

The city has not escaped the ravages of conflagration. Several very destructive fires took place during the year, involving immense losses. The greatest among these was the fire of the First of May which ravaged the North-east corner of Sixth and Market streets.

The two most frightful disasters that ever marked the history of the city have taken place during the year which is just about expiring. The burning of the steamboat New Jersey, on the night of the 15th of March, and the consequent destruction of sixty human beings, sent a thrill of horror through the community; but the tragedy at Camp Hill, on the line of the North Pennsylvania Railroad exceeded even it in horror.

The criminal statistics of the year are not encouraging. Many crimes and outrages have disgraced the city, and quite a number of persons are now in prison awaiting trial for the highest offence known to the law. We cannot at this time even allude to many remarkable events which occurred in the city during the year, and which gave the local itemizer something to keep him out of idleness. We had the fall of a warehouse and of a factory, and the killing of several persons thereby. We had a hurricane in April, which unroofed houses, and did much other damage; and we had extremes in the weather, which were without a parallel in the memory of the "oldest inhabitant." During the summer the mercury was regularly among the nineties, and we presume that none of our readers have forgotten the terrible cold which continued from the beginning of the year into March, and which kept the mercury near zero even far into the month last named.

But the newspaper local historian has had some more agreeable duties to perform than the noting of the crimes, casualties, &c., referred to above. He has had to tell of deeds of kindness and of charity growing out of the disasters he had before recorded; it has been his duty to tell of the growth of the city and of the advance of its prosperity; to note how new blocks of houses were springing up under the hands of the builders; and of how enterprise and industry, under Providence, were adding to the wealth, the credit, and the general prosperity of the city. We opine that when the balance comes to be struck, 1856 will present as fair an average as any of its predecessors; the right and the good will throw the wrong and the bad into the shade, and the growth and prosperity of the city will render the disasters it has encountered trifling and insignificant in comparison.

— Jan'y. 3-57—

**GIRARD HOUSE.**—Every reader, of the *Mercury*, and, indeed, everybody else who is at all acquainted with Philadelphia affairs, must be well aware that the establishment whose name heads this paragraph is one of the model hotels of the United States, and is, in some respects, without a successful rival in the world; the proprietors, however, have been making improvements in their establishment, which seemed to be too near the point of perfection to require any thing of the kind. From a notice inserted in the advertising columns of this paper, we find that they have associated in their firm Messrs. James Sykes and Henry A. Chadwick, and that they have made extensive improvements for the accommodation and comfort of their guests, all of whom will be prepared to certify that the "Girard" is now, in all things which appertain to the character of a first-class hotel, not only unrivalled, but unapproachable. Mr. Sykes is already favorably known to the public, from his excellent management of the La Pierre House, on Broad street, while, as one of the firm of Presbury & Co., it was under his sole management and supervision. We have lately heard a lady who was for three months a guest at the La Pierre bear testimony to his perfect arrangements. She spoke in terms of the highest eulogy of his gentlemanly deportment, his uniform kindness and many delicate courtesies bestowed upon the guests of the house, and praised the attention uniformly paid to their comfort. Mr. Chadwick has been long and favorably known as one of the attentive clerks of the Girard, and in that position has secured friends, who cordially rejoice in his promotion. He richly merits the advancement, and we heartily and sincerely congratulate him. Of Messrs. Presbury and Billings it is unnecessary to speak, they are too well known to require it. Every stranger who walks Chestnut street will have his attention arrested by the Girard House. The outside of the building is magnificent, but the inside equipments and fixtures are more admirable. We ask no one to take our ward for it—call and examine for yourselves.

— Jan'y. 4-57—



CLARA—"Come, Charles, make haste—step in, I can't remain in this position all day."  
CHARLES—"My dear Clara, you forget—this is a new fashion, and I don't exactly understand the ropes."



VULGAR BOY—"I'm blow'd if there aint the S'inese twins."  
CLARA—"Oh, my dear Charles, never mind that vulgar boy."  
CHARLES—"I only wish I could get at the young rascal."

Nov. 28-1857