

To the Citizens of the Town of BOSTON.

THE Fire-Wards of Boston, while they cordially unite in the general sympathy excited in behalf of the sufferers by the late conflagration, feel that there is great cause to congratulate their Fellow-Citizens at large, that the progress of the flames, which at one period seemed to threaten devastation far and wide, was at length so happily arrested. To the persevering exertions of those who laboured on this occasion, is the Town indebted, under Divine Providence, for so seasonable and unexpected a check to the ravages of the destroying element.

The Captains and Companies of the several Engines have the united and individual thanks of the Fire-Wards, for their prompt execution of orders in this trying instance, as well as for their readiness, at all times, to encounter both fatigue and danger in the line of their duty.

In a town like Boston, populous and extensive, its buildings composed principally of combustible materials, in many places crowded together, and accessible only by narrow streets and avenues, it is more an incitement to vigilance, than a cause of surprise, that the inhabitants are frequently summoned by the alarm of Fire, and sometimes to witness scenes like that recently exhibited.

The Citizens of this Metropolis have long been distinguished for their spirited and well directed exertions on these disastrous emergencies; and, as past experience renders it but too probable that a necessity for similar efforts will oftentimes occur, it is of great importance, that the character they have so justly merited in this respect, should be maintained. Impressed with this conviction, and desirous of rendering as efficient as possible the system of operations at such times, the Fire-Wards are induced to offer a few hints, which they hope will be thought not wholly undeserving of attention.

And in the first place, the Fire-Wards cannot but lament that there are often seen at Fires, (and that, too, in very considerable numbers) those, who appear to be led thither by no other motive than curiosity, who, far from being serviceable, do much injury; not only by their idle example, but by occupying spaces which are wanted for others who are willing to labour, and by pressing in upon, and obstructing the operations of such, as are actually engaged in duty. Persons of this description would do well to keep at a distance from the immediate scene of action, where they cannot fail to excite the vexation of the Fire-Wards, and the disgust, as well as discontent, of the active citizens who witness their cold indifference. The Fire-Wards have also, at different times, experienced, from persons of all classes in the community, a mortifying disregard to their pressing solicitations for aid, in the discharge of their official duty. This duty, it must be acknowledged, is, at best, arduous, and frequently requires the co-operation of all the good citizens present, to give it effect. What then must be the perplexity and embarrassment of the Fire-Wards, if this co-operation be withheld, or but partially and reluctantly afforded! Particularly discouraging is it, when they are denied the countenance and support of any, whom they have been accustomed to meet and respect in the ordinary walks of life, and from whom they have a right to expect better things. It is true, the Fire-Wards have authority to enforce obedience to their orders; but if much of their time is occupied in this odious part of their duty, how can they attend to direct the exertions of the inhabitants for extinguishing the flames?

To the influential men of every class, therefore, the Fire-Wards must look for assistance, not only in conveying water to the engines, but in preserving the lanes entire, and in animating

to duty, both by precept and example. These are the only means which need such incitement.

Secondly, Great use may be made of the Youth, from ten to fourteen years of age, who attend school. They should be placed as soon as possible after their arrival, on the empty-bucket side of lanes for supplying the engines. They feel a pride in being thus put forward, and are frequently more steady in that situation than even men, who are apt to leave it in quest of one where they can do more good, while the Youth are satisfied to remain in it. Let it be enjoined by every Father, Guardian and Master, upon the Youth under his care, to take, on such occasions, the post above pointed out, which will train them in the service, so necessary to be understood, and give them a knowledge in the management of fires, which practice alone can afford.

Thirdly, The Fire-Wards observe, with much pleasure, that many of the Fire Societies in the town have increased the number of their buckets to four for each member, instead of two, as formerly; and it is much to be wished, that all the Societies would adopt the same regulation. The want of buckets was seriously felt for a short time during the late fire.

Having said thus much concerning the extinguishment of fires, the Fire-Wards deem it neither foreign to their subject nor their duty, to offer a few brief remarks with a view to prevention.

They have been unremitting in their exertions, to prevent the smoking of Segars in the streets, and conveying fire from one house to another in open vessels, in violation of the 6th and 7th Sections of a law passed in the year 1798, entitled "An Act to secure the Town of Boston from Damage by Fire." They have prosecuted some persons who have persisted in the violation of the law; this however has produced but a very partial remedy of the evil, nor will the nuisance be perfectly checked, until the inhabitants generally become prosecutors of the delinquents, or will hand their names, and furnish proof to the Secretary of the Fire-Wards, who has received instructions to pursue the violators of this good and wholesome Law, and bring the offenders to punishment. The Fire-Wards therefore earnestly request the attention of the inhabitants of the town to this point. To those who allege that they cannot spare from their private avocations, the time necessary to attend a legal process, the Fire-Wards observe, that such part of the fine as accrues to them, on conviction, will be relinquished to the prosecutors, which will fully compensate the loss of a few hours from business.

In thus addressing their Fellow-Citizens, the Fire-Wards are sensible they take upon themselves a task, which their official duty, however it may warrant, does not strictly require; they are aware too, that in doing it, they expose themselves to the strictures of those, who may have views of the subject different from their own. To the candid and judicious part of the community, however, the Fire-Wards cheerfully submit both their remarks and their motives. For themselves they have only to say, that having had those opportunities for observation peculiar to their station, and considering themselves in some measure the Guardians of the public safety in the province assigned them, they have thought it expedient under all circumstances, in this manner to call the attention of their fellow-townsmen to the objects above indicated.

By Order of the Fire-Wards,
ANDREW CUNNINGHAM, Sec'y.

Boston, January 1, 1802.

Extract from the Act to secure the Town of Boston from Damage by Fire. Passed June 27, 1798.

SECT. 6. And be it further enacted, That every person who shall carry any fire through the streets, lanes, or on any wharves, in said town, except in some covered vessel, or shall smoke, or have in his or her possession, any lighted pipe or segar, in any street, lane or passage-way, or on any wharf in said town, shall forfeit and pay for each and every offence, the sum of Two Dollars, to be recovered of the person so offending, or of his parent, guardian, master or mistress, before any Justice of the Peace of the County of Suffolk, upon complaint made upon oath.

SECT. 7. And be it further enacted, That if any person shall have in his or her possession, in any rope-walk within said town, any fire, lighted pipe or segar, candle or lamp, he shall forfeit and pay for each offence, a sum not exceeding One Hundred Dollars, nor less than Five Dollars, to be recovered in any Court proper to try the same.

Extract from the Act, providing for the Storage and safe Keeping of Gun-Powder in the Town of Boston, and to prevent Damage from the same. Passed June 19, 1801.

SECT. 3. And be it further enacted, That no Gun-Powder shall be kept on board any Ship or other Vessel, lying to, or grounded at any Wharf within the port of Boston; and if any Gun-Powder shall be found on board

such Ship or Vessel, lying at any Wharf, or aground, such Powder shall be liable to confiscation, and under the same penalty as if it were found lying in any house or warehouse.