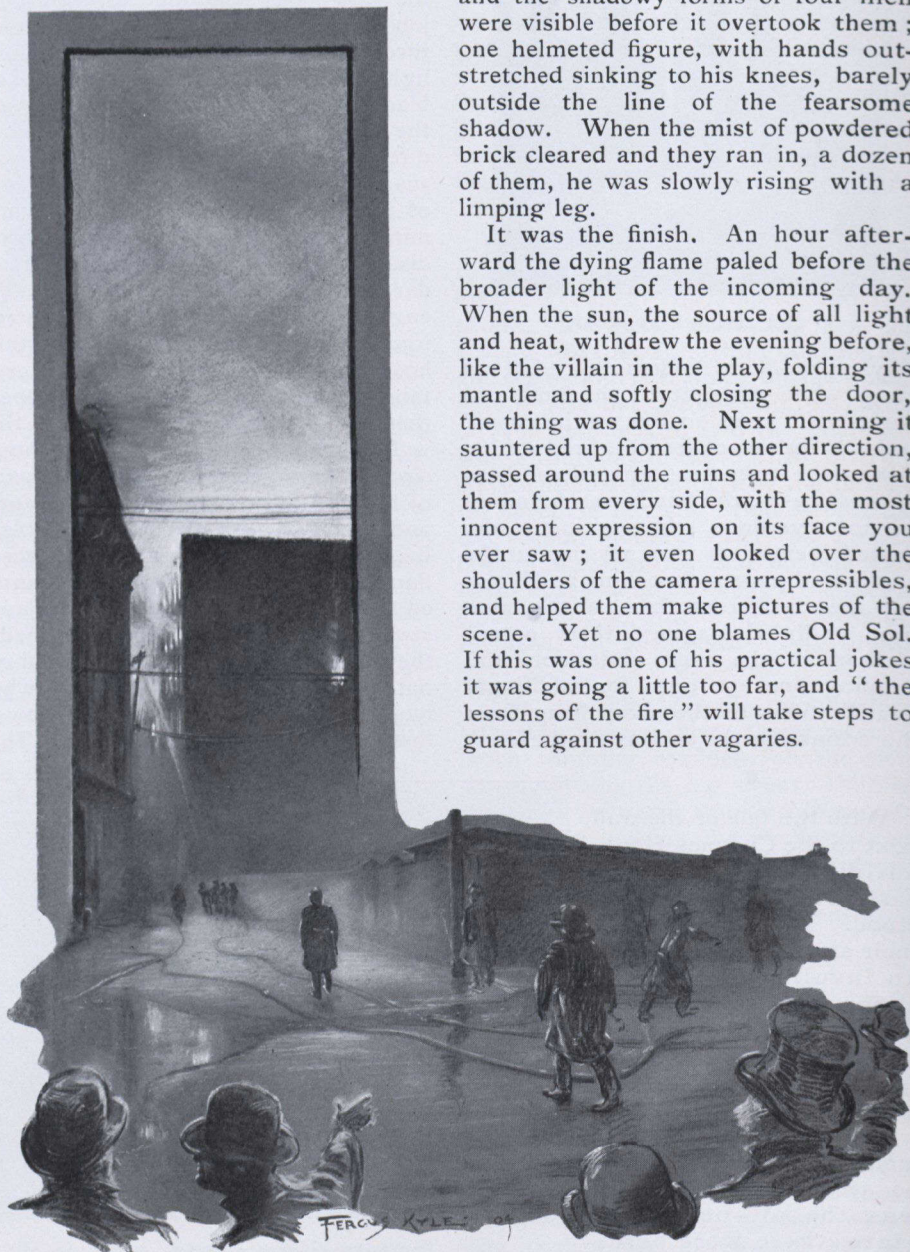


remaining end bricks had clattered out ; with them slid down some heavy crosspiece, the farther end first, burning fiercely with the additional draught, and the big flat wall was drawing out from its position, bulging a little and

gathering speed. The hose was writhing on the ground as the men sped from the spot. There was a heavy sound like the launching of a big vessel and the belching wave was exactly similar ; with this difference, that it was of a sickly orange colour, and the shadowy forms of four men were visible before it overtook them ; one helmeted figure, with hands outstretched sinking to his knees, barely outside the line of the fearsome shadow. When the mist of powdered brick cleared and they ran in, a dozen of them, he was slowly rising with a limping leg.

It was the finish. An hour afterward the dying flame paled before the broader light of the incoming day. When the sun, the source of all light and heat, withdrew the evening before, like the villain in the play, folding its mantle and softly closing the door, the thing was done. Next morning it sauntered up from the other direction, passed around the ruins and looked at them from every side, with the most innocent expression on its face you ever saw ; it even looked over the shoulders of the camera irrepressibles, and helped them make pictures of the scene. Yet no one blames Old Sol. If this was one of his practical jokes it was going a little too far, and "the lessons of the fire" will take steps to guard against other vagaries.



THE FIGHT FOR THE CUSTOMS RECEIVING HOUSE