

THE PINE KNOT.

LIGHTED FOR THE ILLUMINATION OF TAR HEELS, BOTH NATIVE AND ADOPTED.

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A BRILLIANT AFFAIR.

A town on fire is a fine spectacle if one is in the mood for it. Nero had glorious fun at the burning of Rome, playing an accompaniment to the crackling flames and crashing walls on his favorite musical instrument. But the most of us are so constructed that we can't see the fun in the antics of this brilliant devil unless we are sure he is under complete control. And when the wind is his playfellow where are the strong men who can bind? A little flame started out on Monday to wreak its sweet will on Southern Pines, and but for skillful hands, close watching and a very opportune road, might have resulted seriously. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise. The day was one of bright sunshine, but a pretty stiff breeze was blowing, and the fire, which started from a burning stump on land belonging to A. M. Clarke, though fought vigorously for nearly an hour, got beyond the control of Mr. Clarke and his son and a man who was helping them. Aid was summoned, and, as the flames leaped up the hillside it was met by most of the fighting men of Southern Pines and vicinity. The clan of Shaws was there, headed by their chief, smiting the demon with his own weapon—fire against fire. Prodigies of valor were performed. The loud war-cry of Wilson rent the murky air, as with brandished rake he dashed his mighty form against the foe. His experience in running a grocery at Southern Pines had taught him how to charge. P. C. Ford, long accustomed to forensic battles, showed that he also knew how to meet the foe upon the field, and, scooping up great handfuls of damp sand, he cast it in the face of the raging demon. (How skillfully he could throw dust in the eyes of a jury if he chose!) In soldier-like attitude, erect and watchful (that is, with one eye, the other being closed over a cinder) stood Mr. Pond, guarding the road back of H. A. Bland's house. In the midst of the smoke was L. A. Young weeping, and hoeing dirt. All around were bathed in tears. But the fire was stopped at that road, and the depot, Mr. Bland's, Dr. Boynton's and Mr. Grout's houses were safe. Feeling that he was conquered, the warriors began to insult the fallen foe. J. S. Bland was seen dragging him about over hummocks of wire grass, stumps and brush heaps. He was pounded, kicked and tossed about until, thoroughly subdued, he slunk away into the heart of a hollow stump. Then went the scribe about to learn how fared the fighters in other quarters of the field. Upon a "heaven kissing hill" he found that glorious son of Mars, Col. Pardee, after sore toil, resting and viewing the field. W. R. Raymond was there also, triumphant but not unsinged. But the Prospect House and his wood piles were safe and little cared he for such a trifle as eyebrows. At a little distance was C. J. Eaglesfield, a mighty man

from the far northwest. There too were the ladies, with that indifference to sparks which characterizes the sex, urging on the men to do valiantly against the enemy. With the flush of success came great self-confidence, and after taking council together the little army decided to assume the offensive. Word was sent out that just at nightfall there would be an attack upon the enemy all along the line. This was felt to be safe, as the fire's inconstant ally, the wind, had departed. Some of the northern men, not being used to this style of warfare, demurred, but the southern men said: "We have been at this kind of fighting all our lives and we know how to do it. Why, we've got a man here, one of our oldest citizens, who says that with three men he knows and two buckets of water he can put out the flames of Old Nick's domain."

Reader, I wish you had been there. It was a glorious sight. All over the unoccupied lands of our little village ran the flames. How they sped from tussock to tussock of wire grass! How they closed in upon the heaps of dry brush, touching the edges here and there and then drawing back as if to whet their appetite by delay, and at last, with a fierce rush, seizing and devouring them! How they clasped the trunks of the affrighted trees and reached up cruel fingers after the green boughs! Wierd figures flitted here and there bearing fire brands. A spectral horse hitched to a ghostly wagon and driven by a phantasm (by unbelievers said to be L. B. Thurston) was seen passing through a sea of flame. Ever and anon in some hitherto dark quarter a flame would shoot forth and reveal a bandit looking man, with handkerchief bound around his head, just applying the torch. Thus it may have appeared in Paris during the Reign of Terror.

In the vicinity of the Prospect House everybody was out enjoying the sight. All were happy and some were even hilarious. Col. Pardee recited a selection appropriate to the occasion to a small but select audience. Little groups were discussing a proposed excursion to Jackson Springs and "all went merry as a marriage bell", when suddenly (readers will please note the ingenious use of this word) a point of flame was noticed upon the roof of the hotel! It rose and sank, it danced wildly to and fro. A cry of horror (the mantle of G. P. R. James has fallen upon the writer) was about to burst forth when all fears were calmed by the voice of Mrs. Raymond exclaiming: "It is only Frank with a lantern and a two quart pail of water to keep fire off of the roof," and a moment later, even as a fiery cross appeared to Constantine, emblazoned on the sky, so gleamed forth the well-known legend

"Prospect House So, P. N." above a cloud whose ebony blackness made the surrounding shade look pale. Thus reassured and taking the marvelous appearance as an omen of good to our beloved little village the people dispersed to their homes
—all save the watchers
Who that night slept not,
But counted weary hours, waiting for dawn.