

\$100,000 FIRE STARTS WHERE A STRIKE IS ON

It Damages Three Buildings at Mercer and Fourth Streets.

FLAMES TAKE 25-FOOT LEAP

They Spread to a New Building High Above the Level on Which They Began.

Not less than \$100,000 damage was done by a fire that started about 8 o'clock last night in a hat and cap factory near the corner of Mercer and Fourth Streets, spread first to the west and then to the east, and, before being controlled, wrecked the top stories of three large buildings and necessitated the sending in of three alarms. For the last three weeks there has been a strike among the employes of the concern in whose premises the fire started.

Doniger Brothers, makers of hats and caps, occupy the top floors of the two six-story brick buildings, numbered from 21 to 29 West Fourth Street. Just before 8 o'clock last night an automatic alarm sounded from the firm's loft, and when the first engines arrived on the scene the whole top floor of the east building was in flames.

Before the firemen got a line of hose laid the fire had spread to the building on the west and was blazing fiercely. Deputy Chief Kruger, who responded on the first alarm, ordered a second sent in, and Water Tower No. 1 was put into operation in front of the blazing structures.

With the flames covering an area of half a city block and threatening the buildings in Washington Place to the north, Kruger thought it advisable to send in another alarm, to which Deputy Chief Binns responded. This brought another water tower into action, and the firemen fought the blaze from Fourth Street, Mercer Street, and the roofs of the buildings opposite. A large crowd watched the battle.

Because of the inflammable nature of the contents of the upper floors, the blaze proved a stubborn one to fight, and it was nearly 10 o'clock before it was under control. Besides Doniger Brothers, Freitag & Kelm, waist manufacturers, occupying the top floor of the corner building, which is known as the Adler Building, were the heaviest losers, their place being completely wrecked. The stocks of Werner & McCartie, furs; Adler & Ast, waists; Tenny, Hills & Hall, straw hats, and Leipzig & Miller, cloaks, all in the same building, were damaged by fire and water, as were the contents of the lofts occupied by Ambrose, Brill & Ullman, dolls and chinaware; Ferry & Weber, millinery, and Shaft & Brady, cloaks, in the other buildings.

The strike against Doniger Brothers was brought about three weeks ago by a controversy between the firm and its employes over the open-shop question. Since that time Doniger Brothers have asked the police of the Mercer Street Station, which is only half a block away, to protect their new employes as they come and go. The strikers have made no demonstration, but have hung around the place continuously. The police were not inclined last night to connect the fire with the strike.