

## THE GREAT FIRE IN CHICAGO.

SINCE the great fire in London in 1666, when five-sixths of the English metropolis was consumed and two hundred thousand people rendered houseless, there has been no conflagration in modern times to equal that of Chicago. The London fire swept over a district of some four hundred and thirty acres, that of Chicago has overrun an area nearly four miles in length, and from one to one and a-half in breadth, yet it does not appear to have unhoused so many people as did the great fire in London, the largest number mentioned as having been turned shelterless upon the streets of Chicago being estimated at one hundred and fifty thousand. The calamity is not only startling in its magnitude, but was doubly startling in its rapidity and its attendant horrors. Within a period of four-and-twenty hours the north and the south divisions of the city, with a small portion of the west, were completely overrun with the flames. The fire in its mad fury spared nothing, the very wooden pavement becoming a prey to its insatiable appetite, and it only became exhausted when it had nothing more to feed upon. A kindly fall of rain assisted its extinction and gladdened the hearts of the terror-stricken people who looked on powerless at what they doubtless anticipated was to be the utter destruction of their much beloved Queen City of the West. Language cannot describe the agony, the terror, the sufferings and privations caused by this terrible calamity; but in the very midst of their misery the people of Chicago were cheered by kind words of sympathy and substantial means of relief from other cities. The telegraph had scarcely flashed the dreadful news across the Continent ere relief committees were at work, and within forty-eight hours it was announced that contributions in money from the various cities in the United States had far exceeded a million dollars, and were still rapidly increasing, while throughout Canada the people were equally prompt according to their means; and in London, Liverpool, and in several cities on the European Continent, action had also been taken within the same short time. What a blessing is the Telegraph! How many thousands of lives will it not be the means of saving even in this calamity alone! Immense quantities of clothing and provisions were also forwarded both from Canada and different parts of the United States, thereby relieving the immediate misery within a couple of days of the dire occurrence that caused it. The generosity evoked by this awful catastrophe is the only bright side to the terrible "pillar of fire" that illuminated the waters of Lake Michigan on the night of the 8th and morning of the 9th October, and will be gratefully remembered hereafter as evidence of the kindly feeling existing between the people of different countries.

Below we give, under their respective headings, some details concerning the conflagration, the property and public buildings destroyed, the extent of the devastation, &c., in comprehending which our readers will be much assisted by the map and several illustrations which we print elsewhere:

## THE MAP OF CHICAGO.

It will be noticed by the map that the Chicago river, with its northern and southern branches, makes three natural divisions of the city: the north division, bounded on the west by the north branch, and on the south by the main stream; the south division, bounded on the north by the main stream, and on the west by the south branch; and the western division, comprising all that portion of the city lying west of the north and south branches, which meet each other in an almost straight line to form the river which runs through the heart of the city and empties into Lake Michigan. All the business portion of Chicago was comprised in the north and south divisions, where the wharves, elevators, railway depots, &c., were situated, and the heart of the business part may be sufficiently indicated by saying that it was at the northern end of the south division. If Montreal were consumed from the river front back to Craig street, and from Upper Victoria Square to Bleyer street and back to Dorchester—the latter representing the destruction in the west division—its condition would be as nearly as possible like that of Chicago after the fire. This illustration will convey to many of our readers a more exact conception of the extent of the destruction than any minute description of streets and avenues with which they are unfamiliar. In the map which we publish the burnt district is shaded, as accurately as the telegraphic descriptions could guide us, and though the district is small in extent compared with the whole amount of territory embraced within the city limits, yet it comprised the main portion of the wealth and business activity of Chicago.

## THE CONFLAGRATION.

On the night of Saturday, the 7th inst., there had been a fire in the Western division, on Canal and Clinton Streets, destroying several blocks of cheap tenement houses, planing mills, &c.; but the flames were subdued by the exertions of the firemen, after having spread over some twenty acres. The total loss was about five hundred thousand dollars, besides one woman burned to death. The fire had been subdued, and no apprehensions of further damage had been felt, until half-past nine o'clock on Sunday night, the 8th, when a fire broke out at the corner of Canal, Port Avenue and Halsted street in the south-western part of the city, about one mile and a half from the Court House Square, and half a mile south of the fire of the previous night.

As this was an extensive pork packing and lumber district, and the wind was blowing so strong directly towards the Court House Square and centre of the city, the devouring element soon got beyond the control of the firemen, who were promptly on the spot and battled heroically with it, but were obliged to retreat from square to square rapidly. In less than one hour the flames had spread over half a mile, and crossed the canal into the extensive lumber and storerooms near Polk street. Here the flames spread with fearful rapidity, and the wind increasing with the flames, threatened the destruction of the entire city, as all efforts of every fire-engine of the city were powerless. The water thrown on the flames seemed only to add to their fury. By this time the streets became blocked with thousands fleeing before the fiery element, unable to save anything; and vast numbers with bare feet and nothing but night-clothes on, filling the air with cries and wailings for children and friends burnt in the flames. The fiery fiend spread rapidly over the southern part of the city, and by half-past one o'clock the new Court House and the immense blocks of marble buildings surrounding it on the west and south sides, including the Chamber of Commerce, were one mass of flames. Here the scene presented was the most awful that imagination can picture. The unfortunate inhabitants of over a square mile of the most densely populated part of the city, over which the fire had passed, were rushing in every direction in a frenzied state of bewilderment. In a few moments the roofs of the Court House, Chamber of Commerce, Merchants' Insurance building, and Coolbaugh's Bank, fell in with a fearful crash. Here an attempt was made to stop the progress of the flames by blowing up some of the large buildings with gunpowder. Five kegs were exploded in Coolbaugh's Bank, but the shattered debris of the wreck only added fury to the flames. The scenes presented here were terrible, and it was now evident that the entire city was doomed to destruction. The flames rushed on with irresistible force and appeared like a huge monster of flame and smoke over a mile and a half long, with a head on Court House Square. Here huge flames would leap up among the clouds of smoke illuminating the whole city as in noon-day for miles around. Presently from sudden gusts of wind they would dart down along the ground and along the walls of adjacent buildings, which would immediately burst out in flame. The Shetman House, on the north side of the Court House Square, next caught fire, the guests rushing out through the doors, or jumping through the windows, in every direction, many escaping without their clothing. Nothing whatever was saved, and it is not known how many persons may have perished there and in the immense buildings surrounding, as no one could go within a mile of the block. From there the flames rapidly advanced to Lake street, burning the Tremont House, and every building on Lake and Water streets to the Central Railroad Depot and Illinois Central Elevator. The whole southern part of the city, from where the fire crossed the canal at Polk street to the Court House Square, and from there to the Illinois Central Railroad Depot, over a mile and a half in length, and from the canal to the lake shore, one mile wide, was one solid mass of flame. This comprises the wealthy and business part of the city, containing the Court House, Palmer House, and the immense new Pacific Hotel, Michigan, Southern and Illinois Railroad depots, all the leading banks of the city, the *Tribune*, *Times*, and all the newspaper offices of the city, Chamber of Commerce, all the theatres and public libraries and halls, all the wholesale houses and large retail houses of the city, and the rich and fashionable residences on Wabash and Michigan Avenues, as far as Harrison street, one mile from the canal. Everything is absolutely lost over this vast area of one mile and a half long and one mile wide of the very heart of the city. Not even a wall or chimney remains standing as far as the eye can penetrate from the outside. From the immense elevators and storerooms along the canal the flames shot across to the north side, burning all the vessels and canal-boats in the canal, and rapidly spread over the north side. Here the extent burnt over is much greater than on the south side, the whole northern division of the city having been consumed from the main river northwards to the suburbs, as far as Lincoln Park. The scenes baffled all description. Thousands of people rushed about frantically moaning and yelling over the loss of dear friends, in a state of the wildest consternation.

By three o'clock on Tuesday morning there was a fall in the wind; a heavy shower of rain fell and the destruction of the city stopped, leaving a fringe of inconsiderable proportions on the south side and a large part of the western division of the city unharmed, but otherwise making Chicago a mass of charred and blackened ruins, and with, it is supposed, not less than five hundred people burnt in the flames.

## AN HISTORICAL REMINISCENCE.

It reads like a romance that this magnificent creation of western enterprise should be but as of yesterday; yet, young men are living who were born years before Chicago had any title to be called a city. In 1673 five Frenchmen, under the leadership of Louis Joliet, set out from Canada for the purpose of discovering the source of the Mississippi river. Père Jacques Marquette, a famous Jesuit Priest, whose memory has been perpetuated by giving his name to an enterprising American town on the South Shore of Lake Superior, accompanied the party, as a missionary among the Indian tribes. On their return they came upon a small stream which the natives called Chicago. This is the first record of the river whose northern and southern banks were desolated by the recent fire. About a century and a quarter later, that is, in 1795, the United States acquired several tracts of land from the Indians, among which was a parcel "six miles square at the mouth of the Chicago river," which then entered the lake about half a mile south of its present channel. The first white settler was Joseph Kinzie, who crossed the lake from St. Joseph, Michigan, in 1804. Chicago then became an Indian trading post, and for a time consisted of five houses. The Indian tribes who occupied the neighbouring country were the Potawatomes, the Miamies, the Winnebagoes, the Sauks and Foxes, and the Kickapoos. On the 15th August, 1812, there was a fearful Indian massacre, the record of which gives the usual characteristic tinge to the early history of western settlements. The fort was destroyed and the white settlers killed or dispersed. Four years later peace was established between the United States and the Indians, a large cession of territory was made to the former, and the Chicago fort rebuilt. The new fort was occupied by U. S. troops for seven years, after which it was left to the care of the Indian agent, until 1828, when a fresh massacre was threatened by the Winnebagoes, and a new detachment of regular troops again resumed possession. In 1832

it was under the command of Gen. Scott, and four years later the Indians having removed further west, there was no longer any need for its military occupation.

To give an idea of the rapid progress of Chicago, it is only necessary to mention that in 1830 it had but twelve houses and three suburban residences on Madison Street, with a population of about one hundred souls. On the 10th of August 1833, the town was first organised by the election of five trustees; on the 4th of March, 1837, it was incorporated as a city; and on the 1st of May of the same year the first municipal election was held. Two months later the first official census was taken, and Chicago had then a population of 4,179; within thirty-four years its population had swelled to over three hundred thousand! In 1840 it was but a mere trading post on the extreme Indian frontier, now it is the centre of one of the largest trades, and of the most extensive railway system in the world. The aggregate length of the various lines of railway radiating from it is over eight thousand miles. In addition to this immense facility for land transport, Chicago stands at the head of the most magnificent system of inland navigation to be found on the globe; and its shipments to Liverpool alone for the season of 67-68 amounted to 45,119 tons. The shore line of the lakes, whose trade is largely tributary to Chicago enterprise, is over six thousand miles, while the united area of these inland seas about equals that of the Mediterranean, and the whole line of coast, including the St. Lawrence, is of course immensely greater. In 1838 the whole grain trade of Chicago was represented by 78 bushels; 30 years later, in 1868, it had risen to 57,557,496 bushels of grain and 1,321,295 barrels of flour received! The provision trade of the city began in 1835, and like that of grain has risen to enormous proportions. In the year named about five thousand hogs were packed; while during the season of '69, six hundred and ninety-seven thousand nine hundred and fifty-four were packed, and over a million shipped to eastern ports. It is also the chief lumber market for the people of the North-West.

At the present time it is impossible to calculate the full effects of the fire by which so large a portion of this marvelously progressive city has been devastated; but, judging from its past career, we may safely infer that the damage will be speedily repaired, and that the wondrous energy of the people will soon restore prosperity and re-establish trade in its former channels. When it is remembered that it has been the custom in Chicago, of recent years, to spend annually from eight to ten millions of dollars in new buildings, and that from fifty to seventy-five millions of dollars change hands yearly in real estate transactions, there can be little room for doubting the recuperative energy of the city. The number of new buildings erected in 1868 was about seven thousand, and the cost in the neighbourhood of fourteen million of dollars.

Lincoln Park, which marks the northern boundary of the fire, is situated at the north-eastern end of the city, and contains about two hundred acres. Fronting as it does on the Lake shore, it is exceedingly attractive, especially in summer, when the Lake craft are passing to and fro, in an almost unbroken line. It is about two miles from the main river. In the southern division there are two parks, one about 600 acres and the other 350 acres in extent. In the western division, the main portion of which happily escaped the fire, there are three parks, the improvement of which is, or at least was, until lately, still going on.

## PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

We give illustrations of some of the more important public buildings destroyed by the fire. The Water Works, from their important functions, formed one of the principal of these, and their destruction is perhaps the greatest of any single calamity that has befallen the city. The Lake tunnel which supplies the city is a marvel of engineering skill. From the shore shaft, which is sixty-seven feet deep, it extends into the lake for a distance of two miles in a straight line at right angles with the shore. It is five feet wide and five feet ten inches high in the clear, the top and bottom arches being semi-circles. It is lined with brick masonry eight inches thick. The bottom of the inside surface of the bore at the east end is sixty-six feet below water level, with a gradual slope of two feet to the mile towards the shore shaft. This gives a clear fall of four feet to permit of its being emptied in case of need for repairs. The supply of water from this tunnel is practically unlimited, as with a head of eighteen feet it could furnish fifty-seven millions of gallons per day. On the 25th March, 1857, the water was first let into the tunnel to flow through the water pipes and hydrants of the city, and since that date Chicago has enjoyed an unlimited supply of very pure water, with which, however, her firemen were unable to subdue the flames on the night of the 8th inst. The cost of the building was about a million of dollars.

The other buildings which we illustrate, and which fell before the progress of the fire are: The Michigan Southern R.R. Depot, which was also used by the Chicago and Rock Island R. R. Co., and was situated on Van Buren street, opposite La Salle; the Tremont House on Dearborn street, south-east corner of Lake street, one of the largest and most popular hotels in the city, containing about three hundred rooms, all magnificently furnished; and the Chicago *Tribune* building, on the corner of Madison and Dearborn streets. The last named was regarded as a model of architectural beauty, covering an area of 8,712 square feet, and was constructed entirely of what are called "fire-proof" materials, though it succumbed to the intensity of the Chicago fire after several hours' resistance. The cost of the building was \$200,000.

## THE TOTAL LOSS.

The loss is variously estimated; but an experienced Chicago merchant has placed it at \$184,000,000. This, however, is probably an exaggeration, as large quantities of grain and several elevators supposed to have been consumed were subsequently found to have been but little injured. The loss, however, is immense, not alone in property, but also in human life, five hundred persons being supposed to have perished. The fire altogether was one of the most disastrous of the century; but we hopefully anticipate that the citizens of Chicago with their wonted energy will soon obliterate many of the traces of its ravages and restore their city to its former commercial activity. They have had at all events a generous manifestation of the world's sympathy in their dire calamity.

The discovery has been made by Captain Ericsson that the heat of the sun is 4,660,000 degrees of Fahrenheit.