

## Great London Fires.

BY SIDNEY GREENWOOD.

**E**ARLY in the reign of Charles II., on Friday, September 2nd, 1666, broke out the Great Fire of London, which fact has been accorded a place in the history of our country, and upon which so much has been said.

Samuel Pepys, in his diaries, gives some interesting accounts of the events at the time of this disastrous scourge which befell the ancient City of London. The King himself lent a helping hand by taking command of a large body of citizens, who were bent upon applying science only as an effective means of dealing with such an enormous conflagration.

So far successful were they by blowing up houses with gunpowder to prevent the spreading of the flames, that certain streets were saved which otherwise would have been doomed and the damage still greater than it was. From the Tower to St. Paul's there was one mass of devastation. People were running in all directions, removing their goods and chattels to the river-side for conveyance. Steeples of churches gave way, and houses were ever falling in, many streets were reduced to ashes, and like hundreds of furnaces roaring amidst thunderous crashes.

The King rode up Cheapside on horseback, casting his eyes

around, viewing what was inevitably doomed to destruction.

The greatest argument then afloat as to the visitation of such a plague was that it was a punishment for the sin of gluttony; the origin of the fire being unexplained further than it broke out at Pudding Lane and ended at Pye Corner. The fire raged four days and nights, leaving the City as if a volcano had burst in its midst.

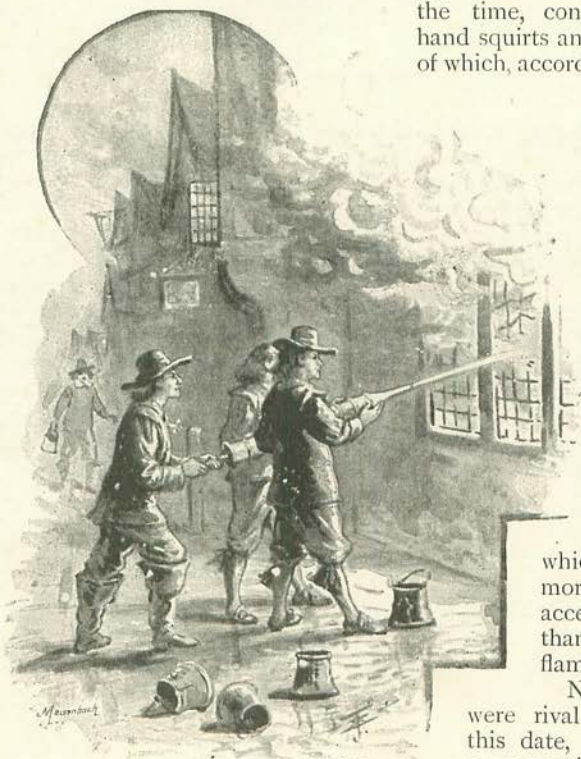
The beneficial consequences to the City soon became manifest, through the suggestions of the Aldermen to rebuild wider streets and to abolish wooden buildings; and instead of this misfortune being productive of so much evil, it proved of incalculable benefit to the country.

It may be interesting to mention here something about the crude and ineffective appliances which were in use at the time, consisting of "Brazen hand squirts and leathern buckets," of which, according to an Act passed

in 1667 by the Common Council, were provided for each of the parishes in the City two of these brazen squirts, holding about one gallon of water, and 800 leathern buckets to each of the four districts into which the City was divided; together with a number of pick-axes and shovels,

which were evidently of more use in gaining access to the houses than in beating out the flames.

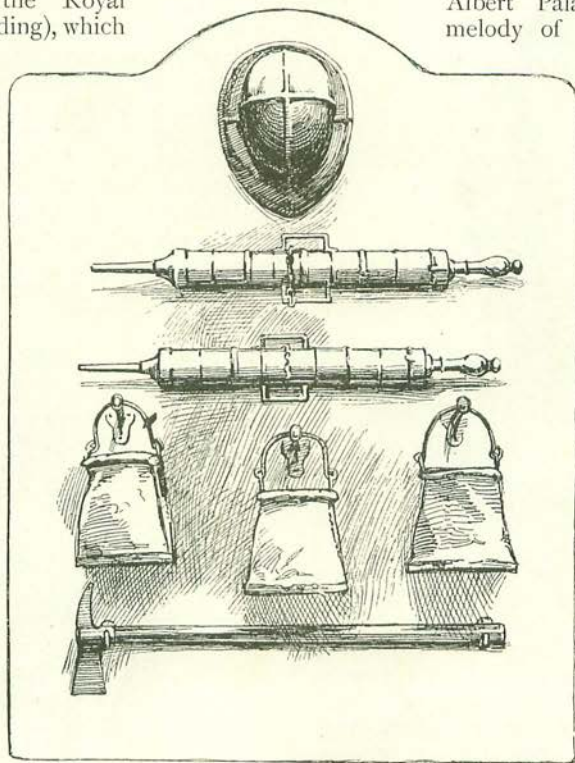
Newsham and Fowke were rival engine makers of this date, and it was during a competition that those of the former proved to be more



A CITY FIRE 200 YEARS AGO.

powerful, throwing water as high as the old bells attached to the fine old organ at the Grasshopper on the Royal Exchange (old building), which was 165ft. high. After this, Fowke's engine appears to have dropped out altogether, leaving no traces of its existence. In a painting by Hogarth, "The Times," No. 1, of 1762, an engine bearing the inscription of the Union Fire Office, is probably one of this manufacture. In Lombard Street and locality there were seventeen engines kept at the time the Royal Exchange caught fire on the night of 10th Jan., 1838, of which one only was in a condition to be

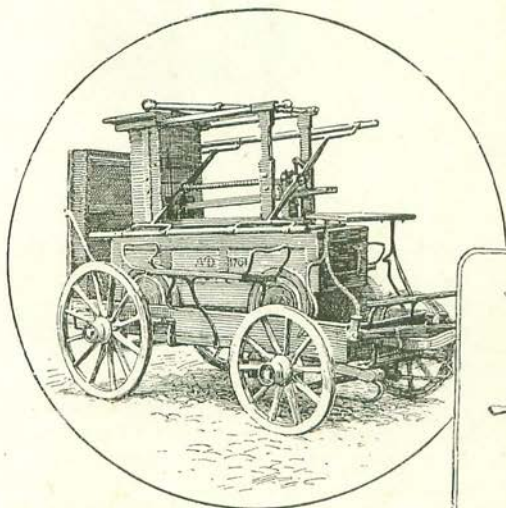
Albert Palace rang out the melody of "There's nae luck about the house"; the echo of which recoils at the present date upon the ill-fated palace, which, although not recently burned, has been condemned piecemeal to the auctioneer's hammer. Our sketches illustrate the old types of engines in use from 1761 to 1852, in the parishes of Christ Church, Newgate, and St. Leonards, Foster Lane, the names of the churchwardens appearing on same to the present day; another, as depicted, was put upon a truck for



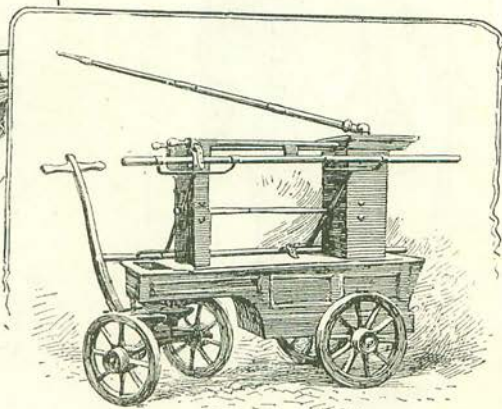
HAND SQUIRTS AND BUCKETS OF 1667.

quicker conveyance to fires, and is of a similar construction, it being made by the firm of Merryweather and Sons, of Long Acre, and tells a tale in itself of the modern improvements which have been added to the present day.

The next fire on record of much consequence after the Great Fire



brought out, and from all accounts was not got to work. On this memorable night it may be interesting to note a singular coincidence which occurred, viz.: While the Royal Exchange was burning the famous carillon of sixty-one



EARLY FIRE ENGINES.



LONDON FIREMAN IN UNIFORM—A.D. 1696.

of 1666 broke out in the powdering-room of Mr. Eldridge, a peruke maker, in Exchange Alley, Cornhill, on the morning of March 25th, 1748, at one o'clock, and continued burning until 12 p.m. the same day, laying waste an extensive range of houses and streets, eighty in number, and playing great havoc with the adjoining houses. Among those

A "ROYAL EXCHANGE" FIREMAN.  
(From a portrait.)

buildings destroyed were several private dwellings of City merchants; shops, and, singular to remark, insurance companies met a like fate, together with their engines, buckets, and appliances for extinction. The wind at the time was blowing strongly in the S.S.W., causing the flames to spread with such rapidity that, in so few hours, it effected a considerable devastation in this, one of the most opulent parts of the City.

So slow was London to improve upon the fire appliances then in vogue, that it was not until 1791 that a fire watch or brigade was established.

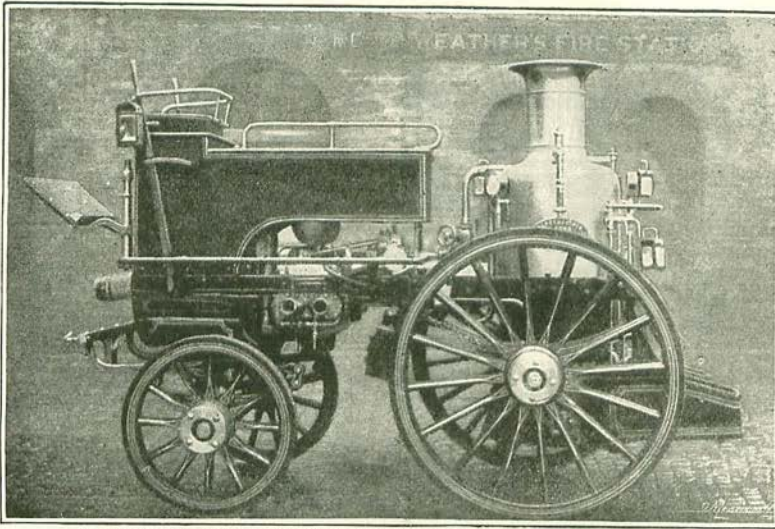


M.F.B. FIREMAN IN UNIFORM—PRESENT DAY.

The parochial system of fire protection at this time being entirely ineffective, the work was for the most part undertaken by insurance offices. Each company had its own engine and men, with the emblems of the offices on the engines and displayed on badges worn on the left arm. The uniforms consisted of double-breasted jackets, knee breeches and long boots, with a "Brummagem" or overcoat worn over the jacket.

It is interesting here to note that the Sun, Phoenix, and Royal Exchange Offices dress their messengers in the same colours now as their firemen wore in those days.

In 1830 the insurance companies resolved to reorganize their forces by doing away with their separate establishments, and com-



MODERN FIRE ENGINE, GREENWICH PATTERN, BY MERRYWEATHER AND SONS.

binning the whole in one brigade. They invited James Braidwood, then Firemaster of Edinburgh, to take the head as Director of the London Fire Brigade Establishment, which was inaugurated on January 1st, 1833, being supported by ten of the offices, who contributed to the expenses of maintenance in accordance with the business they did. During the thirty-three years of its existence it dealt with 29,069 fires, excluding false alarms and chimney fires. They adopted steam fire engines only towards the close of their career, although these were first introduced to their notice by Braithwaite in the year 1835.

In another sketch will be seen an engine in use in 1862, which is of Italian design but English manufacture. It bears, in a conspicuous position, the inscription, "Publica Utilita," also a brass plate on the side stating that it was presented by the inhabitants of Lambeth to Frederick Hodges at the Distillery, Lambeth; the

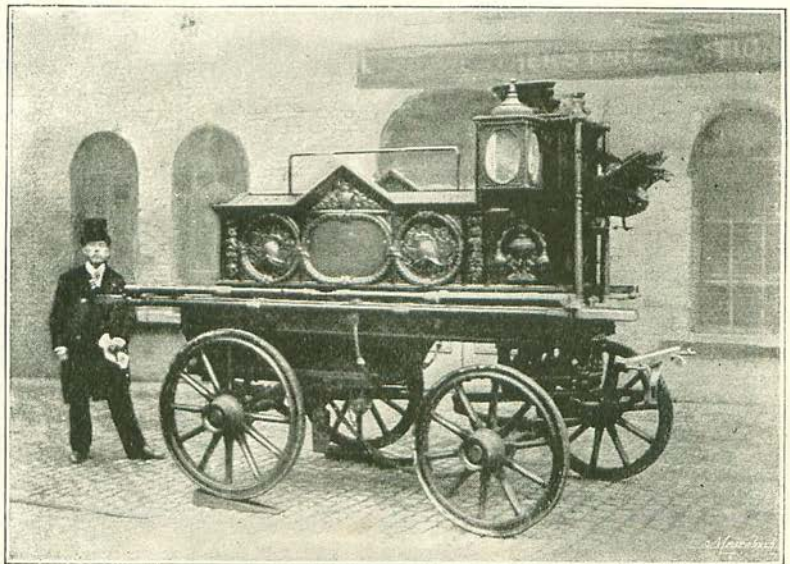
Vol. vi — 83.

carriages, and somewhat longer cisterns and hose boxes than those of the present date, being much lower in build and more heavy in running.

Some explanation of the curious old badges of insurance companies, which remain upon the buildings in certain parts of Old London to the present day, together with the illustrations here reproduced, will serve to satisfy the curiosity of many persons who at some time or other have asked the question: "What are those things stuck on the houses for?" Well, all the early fire insurance

cost or the decorations on same being £600, the engine itself costing £300. This engine, to the present day, is in thorough order, and has done many a public service in its time, well earning the inscription bestowed upon it.

The engines chiefly used were manuals with 7in. pumps, with levers not made to fold over, wooden fore



ENGINE PRESENTED TO MR. HODGES, 1862.

offices had their special "Office Mark," which consisted of a plate of lead or other metal bearing either the name of the office or its trade-mark to place on insured houses. These "Fire Office Marks" have quite a history of their own, as will be gathered from the accompanying illustrations.

Cowper, in his poem "Friendship," written at Olney, in Oxfordshire, probably in 1782, writes the following lines :—

A friendship that in frequent fits  
Of controversial rage emits  
The sparks of disputation,  
Like Hand-in-Hand insurance plates  
Most unavoidably creates  
The thoughts of conflagration.



an impression that in times of great political excitement, the official indication that a house was insured might protect it against incendiarism; it being manifest in such cases that the loss by fire would not fall upon the owner of the building, on whom the mob might probably desire to wreak vengeance. Thus fire insurance gave a moral as well as a pecuniary protection.

Houses may occasionally be seen in the older parts of London bearing several of these fire insurance marks; this circumstance being noted by the facetious author of the "New Tory Guide," published during 1710 or thereabouts :—

For not e'en the Regent himself has endured  
(Though I've seen him with badges and orders  
all shine  
*Till he looked like a house that was over-insured*)  
A much heavier burden of glories than mine.



They were also intended to decide, in case of fire, which company's engine should attend to put it out—certainly a strange proceeding, deserving of being added to the History of Fire Appliances.

Some of the oldest offices, viz., the Sun, Hand-in-Hand, and Royal Exchange, actually issued moulded leaden marks bearing the number of the policy with which they were issued at the time. These relics of the past are treasured by insurance companies, either in glass cases under lock and key, or mounted on polished oak tablets in the sanctum of their chiefs. It was originally



made a condition by the offices that no house should be considered properly and perfectly insured until the metal mark was actually affixed upon it, this condition being founded on "The Amicable Contributionship," and finally by its present title. The society was founded in London in 1696, and the original "proposals" of the association were dated at "Tom's Coffee House," in St. Martin's Lane, Charing Cross, where attendance was daily given. The founders numbered about 100 persons, and it is generally believed that Daniel Defoe (author of the famous work "Robinson Crusoe") took





part in the establishment of this society, although there is no authentic evidence of the fact. In 1809 Old Drury Lane Theatre was burned for time, and on the occasion of its being re opened (in 1812), James and Horace Smith published their inimitable "Rejected Addresses, or the New Theatrum Pœtarum," in which are commemorated some of the scenes of the fire:—

The engines thundered through the street,  
 Fire-hook, pipe, bucket, all complete;  
 And torches glared, and clattering feet  
 Along the pavement flew.  
 The Hand-in-Hand the race begun,  
 Then came the Phoenix and the Sun,  
 The Exchange, where old insurers run,  
 The Eagle, where the new.

The Royal Exchange Office has a facsimile of the old building for its mark, as it appeared before being burnt down. The Phoenix, with its very appropriate name and prosperity, speaks for itself; whilst the Union, for its mark, doubles that of the Hand-in-Hand, being so closely

allied at the date of formation. The London has a quaint old mark emblematical of Britannia. The Sun shines forth its gilded rays. The Royal, with its majestic name, is suggestive of wealth; whilst the Alliance stands as firm as ever upon the rock of its foundation. The Atlas, since its formation, has steadily supported the world upon its shoulders unto the present day. The Lancashire and other offices came into the field of battle at a later date, building up institutions in themselves unsurpassed by other trading communities of this country.



Mr. Braidwood continued his duties with every satisfaction to the brigade, and was at his post when, on Saturday evening, June 22nd, 1861, at ten minutes to five o'clock, intelligence reached him at the head office of the Fire Brigade in Watling Street, City, of a serious outbreak of fire at Tooley Street, to which he gallantly proceeded with all haste, taking with him all the



available force of engines and men to the spot where began his greatest task, and which was fated to have such a serious termination.

This terrific conflagration proved to be the greatest since that of 1666; nothing like it had been experienced during the previous fifty years, the loss having been estimated at about £2,000,000. The scene of this catastrophe was on the waterside portion of Tooley Street nearest London Bridge, a locality which has been singularly unfortunate, several fires having occurred there previously and also up to recent dates.

The outbreak took place in the extensive range of premises known as Cotton's Wharf, and in the bonded warehouses belonging to Messrs. Scovell, having an extensive riverside frontage, covering a space of three acres. They were six stories in height, filled with valuable merchandise of every description, among which were thousands of chests of tea, coffee, and bales of silk stored away in the upper floors, while in the lower floors and basement was an immense stock of Russian tallow, tar, oils, bales of cotton, hops and grain.

The account runs that whilst Mr. Braidwood was engaged in superintending the refreshments being dealt out to his men, a terrific explosion occurred; in an instant it was seen that the whole of the frontage of the second warehouse was about to fall outward in the Avenue, when Henderson, the foreman of the brigade, shouted for the men to run. They immediately dropped their branches and fled; two men with Henderson escaped from the front gateway, the others ran in an opposite direction and jumped into the river. Their

chief made an effort to follow, but was struck down by the upper part of a wall, and buried beneath some tons of *débris*. His men at once attempted to rescue him from the burning ruins, but on account of the continuous falling of the walls, they were reluctantly obliged to discontinue doing so until a later stage of the fire.

The balustrades and coping of London Bridge were

fringed with thousands of spectators, some of whom it was reported, in the struggle to get a place, fell into the river and were drowned.

Mention is made by eye-witnesses of the general stampede of rats that deserted the burning piles, as if from a sinking ship, and of their making haste to the opposite shore, climbing and clinging to pieces of burnt wood which had fallen into the river and were floating with the tide.

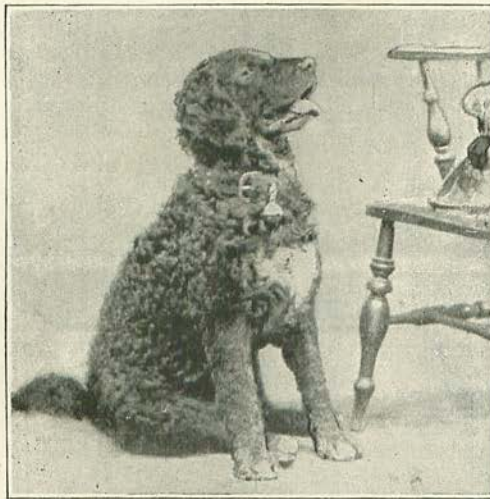
From the bridge was to be seen a spectacle rarely to be witnessed: the river appeared turned to blood, the neighbouring houses and churches lit up as if at a great pyrotechnic display. Many persons paid exorbitant tolls to pass up the staircase of the Monument, to view from the eminence of this architectural structure (in itself erected to commemorate the Fire of London) this never-to-be-forgotten scene.

Barrels of tar and tallow floated alight upon the water, drifting merrily, like small islands of flame. At one time about 20,000 casks of Russian tallow were computed to be alight; but after burning four days and nights, the fire burnt itself out, and the City was not revisited by a conflagration of great consequence until summoned to Wood Street.

Before describing this event we will, however, say a few words regarding "Bob." "Bob," otherwise known as the fireman's dog, was a retriever, and distinguished himself in many ways worth mentioning, making his home at the old Southwark Fire Station. He was ever in attendance, ready to turn out and follow the engine to a fire directly the bell was rung, when, on arrival at the scene of conflagration, he was always ready

to obey orders, and would run up the ladders, jump through the windows, entering dangerous buildings more quickly than any fireman.

Once at a fire in Duke Street, in the vicinity of the station, where the flames were rapidly spreading, threatening the whole structure, "Bob" darted into the burning house, where, after making his round to try and save the lives of any persons who might be left behind, he suc-



"BOB."

ceeded only so far in this case as to rescue the domestic cat, which he brought out in his mouth, carrying it gently to a place of safety. On another occasion, still in the memory of London firemen, at a call to a house alight in the Westminster Bridge Road, the Brigade thought all lives had been saved and everybody had been got out. When "Bob" with his ordinary sagacity, after making his round or survey, as usual, decided otherwise by keeping scratching and barking at a small door, he was promptly ordered to hold his noise and retire. Although usually very obedient, he barked still louder than ever, and, becoming furious, seemed to say: "Be quick and open the door." The firemen were afraid to open the door in case the draught caused thereby would further prevent their efforts to extinguish the flames. But as "Bob" was so boisterous, one of the men present said, "There's some reason why 'Bob' makes this ado; let's open the door."

The door was burst open, when the astonished firemen found a poor little child crouching down in the corner, panic-stricken, who, but for "Bob," would have soon been suffocated and burned to death. No doubt it was the child's cry he heard amidst the crackling of the flames, and in his determination to assist, added another to the score of lives he was destined to save.

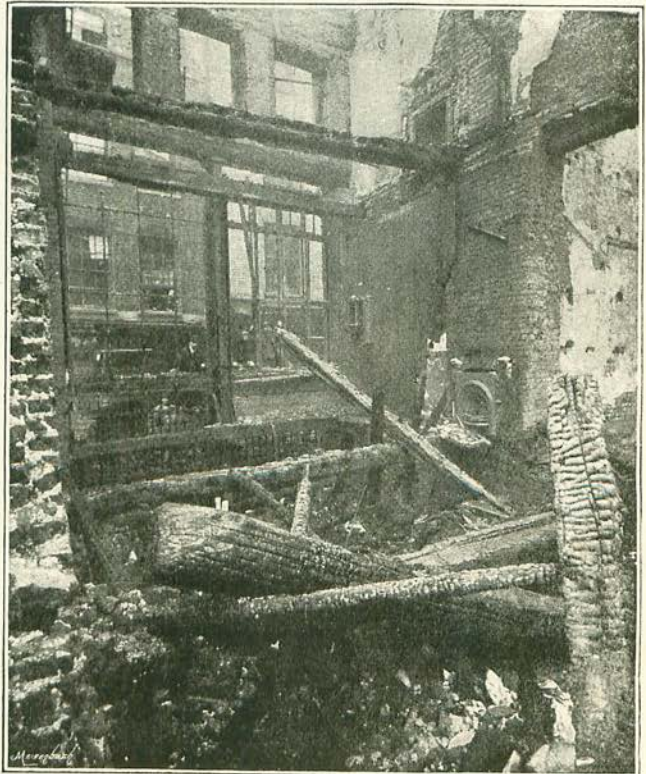
Among the tricks taught him were the following: When asked to pump the engine, "Bob," a good-natured dog, would sit on his hind legs, at the same time working his fore legs up and down with as much regularity as the firemen themselves when working a manual engine. But notwithstanding this faithful creature's rescue of many lives, alas! poor "Bob" had his day. But it was a glorious day for him, and happened like this: Whilst the engine was proceeding to a fire in the Caledonian Road, "Bob," eager for action, ran in front of the horses, was knocked down, and the wheels passed over his body—thus destroying his life when at his post of duty.

He was succeeded by "Bill," who equally honoured the canine race, and was owned by Samuel Wood, one of the oldest and bravest of London fire-escape

men, who saved nearly one hundred lives, and who had as his faithful companion "Bill," around whose neck the parishioners of Whitechapel placed a silver collar in token of his valuable services. During the nine years he had filled the important position of fire-escape dog, "Bill," like his master, had to be very wakeful, and was at his service during the whole of the night, while he slept at the foot of his bed during the daytime; he never attempted to run out of doors until the hour approached for duty at the station, never allowing his master to sleep too long. He was always sure to wake him if a little late, but how the dog knew the time caused many a lengthy yarn.

The brigade returning only the night previous from the burning of the Alhambra Theatre, and having had hardly time to change their clothing, were summoned to a more serious outbreak in Wood Street, City, on December 8th, 1882, which proved a great commercial calamity, involving as it did so many different firms and London agents of provincial and foreign houses, many of whom had their season's stock ready for sending out.

Amidst the labyrinth of streets between



THE WOOD STREET FIRE.

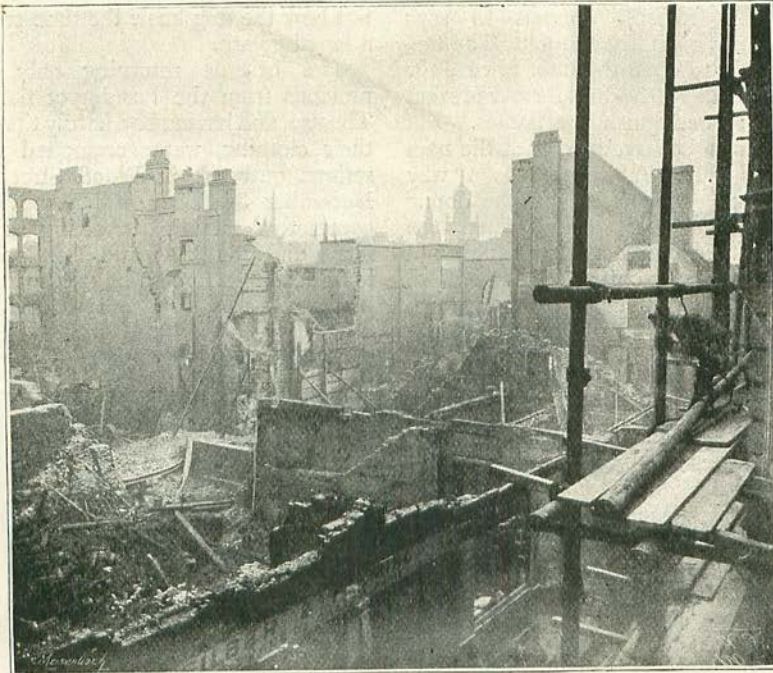


the General Post Office and Guildhall was a scene of the utmost commotion. The illustration here reproduced serves as a good insight into the dimensions of the fire, the damage of which was estimated at upwards of £1,000,000. When the first steamer arrived flames were bursting forth from nearly all the windows in the premises of Messrs. Foster, Porter, and Co., they being alight from beginning to end. The roof, however, soon took fire, and the flames curling over it, ignited the extensive premises of Messrs. Rylands and Co., and of Messrs.

which lies hard by, had a thick and substantially-built party wall and a fire-protective roof, which probably allowed it to remain practically undamaged.

Zion College, with its valuable library, escaped also with a slight warning, which was alone capable of well airing the rooms at this time of year.

Besides the photographs reproduced here, some idea of the extent of the area covered by the fire may be estimated, seeing that no less than a surface of 2,071,000 superficial square feet was laid a barren waste; as if the



THE WOOD STREET FIRE (MESSRS. RYLANDS' PREMISES).

Silber and Fleming. At this moment the alarming nature of the fire was telegraphed to all the outlying districts, asking for additional help. But, however, as was shown, the extremely dangerous position of affairs had not been fully appreciated, and by four o'clock the whole pile of buildings running from Addle Street to London Wall, a frontage of about 150ft., was furiously blazing, notwithstanding there being 150 men and 26 steamers at work endeavouring to quell the flames, which were spreading to the centre block of buildings, devouring as they went warehouse after warehouse. Huge blocks of red-hot masonry were continuously falling in the narrow streets, filling them up several feet in depth.—Luckily the Curriers' Hall,

relics of part of an ancient city confronted the spectator, instead of what were, before the fire commenced, streets of comparatively modern buildings.

The next outbreak of considerable magnitude to take place was the well remembered Paternoster Row fire, which broke out on April 2nd, 1884. It was about 7.30 p.m. that the premises of Messrs. Pardon and Son were discovered to be on fire in the basement; the flames soon gained the upper floors by shooting up the lift, setting alight the various upper rooms, and, gaining upon the roof, shot up a lurid glare, lighting up St. Paul's Cathedral close by, a sight which at once attracted people from all parts, intent upon seeing a fire such as perhaps had not



THE PATERNOSTER ROW FIRE.

been their luck to witness before. Christ's Hospital, also, a handsome stone building, showed up prominently in the distance for many miles, marking the spot of what was unmistakably a great London fire.

The workpeople engaged on the premises at the time made a hurried escape, and happily no casualties occurred. Great difficulty was experienced by the brigade in getting access to the fire on account of the narrowness of the streets and the contiguous lanes running in all directions from the seat of the fire. A good bird's-eye view is given of the fire in the photograph which was taken from the gallery of St. Paul's Cathedral overlooking the burnt-out houses beneath, and in which is plainly seen Christ Church, Newgate, among the many buildings around.

About four hundred police, under Superintendent Foster, were told off to keep the crowds of people in abeyance, and from hindering the firemen in their unceasing efforts to cope with the fire.

Captain Shaw, as usual at large outbreaks, was in early attendance on the scene, and, with his command over the brigade, rendered very efficient service; favoured by a low wind, he was soon able to grapple with this outbreak, and succeeded in reducing the enormous risk which was at one time imminent.

With these two exceptions, what is commonly known as the Charterhouse fire was the largest conflagration in London since the formation of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade. It burnt furiously for six hours. The fire was discovered at about four o'clock on Thursday morning, October 8th, 1885, on the premises of an embroidery manufactory at No. 18, in a very large block of warehouses known as Charterhouse Buildings, lying at the north-west corner of the City. The flames rapidly ran from one warehouse to another, until at length the whole block presented a huge fiery furnace burning in all directions. Buildings of five and six stories fell in one after the other.

A few minutes after this memorable outbreak had occurred, a message was rung up at the headquarters saying that two large warehouses were alight in Charterhouse Buildings, and upon a fireman being sent up the lofty tower at Winchester House and reporting that a fire was showing a strong light in this district, a steamer was at once dispatched, which was followed up by the chief officer. At the time of his arrival it was observed that a large chemical works adjoining was fully ablaze, adding more fuel and flame to the magnificent sight viewed by those around, occurring as it did at an early hour in the morning. By five o'clock no fewer than



THE CHARTERHOUSE FIRE.

fourteen of these warehouses were well alight in the Charterhouse block, when serious apprehension was entertained for the safety of the buildings on the other side of the road; and notwithstanding there being thirty engines at work throwing copious volumes of water upon the burning masses, the people occupying the houses on the opposite side were aroused from their beds by the firemen, and told to leave at once and seek a safer place for refuge until the fire had been subdued.

The scenes which now ensued were pitiable in the extreme. On every side were to be seen partially dressed men and women carrying scantily and hurriedly clad children and babies in arms, or some of

their household goods, out of danger, for which trouble they were well rewarded, for no sooner had some left their houses when, through the extensive heat from the other side of the road, the buildings were observed to take fire, placing at the moment Charterhouse Schools and St. Mary's Vicarage in great danger.

Around the fire were gathered one mass of brass-helmeted men. Occasionally a wall here and there would fall, causing the firemen to run for their lives.

Captain Shaw himself had, at one stage of the fire, a very narrow escape of meeting a similar fate to that which befell his predecessor, for a large block of masonry fell upon the spot where he had been



THE MILTON STREET FIRE.

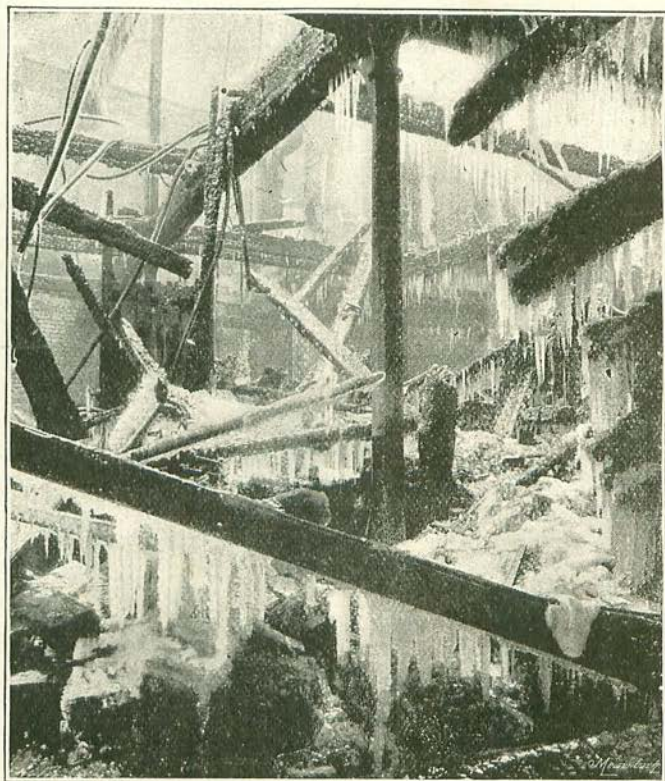
standing only two seconds before. The photograph illustrating this site as it appeared after burning for six hours shows the towering walls left standing, which at length were pulled down, leaving a vast smouldering mass of ruins, in dimensions 25-ft. by 150ft., with much damage all around to the adjoining buildings and those on the opposite side. All throughout the day firemen were employed in pouring water from the street hydrants upon the heated *débris* and pulling down the tottering walls.

Milton Street, hidden behind Cheapside, and almost adjacent to Wood Street, was the scene of another big City fire. At four o'clock on the morning of May 6th, 1889, before London or the City was astir, it raged with great fierceness, for several hours feeding itself on the City Soap Works; originating in a block of buildings bounded by Milton Street, Moor Lane, Butler Street, and Sydney Avenue, comprising five stories and covering a large area. In Moor Lane, the fire attacked four large buildings, used as printing offices. Not until the morning had far advanced were the firemen able to extinguish this outbreak, and after the steamers had left, the hydrants were turned on to the heated *débris*.

The pulling down of dangerous walls was proceeded with until late in the afternoon, amidst many spectators, brought to the scene by the accounts published, and who were watching the walls sway to and fro as the men pulled them with ropes slung round the tops, with a "Heave-ho! heave-ho," and the rope, passing round the brickwork, was seen to cut itself in twain, letting the would-be pullers down, scrambling upon each other. Not, however, daunted by this mishap, again a chain was cast round the brickwork and affixed to a rope, which this time was more successful, and a gigantic pile of bricks was seen to totter as if not being able to make up its mind to fall or stay where it had remained so many years, when all at once they gracefully swayed and fell with a tremendous crash, for which part, however, few of the crowd waited,

they making for the nearest places of safety. Delineated in this photograph can be seen the masses of brickwork all of a heap as they fell, also a copper vat here and there for boiling the soap, and many other interesting objects.

From the previous great London fires, the Queen Victoria Street one differs in many respects. The following notes made at the time of the outbreak should be of interest, especially as of late the London Docks have been trying to beat the records of modernized City fires by taxing every effort of the brigade and causing them to concentrate their entire forces upon them, thereby attracting much public notice, causing many to look up their policies, in case it may be (to quote the barber's words) "Your turn next, sir!" This outbreak occurred mid-day on Tuesday, 30th of December, 1890, whilst the hands were working in the large printing factory of Messrs. Davidson and Sons, 119, Queen Victoria Street, they having to make a very hurried escape from the large warehouses, which were, as if in an instant, ablaze. The fire soon burned through the rear into Upper Thames Street to Nos. 226 and 227, doing



THE QUEEN VICTORIA STREET FIRE.

very extensive damage here and ending in a total destruction of several large warehouses, as well as considerable damage to St. Benet's Church, adjoining. There was a strong north-easterly wind blowing at the time, which aided the conflagration in spreading from No. 119, where it originated, to No. 141, requiring twenty-three engines in attendance to subdue the flames, also three floats from the Thames to play on it from the rear.

It is probable that, had the party walls been sound, it would have been confined somewhat in the direction in which it broke out. From a glance at this photograph, taken when the fire had been extinguished, there will be observed many huge icicles hanging from the joists and masonry, suggesting an Arctic-like appearance, rarely seen on these occasions. Many large pieces of ice formed on the burning timber, and fire could be seen burning among ice-bound *débris*. These ruined buildings, architecturally constructed, and comprising a frontage of 70 yards, presented an exceedingly pretty and picturesque appearance, well worthy of being reproduced from an artist's point of view. The weather on this occasion had a remarkable effect upon the firemen; also upon the appliances at work. The water froze as it left the branches, running in globular form around the nozzles, causing much hindrance in getting them to work, and the hose froze to the ground and building with which it came in contact. Firemen became coated in ice from head to foot, and small icicles clung to Captain Shaw's hair and beard, giving him the appearance of a veritable Santa Claus.

The Welsh church of St. Benet's had a narrow escape from being destroyed, as a sudden outburst of flames in the wooden belfry showed it had caught fire, and the roof and tower were badly scorched.

At this moment much excitement was caused by the crowd seeing a fireman brought out on a stretcher half suffocated and frozen, who was subsequently restored by the assistance of many willing

hands. At last the fire was subdued, and cooled down within a few hours of the end of the old year, leaving the buildings presenting a Christmas card-like appearance to those who viewed them.

This remained in their memory as the last great fire only until eclipsed by the recent fire scourge in St. Mary Axe, which broke out at 1 a.m. on Tuesday morning, the 18th of July, 1893. Amidst immense warehouses in close proximity to Houndsditch, and bounded on the east by Bevis Marks, on the north by St. Mary Axe, and south-west by Bury Court, Jeffrey Square, lies this vast chasm of *âbris*, which is clearly illustrated by the accompanying photograph. Not only was the destruction not confined to this large quadrangle, but the flames extended to many of the buildings on the opposite sides of the streets and completely burnt them out, devouring contents and buildings alike.

The fire continued raging and spreading in all directions, and by five o'clock was comparatively at its worst, and, baffling somewhat the strenuous efforts of the brigade, with 30 steamers and about 300 men to stay its progress, continued burning and smouldering



THE ST. MARY AXE FIRE.

till the following Thursday evening. Alike on other occasions, many incidents occurred of some interest, such as the rescuing of a lunatic, who, panic-stricken by such a sight, refused to receive assistance from the firemen out of a dangerous position until considerable force was used. As soon as the news became known, thousands of spectators visited the spot with the intention of viewing the *débris*, each in turn eager to view the crumbling walls, cracking and falling in all directions, the greater portion of which fell about two o'clock in the afternoon, bringing the heavy masonry and brickwork down with a thunderous crash, forcing in the fronts of the houses opposite, in Bevis Marks, and falling through the basements.

The Fire Brigade, now under the new commandership of Captain Simonds, worked indefatigably for four days—introducing here the new water tower (invented by the chief officer), which rendered much service at the outbreak; and although they were prevented from making their usually early stop to the progress of the flames owing to the buildings being stored with such large

quantities of inflammable stock, they succeeded in saving this quarter of the City which was threatened with destruction.

It is not generally known that when so much combustible material catches fire it is a matter of impossibility to put it out immediately with our present means of fire extinction, or any other means likely to be invented. The fire must take its course, advancing forward, either aided by wind, draughts, or fresh fuel; but whilst in progress it is here that the skilled services of firemen are brought to bear at certain points of vantage, and on the adjoining buildings, whereby the fire is generally confined within a limited area.

The estimated amount of damage was put at £300,000, and fifty warehouses were either burnt out or seriously damaged. Happily there was not a single fatality during the extinction, which marks a feature in the efficient drill and discipline maintained throughout the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

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