

able terms which he had offered it to her."
 "Shall we stay here, or go to St. Paul's, my dear Miss Fletcher?" continued our gentleman, charmed with her frankness.
 "To St. Paul's!" exclaimed the lady, looking at the speaker with genuine amazement.

"Don't you comprehend?" he asked.
 "I do not indeed, Mr. Malford," she rejoined, in a voice so earnest that he was forced to believe her.
 "You like this house?"
 "Very much, Sir."

"And you have decided to take my furniture?"
 "That was the bargain."
 "And you will board me?"
 "I agreed to, I believe."

"All things considered, you are satisfied?"
 "I am perfectly so; and what is more, I think myself extremely lucky in receiving such good propositions. I cannot be too grateful for your kindness, Mr. Malford."
 "Then why cannot you be married immediately?"

Miss Fletcher got the picture of astonishment. Not once had she even dreamed that there might be a covert meaning to Malford's words, or that she had unconsciously encouraged him, by almost every remark she had made. For a moment she looked fixedly at him, without speaking; the scrutiny probably assured her of his sincerity, for she said immediately:

"If you would take me for better or for worse, here is my hand, I am ready at any moment."

As the reader will perceive, there was no false delicacy here. Everything was settled on the spot, no mincing of words, or choosing of sentimental phrases. The matter was a practical one, and it was treated practically; four hours from that time the couple visited a Rev. Dr. who performed a well-known ceremony, which constituted them husband and wife. And they were not an ill-matched pair; the latter being still a fine-looking woman a little short of sixty, and the former an erect, stout, whole-souled man, five years her senior; both sensible, well-informed, and intelligent.

While this important event was transpiring, Mrs. Bly, Mr. Malford's house-keeper, who, by dint of watching and listening, imagined that something unusual was going on, sent word to the three married sons of her employer, that they had better come and talk with the old gentleman, as he "had acted kind of strange-like and had a suspicious-looking woman in the house."

Of course the dutiful young men were not lacking in profiting by this hint, and when Mr. and Mrs. Malford returned, they found three frowning individuals in one of the parlours, ready to express their virtuous indignation at any reprehensible discovery they might make.

"Mrs. Malford, these are my three sons—Boys, this is my wife," said the father, as he presented the lady.
 "Your wife!" exclaimed John.
 "You are crazy!" cried James.
 "You need a guardian!" echoed Henry.

Mrs. Malford did not seem the least intimidated by this sudden explosion of anger, but quietly relieving herself of her bonnet and shawl, sat herself down on an easy chair, as though she had been mistress in that same room for years.

"She's nothing but a nurse!" resumed John.
 "She's a screamer!"
 "And married him for his money!" added Henry.

"Boys, look here!" said Mr. Malford, turning sternly towards the excited speakers, "go home; and mind your own business. I am yet capable of managing my affairs, and taking care of my own interests. Go home, I say?—When I want you I'll send for you."

Without another word the trio left the house, evidently thinking that in view of the one hundred thousand dollars which Mr. Malford was reputed to possess, it was the most politic course to take.

The way Mr. Malford continued to conduct his business matters, proved conclusively that his mind was as sound as ever, while the way in which his wife managed the in-door department, proved, also, that his choice had been a judicious one. She had no reason to complain of her "landlord," nor he of his "tenant."

Dreadful Catastrophe.

NEWCASTLE, FRIDAY.—About 1 o'clock this morning, a fire broke out in the worsted manufactory of Messrs. Wilson and Son, in Hillgate, Gateshead, and at about 2 o'clock the manufactory was a total wreck, and the flames had nearly spent themselves on its contents. The firemen accordingly, turned their attention to the stores; but they were wholly unable to stay the progress of the flames, which gradually spread over the whole premises.—Such a fire naturally attracted the affrighted inhabitants of both towns to the banks of the river, and about ten minutes past three a vast crowd was assembled. Suddenly a tremendous explosion—such an explosion as we never heard before and never wish to hear again—proceeded from the burning mass; and ignited materials, bricks, stones, metal, and every article near was thrown into the air with tremendous force, only to fall again upon the dense mass of people all round. A prodigious quantity was thrown entirely across the river, and scores of spectators upon the quayside were thrown down and injured, many of them being rendered insensible. The mass of burning embers set fire to the ships, and crossing over the quay, entered into the houses opposite; and in a moment the shops of Messrs. Spencer and Sons, Messrs. Smith, and Ormston, and Messrs. Smith & Co., were in a blaze, while the uninjured standers by rushed off in all directions in search of safety. The new conflagration raged with frightful vehemence, and the shops above-mentioned, the offices above them, the public houses of Mr. Teasdale and Mr. Batey, and many private dwellings, were consumed in, comparatively, a few minutes. At the same time the workshops of Mr. Edgar, at the head of the George's Stairs, ignited by the same cause, were blazing with fearful rapidity, and being situated in one of the densest parts of the town, seemed to threaten wide-spread destruction.

About four o'clock, the fire, having wrought its way amongst the closely-piled houses situated at the back of the Quayside, broke through into the Butcher Bank, at Mr. Temple's paper warehouse. This was soon one sheet of flame, and in little more than half an hour the house was an entire ruin. By this time the flames had also broken into the Bank at a furniture warehouse occupied by Mr. Piper, a little further up, and with so much violence that attempts to check it would have been vain, even if the means of doing so had been at hand. As it was the explosion had put the fire-engines entirely hors d'combat at Gateshead, the stand-pipes and many of the men having been buried in the ruins.

Six o'clock a.m.—The frontage of the Quayside for more than fifty yards from the Grinding Chare, is entirely levelled, and a clear view presented of the rifled and rained lanes and chares between the Quay and the Butcher Bank. In those the fire is still in some places burning with violence, and in others only smouldering. Parts of the framework of houses are still standing amongst the smoke, but as a whole the buildings have fallen into a shapeless mass of smoking debris. The house next to Mr. Snowdon's bonded store is entirely in the power of the flames, and must soon fall. An interval of two houses

then occurs, in which there is little fire, and as their walls and interior have been well wet, it is barely possible that they may yet escape. The fire has, however, got hold of the next house, occupied by Mr. Morrison, sail-maker, and others, and indicates that behind it the ravages of the devouring element are in progress. As a last resort to check its progress down the Quay an attempt is being made to pull down a house in two doors above the Custom-house, in order to make a clear space which the fire may not be able to overleap. A strong cable, passed round the upper part of a house, has been affixed to a steamer, which is endeavouring to pull it down. At the upper end of the quay, the railway fire engine has been brought into operation, and may probably prevent the fire extending in that direction.

In the Butcher Bank the fire has been slightly got under, and by maintaining the chief supporting posts of Mr. Piper's shop, the framework of the house has been prevented from falling.—Many houses are, however, completely gutted. The third house from the foot of Pilgrim-street has fallen down, entirely destroyed. The water from a hose-pipe has prevented the flames from extending further on either side of the street-frontage, but the mass of buildings between the George stairs and the Butcher Bank is still burning furiously. A pipe, apparently with a good supply of water, has been got down the stairs, and may have some effect in arresting or limiting the work of destruction.

GATESHEAD.

The explosion here, besides doing immenso damage, naturally helped to increase the extent of the fire. The old houses in Hillgate were left one mass of ruins; several of them took fire together, and being already heated by the flames, they fell a ready prey. In great measure, however, the destruction has been confined to the warehouses on the river side, and these to an extent of more than one hundred yards are totally destroyed, some of them continuing to burn fiercely up to eight o'clock.

LOSS OF LIFE AND PERSONAL INJURIES.

Two soldiers were, we believe, killed on the spot at Gateshead; and on Newcastle-quay two spectators, who were thrown down, like many others, by the concussion, were also choked by the sulphurous vapour which was borne across the river. This occurred, it is to be recollected, at a distance of at least one hundred and fifty yards from the scene of the explosion! In the police station at Gateshead there were ten dead bodies lying at eight o'clock; one of these was an infantry soldier. One woman was known to be buried in the debris of the houses on Churchwalk. One family in the same place was completely overwhelmed, but were fortunately got out without any serious damage. Among the dead is Ensign Paynter, of the 26th Cameronians. He was buried amongst the ruins of a house in Hillgate, and his body was not recovered till some hours after.

At the Infirmary, between 40 and 50 wounded people have been received, and others are being brought. Most of them are very severely bruised.

In the bond warehouse of Mr. C Bertram was deposited a quantity of nitrate of soda, naphtha, sulphur, and other highly inflammable materials, but as far as can be ascertained there was no gunpowder in the place. The articles enumerated, though of a highly combustible nature, are not explosive, and it is supposed that some combination of gases, generated by the fusion of the materials, had made the explosion which has been so disastrous. As an instance of the immense force of the explosion, a piece of timber of about nine feet long and twelve inches in thickness was thrown from Gateshead to the roof of the Ridley Arms, in Pilgrim-street.

Into one place, at least 200 yards from Hillgate a stone, which would weigh about a half a hundred weight, was hurled by the force of the explosion. A smaller stone fell a little beyond this and broke in the roof of a house, and a bar of red hot iron was blown into the High-street.

Scarcely a house in the middle and lower part of Newcastle has escaped from damage by the explosion. On the Sandhill nine out of ten shop fronts and house windows were completely blown out. In Dean-street, Mosley-street, and