

Carleton Sentinel Supplement, June 8th, 1889.

AWFUL DESTRUCTION OF LIFE AND PROPERTY

By the bursting of a dam and overflow of streams in Pennsylvania last week, the result being precipitated by a water burst and heavy rains; several sections of that state have been inundated, towns and cities destroyed, and thousands of lives destroyed.

The accounts are most appalling, the destruction by water being supplemented by the ravages of fire.

One account, June 1st, which, however, only refers to a few of the many places overwhelmed, says:—

DERRY, Pa., June 1.—The flood of death which swept down the Alleghany Mountains yesterday afternoon and overwhelmed almost the entire city of Johnstown, was the most appalling catastrophe that has ever afflicted this state. The disaster overtook Johnstown about 6 o'clock in the evening. As the train bearing special correspondents passed eastward reports at each stop grew more appalling. At Derry a group of railway officials were gathered who had come from Bolivar, the end of the passable portion of the road westward. They had seen but a small portion of the awful flood, but enough to allow them to imagine the rest. The water was rising when the men left, at six o'clock, at the rate of five feet an hour. Clinging to the improvised rafts, boards and timbers rushing down the valley were agonized men, women and children, vainly shrieking for help and carried along at railway speed on the breast of the rushing torrent, from which no human ingenuity could devise means of rescue. With pallid cheek and hair clinging wet and damp to her cheek a mother was grasping flailing timber, while in her other arm she held her babe, already drowned. With a death grasp on a plank a strong man just giving up hope cast an imploring look to those on the bank; an instant later he sinks into the waves. The cries of the drowning rang above the roaring waves.

At Bolivar the greatest excitement prevailed. People were out all the time endeavoring to save the unfortunate beings hurled into eternity on the rushing torrent. A tidal wave struck Bolivar just after dark and in five minutes the Conemaugh rose from six to forty feet and the waters spread out over the whole country. Soon houses began flailing down and clinging to the debris were men, women and children, shrieking for aid. A large number of citizens at once gathered on the bridge and were reinforced by a number from Garfield on the opposite bank of the river. They brought ropes which were thrown into the boiling waters as the persons drifted by in efforts to save some lives, but only one small boy named Hessler was rescued. He was from Cambria City, where with his father he was visiting his grandfather named Kintz. There were four men and three women besides several small children, the boy's father and himself. Shortly after 5 o'clock the noise of roaring waters and the screams of people were heard. He looked out the door and saw persons running. He soon saw houses being swept away, and ran to the floor above. The boy was forced through the roof on a bed and was soon flailing down stream. After being freed from the house he did not see his father and grandfather were on the tree, but they must have been drowned. All along the line people were trying to save them, but they could do nothing. This boy's story is but one incident and shows what happened to but one family. What has happened to hundreds who were in the path of the rushing water is unknown, as it is impossible thus far to get anything in the way of definite news, save meagre details.

A man and two women were drowned in eight of the Bolivar station after a heroic struggle with the torrent. All night long a crowd stood about the ruins of the bridge which was swept away at Bolivar. The waters rushed past with a roar, carrying parts of houses, furniture and trees. Watchers with lanterns remained along the banks until daybreak, when the first view of the awful devastation of the flood was witnessed. Along the banks lay remnants of what had once been dwelling houses and stores, uprooted; piles of drift lay about, in some of which the bodies of the victims of the flood will be found.

New Florence—Bulletin—W. N. Hayes has just returned from Johnstown. He says the place is annihilated. Conemaugh is wrecked and Cambria City swept away. Fully 1,200 lives have been lost.

NEW FLORENCE, Pa., June 1.—The associated Press correspondent has arrived in New Florence, six miles nearer to Johnstown and along the scene of the awful disaster. The roadbed between here and Bolivar is washed out in many places. Trackmen and wrecking crews were working all night in the most dangerous portions of the road. Accounts at this point substantiate the wildest reports that have yet gone out. The last man from Johnstown brings information that scarcely a house remains in the city. The upper portion above the railroad bridge has been completely submerged. The water dammed up against the viaduct, wreckage and debris finishing the work that the torrent had failed to accomplish. A family consisting of father, mother and nine children were washed away in the creek at Lookport. After night settled down upon the mountains the horror of the scenes was enhanced. Above the roar of water could be heard cries of the unfortunates as they were carried by. A brilliant illumination lit up the sky which was plainly visible from this place. A message from Sanghollow says this light came from hundreds of burning wrecks of houses that are piled upon Johnstown bridge. A supervisor from up the road brings information that the wreckage at Johnstown is piled up forty feet above the bridge.

The startling news also comes in that more than a thousand lives have been lost. This cannot be substantiated, but it is known by actual count that 110 people were seen flailing past Sanghollow. Before dark forty-seven were counted passing.

NEW FLORENCE, June 1.—This will give some idea of the terrible fatality. Darkness coming on stopped any further count, and it was only by the agonizing cries that rang out above the waters that it was known human beings were being carried to death. Scenes along the river are wild in the extreme.

PITTSBURG, Pa., June 1.—It was stated at the office of the Pennsylvania railroad at an early hour this morning that the deaths would run up into a thousand rather than hundreds, as was first supposed. From private despatches received it is said that the stream of human beings that was swept before the angry floods was something painful to behold. Men, women and children were carried along, frantically shrieking for help, but rescue was impossible. The dammed basin contained water measuring two miles in width by five miles in length and was 700 feet deep. The people of Johnstown were warned of the possibility of it bursting during the morning, but very few, if any of the inhabitants, took the warning seriously. Shortly after noon the dam gave way about two miles above Johnstown and sweeping everything before it burst upon the town with terrible force; everything was carried before it and not a moment's time was given to seek safety. A despatch says that there is a blockade of the debris at Johnstown bridge, three quarters of a mile long and forty feet high and all on fire.

JOHNSTOWN, Pa., June 2.—The situation here, has not changed and yesterday's estimates of the loss of life are not exaggerated. Six hundred bodies are now lying in Johnstown and a large number have already been buried. Four immense relief trains arrived last night and the survivors are now being well cared for. A portion of the police forces of Pittsburg and Allegheny are on duty. Communication has been restored between Cambria City and Johnstown, and the repairing of tracks between Sanghollow and Johnstown is going on rapidly so that trains will probably be running to-morrow.

There were over 1,500 strangers here, and on a tour of West Bank, for two miles, not over a hundred bodies can be seen where a mass of strangers walked back and forth. Only a few residents in the vicinity have seen this, and it leads to the belief that hundreds, perhaps thousands, are buried in the mud and debris, burned in the furnace at Stone bridge or lodged further down than the searchers have yet gone. A fresh corpse is dug up every few hours, though no thorough search in the mud and debris has yet commenced. The odor from the ashes on the

river bank indicates that of a charnel house. The work of getting bodies together for easy identification began this afternoon at five o'clock. A large vacant lot was almost entirely covered with coffins while between them, stooping over, were weeping men and women. Many bodies have not been identified. From the wreck of St. Mary's German Catholic church to St. Columbias Catholic church, half a mile below, the streets are filled with broken houses and the people in those which were left standing were busily shovelling mud from the first floors to-day. In St. Columbias church, 40 or 50 bodies were laid in a row, and among them were five children from two to six years old. Not one has been identified. A number of bodies lie in the fourth ward schoolhouse and some are still unidentified. Men are busy at work in the lower Catholic cemetery, and the Grand View Protestant cemetery, this afternoon, digging trenches. The bodies were exposed when the waters began falling and are in a bad condition. Some have already been interred. Since the waters have receded there is great danger from falling walls, and all day long crashing walls are heard across the river. Where the Episcopal church is now placed the Lake parsonage was swept away and the rector drowned. James M. Walters, an attorney, was at home with his family when the water struck his house, sweeping it away. His family drifted on the roof in another direction and he passed down several streets and allies until he came to Alma hall, when his dwelling struck that edifice and he was thrown into his own office on the second floor. About 200 persons had taken refuge in the Hall on the second, third and fourth stories and spent the night there in darkness. The scenes were agonizing and heart-rending shrieks, sobs and moans pierced the gloomy darkness. No one slept and many knelt for hours in prayer, supplications mingling with the roars of the waters and the shrieks of the dying in surrounding houses. In all this misery two women gave premature birth to children. Dr. Matthews, although several of his ribs were crushed by falling timbers, and his pains were most severe, attended to the sick. A woman and some children died on the succeeding day as the result of their terrible suffering and fatigue. All Walters' family were saved. One dispensary has treated 300 patients to-day. Among the patients were many who have fractured skulls, nearly all have broken bones and several amputations were necessary. About 76 bodies have been taken out at Karnsville, and 85 above the Silk works. Chief Evans, of the Pittsburg fire department, arrived this evening with engines and several hose cars with their full complement of men. Several Pittsburg physicians came on the same train. Four thieves were caught rifling the dead bodies this afternoon and were driven into the river and drowned. Two others were lynched.

James McMillan, vice-president of the Cambria iron works, has said that he cannot even estimate the loss to his company. The upper mill was totally wrecked; the lower mill is damaged, and all the machinery and all the buildings have been rendered useless. The mills will be rebuilt. The Gate wire works are completely destroyed, but will be rebuilt immediately. The mills were owned and operated by the Cambria Iron Co. The land on which the works stood are to-day barren and desolate.

The Cambria Iron Co. loses its great supplies and stores, and the damage to stock alone amounts to \$50,000, while the building, valued at \$150,000, is a total loss. The company's offices are almost totally destroyed. The losses to the works are estimated at from \$2,000,000 to \$2,500,000.

LONDON, June 3.—The *News*, discussing the danger of artificial lakes, says: "America, where everything is on a scale of vastness which we cannot experience, seems destined to suffer the calamities of civilization as it exhibits its triumphs on the most colossal scale. The sympathy of the whole civilized world will be with the people of Pennsylvania in the saddest, most striking and most overwhelming misfortune that ever befell a people of the English race." The other morning dailies refer to the disaster in a similar strain.

JOHNSTOWN, Pa., June 3.—It is not a hackneyed utterance to say that no pen can

adequately depict the horrors of this twin disaster—holocaust and deluge. This morning opens up dark and dreary. Great drops of rain fell occasionally, and another storm seems imminent. Everyone, however, feels relieved that the weather still remains cool, and that the putrefaction of hundreds of bodies that still line the streams and lie under miles of driftwood and debris is not unduly hastened. This morning the peculiar stench of decaying human flesh is plainly perceptible to the senses as one ascends the bank of Stony Creek for half a mile along the smouldering ruins of the wreck, and the most sceptical now conceive the worst and realize that perhaps thousands of bodies lie charred and blackened beneath this great funeral pyre. Searchers wander wearily over this smoking mass, and as occasionally suddenly a shout comes over the waters the patient watchers on the hill realize that another ghastly discovery has been added to that long list of revelations that chill every heart and draw tears to every eye. From the banks many charred remains are plainly visible; the receding waters reluctantly give up their dead. Beneath almost every log or beam a skull or blanched remnant of rib or limb is found. Since 10 o'clock last night the fire engines have been constantly playing on the burning ruins. The chief sensation of the morning has been the united remonstrance of physicians against the extinguishment of the burning wreck. They maintain, with philosophy that to anxious searchers seems heartless, that hundreds, if not thousands, of lifeless and decaying bodies lie beneath this mass of burning ruins. It would be better, they say, to permit nature's greatest scavenger, the flames, to pursue its work unmolested than to expose the horde of putrefying bodies that lie beneath this debris. Days will elapse before the rubbish can be sufficiently removed to permit the recovery of these bodies, and long ere that every corpse will have become a putrid mass. The stench that already arises is a fore-runner of the impending danger. The warnings of science were lost in the eager demands of those who sought the remains of near and dear. The hose was again turned upon the hissing mass and rapidly the flames yielded. It is almost impossible to conceive the extent of these smoking ruins. An area of eight or ten acres above the dam is covered to a depth of forty feet, with shattered houses, borne from the resident centre of Johnstown, and in each of these houses it is estimated there were from one to twenty or twenty-five people. This is accepted as data upon which to estimate the number that perished on this spot, and if the data be correct the bodies that lie beneath the rains must run well up into thousands. Adjutant-General Hastings, who has charge of everything, stated this morning that he supposed there were at least 2,000 people under the burning debris and anywhere from 400 to 800 lost.

Mrs. Ogle, the Western Union Telegraph manager who died at her post, will go down to history as a heroine. Notwithstanding repeated notifications she received to get out of reach of approaching danger, she stood by the instrument with unflinching loyalty and undaunted courage, sending words of warning to those in danger in the valley below. When every station in the path of the coming torrent had been warned she wired her companion at South Fork, "This is my last message," and that very moment the torrent engulfed her and bore her from her post on earth to her post of honor in the great beyond. The most destruction in a single house occurred at the Hurlbut hotel. There were fifty-seven people in the house when the torrent came down and of these only ten are living.

MOUNT CARMEL, Pa., June 3.—The terrible floods of the past few days will cause the indefinite suspension of ten large mines in this valley, employing 6,000 hands. This will add more to the sufferings of the death-stricken valley. Nearly all of the pumps are now under water, which is sill pouring into the mines. It is reported a large number of miners were drowned in the mines before help could reach them or they could get to places of safety.

BALTIMORE, June 3.—The Chesapeake and Ohio canal, from Cumberland, Md., to Georgetown, D. C., has been utterly destroyed by floods. The canal is 184 miles long