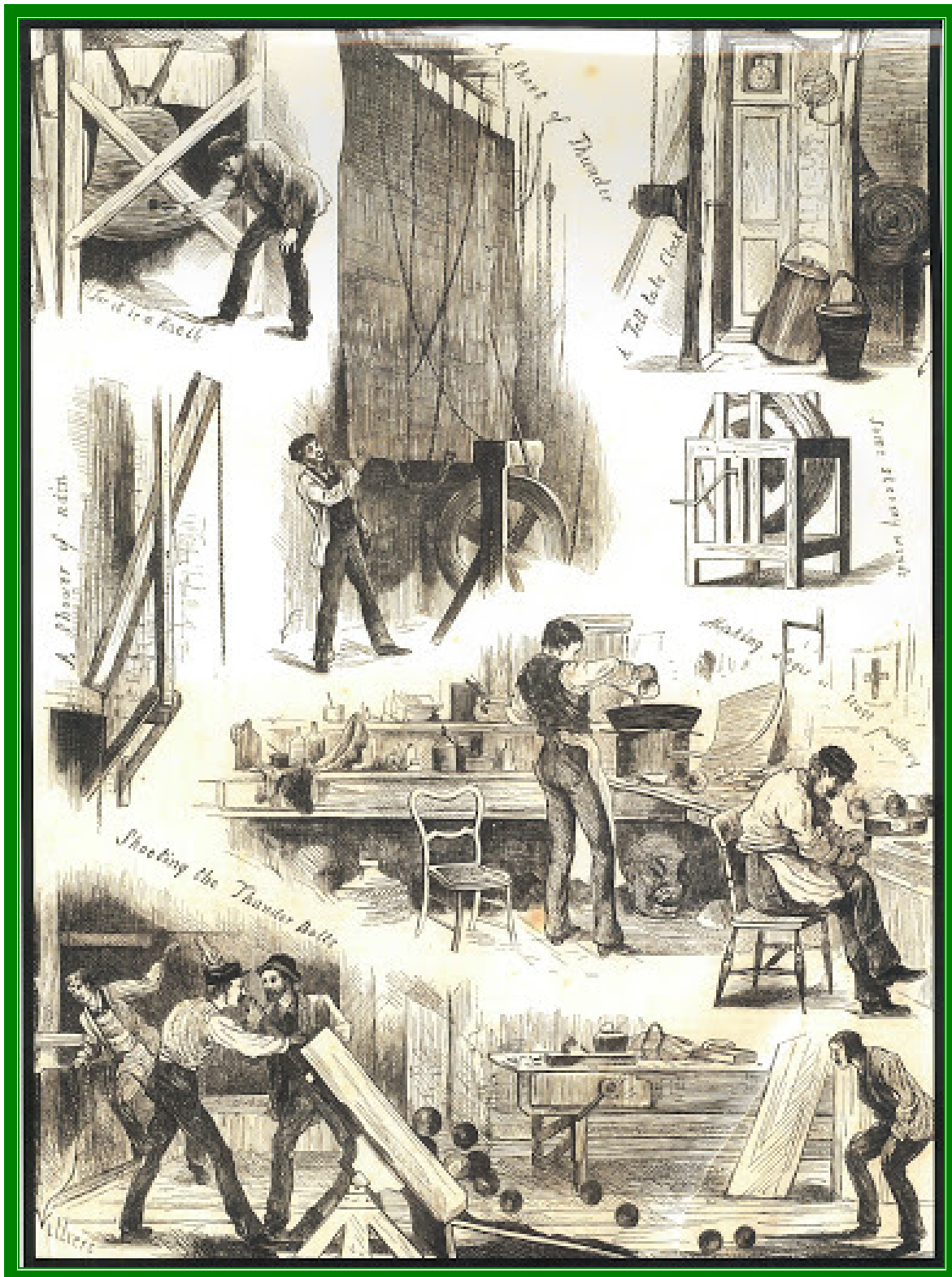


Fig.125. The Theatre Royal, Bath: barrels on fly gallery

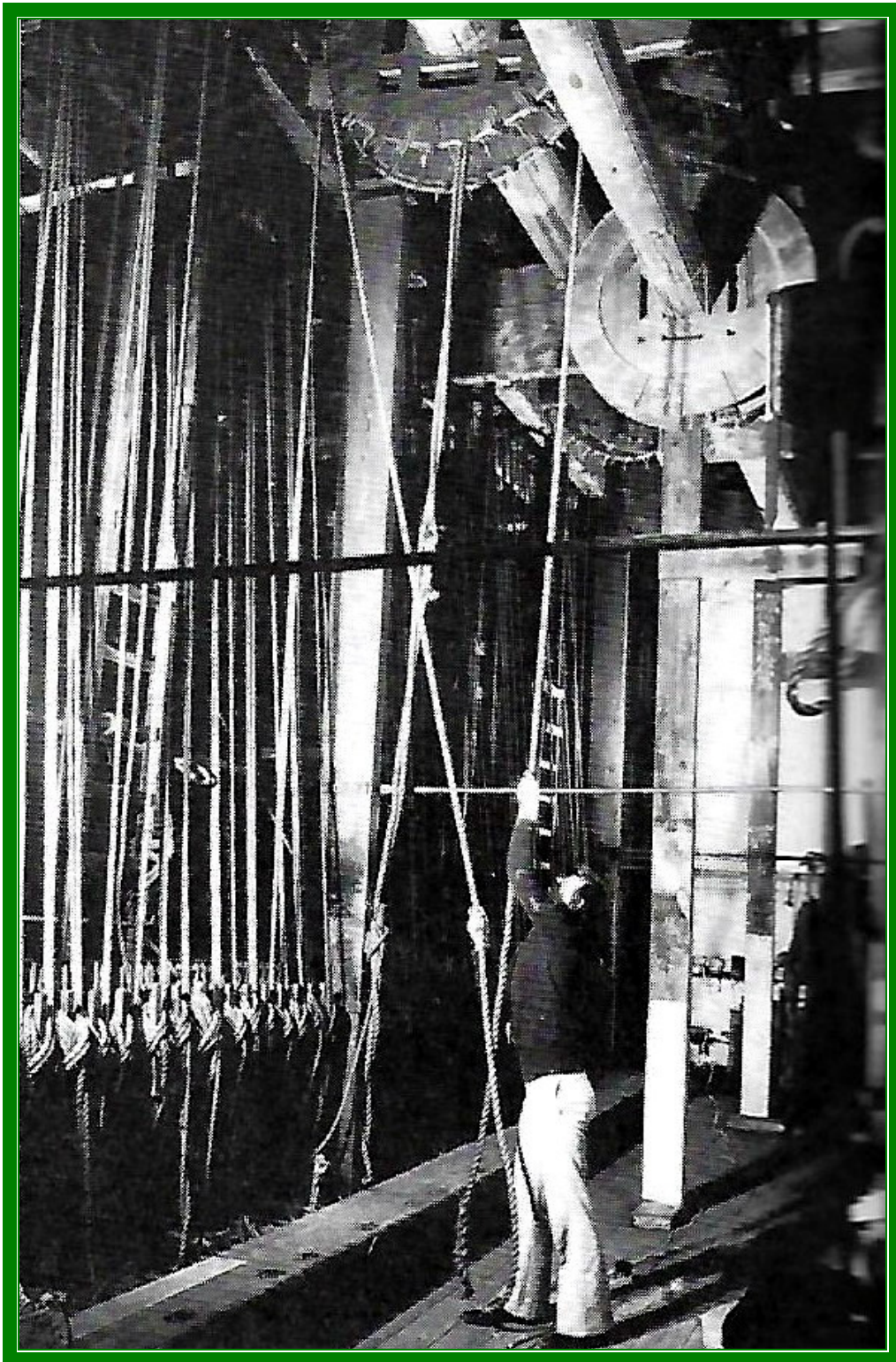
Royal Theatre, Plymouth 1811 Figs. 123, 124: Theatre Royal, Bath 1850 Fig. 125
(The Development of the English Playhouse)

MACHINERY



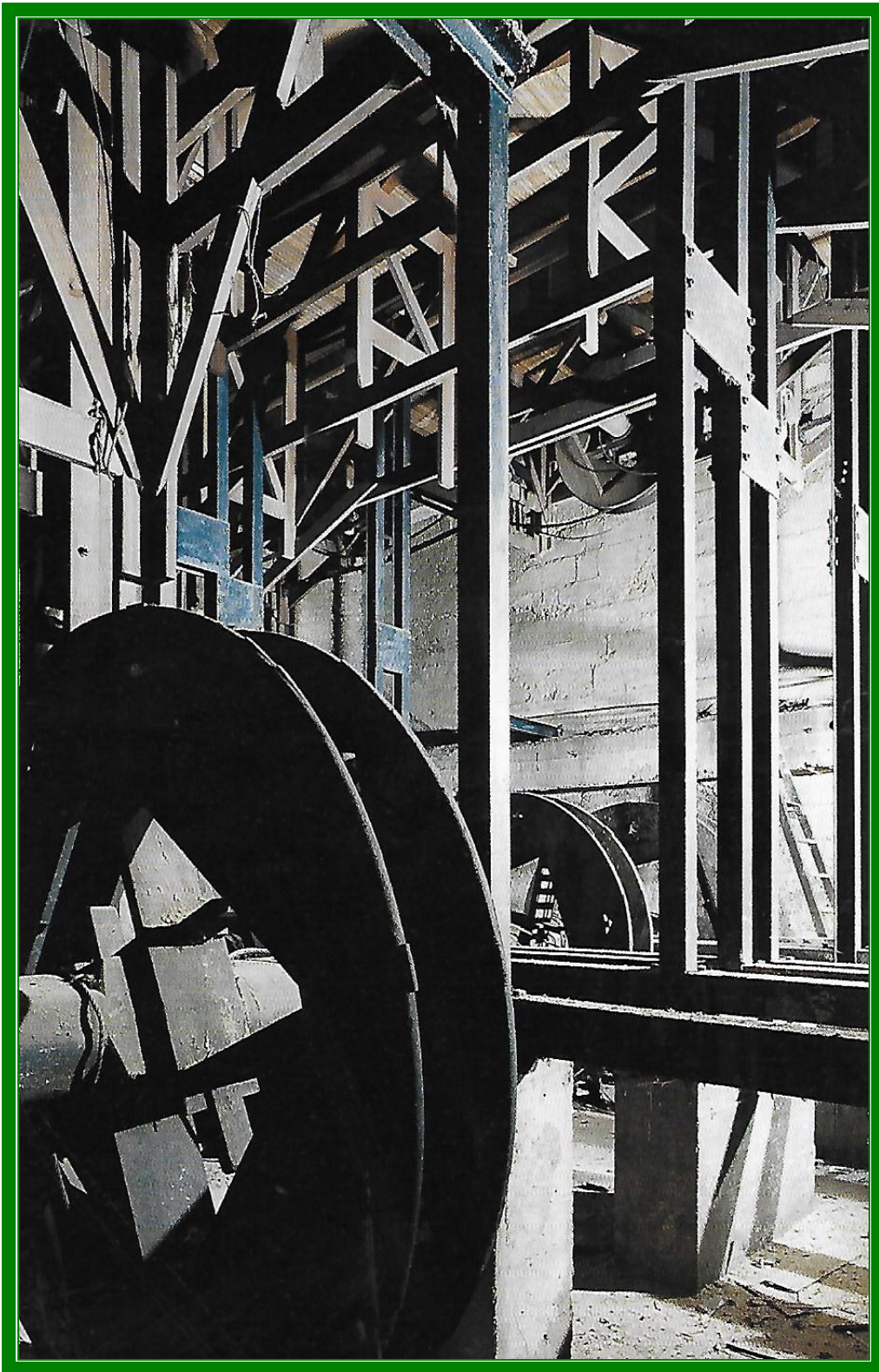
Sound effects "Theatrical Meteorology" *The Graphic* 1875

MACHINERY



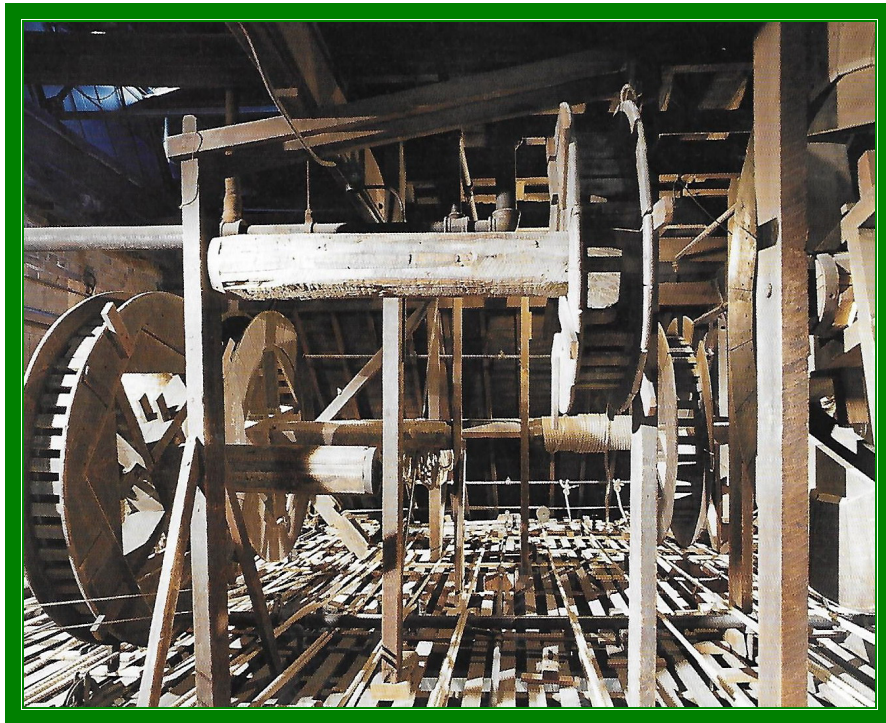
Fly gallery with rollers and hemp lines, Theatre Royal, Bath 1805 (Theatre and Playhouse)

MACHINERY



Drums and shafts under stage at St Martin's Theatre, London 1916 (Scene/Unseen)

MACHINERY

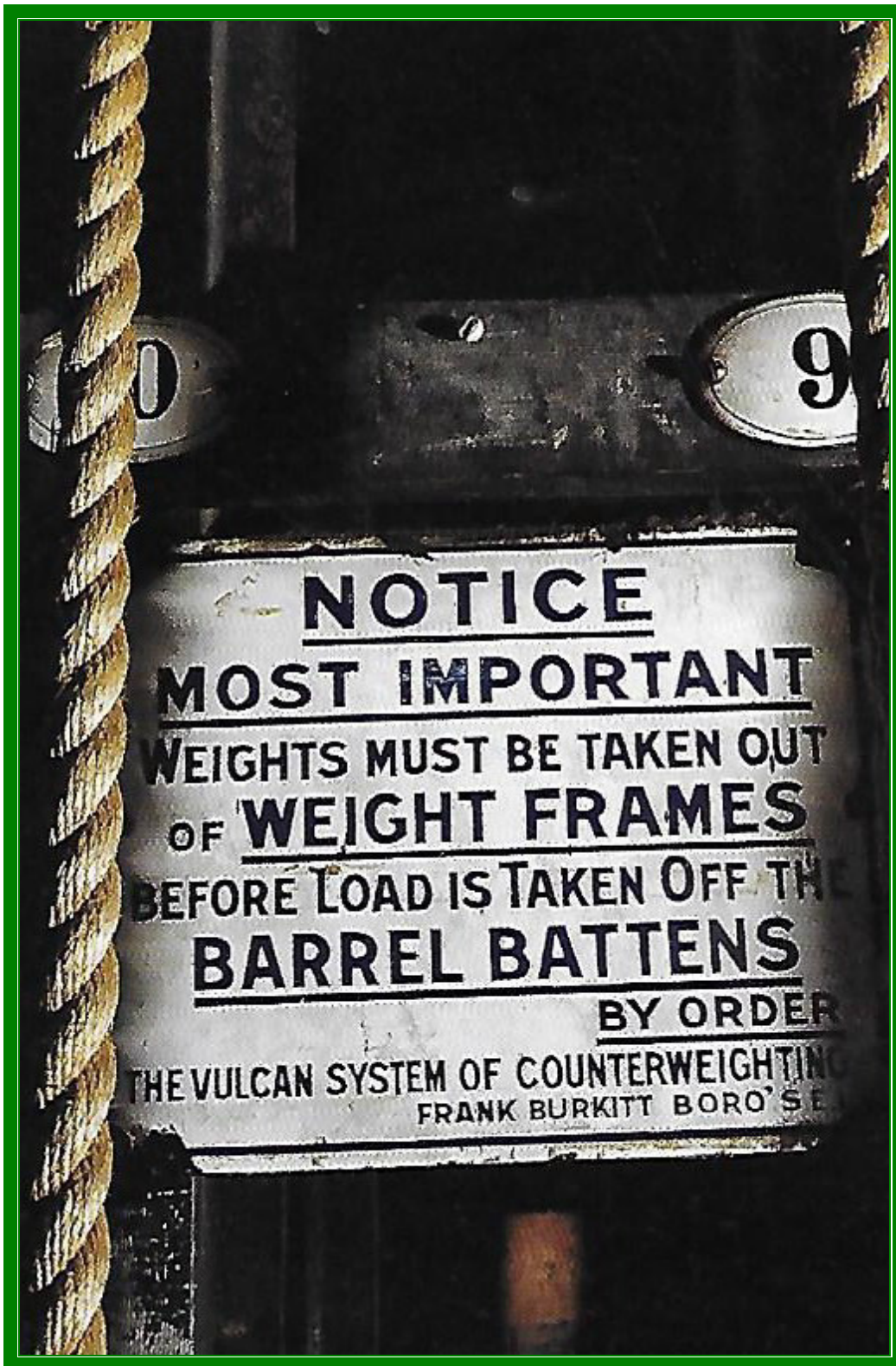


*Drums and shafts for heavy lifting work, Comedy Theatre, London 1881
(Scene/Unseen)*



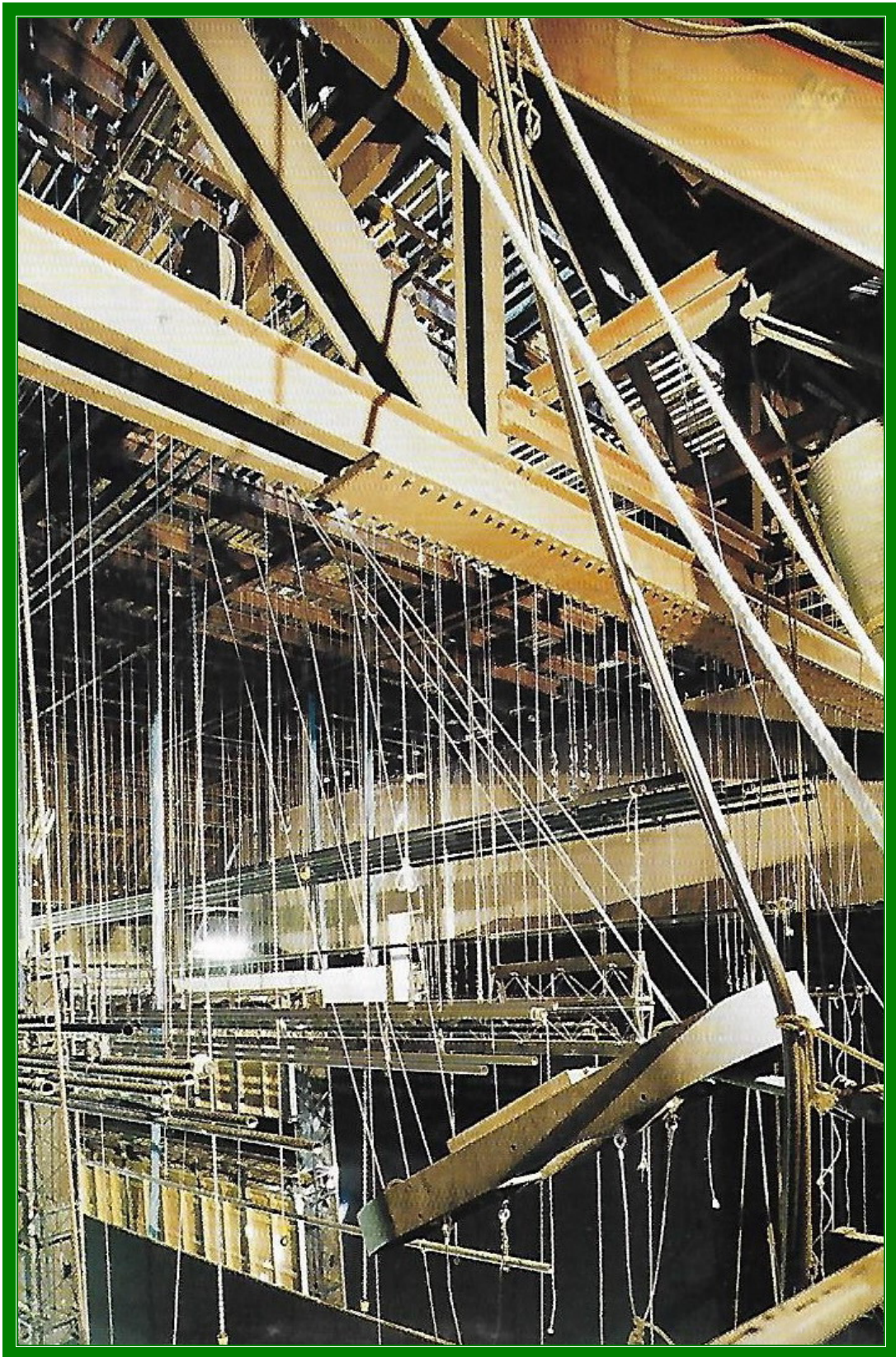
Lifting drum at Her Majesty's Theatre, Glasgow 1878 (Historic Theatre Photography)

MACHINERY



Safety notice Westminster Theatre, London 1931 (Scene/Unseen)

MACHINERY



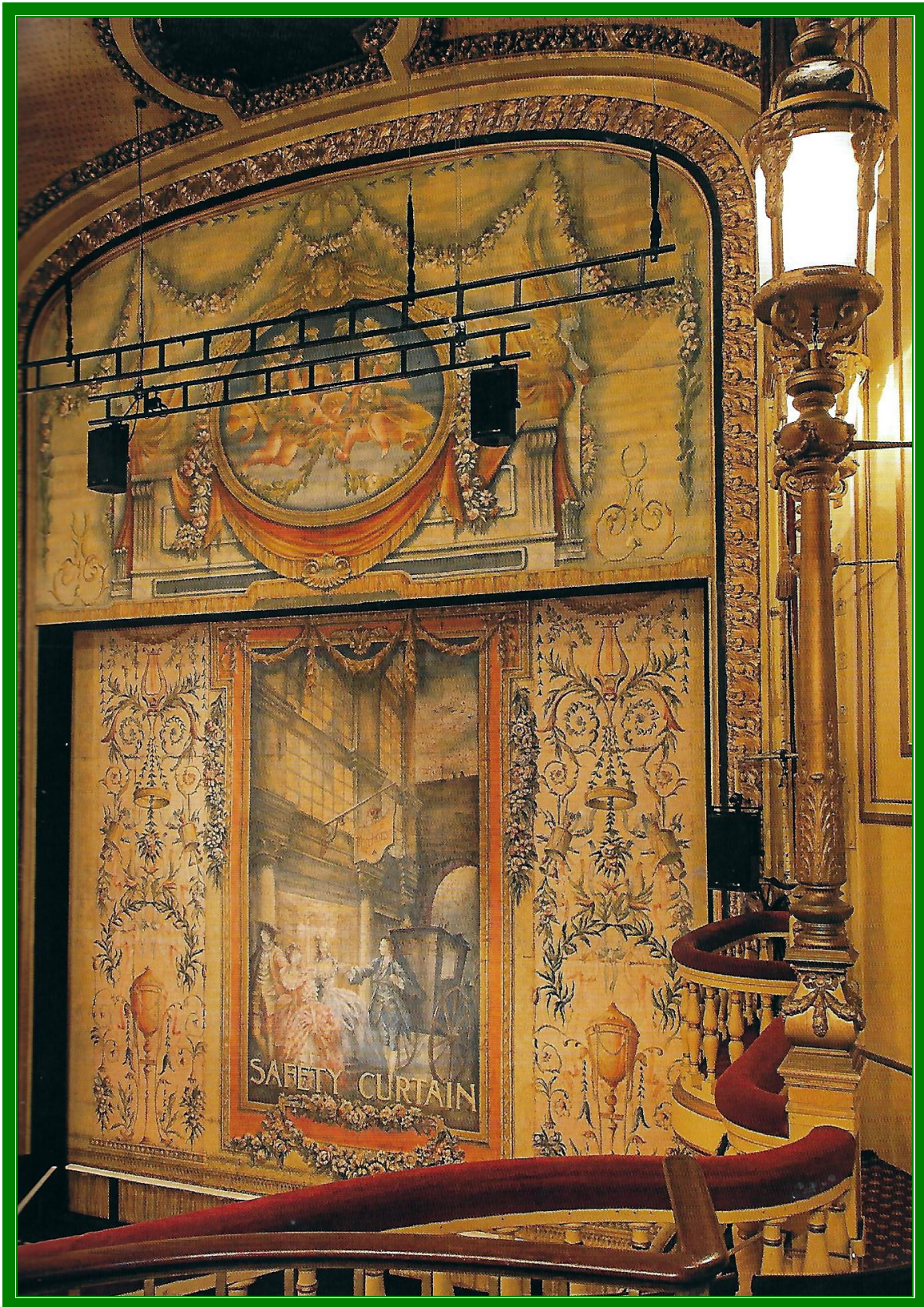
*Fly tower with grid and trusses that serve the flying system
London Coliseum 1904 (Scene/Unseen)*

MACHINERY



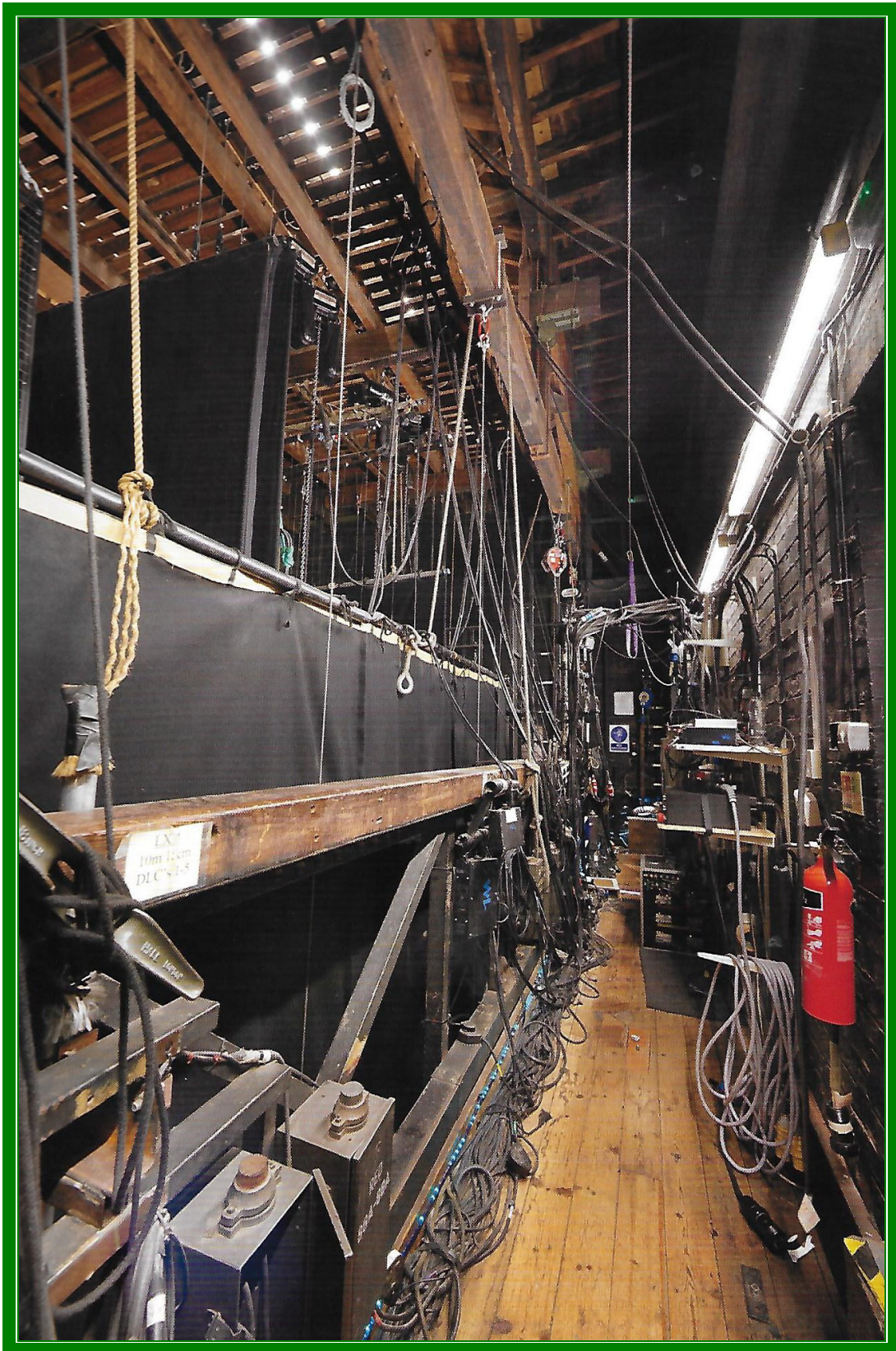
Safety curtain at The Playhouse, London 1882 (London's Great Theatres)

MACHINERY



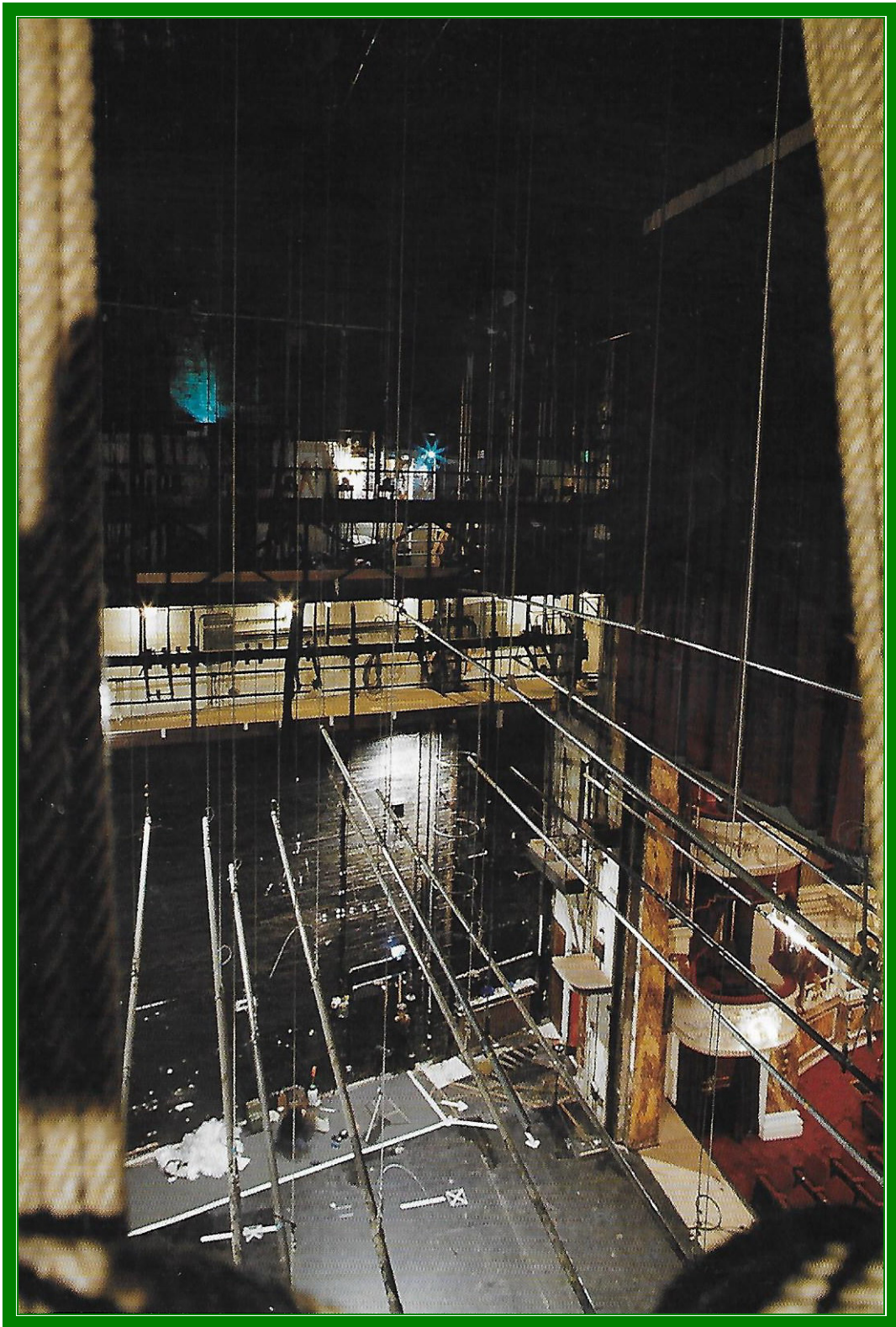
Safety curtain at London Palladium 1918 (London's Great Theatres)

MACHINERY



*Fly floor where scenes are changed "with all hands on deck" Queen's Theatre, London 1907
(London Theatres)*

MACHINERY



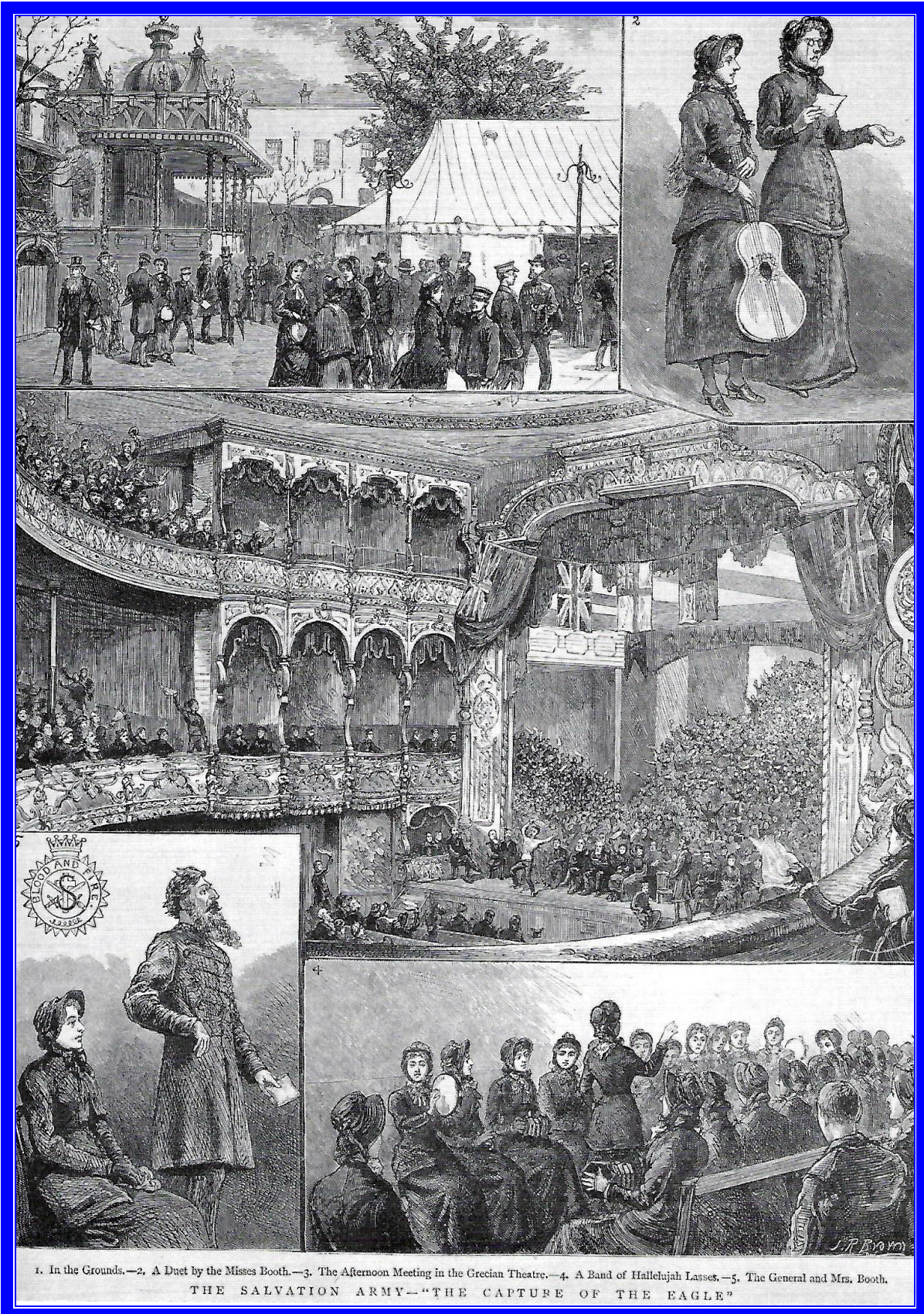
Fly Tower at the Strand Theatre, London 1905 ((Scene/Unseen)

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Savoy Theatre, London (London Theatres)



*The Colosseum, Liverpool 1878, formerly an old Unitarian Chapel c.1850
Bought by General Booth for the Salvation Army 1882 (Victorian & Edwardian Theatres)*

Back cover: King's Theatre, Edinburgh 1906 (ibid)

