

glare, the transition from night to day had scarcely been noted. The long narrow beach was occupied by thousands of fugitives. They were hemmed in on every side. On the south was the river skirted with fire, while opposite, on the west, the heat was almost intolerable, on the east the cold waves of the lake, and on the north a burning pier that they could not cross. Their only hope was to cling to that narrow line where fire and water mingled, and with one element to fight the other. Here again was seen that mingling of every class which the streets and every place of refuge witnessed. Judges, physicians, statesmen, clergymen, bankers, were jostled by roughs and thieves. The laborer sat on the sand with his family, side by side with the millionaire and his household. The poor debauched woman of the town moaned and shivered in her scant clothing, at a slight remove from the most refined Christian lady. In the unparalleled disaster, all social distinctions were lost, levelled like the beach on which they cowered. From some groups was heard the voice of prayer, from others, bitter wailings and passionate cries for lost members of the family; others had saved quantities of vile whisky, if nothing else, and made the scene more ghastly by orgies that seemed not of earth. Added to the liquor, was the mad excitement and recklessness which often seizes the depraved classes on such occasions. They committed excesses that cannot be mentioned—these drunken, howling, fighting wretches. Obscene epithets and words fell around like blows. And yet all were so occupied with their own misfortunes, sufferings and danger, that they scarcely heeded those about them, unless they became very violent.

Upon this heterogeneous mass of humanity the fire rained down almost as we imagine it might have fallen upon the doomed cities of the plain, and the hot breath of the flames scorched the exposed cheek and crisped even eyebrows and hair. Sparks, flakes, cinders, pieces of roof, and fiery pebbles from the same seemed to fill the air, and often cries and shrieks announced that furniture and bedding that many had dragged thither, and even the clothing of women and children, were burning. Added to all the other terrors of the scene was the presence of large numbers of horses and cattle, snorting and plunging in their terror and pain.

But the sound that smote Dennis' heart with the deepest commiseration was the continuous wail of helpless little children, many of them utterly separated from parents and friends, and in the very agony of fear.

He greatly dreaded the effect of these scenes upon Christine, knowing how, in the luxurious past, she had been shielded from every rough experience. But she at length rallied into something like composure. Her constitution was elastic and full of vitality, and after escaping from immediate danger she again began to hope. Moreover, to a degree that even she could not understand, his presence was a source of strength and courage, and her heart clung to him with desperate earnestness, believing him the sole barrier against immediate death, and (what she dreaded scarcely less) a lonely, wretched existence, should her life be spared.

Though he never lost sight of her a moment, and kept continually wetting her hair and person, he found time to render assistance to others, and by carrying his hat full of water here and there, extinguished many a dangerous spark. He also, again and again, snatched up little children from under the trampling hoofs of frightened horses.

As she watched him, so self-forgetful and fearless, she realized more and more vividly that he was sustained and animated by some mighty principle that she knew nothing of, and could not understand. The impression grew upon her that he was right and she wrong. Though it all remained in mystery and doubt, she could not resist the logic of true Christian action.

But as the day advanced the flames grew hotter, and their breath more withering. About noon Dennis noticed that some shanties on the sands near them were in danger of catching fire and periling all in that vicinity. Therefore he said: "Miss Ludolph, stay here where I leave you for a little time, so that I may know just where to find you."

"Oh, do not leave me," she pleaded, "I have no one in the wide world to help me save you."

"I shall not be beyond call. You see those shanties there; if possible we must keep them from burning, or the fire will come too near for safety." Then, starting forward he cried:

"Who will volunteer to keep the fire back? All must see that if those buildings burn we shall be in danger."

Quite a number of men stepped forward, and with hats and anything that would hold water they commenced wetting the old rookeries. But the fiery storm swooped steadily down on them, and their efforts were as futile as to beat back the wind. Suddenly a mass of flame leaped upon them and in a moment they were all ablaze.