

in her lap. How, if once it got loose, the fire would go on getting fiercer and stronger all the time, eating up in a few short minutes houses and towns and big lovely woods, which it had taken God years and years to make, and even people and little children.

And how brave men, forgetting the fear that was in their hearts, might try to stem its course with water and axe. Maybe they could, and then they would count as nothing their labors, after the manner of strong men, and maybe, they could not, and that was the worst of all.

Tommy could see them standing by. Their faces shining under the grimy perspiration, their clothes torn from their limbs. Some had their hair singed, and there was one man who lay on the grass, very still. A woman like Mother was bathing his face with water. Something had fallen on his head, and he did not seem to mind about the fire any more.

But the fire went on burning, making a great crackling noise, and the men and women stood by and watched, the terrified children hiding their faces.

Yes, sometimes they might, and again they might not.

And then, the Mother had bidden him stretch out his hand, and taking up a small stick with a gleaming light at the end, had told him that she would touch his hand with it, so that he might see and feel, understand and remember.

She touched his hand ever so lightly.

It hurt, and he cried. The mother loved and kissed