AN EARLY FIRE.

MANY LIVES ENDANGERED BUT ALL WERE RESCUED.

The North Part of Porter's Block on Winooski Avenue Gutted—The Work of Rescuing—Estimated Loss—Tenants Lose Everything.

Fire gutted a portion of the north half of the Porter block at the corner of Pearl street and Winooski avenue early the morning of the 15th and several women tenants narrowly escaped with their lives, one being taken down a ladder from a third-story window. The fire was discovered about 6.15 o'clock and an alarm from box 25 was sounded soon after.

J. W. O'Sullivan, who lives just across the street, E. N. Porter, who owns the block, and Chief Engineer Murray were among the first to arrive and arouse the people in the building, which was filled with smoke. On the second floor Chief Murray pushed in the door at the right of the hallway and there found Mrs. H. K. Wellman, an aged lady, and daughter, Helen M. Wellman, trying to dress themselves. Mrs. Wellman was stupified, but was able to walk.

She did not want to leave the room but Chief Murray took her in his arms into Mr. O'Sullivan's residence, the daughter following. Mr. O'Sullivan awoke Leiror and Clara Johnson, who occupied rooms across the hall way from Mrs. Wellman's, and although partially suffocated, they made their way out of the building in their night clothes with his assistance. In the meantime other firemen had assisted the other tenants, Mrs. Church and son and the Gallagher sisters, all in their night robes, to Mr. O'Sullivan's house. Smoke gathered in the south half of the block and forced those living there to seek the shelter of neighbors. It was so dense in the hallways as to make it precarious to descend by the stairway and a ladder was hoisted to the window on the south end, Mrs. Cormier being helped from the building this way, while two medical students, and Misses Florence Allen and Katie Page were assisted down the stairway by firemen. They were only partially dressed.

Meanwhile the Ethans, Stars, Boxers, Barnes and Hooks were at the scene, and seven streams of water were soon being thrown on the fire, which had made considerable progress, the flames rising from the roof. In a short time it was under control, however, though it was extinguished with great difficulty. The partitions were constructed of planed boards covered with wall paper, and the blaze made its way from one room to another very quickly. By persistent effort, however, and a liberal use of axes and water, the last spark near the chimney in the roof was put out at 9 o'clock.

As is often the case, about twice as much damage was done by water as by fire. At 8 o'clock, when four of the streams were suspended, water stood in some of the rooms to the depth of six inches on the second, and three inches on the third floors, and the stairway was transformed into a small brook.

Some say the fire originated from a coal stove in the back room of J. M. Storrs' meat market, while others contend that it caught from a defective flue. It is probable that the former view of it is correct. The work of destruction was the most complete around the chimney, the fire spreading as it progressed upward.

On the first floor the fire was confined to the back room of Storrs' meat market. The east half of the second and the whole of the third stories of the north half of the block, were badly damaged. A portion of the roof fell in. The upper story and roof of the building adjoining, owned by Seth Carey, were slightly damaged. The stores in the block were more or less flooded. M. L. Sanborn's grocery and M. J. Hewitt's meat market, which join Storrs' market on either side, all of which were directly under the fire, receiving the greater part of the water. Water also made its way to E. N. Porter's rooms on the second floor and M. H. Cormier's on the third floor, in the south end of the block, doing more or less damage.

THE INSURANCE.

The agency of T. S. Peck had the following insurance on the block: On building, $2000; on Mr. Porter's household furniture, $600; on Mr. Michael F. Cormier's household furniture, $700; on stock and fixtures of George Loveland & Co., $750.

The agency of Hickok & Bailey had insurances as follows: On building, $1000; M. L. Sanborn, $2000; Seth Carey, $800; George Lovsland & Co., $750; J. M. Storrs, $200.

ESTIMATED LOSSES.

The loss on the building is estimated at about $3000. The damage to Mr. Porter's furniture will not exceed $500, that of Mr. Cormier's $4.0 and that of Loveland & Co. $300. The damage on the three latter is by smoke and water, as well as removal.

The fire had undoubtedly been smoldering for some time.

THE HOMELESS LADIES INTERVIEWED.

A FREE PRESS representative interviewed the lady occupants of the block and their statements are appended. Mrs. Wellman and daughter and the Misses Johnson were seen at Mr. L. F. Wilbur's, where, by the courtesy of Mrs. Wilbur, they will remain until suitable quarters can be secured. Mrs. Wellman said that she was partly suffocated; she and her daughter had been up 15 minutes; her daughter was afraid she would take cold and was trying to get some clothes on her before going out doors. They got some of their clothing after the fire and a portion of it can probably be made of some use. Their piano was not burned and as it was covered with rubber cloth they hoped it was not ruined. There was no insurance on any of their goods.

Mrs. Church, who occupied rooms on the third floor, was the first to discover the fire. She arose, awoke many of the others in the building, forgetting to call her own son, who is about 10 years of age, but happily he heard her rappling on the doors below and got up. She lost everything except her gold watch which was found and returned to her by a fireman. No insurance.

The Misses Johnson occupied rooms on the second flor over Mr. Storrs' meat market, where the fire probably originated. They were nearly suffocated when they awoke; they were driven out in their night clothes, going to Mr. Porter's, where they got a few clothes, then to Mr. O'Sullivan's and afterward to Mrs. Wilbur's. Their clothes were not burned, but were badly water-soaked. They had their goods insured, but failed to have the policy altered when they last moved. Miss Clara saved what money they had in the house.

Mary and Susan Gallagher, dressmakers, who occupied rooms on the third floor, lost all their clothing and most all of their furniture. During the progress of the fire some one piled the bed clothing on top of the sewing machine and that was not burned. They recovered one five and four one dollar bills which were in a mug on the bureau, and a purse with some change in it. The thrilling experience made none of them sick. A number of people offered the homeless ladies assistance during the day, among them being Mr. H. N. Coon, who tendered the use of his leased dwelling on Bank street.

It is reported that one of the medical students rooming in the south half of the block, thought he would pick up his things and put them in his trunk before leaving the building. When he opened his trunk after the smoke had died away he found his boots and shoes there.

FARMERS' AT BRATTLEBORO.

Developments in Butter Making.—Winter Care of Stock.

The State Board of Agriculture held a very successful two-day farmers' institute at Brattleboro on Thursday and Friday, February 9 and 10, at which an extended programme was carried out. Gov. Fuller, Col. G. W. Hooker, Mr. C. D. Whitman of the Maple Sugar exchange were among the speakers. On Thursday afternoon, Messrs. H. W. Vail and J. O. Sanford of the board spoke on "Modern developments in butter making," and "Winter care of stock" respectively, and their remarks were discussed as follows:

Mrs. A. A. C. Ware.—Mr. Vail's remarks on the modern developments in butter making have called back to me the old wasp, the dash churn, the crank churn, the use of the finger as a thermometer and the many means whereby we were apt to spoil both butter and temper. I think that we used to overwork our butters in those days, and I know we girls were overworked, and one of the great modern developments in this line in my opinion is that the dairy work has largely passed from the woman to the man, and often to the creamery or cheese factory. The course in methods of milk handling seems to be upwards. The shallow and deep settings now have to compete with the seperator. I hope that something yet may be invented to handle milk as thoroughly and more easily than the seperator, for it is quite a task to run one either by man or animal power, but I am convinced that the seperator system is the system of the future. One of the modern developments in this line is towards making a more uniform product. Different makes make differing grades, whereas plenty of one good grade is better. I want to ask Mr. Vail whether frosted ensilage affects the quality of butter; I think myself it does.

Mr. Vail—I believe that it is liable to hurt the milk. In fact over-feeding of frosted or bad ensilage or clover, of musty corn fodder affects the product. So do odors around the barn in general, and I think that the ill effects sometime charged against ensilage are due to the absorption of its odor by the milk after it is drawn from the cow.

Mr. Ware—How long can milk stay in the stable after milking before it becomes affected by odors?

Mr. Vail—It absorbs more quickly as it grows cooler. You can't get it away from the barn any too soon.

Mr. Stafford—Can we dispense with such grain foods as bran, which we can't raise but have to buy, if we use roots or ensilage?

Mr. Vail—No sir. Bran contains proteine, which roots and ensilage largely lack. A balanced ration must contain both proteine, the flesh forming, and carbohydrates, the heat forming constituents. To get rid of buying so largely, grow more clover and cure it well, cut hay early and feed neither too rich or too poor a ration.

Question—How do you cure your clover hay?

I cut it and let it heat in the cock for a day; it seems to soften it and it may be gotten in greener. I don't dry mine as much as I used to do and believe I got a better food in consequence.

Mr. Wheeler—Why do cattle eat boards?

Mr. Vail—They want phosphate, their food lacks it. Feed them bran, bone meal or wood ashes and they will not have the craving for a board diet.

Mr. Gardner—I think that cottonseed meal will also supply this want.

What's the value of white top grass?

Mr. Vail—It is pretty poor stuff whether cut early or late.

Mr. Wheeler—There are three kinds of white top growing in Windham county, one is like early June grass, one has a head like the sprawling oat grass and a third a head like orchard grass. Early cut some of them are food, but late cut all are very poor.

Mr. Vail—We call some of these grasses poverty grass, and I verily believe that a cow would get as much actual nutriment out of hemlock sawdust as from these grasses.

The singing of the Protective Grange choir, of Miss Goodenough and Mrs. Sprague of Brattleboro and Mr. Miller of Dummerston, added greatly to the interests of the meeting, which in many respects were the best held by the board this year.

"Diseases of Potatoes" Discussed by Prof. Jones at the Shoreham Meeting.

The State Board of Agriculture held a two days' institute at Shoreham in Addison county the latter part of last week. Among the speakers was Prof. L. R. Jones of the University of Vermont, who lectured on diseases of potatoes, illustrating his remarks by the use of the stereopticon.

He said that there were three important potato diseases in Vermont, the true blight, the scab and a new disease which might be called the early blight.

The first two are caused by fungus growths, the third seems to be due to the work of both fungi and bacteria. For the first two we possess more or less practical remedies, and investigations looking toward the checking of the latter are already under way and will form the main line of botanical research at the Experiment station during the coming summer.

During the past three years the spraying of a fungicide upon the potatoes to check the true or later blight has increased the crops in round numbers 80, 75 and 200 bushels per acre, worth from $25 to $150 per acre. The cost of spraying an acre varies from 75 cents to $3 for materials and 50 cents for labor. In the work at the Experiment Station during the past summer three sprayings were made, July 30, August 13 and 25, the field being divided into 16 plots, some of which received no treatment whatever, the others receiving various treatments.

At this point the speaker showed lantern slides illustrative of these plots. Perhaps as striking as any were of two adjoining plots, one untreated, the other well sprayed, taken in the middle of September, the one with every vine dead, the other a mass of living green, the first yielding about 100, the latter 300 bushels of marketable tubers per acre.

One source of loss usually underestimated is the shortened crop from the early killing of the tops. It is safe to say that from a quarter to a third of the potato crop in weight of tubers grows after August 20, and often after September 1. This is illustrated well by a couple of last summer's plots above instanced. The unsprayed plots yielded at the rate of 100 bushels of sound marketable tubers per acre and 20 bushels rotting tubers of marketable size, while the sprayed plot yielded at the rate of 300 bushels per acre sound tubers and only two bushels rotten tubers. The gain then from prolonging the life of the vine was almost ten times that from checking the rot, a gain made entirely after August 1 and mostly after August 15.

There were several fungicides treated at the experiment station last summer and the old standby, Bordeaux mixture, made of six pounds of copper sulphate (sometimes called blue vitrol or blue stone) four pounds fresh lime and from 20 to 45 gallons of water proved most efficient. It is best applied in a spray in order to thoroughly cover the leaves, and best before the disease appears, say about July 30, followed by one or two more applications at intervals of a fortnight. The spraying may be done in a small and imperfect way by use of a pail and broom, or by a watering pot, but better by a force pump on a barrel with hose and nozzle. The knapsack sprayer does good work but consumes man power.

The scab is caused by a fungus growth upon the tuber. It appears as a peculiar delicate grayish mould, especially prominent about the edges of the younger spots. Investigations shows that scabby seed produces a scabby crop; that clean, disease—free tubers will raise a clean crop, provided soil and manure are free from the disease; that smooth potatoes from a scabby lot are unsafe as they are liable to have scab germs clinging to them; that the disease lingers in the ground year after year; that scabby potatoes fed stock made scabby manure, carrying disease to the soil it is used upon; that beets, turnips, etc., will catch the disease; and that if scabby potatoes are soaked in a weak solution of corrosive sublimate the germs are killed and the potatoes safe to use for seed on undiseased ground and with undiseased manure.

The State Board of Agriculture held institutes last week at Addison and Shoreham in Addison county. The Addison meeting closed Wednesday evening, was well attended and much interest was shown. Wednesday morning Mr. Arms of the Board spoke on "Sheep husbandry" saying that he was a believer in mixed farming for most of our farmers, depending on market, location, individual qualifications, the thousand and one things that go to make up the problem. There is no class of workers which needs versatility of talent, ingenuity and skill that the farmer does. He should be chemist, botanist, lawyer, manufacturer and should be endowed with the best of common sense and a good wife to be successful. I believe in a moderate sized dairy, a little "horse dairy," and a few sheep can be kept also to good advantage. They take less work and care, less every day wear and tear than any other farm property. Profits are not as large as they have been or ought to be, yet they generally pay, particularly if they be mutton sheep. With ordinary luck and management a man may approximate 50 per cent profit from a small flock. Compare this with the tens of thousands of cows kept at a loss in this State.

If the far West could raise clothing wool sheep, I would not stand here to advocate the breeding of such sheep, but it cannot. They deteriorate, the wool becomes harsh and the animal less valuable and a great field is open for Vermonters to raise rams to sell West and elsewhere for breeding purposes. This is a fast developing industry and our grand children will not be able to supply the demand. The crossing of mutton sheep upon merinos produces an excellent animal in a short time. Sheep improve the pastures decidedly and, if not too many are put in, do not interfere with the cows.

I have in years past made Cotswolds my pets. I had the largest flock in New England and as many flocks of sheep. They have no herding qualities. I imported 80 Cotswolds in 1870 and took them to New Mexico to cross on the Spanish merinos of that country. They produce at most about three pounds of wool apiece yearly. My first clip was 7000 pounds from 4000 sheep, an enormous yield for that country. My first clip after crossing on the Cotswolds was over seven pounds a head. Such a cross makes a fine flock of middle sheep. Sheep help our pastures and our purses and the profitable early lambs our palates and our purses. Do not keep your sheep too long for they are not good for fattening when they get too old. Pasture your sheep in your mowings in the fall, both will be the better for it. Grain them well. A bushel of grain fed in the fall is worth two fed in the winter to fatten lambs, but start in gradually. I grain my sheep every day they are in the barn; have tried to go without with ill success. Would you raise twins? As for raising twins I think one good lamb is better than two poor ones.

MEETINGS AT POULTNEY AND BRANDON.

Prof. Jones is to talk on this subject at Brandon and Poultney this week and the FREE PRESS will report in a future issue the portion of the lecture which has to do with the new disease and methods of combatting it.

DEATH BY MISFORTUNE.

Such is the Coroner's Verdict on the Asylum Tragedy.

DOVER, N. H., Feb. 17.—The coroners' jury in the county asylum inquest, submitted their verdict to the clerk of court here to-day. They find that the evidence leads to the conclusion that the fire was started by Mrs. LaFountaine, who in some way obtained a match and ignited her bed or chair cushion.

It also appears from the testimony that the commissioner has been handicapped by the limited sum of money allowed for annual repairs. The statutes allow the sum of $1000 on all county buildings, in excess of the appropriation. They have spent more than a fair proportion of this on the asylum and have done all in their power to protect and care for this class of unfortunates.

Whatever may have been the immediate cause of the fire, it appears that every one connected with the institution, did all within his or her power to extinguish the flames and save the inmates, and they find, as the next, or proximate, cause, a condition of things not in keeping with an enlightened age or in harmony with our duties to the poor unfortunates who are our voluntary wards.

A mistaken judgment erects our alms houses remote from the centres of population; false economy crowds our helpless insane into wooden structures which almost invite the devouring element, but the black bordered page of our county's history, written on February 9, by lurid flames as they wrapped these two score victims in their fiendish embrace, is an indictment against our people, to which there is no answer. So the jury finds that the victims came to their death by misfortune.