



Wellington, when the fire was raging through the block behind them, sending showers of sparks and ashes down into the street, stood a couple of old cronies that have been through many a like experience—the team of horses belonging to the old “Boustead” fire engine. It was an off moment for them, and until their driver would come running to get them to move the engine from under some dangerous wall, or to hustle it around into a more advantageous position in front of the fire, they stood there alone in the smoky half-light without the slightest nervousness. Nothing of the fiery steed about them, barring their occupation; just two heavy, sensible old customers with only an occasional intelligent turn of the head, the distinguishing look of the fire horse, to tell that they understood or cared anything at all about it. Had there been an animal-study man among the two or three individuals who picked their way past there among the puddles and dangling wires, he would have heard the off-horse mutter, after a scrutiny of the surroundings over his mate’s shoulder, “Billy, me boy, this is going to be an all-night job. What do you say if we take a nap while we have the chance?”

There were other equines engaged

in tiresome work that night; old general-purpose day labourers that could ill afford the loss of a night’s rest. Some of the bank clerks, who at one stage of the fire were looking for a waggon to move some valuables, tell of a couple of boys, the son of an expressman and a “pardner,” who had “swiped out” the horse unbeknownst to the “old man,” and at three-thirty in the morning had gathered together the sum of thirty-six dollars, most of it at the expense of the four-footed bread-winner, whom they urged to the limit of his public-spirited endurance.

His Majesty’s Royal Mails are put to such curious uses at times, and the loyal servants of His Majesty and the people, the letter-handlers, are so accustomed to straightening out tangles and seeing that everything posted goes, that it was not astonishing, perhaps, or even amusing, to find the postman whose route lay in the burned district conscientiously peering into the box at the corner of Bay and Front streets on the second morning after the wreck, hoping like a patriot that no one had been absent-minded beggar enough (that was not exactly the expression he used) to put anything in there.

The activities of the picturesque telegraph linemen were the subject of much admiring comment on the two days following the big event. While the ruins were still smoking these fellows were heaving the newly-shaved poles up with their long pikes, dropping them into the holes from which the old roots of ruined timber had been expeditiously extracted.

There was an urgent call for experts to open the safes and vaults, and the local company, as well as those from elsewhere, had men at work as soon as the temperature of the bricks would permit. These “safe-crackers,” as the irreverent workmen called them, were from among the most skilful of those engaged in lock-making, and where one of them was engaged he was al-