

A BIG BLAZE.

General Excitement and Alarm.

Rapid Spread of the Flames.

A Large Business Block Destroyed

Between Federal and Devonshire Streets.

The State Printing Office Barely Escapes.

One of the Largest Fires in Boston for Many Years.

The Loss Very Heavy—Scenes and Incidents.

Since the burning of the Globe Theatre and surrounding buildings, in May, 1873, no more serious fire has taken place in this city than that which last night held the best efforts of the Boston fire department completely at bay and for a long time seemed to promise a conflagration which would rival the great fire of November, 1872. One of the choicest blocks of buildings in the district of magnificent business structures fell before the onslaught of a fire which for a portion of the time equalled in intensity anything ever known in so small a space. The iron shutters which enclose the large printing office of Rand, Avery & Co. in the space between the Cathedral block and the main building on Franklin street, and give it after business hours the appearance of an iron fortress, did excellent service last night. The fire, when once it had attained way, had a rare opportunity for intensity, the nature of the materials stocked in the ware-rooms being peculiarly adapted to feeding a flame. Nothing but the overwhelming exertions of the whole of our superb fire department, which responded to the general alarm at 12.15, and the conscientious workmanship in the building of the structures, prevented the whole block from Federal to Devonshire, and along the line of Franklin street, being totally destroyed. Large as is the loss, the citizen, mindful of the ever present disaster of 1872, will congratulate himself that it is no worse. Below will be found a detailed statement of the discovery, progress and extinguishment of this fire.

THE ALARM.

The Starting of the Fire—Quick Response of the Department.

Just a few moments before 11 o'clock last evening Officer French of Station 2 turned slowly from Channing street into Federal, and proceeded in the direction of Summer street. As he arrived opposite No. 91, occupied by Rice, Kendall & Co., paper dealers, he discovered that there was a fire on the second floor, which was occupied by D. Faulkner, a wool dealer. The fire was in the front part of the floor. There was not a soul in sight, and everything was as quiet and peaceful as only the business portion of a great city is after nightfall. Taking a second look, to assure himself that he was not mistaken, the officer hurriedly went to the corner of Franklin and Federal streets and rang in an alarm from box 45. He then hurried back to the scene of the incipient conflagration and awaited the arrival of the firemen. The department was not slow in responding, and before scarce five minutes had elapsed from the first discovery of the fire many streams were on the building, and the firemen were working with a will to save what property they could. When the first engine arrived the whole interior of the second floor was in a blaze, and it was seen at a glance that unless the most strenuous efforts were made the whole building, if not the entire block, must be destroyed. Ladders were immediately hoisted against the front of the building, and the brave firemen pushed upwards with the hose, while others managed to get in the door and ascend the stairs. But in a few minutes, —so rapid had been the headway of the flames— they were forced back to the street, and were obliged to use all their endeavors from that standpoint.

A Second Alarm Was Rung In.

and more engines were soon on the spot. Steam after stream was thrown upon the burning edifice, but it was of no avail. Slowly but surely the flames crept upwards, and floor after floor was in rapid succession gathered within the grasp of the devastating flames. The fire now presented a grand sight, and one which those who witnessed it will never forget. Dense volumes of smoke rolled from the windows and filled the streets below so that the firemen could hardly see to work. At one time the heat was so great and the smoke so dense that grave apprehensions were entertained that the members of the department would be under the necessity of abandoning the building to its fate. Through all this smoke could be seen now and again a solitary lamp-post on the corner of Channing street, whose faint glimmer seemed to scoff at the efforts of poor humanity when pitted in opposition to nature and its powerful influences. Sergeant Munroe of Station 2 was on the street with a squad of men shortly after the first alarm rang out on the night air, and at the sounding of the second alarm he was joined by another detail, and all were placed in proper positions where the most effective service could be rendered to the firemen. Ropes were quickly stretched across the streets bounding

The Block Where the Fire Was Located, and the crowd kept without them. Till this time the firemen had been greatly impeded in their work by the presence of the crowd, but now that the curiosity seekers were driven back, they were able to proceed with renewed vigor.

Within one-half hour after the fire was seen it had burned up through the five stories occupied by the Ashton Valve Company, S. K. Abbott, book binder; E. K. Dunbar and T. Y. Crowell. The fire leaped out through the roof in one great mass of flames, which lighted up the sky for miles around. The fire had in the meantime burned rapidly through the building to the rear, and cries were heard that Rand, Avery & Co.'s establishment must once more go under. There seemed to be no cessation to the terrible work of the flames, and by degrees the beams on the various floors of the large six-story building fell through. Till now the lower floor, which was occupied by Rice, Kendall & Co., had been but little damaged, except by water, but as the falling beams struck the door a fresh fire was started, and

The Blaze Was Most Terrible.

It resembled a furnace, seething and roaring as the fire did its destructive work, and burned away unimpeded. Soon there was left standing nothing of this building but the front wall and a few beams in the rear part on Sullivan place. But even those were not long destined to withstand the flames, for they leaped on in an irresistible rush that carried everything before them. The water from the multitudinous streams that were being

continually poured into the roaring furnace seemed to have no effect whatever. The fire burned away, the men worked hard. Orders were given and executed with regularity and precision. Not the slightest confusion was seen among the hard-worked and willing firemen; but as yet no good result was arrived at from their exertions. It was momentarily expected that the large wall of Rice, Kendall & Co.'s building, 91 and 93 Federal street, would fall with a crash and probably bury a number of men beneath its ruins. Still the firemen worked on, seemingly unmindful of their danger, but the most cautious of them cast occasional glances upwards at the tottering mass of granite, and mentally calculated their chances of escaping at the first sound indicative of its collapse. This front now presented one of the grandest sights imaginable. There stood the wall, clearly outlined against the burning mass in the rear. The woodwork on the windows caught fire and joined in the general spoliation. There were five rows of windows with the outer rims in a blaze, and it presented to the eager and admiring crowd below so many squares, or, rather, oblongs in a blaze.

They all seemed to burn at one and the same time, and exhibited a scene seldom witnessed outside of a theatre. The really beautiful sight was capped by a large heavy granite cornice, which stood out bold and clear, and which gradually began to break and drop to the street below in large pieces. The firemen had many narrow escapes from these falling blocks, but still were unable to get near enough to give the conflagration an effective check. Shortly after 12 o'clock the third alarm was sounded and fresh help arrived for the now tired firemen. Still the front stood there defying the devastating element to make it fall. Yet it

Crumbled Slowly from the Top.

and the fire in this portion slowly became extinguished, simply because there was nothing for it to feed upon. The flames then, as it were, gave their whole attention to the buildings in the rear, facing on Devonshire street. The building on the corner of Sullivan place had in the meantime caught fire on the roof and streams were immediately poured on to it from the adjoining buildings by the firemen. No great damage was done here beyond the burning of the upper stories, which were completely gutted. The fire then proceeded on its way towards the Devonshire side of the block as if intent on destroying those magnificent edifices. On the north side of Rice, Kendall & Co.'s, the fire had made but little progress, and Rand, Avery & Co.'s place was but slightly damaged. By 12.30 the fire on the Federal-street side was under control, and all attention was given to the rear part, where there appeared to be an entirely new conflagration, which was as great, of as much significance and attended with as much danger as the one the firemen had been so long and earnestly contending with. The fire had burned all round Rand, Avery & Co.'s, and it now appeared from the direction the flames had taken that this firm would escape, if not altogether, with but probably slight damage.

In Winthrop Square.

About midnight the scene of the greatest interest was suddenly transferred from Federal street to Winthrop square. The severity of the conflagration on Federal street had been checked in some degree, but over in the rear of Rice, Kendall & Co.'s warehouse the lurid sky, the showers of sparks flying in the air and the tongues of forked flame, shooting up like huge wide-mouthed meteors, showed all too plainly that work—hard work, too—was still on hand for the hardy firemen. At this hour the upper story of 220 Devonshire street, upon the ground floor of which is located the offices of the Union Express Company, seemed filled with fire, which soon burst the confines of the pent up room, darting out through the apertures, when its ravages had made, and shortly after the roof fell in with a crash, and the fire quickly and fiercely worked its way down to the fourth, third and second stories. At the same instant the upper story of the building on the corner of Devonshire and Franklin streets, known as the North National Bank building, was enveloped in flames, which burned furiously. At 12.45 an explosion was heard and a mass of cinders came flying out of the windows of 220 Devonshire street, and the floors shortly after fell one by one until nothing but the outer walls of the building remained.

A REAR VIEW.

A Hard Fight—The Firemen Refuse to Retreat.

In Sullivan place, at the rear of Rice, Kendall & Co.'s warehouse, the sight was a grand and beautiful one. From cellar to attic the vast building was one sheet of flame. Stationed on the roofs of adjoining buildings, the valiant firemen, pipe in hand, guided with all their drenching force the streams from a dozen engines. It was hard battling against fate, and against fate it was, for right here was the hoisting elevator of Rice, Kendall & Co.'s building, and up through this dashed the fire with fearful rapidity, stretching its arms far and wide on either floor of the building, and the entire structure, clear through to the Federal street front, was one mass of seething flame. On Federal street stood steamers 7, 25 and 6, right immediately in front of the building, and within striking distance of the fast-falling pieces of almost molten iron and crumbling granite, which in their fall carried with them at times one or more of the hosemen at the pipes. Nothing daunted, however, with a laugh the brave fellows would instantly regain possession of their pipes, and once more the stream from their engines was doing effective service in the endeavor to quell the surging, seething masses of flame. Time and time again a retreat would be ordered, occasioned by the constant swaying of the massive granite and iron-griddled cornice with which the building was surmounted. Yet notwithstanding its constant vibratory movements it held its place, a tribute to the stanch manner in which the building was erected. Floor after floor and their supports went crashing through the interior of the structure and one hour and forty-five minutes from the time the alarm was rung in by Officer French the entire building, from the warehouses of D. Faulkner, wool merchant, situated on the second floor, was piled in one shapeless mass upon that and the floor beneath.

At that minute the fire upon the Devonshire street side of the square had enveloped the upper story of the North national bank building, upon the corner of Franklin street. Like the roofs which were the cause of the spread of the great fire, this roof burned like tinder, and was soon crashing through the entire building, crowding out in its downward passage the northwestern cornices of the building. The fall was a terrific one, and Franklin street was literally strewn with the burning brands of every description, from the small pieces of paper wafted from the publishing house of Osgood to the heavy iron abutment of the roof of the bank building.

THE SUFFERERS.

List of Persons and Firms Whose Property is Wholly or Partially Destroyed.

The following list gives the names of the persons and firms who are sufferers by the fire, so far as they could be ascertained at the hour of going to press:

- Rice, Kendall & Co., paper warehouse; totally destroyed.
- Houghton, Osgood & Co., heliotype printers; total loss.
- Carter, Rice & Co., paper dealers; partial loss.
- Davis, Lake & Allen, clothing, stock completely ruined by fire and water.
- Pierce, Hardy & Co., general commission business, in building with Davis, Lake & Allen.
- Union Express office. By prompt action a large portion of the goods were saved.
- The building at the corner of Devonshire and Franklin streets was completely gutted. The occupants were as follows: S. D. Warren & Co., paper dealers; J. R. Osgood & Co., Houghton Osgood & Co., publishers; William F. Brown, printer; Claffin & Brown, paper and twine; Charles E. Perry, paper-cutter; North national bank.
- Rand & Avery's paper-room and dry-press-room were destroyed. Damage by water in other portions must be very great.

It is impossible to give any correct idea of the amount of the losses, but they will probably exceed \$1,500,000.

SCENES AND INCIDENTS.

Severe Injuries to Firemen—A Bangor Ladder Breaks.

J. H. Le Ferre and Melzar, hosemen of engine 3 company, were severely injured by the hose pipe escaping from their grasp and darting about on the ground. It also knocked down several other men before it could be secured.

Upon a ladder whose top was in flames stood Ladderman Boardman of Truck 1. The crash, the noise and the falling projectiles was warning sufficient in itself to cause him to seek safety in flight; and, with the agility of a cat, he turned himself around on the ladder, so as to make it partially a barrier between himself and the falling mass and endeavored to slide to the ground. His progress was rapid, but not nearly as much so as was the falling roof, and portions of it caught the

brave fireman when within twenty feet of the street and hurled him violently to the ground.

The steamers from Chelsea and Cambridge did excellent service.

The firemen worked against great odds, but they worked effectively and bravely.

The Bangor extension ladder against the express building on Devonshire street broke and fell to the ground, but fortunately no one was injured.

In the vault of the Union Express office there was \$30,000, which would have been sent to various parts of the country today, and it is probably safe, as the vault is said to be fire-proof. The small safes in the messenger's room were carried away. The fixtures were owned by E. A. Telford & Co., and were valued at \$50,000; totally destroyed.

The iron building occupied by the Union Express Company stood for a remarkably long time, and none of the walls fell, although the roof and floor timbers were completely destroyed. The red hot iron rods and sections of gas-pipe would still be out of some of the upper windows and present a snake-like appearance as they twisted to the ground.

There was a thick coating of ice on the street at the time of the fire, and in a short time this became covered with water, which rendered it very difficult for the firemen to walk. Frequently a fireman or a policeman would slip and fall, and before he could arise he was wet through. When the fire was burning its fiercest, a fireman fell in the water on Federal street, and, as he did so, the cry was raised that the wall was falling. Never before was seen such a scrambling, and quite a laugh was raised at the expense of the unfortunate fireman.

While the North national bank building was a mass of flames and the fire was at its height, some very effective work was done by Engines 1 of Chelsea, 3 of Cambridge and 3 of Boston, the two former of which had come to assist on the ringing in of box 183. The three streams from these engines were combined into one and sent through one large nozzle in a great stream. As soon as this stream struck the base it seemed to carry everything before it, and almost from that time the firemen seemed to get control of the flames. But for this powerful stream in all probability the establishment of Rand, Avery & Co. would have gone the way of all the others. The stream reached to the fifth story, and wherever it reached the fire instantly gave way.

A BAD RUMOR.

Two Firemen Said to be Buried Under the Ruins of the Bank.

A fireman of hose No. 3, Chelsea, says that two firemen of Engine 22 were buried under the fallen roof of the North national bank.