

Affairs in and about the City.

DESTRUCTIVE FIRE AND GREAT LOSS OF LIFE.

At about 2 o'clock, yesterday afternoon, fire broke out in the store No. 324 North street, (in the building known as Jefferson Block), occupied by C. & M. Doherty, grocers, and spread very rapidly through the entire block, and to the adjoining premises on North and Clark streets, destroying in all 10 or 12 buildings, occupied as tenements for 60 or 70 families, mostly Irish, and, for various stores, a barber's shop, stable, &c.

The sacrifice of property was very great, but the most painful interest is in the fact that several lives were also lost. While the fire was in progress, a woman named Mary, wife of Daniel Collins jumped from a 3d story window in Jefferson Block, killing herself instantly.

Chas. Warren, a member of Hook and Ladder Co. No. 3, while standing on a ladder in the rear of a building on Barber's Alley, was crushed by the falling walls. He was instantly removed to the store of Dr. Ludwig, but died in about ten minutes. His head was badly cut and his whole body shockingly mangled. Newell Harding, Jr., of engine Co. No. 11 was also badly cut; Philip Hackitt and J. W. Regan were slightly bruised; Margaret Sweeney jumped from the third story of Jefferson Block, breaking her leg and arm, and otherwise severely bruising herself. She was taken to the Hospital.

At different stages of the fire, charred and blackened bodies were taken from the burning mass, to the number of five in all. They were carried to the station-house. Three of them are supposed to be the bodies of Ellen Keller, 45 years old, and her two daughters, Mary and Ellen, who are missing. The other two had not been identified at last accounts.

The total loss of property must be not far from \$50,000, a large proportion of which belonged to Cornelius Doherty. The following is the amount of insurance so far as we have learned: Cornelius Doherty, on Jefferson Block, \$3000 in the New England Mutual Marine office; on four buildings adjoining in the rear, \$2600 in the State Mutual; C. & M. Doherty on stock in store, \$1500 in the State Mutual. Their joint loss is \$30,000. Mr. John Seaver had two houses and a stable destroyed, valued at \$3000—insured for \$1500 in the Boston Mutual. The brick building on the corner of Clark and North streets, owned by John W. James, and occupied by Patrick Collins as a boarding-house, was wholly destroyed we did not learn the insurance. Probably the different families occupying the buildings destroyed, had no insurance.

Various rumors were afloat as to the origin of the fire. One account states that a can of fluid in the hands of a woman, was ignited by a cigar. Another, that an explosion of gas, followed by the burning of a barrel of liquor, was the immediate cause of the conflagration. So many different rumors prevailed last evening, that it was impossible to ascertain the exact facts in the case.

About 5 o'clock, the alarms were struck, calling for the steam fire engine, and at 20 minutes past 5, she made her appearance on Union wharf. She had steam up in 7 minutes, and two streams were put on to the fire which done good service. We think that if she had been on the ground at an earlier hour, it would have been a great relief to the firemen, who appeared to be much exhausted. Several engines from the adjoining towns were present and done good service.

The firemen worked nobly for three hours before the flames were finally subdued. Much suffering was experienced from the heat of the fire which was intense. We believe that no fire has ever occurred in this city attended with so many fatal casualties. Many families have not only been rendered houseless, but have lost their nearest and dearest relatives.

It commenced raining soon after the fire broke out, and continued during the greater part of the afternoon. A strong police force was in attendance, and several arrests were made for assaults on firemen and officers.