

ed no alarm in the minds of the people, which can hardly be accounted for except from the circumstance of their never having experienced the sad effects of fires in any former instance, and their not estimating properly the great aridity of the forests that followed the extraordinary and long-protracted heat of the past summer.

At 7 o'clock P. M. a smart breeze sprung up from the N.W. and the air became almost instantaneously so darkened that no objects whatever could be perceived at any distance.—Ashes and cinders showered down in such quantities, that those persons who were exposed were nearly blinded and suffocated before they could retreat under cover. The inhabitants kept within doors, and many had retired to their beds as usual with them on dark nights. They had no fears of any further consequences than the temporary inconvenience.

About 8 o'clock P. M. a loud roaring was heard in the woods, and from the burnt substances still continuing to thicken the atmosphere, it was so dark that the flames could not be distinguished, though they were at that time at a distance of not more than one mile from the river. Immediately after, the wind blew a hurricane—the roaring noise becoming more and more tremendous, and seeming to the astonished and dismayed hearers as if earth had loosened from her ancient foundations, and that the elemental strife of chaos were recommencing. Flames burst in masses upon their affrighted vision; earth, air and sky were illuminated by an immense sheet of fire that rushed with inconceivable velocity from the adjacent woods, and in a moment enveloped the devoted settlements of Newcastle, Douglastown, and in fact, the whole northern side of the river, with flame, cinders, ashes, and heated sand. The hope of preserving life became the sole idea that presented itself to the appalled and horror-stricken people, who fled in every direction with the most precipitate eagerness. In about three minutes from the appearance of the flame, their houses were all blazing.

At this period the scene was awfully terrible. The dazzling brightness of the flames—the tremendous blasts of the storm that swept them with an inconceivable impetuosity, over the surface of the earth and water—the agonized feelings, and the horrors of the flying and distracted inhabitants—the screams of the burnt, the burning, and the wounded, mingled with the cries of domestic animals scorched and suffocating with the heat. Men flying half-naked—the sick, of whom there were many from the epidemical fever, endeavouring to save their

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