

Sheffield's Great Fire The Situation Today No News of the Missing Assistant

The dull grey light of this morning nosing disclosed to view a scene of utter desolation and ruin. All through the night firemen had been at work playing upon the smouldering heap which still call for close attention. In wild confusion lie huge masses of debris, spreading over the interior of what a few hours ago was one of the most stately and, ornamental buildings in the city, but is now merely skeleton walls and tottering masonry piled up in fantastic heaps, while over all float clouds of steamy vapour whose density occasionally hides almost everything from the spectators ken. The fire brigade have had a busy time since, the outbreak occurred, and they were not able to cease their efforts during the night. Together with them the Corporation workmen have been hard at work removing the broken masonry, woodwork, and rubbish which had fallen from the burning building and lay strewn all along Angel street and Castle street, and this has been conveyed on heavy trolleys and deposited where it can be kept until use is found for it. This part of the work has been accomplished with excellent despatch, and at the present time the thoroughfares have practically been cleared. Supt. Pound has been directing the work of his men, and the City Surveyor (Mr, C. F. Wike) has been superintending the labours of his subordinates. The most important part of -the operations now being conducted is the taking down of a tall double wall which stands at right angles to Castle street, between Messrs. Hovey's premises and the adjoining property. This immense pile, which rears up into the air for fully 70 feet, is surmounted by a chimney stack, and since early yesterday morning it has been a standing menace to the safety of the workmen underneath and the residents in the opposite establishments in Castle street. Attention is now being given to devising a scheme for removing this huge, obstacle, and early this morning Mr. Wike with several of his men , commenced working with this object. The services of Mr. W. G. Harrison, steeplejack, have been requisitioned, and he has decided to erect a temporary scaffolding of ladders and pull the wall down piecemeal, which will take several hours to accomplish.

With regard to Victor Parsons, the missing assistant, no tidings have yet been received, and hope has been abandoned. Nothing has yet been done in .the direction of searching for traces of him among the ruins, it being impossible to do this until the dangerous wall is removed.

The Missing Assistant

There appears now to be little doubt that the young man Victor Parsons has fallen a victim to the fire which raged yesterday. When it was reported that all the assistants; had escaped there was a general feeling of relief, and many marvelled at the fact that in so great a fire there should be no loss of life. It was late in the morning before the rumour spread that one assistant had been killed. For a long time the story was generally disbelieved, definite information as to the young man's movements being wanting. Inquiries amongst the assistants, however, threw considerable light on the subject. Parsons appears to have undoubtedly left Messrs. Hovey and Sons' premises very soon after the alarm was given. In getting into the passage leading into Angel street it was found that flames were coming out of the building at this point, and also that the smoke was becoming denser every minute. Parsons and two other -assistants, named

Hickson and Sanders, conceived the idea that means of escape for the remainder of the assistants might better be secured if the door in Castle street, leading into the Mantle department, was opened. With some policemen; they quickly proceeded into the street named, and within a few seconds broke open the door. Entering the building the party found that it was impossible to go far. Fire and smoke almost surrounded them, and they felt that the better plan would be to beat a hasty retreat. This was done by all apparently except Parsons. The latter, although only 18 years of age, was of a very determined disposition, and his courage seems to have overcome his discretion. Whether he knew the rest of the party had returned into the street or not is not known, but doubtless he went further towards the staircase, and being overcome by smoke was unable to retrace his steps, and was eventually burned in the ruins. In the bustle and confusion created by the vast proportions which the fire assumed Parson's absence was evidently overlooked, but later in the morning inquiries were made for him, and the police were informed that he was missing. Since then a thorough search has been made for him, but all hope of his being saved has now been abandoned. No effort has yet been made to find the body. There is great danger of, injury to workmen, besides which the debris is still very hot, and is evidently yet on fire.

Help for the Assistants from Manchester

Mr. J. H. Richardson, hon. secretary of the shop Assistants' Association, has received the following letter:

Manchester District National Union of Shop Assistants

Dear Sir, - I have just read of the disastrous fire in Sheffield this morning. Can you get to know if the assistants will be sufferers in consequence? They may rest assured of our hearty sympathy (and help if desired). - On behalf of the Manchester shop assistants,

H. HORSEMAN,

Mr. J. H. Richardson. Hon. District Secretary.