

or of the sailor on the deep. The keen north-east wind swept by with a merciless strength, but few of the villagers listened to its dreary voice, as it was the hour for slumber, and nearly all were clasped in its blessed repose. Mr. Leslie's house stood in an enclosure by itself at some distance from the highway, and still further from any neighbour's dwelling. Barns and outhouses abounded in his spacious farm yard, and close to the house stood a pile of firewood which had remained from the previous winter, and was consequently dry and combustible.

The season had been unusually free from rain; the brooks ran low, and the well adjoining the house yielded but a small supply of water for the household purposes. Provided, then, with so little to meet the giant strength of the element of fire, it was with feelings of horror and despair that Mr. Leslie awoke to find his dwelling in flames. The suffocating smoke had obtruded into his bedroom and aroused him from sleep. Springing from his bed it was the work of an instant to discover that the whole eastern portion of his house was in a blaze. It was, however, unoccupied by any members of his family, and with the speed of desperation he succeeded in arousing them to their danger and to his assistance. Servants and children were speedily at work, but the fire had raged too long, to yield to their feeble efforts. Kind neighbours, too, were soon on the spot, endeavouring by all means to check the flames; but without water at hand, the nearest supply being a lake situated a quarter of a mile from the house, their exertions were of little avail. All was done that could be, in such an emergency, but the most vehement efforts only resulted in saving a small portion of the clothing and furniture. The roof was falling in at all points, and the house was now approached at great peril.

Mr. Leslie, disregarding his neighbours' entreaties to keep back, made one last effort to save some valued household article, and while in the act, a burning rafter gave way, and falling upon him prostrated him in the flames. With much difficulty he was rescued, and borne away insensible from the scene; it was found that the beam having fallen upon his breast, the blow proved severe in the extreme.

It was a heart-breaking prospect, to stand as the cold grey light of morning broke upon the gloomy earth, and survey the smouldering ruins: the scene of Mr. Leslie's birth and childhood—where in the fresh eager hopes of manhood he had brought his young smiling wife; where his children were born; where the vigour and toil of an honest life time had been spent, hallowed as well by its sorrow as its joy. Perhaps it was better that he was not conscious at that time, or the overwhelming misfortune he had experienced might have been too keenly felt. It was with difficulty that any of the family were induced to leave the spot. It seemed impossible to believe, even then, though nothing but blackened brands and ashes lay before them, that it could not be rescued; and when at last their sympathizing neighbour, Mr. Murray, prevailed upon them