

EXPLOSION AND FIRE!

Total Destruction of L. M. Hubby's Residence in East Cleveland.

Several of the Family Shockingly Burned.

Miraculous Escape from Death.

The House a Mass of Ruins.

NONE OF ITS CONTENTS SAVED

Loss Fifty Thousand Dollars

A GAS EXPLOSION THE CAUSE.

Full Particulars of the Sad Affair.

One of the most dreadful and heart-rending calamities that has ever occurred in this city or vicinity, was visited upon L. M. Hubby, Esq., president of the Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati railroad company, and his family, on Saturday evening. His elegant new residence and all its contents were totally destroyed—not a vestige of anything remaining, save the bare and blackened ruins—by a terrific explosion of gas in the basement, and the conflagration, swift, sure and terrible, which immediately followed. Fearful as was the desolation, did it involve only a financial loss, it would be of small moment when compared with the actual results of the disaster—the mental anguish and acute bodily suffering entailed upon the members of that stricken household. Mr. Hubby, the honored head of the family, sustained very painful injuries by burning; his daughter, Miss Ella, a beautiful and accomplished young lady of twenty, chosen by the remorseless flames as their especial prey, was so badly burned that during that fearful night and the day following, her life seemed to "hang on the passing of a breath" and now lies in a critical condition, suffering the most excruciating agony; and Frank W. Hubby and his wife received injuries which, though severe, are fortunately not of a dangerous character. Few can realize the full weight of a blow so sudden and terrible—the utter desolation of a cherished home swept away and loved ones in the very grasp of death.

To Mr. Frank W. Hubby, one of the inmates of the house at the time of the calamity, we are indebted for most of the facts which enable us to lay before our readers a full and correct account of this most lamentable affair.

THE SCENE OF DISASTER.

The residence of Mr. Hubby was situated nearly half a mile from the city limits, in the township of East Cleveland, on the south side of the Euclid avenue road. It was of brick, two stories high, elaborate in architectural design, and was finished, both externally and internally, in the most elegant manner. It was sumptuously furnished throughout, and was in all respects one of the finest suburban residences of the city. It was nearly a year in course of construction, and being designed for a permanent home, no expense had been spared to render it a model of comfort and convenience. The grounds surrounding the house, spacious and delightfully situated, were being laid out and improved with the utmost care and taste. A stream of water courses through the grounds, and a small lake is formed by an artificial embankment. Every thing about the premises had been arranged with especial reference to the romantic and beautiful. Removed from the noise and bustle of the city full, our worthy and highly esteemed townsman was preparing a pleasant and quiet home, where he might pass the declining years of a busy and well spent life. The family formerly lived at No. 110 Lake street, and only removed to their new residence about the first of January last.

THE CAUSE OF THE CALAMITY.

This neighborhood has never hitherto been accessible to the city gas, the pipes not having been extended to that point. We may remark, however, that recently the pipes have been laid as far as the residence of Judge Bolton, the second west of Mr. Hubby, and his house was lighted with street gas for the first time on Saturday evening. It is not intended to lay the pipe further this fall on account of the weather, but early in the spring the gas company will extend it through East Cleveland. Mr. Hubby was making arrangements to have a surface pipe run from the end of the main pipe, to supply his house and that of his son-in-law, Colonel Doubleday, adjoining. In a very few days this would have been completed, and Mr. Hubby would have discarded forever the substitute, which has proved to have been like a mine of gunpowder beneath his quiet home. But the ways of Providence are inscrutable and after being used with safety for months, just as it was about to be thrown aside, it has become the fearful agent of destruction and perhaps of death.

The apparatus used by Mr. Hubby was Bierce's patent generator, the principle article used being gasoline. This is known to all as one of the most volatile, inflammable, and consequently dangerous substances in nature. When exposed to the air it evaporates with amazing rapidity, and its detonating power is said to exceed that of gunpowder, rivaling that of the famous nitro-glycerine which has become the terror of the world. The apparatus of the generator consists of a gasoline tank, air receiver and a pump operated by means of weights. The air is forced through pipes into the gasoline, by which it becomes so impregnated with the inflammable properties as to become gas. From the tank it is conducted through the house and is ready for use. These generators are in many houses in the suburbs of the city and notwithstanding the dangerous character of the material used, they have generally been deemed safe, with the exercise of proper precautions. An explosion of this gas occurred in East Cleveland several months ago although not of a disastrous nature, and the burning of the Continental hotel in Crestline, some time since, was from the same cause.

In the case of Mr. Hubby, as in most others, to insure the greatest possible degree of safety, the tank in which the gasoline was kept was placed outside of the building and several feet distant. It was covered with earth to a considerable depth and only connected with the house by the necessary pipes. The pump, air reservoir and other portions of the apparatus, were placed in the basement of the house, immediately beneath the drawing-room, at the east side and near the front. A defect had for some time existed in the apparatus, and leakages of gas had frequently caused no small degree of annoyance. This is said to have been the result of neglect to apply the proper tests to the pipes when the apparatus was put in. Repeated attempts had been made to repair the defect, but they were never successful, and the family hailed with gladness the approach of the street pipes, which would relieve them from all danger and trouble in future. This explanation is somewhat lengthy, but it is necessary to enable the reader to fully understand the cause of this direful disaster.

THE FATAL NIGHT.

On Saturday evening the gas was more troublesome than usual, the inmates of the house being scarcely able to obtain light at all from the burners. A barrel of gasoline was put into the tank on Friday last, a quantity which would last two or three months. A short time before the explosion Mr. Hubby, accompanied by his son, went into the basement with a candle to endeavor to ascertain the cause of the deficient supply. It may be remarked here that, as is not the case with ordinary gas, that manufactured from gasoline is heavier than air, and settles to the bottom of a room. Our informant states that upon the occasion of the first visit to the basement they did not stoop and thus bring the light in contact with the stratum of gas which at that time doubtless lay next the floor like a latent monster, needing only the touch of the light to cause it to burst forth

in all its deadly fury. A steam pipe extended from the heating apparatus of the house, in another part of the basement, to the generator, to be used in cold weather. Steam was applied to the pipes and this seemed to quicken the generator into an unwonted life, for upon ascending the stairway they found jets of flame shooting up from the burners to the height of three or four feet. It was only a spasmodic action, however, and the light soon became even duller than before. Then it was that the visit was made to the basement which resulted in such fearful disaster and ruin.

THE EXPLOSION.

At about a quarter past seven o'clock the elder Mr. Hubby went below with a lighted candle, to make another examination, not having a thought of the danger which impended. As he has not been able to converse since the accident his exact manner of procedure is not known. Undoubtedly he stooped to inspect the generator or pipes, and the contact of the light with the gas caused its instantaneous ignition and an explosion of the most terrific character, with a report like that of a hundred cannon.

THE IMMEDIATE EFFECTS.

The effects of the explosion were truly appalling. Portions of the heavy walls were blown outward and fell to the ground, and the entire building was shivered and rent as if with an earthquake, from roof to basement. Bricks were hurled through the air with terrific force, and were picked up two houses distant. Floors were upheaved, torn to fragments, and together with a chaotic mass of timbers, bricks and articles of furniture, fell down into the burning abyss. The windows, even in the chamber, were blown out, and the broken sash, shutters, fragments of furniture and pieces of wood torn from the inside of the building were scattered over the yard as far as the street. Doors were wrenched from their hinges and shivered to atoms, while one on the west side of the house was hurled to the edge of the stream, a distance of fifty feet. The terrific force of the explosion seems almost to defy comprehension, when it is considered that this mighty power was only an invisible, intangible agent. Many of the large foundation stones of the walls were forced from their places and broken in pieces, and the keystone of an arch over one of the doors, weighing two or three hundred pounds, was driven out, leaving the remainder of the arch standing, and thrown a distance of ten or fifteen feet. A mine of gunpowder could not more effectually have wrought the work of destruction.

The most terrible force of the explosion was spent upon the front portion of the house. The division of the basement corresponded with that of the rooms upon the first floor, and a mere mention of these will aid to a better understanding of the disaster. At the front of the house were the drawing-room on the east and the library on the west. Immediately in rear of these was a spacious hall, extending across the entire building from east to west, and beyond the hall the dining room, kitchen, sleeping apartments, etc. In the basement, as above, a door led from each of the front rooms into the hall. Previous to the explosion both these doors in the basement had stood open, thus permitting the deadly vapor to find its way into the hall and thence into the room under the library, adjoining the one in which was the generator. The door leading to the rear of the house was closed, thus confining the gas to the front part of the house.

THE CONFLAGRATION.

With the upheaval of the floors great sheets of fire swept through the doomed building with an angry roar, bursting in huge volumes from the doors and windows and the holes and fissures in the wall caused by the explosion. Almost in a moment the flames leaped to the roof and were rapidly making their way through the rear portion of the building. In less than half an hour the elegant edifice was wholly enveloped in flames. The mad billows of fire surged with the wildest fury against the blackening walls and rolled high into the air, telling for miles around their fearful tale of ruin and desolation. Huge masses of the shattered walls tumbled with a dull crash into the blazing vortex. By eight o'clock the work was completed. Only portions of the walls remained standing, grim monuments of the destruction which had been wrought, while within everything combustible had been devoured by the flames.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD AROUSED.

The noise of the explosion was heard a great distance and the adjoining houses were fairly shaken by the concussion. The alarm was instantaneous throughout the entire neighborhood, and from every direction people rushed to the scene of disaster. Efforts to check the ravages of the fire were utterly futile, and so rapidly did they spread through the house that it was even impossible to save its contents, the falling walls and roaring flames forbidding a near approach. Hence it was that scarcely a farthing's worth of property was rescued. All was lost—furniture, including two valuable pianos, clothing, plate, and household treasures upon which money could fix no value.

THE INJURED ONES.

The inmates of the house at the time of the disaster were Mr. Hubby, his wife and mother, his son Frank W. Hubby and wife, Miss Ella Hubby and three domestics. Mr. L. M. Hubby, who was in the basement, was terribly burned about the face, neck and hands. His clothing being of woolen, did not take fire, and protected other portions of the body. He was partly stunned by the explosion, and must have been entirely enveloped in flame. How he escaped seems little, less than a miracle, and the same may be said of those who occupied the library. By an effort which must have been almost involuntary, he made his way into the hall and thence up the stairway leading to the first floor, at the east side of the house, and out into the open air. This must have been but the work of a moment, as the suffering man was found immediately after the explosion, lying insensible, near the house of E. J. Estep, Esq., next east from the burning building. He was taken up and carefully removed to the house of Colonel Doubleday, his son-in-law.

In the library were the younger Mr. Hubby and his wife, and Miss Ella Hubby. The former was reclining upon a sofa and the two ladies sitting near, Mr. Hubby stating that the shock came with such appalling suddenness that he has not the least recollection of hearing the report of the explosion. The first intimation of the disaster was the bursting up of the floor, the rending of the carpet, and the flames rolling upward into the room. Mr. Hubby was thrown up, he thinks, nearly to the ceiling, and immediately fell to the floor of the basement, the first floor having been entirely carried away when he came down. A mass of bricks, timbers and debris fell about him, and how he escaped being buried or rendered insensible by blows from falling fragments, by either of which events he must inevitably have perished, can be nothing less than providential. He was utterly gazed by the shock, and has no remembrance of the manner of his escape from the basement. By some power almost superhuman he might have made his way through the flames into the hall and accomplished his exit at the same place as his father, and probably but an instant afterward.

The cool, fresh air revived him at once, and he found himself near the door, like one who awakes from a terrible dream, unable for a moment to comprehend the nature or extent of the disaster. His face was blackened and begrimed, his hair singed, his left hand badly burned, one or two fingers nearly crushed, and several abrasions and bruises upon the body, but with no dangerous injury from the fiery gauntlet through which he had passed. His ear caught the agonizing screams of the ladies who a moment before were his companions in the library. He made several attempts to reach them by the way of the hall. The flooring had been torn up and he endeavored to pass over the blazing joists, but the flames drove him back, and he passed around the house. He thinks that this could not have been more than a minute or two after the explosion, and yet he found the whole front of the house a mass of flames. He arrived just in time to see his wife taken from a window on the west side of the library by Mr. Estep. Her hair was in a blaze, but her clothing, which was of

heavy material, had not taken fire to any extent, and she was found not to have sustained dangerous injuries. Her right hand was badly burned, and she had received several painful bruises, but none of such a nature as to excite apprehension. She bore herself most heroically through the trying ordeal.

But saddest of all was the terrible fate of Miss Ella Hubby who was so shockingly burned that it is feared she cannot survive. Immediately after the rescue of Mrs. Frank W. Hubby, the unfortunate girl, fringed with terror and pain, leaped from the window, with her clothing all on fire from head to foot. She was received in the arms of Mr. Colley Bolton, who had at that moment arrived and rushed to the rescue. Several gentlemen immediately gathered around the agonized victim, and by means of overcoats the flames were speedily smothered. Tortured with excruciating pain, she was carried to the house of Col. Doubleday.

Physicians were immediately summoned, and everything possible was done for the relief of the sufferers. To Mr. L. M. Hubby and his daughter, those most severely injured, opiates were administered to allay their sensibility to pain. They took almost immediate effect upon Miss Hubby, and she passed the night much better than was expected. Upon her father the soothing potion seemed to have little effect, and he continued to suffer intensely. On Sunday he was more comfortable, and his condition was thought to be not dangerous. Miss Hubby, however, was pronounced in a very critical state, and great fears were entertained that death would complete the terrible work.

THE OTHER INMATES.

Mrs. L. M. Hubby was in her room, in the rear of the hall, at the time of the explosion, and escaped without injury. Her hands were quite badly burned while assisting in extinguishing the burning clothes of her daughter. At one time, thinking her husband was still in the basement, ignorant of his fate, she made an attempt to rush down into the flames to his assistance, and was only restrained by the strong arms of the bystanders. Although tortured with the keenest anguish for her loved ones she deported herself nobly.

The mother of Mr. Hubby, nearly eighty years of age, was in a room in the chamber toward the rear of the house. She attempted first to find egress by the front stairway, but was driven back by the flames and escaped by the rear, without injury. The servants, one male and two females, were in the kitchen, and were not injured.

THE FIRE DEPARTMENT.

Soon after the breaking out of the fire a messenger was dispatched to give the alarm, but through some singular misunderstanding in regard to the location or use of the alarm boxes he came into the city and reported the fire at ten minutes before eight, at Engine house No. 2, on Champlain street. The alarm was sounded from there, box 04 being given, at the corner of Case and Euclid avenues. Steamers 2 and 3 and Mazaepa hook and ladder company went out as soon as possible, but when they arrived it was too late to be of any service. They extinguished the smouldering ruins, after which they returned to the city.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

E. J. Estep, Esq., was at Mr. Hubby's not more than five minutes before the disaster. He had barely reached home when the explosion occurred. His own house, forty or fifty feet from the burning building narrowly escaped destruction. It was only saved with the assistance of the neighbors, by means of wet blankets. The side exposed to the fire was badly scorched and blistered.

ON SUNDAY.

During the whole of Sunday large numbers of people from all parts of the city visited the scene of disaster and viewed the still smoking ruins of the once elegant mansion. Many friends also called at Colonel Doubleday's, but the injured ones were not in a condition to see any except the nurses and physicians. The terrible calamity was alluded to by ministers of several of the city churches in their discourses.

SUMMONED HOME.

Frank W. Hubby is secretary and treasurer of the Powell Tool and Plaster company. The president of the company, Alfred Ely, left this city for New York state on Saturday. Mr. Hubby being unfit for business for a few days, a dispatch was sent to Mr. Ely informing him of the disaster and requesting his return, if possible.

CONDOLENCES.

Our citizens are sincere and profuse in their expressions of sympathy with this deeply afflicted family. All its members are widely known and universally esteemed. A feeling of sorrow pervaded the entire city when the nature of the disaster became known. On Saturday night exaggerated reports were in circulation, to the effect that several of the family were killed, but this is nothing unusual in such cases.

A LESSON OF THE HOUR.

This fearful calamity will cause the question to be asked by thousands of persons who are using the ordinary street gas: "Are we not liable at all times to a similar accident?" A few words in explanation of the difference between this gas or vapor rather, which is manufactured from petroleum, and the ordinary gas from the street will relieve much anxiety. Petroleum gas is much heavier than air, and hence will settle down to the floor of a room; while street gas is many degrees lighter than atmospheric air. In case of the escape of machine made gas, at Mr. Hubby's, it filled the whole cellar and hence the tremendous explosion when it came in contact with the light. On the other hand, if the escape had occurred from the service pipe of street gas, it being so much lighter than air, it would have risen up from the cellar through every crevice and permeated the whole upper part of the house, and thus given timely warning to the inmates. Every older member of a family should be familiar with the fact that attached to every meter is a key or stop cock, which, by a turn of the hand, will instantly cut off the flow of gas into the house, in case of an accident to the chandeliers or fixtures. This should be so arranged and understood by the inmates of a house that it can at once be turned off in the dark by any one.

At Mrs. Shaw's Millinery Rooms

they have a few more of those stylish hats; also new style winter bonnets.

Again in the Field-Perley

the well-known optician who from a neighboring door to us moved up to No. 11 Public Square, last spring, is in full trim for the holidays, having opera-glasses, spectacles, microscopes, stereoscopes, mathematical instruments, &c., enough for half the State. His present stock is probably the largest and finest of its kind ever opened in Cleveland, and those wanting a good glass or thermometer, proper article in the optical line should give Perley a call.

"Tis piteous, 'tis wondrous piteous!"

that so many people will use badly constructed and ill-looking stoves, that burn oceans of coal and have to be replaced each morning, when so admirable a fabric as the "Rivalling Economy" is so near as 60 Faneuil Square. Its beauty, lightness and heating power are beyond all praise. Then, too, it keeps fire from October till May without ever going out.

The Duty of every Father

to his family demands that he shall seek to remove from their midst the constant possibility of a terrible accident that jerks within every petroleum lamp. The time has come when this is easily done by substituting Danforth's Petroleum Field, a far cheaper article, more clear and brilliant in its light, without smell or gas, and perfectly safe from explosion. It sells at various places throughout the country, but the general headquarters is at north side Public Square, in Crittenden's building.

Blow your own bugle and your own bellows.

If you are a blacksmith you should blow your fire through a Baylis' hot blast and water therapy, which is the most compact, economical, cheap and time and labor saving appliance added to the blacksmith's facilities for the last hundred years. You will find it at No. 9 Winter street.

All the painting, papering and polishing

up for the holiday and party season will be attended to promptly and in the best manner by leaving your orders at Downie's.

Biot in Paris—The Emperor reported

Shot—which is so, but do not alter the fact that Somerville, with the original and never surpassed Howe Sewing Machine, is still at the old place with a full line of machines for Holiday Presents, it being conceded on all hands that the Howe, though the oldest of machines, is surpassed by none.