

'Reuben, your'e thinking ower meikle about the mill—which I fear is enough to make the mill no prosper.'

'My dear,' I said, 'do ye consider what a speculation it is?—it is like death or life to me; and if I didna look after the workmen to see how they are getting on wi' it, who do ye suppose would? There is nothing like a man looking after his own concerns, and where there is sae meikle at stake, it is impossible but to think o't.'

But I looked after the progress of the mill, and my thoughts were taken up concerning it, to the neglect of my more immediate business. After commencing in the wholesale line, I found it impossible to abide by my original rule of—no credit; and during my frequent absence from my warehouse, my salesman had admitted the names of men into my books of whom I knew nothing, but whom I afterwards learned were not to be trusted.—Their payments were not forthcoming in the proper season, and in looking after them I put off insuring the mill at the time I intended. Delay is a curse to a person in business: it is as dangerous as the blandishments of a harlot to the young—and so I found it. On the very night that the machinery and every thing was completed, I allowed the spinners and others that I had engaged, to have a supper and dance in it wi' their wives and sweethearts. I kept them company for an hour mysel', and very merry they were.—But after charging them all to keep sober and harmonious, and to see that they locked the doors behind them when they broke up, and to leave every thing right, I wished them good night, and they drank my health and gave me three cheers as I left them. But I dinna think I had been three hours in bed, when Priscilla gave me a hunch, and says—

'Waken, Reuben, waken!—there's an unco knocking at the street door.'

'Hoot!' says I, 'some drunken body,' and turned round on my side to sleep.

But the knock continued louder.

'That is nae drunk body,' said Priscilla—'something has happened.'

I started ower the bed, half-dressed, when the servant lass come fleein' up the stair.

'What is it?' cried.

'O Sir—the mill! the mill!' said she.

A shot could not have stupified me more.

'What about the mill?' cries I.

'Oh, it's on fire! on fire!' she replied.

Priscilla screamed 'on fire!' and sprang u

I cannot tell ye how I threw on my coat—I know that I banged out without a napkin about my neck, and rushing down the stair. I couldna stop to get a horse saddled, but re as fast as I cou'd. It was six miles, but never slackened. I didna even discover thout the stones had cut my feet, that I had com away barefooted. The mill absorbed by thought and sense—I was dead to any thing else. But what a sight presented itself in my view! Great red flames raging up to the height of its five stories, and the very wheels of the machinery seen through the window glowing as bright as when in the hands of the smith that formed them. The clouds of smoke blinded me. Hundreds of women were about screaming, and drunken men staggered to and fro, like lost spirits in the midst of their tortures. O, it was an awful sight to any one to behold; but for me to witness it was terrible! For some minutes I was bereft of reason, and had the spectators not held me back, I would have rushed into the middle of the flames. Crash, after crash, the newly erected walls fell in, and I was a helpless spectator of the destruction of my property. In one hour, more than half of the fortune that I had struggled for years to gather together, was swept as by a whirlwind from off the face of the earth.

I stood till I beheld the edifice a mass of smoking ruins, with scarce one stone left upon another. All the manufacturers round about sympathised with me, and one of them drove me back to Manchester in his drosky. When I entered my own house, I believe I appeared like a person on whom sentence of death had been passed, as he is removed from the block and led back to his prison.

'Weel, Reuben,' asked Priscilla, in her calm way, 'is the damage great?'

'O my dear!' said I, 'there is nothing left but a heap o' ashes! we are ruined!'

"No, no," replied she, as quietly as ever, 'we arena ruined. The back is always made fit for the burden. The Hand that sent us to this misfortune (as we think it) upon us, will enable us to bear up against it. Now, just compose yourself, and dinna be angry with what I am going to say; but we are as strong now as we were three years ago, and, I