

A NIGHT OF FIRES.

Serious Fires in Charlestown and Dorchester.

A GREAT FACTORY BURNED.

The Loss from \$250,000 to \$300,000.

A GREAT RINGING OF BELLS.

A General Alarm Turned In—The Other Fires.

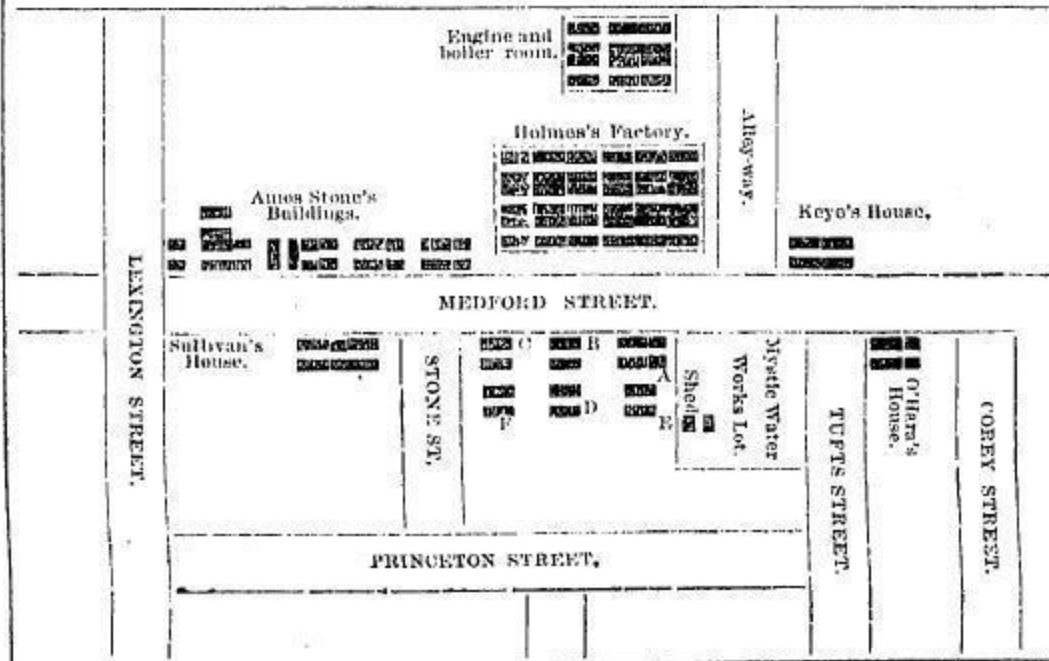
In the midst of the driving storm, the whole city was aroused last evening by the unwelcome sound of the fire alarm bells, which rang their clanging notes almost steadily from 7.20 until nearly 8 o'clock. First came an alarm in the Dorchester District, in which people generally felt little interest; but when No. 424 was sounded, followed by three alarms, and when the entire available Fire Department force of the city was called into service, people began to come out of doors. Being out in the storm, the blaze of some great conflagration was seen lighting up the clouds in the east, and was reflected by the snow all over the city. The fire originated a little before 7 o'clock in the fourth story of the immense furniture factory of F. M. Holmes & Co., Medford street, Bunker Hill District, the cause most generally assigned being the overturning of a watchman's lantern and the subsequent explosion. At once word was sent to the members of the nearest hose company, who promptly rendered what aid they could. It was seen in ten minutes or so, however, that an alarm must be sounded. When the Charlestown Department came to hand the whole

even when, a few moments after, there came the alarm from the Bunker Hill District, the succession of bells jangled did not cause more than a passing comment. But when the second alarm was sounded, people began to look out of their windows; the third alarm caused the men to put on their overcoats and get ready to go out into the streets, and the general alarm called out, as nothing else could on such a night, throngs on all the streets leading to Charlestown. Once out on the street, everybody looked over towards Bunker Hill. In the northern and eastern sky there was a great red glow, portending to many a conflagration which must surely have swept all the Navy Yard before it, and was climbing the historic hills on which Charlestown chiefly rests her fame. The bright color was reflected upon the fast-falling snow-flakes and upon the mass of snow which covered the streets, and no one could fail to know where the fire was. On Washington and Tremont streets crowded horse-cars dounded along, off and on the track; the Charlestown omnibuses did a driving business; and the startling "clang! clang!" heralding the approach of some fresh engine, made the streets very lively indeed. Men, women and children to the number of uncounted thousands tramped along through the city towards the Bunker Hill District, but the cutting steel and driving wind which howled especially, it would seem, at Warren Bridge, kept a good many from essaying further journeyings on such a night. It was not until many streets in Charlestown were passed through that one approached to near

THE SCENE OF THE FIRE.

Steam engines throbbing, pulsing and vomiting clouds of black smoke, which clung to the street-level and almost concealed surrounding objects from view, guarded every corner and were jammed up in most cramped positions often. The whole department of the city being on hand, indeed it became a matter of some difficulty to know what to do with all the apparatus which came in answer to urgent appeal. Some of the engines and hose-carriages settled the matter on their own account by colliding with convenient objects, and lay deprived of wheels in the roadway. It was unpleasant into the evening to note the jaded condition of the poor horses, who had galloped all the way from Mattapan to City Square, but could not go on further. Help was, however, promptly rendered, and most of the tired horses were made as comfortable as possible in various

DIAGRAM OF THE LOCALITY OF THE FIRE.



A NIGHT OF FIRES.

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also told her that the roof offered no means of escape, as there were no ladders available by which to descend to the ground. The woman could not be convinced, but stubbornly refused to accompany us down the stairs with her children. The other people about us, after being assured that there was not a particle of danger in going down the stairs, went with us down one flight, leaving the woman I have mentioned standing on the ladder leading to the roof of the building. We were about going down the second flight when the men and women were seized with a sudden panic, and drew back, some of the men exclaiming, "I see smoke down there; the fire must be burning the walls in the lower story." Several firemen joined us here, and, after a good deal of talking, the people were actually driven down stairs and out into the street. The flames were now bursting from every part of the building, and I was just going from the building when I thought of the woman in the top story. I started to go back for her when I saw her being led by a man down stairs, her children clinging tightly to the skirts of her dress. Everything was confusion when I got out into the street, and soon after the building was totally consumed.

THE COURSE OF THE FIRE.

How it Began and How it Spread—A Detailed Statement of Property Destroyed and Losses Thereon.

The origin of the fire is not known as a certainty, there being various theories advanced in explanation of it. Mr. Joy, of the firm of F. M. Holmes & Co., said that he was told that the night watchman dropped his lantern while making his rounds in the fourth story, and that the fire originated in this manner. At all events the flames appear to have caught in the fourth story of Holmes's factory, and in the northeast corner of the building. The flames then spread in an easterly direction, but it was but a short time before the whole structure was enveloped. The front wall was the first to fall, then the west, then the north and then the east. When the front wall fell the flames were communicated to the house of Mr. O'Hara on the corner of Medford and Tufts streets, and also to the shed on the Mystic Valley Water Works lot, the stables of Nason & Littlefield, Mr. Stone and Mr. Frothingham, and the house of Mr. Sanborn, on the south side of Medford street. When the west wall fell, the tenements of Mr. Amos Stone were soon enveloped in flames, and the firemen had the destructive element to combat on all sides.

All the buildings destroyed, with the exception of Holmes's factory, were of flimsy wooden material and burned like tinder-boxes. In fact, a majority of the buildings on this section of Medford street, on Tufts, Princeton, Stone, Lexington and other streets in this locality are wooden tenement houses, and it is no wonder that when the flames spread from one house to another the destruction of all the buildings in the neighborhood was prophesied. Indeed, it is a wonder that a still more disastrous fire did not result when the weather and the inflammable character of the buildings are considered. It is to the credit of the firemen that the progress of the flames was arrested as early as it was, and the partially burned houses of Mr. O'Hara and Mr. Sullivan are the best evidences of the effective work of the department. From all that could be learned, the fire originated by the accidental overturning of a lantern in the watchman's hands in the fourth story.

THE LANTERN EXPLODED.

and the flames instantly communicated to the inflammable material, varnish and shellac in the finishing room, and in an instant the room was in a blaze. Word was at once sent to the house of Hose 3, and the response was prompt, that company having a stream on the fire before the alarm was sounded. This delay was the fatal mistake, for when the department arrived on the scene the huge seven-story structure was one mass of roaring flame. So hot was the fire that the firemen were soon driven from in front of the building, and one after another the sheds of the Mystic Water Company opposite and the stables of Frothingham, Littlefield & Stone were soon in flames, as were the houses of John O'Hara, corner of Tufts and Medford streets, and the one owned by John Sanborn, corner of Stone and Medford streets, and occupied by one Jelly. At this time the scene was grand, the huge volumes of flame leaping high in the air with a terrifying roar, while the gale carried huge cinders on its wings away over the hill, even as high as Bunker Hill Monument. All the tenants in the vicinity were hurrying to and fro laden with household goods, but making poor headway in the dense crowds of spectators which had gathered and were every moment increasing. The two subsequent alarms brought reinforcements of firemen, apparatus and police, and the crowd was soon roped off at a safe distance. Meanwhile the flames roared on and it appeared as if only superhuman agencies could save the whole side of Bunker Hill, covered as it was with wooden dwellings, from destruction. But as the fire exhausted all the material in the factory the floors, one after the other, fell with a dull, heavy thud, and this so reduced the volume of flame that the firemen could work to better advantage, and they ventured on to Medford street, near to the mill, so that the attacks made on the fire in the houses and stables, both front and rear, began to tell. But now a new danger menaced the brave fire-laddies in front of the mill, namely, tottering walls. The cry of danger soon went out from a thousand throats, and a second later the front wall on Medford street fell outward, luckily injuring no one. Meanwhile, the fire in O'Hara's house had been quenched after blackening the Tufts street side and the building had been flooded with water. So intensely hot had been the fire that the four houses next above the mill, facing on Medford street, occupied by Messrs. Grant, Dwight, Brown and York had been abandoned to their fate, but with the fall of the floors those buildings were approached from the rear, or wharf side, and many streams were poured on these houses.

THE FIREMEN WERE WORKING BRAVELY here, when the wall on that side fell outward with a tremendous crash, sending the bricks and flying debris in all directions. Three members of Hose 2, at work in the rear of Dwight's house, received a volley of these flying missiles and were seriously injured. Their names are Furlong, whose leg was broken; Phelps, seriously cut about the head and face, and Callahan, somewhat injured. There was a small building at the corner of an alley leading to the wharf in rear of the mill from Medford street, and adjoining it was a one-story structure occupied as an office by E. Keyes & Son, wood and coal dealers. This building caught fire several times, but the flames each time were squelched and the firemen had a stream upon it when the rear wall of the mill fell. A few minutes later the end wall overshadowing Keyes's building began to waver and a great cry again went up, of "Look out!" Hardly had the firemen crossed Medford street, ere the great wall gracefully, slowly began to fall, coming down at last with a crash upon Keyes's building and leveling it to the ground. Apparently, it was like an egg shell crushed in the hand, so great was the weight of the wall. With the fall of the walls the lumber stored about the mill took fire, and before it could be extinguished the stacks of mahogany, black walnut and other valuable woods were burned. Just before the walls fell the large, three-story wooden block, corner of Stone and Medford streets, took fire from the intense heat along its entire front, but the flames did not materially damage the interior of the structure, which is owned by William Sullivan and occupied by a number of families, including Sullivan's and one Devine's. Though not much damaged by fire, the building was completely drenched with water. Of the buildings which caught fire, all were destroyed except O'Hara's and Sullivan's. The fact that the buildings opposite the factory were small wooden structures, sheds and stables, and situated so as to be attacked by the streams of water from all sides, except Medford street, probably prevented in a great measure the further spreading of the fire. The residents of fifty or more houses in the vicinity packed their household goods preparatory to vacating the premises, and the more timid ones did vacate, but they soon unpacked and returned their things as before, thanks to the whole Fire Department and its brave, persistent work.

THE LIST OF LOSSES.

First in the list is the factory of Holmes, who was employing his help on half-time. Various estimates have been set on his loss, but when the

size of the building, the stock inside and out and its quality are considered, it must aggregate \$250,000, which is partially covered by insurance. Mr. Joy, of the firm of F. M. Holmes & Co., was unwilling to make a statement of losses and insurance last evening. The property across the street, the Mystic Water Company's sheds and the stables of Frothingham, Littlefield and the adjoining out-buildings would aggregate, with the damage to John Sanborn's house on the corner of Stone and Medford streets, probably \$5000; insurance not known. The houses owned by Anna Stone, and occupied by Messrs. Grant, Dwight, Brown and York on the wharf side of Medford street, next the factory, were worth probably \$7000. The building of Sullivan, corner of Stone and Medford streets, occupied by some half dozen families, was completely gutted, involving a loss of \$5000. John O'Hara, corner of Tufts and Medford, loses by fire and water about \$3000. Keyes & Son, building crushed and burned, about \$3000. Add to this the personal effects of the occupants destroyed and the total loss outside the factory will aggregate \$50,000.

Notes of the Great Fire.

Engine 25 while going to the fire in the Bunker Hill District was disabled by the breaking of the forward axle at the head of Charlestown street, just opposite the bridge. This break-down, directly on the street-car track, blocked up travel for a few hours until the snow blocked up all travel. Two women sick in bed in O'Hara's house were removed by officers of Station XV. to a neighbor's. Several of the tenants burned out are in a destitute condition, escaping from their houses with only the clothing they had upon them. Mr. F. M. Holmes, owner of the factory burned is absent in New York.

THREE ALARMS FROM DORCHESTER

About 3 O'clock this Morning—No Details of the Cause.

At 2.30 this morning an alarm was pulled in from Box 323, Glover's Corner, Dorchester District, followed at 2.43 by a second and at 2.55 by a third alarm. The horrible storm prevailing had rendered the police telegraph inoperative, and no clue as to the nature of the fire could be gained from that source. The snow-clogged and drifted streets rendered the usual means of getting to a fire almost out of the question, and made it a problem difficult of solution what time the reporters despatched by special conveyance might be able to return. At the hour of going to press no information as to the nature of the fire has been obtained.

LATEST—The Fire in a Block of Tenement Houses on Dorchester Avenue Near Commercial Street—Loss, \$20,000.

GLOBE OFFICE, 5.30 A. M.—The reporters have just returned from the Dorchester fire, which was in a block of tenement houses on Dorchester avenue, near Commercial street. The owner is one Haggatt, who had a liquor saloon in one of them. The lower floors of all the houses were used as stores and most of them were vacant. There were no tenants in any of the upper floors. The block, which was of wood, two stories in height, was totally destroyed, causing a loss of probably \$20,000. Nothing is known as to the insurance.

OTHER BLAZES.

Slight Fires in Dorchester and South Boston—Kerosene Causes One of Them.

Just ten minutes previous to the alarm for the great fire in the Bunker Hill District, an alarm was sounded from Box 323, which proved to have been caused by the burning of a coal shed on Commercial street, Dorchester District, owned by the Dorchester Gaslight Company. Loss, \$200.

The alarm from Box 123 at 8.15 was caused by the explosion of a kerosene lamp in the attic of the four-story brick tenement house, corner of Dorchester avenue and Swan street, owned by a Mr. Bishop. Damage slight.

convenient sheds and shelters. It was the army of early comers to the scene of conflagration which saw at its best the brilliant spectacle. The sudden lighting up of the immense manufactory, with jets and spurts of lambent flame from every window was a beautiful sight. Grand, however, was the scene presented when the flames, driven backward by the wind, swept towards Bunker Hill. Gladders and burning masses of wood were carried even to the height of the monument by the wind. In every direction there was a coruscation of sparks, but the great mass of flame steadily tended upward, threatening with destruction a section built up mostly by wooden houses. Interesting, too, was the coming of the engines from all quarters in response to call, the dullness which gradually succeeded the bright glare, and which was only dispelled for an instant by the downfall of the walls; and many were glad to go home at a reasonable hour, sure that the fire was under control. The police regulations were very efficient; a cordon guarded the circle of most earnest work, and the great public saw enough of the fire without, as on some occasions, troubling those who attend fires "on business," and mean it, too.

ACCOUNTS BY EYE-WITNESSES.

The Occupants of a Burning Tenement House Barely Escape Death—Heroic Efforts of the Firemen.

George Taylor, who was early on the ground, after describing the scene, said: It must have been soon after 8 o'clock when the walls of the building fell in with a terrible crash, though I had no way of knowing the exact time. Soon after this the tenements were discovered to be on fire, but the occupants seemed to be wholly unconscious of their danger. I used to be a fireman once myself, so that I am not wholly ignorant of the duties of firemen. I saw at once that unless the occupants of the tenements got out quickly they would all be consumed in the flames. I followed several firemen into the now rapidly-burning building, and told one of the women, whom some of her companions called Maggie, that the tenements were rapidly burning, and that she and the rest of the occupants had better get out of the building as quickly as possible. She gave me some unintelligible answer, and I thought my entreaties would do no good, when a woman at the head of a flight of stairs confirmed the words I had just uttered by crying out, "The tenement is on fire! The tenement is on fire! Oh, my God! what will my children do? What will my children do?" Several firemen who stood near me asked the woman where her children were. "In the top story, sir," she answered. We went up stairs, the woman preceding us. On the stairs and in the hall-ways we encountered men, women and children, and all seemed to know that something terrible had happened or was momentarily going to; but none of them, particularly the men, made any effort, so far as we could see, to remove their wives and children from the building. Some of the men, as we ascended the third flight of stairs, were engaged in gathering a few of the articles of furniture in their rooms together, but none of them seemed to realize their danger. One of the firemen told the men to help their wives down stairs before the flames and smoke prevented this means of escape. The men seemed stupefied, but the women more fully realized their danger. We followed the women because we thought that possibly the majority of occupants of the building had huddled together in the story next to the roof, thinking that this would be the safest place. This expectation proved perfectly correct. We found men, women and children congregated together all ready to ascend to the roof at a moment's notice. The woman who was afraid that her children would be taken to death ascended to the roof of the building, but soon came down again in great agitation, exclaiming, "We're all going to be burned out of house and home; how are we going to get down?" We told her that the only way to escape was by means of the stairway; and we

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A BRILLIANT DISPLAY OF FIREWORKS

Set Against the Dark Clouds and the Driving Snow—All Boston Aroused by the Night's Alarms—Scenes at the Conflagration.

Old indications had begun to fully keep his word in promising to Boston and the cities and towns all along the New England shore a "nor'easter" of most uncommon severity. People in general were preparing for a quiet evening at home, and they were not, of course, disturbed when the familiar tones of the fire-alarm indicated a fire somewhere in the snowy wastes of the Twenty-fourth Ward;