

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, JANUARY 14, 1857.

Those of our readers who have not heard of the fearful conflagration which occurred on New Year's Day, will only require to know the circumstances in which we have been placed to excuse the omission of our last week's issue.

We had made preparation, after the fire, and were expecting to get out two pages, notwithstanding our confusion and distress, but just as we were ready, discovered that parts of our press were missing, and were compelled to abandon the attempt.

More than half of one entire square of buildings and a large portion of another, were destroyed, besides turning out the residents and their effects from probably fifty other houses.

The "Presbyterian Witness" and the "Colonist" newspapers were both suspended in consequence of having to remove their printing materials from their offices. The fire did not, however, reach the former. The roof of the latter was several times in flames but was extinguished. Our own office, where we had just removed, (having only on the previous day given up the keys of the former office,) being in the direction of the wind, was, from the first, in imminent danger. We were watching with intense interest the progress of the devouring element and preparing to leave the premises, when the order was given to pull down our residence and office, for the purpose of more effectually getting at the fire and preventing its further extension.

Our cases of type, books, paper, furniture, and wearing apparel, were taken possession of by friends, both civil and military, and removed. In the confusion, much was scattered in different directions in the streets, at the houses of various neighbours and friends, and the greater part in the Granville Street Church. After spending the lost portion of a week in searching, we have succeeded in recovering a large portion but in a very much injured condition, and have returned to our old quarters, which were fortunately still unoccupied.

Being personally engaged in efforts to save as much as possible from destruction, and having our hands so fully occupied in recovering the scattered fragments we have taken from our contemporary the Recorder, the following description of the disastrous event:

THE FIRE.

Thursday last, New-Year's Day, is not likely soon to be forgotten by the citizens of Halifax, being rendered memorable by a calamity which we believe may be called the most destructive fire that has ever visited our city. The fire originated in the three storey wooden building on the corner of Hollis and Prince streets, owned by Mr. Nicholas Vass. This building comprised three tenements. We believe it was from an upper storey of the central one, occupied by P. Donahoe, Esq., as a dry good store, that the fire broke out. It must have had considerable headway before it was discovered; for, when first seen, the flames were bursting out through the windows and, in a few minutes afterwards the whole building was wrapped in flames. It being a general holiday and about 4 p. m., the shops were closed, the streets in the business part of the city where the fire originated were nearly deserted, and many of the firemen had gone out of town for a day's enjoyment. Consequently by the time the engines reached the spot there was every prospect of a great conflagration. To make matters worse, when the hose pipes were screwed on to the fire plugs, scarcely a drop was to be had. By the time the water was turned off from the other parts of the town, not only the whole of Vass's building, but St. Matthew's church on the opposite side of Hollis street, was too far gone to leave any hopes of being saved. The roof of Harrington's corner, on the north side of Prince street opposite Vass's, was several times on fire; and was saved with great difficulty. Although to windward of the building where the fire commenced, if Harrington's shop had once become completely fired, there is little doubt that the whole of that block, being closely built up and consisting, with the exception of one small house, of high, wooden buildings, would have been destroyed.

St. Matthew's Church was consumed in a very short space of time, the vehemence of the fire being probably increased by the ignition of the contents of the vault beneath, it being occupied, we believe, as a wine and spirit cellar. Soon the flames were darting up the steeple but before they had reached

much more than half its height the foundation gave way and the steeple swung to leeward and fell with a great crash upon the small buildings adjoining the church and fronting on Hollis street. Before St. Matthew's Church was half consumed, the fire had extended to the three adjoining buildings fronting on Prince and reaching to Granville street. The first of these was occupied by James Stewart, Esq., as a law office; the lower floor of the second, formed the office of Messrs. Tobin & Wallace, Attorneys, the upper part being occupied by Mrs. Studley. The ground floor of the next, corner of Prince and Granville streets, known as "Somerset House" comprised the musical instrument shop of Mr. O. H. Robinson and the grocery store of Mr. J. A. R. Wier. Captain Griffin resided in the upper part and the law offices of Hon. J. McCully and William Howe, Esq., were upon the second floor. When once the fire had reached this corner, it extended southwards and simultaneously along both sides of Hollis street and the eastern side of Granville street. We shall trace its progress along each of these three lines of march. It should have been observed that the wind was nearly North East and therefore blew across Hollis and Granville streets in an oblique direction. It was light at first but increased in strength as the fire extended.

At the eastern side of Hollis street, Vass's building was separated from those adjoining by a thick stone partition wall. Had it not been for this, nothing could have saved the "Colonist Office" and Mr. Annand's new four story building, into which the "Morning Chronicle" had just been removed. As it was, they were saved with some difficulty the roof of the former having been frequently on fire. The corner shop of Vass's building was occupied by the heirs of the late John Robinson; the second one as we have already observed, was occupied by Mr. Donohoe as a dry goods shop; the third was vacant, a tenant having just moved out of it. The basement of the whole building had just been fitted up at a great expense and in a style which did them infinite credit by Messrs. W. L. Stewart & Son, as an eating saloon. From this building the fire extended successively to the low building where this journal has, for the past year, been worked off at Kirk & Co's Steam printing press; the dwelling house of Mrs. Power, including the office of John Skerry, Esq.; the shop of Messrs. McCreath & Farquharson, tailors, and the offices of S. P. Fairbanks and P. Lenoir, Esqrs., in the second storey; the shop of Mr. W. H. Drake, shoemaker; and the shop of Mr. J. McCreath, tailor. The next, a small low building, lately occupied as a confectionary was torn down, and by that means the fire was got under in that quarter, Mr. Henry Pryor's office being the first building in this row left standing.

On the west side of Hollis street two houses only, besides St. Matthew's Church were destroyed. The first of these was in the occupancy of Mrs. Carman, Hugh Hartshorne, Esq. having the first floor front as his office and the office of the "Royal Insurance Company." The next, a double house, contained the offices of James Tremaine, Esq., Broker, and H. C. D. Twining Attorney, and Mr. Muir, sailmaker, and Mr. Stevens, carpenter resided in it. Here the flames met with an effectual check in this direction from the substantial brick building of Mr. Wm. Langley, Druggist. The buildings upon Hollis Street that were destroyed, with the exception of Vass's and the Church, were old and of comparatively little value.

Along the East side of Granville Street, the fire extended further than in any other direction. The paint shop of Mr. W. S. Studley, a good two story building, went to ruin along with the "Somerset House." Three long, old one story houses, adjoining, followed next in order. The first of these with stable annexed belonged to Mr. M. Kearney—occupied by McCartney and others, as a dwelling house. The next was the Hon. Dr. Grigor's Dispensary, Mr. Thomas Ellis residing in the upper part of it. The third was owned by Mr. Scithers, painter, and tenanted by some colored families. From these the fire soon extended to the two story house owned by Mr. T. C. Kinnear, and occupied as a boarding house by Mrs. Thomas, although this house was separated from those from which it caught fire by a brick partition wall. The next house, also owned, we believe, by Mr. Kinnear, caught nearly at the same time; and the two were rapidly consumed. The next building, recently purchased and put in thorough repair by Mr. S. Selden and comprising the residence of that gentleman and the "Christian Messenger" printing office,

was partly consumed and torn down. Here the fire was stayed. There was a narrow passage between Mr. Selden's premises and the next building, a three story house owned and occupied by Mr. Thomas Bentley; and the latter was flat roofed, a rare peculiarity among Halifax houses, but one which enabled the firemen to direct jets of water, from the hose pipes, down upon the fire with great effect. Mr. Bentley's house was completely riddled of its contents and greatly damaged; as were also the two houses next to it, on to the corner of Sackville Street.

The houses on the west side of Granville Street, opposite the burning block, were much scorched and were saved with extreme difficulty mainly owing to the exertions of those who manned the Dockyard engine. Nearly every house in the block, on Granville, Barrington, and the connecting cross streets, was emptied of its moveables; and great destruction of property was caused by the hurry and trepidation with which the removal was effected. Several houses and shops in Hollis and Prince Streets, besides those that were burnt, were in like manner emptied of their moveables. The streets in every direction were covered with great heaps of goods and furniture, much of it of a very fragmentary nature. A great quantity of type, in the "Colonist" office was all knocked into pi, and other effects of the office seriously damaged in the hurry of removal; and the contents of the "Chronicle" and "Royal Gazette" offices adjoining did not escape uninjured. Early in the fire, the engine in charge of the 63rd Regt. having been placed between Vass's building and St. Matthew's Church, its situation became suddenly so terribly hot that it was found impossible to work, or even to remove it, and the engine caught fire and was totally destroyed. Another engine belonging to the Dockyard was considerably injured in the same way.

The fire, as we observed before, commenced, or was first discovered about four o'clock. By 10 o'clock it was evident that the firemen had it under control, although the engines continued to play until between 11 and 12. Too much praise cannot be given to officers and men of the garrison for their great exertions on this occasion. Indeed had it not been for the organised efforts of these gallant fellows, half of the town would have been destroyed, for anything we could see to prevent it.

St. Matthew's Church, which was destroyed in this conflagration, was one of the oldest buildings in Halifax.

We are thus visited with wave upon wave. What the design of the Allwise Disposer of events in this, as in other distressing calamities, we are not now prepared to decide, but can perceive that mercy is mixed with judgment, and hope that we may be enabled to learn the lessons of wisdom so severely taught. We can only now say, Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

"Though dark be my way
Yet He is my guide,
'Tis mine to obey,
'Tis His to provide."

Nothing shall be wanted on our parts to deserve the continued sympathy and increased patronage of all our friends and subscribers.

Special Appeal.

We were sensible in some measure of the value of christian sympathy and kindness—previous to the late calamitous fire, but that event afforded an opportunity for the manifestation of those christian graces to an extent which will live in our remembrance to our latest hour.

It would perhaps be invidious to mention the names of some, where all the brethren and friends, and especially the workmen in our office, exerted their utmost efforts in saving what they could from the devouring element and but for the order given to tear down the house in which we lived, so as to arrest the progress of the flames, would have rescued all in comparatively good condition.

The readiness with which Deacon Whitman provided us with a home in his family, until we could procure lodgings, calls for our grateful acknowledgements and warmest thanks.

The communications we have received in relation to this unfortunate event, have tended much to alleviate our distress: The following from one who has manifested the deepest interest in the Christian Messenger from its commencement, has appeared to us to contain valuable suggestions, and yet such as we felt some difficulty in adopting and carrying out fully; we have therefore obtained permission from him to place it before our readers, and trust that the modes therein suggested, by which we may be assisted to repair our losses, will commend

themselves to the brethren, so that our sphere of usefulness may by that means be enlarged, and good may be the result.

WOLFVILLE, January 3rd, 1857.

My Dear Brother,—It was with unfeigned regret that I heard of your sad disaster on New Year's day, I know it must be a most serious inconvenience at the present time, when you especially need good and undisturbed arrangements for making out your past year's accounts and preparing for a new year's duties. I am glad to learn through Dr. C. that your account books were saved.

It occurs to me a circular of appeal might with utmost propriety be put forth by you immediately asking the pastors and leading brethren of our churches to bring forward the case of the Christian Messenger and advise their congregations to show their sympathy, in two ways. First, all indebted to pay for the past and a year in advance; all who paid for 1856 in advance now at once to pay for 1857—and further all who have not yet subscribed—should be urgently requested to do so now and pay in advance; this ought to raise 2 to 300 subscribers which would benefit the subscribers equally with the Editor. Where the pastors could not engage in this service they might get some one to act for that purpose. I feel if this were rightly attended to, good would result from it.

With kind regards to Mrs. S. in which Mrs. B. unites and joins with me in feelings of sympathy. I remain yours sincerely,
J. W. BARRS.

Brethren, if the proposals made in the above communication are carried out in each of the churches in the province, and all our readers lend us their aid, so as to accomplish the results suggested, we shall have a large part of the pressure of this misfortune removed.

The letter of C. H. H. on another page, will also show the vast importance of extending the circulation of our journal. Let no time be lost then, brethren, but at the first opportunity let some one or more be appointed in each congregation to make a special canvass and appeal to all who do not receive the Messenger, and we venture to promise, with the blessing of God upon our efforts, they shall have no cause to regret, but shall have the full value of their subscription before the end of the year.

Let each of our subscribers who has not paid, consider that it is his own subscription we specially require. It may not be much to one, but the aggregate to us is of vital importance. We shall be labouring under great disadvantage in comparison to what we were anticipating, but with our health spared to us we have no alarm for the future. We would not faint in this day of adversity. Our cause is a good one. Our Master is ever-present, and we look forward to the time when we shall meet our friends in regions where "our treasure, we trust, is laid up, and where moth and rust (and fire) do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal." Here we must learn "to labour and to wait."

We have to lament the removal of our aged friend and excellent Agent, Capt. P. Hjalms, who departed this life at Hantsport on the 3rd ultimo. We are informed that an Obituary Notice of him will shortly appear from the pen of the Rev. W. Burton.

The Public everywhere throughout the Province, we suppose, are by this time fully aware of the sharp controversy that is going on between Mr. Howe and the Roman Catholic Press. We certainly should have been wholly silent on the subject, as one which did not in any way call for our interference, had it not been for the assertion in the Halifax Catholic of the 3rd inst., that we had passed over Mr. Howe's letter in "contemptuous silence." In this our contemporary has wholly misconstrued the course we have taken. Without, in any respect, committing ourselves to the approval of many of Mr. Howe's strictures, the Catholic may surely give us credit for the uniform testimony we have borne as to the nature and tendency of the dogmas and usages of their Church, which is wholly inconsistent with any desire on our part to favour or promote its influence or success. Towards our Catholic fellow-citizens we have no other than the kindest feelings—their creed we most heartily abjure, and have never failed, we think, when proper occasions offered, to express our views with firmness and moderation, and we trust shall continue so to do, notwithstanding the sneers and misrepresentations that we have too often observed in their notices of our ministers and missions. It will require better arguments than we have ever yet heard to convince us that any cause, especially a good one, can be promoted by ridicule, or distortion of the truth, and we entertain little sympathy with any who will condescend to use such weapons. As to the rest, we are Protestants, and believe that Protestant doctrines as opposed to the peculiar tenets of the Romish Church, are those alone in accordance with the Word of God.