

For the Fire Journal.

The Night Alarm.

The night was wild with icy blast—
The sky with clouds was overcast—
The piercing wind and howling blast
Were shattering thro' the open street.
The pagoda's eadings and green pale,
Dancing to the music of the gale.
The fire patrol, with weary feet,
Alertly paced his dreary beat;
With watchful gaze and modified form,
Braving the fury of the storm.

At length his eye detects a glare,
And he hears a cry in deep despair—
"Fire! fire! Help! help! My God, I'm lost!"
And the sound on the tempest's breath is tossed.
As quick as flash his fringed cap
To the corner he. The alarm bell rings!
And, in a moment, down the street,
Comes the sound of galloping horses' feet,
The rattle of guns and the rattle of wheels,
Made by the engines, trucks and rods.
A volume of smoke and loud steam,
Leap upward and their victim claim.

In the story of the black
A far young girl awaits the shock
Of death in one of our cruellest shapes.
As a very pit beneath her gipsies.
Her agonizing prayers are o'er,
She slinks into the floor,
The malignant flames are quick to act
And do their duty with ready tact;
A ladder is raised with willing hands,
To a window among the burning brands,
And a brave young member of her band
Springs up the rung with a steady hand.
He reaches the window and sees the frame
He disappears in the flames of flame.
The crackling fire licks with his feet
As he presses on the smoke and heat
To the spot where the hapless maiden lies
With pallid face and staring eyes.
Grasping his arm in a firm embrace,
He bears her out with a glowing face.
His blundered hands and clanging bells
Are forgotten in the shouts that roll the air—
"She's saved!" And his comrades cluster round
As he brings her safely to the ground.
He goes—"Here, take her, I'm done for Dave,"
And he hurries back on the lay prove.
His fearful comrades rushed his hand,
But found that their brave young man was dead.
He had borne his pain without a moan
And in saving a life gave up his own.

All know to his gallant name,
Well worthy of the roll of fame,
And say the grass in beauty were
Ever fresh and green above his grave.
God bless the friends in every land,
Who daily take their lives in hand;
With quick response to duty's call,
They leave both fire and falling wall.

J. A. MACDONALD.

Chicago, Ill., Jan. 29, 1880.

An Efficient Fire Department.

The statistics of the Fire Department show that there were 1,541 fires in the city in 1879, against 1,655 in 1878. In 1877 there were 1,430. The only printed statistics with which these can be compared are those of the first three years of the existence of the paid department—1865, 1867 and 1868—when there were 798, 873 and 740 fires respectively. The increase in the number of fires may be accounted for by the increase of

the city, and the addition of such districts as Westchester to the area covered by the statistics. The higher efficiency of the fire department is indicated in the fact that while the percentages of total destruction of buildings by fire were 7, 61.5 and 5 per cent. for 1866, 1867 and 1868 respectively; the percentage for 1877, 1878 and 1879 were only 3.45, 1.14 and 1.6 per cent. of total loss. This difference is said to be due to the perfected system of fire alarms now in use, the convenient arrangement of quarters for men and horses, insuring the prompt response to the signals, and the introduction into the city of a large number of new hydrants, which have always been erected as soon as the Commissioners requested them.

The principal causes of fires have been carelessness on the part of servants or occupants of houses (this is accountable for nearly one-quarter of all the fires), lost chimneys, explosion of kerosene lamps, and window curtains near gas jets. The number of fires from kerosene has been reduced from 136 in 1877 to 93 in 1879, by the methodical inspection of the oil offered for sale, and the reputation of its quality, and of the quantity kept in store. Men are constantly employed in collecting samples, which are labelled and tested, and the dealer is attended to if his sample is below the standard fixed by law. The dealers are getting to understand that they cannot keep an inferior oil without detection, and the consequence is that there is seldom any offered for sale that is not of good quality.

A letter was recently sent to the Fire Commissioners by the Commissioners of Insurance and Correction calling attention to the inadequate protection against fire at Blackwell's, Randall's and Ward's Islands. Commissioner Brennan has been endeavoring for a long time to get better facilities for putting out fires that might occur at the various institutions, and since the fatal fire at Bellevue Hospital he has not allowed the subject to rest. The Fire Commissioners have given the matter prompt attention, and have appointed Commissioners Van Cott and Gorman a committee to make personal inspection of the islands.

Commissioner Brennan has also consulted with the Dock Department with reference to the facilities for taking fire engines from New York to the islands in case of fire, and the department has already altered the pier at One-hundred-and-sixth st. to allow the passage of the engines to Ward's Island, and has taken steps to make similar alterations in the piers at Sixty-second and One-hundred-and-eighteenth sts. for access to Blackwell's and Randall's Islands.

Great Britain.

Although Captain Shaw's report upon the fires in London last year speaks well for the zeal and energy of the Fire Brigade, it is clear that the existing organization of the brigade does not afford adequate protection to the metropolis. It is true that last year there was a less number of serious fires than in 1878; but compared with the average of the seven previous years, the more serious ones showed no decrease in 1879, while there was an increase of 151 in the total number. Again, if a comparison is made with 1866 (the year the brigade was established) the total number of fires last year showed an increase of 360, or no less than 28 per cent.

though the proportion of serious ones was considerably less. Although the value of property destroyed by fire in 1879 was exceptionally small as compared with the previous year, the fires were more fatal during last year, no fewer than 31 persons losing their lives, or seven more than in 1878. The strength of the brigade consisted of only 432 men of all ranks, and when we are told that during the year there were 297 cases of ordinary illness, and sixty-nine injuries, or 366 in all, many of which were serious, it is evident that the number available for duty must have been reduced far below what was safe. Three years ago the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the working of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade expressed a strong opinion that the strength of the force was inadequate for the work assigned to it, and the committee drew attention to the fact that after deducting the number of men employed with the fire-escapes there were only 260 available for duty with the engines and at the stations. Since then fifty men have been added to the brigade, but as the fire-engines have been increased from 10 to 130, the number now available for ordinary duty remains much the same. If the rate were increased to a penny, as recommended by the Select Committee, the additional sum obtained would probably suffice to place the brigade upon an efficient footing.

The Metropolitan Board of Works has recently tried an experiment in the conduct of Fire Brigade Department which has proved so successful that it will be acted upon immediately. As London increases from year to year, the number of fire-stations is augmented, so that there should be a certain proportion between the chances of danger and the proximity of aid. But houses are now run up so lightly, walls are so thin, and lath and plaster are so flimsy substituted for stone and brick, that it is found that to make assistance effectual it should be rendered with extraordinary promptitude. A fire brigade station is necessarily a fixture. The engine is permanently kept in its own house, with men and horses on the spot to manage and transport it. In the meantime the alarm has to be given and notice sent to the other stations. In this respect, indeed, the service is above all praise. Speed is the first duty in the fireman's code, and has been handed down as a tradition from the days when Horace Smith described the race of the various engines to the relief of the burning pile in Drury Lane. But the London streets are not what they were in the days of the Rejected Addresses; and though a fire engine seems to thunder along with resistless force, it is clear that in the course of its journey there must often be delay, and sometimes delay that may even be fatal. Some means should be taken to deal with this difficulty. The permanent stations of the Fire Brigade are retained, and additions will be made to their number as necessity shall arise. These local institutions will, however, be supplemented by movable fire stations which will be placed at selected centres of traffic. For some time past one of these has been quartered at Lodge-circus, and the success of this tentative measure has decided its general adoption. Some means should be taken to make the selected localities well known to the interested householders. The stations are connected by a network of telegraph wires. The delay arises in the first communication of the intelligence.

Last year the London fire engines traversed 50,491 miles, or about 300 times the length of the circumference of the globe. The quantity of water used for extinguishing fires in the Metropolis in the year was 16,122,125 gallons, or about 72,000 tons.