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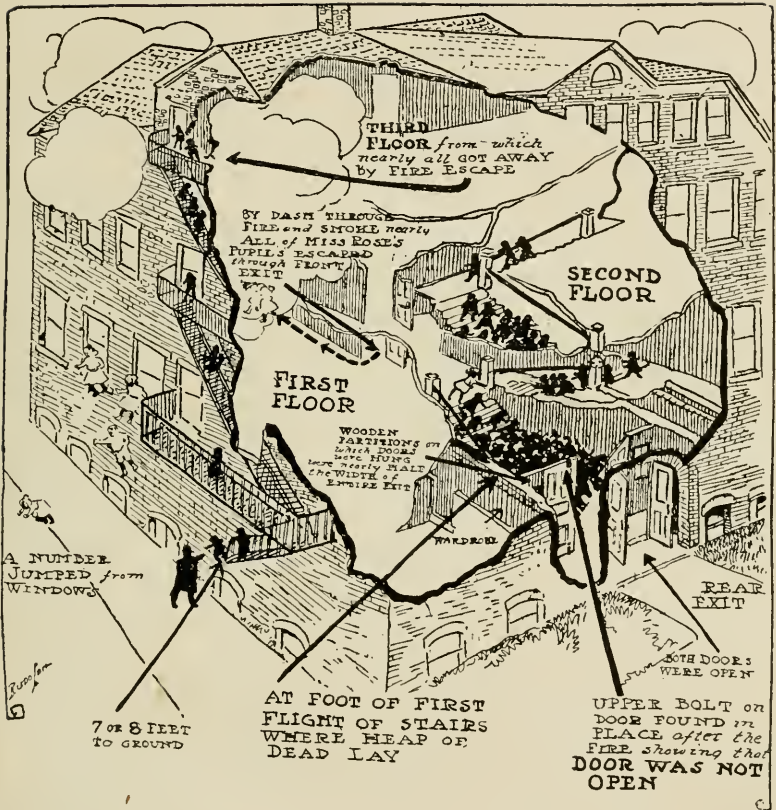














The Collinwood School, photographed while the fire still raged

Henry Shelton

**Complete Story of the**  
**Collinwood School Disaster**  
**And How Such Horrors Can Be Prevented**

**By Marshall Everett**  
The Well Known Author and Descriptive Writer

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*Full and Authentic Story Told By Survivors  
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**Embracing a Flash-light Sketch of the Holocaust,  
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in other School Buildings all over the United  
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tographs of the scenes of death,  
before, during and after  
the Fire.**

**Photographs of the Children Sacrificed**

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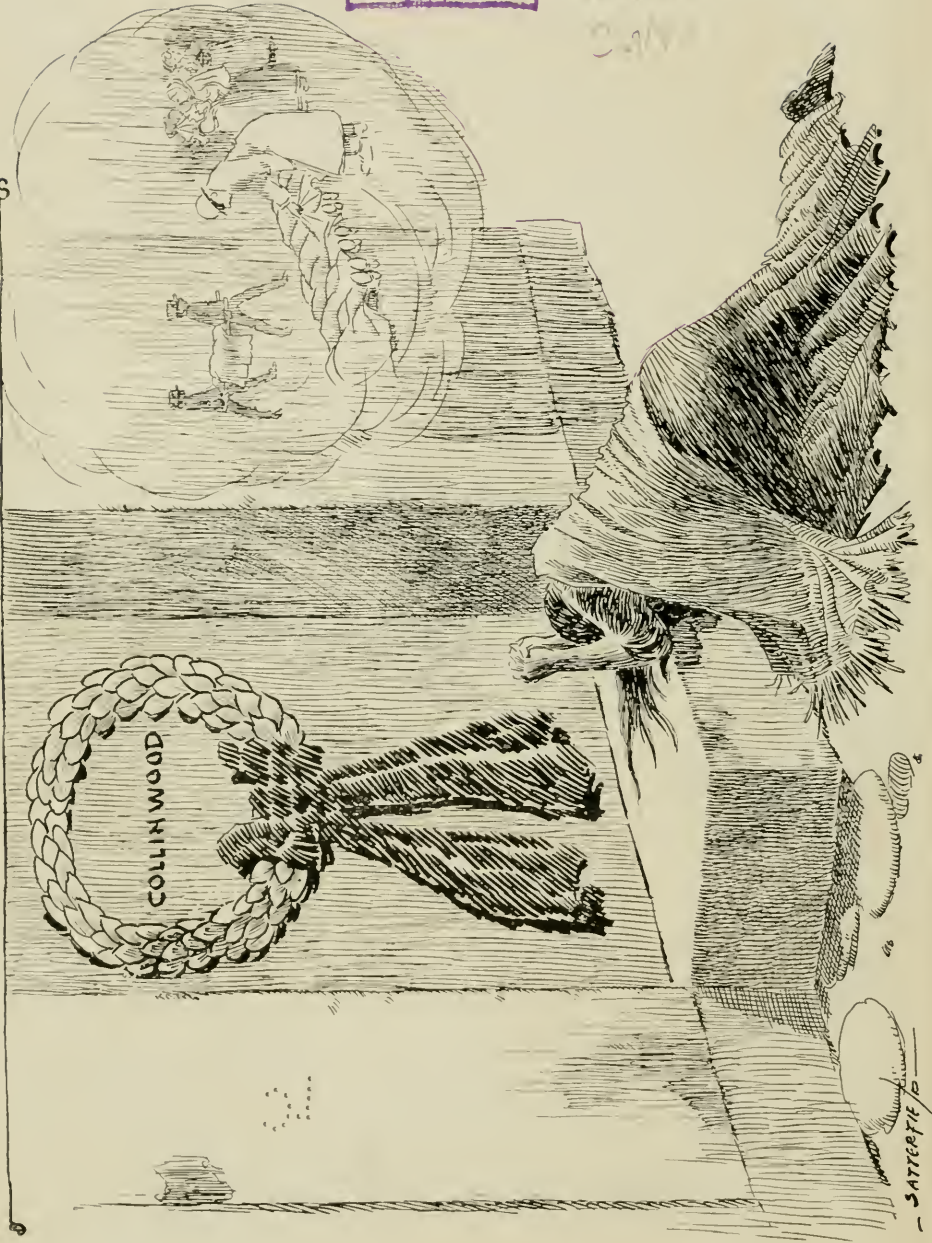
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SATTERFIELD





Nils Thompson, age 9, was a great help to his mother, a widow. He escaped by jumping from a window, and after looking unsuccessfully for his younger brother, Thomas, went back in for him. They both died together.



A class of Collinwood school children, taken before the fire. Many of these were burned to death



Fire Marshal Brockman interviewing Hirter, the janitor, after the fire.





Parents in the morgue looking for their children's bodies.



A row of dead bodies at the morgue



KATHERINE WEILER.

She was the daughter of Rev. Gustave Weiler, 167 40th Street, Pittsburgh, Pa. After saving many of her class, and driven out by the intense heat, she regained strength and returned to rescue others. She perished with the children she loved so dearly. She was 27 years of age.



GRACE FISKE.

Daughter of Mr. and Mrs. D. D. Fiske, 10522 Orville Street. She, like Miss Weiler, did not leave her children, but died as she had lived, with deep affection for them. When the crisis came, her pupils surrounded her in the hopes that they might be saved. While she struggled in their behalf, it was of no avail; they died together. She was 26 years of age.





GRETCHEN DORN.

She was in her 11th year. The beautiful daughter of Mr. and Mrs. G. L. Dorn. She was beloved by all, and a favorite of her teacher. While her father was a hero in rescuing many from death, he was unable to save his little daughter. She perished.



HUBERT HUNTER.

The little son of Mrs. A. Hunter, 253 Collamer Street. He was identified by his school papers in his pocket. Died in the fire at the age of 10 years.



FREDERICK AND RUTH PAUL.

The beautiful children of Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Paul, 5431 Lake Shore Boulevard. When the building was on fire, Frederick escaped, then realizing that his little sister, Ruth, was still in the burning building, he rushed back to find her. They perished together. They were 13 and 7 years respectively.



EARLA GRANT

She was 13 years old. The only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Grant, 5806 Arcade Street. Earla was a beautiful girl, and beloved by all who knew her. She met her death in the fire.





EDWARD SCHOLL.

The 10 year old son of Mr. and Mrs. R. Scholl, 4816 Westropp Avenue. He died in the fire.



MORRIS SHEPPARD.

The only son of Mr. and Mrs James Sheppard, 54 Elsinore Street. He was the light and joy of the home, and faithful in his studies at school. His last words were of what he would do when he returned from school.



ANNA WELICK.

The 11-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wellick, 433 Spruce Street. Anna could not sleep the night preceding the fire. She seemed to have a presentiment that something dreadful was to happen her. She died in the fire.



NORMAN P. SHEPHERD.

The only son of Mr. and Mrs. George Shepherd, 5708 Arcade Street, who was last seen by Mr. Dorn, one of the heroes of the rescuing party. Norman begged to be saved, but it was beyond Mr. Dorn's power. When he found he was to die, he bade Mr. Dorn an affectionate good-bye. He was 12 years of age.



HELENA, WALTER AND IDA HIRTER.

Children of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Hirter, of North Collamer Street. They were considered very bright children. Helena had one of the best records in the United States for attendance at school, not having missed a day in seven years. They all died in the fire. They were 13, 15 and 8 respectively.



JAMES, NORMAN AND MAXWELL TURNER.

The children of Mr. and Mrs. James D. Turner, 436 Collamer Street, and grandchildren of the late Robert Scrutton, Oswego, N. Y. Little did they think of the fate awaiting them when they left their happy home the morning of March 4th, when they met their deaths in the fire. They were 14, 9 and 6 years respectively.



ANNA AND ROSIE BUSCHMAN.

Children of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Buschman, 5415 Lake Street, who perished in the fire. They were 11 and 9 years of age.



CLARA AND FLORENCE LAWRY.

The beautiful twin daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Lawry, of Euclid Beach, Ohio. These sweet little girls had to be sacrificed in the fire. They were 13 years of age.

## CONTENTS.

---

Publisher's Preface .....	9
Author's Preface .....	13

### CHAPTER I.

Fire discovered in school building at North Collinwood, which is filled with children—Futile efforts of the janitor and a few of the larger pupils to check the flames—Spread of the fire—Alarm sounded; efforts of the teachers to march the children out of the doomed structure—Beginning of the panic—Heartrending screams and shrieks alarm the neighborhood as the children find escape cut off—Frantic rush for the doors, which are closed and check the maddened little ones in their dash for life and liberty—Children fall in heaps within an inch of safety—Lives crushed out as the frantic and terror stricken trample on the fallen—Vain efforts of the teachers to stay the awful panic—Faces appear at the windows, only to fall back into the raging furnace and become part of the fire itself. . . . 33

### CHAPTER II.

Men and women rush to the scene—Mothers fall on their knees before the fire and weep and pray—Men curse and fight in their efforts to reach their imprisoned little ones—Pathetic scenes as dying children call to their parents, who are only a few feet away, yet powerless to aid them in their agony—Desperate efforts of the teachers to force open the doors which keep the children prisoners in the burning structure—Thrilling scenes of rescue by ladders—Leaps for life—Drops to death and leaps to unconsciousness—Maimed for life—Blinded by the awful heat



—Heroes develop by the score, yet they can do nothing to save the scores that are perishing before their eyes. .46

### CHAPTER III.

Mother saves her child for a moment only to see him die—Lad stretches out arms for aid—Tried to drag boy out but flames conquered—Cleveland fire fighters arrive but are too late—Frantic men and women rush forward to meet it—Floors of building collapse with ominous roar—Burst of flames and sparks shoot out—Flames rage most fiercely in cellar—Work in ruins begins—Blackened forms of children in pinafores found—Bodies placed in rows in morgue—Identifications made by trinkets. . . .54

### CHAPTER IV.

Victims trample comrades to death in vain efforts to escape—Walter Kelley, a newspaper man, who lost two children, says one of rear doors was locked—Exit jammed full of fighting, panic-stricken children—Many killed by being trampled on—Scores rush for windows and several are killed—Caught like rats—Father and mothers, crazed in efforts to rescue children—Children rush into fiery furnace—Hallways too narrow to accommodate scholars running out—Three little girls die in jumping . . . . .60

### CHAPTER V.

Fathers and mothers pray and curse as their children perish—Maddened, they dash towards flames, to be restrained by friends—Force often used—Big man raves, "my babies are in the fire"—Firemen with rakes and shovels turn up blackened bones and skulls and masses of charred flesh—Horror strikes men taking out scarred bodies—Dead forms of children passed to ambulance men—Driven to morgue—Human charnal house causes men to shudder—Bodies are numbered—Identification made . . . . .68

## CHAPTER VI.

Strong men weep as they tell how their children died—Father relates how little daughter burned to death—Child helped mother with breakfast dishes—Waved good-by as she started for school—Sobs on seeing charred babe—"Mister, help me out pleads little girl—Baby hands reach out for help—White ribbons flutter from doors of almost every house—Man toys with penciled paper of dead daughter—Baby cries for sister who was dead .....72

## CHAPTER VII.

Flames sweep over hall while women stand helpless—Many fall fainting to ground—Water pressure insufficient to send stream high—Firemen's ladders would not reach to top floors—Task not for volunteers but for ambulance men—Police unable to keep back crowds—Girl of ten protects brother of six from fire with shawl until both perish—Few at top of struggling mass saved—Cries for help fearful to hear—Hurl stones through windows—..81

## CHAPTER VIII.

School building inadequate to accommodate all pupils and many studied in the attic—Pupils become panic stricken on sight of smoke—Victims between ages of six and fifteen years of age—Frenzied by screams of crushed and dying many rush into death trap—Save scholars by smashing windows .....85

## CHAPTER IX.

Pathetic scenes enacted at the temporary morgue—Room murky and stifling with odors of burned stuff and silent save for sobs—Charred feet protrude beneath blankets—Grief written on every face—Mother finds child and bursts into tears while strong men join in weeping—Tags placed on bodies—Some curse, some gaze stoney eyed upon twisted, charred shapes of children before them; some rave like madmen and some laugh like lunatics.....92

## CHAPTER X.

Rich woman loses baby—Wealthy and poor, alike in grief, console each other—Bodies taken from morgue as identified—Grief-stricken father fights ambulance driver—Maddened father would throw himself under a train—Child identified by teeth—Screams of despair, wrenched from mothers on finding trinkets of babes—Woman who made boy go to school overwhelmed with anguish, sobbing and shrieking—Crowd sways in sympathy—Grandfather kisses girl's feet .....110

## CHAPTER XI.

Teachers tell of horrors—Attack made on janitor, and police guard is set—Tales of the survivors—Children fall and others topple over on them—Crush terrible—Door said to be usually open, but this time fastened at the top—Few fire drills held and smoke and flames quickly put children into panic which meant death.....120

## CHAPTER XII.

Girl who discovered fire tells investigators she told janitor of the blaze and says she opened door—Janitor asserts building was not overheated—County prosecutor listens to testimony to find whether or not there was a criminal act—Door found closed—Never told to ring fire alarm—No boys seen smoking in the building, but girls were playing. ....128

## CHAPTER XIII.

Teachers tell of attempts to save pupils and why they are unsuccessful—Flames leap over their heads in mad scramble for door and children pile up in hall—Blaze tells bell is not drill gong—Principal denies there was rubbish in closet where fire started—Boy tells thrilling experience—Smoke and heat strike terror into children—Fire blocks stairs, but heroine teacher waits until last—Crowds of men to the rescue but work is checked by fire. ....138



## CHAPTER XIV.

Misery, hopelessness and gloom reign everywhere in Collinwood—Little children make big sacrifices—Three babies lost from one home—Two white faced girls cling to sobbing mother trying to comfort her for loss of child—Bravery of girl—Pall over every house—Frantic women tear hair—Small children pushed beneath pile—Narrowness of corridor catches scholars in pen—Teacher dying amid corpses—Exciting race made by firemen—Boy gives life to save others—Ambulances do good work. . . . .149

## CHAPTER XV.

Mothers cry for children and beg for help—Teachers pursued in rage by bereaved—Child thrown from window—Girl saved by sickness—Boy says stairs crashed on crushed scholars—Baby cried for "papa." . . . . .177

## CHAPTER XVI.

Women show courage—Tiny girl holds out hand for help in vain—Hands burned trying to save children—Lad identified by a ring—Boy who aids family perishes in the fire—Lake Shore officials aid—Scream for help which does not come—Drags little daughter from heap of dying. . . .182

## CHAPTER XVII.

Dead in fire disaster buried—Entire village in mourning—Hearses line all streets of village—Old man weeps on seeing white hearses pass, although he had none in the building to die—Full realization of horrible disaster comes with funerals—One of saddest services was held for Janitor Hirter's children, three of whom died in fire—Police guard him, but none molest man while he is burying his dead—Father bowed with grief and mother mourns for her dead—Child shows her love for playmate. . . . .190

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Stumps of unknown children are buried—Blackened bodies of unidentified dead are placed in one big grave and mourned for by many weeping mothers—Flag placed at church entrance and candles are put at head of coffin—Sixteen white coffins in a row—Service held for 12 at once—Hearses too few to care for dead—Two women faint—Hundreds gathered in sorrow. ....197

## CHAPTER XIX.

Caskets lie in tiers in ambulances—Hearse after hearse passes down the dismal streets—Many dazed by the tragedy pay no heed to funeral corteges—Mothers and fathers bowed in anguish—Three caskets with a son and two daughters lie in a row. ....206

## CHAPTER XX.

Safety of all school children in the land rest in the strict enforcement of the building laws—Better schools urged for protection of pupils—Lower buildings, fire proof construction, wide stairways, fire escapes separated from the buildings themselves and opening off every room sought—School houses must be carefully and regularly inspected—Employes must be watched—Fixing responsibility and punishment of negligent believed to be a preventive. . .212

## CHAPTER XXI.

Newspapers comment on the disaster—Tall buildings are decried—Horror should teach lessons and lead to improvement of buildings—Disaster might have been prevented, it is thought—Probe should go deep and every provision made to empty schools quickly and prevent panic—Fact should be drilled into the minds of a people prone to forget. ....221

**CHAPTER XXII.**

Lack of discipline and unreadiness to meet emergency says one paper—Fancied security leads to laxity and danger—Furnaces a deadly peril—Close watch should be kept on heating apparatus—Automatic doors urged, to open when fire gong sounds—Thousands of structures thought to be defective and in need of reconstruction. . . . .228

**CHAPTER XXIII.**

Model school house designed to save children from death in fire—Towers at each corner arranged so that there can be exits from each room—Emergency exit in center—Stairways are not winding but straight. . . . .237

**CHAPTER XXIV.**

Lest we forget the Collinwood horror we should prick our memory to demand better schools—Children depend on us for protection which it is our duty to give—Plans should at once be made to prevent other such holocausts and death of innocents . . . . .240

**CHAPTER XXV.**

List of the dead in terrible Collinwood school fire. . . . .247

**CHAPTER XXVI.**

Earthquake and fire descend upon San Francisco and the Surrounding cities of California, causing enormous loss of life and property—Shock of death comes in the early dawn—People flee from their beds in terror to face crashing walls—Heaving earth shatters gas and water pipes, releasing noxious fumes and kindling countless fires in the ruins of the once beautiful "Fairy city of the Golden Gate"—First shock followed by worse terrors—Furious flames sweep over doomed city—Firemen baffled by lack of water—Dy-

namite used in vain—Dead abandoned to the advancing cyclone of fire—night falls on a scene rivaling Dante's "Inferno"—Vandals and ghouls appear—Looting and rioting add to hellish scene—Police powerless; troops called—Corpses everywhere—Man's utter helplessness demonstrated—Denizens of foreign quarter battle with fury of fiends—Mobs fight at ferries, while dreary procession of refugees trails southward to escape. . . . .269

#### CHAPTER XXVII.

Wave of flame greets Chicago theater audience—Few realize appalling result—Drop where they stand—Many heroes are developed—Dead piled in heaps—Exits were choked with bodies—Survey scene with horror—Find bushels of purses. . . . .284

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

Terrible Boyertown fire caused by the explosion of lamp used to light scenes in amateur theatricals—Scores burned to death, suffocated or crushed in mad panic to escape. . . .294

#### CHAPTER XXIX.

Boat, the General Slocum sinks in river in New York and more than 1,000 perish—Women throw babes overboard and leap after them—Life preservers rotten or are filled with lead—Bodies washed ashore for days—Jail sentence for offenders—Sunday School picnic ends in terror and death. . . . .300

#### CHAPTER XXX.

Thrilling incidents of terrible disasters of history and horrible loss of life. . . . .304

#### CHAPTER XXXI.

The Johnstown Flood . . . . .316

## PUBLISHERS' PREFACE.

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Amid sobs and groans, from white, trembling lips comes the story of the fearful disaster at North Collinwood, Ohio, where 172 **innocent** children and two heroic women teachers went down to death in the ruins of the schoolhouse, which was swept by flames. To tell the awful story in cold type gives but a faint idea of the horror of it all; yet, in order that the lives of other children and other teachers may be protected and safeguarded, it must be told in detail, and the human suffering and anguish that came to men, women and children through this fire painted, as only those on the spot can paint it, pictured in words that thrill.

By experience we learn. Some day our children will be safe when once inside the schoolhouses of the country—but not until public officials realize that many of the buildings are now but tinder boxes, ready to flare up at the faintest spark of fire, and destroy all who are unfortunate to be caught within the walls. As the author of this work has well said, this great disaster has hastened the day when all of our public buildings—theaters, halls and schoolhouses—will be safe; when we can rest secure while our loved ones bend over their desks, or watch a mimic world depicted on the stage. God speed the day when soul-harrowing tragedies of the sort enacted in North Collinwood shall be a thing of the past!

In presenting this book to the public the publishers do so with two thoughts uppermost in their minds. First is the thought that the details of the great holocaust should

be perpetuated in another way than only in the minds of the parents of the children who lost their lives, in order that those who read may realize to the utmost that "we know not the hour of our end;" and second, that school officials and building department heads throughout this broad land may realize that upon them rests a fearful responsibility. In their keeping are hundreds of thousands of human lives—lives of men, women and children, who, believing that the buildings are safe, blindly trust themselves in the structures that have been erected for public gatherings.

Lessons like the one from North Collinwood sink deep into the hearts of men. It is an old saying that "we never learn except by bitter experience"—God knows the officials of North Collinwood have learned by sad and bitter experience, experience that has robbed scores of homes of all the happiness it ever will know, that only by constant watchfulness and perfect building methods can safety be obtained. Without going into detail as to the responsibility for this horror—that will be left for those directly concerned to determine—it is enough to say that someone is to blame for the fearful loss of life and the resultant misery that has made heavy the hearts of thousands.

It is the aim of the publishers to give this book an educational value that will secure for it a place in the library of every home in the land, and to fill its pages with information and word pictures that will live forever, carrying to the heart of every man and every woman the necessity of protecting the little ones from the dangers seen and unseen, that threaten them on every hand. It will bring home to the thoughtless the fact that "in the midst of life we are in death," and that only by securing perfection in



the art of building can we properly protect the people from possible harm.

The book contains not only the story of the Ohio disaster, but the history of other great disasters, thus making it a valuable reference work for the student. It portrays in vivid manner the causes that lead to great fire panics and shows at a glance the large number of human lives that have been lost in the various disasters in the several corners of the world. Ranking next to the Iroquois theater fire in Chicago, in which hundreds of children lost their lives—and for which it has been decided in the courts that “no one was to blame”—the North Collinwood disaster will remain always in the minds of man as one of the greatest horrors of the century.

As this work is the only authentic and permanent record of the horror, which desolated scores of homes and brought a thrill of sympathy to the great, glowing heart of the world, the publishers hope and believe that the work will prove of great benefit, in that it will point out, in tales of the utmost pathos and dramatic intensity, the necessity for building our schools and our other public buildings so perfectly that fires cannot start in them, or, if fires do start, so fireproof that nothing but a small blaze, dangerous to no one, will result.

As this book goes to press thousands of building inspectors, thousands of high officials and thousands of school directors throughout this broad land are moving with one accord along the line of making the buildings safe, and closing those which are found wanting in the proper appliances. One lesson of the North Collinwood description has startled the world. It is to be hoped that no second lesson will ever be needed!

THE PUBLISHERS.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

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For generations the awful holocaust at North Collinwood, where 172 children and two teachers lost their lives in the destruction of the school building by fire, will be remembered with feelings of horror. It was a veritable carnival of death. Caught like rats in a trap, without a chance to escape, the hapless victims were trampled under foot, smothered, and then half consumed by the fiery flames that swept over them.

The story, sad and thrilling in the extreme, will deal with the vain fight made by the victims to escape the awful fate that awaited them, of the desperate efforts of heroic men and women to snatch from the jaws of death their own loved ones, as well as the loved ones of other fathers and mothers, and of the shocking scenes that were enacted in the pretty little suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, on the 4th day of March, 1908. Standing beside the red-hot embers of the schoolhouse and watching weeping men draw from the ruins shapeless masses that were once laughing, happy boys and girls, I witnessed a scene so terrible that my pen almost refuses to write the sickening story of the disaster that brought grief to every family in the little village, and which depopulated the town of young people.

Fathers and mothers all over this broad land weep with the bereaved parents and bow their heads in shame to think that in this great and glorious country such a



slaughter of innocents could be possible. Long before the smoke had lifted from the funeral pyre, long before the last charred body had been dragged from the red hot ruins, long before the last victim had been laid in old mother earth, town and state officials were at work to place the blame for the disaster. That blame rested on someone was certain, but who was the guilty man? That was the question.

Fixing the blame would not bring back from the grave the 172 human beings that went down to death when flames shot through the handsome building, nor would placing upon the shoulders of an individual, or upon the shoulders of a group of individuals a burden of guilt, assuage the grief of the stricken parents, nor dry the tears of the people of the country, to whom the horror was brought home with startling directness as they thought of their own loved little ones in the crowded schoolhouses of the cities and the towns.

From men and women who were on the spot before the flames had claimed their toll of death and before the last despairing shriek of the last child to die had chilled the blood of all the spectators I have obtained most of my facts, and to them I am deeply indebted for the vivid scenes described in this book, which is destined to be a permanent and historically correct record of the most awful and sickening disaster ever known in the history of the state of Ohio. The task of assembling the vast amount of data is not easy, as every line tells of death and human suffering, the equal of which is not often written in history. True, there have been other great disasters, with fearful loss of human life, but in this case those who went down to death were children, most of them on the very

threshold of life. They had everything before them, no regrets back of them—their pathway to honor, fame and riches was broad and smooth, yet in the twinkling of an eye they were laid low by the fiery hand of Death, and the hopes of their parents shattered in an instant.

While it is the intention of the author to make this work a fitting memorial to the dead, and to record the details of the tragedy in words that will live forever in the minds of thousands of sorrowing persons all over the country, it is his hope and firm belief that great good will at the same time be accomplished, in that the needs of other schoolhouses from one end of the land to the other will be shown, and the necessity of at once taking steps to remedy the defects, and to render such loss of life in case of fire impossible, pointed out.

Indeed, even as these words are written, officials of cities, towns and villages in every portion of the United States, aye, even in Europe, are at work, with breathless haste, making such changes in the school buildings as will give the children there a chance for their lives should flames sweep the structures.

To the many persons who have aided me in preparing this work, with a heart full of sorrow for the bereaved parents, and a prayer for the dead, I dedicate this book to the memory of the victims of the fire which brought the nation to its senses and forced it to realize that hundreds of its schoolhouses are little else than fire traps, ready always to claim the lives of innocent children.

**MARSHALL EVERETT.**

North Collinwood, Ohio.

## MOTHER DRAGGED FROM CHILD.

SHE STROKES BURNING HAIR OF DAUGHTER SHE  
COULD NOT SAVE.

One of the faces in the wall of those who blocked up the rear door of the Lake View School was that of Jennie Phillis, aged fifteen years. Mrs. John Phillis, who lives a few doors from the school, was one of the first to get to the fire. She recognized Jennie immediately. Volunteers had formed a cordon about the door, but the agonized mother broke through and rushed into the passageway.

"Oh, Jennie! Please come out!" begged the mother.

"I can't, ma. Oh, help me, if you can!"

The woman seized both of her daughter's hands and pulled with all her strength. She could not, however, drag Jennie out from the crush. She turned to the men who were in the passageway and begged them to help her. One man pulled with the mother at Jennie's arms, but they could not move her.

"It's no use, ma," said the girl, "I've got to die!"

Mrs. Phillis became resigned to her daughter's fate. She held the girl's hand and the two talked for some minutes together. The fire crept up through the mass of heads. A tongue of it blew over Jennie's head. It began to scorch her hair. Then the mother thrust her bare hand into the flames. She stroked her daughter's hair and kept the fire away as long as she could.

"Oh, thank you, ma," breathed the dying girl. It was the last she said. They dragged the mother from out of the smoke and flame. It was found that her hand with which she had stroked the fire from her daughter's head was burned to the bone.



IN  
MEMORY OF  
THE UNIDENTIFIED  
DEAD  
COLLINWOOD  
SCHOOL  
FIRE  
MAR. 4 - 1908

SATTERFIELD

## CHAPTER I.

### THE STORY OF THE FIRE.

#### FIRE WRECKS BIG SCHOOL—CHILDREN PERISH BY THE SCORE.

In a horror without parallel in the history of American schools, 172 children and two women teachers lost their lives when Lake View School, North Collinwood, Ohio, burned on the morning of March 4, 1908. Ten minutes after the fire was discovered half the families in the pretty little suburb of Cleveland were in mourning, and the nation, informed by telegraph of the soul-stirring disaster, was in tears.

Three little girls coming from the basement saw smoke. Before the janitor sounded the alarm a mass of flames was sweeping up the stairways from the basement.

Before the children on the upper floors could reach the ground floor egress was cut off and they perished.

It was all over almost before the frantic fathers and mothers who gathered realized that their children were doomed.

School officials believed at first that an incendiary started the fire. They were forced to that conclusion after eliminating all other possible causes.

There was no gas in the building. No heating pipes ran through the lumber closet under the stairs where the fire started. There were no electric wires in the closet.

With the call for fire engines calls for ambulances were sent in. Every ambulance in the eastern end of Cleveland was pressed into service and wagons were used to haul the dead.

Rescuers were present by the hundreds, but they could not save the life of one of the children jammed in solid masses, as in the case of the Iroquois theater fire, Chicago, at the foot of the stairways.

The victims ranged in ages from six to fifteen years, and the story of their fate is one of the most heartrending that the world has been called upon to heed.

From the minute that the fire bell clanged out the alarm, the doom of the children was sealed.

The building was a fire trap. It was insufficiently provided with fire escapes. It had but two exits, one of which, at the critical hour, was found to be barred.

There was lax discipline in the institution. And, finally, the fire department of the village was utterly unable to cope with the situation.

Panic was primarily responsible, however. Had the 300 little ones been able to preserve their presence of mind scores that went down in the roaring flames might have escaped in safety. As it was, dozens were crushed to death before the flames reached them in the terrified rush for safety.

Dozens more were killed in frantic leaps from windows. The remainder were swallowed up in the flames, carried down into the raging furnace in the cellar of the building fifteen minutes after the first alarm was sounded, and while agonized parents dashed helplessly about on the outside, restrained by force from dashing in when the floors of the burning building collapsed, further rescue became absolutely impossible.

There was no panic at first. The children on the first floor passed out safely. They supposed it was only the regular practice until they entered the halls. Then they



saw the smoke rising from the front stairs. They cast frightened glances at it, but maintained order.

Many of the children on the third floor were saved. The flames spread so quickly that by the time the children on this floor had entered the hall the smoke and sparks were coming up the stairs in great puffs.

Miss Laura Bodey, who had charge of the single room on the third floor, kept her head and started the children down the stairs.

When they reached the second floor the flames rushed upon them.

Miss Bodey called to the children to follow her. She led the way to the fire escape through a room on the second floor.

Most of the children obeyed her and were saved. Some, however, had broken away and fled down the stairs. They were caught in the deathtrap.

Nearly all the children on the second floor perished. Their teachers led them to the stairs in the rear, for the front stairway was enveloped in flames.

At the sight of the fire the children took fright at once. They started pellmell down the stairs and into the narrow passage that led to the outside doors.

The first few escaped. Some of those following tripped on the stairs and rolled to the bottom.

Others behind them ran over the tangle at the bottom of the stairs and crowded into the passageway, fell over the prostrate bodies and made the confusion greater.

Then the children began dropping over the banisters to get to the passage. Those who had fallen on the stairs began to get up and in an instant the entrance to the passage was blocked. Not yet had the flames spread to the passage.

### Happy in Morning.

In what contrast were the beginning and the end of the day. The morning came with the sunshine of the early spring. Mothers, starting their children off to school with kisses, lingered in the doorways of their homes to feel its sweet breath. Out of sight up the street the children passed, skipping, laughing, throwing their books at one another in the light heartedness of childhood and the joyousness of the day.

The school bell rang; the last of the pupils hurried to their rooms. As soon as all were in their seats the day was begun with prayer. The echo of the "Amen" died away and quickly came the clatter of the schoolroom as classes were begun. Scarcely more than an hour had passed, when the alarm of fire silenced the droning voices and chilled the blood of the teachers, who alone understood.

The pupils thought it was fire drill and began an orderly exit.

### Pupils Saw The Smoke.

Then someone saw the smoke that came pouring up the front stairway and in an instant the orderly lines broke and there was a wild scramble for safety. Those who fled down the front stairway got out safely. The rush down the back stairway, however, was greater. The first child, close pressed by the others, fell as he reached the inner doorway. Those coming behind stumbled, went down and barred the way for the rest.

Of the double doors at the bottom of the stairs, one was held by a catch at the top. The other was unlocked, but closed. The children following the first few who fell had no

time to push open the door. Like an avalanche the rest swept down upon them, screaming and struggling, the stronger trampling the weaker in their frantic desire to get to the door only to be themselves borne down.

### **Ax Would Have Saved Many.**

Outside the rescuers labored impotently to break the wedge and extricate the children. They smashed the glass in the partitions on both sides of the door, but the woodwork, extending upward about two feet from the floor, balked their efforts. An ax would have saved many lives, but none was at hand and none could be found. Men desperately kicked against the doors and battered them with their fists until their hands were bloody, but it was useless.

And then, as they began to see how futilely they were working, the rescuers saw the flames licking their way down the stairs. In the agony of that moment was the sorrow of a lifetime. Women fought their way to the doorway, grabbed at arms and legs and pulled with a frenzy of the maddened. On the top of the heap a little girl lay. Her legs were caught in the jam, but her arms were free. She stretched them out imploringly.

"Please, somebody, oh please, somebody, get me out," she begged. Two women seized her by the arms and strove to tear her away from death. Men helped. And then came the flames, hot upon the gasping choking pile. They beat back the rescuers and in a trice enwrapped the heap. Features shriveled at their touch and the life in the little bodies went out.

The news of the fire reached the furtherest corner of Collinwood quickly. From the Lake Shore shops, where the fathers

of many of the children are employed, the men ran at the first call. Mothers rushed from their homes, their faces white with terror. The sight of the burning building turned dread into frenzy. The first few men and women, those who reached the school before fire lines were established, seemed to realize that with them rested the responsibility of saving as many as they could, but those who came afterward, when all hope was gone, enacted a heartrending scene. Women beat their breasts and tore their hair; men ran about wildly. One mother, her only son lost, went insane and, raving, was taken to her home. Others were too stunned to cry; they could only mutter over and over the names of their dear ones who perished.

Lacking in no possible feature of terror, agony or torture was the fire which swept through the crowded school at Collinwood.

The fire swept through the halls and stairways of the building like a whirlwind, laughing at fire drills and attempts at discipline. Ten minutes would have cleared the building of its population. But the ten minutes were lacking.

Sweeping up under the front stairway the flames cut off that exit entirely after one room full of pupils had passed out. This threw the great seething mass of frightened pupils into the back exit of the building.

In that narrow stairway and vestibule, penned like rats in a great trap, poured the mob of children, fighting, screaming, pushing. Down on them poured others, jumping down over the banisters, climbing over each other's heads, in the last desperate attempt to reach the doorway.

Nearly all the children were killed in the mass at the first floor door. This door was finally opened by men outside, but

a wall of flame had formed across it. And most of the children there were already dead.

A group of distracted mothers fought with the firemen, trying to drag the bodies from the tangled heap. The father of one victim pulled the arms from the little body of his daughter in his struggle.

The homes of people living near the school were turned into temporary morgues.

Glenville hospital cared for seven bodies.

### Fire Finally Out.

The fire was about out at 1:30. Firemen still played water on the ruins where several bodies were entombed.

The fire started in the basement from an overheated furnace. It was discovered by Janitor Fritz Hirter.

Classes were reciting.

### Thought it Was a Drill.

Up in the third floor, the attic, the littlest ones were at work. Miss Anna Moran, principal, was in her office on the second floor when the sharp alarm rang out. She rushed to the door.

Down the hall long lines of children were marching in straight lines. Their teachers were beside them.

Some of the little ones were laughing. They thought it was a fire drill. At the lower floor they saw flames shooting up from the basement. They screamed, and there was a rush for the front door.

Miss Catherine Weiler, second grade teacher, was on the second floor, and tried to keep her children in line.

When the rush began she leaped into their midst, commanding them to keep cool. She was dragged into the human current of bodies and crushed to death. Miss Grace Fiske, a

third grade teacher, tried also to stop the rush. She was fatally crushed.

Their heroic efforts were in vain. The vanguard of the dreadful rush jammed against the big door. Those behind pushed in.

The first little bodies were crushed into almost unrecognizable masses.

One little lad leaped up and walked over the tangled heap of bodies to safety. Others tried to follow. They piled up, higher and higher, till they suffocated. Most of those near the door were not burned to death. They were either crushed in the panic or suffocated.

Cut off from escape by the mass of bodies at the front door the children on the second and third floors tried the windows. The little ones who were reciting in the attic rooms, were carried down the fire escape, many of them.

#### Ladders Wouldn't Reach.

The others, too late, opened the windows and screamed piteously for help.

By this time the Collinwood fire department was on the scene. They found their ladders were insufficient to reach the third floor. The children were trapped, without hope of escape.

It was then that there followed the worst horrors of the fire. The little ones went insane with fear and ran down the stairs till they met the upsweeping flames, and perished.

#### Cleveland Helps.

Mapes' and Shepard's ambulances had been called. They loaded up from the ghastly heap at the front door and dashed



away. Hogan's ambulances came, received their freight and left, to return later for more. The Cleveland department came with its aerial ladder.

This reached the third floor and many were borne down to safety. By this time the flames had mounted to the third floor. The first and second floors fell away. At 11:30 only the walls of the building were left standing, and the screams of the helpless, trapped children, died away forever.

Crazed by horror, Fritz Hirter, the janitor, could remember little of what happened after the fire broke out.

Three of his four children in the school were among the dead.

"It was sweeping in the basement when I looked up and saw a wisp of smoke curling out from beneath the front stairway," he said. "I ran to the fire alarm and pulled the gong that sounded throughout the building.

"Then I ran first to the front and then to the rear doors and threw them open, as the rules prescribed.

#### **Crazed by the Horror.**

"What happened next? I can't remember. I see the flames shooting all about and the little children running down through them screaming.

"Some fell at the rear entrance and others stumbled over them. I saw my little 13-year-old Helen among them there. I tried to pull her out, and the flames drove me back. I had to leave my little girl to die."

Oscar Pahner, a lad of 11, was one of the heroes of the fire. Though his face was terribly burned and he suffered terribly from burns on his arms and hands, the boy rushed clear to

the Collinwood fire department to inform them of the holocaust. When he found them gone he hurried back to the school building and tried to dash into the burning building to save his little sister, Edna.

The boy was in a serious condition at his home. When the alarm of fire spread through the building he left his seat in a room on the second floor and dashed towards the rear door downstairs.

It was closed by the dead bodies of the pupils. The lad then ran into a room on the first floor, broke a window and escaped.

#### Teacher Dies.

At the bottom of what was the stairs of Lake View school lay the heap of little bones. For it was there almost every one of the 39 children in Miss Catherine Weiler's second grade on the second floor were killed and under them lay the larger skeleton of their teacher who lost her life in trying to save the little ones.

Just before the fire was discovered children were singing one of their little songs. The windows were opened to let in the sunlight. No one smelled the smoke in the hall.

Suddenly the school bells rang. Miss Weiler rushed to the door. In an instant she had the little ones on their feet. Carefully she marshaled them down the stairs, but the entrance was clogged. The first floor children were fighting to get through. There was no chance, except by the fire escape on the second floor.

She tried to take them back. She pushed them—pulled them. They wouldn't go. She then threw them from the windows. She stood among them until the stairs fell and they were thrown into a heap at the bottom.

Miss Anna Moran, principal, who was in her office on the second floor when the fire alarm rang in said:

"I ran out into the hall and beheld the most pathetic sight my eyes have ever seen. The little children were marching past my door in perfect order, heads up and feet keeping time.

"Their teachers were beside them, keeping the lines straight. The little ones were smiling and happy.

"They thought it was a fire drill.

"A moment later the vanguard reached the first floor. They saw the flames leaping up from the basement. They screamed, broke ranks and ran for the front door. It would not open. The mass turned to the rear door. It would not open and it was shut.

"Those in front tried to open it but the ones in the rear pushed against them, and the little bodies were crushed to death. Others suffocated. It was too dreadful for words."

### Took Out Children.

John Leffel, who lives near the school, tells of efforts to save the children piled up at the rear entrance. Leffel is 24.

"I ran to the school when I saw the smoke. The rear entrance, where the storm doors blocked up the arch, was heaped up with little bodies.

"I seized the first children I could reach and dragged them out.

"I was the first there. In a few moments two or three other men were working by my side.

"Some of the children seemed half suffocated. Some were unconscious. I did not stop to look. I seized them by the arms or legs or bodies and tossed them out behind.

"I guess there were others to pick them up and carry them

out of the way. The flames were rushing upon us and I knew we had only a few moments left.

"Some of the children were still piled up in the entrance when the heat and smoke drove us back from them."

A. Hansrath, clothier, whose store was near the school, arrived when children were jumping from the windows. He caught three who jumped from windows of the second floor.

Others were caught in the arms of two or three men who stood near him.

When the flames were discovered the teachers, who seem to have acted with courage and self-possession and to have struggled heroically for the safety of their pupils, marshalled their little charges into columns for the "fire drill," which they had often practiced.

Unfortunately the line of march in this exercise had always led to the front door, and the children had not been trained to seek any other exit. The fire came from a furnace, directly under this part of the building. When the children reached the foot of the stairs they found the flames close upon them, and so swift a rush was made for the door that in an instant a tightly packed mass of children was piled up against it.

#### 200 Maddened Children.

From that second none of those who were upon any portion of the first flight of stairs had a chance for their lives. The children at the foot of the stairs attempted to fight their way back to the floor above, while those who were coming down shoved them mercilessly back into the flames below. In an instant there was a frightful panic, with 250 pupils fighting for their lives.

Several parents succeeded in getting hold of the out-

stretched hands of their loved ones, but they could not break the grip that held them from behind. When the fire finally reached the prostrate mass, there was nothing to do save to take one last look.

### Death Fight is Heart Rending.

The shrieks of the entrapped children, agonized, blood chilling cries, died away. There was a gurgle of sound—then quiet. For a few moments the rescuers were powerless to move, stunned into silence. Suddenly a grey haired man dropped to his knees in the mud.

“Oh, God, what have we done to deserve this?” he moaned, with arms outstretched toward heaven.

Women, bareheaded and breathless, came running across the fields. They sought their children. They had not yet reached the building when they saw the old man kneeling. As of with one thought they threw themselves down in the mud and prayed to God to spare their little ones. As the words rose the dull sound of the fire engine came back as if to mock them, and the hissing of the flames as if to sneer at their misery.

When darkness fell Collinwood was bereft. Crushed and awed, it lay under a pall of sorrow. Here and there silent figures moved. The day of doom was nearing an end—there were no more tears left to shed, little more consolation left to give. If the neighbors met it was not to say, “How sorry I am,” but “How many have you lost?” Few the homes where death did not strike through relatives or friends.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE WAY OF ESCAPE BLOCKED.

#### CHILDREN CROWD INTO PASSAGEWAY, WHERE THEY ARE DESTROYED.

When the fear-maddened children first wedged into the passageway that led to safety they were all standing.

But the others surged from behind and as those in front struggled to free themselves they fell. This continued until the passage was blocked to within a foot of the top.

Only the faces of the children could be seen from the outside. Behind the human partition were scores of other children crowded against the barrier in a moaning huddle.

Then the fire swept down upon them and they perished as their helpless and frantic parents looked on.

An alarm had been turned in, and the news of the fire having spread through the village, fathers and mothers came rushing to the schoolhouse, screaming, smashing at the windows, hurling themselves against the doors, and as frequently being forced back by the intense heat which the flames threw off.

There were but two fire engines in Collinwood and they proved practically useless. The ladder company was of no use, its ladders failing to reach the windows where the imperiled children were trembling on the brink.

A frantic message was sent across the wires to Cleveland:

“Send help. Collinwood school is burning.”

And the crush at the door of the schoolhouse grew in its monstrous proportions, while the flames burned steadily



on. It was here that dozens of acts of heroism were performed that shine out in the awfulness of the scene.

Andrew Dorn, who lived in the neighborhood was early on the spot. He had a daughter in the school. As he reached the door he staggered back in horror.

In some way the door had been forced open a few inches—just a few pitiable inches, through which nothing but a frail little child could thrust its hand. The man faced a score of these little hands, torn, mangled, bleeding, stretched out in mute supplication, while from behind there came the saddest chorus that man has ever heard.

Dorn hurled himself against the door. Others joined him in the effort. The weight of a dozen men against the stout oak paneling sufficed only to move it an inch at a time, for behind it were the compact bodies of a hundred children upon whose slender bodies the flames were already feeding.

But they got it open finally, and among the mass of agonized faces that gazed beseechingly at Dorn was that of his own little daughter.

With a maddened cry he plunged into the mass. Move it he could not, though his daughter's voice weakly appealed to him. In his frenzy he seized hold of her arm and pulled and pulled.

The flames were already upon them, and he succeeded only in pulling the child's arm from its socket. She fell back into the struggling mass, and he saw her no more. Dorn fled with a piercing shriek.

Wallace Upton also had a child in the school. He was in the band of heroes with Dorn, and he remained there with the fire leaping over him until he was carried away with fearful burns.

He did not know that he saved his child and with her eighteen others, whom he dragged from the mass of victims, one at a time, and passed out to the eager helpers who thronged the place.

All the while the Collinwood firemen were doing their best, and the frantic mothers and fathers and other relatives and friends of those in the burning building were dashing about practically helpless, praying for the appearance of the Cleveland fire fighters.

By the windows above, when the wind would clear away the smoke temporarily, the faces of the children could be seen in a background of flames.

Now and then one of them would fall or leap out. Again there would be cries of "Hold on."

Ambulances clanged up—scores of them, and automobiles, wagons, carriages—all pressed into service to carry off the dead and injured as they were picked up from beneath the walls or dragged out of the mass that still struggled at the half-open doorway.

The Lake Shore Railroad shops were shut down and the employes sent over to join in the work of rescue. Other employes followed suit.

The flames were bursting from every opening in the building. Mothers and fathers who strove to rush into the building had to be restrained.

One big man, his eyes glaring fiercely, broke away time after time and sought to enter the structure.

"My kinder are there," he shouted. Bystanders finally had to throw him down and hold him to prevent him from going to his death.

Still no ladder, no skill in fire fighting—and every minute meaning the loss of another human life.

The second floor contained the rooms of Miss Catherine Weiler, second grade teacher, who was crushed to death, Miss Lulu Rowley, third grade; Miss Mary Gollmar, fourth grade, and Miss Anna Moran, principal and sixth grade teacher.

The top floor contains an auditorium, an attic and the fifth grade, taught by Miss Laura Bodey. One fire escape descended from the auditorium down the north side of the building.

Each of the rooms contained from thirty to forty children. Miss Fiske had forty-four, Miss Weiler thirty-nine. Miss Rose had the smallest children, those who started to school three weeks ago in the middle of the year.

The heaviest losses came in the rooms of Miss Moran, the principal; Miss Gollmar, Miss Rowley and Miss Lynn, Miss Fiske and Miss Weiler, where nearly three-fourths of the children perished. These were the children who attempted to get out by the fearful back stairway. The casualties were lowest among the youngest children on the first floor and Miss Bodey's whose pupils came down by the fire escape.

#### Parents Hurry to School.

Miss Rose Lynn and Miss Irvine started to lead their pupils out by the front entrance, but were driven back by the flames before more than half of them got away. Holding the little ones in check as much as they could, they led them back into the rooms, where they helped them from the windows.

Neighbors and parents hurried to the school building, where they caught the pupils as they jumped. Heroic rescues and narrow escapes become commonplace, as the friends and parents fought for their little ones.

On the second floor the teachers tried to take the children down the front and back stairways. Those who tried the first, hurried them to the back to find the passage blocked by hundreds of children, already beginning to mass and get blocked up.

Then ensued the dramatic fight of the day, the children struggling for the back stairways, the teachers trying to control them, and trying in vain. Miss Gollmar got a few of her pupils back into her room and got down the fire escape with them. The other teachers, except the two who were killed, got out that way.

But the children, uncontrollable, jumped and threw themselves over the stairways on the mass below. The pressure from behind carried all those ahead down to the first pit. The sea of children surged and beat and stormed against the doors below.

With the first call of fire came a call for help and relief. Every ambulance company in Cleveland and Collinwood sent every available wagon to the fire. Inspector Rowe sent out a detail of police under Capt. Schmunk and Lieut. Doyle of the thirteenth precinct.

When the fire gong sounded at the Lake Shore shops, the foremen ran into the shop crying:

"The schoolhouse is on fire. Everyone who has any children drop his tools and run for the building."

**Cried, "Jump, Jump."**

Men and women tried to rush into the building to rescue the children, but were driven back. Others stood underneath windows and encouraged the little ones to jump to their arms.

Finally the police established a fire line and began the work of rescue.

As the flames receded from the rear end of the building they exposed a great charred mass. Around it were blackened rafters and ashes and charred wood.

The ambulances lined up in a great semi-circle around the back of the building and the drivers assisted the firemen in recovering the bodies. While part of the workers shoveled away the debris, the others felt around in the water with their rubber boots for the bodies. As fast as they were found they were hoisted out and hurried to the temporary morgue.

#### Fire Department Late.

The alarm of fire was rung at 9:45 o'clock in the morning. Twenty minutes, according to the accounts of those who were witnesses, elapsed before the department arrived.

The equipment of the village fire department was one engine, one hose company and a small ladder truck and one team of horses. There were no regular firemen and only twenty volunteers.

Other horses were impressed into service and the fire department was sent to the schoolhouse. The chief of the local department, George C. Hammel, was at work in Cleveland at the time of the alarm. He arrived one hour later.

When the fire department arrived firemen say that the pressure was too light to supply the two lines of hose.

An alarm was sent in by a woman to engine house No. 7 in Cleveland. Chief Wallace was telephoned and he immediately ordered engine company No. 30 and a truck company to respond to the alarm, under the command of Battalion

Chief Fallon. The first equipment to arrive from Cleveland was the engine, a hose cart and an auxiliary truck.

Robert Galloway, an employee of the Lake Shore shops, who was present at the fire soon after its start, said that twenty minutes elapsed before any firemen were on the scene.

John Warson was the first Collinwood fireman to mount a ladder. Smoke overcame him and he was taken down in a comatose condition by his comrades.

"The outer doors at the back of the building were open, both of them, but one half of the double inner doors was closed," said Patrolman C. L. Wohl, of the Collinwood department. "The inner door was opened before the children became wedged in, however. The narrow corridor is what caught them.

"I rushed into the little outer hallway with Mr. Down and attempted to pull some of the children out, but it was of no use. I couldn't move one of them. Three times I tried to get them, but the heat was too great.

### Into A Fiery Furnace.

"I pulled my thick hat down over my ears, turned up my coat collar and went in again. It was terrible. The fire was coming out over the children in a solid wall. As I think of it now I can't remember hearing them scream, although I remember the awful pain reflected in their faces."

"Miss Gollmar, a teacher, tried to rescue the children, too, but I held her back. If I hadn't she, too, would have been burned."

Wohl's hat was burned on the top where he had held his



head down toward the fire, his coat was scorched, and his hands blistered, mute testimony to his unavailing bravery.

Miss Pearl Lynn, teacher of the first grade on the first floor, had a narrow escape from death. She was among the few who were pulled from the heap at the foot of the rear stairs. Most of her pupils perished.

"The fire gong sounded at exactly 9:30 o'clock as the classes were changing," she said. "The children stood up at once, thinking it was simply for fire drill. I gave the order to march, but when the doors opened into the corridor, smoke rushed in.

#### **Rush for Rear Exit.**

"The children all ran for the rear exit. Children from the second floor were tumbling down the stairs and blocking the way. My children crowded into them and so did those from two other rooms on the first floor. Miss Rose's pupils were the only ones in the school who escaped through the front door. Flames shooting up from the basement shut off the rest and they all rushed to the rear.

"I saw that one of the doors was shut and tried to get to it, but was borne down by children crushing from above. Miss Rose tried to unlatch the door but failed. Then Mr. Hirter, the janitor, came and forced it. I knew nothing after that until Mr. Dorn dragged me outside."

#### **Escapes with Coat.**

"I heard three bells. Then I got my coat, hat and rubbers, climbed out of the window to the fire escape, ran down one story and jumped."

### CHAPTER III.

#### A MOTHER'S AGONY.

MOTHER SAVES HER CHILD FOR A MOMENT,  
ONLY TO SEE HIM DIE.

Across the street from the burning building lived Mrs. Clark Sprung. Her boy was in the school. When she arrived on the scene at one of the windows she saw the face of her son. He stretched out his arms for help. The mother ran across the street and secured a stepladder which she placed against the wall.

Climbing up, she reached out and was barely able to catch the boy by his hair. With all her mother-strength she sought to drag him to safety, but at the moment of victory the fire conquered. It burned the boy's hair off in her hands and the lad fell back into the flames.

Tragedies like these, acts of daring bravery, of sacrifice, abounded on every side, while the fire swiftly spread the pall of death over nearly every home in the village.

Suddenly a shout of joy went up. The Cleveland fire fighters had been sighted, in the van the ladder wagon, with ladders that would reach those above. The driver was on his feet, lashing his horses into a mad gallop.

A hundred frantic men and women rushed forward to meet it. They did not wait for the apparatus to stop. The ladders were dragged off and eager hands carried them forward, but—

Again, in the hour of victory, the fire conquered. It had not been burning more than half an hour. There were still many precious lives that might be saved—they were

in the windows above there, little ones, six years old, seven, eight, with arms outstretched. Ten minutes before there had been a chance.

Now, as the rescuers were in the act of rearing up the ladders, there came an ominous roar, a burst of flame, a shower of sparks, and the floors of the building collapsed.

Those who heard the wail—low, plaintive, yet piercing—will never get the terrible ring out of their ears. It was the requiem.

It rose above the crack of flames, the crash of timbers. With it went all hope of saving any life that still remained in the building. Down there in the cellar the flames raged most fiercely.

From the crowd came in response an echo of agony and despair. Men and women gathered about in weeping groups while the firemen poured water on the flames.

Another hour and it was possible to begin work in the ruins with picks and delve in the blackened mass for the little ones in pinafores and Norfolks who three hours before, kissing mamma good-bye, with "shining morning faces, had crept unwillingly to school."

Firemen and employes from the Lake Shore shops turned morgue keepers. The railroad company turned over one of the buildings nearby to be used as a temporary morgue, and thither the charred and broken little bodies were removed as fast as they could be dug from the ruins.

They were placed in rows in the railroad shop. Identifications were made only by means of clothing or trinkets. The fire had swept away nearly all resemblance to human features in the majority of instances.

A line of men was formed, backed by half a dozen

ambulances. As the bodies were untangled from the debris they were passed along to the stretchers and thence to ambulances.

As fast as a load was obtained it was driven away to the improvised morgue, to be succeeded by another within a short time.

The hour had come to count the cost of somebody's blunder—"ten at a time." The cost was reckoned in the lives of little children, and the first squad of ten fathers and mothers were let through the big gate to the Lake Shore shops.

The cost was tabulated neatly, ready for the counting—rows or rows of charred bodies wrapped in blankets and laid out on the floor of the warehouse.

#### **Ten at a Time Seek Dead.**

Ten fathers and mothers counted the cost, and their places were taken by ten more fathers and mothers, and ten more, and yet ten more, until the awful tale was told.

By 4 o'clock 165 bodies had been brought to the warehouse, and many identified.

But to go back a little while. The Lake Shore shops at Col-  
linwood have been called the model railroad shops of the world—the biggest and the best.

Wednesday morning every department there was running smoothly in its accustomed groove. Word came that the schoolhouse had been burned down and that all or nearly all the children had died in the flames. At a signal every wheel in the model railroad shop stopped. And every superintendent and foreman of every department took advantage of the lull to make a short speech. They were all practically alike, and were as follows:

"Men, the school is on fire. Some of you have children there. There will be no more work today."

A machine shop foreman in overalls came running to the warehouse with a verification of the first reports.

"Hardly a one got out alive," he said. "I just came from there. It's bad enough when grown folks die, but when it's kids—yours and mine—little kids that were laughing and whispering and studying their lessons only an hour ago——"

He did not finish.

Already order was taking the place of disorder. A master mind somewhere had taken command. The system that makes this the model shops was working with the same efficiency on a labor of humanity.

A railroad shop contains everything a railroad can possibly need. And that means everything. It even means stretchers and sheets and blankets, for railroads have their share of disasters.

And it was providential that these things were to be had and that a master mind was there to order their distribution.

The company's physician, Dr. Williams, was among the first at the fire. He ordered the removal of the bodies from the smoking embers to the warehouse.

#### **Ambulances Busy at Grewsome Task.**

The ambulances galloped back and forth until their horses were white with lather. The bodies were laid in rows on the ground floor, between the shelves and heaps of castings, and covered with blankets.

A railroad man was given charge of each row. On the second floor a temporary hospital had been established, with four nurses. Then when everything was in readiness, the word was given to the gate tender.

And ten at a time they came, while the great crowd without pressed their white faces against the pickets and waited.

There was an escort at the gate to take them to the warehouse. They entered by a certain door. The escort changed, and they inspected first this row, next that one, and so on, to the last body in the last row. They went out by another door and through the gate, and ten more came.

With them went men who checked off names on lists, and when a body was identified it was covered with a white sheet. By night time there were more white sheets than blankets. And so the cost was counted.

A woman came, wild eyed and breathless. She all but stumbled over a body. The row stretched from wall to wall. She steadied herself and went resolutely to the task.

Shuddering, she passed from form to form, until she came to the next to the last. A suspender buckle glistened in a mold of burned cloth.

#### **First Victim to be Identified.**

Voiceless, she bent and picked it up and kissed it.

And the name, "Mills Thompson," was checked off the list.

Another woman came. "That's Henry's sweater," she said, and a check mark was placed after the name of Henry Schultz, nine. They would have led her away, for there were grewsome sights that were not good to see, but she said:

"That's only one," and went on looking.

A man came, leading a little girl by the hand. The man walked with averted face. "I dare not look," he said.

But the little daughter was braver. The search was long, and the child's face was white and drawn when it was finished and she said to her father:



"This is Irene's skirt, daddy."

And Irene Davis, fifteen, was numbered among the identified. The identification was made by her younger sister, Helen.

The work of identification was necessarily slow. In rare cases were the faces of the dead recognizable. The identity of most could be told only by the clothing, and perhaps a dozen bodies were nothing but charred flesh and bone.

An aged Polish woman searched for her dead boy. In her haste she brushed others aside. "Leave me alone," she said. "Do you think I would not know my boy?"

#### Woman Keeps Courage to End.

So they left her alone until they found her crouched at the feet of a blackened and shapeless thing that once had been a boy of ten. On its breast lay a silver watch. The woman knew the watch, because it had been her husband's, who was dead. It had gone to the boy as a legacy. She moaned and shivered on the floor.

Another woman, cast, perhaps, in a different mold, marched unflinching along the rows of bodies. Her husband followed her. In his eyes were tears; in hers none. Both were well and fashionably dressed.

Presently she halted and pointed with a gloved hand. The man nodded miserably. The woman, in the calmest of voices, instructed an undertaker concerning the disposition of her son's body. Her face was expressionless and stony.

"Come on," she said, and turned away, followed by her husband.

But when they reached the outer air she fainted dead away.

## CHAPTER IV.

### IN THE DEATH STRUGGLE.

#### VICTIMS TRAMPLE COMRADES TO DEATH IN VAIN EFFORTS TO ESCAPE.

Walter C. Kelley, a newspaper man, two of whose children were in the building, was one of the first upon the scene.

He said the rear door, one of the two exits, was locked. The children rushed for the front and rear doors. The front exit soon was jammed full of fighting and panic-stricken children.

Many who reached the exit first escaped, but those, the greater number, who followed choked the doorway.

Those who fell were trampled upon, and many were killed in this manner. Those behind turned and made for the windows. Some upon the second and third floors jumped from the windows and escaped.

In this way three or four were killed while others were more fortunate and escaped with slight injuries.

The greater number of those who met death were cut off from escape by the smoke, which blinded them.

Caught like rats in this manner, they fell with the lower floor, amid the blazing timbers, to the basement below. There the little bodies could be seen writhing in their last death struggle.

A few minutes after alarm was given the school was surrounded by fathers and mothers, who were frantic in their dazed efforts to rescue their children. Very few

were saved from among the children who were behind the jam at the front door. The others escaped with slight injuries.

The fire from the basement, in addition to filling the schoolrooms with smoke, which caused the first alarm, leaped up the stairway to the first, second and third floors.

When the children rushed from their rooms to the hallways they rushed into a fiery furnace. It was in the hallways and at the main exits where the greatest number met death.

The hallways were narrow and could not accommodate the large number that attempted to rush through them to reach the main door.

Three little girls met instant death in attempting to jump to safety from the third floor of the burning building. They were Mary Ridgeway, Anna Roth and Gertrude Davis.

The greatest loss of life was caused by one of the exits being closed, to which point scores of the children rushed. Their escape was blocked by a door that is, it is charged, opened inward.

In this manner they were delayed in reaching the other door and windows. It is believed that as a result of this stampede alone scores of children lost their lives.

After the fire had been somewhat reduced piles of charred little bodies were still visible in the doorways. In the rear door bodies burned beyond recognition lay piled five feet deep.

A man who reached the school building shortly after the fire broke out declared that the back door was locked.

He attempted to break down the door, but failed to do so. He then smashed in the windows with the aid of

other men and rescued a number of children by dragging them out.

The flames shot up through the central halls with terrible rapidity. The children were terrified beyond all control and the teachers, although they struggled bravely to marshal their charges out of the building in something like order, were utterly helpless.

Those who were familiar with the building and were early on the scene believe that most of the loss of life was due to the fact that all of the rooms were dismissed at once.

Pupils pouring down the stairs made for the doorways, already full of children escaping from the lower floors. The exits were soon choked.

The desperate ones behind pushed and struggled for their lives, driving the human wedges the tighter in place.

Persons living across the street, who were the first to reach the burning building, said the lower halls were already filled with flames when they arrived.

They helped out such children as they could reach, but were forced to see many beyond their aid perish miserably. The doors and windows were packed with terrified little ones, whose panic left them helpless to escape.

Many children descended the fire escapes, but feared to jump on reaching the bottom. They were pulled down to make room for others.

"As long as I live I will remember the terrible scene that confronted me, the despairing little children, arms outstretched, begging for protection from the awful wall of fire that was sweeping down on them," declared Mrs. Walter C. Kelly, as she turned, heartbroken, from the long line of dead

at the improvised morgue, where she and her husband were searching for the bodies of two of their children.

Mrs. Kelly was on her way to Willoughby with a contractor, where Mr. and Mrs. Kelly intended building a summer bungalow. Mr. Kelly, who is marine editor of the Cleveland Leader, recently moved into Collinwood and their children had not been attending the school long. As Mrs. Kelly was about to cross Collamer avenue a little girl rushed up to her.

"Fire, school fire," was all the breathless and frightened little one could say.

#### Sees Smoke Arising.

"I looked back at the school house," said Mrs. Kelly, "and saw smoke, and knowing my little ones were in danger I ran to the building and joined a frantic and screaming crowd of men and women at the rear of the building who were trying to rescue some of the pupils. I pushed my way to the front and found children jammed in a mass in front of the door. There they stood, arms outstretched, the flames beating down upon their heads and swirling about their bodies.

"They were silent, most of them. The heat had become so intense when I arrived that they were stifling and their agonized screams were stilled. The outside doors of the vestibule were wide open, but the inner doors were closed.

"The panels had been broken out and we could reach through and seize the children.

#### Children Piled Up.

"The lower part of the doors were intact and behind them, piled up almost breast-high, were the children.

"It was terrible to think that we could reach them with our hands and yet were unable to drag any of them out.

"The little ones looked up into our faces and the mute appeal and agony expressed in their countenances I never will forget.

"I seized one little girl by the hands and pulled. Her hands were blistered and burned and presented the appearance of raw beefsteak.

"I exerted all my strength, but she was wedged so fast in the mass of children that her flesh slipped through my hands.

"Despite every effort those who were frantically trying to rescue the children failed utterly.

#### Couldn't See Her Own Boy.

"The hair of most of the children was burned off, their clothes were afire; their faces, upturned, were glazed over by the furious blast of flame which poured over their heads, and, with hearts wrung with agony, we were forced back from the door and stood idly by as the little ones perished.

"It was awful, a terrible sight. I knew that while I stood there trying ineffectually to aid the doomed tots my Richard was there. I could not see him, but I am sure he saw me."

Late in the afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Kelly identified the body of Walter C. Kelly, Jr., seven years old. The body of the older boy, Richard Dewey Kelly, ten years old, also was found at the morgue.

Of their three children only the youngest, Gilbert, too young to attend school, survives.

#### Breaks News To Wife.

John Leonard walked homeward from the Lake Shore morgue where on a stretcher, among the dead, lay his two little ones. His step was slow and tears coursed down his cheek. He was thinking how he could break the news to his wife.



"She has a weak heart," he sobbed. "It may kill her."

As he neared the house he forced a smile. Three little nieces came to meet him.

"Where's Louise?" asked a 5-year-old.

Leonard lost his self-control and burst into tears. He mounted the steps.

"They're dead—my babies are dead," he cried.

Mrs. Leonard screamed and fell fainting into her husband's arms.

With a wild cry, Leonard reeled, and, his wife in his arms, fell to the floor. He, too, had fainted.

#### **All The Teachers Heroines.**

There were nine teachers in the Lakeview school. Two of them died with their children. They were Miss Katherine Weiler, 2217 East 81st street, and Miss Grace Fiske, Orville avenue, Cleveland.

Miss Fiske died among the first, shielding the little six-year-old first grade pupils in her charge from the flames.

Her room was burned first of all. Some of the children escaped through the window, and she could have done so, but insisted on waiting until her charges, or some of them, could be saved.

#### **Sacrifices Her Own Life.**

Miss Weiler deliberately plunged into the struggling mass of children on the stairway, though she knew the way to safety, and rendered up her life in exchange for the safety of a score of little ones, whom she bodily hurled back toward the fire escape, down which they fled.

The last seen of her was, as her clothing blazed, she repeated:

"Quiet, children, quiet: go back to the fire escape."

Then she died.

Miss Pearl Lynn, another teacher, was pulled from beneath the mass of children by Patrolman Wahl, and carried away unconscious.

Miss Ethel Rose, teacher, saved all but three of her 37 pupils, and escaped herself.

#### **Loses Half Her Flock.**

Miss Ruby Irwin lost half of her flock. She ordered them to rush through the flames to the front doorway.

Those who refused stayed back—and died. All who followed her escaped unscathed. Her judgment had been good.

Misses Moran, Gollmar and Rowley escaped through the windows of their rooms.

Miss Laura Bodey alone maintained the order of the fire-drill, and standing on the fire escape, after flight through the halls was rendered impossible, lifted her children to safety.

Only five or six of hers perished, and those broke from the lines and leaped into the death-trap at the foot of the stairs.

"We had been having fire drills about once every month," said Miss Lulu Rowley, one of the teachers. "The children knew the signal well; so when the gong sounded Wednesday in my room on the second floor, the pupils all closed their geographies and stood up.

"I ordered a child at a desk in the rear of the room to open the door. It was when smoke poured into the room that I realized that this was more serious than our ordinary fire drills.

"I was standing in the middle of the room at the time, help-

ing one of the pupils with her work. Despite my caution to keep quiet, some of the children started to cry 'fire.' Immediately there was a rush for the door.

"At the foot of the stairs the passage through the front door was cut off by the flames. The other entrance in the rear was jammed shut with children from the other rooms who had left their rooms earlier than those in mine.

"I called to my class to file into one of the rooms on the first floor. Only a few obeyed, and these I lifted to the windows. Even then some of them would not jump until I pushed them.

"I ran back into the hall to call more children. By this time the smoke was so dense that I could not see 10 feet before me.

#### **Only A Few Obey.**

"Most of my pupils are foreigners. I always found them more obedient than the American children, but they were too panic-stricken to mind me. They rushed headlong at the back door. They could not get through.

"Seeing that I could not save any more, I jumped through one of the back windows.

"At our last fire drill three weeks ago, the children in my room filed out of the building in about a minute. But with the front door cut off by flames, it was impossible to follow our usual drill."

## CHAPTER V.

### PARENTS UNABLE TO SAVE.

#### FATHERS AND MOTHERS PRAY AND CURSE AS THEIR CHILDREN PERISH.

Fearful scenes were enacted while the schoolhouse burned. Fathers and mothers raved, cursed or prayed. Many tried to break through the crowd and some got so far as to dash toward the flaming doorways. A big man in overalls and jumper was restrained by force. Explaining in broken English that his "babies" were in the building he struggled desperately with the three men who held him.

Finally they threw him to the ground and sat on him, forcing his great form down in the ankle-deep mud.

The building was destroyed, only the outside brick walls remaining standing. The floors and roof fell into the interior early in the fire, making the rescue of bodies intact absolutely hopeless.

As soon as firemen and volunteers could get close enough attempts were made to pluck bodies from the death heaps at the doors.

It was found that the flames had practically incinerated the bodies. Firemen with rakes, forks and shovels turned up blackened bones, little blackened skulls and masses of charred flesh, but bodies recognizable as such were no longer to be found.

The fire had swept away nearly all resemblance to human features in the majority of instances. Distracted par-

ents soon began to gather and the work of identification of the blackened and mangled corpses began.

The task of taking out the blackened bodies was one of horror. A line of rescuers was formed, backed by half a dozen ambulances.

As the bodies were drawn from the debris they were passed along to the stretchers and thence loaded in the ambulances.

Mercifully covered with blankets, the pitiful sights were veiled from the crowd of curious that stretched about the entrance to the structure.

As fast as a load was obtained it was driven away to the improvised morgue, to be succeeded by another within a short time.

The sights of the human charnel house caused the men delving into the mass of burned flesh to hesitate, but the work had to be done and done quickly, so their feelings had to be smothered for the time being as they tenderly handled all that was mortal of the little ones.

At the temporary morgue in the Lake Shore shop the scenes increased fourfold in the intensity of human suffering as fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters passed up and down the lines formed of scores of corpses.

To facilitate identification the bodies were numbered as they were received at the morgue.

After the bodies had been taken to the temporary morgue they were laid in rows of ten.

The first identification was that of Nels Thompson, a boy who was identified by his mother, who knew his suspender buckle.

Henry Schultz, nine years old, was known only by a

fragment of his sweater, his face having been trampled into nothing.

The third identification was that of Irene Davis, fifteen years old, whose little sister pointed out a fragment of her skirt.

Among those who sought vainly through the morgue for their children was Mrs. John Phillis of Polar street, whose fifteen-year-old daughter was among the dead.

Her attention was called to the fire by her four-year-old son, who called her to come to the window, "and see the children playing on the fire escape."

Mrs. Phillis ran to the schoolhouse and found her daughter among those penned in around the front door. She took hold of her hands, but could not pull her out.

"I reached in and stroked her head," said Mrs. Phillis, "trying to keep the fire from burning her hair. I stayed there and pulled at her and tried to keep the fire away from her till a heavy piece of glass fell on me, cutting my hand nearly off. Then I fell back and my girl died before my eyes."

Dale Clark, eight years old, was identified by a little pink bordered handkerchief, in which he had wrapped a new, bright green marble.

The body of Russell Newberry, nine years old, was made known by a fragment of a watch chain.

Hugh McIlrath, ten years old, who was killed in the fire, was the son of Charles G. McIlrath, chief of the Collinwood police. He lost his life in the effort to save a number of smaller children.

When Chief McIlrath reached the burning building he saw his son leading a crowd of younger children down the fire escape.



From the bottom of the escape to the ground was a long leap, and the children refused to take it, in spite of young McIlrath's efforts.

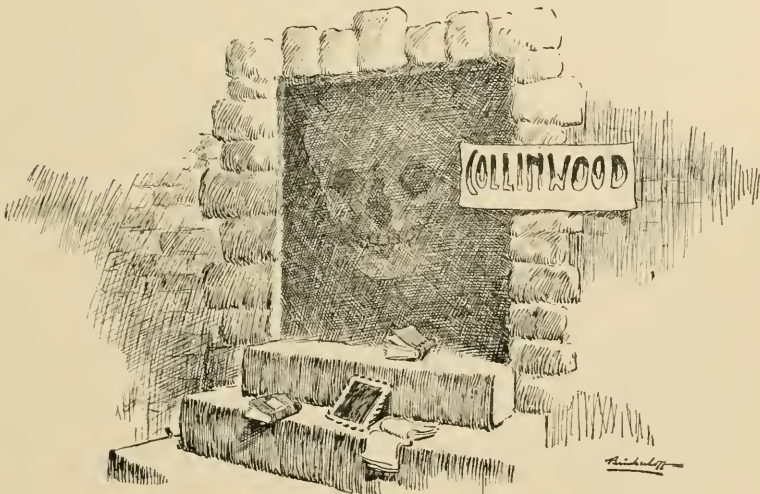
Some of them turned back into the building, and young McIlrath hastened after them to induce them to come out again, but was caught by the flames before he could do so himself.

Glenn Sanderson, a boy of twelve, met his death in plain view of a large crowd which was utterly unable to help him.

He was on the third floor, in the school auditorium, in which were a number of pieces of scenery.

The floor beneath him was on fire, and young Sanderson swung from one piece of scenery to another, trying to reach the fire escape.

He managed to cross the stage about half way, when he missed his grasp and fell into the fire.



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE TERRIBLE STORY.

#### STRONG MEN WEEP AS THEY TELL HOW THEIR CHILDREN DIED.

A father stood on the street in Collinwood after the fire and told a neighbor how his little girl, nine years old, was burned to death.

He told how she had helped her mother with the breakfast dishes. He told how she had laughed and waved her hand to him as she skipped off down the street for school on the fatal Wednesday. He told how she looked when they got her out, her poor little body charred by flames, twisted in agony.

He laid his face in the arm of his shabby overcoat and sobbed.

The word "Wednesday," marking the day when scores of children had died in the flames of their school, merely startled those whom the fire did not leave stricken and hysterical or dazed.

Realization of the horror came in the plain, heartrending stories that passed from man to man in the streets and from one home to another.

It was learned then how some little boy, the snub-nosed youngster who passed the house every morning rattling a stick against the fence pickets, met death; how he was taken out with his little legs twisted, stiffened, charred, his arm thrown up across his burned and blackened face.

A hush of pity fell. The silence of death, an awful, wholesale death of little children lies upon the town.

One story is that of an unknown little girl among the many heaped up against the closed rear door. The flames were at her back when she pressed her face to the crack of the door and pleaded:

“Mister, help me out.”

William Davis, aged twenty-four, 615 Westropp avenue, could hear her. He threw his weight against the door and tried to force it open, back through the piled-up bodies. She could almost touch him. Her face was to the crack. Her hair was scorching. Her baby hands reached out pleading, “Mister, help me.”

Something fell from above on Davis’ head and stunned him. Before others could reach the child she had fallen back among the dead.

Whose little girl?

No one could answer this question. To every stricken parent, to every one whose child was saved, to all who heard this story, the thought occurred: “Suppose my child was at that door reaching out and pleading, ‘Mister, help me!’”

At almost every other house along the streets white ribbons fluttered from the door-knobs.

At one house three bows of white marked the number of the dead. At the table there at noon a father sat silent, with eyes staring ahead, and saw nothing. The food before him lay untasted.

At the side of the table were their chairs—three; in a corner, the skates of the young boy; on a rack behind the door hung the cap and cloak of his little girl—all dead.

In the man’s toil-roughened hands lay a sheet of paper with figures penciled over it. At the top was the name in a slow, rounded hand, Alice.

The night before she sat by him at the table when the supper dishes were cleared away. He helped her with her lesson. It was a hard lesson for the little girl. He thought how pleased she had been when they got it right at last.

He thought how she looked when she sleepily kissed him goodnight and went upstairs to bed. He thought of how she looked that last morning when she started to school.

Slowly, while his eyes were still staring straight ahead, he folded the bit of paper that had been his little girl's and laid it away in his pocket.

The baby in his high chair pounded the tray with his spoon.

"Papa," baby cried in childish prattle. "Papa, when's Alice coming home?"

The man could not speak. Tears rolled down his furrowed cheeks. He hid his face in his arms on the table and sobbed aloud, his shoulders shaking.

In the front room the bodies lay side by side. And there beside them, crying, the mother knelt. They two, together at the morgue, had claimed their dead.

They passed along the long lines of charred, twisted little bodies. The mother pitched forward fainting when they at last found their third.

Just across the street from the burned school was a little candy and school supply store. It was closed. In the windows lay displayed the slate pencils, rulers, tops, marbles, balls and chocolate rats, licorice sticks and all-day suckers—things for which children spend their pennies.

Such things as these fell from the pockets of charred

clothes at the orgue when the bodies were lifted for removal.

It was school time at 8:30 a. m. Thursday. BUT THERE WAS NO SCHOOL IN COLLINWOOD.

At the regular hour children came out on the streets. Habit or fascination drew them to the ruins, where their playmates had perished.

### Fights Fire as Son Dies.

The fire had its tragedy for Charles G. McIlrath, chief of the Collinwood police force. He was one of the first to arrive at the burning building. He was at the police station when the fire broke out and received the first news of the fire over the telephone. As soon as he turned in the alarm he jumped into a passing wagon and ordered the driver to rush him to the school building.

The flames had gained considerable headway, however, before he arrived and the heat was so intense that he was unable to enter the building where his three children, Hugh, fourteen; Benson, seven, and Viola May, nine, were at school.

A large number of children had made their escape from the building, but he did not know whether his children were alive or dead. Duty came before everything else. He had to take charge of the police force and he had no time to examine the bodies as they were carried from the building.

For six hours he remained at the building keeping the crowd back and answering the questions of hundreds of anxious fathers and mothers. His stolid face did not betray his anxious heart and only when pressed did he say that he feared that his children were lost.

During the afternoon he learned that his daughter Viola

May and his son Benson were safe. His eldest son was still missing, but he was unable to search for him until 6 o'clock. Then he hurried to the Lake Shore shops, where the dead bodies were taken, and after a long, nerve racking search he found the body of his son.

#### Finds Dead Son.

"It's Hughie," was all he said.

Brushing back the tears that welled into his eyes he hurried back to the ruins of the charnel house and remained on duty until far into the night.

Frank J. Dorn, a member of the school board and chairman of its building committee, was in the kitchen of his home when the school bell gave the alarm. Without waiting to put on his hat or coat, he ran to the building. He and Charles Wall, a special policeman, were among the first to reach the building. The children had begun to fall at the rear door. Together they dragged many to safety, among them Miss Pearl Lynn, a teacher in the first grade, who had fallen and was being trampled under foot by the excited scholars.

"The fire had not much headway when we reached the school," said Frank Dorn. "The flames were burning in the front part of the hall and had shut off escape from that way, but the rear entrance was still free and the children were pouring out.

"One child fell and the others, mad with the panic, and borne on by the force of those behind them, fell over their prostrate companions. One of these was Miss Lynn. She was nearly unconscious when we got her into the open air and her clothing was badly burned.

"I could see my little girl in the rear of the crowd. She was with Blanch McIlrath, Chief McIlrath's daughter. I called to



them to come on and I would pull them over the heap of children. I saw them turn and go up the stairway. That was the last I saw of my girl. Blanch McIlrath was saved. My little one is dead."

Ten-year-old Mildred Schmitt, her skirts in flames to the knees, ran screaming from the building. Someone in the crowd smothered the flames, but not until the little form was blistered and blackened. "Papa, papa," moaned the child, and breaking his way through to her, the father sprang to her side just as she was being placed in an ambulance. Her mother had fainted at sight of the child's agony.

"You'll go with me, won't you, papa?" the little girl moaned.

"Yes, right with you," said the father, choking down his sobs. Mildred was taken to Glenville hospital, where she died a few hours later.

#### **Face and Hands Blistered.**

Henry Ellis, 4613 Westropp avenue, Collinwood, a real estate man, was one of the first to reach the doomed building. He was aroused by a boy running down the street and crying "Fire." With L. E. Cross, superintendent of the Lake Shore roundhouse, he ran to the scene. Together they attempted to rescue some of the children, jammed in at the rear door. Ellis remained at his post till his face and hands were blistered.

"It was the most heartrending sight I ever saw," said Ellis, his hands swathed in cotton. "When I reached the school the smoke was pouring from the first and second story windows. The front door appeared to be closed, and behind it I could see the flames coming through the floor.

"Cross and I went to the rear. Back of the open door was

the most pitiful sight I ever saw. The memory of it I will carry to my grave.

"There they lay, five or six deep in the open door. They had almost reached a place of safety, and, running down the stairs, had evidently fallen over the forms of their prostrate companions. Back of them were other children. The fire had already reached them. I could see over the mass before me; the flames caught first one and then another.

"The fire was creeping up on the children in the rear. I saw one girl, who could not have been more than ten or twelve, protect her little brother, who was not more than six years of age. He cried for help and clung to her hand. She comforted him and covered his head with a shawl she was wearing.

#### Flames Near Children.

"The flames were growing closer, and the moans of the children mingled with the creaking of the fire. The little girl drew her brother nearer to her. She saw that there was no help. Together they knelt down on the floor. That was the last I saw. The fire caught them after that.

"Cross and myself and others worked at the rear door. The children were lying in a heap on the floor and when I first came there I thought it would be no task at all to get most of them out.

"After we had attempted to release the first girl we saw what was before us. They were crowded in, one on top of the other, as a cord of wood is piled up. It was impossible to move them. We succeeded in saving a few who were nearer the top, but that was all.

"The children, and they were mostly girls, were patient.

They did not cry out for help. We worked as rapidly as we could. We would grasp a child by the arms and strive to disengage him from the compact mass. In most cases it was impossible.

"The fire swept on through the hall. It sprang from one child to another, catching in their hair and on the girls' dresses. The cries of those in the rear were heartrending."

When the first rumor of disaster reached Mrs. Mary Laubish, of Kent street, she rushed from her home bareheaded. Over the frozen pavement she flew, slipping, panting, falling, still running on. Her sole thought was for her only boy, Clarence, ten years old, a bright fourth grade pupil.

The woman dashed into the press of the people before the burning building.

"My boy," she said imploringly. "Where is Clarence?"

Before bystanders could speak her question was answered. The boy, alive and uninjured, rushed into her arms. Fainting with the excess of joy the mother sank to the ground and had to be carried away.

At the first alarm Clarence had run to a second story window and jumped. He escaped without a scratch.

### Depicts the Horror.

Miss Colmar said: "It was awful. I can see the wee things in my room holding out their tiny arms and crying to me to help them. Their voices are ringing in my ears yet, and I shall never forget them. When the alarm gong rang I started the pupils to marching from the building. When we started down the front stairs we were met by a solid wall of flame and clouds of dense smoke. We retreated, and when we turned the children became panic stricken and I could not

do anything with them. They became jammed in the narrow stairway and I knew that the only thing for me to do was to get around to the rear door, I suppose, and help those who were near the entrance. When I got there, after climbing out of a window, I found the children so crowded in the narrow passageway that I could not pull even one of them out.

"Those behind pushed forward, and as I stood there the little ones piled up on one another. Those who could stretched out their arms to me and cried for me to help them. I tried with all my might to pull them out and stayed there until the flames drove me away."

#### Tells of Horror.

Another teacher, Miss Pearl Lynn, narrowly escaped death. She was carried toward the rear entrance by the rush of the panic-stricken pupils, and fell at the bottom of the stairs, with numbers of the children on top of her. She lay unable to rise because of the weight of the bodies upon her. She was dragged from the mass of dead children just in time to save her own life.

One of the scenes of supreme horror that attended the fire occurred at the rear doorway of the building before the firemen arrived. This door is said to have been closed and some say that it was locked. The children were piled up high against it, and when it finally was broken down, by those outside, and because of the fire that had partly burned and weakened it, the women who had gathered on the outside saw before them a mass of white faces and struggling bodies.

The flames swept over the babes while the women stood helpless, unable to lift a hand to aid the children. Many of the women were unable to withstand the sight and dropped fainting to the ground.

## CHAPTER VII.

### EFFORT TO RESCUE CHILDREN.

#### SUPREME MOMENT OF HORROR—DOOR TO SAFETY IS CLOSED.

One of the scenes of supreme horror that attended the fire occurred at the rear doorway of the building before the firemen arrived.

This door, like the one in front, opened inward, and it was locked. The children were piled up high against it, and when it finally was broken down by their weight and because of the fire that had partly burned and weakened it the women who had gathered on the outside saw before them a mass of white faces and struggling bodies.

The flames swept over the aisle while the women stood helpless, unable to lift a hand to aid the children. Many of the women were unable to withstand the sight and dropped fainting to the ground.

The fire department was late in reaching the building, and when it came the apparatus was inadequate, and the men were volunteers, there being no paid fire department in the suburb.

The water pressure was not sufficiently strong to send a stream to the second story windows. Moreover, the firemen had no ladder that would reach to the third floor. The volunteers did what they could, but within a few moments after their arrival the task was one for ambulances alone.

The police were utterly unable, through lack of numbers, to keep away the crowd that pressed upon them, and

the situation soon became so serious that a number of the more cool headed men in the throng took it upon themselves to aid in fighting back the crowd, while others worked to help the firemen and the police.

The flames had spread with such terrific rapidity that within thirty minutes from the time the fire was discovered the schoolhouse was nothing but blackened walls surrounding a cellar filled with corpses and debris.

The firemen dashed into the blazing wreckage, and worked in the most frantic manner with the hope of saving a few more lives. They were unsuccessful, for none was taken alive from the ruins after the floors collapsed.

Fragments of incinerated limbs, skulls, and bones were found almost at every turn, and these things were piled together in a little heap at one side of the building.

George Getzien, superintendent of the Collinwood Telephone Company, was in his buggy fewer than 200 feet distant from the school when he saw the fire eat its way through the front of the building. In relating his experience he said:

"I went to the rear door and tried to force an entrance. Aided by Policeman Charles Wall, we managed to get in, but both of us were driven out by the fire.

"There were no children near the door at that time, as I remember it. We ran around to the front door, but could not force it open. My opinion is that it opened inward. The fire was so hot that within fifteen minutes after I saw the flames we could not remain near the building."

Henry Ellis, real estate dealer, was one of the first to reach the building. With him was L. E. Cross, foreman of the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern roundhouse.

Together they attempted to rescue some of the children



jammed at the rear door, and Ellis remained at the work until his hands and face were badly burned.

"When I reached the school," he said, "the front door was closed, and below it I could see the flames coming through the floor.

"We knew we could save none of the children there, so Cross and I went to the rear. The door had been broken open and the children lay five or six deep, the fire had already reached them, and I could see the flames catch first one and then another.

"I saw one girl, who could not have been more than ten or twelve years old, protect her little brother, who was not more than six. He cried for help and clung to her hand.

"She encouraged him and covered his head with a shawl she was wearing to keep the flames away. The fire caught them in a minute and both were killed.

"Cross and I thought that the work of getting the children out would be easy, but when we attempted to release the first one we found it was almost impossible to move them at all.

"We succeeded in saving a few who were near the top, but that was all we could do. The fire swept through the hall, springing from one child to another, catching in their hair and on the dresses of the girls. Their cries were fearful to hear."

From the upper floors of the school building two stairways offered exit. One of these led to the door in front, the other to the door in the rear.

It was in this last place that the lives of the little ones were lost while would-be rescuers stood helpless. The scenes that were enacted in the front hall never will be known.

The door at this side of the building never was fully opened. But a dense pile of little bodies that lay in the blackened wreckage beneath this point, the feet, the hands, the limbs and the skulls that were scattered about formed a complete index to the horrors that had taken place.

Crowding in among the first rescuers at the fire came the mothers. Some of them could see their children in the crowd.

The children who had been keeping up an incessant monotonous scream, shrieked louder at the sight of their mothers.

A few of the women stood close to the stairway holding the hands of the little ones until the flames drove them away.

When the fire forced the mothers to leave their children they stood about for the most part wailing and clasping their hands.

A few hurled stones through the windows in the hope that the crash of breaking glass would suggest to the children a possible avenue of escape.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A FIRE TRAP.

#### SCHOOL BUILDING INADEQUATE TO ACCOMMODATE ALL THE PUPILS.

The Lake View School of North Collinwood was a brick structure,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  stories in height. Under the stairway in the basement in front of the building was located the furnace. Owing to the mild weather there was less fire than usual.

On the first floor four rooms were in use when the fire broke out. The children on this floor, with few exceptions, escaped.

They believed the ringing of the fire gong was the usual fire signal and marched out in order. The pupils on the second and third floors became panic-stricken and rushed to death.

Singular lack of foresight was shown in the construction of the school building, for it was provided with but narrow halls; and the covered fire escapes on the outside, customary on school buildings, had never been installed.

The school was overcrowded and quarters had been provided for the younger children in the attic.

Strange as it may seem, more of the pupils escaped from this part of the schoolhouse than from any other.

The children were under good discipline, they had been practiced frequently in the fire drill, their teachers without exception retained their self-possession, showing great courage in the face of imminent death, and yet more

than half of these little ones died horribly because of faulty building arrangements.

Inside the building was a shell, which burned with almost inconceivable rapidity. The entire interior was a mass of smoking ruins lying in the cellar within thirty minutes after the alarm of fire was sounded.

There was but one fire escape, and that was in the rear of the building. There were but two stairways, one leading to a door in front and the other to a door in the rear.

There were in the building at the time the fire was discovered between 310 and 325 pupils. They were under the control of nine teachers, all but two of whom escaped.

All of the victims were between the ages of six and fifteen years. The school contained between 310 and 325 pupils, and of this entire number only about eighty left the building unhurt.

When the teachers were informed of the existence of the fire they promptly formed the pupils in columns of march, according to the fire drill, which they had so frequently practiced, and started them for the door.

They had trained the children to march always toward the door in front and instinctively the columns headed that way and the children unknowingly were by their teachers literally marched into the very face of death.

When the head of the column was nearing the front door a rush of flames met it.

Some of the children dashed at the door in the effort to open it, while others turned and fled wildly up the stairs. The door was double and one side was held by a spring.

The column above knowing nothing of the fire on the stairs below, kept pressing down and within a few seconds there was a jam, panic and struggle on the stairway and

behind the half-closed front door that nothing could stop and which cost the lives of all who were caught within it.

As soon as the alarm was given in North Collinwood Mrs. W. C. Kelley ran from her home, which is not far from the schoolhouse, to the burning building.

The front portion of the structure was a mass of flames, and frenzied, by the screams of the fighting and dying children which reached them from the death trap at the foot of the first flight of stairs, and behind that closed door, Mrs. Kelley ran to the rear, hoping to effect an entrance there, and save her children.

She was joined by a man whose name is not known, and the two of them tugged and pulled frantically at the door.

They were unable to move it in the slightest, and there was nothing at hand by which they could hope to break it down.

In utter despair of saving any of the children, they turned their attention to the windows, and by smashing some of these they managed to save a few of the pupils.

"They could have saved many more," said Mrs. Kelley, "if the door had not been locked. Nobody knows how many of the children might have made their way out before any aid had reached there, if the door had not been locked.

"If half a dozen men had been there when I arrived at the schoolhouse, perhaps they might have broken down the door, but I could do nothing, and the flames spread so rapidly that it was all over in a few minutes."

Those who survived the terrible catastrophe had heartfelt praise for the heroism of some of the women teachers in their efforts to save the children from death, especially Miss Catherine Weiler, who lost her life, and Miss Grace

Fiske, who labored with almost superhuman efforts to save the pupils under her care. She was badly injured.

Miss Weiler's body, covered by a huge pile of her dead scholars, was found just inside the rear door, through which a frantic fight was made to escape.

Miss Catherine Weiler lost her life in a vain effort to marshal the pupils of her class and lead them to safety. She died in the crush at the rear door. Her room was on the second floor, and when the fire alarm sounded she marched her pupils out into the hall, thinking it was only a fire drill. There the truth dawned upon both teacher and pupils, and control was lost.

The children in their frenzy plunged into the struggling mass ahead of them. Miss Weiler attempted to stem the rush, but went down under it, and her body was found an hour later piled high with those of the pupils.

Miss Weiler formerly lived in Detroit and was educated in Toledo.

Miss Fiske was taken out horribly crushed, but died.

#### Whole Town on the Scene.

The suburb of Collinwood contains about 8,000 persons, and within half an hour after the outbreak of the fire nearly every one of them was gathered around the blazing ruins of the schoolhouse, hundreds of parents fighting frantically with the police and firemen, who were busily engaged in saving the lives of the children and doing their best to extinguish the fire. The police were utterly unable through lack of numbers to keep away the crowd that pressed upon them, and the situation soon became so serious that a number of more cool-headed men in the throng took it upon themselves to



aid in fighting back the crowd, while others worked to help the firemen and the police.

The flames spread with such terrific rapidity that within 30 minutes from the time the fire was discovered the building was nothing, but a few blackened walls surrounding a cellar filled with corpses and debris.

The firemen dashed into the blazing wreckage, and with rakes, forks, shovels and their bare hands worked in the most frantic manner with the hope of saving a few more lives. They were unsuccessful, for none was taken alive from the ruins after the floors collapsed. Fragments of incinerated limbs, skulls and bones were found almost at every turn, and these things were piled together in a little heap at one side of the building.

The great majority of the little bodies that were taken out were burned beyond all possible recognition. And it is no small part of the sorrow which bore down the people of North Collinwood that positive identification of many of the children was never made.

Besides the children who were killed inside the building three little girls, Mary Ridgeway, Anna Rolth and Gertrude Davis were instantly killed by leaping from the attic to the ground.

#### **Anguish after Fire.**

Anguish and anger were Collinwood's the day after the fire.

The day of horror past, the townspeople turned to the reckoning. Directly they placed the blame against the faulty construction of the inner door, wrathfully against the feeble fire department, more bitterly against the politics that made such inadequate protection possible.

When the alarm was sounded the only team of fire horses the town owns was dragging a road scraper, more than a mile away. While frantic and helpless men and women were wasting their futile strength trying to break down the rear door and the partition on both sides, the ax that would have saved many lives was lying idly in the fire station, and the team-of-all-work was plowing through mud knee deep on its way to where it should have been.

### Many Lives Sold Cheaply.

It would have been a simple matter, say those who were first on the scene, to have broken down the door, cut away the partition and released at least part of the mass of children that clogged the passageway—if there had been an ax at hand. Several men ran to near by homes in quest of one, but they came back empty handed.

At last the fire department reached the school. First came the hose wagon, drawn by horses borrowed for the occasion. Frail and antiquated, it squeaked and rattled as it struck the numerous ruts in the mire of the road. It would have been a laughable sight under other circumstances. In time, followed the wheezy gasoline engine and the hook and ladder, for even such a long run could not kill the team-of-all-work. The engine once in action, spluttered and halted, the hose leaked and the water pressure was admittedly abnormally low.

And this was what the fire department depended upon to protect a town of 7,000 inhabitants, forty-three miles of streets and property worth several millions.

For months Collinwood talked of becoming a part of Cleveland. Under the administration of Mayor Sherman,

who preceded Mayor Westropp, the town voted for the step. But the Sherman regime was not to be ousted without a fight. It had a month of life after it was sentenced to fall and after the people had declared their wish to be taken into the larger city. In that month the anti-annexationists devoted themselves to obstructing the carrying out of the plan and perpetrated a successful political trick, delaying action.

In this situation Collinwood was stagnated. No money has been spent on fire protection that could be saved, for once in Cleveland, the town no longer would have to depend upon its own resources. The dust and rust have been allowed to gather on the superannuated fire apparatus.

"We have little money and we must economize," said Mayor Westropp.

#### Appeal for Protection Futile.

It was only a week or so before the fire that an appeal was made to the council for better protection on the north end of the town, in which the ill fated school building was located. The petition was "placed on file."

And in its grief, Collinwood recalled all this. "If we had our way this never would have happened," was the lament.

#### Irony in Hall of Dead.

What irony there was in the bringing of the dead to this place, dedicated to the housing of the town's fire department.

"Protection No. 1" was the legend in gilt letters on the little old hose wagon in the rear of the room. "Protection No. 1." Stricken fathers and mothers looked at this and then at the pathetic rows of bodies.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE MORGUE'S SAD STORY.

MANY PATHETIC SCENES ARE ENACTED AT  
THE TEMPORARY MORGUE.

Hundreds of dramatic scenes were enacted at the temporary morgue where the bodies of the fire victims were taken.

A long, wide room was divided into corridors by goods, hastily piled up. A murky room, stifling with its odor of burned stuff. A silent room—save for the shuffling of feet and now and then a sob.

Along each corridor lay blankets which covered little heaps. Here and there a shoe or a charred foot protruded, telling what was concealed beneath.

Here and there, too, a white sheet, which told that some child had been identified.

Walking through the aisles was a group of men and women—the men with bared heads, the women with shawls over their heads—on their faces—who can describe the looks there, some with tears, some with dry eyes—walked past each body and looked as the attendant drew away the blanket.

Grief was written there—and hope—and greater and greater grew the hope as the terrible review revealed not the body of the loved ones.

Then came the terrible moment when the mother and father found the body of the child they knew was dead yet hoped was not. Strong men on guard joined tears with the stricken ones.

Such was the scene at the Collinwood morgue.

Such was the scene again and again enacted as the groups of parents were admitted to the hall of death. All afternoon, all night and when dawn broke the next day, the mothers and fathers of Collinwood stood at the doors of the Lake Shore storehouse awaiting their chance to find their dead.

As each body was laid upon the floor, a tag was attached to the blanket telling whether the corpse was that of a boy or girl. This saved much unnecessary uncovering of the bodies.

The system of identification was perfect. The entire personnel of the Lake Shore offices was in charge and escorted the parents through the aisles. Time and again, a mother, having found her child under a blanket would throw up her arms and sink unconscious.

Fathers were affected differently. Some cursed. Some gazed stony-eyed upon the twisted, charred shape before them, the light of reason having deserted their eyes temporarily. Some raved like madmen.

One poor fellow was led away by stout men, jibbering unintelligibly. Some one laughed and a silence so intense that it was deathlike fell upon the hundreds within hearing.

The stricken mothers were carried upstairs, where nurses and physicians administered such aid as was calculated to dull the stiletto stabs of agony.

Police Captain Schmunk, after the fire, asked Inspector Rowe for ten more policemen to help handle the crowd about the morgue. The Cleveland Young Women's Christian Association at once sent out 100 women to

assist in caring for the injured and to prepare for the funerals.

A legal fight over the burned body of one of the fire victims was for a time threatened by the child's father and his divorced wife.

As a result the little corpse lay for two days in a Collinwood morgue guarded by an officer under orders of Coroner Burke.

The child was John Rush, six years old. A year ago his father, L. W. Rush, was divorced from his wife Effie. With the decree of separation the court gave the mother the custody of the child. Later the wife has married Clinton Taylor, an employe of the Lake Shore. The body was identified by his foster father.

Rush, the boy's real father, claimed the body, but the mother refused to surrender it. The father said he would get a writ of attachment if necessary. Before the funeral, however, the trouble was settled.

In addition to the frightful list of dead, fresh grief came to the suburb soon after the fire with the announcement that several women, mothers of children lost in the fire, had lost their reason.

Mrs. Bertha Robinson of 5078 Forrest avenue, attempted to kill herself. Her two little girls, her only children, Fern, twelve, and Juanita, seven, were burned to death.

Testimony taken at the morgue established beyond a doubt that the school building was a veritable fire trap.

Evidence showed that one of the inner doors at the west entrance was closed and fastened, while children were piling up against it in the passage; that wing partitions in the vestibule narrowed the exit by at least three



feet; that there was but one fire escape, and that its use never was taught as a part of the fire drill.

Survivors among the teachers testified that only two or three minutes passed between the time of the alarm until all escape was cut off.

The building was a fair sample of the kind of school construction in use in small towns. The halls and stairways were inclosed between interior brick walls, forming a huge flue, through which the flames shot up with great rapidity.

#### Identifying the Dead.

The scene was awful at the temporary morgue in the general store house of the Lake Shore shops. Row on row of charred corpses, headless torsos with blackened flesh, half naked bodies with splintered bones protruding, crumbling stubs of hands crossed before unrecognizable faces, some bodies mere heaps of bones and rags, others more grewsome in their human guise. Such was the awful spectacle that awaited the eyes of frenzied parents, who after hours of waiting, were admitted to claim their dead. In a moment the quiet of the charnel house with its scores of silent guards was broken by the screams of distracted parents. Cries, moans, but most terrible of all laughter, maudlin laughter, the laughter of madness, made the flesh of the watchers créép. They were identifying their dead. A woman would faint as she recognized in some blackened bit of flesh the daughter whom she had kissed goodbye as she left for school a few hours before. A strong man would fall into the arms of a watchful guard, mumbling the name of the child whose clothes he had just recognized on some headless hump.

But there could be no delay. Other mothers and fathers waited their turn to find their dead. As the bodies were iden-

tified kind but firm guards carried or led the sorrowing parents away. Others would then be admitted. Another heart-rending scene would follow. And thus the afternoon wore away and the night. At midnight 56 unidentified bodies were moved to the town hall. In the improvised morgue in the Lake Shore storehouse, love, hate, grief, despair and the intoxication of liquor all added to the horror of death. Men cursed, calling down imprecations upon the unknown authors of their misery, women knelt in an agony of grief over the forms of dear ones, the naked walls of the storehouse echoed to the wails of love, mother love, father love, for the children who would never hear them more. Men and women with haggard, listless faces and glassy, staring eyes were led away semiconscious.

#### Mercifully Become Unconscious.

Merciful unconsciousness gave many a short respite. Red-eyed men drunk with alcohol staggered among the dead demanding their children. They were identifying their dead.

In this inferno, soft-voiced women volunteers moved about like ministering angels, giving aid and comfort where they could, soothing fainting women and relieving the scene of much of its horror. Volunteers from the Lake Shore shops and offices did everything in their power to keep hysterical men and women in check. Not all the searchers cried aloud. Some there were who passed silently before the rows of bodies exposed in their blankets. Some cooed over the dead like a mother rocking her child. "It's a little plaid, blue and red," one woman murmured as she moved unaided along the rows of dead touching their clothing and peering at their faces. "He has pretty little fingers," "I'm glad he kissed me when he left this morning."

And then the watchful guard saw her crumble in a heap as she recognized in a little nude figure, her child.

"My God, that's my boy," she screamed as she sank into the guard's arms an inert mass, every vestige of consciousness gone. It was a common case. She was carried to the second floor where a corps of 20 physicians waited to attend to those overcome. She was given a hypodermic injection of strychnine sulphate to revive her. In a few minutes she again awoke to the realization of the disaster that had befallen her. She was put in an auto, one of several waiting for that purpose, and taken to her home. She had identified her dead.

A man entered the morgue supporting his wife by the arm. They had lost a girl. Neither uttered a sound or shed a tear as they were led through the aisles of dead. As the guard uncovered a face or held up a bit of dress for them to see, the man held out his hands, palms outward, to signify that his had not been found. The woman gazed steadily at the disfigured bodies as in a dream. The man hesitated at one tangled heap. "Look in his pockets," he said calmly as one might ask for a match. A list of spelling words, uncharred was disclosed. The man gazed at them many seconds as if rooted to the spot. "I saw those this morning," he said uttering each word separately. His wife turned to him. He looked at her. "Take me away," she whispered.

They walked out together. They had identified their dead.

A woman, shrieking like a lost soul was led in by two guards. She was a foreigner, with toil-stained hands. As each body was shown her she cried at the top of her voice. Over and over she repeated her boy's name.

She clawed at the tattered remnants of clothing on more than one little form.

"Oh, Henry, Henry," she shrieked. "He isn't here. He is in a hospital somewhere. He isn't here. He isn't here."

But he was there. A silver watch ticking peacefully told the story. She recognized it. The body was headless. The arms and legs were charred to a crisp. With a cry animal like in its ferocity, she threw herself upon the torso. On her knees, with hands uplifted to heaven, she prayed in her native tongue. When the guards attempted to lift her she clung to the form of her boy, gibbering, a mad woman. She had identified her dead.

A strong man, his eyes bloodshot from weeping, and shivering in every limb, moved along the rows of distorted bodies, supported on either side by a guard. His mouth open, so limp it seemed he must fall at every step, he bent over the bodies, reeking with the odor of burnt flesh. "Oh, God, I have nothing left in the world. Let me die, too," he sobbed, his voice strangling in his throat. His three children were among the dead.

#### Identified by a Shoe.

One more was found, a boy. He recognized the body by the shoe. The man continued to sob. He paid no particular attention to the body. Half led, half carried, he moved along the rows. Another child and then the third was found. The girl he knew by a bracelet encircling her fleshless wrist. The third child, a boy, he knew by his clothes. Without pausing, without noticing the dead, he was led away, still crying distractedly, "Oh, God, let me go, too. Why did I live to see this day?" He had identified his dead.

These are but types of the kaleidoscopic views of human misery and suffering that passed through the death house Rich and poor, young and old, white and black—class, caste and color were forgotten. All were united in a common object, the search for their dead. Many were there who after hours of search could not identify their children. Relatives in particular who sought to take the harrowing trial of identification from the parents were unable to recognize the little ones. Some took pieces of clothing home to see if the parents could identify them.

#### **Railroad Men as Heroes.**

During all the scene of agony and death the employes of the Lake Shore offices did valiant work in caring for the searchers. Under the direction of Dr. W. H. Williams, Lake Shore surgeon, and Harry McNeill, deputy coroner, everything was done that was possible to help in the work of identifying the dead. Seventy-five Lake Shore office men acted as guards over the bodies and escorts for the searchers. A band of Collinwood women cared for those who were overcome. The railway Y. M .C. A. furnished sandwiches and coffee to the workers.

#### **Battle With Dead.**

To the workers the scene lost much of its gruesomeness because of the number of the dead. One body, one sorrowing mourner more or less made little difference. It was like a battle, the very number of slain made the sight less appalling. The clanging of ambulances as they rushed up for their freight of identified dead to convey them to their morgues, was mingled with the raucous calls of the workers who

checked off each body carried from the building. When the bodies were identified the name, age, and address of the child were placed on a tag attached to a blanket. When an undertaker removed the body the tag was turned over to McNeil, who thus kept account of all unidentified bodies.

Late in the evening a constant procession of stretchers, blankets and baskets was being employed to carry out the dead. Most of the bodies were taken to private morgues.

#### **Bodies Covered and Tagged.**

Rival solicitors for undertaking establishments thrust the cards of their firms in the hands of weeping parents who had just identified their dead. Several solicitors were cautioned as being over anxious to get business. Bodies began to arrive at the improvised morgue soon after 11 o'clock Wednesday morning. Ambulances brought from one to seven bodies. Some of the bodies were so disintegrated that they were carried in baskets. All were wrapped in blankets and laid in rows along the aisles of the storehouse, a building 250 feet long and 100 feet wide.

All the bodies were covered. Tags were attached to each blanket bearing a number. No one was admitted until all the bodies possible to recover before the fire was extinguished were brought in. The list increased until every aisle in the building was lined with rows of smoking figures.

#### **Only One Identified.**

At 2 o'clock in the afternoon only one child had been positively identified. Irene Davis, fifteen, whose father, W. B. Davis, works in the storeroom recognized his child when the body was brought in.



By orders of Deputy Coroner McNeill and Dr. Williams, assisted by a dozen Lake Shore officials, a few of the 500 anxious relatives that had been detained by a cordon of police at the entrance to the works on Collamer avenue, 200 yards away, were admitted.

They were met at the door of the morgue by volunteer Lake Shore men, who led them along the aisles of dead. A man stationed over little groups of six or eight bodies helped them to inspect the remains. As they found the one they sought, the name, age and address of the child was placed on the tag attached to the blanket. A piece of white canvas was put over the identified body, which was removed to an undertaker's room as soon as one was employed.

#### Many Bodies Removed.

One hundred and three bodies had been identified and removed by midnight, when McNeill ordered the remaining unidentified bodies taken to the town hall on Collamer avenue. There they kept them until identified.

Many, after spending hours searching among the bodies, could not find their loved ones. John Grant, 5806 Arcade street, searched with his wife the entire number of bodies, but could not find their daughter, Earla, who was lost.

At the entrance to the Lake Shore yards the crowd of hundreds held back by the police surged angrily against the gate, threatening to break it every minute. Roy Lowey, 16 Arcade street, whose two twin sisters, May and Clara, twelve, were among the missing, leaped over the fence. He fought frantically with the police who sought to restrain him.

His father, Jesse Lowey, who had been admitted to look for his daughters, joined him, beside himself from grief.

"Don't you touch my boy," he yelled hoarsely. "I'll kill you all," he raged, as the police strove to restrain the sobbing boy from rushing with his father back to the morgue. Both were carried by main force from the yard.

There were not a few who sought admission to the morgue out of mere morbid curiosity. Several of these made their way into the yard only to be thrown out roughly by the police.

### **Many Families Hungry.**

The sadness of bereavement was not all the sorrow of Collinwood. There was the sadness of hunger, of hopelessness, of the madness that means suicide.

Many of the bereaved families were Greiners. They were poor. They did not know the customs of the land. Many of them did not speak the language. And many of them were working only part of the time or not all at. It was privation for them to give their last pennies to buy books for their little ones and clothe them so that in the presence of the American children they would not be ashamed.

The Collinwood town committee in its rounds of mercy, entered these humble homes and found destitution that made bereavement more keen. But the parents did not ask for charity; they did not think of fire or food.

### **Poverty Adds to Suffering.**

The committee went to the comfortless home of Mrs. Mary Maknic, 4811 Charles street. There was no answer to their knock. They opened the door and found no one in the chill, bare room. A sound came from the kitchen, and there stood Mrs. Maknic, disheveled, with staring eyes and set face.

She held a knife in her hand. As she caught sight of the visitors she grasped the handle convulsively, lowered the weapon, and then darted the point toward her throat.

They caught her arm just in time, and wrested the knife from her hand. Then the rigid body grew limp, and she sank in to the arms of the men, muttering incoherently in her own tongue.

### Little Mary Missing.

They caught the word "Mary." Her Mary was "missing"—a charred little mass, perhaps, among the "unidentified" at the morgue.

There was no food or fire in the home of Mary Popovic, 4709 Charles street. And there were no children. There had been two. The mother was sitting huddled up in a rocking chair, a ragged shawl over her head, and her face buried in her arms.

The eyes that glanced furtively at the visitors were blood-shot, and the quivering lips were thin and blue. But she did not ask for food or fire. Her thoughts were food enough, and there was fire in her veins.

At daybreak a man, shivering and wan, knocked at the door of Father M. Pakiz, pastor of St. Mary's church. He had no overcoat, no gloves. He was John Oblock of 424 Spruce street.

All night he had roamed through the streets of Collinwood—to the morgue, to the blistered walls where the schoolhouse had been—tramping, tramping, through the slush and mud. He had a little daughter in the morning, and in the evening he could not find her. And so there was nothing for him to do but walk, and walk, and maybe somewhere, he thought, he might see or hear something of his little girl.

John Oblock was not the only father who tramped all night through the streets of Collinwood. The streets are turned to mire with the wandering of men and women. All night, Oblock dimly remembered, men had passed and repassed him.

#### Sickening Scenes.

All day long in the fire shed adjoining the town hall the people of Collinwood toiled in their second sickening day—a day of aftermath—the day of identification of the charred, blackened and half naked dead. Over and around the others a continuous crowd passed and passed, passed again and again, trying and trying, many of them in vain, to find some clew that would establish the identity of their loved ones.

Those bodies that were left at the end were the survival of the unfittest. Many were burned to the bone, clothes entirely gone, often headless, footless trunks, mangled beyond possibility of recognition.

But still the crowds of anxious men and women passed in the pathetic review.

“If I could but know that what is left of my boy was in my own hands,” mourned a mother. “I can’t bear to leave his body if it is here. I must find it, must find it.”

#### Lost Three Children.

There were those who had lost three children, but had only found two, or one. There were those who had lost two and could identify but one. Mothers and sisters and brothers came to aid in the search. Sometimes they brought tiny underwear and stockings to match with the torn clothes on the limbs of the unidentified dead.

Outside held back by ropes and a squad of police under the

command of Capt. Schmunk of the Cleveland police, was a constant crowd of friends and curiosity seekers. They could be told apart at a glance. Those who had lost relatives were haggard eyed. As the fathers and mothers went in the other relatives waited outside, hanging on the ropes, watching for a favorable word. Their faces told tragic stories.

As for the others—they stared, boldly, constantly, calling each other's attention as they caught glimpses of suffering and anguish, craning their necks as the ambulance men came out with bundles in hand, and drove quickly away to the private morgues keeping count, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three.

#### Protects Sorrowing Relatives.

Deputy Coroner McNeil placed a shield before the door to protect the sorrowing relatives from the gaze of the curious, but it had no effect on their numbers. Every car from the city brought its load. As fast as one group went away satisfied, another crowded into the place.

The crowd of searchers was quieter than that of the first day, when the first great anguish of death and loss had left them staring disheveled, laughing, shrieking, tearing hair, fainting, maddened by their loss. As the hours rolled on, and they examined body after body, they became dulled, the pain nerves were deadened.

Only trembling hands showed the tumult within when the poor, bereaved ones compared clothing, examined shoes, searched for trinkets—a marble or a watch. They talked comparatively calmly. They had seen so many bodies, had been nearly sure so many times.

Only once in a while would there be a shriek or a burst of hysterical weeping as a father or a mother threw themselves

on the dingy floor, clutching a trinket or a bit of cloth that had made them sure.

Sadly filing out of the morgue at the end of the day were those who had failed, who had to go away leaving their babies lying on the floor among the unrecognizable masses of the unknown.

### Street Scene of Grief.

Death's hand laid heavily upon Arcade avenue. In seventeen houses, fifteen in a row, and three adjoining each other across the street, nineteen are dead. The presence of white crape on the doors along the street is almost monotonous.

In the parlor of the third house from Park avenue, 5704, stood a white casket in which lie the remains of Norman Shepherd, twelve. From that house of the dead stretches a long, unbroken line of homes, with its corpse in every parlor.

Next door at 5718, was the body of Mildred Cunningham. Then comes that of Earle Grant, thirteen, at 5806; Dale Clark, nine at 5812; Florence Clayton, eight, at 5816; Wilfred Hook, eight, at 5908, and Mabel Sigler, ten, 6012.

In the seventh house, 6212, there were three dead—Caroline Kern, ten; Rudolph Kern, twelve, and Annie Kern, nine. Next door, at 6124, was the body of Willie Smith, nine.

Death, always erratic, then jumped across the street, taking four in three adjoining houses. There was Edward Kanowski, seven, at 6215; Don Rush, thirteen, at 6107, and Helen and Clara Ritz, sisters, eight and seven, at 6007.

The same age, chums since babyhood, their fathers brothers and partners in business, death did not divide them. Two little charred bodies were identified side by side in the morgue, by the sister of one of the boys.



Mr. and Mrs. H. E. Gould live at 5416 Maple street, Collinwood. Their boy was Albert Gould. Just opposite at 5412 Poplar street, live Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Gould. Raymond Gould was the pride of that home. The two boys were almost exactly the same age, eleven years.

Tuesday evening they spent together at the home of Albert, playing games until 10:30. As usual Wednesday morning they went to school together. The news of the fire completely prostrated the two mothers. A sixteen-year-old-sister of Albert was sent to identify the bodies. She found them side by side. Raymond was identified by his cuff buttons and Albert by his shoes and sweater and a crumpled wet paper in his pocket, covered with writing in his childish hand. The fathers of the boys, contractors, are engaged in the erection of buildings in West Virginia. They were telegraphed for. Saturday at the home of Mr. and Mrs. H. E. Gould on Maple street the double funeral of the boys was held.

### Mother Shopping During Fire.

Mrs. Schwans of 597 Adamson street, Collinwood, who lost three children, Edwin, twelve; Hulda, eleven, and Freddie, eight years old, was shopping in Cleveland when the fire broke out. Her eldest boy, Rudolph, she had left at home with the baby.

"The newsboys on the car calling out the special was the first I knew of it," said Mrs. Schwans. "When I came to the school they were taking the children out. Oh, if I had not gone away; but I could not have saved them anyway," she moaned as she rocked back and forth.

The poor half crazed mothers did not know how to try to identify their dead, looking in restless terror first at one

burned little form and then at another. "Look carefully now," an attendant begged of a poor foreign woman who sought her child. "I could tell my boy's coat; it was a little plaid coat," sobbed one mother, while another thought her boy's little new red sweater with braid on the front would serve to lead her to her own.

"I was ironing when I heard the alarm," said Mrs. Rostock of 5315 Lake avenue, who lost a boy, Amiel, aged fourteen, and a little girl, Lillian, six. I ran over to the building in my bare feet; but oh, I could not see them, and to think of my little, little girl."

Three other children are living, all boys.

There was joy at the home of Matt Drecek, 4th street Monday before the fire. There was poverty, too—Drecek, like hundreds of others in the Collinwood Greiner settlement, had been working but two days a week lately. But there was joy, anyway.

It was this—a baby had come. Mary, thirteen; Lena, twelve; John, ten; Amelia, nine; Clara, five, and Paul, three, all clustered about and gazed rapturously upon the little pink and white bundle that their mother so proudly displayed to them.

### Joy Flees Home.

That was Monday. The joy fled Wednesday. In the terrible fire that ravaged the Lakeview school building and took a toll of human life that has appalled the world, Mary and Lena died. John and Amelia climbed out of a window and lived. But the terrible fact remained—Mary and Lena were dead. They never would see baby again.

Drecek tried to keep the terrible news from his wife, but

the children told her in spite of him. She swooned at the news. Neighbors brought a doctor—he said that she lay between life and death.

The husband was down at the morgue when that happened, vainly hunting his Mary and Lena in the long rows of blackened corpses. He stayed all afternoon, he stayed until after midnight, when they transferred the unidentified from the Lake Shore shops to the town hall.

Then he hurried away again. He ate no breakfast, there was hardly enough for the children. At noon he had been unable yet to pick out the bodies of Mary and Lena. He went outside—and fainted in the street, from hunger, exhaustion, worry and grief.

Revived, he refused to leave. "I'm going to get my Mary and my Lena," he wailed. Between his sobs, he told someone of the "kinder" and the woman at home and of the new baby.

In a few minutes the relief corps had sent a physician and a nurse out to the little house on 4th street. They sent out provisions too. Drecek wouldn't eat. They let him stay there in the street.

## CHAPTER X.

### RICH WOMAN LOSES BABY.

"TERRIBLE BEYOND ALL DESCRIPTION!" CRIES  
DR. WILLIAMS.

"This is a terrible thing; awful beyond description," said Dr. Williams, as he stood and watched the throng of anxious relatives moving disconsolately from body to body.

"Are there no injured in the hospitals? I've lost my baby, my darling boy," moaned a well-dressed woman who stepped out from the line of people moving slowly past a row of bodies. Upon being told that there were few injured and that she had better persevere in her search she joined the mournful procession again.

The morgue was a great leveler. Women richly attired, wearing furs and other tokens of comparative wealth, mingled with women of plainly foreign extraction, with shawls thrown over their heads and garments betokening the pinch of poverty. They consoled one another.

#### **Strong Comfort the Weak.**

The weaker, on the verge of hysterics, were comforted by the stronger, regardless of social position. The men, most of them tearless, but grieving none the less, were silent for the most part upon attaining the object of their search.

As fast as the bodies were identified they were placed in charge of the undertakers and were taken from the building, the coroner seeing every body removed and collecting the tags upon which the identifications were marked. In this way an accurate tab was kept on the bodies and the identifications.

The scene at the morgue was particularly heartrending to the employes of the Lake Shore Railroad, who were engaged

in escorting the stricken parents and relatives through the rows of corpses. Many of the dead children were known to them and in many cases the parents were fellow workmen.

Dr. Williams was particularly grieved by the terrible affair, as he knew personally nearly three-quarters of the boys and girls whose bodies were before him. Work was suspended in all of the Lake Shore shops to give those employees whose loved ones were victims of the fire a chance to visit the morgue. At 5:30 o'clock workmen from other shops in Collinwood flocked to the warehouse with their wives and until well on into the night the inspection continued.

Some of the women, loath to leave until they had discovered some trace of their children, begged to be allowed to continue the search far into the night, but when most of the corpses had been identified the morgue was closed to visitors and the bodies remaining were taken to the town hall.

#### **Father Fights Official.**

A grief-crazed father fought with an ambulance driver for a sight of his two little children who had been burned to death.

A. Ziehm had driven from the Lake Shore morgue with the bodies of Olga and John Neibert, Fifth and Forest-sts.

"Drive on to the undertaker's," bade the father, John Neibert.

Ziehm started on. In a moment the father changed his mind and demanded a sight of the bodies. He sprang to the horse's head and grasped the bridle. Neighbors rushed to join him and someone sent in a call for the police.

The bodies were taken from the ambulance and carried into the Neibert home.

The saddest place in Collinwood, the village of many sor-

rows, that day was the dead house. Between the narrow walls of the fire station, surrounded by all that had failed to save, lay the blackened things that once were smiling children.

The hush was rarely broken and when it was the cry or moan came from the lips of a father or mother. Through the building filed the real sufferers by the fire—those who lost children.

But a greater burden of grief came to those who failed to be sure in looking over the little forms. Some of the bodies never were identified.

#### Crowds of Sightseers.

Twenty-five bodies were left in the morgue the night after the fire. Another day was given relatives to claim their dead, and then the remaining bodies were taken to Shepard's morgue for burial at the expense of the village.

Crowds of sightseers pressed against the rope in front of the morgue all day, the police permitting only those who had relatives in the fire to pass between their lines. The guards were Cleveland patrolmen under the command of Captain Schmunk. Collinwood police were also on guard.

Harry McNeill, deputy coroner, long on duty, watched the bodies of the children, and superintended the work of identification. As soon as a body was recognized it was given to an undertaker.

#### Father Loses Control.

One of the most heartrending cases was that of Leo B. Harvey, who has been working at Geneva, O. He had two children attending the school. His first intimation of the dis-



aster came in a newspaper Wednesday night. He went to Cleveland, arriving late in the morning. Harry, his fourteen-year-old son, was saved. Claude, seven years old, had disappeared. When he discovered that his son was not to be recognized among the bodies he lost self-control.

"I want to throw myself beneath a train," he cried.

Friends finally took him away.

When Mrs. John Centener, who lives at No. 512 Collamer street, came to look for her thirteen-year-old son George, she found one body that she thought might be his. She looked searchingly at the twisted face but was not sure. Then she looked at a shred of underwear which stuck to the body.

#### Not George's Button.

"No, no, those are not George's buttons," she said. "If there was only a piece of his red sweater I could tell him."

She went away, doubt adding to her grief.

Bearing in his hand an apron of his wife's, John Polonsky, No. 447 Cedar street, went to seek the body of his son Victor, nine years old. The boy had worn a little shirt made of material like that of the apron. After he had searched the faces and clothes of a score of little bodies he found one with a shred of a shirt clinging still to a shriveled arm. He compared the two pieces of cloth. They were the same. It was his son.

Mrs. Sodma, who lost three children in the fire, went for the second time to the morgue. The night after the fire she identified her son, but her two daughters, Elizabeth, twelve years old, and Erma, ten years old, were still among the missing.

She said that Elizabeth had worn a pair of earrings with four stones in each of them and a bracelet. Although she walked from body to body she could find no trace of earrings or brace-

let or the red waist and blue skirt worn by Erma. She left brokenhearted.

Mrs. Oscar Swanson, No. 5709 Adams street, lost three children. The bodies of eight-year-old Fred and twelve-year-old Edwin were identified. She was seeking that of Hulda, ten years old. She looked at the rows of bodies twice, then three times. Finally she found a body that she thought might be that of her child. She told McNeil of a recent tooth filling. He fingered the shreads of clothing.

#### Identified by a Tooth.

Finally an undertaker's man pried open the mouth, and a recently filled tooth was revealed. The mother became hysterical and nearly fainted. The body was taken away.

With a little shoe in his hand. William J. Parr sought the body of his son, Harry, eight years old. Mr. Parr lives at No. 218 Park street. With the assistance of a piece of underclothing, he recognized the body. His other son, Thomas, ten years old, had saved his life by leaping from a second-story window.

#### Recognizes Body By Clothing.

The wife of John Oblak, No. 424 Spruce street, was prostrated when her son, John, thirteen years old was reported among the missing. Her husband found a body that he thought was that of his son, and yet was doubtful. He tore a patch from the charred clothing and took it home to the mother. She recognized her handiwork. Mary, the little daughter of the family, had saved her life by jumping from a window.

Albert Ritzi, No. 6007 Arcade street, tried in vain to find

the bodies of his two girls, Helen, aged nine, and Clara, aged seven. Again and again he bent over the faces. He was unsuccessful.

#### **Feared to Enter.**

Bringing his wife, George Morrelle, who lived at No. 4713 Charles street, came to the door of the deadhouse. They sought the body of their eight-year-old daughter, Maria. Mrs. Morrelle cast one glance at the room. Her face grew pale and then she collapsed. The father found a body which looked like his little daughter. He took the dress out to show it to his wife. She shook her head—it was not the one.

Screams of despair, sobs of agony and groans of anguish were wrenched from the mothers and sisters of the victims as the searchers walked from row to row, examining fragments of dresses, pieces of waists and trousers, pocket-knives and marbles in an effort to establish the identity of the dead.

One of the first body identified was Nils Thompson, seven years, of No. 405 Collamer street. "My God, that's Nils!" cried Mrs. Anna Thompson, the mother, as she gazed upon a blackened corpse in the first row she encountered on entering the building.

#### **Led Away by Sister.**

Tears streaming down her face she was led away by her sister, but she bore up bravely for she still had a task to perform—the locating of the body of Thomas, her oldest son. Three-quarters of an hour later, while inspecting a long row of bodies charred and twisted almost beyond recognition, she found the body of her son. She nearly fainted and was taken to the second floor of the building, where nurses gave her assistance.

The next body identified was that of Henry Schultz, nine years old, No. 4623 Westropp avenue. Again a mother recognized the torn fragments of a son, and, weeping, was led away. Then as the crowd inside the building increased in size the identifications came faster.

Men stood sobbing over the bodies of their loved ones. At times cries of women resounded from all parts of the building. The doctors were busy with the relief-giving hypodermics.

#### Told by the Clothing.

"That's Irene; I know it is her. I can tell by the clothes," wailed Helen Davis as she leaned over the body of her sister, Irene, No. 4615 Westropp avenue, and then the identification was made complete by the discovery of the finger ring.

Mrs. Lodge, mother of Harry Lodge, eleven years old, of No. 4910 Scott street, fainted when by means of a piece of a red sweater she recognized the charred remnant of a body as that of her son. She was taken to the hospital and placed in care of the nurses on the second floor of the building.

Almost distracted with grief, the parents of Thomas and Glen Sanderson, of No. 438 Park avenue, paced from one end of the building to the other, inspecting the dead in the hope of recognizing the bodies of the children. Late in the afternoon their search was rewarded. Both bodies were identified.

Pitiful in the extreme was the sight presented by the bodies in the west end of the temporary morgue. The lower clothing of most of the children, though charred and soiled, was pretty well preserved. The pockets of the boys were searched and the treasures hidden so carefully from the teachers' eyes were brought forth and placed on top of the blankets.

Marbles, slingshots and other articles were placed on view.

A watch with a nickel case was taken from the body of one boy. The timepiece had stopped at 11:25 o'clock. A watch was also found on the body of another boy near by. The hands had stopped at 1 o'clock, indicating that the body had been taken from far down in the heap of mangled corpses blocking the doorway of the school and that it had taken the heat a longer time to reach it than the others. From the girls' clothing were taken handkerchiefs and in some instances pennies and chewing gum were found rolled in the corners of pieces of cloth.

One of the most affecting scenes at the morgue occurred when Albert Gould, eleven years old, of No. 5416 Maple street, and Raymond Gould, also eleven years old, of Poplar street, cousins, were found lying side by side among the unidentified dead. A sister of Albert Gould made the discovery, recognizing a knife found in the boy's pocket.

#### Heartrending Scenes Witnessed.

"And I made him go! I made him go!"

The wailing voice rose in a quavering chant above the heads of the silent crowd crushed against a door that led into the improvised morgue at the Lake Shore shops. Most of them were men, with stern, set faces. A woman, here and there, stood with bowed head. Silent, they all were, except when one raised his voice for a moment in that solemn, wailing chant which told of his own woe, while the living humanity about him swayed in the common sympathy.

"He was my only boy. And I am old," the voice went on. "Three weeks ago he broke his arm. This was his first morning at school. He didn't want to go. But I made him go. I made him go."

Again the crowd swayed and a low groan swept over the mass of waiting ones.

The narrow door opened. Men and women struggled, straining in silence, to enter.

#### His Children Among the Dead.

"Joe Curran," cried the keeper of the door.

"Joe Curran," echoed through the crowd.

"Here!" cried one.

"Let that man in," commanded the doorkeeper. "His two children are here."

Immediately a lane formed and Joe Curran went in.

Pressed close against the unyielding door stood a portly, prosperous looking man. His face was impassive, but as he stood, waiting, his head leanded against the door, he moaned.

"You have someone in there?" asked the next one.

"My oldest boy," answered the man, and, turning, he pressed his face against the door.

Again the silence—waiting. Presently another chant arose.

"He knew me. He called to me: 'Papa, help me.' I had hold of him. I put out the fire in his hair. I pulled his arms out of their sockets. And I couldn't save him."

Again the crowd swayed in a common agony and the common groan swept over it.

The little door opened.

"Don't push. Don't crowd. Be careful of the women," shouted the doorkeeper, grimly kind.

"Let me in! Let me in! My children are in there!" cried a voice from the rear.

"They are all in here," answered the doorkeeper. "Your turn will come."



This time the visitor was wedged in with the bunch of 10 admitted. At his feet stretched an orderly row of white-sheeted forms. The white-sheeted were the identified. In charge of each row was a railroad man, aiding the fathers and mothers who had come to find their own. Order was everywhere. And silence was everywhere. The searchers picked their way carefully among the rows of blackened bodies.

"Girl or boy?" asked the attendant, as each came to him. And he turned back the gray blanket or the gray quilt for the inspection of some father or mother.

One old man hurried from one little form to another, looking only at the shoes. Down on his knees he went each time. Finally he threw up both hands.

#### Kisses the Burned Feet.

"It is she!" he cried. "I know, because this morning I fixed her shoes for the mud. I am the grandfather," he added, pathetically, as he bent over and kissed the pitiful little feet.

A little woman, with bowed head and clasped hands, hurried by.

"Did you find them?" asked a visitor.

"Yes, ma'am. Both of them," she said, dully.

Few were weeping. They had gone beyond that. They were just searching, searching.

One man was gazing at an unrecognizable mass of burned flesh and bones.

"It is horrible," involuntarily exclaimed a bystander, under his breath. He heard him, and looked up.

"Not horrible," he said, "when your own child is here."

The last row was reached. There were few white sheets here, for there was little else than a few charred bones.

## CHAPTER XI.

### TEACHERS TELL OF HORROR.

#### PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION AS TO THE CAUSE OF THE FIRE.

Before the last charred body had been removed from the ruins of the schoolhouse an informal investigation had been begun to determine the cause of the fire.

Several of the school officials claimed that an incendiary started the fire. Here are the reasons why they declared it appeared the building must have been set on fire:

1. There was no gas in the building.
2. No heating pipes ran through the lumber closet under the stairs where the fire started.
3. There were no electric wires in the closet.
4. Spontaneous combustion is not considered a feasible solution.
5. There is no evidence that the blaze was started by children in play.

Certain it is that the flames were first seen near the front door coming up from the basement steps. This is directly over the closet in which three girls were hiding while playing a game.

The architects scouted the theory that the flames crawled to the front of the building from the furnace. The possibility that a child might have accidentally caused the fire developed in the story told by Janitor Hirter, who testified that the first knowledge he had of the fire was from three girls who came up from the basement.

"I ran upstairs," said Hirter, who lost three children in the

fire, "and gave the signal for fire drill—three taps on the gong. Then I threw open all of the doors leading to the outside. These consisted of two double pairs of doors in the front and rear of the building. After that I did all in my power to aid in rescuing pupils."

The testimony as to whether both rear doors were open was conflicting. The plans show the rear doors opening out, not in. Whether they were built according to the plan was in dispute. The evidence is, of course, destroyed.

Janitor Hirter was at first made to bear the major portion of the blame. Feeling against him ran high in Collinwood. One father, crazed by grief, made an attempt upon the life of Hirter, but was restrained with difficulty. Hirter was then guarded by the police.

In addition to the blame, whether justified or not, that was being heaped upon him, Hirter broke down with grief over the loss of three of his own children in the fire, and for a time raved, almost beside himself.

Hirter declared the fire could not have started from the furnace. The day was comparatively warm, and Hirter declared he maintained the fires at a lower heat than usual throughout the early part of the morning.

Fearing he had not sufficiently warmed the building he was, according to his story, on his way to open the furnace drafts and increase the heat when he was met by the three little girls who told him there was a fire.

As these three little girls were among the dead their knowledge of the fire never will be known.

"I was sweeping in the basement," said Hirter, "when the three little girls came running through. Suddenly I looked and saw a wisp of smoke curling from beneath the stairway.

Crying, a crowd of little children came rushing through the hallways.

Those in the rear, not realizing the danger, pressed forward and crowded the line over the threshold and down the steps to the landing, where they were suffocated by the flames and crushed to death in the stampede."

#### Tales Told By Survivors.

Thrilling and dramatic in the extreme are the tales of horror told by the survivors of the great fire in which so many went down to death.

As soon as order was restored in the village the board of education began an investigation of the fire. The first witness was Miss Pearl Lynn, who was badly burned.

Miss Lynn said she was teacher of the high division, second grade, at Lake View school. Her room was at the southwest corner of the first floor.

She was present Wednesday morning. School was called at 8:30, as usual. Matters went as usual until 9:30 or 9.35 a. m. Then a fire alarm was given. The alarm consisted of four taps of the general gong in the lower hall.

She heard the alarm. The children in her room took their places in line as quickly as they could, the first file facing the door.

They didn't stop for their wraps. There was no confusion. Good order was maintained. Everything was the same as in a fire drill, which the children supposed it was.

Miss Lynn said they had had fire drill three times this year, always unexpectedly.

In such cases the pupils rise from their seats and form in line. The teacher is at the door and opens it when they have the line formed. They form on a quick trot.

The door is at one of the front corners of the room. The seats are arranged so the children form a double line in the broad aisle, facing the door. This program was carried out Wednesday morning.

"I was at the door," said Miss Lynn. "The door was open. There was no confusion at that time. Opening the door is the signal for the children to pass.

"The door swings outward into the hall. I opened it and the children passed into the hall. As soon as they smelled the smoke they became somewhat excited.

#### Guided the Children.

"I got on the outside to guide them. The stairway was partly filled with children when we passed out. But we had a chance to pass down at one side.

"Two or three children got away from me and went down toward the west door. As soon as I got my school on the stairway I got behind them.

"When I got two or three steps from the bottom of the stairs I found some of the children had fallen. To give them a chance to rise, I held the others back a little, what I could, with my body.

"There was a great crush behind me. I myself was borne down. Two or three children were under me when I fell, who hadn't recovered their feet.

"Ordinarily my children take the west exit in leaving the building. There are only two exits, the other being at the east side."

"Does the fire drill cover any alternative in case of emergency? Do you ever go out the other entrance?"

"My children never went out the east entrance.

"Most of mine got to the entrance without stumbling. The stairway was partly filled with other children who had got out first. The west side consists of a stairway about five or six feet wide leading down. Next to that is a pair of double doors arranged to swing outward.

"One door is fastened with a spring catch at the top. That door is the left. The other, at the right, fastens to the other door.

#### Door Usually Half Open.

"During sessions this door is usually half open and the other half is shut. By open I mean unfastened. While the children were passing out the other door was fastened at the top.

"I can't tell how the fire drill is prescribed or regulated. I have had verbal instructions as to fire drills; as to conducting them. We see the children out of doors; keep them in line outside the building until all are out. Then they march back in order. The last out are the first to go back.

"My room is not the nearest to the west entrance. Miss Fiske's room and mine are equally distant from it. No other room is nearer than ours.

At this point the witness was overcome and broke into sobs. When she recovered her composure she resumed:

"I was not given any instructions in connection with the outer door. I know of none given to any one in connection with the outer door. The bottom of the stairs was blocked when I got there. The children under me were not of my school. I fell down owing to the crush above. The children at the bottom of the steps were not passing out freely when I got there.

"The right hand door, which was open, is about three feet



wide. The children were being impeded by others who had fallen to the floor.

"The other door was finally opened by Mr. Hirter the janitor. When I first came to the stairs I didn't see Mr. Hirter. I don't know where he was.

"The first I saw of him was about one minute after we began to encounter difficulties. He rushed to the door, seized it and tried to force it open.

#### Fastened At The Top.

"It was fastened at the top as usual. There was nothing wrong with it.

"If both doors had been open when I reached the top of the stairs a few more of us would have been able to get out quicker than we did. If the doors were twice as wide it wouldn't have made much difference.

"The stairways were not broad enough to accommodate the number of children coming down.

"There was one difference not customary at fire drills. Three schools in all were using the west door, mine, Miss Fiske's and Miss Urgan's.

"The last one usually went out the east door, but had encountered flames and couldn't. Mine was the second school to reach the door.

"The addition of one more school than usual caused the overcrowding of the stairway.

"We had always gone through the same entrance at fire drills. I know of no discussion of anything to do in case it was impossible to use the west door.

"The work of rescue began right away. People came rushing and began taking out the children as fast as they could.

I have 34 pupils. There were 33 present the morning of the fire.

"The doors I have spoken of were the inner of two sets of doors, about two and one-half feet from the foot of the stairs.

"Beyond these were the other doors, about the same distance, or three feet, just far enough to allow the inner doors to swing outward and clear the outer doors.

"The outside doors are very similar to the inner. I think both outside doors were open. I am not positive.

"One was open anyway. I think both. I never examined the fastenings of the outer doors. Ordinarily in fire drills I find the outer doors standing open, both the right and the left hand doors.

"These are not storm doors, but permanent doors. They are not always standing open.

"In fire drills I don't know how it is. I always find them open or unfastened. I am not positive whether the head child has to push the doors open.

### Three Fire Drills Held.

"We have had three fire drills since January 1, but I don't know about the opening of the doors. I don't think the outer door is fastened at the top, as half of the inner door is. The outer doors swing outward.

"This morning all the children who passed the inner door passed through the outer one.

"The right hand inner door and both the outer ones were open. I could see that.

"At fire drills the teachers are the only ones who assist. I don't know of any duties of the janitor in fire drills. He is

usually there, near the east entrance. So far as I know he has no duties in connection with fire drills."

Questioned as to how she made her escape, Miss Lynn said:

"I was dragged out forcibly by the arms. Mr. Dorn was one of the men who did it. I don't know the others. One child at least was under me at the time."

#### **Smoke Brings The Panic.**

"My children were going down in good order," Miss Lynn resumed, "until they smelled the smoke. I don't know about the other schools.

"There came a very great pressure from behind almost immediately. I don't know what caused it. I didn't see any flames.

"I was almost suffocated with smoke when I reached the stairs. I think the smoke was coming from the east, from the front part of the hallway.

"Fire drill instructions come from the principal. I don't know who gave the signal. I don't know where Mr. Hirter was at the time."

Miss Lynn, who was suffering from painful burns along her back, was then excused.

## CHAPTER XII.

### HEROINE OF FIRE.

#### LITTLE GIRL WHO FIRST SAW THE SMOKE TELLS HER STORY.

Emma Neibert the child said to have seen the smoke first and to have alarmed the janitor, was called.

She said she was thirteen years old and a pupil in Miss Bodey's room. She was present Wednesday morning, had occasion to visit the basement and on her way down saw smoke coming up in the front of the hall.

"I told Mr. Hirter," said the child. "'What's the matter?' I hollered to him. I think he didn't understand me. I told him again and he went and rang the fire bell. I went and stood in the front door.

"I went down the stairs near the east entrance. I was just going downstairs to the basement when I saw the smoke. I didn't go on down.

"Mr. Hirter came up where the smoke was and rang the fire bell. He ran right past me. There was just a little smoke coming up then.

#### Calls Him A Second Time.

"When I hollered to him the second time the rooms below were full of smoke. I stood there a long time, about five minutes, before I called a second time. He was by the furnace. I could see him. There was just a little smoke then.

(A test proved that the child's idea of "five minutes" was about 20 seconds.)

"Mr. Hirter ran and sounded the bell. I ran out the front

of the building and didn't see him again. I opened one side of the door and hooked it back. Just one side of the door was open. The inside doors were open.

"I only opened the outside door, which I hooked back. I put the hook on the string on the handle of the door."

Emma became confused and said she pulled the door back inwardly. (It was explained that the hook was used to keep the door from shutting on its spring check when children were passing out.)

#### Proves Herself A Heroine.

"Mr. Hirter," resumed the child, "went to Miss Moran's old room to ring the bell after I called him," she said. "I ran outside. About 10 children came out the front door. Then I went away.

"I left the doors open. The right hand door was open. The right hand outer door was closed. I opened it and hooked it back. I heard no noise, I saw smoke, but no flame.

"I didn't see any girls playing hide and seek in the basement this morning. I know a Lizzie—Lizzie Sodoma. She is lost. She was in Miss Gollmer's room. There was an Anna in our room. Anna Gordon. Miss Bodey is my teacher. I don't know any Mary."

The girl was then excused. It was then nearly midnight. The party of teachers, only one of whom had testified, was waiting in another room.

As that room had grown chilly, they were all ushered into the library, where the hearing was in progress. They presented a saddening appearance, being haggard with the experiences of the day.

Joseph Neill was called. He lived near the building. He

was taking care of his baby and his wife was out hanging up clothes when she saw the fire and called to him. He ran over to the school.

"There were quite a number of teachers and children on the fire escape then," he said.

"We got them all down. I went to the back door and found a pile of young ones burning to death.

"We pulled them out as long as we could. The south door was open.

"I tried to pull down the wooden partition to give us more room. I don't know about the north door. The space between the doors was about five feet wide. The doors swung out.

#### Did Not Notice It.

"I didn't notice the condition of the inside doors. They were open, whatever way they swung. I think the south door was fastened open.

"I ran home to get an ax to knock out the partition. When I got back I couldn't get near the building. I live 400 or 500 feet from the building on the same side of the street to the north.

"I think it was not more than 10 or 15 minutes at the outside before it was all over and we could do no more."

#### Janitor Tells Story.

When Fred Hirter, janitor of the school, who was at first blamed for the tragedy, was called, a hush fell on the room.

He gave his testimony with remarkable coherence, considering that he had lost three of his own children in the disaster.

"I am janitor of the Lake View building," he said. "I have charge of the whole building. I have no assistance.



"I do the cleaning, heating and so on. I have been there a year, since the addition of four rooms was built a year ago. Before that my wife had it and I helped her before going to work in the morning. I had a job. My woman fired the boilers.

"At night I went and wheeled the coal for the next day and did the heavy work. I was a car inspector for 14 years for Mr. Mooney.

"I had worked in greenhouses in Germany for about 16 years and fired the boilers. That was steam heating boilers, about the same as in the school.

#### **In Excellent Condition.**

"The heating apparatus in the school building was in first-rate condition all the time. We had had no trouble within a week. The furnaces were not smoking or acting badly. I had had no trouble in heating the building. I told the teachers this morning that one or two pounds of steam would keep them warm.

"At 9:30 I went down and found the steam down to a pound or a pound and a half. The fire was very low. I just shoveled in two or three shovelfuls of coal in each furnace. Then I shut the dampers and swept the basement, the fire pit, as usual.

"Then a little girl came down on the stairway. She called me and said there was a fire in the building. I told her to run out.

"I went and rang the bell. I notified the teachers. I tried to open the windows and knocked them out when I couldn't. I think there were three girls in the hall.

"If you were to kill me, I couldn't tell what girl it was that called me. There wasn't much smoke then. I ran to Miss

Irwin's room and rang the bell there. That was No. 1 room on the first floor. The bell was in there.

"There was no bell in the basement. On the second floor in No. 5 room is a bell (connection). Miss Irwin's room is in the northeast corner.

"I ran past where the smoke was near the east entrance and went up stairs to the room.

"When I came back the basement stairs were blazing already and I couldn't get down the basement any more. It wasn't more than half a minute. It would have been nearer if there had been an alarm in the basement.

#### Smoke Near The Landing.

"I first saw the smoke in the center of the steps right near the landing of the stairs leading to the east door. The smoke was right at the turn where you go down to the basement. It was at the head of the basement stairs. The stairway is about half as wide as the landing.

At this point Prosecuting Attorney McMahon and Assistant Prosecutor Carey arrived.

"I was not asked to be present. I heard of the inquiry and came out," said McMahon.

"My only official interest here lies in the question whether a crime has been committed. If so, I want to learn all that is to be known."

"The doors are about two and one-half or three feet wide, that is, each half of the door," said Hirter, resuming.

"The right hand door as you go out is fastened and the left hand door is open. Both the inner doors are always open. The inside doors are not fastened at the top by a bolt, never.

"They could be fastened by the knobs, but never were. That

is, the right hand door. The left hand door couldn't be fastened at all. There was no catch on it at all; only a handle on the outside.

"The inside doors stand unfastened all the time. They are not even closed. They were open this morning. I opened the outside doors myself when I saw the smoke.

(Emma Neibert said she did this.)

"They were just closed, not locked, when I came to them, I have both open when the children come down in fire drills. I have the right hand outer door bolted at the top during school hours. This morning I opened the door and fastened it back with the hook and chain. One half of the door has a door check and has to be chained. The other has no check and will stand open.

#### Shut But Not Locked.

"Then I ran up the stairway and went to the back door. The outside door was shut, but not locked.

"I don't lock the doors except at 6 o'clock when I go home. At the west door there was nobody there. I opened the inner and outer doors.

"Both the inner and outer doors were closed. One side, the left, was fastened. I don't know why the left hand door was fastened at this side of the building and the right hand door at the east side, except that the bolts are on that side.

"I went and pushed up the bolt and hooked the door back. I saw nothing there, in the back part of the building.

"Then I ran back to Miss Rose's room. I had opened the four back doors, all of them.

(Miss Lynn had testified that she found one of them closed and fastened at the top.)

These doors were all wide open before the children came down the stairway.

"I went to Miss Rose's room, No. 2, and saw some boys in there. I opened the windows and let them out. Miss Rose's room is the southeast one on the first floor. Miss Rose was already out.

"There was no more line of children in the room. I met children at the top of the stairs on the main landing at the west entrance.

"They were coming fast. I didn't stop there. I helped two boys out. One fell outside. I jumped out of a window to help him.

"I saw Miss Rose trying to open the door, the inside door, which somebody had closed again. Miss Rose was trying to open it.

"There was hardly any smoke there. It just came along the ceiling. The east entrance has an iron gate in front of it. It was open. It has been open since about a month ago.

"That gate was open, I swear to that. The doors were all open, I swear to that. I did all I could.

#### Finds Door Half Closed.

"I went out the window to pick up a little boy who fell down. I found the door half closed. Miss Rose couldn't open it. I don't know why.

"The bolt at the top has to be turned with the hand. The bolt was in perfect order at the rear entrance. At the front there is no bolt at all. It is not a spring bolt and won't close itself.

"So I turned on it and opened it as before. When shut it catches without turning. It must have blown shut.

"I never gave a fire alarm before. I just went in Miss Irwin's room and pulled it three times.

"I never had any instructions about that, but had heard the principal give it a dozen times. My order is to open the doors as soon as I hear the alarm.

#### Orders Given Verbally.

"The board of education and Miss Moran, the principal, gave me those orders verbally. She didn't say which to open first. She simply said to open the doors as soon as I could.

"When I came up from the basement the first thing I did was to ring the alarm. Then I went and opened the doors.

"All the outside doors were closed. One was bolted at each entrance. We had a fire drill about two or three weeks ago. We have had them twice since January.

"There was never any way of fastening the left hand doors back.

#### Dark Doom Under Stairway.

"There was nothing under the stairs when I first saw the smoke except a dark little room," continued the janitor.

"Nothing is there but a box in which I fix up lime, with boards over it. The box had some lime in it. I got it last fall. I used it for whitewashing the basement. I had slacked it all before school began last fall. I had added no lime since then.

"The box was about one and one-half by two feet. It was about half full of lime. The box had been under there for seven years.

"The place has a door and is a sort of closet under the stairs going into the basement. It was all slacked lime in that box."

Replying to questions, the janitor said:

"It was dry down there. I scrub those stairs. Water may run through. I last scrubbed them Saturday. No doubt some water leaked through the stairs into the box.

#### Steam Pipe In Closet.

"One steam pipe runs through the closet. It is covered with asbestos. The stairs are Georgia pine.

"The pipe is not closer than three inches to the woodwork. The pipe and the asbestos were all right about a week ago.

"The closet door has a key, but was open today. I had looked in there about an hour before.

"Some girls were hiding in there. This was about 8 to 8:30. There was nothing in there when I drove the girls out.

"I didn't notice whether there was anything in there. I didn't see anything, hear anything or smell anything."

It was explained that the steam pipe mentioned was a circulation pipe, returning to the furnace, and was never very hot.

"I don't know who the girls were in there," said Hirter. "They were little girls, fourth or fifth grade girls. I never saw any electric wires in there. There was none there.

"We light the building by electricity, but there were no wires in there. The nearest wire is by the boiler. There is a light in the vestibule at the east entrance."

#### Any Boys Smoking?

Question—Did you ever see any boys smoking in the basement?

Hirter—Not this year. There were some last season, but I haven't caught any boys smoking in the building this year.

"I don't use any matches in the building," the janitor con-



tinued. "I don't need any. I ain't got any in the building. I keep a fire all night and Sunday and bank it.

"The valve on the little boiler is set at 15 pounds and on the big one at 10 pounds pressure before the safety valve acts. I never meddled with the valves. They were just as they were left.

"There were three or four girls hiding in the closet. I can't tell any of their names. They had been attending the school three, four or five years.

"They were about ten years old. I could tell them by sight. I never heard their last names. One of them was named Lizzie. One was Anna. One was Mary. If they are living yet I don't know.

#### **Playing Hide And Seek.**

"They were playing hide and seek. It happened many times like that.

"They were just standing there in the closet, all three, waiting for some girl to come and find them. I don't know what girl was to find them.

"They closed the door and stood inside in the dark. I heard them laughing. I opened the door and chased them out. The door has only a catch with a knob inside and outside.

"The closet is about 25 feet east from the furnace door. There is a cement floor in the basement and closet.

"There was nothing in there but the little boards and possibly a little sawdust left from what I used in sweeping and the lime box. I keep no oil in the building. I used to have a little oil upstairs to put in a pan for the floor brushes.

"I carry out the ashes every morning after the school is in. It takes about 20 minutes. I did it this morning."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### TRY TO SAVE SCHOLARS.

#### TEACHER WHO LOST NEARLY ALL HER FLOCK GIVES GRAPHIC RECITAL.

Miss Ethel Rose, 959 Adams avenue, teacher, told a graphic story. She said her room was No. 2 at the southeast corner of the first floor.

"When I heard the alarm I opened the door and told the children to run outside as quickly as they could," she said.

"The fire alarm is three gongs. It was the first time I had had a fire drill with this class. They had been in the building only four weeks. I can't say when we had the last drill. I think only once since Christmas.

"Miss Moran gives the fire drill instructions. I line up the children as quickly as possibly, take them down the right hand side of the stairs, out the front door and around to the right to the same side of the building as my room.

"This class not having had a fire drill, I told them to get in line and get out as fast as they could. I opened the door and went into the hall and they followed.

#### Blocks Basement Doors.

"I saw them all out of the room. I went downstairs, blocked the basement stairs and all went out the front door. I had 34 enrolled. Three were absent this morning.

"In fire drills we always go out the same way. There are no instructions about varying the program at any time.

"The two inner front doors were standing open. The one to the left was fastened back. They swung outward.

"My children were the first ones to go out there. I didn't notice a girl of twelve standing there.

"Of the outer doors the left one was open and fastened with a chain and hook. The right-hand door, I think, was open. These doors are ordinarily open.

"The right-hand door is generally closed when the children leave the building. I think this time the doors were open. I noticed there was more room than usual for the children to get out.

"I noticed Miss Irwin trying to get her children out the back way. I tried to go to her through the hall. The flames were coming up. I went around outside. That took about a minute.

#### **Open And Fastened Back.**

"At the back the outer right-hand door as you go out was open and fastened back. The left-hand door I think was open.

"The inner left hand door as you go out was closed. I tried to open it. I grasped it with both hands and pulled. I could not open it.

"I tried to help the children out. I tried to open the door again. Flames leaped out over my head. Then some men came and opened it. I saw Mr. Dorn and Mr. Hirter. I don't know who opened the door.

"The inner left hand door was closed. Children were piling up behind it in the entry.

"I don't think it was over two minutes after I tried to open the door till it was opened. Just as they opened the door some one grabbed me and shoved me out.

"There were no children in the space between the outer and

inner doors. They were piled on the stairs. It wasn't three minutes from the time the gong sounded until it was all over.

"It wasn't a second until I had my door open. I was standing right by it. My children were the first out of the east entrance.

"As I stood at the head of the basement stairs flames were coming up a foot from me, and while the children were coming out.

"Some were frightened and fell and I picked them up. I heard no explosion. My children had been in school about a month. Their average age was six or seven years. I think they all got out.

"I could tell by those at the rear of the line, who were the largest children. I didn't count them. It is possible some might have turned back. They were frightened because they could see the flames."

#### Principal Moran's Story.

Anna Moran, the principal, living at 4905 Westrupp avenue, told the investigators that she had been principal of Lake View since the school was built six years ago.

"Four rooms were added a year ago, making nine in use as schoolrooms," she continued.

"As to fire drills, the teachers were told that the signal was three gongs, which side of the stairways to use, where to go outside, to go out in order and come back in order.

"It must have been a month since we had a drill. The weather was too cold through February. I think we had had only one since January 1. Miss Rose's was the only class that had come in since then.

"At the tap of the bell," continued Miss Moran, "the children get right up out of their seats, go to the side of the room and march down and out.

"The teachers are to see that they keep moving. They go with the children. The children do not go to the cloakrooms to get their wraps. Each grade has a particular stairway entrance.

"Mr. Hirter is notified to open the doors. I have told him to get them open as quickly as he can. At drills we have never been blocked or had to hesitate a moment.

"My room was on the second floor at the northeast corner. The first grades are out before I get down. One door is a spring door and would come back if we pushed it open. There is one of this sort at each entrance.

"All of them open out, certainly. The schoolroom and class room doors also. I usually give the fire drill alarm. It can be rung from my room or Miss Irwin's room. There is no way of giving it from the basement.

#### Did Not Give The Signal.

"I realized more quickly than anybody else that this was not a fire drill, because I had not given the signal.

"Flames and smoke were coming up the front stairs. I asked my children to go back to the fire escape in the library. I am afraid not many of them went.

"They thought they were nearer safety on the first floor than to go back to the second floor with me to the fire escape. This couldn't have been more than a minute after the alarm was given.

"I went back up. I met children coming down. I couldn't stop them. I went into the library with some.

"I smashed a window with a chair. The wind blew the door shut. I went back and looked into the hall.

"It was dense with smoke. I couldn't see a child there. I went back to the window and down the fire escape.

"I went around back. The doors were all open then. Men were there getting children out. Those doors swung outward.

"Fire drills have been given in this way for three years or more. There has never been any variation in the program.

New pupils are not instructed individually. We never had any trouble as to that. They get right up and go along out with the others.

#### **Children Won't Follow Teacher.**

"I lost a great many of my children, nearly all of them," concluded Miss Moran, tears filling her eyes. "I couldn't get them to follow me back to the second floor to the fire escape."

Miss Moran was then asked a few questions.

"The janitor was always in the building when needed," she said. "We have no trouble with the heating apparatus.

"There never was any smoke in the building. It was satisfactorily heated all the time except one day after vacation, when the third floor was not warm enough.

"It was comfortable this morning; not overheated. The boiler was in the center of the building, 15 or 20 feet west from the place where the flames came up.

#### **Small Room Under Stairs.**

"Under the stairs there was a small room in which ink was kept, perhaps tools. I have never seen any rubbish there. Sometimes there was a stepladder.

"This closet is north from the stairway. The flames seemed



to come from the south side. Under that point might be the edge of this closet.

I think the fire crept under the floor to the stairway opening and burst out when the opened doors admitted the draft.

"I heard an explosion half an hour after we got out of the building. There was not a sound before that.

"Mr. Hirter takes ashes out of the side door and piles them north of the building."

#### **Boy Tells His Story.**

The next witness was little Walter Skelly, a manly lad of six, who tried to tell just how things happened. He spoke up bravely, but became somewhat confused at times.

"I live on Sackett street," he said. "I am in Miss Lynn's room. I heard the gong ring. Miss Lynn opened the door.

"We ran out. I caught hold of the little kids so I wouldn't fall. We ran for the door. We went home then. We came down the back way. The door was open. The right-hand door was open. The left-hand door wasn't open. I was the first boy to get out. The second door was shut. I couldn't open it.

"Five boys got out before me. I bumped a kid and he bumped the door and pushed it open.

"Mr. Hirter opened the door. I was there when Mr. Hirter came. I waited there four minutes."

#### **Describes Panic Of Death.**

Katherine Gollmer, 4919 Westrupp avenue, teacher of the northwest room on the second floor, told her story:

"My children were from nine to twelve years old. I had no Lizzie. There was Anna Widmar and Mary Schednick in my room and Elizabeth Sodoma.

"All were about eleven years old. I don't think they played together much. They were not chums especially.

"At the alarm the children rushed up out of their seats. A boy opened the door. I went out with the children. I said, 'Fire drill.'

"I looked back and saw them all out. I told them to rush. I got down last. I saw the jam.

"The outside door, the right-hand half of it, was only half open. I called and beckoned them to come back.

"Miss Moran was there. I went with her and such children as would follow to the library and out on the fire escape. I went to the door as soon as I struck the ground.

"I tried to open it. I saw hands stretched out. I took hold of the hands and tried to pull the children out, but couldn't.

"I tried to get the door open. A man was there, Mr. Hirter, I think. The door was fastened at the top. My children always went out the west door.

"This morning the left hand door, going out, was closed.

"My children were panic stricken when they saw the flames. They seemed to reach to the ceiling when we got there.

"I told them to rush. I wanted them to go out quickly. I never told them to 'rush' before in a fire drill.

"This is my second year in the building. We have had several fire drills this year. We have to go into the library to get to the fire escape.

"The fire drills don't involve any use of the fire escapes."

Lulu Rowley, teacher of No. 6 room, A third grade, telling her story for the second time, said that her room was at the southeast corner of the second floor.

"At fire drills I always tell the children to get a partner and

not to rush," she said. "They follow the school ahead, if there is any.

"We usually go out the front door. Today the flames were coming up and we went to the west door.

#### **Fire Blocks the Stairs.**

"The fire was then blocking the stairs. I went down with the children. We couldn't get out the front way. Flames were coming up right between the banisters.

"I didn't go back upstairs. The children were crowded in the back stairway. Miss Irwin and I went into Miss Fiske's room.

"Some children followed us. We threw them out the windows and followed ourselves.

"I picked up a boy with the skin torn from his face and hands. His face was all blood. He told me he couldn't see.

"I carried him out of the way and came back. It couldn't have been more than two and one-half minutes from the time the gong sounded till I was out of the building and back at the rear door and it was all over.

"This is my fifth year in the building. We had at least one drill before this year. There was no change of instructions. The exits were always open. It was the janitor's duty to open them."

#### **Heroine-Teacher Stays.**

Laura Bodey, 978 Collamer street, said that she was a teacher in the building, her room being the auditorium on the third floor:

"My children are in the fifth A and B grades," she said. "This was my fifth week. I had had no fire drill in that time and no instructions.

"The children had had it and knew what to do, only when they saw the smoke and fire they called 'Fire!'

"I stayed until every child was out of the windows and down the fire escape. I found a little boy with his hands and face hurt and took him out in front.

"I went around to the west door. There was a wide space, as wide as if the doors were open.

"I didn't get the children in line. Some of mine were missing. They went down the back stairway."

#### F. J. Dorn's Tale.

Frank J. Dorn, member of the school board and father of one of the little victims, said that he reached the building shortly after the fire started.

"I went to the west door," he said. "I first found a little girl lying 10 or 12 feet from the building, with her head battered, her clothes burning. I carried her a little way and gave her to some women. I went back to the doors. Both were open.

"The inner door on the north side was wired back to the radiator. The first thing I thought of was to tear out the middle partition; that is, besides the inner vestibule doors, four or five feet back from the outer doors.

"The partition crosses parallel with the outside walls. Double doors were hung in it with side panels of glass. The entrance was about five feet wide. The partitions were about 18 to 24 inches wide.

"On my way to the fire I met my little girl, who told me to hurry up and save 'little sister.' She always called her 'little sister.' She said she was burning up. I helped pull out six or seven children.

"Just imagine 75 children in front of you, calling you by name and stretching out their hands and begging you to save them! With their hair on fire and their clothes burning!

"I helped to pull out Miss Lynn. When I got there I didn't notice any children outside."

R. W. Galloway, living near the school, said:

"I got there about 9:25 a. m. I was starting for work when I saw the fire, and threw my grip back into the store and called to Mr. Hausrath and went to the fire.

"I helped get them out, what I could, at the back door, the west door.

"One door was about half closed and half open. The crowd was against it outside as much as inside.

"Mr. Hausrath and I tried to break down the railing. We smashed the glass, but couldn't get the partition out.

### Saves Many Children.

"Finally we took the children as they came over the top of the pile. A teacher, a lady, anyway, was the first to call for help.

"Mr. Schaeffer, a tailor down by the Lake Shore, got hold of his boy's hand. I should call the door about half way open.

"The crowd of children was back of the partition. I couldn't say how wide the partition was. I was not at the east doors at all.

"Hirter was there trying to get the children out, the same as the rest of us. We were pulling children off the top.

"Those who were strong enough were climbing over the top. Some fell back. Most of them were underneath and we couldn't move them."

Daniel H. Farnam, 3892 West 36th street, Cleveland, said:

"I am a draughtsman for Searles, Hirsh & Gavin, architects. I had charge of the drawings for the addition to the school building. I am acquainted with the plans for the addition especially. We constructed the west four rooms.

"The width of the vestibule is 10 feet eight inches. The stairs going up are five feet eight inches wide. The finish of the stairs is yellow pine.

"The vestibule is about five feet deep from the inner to the outer doors. The doorways were five feet wide, outer and inner. All four doors swung out.

"The doors were hung in a wooden partition with glass panels at the sides. The partitions are less than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide at each side—little more than two feet. Georgia yellow pine is a usual material for a building of that grade. I would not say that it is more than usually inflammable.

#### Four Rooms in Basement.

"There were four rooms in the basement, corresponding with the rooms above, and a long hall. The heating plant was in the center of the octagonal space. The closet mentioned was closed with a ceiled partition.

"The octagonal space had a plastered ceiling. It was fenced off with a slat fence of pine. A pit 26 or 28 inches deep was inside the fence. You had to step down into it to get to the boilers.

"I have worked more or less on the plans for 10 or 12 school-houses.

"This building would stand no comparison whatever with a fireproof school like the Shaw Building in East Cleveland, but compares with the class of schools built in small towns.

"It was approved construction for such school buildings."



## CHAPTER XIV.

### CHILDREN'S SACRIFICES.

PATHETIC SCENES ARE ENACTED IN ALL HOMES  
IN THE VILLAGE.

Collinwood mourned for her children that are not, even while the official investigation of the fire was in progress. Up and down the principal street, Collamer avenue, on either side of the burned Lakeview school, there was hardly a home where some little loved one was not missing.

It was the same on the side streets. Everywhere within a radius of half a mile was misery, hopelessness and the gloom of death.

Over the home of Mrs. Paul Sprung, two doors east of the school, the silence of utter desolation had settled. Everything was as it had been when little Alvin, 7, the only boy, went clumping out in the morning after his goodbye kiss.

#### You'll Be Late.

In the living room stood his little table piled high with picture books. Jack and the Bean Stalk lay just as he left it when warned—"You'll be late for school."

The tiny chair pushed back and a little sidewise told a mute story of how the little fellow had slid lingeringly out.

Through the open back door of the dining room his blackboard peered. A house with the many-windowed front and roof going to a wobbly point, which every mother knows, stood out white from the vigorous strokes of his baby hands.

The mother came in like an apparition. Her face was blood-

less. Great dark shadows lay under her eyes. Her hands hung listless. There was no sign of life, but her noiseless glide.

"My boy Alvin; yes, he's dead," she said monotonously. Then her eyes fell on the little table and chair.

"Oh, you can't think how it was," she burst out.

"It was such a little time that he'd been gone. I heard the commotion. I ran to the door and saw them piled high on each other; screaming, struggling—I caught their hands. I pulled at them. But I couldn't do anything—I—I couldn't."

The dry sobs ceased. The slender hands hung lifeless again.

"I'm just waiting for my boy to be brought home," she murmured, turning away with the dullness of despair.

### Three Little Ones Gone.

At the home of James D. Turner, 436 Collamer avenue, a few houses west of the school, three little boys went down to death in that awful heap of charred bodies. James 14, Norman 9, and Maxwell 6—all were lost.

Mrs Turner sat in a low chair. Her head was sunk on her bosom. She rocked moaning back and forth—back and forth.

"We fear for her," said the father chokingly. "She has not been well; and she just can't give them up. She insists that our Jim is not dead.

"Jim was such a gritty lad."

Turner's lips trembled, but loving pride was in the tone. "The children say he got out by breaking a window, but went back in again to get his brothers. No one saw him come out."

Oh, the bravery of those little heroes!

Could anything be finer than the way they turned back into the flames and smoke to hunt for little brothers and sisters!

Edna Hebler, 14, 4908 Westropp avenue, also lost her life

in the same way. She went safely down the fire escape with other children, and started away, when the thought of her little 6-year-old sister Melba's danger drove her back.

Up the fire escape she climbed, and made her way down inside to the first floor to die, while the little sister was safely at home.

Walter Hirter, 10, son of the janitor, was another little hero.

He was one of the first children to escape. He started to run across the street to his home when, "Ida, Ida," he called. Back he rushed to save his little 8-year-old sister, only to fall with her.

### Two White-Faced Girls.

At 432 Collamer avenue, in the Gordon home, two white-faced little girls clung to their sobbing mother, trying to comfort her for the sister Ruth they couldn't save.

Annie, 10, with the bravery of childhood, was the spokesman. She told of her own remarkable escape barely touching on her heroism.

"I was on the third floor," she said. "I ran down to the first and saw the door jammed.

"Then I ran up to the second to the library. The fire escape runs past that. I pounded on the window. It wouldn't open, so I ran to the first again.

"A window in the first grade room was open. I ran and called to other children to come. I got some to, and we jumped out."

Mrs. Gordon cuddled her little ones close.

"Oh, my three girlies. I was so proud of them," she cried, "and I'll never hold my Ruthie again."

A little farther up the street, at No. 521, a man in his shop clothes paced wildly up and down.

"Annie and Sofie, Annie and Sofie," he said over and over again.

It was Joe Widmar, who had lost two of his big brood of babies.

"Oh God, I couldn't get there in time," he groaned. "What if the use of my strong arms! They didn't save my girls. I ran; I rode. I don't know how I got there—and saw only bones."

There were no signs of living in those stricken homes. Food was uncooked. Fires went out. People sat helpless, speechless. Even the children seemed afraid to talk.

#### A Pall Over Every House.

It was awful. A pall hung over every house. Mothers with minds strained to the snapping point ran madly about.

It was feared that Mrs. Salvatore Caranova, 5314 Stone avenue, whose only daughter, Margarite, was among the lost would lose her mind.

The frantic woman tore her hair; she beat her breasts. Her shrieks could be heard a block away.

But what a blessing the younger babies were. Their helpless cries were all that saved many a mother's reason. Their soft snuggling in the hungry arms brought the merciful tears.

At the Schubert home, 5411 Lake street, Max Schubert, the father, sat bowed and broken, hot tears dropping on his big hands. His wife, with misery-drawn face, held her baby close.

They had lost their first born, Verna, 12, for whom they had hoped and planned and lived.

"I couldn't stand it but for the baby," moaned the mother, as

she snuggled her cold face beside the tiny warm one. "My sister-in-law, Mrs. Potter, saw Verna on that pile of children at the door--saw her burn and couldn't get her out."

Henry Ellis, 4613 Westropp avenue, was one of the first to reach the scene.

"The children were corded up, like wood," he said. "The little ones, mostly girls, were patient, and only held out their arms to us in a plea for us to save them.

"God knows we tried, but they were wedged in there so that a giant could not have moved them.

"We lifted off those at the top, one after another, until the fire came and killed them as we worked.

"I saw one little girl take the shawl which protected her own head for a moment, and wrap it about a littler boy, whom she held close to her and comforted as they died. They were in behind, and we could not reach them."

Mrs. A. A. Hunter, wife of the secretary of the Western Reserve Woolen Company, ran to the fire to search for her boy.

"I think more of the children should have been saved," she said. "The school rooms did not burn until after the halls were afire, but the firemen kept pouring water on the front of the building. If they had sprinkled it on the children many of them might not have died."

#### Smaller Children Beneath.

Max Schubert worked at the heap of babes, in which his own little girl, Verna, was being burned to death.

"The inner doors were open," he said. "The smaller children were underneath. Emil Pahner and I took hold of one little chap, and pulled with all our strength, but we could not move him.

"Then came the jet of flame, which withered them before our eyes, and horror stricken, we were driven back from that heap of little ones."

George Getzein, construction superintendent of the Cuyahoga Telephone Company, set his whole force of linemen to work at the task of rescue.

"Two of them lifted me up to a window, which I broke in, on the north side," he said.

"It opened into a schoolroom, but there were no children there. They were gathered on the stairs, and the fire was in the center of the building.

"It spread so rapidly that we were driven back by the heat even as I was preparing to jump inside.

"We then tried to force the front door, which opened inward, I think. We failed, until after the children within were dead."

#### Caught in a Pen.

"One-half of the inner double doors were closed," said Patrolman Wohl of the Collinwood department. "It was the narrowness of the corridor that caught them as in a pen."

The janitor, Fred Hirter, 477 Collamer street, lost three children, Walter, fifteen; Helena, thirteen, and Edith, eight.

"A little girl ran to me," he said, "and told me the place was burning. Her hair was afire. I was inside the building when it happened."

It was said that the child who notified him was Helena, his own daughter.

The janitor was compelled to keep his doors locked Wednesday to avoid attacks from crazed mothers.

Of the nine teachers at the North Collinwood school, only



two, Miss Katherine Weiler and Miss Grace Fiske, went down to death with the little ones intrusted to their care, said Dorothy Dale.

Both fought to turn the frightened children from that death pit at the rear door, till the flames burned the strength from their arms.

Both begged and entreated and comforted till the choking fumes stilled their voices.

Both fell charred and almost fleshless trying to save their little flocks. And escape was in a jump from the windows, 20 feet away.

The bones of a woman believed to be Miss Weiler were found a few hours later. They were locked in the tangle of little legs and arms that she had tried so hard to set free.

#### Dying Amid Corpses.

Miss Fiske was not quite dead when found. She had tried to protect the clinging children with her clothing. The forms of two little ones were wrapped in her skirts.. She died at noon at the Glenville hospital.

Miss Weiler taught a second grade on the second floor. There were 39 7-year-old babies in her room.

At the sound of the gong she started the line of little figures down the back stairs. The smoke was already rising around them.

As she saw the jam at the door, she tried to call them back.

Children who escaped say her voice rose above the screams and crackling flames.

But the children were so tiny they saw but one thing, the door that habit told them meant air and freedom. She pulled at them. She tossed them back.

But it was fruitless. They hurled themselves forward to be borne down by that struggling mass in the hall below. And she went down with them.

Miss Fiske also taught a second grade. She turned her 44 pupils to the back stairway because the little first graders were going out so slowly at the front.

Max Schubert, of gigantic stature, saw her at the door.

"She was jammed so tight against it she couldn't move," he said. "She was half in and half out. I tried to pull her out. I tried to pull children out, but they were wedged so tightly, I couldn't."

Miss Weiler was the daughter of Rev. Gustav N. Weiler, pastor of the German Methodist church Pittsburg. She lived at the home of F. W. Lindow, 2217 E. 81st street.

Mis Fiske lived on Orville avenue, N. E.

### Fireman Makes Exciting Race.

Fireman John O'Brien of No. 1's house, Cleveland, made the most exciting trip to the Collinwood fire.

The first message was that the stairways of the school had been burned and that scores of children were imprisoned in the third floor of the burning building.

A newspaper telephoned to fire headquarters and for an automobile. Capt. Ney at headquarters answered.

"Will the chief let the newspaper send a fire net and a fireman out to that fire in an automobile?"

The chief would.

Meantime an automobile dashed up to No. 1's house. It was a limousine machine—one of the inclosed affairs.

A fire net is a big circle of padded, hammock-like mesh fas-

tened to a big jointed iron frame. To put this ungainly thing in a closed automobile was impossible, but the fireman piled it up on top and John O'Brien, a six-footer, scrambled up and sat on the wabbling thing.

The roof of the auto squeaked and groaned, but the fireman only called down to the line: "Give 'er hell. It's worth smashing the whole outfit to save one kid's life."

Then the auto started for Collinwood. Over good pavements, bad ones and none at all, it dashed. O'Brien clung to the top of the machine and to his ungainly lifenet, the auto swayed and cracked.

And arrived to late.

But the willingness to do and dare was there, and from No. 1's house, on St. Clair avenue near East Ninth street, to the place of the fire, including a sea of mud in Collinwood's streets, the run was made in a few seconds under 19 minutes.

### **Gives Life To Save Others From Awful Death.**

Among the little heroes of the awful day was James Turner, fourteen, 436 Collamer avenue, whose charred body later rested in Shepherd's morgue beside his two brothers, Norman, eight, and Max, six, for whom he gave up his life in a vain effort to save them. James had jumped from a window and was safe, when suddenly he remembered his two little brothers imprisoned like rats in the burning building. Back through a window he climbed. His father, J. T. Turner, identified all his dead.

The greatest havoc was wrought among the children of Lake Shore shops and round house employes, and employes

of the Browning Engineering Company. Several children of brakemen and firemen were killed. A message sent to Fred W. Hook, passenger brakeman, at Buffalo apprised him of the death of his boy, Wilfred, eight. Most of the bereaved families were foreigners, but several children of well-to-do families were among the dead.

#### **Death the Great Leveler.**

In the presence of the great leveler Death, rich and poor were equal. Women in furs sobbed upon the shoulders of lowly foreigners in calico. Men of far different strata of society grasped each other's hands and shed tears for each other.

In the gloomy storehouse death, grim, unyielding, unspeaking, ruled supreme, yet it brought in its train, charity, love and richest flowering of human kindness. In the world without, birds sang and sun shone, and the thousand noises of city life proclaimed the relentless fact that the catastrophe which brought desolation to hundreds of homes had left the great world untouched. They had no dead to identify.

#### **Every Ambulance Busy.**

Every ambulance in the East End answered the general ambulance alarm following the discovery of the fire. Twenty wagons and crews were engaged from 9:40 o'clock in the morning until after 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Even at 8 o'clock several crews had not returned to the barns. Drivers and attendants were exhausted physically by the actual exertion of carrying away the dead and dying.

Ambulance men steeped in the horrors of accidents were horrified at the spectacles they were compelled to witness. Never in their lives had they seen such scenes as those of the

fire. Hogan's, Shepherd's, Mapes', Ziehm's, Abel's, Monreal's and Jennings' and Hazenpflug's wagons responded to the call. All of them sent every wagon available. Hogan sent three ambulances from his East End office, John and St. Clair street. They left the barn at 9:30 o'clock.

The first load was seven bodies. These were taken to the Hogan morgue. Instructions were received, however, to take the bodies to the Lake Shore shops. After that all bodies were taken to the shops. One dead girl was taken to her home. Forty-eight bodies were carried during the day. At 8 o'clock in the evening two wagons were still busy taking the identified dead to their homes.

Mapes sent two wagons, working late into the night. All bodies were taken to the Lake Shore. Six ambulances were sent out by R. G. Shepherd, whose morgue is near the school. On account of its location this morgue was used for the dead. At 8 o'clock Shepherd had hauled forty-five bodies and more were constantly being received.

Ziehm's three wagons hauled thirty-eight, all to the Lake Shore. Abel had three wagons out, hauling thirty-two. Two wagons from Monreal's hauled forty-three bodies. One wagon was out all night. Jennings and Hasenpflug had one wagon out, carrying fifteen bodies. The driver of this wagon made eleven trips.

#### Like Great Slaughter House.

"Never in all my life have I witnessed such horrible sights," said R. G. Shepherd, an ambulance man. "I have seen the effects of some terrible affairs, but this one was inexpressibly horrible. We soon found that it was of but little use to try to save any lives. All were dead by the time we could get to

them. It was like a great slaughter house—that school. Only it was an abattoir made more terrible by the fire which burned and charred each body."

The reports of the ambulance men were but partially compiled. So many bodies were handled that the drivers themselves hardly knew how many bodies they carried. Early in the evening calls began arriving at the different stations asking that wagons be sent again to the Lake Shore warehouse. Parents of the identified were beginning to take home the remains of their loved ones. All night this was kept up.

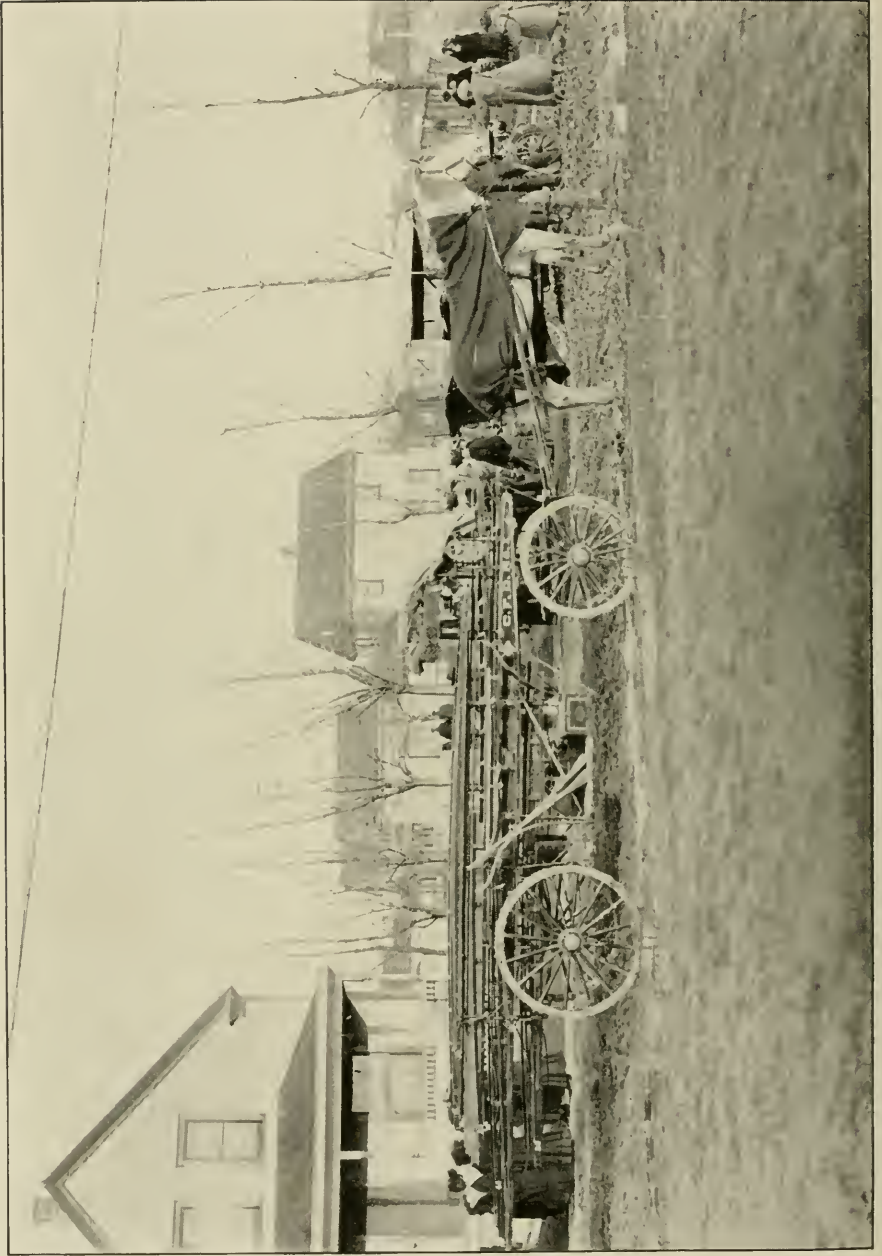


Come Back Soon.

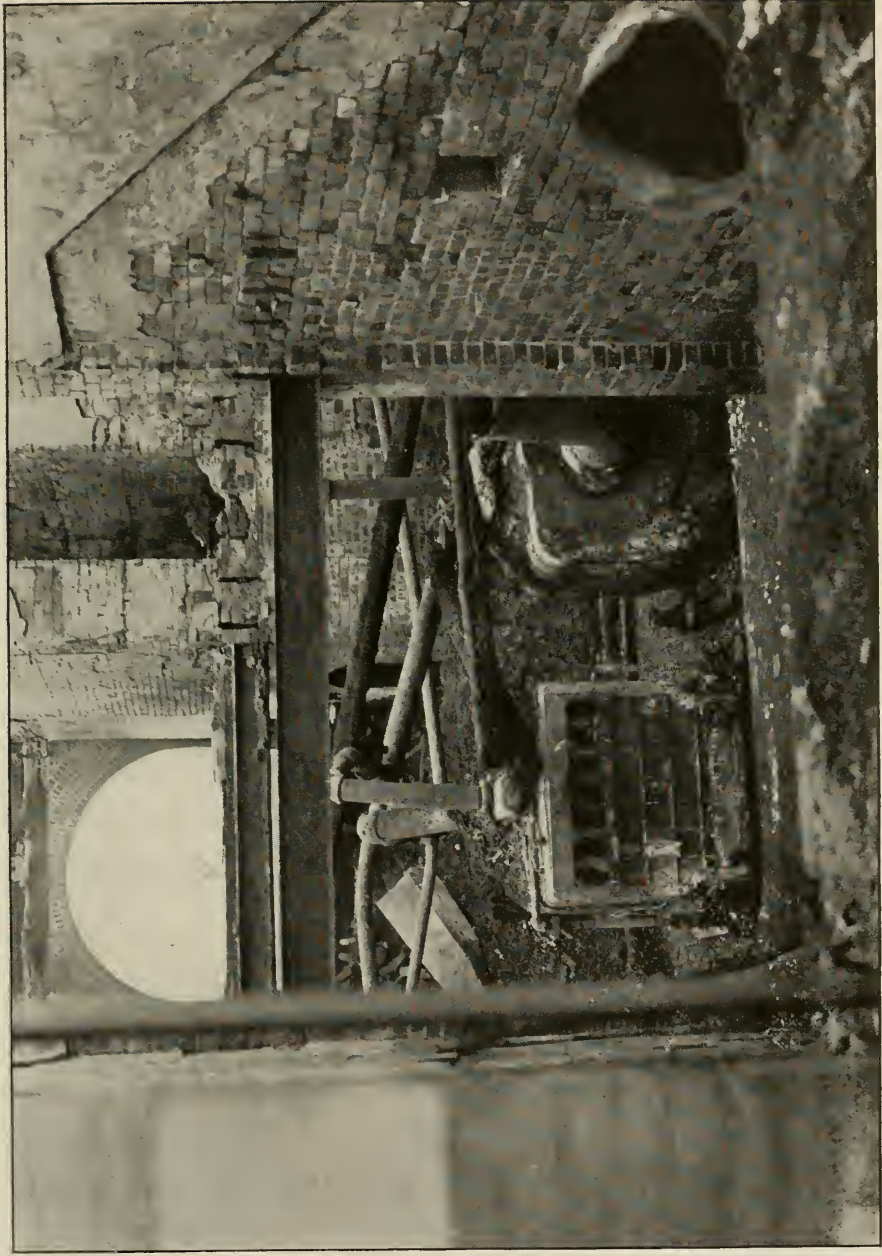




Emma Neibert, the girl who discovered the fire and gave the alarm

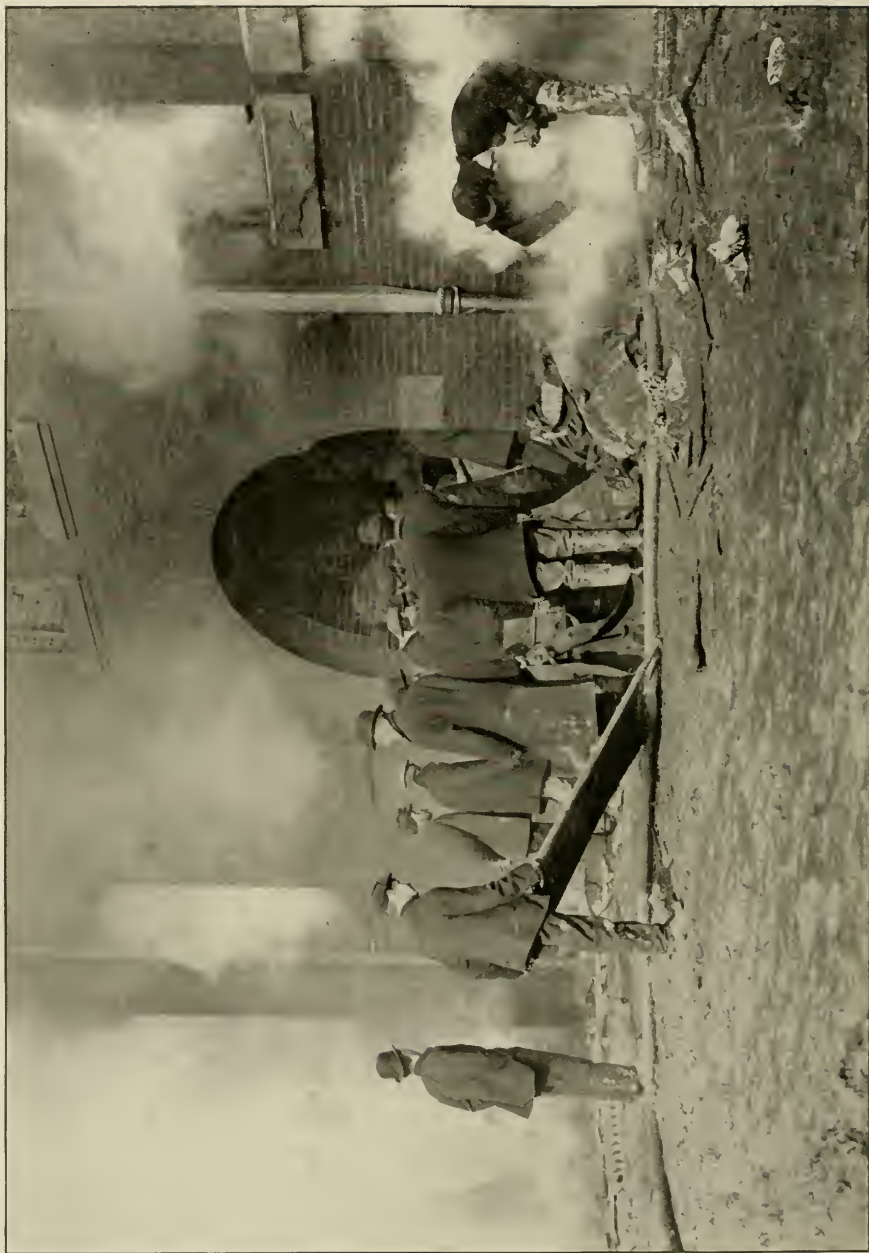


The Collinwood Fire Department Hook and Ladder



The heating plant right under the front entrance, where the fire started and prevented the children going out the front door

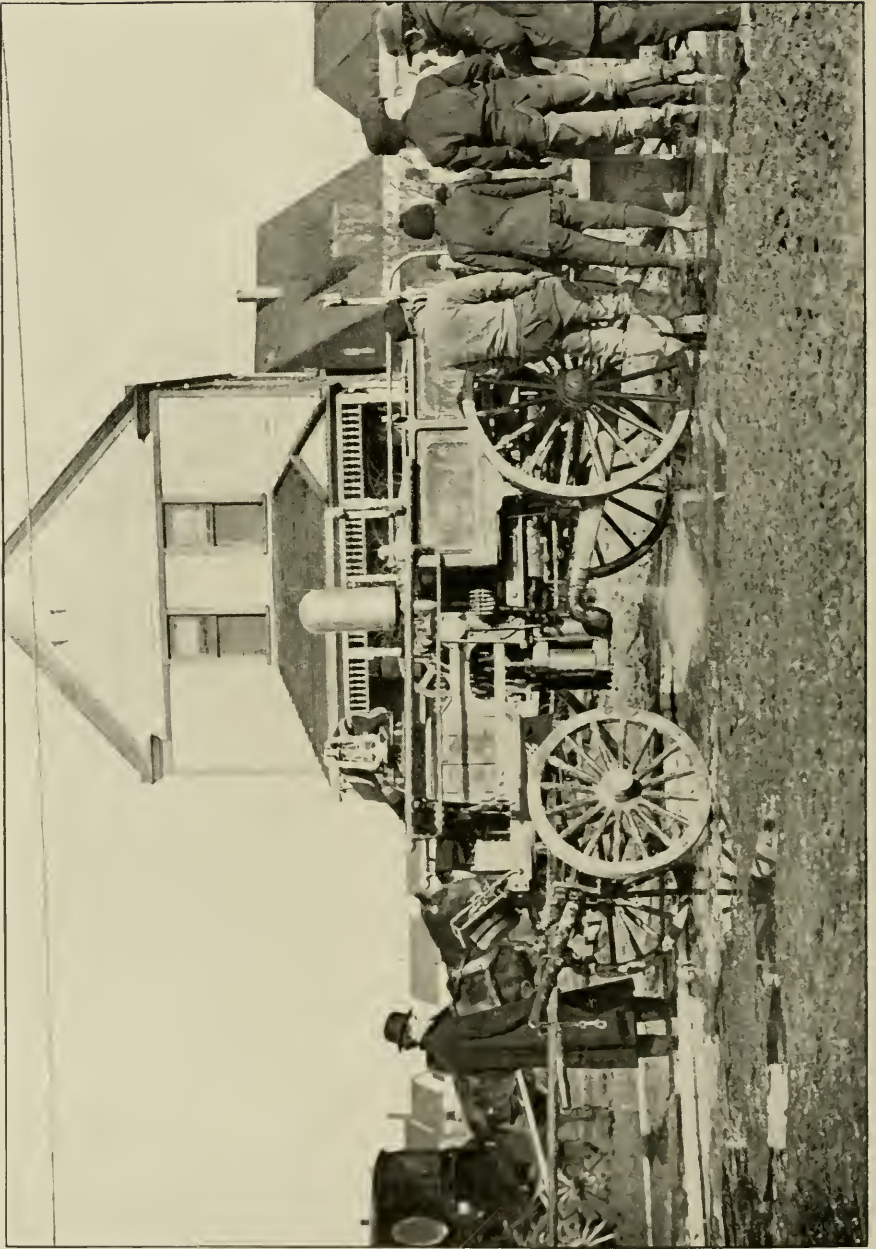




The death door where scores of children perished



Fritz Hirter, the janitor of the school, who lost three of his own children in the fire

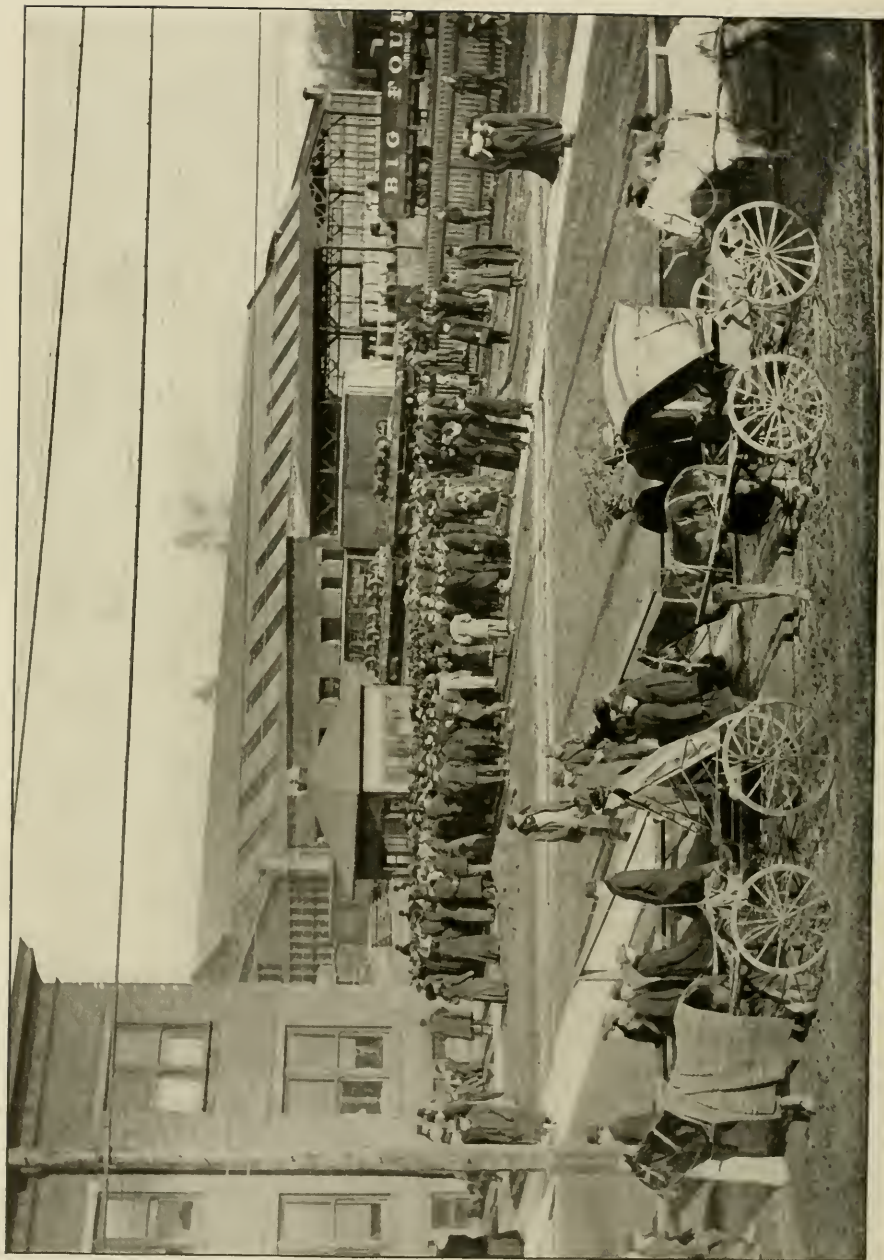


The Collinwood Gas Fire Engine

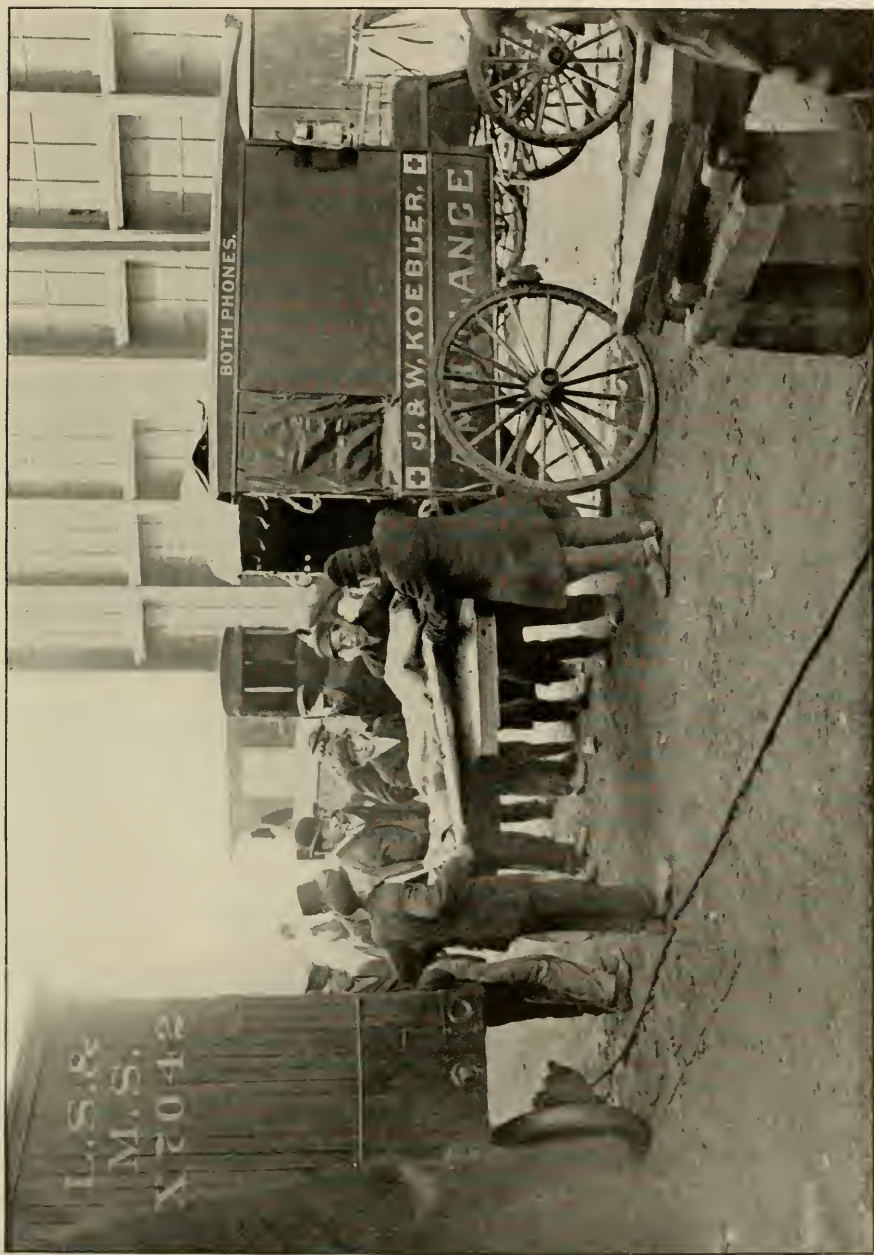




Collinwood City Hall and Fire Engine House

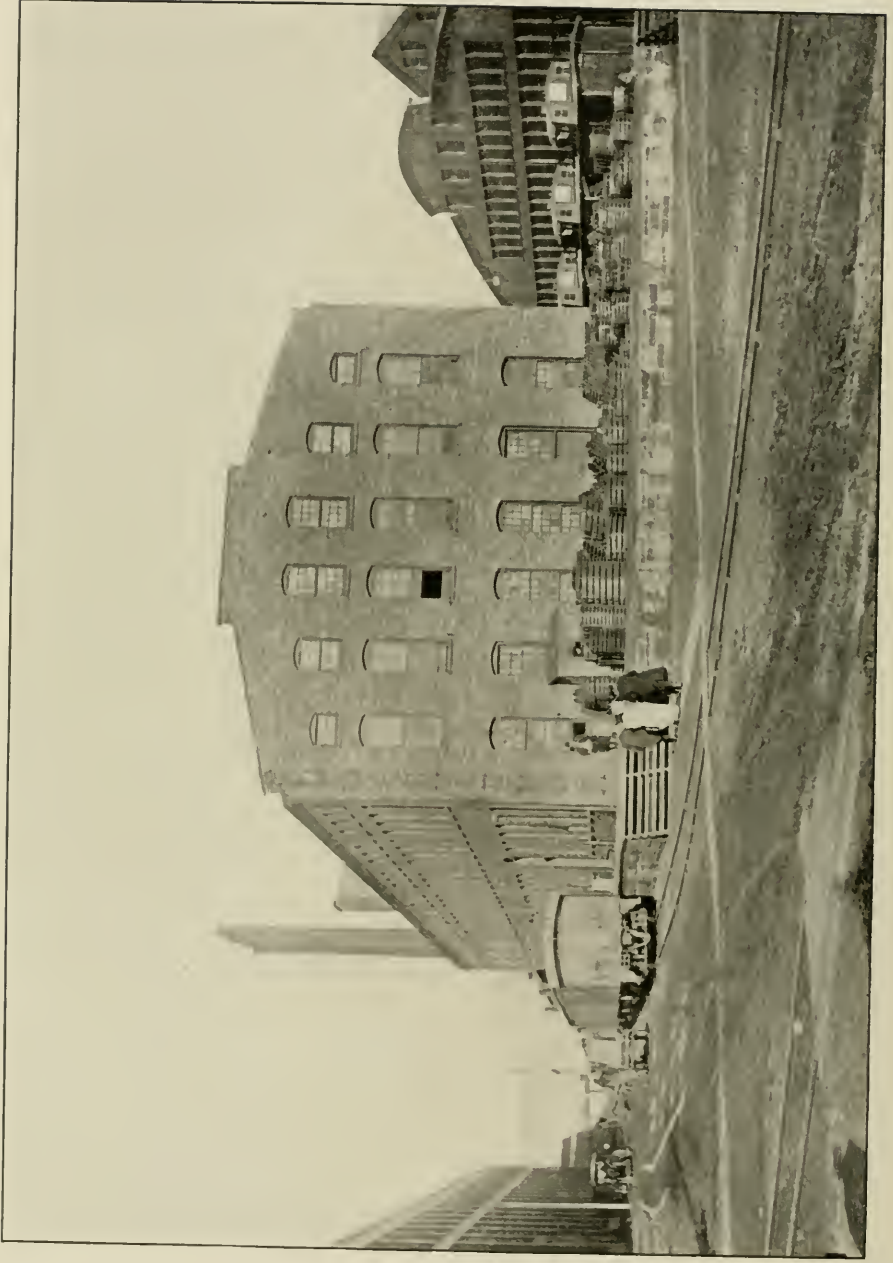


Parents of the dead children rushing to the morgue



Delivering dead bodies at the morgue

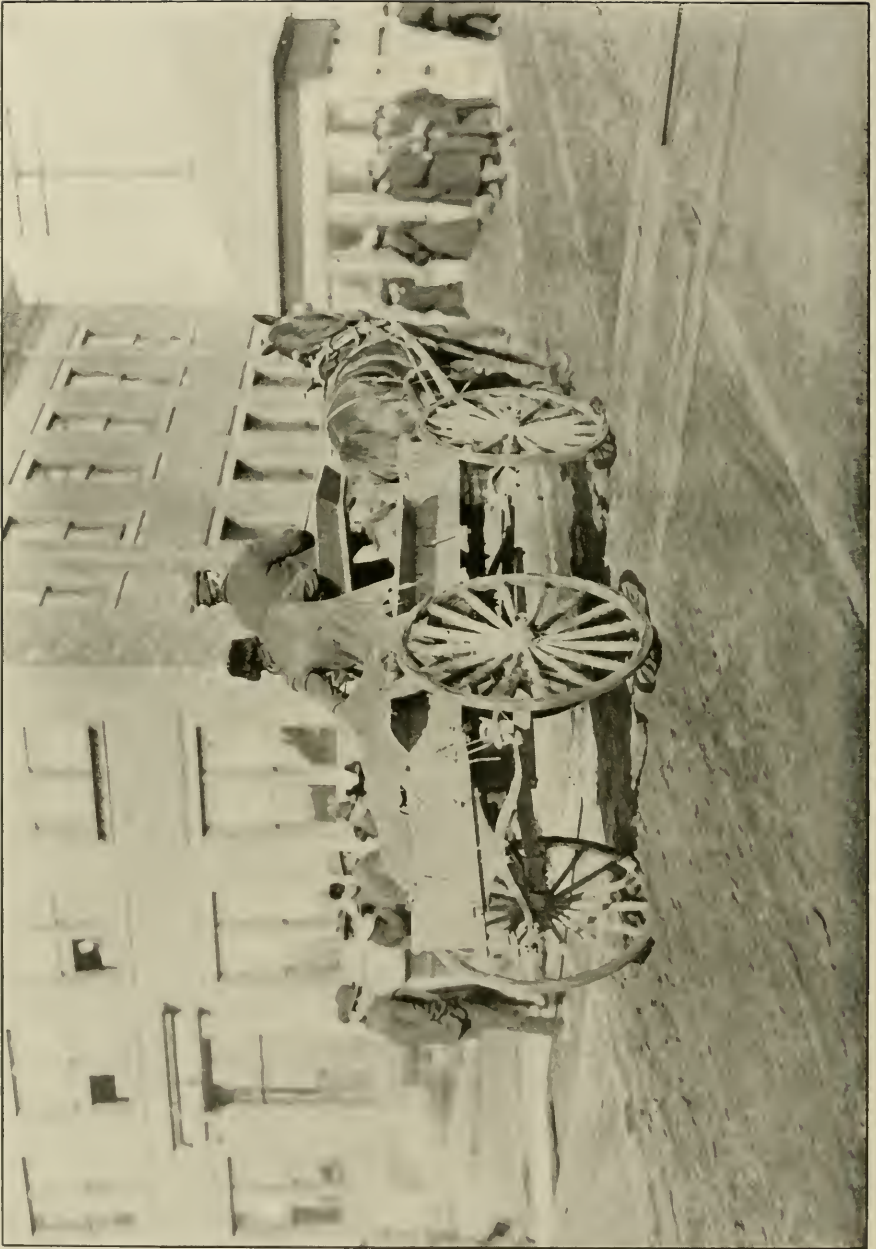




The Lake Shore Railroad Storehouse used as a morgue

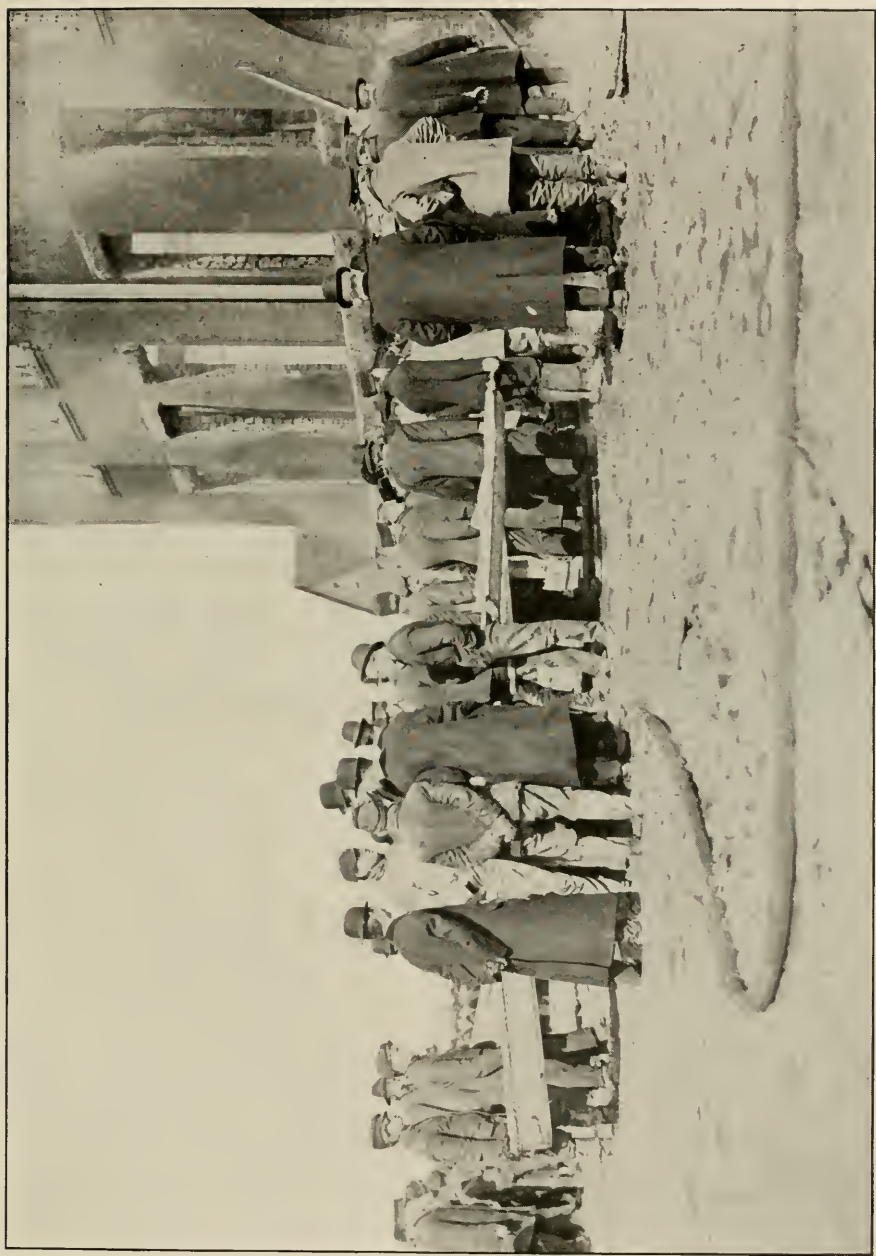


Fritz Hirter, the janitor, making a diagram in the sand of the school exits for Fire Marshal Brockman



One of the wagons hauling bodies of children to the morgue





Getting the last of the dead bodies out of the building

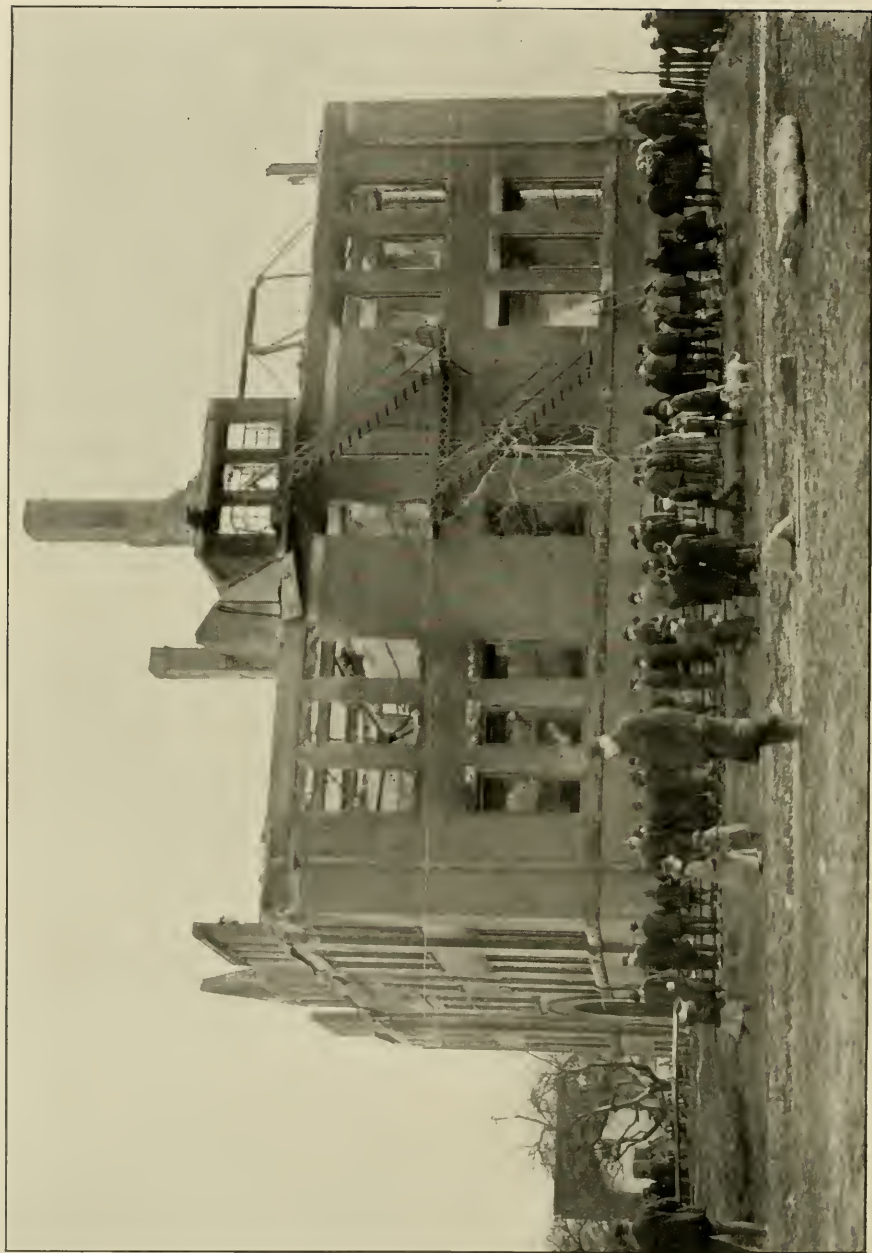


A row of the children's dead bodies laid out in the temporary morgue



The Building Inspectors and Fire Marshal after the fire





Ruins of the Collinwood School

## CHAPTER XV.

### MOTHERS WAIL FOR BABIES.

#### WEEPING TEACHERS VISIT PARENTS IN AN EFFORT TO COMFORT.

Their eyes red from crying, tears still running down their cheeks, the teachers that escaped the holocaust visited the homes of all their pupils.

Having no official list with the addresses, they stopped at every house within a mile of the ruins.

"Are any of your children missing?" was the first question the teachers asked.

Tear-stained eyes of mothers answered affirmatively in nearly every house. Few homes there were near the school that had not a missing one. In some instances two, and even three, were gone.

Moaning and loud crying often told the young women before they knocked at the door that their list of fatalities was to be augmented.

#### Calling for Her Babies.

"My babies! my babies! Why did you let them burn? Won't I ever see my little boy again?" the heart-broken mother would cry.

Miss Lulu Rowley, teacher of the third grade—more than half of the children of her room perished—answered all the questions put to her by the parents as best she could. Frequently she broke down. Then she would wring her hands and say:

"If they had only done as I said. But the dear little things

saw daylight through the smoke at the open door in the rear. Then they rushed into the mass jammed in the doorway. Your child probably was with them."

#### Parents in a Rage.

Some of the parents whose children lay charred in the improvised morgue at the Lake Shore yards, spoke kindly to the teachers, but many flew into a rage.

"Never again will I let my boy go to school," fairly shouted a foreigner, who had lost his little girl.

"Why didn't you bring my little girls with you?" cried Mrs. Bertha Robinson to Miss Laura Bodey, the fifth grade teacher. The Robinson girls, Fern 12, and Waunetta 7, were the only colored children in the school. Both were caught in the doomed building.

Crazed with grief over her loss, Mrs. Robinson refused to be comforted by the teacher. Her condition was for a time serious.

#### "I'm So Glad," Said Pet.

One little girl, Mary Oblak, 11, ran through the mire, ankle deep in Spruce street, to embrace Miss Rowley.

"I'm so glad you threw me out the window. I only hurt my wrist," she said.

Mary was in Katherine Weiler's room. When she ran to the back door she found it clogged with shrieking children piled six high.

"Come with me," called Miss Rowley.

Mary ran into one of the rooms on the first floor, and Miss Rowley threw her through the window.

Mary's brother was killed.



At every corner, children ran up to the teachers and told of their escapes. They gave the names of their unfortunate playmates. In this way the teachers found out about the pupils.

#### **Illness Saves Girl.**

The mother of Bertha Jepson, 7, told about her little girl. She kept her home from school because she was sick.

"I'm so glad she didn't go to school, because she would have been killed, for she isn't as strong as her comrades."

It was late in the night before the teachers finished their visits. Miss Rowley was faint with exhaustion. Most of the children on her list were lost. The strain was more than she could stand—her inquiries for the safety of those in her room usually brought a negative shake of the head.

"If only I could have thrown some more out of the windows," she cried, "but they all ran away from me to the stampede at the back door."

#### **Says Stairs Collapsed.**

Glenn Barber, 10, one of the survivors of the Collinwood school fire who was taken to Glenville hospital, died there a few hours later.

If the story the boy told the nurses is accurate, not only were the front doors of the school locked, but the rear stairs collapsed while the little children were trying to escape by the back door.

"When the fire alarm sounded," the child said. "I ran down the front stairs. I tried the front doors and found them locked. I ran back upstairs to my room on the second floor. By that time the children were pouring out into the halls.

"I told them the front doors were locked, but they didn't

pay any attention to me. As they rushed by me to the stairs, I clung to the door jamb as they rushed past, to keep from being swept downstairs.

"They ran down the front stairs and, finding the doors locked, came back. Then the upper halls filled with smoke and it got so dark we could hardly see. Suddenly there was a bright light at the front door. It was the flames.

"All the children then rushed down the back stairs. They were so crowded at the rear door they couldn't move, while others from behind pressed them.

"Then the back stairs collapsed and all the children on them fell in a heap in the ruins.

"I came upstairs again and jumped out of a second-story window."

Frank J. Dorn was a happy man when he left his home on Park avenue, Wednesday morning, for Gretchen, age 10, and Katherine, age 7, two beautiful little daughters, were growing to womanhood amid pleasantest surroundings; and this man's whole heart was centered in them.

A block away from home and he was in sight of the Collinwood schoolhouse. He noticed a wreath of smoke blurring the sky, but he did not regard it closely.

At the same moment he noticed his child Katherine, dressed only in her plain white skirt, running toward him frantically.

"Papa, papa!" she screamed, and her brown eyes were alight with terror.

"The school—the school, papa! It's on fire. And Gretchen"—her breath came in gasps, for she had rushed toward home.—"Gretchen is in there and can't get out!"

One leap and little Katherine was left behind to stare at her father as he ran to the school.

Yes, Gretchen was in there—dead.

He worked with two or three others with Trojan might. He gripped Miss Lynn, one of the lower grade teachers. She was in the front of the ranks of the pinioned. He freed her from the human fastening and she lurched forward from the hot breath of flames to freedom.

Sharp tongues were licking about the entrance. Smoke gushed forth stifling the rescuers. A hot flame now seared the heads of the little ones. As the smoke arose the rescuers saw the charred faces.

"I couldn't stand it any longer," said Dorn.

Soon his courage returned. There was no hope of saving any more children. Plans for taking care of the dead came next. And an hour later this man, whose oldest child was dead in that fire, was among the most energetic workers at the Lake Shore shops morgue. And while he worked with the dead he recognized his child.

### **"Their Eyes! Their Eyes!"**

"Their eyes—that's what I see all the time; that's what I never can forget. I see them all the time looking up at me as they did from that jam of children in the doorway. And the horrible part of it is that, although we were there—big strong men—we could do nothing to answer the appeal in those eyes."

Wallace Upton, the speaker, was a "big, strong man" in every sense of the word. He weighs more than 200 and has the shoulders of a Hercules. He was one of the first to reach the fire. He is credited with saving 18 children.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### COURAGE OF WOMEN.

#### TEACHERS PRAY AMID FLAMES AS THEIR LITTLE CHARGES PERISH.

Mrs. Gordon, mother of three children, two of whom escaped from the building, tells of the things she saw when she ran to the school to save her little ones.

"When I got there," she said, "I saw two of my children leap from a second-story window. Some one caught them and they were safe.

"But when I looked at the window I saw my littlest girl standing there, holding out her hands. The flames were all around her. A minute later she was gone. It was a terrible sight for me. I had to stand there helpless and see my baby die.

"I could see through the windows. I saw two teachers standing in the middle of a room with children crowded around them. I think they must have been praying. I could almost see the look of agony on their faces. A moment later they disappeared from view."

Women proved their courage at the fire. Mrs. Joseph Jones who lives opposite the school house, was among the first there. She stood and caught many children as they leaped from the windows.

After frantically striving to release his eight-year-old son George, from the tangled heap of smothering children at the rear door of the Collinwood school, W. C. Schaeffer of Groveland, Lake Shore boulevard, was forced by fire and humanity to release his hold and to see the despairing look of the boy

as the flames brought death to him and to scores of other children.

Glad, eager hands and a smile that said, "It's all right now—papa's here," greeted the heart-sick father as he stepped into the fiery entrance. Quickly he seized them, but pulling as hard as he could, he could not bring the lad to safety, for he stood more than waist-deep among the prostrate bodies of schoolmates and could not budge an inch. In despair, the father sought to pull out other children in front of George, and their cries and beseeching eyes gave him the strength of ten men. Not one could be moved, however.

#### His Hands Burned.

Then he reached to smother the flaming hair of his son burning his own hands and cheeks. Again he put out the fire in the lad's hair. Then hope fled with a last vain pull. George sank down with a look his father will always see, and Mr. Schaeffer was forced to get out of the building.

The thought of climbing up on the bodies of somebody's children, even if the inhuman act would help to save George, never entered Mr. Schaeffer's mind. He had done the best he could. Nothing was left to do, but to return home to his agonized wife.

A younger son—Charles, aged six—escaped from the burning building. He came running home, crying with terror, and said that the school was on fire and that George was in it

"I rushed to the school, and was in time to find my little boy alive," said Schaeffer, "and if anyone had been there to help, we could have saved many of the children. Oh; to think that I held George's hands, and I couldn't pull him out! Why, twice I put out the fire on his head. And I couldn't move him!

"I tried to get other children out of the way, but I couldn't move them, either. George was standing back behind a lot of them, and I had to stretch to reach him. He was wedged in there so tight that he couldn't move at all, though I nearly pulled his arms off. No one was there to help. Everybody seemed to be in front—doing nothing but gazing at the fire. It was awful!

"The fire engine had not arrived when I got there, and you can judge how long it must have been from the time when the first started, when I tell you that little Buddie ran all the way home to tell about it, and that I reached there in time to save many of those children. Oh, if there had been anybody to help."

Schaeffer spoke with forced composure until he told of smothering flames which licked at his little boy's head. Then his voice trembled. His wife was completely prostrated by the shock, but under a physician's care she soon improved. She was cared for in a neighbor's home until supper time.

#### Identified by a Ring.

The body of little George was identified Wednesday afternoon by a ring he wore, and it was removed to an undertaker's rooms.

Neighbors at the Groveland club grounds, east of the White City, were ill from their concern for the sorrowing Schaeffer family. Miss Teal met Schaeffer as he was returning from the school.

"The look on that man's face is burned into my memory so that I never can forget it," she said. "It was the most terrible expression I ever saw. I can't describe it, but I can see it now. Think of the experience!"



Everyone agreed that no incident of the fire was more tragic than the death of George Schaeffer before the eyes of his father, who had tried in vain to save him.

### Little Girl First To Escape.

The first person to get out of the school building was a tiny bit of a girl. Her name is Dena Carlson. Dena's sister, Nellie, is dead.

Weeping, the eight-year-old girl told the story of her escape late Wednesday.

"I heard the bell ring. It sounded strange to me—not like it always sounded. I ran with all my might for the back door. Other little girls and boys were there, but I got out first. Oh, I was out in the air. It was good to breathe.

"Then I thought of my sister Nellie. I tried to go back to save her, but I could not. Then I cried out 'Nellie! Nellie!' I just listened there outside to hear her say 'yes, Dena,' but she didn't.

"Then I fell to the ground and cried. I knew Nellie was dead. I wish I had died with her, my little sister playmate, but I can't die when I want to—we die when we don't want to, don't we mamma?" asked Dena of her weeping parent as she finished her sad story.

### Picture on the Wall.

Samuel M. Carlson and his wife, with little Dena between them, sat in their home at 4907 Fulton street, Collinwood, Wednesday night. The three were crying. Friends could not comfort them. On the wall was a picture of Nellie.

"Oh, I could not part with it for even a minute," sobbed Mrs. Carlson. "Do not ask me, please, sir.

"There is a picture of Nellie when she was three years old. Take that—that will do, but I must look at my own Nellie all night long—till morning."

A wreath tied with white ribbon mutely told of the grief in the household of Peter Schmitt. Hope had lingered until 6 o'clock that Mildred Schmitt, ten, who had escaped from the building by jumping from the second-story window, might recover from the serious burns she received, but she died at the Glenville hospital.

#### Perish in the Fire.

Another member of the family, Emma Henicka, twelve, the daughter of a sister of Schmitt, perished in the fire, and her death was regretted almost as much as the death of the idolized daughter, and two deaths in the family of Mrs. Lang, a sister of Schmitt's also, added to the sorrow.

Neighbors spoke of little Mildred as the apple of her father's eye.

"If ever a child was idolized by her parents," said a sympathizing friend, "that child was Mildred Schmitt. Why, they would not even let her go to school alone. She was a beautiful little girl, and everybody who knew her loved her."

Before the fire had made much headway, the father was at the school. He was just on the point of leaving for his business downtown when he learned about the fire. He said:

"When I reached the school I learned that Mildred had jumped out of a window. I found her at a house across the street, where a doctor was dressing her burns, and I had her removed at once to the hospital. They told me there was a chance to save her life, but she was too badly burned."

Peter Schmitt lived opposite the White City, and he had a saloon at 705 Superior avenue.

The place of honor in the house was given to a white-draped bier upon which lay the body of the child who was her father's joy. Here the family tearfully led neighbors who dropped in to offer condolences, and standing there they mournfully recited incidents of Mildred's childhood.

"When she was five years old," said the broken-hearted father, "she took first prize of all the girls in Cleveland for her beautiful eyes."

With the Schmitts was Mrs. Lang, who lost a daughter, Lizzie, aged fourteen, and a sister's son, who was loved as though he were her very own, Peter Henicka, a lad of nine or ten. "Pete," as everyone called him, carried newspapers to the people in the neighborhood, and regrets at his death were heard in many homes.

#### Aid the Family.

"Pete" and his sister put their shoulders to the wheel when the father was out of work. Mrs. Lang baked bread, which the children sold to families in East Cleveland. Recently there was scarlet fever in the family, and the children had just begun to go to school again. Their death came as a sad blow to their parents.

#### Officials Aid.

On every hand the Lake Shore Railroad officials and their employees were commended for the assistance they rendered the community. From the time the fire started until the bodies were removed from the temporary morgue in the company's warehouse, the railroad officials did everything possible to alleviate suffering and to aid the authorities.

Soon after the fire was discovered, M. D. Franey, superintendent of shops, ordered the company's shop fire department to the scene. Sixty men with hose and axes responded to the call and although they were unable to save the children because of the headway the flames had gained and the panic at the doorway they performed heroic work later in removing the bodies from the heated ruins.

Though L. F. Parish, superintendent of motive power, and Mr. Franey, the general storekeeper's warehouse was thrown open for use is a temporary morgue. Lake Shore employees were pressed into service to take charge of the crowds of people crowding the morgue. Work in all of the shops was suspended. The company's surgeon, Dr. W. H. Williams, was active in assisting Deputy Coroner Harry McNeil in taking charge of the numbering and tagging of the bodies.

#### **Tells of Horrifying Sight.**

The scenes of horror at the west side of the building when the children, wedged in the doorway, screamed and begged miserably to be saved, stamped itself indelibly upon the memories of those first to reach the building. Henry Sigler was one of the men who tried to pull the children from the door.

"I was about two blocks from the building when the fire broke out," he said. "I was talking to Mrs. Walter Kelly. When we saw the flames burst from the front door we both started on the run for the schoolhouse. Mrs. Kelly, who had two boys in the building, outstripped me. Her children were burned to death. When I got up to the building I saw a little girl lying under one of the windows. I turned her over and saw that her face was all crushed in. I thought she was dead,

so I paid no further attention to her, but went on to where the children were screaming for help from the doors.

"What I saw then I never will forget. I could see nothing but faces with arms outstretched in front. So closely were the faces packed together that I could recognize none of them. I think I did know one little girl, but I will not mention her name, for I know her family well, and though I tried to drag her out I was unable to do so. I reached for the first pair of arms I could get and pulled with all my might. I might as well have been pulling on an iron ring set in concrete. Another man helped me, but the two of us could do nothing. One could never believe bodies could be packed so closely together if he hadn't seen it. I saw arms pulled from their sockets and one body was literally pulled in two. It was my idea that if we could get one body out even if we had to kill the child in doing so, the others would come easily. I said as much to another man and we tried it. But we were not strong enough to get out a single one."

Sigler's grandchild, Mabel Sigler, aged ten, of No. 5012 Arcade street, was a victim of the fire.

#### **Dragged from Human Heap.**

In the face of the furious flames enveloping the children packed into the doorway of the school Mrs. Julius Dietrich, No. 5318 Storer avenue, dragged her daughter, Gertrude, from the mass and snatched her out of the school entrance. In effecting the rescue Mrs. Dietrich was badly burned about the arms, and her little daughter, too, was seriously burned.

The little girl was on the top of the crowd of struggling children and was near the edge of the inner vestibule door.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### BURRYING THE DEAD.

#### HUNDREDS OF CITIZENS WEEP AS WHITE HEARSES PASS.

Hundreds of Collinwood citizens stood with bared heads, bowed with grief over the graves of little children being lowered into the ground Friday—the little victims of the terrible school disaster.

Hundreds of others watched and mourned over little white biers where rested the charred remains of what three days before had been the life and joy of the home. Parents, relatives and neighbors gathered together at the sides of these coffins to mourn for the lost little ones.

All Collinwood was in mourning, for the burial of the village's dead had begun. Scarcely a home that had not felt the terrible blow either directly or indirectly. If it was not their own children it was those of a dear neighbor or a sister or a brother. Those whose children were saved mourned none the less for the relatives and friends that were dead while clasping their own dear ones to their hearts and giving thanks that they were still alive.

The village seemed to be one vast procession of hearses and carriages. White hearse after white hearse passed down the various village streets Friday morning and afternoon. From 9 o'clock in the morning until dusk there was no cessation in the procession. Scarcely did one funeral carriage pass before another came into sight wending its way with its sorrowful burden to the burying grounds.

Those who had no dead to mourn stood on the streets



watching the grim processions as they passed. There was scarcely a dry eye in Collinwood. Aged men and little boys were alike stricken with the gravity of the situation. Hats went off everywhere and the streets of the village were fairly lined with men and children with heads bowed and with tears streaming from their eyes.

"If they were only black hearses, I could stand it," said one old man with gray beard and hair. "But the white hearses! The children. All little children. It is too much."

"Have you lost any?" questioned a sympathetic bystander.

"No," said the old man, with tears streaming down his cheeks. "I have none to lose. None. I feel with them all."

The full import of that terrible catastrophe only came home to Collinwood as those white hearses passed solemnly one by one on their way to the cemetery. Collinwood has been stunned. The enormity of the horror was too much for human reason to grasp. The public mind was dazed.

#### **Funerals Bring Full Realization.**

But Friday when the poor little twisted and charred bodies were being taken to their resting place the full extent of the fire was realized. It was all over.

They had had their share of the terror and the horror as they were piled high in the hallway of the schoolhouse, with the hot flames sweeping upon them. Many lay on the floor waiting for death with limbs mangled and broken by the fall. Others unhurt, but pinioned down by the weight of those above them with their tiny hands stretched out for aid, for aid which did not come. There they died in agony. But their grief was over.

It was the stricken homes, the hearths where no childish

laughter again would be heard, where no childish complaints or quibblings—all of which now are cherished as the veritablest treasure in the hearts of the parents—will again be brought to the ear of the parents, that the grief centered Friday. Childless fathers and childless mothers, who had lost all that made life worth while, it was to them that the hearts of the people went out on the first day that the bodies were being taken from them, never to be seen again. Theirs would be the long, dreary years and years of agony, untold and unknown to any but those who had lost their own.

In the afternoon there were 35 more funerals, most of them being buried under the charge of the Rev. E. R. Wright, to whose Sunday school they belonged.

Saturday morning funeral services were conducted for 16 children by Father Bell. All of these children were identified, but the parents decided to have just one service for them all. They were buried side by side in one large grave in the Collinwood Catholic cemetery.

#### **First Service Held.**

The first funeral Friday was that for Alma Gilbert, ten years old, who was one of the first little girls taken from the building and one of the first to be identified. The services were held in her father's home on Lake Shore boulevard.

The house and yard were crowded with persons eager to sympathize with the stricken parents. The majority of those who stood about the little bier felt the grief keenly, as but few of them but had dead ones in their own home, or, worse still, had children burned in the fire who had not yet been identified and never could be.

After this funeral the others came in rapid succession. The second was that of Morris Shepard, 54 Elsinore street.

The lad was fourteen years old and was on the third floor when the fire started. His body was found far in the rear of the bodies stacked up in the doorway. He never had an opportunity to get anywhere near the door. The services were held from the family home.

#### Saddest Funeral.

The saddest funeral in Collinwood Friday was that of the three Hirter children, the two daughters and son of the janitor. They are Helena, thirteen; Walter, fifteen, and Eda, eight. The services for these three victims were held simultaneously with those for Lilly Rostick, six; Robert Wickert, ten, and Henry Kuiat, thirteen.

Mutterings against the janitor could be heard about the village all morning. Grief-crazed parents, eager to wreak vengeance upon anyone who could be held in any way responsible for the deaths of their little ones, were eager to pick up the slightest rumor of carelessness or neglect. It did not take long for these rumors to spread to ominous threats against the janitor.

All night and all morning police guarded the Hirter home against possible attacks. Angry parents who came to inquire what was his responsibility in the fire were turned away. While the funeral preparations were being made in the home the crowd collected about the house. The people had heard that the funeral would take place at 1 o'clock. Long before this time there was a crowd of 500 persons about the house.

The police became alarmed and six extra patrolmen were hastened to the house to be prepared for emergencies.

When the first little white casket appeared in the doorway, however, a silence fell upon the crowd. When this casket was followed by two more just like it, hats went off and tears came to the eyes of many.

#### Father Bowed With Grief.

The father bowed with grief of his three lost children, and broken by the questionings and the suspicions of his neighbors, his head swathed in a great bandage, for he himself had been badly burned in the work of rescue, followed the little coffins from the door. He looked neither to the left nor the right, but followed his children with his eyes fixed in unutterable grief on the boxes that contained all that was left of his own little ones. There was no fear of the crowd in his face. His grief was already too great. What more could mortal hand do?

"This man with three dead ones of his own, could it be possible he had been guilty of any carelessness when the lives of his own babes were at stake as well as those of a hundred and more of others?" questioned the crowd.

Whatever their thoughts, all knew it was not the time to express them. Silently and carefully they opened a way as the policemen headed the procession to the German Presbyterian church. The crowd followed and remained outside, those who could not get in, until the services for the children were over.

Again they made way as the coffins came out of the church and were carried down the street to the cemetery. And the crowd made no attempt at violence.

One funeral was held Thursday night, the first of the victims. The three children, James, fourteen, Norman, ten,

and Max Turner, six, of 346 Collamer avenue, which left the home bereft, were among the first taken from the ruins of the burned school building and were soon identified. Friends and relatives gathered at the home and many others who could not get into the house stood outside to show their sympathy for the dead. The street was lined with people, who stood with hats off and heads bowed as the three white hearses left the house after the funeral.

Then the people went back to their homes to mourn for their own dead and to prepare for their own funerals in the morning.

There was little or no sleep in Collinwood all night, and with the early dawn everyone was up and preparing for the day's grim task. All day it was a repetition of the first scene. Funeral after funeral was held until it was too dark to take any more of the bodies to the cemetery. When dusk came 50 bodies had been placed in vaults or lowered into the earth.

And again the people went home for the night. But it was only with the thought of awakening in the morning to go through the same task.

#### **Mother Moans by Her Dead.**

The funeral of Lucy and Harry Zingleman, two little fire victims, aged eight and twelve respectively, the children of Mr. and Mrs. H. Zingleman, of 387 4th street, took place at 11 o'clock.

White crepe fluttered dismally on the front door of the humble weather beaten one-story cottage. A stolid dark browed man, the father, stood as if dazed, by the front doorstep. He held a broom with which he kept constantly sweeping across the stone. As the neighbors and friends, many of

them weeping, straggled up the path, the man bowed his head, silently like some animal numbed with pain and fumbled for the door knob to open the door for the mourners.

In the cramped little dining room, a board table was covered with flowers. In the other room a single sealed casket held the two little bodies. By its side the mother knelt and moaned. Some neighbor women with tears streaming down their faces put their arms about her. Some kissed her hair and clutched hands.

#### Shows Her Love.

A yellow haired little girl from next door came timidly up the path to the house. She had been a playmate of the dead children. Her little palm held a handful of nickels and pennies. She ran up to the first woman she saw and thrust the money into her lap.

"Give them to Lucy's ma," she said as her lip began to quiver. "I am so sorry and want to help."

The pastor read from the Bible, both in English and German. Then he talked about the inscrutable ways of Providence, and while he said that in good time all tears would be wiped away and the reason of all sorrows understood, the sound of weeping was on all sides. For the first time since the shock of the terrible disaster the realization of death seemed to come to the afflicted families, who up until this time seemed only dazed with horror.

Three little boys, playmates of the dead children, were pallbearers. As the minister talked sometimes they drove their fists into their eyes and cried. But when it was over and they had to take up the little casket which held their dead comrades they braced up like brave little men.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### UNKNOWN STUMPS BURIED.

#### BLACKENED BODIES OF UNIDENTIFIED PLACED IN ONE BIG GRAVE.

Several scores of bodies of boys and girls who were burned to death in the Collinwood school fire were buried Saturday. The number of coffins laid in the earth that day was 70 in all.

All through the main street of the town the funerals passed all day in one almost continuous procession. The hearses marked where one funeral cortege ended and the next began.

The horses were kept trotting. Only at this pace could all be gotten to the cemetery.

#### Flag at Entrance of Church.

A large American flag hung above the entrance of St. Mary's Catholic church from which 16 boys and girls were buried.

This is the parish of Rev. Mark Pakiz. Most of his people are foreigners and are not yet naturalized. Nearly all still speak their old country language.

The men are big broad shouldered workmen in the Collinwood shops. Many are out of work and destitute. They thought that because they were not naturalized the village wouldn't help them. They were quickly convinced that this was not so.

#### Sixteen White Coffins in Church.

Mayor Westropp issued a proclamation in their own language and the city paid for many of their burials. The flag on the church Saturday was in recognition of this. A common grief had bound this people to the life of the old country.

Above the flag, the great bell in the tower tolled deep and slow, and one by one the 16 little coffins, decked with white flowers, were carried inside. Children were pallbearers. With them were little girls who carried tall candles. Lined on each side were sad-faced men and silent, dry-eyed victim's mothers. In a large row before the altar rail the bodies in their white caskets were laid. Four rows of pews were taken out to make room for them. The tolling ceased. The chanting of the solemn requiem mass began. Sobs broke the silence when the chanting ceased and the priests passed along the rows of dead and blessed each one.

#### Service for Twelve.

At the same hour another solemn high mass was held from St. Joseph's Catholic church, where the funerals of 12 children were held. They were buried side by side in one wide grave at Euclid Catholic cemetery.

#### Not Enough Hearses to Carry Dead.

Saturday for the first time undertakers' wagons were used to carry the dead in the funeral processions. There were not enough hearses available to care for all buried. Several of these undertakers' wagons were in the procession from St. Mary's church. Not enough funeral street cars could be obtained. Some of the funerals were carried to the cemetery in ordinary street cars run "special" and draped in black and white. At St. Joseph's Catholic church, where Rev. J. W. Bell held solemn high mass and 12 were buried, the services were impressive. Before 9 a. m. the first white hearse arrived. Another quickly followed. Little girls in white were pallbearers. The doors opened. At the entrance the little procession was

halted while the priest with outstretched arms gave them his blessing.

One large white coffin held the charred bodies of three. These were Anna Kern, 8; Lillian Rommelfanger, 9, and Rudolph Kern, 12. They were playmates. When their poor charred, twisted little bodies were taken from the ruins of the fire the little girls were found together locked arm in arm. The body of the boy was found close by. They played together. They died together. Together now they lie. It was nearly 9:30 before all the coffins had been born into the church and arranged in a long row before the altar. Fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers of the dead had followed the coffins into the church as they arrived. Others were held back. When the service began and these were admitted, the church wouldn't hold them all. Priests from Cleveland and other neighboring parishes assisted Father Bell.

At the close of the services the priests officiating, passed slowly down the row of dead children and again blessed each one. The last prayer was said at the cemetery when once more the victims of the fire lay in one wide grave side by side.

Twelve separate funerals of children of the Collinwood Presbyterian church were held Saturday at their homes. Eleven from this Sunday school were buried Friday.

### Two Mothers Faint.

During the services at St. Joseph's church two women, mothers of dead children, became hysterical and fainted. They were carried out and revived.

Two mothers mourned over one casket in the St. Joseph's church. Mrs. Lowry lost two children in the fire, Clara and Florence. Clara was found, but the body of the other was

lost. Mrs. Lowry claimed a body which had been identified as that of Mabel Zimmerman as her child. Though the authorities decided that the body was that of the Zimmerman baby, yet the coffins were placed side by side in the church and both Mrs. Lowry and Mrs. Zimmerman mourned over it.

Deputy Coroner McNeil announced that he had found the body of Florence Lowry. He told the mother, but she said that she was sure that the body claimed by the Zimmermans was her own. She said she would make no further claim for it, but would be content to visit the grave and mourn over it.

#### **Candles By Coffins.**

On each side of the little coffins in the church there was a lighted candle. Back of the candles were piled high masses of flowers, brought by the relatives and friends and also sent by sympathizers, who did not know the children, but who felt keenly themselves the heartaches of the stricken mothers.

Amid a profusion of flowers and in the presence of a great crowd of people, the unidentified dead who lost their lives in the Collinwood fire were laid at rest in Lake View Cemetery Monday.

Twenty little white caskets, with soft rays of sunlight sparkling among the blossoms which covered them, were laid side by side in one great grave. Above and all around were huge banks of flowers, while from a cross which surmounted the common resting place of the children hovered three white doves as in benediction.

#### **Hundreds Gathered in Sorrow.**

Early Monday morning, at the beginning of the day of public mourning in Collinwood, hundreds began to gather at Shep-

ard's morgue, where the bodies of the children were resting in their coffins. Almost at the last moment three of the twenty-one bodies, so long unclaimed, were identified. These were those of Elsie Markushat, Edgar Woodhouse and Anna Kern, one, that of little Anna, was taken at noon to Nottingham for burial. The other two were buried at Lake View with the unidentified dead. At 11 a. m. Rev. Gerard F. Patterson, of the Church of the Incarnation, stood in the doorway of the morgue and offered a simple prayer. All about were hundreds of mourners, their heads bare, tears streaming down their cheeks. A moment later eight pall-bearers carried out the flower-strewn caskets, each bearing a number. They were placed on two funeral cars. Preceded by a car filled with policemen under the charge of Captain Schmunk, and followed by the cars loaded with mourners, the procession moved to the cemetery.

#### Services in the Churches.

Prior to the services at the morgue, short memorial services were held in the Collinwood churches. Relatives and friends of the unidentified dead and of the eight whose bodies cannot be found, gathered at their own churches to listen to the comforting words of their pastors. From the churches the mourners were taken in carriages to the special cars which carried them to the cemetery. At a fork in the driveways at the Euclid avenue entrance to Lake View Cemetery the town of Collinwood had purchased a lot where the unidentified dead might be buried. Here at noon thousands gathered and here in one grave, lined with flowers, the caskets were laid. Over the grave will be erected one monument to mark the resting place of the children.

At the cemetery another simple service was held. "Lead, Kindly Light," was sung by a choir of twenty from the College for Women and twenty from Adelbert College.

A prayer was said in English by Rev. E. R. Wright, of the Calvary Presbyterian Chapel at Collinwood, and a prayer in German by Rev. William J. Friedbolin, of the Collinwood German Reform Mission. Rev. John D. Kaho, of the Collinwood M. E. Church, read the burial service, and the Italian boys' band played a dirge as at the same time the twenty white coffins were lowered to their bed of flowers in the grave.

To that Infinite whence they came not long ago a band of little children returned. Beneath the chill earth the blackened stumps that were babies' arms will stretch in appeal to those whom they trusted, and will appeal in vain forever. In the minds of men and women, from whom has vanished all the light and joy in life, will ring through all the years the pitiful cries for help which were not answered. They went together, and fresh on their lips was their morning prayer to Christ, who said: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

One hundred and seventy-two children. One hundred and seventy-two pure hearts, on whom the taint of the world had not fallen! One hundred and seventy-two clear, happy voices which shall sound no more!

Gone! Gone! Gone!

It was many weeks ago that the first unthinkable horror came. Appalled, unable to comprehend, the people who were there carried off their dead, and passed mechanically along the rows of distorted bodies, and counted, and searched, and tried to weep. Now the full sorrow of the thing has fal-



len, and black upon the folk of Collinwood, of Cleveland, of the world, has fallen the knowledge that children had been allowed to die; that somehow, by someone, they could have been saved.

Too late. The procession of the little innocents to the cities of the dead stretched on and on until Tuesday. Thirty-five of them came from one Sunday school, that of Calvary Presbyterian church in Collinwood. These were buried one by one. Twenty-three came from St. Mary's Catholic church. Fifteen came from the Reformed church, and seven were buried together Friday. Six came from the Sunday school of the Church of Christ. Many were never identified. Mere fragments of mortality, they were interred in Lake View cemetery, and above them was erected a common monument. Fathers and mothers will come there, through the years, and denied even the knowledge of their babies' graves, will bow in turn over each tiny mound that their tears may fall above the forms that once they clasped to their hearts.

Through it all, rings the warning to the world: "Protect the children, lest the like befall your own!" How did it happen? It was morning in Lakeview school, in North Collinwood. The children, more than 300 of them, were gathered in their classrooms. They had just concluded their morning's song and prayer, and were turning to their lessons. A little girl came running from the basement. "The school—it's on fire," she gasped, and sped away. The janitor, Fred Hirter, sounded the alarm upon the big school gong. Three strokes rang out, and at the signal, each child sprang to its feet, and orderly, marched to the doors, the teachers patting time with their hands. First came the little tots, on the first floor, laughing gleefully. It was the fire drill, they thought. "Pff!"

A blast of hot air smote them in the face, and they shrank back. Through the front stairway, between the cracks and about the balustrades, the flames were leaping. "Forward, children,—quiet," said the teacher, who was in the lead. With all her flock but two or three she passed through the mounting flames, and out to safety. Not so the little ones of the three other rooms on that floor. The stairs were sinking upon the furnace underneath. They turned, and moaned with inarticulate fear, they dashed for the rear door. What did they find? God knows! Some say the door was locked; others that half of it was fastened. A panic-stricken child stumbled and fell. One hundred others pushed on from behind, and thrusting those before them further still, heaped in a pitiful tangle at the foot of the stairs before that door.

#### One Hot Blast and All Was Over.

One teacher, commanding, pleading, threatening, drew half her flock back with her to their room, and standing on the fire escape, literally threw them to safety. Then came the climax of the horror. From the second floor came the rapid, clattering footsteps of the older pupils. Out of bounds of all authority, they leaped over the banisters; plunged upon the tots below; struggling, screaming, for an exit. Some of the boys, trained by play in the railroad yards to quick thought, drew back, and pulling with them such as would come, ran for their rooms, dropped from the windows or scaled the fire escape. Down in the press of doomed children two teachers were still at work. One, tall, strong, stood and bodily lifted her charges and thrust them up the stairs, and commanded them to jump for their lives. Another was knocked down and buried under the heap. It was just then that rescue, pitifully

inefficient, came. The door was battered in, and strong arms tugged at the foremost. They could not be moved. The buried teacher was extricated, but she died.

A hot blast of flame, drawn to the west entrance by the draft, came plunging down upon the crowd. Its work was almost instantaneous. Baby features shriveled in the fire; soft tresses blazed, and the arms that had been outstretched to the offered succor stiffened. The rescuers fell back, appalled. The stairway fell, and down into the seething flames 100 children dropped, and lay still: They were already dead. Bounding, hideously bright, the fire finished its work, and when it was over, a heap of steaming ashes was all that was left of the innocents who had died. Seven teachers escaped; one, faithful to her trust, though it carried her into the valley of the shadow, was utterly consumed, and another died after removal.

The 44 children on the third floor, obedient to a teacher whom they loved, quietly descended the fire escape, and only then relieved their terror by their screams. The fire department had come, but it was able to do nothing. The apparatus was inefficient; there were no ladders there, the water pressure was shamefully low. All it could do was to help in the slow procession that moved with the charred bodies to the temporary morgue in the Lake Shore storehouse. Then came the hours—a day, a night, another day and night, of mothers and fathers moving through trying to identify their children. After this, the funerals. An investigation was made. But the children are dead, and no investigation in the world can bring them back to life, nor all the tears that are shed heal one awful wound seared into the soft flesh of the babies. Homes are desolated, and no investigation can restore their happiness and peace.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### CASKETS IN TIERS.

#### AMBULANCES CARRY MANY WHITE COFFINS AT TIME THROUGH STREETS.

A horse went floundering heavily through the mud of the street, dragging behind him a bespattered ambulance. In the ambulance, tier upon tier, were three little white caskets, one above the other. Behind were two carriages, through the windows of which one could see women, white-faced and bent dejectedly, looking out with hopeless, staring eyes; beside them were seated men with set, expressionless faces—the faces of persons who have passed beyond the point of suffering. On the other side of the street, and going in the same direction as the first cortege, was a white hearse, containing two small, white caskets.

There followed five carriages and in these the occupants, as in the first carriages, wore the same strange expressions upon their faces. The fearful, haunted look in their eyes was that of the faithful dumb animal which has received its death wound and which knows not the reason for its suffering nor yet the cause.

#### • Still Another Hearse.

Down a cross-street, a short half block away, was another white hearse, heading a sombre line of carriages, and in this hearse were the inevitable white caskets, three in number, one placed above the other, and flanked with flowers.

In a small lane, in which stood several small tenement houses, was another ambulance and one carriage. In the ambulance two men, undertakers' assistants, were hastily

placing another diminutive white casket, and behind them stood a group of foreigners, men and women, gazing with stolid, heavy eyes at the casket—the white casket. Up in the center of the street, upon the car tracks and between the lines of hearses and carriages, rumbled a great dray, piled high with little rough boxes, and behind came ambulance after ambulance, hearse after hearse and carriage after carriage.

A hearse would turn down one street, to be instantly followed by three or four carriages; an ambulance would turn up the next street, and with this would go several more carriages. Before one door a hearse, next door an ambulance; across the street a hearse, and from door after door fluttered floral wreaths, with their streaming ribbons of white.

#### Collinwood Burying Its Dead.

These were the scenes enacted in Collinwood on Friday, forty-eight hours after the terrible holocaust had occurred which stunned that village and sent a wave of horror over the entire country. Collinwood had started to bury its dead!—to hide forever from sight its 172 innocent, little victims who had met such a terrible fate on the preceding Wednesday.

The spectators stood appalled at the sight. Elsewhere could be heard expressions of the deepest commiseration over the terrible calamity and elsewhere people were shocked and horrified over the disaster; but there in Collinwood were the concrete signs of the frightful catastrophe.

Upon all sides and over every street hearses and ambulances were hurrying to the houses. The number of hearses available was totally inadequate, and ambulances and even street cars were pressed into service to carry the little caskets of white to church or cemetery. From nearly every other door, and

upon some streets from every door, fluttered the floral wreaths which marked the homes of the dead.

And yet many of the people of Collinwood, one met upon the street, were paying no more than passing attention to these almost endless funeral corteges, and the constant passing and repassing of ambulances and hearses. These people had been dazed by the awful tragedy. The immensity and the horror of the blow which had befallen their devoted village had completely stunned them. Mechanically they performed the tasks assigned to them. Mechanically they visited other bereaved homes and offered their sympathy, and mechanically it was received, for the grief of the people of Collinwood was beyond words.

#### Scenes in the Morgue.

In the Town Hall is situated also the fire station, containing the six pieces of obsolete fire-fighting apparatus, which should have been destroyed years ago. Protection Hose, one read over the door. Protection Hose, what irony! for directly under the inscription lay body after body of the little children whom it had utterly and miserably failed to protect when death had reached out with fiery hands to clasp them.

Here in this morgue was the full force of the blow understood, for here next to the school building itself was the theater of greatest suffering. Here, in the days following the fire were enacted pitiful tragedies which are beyond words to describe; the tragedies of broken hearts; of women—mothers—whose minds were deranged at sight of their beloved ones lying there before them in the long lines of blackened, maimed bodies that looked little like human beings; fathers, stern and white-faced, trying hard to keep up, looking here and there



among the little forms, fearful of finding that which they sought; tiny bodies of what were beautiful children, the frail arms crossed in agony over their heads and the lips drawn with the anguish of the torture endured before death came as a sweet relief to end their sufferings.

#### Bowed by Anguish.

Here and there mothers, bowed in sorrow and anguish, searched among the long lines for their own—for the tots that had left them on the fatal morning of Ash Wednesday, happy and prattling of their little triumphs in school, or worrying over the lesson which had been too much for the little minds. The burned bodies lay in rows where they had been carried in, wrapped in anything convenient—a blanket, a sheet, or an overcoat. Only the lower parts of the limbs were left exposed for identification.

At the door a man turned pale at the pathetic spectacle.

“They were in the entrance to the school,” he said, “and they seemed to fall one upon the other. I tried to pull some out, but they were massed in so tightly I could not stir any of them.” As he talked his face became drawn with pain as he gazed hopelessly over the rows of little bodies. “You notice,” he continued, “that nearly all of the upper parts of the bodies are gone. They were struggling when the floors gave way, and the blazing mass fell upon their heads. But I could tell my boy’s shoes. They were new last week and he was so proud of them. But I can’t find—he isn’t”—then the white lips began to quiver, the man tried to continue, gave an agonized sob that told of a breaking heart, and turned and hurried away. He could not find his boy. Even that consolation was denied him.

And so it was on every side. In groups of 10 or 20, men and women were let into the morgue. Slowly they passed down the aisles. There was not much hysteria. A sob, a groan, a face contorted with agony, a nod, and then a white cloth was placed over a small form, indicating that it had been identified. Here and there mothers related stories of their children. Their success in the school, little acts of kindness they had done and the pleasure they took in this or that matter pertaining to their studies. And always the mothers spoke of their children in the present tense. To them, in the first great shock of the calamity, had not come as yet the realization of the fact that their loved ones had gone forever.

### Three Caskets in Row.

Everywhere were the same signs of a great sorrow, an appalling tragedy beyond one's power to fully realize. But most pathetic of all were the stricken homes. In one home, in the parlor, stood three little white caskets, side by side. A son and two little daughters—all the children of that home—had been swept away. What words of sympathy could one offer to that mother sitting, dried-eyed, in her vigil beside her children? Who could gauge the extent of her sufferings or her loss? And so it was in all the homes. In many were two caskets, in others one, but always the mother sitting there wrapped in her mantle of grief.

The supreme horror of the disaster, however, was that the fathers and mothers of many of the little victims stood before the doors of the school house and saw the flames creep up and blacken the faces of the screaming children.

The vestibule at the front entrance to the school and the rear hall way were packed almost to the top with white faces.

Some of the little ones recognized their fathers or mothers in the gathering crowd and in their childish treble cried: "Papa, save me," "mama, come to me." Little hands were stretched out supplicating to be saved.

#### **Crazed by Grief.**

Fathers crazed by grief dashed madly into the school and strove to release their children from the struggling mass. But they could not. Mothers screaming wildly for aid for their children, fell fainting at the awful scene they were called upon to witness. Then the fire swept up through the mass of children and silenced their cries.

#### **Could Not Give Aid.**

Most touching is the fact that nothing could be done to save the little ones, though rescuers were at both the front and rear entrances many minutes before the flames reached the children. In their wild panic the pupils had wedged themselves so tightly into the narrow passageway that the rescuers pulled the flesh from the arms of some of them in trying to draw them out.

## CHAPTER XX.

### SEEK BETTER SCHOOLS.

#### ERECT BETTER BUILDINGS AND ENFORCE THE LAWS TO SAVE CHILDREN.

“The lives of all the school children in the land will be in danger until the people of this country erect better **school buildings and enforce the laws** regulating them.”

Such was the expression of Col. W. J. Giffin, of Washington, one of the most noted building authorities, just after the great fire in Collinwood.

“At the present time our school buildings, or rather most of them, are mere shells, veritable fire traps, in which the children are in danger of their lives. Half of them—yes, even fewer than half—are even properly equipped with fire escapes, and when they are, they are generally located in a place inaccessible in time of need.

“The disaster at Collinwood, however, has done much good, in that it has awakened the public conscience, and already all over the land the work, of protecting the school children is under way, I am glad to say.

#### Buildings Too High.

“For years I have made a careful study of the school house question, and have come to the conclusion that we make our buildings too high. In the smaller towns there is absolutely no excuse for a school building to be more than two stories in height, and in the cities, where land is more valuable, they should not be more than three stories, at the outside. There should be no wood in it—for wood will burn, you know.

"The floors must be of concrete or of steel, and even the window casings must be of a substance other than wood. Wide hallways are an essential, for in times of panic children cannot be controlled, any more than can grown people, and they rush frantically for safety—the open air.

"Then it is that the necessity for wide hallways and extra wide stairways become apparent, for the little ones will not maintain order and march gracefully out two by two, as they are accustomed to during a fire drill.

#### Schools Tinder Boxes.

"At the present time most of the brick school houses of the country are simply tinder boxes, ready at all times, on the slightest provocation, to burst into flame. The brick walls, as soon as the roof falls in, become flues, sucking up the draft from below, and inside of a few minutes at the most a solid column of flame is shooting up from the bottom, destroying everything in its path.

"As we all know, a big fire furnishes its own draft, and I do not need to explain further when I say that this draft becomes a thousand times greater when this draft is confined inside four solid brick walls with no cover on. No fire department in the world can stop such a blaze, once it gets a fair start, because the fire burns too quickly for the firemen to act.

"I am more than forcibly impressed with the plan of building schoolhouses that have been adopted over in England. There a few thinking men have put their heads together, and the result is that several schools have been erected in which the children are safe, so far as human ingenuity can make them.

"Down through the center of the school building, completely cut off from all connection with the inside of the build-

ing, except by means of an iron floor reached by windows on the various floors, runs a passageway, encased in a solid brick wall of great thickness.

#### **Seeks Broad Stairways.**

“This encased stairway, broad enough to accommodate seven or eight persons at once, extends from the top of the building to the bottom, ending out doors, some distance from the building itself, thus making what you might call a tunnel leading from the upper air to the ground. This brick tunnel is, of course, resting on solid iron beams that fire would have hard work to damage, and is practically cut off from the building itself.

“Suppose an alarm of fire is sent in. Instantly each pupil in the building leaves the room he is in, runs to the iron platform outside the room and enters the brick tunnel, where he is as safe as if he were blocks away from the fire. As I have said this stairway, protected on all sides by thick, brick walls, can defy the fire indefinitely, and long before the building has been materially damaged by the flames—supposing, of course, that the structure would burn—each pupil is out and far away.

#### **Public Is Aroused.**

“Such a building is not, of course, possible in the smaller communities in this country, but I hope to see the time,—and that near at hand—when every big city will be equipped with them. The public has been aroused as never before by the Collinwood horror, and action is being taken all over the United States that will work for great good.

“Every school building more than one story in height should be equipped with fire escapes leading from every window, and these fire escapes should be broad enough to accommodate sev-



eral persons at a time, instead of the narrow, parsimonious little things like those at present in use on most of the school houses in the various cities and towns.

“Are we so selfish, and so thoughtful of the almighty dollar that we consider it of more value than the lives of our children, and the lives of our neighbor’s children. I say NO most **emphatically** and point to the action now being taken in hundreds by the school authorities in nearly all the cities of the country as proof of my words. Why, even one of the city schools in Cleveland, which prided itself on having the most carefully protected buildings in the country, already has closed one of them in order that it may be put in safe condition.”

#### Newspaper Comments.

Before the blame for the school fire horror had been fixed, yes, even before the last pitiful little body was dragged from the ruins the great newspapers of the country began printing editorials demanding a reform in school buildings, and a stricter enforcement of the law relating to the overcrowding of public buildings. Said the Baltimore Sun:

“The death of a great number of children in a burning schoolhouse at North Collinwood, a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, is a horrible event which should be taken to heart by school authorities all over the land. There was an overheated furnace and the building had but two exits, of which one was closed. The overheating of the furnace of a school building should not have occurred and the structural arrangements should have been such as to favor, not to prevent, quick egress. This is obvious enough now to the school management of Collinwood; it should have been noted before.

"The lesson can hardly be lost upon school authorities elsewhere. It is up to them to inspect their buildings and take note of the fidelity of janitors whose business it is to regulate furnaces. Are our school buildings in Baltimore so arranged as not to catch fire readily from the accident of a careless janitor and to give easy and abundant ways of exit in case of fire? Do teachers drill themselves and the pupils to do the sensible thing when an alarm is sounded, avoiding panic and death from wild rushing for the doors? It is incumbent on the authorities everywhere to take all steps necessary to prevent duplication of the unspeakable horrors at Cleveland."

#### Sacrifice of School Children.

The New York World said:

"The fate of the Cleveland children slaughtered in a school-house fire panic is peculiarly deplorable.

"They were not taking chances with death in an inflammable theatre or on a tinder-box excursion boat. Their little lives were sacrificed in a building to which the city authorities had assigned them and which it was a first duty to make safe. The locked rear door and the lack of other exits show how this responsibility had been met. Official negligence wears here its ugliest look.

"Granting that the school-house was a fire-trap, were there no precautions against panic? Was there no fire-drill such as has more than once saved the lives of New York's school children in emergencies? As recently as Jan. 2 last the 2,500 pupils of School No. 86 marched out in perfect order while the flames were being fought.

"To all cities in the nation this catastrophe is summary no-

tice to set their school-houses in order and safeguard the lives of their young wards with every device against fire and with all possible preventives of panic."

In the tragedy lax enforcement of the law was seen by the Chicago Examiner, which said:

"The disaster in a public school in the suburbs of Cleveland is an example of a truth long proclaimed in these columns, and that is the sensible proposal that the egress from a building holding a large number of people should be based on the possibilities of a few moments.

"But civilization persists in the evident murderous absurdity of buildings, subject to fire, easily filled by the multitude coming early and taking its time to enter. However—and it is a terrible 'however'—the attempt to get out all at once usually is deadly.

"When the audience, taking an hour to enter, has tried to go out in a body in a few moments at the cry of fire the consequences frequently have been frightful.

"Of course, there is the much larger cost of buildings and of grounds in case of complete effort to prevent loss of life. But the school buildings ought to be the exemplar of human life held more precious than the mere cost of buildings. It is, therefore, a shock when an accident of this too common character happens in a public building.

#### Confronts the Authorities.

"As a matter of fact, no building intended for public assemblages should lack the features necessary for the preservation of human life. And that necessity is a thing confronting the authorities. Whether a school house or a theater, the authorities, at heart and in the law, are responsible.

"Some officer, some official authority, is responsible for the character of these buildings. There are laws. The laws are not bad usually, but they are seldom enforced.

"Who is responsible for these catastrophes of non-enforcement more than the public officer violating his oath?"

Says the Cleveland Press:

"Death reaches out and claims the beloved child of your dearest friend. You go to the stricken home, the heart-broken father or mother meets you at the door, and instead of the words of sympathy you thought you would speak, you clasp your friend's hand, bow your head and are silent.

"So to-day Cleveland, at the home of her friend, Collinwood, full of sympathy for her grief-stricken friend, bows her head, clasps her hand, and is silent.

"In the face of such a pitiful tragedy as the one which visited our neighbor and friend yesterday words are meaningless, and he who tries to speak them only proves the inadequacy of language to express the real depths of emotion.

"Those of us who are parents, who get from the tender souls whom God has given to us the inspiration to meet life's daily battles with a braver spirit, realize at a time like this how large a part of our lives our children are, how sacred a thing is the protection which we owe to our own children as parents; to all children as citizens.

"Are we as alive as we should be to the sacredness of the duty which the responsibility of parenthood and citizenship imposes?"

"One hundred and sixty children met untimely death in one of the most awful forms in Collinwood yesterday.

"The soul sickens at the thought of the cruel torture to those choking, burning, writhing little bodies.

"And yet, broadly speaking, the fault is ours, as a people. Ours! Ours!!

"The cheapest thing in this great American republic to-day is human life.

"Five hundred people, most of them children, were burned to death in the Chicago Iroquois theater fire because we, as a people, were too busy making dollars to give even a thought to the protection of the lives of theater patrons.

"A thousand people, most of them children, were sacrificed on the altar of greed and public thoughtlessness in the Slocum disaster in Long Island sound.

"One hundred and seventy-two children were killed in Collinwood just because we as a people do not love our children enough to tax ourselves to build schoolhouses of steel and stone and other fireproof materials.

"If out of this pitiful tragedy grows an awakened public conscience, a determination on the part of each one of us to do his share toward better safeguarding the lives of other children, then the 172 victims of our thoughtlessness will not have died in vain."

#### **Peril of School Children.**

And from the Chicago News:

"In the face of the dreadful slaughter of the innocents at Collinwood, O., there is no need that many words be spoken. There is need, however, for immediate and energetic action. Since a public school building in a suburb of Cleveland proved so shockingly ill prepared to permit the escape of its little inmates when it took fire, there is no reason to doubt that many other school buildings are equally perilous to the pupils who assemble in them.

“Accounts of the fire at Collinwood indicate that the lives of all the children might have been saved if the building had been in reasonable condition to permit of rapid departure from its doors and windows. It had but inadequate fire escapes for its hundreds of occupants. One of its rear doors was locked. Its front doors were useless. Its halls were so narrow that they afforded no chance for free movement. They served merely as traps, into which the children, driven by the imminent peril in which they found themselves, trampled one another to death or fell and were burned in heaps.

#### **Urges Better Protection.**

“How much intelligence has been used in protecting the school children of Chicago? A great deal of intelligence, we think. Yet it should be the care of the board of education and the school authorities generally, as well as of the city building commissioner, to examine once more all the exits and fire escapes and hallways of all the school buildings and to have every defect remedied. To the memory of the innocent lives sacrificed in Collinwood there should be paid effective homage in the form of untiring efforts to prevent other children in this civilized country from being roasted or trampled to death.”



## CHAPTER XXI.

### DECRIES TALL BUILDINGS.

“SAFESGUARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS” IS CRY THAT  
ARISES.

An emphatic protest against tall buildings for school purposes is made by the Chicago Journal, which says:

“The Collinwood school building that was burned, costing the lives of little children, was three stories high. It occupied land in a suburb of the city, and that land could not have been worth more than \$1,000 an acre, if so much. Why was the building made three stories high?

“No building to be occupied as a public school should ever have more than two stories, even where land is expensive. This rule has not prevailed in the erection of Chicago school buildings or of those in the suburbs. Out northwest, for example, there is one school building, standing alone in the midst of open fields, and it is five stories high.

#### **Buildings Far Too High.**

School buildings in the city are all higher than they should be, when the safety of occupants in case of fire is considered.

“The board of education should make sure that all school buildings are as well protected against a catastrophe like that in Cleveland as they can be. Especially should it see that all doors open outward and that every exit is kept open during school hours.

“But, more important still, the board should now adopt the policy of building no school house more than two stories high. Such a policy may perhaps slightly increase the expenses of

the taxpayers, but what is expense in comparison with such a loss as that at Collinwood, where nearly two hundred households were plunged into grief as the result of negligence and carelessness?"

#### **Little Children Sacrificed.**

The Cleveland Leader says:

"Dreadful as the slaughter of little children in the Collinwood schoolhouse was in itself, the worst phase of the pitiful sacrifice of young lives is the needlessness of it all. The boys and girls who perished in that slaughter pen might have escaped if the building had been safer and better cared for. And there is a sickening menace of like horrors in other places, in the story of the Collinwood tragedy.

"How many schoolhouses in Cleveland have hall doors which are big enough, both front and rear, for emergency use? How many of these doors open inward? How many are kept so locked or otherwise fastened that they could not be opened instantly in case of fire? How many schoolhouses are well equipped with fire escapes? In how many are attic rooms, without proper means of exit, used as classrooms?

"Every one of these questions may involve the safety or destruction of many children. Every one must be answered. If the answer is not what it should be then every defect so revealed must be remedied. It is not a matter for parleying or delay.

#### **Imperative Need Shown.**

"The horrible Collinwood lesson brings home to every man and woman in Cleveland the imperative need of adopting all of the safeguards in schoolhouses which common sense and experience demand.

"Far better one-story relief buildings with all their defects, than firetraps of whatever architectural appearance. Better no school than a slaughter house.

"And how frequent and thorough are fire drills? How nearly automatic has the marching out of the children become when the fire gong rings? How completely in hand do the teachers feel that their little charges are, and how well prepared for emergencies?

"The slaughter in Collinwood is past mending. That record is closed. What can be done, what must be done, now is to exhaust every resource to prevent another such tragedy. There is no lack of pity and tenderness for the families plunged into grief and the long nightmare of a dreadful memory. There must be no failure to take the dire lesson to heart and make it the means of safeguarding other children, in other schools, more perfectly than they have ever yet been protected."

Said the Cleveland News:

"Unquestionably the cause of the large number of deaths in the Collinwood fire was the closed door at the foot of the rear stairway—the door behind which the bodies of the little ones were piled several feet deep.

"The main—the all-important—question now is who was responsible for that door's having been closed when it should have been opened. It seems to have been established that the door did not swing inward, as was stated. It is also clear that the hallway was too narrow, a fault of the architect who designed the building. But even with all the defects of the structure, if the door had been open or unfastened so that the children could have got out the death list would have been insignificant as compared with the great total that has now been counted.

"Unfortunately there is no law covering criminal carelessness in Ohio unless the person who is careless is at the same time violating some law.

"The Collinwood holocaust is the most fearful calamity in the history of Cleveland and vicinity. Its horror is inexpressible. The anguish that must have crazed the minds and tortured the bodies of those children, struggling, suffocating, burning alive, leaves us speechless when we think of it.

"Fortunately, most of the little victims met a death that was a little merciful in its swiftness if not in its terrible manner. Comparatively few live to suffer. But the anguish of hundreds of stricken parents and brothers and sisters will endure through life. The sympathy of the whole country is held out to them, but it can do little for them. No sympathy can bring back the little babes that went merrily to Lake View school Wednesday morning.

#### **Might Have Been Prevented.**

"Perhaps the most horrifying feature of the whole affair is that it might have been prevented.

"Let us learn to the full the terrible lesson so terribly taught. Let us realize the only good that ever comes out of such evil catastrophes.

"After the Iroquois theater fire, theaters all over the country became subject to searching inquiry. Many improvements resulted. Cleveland theaters were made safer than they ever were before. They are safe still. The vigilance of managers and city authorities has never been allowed to relax.

"Now what of our schoolhouses? We have fire wardens who inspect theaters and firemen detailed to attend performances, theoretically to watch over the safety of our citizens,

but did anyone ever hear of firemen being stationed at schoolhouses to guard the safety of helpless children?

“How often do the fire wardens inspect schoolhouses? Are the school buildings all fireproof, as some of the newer ones are claimed to be? Are the school heating appliances all in first-class condition? Would it not be well to install school heating plants in detached buildings? How many schools have adequate exits? How many winding stairways are there? How many narrow passages, choked vestibules and mantraps of whatever sort waiting to share their little prey?

“If there are none, thousands of parents will be glad to know it. If there are, thousands of mothers and fathers demand their removal.

“Let us know about our Cleveland schools. Let us have inspection, inquiry, publicity. No amount of this will mitigate in the least degree the horror of the Collinwood tragedy. But it may prevent its re-enactment in Cleveland any day. It doesn't take a fire to start a panic. A scream in any school corridor in Cleveland might send hundreds of children struggling to agonizing deaths to-morrow—the more so because our children, unfortunately, know as much about the Lake View holocaust as we do.

Reforms in our school buildings will cost money. It must come out of the public purse this time. Let us spend it while the mood is on us.

### Will We Forget?

“Two weeks hence we shall be absorbed in other subjects—politics, legislation, business, baseball, scandal—each according to his bent. The Collinwood calamity will have dropped out of our reading and our conversation almost altogether.

"As a people, we are blessed with a short memory. With the utmost cheerfulness and dispatch we proceed to forget what it would be disagreeable to remember. The few memories that we cling to most fondly are the little incidents in which we have figured to our own credit. The great blunders we have committed, the wrongs we have been guilty of, the deep griefs we have suffered—these we choose to forget.

#### Horror Fades Quickly.

"It is a lamentable fact that we are habituated to horrors and human hecatombs. The Iroquois, Slocum and San Francisco disasters were faint memories within six months of their occurrence. The Boyertown calamity occurred less than two months ago. Little recollection of it remains in our minds now, though it happened in an adjacent state and was every bit as bad as the crime of Collinwood.

"Perhaps nothing so well illustrates the immensity of our country as our indifference to disaster except when it occurs at our very door. In England a railroad wreck in which half a dozen lives are lost scandalizes the whole country for weeks. In America railroad wrecks, mine horrors and even such peculiarly appalling disasters as the sacrifice of children's lives in Collinwood are commonplace.

"It is not to our credit. It shows our boasted civilization up as a pretty poor thing.

#### Can't Forget Children.

"The horrors named, with many more that have entirely slipped from memory, will endure in agonizing recollection for decades, but only in the immediate communities where they occurred. Collinwood, the scene of several disastrous accidents, can never forget the Lake View school fire. Cleveland



may forget the Central viaduct disaster, but it will never forget the little children who laid down their lives at Lake View school because someone had blundered.

"The rest of the country may, and no doubt will, forget. Most communities have horrors of their own to shudder at—skeletons in their own closets. Think of the towns you know. Elyria, Mentor, Ashtabula? What do their names suggest?

#### **Sacrifice Needless.**

"Needless, heedless sacrifice of human life. That is all.

"All over the United States, all over the world for that matter, Cleveland today is principally known as the city where 172 children were burned alive.

"The country will forget that. What does it care for children's life? Wherever Collinwood is an unknown village far away, there the fate of the 172 little victims will be forgotten. Here, where Collinwood is as a member of our family, it can never be forgotten.

"The wreath of glossy green leaves on the door in the next block means nothing to us. But the spray of pink roses on our own door? Ah, that is different.

Perhaps when there is no longer a single little community in the United States without its own ghastly memory, the nation may awaken from its indifference. We are short-memoried as a people. Many of us may be talking base-ball a fortnight hence. But when we have all had crepe tied to our own doors, our memories may be jogged to the extent of doing something about it."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### SACRIFICE OF LIVES.

NO EXCUSE FOR TERRIBLE LOSS OF LIFE, SAYS  
ST. LOUIS PAPER.

The St. Louis Republic said:

"Every detail of the holocaust at the Collinwood suburb of Cleveland attests that the lives of half the children in the burned school building were sacrificed to short sighted negligence and incompetence that have no other name than criminal.

"The school authorities of the town cannot escape censure if the municipal authorities were derelict in their duties. A school board having under its charge the lives as well as the training of hundreds of children can hardly escape severe condemnation for neglecting so simple and inexpensive a precaution of safety as the fire escapes that were wanting.

#### Lack of Discipline.

"All through the tragedy there was unreadiness, lack of discipline, panic and death. Somebody should be held accountable for the lives needlessly sacrificed. Equally with the victims of similar neglect in the management of the Boyertown picture show, the lives of the Collinwood children call for atonement.

"Happily the St. Louis schools are well equipped to meet a panic originating in fire or other cause. But it makes no difference whether the place in which large numbers of people are habitually assembled be a school or a theater or a hall for public meetings, there is under the laws a punishable offense

committed when such horrors are recorded as those of the Iroquois theater, the Boyertown show and the Collinwood school. The best way to prevent them is to enforce the law."

Said the Columbus Press-Post:

"Language fails to express the shock of horror caused by the catastrophe which befell so many school children in Cleveland's suburb of Collinwood. Language is even inadequate to describe it, as all must realize who have followed the narration of the terrible details.

"The most skillful news writers find their hands almost paralyzed and their brains stupefied in attempting to tell the pitiful story. There is no inspiration to lofty figures of speech, no inclination for florid disclosure. Plain words, plainly threaded together, tell the harrowing tale.

#### **Fancied Security's Snare.**

"We feel here in Columbus that we are safeguarded against such catastrophe. No doubt the people of Collinwood felt exactly the same way. Calamities of that sort do not befall the wary, but fancied security sets the snare that is not discovered until too late.

"A competent and thorough fire drill is a good discipline and in most cases is a sufficient protection against danger. But even a fire drill will not obviate panic when children are expected to march through a gaping inferno.

"In addition to a thorough fire drill, to discipline pupils, there should be adequate means of egress. No schoolhouse should be without exterior fire escape stairways reaching to every schoolroom, even though the building be not more than two stories high, which is a matter that should be given im-

mediate attention by the board of education in this city."

The Indianapolis News commented thus:

"Accustomed as we are to our almost daily horror, the fire at Cleveland comes still as an awful shock. Nor does there seem to be great criticism due for lack of preventives. A two-story brick building ought, in the nature of things, to be safe. True, there was only one fire escape, yet numerous fire escapes would have been a frail dependence for children. There were two stairways; and these, if of the right relative capacity, should have been sufficient. The "fire drill," too, had been practiced. The children responded to it, and got to the lower floor. But alas! they had been taught only to go to the door that was now was barred by the flames.

"There was a blockade and in a moment pressure from the rear completed the tragedy. Of course, one might ask why was there a fire. It is said that it came from a defective furnace. If so, here was indeed grave fault. It is known also that the building was overcrowded; here was another fault."

The Springfield Republican says:

"What every community throughout the country is ever fearful of in relation to its schools and its children therein has befallen the village just outside the city limits of Cleveland, and that which was spoken of Rama by the Hebrew prophet may now be heard there in measurement of the uttermost depths of human anguish—"lamentation and weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her childrenp."

#### Mourn for Children.

"We have had similar fire horrors with even greater sacrifice of life, and one only within a few weeks where children and adults perished by scores together. But how much worse it

seems where the great sacrifice of life is almost exclusively confined to little children! It is a story which strikes with sickening force into the parental heart all over the land.

"The glory of the American democracy is its common schools, which stand also as the witness to the world for the strength and genuineness of its purposes in the work of uplifting the race. No expense has seemed too great for it in the work of bringing its children of all classes into a common education. And with what care it watches over the children as they come together in its schools—always and especially with an eye to the possibilities of fire, and taking pains through the fire drill and in other ways to prevent such a horror as has always been feared and has now come. We may not forget, in the great pity of it all, the sore affliction which falls also upon this splendid spirit of our democracy."

Stated the Hamilton (Ont.) Spectator:

"The fire horror in a Cleveland suburban school has brought terror to the hearts of thousands of parents in all parts of the country, and boards of education everywhere will be taking stock in an effort to further safeguard the lives of children under their care. So far as the calamity was explained the cause was not through any absence of fire drill, the thing we have pinned our faith to in this city as the best safeguard against similar catastrophe.

#### **Children Flee in Terror.**

"What seems to have been the cause of such enormous loss of life as has been recorded was the fact that the rear doors were closed and locked. Seeing the smoke and flame, the children headed down the stairway for the front door, became excited and rushed ahead in panic. Either the doors were

never opened, or, if they were, were soon forced shut again by the crush of human bodies piling up against them.

“There are but two or three school buildings in Hamilton where the hallways are narrow; there are no schools where the doors open inward. The horror demonstrates the fact that while fire drill may be perfect when given for exhibition purposes it may be expected to fail when the children are brought face to face with actual smoke and flame. In such case there must be other safeguards.”

The Hartford Courant made the following comment:

“The carelessness which made this burnt offering of budding lives possible is quite as appalling as the disaster itself. Doors being closed in a three-story brick building with a mass of children on every floor; one fire escape; the heating apparatus directly under the stairways leading downward; and the evident surprise of everyone that a fire should have occurred. There is some question as to whether the back door of the building was locked; but the first rush against it fastened it as tightly as if it had been locked.

#### Furnace a Deadly Danger.

“The furnace or heating apparatus, however, was the deadly danger. It should have been inclosed in a cemented chamber near the side or a corner, with the proper radiating pipes, so that if it became red hot nothing would be burned but its own material and perhaps the ends of the pipes. Instead, it appears simply to have been planted under the stairways with wood all about it.

“But, being thus dangerously planted, with what minute and constant care, it should have been watched during school hours, and with what a stolid and dreadful carelessness it was not watched!—the fire itself being ample proof of this.”

•



The Rochester Union and Advertiser said :

“The only conclusion at which one can arrive after reading the accounts of the disaster at North Collinwood, near Cleveland, in which between 170 and 180 children lost their lives, is that there was criminal negligence on the part of the town authorities in not having a better equipped fire department prepared to meet such an emergency.

### **Trampled to Death.**

“To make this horror complete the door at the rear entrance was closed, and the children, who came down the stairway pellmell, trampled one another to death until their bodies were piled high in the hall near the door. Most of the deaths, it appears, occurred here. If the door at this rear entrance to the building had not been shut the death record would have been small in comparison with what it is.

“Besides being shut, the door at the rear entrance was reported to open inward, which should not be the case with the doors in school buildings. Such doors should open outward, and, moreover, they should open automatically when the gong for the fire drill sounds.”

Said the Boston Globe :

“So many illustrations recently have been afforded of the speedy and safe exodus of large numbers of children from school buildings on occasions of fire drill and even when actual danger was thought to be threatened, that it is all the more shocking to learn of the terrible loss of life in a fire which destroyed a school building in a suburb of Cleveland.

“It is reported that only two exits were available and that one of these was so difficult to open that it was practically useless. With 400 children endeavoring under these circum-

stances to escape from a building that filled rapidly with smoke and flame, it requires little effort of the imagination to picture the fearful scene of death. Adults, under like conditions, would have been not less panic stricken.

"The actual catastrophe can only be deplored, but every city and town in the country where children are gathered in schools may read in this startling story a solemn warning to make immediate examination of the means of exit from the buildings in case of fire or alarm and to take instant steps to provide facilities, where such are wanting, that will assure the safety of the children beyond any doubt or chance."

The Boston Advertiser remarked:

"The appalling death roll from the schoolhouse tragedy at Cleveland may have a serious warning for many New England communities. The present state law does give to building inspectors the right to pass on plans for public school structures, throughout Massachusetts; and it is to be assumed that proper means of egress are maintained in all.

#### **More Care Needed.**

"But it was supposed that the Collinwood schoolhouse was supplied with proper exits, yet one became impassable through the panic of the children. The "fire drill" is a recognized institution in most Massachusetts schools. But the real test of such drills comes only when the teachers and pupils, as a rule, are unprepared for it.

"If the Collinwood tragedy has no other effect it would make teachers and principals more careful than ever before to make sure that no panic, however sudden and unexpected, shall be able to override the habits taught by constant repetition of the fire drill."

The Columbus Dispatch said:

"The entire state has been shocked by the terrible disaster in the public school building at Collinwood, a suburb of Cleveland—a disaster which, in cost of human life, threatens to equal if not surpass that in the Boyertown (Pa.) opera house, a few weeks since. It is the old story of fire, panic, a crush of humanity at inadequate exits and—death in its most hideous form. There was help in abundance just outside, but it was of no avail against locked and blockaded doors, and the result was anguish unspeakable, on the part of parents, friends and all others of humane instincts."

#### Investigation's Aid.

"The disaster was investigated and all the facts made known, as far as they could be secured from those who knew and those who can only guess. For the children who are dead and the parents who are broken hearted, it was all in vain. Will it also be in vain for others who are similarly imperiled? One certain result the calamity should produce: The enactment of the bill pending in the legislature, making the fire drill compulsory in all schools in which there are fifty or more pupils."

The Buffalo Enquirer said:

"Another lesson which should not go unheeded by the authorities of the danger to which many of the school children of the country are daily subjected, comes from Collinwood, where occurred the awful holocaust by which more than a hundred innocent lives were blotted out and scores of families plunged into deepest mourning.

"That so little care is exercised by the authorities in the construction and maintenance of school buildings is a serious

wrong and a disgrace to a country which claims to be law abiding and sympathetic in its tendencies.

#### Young in Peril.

"There are thousands of structures in this country in which the young are being educated to take their places in the busy world of men and women, equally dangerous as the building in Ohio where such a terrible sacrifice to official neglect and carelessness of the law's enforcement, was demanded.

"Every possible safeguard should be thrown about the little ones whose lives are so precious to us, but whose protection from similar conditions as those said to have attached to the Collinwood building, we are too careless to ensure."

The Boston Herald commented:

"The terrible destruction of child life in Cleveland's suburb, owing to fire in a school building, seemingly constructed so as to bring about a maximum of disaster in case of fire and panic, will be an object lesson for many other communities which are courting like horror. There cannot be too much attention given to the construction of school buildings, the number and situation of exits, and provision for easy egress."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### MODEL SCHOOL HOUSE.

#### PLANS SAID TO SHOW HOW SCHOLARS COULD ESCAPE EASILY.

Impelled by the Collinwood school horror, John P. Brophy, vice president and general superintendent of the Cleveland Automatic Machine Company, a thorough mechanic and practical man in every way has evolved a new design for a school-house, which he thinks will provide a building as safe in case of fire as it could be made and which at the same time will make provision for the comfort and health of pupils and teachers.

He has designed a square building, with a light well in the center and towers on each corner.

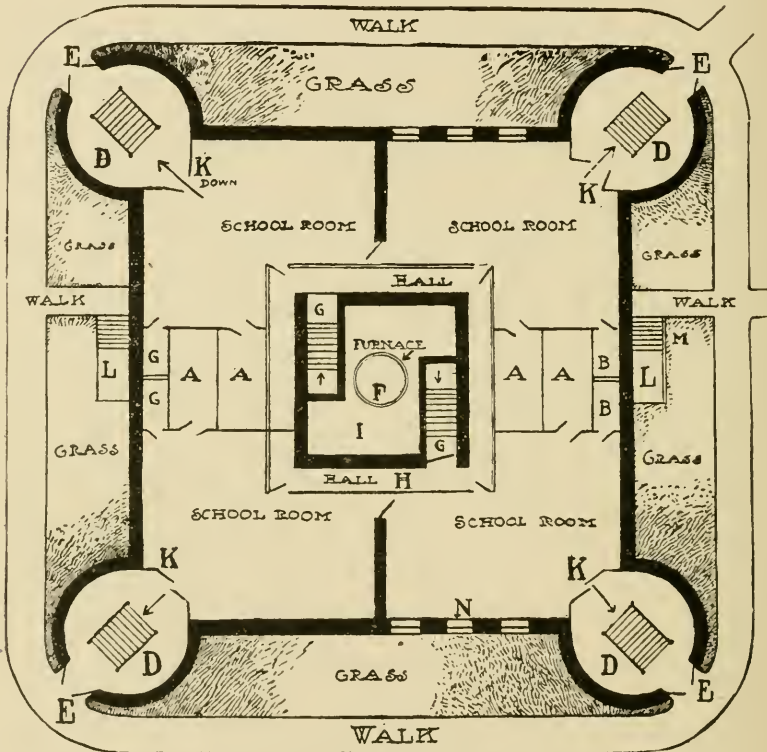
#### Stairs Regularly Used.

The stairways in these towers are used regularly by the scholars to reach the rooms close to each tower; that is, if there were even five stories, all the scholars in the rooms in each corner of the building, could pass into the towers closest to these rooms. On the inside of light well "I" are stairways "G," leading from the top to the bottom of the building, to be used as fire escapes or to pass from one floor, across the court below, to the room on opposite side. To pass from room 4 to room 1 use the stairway "G" to the ground floor, passing through the court and use stairway "G" on the opposite side to room 1.

On each floor there is a hallway "H" around the inner wall, or lightwell; "AA" are cloakrooms and "BB" toilet rooms,

located on each floor. The walls surrounding cloak and toilet rooms would be brick, reaching up through all floors.

Each floor is only a large gallery, and the stairways down



THE MODEL SCHOOL.

the towers are not winding, but straight. Also all doors on the inside of building swing both ways, so there would be no danger in case of panic from doors being locked. On the wide stairways passing down towers "D" there would be a



center double rail and one on each side, avoiding chance of scholars stumbling and falling in rushing down suddenly.

The furnaces would be at "F" in center of court below, and reached from the lower floor by stairway. From the outside stairway "M" leads to entrance "L" on both sides a passage-way for fuel and supplies underneath building.

#### **To Eliminate Trouble.**

"Supposing," said Brophy, "a fire started in any of the rooms, say room 4, five stories high, all that is necessary for the teacher to do is to have the children move around through doors to 3 and 2, finally leading to 1. We all know that if a fire started in room 4, no matter how serious it might be, it would take considerable time before it would reach either room 1, 2 or 3, and especially 1, and as all the floors are one vast gallery, there is no chance of the scholars being caught, as they were at Collinwood. By having four entrances to this school with say, 1,000 children, there would be 250 scholars passing in and out of each tower. This, without question, would eliminate trouble from a vast army of children passing out of one or two entrances.

"Also, there will be better ventilation in this style of building. I am satisfied that this design of school would obviate all trouble from fire; would be heated more satisfactorily; have better air and light; and no possible chance of a repetition of that which occurred at Collinwood a few days ago."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### "LEST WE FORGET!"

RECONSTRUCT YOUR SCHOOLS NOW THAT SIMILAR DISASTERS MAY NOT HAPPEN.

"Lest we forget!" The Collinwood fire is now of the past. To the stricken homes it is still fresh. But is the terrible disaster still strong in the minds of those who were not directly affected by it?

The entire nation, yes the whole world, was shocked and horrified at the awful holocaust. It was the deaths of little and innocent children that made the disaster so terrible. It is bad enough when such calamities visit adults, but when the hand of death touches the young and innocent there is an additional feeling of horror.

#### Left Home Happy.

With the early morning 172 little ones, fresh and rosy wended their way to the school house, the school that we were supposed to see was safely constructed, the building which proved to be only a fire trap.

It was not of their doing. They were not voluntary visitors at the school. It was at our instigation that these little children went to the building where they met their death. They knew nothing of the dangers, but put their trust in the older ones who were responsible for them.

Hardly had their morning prayers to the Father who does not let a sparrow fall but that he knows, when the cry of "fire! fire!" rang through the building. The children rushed out into the halls and there seeing the smoke and flames became panic stricken and ran pell mell down the stairway. One tiny



EDWIN, HULDA AND FRED SWANSON.

Children of Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Swanson, 597 Adams Street. Fred wanted to go with his mother to the city on the morning of the fire. They were very affectionate children and fond of school. Their ages were 12, 11 and 8 respectively.



RUDOLPH AND CAROLINE KERN.

Children of Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph Kern, 6212 Arcade Street. They both perished in the Collinwood school disaster. They were 12 and 10 years old respectively.



**WILLIE SMITH.**

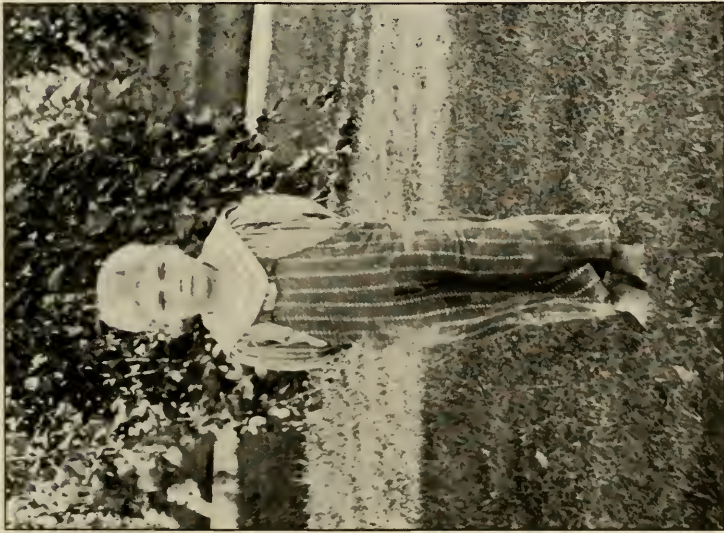
Son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Smith, 6124 Arcade Street. He met his death in the Collinwood school fire.

He was 9 years old.



**MARGUERITE CARVONA.**

The 12-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. S. Carvona, of 5314 Storer Street, who perished in the fire.



WILLIE WEISBERG.

He was the 10 year old son of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Weisberg, 386 Collamer Street, who lost his life in the Collinwood fire.



EDWARD MEIRT.

He was the only child of Mr and Mrs. Julius Meirt. He was six years old and in the infant class at school and had only been attending a month when he met his death. He did not want to go to school the morning of the fire.





**ELMER AND ELSIE MARKUSHATT**

Children of Mr. and Mrs. Otto Markushatt, 5814 Forest Street.  
They both met their deaths in the Collinwood school fire.  
They were 13 and 11 years respectively.



**JOHN KLISHVISH**

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Klishvish, 4819 Charles Street,  
who met death in the fire. He was 14 years old.





HENRY SKELLY.

The 14-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Skelly. He was terribly burned on the face and hands. After going to the ground floor, he returned through smoke and fire to the floor above and escaped by means of the window.

He is the brother of Mudge and Gilbert Skelly, who perished in the fire.



EDNA MAY PAHNER.

She was the 13-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mr. Enil Pahner, 404 Park Avenue, who was a great help to her mother. She was a bright scholar in school and proficient in music. The last words before leaving for school on the morning of the fire were, "Mamma, I had an awful bad dream last night. I thought the school house was on fire, and we could not get out."



ALBERT GOULD.

He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. H. E. Gould, 5416 Maple Street. Albert was the chum of Hughie McIlrath, who met a heroic death trying to rescue his chums. They were all found in the same affection as in life.



RUSSELL NEWSBERRY.

The 13-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Newsberry of Fulton Street. He met death in the act of helping his little schoolmates escape. He lingered too long and perished with the rest.



GLEN A. BARBER

Son of Mrs. Henry Barber, 4901 Westropp Avenue. He rushed down and saw the jam at the door. He returned up-stairs through smoke and fire, jumped out of the window, and died in the Glenville Hospital the following Friday night. Death resulted from inhaling of the flames. He was 11 years old.



LYDIA MURPHY.

Daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Murphy, 5814 Forest Street, who lost her life in the Collinwood school disaster. Was 11 years old.



WILLIAM WORTHINGTON WELLS.

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Clinton Wells, 442 Park Avenue, who lost his life in the fire. He was 12 years old.



ANNA KERN.

This little girl was the eight-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Kern, 5724 Elsinore Street. Her death was a great blow to her parents.



CHARLIE BERG.

He was the 10-year-old son of Adolph and Gertrude Berg, 4422 Jeny Avenue. He was terribly burned on the hands and face and ran down to the rear entrance, then returned and saved himself by means of a fire escape. Charlie was the chum of the Swan-son and Depner boys. They all left the Berg home the morning of the fire and only two returned alive of the five, Charlie and his younger brother.



EDGAR THOMAS WOODHOUSE.

The 9-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Woodhouse. His parents never saw him alive after he bade them good-bye the morning of the fire. He perished with the rest.





GRETCHEN PUPPLE.

She was the little daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Puppel, 6401 Arcade Street. She was only a short time in this country when she met her death in the Collinwood school fire on that fatal morning. She was 6 years old.



ANNA GERBIC.

She was 11 years of age, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Anton Gerbic. On the morning of the fire her mother persuaded her to remain at home, because she was suffering from a toothache. However she went, fearing that if she remained at home she would receive a scolding from her teacher. Died in the fire.





DOROTHY LILLIAN HART.

She was the only child of Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Hart, 4615 Fulton Street. She was like a mother to the smaller children and lost her life in trying to save them. She was loved by all and was laid away in Spring Grove Cemetery, Medina, O., March 6th, 1908, aged 10 years.



PERCY DAY.

The little eleven-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Hiram Day of 6203 Arcade Street. He met his death in the fire.



RUTH GORDON.

This was the 9-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Gordon, 432 Collamer Street. She was in the third grade A. She met death in the fire.



HENRY SCHULTZ.

Henry was the 9-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. John Schultz, 4623 Westropp Avenue. Before going to school on that fatal morning, he marked his mother's birthday on the calendar and said he would buy her a nice present. The little fellow was buried the following Saturday, his mother's birthday.



CLAYTON BELL.

He was 14 years of age, son of Mrs. Anna Bell. Clayton escaped from the building, then returned and met his death in the fire. He was the chum of the Turner boys, who also lost their lives.



EMMA JANE PHILLIS.

Daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Phillis. She perished in sight of her mother, who tried to rescue her, but all in vain. She was 15 years old.



NORRIS ACKROID SHERMAN.

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Gideon Sherman, 341 Park Avenue, who met his death in the fire. He was 10 years old.



LUELLA B. WALDEN.

The 7-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Watson Walden, 5450 Elsinore Street. This sweet little character was torn from her parents without a moments warning.



EDWARD KANAWSKI.

The 12-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. William Kanawski, 6215  
Arcade Street, who lost his life in the Collinwood fire.



ALLEN BARLETT HINSDALE.

The 13-year-old son of Mrs. Mary Hinsdale, 4800 Westropp  
Avenue, who perished in the fire.



GEORGE CENTNER.

The 13-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. John Centner, 512 North Collamer Street. He was a dutiful son, and his parents had placed great hopes in him. He met his death in the fire.



LESTNER CENTNER.

The 8-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. William Centner, 512 Collamer. This little fellow met his death in the fire.



foot slipped, one child fell. Those from behind pushed over and fell on top until there were more than a hundred lying in a heap, crushed in so tightly they could not be moved.

Soon the awful flames spread through the rooms and the hallways. The hot breath scorched the tiny faces and burned the hair as the mothers and fathers of the little ones looked on in horror, unable to do anything to help the suffering children. Tiny hands were stretched out for aid, but the aid did not come. The flames withered the little hands which fell limp at the owner's sides and burned to a crisp.

### One Awful Cry.

There was one, awful, terrifying cry as the hot breath of the flames blasted out the lives of those children piled high in a terrible crush. Then all was still. The little ones had returned to Him who knows all, who watches all.

There was a hush fell on the crowd of watchers. The calamity was too awful to realize. Parents and friends were numbed by the staggering blow. Suddenly an aged man dropped on his knees and prayed:

"Oh God, what have we done to deserve this."

Women began to realize that they would see their little ones no more. Some wept. Some cried out to Heaven to end their misery. Others sobbed hysterically and yet others stood dry eyed and silent, the awful grief rending their hearts. Many were there that fainted and had to be carried to their homes.

Then the flames died down. Through the rift of smoke that poured out of the building there could be seen through the back door a charred heap that a few minutes before had been laughing, happy children.

Arms were twisted and broken or burned off all together.

Faces of many were blackened and burned beyond possibility of recognition. It was a steaming, smoking mass.

Then began the task of taking out the bodies. One after the other the twisted, tortured bodies were taken from the building. They were hurried in the ambulances to the Lake Shore temporary morgue, where soon began the heart rending work of the parents in searching among the bodies for their dead.

#### Funerals Held.

At last they were found, all but a few. The funerals were held and the bodies lowered into their graves. The benediction was pronounced. It was over. Left only was the bitter memory of sons and daughters, of sisters and brothers lost.

In the bereft homes which in so short a time were left childless, or where one or two of the little ones had been taken away, leaving an emptiness which can never be filled, there is no forgetting. Throughout the long, long years to come, the sting of bitterness and sorrow will remain in these homes.\* Fathers and mothers who lost all that made life worth while, there is no necessity of reminding them not to forget. They will carry their burden to the grave.

It is to others that there is need of warning. There remains a duty for all of us to other children. These childless mothers are bereft. We can not return their children to them. Only the Infinite One is powerful to give them any measure of comfort in their great sorrow. We sympathize, but we can not aid.

We can prevent other such horrors, however. We can build our schools in such a way that there will be no danger of similar disasters, which may result in making more homes child-

less, which may mean that more children must be sacrificed.

Remember your own little ones who are in school, lest the like befall them.

Money should not be spared in such a cause. We have a sacred trust placed in us. We have a duty to perform. Measures have been adopted to make schools more safe. Do not rest until this shall have been accomplished. Let there be no half way measures. See to it that these improvements in the schools are pushed at the utmost rapidity and that they be executed so as to make the schools perfectly safe.

This is one of the objects of this book. We are too prone to forget soon after a great disaster. The Chicago theatre fire is but a memory. So also is the San Francisco disaster. Let the memory of the Collinwood disaster remain long. Let it remain until you have made your schools absolutely safe.

Care should be taken in the homes also to guard against fire. Wherever there are little ones there is always danger and safeguards should be thrown around them in every instance. Safeguards should be thrown out beforehand as preventives and not afterwards when the disaster is over.

It behooves us all both at the school and in the home to take warning, to keep the terrible Collinwood disaster in mind and plan for the future lest we forget and the like befall our own dear ones.

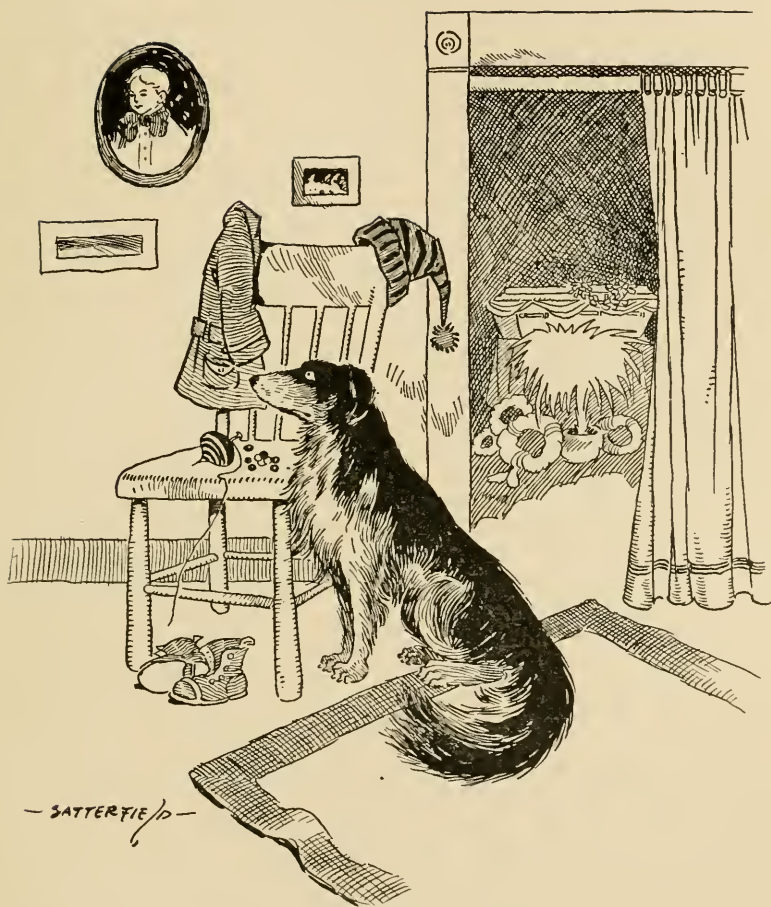
## OUR LITTLE BOY BLUE.

The little toy dog is covered with dust,  
But sturdy and stanch he stands;  
And the little toy soldier is red with rust,  
And his musket molds in his hands.  
Time was, when the little toy dog was new,  
And the soldier was passing fair,  
And that was the time when our Little Boy Blue  
Kissed them and put them there.

"Now, don't you go till I come," he said,  
"And don't you make any noise!"  
So, toddling off to his trundle-bed,  
He dreamt of the pretty toys.  
And as he was dreaming, an angel song  
Awakened our Little Boy Blue—  
Oh, the years are many, the years are long,  
But the little toy friends are true.

Aye, faithful to Little Boy Blue, they stand,  
Each in the same old place,  
Awaiting the touch of a little hand,  
The smile of a little face.  
And they wonder, as waiting these long years through  
In the dust of that little chair,  
What has become of our Little Boy Blue  
Since he kissed them, and put them there.

—Eugene Field.



“ I wonder when he's coming ”

## THE LONG SILENCE.

By Edmund Vance Cooke.

There are sorrowful words when the soldier falls  
 From out of the firing line;  
 There are fitting words when the Long Watch calls  
 To the sailor out on the brine.  
 But what are the words which a man may speak,  
 Which are other than vainest breath,  
 In silence of these—the little and weak—  
 Who have played the game with Death.

For Horror has hidden her eyes in fright,  
 And Terror has stopped her ears,  
 And Solace stands dumb at the ghastly sight,  
 And her only words are tears.  
 For what is the form which Pity may own  
 In a pitiless hour like this,  
 When these mothers are sitting alone—alone,  
 With their babies they may not kiss.

Oh, what to them is the sounding word,  
 And what is the poet's page?  
 And what all the wisdom written and heard  
 By prophet and priest and sage?  
 They are dust and dross, they are straw and chaff;  
 Can they lighten the sightless eye?  
 Can they bring back one little lightsome laugh,  
 Or one little wistful cry?

And who would mock a motherly grief  
 By telling her Death is rest?  
 And who would rack her stricken belief  
 By asserting that God knows best?  
 For bone of her bone and flesh of her heart  
 Is the form which lies unheeding,  
 And God himself may not tear them apart  
 And see that there be no bleeding.

We can only reach our hands, as prayers,  
 To the hands which blindly grope;  
 We can only mingle our tears with theirs,  
 For in grief alone is hope.  
 And we clasp our own little loves, unclaimed  
 By the shadow of dark distress,  
 And blush that we are not more ashamed  
 Of our kisses of thankfulness.



## CHAPTER XXV.

### LIST OF DEAD.

#### NAMES OF THOSE WHO MET DEATH IN THE COL- LINWOOD FIRE.

ADAMS, IBA, aged 10, No. 390 Second street.  
BALDWIN, LAURETTA, aged 14, Sackett.  
BALDWIN, ALBERT, aged 12, No. 154 Park avenue.  
BELL, CLAYTON, aged 14, No. 5310 McClure.  
BLUHM, GEORGE, aged 14, No. 5714 Elsinor.  
BURROWS, MARY, aged 12, No. 4907 Charles.  
BURROWS, ARMELIA, aged 11, No. 423 Park.  
BUSCHMAN, ROSE, aged 9, No. 5414 Lake.  
BUSCHMAN, ALMA, aged 11, No. 5414 Lake.  
BRAVO, FLORA, aged 9, No. 5422 Elsinore.  
CERWANA, MARGARET, aged 12, Store street.  
CLARKE, DALE, aged 8, No. 5812 Arcade.  
CLAYTON, FLORENCE, aged 8, No. 5816 Arcade.  
CUNNINGHAM, MILDRED, aged 12, No. 5118 Arcade.  
CENTNER, LESTER, aged 8, No. 512 Collamer.  
CARLSON, NELLIE, aged 13, No. 4907 Fulton.  
DEPNER, MEDA, aged 10, No. 4605 Fulton.  
DEPNER, ARNOLD, aged 9, No. 4605 Fulton.  
DRESCIK, MATILDA, aged 9, No. 389 Fourth.  
DRESCIK, MARY, aged 10, No. 309 Fourth.  
DAVIS, IRENE, aged 15, No. 4615 Westropp.  
DAY, PERCY, aged 11, No. 6202 Arcade.  
DORN, GRETCHEN, aged 10, No. 389 Park.  
DUFFY, KATHERINE, aged 13, No. 17 Lake.  
EICHELBERGER, ALBERT, aged 6, No. 5322 McClure.

- ENALA, FLORENCE, aged 9, No. 6203 Forrest.  
EVALD, FLORENCE, aged 9, No. 6203 Forest street.  
FINGLEMAN, LUCY, aged 8, No. 387 Fourth street.  
FISKE, MISS GRACE, aged 26, No. 10522 Orville avenue  
N. E.  
GALOP, TONY, aged 13, No. 421 Oak.  
GOULD, ALBERT, aged 11, No. 5416 Maple.  
GOULD, RAYMOND, aged 11, No. 5406 Poplar.  
GILBERT, ALMA, aged 11, No. 4710 L. S. B.  
GERBIC, EMILY, aged 9, Sackett and 4th streets.  
GRESSHAUGE, MARY, aged 9, No. 5714 Forest.  
GLASSMEIR, CATHERINE, aged 12, No. 5309 McClure.  
HART, DOROTHY, aged 9, No. 4615 Fulton.  
HUNTER, HERBERT, aged 10, No. 253 Collamer.  
HOFFERLE, LENA, aged 7, No. 5434 Elsinore  
HENICKE, PETER, aged 13, No. 437 Deise.  
HECKLER, EDNA, aged 13, No. 4908 Westropp.  
HIRTER, EDA, aged 8, No. 447 Collamer.  
HIRTER, HELENA, aged 13, No. 447 Collamer.  
HIRTER, WALTER, aged 15, No. 447 Collamer.  
HOOK, WILFORD, aged 8, No. 5908 Arcade.  
HUMMEL, ESTHER, aged 15, No. 4316 Fulton street.  
INTCHAR, FRANCIS, aged 9, No. 426 Spruce street.  
JANKE, EMMA, aged 7, No. 434 Cedar.  
JUPUDIZA, MARY, aged 11, No. 5619 Sackett street.  
KERN, CAROLINE, aged 10, No. 6212 Arcade,  
KERN, RUDOLPH, aged 12, No. 6212 Arcade street.  
KERN, ANNA, aged 8, No. 58 Elsinore street.  
KONOWSKI, WILLIAM, aged 12, No. 6215 Arcade.  
KELLY, WALTER, aged 7, Dow cottage, Beulah Park.  
KELLY, RICHARD, aged 10, Dow cottage, Beulah Park.

- KEHL, EDWARD, aged 10, No. 5407 Poplar.  
KUJAT, HENRY, aged 13, No. 381 Second street.  
KAPUDJYA, FANNIE, aged 9, No. 5619 Sackett.  
KAPUDJYA, MARY, aged 11, No. 5619 Sackett.  
KLISHWISH, JOHN, aged 14, no 4819 Charles street.  
LANGES, LIZZIE, aged 14, No. 437 Deise street.  
LAMSON, ROSIE, aged 8, No. 5704 Elsinore street.  
LEIBINTZER, FERDINAND, aged 9, No. 435 Oak.  
LEONARD, ARTHUR, aged 10, No. 4221 Montgomery.  
LEONARD, HERBERT, aged 11, No. 4221 Montgomery.  
LEONARD, LOUISE, aged 8, No. 4221 Montgomery.  
LODGE, HARRY, aged 11, No. 4910 Scott.  
LOWRY, CLARA, aged 13, Euclid Beach.  
MARKOSHOT, ELSIE, aged 11, No. 5814 Forrest.  
MAREA, MARY, aged 8, No. 4713 Charles street.  
MILLS, GLADYS, aged 12, Camp Lakewood.  
MARKOSHOT, EDWARD, aged 13, No. 5814 Forrest.  
MILLER, TRACEY, aged 11, Charles.  
MURPHY, LYDIA, 5814 Forrest.  
MYERT, EDDIE, aged 7, Lake.  
MARINSKI, KATHERINE, aged 7, No. 5807 Forrest.  
M'ILRATH, HUGH, aged 14, No. 5318 Maple.  
NEWSBERRY, RUSSELL, aged 13, Fulton.  
NEUBAKER, PAUL, aged 7, No. 391, Second street.  
NEUBERT, JOHN, aged 10, Fifth and Forest streets.  
NEUBERT, OLGA, aged 12, Fifth and Forest streets.  
OBLAK, JOHN, aged 13, No. 424 Spruce street.  
OPELECK, JOSEPHINE, aged 12, Oak street.  
OPELECK, JOE, aged 10, Oak street.  
PARR, HARRY, aged 8, No. 218 Park avenue.  
PAUL, RUTH, aged 7, No. 5413 L. S. B.  
PAUL, FRED W., aged 13, No. 5413 L. S. B.

- POLONSKI, VICTOR, aged 9, No. 447 Cedar street.  
POPOVOCI, JOHN, aged 13, No. 4709 Charles street.  
POPPEL, GRETCHEN, aged 7, No. 6401 Arcade.  
PARAL, FRANK, aged 9, No. 708 Elsinor.  
PHILLIS, JENNIE, aged 14, No. 5224 Poplar.  
PAHNER, EDNA, aged 13, No. 440 Park.  
PARRIT, MARY, aged 11, No. 5708 Elsinore.  
QUIRK, LOUIS, No. 5501 Sackett avenue.  
REHAN, ADAM, aged 12, No. 390 Second street.  
ROBINSON, WANETA, aged 7, No. 5078 Forest street.  
ROMMELFANGER, LILLIE, aged 9, No. 324 Spruce.  
ROSTOCK, LILLIAN, aged 6, No. 5315 Lake.  
REEVES, HARVEY, aged 9, No. 4713 Scott.  
ROSCHINSKY, JOHN, aged 7, No. 445 Cedar.  
RUSH, DON, aged 13, No. 27 Arcade.  
ROBINSON, FERN, aged 12, No. 5078 Forrest.  
SAGER, MARY, aged 11, No. 16 Oak.  
SEGA, MARIA, aged 11, No. 421 Oak.  
SCIBIRITZER, FERDINAND, aged 9, No. 435 Oak street.  
SCHOLL, EDWARD, aged 10, No. 4816 Westropp.  
SOUTHWELL, EUGENE, aged 12, No. 346 Park.  
SCHMITT, MILDRED, aged 10, Lake Shore boulevard.  
SKIEL, PAULINE, aged 13, No. 438 Coker street.  
SODONA, JULIUS, aged 8, No. 379 Fourth.  
SCHUBERT, VERNA, aged 12, No. 5411 Lake.  
SHERMAN, NORRIS, aged 10, No. 341 Park.  
SHEPARD, MORRIS, aged 14, No. 54 Elsinore.  
SCHAFFER, GEORGE, aged 9, Groveland Club.  
SIGLER, MABEL, aged 10, No. 6012 Arcade.  
SKELLY, Bert, aged 8, Sackett.

- SKELLY, MADGE, aged 12, Sackett.  
SMITH, WILLIE, aged 9, No. 6124 Arcade.  
STEWART, ELLA S., aged 14, No. 5713 Depew.  
SPRUNG, ELVIN, aged 7, No. 382 Collamer.  
SWANSON, FRED, aged 7, Fulton and Adams.  
SWANSON, EDWARD, aged 12, Fulton and Adams.  
SWANSON, HULDA, aged 13, No. 597 Adams street.  
SHEPARD, NORMAN, aged 11, No. 5708 Arcade.  
SANDERSON, HAROLD, aged 9, No. 438 Park.  
SANDERSON, GLEN, aged 12, No. 438 Park.  
SAMSON, MARY, aged 9, No. 5704 Elsinore.  
SAMSON, TONY, No. 5704 Elsinore.  
SCHULTZ, HENRY, aged 9, No. 4623 Westropp.  
TURNER, JAMES, aged 14, No. 436 Collamer.  
TURNER, NORMAN, aged 10, No. 436 Collamer.  
TURNER, MAX, aged 6, No. 436 Collamer.  
THOMPSON, TOMMY, aged 7, No. 405 Collamer.  
THOMPSON, NILS, aged 9, No. 405 Collamer.  
URBANCIE, JOSEPHINE, aged 7, No. 430 Spruce street.  
WELLS, WORTHINGTON, aged 12, No. 442 Park avenue.  
WEICHERT, HENRY, aged 11, No. 382 Second.  
WENDORF, CLARA, aged 12, No. 4323 Westropp.  
WALDEN, LUELLA, No. 5450 Elsinore.  
WEILER, MISS KATHERINE, No. 2217 E. 81st street.  
WELICK, ANNA, aged 11, No. 433 Spruce.  
WACHHAUS, EVA, aged 7, No. 5608 Elsinore.  
WACHHAUS, IDA, aged 8, No. 5608 Elsinor.  
WACHHAUS, MARY, aged 9, No. 5608 Elsinore.  
WICKER, ROBERT, aged 12, 389 Third.  
WIDMAR, S., aged 10, 5217 Lake boulevard.  
WIDMAR, ANNA, aged 12, No. 5217 Lake Shore Boulevard.

WOODHOUSE, ANNIE, aged 12, Lake.

WOODRICK, META, aged 11, No. 4605 Fulton.

WOODRICK, ARNOLD, No. 4605 Fulton.

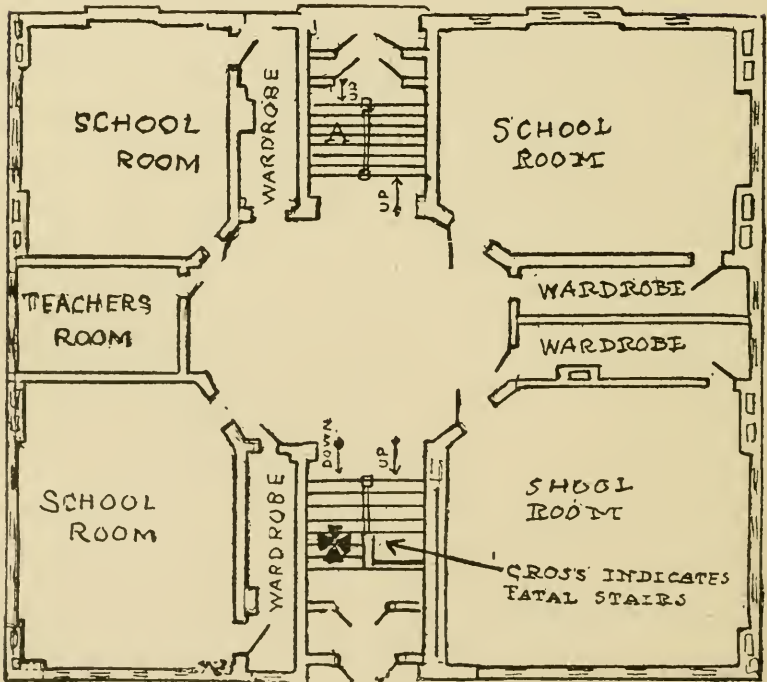
ZUPAN, MARGUERITE, aged 11, Collins street.

ZIMMERMAN, JOHN, aged 8, No. 5714 Sackett.

ZIMMERMAN, LOUISE, aged 14, No. 5714 Sackett.

ZINGLEMAN, HENRY, aged 11, No. 3874 Fourth.

ZINGLEMAN, LUCY, aged 8, No. 3874 Fourth.



FIRST FLOOR COLLINWOOD SCHOOL

The Plans of the other floors are modelled on the same design.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

### SAN FRANCISCO DISASTER.

#### SCENES OF HORROR FOLLOW TERRIFIC EARTH- QUAKE, SHOCK.

In the San Francisco disaster, April 18, 1906, destruction fell in almost every conceivable form. The heaving earth shattered the walls of its towering structures and brought them crashing down on the helpless people within. Combustion spread to the ruins and the fire fiend smote the wrecked city with merciless fury. Absence of water, famine and pestilence each lent their portion to the dismal tragedy. Madened men and women of the lowest strata of society battled in the scarred and smoking ruins for plunder, while soldiers shot down the ghouls and looters.

Such a scene can only be imagined after a midnight session with Dante. It was Inferno apothesized.

It followed a night of restful calm—a night during which the fairy city of the Golden Gate throbbed with the joy of life. Its palatial theatres were crowded. Its bright lights flashed from the highlands over the bay and down the rugged passage to the western sea.

#### Shock Of Five Minutes.

Morning brought the transformation just after rosy dawn awakened early risers to their toil—and death.

The first shock, which lasted almost five minutes, and which started the wrecking of the city, came just at daybreak, and through a day of terror the people fought, aided by soldiers, to check the following flames. At midnight the fire still burned fiercely in every direction, checked on two sides by the

water of the bay, and held back from the other two and from the main residence districts by the half gale that had fanned its fury all day.

The fireman and the 4,000 soldiers who were fighting the flames and rescuing the dead and injured, labored all day without water, for the earthquake snapped the water mains and left the city helpless.

Dynamite and powder were the only agencies left with which to battle. Many of the finest buildings in the city were leveled to the ground by terrific charges of explosives in the hopeless effort to stay the horror of fire. In this work heroic soldiers, policemen, and firemen were maimed or killed outright.

#### Flames Furnish Only Light.

With nightfall there was no light, except the glare of the flames—for the gas plants were blown up or shut off for purposes of safety and the earthquake destroyed the machinery in the electric light works.

Nearly a quarter of the population of the city either fled to the hills and other supposed points of greater safety—or were homeless in the streets.

Martial law was proclaimed, nearly 4,000 soldiers patrolling the streets with orders to shoot all vandals.

While the center of the earthquake was in San Francisco, the destruction and death covered the coast for miles, and the scenes in San Francisco were duplicated on a smaller scale in half a dozen of the nearer cities.

As night descended upon the city of death and destruction the fact that there were no lights brought on fresh terror,

which was accentuated by the third sharp shock, which came just before dark.

As the flames spread into the residence districts people left their homes and fled to the parks and squares.

The city resembled one vast shambles with the red glare of the fire throwing weird shadows across the worn and panic-stricken faces of the homeless, wandering the streets or sleeping on piles of mattresses and clothing in the parks and on the sidewalks in those districts not yet reached by the fire.

#### **Leave Dead To Burn.**

Through all the streets automobiles and express wagons hurried, carrying the dead and injured to the morgues and the hospitals. At the morgue, in the hall of justice, scores of bodies were on the slabs. The flames rapidly approached this building and the work of removing the bodies to Jackson square, opposite, began. While the soldiers and police were carrying the dead to what appeared safe places, a shower of bricks from a building dynamited to check the progress of the sweeping flames injured many of the workmen and sent soldier after soldier hurrying to the hospital. The work of removing the bodies stopped and the remainder of the dead were left to possible cremation in the morgue.

Offers of relief poured in all day—from every direction—but the city was isolated from the world except by telegraph. The railway tracks for miles were destroyed, twisted and contorted. In places the tracks sunk ten feet, in other places they were torn to pieces.

It was days before the city could communicate with its sister cities by railway, and appeals for food and fresh water to be sent by steamers from coast points were sent out.

It was many days before the complete story of the ruin wrought by the double calamity of earthquake and fire that visited San Francisco was realized and there will still remain untold countless tales of pitiful tragedy. The exact loss of life will never be known as hundreds of unfortunates were incinerated in the flames which made the rescue of those buried under toppling steeples and falling walls impossible.

The first shock was at 5:13, and it came without warning save a slight reverberating roar, the motion of the earth being from east to west. The upheaval was gradual, and for a few seconds it seemed as if the entire city was being lifted slowly upward, and then, after perhaps five seconds of the sickening rising sensation the shock increased in violence.

Chimneys began to fall, the houses trembled violently, swayed, and some fell with crashes.

In an instant the panic began. People driven from their beds ran unclothed into the streets, screaming, crying, and praying. They screamed to each other, begging for help and asking each other what had happened.

Others fled in terror to the basement—others fainted or fell terrorized in their own homes. They were safer than those who rushed into the streets at the first awakening—for these were struck down by showers of falling brick.

#### **Buildings Sway and Tumble.**

Buildings tottered on their foundations. Some rose and fell, and, when falling, the fronts or sides burst out as if from explosions, hurling tons of brick, mortar, and timbers into the street. Great rents opened in the ground.

Those who remained indoors generally escaped death or in-

jury, except in cases where the entire buildings collapsed, although hundreds were hurt by falling plaster, pictures, or flying glass. It was said that there were more or less injured persons in every family in the city.

Hardly were the people of the hill district out of their houses when the dawn to the east was lit up in a dozen places by fires which had started in the business district below. The first of these came with a sheet of fire which burst out somewhere in the warehouse district, near the water front.

Men from all over the upper part of town streamed down the hills to help. There were no cars running, and none could, for the slots of the cable cars and the very tracks were bent and tossed with the upheavals of the ground.

The fire department responded. Chief Sullivan of the fire department was dead, killed by the cupola of the California hotel, which had fallen through the roof of the fire house where he was sleeping. His assistant rang in a general alarm.

The firemen, making for the nearest points, got their horses out. There was one rush of water and the flow stopped.

The great water main which carries the chief water supply of San Francisco, ran through the ruined district. It had been broken, and the useless water was spurting up through the ruins in a dozen places.

The firemen stood helpless while fire after fire started in the ruined houses. Most of these seem to have been caused by the ignition of gas from the gas mains, which were also broken. The flames would rush up with astonishing suddenness, and then smolder in the slowly burning redwood of which three quarters of San Francisco was built.

When day came the smoke hung over all the business part of the city. Farther out fires were going in Hayes Valley, a

middle class resident district, and in the old mission part of the city.

How many buildings went down in these two shocks and how many people were killed will never be known. The world knows only the larger items of the catastrophe. Probably scores of little houses went down, burying four or five people in each. These little holocausts and some of the greater ones happened in an area about two blocks wide which runs south of Market street, the main thoroughfare, east to the water front.

It was a district of little lodging houses inhabited mainly by sailors, interspersed with business houses. There seems to have been another center of disturbance in the mission district, much farther west, and there was heavy loss of life at that point.

The Kingsley house, a crazy, cheap old hotel on Seventh street, between Mission and Howard, collapsed at the first shock. Seventy-five people were buried in the ruins. The firemen pulled some of them out alive, but most of them were left under the ruins.

#### Columns Of Fire Sweep Everywhere.

The great columns of fire rushed down streets, turned corners, roared through a cross street, and then, leaping entire squares or blocks, rushed onwards to the wooden portion of the town nearer the river.

The Grand Opera House, wherein the preceding night Caruso sang with the Metropolitan Grand Opera Company in the opening opera of the engagement, was attacked, and all the expensive scenery and costumes were destroyed with the building.



In the middle of the morning the whole Oakland fire department, answering a call from San Francisco, came over on a special ferry boat. By that time there was a wall of fire between the water front and the main business district. They took to the wharves and marched far to the south before they found a way through the flames, and reached the San Francisco firemen, who were still working without water.

#### **Dynamite Fails To Stop Flames.**

The firemen dynamited a four story building housing railroad offices, which lay between the Palace and the Examiner building. That did not stop it. Just before noon the men in the newspaper offices who had reported for duty and were hanging on to the last, left the building.

The east wind gave another spurt, and the fire caught the Call building. Hardly were these burning and beyond hope before the wind switched to its normal southwest direction and the Chronicle building, northward across the street caught fire. When this happened all the newspaper offices had been transferred to the Chronicle building, whose basement presses had somehow lasted through, and they were preparing to issue all the papers from the one office. Driven out of this last stand, they took to the hills or tried to get out to Oakland and a wire.

#### **Rich Not Spared.**

In addition to the main conflagration half a dozen others were raging, and seemed to be uniting into one great fire which would sweep clean all the low lying parts of the city.

The hills district, where the well to do residents lived, was not spared, and there were ten or twelve small fires there. In this part of town there was some water from the hill reser-

voirs, and this, together with the slow burning quality of the redwood of which they were mostly built, seems to have saved these parts of the town, temporarily at least.

Further down, in the flats of the Hayes valley, the fire ran fast through a thickly inhabited district of working people. In the midst of this district was St. Ignatius' church, the largest church on the Pacific coast. This caught early, and went up in a sheet of fire. Block after block in this part went up.

The whole water front, except the fine big ferry building of the Southern Pacific company, burned to the ground, and this fire extended to the warehouse district, taking the stores of the Pacific trade.

Another center of flame was California street, the financial district.

#### **Mechanics' Pavilion A Morgue.**

In less than two hours more than 100 bodies taken from the ruins of the fallen buildings had been laid out on the floor. The dead were brought from every part of the city in every sort of vehicle. Inside the pavilion a corps of doctors and volunteer nurses labored with the injured brought in with the dead.

In the first hour of the disaster many must have been killed by live wires. Almost all the electric light wires fell across the streets and the work they did was proved by the presence at the temporary morgue of many corpses on whom the only mark was a burn about the hands or feet. This lasted for only an hour. After that the electric power was cut off.

When the city awoke to a full realization of the fate that had befallen it and the fight to escape death became unanimous, thousands made for the banks, where their savings were

deposited. Long before the usual hour of opening, hundreds of the more daring were clamoring around the bank doors.

But the banks did not open. To have opened meant the certainty of runs that would have sent many of them to the wall. Thousands left the city practically penniless, not knowing whether their savings would be swept away with their homes and business.

The food problem was already troubling the authorities. Mayor Schmitz had ordered grocers and dairymen and bakers to hold their supplies at the disposition of the authorities. The food was distributed equally, rich and poor sharing alike.

#### Scenes Of Horror In Ruined City.

Of the scenes which marked the transformation of this, the gayest, most careless city on the continent, into a wreck and a hell it is harder to write. The day started with a blind general panic. People woke with a start to find themselves floundering on the floor.

In such an earthquake as this it is the human instinct to get out of doors, away from falling walls. They stumbled across the floors of their heaving houses to find that even the good earth upon which they placed their reliance was swaying and rising and falling, so that the sidewalks cracked and great rents opened in the ground.

The three minutes which followed were an eternity of terror. At least two people died of pure fright in that three minutes when there seemed no help in earth or heaven.

There was a roar in the air like a great burst of thunder, and from all about came the crash of falling walls. It died down at last, leaving the earth quaking and quivering like jelly.

Men would run forward, stop as another shock, which might

be greater any moment, seemed to take the earth from under their feet, and throw themselves face downward on the ground in a perfect agony of fear. It seemed to be two or three minutes after the great shock was over before people found their voices.

There followed the screaming of women, beside themselves with terror and the cries of men. With one impulse, people made for the parks, as far as possible from falling walls. The parks speedily became packed with people in their night clothes, who screamed and moaned at the little shocks which followed every few minutes.

#### Chinese In Delirium Of Fright.

On Portsmouth square the panic was beyond description. This, the old plaza, about which the early city was built, was bordered by Chinatown, by Italian district, and by the Barbary coast, a lower tenderloin. A spur of the quake ran up the hill upon which Chinatown was situated and shook down part of the crazy little buildings on the southern edge. It tore down, too, some of the Italian tenements. The rush to Portsmouth Square went on almost unchecked by the police, who had more business elsewhere.

The Chinese came out of the underground burrows like rats and tumbled into the square, beating such gongs and playing such noise instruments as they had snatched up. They were met on the other side by the refugees of the Italian quarter. The panic became a madness.

At least two Chinamen were taken to the morgue dead of knife wounds, given for no other reason, it seems, than the madness of panic.

There were 10,000 Chinese in the quarter, and there were

thousands of Italians, Spaniards and Mexicans on the other side. It seemed as though every one of these, together with the riffraff of the Barbary coast, made for that one block of open land.

The two uncontrolled streams met in the center of the square and piled up on the edges. There they fought all the morning until some regulars restored order with their bayonets.

Then, as the dawn broke and the lower city began to be overhung with the smoke of burning buildings, there came a back eddy. Cabmen, hackmen, drivers of express wagons and trucks, hired at enormous prices, began carting away from the lower city the valuables of the hotels, which saw their doom in the fires which were breaking out everywhere and the spurts of gas mains.

Even the banks began to take out their bullion and securities, and, under guard of half-dressed clerks, to send them to the hills, whence came today the salvation of San Francisco. One old night hawk cab, driven by a cabman white with terror, carried more than a million dollars in currency and securities.

### Human Rats Begin Work.

Men, pulling corpses or broken people from fallen buildings, stopped to curse these processions as they passed. Many times a line of wagons and cabs would run on to an impassible barrier of debris, where some building had fallen into the street, and would pile up until the guards cleared a way through the streets.

And then the vandals formed and went to work. Routed out from the dens along the wharves, the rats of the San Francisco

water front, the drifters who have reached the back eddy of European civilization, crawled out and began to plunder.

Early in the day a policeman caught one of these men creeping through the window of a small bank on Montgomery street and shot him dead. But the police were keeping fire lines, beating back overzealous rescuers from the fallen houses and the burning blocks, and for a time these men plundered at will.

#### **Troops Ordered To Kill Thieves.**

News of this development was carried early to Mayor Schmitz, and it was this as much as anything which determined him when Gen. Funston came over on the double quick with the whole garrison of the Presidio to put the city under martial law.

Orders were issued to the troops to shoot any one caught in the act of looting, and the same orders were issued to the First Regiment, National Guard, of California when they were mustered and called out later in the day.

And all this time, and clear up until noon, the earth was shaking with little tremors, many of which brought down walls and chimneys. At each of these tremors, rescuers, and even the firemen, would stop for a moment, paralyzed. The 8 o'clock shock, the heaviest after the big one, drove even those who had determined to stay by the stricken city to look for a means of escape by water.

#### **Wild Rush For Ferries.**

There are only two ways out of San Francisco, one is by rail to the south and down the Santa Clara valley; the other is by water to Oakland, the overland terminal. Most of the Californians, trying to get out of the quaking dangerous city,



made by instinct for the ferry, since they knew that the shocks always travel heavily to the south, down the Santa Clara valley.

As for the easterners, they had come by ferry and they started to get out by ferry. But when the half-dressed people, carrying the ridiculous bundles snatched up in time of panic, reached Montgomery street they found their way blocked by ten blocks of fire.

They piled up on the edge of this district fighting with the police, who held them back and turned them again toward the hills. They must stay in the city. If it went, they went with it.

The troops ended their last hope of getting out of town. So great had been the disorder that, as afternoon came on and the earth seemed to be quieting down, they enforced strict laws against movement.

#### **Troops Stop Run On Banks.**

This stopped a strange feature of the terrible disaster—a run on the banks by people who wanted to get out their money and go. All the morning lines of disheveled men had been standing in line on Montgomery and Sansome streets, ignoring the smoke and flying brands and beating at the doors. The troops dove these away; and the banks went on with their work of getting out the valuables.

There is an open park opposite the city hall. Here, in default of a building, the board of supervisors met and formed, together with fifty substantial citizens whom they had gathered together, a committee of safety.

The police and the troops, working admirably together, passed the word that the dead and injured should be brought

to Mechanics' Pavilion, since the hospitals and morgue had become choked; and toward that point, in the early forenoon, the drays, express wagons, and hacks impressed as temporary ambulances, took their course.

There were perhaps 400 injured people, many of them terribly mangled, laid out on the floor before noon. Nearly every physician in the city volunteered; and they got together enough trained nurses to do the work.

#### **Vampires Shot Down.**

Fiends in human form, in whose bosom was no sympathy for the stricken, began soon after the shock, the unholy work of robbing the dead. In many cases these vampires were shot dead in their tracks by soldiers or policemen.

A. J. Neve, manager of the great Owl drug store in San Francisco, barely escaped to Sacramento with his life.

"The work of the villain—the vandal, the worse than murderer—was the thing that added rage to discouragement and despair," declared Mr. Neve. "Hundreds of women were crowded into the St. Francis Hotel, it being believed that it could withstand the flames.

"The buildings burned on all sides of it and then it caught. The women were carried out and the villains cut off their fingers and put them in their pockets to secure the diamond rings.

#### **Mob Lynches Two Miscreants.**

"Instant death to scores was the fate for vandalism," said Oliver Posey, Jr., a wealthy mining operator. "Not only did the soldiers execute summary justice on robbers, but citizens likewise took the law into their own hands. On the first

afternoon in front of the Palace Hotel a crowd of workers in the ruins discovered a miscreant in the act of robbing a corpse of its jewels. Without delay he was seized, a rope procured, and he was immediately strung up to a beam which was left standing in the ruined entrance of the Palace Hotel.

"No sooner had he been hoisted up and a hitch taken in the rope than one of his fellow criminals was captured. Stopping only to secure a few yards of hemp, a slip knot was quickly tied around his neck and the wretch was soon adorning the hotel entrance by the side of the other dastard."

John Spencer, an employe of Ascot Park, also had much to say of the treatment of those caught in the act of rifling the dead of their jewels.

"At Market and Third streets Wednesday," said Mr. Spencer, "I saw a person who could not be called a man attempting to cut the fingers from the hand of a dead woman in order to secure the rings which adorned them. Three soldiers witnessed the deed at the same time and ordered the man to throw up his hands. Instead of obeying the command he drew a revolver from his pocket and began to fire at his pursuers.

"Without more ado, the trio of Uncle Sam's soldiers, reinforced by half a dozen uniformed patrolmen, raised their rifles to their shoulders and fired. With the first shots the fleeing human vampire fell, and when the soldiers went to the body to throw it into an alley eleven bullets were found to have entered it."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE CHICAGO THEATRE HORROR.

FLAMES SNUFF OUT LIVES OF NEARLY 600 PERSONS IN FEW MINUTES.

No disaster, by flood, volcano, wreck or convulsion of nature has in recent times aroused such horror as swept over the civilized world when on December 30, 1903, a death-dealing blast of flame hurtled through the packed auditorium of the Iroquois theater, Chicago, causing the loss of nearly 600 lives of men, women and children, and injuries to unknown scores.

Strong words pale and appear meaningless when used in describing the full enormity of this disaster, which has no recent parallel save in the outbreak of nature's irresistible forces. There have been greater losses of life by volcanoes, earthquakes and floods, but no fire horror of modern times has equaled this one, which in a brief half-hour turned a beautiful million-dollar theater into an oven piled high with corpses, some burned and mutilated and others almost unmarked in death.

#### Shrieks Of Living.

Coming, as it did, in the midst of a holiday season, when the second greatest city in the United States was reveling in the gaiety of Christmas week, this sudden transformation of a playhouse filled with a pleasure-seeking throng into an inferno filled with shrieking living and mutilated dead, came as a thunderbolt from a clear sky.

It was a typical holiday matinee crowd, composed mostly of women and children, with here and there a few men. The

production was the gorgeous scenic extravanza "Mr. Bluebeard," with which the handsome new theater had been opened not a month before. "Don't fail to have the children see Mr. Bluebeard," was the advertisement spread broadcast throughout the city, and the children were there in force when the scorching sheet of flame leaped from the stage into the balcony and gallery where a thousand were packed.

The building had been heralded abroad as a "fireproof structure," with more than enough exits. Ushers and five men in city uniform were in the aisles. All was apparently safety, mirth and good cheer.

Then came the transformation scene!

The auditorium and the stage were darkened for the popular song "The Pale Moonlight." Eight dashing chorus girls and eight stalwart men in showy costume strolled through the measures of the piece, bathed in a flood of dazzling light. Up in the scenes a stage electrician was directing the "spot-light" which threw the pale moonlight effect on the stage.

### **Tiny Tongue Of Flame.**

Suddenly there was a startled cry. Far overhead where the "spot" was shooting forth its brilliant ray of concentrated light a tiny serpentine tongue of flame crept over the inside of the proscenium drape. It was an insignificant thing, yet the horrible possibilities it entailed flashed over all in an instant. A spark from the light had communicated to the rough edge of the heavy cloth drape. Like a flash it stole across the proscenium and high up into the gridiron above.

Accustomed as they were to insignificant fire scares and trying ordeals that are seldom the lot of those who lead a less strenuous life, the people of the stage hurried silently to the

task of stamping out the blaze. In the orchestra pit it could readily be seen that something was radically wrong, but the trained musicians played on.

Members of the octette cast their eyes above and saw the tiny tongue of flame growing into a whirling maelstrom of fire. But it was a sight they had seen before. Surely something would happen to extinguish it. America's newest and most modern fireproof playhouse was not going to disappear before an insignificant fire in the rigging loft. So they continued to sway in sinuous steps to the rhythm of the throbbing orchestra. Their presence stilled the nervousness of the vast audience, which knew that something was wrong, but had no means of realizing what that something was.

So the gorgeously attired men and dashing, voluptuous young women danced on. The throng feasted its eyes on the moving scene of life and color, little knowing that for them it was the last dance—the dance of death!

#### Death Danced.

That dance was not the only one in progress. Far above the element of death danced from curtain to curtain. The fire fiend, red and glowing with exultation, snapping and crackling in anticipation of the feast before it, grew beyond all bounds. Glowing embers and blazing sparks—crumbs from its table—began to shower upon the merry dancers, and they fell back with blanched faces and trembling limbs. Eddie Foy rushed to the front of the stage to reassure the spectators, who now realized the peril at hand and rose in their seats struggling against the impulse to fly. Others joined the comedian in his plea for calmness.

Suddenly their voices were drowned in a volley of sounds



like the booming of great guns. The manila lines by which the carloads of scenery in the loft above was suspended gave way before the fire like so much paper and the great wooden batons fell like thunder bolts upon the now deserted stage.

Still the audience stood, terror bound.

"Lower the fire curtain!" came a hoarse cry.

Something shot down over the proscenium, then stopped before the great opening was closed, leaving a yawning space of many feet beneath. With the dropping of the curtain a door in the rear had been opened by the performers, fleeing for their lives and battling to escape from the devouring element fast hemming the min on every side. The draft thus caused transformed the stage in one second from a dark, gloomy, smoke concealed scene of chaos into a seething volcano. With a great puff the mass of flame swept out over the auditorium, a withering blast of death. Before it the vast throng broke and fled.

### Doors Jammed Tight.

Doors, windows, hallways, fire escapes—all were jammed in a moment with struggling humanity, fighting for life. Some of the doors were jammed almost instantly so that no human power could make egress possible. Behind those in front, pushed the frenzied mass of humanity, Chicago's elect, the wives and children of its most prosperous business men and the flower of local society, fighting like demons incarnate. Purses, wraps, costly furs were cast aside in that mad rush. Mothers were torn from their children, husbands from their wives. No hold, however strong, could last against that awful, indescribable crush. Strong men who sought to the last to sustain their feminine companions were swept away like

straws, thrown to the floor and trampled into unconsciousness in the twinkling of an eye. Women to whom the safety of their children was more than their own lives had their little ones torn from them and buried under the mighty sweep of humanity, moving onward by intuition rather than through exercise of thought to the various exits. They in turn were swept on before their wails died on their lips—some to safety, others to an unspeakably horrible death.

#### Exits Piled With Fallen.

While some exits were jammed by fallen refugees so as to become useless, others refused to open. In the darkness that fell upon the doomed theater a struggle ensued such as was never pictured in the mind of Dante in his visions of Inferno. With prayers, curses and meaningless shrieks of terror all faced their fate like rats in a trap. The darkness was illumined by a fearful light that burst from the sea of flame pouring out from the proscenium, making Dore's representations of Inferno shrink into the commonplace. Like a horizontal volcano the furnace on the stage belched forth its blast of fire, smoke, gas and withering, blighting heat. Like a wave it rolled over every portion of the vast house, dancing.

#### Many Hideously Disfigured.

Dancing! Yes, the pillars of flame danced! To the multitude swept into eternity before the hurricane of flame and the few who were dragged out hideously disfigured and burned almost beyond all semblance of human beings it seemed indeed a dance of death.

Withering, crushing, consuming all in its path, forced on as though by the power of some mighty blow pipe, impelled by

the fearful drafts that directed the fiery furnace outward into the auditorium instead of upward into the great flues constructed to meet just such an emergency, the sea of fire burned itself out. There was little or nothing in the construction of the building itself for it to feed upon, and it fell back of its own weight to the stage, where it roared and raged like some angry demon.

And those great flues that supposedly gave the palatial Iroquois increased safety! Barred and grated, battened down with heavy timbers they resisted the terrific force of the blast itself. There they remained intact the next day. Anxiety to throw open the palace of pleasure to the public before the builders had time to complete in detail their Herculean task had resulted in converting it into a veritable slaughter pen.

#### Chamber Of Horrors.

"Mr. Bluebeard's" chamber of horrors, lightly depicted in satire to settings of gold and color, wit and music, had evolved within a few minutes into an actuality. Chamber of horrors indeed—grim, silent, smoldering and sending upon high the fearful odor of burning flesh.

Policemen and firemen, hardened to terrible sights, crept into the smoldering sepulchre only to turn back sickened by the sight that met their eyes. Tears and groans fell from them and they were unnerved as they gazed upon the scene of carnage. Some gave way and were themselves the subjects of deep concern. It was a scene to wring tears from the very stones. No words can adequately describe it.

Perhaps the best description of that quarter hour of carnage and the sense of horror when the seared, scorched sepulchre was entered for the removal of the dead and dying is found in

the words of the veteran descriptive writer, Mr. Ben H. Atwell, who was present from the beginning to the end of the holocaust, and after visiting the deadly spot in the gray dawn of the following day wrote his impressions as follows:

"Where at 3:15 one day, beauty and fashion and the happy amusement seeker thronged the palatial playhouse to fall a few moments later before a deadly blast of smoke and flame sweeping over all with irresistible force, the dawn of the last day of the passing year found confusion, chaos and an all-pervading sense of the awful. It seemed to radiate the chilling, depressing volume from the streaked, grime-covered walls and the flame-licked ceilings overhead. Against this fearful background the few grim firemen or police, moving silently about the ruins, searching for overlooked dead or abandoned property, loomed up like fitful ghosts.

#### Wave Of Flame Greets Audience.

"The progress of their noiseless and ghastly quest proved one circumstance survivors are too unsettled to realize. With the opening of the stage door to permit the escape of the members of the 'Mr. Bluebeard' company and the breaking of the skylight above the flue-like scene loft that tops the stage, the latter was converted into a furnace through which a tremendous draft poured like a blow pipe, driving billows of flame into the faces of the terrified audience. With exits above the parquet floor simply choked up with the crushed bodies of struggling victims, who made the first rush for safety, the packed hundreds in balcony and gallery faced fire that moved them up in waves.

"With a swirl that sounded death, the thin bright sheet of fire rolled on from stage to rear wall. It fed on the rich box

curtains, seized upon the sparse veneer of subdued red and green decorations spread upon wall, ceiling and balcony facings. It licked the fireproof materials below clean and rolled on with a roar. Over seat tops and plush rail cushions it sped. Then it snuffed out, having practically nothing to feed upon save the tangled mass of wood scene frames, batons and paint-soaked canvas on the stage.

"There firemen were directing streams of water that poured over the premises in great cascades in volume, aggregating many tons. A few streams were directed about the body of the house, where vagrant tongues of flame still found material on which to feed. Silence reigned—the silence of death, but none realized the appalling story behind the awful calm.

"The stampede that followed the first alarm, a struggle in which most contestants were women and children, fighting with the desperation of death, terminated with the sudden sweep of the sea of flames across the body of the house. The awful battle ended before the irresistible hand of death, which fell upon contestants and those behind alike. Somehow those on the main floor managed to force their way out. Above, where the presence of narrower exits, stairways that precipitated the masses of humanity upon each other and the natural air current for the billows of flame to follow, spelled death to the occupants of the two balconies, the wave of flame, smoke and gas smote the multitude.

#### Drop Where They Stand.

"Dropping where they stood, most of the victims were consumed beyond recognition. Some who were protected from contact with the flames by masses of humanity piled upon them escaped death and were dragged out later by rescuers,

suffering all manner of injury. The majority, however, who beheld the indescribably terrifying spectacle of the wave of death moving upon them through the air died then and there without a moment for preparation. Few survived to tell the tale. The blood-curdling cry of mingled prayers and curses, of pleas for help and meaningless shrieks of despair died away before the roar of the fire and the silence fell that greeted the firemen upon their entry.

“Survivors describe the situation as a parallel of the condition at Martinique when a wave of gas and fire rolled down the mountain side and destroyed everything in its path. Here, however, one circumstance was reversed, for the wave of death leaped from below and smote its victims, springing from the very air beneath them.

#### **Man Heroes Are Developed.**

“In a few minutes it was all over—all but the weeping. In those few minutes obscure people had evolved into heroes; staid business men drove out patrons to convert their stores into temporary hospitals and morgues; others converted their trucks and delivery wagons into improvised ambulances; stocks of drugs, oils and blankets were showered upon the police to aid in relief work and a corps of physicians and surgeons sufficient to the needs of an army had organized.

“Rescues little short of miraculous were accomplished and life and limb were risked by public servants and citizens with no thought of personal consequences. Public sympathy was thoroughly aroused long before the extent of the horror was known and before the sickening report spread throughout the city that the greatest holocaust ever known in the history of theatricals had fallen upon Chicago.



"While the streets began to crowd for blocks around with weeping and heartbroken persons in mortal terror because of knowledge that loved ones had attended the performance, patrol wagons, ambulances and open wagons hurried the injured to hospitals. Before long they were called upon to perform the more grewsome task of removing the dead. In wagon loads the latter were carted away. Undertaking establishments both north, south and west of the river threw open their doors.

#### Dead Piled In Heaps.

"Piled in windows in the angle of the stairway where the second balcony refugees were brought face to face and in a death struggle with the occupants of the first balcony, the dead covered a space fifteen or twenty feet square and nearly seven feet in depth. All were absolutely safe from the fire itself when they met death, having emerged from the theater proper into the separate building containing the foyer. In this great court there was absolutely nothing to burn and the doors were only a few feet away. There the ghastly pile lay, a mute monument to the powers of terror. Above and about towered shimmering columns and facades in polished marble, whose cold and unharmed surfaces seemed to bespeak contempt for human folly. In that portion of the Iroquois structure the only physical evidences of damages were a few windows broken during the excitement.

"Searchers gazing down from the heights of the upper balcony surveyed the scene of death below with horror stamped upon their faces. Fire had left its terrifyig light in a colorless, garish monotony that suggests the burned-out crater of an extinct volcano."

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE BOYERTOWN FIRE.

#### MORE THAN 170 KILLED IN TERRIBLE THEATRE FIRE.

A catastrophe horrifying in its details, which occurred on January 14, 1908, killed more than 170 women and children and injured nearly three score, many of them fatally. A majority of the dead were members of leading families of the town, the entertainment being given under the auspices of St. John's Lutheran church.

While the Scottish Reformation was being produced in Rhoades Opera House by Mrs. Monroe, of Washington, a tank used in a moving picture scene exploded. Immediately there was a wild rush for the exits of the building. Men endeavored to still the panic, but their voices could not be heard above the shrieks and screams of the terrified women and children, who composed the greater part of the audience.

The cries for help of those who were penned within the walls of the blazing structure could be heard above the roaring flames. It seemed as though the entire audience made a rush for the exits the moment the explosion occurred. In their attempt to quiet the great crowd, those on the stage accidentally upset the coal oil lamps used as the footlights. The burning oil scattered in all directions, and the lamps which were used to light the opera house exploded.

In the mad rush a section of the floor gave way, precipitating scores of persons to the basement. It was scarcely five minutes from the time of the explosion of the tank until the entire heart of the structure seemed a roaring furnace. There

was a scramble for the stairway leading from the balcony, and scores of women and children were knocked down and trampled upon, many of them doubtless being crushed to death.

At least fifty persons realizing that exits by the stairway meant almost certain death risked their lives by jumping from the windows. Limbs were broken and skulls were crushed by this daring method of escape.

In the meantime a relief corps was at work at the entrance to the theatre endeavoring to release those who were wedged in the doorway. Many persons who otherwise might have escaped from the furnace of flame were held in check by the jam at the doors. As the flames made their way toward the front of the building women were seen to clasp their hands and fall back into the flames.

#### **Victims' Faces mutilated.**

Once the doorways were cleared the rescuers dragged many women and children from the stairways leading to the balcony. Some of them were so badly injured that they died before reaching a temporary hospital. Skulls were crushed and the faces of some of the victims were so horribly mutilated that they were barely recognizable. In one instance the skull of a child apparently ten years of age was crushed almost to a jelly.

Until the ruins were searched there was no way of accurately estimating the dead and injured.

The theatre was still smoldering and frenzied parents refused to leave the scene despite the danger to their lives of falling walls. The fire apparatus of the town failed, and the flames were left to burn themselves out.

In many cases entire families were wiped out.

Scores of persons who were in the balcony jumped from the windows and sustained fractured limbs and skulls. It is almost certain not a vestige of the bodies of the dead will ever be found. Assistance was asked from Pottstown, but before the fire apparatus from that city reached this place the entire center of the structure was a roaring furnace.

Had the women and children heeded the warning of the cooler heads in the audience the horrible loss of life might have been avoided. The flames spread rapidly and communicated to the other parts of the theater. Men, women and children rushed from the exits and children were trampled upon and maimed.

#### **Mothers' Shrieks Pitiful.**

The shrieks of mothers who had rushed to the scene as soon as they learned of the fire was pitiful. As the night wore on the crowds surrounding the building grew to such proportions that it was almost impossible for the police force, which had been augmented by a score of men from Pottstown and Reading, to keep the people back. One woman who said she had lost her entire family in the theater was with difficulty restrained from throwing herself into the roaring flames.

A special train from Reading bearing physicians and nurses reached here, but there was little for them to do, as the injured who had dashed themselves to the pavement had been cared for by local physicians, assisted by the Pottsville relief corps. A few minutes after midnight the rear wall of the theater collapsed. The flames broke out anew and those who had vainly hoped to be able to find the bodies of their children turned away in despair.

It is estimated that at least seventy-five persons were injured by being trampled upon on the stairway or in jumping from the windows. Of this number at least a score were fatally injured; at least half a dozen succumbed to their injuries after being hurried to one of the temporary hospitals.

Three children, ranging in ages from eight to twelve years, and one woman, who were dragged from the building had been trampled almost to a pulp, the skull of one of the children had been crushed as though an egg shell.

Boyertown has a population of about 2,500 and is located about midway between Pottstown and Reading.

When nightfall put a stop to the work of recovering the dead from the ruins of the Rhoades Opera House, the scene of the disaster, the official roll of victims numbered more than 170.

### Women And Girls Die.

It is the belief of those who had charge of the work that all of the dead have been removed.

The ratio of women and girls to men and boys is about nine to one.

The bodies, dislodged by pickaxes, were so badly burned that it is said that not half the victims will be identified. By noon the rescuers became thoroughly exhausted, and for a time the work came almost to a standstill. The Philadelphia & Reading Railway Company sent two carloads of laborers and carpenters to the town, and then the bodies were removed at the rate of two every five minutes.

After the explosion and the fire caused by the oil footlights the audience made for the door. Those who did reach the front entrance found it jammed with people who were fighting

and shrieking to get out. One of the double doors had been bolted shut so as to better enable the tickettaker to take up tickets. Not more than two persons could pass this door at one time, and after the first half dozen got through the narrow passage it became clogged with a struggling mass of humanity.

### Flames Creep On People.

All this time the flames were creeping toward the mass of people, who were frantically shrieking and fighting to get out. The theatre was soon a furnace, and, to make the situation still more disheartening, some of the firemen indulged too deeply in liquor and became involved in fights. The State constabulary checked the row.

Bearing up bravely under the awful blow it received in the destruction of the Opera House by fire this borough came to a full realization of the fact that one-fifteenth of its population was wiped out of existence.

The scenes at the morgue were heartrending. Children of tender years were called upon to assist in making the identification of parents who went to death in the fire. Feeble men and women were racked with anguish as they came upon some distorted body in which they recognized the form of a lost son or daughter.

### Jury to View Bodies.

Before any of the bodies were removed from the morgue, Coroner Strasser empaneled a jury to view the bodies and the scene of the devastating fire and to sit at the inquest.

After the jury had been sworn in it made an inspection of the ruins and went through the morgues.



Coroner Strasser opened an office in the Mansion House and established a bureau of information where he granted death certificates and signed insurance papers. In this connection the representatives of scores of insurance companies were in Boyertown paying off claims as fast as they were presented.

#### **Overcome by Fumes.**

Building Inspector Heckman, of Reading, who made an inspection of the opera house, said:

"In my opinion, the people in the hall were overcome by the fumes from the tank used in connection with the tableau lights, and simply could not help themselves. A man told me that he reached in the doorway to assist a woman from the building and that he was nearly overcome by gas. He was not in the hall when the fire started."

#### **Awakes To Terror.**

Boyertown did not awake to the terrible results of the disaster until days afterward. The town was dazed and did not realize the enormity of the terrible calamity that had befallen it until several days afterward.

Then the people awoke, and when the dead were being carried to the cemeteries in the funeral cars, the grief came home, and when the bereaved ones went home to find children and wives no longer there, the full horror of the fire struck them.

It was then that hearts broke. Boyertown was in mourning, yes, and will be in mourning for years to come.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE SLOCUM DISASTER.

MORE THAN 1,000 WOMEN AND CHILDREN  
DROWNED OR BURNED TO DEATH.

Terrible beyond all description was the disaster of the "General Slocum," in the East River, New York, in which more than 1,000 women and children on a Sunday School excursion lost their lives.

It was a balmy summer day, the 15th of June, 1904, when the steamer left its dock, crowded with passengers from the St. Marks Lutheran Church, who were to picnic at Locust Grove, Long Island. It was a merry crowd of persons on board. There was music and merry making.

Suddenly as the boat passed Hell Gate, smoke was to be seen in the rear part of the boat. Nothing was thought of this at first, it being supposed that the smoke came from the engine rooms.

#### Flame Shoots Up.

A slender tongue of flame shot up from the back of the boat. There was an instant of breathless silence among those who saw the blaze, and then a terrified shriek of "fire."

It was fire, but no one knew how serious it was until later. Even the captain of the steamer, William Von Shaicks, thought that it did not amount to much and instead of trying to beach his boat kept on up the river towards North Brothers Island.

But the women and children became panic stricken. They rushed madly about the decks of the vessel, crying for aid. The boatmen opened the life preserver bins and told the people aboard to help themselves.

The flames gained rapidly, especially as the boat was under full speed, and swept over the vessel. Women screamed in desperation. The captain then tried to put in to shore, but it was too late. The hot breath of the flame was sweeping across the deck and the passengers, huddled in one part of the ship, were struggling to get as far away from it as possible.

The smoke choked them. The hot blaze was maddening. Many hurled themselves into the river, despite the efforts of the deck hands to keep them aboard.

Before the boat could be beached the flames had gained such headway that even those who kept their heads and had not leaped overboard before it was necessary, found that their only escape was in jumping into the water.

#### **Lead In Life Preservers.**

Those who had been able had secured life preservers. There was not nearly enough to go around. It would have been better if there had been none at all than those that were on the vessel, for it was afterward found that they contained lead on the inside or were otherwise useless.

Women maddened with fear of burning to death braved the horror of drowning and threw themselves overboard. Those who had children with them threw their babes overboard first and then leaped after them.

The scene on the boat was that of a mad house. More than 1,000 women and children ran about the deck and leaped and cried out in terror. The cries were maddening and only stirred the panic stricken ones to more direful action.

One woman fell on her knees and prayed to God to save the little ones.

"It matters not if we older ones perish," she cried, "but save the children."

But the children were not spared. They were consumed by the flames by the scores and yet other scores were drowned.

#### Leap Into Water.

Relying on the life preservers, women leaped into the river, many of them with babes in their arms. But they were ensnared by the cupidity of man. Instead of buoying them up, the life preservers bore them down.

Choking and struggling in the water, the women cried for aid. But there was none at hand to help them. There was a few seconds of agonizing fight against the waters and then the heads dropped below the surface of the river, to be seen no more until the grim and gastly corpses were washed ashore.

Tugs hurried to the scene of the disaster, the crews eager to help. But when the boats arrived there were few that could be aided. The great majority had been drowned in the river or had perished in the flames, through remaining on board the boat.

Many that could swim, however, were picked up from the river. These were mostly men.

#### Search River For Dead.

For days and days relatives of the dead searched the river banks for the corpses of their loved ones. Many were washed ashore, but there were still many that were never recovered. The anxious fathers and sisters and mothers surrounded every wharf in the East River awaiting the announcement that a body had been found. When one was found there were hundreds to view it, hoping that it might be a relative of theirs.

For days and days this was kept up, until all hope that any more bodies would be washed up to the docks was abandoned. Tugs searched the river for floaters, but finally even this search was given up.

### **Burying The Dead.**

It was then the time to bury their dead. Day after day New York was one vast funeral procession. The streets were lined with hearses. Finally it was over. The relatives had buried their dead or had given up hope of finding them.

Then began the investigation which ended in the chief official of the steamer being sentenced to prison. But there were many implicated that were responsible, that were never brought to justice. There were rotten life preservers on the boat. There were life preservers filled with lead.

Hundreds paid the penalty for their trust in the boat officials that they would be carried safely to their destination. They had planned on a day of pleasure. They found a day of horror and death.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### OTHER HOLOCAUSTS.

#### TERRIBLE CALAMITIES HAPPENING THROUGH FIRE AND PANIC.

Since the time that civilized man first met with fellow man to enjoy the work of the primitive playwright, humanity has paid a toll of human life for its amusement. Oftener than history tells the tiny flicker of a tongue of flame has thrown a gay, laughing audience into a wild, struggling mob, and instead of the curtain which would have been rung down on the comedy on the stage, a pall of black smoke covered the struggles of the living and dying.

Of all the theater disasters of history, none ever occurred in America equaling the loss of life in the Iroquois fire. Only two in the history of the civilized world surpass it. There have been fires accompanied by greater loss of life, but not among theater audiences.

#### **Many Children Killed.**

But the grand total of persons killed in theater holocausts is large and the saddest comment on this list is that most of the victims were from holiday audiences of women and children. Lehman's playhouse in St. Petersburg, Russia, was destroyed in Christmas week, 1836, and 700 persons lost their lives. The Ring theater, Vienna, Austria, was destroyed Dec. 8, 1881, and 875 persons lost their lives. These are the only theater holocausts whose deadliness surpasses that of the Iroquois.

To all have been the same accompaniments of panic, futile struggle and suffocation. In the last century with the intro-



duction of the modern style of playhouse, these fatal fires have increased. The annals of the stage are replete with dark pages that cause the tragedy of the mimic drama depicted behind the footlights to pale and shrivel into comparative nothingness.

Perhaps it is a fatal legacy from the time when civilized society gathered in its marble coliseums and amphitheaters to witness the mortal combat of human soldiers or the death struggles of Christians waging a vain battle against famished wild beasts. Whatever it may be, death has always stalked as the dread companion of the god of the muse and drama.

An English statistician published six years ago a list of fires at places of public entertainment in all countries in the preceding century. He showed that there had been 1,100 conflagrations, with 10,000 fatalities, and he apologized for the incompleteness of his figures. Another authority says that in the twelve years from 1876 to 1888 not less than 1,700 were killed in theater disasters in Brooklyn, Nice, Vienne, Paris, Exeter and Oporto, and that in every case nearly all the victims were dead within ten minutes from the time the smoke and flame from the stage reached the auditorium. As in the Iroquois fire, it was mainly in the balconies and galleries that death held its revels.

#### Havoc at Rome.

Fire wrought havoc at Rome in the Amphitheater in the year 14 B. C., and the Circus Maximus was similarly destroyed three times in the first century of the Christian era. Three other theaters were razed by flames in the same period, and Pompeii's was burned again almost two centuries later, but the exact loss of life is not recorded in either instance.

The Greek playhouses, built of stone in open spaces, were never endangered by fire.

No theaters were built on the modern plan until in the sixteenth century in France, and not until the seventeenth did any catastrophe worthy of record occur. When Shakespeare lived plays were generally produced in temporary structures, sometimes merely raised platforms in open squares, and it was after his time that scenic effects began to be amplified and the use of illuminants increased. Thus it was that dangers, both to players and auditors, were vastly increased.

In the Teatro Atarazanas, in Seville, Spain, many people were killed and injured at a fire in 1615. The first conflagration of this kind in England worth noting happened in 1672, when the Theater Royal, or Drury Lane, standing on the site of the playhouse in which "Mr. Bluebeard" was produced before it was brought to Chicago, was burned to the ground. Sixty other buildings were destroyed, but no loss of life is recorded.

#### 210 Lost Lives.

Two hundred and ten people lost their lives and the whole Castle of Amalienborg, in Copenhagen, was laid in ashes in 1689 from a rocket that ignited the scenery in the opera house. Eighteen persons perished at the theater in the Kaizergracht, Amsterdam, in 1772, and six years later the Teatro Colisseo, at Saragossa, Spain, went up in flames and seventy-seven lives were lost. The governor of the province was among the victims. Twenty players were suffocated in the burning of the Palais Royal in Paris in 1781.

In the nineteenth century there were twelve theater fires marked by great loss of life, and the first of these occurred in

the United States. At Richmond on the day after Christmas in 1811, a benefit performance of "Agnes and Raymond, or the Bleeding Nun," was being given, and the theater was filled with a wealthy and fashionable audience. The governor of Virginia, George W. Smith, ex-United States Senator Venable, and other prominent persons were in the audience and were numbered among the seventy victims. The last act was on when the careless hoisting of a stage chandelier with lighted candles set fire to the scenery. Most of those killed met death in the jam at the doors.

The Lehman Theater and circus in St. Peterburg was the scene of a fire in 1836, in which 800 people perished. A stage lamp hung high ignited the roof, a panic ensued, and there was such a mad rush that most of the people slew each other trying to get out. Those not trampled to death were incinerated by the fire that rapidly enveloped the temporary wooden building.

#### Lamp Upset.

A lighted lamp, upset in a wing, caused a stampede in the Royal Theater, Quebec, June 12, 1846, and 100 people were either burned or crushed into lifelessness. The exits were poor and the playhouse was built of combustible material. Less than a year later the Grand Ducal Theater at Carlsruhe, Baden, Germany, was destroyed by a fire, due to the careless lighting of the gas in the grand ducal box. Most of the 150 victims were suffocated. Between fifty and one hundred people met a fiery death in the Teatro degli Aquidotti at Leghorn, Italy, June 7, 1857. Fireworks were being used on the stage and a rocket set fire to the scenery.

One of the most serious fires from the standpoint of loss of

life was that in the Jesuit church of Santiago, South America, in 1863. Fire broke out in the building during service. A panic started and the efforts of the priests to calm the immense crowd and lead them quietly from the edifice were vain. The few doors became jammed with a struggling mass of men, women and children. The next day 2,000 bodies were taken from the church, most of them suffocated or trampled to death.

#### Brooklyn Theater Fire.

The Brooklyn theater fire was long memorable in this country. Songs, funeral marches and poems without number were written commemorating the sad event. Vastly different from the Iroquois horror, most of the victims of the Brooklyn theater were burned beyond recognition. At Greenwood cemetery in Brooklyn there now stands a marble shaft to the unidentified victims of the holocaust.

Kate Claxton was playing "The Two Orphans" at Conway's Theater in Brooklyn on the night of Dec. 5, 1876. In the last scene of the last act Miss Claxton, as Louise, the poor blind girl, had just lain down on her pallet of straw, when she saw above her in the flies a tiny flame. An actor of the name of Murdoch, on the stage with her, saw it about the same time, and was so excited that he began to stammer his lines. Miss Claxton tried to reassure him and partly succeeded.

#### Theater on Fire.

Then the audience realized that the theater was on fire, and a movement began. The star, with Mr. Murdoch and Mrs. Farren, joined hands, walked to the footlights and begged the audience to go out in an orderly manner. "You see, we are

between you and the fire," said Miss Claxton. The people were proceeding quietly, when a man's voice shouted, "It is time to be out of this," and every one seemed seized with a frenzy. The main-entrance doors opened inwardly, and there was such a jam that these could not be manipulated.

The crowds from the galleries rushed down the stairways and fell or jumped headlong into the struggling mass below. Of the 1,000 people in the theater 297 perished. They were either burned, suffocated or trampled to death. The actor Murdoch was one of the victims.

That same year, 1876, a panic resulted in the Chinese theater of San Francisco from a cry of fire. A lighted cigar which someone playfully dropped into a spectator's coat pocket caused a smell of burning wool. The audience became panic stricken and rushed madly for the exits. At the time there were about 900 Americans in the auditorium, and of this number one-quarter were seriously injured. The fire itself was of no consequence.

The destruction of the Ring theater at Vienna, Dec. 8, 1881, remains the greatest horror of the kind in the history of civilization. It was preceded on March 23 of the same year, by the burning of the Municipal theater in Nice, Italy, caused by an explosion of gas, and in which between 150 and 200 people perished miserably, but the magnitude of the Vienna holocaust made the world forget Nice for the time. The feast of the Immaculate Conception was being celebrated by the Viennese, and Offenbach's "Lees Contes d'Hoffman," an opera bouffe, was the play. The audience numbered 2,500.

Fire was suddenly observed in the scenery, and a wild panic started. An iron curtain, designed for just such emergencies, was forgotten, and the flames, which might thus have been

confined to the stage, spread furiously through the entire building. The scene was changed from light-hearted revelry, with gladsome music, to one of lurid horror.

The exits from the galleries were long and tortuous and quickly became choked. As in the Iroquois theater fire, those who had occupied the gallery seats were the ones who lost their lives. But few escaped from the galleries. The great majority of the spectators were burned beyond recognition by their nearest relatives. One hundred and fifty were so charred that they were buried in a common grave, and the city's mourning was shared by all the world.

The next fire of this nature to attract the world's attention and sympathy was the destruction of the Circus Ferroni at Berditscheff, Russian Poland. Four hundred and thirty people were killed and eighty mortally injured. Many children were crushed and suffocated in the jam, and horses and other trained animals perished by the score. This was on Jan. 13, 1883, and the origin of the conflagration was traced to a stableman who smoked a cigarette while lying in a heap of straw.

#### TWO GREAT PARISIAN HORRORS.

The burning of the Opera Comique in Paris, May 25, 1887, was a spectacular horror. Here again an iron curtain that would have protected the audience was not lowered. The first act of "Mignon" was on, when the scenery was observed to be ablaze. The upper galleries were transformed into infernos, in which men knocked other men and women down and trampled them in their eagerness to save themselves, while the flames reached out and enveloped them all.

Many of the actors and actresses escaped only in their cos-



tumes, and some rushed nude into the streets. The scenes in the thoroughfares where men and women in tights and ball dresses and men in gorgeous theatrical robes mingled with the naked, and the dead and dying were strewn about, made a picture fantastically terrible. The official list of the dead was seventy-five, but many others died from the fire's effects.

#### **Suffocated by Smoke.**

The theater at Exeter, England, burned Sept. 5, 1887, was ignited from gas lights, and so much smoke filled the edifice in a short time that nearly 200 were suffocated in their seats. They were found sitting there afterwards, just as though they were still watching the play. This was the eleventh, and the Oporto fire the twelfth of the big conflagrations of the country. One hundred and seventy dead were taken from the ruins of the Portuguese playhouse after the flames which destroyed it on the evening of March 31, 1888, had been subdued. Many sailors and marine soldiers in the galleries used knives to kill persons standing in their way, and scores of the victims were found with their throats cut.

Ten years after the Opera Comique fire occurred the greatest of all Parisian horrors, the destruction by flames of the Charity Bazaar, May 4, 1897. Members of the nobility, and even royalty, were among the victims. All of fashionable Paris were under the roof of a temporary wooden edifice known to visitors to the exposition of 1889 as "Old Paris." The annual bazaar in the interest of charity had always been one of the most imposing of the spring functions. The wealthy and distinguished, titled and modish were there in larger numbers than on any previous occasion.

The fire broke out with a suddenness that so dazed every-

one that the small chance of escape from the flimsy structure was made even less. Duchesses, marquises, countesses, baronesses, and grand dames joined in the mad rush for the exits. The men present are said to have acted in a particularly cowardly manner, knocking down and trampling upon women and children. The death list of more than 100 included the Duchesses d'Alencon and De St. Didier, the Marquis de Maison, and three barons, three baronesses, one count, eleven countesses, one general, five sisters of charity and one mother superior. The Duchess d'Alencon was the favorite sister of the Empress of Austria and had been a fiancee of the mad King Ludwig of Bavaria. The Duchess d'Uzes was badly burned. The shock of the news and the death of his niece, the Duchess d'Alencon, accounted for the death on May 7 of the Duc d'Aumale.

#### Fire Killed Thirty.

The Gaiety Theater in Milwaukee on November 5, 1869, furnished more than thirty victims to the fire fiend, but only two of these were burned to death. The Central Theater in Philadelphia was destroyed April 28, 1892, and six persons perished. A panic occurred at the Front Street playhouse in Baltimore, December 27, 1895, among an audience composed entirely of Polish Jews. There was no fire, but a woman who had seen a bright light on the stage thought there was, and her cries caused a stampede that resulted in twenty-four deaths.

Statisticians show that theaters as a rule do not attain an old age, but that their average life in all countries is but twenty-two and three-fourths years. In the United States the average is but eleven to thirteen years, and here almost a third

are destroyed before they have been built five years. More playhouses feed the flames just prior to and after than during performances, because of the added precautions of employes.

Two deadly conflagrations occurred in New York in 1900. The first the Windsor hotel fire, which resulted in the death of 80 persons. Fire broke out in the old hotel on Fifth avenue about midnight. With lightning rapidity the flames shot up the light and air shafts, filling the rooms with smoke and making them as light as day. The guests suddenly aroused from sleep became panic stricken. The fire department was unable to throw up ladders and give aid as fast as frightened faces appeared at the windows. The result was that many jumped to death. They were picked up dead and dying in the streets. Others ran from their rooms into the fire-swept hallways and were burned to death.

A short time later fire broke out one afternoon on the docks across the river from New York at Hoboken. The fire was on a pier piled high with combustible material. It burned like powder, spreading to the ocean liners tied to the pier and the efforts of the fire department were not effective in checking it. The cables which held the blazing vessels to the piers burned through and they drifted into the river, carrying fire and death among the shipping. Longshoremen unloading and loading the vessels jumped in panic into the river. Others found themselves cut off from both land and water by the flames on all sides and were burned like rats in a trap. It was estimated that 300 lives were lost. Many bodies were never recovered and others were found miles down the river.

Property losses are seldom proportionate to the financial losses from fire. In the Iroquois theater fire the property loss was almost inconsequential, while at the burning of Moscow

by the Russians, Sept. 4, 1812, the property loss amounted to more than \$150,000,000, while no lives were lost.

Constantinople, with its squalid and crowded streets, has always been a fruitful spot for fires. They are of annual occurrence and as the Turkish fire department is a travesty, are usually of considerable magnitude. The great fire of that city was in 1729, when 12,000 houses were destroyed and 7,000 persons burned to death. Aug. 12, 1782, a three days' fire started in which 10,000 houses, 50 corn mills and 100 mosques were burned and 100 lives lost. In February of the same year, 600 houses were burned, and in June 7,000 more. Fires are the best safeguards for Constantinople's health

Great Britain has had comparatively few fires. In 1598 one at Tiverton destroyed 400 houses and 33 lives. In 1854 50 persons were killed at Gateshead. The great fire of London raged from Sept. 2 to 6, 1666. It began in a wooden building in Pudding Lane and consumed the buildings on 436 acres, blotting out 400 streets, 13,200 houses, St. Paul's and 86 other churches, 58 halls and all public buildings, three of the city gates and four stone bridges. The property loss was \$53,652,500, while only six persons were killed.

Nearly every large city of the United States has had its great fire. That of Boston was on Nov. 9 and 10, 1872. Fire started at Summer and Kingston streets and 65 acres were burned over. The property loss was about \$75,000,000 and there was no loss of life.

The great fire in New York began in Merchant street, Dec. 16, 1835. No lives were lost, but the property loss was \$15,000,000 and 52 acres were devastated, 530 buildings being destroyed. Ten years later a much smaller fire in the same district caused the death of 35 persons.

July 9, 1850, thirty lives were lost in Philadelphia, and February 8, 1865, twenty persons were killed by another fire. Large fires in that city have almost invariably been accompanied by loss of life.

As the result of a Fourth of July celebration in 1866, nearly half of Portland, Md., was swept away by fire. The property loss was \$10,000,000, but there was no loss of life. In September and October of 1871 forest fires raged in Wisconsin and Michigan. An immense territory was swept over and more than 1,000 persons lost their lives.

The greatest fire of modern times was the one which started in Chicago, October 8, 1871. A strip through the heart of the city four miles long and a mile and a half wide, was burned over. The total loss was \$196,000,000 and 250 persons lost their lives. By the fire 17,450 buildings were destroyed and 98,860 persons were made homeless. Within four years the entire burned district had been rebuilt.

#### **More Lives Lost.**

Fires in Chicago attended with loss of life have been of increasing frequency in the past few years. Fire in the Henning & Speed building on Dearborn street, in 1900, caused four girls to lose their lives. Since it and before the Iroquois disaster have come: The St. Luke Sanitarium horror, 10 lives lost, 43 injured; the Doremus laundry explosion, 8 lives lost; the American Glucose Sugar refinery blaze, 8 killed; Northwestern railroad boiler explosion, 8 killed, Stock Yards boiler explosion, 18 killed, and about a year ago the Lincoln hotel fire, 14 visiting stockmen suffocated.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### JOHNSTOWN'S FATAL FLOOD.

NEARLY 2,300 PERISH IN DEADLY TRAP—DELUGE  
REBOUNDS AND FIRE COMES.

Previous to the year 1900 the Johnstown disaster was the most frightful calamity known in the history of the United States. It occurred on Friday, May 31, 1889, at 12:45 p. m. Johnstown was situated in the Conemaugh Valley in Pennsylvania. It was a town of 30,000 inhabitants. Above it in the mountains slept the waters of the Conemaugh Lake, a beautiful body of water three and a half miles long and one and a fourth miles wide, formed by building a dam across a deep gorge in the mountain.

With not even a warning shout to apprise the inhabitants the dam gave way, and that great mass of water came leaping and tumbling down the valley to Johnstown, and the city with its inhabitants was drowned in a flood of angry waters. When the deluge subsided where had stood the homes of so many happy toilers there were but twisted and shapeless piles of drift-wood and the bodies of the dead and dying.

#### Loss of Life Nearly 2,300.

From the lake to Johnstown in a straight line was but two and a half miles, but following the winding valley the waters had to cover thirteen miles before they struck the town. But the flood moved with such terrific speed that within a few minutes after the breaking of the dam nearly 2,300 men, women and children were lying dead in the wreckage of the city; millions of dollars' worth of property was destroyed, and thousands of people beggared.



Hundreds of business buildings and residences were destroyed, and less than a score of structures composing the town were uninjured; complete paralysis followed, and many said, as in the case of Galveston, the city would not be rebuilt; hundreds were crazed by their sufferings and never regained their reason; thieves swarmed to the place and looted the bodies of the dead until the arrival of several thousand State troops put an end to the carnival of crime; the impoverished survivors were cared for until they could get upon their feet again and relief pouring in from everywhere in the shape of hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash and thousands of carloads of supplies of all sorts, went to work.

On the other side of the town is the Stony Creek, which gathers up its own share of the mountain rains and whirls them along toward Pittsburg. The awful flood caused by the sudden outpouring of the contents of the reservoir, together with the torrents of rain that had already swollen these streams to triple their usual violence, is supposed to be the cause of the sudden submersion of Johnstown and the drowning of so many of its citizens. The water, unable to find its way rapidly enough through its usual channels, piled up in overwhelming masses, carrying before it everything that obstructed its onward rush upon the town.

#### People Had Been Warned.

The people of Johnstown had been warned of the impending flood as early as 1 o'clock in the afternoon, but not a person living near the reservoir knew that the dam had given way until the flood swept the houses off their foundations and tore the timbers apart. Escape from the torrent was impossible. The Pennsylvania railroad hastily made up trains

to get as many people away as possible, and thus saved many lives.

Four miles below the dam lay the town of South Fork, where the South Fork itself empties into the Conemaugh River. The town contained about 2,000 inhabitants, and four-fifths of it was swept away.

Four miles further down, on the Conemaugh River, which runs parallel with the main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad, was the town of Mineral Point. It had 800 inhabitants, 90 per cent of the houses being on a flat and close to the river. Few of them escaped.

Six miles further down was the town of Conemaugh, and here alone was there a topographical possibility of the spreading of the flood and the breaking of its force. It contained 2,500 inhabitants and was wholly devastated.

Woodvale, with 2,000 people, lay a mile below Conemaugh, in the flat, and one mile further down were Johnstown and its cluster of sister towns, Cambria City, Conemaugh borough, with a total population of 30,000.

On made ground, and stretching along right at the river verge, were the immense iron works of the Cambria Iron and Steel Company, which had \$5,000,000 invested in the plant.

#### **Flood Rebounds and Fire Comes.**

The gerat damage to Johnstown was largely due to the rebound of the flood after it had swept across. The wave spread against the stream of Stony Creek and passed over Kernsville to a depth of thirty feet in some places.

The exact number of the victims of this dreadful disaster will never be known. Bodies were found beyond Pittsburg. The loss of property was about \$10,000,000.

All was over in a few moments' time. The flood rushed down the valley when released from its prison, swept earth, trees, houses and human beings before it, depositing the vast debris in front of the railroad bridge, which formed an impassable barrier to the passage of everything except the vast agent of destruction—the flood—which overflowed it and passed on to wreak fresh vengeance below.

#### Gorge at the Railroad Bridge.

One of the most terrible sights was the gorge at the railroad bridge. This gorge consisted of debris of all kinds welded into an almost solid mass. Here were the charred timbers of houses and the charred and mutilated remains of human beings. The fire at this point, which lasted until June 3 and had still some of its vitality left on the fifth, was one of the incidents of the Johnstown disaster that has become historic.

When the great storm of Friday came the dam was again a source of uneasiness, and early in the morning the people of Johnstown were warned that the dam was weakening. At 1 o'clock in the afternoon the resistless flood tore away the huge lumber boom on Stony Creek. This was the real beginning of the end. The enormous mass of logs was hurled down upon the doomed town.

Had the logs passed a seven-arch bridge Johnstown might have been spared much of its horror. There were already dead and dying, and homes had already been swept away, but the dead could only be counted by dozens and not yet by thousands. Wedged fast at the bridge, the logs formed an impenetrable barrier. People had moved to the second floor of their houses and hoped that the flood might subside. There was no longer a chance to get away, and had they

known what was in store for them the contemplation of their fate would have been enough to make them stark mad.

Only a few hours had elapsed from the time of the breaking of the lumber boom when the waters of Conemaugh Lake rushed down upon them.

### River Flows Through The City.

The towering wall of water swooped down upon Johnstown with a force that carried everything before it. The blockade backed the water up into the town, and as there had to be an outlet somewhere the river made a new channel through the heart of the lower part of the city. Again and again did the flood hurl itself against the bridge, and each wave carried with it houses, furniture and human beings. The bridge stood firm, but the railway embankment gave way, and fifty people were carried down to their deaths in the new break.

It was now night, and darkness added to the terror of the situation. Then came flames to make the calamity all the more appalling. Hundreds of buildings had been piled up against the stone bridge. The inmates of but few of them had had time to escape. Just how many people were imprisoned in that mass of wreckage may never be known, but the number was estimated at between 1,000 and 2,000. The wreckage was piled to a height of fifty feet, and suddenly flames began leaping up from the summit

Shrieks and prayers from the unhappy beings imprisoned in the wrecked houses pierced the air, but little could be done. Men, women and children, held down by timbers, watched with indescribable agony the flames creep slowly toward them until the heat scorched their faces, and then they were slowly roasted to death.









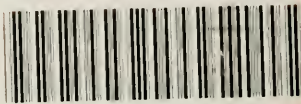








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