

# THE WIRES ARE WORKING

TELEGRAPH SERVICE BEING PUT INTO SHAPE.

THE WESTERN UNION BUILDING IN THE HANDS OF REPAIRERS—BUSINESS TRANSACTED AT BRANCH OFFICES.

Every floor of the Western Union Telegraph Company's building, at Broadway and Dey Street, was guarded yesterday by a sentinel, who forbade all sightseers to enter the scene of the destructive fire of Friday morning. This precaution was rendered necessary by the danger of the upper stories and by the crowds of workmen, who were busy remedying the damage done by the conflagration. This work of renewal has been continued ever since the fire was put out, and the officers of the company said that it should not cease until all the appurtenances of the business had been restored.

A temporary resting office has been constructed on the fourth floor, and the cables are being run into it with all the speed possible. Several of these were in place yesterday afternoon, and Press Agent Somerville, as well as the Superintendent of the work, were of the opinion that some work could be done from the damaged building last night. Three rooms on this same floor were being fitted up for the use of the Associated Press, and Mr. William Henry Smith, who was present trying to recover some of his lost treasures, said that he thought that he could do the work of the Associated Press in that space, although it was somewhat cramped. He would have to make the best of it, however, as it was all the room that could be afforded in the building for the present.

Mr. Smith had been up on the eighth floor rummaging in the rubbish for the records of the Associated Press, as well as for his own documents. He found a few charred remains that were partially decipherable, and he brought these down in his arms, handling them as though they were priceless.

The debris of the fire is being removed as rapidly as possible. The ceilings and floors throughout the building are still damp from the drenching they received, but the pools of water have been swept away, and much of the rubbish has been thrown out by means of chutes. The sixth, or battery, floor is the worst-looking place in the entire structure: the cables and wires being massed and tangled in great black heaps. A large force of men were busily engaged all day yesterday in removing these wires and in tearing away the charred partitions. On the floor above, that occupied as the old operating room, nobody was allowed to enter on account of the danger from the large pieces of plastering that continually fell from the ceiling. The eighth and ninth stories were also undergoing the process of renovation, and were being put into order as far as possible.

As Mr. Somerville went through the building with a TIMES reporter he sounded the walls and the flooring and remarked that it was strange that so great a fire could have occurred in what still seemed to be a fire-proof structure. In the repairing of the upper floors it was said that better provisions for escape from fire would be furnished than those that had existed.

In a late bulletin sent out by the Western Union it was stated that the Stock Exchange and financial tickers were all right, and that all the other ticker service, including the Cotton, Coffee and Petroleum Exchanges, would be all right by to-morrow evening. This bulletin also stated that from William's Bridge, N. Y., service would be given to all the way stations of the New-York, New-Haven and Hartford Railroad, and also of the Harlem Road; to the Vermont stations, Springfield, Boston, Worcester, and East; Albany, Buffalo, Chicago, and West. From the West Shore station, Weehawken, matter will be distributed to Albany, Buffalo, Chicago, and West; United Press circuit and all way stations on the West Shore; Ontario and Western and Delaware and Western Roads.

The entire fifth floor of the building at 195 Broadway has been cleared out and is being fitted up for a temporary operating room. Owing to the corridor and the partitions there is not nearly as much room here as there was in the original operating room on the seventh floor, but the management expressed the opinion that it would serve the purpose for the present. Mr. Somerville expected to be able to send out the newspaper specials from this room last night. He also thought that by Monday all the news matter could be sent from the building.

The work of reparation was greatly retarded by the water, which completely soaked the building from the roof to the basement. Another drawback was found in the absence of lights at night. All the gas and electric light fixtures were destroyed and lamps had to be substituted.

The plan of distributing the business, which was adopted Friday, has been retained as the most efficacious possible. It was found to work very well, and the forces at the different stations have been increased as additional wires have been run in. There were about fifty operators at 415 Broadway, where direct wires had been fixed to Albany, Buffalo, Chicago, Boston, Rochester, Bridgeport, Hartford, and all points along the Hudson. Philadelphia was reached from the same office by way of Buffalo, that method being quicker than the plan of sending messenger boys to Jersey City. The messenger system was used for New-Jersey and Long Island, however, the messages for each being sent respectively to Jersey City and Brooklyn. Mr. W. H. Jones, who is in charge at 415 Broadway, said the Wheatstone system was being put in there and that it would be working to Chicago by Monday. Dynamos and the multiplex system were also being put into place.

At the offices at Twenty-third Street and Broadway there were forty-five operators at work, and everything was reported to be running smoothly. At 16 Broad Street the cable matter is still being handled, and this office is also a distributing centre. Twenty-five operators were at work there. The whole system of distribution as published yesterday has undergone no change except in enlargement, and it will probably be subjected to none until work is resumed at 195 Broadway.

The Associated Press still has its headquarters in Jersey City, where it is working smoothly although cramped for room. It will remain there until its quarters in the main building are ready for occupancy.

Among the greatest sufferers from the fire was the ship news office of the Associated Press, which remained entirely cut off from the outside world yesterday as far as wires went. News from Quarantine was received at regular intervals, but it came by the Staten Island boats. This included dispatches over the wire between Sandy Hook and Quarantine.

## STORIES OF THE OPERATORS.

THEY SAY THAT "OLD MAN KAY" CAUSED THE FIRE.

Telegraph operators as a rule are a happy-go-lucky, fun-loving lot. They work pretty hard, but amusing incidents are constantly arising in their business. They are to be excused, therefore, if—as many of them do—they should regard the fire in the main office as one huge joke. It is safe to say that not one of them has talked about anything else for the last thirty-six hours. They have discussed everything that occurred. They have told of their experiences and of the experiences of their friends. The thirty-five men who were at work at the time of the fire have naturally been surrounded ever since by a sort of halo of interest. They have repeated over and over again what they saw, what they did, how they felt, and how they got out.

Some of the stories are true; a good many of them were born in the imaginations of the tellers. There is a widespread disposition to blame "Old Man Kay" for the catastrophe. "Old Man Kay" does not exist. He is a myth. But no operator ever entered the office without being told within a few hours of the old man's tricks. His spirit is supposed to inhabit the little rooms just under the roof. Whatever has occurred in the office "Old Man Kay" has been reported as having some sort of connection with it. It is said that he became disgusted at the actions of the time ball. It has been dropping a second or two late recently. So, from motives of revenge, the old man set fire to the building.

One of the best-known operators in the building is George Erwin. He is widely known as the "Bounding Antelope of the Arizona Desert." It is related of him that when the fire broke out he seized a hand grenade and ran frantically about hunting for something with which to draw the cork.

"Roxy" Phillips saved his pipe. Mr. Phillips is one of the oldest men on the all-night force, and he has always smoked the same pipe. He has smoked it ever since he was a policeman, before he became a telegraph operator, and everybody over there is well acquainted with it. All-night Chief Tobin keeps a time sheet on which he records the time the all-night men appear in the office. It is said that, when 1 o'clock approached, Mr. Tobin has been accustomed to open the window and if "Roxy" was on his way across the river from Jersey City Mr. Tobin would get a whiff of the pipe and mark him "on time."

But, according to the operators, Mr. Phillips narrowly escaped losing his life. They say that just as the fire broke out he started to make the characters that represent the figure 6, that he

couldn't let go, and that he had to be dragged from the instrument. Laymen won't understand that, but there are a great many operators to whom the figure 6 is a mighty stumbling block.

A question that was often asked yesterday was "Where was Finnigan all the time?" Finnigan is the funny little man who has guarded the door of the operating room for many years. He owns houses and lots in Brooklyn and he thinks about them a great deal. It is said of him that he can say to a visitor "What do ye want? who do ye want to see? sind in your card," without ever taking his thoughts off his real estate. Finnigan was not at the door. It was too early for him. But he reached the building in the midst of all the excitement and got inside the fire lines.

"My, my," he said, "shure the ould school-house is on fire."

"Go up and help, Finnigan," said an operator.

Finnigan saw the streams of water pouring down from the upper stories. "No I won't," he is recorded as answering, "I ain't had a drop o' water on my back for forty year."

The whereabouts of Operator "Billy" Walsh since the fire have been a mystery. But late yesterday afternoon it was reported that he had been at home devoting himself to making out time slips showing that he had worked six hours at Weehawken, twelve hours at Communipaw, fourteen hours at William's Bridge, and eighteen hours at Hoboken, in the full belief that the office time book had been burned. But the book was one of the few things saved.

Manager W. J. Dealy is celebrated every where for his suavity and extreme courtesy. "Court-cous to all, servile to none, dignified without ostentation," is his motto. Some little time after the fire broke out Mr. Dealy and a number of chief operators and superintendents were standing in the hall of the first floor. They were in a wild state of confusion. Nearly everybody was talking at once. Gen. Eckert, the Vice President, entered the hall. He was protected from the dripping water by a big rain coat. He was as calm as a sunny Summer morning. He said: "I think, gentlemen, that the less general conversation there is about this matter the better. It will be necessary for everybody to do a great deal of work to put things in shape."

He turned to go out, and Mr. Dealy, ever-mindful of the courtesy due to a superior officer, seized an umbrella and held it over the General as he passed out of the door and down the Broadway steps.

New-Yorkers will not be bothered with the long, awkward strips of paper on which the messages which are received on the printing instruments are recorded for some time, perhaps never. The printers were burned with the other machines, and it is doubtful if there are any duplicate sets, and it is also doubtful if the company will order any more made. They were only operated between New-York and Boston and New-York, Philadelphia and Baltimore. It has always been difficult to obtain men to work them because sufficient expertness only came after very long practice.

The printers were very speedy. It was possible to transmit three or four thousand words an hour over them; but the improvements in other directions and the great number of wires to various cities that the Western Union has acquired by industrious absorption of opposition companies render the printers practically unnecessary.