

Science Hall Fire

ON the morning of March 30, 1905, between the hours of one and two, three students returning to Granville from festivities in Newark, observed tongues of fire issuing from the Chemistry Department of Science Hall. This was the first warning received of the catastrophe which cost the University much money and irreparable labor of master minds. The alarm was given and responded to by a large portion of the village population, and the student body not yet departed on the spring vacation.

Brave work was done with hose and chemicals, but the handicap of an inadequate water supply with weak pressure was too great. The flames spread and destruction of the building was inevitable. The students and instructors then directed their attention toward rescuing what could be saved. With wonderful coolness Professor Chamberlain sought the dynamo room and turned on the electric current, giving light to the workers for a few minutes, and then, the flames progressing and destroying the electrical connections, the building was again in a darkness lighted only by the flickering glare of the advancing demon. And by this feeble light, after several failures, the combination of the Treasurer's safe was turned and precious papers extracted. Great risks of life were run in attempts to save the contents, and, through this devotion, practically the entire equipment of the Geological Laboratory. Much of the Physics Department, and some from the Botanical and Zoological Departments was saved.

Now and then, as the destruction proceeded, heavy safes, relieved of support, dropped with gigantic thuds to the basement. Occasional explosions, one of mighty power, sending forth a constellation of sparks, heralded the triumph of the flames. The intense heat and flying cinders endangering structures nearby, volunteers were located on the roofs to extinguish the malicious sparks of fire dancing around them.

Neighboring trees, catching the infection, burst into flame, outlining their naked branches in glowing fire against the gloomy heavens, until their ardor was quenched by the fire fighters.

In the midst of this impressive display of uncontrolled forces, figures moved in the weird light like manikins before a roaring monster.