

NEW YORK'S PERIL.

What May Happen to the City Any Moment.

LESSONS OF RECENT FIRES.

\$750,000,000 Worth of Property In Danger.

OPINIONS OF EXPERTS

The Street Mains Unable To Carry a Sufficient Supply.

There can be no doubt in the minds of those who have watched the record of fires in this city during the past five years that certain localities in New York are in an unsafe condition should a great fire occur. Indeed, it is very clear to most people who have reflected on the subject that the city has every reason to congratulate itself on its fortunate escape from disastrous consequences from the late fire in Broadway.

It would not be possible without a large and unnecessary expenditure of time and money to ascertain precisely the value of the capital invested in this section, but experts have given estimates that are not in any sense exaggerated. The value of the buildings alone, it is thought, is fully \$500,000,000. Added to this enormous figure the stock of the different dry goods stores is estimated at \$225,000,000, and, it is said, that in various other lines of wholesale and retail business within this narrow compass the value of the stock in trade cannot be stated at any figure less than \$500,000,000.

So much for the value of the property and the insurance thereon. Now the great question arises, What would be the consequence of a great fire, such as that recently started on Broadway, if the weather was so cold at the time of its occurrence as partially to cripple the efforts of the firemen, or a gale such as passed over the city a week before happened to prevail? The answer may be easily imagined.

The water mains are believed to be wholly insufficient in their carrying capacity to supply the demands in such an emergency. The Herald map shows the different lines of water mains and the calibre of each. These conductors run from the 36-inch pipe down to a 10-inch one. The intermediate mains are the 24, 20 and 16-inch pipes. On the map the position of these pipes can readily be traced, and an estimate made of the force and quantity of water that could be relied upon for extinguishing or checking a great fire.

With a water front of nearly twenty miles in extent there need be no further efforts made to bring fresh water in for fire purposes. The plan proposed by the Board of Health a few years ago, to erect stationary pumps, with independent mains and hose hydrants, would place in the possession of the Fire Department an inexhaustible supply of the necessary element.

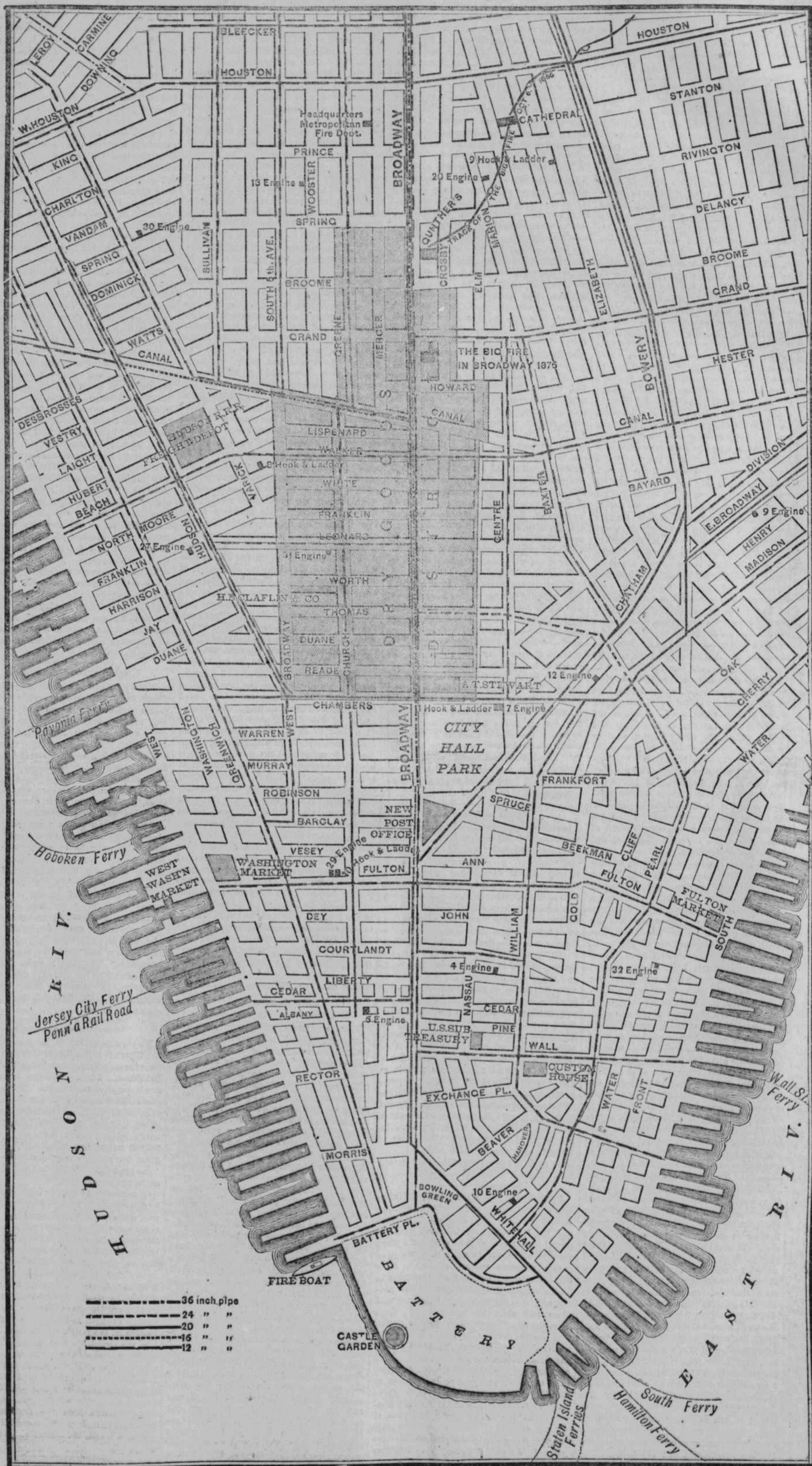
With the view of ascertaining the opinions of experts in relation to our water supply and to the capacity of our aqueducts, mains and hydrants in the case of a fire as large as that which occurred on Tuesday evening last, a Herald reporter made inquiry yesterday at the offices of leading fire insurance companies. The gentlemen whose statements immediately follows is the president of one of the oldest and soundest fire insurance companies in the United States.

Upon being approached he opened a book and read:—"It is of vital importance to the city that additional mains be laid at the earliest practicable day. For many years past the department has kept a gauge of the daily quantity of water flowing over the Croton dam, in addition to that which is conveyed to the city by the aqueduct, and during the past ten years an average daily quantity of 340,000,000 gallons has run to waste over the dam in addition to the quantity that was brought to the city."

He then went on to say:—"Mr. Edward H. Tracy, then Chief Engineer of the Department of Public Works, made this statement in his annual report for the year 1872. It was the advice of a practical engineer well schooled in his profession and who had thoroughly investigated the situation. Though more than two years have elapsed, yet no regard whatever has been paid to this advice. As will be seen from the sequel, it is the opinion of every one at all familiar with the subject that the water supply of New York city is wholly inadequate to the demands of our rapidly increasing population, a very large proportion of which resides in those sections of the city, and at the same time under those peculiar conditions, where fires are most likely to occur and be followed by the most disastrous consequences. Those who build fast, as a rule, build poorly, and the majority of our tenements have been constructed with the view of affording the meagrest possible shelter at the highest possible price; hence it is about these tenements that we find the greatest number of human beings huddled together, with the poorest facilities for escape in case of fire. It was in consideration of this circum-

OUR WATER SUPPLY.

Map Showing the Location and Actual Carrying Capacity of the Croton Mains Below Bleecker Street—Startling Facts.



stance that Chief Engineer Tracy was led to urge the importance to the city of additional mains being laid. He also, in the same report, stated that, to construct a new aqueduct to carry twice the quantity of the present one, would require no more right of way than the present one, and not more than twice the quantity of masonry in construction, and it is highly probable that a better line can be found to construct it upon than one near the location of the present aqueduct. This sound advice from a practical engineer was also unheeded. The late fire in Broadway, near Grand street, which within the brief period of four hours swept out of existence \$4,000,000 worth of property and brought with it disaster, ruin and death, taken in connection with the fact that the water in the Croton Reservoir is several inches lower now than it was a little time ago, shows the terrible calamity which might have happened to this city on Tuesday night had the fire not been put

Chief Shea states that in June last Chief Engineer Bates laid before the Commissioners a lengthy communication relative to seeking a better supply of water.

REPORTER—What were your main objections? Chief Shea—We contended, and do yet, that the mains are not of a sufficient size, and of the small number of hydrants. The style and size of buildings are constantly undergoing changes, and have been, to a very great extent, for the past ten years. The improvement in the supply of water has, however, fallen far behind the times. At present the pressure on hydrants ranges from six to twenty pounds, most of the hydrants being attached to mains of six inches in diameter, which is entirely too small to supply large engines.

REPORTER—Where are located the objectionable points of the city? Chief Shea—There are many I might allude to, Take New Church street, from Morris to Liberty; West Broadway, from Chambers to Canal, and the section of the city bounded by Canal, South Fifth avenue, Houston and Crosby, the supply in the latter vicinity has not been increased since the change from small buildings. I can assure you there is not a sufficient supply of water for even the old-fashioned buildings. The fact is the whole portion of the city south of Fourteenth street should receive immediate attention. Mercer street has only a six inch pipe, which is second to none when we consider the large sized buildings.

On Broadway there is a thirty-six inch main pipe used to supply the lower portion of the city and is connected at Houston, Grand, Canal and Pearl streets with side mains. Now the department has no hydrants connected with this main; we should be allowed at once to tap this main on every block by hydrants, to be used only in case of large fires. There is another extensive main on Mott street (forty-eight inches), which we should also have the right to tap.

REPORTER—What is your opinion of corner cisterns? Chief Shea—I am satisfied that they would be a good thing. The large mains I speak of could be tapped at street corners and have cisterns built with an opening into the main. By this means two or three engines could be concentrated on each corner and still procure a good supply of water. It would certainly be a great help at large fires. Then in cold weather, after shutting down the engines, the water could be drawn out of the cisterns only to be opened and filled again in case of fire.

REPORTER—How is the supply of water on Nassau street? Chief Shea—Nassau street and Park row are in a very exposed condition, especially on the latter street. The broad opening at the Post Office admits, in case of a heavy wind prevailing, for a fire to make a clean sweep. Broad street is another important point for consideration.

OPINION OF THE FIRE COMMISSIONERS. These gentlemen seem to have but little actual knowledge as to the real condition of the water supply, with the exception of President Perley. Mr. Hatch states that he knows there is not a sufficient force of water in the lower portion of the city, but has no practical experience of the fact, only so far as he has gained from the Chief Engineer. Commissioner King states that, having been for many years out of the department, he was not so well posted as in former years; but from such information as he had gleaned since he has been Commissioner he is satisfied that, unless prompt steps are taken to place throughout the city large-sized mains, the Fire Department, with ten times its number, could not be held responsible for an extensive conflagration. President Perley says that it has long been a constant subject of study with him. He has oftentimes wondered that New York has not met with heavier losses owing to the want of water. The dry goods district has been one of marked attention by the department, and he caused Chief Engineer Bates to make a more thorough inspection of all the localities in the city where large buildings are erected and inflammable material stored. Some steps must be taken, he said, to give the department the entire control of the water supply in the lower portion of the city at fires. Unless this is done there is no knowing what may follow.

RETIRING FIREMEN. There is no more benevolent bill now pending before the State Legislature than that of retiring without and disabled firemen. It is a well-known fact that there are many "old veterans" in the present department who, before the paid system came into existence, had done noble service, while at the same time there are many who are now in the present department likewise entitled to every consideration; but it appears among the members there is a great deal of dissatisfaction expressed in the revision of the bill, which gives the Commissioners unlimited power. The bill provides that the Board of Fire Commissioners can retire such men as they consider unfit for duty on half pay. But at any future time they can at their own judgment cut them off from the retired list. Thus the firemen claim that they may be retired on a pension, and in a few months after the Commissioners can remove them if they feel disposed. When the present department was first organized it was composed principally of men who had served their time out in the old Volunteer Department—viz., five years, while many had served ten and fifteen years. This present paid system has been in existence nearly eleven years. Adding this and their previous services in the old department goes to show that these men have been faithful servants to the public, and it, in the wise judgment of the Commissioners, they should be retired, they should be entitled to a pension for life, and that no Board of Fire Commissioners, in the present or the future, should be vested with the power to remove them at their pleasure. Many of the leading members of the department contemplate holding a meeting with a view to urging the passage of the Retiring bill, but to oppose the dismissal of men after having been retired.

FUNERAL OF ASSISTANT BUSH. Another one of the unfortunate victims of the Broadway fire was carried to his last resting place yesterday, from his residence, No. 25 Christopher street. Notwithstanding the unpleasant state of the weather there was a large gathering of friends. The funeral services were held on Sunday afternoon, owing to the fact that the remains were to be conveyed to Paramus, N. J., for interment. It was intended that the funeral cortege should start at ten o'clock A. M., but the heavy storm somewhat disarranged the programme, and it was after eleven before the remains were conveyed from the house. A detailed force of police from the Ninth precinct headed the solemn procession, followed by two companies from the Fire Department; then followed the hearse, with the remains of the deceased surrounded by eight pall-bearers, all of whom were assistant firemen in the service of the city. Next came the members of Engine Company No. 30, of which the deceased was assistant foreman; the relatives and friends following in carriages. The procession proceeded through Fourth street to Broadway, down Broadway to Chambers street to the ferry. All the firemen, with the exception of the members of No. 30 Engine, were here dismissed, the latter escorting the remains to Paramus, N. J., where the remains were taken to the old Dutch church. A brief service was held and the body then laid at rest in the family burying ground.

A FATAL ACCIDENT. A fatal accident occurred at nine o'clock yesterday morning in the engine room of the establishment of Harper Brothers, publishers, Franklin square, by which Matthew Fagan, a fireman, lost his life. It appears that the deceased attempted to oil the machinery below the large crank, and for that purpose had to stoop very low. While thus engaged he raised his head, when the crank struck it with full force, fracturing the skull and killing him almost instantly. No person was in the engine room at the time, out a few moments after the accident occurred the engineer entered and saw his fellow workman lying dead; his head frightfully disfigured. Information of the occurrence was sent to the Coroners' office, and after viewing the body Coroner Eickhoff gave an order for its removal to his late residence. The deceased was forty-two years of age, was married, and resided at No. 240 East Fourteenth st.

THE CENTENNIAL REGATTA. WHAT ARE OUR PROFESSIONAL OARSMEN DOING?—WILL THERE BE A WARD CREW FOR '76? NEW YORK, Feb. 14, 1876. TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD:—The signs of the times all point to great activity and excitement in boating circles during this centennial year, and to the lovers of this healthful pastime a rich treat is doubtless in store in the shape of the contests that will take place on Saratoga Lake and upon the Schuylkill. So far as I am informed, careful preparation is being made by our college boys and amateurs to worthily meet any crews that may come from abroad, but what are our professional oarsmen doing to get ready to meet the men who will be coming from the Tyne and the Thames to endeavor to outdo the veterans of 1872, when the Ward brothers walked away with the laurels? And this leads me to ask the Ward brothers and what they are doing to seal the verdict pronounced upon them by all the world? Where is Josh? Is he asleep or mending his wits by our college boys and amateurs? Is another good one—what is he doing? And what is Alvin, the Joseph of the flock, doing? As for Hank, the Old Man of the Sea, if too old to do duty himself, surely he must have a son or a grandson period able to take his place. This wonderful family must have a crew left—and it could not help being a good one—among so many brothers, and why are they here to work? Have they forgotten, can they ever forget, the proud moment of their lives when, in 1873, on Saratoga Lake, they crossed the line and undid the neck of the champions of the world? AMATEUR.