

FIRE'S FEAST.

Flames Flash Through a Big Freight House.

Spark Was in a Bale From a Steamer.

Mass of Hot Coals Represents \$350,000 Worth of Property.

While Hot Slates Showered on Firemen.

Lieutenant Hart Snatched from the Glowing Pit.

"Ring in an alarm!" shouted Foreman Scripp, at the Lowell freight depot on Lowell street yesterday afternoon at about 5.20 o'clock. Freight shifter Charles H. Thompson obeyed the command and at just 5.21 o'clock the city, or so much of it as watches the fire alarm bells, was made aware that a fire had broken out near the Boston & Lowell depot on Causeway street.

It was a fire! Such a fire as Boston sees but once a year, thanks to our fire department.

What burn? The Boston & Lowell freight depot, the grain elevators and 40 loaded cars. It is going yet, so one can hardly say that the property went up in flames, but already \$350,000 worth of property has been destroyed.

How did it catch? No one knows. There is a supposition, however. It is a good one, and upon investigation will no doubt prove the origin of this fearful blaze. Yesterday morning truckmen began unloading bales of cotton consigned from Savannah to a house in Montreal. This cotton came to the freight house from a steamer from the Southern port, and was in all about 50 bales. It was unloaded upon the platform and rolled into the inclosure, where men were busy putting it aboard a train which would haul it to its destination. In the afternoon, after the last load had been delivered some time, one of the "handlers" saw smoke rising from the pile. He called his companion's attention to it, and that man yelled to the foreman. The instant Mr. Scripp saw it, he realized the danger and yelled to some one to ring in an alarm of fire. Before the words had left his mouth a dozen hands were pulling away at the bales to get at the source of the smoke, in a minute more a blaze sprang up, small at first, but rapidly growing, and in less time than it has taken to tell it a fierce fire was going. The men were helpless; the fire was roaring around them, and in 10 minutes the wooden walls about the cotton had ignited, and then there was no salvation for the depot or its contents.

Men rushed to the big wooden doors which opened into the grain elevators, and shut them, but the flames followed and undid their work by burning through the partitions. Then the grain elevators

Were Beyond Salvation.

Fire apparatus came at once, of course, but the streams were of no use in the fight against the awful fire that had been started; a second alarm was sent in, then a third.

To these three alarms there responded three engine companies: 4, 6, 8, 10, 25, 26, 27, 7, 9, 22 and 23; ladders, 1, 8, 14 and 15; chemical engine, No. 1; the water tower, hose company 8, and fire boat No. 31. This was a goodly array of apparatus, and it was all needed. Every company, severally and unitedly, had to lend its best efforts to the struggle and the flames were not gotten under control until after 9 o'clock. Nearly five hours did the brave firemen battle with the flames, and there still are smouldering, smoking piles of ruins and grain to show the awful light.

The freight house is bounded upon three sides by the depot yard, Minot street and Lowell street and the rear end open into the general yards. From these facts it was evident to the firemen that there was little danger to the surrounding property. Built more than 35 years ago, the old building was excellent food for flames, in itself, however, and the rapidity with which the fire spread through it was surprising, even to the experienced firemen. It was erected by the Lowell Cotton Company as a storehouse for cotton and soon after the completion of the old Boston & Lowell railroad the structure was sold to that corporation. Its value at the time of its erection was much greater than now, of course; material cost more. It was not intended as a railroad building, however, and architecturally speaking it was remarkably ill-provided against the dangers of the destructive element. Like a pile of tinder it went down. The fire literally swept through the place. It is safe to say that not another building in Boston, used for the storage of so much valuable property, could have been so completely ruined.

Upon acquiring possession of the structure the Boston & Lowell Railroad Company converted the half of it lying along the depot and into grain elevators. The other half, that lying along Lowell street, was made into a freight depot. Within the building were four tracks, each one capable of holding 11 cars.

All three tracks were full when the fire broke out, and the train on track 3 was ready to start for Montreal. The caboose of this train contained the dinner pails of the trainmen, and the engineer in the cab was waiting for a signal from the conductor. It seems strange, but an idea of the

Pierce Rapidly

of the spread of the flames can be gathered from this fact. When the fire was first discovered the engineer received his signal and started to pull the train from the depot. When the engine and four cars had passed out, a brakeman who was on the watch saw the flames claim the fifth car, and to save those that had gotten out he pulled a pin, leaving the others to the flames.

Incredible as was the spread of the fire, and devastating as was its sweep, the engines did much good. The heat from the masses of grain and the contents of the 40 cars consumed was frightful. There was little about the building itself to burn, only the floors and the wooden beams. The crowds about the place, however, had to stand back, and how the firemen braved the awful heat is a wonder. A strange fact is that the portion of the building which contained the grain elevators was most severely damaged.

Upon the whole structure was a slate roof, and these slates were a constant menace to the firemen. Before the roof fell in, which it did in an hour after the fire had started, the hot slates began to crackle and curl in the heat, and fell in showers upon the ground below. Intensely hot were they, and by the nightfall they made an awful spectacle, falling, almost white hot, toward the ground. A fireman upon a ladder with a hose had to constantly guard against these missiles, and the stiff leather hats of the brave men saved many of them from severe cuts on the head.

The building destroyed was about 300 feet long, extending from Minot street toward the water front, and fully 100 feet wide. It was built of brick, in the good, substantial style of 30 years ago, and at intervals of about 30 feet, its entire length, were party-walls of double thickness. Within the freight cars were burning, there were flames intense in their ferocity and sweeping in their scope, but the many big, thick walls restrained their endeavors to go without.

The roof did not fall until after the cars were in ashes, and when the flames had eaten well into the thousands and thou-

sands of bushels of wheat, oats and corn, there was simply a seething, angry bed of coals. High pillars of flame and much smoke characterized the fire. Indeed, the engines made about as much smoke as the fire. The grain would tumble and roll and run down in perfect rivers when a floor gave way, and the hot bed below it burned up through.

Night Saw the Weary Men

still fighting bravely, and then the spectacle became one of awful beauty.

A building 300 feet long, 100 feet wide and its whole length a solid mass almost of blazing red coals! Here and there a flame would shoot up. A stream of water turned upon it for a minute or two made it blaze higher; then it sunk. Within 10 feet another flame would spring up, and this would suffer the same fate at the hands of the firemen.

What brave fellows they are! Up ladders leaning against a frame perhaps, mounted the men with hose to quell the obstinate little blaze.

In the progress of the fire there were fewer accidents to men than would be supposed. It was a hard fire to fight, and the firemen had to take severe risks many times to well direct their streams.

Hoseman W. C. Newdick of company 1 heard a crash and looking behind him saw a man falling into the fearful bed of flames and coals in the west of the building. An open archway was before him, and like a hero he ran into this, caught up the form and dragged it to the air without. Help awaited him, and the unconscious form, in the uniform of a member of engine company 21, was carried to a drug store at the corner of Everett and Green streets. There he was laid upon a couch and Dr. Williams applied the usual restoratives. It was full 20 minutes before the poor fellow recovered command of his brain and tongue.

"Five other men went down with me; did you get them out?" were his first words, and Hoseman Newdick recognized Lieutenant Hart of company 26.

The crowd that had gathered were fear-stricken. No other men had been taken from the ruins with Lieutenant Hart, and the first thought of all was that they were still in their fiery beds. The rumor got out upon the street and excitement reigned for a few minutes until all of 26's men had been accounted for. The other fellows had clung to the roof or jumped, and saved themselves, but it took the crowd some time to find this out. Firemen themselves became white, even under their blackened faces, when the rumor swept across the fire lines to them. A sigh of relief went up from them when a member of engine 20's company said all his companions were accounted for.

Lieutenant Hart Was Cut

over the left eye and badly bruised about his entire body. He was removed to the Massachusetts Hospital.

James H. Lushard of engine company 10 fell from a ladder at the rear of the structure and was badly cut. He would not listen to the advice of the men who picked him up, and insisted upon going back to fight the fire. No other serious injuries to firemen were reported.

Hoseman Plannick of chemical engine No. 1 was hurt about the head and face in a shower of hot slate from the roof. His injuries are not serious.

Chief Webster and Fire Commissioner Tobin looked after the workers, and well directed all their efforts, so well, indeed, that this morning there is but a smouldering mass of harmless coals, mostly grain.

The fire will cost some one about \$350,000, divided thus: Grain in elevators and on six cars, \$150,000; 40 freight cars, \$60,000; their contents, \$65,000; building, \$75,000.

The building was fully insured by the Boston & Maine Railroad Company, as were also the cars and the grain in the elevators. The contents of the cars were insured only by the railroad in the capacity of common carriers, and the collection of damages depends much upon the form of contracts made with the many shippers. About 50 different firms owned the grain destroyed, the heaviest losers being C. B. Edgerly, Mark Schultz and Timothy Baker. George H. Chapin and Divinell, Hayward & Co. lose several thousand bushels of seed peas, which were in the house. Much bran and meal was destroyed, and several carloads of flour in barrels. The contents of the loaded cars could not be found out. They consisted mainly, however, of provisions, groceries, oil, flour, hardware, etc., consigned by Boston wholesalers to dealers along the line from here to Montreal. A statement was made by a handler in the house, that five horses, consigned to a stock farm near Montpelier, Vt., had been burned, but this could not be verified. The oil and a supposed keg of powder which were in the cars did not explode, fortunately.

It was after 12 o'clock when the apparatus was dismissed, and then several engines remained, playing streams upon the smouldering pile.

When the Fire Started

the thoroughfares leading to the Boston & Lowell railroad were crowded with suburban residents on their way to the different railroad stations on Causeway street. The throng constantly increased, until the different streets leading to the freight house were choked by the people trying to get a view of the blaze.

Ten thousand people availed themselves of every opportunity to get near the blaze and every inch of space within 1000 yards of the fire was taken up by them.

After the third alarm Captain Hurley of the Joy street station, who with Sergeants Lee, Kitter and Butters of that station had 30 men at the fire, telephoned to headquarters for more officers and details of 10 men from stations 1, 2, 4 and 15, under Sergeants Boynton, Trask, Peare and Yeaton, who sent to Captain Hurley by the superintendent, Captain Hurley and his men roped off the streets in the vicinity of the freight house, and the crowd were kept back so as to give the department a chance to work.

In the yard where the freight house is situated, and within a stone's throw of the burning building, 10 empty freight cars were standing on a side track. The crowd soon occupied these cars and were having a fine view of the work of the fire king when their pleasure was suddenly interrupted by a squad of officers under Sergeant "Dan" Kitter, who cleared all the cars of their human freight. This was done by orders of the railroad people, who were afraid that one of the freight house

Boilers Would Explode.

There were many ladies and young girls among those who, having just completed their day's toil, were drawn to the spectacle. A good many suburbanites lost their trains by stopping to gaze. The house-tops near were thickly lined, and the roof of the depot was made use of by employes and others.

The excitement of the crowd at times was intense, and was raised to a white heat when someone reported that one of the roofs of the building had gone in with seven firemen. Then one of the hose wagons came out of the yard at full speed, containing the unconscious form of Lieutenant Hart.

As the night began to descend the fire showed up to greater advantage and it up the surrounding buildings. The crowd seemed to grow denser, until the police had all they could do to handle them. But the police maintained passageways in the streets leading to the burning building.

The cars on one East Cambridge line were stopped from running down Lowell street and the line did not resume running cars over this route until early this morning.

As is usual in such cases, the "small boy" was out in force, and he kept the "finest" busy in looking after him.

The crowd as a whole was a good-natured one, and when any of their number were sprinkled by the moving of a hose pipe would receive it cheerfully.

There was a small army of reporters present. Out of town firemen were there in all their glory and large badges. A policeman said he never saw so many badges before at any one time. The crowd stuck to their posts until nearly 10.30 o'clock, when the fire was under control, and from this hour until midnight began to diminish, until none but the police and firemen were left to watch the burning building.

Worcester Excited, but the Loss Small.

WORCESTER, April 9.—There was great excitement on the street tonight over the report that the gas works at South Worcester were on fire. A fire was discovered in the wooden building, at the east end of the works, used for mixing lime before it is transported to the purifier. It was feared that the flames would spread to the latter building and to the general works, and cause a terrible explosion. The call for the fire patrol was followed by a telephone alarm, and finally by a box alarm. The repeated alarms attracted several thousand people to the scene. The fire was confined to the building where it originated. The loss will not exceed \$1000. The cause is not known.

The Children Were Safe.

NEW BEDFORD, April 9.—Fire this evening gutted a small cottage on Hillman street, owned by John P. Jenney and occupied by Joseph Grenon. A story was started that two of Grenon's children had been burned to death, but the children were with their uncle. Damage to house, \$800; no insurance. Grenon's furniture was insured for \$1200.