

CAUGHT IN A FIRE-TRAP

Retired Merchant's Narrow Escape from His Burning House.

SURVEYOR'S CHAIN SAVED HIM

Crippled in Final Jump and Forced to Crawl Through Snow—He Lived Alone Among Treasures.

Robert A. Johnson, a retired merchant of this city, who has for some years lived alone in a large mansion in Mount St. Vincent, had a narrow escape from death in the burning of his residence early yesterday morning. After lowering himself part of the distance to the ground by means of a surveyor's chain which was in his room on the third floor, he was forced to jump a distance of fifteen feet into a snowdrift. The fall injured his spine in such a manner as to make walking impossible, and, clothed only in pajamas, he was compelled to crawl nearly half a mile in the snow and bitter cold to the nearest house, where he collapsed after summoning assistance. Mr. Johnson suffered greatly, and it was said yesterday that pneumonia might result from his exposure.

Mr. Johnson was some years ago a member of the firm of Johnson Brothers, at Twenty-second Street and Broadway. The house was well known and prosperous in its day, and when it was dissolved Mr. Johnson built the handsome mansion in Mount St. Vincent. The house was of stone, three stories high, and commanded the finest view in the place, standing as it did on a bluff overlooking the Hudson River. Its owner, who had traveled extensively, filled it full of art objects, paintings, and rugs, which he had collected, but through some eccentricity he lived there all alone. He had never been married, and not even a servant slept in the house over night.

Mr. Johnson was interested in real estate matters in this city, and it was his rule to leave his house every morning and return before sunset. He followed this rule yesterday, and when he reached his house he lighted a fire in the hall which his house servant had made ready before going home. He then went up to his sitting room on the third floor, lighted a fire in the grate there, and divesting himself of his outer clothing put on pajamas and sat down to read. He fell asleep over his book and woke suddenly at 3:30 o'clock to find the room full of smoke. The fire in the grate had nearly gone out and the room was cold. Mr. Johnson, who has been a sufferer from rheumatism, experienced some trouble in getting to the door, his back and legs being stiff, and as he opened the door he saw that the space beneath was a blazing furnace.

Mr. Johnson looked around for a means of escape, and found an old surveyor's chain in a corner of the room. He fastened one end around the leg of a sofa and dragged the sofa to the window, which was directly over the storm door at the front of the house. The chain reached exactly to the roof of the storm door. While Mr. Johnson was making these preparations the flames gained steadily, and he had only time to put on a pair of gloves and shoes when the fire attacked the sitting room and drove Mr. Johnson out before he could don his clothes.

Mr. Johnson is forty-five years old, and agile enough when his rheumatism does not trouble him. He lowered himself painfully to the roof of the storm door, and then jumped from the side where he thought the snow was deepest. He wrenched his back badly, and found, to his great concern, that he could not walk. In imminent danger of freezing to death, he gathered together every faculty and crawled through the ice and snow to the house of John Meehan, a gardener on the estate of Edmund T. Randolph.

The glare of the fire on the hill had awakened Mr. Meehan, and he was about to start out to render what assistance he could when Mr. Johnson reached his door. Nearly dead with fatigue and cold, Mr. Johnson could only ejaculate "Fire!" as the door was opened, and he fell over in a swoon. Mr. Meehan left Mr. Johnson to the care of his wife, and ran out to give the alarm. On his way he met Mounted Policeman Weeks of the High Bridge Station, who was going to Mr. Johnson's relief, believing he was in the house. Mr. Meehan told Weeks that Mr. Johnson was safe, and the policeman galloped to the house of Engine No. 52, nearly a mile away, where he gave the alarm.

The men turned out promptly, but it was hard work to get to the house over the slippery roads. When they reached the house there was nothing to be saved but the walls. The handsome mansion and all the art works it contained were completely destroyed. The firemen suffered terribly from the intense cold, and after the fire had burned itself out Mr. Randolph brought the firemen over to his house, where they got warm food and coffee.

Mr. Johnson told the story of his escape to Mr. Meehan. He was later removed to the Randolph house, where it was said yesterday that he had developed a severe cold, which the doctors fear will result in pneumonia. The loss of the house and its contents will be over \$100,000.

BLAMES FIANCEE'S FAMILY.

Mr. Stein Says His Engagement to Miss Woolner Was Broken by Them.

Much surprise has been caused among the friends of Miss Louise Woolner and Henry B. Stein by the announcement that their marriage, which was to have taken place this week, had been definitely broken off. None of Miss Woolner's family has returned to the city, which they left for New Jersey last week, and Alfred C. Woolner was absent from his law office, at 20 Broad Street, yesterday. Mr. Stein returned to town in time for business yesterday and was in his real estate office, at 20 Nassau Street, during the afternoon.

"The engagement," he said, "was canceled by the other side, not by me. Therefore they can give the reasons; I do not care to say anything about it."

DR. A. J. MCCOSH BETTER.

Recovering from Infected Wound Made by an Operating Knife.

The condition of Dr. Andrew J. McCosh, who has been suffering from blood poisoning resulting from a cut on the left arm which he accidentally inflicted upon himself while performing an operation upon a patient at the Presbyterian Hospital a week ago, was greatly improved yesterday.

Drs. G. E. Brewer and G. M. Swift, who are attending him, said yesterday afternoon that the activity of the poison has subsided and that Dr. McCosh will probably be convalescent and about within a few days.

Dr. McCosh is a son of the late Dr. James McCosh, formerly President of Princeton University.

BOY KILLED BY AN ELEVATOR.

Fellow-Employees Find His Lifeless Body Crushed Beneath It.

Bernard O'Gare, who was employed as an errand boy by George H. Everall in the latter's tailor shop at 291 Fifth Avenue, was killed early yesterday morning by an electric elevator in the building, which he was evidently trying to run.

The boy was in the habit of starting to work at 7 o'clock. The elevator man did not come till 8. O'Gare's body was found crushed under the elevator at the foot of the shaft by two of Mr. Everall's employes. He had apparently opened the elevator door at the foot of the shaft, found the car up the shaft somewhere, and started it down, the elevator dropping so quickly as to catch him underneath. The cables of the elevator had been thrown off the drum by the fall.

Policeman Lake of the West Thirtieth Street Station was called and took the body to the station house.

New Lawyers of Both Sexes Sworn In.

Eighty-seven law students were sworn in as members of the bar in the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday. Presiding Justice Van Brunt presided and delivered a brief address congratulating the students upon the completion of their preliminary studies. He observed that there was a tendency to-day to rely too much upon particular cases, and he warned his hearers against this tendency. Study principles first, said the Justice, and take up cases afterward. There were three women in the class—Josephine Ettlinger, Juliana Gallwitz, and Winifred Sullivan.