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APPALLING LOSS OF LIFE.

THE BURNING OF A FALL RIVER WOOLLEN MILL.

Seven Hundred Operatives Shut up in the Burning Building—Terror-Stricken Girls Unable to Make an Effort to Escape—Forty Persons Killed and Many Wounded.

FALL RIVER, Mass., Sept. 20.—Mills Nos. 1 and 2 of the Granite Works had been running about twenty minutes yesterday morning when the operatives in No. 1, which is the old mill, were startled with a cry of fire, and the escape of smoke from the fourth story. Next to the upper floor of this mill, which was the mule yarn spinning department, nearly 100 girls were at work under a male overseer. On the upper floor, the fifth, about thirty girls were employed spooling and warping cotton. These were the youngest of the operatives. With the alarm, the flames seemed to leap up to this attic, coming from the windows below, and, to the terror of all, up the great tower in the centre of the building in which were all the stairs communicating with each story. The fire caught, it is said, from a friction in the mule head, at once igniting the oil waste about it, and spreading rapidly by means of oil on the floor toward the centre tower, the only source of escape for those on the fourth and fifth stories, besides the four fire escapes, two on the sides of each gable end. As the flames swept over the flooring it instantly found substance in the wood work, and once getting into the tower ran up to and through the single entrance to the fifth story, then springing to the roof timbers and filling the two great rooms (450 by 90 feet) with dense black smoke and flame.

THE OPERATIVES WILD WITH TERROR.

While the flames were making such terrible headway the operatives became wild with terror. The overseers seeing at a glance that there was no way possible to check the fire called to them to save themselves, and pointed out ways to escape. These were principally fire-ladders, for the timid creatures dared not run the fire gauntlet of the tower. The overseer of the spooling room, who himself remained until he had no way to escape by the stairs, says the loss in his room cannot be depleted. Children ran about without any knowledge of what they were doing, crying and begging piteously to be saved, yet wrenching themselves away when taken forcibly and carried to the only avenues of escape, the tower and the roof ladders. As the fire fright led them from their deliberations at the foot of the roof ladders, they ran to the windows at the south gable end. But they were nearly sixty feet from the ground, and careful men, women and children rows were put out for them to slide down by, and some took this means, but in the effort several met with death or injury; for no sooner would a rope be lowered than there was a rush for it from the story below, and so many would take hold that it would break and all clinging to it would come down in a bunch.

LEAPING FROM THE WINDOWS.

While such scenes were being enacted here similar ones were going on in the mule spinning room. The flames had leaped to the entrance of the tower on the fourth floor, thereby cutting off this means of escape, but the operatives took the ladders of the south gable end before them, and were urged to by the overseers and citizens below to take them. Some did, but others rushed madly upon the balcony and dropped or threw themselves from the guards, hardly looking at the iron ladders. There was amidst these scenes, if it can be have been saved that the right course been pursued, and it was not for want of direction that the girls lost their lives. The Superintendent, as soon as the alarm was given, hurried to the upper story, and, with the overseer, did all that was possible to save life, and when the means provided for escape in the construction of the mill were rendered unavailable by the heat, flames, and smoke, the people on the ground procured beds and mattresses for the poor unfortunates to jump upon. Many threw themselves from the windows, but, in almost every case, received fatal or terrible injuries, for the distance was nearly fifty feet.

THE HEROIC FIREMEN.

The streets were filled with people, and their cries and acts did not help greatly to compose the mill hands, but the disciplined firemen and policemen as soon as they arrived in sufficient number worked with a will and to advantage. The firemen in every way worked to stop the spread of the fire, and especially to keep it out of the south end, whither the operatives had fled. Ladders as long as they had at command were used in this end, and in efforts to rescue the girls. Some brave acts were performed, and it is said that several firemen—the number is given as four—gave their lives in this humane endeavor. One was lowered from the roof by his companions