

P O L I C E

Records and Recollections;

OR,

BOSTON BY DAYLIGHT AND GASLIGHT

FOR

TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY YEARS.

BY

EDWARD H. SAVAGE.

“Tis strange but true — for truth is always strange, stranger than fiction.”

— BYRON.

B O S T O N :

JACKSON, DALE & COMPANY,

114 WASHINGTON STREET.

1873.

J. F. RIDAY, SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER,

147 TREMONT STREET.

B. E.

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

(Editor's Note: The following excerpt from "*Police Records and Recollections*" by Edward H. Savage, Boston Police Chief in the 1870's, describes the Line Of Duty death of Hoseman George N. Abercrombie of Engine Company 7, which occurred on July 11, 1862 at Box - District 1/Station 11 (Two Alarms) on Sudbury Street, Downtown.)

DEATH OF A FIREMAN.

DURING my service for the city I have usually been in the habit of being present at any considerable fire that might occur, especially in the night time.

On the evening of July 11, 1862, having had a hard day's work, I was about to retire to my bed at an early hour, when the bells sounded the alarm of fire, in District No. 1. On throwing open the window-blinds of my house, which was in Charter Street, I saw that the heavens were lighted up by a fire apparently somewhere near Haymarket Square. I immediately threw on an old fire suit, and started out. On reaching Haymarket, I found the Square and adjoining streets filled with people; but the fire was further on up Sudbury Street, and consuming several wood buildings on the north side of Sudbury, between Adams and Hawkins Streets.

I elbowed my way through the crowd till I reached the fire, where I found the people so densely huddled together that it was necessary to shut off the streets.

An additional force of police, with ropes, were soon on the ground, and the spectators were forced back sufficiently far to give the firemen room to work.

The police had hardly accomplished their task, when a chimney near the corner of Adams and Sudbury Street, losing the support of surrounding timbers, fell upon the front wood walls, which were still standing, and the whole burning mass came tumbling into Sudbury Street, burying several firemen under the rubbish on the very place where a large number of spectators had so lately stood, and where I stood myself but a moment before.

A number of men rushed to the spot to remove the rubbish and extricate the poor fellows that lay buried beneath. There were seven in all, more or less injured, some being carried to one place and some to another, to have their wounds dressed; all but one escaped without fatal injury, and he was struck on the temple with a heavy stick of timber, that broke his skull, and he died in a few moments after, we had carried him into a shop on the opposite side of the street. He was a member of Engine Company No. 7, about thirty-five years of age, a worthy man and a good fireman, and had a wife and three small children dependent on his labors for support.

We procured a litter, and his body was conveyed

to the Station House in Court Square by his sorrowing comrades.

Then the melancholy tidings must be conveyed to his family, — to his poor wife, who, with her little ones, were patiently waiting the father's return after the fire. But the stout hearts of those brave men, who could meet death in any form without a tremor, shrank from the task of conveying the sad news to the wife. No one felt that he could go. Finally, at the earnest solicitation of the engineers and some of the members of his company, — with his employer and one other gentleman, I started off on the melancholy errand.

We reached the house about 11 o'clock at night, and on entering found the widowed mother with her children drawn closely around her, as if expecting some fearful visitation. We told our sad tale as best we could; but the scene there presented I cannot describe, neither can I recall it to memory without a most painful emotion. Her neighbors and friends gathered about her, and there was no dry eye in that sad group. The wife was calm, but a picture of despair, and spoke of her husband and her children with a depth of feeling most touching.

She had a little son about three years old, a bright, flaxen-haired child. She said when the father left the house at seven o'clock in the morning, (he had not been home since,) the child fol-

lowed him out the door, hanging on to his coat, and crying, "Pa pa, don't go ; pa pa, don't go !" as if his little heart would break. The circumstance was unusual, and produced a foreboding on the mind of the mother throughout the day. "Poor child," said she, "he will never again meet the smile nor enjoy the parting kiss of that fond father, who now sleeps in death."

We left the poor heart-broken widow in care of a few kind friends, and after rendering what further assistance I could, in caring for the body of the deceased fireman, long after midnight I found myself, almost exhausted, wending my way alone through the deserted streets to my own home, with a heart deeply depressed at the melancholy scenes I had so lately witnessed, yet grateful to Him who holdeth the lives of men in the hollow of his hand that I was spared to yet be the guardian of my own dear wife and child.