

dred families were already at this time cast homeless into the streets. Shortly before quitting the scene of the conflagration for the country, I passed along a common stair, which led from the Parliament Close towards the Cowgate, through a tall old domicile, eleven storeys in height, and I afterwards remembered that the passage was occupied by a smouldering oppressive vapor, which, from the direction of the wind, could scarce have been derived from the adjacent conflagration, though at the time, without thinking much of the circumstance, I concluded it might have come creeping westwards on some low cross current along the narrow lanes. In less than an hour after, that lofty tenement was wrapped in flames, from the ground storey to more than a hundred feet over its tallest chimneys, and about sixty additional families, its tenants, were cast into the streets with the others. My friend William Ross afterwards assured me, that never had he witnessed anything equal in grandeur to this last of the conflagrations. Directly over the sea of fire below, the low-browed clouds above seemed as if charged with a sea of blood, that lightened and darkened by fits as the flames rose and fell; and far and wide, tower and spire, and tall house-top, glared out against a background of darkness, as if they had been brought to a red heat by some great subterranean, earth-born fire, that was fast rising to wrap the entire city in destruction. The old church of St. Giles, he said, with the fantastic masonry of its pale gray tower, bathed in crimson, and that of its dark rude walls suffused in a bronzed umber, and with the red light gleaming inwards through its huge mullioned windows, and flickering on its stone roof, formed one of the most picturesque objects he had ever seen.*

* The extreme picturesqueness of these fires,—in part a consequence of the great height and peculiar architecture of the buildings which they destroyed,—caught the nice eye of Sir Walter Scott. "I can conceive," we find him saying, in one of his letters of the period, "no sight more grand or terrible than to see these lofty buildings on fire from top to bottom, vomiting out flames, like a volcano, from every aperture, and finally crashing down, one after another, into an abyss of fire, which