

## THE FIRE!

Acres of Ruined Public Buildings, Business Blocks, Docks, Residences, Factories, Etc.—An Event that has Burned an Indestructible Tablet in the Memories of Thousands of Sufferers.

**F**RIDAY, May 3d, 1901, will always be a memorable day in the history of Jacksonville, the metropolis and gateway to Florida. The recurring anniversaries will not be welcomed with joyful acclamations, but a shuddering posterity will listen with awe to the tale as it comes from the lips of white-headed grandparents who are living witnesses of that deplorable event.

The fire originated in a pile of moss at the Cleveland Fibre Factory, situated in the block bounded by Davis, Madison, Union and Beaver streets. It was discovered by one of the men during the dinner hour, and it was thought they could put it out with a few buckets of water, as they had frequently done on similar occasions; consequently an alarm was not turned in until it had gone beyond their control. When the department arrived the fire had spread from the outside platform upon which it started, to the pine buildings, which rapidly became a seething mass. Then the breeze sprang up, and the burning resonous brands and millions of sparks were dropped on the tinder-like roofs of adjoining houses and those blocks away, every few minutes starting a new distributing center and rapidly creating a perfect hades of fire and smoke. Rapidly it made its way eastward, devouring everything combustible in its path. Nothing that would burn was allowed to escape, and when anything wouldn't burn, the intense heat melted it. Gallantly and fearlessly Chief Haney and his brave firemen struggled with the destructive elements, whose resistless energy continuously drove them from line after line of defense. It was impossible for human beings to

do more. Nothing human could resist the onward march of the fiend. Nature, with her usual perversity, had dried the roofs of the buildings, and then arranged with the elements to give every encouragement to the fire possible. Man could never have succeeded half so well in making it favorable for a successful realization of such a fearful calamity.

Within eight hours over seven hundred acres of beautifully shaded, grass bordered streets, lovely residences, public buildings, business houses, warehouses, factories, docks, churches, etc., were in ruins. One hundred and forty-six squares in the most thickly settled portion of this little city of thirty thousand population in ashes! There was no time to save furniture, household utensils, or even clothes, and thousands of people who have labored and saved for years, in order to get a comfortably furnished home, are destitute.

The fact that it might have been worse, that it might have occurred in the night and hundreds of people been burned, and the destruction been much greater, does not successfully console the elderly and gray-haired men and women who have been deprived of everything they had in the world. For these worthy people the future is filled with a gloom difficult to dissipate. The fact that the old part of the city will arise from the ash-piles clothed in more fashionable and attractive garments, will not help the men and women, who had no insurance, replace the homes which they had occupied half a century or more and the memory of whose loss will hereafter bring a tear and a sob.