

BIG FIRE AT SUNSHINE.

Pottery Works Destroyed.

Damage Estimated at £12,000.

At midnight last night what had been flourishing pottery works at Sunshine a few hours before were a mass of smouldering ruins. Shortly after 8 p.m. flames were seen bursting from the factory of Drayton Brothers, trading as the Sunshine porcelain works, which is situated on a large block of land bounded by Derby and Hampden roads. Two hours later nothing had been left of the establishment excepting distorted masses of iron, which had been machinery of the most up to date type used in porcelain manufacture. Sheets of red hot corrugated iron, blazing timber, great quantities of broken crockery, insulators, &c., and raw materials used in the manufacture of porcelain utterly ruined. The factory was completely destroyed.

The alarm was given by a fireman of the local brigade, and the five men at that station, with their pumping engine, soon after joined by the Footscray brigade, was quickly on the scene. It was at once realised that there would need to be a desperate fight to save any portion of the building, which was of wood and iron. As soon as the water was turned on, however, it was realised that the struggle was hopeless. The water pressure from the three-inch main had to be carried several hundred yards from Derby road, and only one hose could be utilised. The fire had such a hold that the stream of water produced had practically no effect on the flames. Fortunately there were no other buildings near by, and there was no danger of any extension. While the firemen were engaged in their forlorn struggle a painful accident befell Fireman P. Payne, of the local brigade. He tripped and fell into what is known as the pump shaft, and sustained a severe laceration to the hand. He had to receive medical attention.

The outbreak was all the more unfortunate, owing to the fact that it poses a serious setback in the progress of an Australian enterprise which had been making rapid strides in the last few months. It will not only throw more than 30 men and girls out of work, but will be the means of delaying the carrying out of a number of contracts—for the present, at all events—for the Victorian and New South Wales Governments, in the manufacture of crockery and electrical porcelain.

Discussing the fire last night, one of the partners in the firm, Mr. Drayton, said it had occurred at a particularly inopportune time, as they had contracts at present awaiting fulfilment which were sufficient to keep the staff fully occupied for at least twelve months. He and his brother had taken over the establishment from the old Sunshine Porcelain Pty. Ltd. in 1916, and they had been working to build up the business ever since that time. Two partners were taken in three years ago, and the work carried out had

time. Two partners were taken in three years ago, and the work carried out had been such that they had received orders from the Victorian Railway department, the Melbourne Tramways Board, the New South Wales and South Australian Governments and the Electric Supply Co. In fact, the firm was just beginning to establish itself in the Australian market in the making of porcelain. They were the first in Victoria to make china cups, and over 150,000 of their cups and saucers had been supplied to the Victorian railways. Among the property destroyed last night were 36,000 cups and saucers which were to go to the railways.

The property was not by any means covered by insurance. The estimated loss was £12,000, while the insurance in the Colonial Mutual Company was for only £6000. It will take probably six months to again get started. One of the Drayton brothers has been so bent on making a success of the enterprise that he had been working there seven days a week for two years.

A remarkable feature of the rapidity with which the flames had spread was shown by the fact that half an hour before the alarm was given Mr. Drayton had been to the establishment to see that everything was in order. There was no sign of any fire at that time.