

"CROW'S NEST" DESTROYED

JOE JEFFERSON'S BEAUTIFUL HOME GONE UP IN FLAME.

GASOLINE LEAKED OUT IN THE CELLAR AND THE FURNACE FIRE EXPLODED IT—HELEN M'GRATH, THE COOK, PERISHED IN THE FLAMES—OTHERS HAVE NARROW ESCAPES.

BUZZARD'S BAY, Mass., April 1.—Fire this afternoon totally destroyed the beautiful Summer residence of Joe Jefferson, situated on the shores of Buttermilk Bay, and the family cook, Helen McGrath, perished in the ruins.

Miss Simmonds, the housekeeper; Miss Collins, the maid, and Miss McGrath were in the cellar at noon, when Miss McGrath discovered what she supposed was water covering the floor.

She called the hired man, Mr. Wright, who saw at once that it was oil from the gasoline tank. He shouted to the women to flee for their lives, but they stood dumbfounded. The gasoline communicated with the fire in the furnace, and in an instant there was a terrific explosion.

Mr. Wright caught Miss Simmonds and Miss Collins and fought his way to the open air. He endeavored to return for Miss McGrath, but was met by a blinding sheet of flame. Burned and bleeding, he heroically tried to gain an entrance, but was unsuccessful, and the unfortunate woman was left to perish in the flames.

When the cry of fire was raised Mrs. Jefferson was ill in bed, but she hastily arose and luckily escaped, not having time to dress. She was assisted out and covered with buffalo robes. She suffered a severe shock to her nervous system, and was at once removed to the home of Station Agent Bassett, and medical attention summoned.

The children, who were playing in the attic, were the first to escape and seek a place of safety.

The fire spread with lightning rapidity, the whole building soon being a roaring furnace. The entire population was soon at the scene, and repeated attempts were made to enter the building to save, if possible, the unfortunate cook.

The wind was blowing a gale from the southwest at the time of the fire, and that alone saved the residences adjoining the Jeffersons' from destruction.

Gov. Russell and A. H. Wood, who were fishing in the vicinity, were soon at the scene and called on Mrs. Jefferson. Mrs. Jefferson received a telegram from her son from New-York stating that he would be here on Sunday, which greatly relieved her, and she is now resting as comfortably as can be expected. She does not yet know that the body of Miss McGrath is in the ruins, and the sad news will be kept from her as long as possible.

Miss McGrath had been in the employ of the Jeffersons for twenty years. She was a middle-aged woman, a devoted Roman Catholic, and her sad and untimely end has cast a deep feeling of sorrow over those who knew her.

The large and valuable painting which was to have been exhibited at the World's Fair was totally destroyed, together with Mr. Jefferson's costly collection of curios.

Gov. Russell searched among the goods saved for some wearing apparel for Mrs. Jefferson, but not a bit had been saved, and Mrs. Jefferson has only the clothes she had on when she escaped from the burning building.

It is estimated that \$150,000 worth of paintings were consumed, and that the total loss will be \$250,000. Mr. Jefferson is en route to California, and word has been sent to him. The house, which was erected three years ago, was designed by the actor himself. It stood on a high bluff overlooking Buttermilk Bay, and was a model of modern architecture.

The report of the fire spread rapidly, and over 1,000 people were on the ground in a short time. A squad of special police is on duty tonight watching the fire and guarding the property.

BOSTON, April 1.—Destroyed in Crow's Nest to-day were many unique things of more or less positive value, but much treasured by Mr. Jefferson.

In his drawing room were two carved ebony figures with frightful faces, hobnobbing with two tiny brazen elves. The elves sat in front of the andirons on the tiled hearth. An inlaid escritoire, with panels of china, painted in scenes from the gay revels of courtiers of the time of Charles II., contained a case of shallow drawers, with grooves for cigars, in much the same fashion that spools of silk are displayed in a country store.

The drawing-room furniture consisted of high-backed, low-seated chairs, beautifully carved in a close and intricate design of foliage, with here and there a peacock spreading himself from a branch. The set was found abroad, but a piano chair to match was made in America.

In this room were treasures from the Old World which would have made a Doge of Venice green with envy. There were piled promiscuously cabinets dainty enough to be kept in cabinets. One of these was of Japanese manufacture. The outside was perhaps 2 feet in height, and was evenly covered with red sealing wax embossed in a conventional design, with here and there an exquisitely-painted medallion imbedded in the surface of the substance.

A comfortable, homely, willow easy chair, painted brown, with red ribbons run through, stood side by side with an ebony chair of stiff Dutch design.

The pearl of great price of this treasure house was a dual armor, or wardrobe, 7 feet high and 4 broad. It was surmounted by a plumed helmet, with visor partly raised and a shield. The letters "L. X. B." and "E. B." were on opposite quarterings of the shield, and underneath is the date, "1673." Below the shield was carved a festooned rosary, and beneath the cornice moulding a row of grotesque, long-nosed, butchy-looking devils in livery, using their long, flattened tails as swords. The entire surface was inlaid with precious woods in ornamental design, and in every panel, held by circular mouldings, were large porcelain medallions of rare beauty. This armor was in the dining room in a space specially prepared.

On an inlaid table was an ancient mosaic window, about 2 by 4 feet, made up of countless tiny pieces of colored glass, set in lead, and picturing the slender figure of a buskined page descending the spiral stairs of a castle turret.

Mr. Jefferson received the news of the burning of Crow's Nest at the Fifth Avenue Hotel yesterday afternoon. He was deeply grieved by the report of the death of the cook, Ellen, who had been twenty years in the family.

His eldest son, Charles, started for Buzzard's Bay last night, and, after Mr. Jefferson was assured of the safety of those members of his family who were in the house, he started with his son William at 7 o'clock on his Western tour.

Mr. Jefferson's property—house, stables, furniture, and pictures—was insured for \$70,000. The total value is roughly estimated as between \$200,000 and \$300,000. He had recently put in a picture gallery and bought some new and extremely valuable canvases. He feared that the fine examples of Mauve and Daubigny recently at the Loan Exhibition in the Fine Arts Building in New-York had been returned and placed on the walls, and therefore were destroyed.

Mr. Jefferson owned three Corots, four Troyons, two Daubignys, three Diazes, one Jules Dupré, one Decamps, two Greuzes, four Mauves, two Israels, (including the large canvas "The Mother") one Sir Joshua Reynolds, two Sir Thomas Lawrence's, three Van Marcks, one

Madrago, besides family portraits and a portrait of Macready the actor.

In the house were a number of fine wood carvings, books of value, and in fact the art and bibliographic accumulations of a lifetime. Built into it were original modelings by the sculptor Bauer, old tiles and stained glass portraits of Edwin Booth and William Warren. On the main stairway was a large stained-glass window with a design by Jefferson himself.

The house was built substantially and amply, and in every part was characteristic of its accomplished and hospitable owner. It is Mr. Jefferson's intention to rebuild at once.

Crow's Nest was a picturesque, rambling cottage of stone, built on the edge of the bluff behind Buttermilk Bay. Its site was one of the finest on the Massachusetts coast. It was not a new building, but its construction was of a thoroughness that made it equally delightful in Summer and Winter, and it was occupied by Mr. Jefferson or some of his family most of the time. Mr. Jefferson had gathered his children about him in neighboring cottages, and his family, with their guests, of whom there were always many, formed a settlement by themselves.

Since Mr. Jefferson first took possession of Crow's Nest many well-known guests have been entertained in its big, quaint, low-studded rooms. President Cleveland was a frequent visitor while he was at Gray Gables, a mile and a half away, last Summer, and William H. Crane and Richard Watson Gilder were among the friends who met there.