



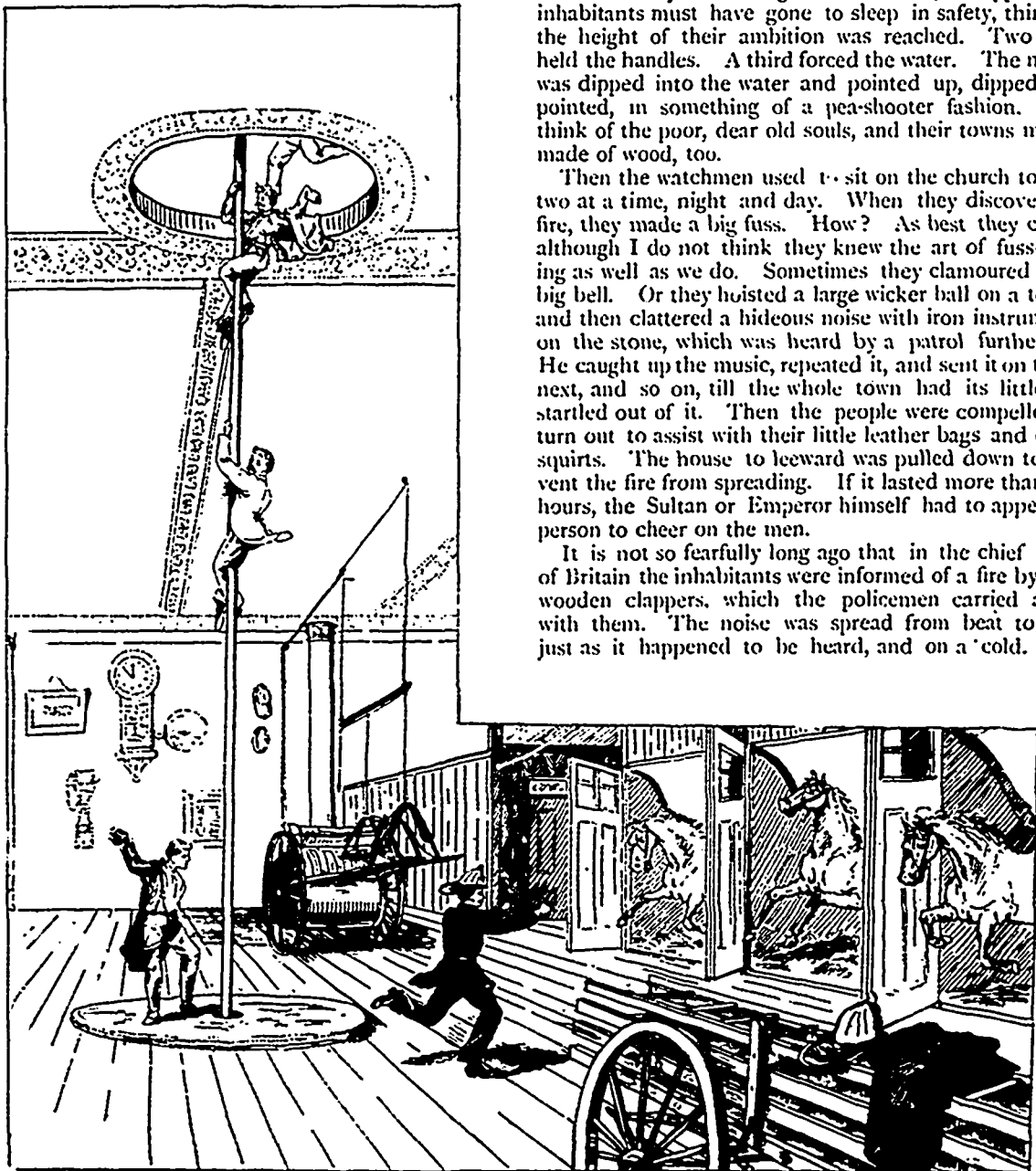
OUR FIRE BRIGADES.

How our old, old ancestors would stare at them, as they thought of the way they themselves did—running around with leather bags of water, squirting out a few pints, scuttling off to fill the bags again, and coming

back to their paltry sprinkling! Specially grand they thought themselves, quite advanced indeed, when they got the length of a cistern drawn about by a horse, with a crowd of thirty men pushing and spluttering to get it to work. But, when brass squirts were introduced, which actually held one gallon at a time, I suppose the inhabitants must have gone to sleep in safety, thinking the height of their ambition was reached. Two men held the handles. A third forced the water. The nozzle was dipped into the water and pointed up, dipped and pointed, in something of a pea-shooter fashion. Just think of the poor, dear old souls, and their towns mostly made of wood, too.

Then the watchmen used to sit on the church towers, two at a time, night and day. When they discovered a fire, they made a big fuss. How? As best they could, although I do not think they knew the art of fuss-making as well as we do. Sometimes they clamoured on a big bell. Or they hoisted a large wicker ball on a tower, and then clattered a hideous noise with iron instruments on the stone, which was heard by a patrol further on. He caught up the music, repeated it, and sent it on to the next, and so on, till the whole town had its little life startled out of it. Then the people were compelled to turn out to assist with their little leather bags and quart squirts. The house to leeward was pulled down to prevent the fire from spreading. If it lasted more than two hours, the Sultan or Emperor himself had to appear in person to cheer on the men.

It is not so fearfully long ago that in the chief cities of Britain the inhabitants were informed of a fire by loud wooden clappers, which the policemen carried about with them. The noise was spread from beat to beat just as it happened to be heard, and on a cold, foggy



THE ALARM.