

UNITED STATES.

Boston, Dec. 19.

DESTRUCTIVE FIRE AT NEW-YORK

The few New York papers which reached us yesterday, furnish the particulars of the most calamitous destruction of buildings and property, which has ever occurred in this country. But two of the morning papers remained in a condition to tell the story.

The fire began a little before nine o'clock on Wednesday evening, and was not fully suppressed until one o'clock on the following afternoon.

From the N. Y. Com. Advertiser of Thursday.
DREADFUL CALAMITY.

New-York has been for fifteen hours in flames! They are not yet extinguished. A large section, and that the oldest and most wealthy portion of the city, is in ruins; and whether the progress of the destroyer is yet completely arrested, we cannot tell. Since the conflagration of Moscow, no calamity by fire, so extensive, and so dreadful, has befallen any city in the world. The fire broke out in Merchant street in the triangular block formed by Wall, William, and Pearl Streets, at about nine o'clock last night. A fierce wind was blowing from the north-west, and the weather so intensely cold as to render the efficient working of the engines impossible. The consequence was, that the fire held the mastery through the night—spreading with great and destructive rapidity. It was an awful night for New York, and for the country. But we can neither describe the grandeur of the spectacle, nor its terrors, nor the desolation brought more distinctly to view by the morning light. The arm of man was powerless; and many of our fellow citizens who retired to their pillows in affluence, were bankrupts on awaking.

The fact of the powerlessness of the firemen, from the almost instantaneous congelation of the water, and the benumbing influence of the cold, increased the consternation which prevailed among the thousands of the agitated multitude who were witnesses of the calamity—many of them doomed to stand and see the destruction of their own fortunes without being able to lift a finger for the rescue. To arrest the flames was at once seen to be impossible, save by the blowing up of ranges of buildings in advance of the fire, that its progress might thus be interrupted. But the difficulty was to obtain powder—none of consequence being allowed in the city. A sufficient supply therefore, could not be obtained short of the Navy Yard—whence, also, the Mayor was obliged to send for a strong military force, to preserve property from the swarms of robbers who are ever ready on such occasions. [What a commentary upon the depravity of man!]

Such is the confusion that prevails, and such the difficulty of working one's way among the smoke, and fire and heated ruins, that it is impossible to detail particulars with any pretence to accuracy. * * * * *

Seventeen blocks of buildings, of the largest and most costly description, are totally destroyed; the large block between Wall-street and Exchange place, bounded on the W. by Broad-st., that between Exchange place and Beaver-street, fronting on Broad street, and that between Beaver and Mill streets, also fronting on Broad, are greatly injured, and may almost be said to be destroyed, except the single range of stores fronting on Broad street. The number of buildings it is impossible to ascertain, but it is estimated between 700 and 1000. The amount of property destroyed is incalculable.

Those acquainted with our city will at once perceive that nearly the entire seat of its greatest commercial transactions has been destroy-

ed. It is not probable that the destruction of any given section, of any other city in the world, of equal extent, would have involved a destruction of capital, or ruined the fortunes of a greater number of men. The destruction of goods, of every description that can be enumerated, has been immense; and what yet farther magnifies the calamity is the fact, that the portion of the city thus destroyed, is one which has been almost entirely rebuilt within the last five or six years, and was covered on every hand with the most noble and substantial ranges of mercantile edifices perhaps in the world.

Before the gunpowder was used in blowing up houses there were many loud reports, from occasional explosions of powder and casks of spirits. During the whole night the scene was one of awful terror, and indescribable grandeur. The drought of the season had contributed to the combustibility of the matter, and the rapidity with which house after house, and range after range, were wrapped in flames, was truly astonishing. The wind being high, large flakes of fire were borne whirling aloft through the dark vault of heaven with awful splendour. From the direction of the wind—to which, under Providence, the salvation of perhaps the whole city is owing—the city of Brooklyn was considered in danger; and the flakes of fire were borne along in quantities beyond Flatbush,—(a distance of 5 or 6 miles.)

The buildings on Exchange place having become involved in the conflagration, the flames communicated to the Merchant's Exchange, itself, the exemption of which had been so strongly confided in, that a large amount of goods was deposited there for safety. Before these could be removed, and the tenants of that edifice remove their private property, the fire communicated to the roof, and this soon falling in, carried with it the wall at the east end of the building, beneath which several persons are said to have been buried alive. The splendid dome of the Exchange, after sending columns of flame to an immense height for half an hour, until it was reduced to a body of fire, fell in with a tremendous crash, burying the elegant statue of Hamilton in the ruins.

At the time the fire on Pearl-street reached Hanover-square, the large space of ground was filled with piece goods promiscuously piled together, and much of this property was of the most valuable kind. So unexpectedly and rapidly did the flames extend on both sides of the square, that an unsuccessful attempt was made to remove it, for much of it was destroyed in the street, and the residue, though deposited at a still greater distance in stores and otherwise, was shortly afterwards consumed. Dr. Matthews's Church had been made a depository for goods in the early part of the fire, which were of course entirely consumed with the building, leaving nothing but the bare walls.

With the Exchange the public has sustained a loss in the fine arts greatly to be regretted. We refer to the statue of Hamilton, erected by the munificence of our Merchants during the present year, in the centre of the rotunda of that building. That which was designed to remain for ages, is in eight months, precipitated from its pedestal, and is mixed with the ruins of the ill fated structure it was erected to adorn.

The mere amount of property wasted and destroyed, not by the flames, but in the confusion, and hurry, and desperation of the time, is probably equal to the entire loss at ordinary fires. It is lamentable to see the piles of costly furniture—rich mahogany tables with marble tops, sideboards, sofas, &c. &c. broken and heaped up like worthless rubbish; rich merchandizes—silks, satins, broad cloths, fine muslins, and every species of fancy dry goods,

trampled under foot; packages half burnt—boxes of cutlery and hardware burst open, and their contents scattered in the mud—bottles of wine broken—and in short thousands upon thousands, and tens of thousands of dollars lying wasted around, in the form of ruined merchandizes.

Carmen and porters were heaping goods upon carts, barrows, in coaches and omnibuses; the battery and Bowling Green are thickly studded with piles of goods, some in boxes, others just as they were snatched from the shelves; marines with fixed bayonets patrolling among them for protection against marauders; and all eyes fixed upon the volumes of dense black smoke, whirling away before the wind—flames darting and roaring from the roofs and windows of whole streets—walls tumbling to the ground, and the firemen worn out with their exertions and almost discouraged from farther efforts, vainly striving to make head against the flames, which seemed to mock all human skill and power.

Amidst this dreadful destruction, we are happy to announce that the shipping have not sustained any material injury. A vast many of them were lying at the docks between Murray's wharf and Coentie's slip, and at one time, we had our fears that the whole would have been destroyed. The water was very low, and they could not, for some time, get away. The brig Powhatan was on fire, but it was soon extinguished, and all, except one British brig in Coentie's slip, finally got into the stream, where they are now at anchor.

In all cases of great public or individual calamities, especially those occasioning loss of property, the first impressions, and first reports, are of course greatly exaggerated. And before concluding this hasty and very imperfect account, we take leave to caution the public abroad against giving credence to first reports. The calamity is indeed a terrible one, and the losses will be immense. But still we are warranted in the belief that the burden will principally fall in such a manner that it will be borne without shaking the credit of the city, or checking its prosperity for any considerable length of time. We take it for granted—nay, it is admitted on all hands—that the fire insurance companies are all ruined. Some will not be able to pay fifty cents on the dollar of their policies, and others, perhaps, not more than twenty-five—while others may be rather more fortunate.

But yet, the condition of things is not by far so bad as many who are on the spot imagine, and not by any means so deplorable as will be represented abroad. A number of able and cool calculators in consultation this morning, have estimated the loss at fifteen millions of dollars. Now the fire insurance capital in this city—to say nothing of insurances effected elsewhere—is about ten millions. The calculation is, that about six hundred stores have been consumed—the insurance of which does not average more than about five thousand dollars upon each—making the sum of three millions. The loss, thereupon, in real estate, is not by far as great as will at first be supposed, inasmuch as the lots themselves constitute the chief value, being often worth three or four times more than the buildings on them. Whatever amount, therefore, the insurance companies may be able to pay, the holders of real estate will be able to sustain and bear up under the loss. Under this view of the case, will be seen that there will remain eleven millions of insurance capital to be divided into a pro rata dividend toward covering the losses on personal property. Many merchants, likewise, have doubtless insured their stock of goods in other cities: So that on the whole, it need not be supposed that the credit of New

Continued on 262d page.