

CHAPTER II.

Fire, Flight and the Storm.

WHILE the fire fiend, springing rapidly from the ruined homes of Richmond threatened to engulf the whole city, a new and horrible danger arose. Until the soldiers, as related, so bravely undertook the flooding of the Wellington Barracks magazine, the military authorities feared a second explosion even surpassing the first and the alarm went out for the evacuation of the entire North End and business sections of the city. Moscow was no more deserted before Napoleon than were the shattered streets of Halifax when this flight had been carried out. Visitors, coming in on the first relief train from Truro, wondered almost if the catastrophe were not some divine dispensation and the entire population had been spirited away as the beginning of the end of the universe. The story of this flight cannot be better told than in the words of Frank Leonard, Nova Scotia advertising representative of the Imperial Tobacco Co. Ltd., who was through it all and whom I greeted as an old friend on reaching Halifax.

Mr. Leonard's moving story follows:

"Luckily for me," he said, "I arose earlier than usual and got away from my lodging house in the North End before 9 o'clock. Afterwards I found the place had collapsed and several were killed. I was walking down Barrington street when the crash came, and was just in front of a tobacco store in which worked a friend of mine—Frank Hanrahan, son of the chief of police. The windows were blown in and, looking in, I saw him stretched across the counter with blood spouting from a dozen wounds. Knowing something of First Aid, I ran in and bound him up as quickly as possible. Crowds by this time were running by and a few took time to snatch from the window some of the cigarettes exposed for sale though on the whole I believe there has been very little thieving. The shock seems to have touched the hearts of the most hardened. When Hanrahan was able to be moved I went out and in the streets I saw many wounded. It is a mistake to suppose there were not any seriously injured in the business district. Some men were killed at their desks—girls lay on the street corner with their life blood ebbing away. I took one of them into a ruined drug store and sought from the shattered stock to stem the tide which flowed from the failing heart.

The Quick and the Dead.

"Later on, I was to see dead bodies, scattered about on