

One of the last days of the old year there had been a great ball at the chateau, to which all the country round had been invited. The younger children, however, had been sent to bed after having a peep at the first dance, and Mademoiselle Maurier, before taking them to their rooms, had gone with them to the chapel to say night prayers, as the good Abbe was away on his holidays.

The guests had been gone several hours and the whole household, fagged out by the entertainment and the work it had entailed, was sleeping soundly when, all of a sudden, one of the man-servants tore through the corridors, banging at the doors, and shrieking :

“ Fire ! Fire ! Fly for your lives ! The chateau is on fire ! ”

In a minute all was indescribable horror and confusion. Mademoiselle Maurier and the children slept on the upper story of the house. In an incredibly short time she managed to dress and help the children to do the same. Jeannette, being the youngest, was, of course, her chief anxiety, and she seized a heavy white woolen dress that the child had worn the previous evening, and slipped it on her, afterward wrapping her up in a heavy plaid shawl. Then, followed by the others, she went to the head of the staircase, but found it a mass of flames ! For a minute they stood panicstricken. Then Mademoiselle Maurier recovered her presence of mind and said : “ Let us try the servants’ stairway.” They rushed there and found it still practicable, though volumes of smoke were pouring upward. They had groped their way down one flight of stairs and were starting down the second when Jeannette suddenly exclaimed :

“ I wonder if any one has thought of Aunt de Mibreuil ? ” and in spite of Mademoiselle’s entreaties, she insisted upon rushing back and along the second floor corridor to the old lady’s apartments, where she found her dressed, but too totally scared and unnerved to leave her room. Jeannette’s cheery coolness seemed to bring her to her senses, and she allowed the child to lead her to the head of the servants’ staircase, where Mademoiselle and the Count, having seen the other children safe, had run up again in search of them. Together they help-