

To the citizens of Richmond—A terrible calamity has just occurred by which many who were in the calm repose of death, are sleeping upon such an occasion that some public action should be taken expressive of the deep sorrow that pervades every heart.

It is therefore recommended that the people assemble on the Capitol Square to-day at 12 o'clock to give a suitable expression to their grief and sympathy on this mournful occasion.

### The Terrible Calamity.

Yesterday occurred the greatest calamity that ever afflicted this city save the burning of the Theatre in 1811. It was occasioned by the falling in of the floor of the old Senate chamber, in the Capitol, which is now used for the sessions of the Supreme Court of Appeals of this State.

Eleven o'clock was the hour for the meeting of the court, and it being understood that there would be announced the decision upon the question of the constitutionality of the "enabling act," otherwise known as the CHABON-ELLYSON case—which has excited so much interest in this community—a large number of citizens assembled in the gallery and space in front of the bench before the hour appointed. The weight of such a packed mass was too great for the imperfectly-constructed floor, and yet more faulty girders, which was suspended from the upper joists in a most defective manner. The gallery first fell forward, the floor yielding instantly and going down with it, carrying the packed body of men to the floor of the House of Delegates, fully twenty feet below. As fearful and fatal as this was, the heavy ceiling and the timbers which supported it descended along with the mass, greatly increasing the mortality. Fifty-six were killed outright, and others may die from injuries received.

Had the catastrophe occurred ten minutes earlier possibly half the members of the House of Delegates would have been killed by the falling of the mass upon them, for a caucus of the great majority of the body had adjourned probably not ten minutes before the occurrence; or had the hour for the meeting of the court been 12 instead of 11 o'clock, a like destruction of life would have taken place, for the Legislature would then have been in session.

The scene cannot be described, nor can it be appreciated by those who did not witness it. The mass of human beings that fell were so mixed up with the heavy timbers and rubbish that they had to be disengaged with great labor. The slow of the dead and wounded as they were sighted let down from the windows of the House of Delegates (the door of which was blocked up by the ruins) was heart-rending. So covered with dust and blood were they that it was difficult to recognize them. The great body of people outside swayed with anxiety and grief. Many hundreds watched eagerly for friends and relatives who were known to have been in the court-room, and each body that appeared in the hands of the identifiable men who worked for the relief of those buried with the ruins was scanned with closest scrutiny by a thousand eyes.

The reporters for the Dispatch have gathered all the particulars of this terrible event that were obtainable. We refer the readers to their full details.

This calamity has filled the city with gloom, and bowed the public spirit to the premeditated dispensation which it is not for us to criticize, but which it is our duty to turn to our own good by the practice of the public and private virtues which affliction teaches all intelligent and wise communities.

This disaster has swept through all classes of the community. None escape. Some of our best and most distinguished citizens have perished in it. Legislators, lawyers, citizens, State and municipal officers, a journalist, and private citizens, are all numbered in the list of dead, as also in the larger list of wounded. Richmond is chief mourner; but nearly every section of the State shares in the immediate results of the calamity, while we know that the people of the entire Commonwealth will feel the affliction as their own.

### The Capitol—A Warning.

The old Capitol of Virginia was built at a time when there were no such modes of fastening and supporting floors, galleries, walls, and roofs, as are now employed; nor was the necessity for strength in public buildings then so great as it is now. There were no such packed assemblages drawn together by excitement and entertainment of one kind and another within doors. So the builders accommodated themselves to their times. Only the Capitol has lived beyond its true day, and has added another appalling chapter to the history of this devoted city of calamities.

The Senate chamber—now turned into the Supreme Court room—did tolerably well for the old Senate, which could not originate a money bill of any kind, but was a mere revisory body, and little interest attached to its proceedings. So, the hall was never subjected to a very heavy weight—nothing like that brought upon it yesterday. The joists were so poorly joined to the wall that they readily gave way under the floor when slightly sunk. The ceiling was what may be termed a false one. There was a space of eight or more feet, we suppose, between the ceiling and the joists which rested on the top of the wall, and the ceiling was suspended by pieces of plank nailed to the joists, and a most slender support it was. So the gallery was supported by similar pendants from the joists above, and when it fell forward it no doubt gave that start to the ceiling which the vacuum caused by the descending floor, ended by drawing the whole of it, with all its timbers, down upon the heads of the men who fell with the floor, fearfully increasing the number of deaths.

The whole building is unsuited to the times and is not at all safe. The library is of a piece with the court-room. Nothing saves it from a like fate but that the books are near the walls. We see no remedy but to remove the entire interior of the building and reconstruct it. And if that is to be done it will be a great deal better to build a new Capitol.

This calamity is a warning against trusting floors that are not well tried and proved to be strong and capable of bearing the weight of all the human beings that can stand upon them.

There are other rooms in the city beside the old Senate chamber that have not been safe. With the increase of population the architecture of the city must be changed. The public should be better protected by law. No place of public assemblages of any kind, whether for State purposes or amusements, or churches, or even fairs, should be allowed to be used until a proper investigation of its capacity and strength is made.

The public safety demands this, and we trust the proper measures to secure it will be at once taken.

### Death of Hugh Rose Pleasants.

HUGH ROSE PLEASANTS, so extensively known as one of the most gifted writers for the daily press of this country, for the last thirty years or more, died in this city yesterday. He was a son of the late Governor JAMES PLEASANTS, and was the brother of JOHN HAMPDEN PLEASANTS, and was in his fifty-third year. He died whilst the harrowing scenes of the disaster at the Capitol were transpiring. The magnitude of that calamity overshadows individualities, dwarfs personal consequence, and stints the separate honors to the departed, by the wholesale absorption of the public grief. Yet such were the character, talents, and pursuits of this lamented gentleman, that the press owes him a tribute even at such a time.

He graduated at the University of Virginia, studied law, and embarked in the profession about 1834. But like his distinguished elder brother HAMPDEN, he soon abandoned it, and took to the profession of editor as far more agreeable to him. He was a contributor to the press successively in several cities in the Gulf States, in the West, in Philadelphia, in Baltimore, and in this city. He long wrote for the *Whig*, and was at the establishment of the *Dispatch*, in 1850, a constant contributor to its columns. He afterwards established, in conjunction with his talented nephew, Mr. JAMES PLEASANTS, the *Peninsular Post*, one of the most brilliant of southern papers.

Mr. PLEASANTS was one of the most vigorous and terse writers we ever knew. He was a master of medieval history, and few men were so well versed in classical literature. His memory was remarkable. He made the life and campaigns of NAPOLEON a specialty, and could, without refreshing his memory, write sketches of the great battles of NAPOLEON that were like faithful pictures; they so spread before the mind's eye the whole scene of struggle, with its progress, alternations, and termination.

Warm-hearted, generous, and impulsive, if error was sometimes his misfortune, mercy or selfish motives never entered his soul. And no man suffered more from an error under an impulse, and none would go further to repair an injury. He was a man of true genius, and whilst a bold and keen satirist, his heart was full of the kindest sympathies.

The lamented PATRICK HENRY AYLETT, when about entering yesterday the court-room, out of which he never came alive, remarked to a friend, "I learn that poor HUGH PLEASANTS is dying. We are all passing away." Little did he dream that his life would end even before that of the man with whom he so earnestly sympathized. The one lay insensible and sinking, exhausted and emaciated by disease, the other was in the prime of vigorous and well-developed manhood; yet death strikes down the latter first—snatches the vital spark from the body full of health, with its bright faculties and well-learned honors, even before the spirit had left that from which all hope had already departed. What shadows, indeed, we are, and what shadows we pursue!

The meeting called for 12 o'clock to-day on the Square will take such steps as the sad occasion suggests in a fitting and becoming manner, we are sure. At such a time we may well turn from the busy day of this world's affairs, and with hearts bowed down, acknowledge our utter dependence on the will of the Supreme Disposer of Events. The dead, too, claim our sympathy, and we best show our sense of the frail tenure of our own existence by the decorous manifestation of sorrow for those who have thus untimely perished, but who, at most, only depart a little way in advance of us all.

The *Charleston Courier* comes to us in mourning for the death of Richard Yeaden, Esq.

### State Council Friends of Temperance.

Reported for the Dispatch.

WYNNESBORO, April 26, 1870.

The State Council of the Friends of Temperance of Virginia assembled here to-day in its fifth annual session.

The Council was called to order at 8 o'clock, P. M., and the following officers took the oaths:

President—J. Ed. Pennypacker.  
Associate—Rev. J. A. Jefferson.  
Chaplain pro tem—Rev. W. W. Green.  
Secretary—Rev. R. W. Williams.  
Treasurer pro tem—James Alexander.  
Conductor—W. H. Hall.  
Sexton—J. S. Lipscomb.

Representatives—A. Pope Abell, Esq., and the following gentlemen in the Committee on Credentials.

On motion, the order of business was suspended to receive and act upon a motion to admit active members of associate Councils as ex-officio deliberative members. Motion prevailed.

A large number of members were invited into the State Council.

A communication from the Grand Division of the Sons of Temperance was then read.

The delegates from the various Councils were then called upon to give an account of the condition and prospects of their various Councils, which was generally very good.

The number of members in the State Council is by far the largest, and in many respects the most influential, that has ever existed in the State. Some of the members are from other States. Prominent among those who reported was M. L. Wicks, of Memphis, Tenn., and who is now a student of the University of Virginia, and the representative of University Council. The report of this promising young brother gave of the condition of his Council and the part taken by the students and professors of this great and noble institution of learning was truly encouraging. Many papers were read, and a heartily and persevering sentiment is being inculcated where they send their children to fit and prepare themselves for discharging usefully and profitably the duties of subsequent life.

### FOR SALE.

STEAM-YACHT BONITA.

FOR SALE.—This well-known steamer yacht, of the property of Major William Allen, of Charleston, offered for sale privately. She is very fast, and can accommodate twenty persons, and is well equipped with all the latest improvements, and is a most desirable vessel for pleasure or business.

EDWARD CANNON, Ship Carpenter, opposite Richmond and York streets, Richmond, Va.

ap 28-29

### MILCH COWS.

FOR SALE.—I have several superior thoroughbred MILCH COWS, of the best breed, and of the best quality, for sale. They are all of the best breed, and of the best quality, and are well adapted for the purpose.

W. W. WATKINS, 1111 Main street.

ap 28-29

### TO REDUCE HIS TEAMS FOR SALE.

THE SUMMER of the year 1870 will sell a PAIR of FINE MULES, which are sound and work well.

J. B. WATKINS, 1111 Main street.

ap 28-29

### HORSES AND MULES FOR SALE.

FOR SALE.—I have a lot of fine HORSES and MULES for sale, and of the best quality, and are well adapted for the purpose.

W. W. WATKINS, 1111 Main street.

ap 28-29

### FOR SALE, A SPLENDID NEW TOP.

BUGGY, complete, improved, and took first premium at State fair. Sold much less than manufacturer's price.

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