

THE BURNING OF MIRAMICHI.

BY PASTOR FELIX.

ON, on it came, a sea of flame,
 In long, deep rolls of thunder,
 And drawing near it seemed to tear
 The heavens and earth asunder!
 How those waves snored, and raged, and roared,
 And reared in wild commotion!
 On, on they came, like steeds of flame
 Upon a burning ocean.

How they did snort, in fiendish sport,
 As at the great elms dashing;
 And how they tore 'mong hemlocks hoar,
 And through the pines went crashing;
 While serpents wound the trunks around,
 Their eyes like demons gleaming,
 And wrapped like thongs around the prongs,
 And to the crests went screaming!
 —*Alexander McLachlan, "Fire in the Woods."*

THE crackling noise, and dreadful blaze,

They, not pursued by fate,
 Half-clothed, half-naked, hastily retire;
 And frightened mothers strike their breasts too late
 For helpless infants left amid the fire.
 —*John Dryden, "Annus Mirabilis, 1666."*

GIANT trunks, bleak shapes that once were trees,
 Tower-naked, unassuaged by rain or breeze,
 Their stern grey isolation grimly borne.
 —*Charles G. D. Roberts, "Burnt Lands."*

II.

O YE who love storms; and take a fierce pleasure in them, akin to that of the gloomy creator of *Manfred*,—this is your opportunity! And ye whose spirits are soothed and quieted, and who are exalted in spirit like Robert Burns, by that shrieking, maniacal charioteer, the wind,*—mark what a tempest is now upon you! Will not the most saturnine among you be emptied of your grim delight, in pity of weakness overwhelmed! Fire is here, for a little space, one of the most terrible of the contending elements: it intensifies, usurps all others. God's own hand seems to be thrusting here and there with fiery bayonets of the lightning; while to the human cries, bewildered and bewildering, voices of wind and thunder make terrible response! The calm of the air, once violated, never a more mad-begotten spirit whitened the wrathful features of the

* "THERE is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something that exalts me, something which enraptures me,—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood, or high plantation, on a cloudy, winter day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion; my mind is wrapped up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, 'walks on the wings of the wind'."—*Burns' letter to Dr. Moore.*

river and tore its caps of foam. But these fail suddenly, for they are the immediate births and harbingers of the destroyer,—the avant couriers of *Fire!* Yes! *Fire!* *Fire!* *Fire!* everywhere! A million of its stallions, unharnessed, unbridled, careering, chasing every living thing before it! *Fire!* *Fire!*—in the air—outclimbed on the river—ward branches—scorching the roof—smouldering stack and thatch—springing spontaneously, as though ignition were bred in ten thousand centres at once, and flames are about to envelope everything!

See! if you can find vantage from which to be a spectator, and dare to look where no relief is possible, upon the woes of others—see how the people are scattering, as if uncertain whither to fly for a refuge! The river—that were a blest asylum, but that the tempest of wind, lulled for a moment, is on again, shrieking wildly as ever. Yet they do fly thither, plunge in and stand in dismay, with but their heads uncovered,—pallid faces, terrified, agonised, on which the blazing forest flares! Some who have taken to the little cockle-boats fare more ill than those who stand in this double baptism of death; for the waves and the wind have made playthings of them, and they are engulfed; a final glimpse of their burning homes—a momentary pang a gasp, and time's oblivion. Some spring frantic into the forest, and are lost. Ah! where in this melee are the little children? Mothers will clasp their babes, as they fly, if they have time to gather them; but wild storms and wild convulsions of the earth, are circumstances of hardship amid which to huddle the little ones together.

South-west of Newcastle a marsh stretches away, beat upon by wind and sea, and swept by wing of sea-fowl. Thither hundreds lie them, as if some fortunate angel conductress herded them out where, with the sea before them and airs somewhat less stifling, and with nothing between them and their burning homes that could convey fire, they find themselves among the safest of the refugees. But some of these are distracted by the absence of their kindred, and bewail their safety where life seems so little worth. The madcap flames leaping out riverward come hotly to hands and face exposed above the water, and snatch at sail and cordage of vessels afloat there. See the submerged people flinging water over their exposed parts! Diligently the sailors ply the buckets, and for a time succeed in staying the prevailing fire; but now—!o! one of their barks flames suddenly up to the mast's peak! Another! and yet another! burning down to the edge of that wild water. On—on rushes the fire-tempest through league after league of the groaning forest, hurrying life before it or tramping it under; filling the land with desolation, and thickening the air with smoke and cinders that are wafted to Nova Scotia and Maine.

The work is done, and the ancient region of Acadia had never had such a visitation. I turn to the page of a contemporary and onlooker, and find him recounting some details, and telling how the picture of the fire-devil's march,