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HISTORY OF BOSTON,

THE

Metropolis of Massachusetts,

FROM ITS

ORIGIN TO THE PRESENT PERIOD;

WITH SOME

ACCOUNT OF THE ENVIRONS.

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Mons Idæus ubi et gentis cunabula nostræ.—Virgil.

EMBELLISHED WITH ENGRAVINGS.

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1828.

ADDENDA.

SUMMARY OF EVENTS SINCE OCTOBER

1825.

DURING the latter part of the year 1825, the City Government was deeply engaged in organizing the new Fire Department, on the plan of the Act of June 18th, which had been accepted at a general meeting of the citizens on the 7th of July. Great opposition was made to the acceptance of that Act, principally on the ground that the City Council had exceeded their prerogative, in asking of the Legislature so essential a change in the City Charter, without the previous consent of the inhabitants. Those who considered the Board of Overseers of the Poor to have been virtually abolished by the creation of the Board of Directors of the House of Industry, and who were alarmed at the declaration from high authorities, that the School Committee, on its present plan, was a body inefficient and liable to be treated with disrespect, judged the opportunity now offered to be a proper one for expressing their opinion, unitedly, against what they regarded as dangerous assumptions. But the number of both was inferior to those who had witnessed the disorder prevalent on every occasion of an alarming fire, and felt the necessity of more energetic measures to ensure their property from destruction. So the Act was accepted by a vote of 1347 to 1164 :—Majority, 183.*

The expediency of the measure was thus determined, and a melancholy opportunity soon after occurred, to evince to all the necessity of speedily carrying it into execution. A fire broke out in Court-street, on Thursday morning, Nov. 10th, about half past twelve o'clock, in the hatter's shop of Mr. Wm. Brown, on the South side of the street, ten doors from Washington Street. It soon penetrated into the adjoining buildings on each side, and extended itself, across the street, to the large granite building occupied in part for the extensive bookstore of Messrs. Wells & Lilly. Nine or ten large brick and stone buildings, with several smaller ones were entirely

* An Act, in addition to this Act, was definitively passed, March 2, 1827, rendering the power of Engineers more certain in regard to their control over powder. A law of March 10, 1827, regulating buildings, required the consent of the inhabitants, which was refused, in general meeting, April 20th.

destroyed, containing thirty-five lawyers' offices, and about 20 shops and stores. Many Attorneys lost their entire libraries, of which several were highly valued—two at not less than 10,000 dollars each.

The confusion which prevailed during this fire, and the unwillingness of many spectators to assist, when directed by the old Firewards, increased the desire of the city to see the new Fire Department organized. The system was completed and adopted by an Ordinance of the City-Council, December 5th. The officers were subsequently chosen, and all other arrangements being completed, the Mayor issued his proclamation on the 29th of April, 1826, declaring the fact.

By the provisions of this Ordinance, the Fire Department now consists of one Chief Engineer, with so many other engineers, one to reside in each Ward, and as many Fire-men, Engine-men, Hose-men, and Hook-and-ladder-men, to be divided into companies, as the number of engines, and the number and quantity of the other fire apparatus shall make expedient. The Chief has the "sole and absolute control and command," over all the engineers and all other persons of the Fire Department, in cases of fire; and in his absence, the engineer next in rank will execute his office. The body of engineers possess all the powers heretofore exercised by the board of firewards. It is the duty of the other members of the department, whenever a fire shall break out within the city, to repair forthwith to the place, and to exert themselves with all their skill and power, towards the extinguishment of the same, and to protect the persons of the department from being interrupted in the performance of their duty by the by-standers, and in saving and protecting property endangered. It is made the duty of the City Marshal and Constables to be present at all fires, for the preservation of the public peace, and all spectators are enjoined to obey the directions of any engineer, under penalty of not less than two nor more than twenty dollars for each offence. All members of the fire department are conditionally exempted from military duty, and if any one shall neglect or refuse to perform his office at a fire, he becomes liable to a fine of three dollars.

To facilitate the operations in case of fire, large reservoirs have been constructed in various parts of the city, which are kept constantly full of water; and the project of supplying the city with water by aqueduct, from some of the sources in the vicinity, has been under serious consideration. The utility of such an expedient admits not a doubt, and modern ingenuity forbids that there should be any question of its practicability. An extensive supply of hose has been procured, and several new engines.

The expences of this department including all the purchases and building of reservoirs was, for the two years ending May 1st, 1827,

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| In 14th annual report, | Fire Department, - - | \$9836 95 |
| | Engine Houses and Land, | 6159 62 |
| | Reservoirs, - - - - | 3488 27 |
| In 15th do. | do. Fire Department, - - | 21362 42 |
| | do. Reservoirs, - - - - | 4125 66 |

Making a total of \$44922 92

On which the Auditor remarks, "it is believed that the whole expense is largely compensated by the great additional security which it affords to property within the city. A comparatively small annual expense will probably be sufficient hereafter."

On the first of November, 1826, an inspection and review of the whole department took place on the Common. "The engineers, fire-men, hook-and-ladder-men, and hose-men, all wore their respective uniforms and caps, and appeared in the most complete order. The engines &c. were all accompanied by their lantern-bearers, axe and saw-bearers, &c. The perfect neatness and order exhibited by the whole, and the cleanliness of the engines, &c. reflected great credit upon the several branches of the department." It may gratify some to see the following recapitulation of men and apparatus employed in this department:—Chief Engineer, 1; Engineers, 12; Firemen, 300; Buckets, 600; Badges, 300; Engines, 20; Men, 1180; Hose Carriages, 23; Hose, No. of feet, 6005; Spanners, 294; Belts, 183; Buckets, 839; Suction Hose, No. of feet, 144; Drag Rope, do. 1465; Axes, 42; Saws, 14; Conductors, 14; Caps, 908; Badges, 1369; Torches, 62; Lanthorns, 34; Hose Lines, 28; Wrenches, 30; Oil Cannisters, 40; Shovels, 15; Hammers, 17; Tin Pans, 29; Trumpets, 54; Hooks, 25; Ladders, 14; Lamps, 76; Life Lines, 56; Brushes, 41; Candlesticks, 21; Hose Boots, 99; Pipes, 47; Copper Pump, 1. Hook and Ladder Company, 48 men; 1 Four Wheel Carriage and Harness; 1 Ladder, 60 feet long; 1 do. 45 do.; 1 do. 25 do.; 1 do. 20 do.; 3 Hooks, with Ropes and Chains; 6 Crotch Poles, 2 of 25 feet; 2 of 12 do.; 2 of 6 do.; 2 Torches; 4 Hammers; 2 Lanthorns, and 50 Badges.