

ities. The attorney for the plaintiff claimed that as Congress has passed an Act stating that the people of the island of Cuba are, and of right ought to be, free and independent, and also passed a resolution authorizing the United States to feed, arm, and equip the people of Cuba in their war against Spain, the people of Cuba were not at war with the United States, but are their allies in the war against Spain. Mrs. Valdez being a Cuban, could not be called a Spanish subject, and was entitled to the insurance money."

The allegation that Valdez committed suicide is denied by plaintiff.

THE NATIONAL FIRE BRIGADES' UNION.

(An interesting gathering at Blenheim Park, Eng.)

On the 20th ult., the above organization opened what is to be called a Fire Camp, at Blenheim Park, the property of the Duke of Marlborough. Those promoting this yearly camp hope to make the meeting to firemen what Bisley is to riflemen, and the Agricultural Hall Tournament to the army. The *Insurance Observer* thus reports the proceedings:—

"The tents are pitched in a delightful situation near the entrance to the park, and are sheltered by a splendid avenue of trees. Contingents from 200 brigades, representing all parts of England and Wales, are attending the camp, and it is estimated that nearly 800 firemen were under canvas. The foreign representatives include delegates from France, Belgium, South Africa, Johannesburg, Australia, and Germany. The Duke of Marlborough is this year president of the union, and is doing his utmost to make the meeting a success."

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Mr. Guy Pym, M.P., took great interest in the gathering. On Saturday, in calling attention to the question of protection against fire in the country, he said it was still thought by many that the provincial fire brigades were to a great extent supported by the insurance Companies, but this was not the case. The subject of fire extinction was one of so much importance that a statement of the legal status and present condition of English fire brigades might be useful. The fire service in England was carried out at the present moment on the following lines: First, brigades constituted and regulated by special or local Acts of Parliament; secondly, brigades organized, equipped, and maintained by local authorities in the exercise of power contained in Acts of Parliament; thirdly, brigades partly equipped or subsidised by local authorities under the same Acts, but partly dependent for their equipment or maintenance on voluntary subscriptions; fourthly, brigades dependent entirely on voluntary subscriptions; and fifthly, private brigades organized by and at the expense of wealthy men, business firms, railway and other Companies, or other public bodies. A few brigades in various parts of the country were still in the employment of insurance Companies, but they were very few. Of the brigades constituted by special Acts of Parliament the Metropolitan Fire Brigade was by far the most important. The Metropolitan Fire Brigade was supported from three sources—the rates, a Parliamentary grant not exceeding £10,000 a year, and a contribution of £33 for every million of insurance on property in the me-

tropolis, imposed by statutes upon the insurance Companies; and it was regulated by the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Act of 1865. With these few exceptions the statutory provisions relating to fire brigades were contained in the following Acts: Lighting and Watching, 1833, under which inspectors were empowered in parishes where the Act had been adopted to provide and keep up fire engines with the necessary plant for the same, to provide places for it and persons to look after it, the expense to be paid out of the rates thereby authorized to be levied. The Town Police Clauses Act, 1847, by section 32, appointed Commissioners who might be entrusted with powers to provide engines and all the appurtenances, fire escapes, purchase or hire of horses for drawing engines, build engine-houses, employ men to act as firemen, and give them and other persons such salaries and rewards for their exertions in case of fire as they might think fit. They were also empowered to send the engines and firemen outside of the limits of the district in which they had power to levy rates, and charge the owner with the expense thereby incurred. The Poor Law Amendment Act, 1867, gave power to the vestries to provide everything necessary, payment to be made out of the poor rate for maintenance and the charges of such persons as might be required for the use thereof, and the cost of suitable implements and accoutrements. By section 66 of the Public Health Act of 1875, it was required that every urban authority should cause fire plugs and all necessary works and machinery for securing an efficient supply of water to be provided. The powers contained in these Acts had since become vested in the urban district council, the rural district council, and the parish council as the case might be. In all these Acts, with the exception of the last, the enactments were permissive only and not compulsory. They gave a power, but they did not impose a duty. The practical result of this legislation was that in some large towns the local authorities had adopted, and were now exercising, such powers with excellent results, and the addition to the rates was very trifling in comparison with the security against loss of life and of property. In many places the local authorities exercised in part only the powers conferred on them, and provided more or less adequate appliances, leaving to the energy and public spirit of some individual, and to the generosity of a few well-disposed persons, the whole, or a greater part, of the expense of forming and maintaining a brigade which was very heavy.

The competitions were most exciting and interesting. The chief competition was the National Challenge Shield for manuals, six men and coachman, with four 50 ft. lengths of canvas-hose and screw couplings. The trophy was won by Bournemouth in 65 seconds. The one man drill for the championship of the union attracted sixty-three entries, the winner being a fireman named Blacklock, of Lydd.

The Duke and Duchess of Marlborough entertained the foreign representatives at their palace, and in the course of a speech the Duke said:—

"He was glad to welcome the National Fire Brigades' Union to Blenheim. He thought that as a result of the increased wealth of the world they had increased property to protect and also increased dangers in the preservation of that property. But had they in the same proportion increased the means of protecting that property from the increased dangers? He thought the answer was in the negative, because,