

## 2 THE NEW BRUNSWICK MAGAZINE.

foreign countries in the vessels of the more prosperous of these merchants. On the morning of the 14th of January, 1837, a million dollars would not have sufficed to buy these old wooden structures and their contents. Twenty-four hours later the whole of this busy district was a smoking ruin. In a few hours many were deprived of all they had possessed, and some who had been prosperous merchants remained broken in fortune to the end of their days.

The fire started shortly after nine o'clock in the evening, in the store of Robertson & Hatton, Peters wharf, nearly opposite the end of Ward street. It began in the second story of the wooden building and the cause of it is not known, though there were several theories at the time. In a very few moments the flames were bursting through the roof and the citizens were hurrying to the spot in response to the clanging of the bell at the head of the Market slip. There was a fire department in those days, but it was of a very primitive kind, the engine being the old fashioned machines which pumped the water poured into them from lines of buckets. When an alarm was given the citizens went to the place where the fire was, the blaze being generally large enough to guide them, and each citizen was supposed to carry the two leather buckets which the city by-law compelled him to provide. The line of buckets was formed to the nearest wells, or to the harbor when the fire was near the water front and the tide was in, and a short time sufficed to show whether the fire or fire department was to conquer. In this particular instance, the problem was solved almost as soon as it was propounded. With a vigorous headway to the blaze, a bitterly cold night and an insufficient supply of water, the firemen were soon compelled to retreat, and the question was simply one of trying to save the goods and effects from the other buildings in