

length fell at once upon the roof of the church, which gave way beneath it, like a cobweb under a stone. A stifled shriek from those within the building—a piercing cry of agony and horror, from those collected in the church yard—and one or two persons rushing madly out, maimed and bloody—and the catastrophe seemed complete! So sudden had it been, that its spectators could hardly trust the evidence of their senses; and, sick with the excitement of the moment, reeled wildly to and fro, like men drunk with wine! It was a blessing, for which the congregation could never be sufficiently thankful, that this calamity happened before the service began. One or two old persons and a body of children belonging to some charity school had, indeed, been seen to enter.—Immediately, as soon as the horror of the moment had subsided, a crowd of able-bodied men, (for the church-yard was presently filled with a multitude of people,) made their way into the building through the chancel doors. They found that only that part of the roof, which had covered the south aisle, was left entire:—and that so overloaded that it was momentarily expected to crash down upon their heads. The rest of the interior of the church was filled with a confused mass of rubbish; blue sky above. Heedless of the warning of falling plaster from the small sound portion which yet remained, they began to force their way among the ruins and to encourage with assurances of help those who, it was hoped, might yet be spared. In the north aisle, which was almost entirely choaked with beams, slates and enormous stones, they heard the weak cry of a child, and a groan which suddenly died away:—to that point the labourers turned the full force of their exertions. Meanwhile the windows were covered with the faces of those who had clambered up from without and were watching their proceedings with agonized interest. At last, a strong man, a mason by trade, was seen to insinuate himself between two perilous looking masses of ruin, in the hope of finding some clear space within, or some means of delivering those who might be there buried alive. It was in vain—he encountered a mass of destruction, to remove which would require the labour of hours; he had fallen upon some crushed thing, for he came out with his clothes and hands stained with blood! A shriek burst from the crowd that filled the windows; and many a miserable woman knelt down upon the tomb-stones and prayed, in the bitterness of anguish, that her child might not be counted among the slain; but, alas! it was soon ascertained that one detachment of the charity children had entered the church a few moments before the spire fell, and of these only three or four came forth alive! Mr. Evesham was the first to remember that Robert Douglas had been seen to go in at the belfry-door, and that he had never re-

turned. Nothing could prevent this excellent man from forcing his way into the thickest of the ruin, calling upon his friend to answer,—if he were yet alive. Capt. Crovie was by his side; as for the rest of the party, they had been escorted home in fits by the considerate cousin Sydney, who judged wisely that “it was no place for ladies,” and led them from the spot. Meanwhile, as every instant narrowed, so did it also deepen the interest of survivors. Gradually it became known, among the crowd, who must yet be among the ruins. One or two who had been extricated, had been carried home in the midst of their weeping families, too much awe-stricken to rejoice at their preservation;—it became too, more certain that those who had not been drawn or dug out, must have perished; and Mr. Evesham was on the point of leaving the building, with the most miserable fears for the fate of poor Robert,—when, on again venturing into the corner of the south aisle to which a roof still remained,—a low dull sound, as of a voice trying to make itself heard through many stones, reached his ear. He listened again, in an agony of attention—it was repeated. “Hither! hither!” shouted he to the masons, “there is some one alive in this corner.” They obeyed his summons, and Martin, the strong man already mentioned, broke in the baptistery door, by throwing himself against it with all his weight, crying out in his loudest voice, “Help at hand!—who is within there?” and listening acutely for an answer, whilst he watched with an upward eye, the roof above, which was now perceptibly bulging downwards.—The same voice as before, answered,—but they could distinguish no words. The space within the baptistery door was entirely filled with enormous fragments of stone work and mortar. The men held an anxious consultation. “It is as much as any one’s life is worth to attempt to pull them down,—but, poor fellow! there must be some one jammed upon the belfry stairs, and we must get him out at all events.” But how to get him out was the question. It was feared that their very attempt to deliver him who was immured, might itself hasten his destruction: for to remove one stone, was to incur the risk of bringing twenty after it. Nevertheless, as this was their only chance, they resolved to try it. Mr. Evesham took a pickaxe and crow-bar, and worked among them: and in the course of an hour, they had with cautious exertion, penetrated one of the layers of the ruin, behind which they supposed their victim to be imprisoned. They were rewarded for their labour, by receiving an audible answer from the object of their search, that Robert Douglas was within, and as yet unhurt; though so hemmed in that he could hardly move, and that he feared any further attempt on their parts might end in crushing

him to death. Mr. Evesham turned deadly faint on hearing these words:—the risk and peril had now reached their most critical point. “Indeed, Sir,” cried Martin, “you can do no good here! you had better go out into the air, while we endeavour—.” He was interrupted by the sudden falling of a shower of dust.—“Lord have mercy upon us! we are all dead men!” cried one of the masons; but with true English stout heartedness, they refused to abandon their work of mercy. It was well,—for the cause of this new alarm was presently evident; through a narrow cranny of the ruin, a damp clammy hand was suddenly forced. “Is Mr. Evesham there?” said the same voice within; “I fancied I heard him speak.” “It is I—Robert—I am here—we are at work to deliver you.” “You cannot,” replied the other faintly, but firmly, “I hear already something giving away. Shake hands, Sir! for the last time; let me have your blessing, and I pray of you all to leave me, for charity’s sake!” “Leave you!” cried the men, encouraged by hearing him speak, so near them, “that we will not—till we have brought you out. Gregory—that bar here! Allan, help Mr. Evesham, he is fainting like!” The clergyman was now in that state of excitement which rendered his presence dangerous in their present imminent peril. He grasped Robert’s hand eagerly. “Bless—bless”—he sobbed out. “Come away, Sir! come away!” shouted Martin, “you must go! some one is calling you without; and you, inside there, draw in your hand. Now, boys! death or deliverance!” Unable to endure the tumult of his feelings any longer, the divine suffered himself to be pushed back through the crevice, and was, in another second, in the open air.—He was awaited by a no less moving scene than the one he had just quitted. The crowd eagerly calling him by name, made way for him to pass to the spot to which old Douglas had been brought. He had heard of the accident, and, crawled from his sick chamber, and dressed in his house garments, made his way thither to ascertain the fate of his son. He had scarcely entered the gates, when, wearied by so extraordinary an exertion, he fell to the ground. Some compassionate persons supported him, and a chair was brought from a neighbouring house,—for he resisted every attempt to remove him, with a violence even more dangerous than his exposure to the open air; and sat, with his eyes strained towards the church, ejaculating such broken sentences of anguish—for he durst not pray—as made those who surrounded him tremble. As soon as Mr. Evesham approached him he seized him convulsively by both hands. Miss Annesly, who had lingered behind the rest of the party, was supporting his head,—for his exhaustion was momentarily increasing, and he cried out vehemently, shedding torrents