

FIRE IN PRINCES STREET SOUTH.

On Saturday, hundreds visited the scene of the fire reported in our issue of this day to have broken out on the premises of Messrs Guthrie and Larnach. Hundreds too, who, having been present when it raged fiercest, could hardly have failed to contrast with the calm of day the hurry, the confusion, and the din of early morning. Scorched and blackened masses showed how mercilessly the fire had done its work; smouldering and hissing timbers indicated an extreme unwillingness to relinquish its prey; long lines of serpentine-like hose lay here and there, suggestive of the peril that had passed; while the fatigued and almost exhausted appearance of Captain Wain, and his hard-working and gallant band, together with the almost untouched appearance of adjoining buildings, presented additional evidence of their great value as a fire brigade. The fire was first discovered by Alfred Hamilton, the night-watchman at Messrs Guthrie and Larnach's, after going the round of the premises between a quarter and half-past 3 o'clock. He first saw flames, 4ft. high, issuing from the vicinity of the boiler, situated at the north side of the building. The exact spot where the fire was supposed to have originated was carefully examined by him about half-an-hour before it was discovered. On observing the first indication he ran up the yard, opened the front gate, and gave the alarm. He afterwards turned on the water, and endeavored to extinguish the fire by playing on it with the firm's hose. His efforts, however, as the result proved, were futile. Near the spot where the fire broke out were shavings and light timber. The flames quickly spread from one piece of timber to another, "leaping higher, higher, higher," until the scared watchman, with his face badly scorched, was compelled to retire. Soon a great deal of the closely-packed inflammable material was all aglow, and soon, too, the appearances were most alarming. A short time afterwards one portion of the large chimney was absolutely red-hot; and it will be necessary, it is said, to take it down. Fanned into greater fierceness by the pursuing wind, the fire soon approached the Spanish restaurant, belonging to Mr Guardiola, a building of three storeys, in which there were that night sleeping 54 persons. And now a scene of great confusion was witnessed. The boarders—all the property of some of whom, it is said, pecuniary and otherwise, was in their bedrooms—endeavored to remove what they could before the flames rushed in to prevent them. But with nothing to facilitate their progress beyond a staircase only about 2ft. wide, they almost of necessity met with many hindrances while going in and out of the building. Some had even to get down from the upper storeys by means of ropes. Meanwhile the fire continued to spread with alarming rapidity. It ultimately communicated with the restaurant, and soon that, with the adjoining building, in the occupation of Mr R. T. Haworth, was enveloped in flames. The Brigade were promptly on the spot, but many complaints were made that there was a great deal too much delay in the ringing of the fire-bell. No time was lost by the Brigade in endeavoring to beat back the advancing enemy. And what a hissing, crackling, and spluttering was then heard! Shortly after the last of the inmates left the restaurant, the buildings and timber ignited were one vast sheet of flame. Then, indeed, the Brigade had great difficulties to cope with, amongst them heat almost unbearable, and smoke almost stifling. Continuous streams of water were poured into the burning mass. The main jet was pointed against the Prince of Wales Hotel, on the opposite side of the street, which building is surrounded by wooden houses. The close proximity of the hotel to the property destroyed, and the fact that it escaped unscorched—although protected perhaps somewhat by a timely change of wind, and the brick portion of the premises first attacked—bears testimony to the often admitted efficiency of the Brigade. As on all previous occasions, their efforts to prevent the spread of the fire were arduous and continuous. At last, the roof and side walls of the restaurant gave way, and then flew up from the burning mass an immense body of sparks that heightened in no small degree the terrible grandeur of the scene. The immigrants located at the old barracks, aided by many willing persons, succeeded in getting their clothes out of the dépôt; but this building was fortunately not damaged, the fire being confined entirely to Messrs Guthrie and Larnach's, Haworth's, and the Spanish Restaurant. A number of women, half-dressed, were seen rushing about the street with children in their arms, excited and naturally much frightened. The only explanation that can be given regarding the origin of the fire is, that a spark from the engine must have fallen amongst the timber. One of the most painful results of the conflagration is the fact that 200 men have been thrown out of employment. The Corporation, however, have made arrangements by which Messrs Guthrie and Larnach will be able to erect temporary premises between Bond and Crawford streets, in a very short time, and most of the hands, with the exception of those in the manufacturing department, will be almost immediately employed. We understand that on Saturday the agent of the New Zealand Insurance Company intimated that a cheque would be handed for the amount of the insurance, £3,000, due to Messrs Guthrie and Larnach, directly it was applied for. Permission was also given by that company to remove the débris. Arrangements have been made with different timber merchants in town by which there will only be a short delay to the customers of the firm in executing their orders. The greatest injury was done to the manufactory, engine-room, store, and offices; the iron shed was not damaged. Quite recently the firm had received some improved machinery from home. Luckily it was in the premises which the fire did not reach, and it will, therefore, be brought into operation immediately. Constable Murdoch, it appears, passed on the opposite side of the road a few minutes before the alarm was given; all then appeared to be right. He proceeded as far as the Government house, and, on returning, observed flames issuing from Messrs Guthrie and Larnach's premises. The police, under the superintendence of Sub-Inspector Mallard, were present, and rendered valuable assistance in restraining the progressive efforts of the crowd. The fire, if not of the most costly character, certainly sent forth the strongest volume of flames of any that has been witnessed in Dunedin for many years. The whole of Saturday the Brigade were engaged

endeavoring to extinguish the slumbering embers in different parts of the yard, the material being removed from place to place by men specially engaged for the purpose, so as to leave no chances of the flames being revived. Yesterday strict watch was also kept, lest there should be any further necessity for the Brigade's services. During the day a large portion of the wall which divided the timber-yard from Crawford street fell. A large number of persons were in the immediate neighborhood at the time, but fortunately nobody was injured, nor, so far as we have heard, was anybody hurt from the first alarm of fire until it was extinguished. What goes to justify in some degree the remarks made by many persons as to the delay in ringing the bell is the fact that the watchman warden on one of the platforms at the Gaol states that shortly after 4 o'clock, and fully five minutes before the bell rang, he saw flames shooting up in a great body, and heard people shouting as they hurried along the streets. A system which is adopted in many large places of business in the Old Country, might with advantage be carried out here. It is that of placing a peg, or tell tale clock, at or near the spot where a fire is most likely to originate. Forming part of the fixture are a number of pegs, one of which is removed by the watchman perhaps every half-hour. Should he fall asleep, or in any other way neglect his duty, the pegs, equal in number to the half-hours he has been neglectful, appear against him as evidence on the following morning. It has also been suggested that the Sergeant of Police on duty should be furnished with a key of such large establishments, and be authorised to visit the watchman every half-hour to ascertain whether he is on the alert; but here it should likewise be mentioned that the watchman was supposed to give warning every half-hour during the night, so that the policeman on duty in that particular neighborhood might himself be satisfied that strict watch was being kept on the premises. There is no doubt, however, that the tell-tale clock would be the most efficient check that could be introduced. We understand that the watchman at the Bell-tower has reported that the first he saw of the fire was a narrow-shaped flame, issuing from what he thought to be an attic window, at about five minutes past 4 o'clock; and he then ran down the steps and rang the bell. One of the police officers on duty at the time has reported that when at the corner of Prince street and Rattray street he saw indications of fire. He paused for a moment to satisfy himself that the reflection was really that of a fire, and then ran towards the Bell Tower. Immediately after ascending the Dowling street steps, he called out to the watchman at the tower. The latter asked about the precise locality of the fire, whereupon the constable said the glare which he had witnessed appeared to come from near the Gridiron Hotel. Immediately afterwards the bell rang. Captain Wain had 25 men under command, five less than usual; and we believe that this, the last fire, furnished further proof that the Brigade should be strengthened by at least ten more men. Members of the Brigade kept watch until last evening, when they were relieved by Messrs Guthrie and Larnach's own servants. While the fire was raging the Brigade had between 12,000ft. and 13,000ft. of hose in use, and as many as nine streams of water were fighting for victory with the flames that made many think when they left their beds, that a very great portion of Dunedin, and not merely a part of a block, was on fire. Fortunately, Dunedin has an efficient Brigade, who, on Saturday morning, were backed up by a good supply of water. As showing the intensity of the heat, it may be mentioned that several of the helmets of the firemen are reported to be literally shrivelled up.

The following were the insurances on buildings destroyed:—

MESSRS GUTHRIE AND LARNAOH.				
	Building.	Machinery.	Stock.	Total.
Victoria Company	...	£500	...	£2,000
South British	...	500	...	1,750
Australian Alliance	...	150	...	1,000
Standard	...	750	...	1,500
Norwich Union	...	250	...	2,000
National	...	500	...	2,000
New Zealand	...	1,500	...	3,000
Grand total	£13,750

MESSRS R. AND T. HAWORTH.				
Royal Insurance Company	...	...	...	£1,000
New Zealand	...	...	...	500

SPANISH RESTAURANT.				
New Zealand Insurance Company	...	...	...	£500

—'Guardian.'

LIP READING.—Lord Granville presided at the examination of the children who are being educated under the direction of the Association for the Oral Instruction of the deaf and dumb, at 12, Fitzroy square, London. Rabelais tells of a young Italian—one Nello de Gabriellis—who, though deaf, understood all that was said by merely watching the lips of the speakers. Nevertheless up to the present time the system of teaching the deaf and dumb to communicate by signs has usually obtained. In the last century, however, Anzman, a Swiss physician, then living in Holland, taught his pupils to watch closely with their eyes the changes which came over his face and lips when he uttered words, and then to imitate those changes before a mirror. Perfected in Holland and Germany, this system is now taught by Mr Van Praagh assisted by three ladies, at 12, Fitzroy square. There are now 36 children on the books. The children being called before Mr Van Praagh by their classes, the little ones repeated whatever he said, although they were, born and are absolutely deaf. "Give a picture," said the speaker, and a little boy ran and brought a painting of a farm yard. A higher class repeated and wrote down strings of figures like 26,000,003, and worked sums in "Bills of parcels." In answering questions some of them displayed remarkable intelligence. One described a visit to Wales with her sisters; another child, being asked for what Oxford and Cambridge were famous, replied with unconscious satire, "The boat race." The list of those present included Mr Jefferson Davis.