

A FRESH HORROR!

A Five-story Brick Building Destroyed by an Explosion.

LOSS OF LIFE AND PERSONAL DAMAGE.

A Terrible Scene of Excitement—Two Fire Alarms Rung In.

THE POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS PROMPTLY AT WORK.

Searching the Chaos of Brick and Mortar for the Bodies of the Dead and Wounded.

THRILLING SCENES ABOUT THE RUINS—NARROW ESCAPES.

The Damage to Property in the Vicinity—Stores and Vehicles Shattered—A Horse-car Thrown Across the Street.

SCENES AND INCIDENTS OF THE DISASTER.

The List of Killed and Wounded, So Far as Known—More Bodies Probably in the Ruins—Full Details of the Affair.

The most startling sensation of this week, so rife with thrilling events, occurred at 4:30 o'clock, last evening, when an explosion, for which it is impossible at present to account, reduced the large five-story brick building, on the southwest corner of Washington and La Grange streets, to a mass of brick, mortar and shattered timber, and caused the death of several persons and the wounding in various degrees of a large number. The blast which wrecked the building in question was a dull, heavy explosion, accompanied by a blinding glare of light, and a shower of dirt, ashes and debris, which pervaded the whole vicinity, and caused the utmost excitement and alarm. Not only was the building in which it occurred, and which was occupied by the drug store and soda-water manufactory of G. D. Dows & Co., entirely destroyed, but considerable damage was done to buildings in the vicinity, and to vehicles in the street. Plate glass windows were shattered, a passing street-car thrown to the further side of the street, a wagon, standing in La Grange street, blown to atoms, and other vehicles thrown about as if mere toys. Persons in the drug store and on the street were hurled to a distance, in some instances through the windows of stores across the street. The number of persons in the fated building at the time is not definitely known; neither can the total loss in killed and wounded be accurately estimated until the debris which fills the cellar shall have been overhauled, as it is probable several more are buried in the ruins. So far as can be ascertained at an early hour this morning, three persons were killed outright, three others are in a dying condition, and ten or twelve others are known to be wounded. Of course, the terrible affair caused a tremendous excitement throughout the city, and immense throngs of people gathered about the scene and remained for hours, watching the work of extricating the killed and wounded, and indulging in the wildest rumors and speculations. Two alarms of fire were rung in, calling the entire Fire Department of the city proper, to extinguish the flames which broke out directly after the explosion, and to remove the ruins which held the unfortunates carried down in the crash. The police promptly took charge of the place, and stretched ropes across the street in the vicinity to keep back the crowd and enable the firemen to work efficiently and successfully inside. There were many hair-breadth escapes and many cases of deliverance with slight injuries from what seemed the certainty of a horrible death. As to the cause of the disaster, the wildest and most conflicting theories are indulged. It seems certain that no one knows the origin of the destruction or the element which produced it. A searching investigation will so doubt be made, but it is doubtful if the matter is ever fully settled. Below will be found full and graphic accounts of the startling affair, with its consequences, prepared by a corps of reporters of THE GLOBE, who were early at the scene.

THE BUILDING DESTROYED.

A Drug Establishment Demolished—The Persons in the Building—Work of the Firemen and Police.
The building destroyed was that of G. D. Dows & Co., apothecaries and manufacturers of soda water apparatus, old number 625 Washington street, corner of La Grange street. A small three-story building at the rear, No. 14 La Grange street, was also totally demolished. The ground floor of Dows's building was occupied by Dows's drug store, the second floor by S. T. Frazier, custom tailor, while Mrs. L. G. Hersey, a somewhat noted clairvoyant, known as "Madame Lillie," occupied rooms on the third floor, and the remaining apartments were occupied by lodgers. The building was five stories in height, and had a frontage of twenty-five feet on Wash-

ington street. It was completely demolished and fell within a moment after the explosion, burying a number of occupants in the ruins.
So far as ascertained, there were fifteen or twenty persons in the building at the time of the explosion. At 8 P. M. nine had been taken out of the ruins, of whom but two were fatally injured. A man named Pratt was thrown bodily from a window by the shock, and all the glass within a block of the building was shattered. Sergeant Thomas of Station IV, was on the ground quickly after the explosion, and ran to give the alarm, but some one was ahead of him, and the alarm was sounded from the box at the corner of Washington and Boylston streets, exactly one minute and a half after the explosion. The Fire Department rallied with its customary promptness, and the flames, which were now bursting from every part of the debris were quickly extinguished. The news of the awful occurrence spread like wildfire throughout the city; a second alarm was rung in at 6.44, and immense throngs invaded the streets in the locality for a distance of many blocks. The police seconded the efforts of the firemen nobly, and did their best to keep back the tremendous crush, and to remove the sufferers as expeditiously as possible. As fast as the wounded were removed they were taken to the City Hospital in ambulances and every available vehicle.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPLOSION.

A Heavy, Dull Shock—The Startling and Thrilling Scene—Injuries and Narrow Escapes of Bystanders.

The explosion occurred within a few seconds of 6.30 o'clock. An eye-witness told a GLOBE reporter that the sound was not sharp, but muffled and dead, like a heavy "boom!" It was so heavy as to shake the earth for a great distance, and immediately the air in the vicinity was filled with flying bricks, beams, and clouds of blinding dust. No flame was visible from the street. When the explosion occurred, a GLOBE reporter was standing in front of the building of A. Whitney & Co., No. 680 Washington street, opposite Dows's corner. The first incident which attracted his attention was the abrupt flight of a hack from the street to the sidewalk where he stood. Mr. A. K. Corliss, who was looking into the hat store at the corner of Washington and Kneeland streets, says the first thing he noticed was the toppling over of the walls of the building and the terrific crashing of the rafters as they fell. He says he saw a carriage containing three ladies overturned on to the sidewalk, and, an instant later, a woman fell or jumped from the third floor of the building to the street. In his words: "She shot down like a rocket." He saw the walls in falling strike the apple stand on the corner, and supposed that the old apple-woman was crushed to death. Mr. Corliss rendered efficient service to the wounded, whom he assisted to remove, acting in the coolest manner in the midst of the wildest excitement. He helped to remove four persons from the ruins. James Mitchell of 13 La Grange street had removed his goods from the house only yesterday, but the house was heavily damaged and Mr. Mitchell had a very narrow escape. James R. Sanford, real estate agent, was in the plumber's shop on La Grange street up to a moment before the accident, when he stepped out on the street, and the next instant he found himself in the jeweler's store, No. 8 La Grange street, having been blown through the show window. He was injured about the throat and head, and his hands were slightly cut. He then ran into the shop of one Selkirkmann, a German, and asked for water to clear his eyes from the blood. The whole-souled Teuton refused, saying that he "had no time to give away any water."

The Story of the Clerks.

At the time of the disaster there were two clerks in the druggist's store, attending as usual to the duties of the trade. Two of the assistants were on their way to dinner when the alarm struck, and knowing that the fire was near by their place of business they returned to the store. Before their arrival the street was crowded with startled residents of the neighborhood, who, however, were no more at a loss to understand the cause of the explosion than the clerks themselves. Fortunately their two fellow-workers came out alive from the sudden, terrible ordeal of fire and smoke to which they had been subjected. One of these, indeed, was badly bruised and cut, and will need a long respite from duty to fully recover his waning strength. The other, Mr. Park, was in attendance at the soda fountain at the very instant of the explosion. He describes the event as follows: "I was by the soda fountain, when suddenly a bright flash of light danced before my eyes. The next instant there was a tremendous upheaval of everything, followed by the downfall of the building and all it contained. I was twisted around by the door, with a mass of debris, which bruised and lamed me somewhat, but still managed to come out without serious harm." The escape was certainly most fortunate, since the women whom he was serving, and who stood not more than a few feet away, were swept under the falling ruins into the very depths of the funeral pile. That the other clerk, who was attending to his duty in another part of the store, was not killed is matter for congratulation. Doubtless, in the rigid investigation which is sure to follow the disaster, the testimony of these clerks will help to clear up the mystery.

Mr. Pratt's Statement.

Mr. William Pratt of William Pratt & Sons, who carried on business in the store on the corner opposite Dows's, describes the explosion as closely resembling the discharge of a cannon. The windows of his store were forced in by the shock, and all the goods on the shelves thrown down on the floor—goods, glass and mortar all being thrown in a heap. When he recovered from the shock he ran out into the street, but soon returned, when he had recovered his senses.

The Effects, as Felt in the Building Opposite.

Mr. George Livermore, in the employ of Cobb, Bates & Yerxa, who occupied the building opposite, states that he was in the back part of the store at the time of the explosion, and says he was, even at that distance, nearly stunned by the shock. For an instant he thought the explosion was in the building, as the glass in the front of the store was broken into inch pieces by the force of the explosion, and fell with a ringing sound to the pavement. The street-car, he said, was turned nearly completely around. The building seemed to fall in rather than outward to the street.

The Throngs in the Streets.

A few moments after the explosion, Washington, Tremont and all the streets in the vicinity of the accident became literally packed for a quarter of a mile in every direction. With commendable promptness the streets were roped off, and a force of policemen were stationed to keep the crowd back and allow no one to enter but firemen and reporters of the city papers. Reporters who were so unfortunate as to come without their badges found it hard to get within the enclosed space, and when once within realized that the task of gathering the full and correct details was a hard one, so excited were the people.

CAUSE OF THE DISASTER.

An Open Question, So Far—Various Theories, But no Positive Knowledge—An Interview With Mr. Dows, Etc.

The cause of the explosion is unknown, but the theories are numerous. A large amount of soda and mineral waters were manufactured in the cellar, where there was also a small steam boiler. There was no gunpowder or nitro-glycerine in the building, according to all accounts.

An Interview with Mr. G. D. Dows.

It is one of the remarkable circumstances of this deplorable calamity that the men most immediately interested in the property destroyed take their ill-fortunes philosophically. Doubtless this is largely owing to the overshadowing importance of a disaster which records a sad loss of human life. Mr. G. D. Dows, the proprietor of the establishment from which the powers of death were sent on their errand, was briefly interviewed by a GLOBE reporter, last evening, at his residence on Concord square. Though all his stock in trade had been annihilated, and the success of long years sadly encroached upon, Mr. Dows was calm and collected. He had not at that hour (9.30 o'clock) the faintest idea as

to the real cause of the explosion. To him the whole affair was a mystery, which he did not believe could ever be solved satisfactorily. In his clerks he felt the fullest confidence; and is quite sure the accident could not have resulted from any carelessness on their part. The building was well built, and in good repair, so far as his experience goes; and no ordinary explosion could have wrought so complete a demolition. However, the clerks—not one of whom, fortunately, seems to be killed—could perhaps give some information concerning the disaster and its cause; and, in a few courteous words, the brief interview closed.

What Was the Origin of the Disaster?

A GLOBE reporter, anxious to gain all the information possible concerning the origin of so terrible a calamity, sought out the clerks who were in the store as those who should know best the real state of affairs there. Mr. Downes, one of the salesmen, has no theory to offer to account for the disaster. Like his co-worker, Mr. Park, who stood at the soda fountain at the moment of the explosion, he can not give the slightest positive information concerning the cause. The bright flash of light, followed by the upheaval of everything, would seem to indicate that the source of the calamity was from beneath. But in the cellar, according to the united testimony of the clerks, there was nothing which could cause such an explosion. The idea which had obtained some credence that the explosion was the result of experiments with nitro-glycerine is sufficiently disproved by the fact that there was nothing of that violent explosive nature in the store. Indeed, there seems to be no occasion to keep the dangerous article in an apothecary establishment. If nitro-glycerine were to be used at all, it would be at the manufactory on Sudbury street. There being no nitro-glycerine in the store, the question arises, What could have caused the explosion? Soda fountains have been blown to pieces several times in this city; but no combination of the mild chemicals employed in the making of soda-water could produce such a dreadful effect. All sorts of rumors were talked about on the street; some attributing the accident to some defect in an apocryphal steam boiler, others to the occult influence of tide water in the sewers. As matters stand now, everybody who has heard of the disaster has as good a right to present a theory as either of the clerks. It seems most probable, as matters now look, that some leak in the gas pipe which supplies the establishment, will be recognized as the true cause of the calamity. Of course, if there was an extensive leak of gas into the cellar and any one should carelessly venture down stairs with a lighted lamp, disaster would be sure to occur. But the question recurs: "Did any one go down stairs with a lighted lamp or carelessly throw into the cellar a match or cigar end?" and it is hard to make any certain answer.

At any rate, if the clerks are to be believed, there was nothing in the cellar to generate spontaneous combustion. Boxes and barrels were not used as receptacles for filthy rags and other refuse; and the utmost care was exercised to keep the premises reasonably secure against fire. For the present, at least, the origin of the disaster is shrouded in mystery, and it may well be doubted if the question will ever be settled to general satisfaction. Certainly, if the manufacture of ginger ale and soda water involves such peril to human life, some means of protection for the public should be devised. If there were any carelessness in the management of the establishment—which does not at all appear—then the people have a right to insist that the lesson shall be heeded.

THE PECUNIARY DAMAGE.

Losses on the Building Destroyed and the Adjoining Property—Glass Shattered and Buildings Shaken at a Distance.

The building at the corner of La Grange and Washington streets was a substantial structure; built in these ante-bellum days when shoddy architecture was unknown. For a great many years, the apothecary store at the corner had been a popular place of resort for thirsty souls during the "heated term"; and the soda furnished by that ill-starred fountain ranked very high among friends of that harmless beverage. Mr. G. D. Dows, the proprietor, was one of the inventors of the modern soda fountain; and, so extensive has the business come to be, that a manufactory established on Sudbury street has enjoyed, for several years, a large trade. Mr. Dows took a great interest in ginger pop, "Green Mountain Beer," and other varieties of summer drink; and his drug store was a sort of emporium for this kind of effervescence. The tailoring establishment overhead was not so well known, perhaps, but still resorted to by a great many customers; and the Hayden Block was as generally known to Bostonians as any other structure not a public building.

According to all accounts, the building was well constructed, within as well as without. The mass of debris which cumbered the street, this morning, would indicate that the timbers were rotten and the walls insecurely built, if the public did not take into account the tremendous force of the explosive power. The estate was taxed for about \$50,000 and probably was well insured. Mr. Dingley, who acts as agent for the Hayden heirs, the owners of the building, is absent at Ashfield; and, consequently, it is impossible to present, this morning, an accurate statement of insurances.

The damage done to the adjacent buildings was slight, considering the tremendous force of the explosion. As far as can be ascertained they were as follows: Childs, Fuller & Co., dealers in kerosene goods, No. 680 Washington street, large plate glass windows demolished, containing eight panes, valued at \$75 each. The damage to the interior of the store was slight. The front of No. 684, an unoccupied store, was badly shattered. The store corner of Beach and Washington streets, occupied by Samuel Erick and Joseph Wolf, had the show-windows blown out, and the store was filled with ashes and dirt. The cigars were all thrown from the shelves on to the floor. Mr. Erick was standing in the doorway, and the flying fragments of glass and wood cut his face and neck slightly. Mr. Wolf was knocked down by the shock. The front of Cobb, Bates & Yerxa's store was smashed very badly; damage, \$1000. A. S. Haven's hardware store was slightly damaged, and 100 pounds of powder were safely removed from his premises after the explosion. Thomas A. Gray's comb and hair store, No. 679 Washington street, was damaged \$500, and the regulator clock was thrown across the store, and stopped at precisely 6.30.

The next store south of the building destroyed was occupied by Albert S. Haven, dealer in hardware, etc. The wall between fell in at the rear of the store, but, fortunately, no one was injured. The stock of Mr. Haven is about ruined by the water which poured into the store. The next store was occupied by C. W. Haven, dealer in paints and oils, and a number of lights of glass were broken.

The loss of S. T. Frazier, tailor, second floor of the building destroyed, is estimated at \$3000.

Fenno's clothing store is minus four large plate-glass windows.

SEARCHING THE RUINS.

Removing the Mass of Debris and Releasing the Dead and Wounded—Tremendous Excitement—Thrilling Incidents of the Search—A True Hero.

The work of removing the debris and reaching the imprisoned persons beneath was begun as soon as the flames had been sufficiently quenched to enable the firemen to get at the ruins with safety. As large a force as could work with convenience went at it with a will, while the police kept back the crowd. The scene was illuminated by the gas which, coming from the broken and twisted pipes, cast a bright light over the entire place, and a little later, a calcium light with a reflector was placed in the window of No. 680, on the opposite side of the street. The windows of all the surrounding buildings were crammed with faces, and Washington street was filled with a solid mass of men and boys for a long distance, far into the night. The most absurd stories concerning the number of the killed circulated about the city and stimulated the intense popular excitement. Mr. E. O. F. Farrar states that he assisted to remove the first woman taken from the building. He formerly belonged to the Fire Department. At 10 o'clock the firemen got the last of the shaly floors cut down, and all the remaining timbers fell in with

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a tremendous crash. Warren Hock and Ladder No. 1 arrived shortly afterward to cart away the timber.

Rescue of Mr. Fraser.

The firemen were working with a will tossing the heavy joists and handfuls of bricks into the street with wonderful quickness, in their sad and discouraging search for the bodies of the mangled and the dead. Now and then they were seemingly spurred on by the excited crowd, and with redoubled energy bent to their task. Suddenly a loud and hoarse cheer rent the air. The eager crowd pressed forward, but were kept back by the excited policemen, and for an instant the bevy of workmen tugging with all their might at their almost hopeless task ceased their labors, but only for a moment. The next minute an animate form of a human being was dragged from beneath the debris. He was a man in the prime of life; but as he stood or rather leaned upon his deliverer he presented a ghastly and sorrowful spectacle. In spite of the dirt which covered his face and in fact his entire body, a death-like pallor was visible where flesh was to be seen. Supported by his deliverer and another fireman, who sprang to his assistance, he stood with trembling and shaking limbs as near upright as he could, and in response to the loud and prolonged cheers with which he was greeted, feebly waved his hand. This was a signal for a still more exciting and uproarious shout, and as with tottering steps he walked to a drug store near by it seemed but for the great exertions of the police that he would not until his strength was wholly exhausted be able to reach a place of safety where he could receive the care and attention he so much needed. The man was in his shirt sleeves, and over his shoulders was the tape in the position it was when the crash came. His name was ascertained to be Samuel T. Fraser, of the firm of S. T. Fraser & Co., tailors, who occupied the second story in the doomed building.

Mr. Fraser's Experience—A Thrilling Story.

Mr. S. T. Fraser, the tailor, whose almost miraculous escape has been chronicled, was interviewed by a GLOBE reporter, last evening, and told the experience of his imprisonment as follows: The sound of the explosion was the first intimation he had of anything wrong. He describes the sound and sensation as similar to that of the terrible nitro-glycerine explosion at Worcester, four or five years ago, at which he was present. After the explosion, he knew nothing till he found himself covered up in the ruins. He could plainly hear shrieks and cries for a few seconds, the screaming of a woman being plainly audible. Then he began to feel the heat of the flames, and was badly burned on both wrists. He was fastened by a timber across the right arm, and was unable to extricate himself. He then heard the people at work on the outside; and, after they had penetrated through the roof near him, he asked for a saw, to release his arm. One was given him, and he attempted to use it, but was unable to make any progress, and returned the saw to the men outside, who soon cut off the timber and dragged him out, so covered with dirt and ashes as to be unrecognizable, but, aside from the shock and his bruises and burns, uninjured. He was taken to the house of Benjamin J. Remick, 8 Newton place, where he was seen by THE GLOBE reporter. He says he had six or seven girls at work in the shop, yesterday afternoon, but knows nothing of the fate of any of them.

A Case of Heroism.

Mr. L. E. DeWard of 26 La Grange street was one of the first men on the ground. He says that one man remained buried under the ruins for more than half an hour, confined, but not injured. He remained wonderfully cool, saying "Take your time, boys. Help others first. I can wait." The brave fellow was saved and escaped uninjured. While confined he could not move in the least, and the situation was one to try the strongest nerves.

After a number of bodies had been taken from the ruins, orders were given to suspend operations for a while until portions of the walls which tottered above had been pulled down. This was accomplished quickly and without accident, and work was soon resumed.

Above the scene of desolation, coats, dresses, underclothing, etc., hung on the south wall in the same position they occupied before the crash.