

# KELP

---

## CHAPTER I.

### A MIDNIGHT ALARM.

WAKE Up! Wake Up!

Tom Percival turned uneasily on his hot pillow, – it was the middle of a sultry night in June, – and was dropping off into a sounder nap than before, when a hand on his shoulder thoroughly roused him. It was his father who spoke.

“Wake up, Tom, and dress yourself as fast as possible. I’ve just got word that there’s a fire in our block downtown, and I want you to go with me. Are you awake, my son?!”

“Yes, father. I’ll be with you in no time.”

Tom sprang out of bed, and very nearly kept his promise. He found his father waiting for him in the front hall, and a minute later they were hurrying down the silent street toward the red light that filled the northern sky.

“How did you find out, father?” asked Tom, keeping up a rapid pace, beside his grave companion.

“A messenger came, – from the Watchman, I think. He went back immediately to help. There may be no real danger for our place; but there are valuable books and papers in the safe, and the risk is too great.”

On reaching Tremont Street, they found men and boys running in the same direction. A hook-and-ladder, called out by the second alarm, which was even now clanging dolefully from steeple to steeple, passed them with a jangle and clatter.

“Hello!” cried Tom suddenly, catching a boy of about his own age by the sleeve. “Going to the fire, Bert? – Father, this is Herbert Martin. He was in the first class with Ran, you know.”

Mr. Percival nodded hastily, but was too anxious for the safety of his building and its contents to pay much attention to the boy.

The three kept on, side by side, faster than ever. Presently they turned a corner, and there was the fire!

A glance showed them, that, unless the department accomplished wonders, the whole block was sure to go. It was built of granite, six stories high; and the great storage warehouse of Percival, Walton, & Co. occupied nearly one-half of it. Huge masses of golden red smoke were rolling up from the end of the block, and plainly working their way toward the center. The air was filled with hoarse shouts from the firemen, and the dull booming of the engines as they worked like mad creatures to drown out their enemy. Under foot, the street ran half-ankle-deep with muddy water, and was veined with the swelling coils and lengths of hose. Here and there a little fountain of spray burst from a