

and oppressive, and it was almost as dark as night.

Directly on one side of the track of the Reading Railway was situated the paint shop of the company. It was a one-storey building, about 60x150 feet, and held about thirty men, employed in painting passenger cars. There were eight or nine of these cars in the building. They had been built at the cost of \$3000 each. The building was struck squarely in the middle, and the bricks scattered about as if they were playthings, the cars turned topsy-turvy, while the men were buried under the debris. The chamber of each passenger car was already filled with gas, as they were ready to be taken out on the road in a few days. They exploded one after another. "Bang! bang!" resounded over the city, causing the people to run out of their houses, thinking it was the sound of an earthquake. There was a considerable quantity of gasoline in the building, and this added fuel to the flames. A sheet of flame shot upward with a roar as of musketry. Some twenty of the men had a chance to crawl out of the debris, but four of their companions were enveloped in the embrace of the flames. Their cries were heard for a moment by the terrified workmen, and their voices were hushed for ever. They were quickly roasted to death.

The fire from the nine passenger cars lit up the heavens for a mile around. It was a beautiful sight, and could have been enjoyed, but for the awful calamity which accompanied it. In the meantime, the fire department was out, but its services were unavailing. The building and cars were consumed in fifteen minutes, and nothing was left but blackened, smoking ruins under which lay four human beings burned to a crisp.

While this was going on, the storm was traveling onward with fearful rapidity. It must have traveled at the rate of 100 miles an hour. It sucked in some fine private houses and unroofed some dozen private residences. Huge sheets of tin were carried half a block away, and deposited in a lump in the street. Directly in its path at the corner of Twelfth and Marion streets stood the Reading silk mill. Here about 275 girls were working. The building was a huge structure, most substantially built, four stories high and basement; besides it occupied an entire block of ground. The size of the building itself was nearly

300 feet in length and about 150 feet wide. It was surmounted by a massive tower fully 100 feet from the ground. The funnel-shaped storm cloud struck the building directly in the center on the broad side which faced to the west. It fell to pieces as if composed of so many blocks. Nearly 200 people were down in the awful wreck. The walls gave way, the floors fell down, one on top of another, and carried their great mass of human beings to the bottom. Bricks were piled up in the greatest confusion, while amid the hurricane of the whistling, rushing, roaring wind terrible cries for succor were sent up to heaven. It was a moment that tried men's souls, and almost simultaneously with the fall of the building came cries for relief. Girls with blackened faces, bruised and broken limbs, their clothing tattered and torn, dragged themselves from the ruins; 75 to 100 escaped or were dragged out by their friends. These, of course, worked on the upper floors, and were thrown near the top of the debris. In some places the bricks were piled up 20 feet deep, and underneath are lying tonight human bodies by the score. About 250 girls and young women are usually employed in the mill, but at 4 o'clock 80 were relieved from duty for the day. They returned to their homes before the storm came. The most reliable estimate tonight places the number in the building when it went down in the neighborhood at 175, and as before stated 100 of these were rescued by friends or dragged themselves out immediately after the accident. An alarm for relief was immediately sent out, and in a short time thousands of citizens arrived to help out the dead and dying. The scene was a harrowing one and beggars description. The mill is situated near the foot of Mount Penn, a high mountain overlooking the city. When the people arrived everything was enveloped in darkness. Then huge bonfires were built which cast a dismal glare on the surrounding scene. The entire police force was called out. The ambulance and relief corps and thousands of people were in among the debris carrying out bricks, pulling away timbers, and assisting wherever they could, all at the same time. But their work was slow compared with the demand for the rescue of the victims of the disaster. Here a young woman was taken out all bruised and suffering from cuts and bruises. One body it was no-

ticed as it was dragged out had its head cut off. Others were in various positions. The living were all suffering from the most terrible wounds, and some were almost scared to death.

The Associated Press representative entered what was once the basement of the building, and groping his way through the debris noticed the bodies of five young girls lying side by side. He tried to pull them out, but they were pinned down, and it was impossible to get them out. They were dead and beyond all human aid. Up to 10:30 o'clock probably the bodies of a dozen dead have been taken out, while the greater portion of the remainder were still under the ruins. The managers are missing and the correct number is merely guess work. It may not be over forty, and then again there is a likelihood that it will reach sixty or eighty.

Augustus Roschp was foreman of the first and second floors of the silk mill. A reporter interviewed him, and his statement is as follows:

"It was about 5:10 o'clock when I went in the second storey to turn on the electric lights. After I had done that I stood looking about the room for about ten minutes. Suddenly I heard a loud rustling noise which I thought was a cyclone. The building then shook. I was standing in the southern end of the room, and before I could go back to the window I felt the building sinking. Quick as lightning the portion of the room I went in went down. The girls rushed about me crying and screaming and calling for help. They did not realize what was taking place. It seemed to me as if the centre of the building was struck first. I cannot describe the scene. It was awful. I could not do anything, and could not think of anything I should do. One end of the building went down first, and while the floor was sinking, it seemed to me as if the girls in the other part of the room were on top of a hill. That was the way it impressed the men while we were going down. I saw other portions of the floor fall. In a minute all was over. The screaming of the girls was heartrending. I was knocked down under heavy timbers and held fast by my foot. I could move every other part of my body except my leg. I reached down with my knife and cut the shoe off my foot. In this way I became loosened and managed to rise. Amid the screams of girls, falling beams and bricks, I succeeded in escaping. I got out of the ruins on the eastern side of the buildings, but how I do not know. I called to the girls as loudly as I could. They were all terribly excited, and I never witnessed anything so awful in my life. Many of them heard me and worked themselves towards me. At some places