

THE DAY OF DOOM!

ST. LOUIS, May 28.—Two hundred lives snuffed out in this city and as many more in East St. Louis, property destroyed in value running up into millions, is the record made by the 27th day of May, 1896. This is a conservative estimate.

No possible idea of the number of people killed in the tornado that swept this vicinity yesterday afternoon can be made at this time. South St. Louis is littered with the bodies of the dead. East St. Louis is a gigantic cemetery. Under the debris of the buildings of that city are scores buried, whose bodies will not be brought to the light for many days, perhaps never. It was the most disastrous storm from every point of view in the history of the Southwest. The storm did little damage in the business and northern portions of the city, save along the river front, where the damage cannot be estimated; nor will it ever be known just how many gave up their lives in the waters of the Mississippi when the tornado came down and tore all the boats in the harbor from their moorings. The channel is full of wreckage. In South St. Louis the storm spent its force. All the way from Papin street to Carondelet it put a stamp on the face of the city that will not be effaced for years. Big, strong buildings fell before the wind like houses made of cards. From where it entered the city, out in the southwestern suburbs, to where it left, somewhere near the Eads bridge, there is a wide path of ruin. Factory after factory went down and piles of brick and timbers mark the places on which they stood. Dwellings were picked up and thrown in every direction. Business houses were flattened. There was no chance for the escape of the occupants. The ruins covered bruised and mangled bodies that will not be uncovered until a systematic search is made. Thousands of families in South St. Louis are homeless, practically, and the temporary hospitals shelter scores and hundreds.

Early in the storm the plant of the Le Clede Gas company, at Fourteenth and Poplar streets, was destroyed and a large portion of the central portion of the city was cut off from its gas supply. This affected the newspaper offices severely. In the Republic office no gas could be obtained to heat the metal on the linotype machines and the typesetting was done on machines in which the metal was melted by blow lamps. This accounts for the twisted condition of the typographical department of the Republic this morning and also for its limited size. The Scullin line will be crippled for weeks because of the blowing down of the power house on Greyer avenue. Wires are down all over the city. Liggett & Myers big factory in Compton Heights is in ruins and many were killed and injured in the wreck. Elevators were blown down, boats were sunk and churches and school houses were demolished.

After the wind and rain had done its work, fire added to the destruction. Retzel's mill was the first to become ignited and it was totally destroyed at a loss of \$150,000.

Harrie Barrett factory, nearly fifty

loaded cars in the terminal yards, Lynch's boarding house, Herd's feed store, Lee's blacksmith shop and other smaller places were burned. The destruction of the water works early in the storm cut off the water supply and Chief Parry and his men fought the fire with a bucket brigade as best they could. The whole central portion of the city was threatened by the burning mill, but all hands worked with such a will that its further spread was prevented. The fire caused consternation.

When the first evidence of the approaching storm began to appear, every engineer on the river got up full steam in order to be able to combat the elements. Had it been anything but a tornado it is probable this would have aided the crews of the steamers in saving their craft. But the onslaught was so violent that the crews found their efforts only sufficient to aid them slightly in directing the course of their boats. The steamer Pittsburg, of the Diamond Joe line, the steamer City of Vicksburg and the Providence of the Columbian Exposition company; the Captain Monroe, of the Anchor line, and many of the smaller craft were pitched and tossed about until the final blast rent them from their anchorage. The storm swept diagonally across the river and struck the Illinois bank with increased fury. The loss of life in the water on the east side seems to be light, as everybody was cautioned not to jump and everybody was carried safely to land. The City of Vicksburg is almost a total wreck. The City of Providence was blown up on the Illinois bank. Her rudder, cabin and smoke stack are gone. The St. Louis and St. Paul packet company's steamer St. Paul had started for Keokuk when the tornado struck the city. She has not been heard from since. She had a full cabin list. The Belle of Calhoun, and the Libbie Condon which were moored near Chouteau avenue, were almost totally broken up. The Ellen G. Smith, the harbor boat, was blown away down the river and was wrecked near Arsenal Island. It is thought no lives were lost on this boat. The steamer Ed. Harvester, of the Missouri Valley Transportation company was also torn from its dock and carried down the river. Many heroic acts were performed in the saving of lives as a result of the storm. When the City of Monroe had listed away from the anchor-line wharf there were about forty passengers on board and a full crew, as the boat was just making ready for the trip to New Orleans. When the moorings finally gave way the boat lurched over on its starboard side and nearly capsized. The movement threw nearly all the freight to the starboard side and served to hold the boat in its perilous position. Captain Viegler made a reassuring speech to the passengers, which slightly quieted the extreme excitement. He said they were all safe. When the boat struck the Illinois bank the captain was not to be found. A tug had a marvelous escape from drowning when the boat was blown from its moorings at the foot of Washington avenue. On board were three men and two women, the latter Jennie Miller, cook, and Emma

Nolan, chambermaid. When the storm broke the men were on deck and the women below. The mate saw that the storm was to be a hard one and began to ring the alarm bell. Then the steamer Dragon, which left its moorings, was blown out into the stream. At the same moment the Dolphin's ropes parted and the tug began to ship water. The wind blew her against the bridge. While this was going on the women and the men on the boat climbed to the upper decks. When the boat struck the bridge those on board had to dodge to escape the iron work of the structure. The mate saw there was no hope if they stayed on board. Jennie Miller was the first to climb on the iron work. She was assisted by two of the men while the mate stayed on deck to help Emma Nolan. As she swung herself to the beams the boat drifted away and sank before the eyes of the horrified crew. Slowly with the wind blowing with a force that caused the big structure to rock like a cradle, the three brave men assisted the women on the laborious climb to the roadway. Several times they were nearly blown off. They finally reached the railroad track on the bridge where they lay down until the full force of the storm was passed. They then crawled to the Washington avenue station.

The St. Louis Refrigerator and Wooden Gutler company's entire plant on Main and Park street was destroyed. The plant consisted of a four-story factory, a four-story warehouse, a bicycle factory and several smaller buildings. When the cyclone struck the plant there were at work between 400 and 500 men and women. The top stories of the warehouses and factory were blown off. Fortunately there were only a few people on the top floor and all but two are thought to have escaped with slight injuries. One of the employees was seen shortly after the crash, and he was positive that at least two of his fellow workmen had been buried in the ruins. Fire broke out in the warehouse just after the top floor was destroyed. The panic-stricken employees rushed pell mell from the buildings, leaving many disabled behind them.

To add to the horror, hundreds of pieces of heavy lumber from adjoining lumber yards came flying through the air and forced many back into the blazing buildings. Alarms were sent in from all the fire alarm boxes in the neighborhood, but the wires were already useless. Chief Swingley happened to be crossing the Fourteenth street bridge at the time and saw the blaze. He drove to the nearest engine house and piloted the apparatus to the fire. By the time the engine arrived the warehouse was a mass of flames and the fire had already spread to the factory across the alley. The ground for blocks around was covered with lumber and brick, and the fire plugs near the business buildings were under masses of debris.

It was some time before water could be secured and much difficulty was experienced in dragging the hose to the building. The chief hurried off after more apparatus and succeeded in getting several companies to the fire. It was seen that the entire plant was doomed so the main efforts of the department were directed toward pre-