

A House on Fire

One evening I had not been long in bed when I was awakened by cries of 'Fire! Fire!' I at once dressed myself and hurried out of the house to see where the fire had broken out. There were many like me who, roused by the alarm, were hurrying towards the scene, and I joined them. We had hardly gone a furlong or two when we saw a huge glare high above the roofs of the surrounding houses. Now we saw that the Wazir Ali Building was on fire. The blaze was tremendous. A large crowd had already gathered there. People were hurrying to and for and throwing buckets full of sand and water on the flames. Their faces looked ghastly and weird in the red light of the flames, which were leaping up to the clouds. The air was thick with smoke and pungent with the fumes of the burning timber. Our eyes smarted and our skin seemed to burn. Now the fire-brigade arrived. At once the brave firemen in their shining helmets leapt into the fire and began to play streams of water on the shooting flames with their long hose-pipes. They seemed to bear charmed lives. They walked through the fire, as it were. They dived here; they dived there; they dived everywhere; yet the burning flames hardly seemed to touch them. The fire had now reached the second floor and the tongues of flames were licking the ceiling of the story above. Suddenly the roof fell with a thunderous crash. The flames now shot up higher than ever and the burning sparks danced all round. It was a terrible sight.

But the brave firemen went on battling with the flames. For full two hours the fire raged, but in the end the firemen succeeded in bringing it under control and preventing it from spreading to the neighbouring houses. Everyone heaved a sigh of relief. The loss of property was tremendous for the whole mansion was turned to ashes, but happily there was no loss of life.