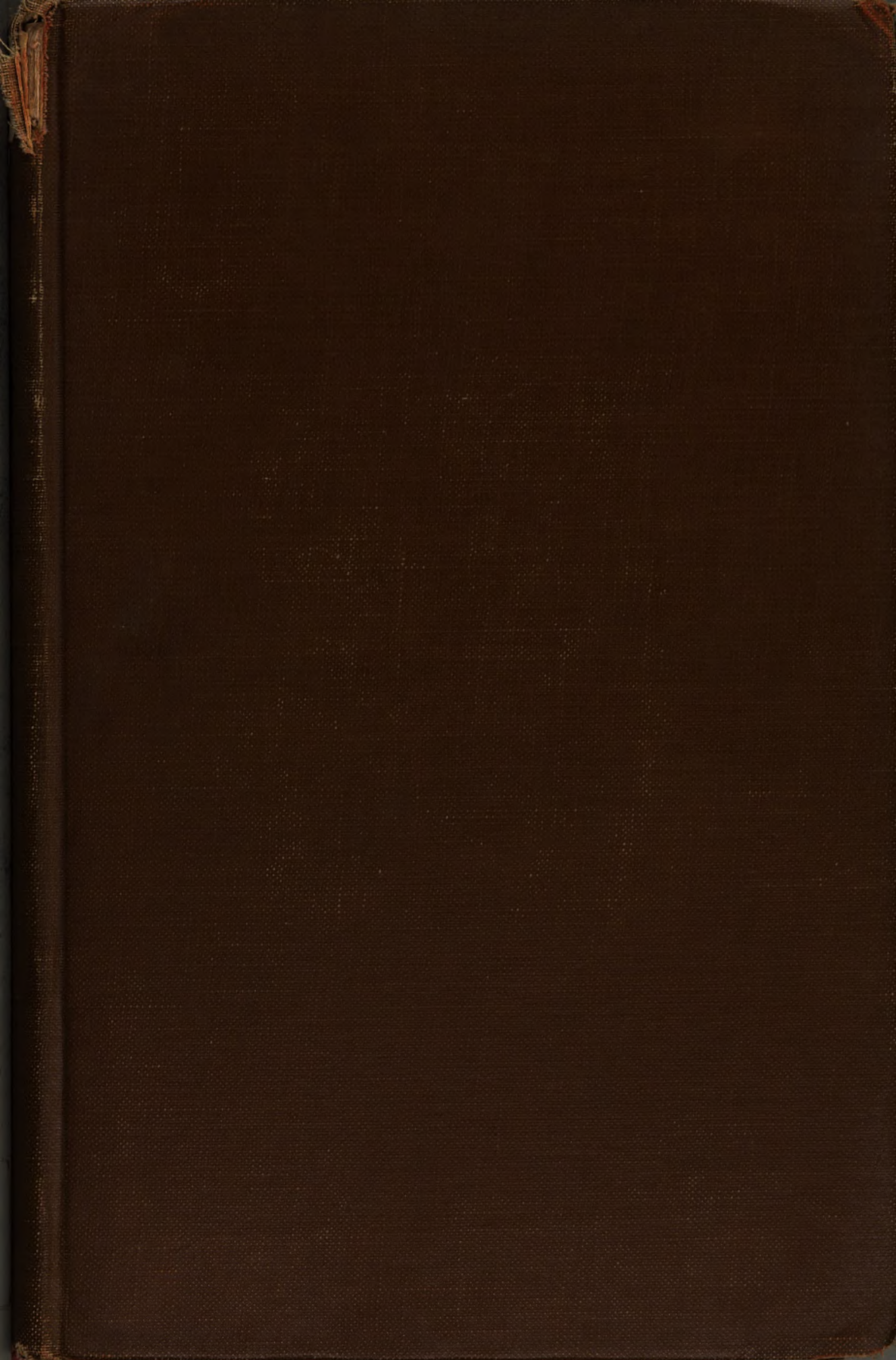

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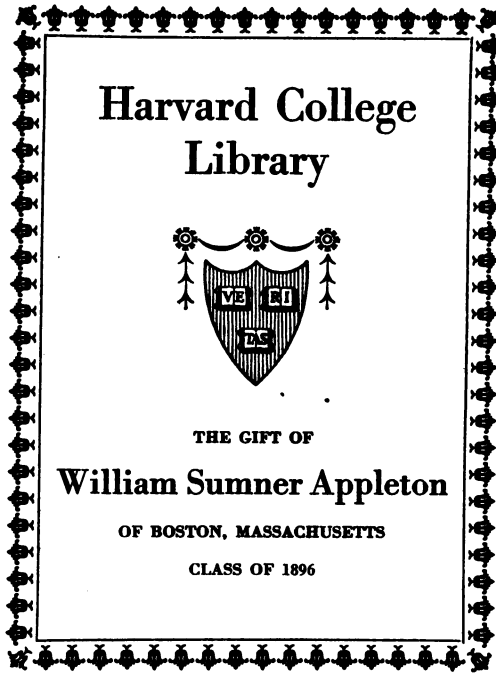
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CITY OF BOSTON.



REPORT AND EVIDENCE

ON THE

Reorganization of the Fire Department,

AND THE

CAUSE OF THE FIRE MAY 30TH, 1873.

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Mass*

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CITY OF BOSTON.

IN COMMON COUNCIL, September 4, 1873.

The joint special committee on the reorganization of the Fire Department, to whom were referred the petitions of Little, Brown & Company, and many other citizens and taxpayers of Boston, praying for the appointment of an independent Board to have control and management of the Fire Department, after a series of public hearings given to the petitioners aforesaid, as well as to the remonstrants against the proposed measure, having duly considered the subject, would respectfully report in favor of granting the prayer of the said petitioners, and submit the following statement of the views and considerations upon which their recommendation of the measure is based.

Until the manner of building of American cities shall be reformed altogether, we their inhabitants cannot too soon realize that we are living, not in a state of peace, but of war, declared against us, for good cause, by a relentless and stubborn enemy. There is no safety for us now unless our troops are kept constantly upon a war footing and in the highest state of efficiency. This no person in his senses will attempt to deny, and it is the question of means to this acknowledged end which it is the most important duty of this committee to consider. Our soldiers, in spite of their undeniable bravery, have suffered two terrible defeats. The consequence for the moment is greatly increased vigilance at all outposts, and it may be some time before the enemy again advances in force; but when he does, the community cannot feel confidence that similar or even more disastrous losses may not occur. For we cannot but come to the conclusion that the department,

with the old hand engines, was a better protection to Boston of the past, than even with the assistance of steam and electricity it is now to Boston of to-day. Our business thoroughfares become daily more and more crowded, our warehouses rise higher and higher, and combustible material for a conflagration is heaped together with the increase of business to a tenfold greater degree than in former days. The introduction of steam has only partially counteracted this increased liability, for although vastly greater volumes of water can be now thrown, it will not help us so long as the problem of placing a little where it will do the most good remains unsolved. This was what the old volunteer department certainly did better than our firemen of to-day; for the danger of entering burning buildings and scaling roofs could not be compared with what it is at present. We would refer on this point to the testimony of ex-Alderman Fitch, a practical fireman of the old school. All parties concur in acknowledging that most important changes and improvements are imperatively called for in the department before its efficiency will again merit the confidence of the community; the difference of opinion is merely upon the question whether the desired reforms can be effected and the department brought to and kept in a state of excellence which shall enable us to court comparison with those of other cities under joint committees of the City Council and the Board of Engineers, or whether a permanent commission should be created to whom the whole authority and responsibility in the matter should be delegated.

To answer this question it will be necessary to inquire to what extent and how radically the present force needs reorganization. It appears to the committee to be at the present moment in a transition state. That the men individually do more than ought to be expected of them, under the present system, no one can deny. But that system seems to us an unfortunate compromise between a regular and volunteer department, and gives us neither the drill, discipline

and trained professional skill of the one, nor the numbers, enthusiasm and rivalry of the other. Engineers, stokers and drivers only are permanently employed; the men whose duty it is to fight the flames at close quarters still leave their private vocations — the support of their lives — to run to fires, as of old, and only at the scene of action are they under orders. If danger is anticipated, as it was recently on the fourth of July, the Chief Engineer can only request his soldiers to assemble at any given point. They were so requested and complied; but it was evident from the statement of Mr. Merritt that an order would have been resented as an unauthorized assumption, which indeed it would have been. Then what little discipline might be established voluntarily within the companies is rendered almost impossible by the fact that the foremen and assistants are still nominated by the companies, and owe their positions to popularity.

It appeared from the statement of the last-named gentleman that there are or have been volunteer drills in the hook and ladder companies, but the committee have heard of none elsewhere, and there is no power to compel them.

Then there can be no doubt that the existing apparatus is not properly distributed for the protection of the greatest amount of property. This may be owing to the recent increase of the city's area by annexation; but there would seem to be no body or official ready to take the immediate responsibility of ordering the necessary change.

The committee cannot but regard the present system of electing the Chief and Assistant Engineers by the City Council as a dilution of responsibility; which, whenever there is competition, greatly decreases the best man's chances of success. And the fact that these officers owe their position to election, and not to appointment, greatly enhances the difficulty of a removal for incompetency or misbehavior. It is not difficult to see why the Chief would hesitate to attempt it, except in a case so glaring or outrageous as to render him

certain of success, for if he fails, as happened a year or two since, where the committee sustained the accused, the effect must be damaging to discipline and efficiency.

The request of the petitioners that a special force be organized to take charge of the streets in the vicinity of a fire, with power to check and properly divert travel at the requisite points, appears to the committee reasonable and good. To these duties might be added that of preceding the engines on horseback, if necessary, to give warning of their approach. The chances are that the fire of May 30th would not have gained the mastery, as it did, but for the block of horse-cars and other vehicles on Tremont street, which impeded the engines. The police, relieved from the duty of keeping the lines, could then devote themselves to their legitimate business of preserving order and preventing theft.

The question of the combination of light, portable apparatus, whether chemical or manual, with the powerful steamers, is one which has received, in other cities, greater attention than with us.

In like manner it has been found advantageous in all cities in which the force is kept constantly in hand, to dispense with the public alarms, which serve only to attract the curious, and announce to the criminal classes where a field for their operations may be found. But it is useless for the committee to further suggest reforms and improvements. Whenever all traces of the volunteer system shall have disappeared, and we have in its place a small but paid, drilled and disciplined standing army, with appointed officers, under a competent and responsible head, those whose business it is to seek and devise means for increasing its efficiency will undoubtedly continue to find them.

The question for the committee is whether the reorganization indicated, which shall result, as one of our New York friends prophesied, in the production of the model American department, can be hoped or expected under the existing or any

similar machinery, or whether a permanent board should be appointed, paid to make it the business of their lives and held to a corresponding responsibility. There would seem to be but one answer to this question, unless it can be shown that the evils resulting from such a system will more than counterbalance its increased efficiency. For until, as before stated, the manner of building of American cities shall be reformed altogether, the business of protecting them against fire will soon, if it has not already, come to be regarded as a profession not unworthy of the best talent and education in the land.

The conviction which seems to have justly entered the mind of the public is that the business of running the fire department has become too big a job, to use the common expression, to be longer entrusted to elective boards, and changing, unpaid committees, and they demand a concentration of power and responsibility in some permanent and competent body whom they may hold to strict account for shortcomings and deficiencies. And these eight thousand petitioners ask us for such a body in the shape of a fire commission of three persons, to be appointed by the Mayor.

The testimony which we have concerning the working of fire commissions, for we are not now concerned about others, seems to be almost all in one direction. The regular and striking diminution of loss by fire in New York since the adoption of this system speaks volumes in its favor. The objections thus far urged before this committee have been, first, the greater opportunities for corruption which a permanent commission is alleged to present; and, second, the increased expenditure which it would call for out of the pockets of the tax-payer. But the committee cannot admit that commissions should receive general condemnation because certain aristocratic thieves in our sister city succeeded in perverting one to their purposes, any more than that horse-cars should be abolished because an humbler class of profes-

sionals made them their field of labors. The committee would have supposed, on the contrary, the system of electing officers, of constantly changing committees of an unpaid government, and of diluted responsibility in general, to be more favorable to dishonesty, to political influence, to jobs, and what are called rings, than would be a permanent Board, whose doings would be at all times subject to the fierce light of popular criticism by the citizens whose property they were paid to protect. If we have escaped corruption under our present system, the committee cannot believe that the appointment of a fire board is about to inaugurate its reign. Next, the increased expenditure. It is evident that increased expenditures are imperatively called for, whether under a commission or the present system. Unless it can be shown that the probabilities are that they will be greater under the first-named regime than under the latter, then the increased expenditure amounts only to the salaries of the Board; for the committee would certainly recommend that these be fixed at a sum which would enable us to command the services of education, talent and business capacity of the first order. If the result shall be a protection of property and a restoration of confidence in the community at large, will not this money have been well spent?

But let us follow this subject of increased expenditure a little farther. If the tax-payer should be called on to pay more for a department which does protect his property than for one which does not, it may be supposed that he would not complain. Have, then, the departments which have given the best protection to property, cost proportionally more than ours, which has just notoriously failed? Not so, the facts show the contrary. The committee would cite a few figures, taken from an excellent article upon this subject, published in the last number of the "North American." It appears that the expense of various fire departments in

American cities assessed per capita on their inhabitants is as follows: New York, \$1.02; Philadelphia, .57½; St. Louis, .46¼; Chicago, \$1.00; Baltimore, .57; Cincinnati, \$1.27; Boston, \$1.54. The amount of losses per capita within the last five years, exclusive of the great fires of Chicago and Boston, has been: New York, \$16.80; Philadelphia, \$16.17; St. Louis, \$13.26; Chicago, \$30.39; Baltimore, \$6.62; Cincinnati, \$16.56; Boston, \$13.08.

Of these cities the only one which had not a more permanent government of the department than that of Boston was Cincinnati, where, it will be observed, the cost per capita comes nearest to that of our own department, while the losses nearly equal those of New York and Philadelphia. So far from assuming that the department of the future will cost more to future tax-payers if run by a commission than under a continuation of the present or similar machinery, the committee consider that reason and experience have proved the contrary, and that our present system has proved itself of all others the most costly and not the most efficient.

The committee do not feel themselves called on to discuss the competency or qualifications of the present Chief Engineer, or to criticise the management of the recent fires. They would, however, remind those loudest in censure that the Chief has never enjoyed the power which should render him responsible for the efficiency of the Department. Had he in past years been vested with the power which it is proposed to give the commission, then the occurrence of either of the recent fires would have justified a demand for his instant resignation. Whether he managed his forces well or ill, it is evident that under any management they were insufficient, and he should not be made a scape-goat to bear the faults of the system. It has been asked by those who oppose the appointment of a commission: Why not vest the whole power in a single head, giving autocratic power to the Chief Engineer, and hold him responsible? Because, in the

first place, it would be too much to expect any one man to undertake. The general in command of an army, although absolute in the field and responsible for the manner of its use, yet is not responsible for the details of its organization, its armament and equipment; that is the business of the War Department, acting through boards and commissions, who give their whole study to the question of keeping the machine in the highest state of efficiency. Because it has been found in another city that five commissioners were better than seven, and three than five, the committee can by no means agree that it follows that one would be better than three, and that that one should be also Chief Engineer. There is work enough for three men. In the New York Department, each commissioner is at the head of a bureau, one for the extinguishment of fires, one for the investigation of the cause of fires, and one in relation to the storage of combustibles.

It has been asked could not the present Board of Engineers, if given greater powers, accomplish all that could be expected of a commission? In the first place, different qualifications are or should be required of an engineer, and of a commissioner; and, secondly, the body is too large to properly exercise the supreme authority, and to assume the responsibility which the public require.

The committee allow the full force of the arguments in favor of building laws which should give to this city the safety of those on the continent of Europe. Could we pull down our city and rebuild it, with the fire-proof floors of Paris, we might undoubtedly diminish the expense of our department, and sell our steamers to London; but, though we should spare no effort in this direction in behalf of unbuilt Boston, it is Boston as she stands to-day that we are called on to defend. It is not, however, to her superior construction alone that Paris owes her immunity from loss, but to the admirable manner in which the protection of her fire-soldiers, or *pompriers*, is dispersed throughout the city.

Stations are very numerous, patrols constant, in every theatre and public ball-room the brass helmet shines ; they are, in short, a fire police, always on duty and on the watch. How far such a system could be introduced or adapted to our community is exactly one of the questions to which the commissioners would undoubtedly devote all the necessary study. The principle underlying Mr. Bird's theory of a fire department, viz., portable apparatus within instant reach for the attack upon a fire in its inception, is also a valuable one. The placing of such apparatus within reach of citizens as well as firemen, with inducements and instructions for its use, may be an experiment well worth trying, on a larger or smaller scale, according to the judgment of the commissioners. The advisability of legislation upon this point might well deserve their consideration. Were the owners of all buildings stored with certain classes of combustibles compelled by law to provide apparatus on each floor for instant attack on the flames, under penalties to be enforced by the department, many a destructive fire would be avoided. With a Johnson pump and a bucket Mr. Burr might have dashed out the conflagration of May 30th, even in spite of the oil and turpentine which soon gave it such fearful headway.

The committee have used the words "standing army" intentionally, because no others so well express the nature of the organization to which the defence of a large city against fire should be entrusted. That the words are repugnant to our form of government, and that our citizens look with distrust upon officials who do not owe their positions directly to the voice of the people, is well understood. But the war taught us at least that republican government could not be carried into an army ; that the town-meeting principle, though admissible for the militia in time of peace, would never produce the fighting machine of an army in condition to face the enemy. Our argument in favor of a commission, therefore, is based upon the position announced at the begin-

ning, viz., that the inhabitants of American cities, as now constructed, are living in a state of war against an enemy ready to take instant advantage of every weak point in our lines, and that in consequence war powers and war responsibilities must be given to and imposed upon the body to whom are entrusted the organization and management of our troops. [To expect such powers and responsibilities to be properly exercised and assumed by elective boards and unpaid changing committees, whose members' time is claimed by half-a-dozen others in addition to the private business by which they live, seems contrary to all reason and common sense.] That the appointment of a commission will act as an immediate remedy for all the faults and deficiencies of our present system, we do not claim. Men of the desired abilities and qualifications may not be immediately found. But that they will eventually appear, and that in the long run this system is the only one which will ensure to Boston of the future a protection equal, if not superior, to that enjoyed by her sister cities, this committee is so convinced, that they have no hesitation in recommending the change desired. In so doing they desire to recognize and acknowledge all the zeal and industry which the existing as well as former committees have brought to a task, which, for the reasons above stated, this committee would transfer to a permanent board. It must be remembered that the City Council, in deciding to try the experiment of a new system, parts with no power which it cannot resume at will if, after a fair trial, we may desire to retrace our steps, as the statute already provides that all powers in relation to the establishment and maintenance of the Fire Department may be exercised either by the City Council immediately, or through the agency of any persons or boards to whom the same may be delegated.

In accordance with the foregoing views the committee would offer the following recommendations and suggestions concerning the reorganization of the department which it is

proposed to commit and entrust to a permanent board of three commissioners, in accordance with the prayer of the petitioners.

I. Such immediate increase of the permanent force of the department, both in men and apparatus, as shall in the opinion of the commissioners suffice for the present protection of the city.

II. The establishment and maintenance, throughout the entire command, of a system of strict military discipline and responsibility, together with such instruction, training and drill, theoretical as well as practical, as shall bring it to the highest state of efficiency, together with the adoption so far as necessary for this purpose of a military form of organization.

III. The division of the city into fire districts, in each of which an assistant engineer or other officer should reside, held to a knowledge of the character of all buildings and their contents in relation to the possible origin or spread of fires — such engineer or officer to have command in such district in the absence of the chief.

IV. The establishment of a fire patrol in each district by detail from the department, who shall make daily reports of their tour of duty to the engineer or officer in charge, to be by him transmitted to head-quarters. Such patrol to be empowered to make all investigations necessary to enable them to report all changes in use of buildings, storage of merchandise, character or habits of occupants, and all other matters which may in any manner bear upon the danger of origin or spread of fire within the district. Such a system would give those in command constant information of the state of the lines and the points of danger most necessary to be strongly covered.

V. The establishment of a body of fire police, in accordance with the prayer of the petitioners, whose duty it shall be to take charge of the streets and keep the lines at fires. If it shall be found impracticable or unadvisable to detail this body from the regular force, we recommend its appointment

in addition thereto, and that legislative authority therefor be obtained, if necessary, without delay.

VI. The amount of water supply necessary and available at different points should, of course, receive the immediate and earnest attention of the Board. Whether all hydrants and water apparatus are in proper order for instant use should form part of the daily patrol-report before alluded to, together with the condition of the fire-alarm and boxes.

VII. In view of the surprisingly large expenditures now incurred for the repair of engines and fire apparatus, the committee would suggest that the establishment of a city repair shop, with skilled workmen in regular employ, would, in the long run, be found to be a measure of economy, as has been shown in the case of railway corporations.

VIII. The committee have provided in the ordinance that a report containing such information concerning fires as is most interesting and useful to the public be made monthly, instead of annually. The facts will thus be known before the interest in the matter has died out, and the lesson which they inculcate will be more likely to be remembered.

The committee would, therefore, recommend the passage of the accompanying ordinance, to which they would call attention as embodying matters of detail necessarily omitted in the foregoing report.

SAMUEL M. QUINCY,
ALANSON BIGELOW,
WILLIAM H. WEST,
GEORGE A. SHAW,
GEORGE P. DENNY,
CHARLES E. POWERS.

James Foster
Auburndale
Mass.

REORGANIZATION OF FIRE DEPARTMENT. xvii

CITY OF BOSTON.

In the year one thousand eight hundred and seventy-three.

AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH A FIRE
DEPARTMENT.

Be it ordained by the Aldermen and Common Council of the City of Boston in City Council assembled, as follows : —

SECTION 1. The Fire Department of the City of Boston shall consist of a Board of three Fire Commissioners, a Chief Engineer, and such number of assistant engineers and other officers, and so many enginemen, telegraph operators, and other members, not exceeding in the whole number men, as the said Commissioners may deem necessary to perform the duties of the department.

SECT. 2. In the month of September, in the year 1873, or as soon thereafter as may be, the Mayor shall appoint, subject to the approval and confirmation of the City Council, three persons, who shall constitute said Board of Fire Commissioners of the City of Boston, and who shall have and exercise the powers and duties hereinafter designated. One member of said Board shall be appointed to hold his office until the first Monday of May in the year one thousand eight hundred and seventy-four, one until the first Monday of May in the year one thousand eight hundred and seventy-five, and one until the first Monday of May in the year one thousand eight hundred and seventy-six. In the month of April in the year one thousand eight hundred and seventy-four, and thereafterwards annually in the month of April, the Mayor shall appoint, subject to like confirmation and approval, one person to be one of said Fire Commissioners for the term of three years from the first Monday of the following May. Any member

of said Board shall, at any time, be subject to removal by the Mayor for cause, and all vacancies occurring in said Board, from any cause, shall be filled in the same manner in which the original appointments are herein directed to be made. No member of either branch of the City Council shall hold the office of Fire Commissioner. For their services the Fire Commissioners shall receive such compensation as the City Council may from time to time determine.

SECT. 3. The said Board shall organize forthwith upon the first appointment of its members, and thereafterwards annually on the first Monday of May, by the choice of one of their members as chairman. They shall also choose a clerk, who shall not be a member of the Board; and they shall make such rules and regulations for their own government and for the government of all other officers and members of the fire department, including the fire-alarm telegraph, as they may deem expedient, provided that said rules and regulations shall not be inconsistent with the ordinances of the city.

SECT. 4. The duty of extinguishing fires and protecting life and property in case of fire, shall within the city of Boston be intrusted to the said Board of Commissioners; and to enable them to perform that duty in the most efficient manner, the said Board is hereby authorized to appoint all other officers and members of the Fire Department, including the fire-alarm telegraph, and fix their compensation; to discharge any of said officers or members at any time for cause; to divide the city into fire districts; to organize companies and battalions to work the apparatus; to purchase steam engines, extinguishers, hose carriages, hook and ladder carriages, and all other apparatus and supplies necessary for the complete equipment of the said department, or conducive to the proper performance of its duties; *provided*, however, that the expenditures for the purposes herein named shall not exceed in the aggregate the sums previously appropriated

by the City Council for the maintenance of said Fire Department.

SECT. 5. The said Board of Fire Commissioners shall annually, on or before the 15th day of February, send to the City Auditor an estimate in detail of the appropriations required for the maintenance of the Fire Department during the next financial year. All bills for expenditures from the appropriations for the Fire Department shall be drawn for by the said Board, examined by the Auditor, and approved by the Committee on Accounts, before they are paid by the Treasurer.

SECT. 6. The said Board shall, on or before the tenth day of each month, present to the City Council a report made up to and including the last day of the preceding month, containing a chronological statement of the number of fires in such month, with the causes thereof, a general description of the property destroyed or injured at each fire, with the names of the owners or occupants and the amount of insurance, if any, specifying the portion of the force and apparatus called into action at each fire, with the name of the officer in command, also a statement of all fatal or serious accidents to members of the department or others on account of fires or alarms of fire during the month, together with such other information or suggestions as they may deem proper. They shall also, annually, in the month of May or June, present to the City Council a report made up to, and including, the thirtieth day of the preceding April, containing, in addition to a consolidated statement of the facts contained in the monthly reports of the preceding year, a list of the causes of fire, alphabetically arranged, a statement of the income and expenditures on account of the department during the preceding year, a schedule of all the property belonging to the department, with a statement as to its condition on the date of the report, and an estimate of its value, also a statement of the number and location of the fire-alarm boxes; together with such other information or suggestions as they may deem proper.

SECT. 7. The Chief Engineer and the Assistant Engineers appointed by the Fire Commissioners as hereinbefore provided, shall constitute the Board of Engineers of the City of Boston, and shall have and exercise all the powers conferred upon such officers by the Statutes of the Commonwealth and by the ordinance in relation to the manufacture, storage and sale of petroleum, camphene and burning fluids. And they shall also have authority, under the direction of the Fire Commissioners, to inquire for and examine into all shops and other places where shavings or other such combustible materials are collected or deposited, and report to said Commissioners from time to time the condition in this respect of the district to which they are assigned ; and whenever, in the opinion of said Commissioners, the same may endanger the security of the city from fires, they shall direct the tenant or occupant of said shops or other places to remove such shavings or other combustible materials ; and in case of such tenant's or occupant's neglect or refusal so to do, they shall cause the same to be removed at the expense of such tenant or occupant, who shall, in addition, be liable to a penalty of not less than five nor more than fifty dollars for such neglect or refusal ; and any person who shall obstruct the said Commissioners or Engineers or any of them in carrying out the provisions of this section, shall also be liable to a penalty of not less than five nor more than fifty dollars.

SECT. 8. It shall be the duty of the members of the Police Department to aid the Fire Department by giving alarms in case of fire in such manner as the Fire Commissioners may direct, and in clearing the streets or grounds in the immediate vicinity of the fire so that the members of the Fire Department shall not be hindered or obstructed in the performance of their duties. If any policeman refuses or neglects to give an alarm as directed in the manner aforesaid, or refuses to obey the orders of the chief officer in command at a fire, he shall forfeit and pay a fine of not less than five nor more than twenty dollars.

SECT. 9. The said Board of Fire Commissioners shall make suitable regulations, under which the officers and men of the Fire Department shall be required to wear any appropriate uniform and badge, by which, in case of fire and at other times, the authority and relations of such officers and men in said department may be known as the exigency of their duties may require.

SECT. 10. The ordinance in relation to the Fire Department, printed in the revised ordinances adopted the thirty-first day of December, A. D. 1869, and all the amendments and additions thereto, are hereby repealed, said repeal to take effect upon the organization of the Board of Fire Commissioners as herein designated.

REPORT ON THE CAUSE OF THE FIRE OF MAY
30TH, 1873.

This committee was instructed, by an order passed June 20, 1873, to investigate the cause of the fire of May 30th. As these words are generally used in this connection, an investigation into the cause of a fire does not go beyond the circumstances of its origin. The fact that a previous order, which failed of passage, directed an investigation into the "cause and management" of the fire, would seem to forbid the assumption that any more extended meaning was intended in this instance. The committee have taken the testimony of all persons who seem to be able to throw any light upon the origin of the fire, and their evidence will be found hereto annexed.

It appears that the fire originated in the back part of the room, which extended through the whole depth of the second story of Messrs. Haley, Morse & Co.'s furniture warehouse. The front part of that room was occupied by the Freeman's Bank, temporarily; the rear was used as a show-room and filled with furniture standing close, and in some cases even piled up. This furniture it was the duty of the witness, Mr. Burr, from time to time, to clean and rub over with oil, spirits of turpentine and shellac. He was at this work, rather in a hurry, on the morning of May 30th. He commenced at the rear, and as he went through pushed each piece of furniture back towards the wall as fast as his work thereon was completed. He had accomplished a good portion of his task when, thinking he saw a light in his rear, he turned round, and, to use his own words, "About twenty feet from where I was, there was a light flame running up over the furniture." He instantly shouted "Fire!" and ran downstairs for water.

At the same time Mr. George R. Richards, an employé of the bank, who was in the room, hearing the shout and seeing the flames, started for the box in Boylston Market, where he happened to find a fireman by whom the alarm was promptly pulled in. The witness, C. W. Elton, employed upstairs, testifies to hearing the bells, as he thinks, for five minutes before the smoke gave notice to those upon the fifth floor that it was their own building which was on fire, and as he escaped he met firemen at the door with hose. It would seem then that the alarm could hardly have been given sooner, and that a portion of the department responded with great promptitude. But they found the enemy in no ordinary force. Cotton-covered furniture, with wood-work anointed with spirits of turpentine not yet dry, turpentine spilled more or less on the floor and its vapor in the air, gauze mosquito bars hanging from wooden posts, open wells and elevators through the building ensuring circulation of air to fan the flames, — it seems as though all possible conditions were combined to give an instant and irresistible impetus to the fire. The prompt arrival of reinforcements might have turned the battle even then, but though not in evidence, it is a matter of notoriety that a portion of these, during precious moments, were involved in a block of cars and other vehicles on Tremont street. The manner in which the forces were used when brought into action the committee do not, for reasons above stated, regard as subject for their investigation under the above order.

With regard to the actual origin of the spark which fired this train of combustibles there are two theories: one that of spontaneous combustion among a few oiled rags, which the witness admits that he left in the room a few days previous, and which, perhaps, still remained there; and the other that of a match on the floor ignited by moving the furniture. The committee are inclined to regard the latter theory as the most probable. Though smoking was strictly prohibited

among the employés, yet it is evident that a match dropped by a customer might remain for a long time unobserved, until accidentally struck by the castor of a piece of furniture at the moment when everything was most inflammable and ready to flash almost like a train of powder. Spontaneous combustion of rags would, as the witness, Mr. Haley, suggests, have been preceded by smoke pretty sure to have been perceived by persons in the room, nor does it appear that the rags if present were in a quantity or position so to ignite. Leaving them in the room was, undoubtedly, careless, and a habit of so doing would be highly reprehensible; but it does not appear that such habit existed, and the committee do not think it probable that the fire resulted from this single oversight. If the committee are expected to draw any conclusion or moral from the result of their investigation, it is simply that to which allusion is made in the report on the subject of reorganization, viz., the advisability of compelling, either by law, or through the insurance companies, the occupants of all buildings, stored with combustible merchandise, to provide apparatus upon each floor for an instant attack upon the flames when discovered. From the experiments which the committee have seen with the Johnson pump, it would seem that even this fire, exceptionally fierce and rapid from the start, might have been dashed out by Mr. Burr had this apparatus been within instant reach. The gallant and distinguished fireman, James Braidwood, lost his life in a fire which originated in a neglect of similar precautions which he himself had advised. If it were made the duty of large business firms not merely to provide the arms but to instruct and practise all employés in their use, the victories of the fire-fiend, as the reporters phrase it, would soon become greatly diminished.

For the committee,

SAMUEL M. QUINCY, *Chairman.*

FIRST HEARING.

A PUBLIC hearing was given at the City Hall on Tuesday afternoon, June 24, before the Joint Special Committee on the reorganization of the Fire Department, on the several petitions from the merchants of Boston and others in relation to that subject.

The meeting was called to order at four o'clock by Alderman Quincy. George O. Shattuck, Esq., appeared for the petitioners, and Tolman Willey, Esq., for the remonstrants.

The Chairman read the petition as follows :—

“TO THE HONORABLE THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BOSTON :—

“The undersigned, citizens and tax-payers of Boston, respectfully petition that a much larger number of Steam Fire Engines, fully manned and equipped, be provided and placed in central locations; that a larger number be sent to each fire at the first alarm; that provision be made for a supply of water in all parts of the city, sufficient and available in any emergency; that Assistant Engineers and Hosemen be employed, who shall devote their whole time to the interest of the department; that a disciplined force be organized to clear the streets and prevent theft, in the vicinity of a fire; and that such other measures be adopted as will secure the highest efficiency of the Fire Department.

“And, moreover, believing that such efficiency can only be secured by entrusting the control of the Fire and Fire Alarm Departments, and other matters pertaining thereto, to an independent Board, they ask that such a Board be constituted, to consist of three (3) persons, who shall be appointed for a term of not less than three years, by the Mayor, with the approval of the Board of Aldermen, or City Council, and be removable by the Mayor; said Board to have the appointment of the Chief and Assistant Engin-

eers, and to be paid such salaries as will secure the best available talent for the important duties to be performed.

"They further ask that these changes shall be made at the earliest practicable date."

THE CHAIRMAN. — The hearing this afternoon is for these petitioners. If there is any person present authorized to appear in behalf of this mass of petitioners, the committee will hear them first, and afterwards any petitioners who desire to be heard themselves will have an opportunity to address the committee; and at some subsequent meeting there will be an opportunity for the remonstrants against the measure to be heard. The Chair desires to remind gentlemen present that although this committee has general power to investigate all matters in relation to the Fire Department, the hearing this afternoon has been called specifically in relation to this measure which we are asked to adopt; therefore, all gentlemen speaking this afternoon will be expected to confine their remarks to such arguments as legitimately support this matter of reorganization, which these petitioners request of the committee. Is there any gentleman present who represents these petitioners?

STATEMENT OF GEORGE O. SHATTUCK, Esq.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — I have been requested to appear here in behalf of a considerable number of the 8,000 petitioners who have asked for this reorganization of the Fire Department. Many of these petitioners are merchants and persons who have large interests in real and personal property in the city. I have not seen in any newspaper what seemed to me to be an adequate expression of the very serious alarm which is felt by these gentlemen at the present state of our Fire Department. I understand that the amount of insurance paid in the city of Boston has already been increased more than \$600,000 a year. Add to that the amount of insurance which is paid out of the city, which was previously paid to insurance-companies in the city, and a million and a half will be a low estimate of the amount which is, to a certain extent, lost. But this is not the greatest injury. The rates of insurance have been

made so high that many of the merchants are unable to keep their property stored in the city of Boston, and they are to-day making arrangements by which property to the amount of millions is to be carried out of the city, and stored out of the city. This cannot be done without a serious and permanent injury to the business interests of the city; and all this, or most of it — all of it, in fact — is caused by reason of the two fires, which have shown that our Fire Department, for some reason or other, is inadequate to the emergency; that property in Boston cannot, with our present resources, be protected; and these petitioners come here, not to reflect upon any person, but to ask you to change the system. They believe the system to be inadequate. Bearing upon this matter of the danger, I hold in my hand a letter from one of the leading merchants in Boston, in which he says: "We cannot use our store in Chauncy street for goods as designed, if the new rates of insurance are to hold; and this is the result of the deficiencies of our Fire Department." That letter I know expresses the view of a very large number of merchants. It is, therefore, a matter of vital importance to every citizen of Boston that something should be done to allay the alarm which is felt everywhere. I do not intend to trouble the committee with any lengthy remarks, but merely to appear here and give other parties an opportunity to express their views. The petitioners do not come here, as I have already said, to bring any charge against any individual, but to ask that the system shall be changed; and they ask that this system may be changed for two or three reasons, which I shall state very briefly.

In the first place, they think that the duties of the Chief Engineer to-day are such as no one man can properly discharge. I understand that there devolves upon him not only the management of fires, but the purchasing of the supplies for the department. No man can be expected to attend to all these duties, and do them properly, as I am informed.

In the next place, they ask for a permanent commission, because it must be apparent to everybody that a committee of the Board of Aldermen and Common Council cannot have the experience, and cannot devote to this single branch of their duty so much time as is necessary for the adequate performance of the work to be done.

They ask, therefore, that a permanent commission shall be established. I do not intend to go into any of the details which are set forth in this petition. The first step is to establish a commission, to find the men, and throw the responsibility upon them. Besides, it has been found, in practice, that this system works successfully. It was adopted in New York in 1866, and the result has been a regular and rapid diminution of loss by fire. It is stated that in the year ending Oct. 31, 1868, the loss was over \$4,000,000; in the year ending Oct. 31, 1869, it was \$3,400,000; in the year ending April 4, 1871, it was \$2,600,000; in the year ending April 4, 1872, \$1,545,000. (I give the round numbers.) There has, therefore, since the introduction of the present system, been a regular and constant diminution in the loss by fire, until it is not now more than one-third what it was in 1868. No other explanation of this is given, that I know of, except the efficiency which is the result of creating a commission, and devolving upon them the responsibility of looking after the Fire Department. I understand, also, that a commission has been created in Philadelphia, recently, and that, so far, it has proved successful. A commission has also been created in Chicago, since the fire, and, as I understand, there has been a marked improvement in the efficiency of the department. But it is not necessary to refer to the results of these experiments. Anybody who knows what are the duties of the Board of Aldermen, how constantly they are employed, how many different interests of the city they have to look after, knows that it is utterly impossible for them to give that attention which is necessary to watching the hundreds of millions of property in the city of Boston, and properly guarding it against fire. The interest on the money paid for insurance, and the money which will be lost if some change is not made in this respect, will probably exceed the whole amount of the taxation of the city of Boston. The loss will equal all the money that you are called upon to expend in the various departments of the city government.

Now, I say it is clear that an interest of this magnitude, requiring such careful investigation, requiring a watchfulness over all the property of the city, should be entrusted to a commission that can give its whole time to the subject, and that shall be responsible. I need not refer to the experience of the city of Boston in

creating commissions. We all know how much has been accomplished, or is supposed to have been accomplished, by the Board of Health, and there seems to be no reason, therefore, why a responsible commission should not be created to take this matter in charge.

I have simply introduced the subject, and propose to call, with the leave of the committee, upon one or two gentlemen to state their impressions upon the subject.

STATEMENT OF HON. E. R. MUDGE.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE: — I did not think of speaking when I came into the room, but Mr. Shattuck has read an extract from a letter from a tenant of mine, saying that he cannot get insurance on the building in Chauncy street, and I wish to state some facts in regard to the erection of that building, and in regard to its resistance to the fire of Nov. 9th, and, after having stated those facts, to state that it is now, as Mr. Shattuck says, impossible to procure insurance on that building at any rate which any insurance man would say, under ordinary circumstances of protection from fire, in a city of the magnitude of Boston, was a fair rate. That building was erected by Mr. Joy and myself four years ago. At that time we had had no considerable conflagration in Boston within my remembrance; but as I saw the buildings going up all around, constructed as they were, and have been since, very imperfectly, and of inflammable material, especially in the roofs, I made up my mind that we should have, at some time, I did not know when, a fire which would astonish everybody in Boston. Therefore, in erecting that building, I took the precaution to have it, as far as we knew how, fire-proof on the exterior, when the nature of the business should be considered for which it was to be employed. I will state that it cost us thousands of dollars extra expense to construct that building to guard against the spread of a fire toward us. The wisdom of that expenditure was abundantly manifested on the night of the fire of Nov. 9th, because I can state that there was not a pint of water put upon the two upper stories during that night. Whether there should be steamers that are capable of throwing water to the top of that

building or not, I leave to others to determine. That it is not of such extraordinary height as would prevent water from being applied there, is manifest to anybody who will look at it, if any permanent provision for throwing water to such heights should be adopted, not by the Fire Department, perhaps, but by individuals occupying or putting up such buildings. The facts in regard to that building are these, so far as the opinion of those who are interested in the property exposed, and also the opinion of those who hold policies on that property, is concerned. I have to-day received notice from three separate fire insurance companies that they wish to cancel their policies. Why they should have expressed such a wish, perhaps it is not proper for me to state; that is, my impression in regard to the reasons which led them to that course is perhaps not proper for me here to state. I have my own opinion about it. On Saturday last an agent of the Germania Insurance Company, of New York, called on me in my private office, introduced himself, and said he had just inspected the building, stating that he was agent for that company, and that he had a risk on the building. I asked him what he thought of it. He said he thought very well of it. I put the question to him whether he knew, in the city of New York (which I jocosely said was a large place, and had a great many buildings in it), of a building used for the same purpose for which this building was used, which was as secure against fire. He hesitated a moment, and said he, "Yes, there is one building, on the corner of 14th street," I think he said, recently erected. Said I, "For what purpose is that building used?" He said it was a life insurance company's building, or something of that sort; and then I asked him whether he knew of a better building in the city of New York which was used for the purpose for which our building is used, or one more secure against fire. He said he did not. Yesterday, I was called upon by a gentleman who represents a London insurance company. He said he had been over the building, and had examined it from the roof to the cellar. I asked him what he thought of it, and he said he thought it was a good building. Said I, "Do you consider that you have a good risk there?"—"Yes." Said I, "Would you have the building changed in any particular?"—"No." I asked him if he had examined the roof. He said he had. I asked him if he

could suggest any improvement in the building as security against fire, or the spread of it. He said no, he could not. He mentioned the steam pipe in the basement, which he thought was rather near the wood-work, and said that if I would have the space around the pipe enlarged, that was the only suggestion he had to make in regard to the building.

Now, as I say, this morning I received notice from three different companies that they wish to cancel their policies. There is some reason for that. I do not know that I should state here, as I said before, what I believe to be the reason; however, there is the building, any one can see it. There was no water put on the two upper stories of it during the night of the fire. It stayed the fire in that direction. There is no question about that. There is no wood exposed in any part of it. The principal windows are of granite — carried up entirely of granite, — what we call dormer windows in some structures, or in the Mansard roofs. The principal projections are of granite, but the inferior are of corrugated iron. In the pilasters there is recessed ornamentation, like fluting, formed by double plates of this iron, which was soldered together. The heat was so intense as to melt the solder down from these plates. You can see by that that there was some danger that the building would have taken fire if it had been otherwise constructed. The Fire Department had three fire engines immediately in front of the building all night and Sunday, and all they did to that building (it was a great protection, undoubtedly), was to throw water on the three lower stories. The heat was so intense that it evaporated instantly in steam, and in that way, of course, afforded protection. The end wall, which was directly exposed to the fire in the building which was formerly occupied as the Post Office, was of brick, and the force of the flames can be easily seen there. They absolutely bore into that wall so as to disintegrate the outer bricks. I only mention these facts to show the extreme heat. The buildings are all burned away from us on one side, and from the opposite corner on the other.

Now they charge \$1.40 a thousand on that property to insure it. Gentlemen present, who are engaged in insurance, can tell us what the rate was before the fire. I think the former rate was less than one-half per cent. Now, it would seem as if a building built ex-

pressly to avoid disaster by fire, with the proper appliances, and with the proper organization of the Boston Fire Department, should not be expected to pay such rates, which might fairly, I think, in such a case as that, be called exorbitant; but still, I do not know that I, or any other person, have any right to call in question the insurance companies for making these rates, in view of the facts with which we are all acquainted as to how fires are managed, and how they rage under certain conditions.

I do not wish to occupy the time of the meeting. I simply wished to state these facts in regard to this building, because it was alluded to by Mr. Shattuck in his opening remarks. I think it will be apparent enough to any one that, with a proper Fire Department, with a proper organization of the Fire Department, and with a proper efficiency in working that department on any system, such a building as that ought not to be charged \$1.40 premium.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Is this building to which you have referred, the one that you occupy yourself as your own warehouse on Chauncy street?

A. Yes, sir; on Chauncy street, next to the fire.

Q. It is now stored with the merchandise of your own companies?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. The rates before the fire were about one-half per cent.?

A. I won't state exactly whether the rates on the building and on the merchandise were the same or not. The rates on the building were about that; and gentlemen here interested in insurance can tell what was the difference between the rates on the merchandise and the store itself. But they have all been increased at the same rate. I think \$1.40 is now the charge on both the merchandise and the store.

Q. Is this building any higher than other buildings on the street?

A. It is quite as high, I think, as any building in the immediate neighborhood.

Q. I mean the new buildings?

A. The new buildings are about the same height. The next store to us on the corner is but a few feet lower; but there are a

great many buildings in the city which are higher. It is not one of extraordinary height, that is, for the recent structures.

Q. Is there an elevator in that building?

A. Two.

Q. Where you lift merchandise?

A. Yes, sir. Those are protected with tin from the bottom to the top; there is no wood exposed in either of them.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) You said that you had received three communications from three different insurance companies, notifying you that they wished to cancel the policies that they have on your property?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. I understood you also to say that you mistrusted the reasons they had for sending these communications to you at this time. Will you please state to the committee what you suppose to be their reasons for sending you such communications at the present time?

A. It would be rather an invidious statement to make, but I think the fact would be patent to all minds, that they take advantage of the present inefficiency of the Fire Department of Boston to retire from the obligations they are under to insure at a low rate, in order to secure a higher.

Q. In other words, you suppose it was rather more for effect, to keep up this excitement, that that might assist them in getting higher rates?

A. That is it, exactly; that they take advantage of the present inefficiency of the Fire Department to secure a higher rate. They agreed to insure that building for a period of five years. A portion only of that time has expired. They see that they have an opportunity for getting more money, in consequence of the general alarm which exists in the public mind in consequence of the inability of the Fire Department of Boston to cope with a large fire. That is my feeling.

Q. You stated that you were present during the fire of the 9th of November?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Will you please to give us your impression of the condu

of the Fire Department on that occasion, and the conduct of the firemen, as far as you observed it?

A. The conduct of the firemen was excellent. The supply of water was totally inadequate. The effect on those three engines in our street was that they could play, I should say, not more than ten minutes at any time without running the head down so that they could not get any water. There was, evidently, an insufficient supply of water in the main, in that street, on that occasion.

Q. Will you please state what you know of your own knowledge of the working of the department when it is under the control of a fire commission?

A. I know nothing of the conduct of the Fire Department, except as it was exhibited at that point. I could tell what that was.

Q. In my other question, I asked you to give your impression of the working of the Fire Department on the 9th of November, from what came under your own observation.

A. My observation was confined to that point, and to Milk street, where I went after having abandoned my building, as I supposed, to be burned. I went round there to assist in saving the books and papers of Mr. Joy, at 81 Milk street; but up to the time I left, as I said before, the conduct of the firemen had been admirable in every way. The working of the system I cannot say so much of, for this reason: When the fire took in the corner building, which, as I said before, was formerly occupied as the Post Office, I saw at once we should have to fight the fire against the northeasterly side of our building, and I asked the person in command of the engine nearest the fire if he would take a stream up the alley to protect that side of our building by throwing water on it, as I knew the flames would go through and strike against it. He said he had no authority for doing that. He could not move from his position unless ordered. I asked him who had the command; and he said Engineer so-and-so. Said I, "Where is he?" He did not know. Said I, "Can you tell me where I can find him?" No; he supposed he was out on Washington street. Said I, "How shall I know him when I see him?" Well, he said he had a white hat, and described him so I thought that I should know him. I went out myself, and sent two friends in search of

him, and after a delay of fifteen or twenty minutes, we found him, and got him to come to that point; but by that time the Post Office building was all in flames, and the heat was so intense that they could not get a stream of water where I had proposed to put it before; so that, if he had been willing, he could not have done what I supposed necessary to protect our building; but he then did what was the next best thing, he took his hose into the building up through the first and second stories, and played a stream of water from our building on the fire, both diagonally across the street, and also against the buildings on fire on that side. That was the only time when I had any opportunity of judging of the working of any system which might have governed the action of those firemen in the discharge of their duties.

Q. My other question was what you know of your own knowledge in relation to the working of fire commissions?

A. I beg your pardon. I was misled entirely by supposing that you wanted my opinion of the working of the Fire Department. I know nothing of my own knowledge in regard to that.

Mr. SHATTUCK. I wish to say, in answer to one question that has been put here, that I do not understand that any of the petitioners intend to reflect in any way upon the personal bravery or efficiency of any member of the Fire Department. I never have heard one word said against them.

STATEMENT OF HON. AVERY PLUMER.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) You are a merchant of Boston, I believe?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Have you any personal knowledge as to engines, or as to the condition of the Fire Department? If you have, will you state it, in your own way?

A. Well, sir, I have personal knowledge in regard to the rise in the rates of insurance, as every other merchant has. I also have had difficulty in obtaining insurance. I know that it is quite difficult to obtain.

Q. You do not think, then, that the withdrawal of insurance by the insurance companies is in all cases to get a higher price, but

in many cases they are actually reducing their insurance here, — taking it away from Boston, are they not?

A. Well, sir, I think the state of things is used as a lever to raise the rates of insurance, unquestionably, and I think there has been altogether too much said in New York and other places with regard to matters here. I think Boston is entirely competent to take care of its own affairs. If I understand the point, Mr. Chairman, before the committee this afternoon, it is with particular reference to the necessity and importance of so organizing the department as to place it in the hands, first, as a preliminary step, of a commission, independent, somewhat, of the city government. Am I correct, sir?

The CHAIRMAN. That is the only question before the committee at this hearing. It is for those who favor this measure which the petitioners ask for.

Mr. PLUMER. I will detain the committee but a very few moments with what I have to say. I have some very decided convictions on that point, and they are briefly these: Two or three years ago, I had the honor of being a member of the Board of Aldermen, and was also honored by the Mayor with the Chairmanship of the Committee on the Fire Department. I had some six months' experience there, sir, and I came to the conviction at that time, and subsequent developments from time to time have only tended to strengthen that conviction, that the Fire Department should be placed in the hands of an individual or commission, or, at least, that the Joint Committee should be abolished, and it should be placed in the hands of the Board of Aldermen, for the reason that you would thereby narrow the responsibility, and the work would be more efficiently performed, and with much less expense, in my judgment, than by the large Board which now manage the department. I think that must be obvious to every gentleman.

Why, sir, when I was on the committee, I found that the question of an engine-house for No. 4, I think it was, in this neighborhood, had been agitated something like a year; when I came on the Board it was still in agitation, and the matter was prolonged from time to time; I don't know but it was nearly two years before it was decided where that engine-house should be built.

In my judgment, if the matter had been in the hands of a commission, they would have accomplished the whole thing in a very few weeks. Everything is done in that way. You cannot do anything unless you have a committee of eight men present. The Chairman of the Committee on the Fire Department is expected to be here, or is here, if he attends to his duty, every day. During the time I had the honor of being chairman of the committee, my first business every morning was to call on the Chief Engineer of the Fire Department, and see if anything was wanted. Gentlemen can readily see that if this department is placed in the hands of one, two, or three individuals, who are looking after it all the time, the wants of the community, and the wants of the Fire Department, will be better known and more speedily met, than they can be under the present system, when you meet together once a week, or once a fortnight, or once a month, and the chief business is to have a dinner over at Young's, or Parker's. I hope, sir (and I have petitioned for that, as one of the objects), that this department may be taken from the hands of the City Government, and placed in the hands of a commission. Certainly, the most bitter opposers of the Board of Health have become converted since that Board has gone into operation. I do not find anybody now, however bitterly they opposed it before, who are not perfectly satisfied that the Board is working very efficiently, and that the department was never in a better condition than it is at the present time, in the hands of the competent gentlemen who constitute the Board; and, I think, if you can find three gentlemen in Boston who will take this department and reorganize it, and give them pretty large powers, you may have a department which will be equal to that of New York, to say the least, or any other place that I know of. That is about all I have to say.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) As you have had experience in the Committee on the Fire Department, I would like to ask you to define exactly, in few words, what duties you think the fire commission should discharge, or what their supervision or authority should be over the present heads of the Fire Department,—not over the committee, but over the engineers and the chief?

A. I think they should be paramount in authority. I think the first duty of the Board of Commissioners should be to find a

competent head of the department, if you have not one already. Mind you, I am not speaking disparagingly of anybody. I do not come here for that purpose. I will say this much ; that I have no expectation at all that the city will ever be able to get anybody superior to the chief they have now, for the same price they pay him. My opinion, in regard to the head of the department, is, that if there was a commission, they should seek a competent scientific man, of large executive ability, a man fit to meet any and every emergency, and then I would pay him \$10,000 a year, or, if necessary, \$15,000, and make money at that.

Q. Should you expect those gentlemen personally to attend fires?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And have any direction at fires?

A. I think, if they had a proper appreciation of their duty, they would be on hand at fires, especially at large fires, to see how their subordinates were performing their duties.

Q. But not to superintend at fires?

A. No, sir. It wants one man to manage that thing.

STATEMENT OF PATRICK DONAHOE.

I suppose that many of the gentlemen present are more desirous to see me, having been burned out so often, than of hearing what I have to say. I do not intend to say but a very few words. I fully coincide with the remarks of the gentleman who last spoke, and with the views expressed in the petition. I signed that petition for the purpose of having a commission appointed who would superintend the Fire Department of Boston. At the late fires, I have been punished severely. I had so much confidence in the Fire Department, at the time of the great fire in November, that I did not think of removing the goods from my store until it was too late, and of course I lost very severely in consequence. Well, sir, I had almost forgotten that fire ; but when it attacked me again in Washington street, and in my new building, and burned my stock of goods in Washington street, then I began to tremble for my safety, and thought that something should be done in order to avert these great calamities. I had made up my mind, as other

gentlemen have, undoubtedly, made up their minds, that unless we can have security for life and property in Boston, people will leave it and go somewhere else. Had my building been destroyed,—and it came very near it,—I had made up my mind, if I had anything left, to leave the city and seek some place where I should have more security in the future.

I am in favor of a commission. I believe that it will be of great service in concentrating and guiding the efforts of the Fire Department, and under that belief I signed the petition. I trust that such a commission may be appointed, for we cannot have too much protection for the future, at least. We can forget the past, but if we are to be assailed again and again as we have been, then the city of Boston and the property of Boston will suffer very severely.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) Will you please state what you know of your own knowledge of the working of fire commissions?

A. I do not know anything about them, because we have never had one in Boston, to my knowledge. All I am speaking about is the working of the Fire Department in Boston. I do not know anything about the workings of the Fire Department in New York, Chicago, or anywhere else. We have had nothing here by which we could see the workings of a fire commission, but we have seen the workings of some commissions, which have proved of very great service. I allude to the health commission. If we can get a commission to manage the Fire Department as well as the Board of Health have managed their department, it will be of great service, and I think we ought to try, at least.

Q. Then you know nothing about the working of a fire commission anywhere?

A. Nothing at all; but I should like to see the working of it here, very soon.

STATEMENT OF CHARLES U. COTTING.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) Will you state what your views on this subject are?

A. I did not sign the petition. I only appear here this afternoon at the request of some gentlemen to state what my own ex-

perience has been. I have occasion to get a great many policies, some four or five hundred, on buildings in different parts of the city, and I find that there is a want of confidence, not only among our home offices, but in the foreign offices, in regard to taking risks here. Some are refused; in other cases prices are raised in consequence of it. Just before the last fire there was a meeting of gentlemen representing all the insurance companies, who established a tariff of rates which very largely increased all the premiums in the city, and since the fire I understand that the companies have strongly held to those prices, which has had a tendency to increase very much the premiums. Within the last few days I have had occasion to settle one or two losses, and I find that among the agents of the companies, and the adjusters, there is a want of confidence in the Fire Department. Personally, I do not attempt to pass any criticism upon the department, because I do not feel myself qualified to do so, but I favor a commission, and for this reason:—the gentlemen who serve as Aldermen, or Common Councilmen, have to give the time which they give to their duties from their business, and they are not, of course, always at the City Hall, and cannot give the time which it appears, in the present emergency, is required.

Another reason why I favor a commission is, that the Aldermen and Common Councilmen are elected from year to year. If a commission is appointed, I should favor their appointment for three years, or longer, like the Street Commissioners, the term of office of one only expiring every year. These are my reasons for favoring the commission. I would like to be distinctly understood as not criticising any fireman or engineer, because I have seen them work, and seen them work, as I thought, with great bravery and great efficiency; but there is this prejudice abroad, and we are now very much dependent upon the foreign companies to get our insurance.

STATEMENT OF FRANCIS JAKUES.

It must be evident to every one that there is a greater feeling of insecurity in regard to our property in the city of Boston than has ever existed before, and it is also obvious why that feeling ex-

ists. The events of the last eight months are sufficient reason. There is also a deeply-seated feeling that the means for preventing fires in their inception, and preventing their spread when they have once begun, and for extinguishing them, are inadequate to the wants of the city, as now constructed. A great deal of time has been wasted, and I am afraid will be wasted, in the newspapers, and in every meeting, in discussing details in reference to these cases; the question as to whether the best man is at the head of the Fire Department; the question whether the water supply in a particular portion of the city is sufficient; whether this building is too high; whether that street is too narrow; — all these are questions which, although proper in themselves, divert attention from the main question. I claim that the only way in which a satisfactory result can be arrived at, one which will satisfy the public, — for let never so much be done in the way of supplying new machinery and new appliances, there will be, on the one hand, those who will say, "You have not done enough," and on the other hand, those who will say, "You have wasted your money; it was not necessary to do this; you had enough before," — therefore, I say, the only way to arrive at what we want is by having competent men to investigate the subject and report what is necessary. Therefore I come to the question before the meeting, of the appointment of a commission. I deem it essential that a permanent commission should be established, and if such a commission is to be established there should be first a commission of three men, — I would say, a military engineer, a civil engineer, and a scientific and practical builder; men of the stamp of Mr. Olmstead, who laid out the Central Park; for a builder, such a man as Mr. Bradley; he would be a competent man. I merely mention these names, not as making any suggestions as to who we are to have, but to illustrate the class of men who I think ought to be employed. Let these men begin at the beginning and see if we have a water supply sufficient; if not, how it shall be increased; then the means for getting water into the city; having it in here, the best mode of distributing the water, including in that all the appliances in the way of hydrants; and in regard to the hydrants, to have a standard system which shall be uniform, with couplings of the same size for the different towns, so that we shall not be in

the same condition we were at the last fires ; stand-pipes in buildings, and everything, in short, that appertains to the distribution of water ; then to see what is necessary in the way of machines of all kinds, steam engines or hand engines, hose carriages, chemical extinguishers, and everything of that kind ; then to go into the question of the construction of our buildings, to see how they can be best constructed to give us the greatest protection ; to have made for their use fire maps, which should district the city into squares of perhaps not more than 200 feet in extent, so that every building and every locality should be before them, and the peculiarities and particular wants of these localities provided for. If they find there are certain localities which are more dangerous than others, let them mark them, and show how they should be improved. Take, for instance, an illustration drawn from the last fire up here in Province street. Such an instance as that would seem to prove that the only cure for such localities is in cutting a wider street directly through from School street to Bromfield street. I only offer that as an illustration. It is very important that we should get means of access to those localities, covered as they are with high buildings which are so dangerous, filled with all sorts of inflammable substances. And we shall make the land too valuable for such buildings to be there ; they have no business to be there, in the heart of the city. The city gets the power to abate nuisances which violate sanitary laws ; it gets the power to prevent the erection of wooden buildings within the city limits ; but which is the more dangerous, a wooden building stored with hardware, or a brick building stored with inflammable materials of all kinds, filled with shavings, with varnish, with all sorts of combustible materials ? The City Government, if the suggestions of this commission are to be carried out, should have the power of abating all such nuisances.

Not to occupy too much time, I merely wish to say, that the whole gist of what I want to put before you is, that the question is not whether this thing or that thing shall be changed, — perhaps they all want to be changed, — but we do want men in whom we can have confidence, and who have skill and experience in their peculiar departments, to tell us what those things are, and where they are ; and, as has been well said, such a committee could not

be, from the very nature of things, formed out of an ordinary City Government. I have no reason to doubt that our present City Government is as good as we, perhaps, have ever had, or are likely to have. I have not a word to say against its members; but their pursuits, and the demands upon their time, everything militates against their ability to go into this investigation. We want scientific men, who can tell us if the houses in certain localities are right, and who shall have the position of every steam engine and hand engine marked upon the fire-maps which I have suggested, so that there shall be no point that shall be uncovered for any great distance. Therefore, I am clearly in favor of a commission, merely saying that I hope it will be preceded by a commission, not necessarily intended to be a permanent one, but rather an examining one, which shall investigate and report; and, probably, one of the features of their report will be a recommendation that a permanent Board shall be established, so that when we have a fire it shall be fought on the same principle that a battle is fought, and it will not be necessary for the firemen, or the owners of buildings, to ask, "Where is the General?" He should establish his head-quarters and should receive reports every five minutes, if necessary, and when these reports are made, give his instructions accordingly. It is the most absurd thing in the world to talk about not being able to find the Chief Engineer. Could a battle be fought in that way?

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) What is the object in having two commissions? You contemplate a commission, and then a commission after that.

A. No, sir. I do not make myself understood. I believe that a permanent Board would be the result of such a plan as I have suggested; but I do believe that it ought to be preceded by a Board chosen from our own citizens; or, if necessary, from competent gentlemen anywhere in the country. Suppose (I do not suggest it in the way of making any nomination, but simply as an illustration) such a man as General McClellan, who is now being employed to lay out the docks in New York, is considered the best man, — I know nothing of him of my own knowledge, — but men of such stamp and reputation, who have the power of investigating from the beginning, who have great power of organization,

and have no prejudices whatever. Let them tell the public just what the best plan is, and there will be men found to carry it out, and then, as part of that plan, they would probably recommend a permanent Board.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Why may not this committee recommend a permanent Board?

A. If they will do it, and select men for their peculiar fitness, I should have no objection. If this select committee could be kept in office, perhaps it would not be necessary. Perhaps the city has no power to employ men out of their own number; but perhaps they might employ experts, who would embody the results of their investigations in their report to the committee.

Q. Don't you think this committee could get the information?

A. The only reason I venture to say one word here is that I have no information to give, and I don't believe there is a man in this room who has the right information to give. We all know that we have to seek it. We want to find the men who have the peculiar knowledge and peculiar aptitude for investigation and discovery of what we want, and they have got to do it as a whole. Our worthy Chief Engineer can tell what is lacking in his department. One gentleman has said that in one portion of the city the water gave out at the time of the great fire; another gentleman would say that there was a surplus of water in his district. That is the question. We want our water works laid out with peculiar reference to these emergencies, so that we can draw on the extra supplies when needed. I do not intend to make any suggestions; I am not competent to do so; but it seems to me plain that the whole thing needs to be studied and digested by competent persons; and, without derogating anything from the ability of the present committee, I think it is necessary for them to get information other than through public hearings, from persons who look at things from particular points of view, merely studying details. We want general principles.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Are you one of the petitioners?

A. I am nothing but a private individual; I believe I did sign the petition.

Q. The petition asks that such a Board be constituted; your

suggestion is, that a commission be appointed to consider the expediency of establishing such a commission?

A. Not necessarily. If the present committee will employ that style of men to aid them as experts, I should be entirely willing to let it go in that way. I don't care how it is done, if we only have that class of men.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) Will you please to state what you can of your own knowledge of the working of existing fire commissions in other cities?

A. Nothing whatever. I will state again, that my only reason for standing here is that I don't know anything, and I believe that other gentlemen (in the same sense, I wish to be understood) don't know anything about this subject, simply because they have not studied it from the right end.

Q. Do you know anything about the Boston Fire Department, — how it is governed?

A. I have no special knowledge.

Q. You don't know whether it is governed by the Board of Engineers or the Committee of the City Government?

A. I suppose the Committee of the City Government, primarily.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Do you not suppose that this committee could get information in regard to these matters here in Boston, as well as from General McClellan?

A. I do not think that General McClellan, at present, knows anything about it; I don't know that he would be the right man; but I believe that a military engineer, educated, for instance, at West Point, combined with a civil engineer, combined with a practical builder, who has a knowledge of our city, if they did not know at the moment they commenced their investigation, they would know how to get the information, which is very important. They would call upon the City Engineer, they would call upon the Chief Engineer, they would call upon the President of the Water Works, they would get all the information possible, and bring it before the committee. That is what we want.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) I happen to be a member of this committee; don't you think that this committee is competent to get that information from citizens of Boston?

A. No, sir, I do not, with all due respect to the committee.

Q. Do you mean that the committee are not competent to get it, or that the people of Boston are not competent to give it?

A. I speak on general principles, and therefore you will free me from all appearance of disrespect, for I feel none. I do not know who the members are, but I do know that a committee taken from the City Government cannot, from the nature of the case, be competent to take hold of the subject, as I have endeavored to express my opinion it ought to be taken hold of. I believe that the commission should be constituted, in some form, of men chosen for their peculiar aptitude for that business. The gentlemen of this committee can get information from this source and that source; but are they competent to weigh that information when they get it? Have they the peculiar education which will enable them to do it?

Mr. SHAW.—That is to be proven; we are sitting here for that purpose.

STATEMENT OF DR. H. W. WILLIAMS.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN: I do not believe in getting up a clamor in regard to the want of protection in Boston, and it seems to me that the agents of insurance companies in other cities have said a great deal too much as to the insecurity here, evidently with the idea of getting higher rates, and making their services seem more valuable to the citizens of Boston. But, sir, I do think almost every one must admit that there is a call for a change, and a very considerable change. Exactly what the nature of the change is to be, in detail, no one is prepared to say at present; but the mere fact that we are paying such enormous sums for insurance, that we are obliged to do it by the existence of this public feeling, not only among insurance companies, but elsewhere, that there is an insecurity, would be a reason for our setting that matter right as soon as possible, and having the character of Boston cleared up in its own community, and in foreign insurance communities, so that they shall not turn up their noses at policies taken here. That being the case, it seems to me very important that a commission should be appointed. I do not believe that any committee, however intelligent, can manage an interest of this

magnitude so well as a commission devoting its whole time to it can. Gentlemen have been asked whether they had any personal knowledge of the workings of fire commissions. I take it but very few men know much about that matter, for even in New York the plan has been tried but a few years, and in other places but a few months; but we do know what water commissioners are good for; we probably should not be willing to give up the Water Commission; we probably, now that we have had experience as to what the Street Commissioners are worth, would not be willing to give up that commission; we probably would not be willing to give up the Board of Health. What I ask is, that something analogous should be arranged for the protection of the city against fire, and I believe it is far better to have the responsibility fixed somewhere; to have three or five commissioners, who should be held responsible by the community for the officers they appoint, and for the general working of the system, who should be able, being experts in some sense or other, and therefore fitted to constitute such a commission, to get information better than any committee of the City Council, or Board of Aldermen could do, changeable as such a committee is from year to year. These commissioners would have a more permanent appointment, and there would be, it seems to me, great advantages in the fact of their being a permanent organization, being able to get information from all quarters, and to keep that information, and not have it lost by changing the committee, so that what one man knew should be lost to the committee when he went out of office. I believe that such a commission, appointing its engineers and other officers, taking due care in their selection, arranging the water supply, and the supply of machinery, as they would be able to arrange them, after looking over the whole field, and seeing what was required, and arranging, if possible, to have paid firemen, who should devote their whole time to the work, — for I believe it would cost very little more to get the whole of the time of the men, than it does to get a portion of it, — such a commission I believe would be of immense service. The men could be employed part of the time in patrolling the city, and finding out the dangerous localities. Then I believe in having them called out for drill, and set to work upon unfinished buildings, or unoccupied

stores, in putting up ladders and handling their machines, so that in times of emergency they would be ready to do it more successfully than we might expect them to do it when only occasionally called upon for that service. I think they ought to be drilled as much as any workmen are drilled in their work, whatever it may be. I think these things could be carried out far better under the control of men selected carefully, and having permanent appointments, and that no committee can possibly take the place of a commission of that kind.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) As a taxpayer, you would recommend a paid Fire Department?

A. I should make that suggestion, as seeming to me to be a sensible one, but I should leave that matter to the commissioners. It seems to me it would be the most economical thing to do.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) Have you had, of your own knowledge, any manifestation of the incompetency of the present Fire Department?

A. I cannot say that I am a competent judge as to what should be expected of the Fire Department. I only judge from the facts which have occurred, and from the statements which were made before the Committee of Investigation, and reported as the result of their investigations. I think the mere fact that the public and the insurance companies are not satisfied, shows that there is a deficiency somewhere. I don't mean to say that it is in the *personnel* of the Fire Department, or that the officers and men are not as good as they could be; but there is certainly something wrong, and I would have a competent commission investigate that matter, with sufficient authority, and sufficient continuance in office, to set it all right.

Q. Have you any personal knowledge of the present management of the Boston Fire Department?

A. I have no special knowledge of it.

Q. Do you know whether it is governed by the Board of Engineers, or by the Committee of the City Government?

A. I only judge from the investigation which took place after the great fire, when it seemed that there was a conflict of authority in various directions.

Q. In what way?

A. By no one having authority to do certain things that were required, and others not seeming to have the authority called for.

Q. Have you ever seen the authority of the Chief questioned at any fire?

A. The Chief didn't seem to know what his own authority was in the matter.

Q. Will you please state the instance wherein he didn't know what his authority was?

A. As I understand it, he didn't know whether he had authority to use explosives, without the order of the Mayor.

Q. You understand that he has made such a statement, that he didn't know whether he had authority to use any explosive materials?

A. I think he didn't feel that he had authority to use them on some occasions that night, without the order of the Mayor. I don't wish to go into such details of mere facts, which are not within my personal knowledge, but only derived from the published accounts.

Q. I understand you to say that you have no knowledge of the working of the Fire Department?

A. No knowledge except what I get from the investigation, and from the general facts which are patent to every one as to the way in which fires have been allowed to go on, through some deficiency or other.

Mr. SHATTUCK. — For some reason or other, a large number of persons who take an interest in this question, and who would be very glad to express their views upon it, did not know that the hearing was to take place this afternoon until it was too late for them to be present. I do not know what the engagements of the committee are, or what it will be possible for them to do; but I think if the committee have no engagements to prevent it, if they could give us a little more time, the hearing could be shortened, and there would be something gained. I did not know myself of the hearing until late this morning. I am told that a large number of persons, some of whom have a very deep interest in this matter, did not know of it, and I should like to have the matter postponed before any further testimony is put in.

The CHAIRMAN. — I understand you to wish the case for the petitioners not closed this afternoon?

Mr. SHATTUCK. — Yes, sir, for the reason I have stated.

The CHAIRMAN. — You have no one else at this moment whom you would wish to call?

Mr. SHATTUCK. — I have no others, at present, that I wish to call.

X

STATEMENT OF GEORGE W. WARREN.

I signed the petition very much for the reasons expressed by ex-Alderman Plumer. I should most heartily endorse every word that he uttered, and coincide with him in the reasons which he gave for the utterance. I could not go with those, however, who seem to feel entire satisfaction with the Fire Department. I don't know that I should dare say so, if I really wanted any office. I was an old fireman myself in the days of the volunteer department, and I have attended fires from that time to this, more or less. I was out all night on the 9th of November, and one fact I wish to call to the attention of the members of the City Government, and my fellow-citizens, which seems to me to show a want of proper executive ability on the part of those having the management, whether the Chief Engineer or others. I understand the Chief Engineer lays the blame on the City Government, claiming that he could not get what he wanted. The fact to which I refer is, that we have no fire engines of a capacity to throw a stream of water as high as the old tub engines would throw a stream of water. The poorest tub engine in the old Fire Department would throw a higher stream of water than any steam engine that night. The firemen admitted to me that they had no engine that would play a stream of water over a five-story building. We had out-of-town engines here on Sunday night that would play three streams of water over a five-story building, and there was water enough for those three streams. It seems to me that we must have engines which can throw water as high as our buildings, or else we must stop erecting buildings above the capacity of our fire engines. That is my first point. My next point is this. Residing in the country during the summer, for some ten years, and having been, as I have said, a fireman, and being fond of going to fires, I bought one of those little ten-dollar machines to run to fires with; and I will simply say, that in the

town of Brighton, any person who drives round by the aqueduct to the cemetery there, will see a large barn near the road, and will see the whole south-west side of that barn charred and the wood burned half through. If they will look within fifteen feet of that, they will find the remains of another barn that was burned, filled with hay, to the ground. There was not water enough to play our fire engine, and with three of those little hand engines, the neighbors helping to fill the tubs with water, we saved that barn. I believe, if we had had engines of the highest capacity for throwing water, they could have carried their water to the tops of the five-story buildings, and we should never have had such a conflagration as that of the 9th of November; and if we had had engines that could have played to the top of Chickering's building, in the recent fire, we should never have seen the fire cross Washington street, for a very little water put in the right place, at the right time, will do a great deal towards quenching a fire.

The real difficulty, in my mind, lies not in our want of water, but in our want of capacity, either moral capacity or physical capacity, to use the water of which we now have a large supply, and for that very reason, believing that there is a screw loose somewhere, I have favored the appointment of a Board of Commissioners; not that I have any experience in the working of Boards of Commissioners elsewhere, but I have great faith in three men of intelligence, such as I believe this committee would throw their influence in favor of selecting and appointing. I have great faith in three gentlemen appointed for that special work, and taking full charge of and responsibility for it. I believe in that kind of supervision.

There is another point I must speak of, to be true to my duty to my fellow-citizens of Boston, and that is, in my attendance at fires, I have frequently come in contact with volunteers serving in place of regular firemen. It seems to me that that is not just the right thing. I believe one of the sad facts in regard to our last fire was that one of the men killed at that fire was the son of a fireman, serving as a volunteer at that time. It seems to me, as was mentioned by the gentleman who spoke last, that one great point is, that we should have firemen who are firemen, and nothing else; that we should pay them a price that will command their services,

and that we should select men for that service who are specially qualified. There are those who, by their physical ability and by their love of the occupation, are especially qualified for the work. That is all I have to say, Mr. Chairman. I favor, with all my judgment, the appointment of a Board of Commissioners, in accordance with the petition I have signed.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) If I understand you right, you think there is water enough?

A. I saw no lack of water on the night of the fire.

Q. But you think there is want of capacity to conduct the water to the fire?

A. There was a great quantity of water thrown into the first, second, and third stories of the buildings, and on the sides of the buildings, and on the sidewalk. I saw many engines playing three streams of water, and I think, if they had played one, they would have done a great deal more good.

Q. Then your experience teaches you, and you would give us to understand, that there is abundance of water?

A. I saw no want of water; but I would have ten times the amount, if the Board of Commissioners think it is needed.

Q. You say the poorest of the old fire engines had a greater capacity than our steamers have?

A. The old Washington tub engine No. 3, after we had most of them altered to suction, would play over the Grasshopper a handsome stream, and she had the smallest capacity of any engine in the department at that time.

Q. And the present steamers have not that capacity?

A. I didn't see any of them playing above the third story. During the great fire, I asked a fireman if he couldn't stop the fire from crossing Devonshire street, and called his attention to the wood-work which was on fire; and he said they couldn't reach it. I put the question if that was because of want of power in their engines, and he said it was. He said that they hadn't an engine that could play up to the fifth story. Then I asked if we hadn't got to let the fire go as far as the five-story buildings reached, if we didn't use something else besides water. He said he guessed we had.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) You say you saw several streams that were not played higher than the second or third story?

A. I saw none higher than the third story.

Q. Do you know whether these were hydrant streams, or streams from the fire engines?

A. They were streams from fire engines. I stood by the side of one when the fire was just crossing Devonshire street.

Q. You say that you saw them playing three streams, and thought, if they had played one stream in the proper place, it would have done much more good?

A. I think if they had had the power to play one stream that had the capacity to reach the fifth story, it would have been of a great deal more value in stopping the spread of the fire than three streams reaching only to the third story. I was told that they could play one stream higher than they could play the three; but that they were under orders to play three streams.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) You spoke of playing over the "Grasshopper;" will you explain, for the benefit of the reporters, where the Grasshopper was located?

A. I believe it is sometimes called Faneuil Hall. That was one of the places we used to practise on in old times.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOSIAH DUNHAM.

I am one of the signers of the petition; but I am not exactly in favor of this commission, nor of the series of commissions that may follow after in the City Government. I am in favor of pruning the Fire Department as it now is. I believe that it can be pruned and made healthy. The men ought not all to be dismissed, but the department can be pruned, as you would prune a garden. I have not attended many fires of late years. I sometimes stand at a respectful distance and look on, as many others do. I had an experience of some fourteen years in the volunteer department, but that has nothing to do with the present system. Steam engine men have nothing to do in comparison with what the old hand engine men used to do. I should say, as an old fireman, that you do not want a fireman now who merely joins an engine company for the money; if he has no love for putting out fires,

he is not worth a straw. You cannot make him good for anything, any more than you can force a soldier in the ranks to learn the Manual, who has no love for the life of a soldier. The Mayor, as I understand it, is to appoint this commission, and to be at the head. We may elect a Mayor who knows no more about putting out a fire than he does about building a house, or preaching a sermon; but he has got to be the head man, and consequently he may know no more about what should be done at a fire than any man you can pick up in the street anywhere.

The CHAIRMAN.—The words of the petition are that the Board shall be appointed “for a term of not less than three years, by the Mayor, with the approval of the Aldermen or Council.” The Mayor is not to be the head.

Mr. DUNHAM.—He would be substantially so. He can remove them, and with the temptation of a salary of three thousand dollars, they would conform to the will of the Mayor at all times. They would not know their own interest if they did not. Are there not three men in the Fire Department who have served as engine men, and know something about it, who are as competent to make all the investigations that are needed as a man (since that question has been brought up) who is good at making excavations and shovelling up mud for embankments and breastworks? I do not see how the Fire Department comes under that head at all.

The City Government ought to go to work and prune the Fire Department, by making a new ordinance, and dropping out all that is objectionable in the present system. We have plenty of material for a new department. There are men enough who will join the department for love of going to fires. The leading hose-men and the engineers (the men who get up steam) are the important men; it is of no consequence who drives the horses. I have heard it said, but I cannot believe it, that at the great fire in November, they did not get up steam sufficient to throw the water above the third story of the buildings. If that is so, the engines have not been properly managed by the engineers who have charge of them. The Fire Department, I repeat, needs pruning.

Let me say one thing more. I live in South Boston, where we have a population of 50,000. In the last twenty-three years, there

has been \$30,000 lost by the burning of dwelling-houses in that part of the city ; all wood or supposed to be. That \$30,000 has been paid by two of us ; where has all the rest of the money gone ? We have not used it. It has been used in other places. That has been our condition. Now, we receive notices occasionally : — “ We want to cancel your policies.” All right, — cancel them. Those who can afford it will run their own risk ; those who cannot, must get insured somewhere else. But the whole thing is bearing down fearfully upon that place, where, as I said before, the losses have been trifling. Bear that in mind — not \$30,000 have been lost in twenty-three years, — I mean, upon dwelling-houses ; I am not talking about vinegar factories, or lead works, or kerosene oil works, — and only two men have paid those losses very easily. What has become of the rest ? Nobody can tell. And yet we are borne down by these enormous rates of insurance. I am paying \$1.60 ; where I formerly paid eighty cents. Some of the rates have doubled, and some almost doubled. Why ? Because that portion of the city is mostly built of wood. We pay our money freely for the Fire Department, and yet we are obliged to pay these high rates. I say, the Fire Department needs pruning, needs reorganization. Will the City Government shrink from it ? Gentlemen come here and claim that we should have a commission for this thing, that thing, and the other thing. What will there be left for the Mayor and Aldermen to do, except, if you please, to levy taxes ? If the members of the City Government are not willing to do their duty, they should not have accepted their offices. If they say they have not the time properly to discharge their duties, they could not afford to come here. That is the plain English of it. You may use different language to carry the same meaning ; but that is the plain English of it. You cannot afford to do your duty.

I am opposed to the commission from beginning to end, but I am in favor of a pruning and reform of the whole Fire Department ; therefore I shall do all I can to prevent the establishment of any commission. However genteel the men may be, however eminent they may be in culture, they are not firemen, after all, and do not know much about it.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Will you be kind enough to suggest to the committee how they can prune the department ?

A. Make a new ordinance, dropping this Fire Department right out. I could make one with you in a short time, if we could sit down together. I will tell you how I would have it. The Chief Engineer should be appointed, not elected by ballot.

Q. By whom?

A. I would take the Judge of Probate to appoint him, so that he could not be removed for political causes. I would let him have the appointment of the foremen of all the engines. There was no weaker spot in the old Fire Department than allowing us to choose our own foreman. In the fall of the year, when we used to choose officers at that time, the foreman had to cater to us, as well as give us chocolate, and pat us on the shoulder, and tell us he was going to reform his ways. The Chief Engineer should be a man of brains—a man worth six, seven, or eight thousand dollars a year; no matter about the money, if you get the right man. He should appoint the foremen of the engines, and should select his engineers. Men grow old in the Fire Department, and I think they should be told when it is time for them to leave, and younger, smarter, more active men take their places.

STATEMENT OF E. W. JAMES.

MR. CHAIRMAN:—For a number of years I have had something to do with insurance, especially in the western part of the city,—that is, from the City Hall to Cragie's Bridge. No part of the city is so much exposed to fire as that, and in no part of the city, except East Boston, is the rate of insurance so high. The reason why I favor a commission is, because attention has been turned, in this matter, exclusively to the South end. If a steam engine has been asked for north of Boylston street, it could not be had. Our rates of insurance are from five to eight per cent., and it is difficult to get insurance on property below Brighton street at any price. I ask for a commission that shall be taken out of politics and out of the City Government, so that we can get some protection at the West and North end, and thus reduce our rates of insurance. The Lowell Railroad and Eastern Railroad companies are willing to pay for the machines, as they have told me, if they can have them located there. I say, the whole system should be

changed, and the engines located in Boston, instead of out to Mattapan, six miles from here. At the last big fire, the engines from Charlestown, Cambridge and Newton were there before the engines from the 16th Ward arrived. I am in favor of a commission that will remedy this evil, and put some of the engines in that part of the city where the business is done. Last January, some of the insurance gentlemen before me headed a petition to the present Board of Aldermen, and on the 10th of February it was backed up by a big petition, asking that an engine might be located on Charles street, at the foot of Poplar, and yesterday one of the members of the Committee on the Fire Department said he did not know that any such petition had been presented. He had been busy locating engines at the South end, away out in the country.

I do not care how you are taxed. I have got all the insurance I can get on my property. Why did I get it? I went to Capt. Wilson, and asked him, "What is the capacity of the pipe?"—"Four inches."—"Can you take all the water?"—"Yes, sir, every drop of it, with my engine." Then I went to the "Massachusetts," and got all the insurance I could, and went to another office and got all the insurance I could, and then I said to my wife, "Let it burn! If the insurance is good for anything, I am all right."

This thing is under the control of a political ring, and the engines and other apparatus must go to the South end. As a matter of fact, one-half of the expense of the department, Ald. Clark says, is paid in Dorchester. That is the reason why the citizens of my part of the city want a commission, so that we may have protection in those parts of the city where the business is done. Wards one, two, three and six have but one engine apiece, and three-quarters of the business of the city is done in those wards. You cannot locate any other engine in that part of the city. This government cannot do it. You have not got the power to do it. I want to state the facts just as they are, and I want the merchants of this city to understand it; and I say you have not even the power to put an engine in the northern part of Boston. You locate steam saw-mills in the northern part of the city, and you cannot open a street to put in new pipes, except in the burnt district. I want a commission appointed (and I can get a petition in favor of it from every man in Ward 3 and in a portion of Ward 6)

who will take this question out of politics. I have been in politics as much as any other man, and know all about it. I know the firemen, and take them where they are free from any ring, they are good men. You, gentlemen, all know what influences are brought to bear in these matters. I never expected to see so good a committee as this appointed. I supposed they would be, like the handle of a jug, all on one side — all from the South end. Last January, as I said, a petition was put in for new engines by the No. American Ins. Co., and the Mass Mutual Ins. Co., and then backed up by a large number of citizens, all around here. They have located three or four engines since then at the South end, but Mr. Clark, of the committee, never discovered that there was any such petition before them at all! You can judge whether the brains of a certain portion of the Board of Aldermen are looking out for the South end.

Now, under the present system, so many engines come on the first alarm, so many on the second alarm, and so many on the third alarm; but the fire keeps on burning all the time. There are six or seven engines a great ways off. Take, for instance, the engine at Mattapan. It takes that engine about an hour to come from Mattapan to Dock square or Causeway street. We had a fire down in Causeway street the other night, and if it had not been raining at the time, we should have had another big fire. You say, "We lay back on Charlestown." She has got one company and two steamers, but you don't catch her over here except to a big fire. We protect Charlestown, we protect East Cambridge. I want to know how much it costs our department. In Brookline, they have nothing but hand engines. I presume some gentlemen here saw that beautiful hand engine that came in from Brookline — that lovely place. Now, instead of taking care of your own property, you locate your engines clear out in Ward 15. Yesterday, you located a steam engine and hose-carriage on Parker street, away off in the country somewhere (if anybody knows where it is), to protect the city proper! You have got up, at last, as far as Mason street, but go through the North and West end, full of manufactories of all kinds, and you have nothing there but one engine. Supposing Steamer Six was gone, what would you have to put out a fire with? Nothing! Therefore we have to pay five and eight per cent. a year for insurance. The people I insure for

have got sick of that kind of business, and if this committee can do anything that will take this matter out of politics and rings, and fix it so that we shall not be obliged to pay eight per cent. for insurance, we shall be satisfied. Mr. Littlefield says he would rather pay the city a hundred dollars for an engine, than pay the money to Mr. Bowker and these other fellows for insurance. That is the way we feel. I will give a hundred dollars to the city of Boston if they will locate an engine near my property. I had some brick houses on the corner of Poplar and Brighton streets, and the insurance companies would have nothing to do with anything below Brighton street. What are these poor people to do, — the men who are worth eight or ten thousand dollars, — if they cannot get their little property insured, except at these enormous rates, if at all?

I take it we have got men in Boston just as able and competent to deal with this question as are to be found anywhere. I would as lief trust some of these men as Gen. McClellan. You want a practical man, who has seen fires, who knows about insurance, and buildings and fire-escapes, and everything. I go for paying such a man well, and that is the way our folks feel. We want the Fire Department put where it is needed. Let us have a Fire Department large enough, so that we can get our property insured. We want this commission to prune out the department and arrange it so that every portion of the city will be protected.

Q. (By Mr. WEST.) Do you know what part of the area of the city is covered by Ward 16?

A. There is a good deal of wood land out there. I should think Ward 16 might be a quarter of it.

Q. What proportion of the steam fire engines of the city are out there?

A. There are six or seven out there.

Q. What proportion compared with the whole number?

A. There are six or seven out in Ward 16.

Q. How many are there in the whole city?

A. I think we had six or seven in the old city proper, and some of the South end folks have got some lately. There are some five or six in Roxbury, and now they have located one in Parker street, off in the western country somewhere. We have got one in Salem

street, one in Bulfinch street, one in Wall street, and one in River street.

Q. Would you be surprised to hear that Ward 16 was as large as the balance of the city?

A. Yes, sir, I should be considerably surprised, taking in Roxbury. I know you have got a lot of territory that won't be built over for one or two hundred years. You have got hardly anything but dwelling-houses out there. When you get a five-story building, full of dry goods, or leather, on fire, and have your steamers located out in Mattapan, you get a pretty tall fire before they can get to it.

On motion of Mr. Dean, it was voted, that when the committee adjourn, it be to meet on Thursday afternoon, at four o'clock.

Mr. ALBERT BOWKER.—A great deal of information has been brought before the public lately, and a good many reasons given why fires are not put out; but we have a gentleman present from a neighboring city, who has himself put out a great many fires, and who has a peculiar system for doing it. He has the endorsement of the President and Professors of Harvard College, and has written a book, which some of you may have read, and which all of you ought to read, I think. I should be very happy for one; and I think the committee and the gentlemen present will be interested, in hearing Mr. Bird, of Cambridge.

STATEMENT OF JOSEPH BIRD.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN:—I will not detain you but a moment, to make a suggestion. First, however, let me say that I do not think you need any commission to make another commission. I think you are a good commission of yourselves. What I have seen here this afternoon has convinced me that there is no need of choosing a commission to make the commission which is asked for. But you will adjourn to-day, and meet again and adjourn, and perhaps hold two or three more meetings, and there must be time to prepare your report, and all the while this drought is increasing, the wind may arise at any moment, a fire may break out; you have had two dreadful conflagrations without a wind, and with a wind and this drought, this city lies to-day at the mercy of

Divine Providence. I say not a word against the firemen, not a word against the engineers, but entirely against the system which you have.

Now, sir, I have with me a certificate from James Braidwood, the best fireman in the world, who says that there should be in every warehouse a little portable pump and buckets, and the workmen or officers, seeing them, could instantly put out a fire. I heard Mr. Damrell say, within a few weeks, at the Revere House, that merchants should provide themselves with something of this character; and yesterday, the President and Overseers of Harvard College, having had ample opportunity to investigate the power of these small engines, voted to have fifty of them placed in the buildings of Harvard University at the earliest possible moment, and within three days they will be there. If Harvard University, with its isolated buildings, needs fifty of these engines, what does Boston need? If a man has his leg cut off by a cannon-shot, do you wait to appoint a commission before you stop the flow of blood? By no means; you tie it up at once. So I say, let something be done at once to relieve the anxiety of those people whose property is in danger, and to stop the jeers and laughter of all the rest of creation, because the "hub of the universe" is likely to burn at any time. I suggest to you, that you do not wait for a commission, but have these engines put in your buildings, as Mr. Damrell says they ought to be, as Mr. Braidwood said they ought to be in London; and because they did not heed his advice, he was crushed to death in a fire that destroyed eleven millions of property. Mr. Braidwood might say so to all eternity, and the City Government of London would not do it; Mr. Damrell might say so forever, and the City Government of Boston would not do it; but, gentlemen of this committee, if you will report to-morrow to the City Government that you need three thousand small engines here, the people of Boston will say, "For God's sake, let us have them," and the City Government will have to get them. It is the one thing that will solve all your difficulties. Excuse me for saying this. I do not speak of what I do not know. I have been for years in it. I have shown the operation of the little engine to which I refer to the gentlemen of Harvard College, and to the reporters, and all, without exception, say there is no doubt about

its efficiency. I say to you, that there are hundreds of places where, if a fire should break out, with a wind such as we had last Friday, it might utterly destroy the city, and there would be no need of any further discussion of this matter, because there would be nothing to be done except to build up Boston again. It is not a question which you should rest on over night, but by somebody, by your committee, by the Mayor, or by the City Government, something should be done at once, — as you would, if a person was bleeding to death, stop the blood as soon as you possibly could. Boston to-day is bleeding to death. Why? It is because of these Mansard roofs. I say, you may build this city so that it will not burn, and you may build it so that it shall burn in spite of all you can do; and I say that the department is not now made up, and cannot be made up, with this kind of engine, so as to be able to meet such an emergency. The wind to-day has been as high as it was at the time of the conflagration; last Friday, it was three times as high; it may be so to-morrow. I do not know that you have any power in the matter, but I say there is a danger that the citizens of Boston do not realize; if they did, they would insist that something should be done, and done at once, to guard against it.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Who would you suggest that this great number of engines should be placed in charge of?

A. If fifty were got to-night, before nine o'clock, they should be placed in the furniture stores, where there is especial danger; the next fifty should be placed in buildings selected by the police, perhaps. But the city of Boston should be immediately filled with them. \$21,000 would be required for 3,000 of these engines, and they could play 18,000 gallons of water a minute, while the capacity of the whole force of steam engines is only 11,000 gallons a minute, and the expense is over \$300,000 a year.

One other word, and I will close for this evening. If the gentlemen of the committee will come to my house, I am ready any day, within one, two or three days, to make buildings and make fires, and show what large fires can be put out with small means, if taken at the right time.

Q. You suggest that they shall be furnished to the citizens?

A. Precisely. Mr. Damrell says the merchants should get

them. How many would get religion, if they had to pay for it? How small a portion of the citizens would pay ten dollars for one of these engines? I would have them bought by the city, and the city should put them where they are needed. Put \$21,000 in the hands of the Mayor, and let him buy the engines. The gentleman in front of me, for instance, wants an engine, and he signs a paper, pledging himself to take charge of it, and to see that it is worked if there is a fire within reach. The city would be protected, just as Mr. Braidwood and Mr. Damrell have said that London and Boston should be protected. Do the infantry or the cavalry buy their arms? It is infantry that is wanted. You have batteries, but no infantry. And just as the infantry is better than all the other parts of an army, just so much better will be the small engines than the others.

Q. (By Mr. BOWKER.) Have you used these engines practically in putting out fires?

A. For twenty-five or thirty years I have used them practically.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) As I understand you, it is a simple apparatus, made by you or somebody, to be applied to the pipes already existing in houses or stores?

A. Nothing is required. There are no wheels to it; there is no carriage to it; no clatter or anything of that kind; it is a simple engine, to be applied to the present water power in the buildings.

In addition to the expense for the engines, there will be the expense of a competent person to take charge of them, to be appointed by the Mayor, and to report to him a statement of every fire, and also to report to the city through the press. Fires now are not reported. The gentlemen reporters report them just as well as they can, but they have no power to get the truth. A fire officer appointed by the Mayor, going to a fire, would get just exactly what these gentlemen do not get. It is my experience, after thirty years' observation, that when a man's building gets on fire and burns down, or does not burn down, anything but the truth is told; anything is stated as the cause of it. But if it could be reported, that when a fire was discovered, it was not more than five feet in diameter, but the Fire Department waited and waited until the whole building was on fire, the Mayor and the

press of the whole city would learn a lesson. And if it could be said that when the fire was ten feet in diameter, a man came up with a small engine and dashed it out in a minute, the city would learn another lesson. I appeal to you. Do you learn such lessons now? All the facts in regard to every fire should be carefully investigated by a competent officer, and reported to the city press, and we should learn much more about them than we do now.

Let me say one word more. You pay now \$350,000 a year and get a force of steam engines equal to 11,000 gallons a minute. \$168,000 added to that will give you 24,000 Johnson engines, with a force of 144,000 gallons a minute. Suppose you put in 15,000 of these engines. At the first fire, the man will act like a fool, but the facts will be reported, and every man of the 15,000 will have learned a lesson; and on the next occasion, the man puts out a wonderful fire, and very soon you have 15,000 experts in this city; 15,000 men who, seeing a fire, will dash at it in a moment, and have something with which to put it out. With such a force, eight out of nine fires would be put out without the large engines. Let me go one moment to Otis street. Here is Otis street, with its Mansard roofs; there is Kingston street in flames. It is a terrible hour. The steamers cannot play higher than the third story. A Mansard roof on Otis street is catching fire, because the steam engines cannot reach it; no fault of the men; no fault of anybody; it happens so. A little water on those slates will prevent the boards burning underneath. Let one of these engines be taken up into that roof, and a man with a wet woollen cloth around his hand can put the pipe out of the window and prevent or dash out the fire. It is a very simple affair. There is not a Mansard roof in this city where one of these little engines cannot play twice the distance that would be necessary to protect it. Now comes the Globe Theatre. Water was not thrown on the Globe Theatre (no matter for what reason), nor on the Chickering building. It would have been the easiest thing in the world for a man to have played on those buildings with one of these engines, by putting his hand out of a window.

I want to mention one or two facts, to show how slowly this thing grows. Many years ago, there was quite a fire at the North end; perhaps some of you will remember it when I say that Mr.

Gove's store was among the buildings destroyed. That night the steam engines were twice driven some two hundred feet away from the fire, thereby allowing it to cross the street. After the fire, I called on the committee on the Fire Department; they were delighted with my ideas; they thought they were exactly right. Then I called on the Chief Engineer. The next time I called on the committee, they would not look at me. I am not a very small man, but they could not see me. I had been called a "one-idea man," "a fool," and the whole thing was put off. Now, a man came before the commission that made the investigation in regard to your great fire, and he was asked, "Were you on Franklin street when the fire crossed?" — "Yes, sir, I was there; I saw it cross." — "Well, how did it happen?" — "When the fire came down upon Franklin street, the steamers were playing upon the buildings on the northern side, but the fire got so tremendously hot on that side of the street, that we had to move right away." (I think those were the precise words.) "I moved up towards Washington street, and the others moved down." — "As I understand you, then, there was no more water thrown from the steamers?" — "Not the slightest in the world." Of course the fire crossed for precisely the same reason that it did on Washington street the other day, and it may cross in this city, in a gale of wind, at any time.

Now, what is the remedy? Only a few engines. The French have no steam engines. The French have small engines, which they put on wheels when they are wanted; but every place where there is the slightest danger from fire is sure to be covered by these small engines. Paris is better built than Boston, so that they do not need steamers as we do; but to-day we need small engines more than we do large ones.

Q. (By Mr. DEAN.) How large are these engines? How many men does it take to operate them?

A. For playing directly upon a fire, only one man is required, but to put out a fire on a roof, eight feet of hose would be necessary, and two men would be required. I want to say that, if I should bring one of those engines in here, it would be received with a perfect guffaw. You would not know anything about it. But if you will come to my house and witness its operation, you will never laugh at it again. When you see a building 8×10, with a large roof, of the very dryest boards; when you see a

gallon of kerosene thrown over it; when you see resin barrels and staves and shavings put into it, and these covered with kerosene, — when you see such a building on fire, and allowed to burn until the grass for a space longer than the length of this building was burned, as eight Boston reporters saw it, and when they tell you that in a minute that fire was so completely under control that it could not burn a building on either side of it, and only a few minutes more work was required to extinguish it entirely, you will, perhaps, understand something of the value of this little machine.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) If a fire is raging in a building to such an extent that the firemen cannot stand in the street, on account of the heat, and it will evidently cross, are your engines then applicable?

A. It is just exactly where they come into play. Suppose the building opposite here were on fire, one of these engines could be brought in here and put behind the wall, and while one man pumped, another man, with his arm covered with woollen rags, an old shawl, or coat, could stand at the window and throw water enough on the building to prevent its taking fire. I am going to have a building made, eight or ten feet by twelve, and I am going to have resin barrels and staves so near it as to set the building on fire on three sides, and make a fire as intense as you ever saw, and then I will have one or two small engines inside of that building, and just play on the wooden building all round, and you will see how astonishingly easy the building may be saved. I want to show how small an amount of water will keep that building from burning, with an intense heat on three sides of it.

Q. (By Mr. WILLEY.) Won't you give the committee an idea of the capacity of your engine for throwing water?

A. I could throw water to any corner of this room [the large committee room] from where I stand. I should dash it into the nearest corners; I should only be able fairly to throw the water to the furthest corners. The difficulty lies in the fact that we have been educated up to the idea, that it is necessary to have the largest stream possible, and it is hard to make people believe that a small engine can do much. Therefore, I will invite you to come to my house, and I hope, also, to have the committee of the under-

writers, and the Committee on the Fire Department, and I will pledge myself to show you that a small engine can do wonders.

• STATEMENT OF OSBORN HOWES, JR.

I wish to refer only to one point, and that has reference to the system in New York. I think it would be very difficult indeed for any Bostonian to understand that system thoroughly; but, from what little I have seen of it, during a residence there of two or three years, I am quite certain it works admirably well. The organization of our City Government is such that it is very difficult to get reforms carried out. Some three weeks ago, I attended a meeting at the Revere House, at which Mr. Damrell said the reforms he had suggested had not been carried out; if they had been, there would be no need of a Board. That is what we want. The only idea of having a Board is that these reforms may be carried out. Now, in New York, and also in Philadelphia and Chicago, the system, as I have been told by those connected with it, has proved everything that they expected. The statement which was made in reference to the decrease of fires in New York was furnished by me. What we want is the same system here. They have had no such fires in New York as we have had here; possibly they may have, but they have not so far, and there is one fact in their favor, and one fact, as far as it may go, in favor of a Board. That is all I desire to say.

Q. (By Alderman Power.) You have referred to the meeting at the Revere House. Do you remember what measures Mr. Damrell said he had recommended which the City Government would not carry out for him?

A. I do not know that I could speak of them definitely. My impression is that he spoke of increasing the number of engines, and locating them in central positions. I think those were two measures he spoke of particularly. He said he had repeatedly urged upon the City Government the necessity of doing that.

Q And that if they had acted as he had suggested, the probability was we should not have had such fires?

A. No, I do not think he made that statement. That might be inferred, but there was no such statement made. The idea was,

that we should have been in a more protected condition than we are at present, if those suggestions had been carried out; and had they been carried out, possibly the need of a Board would not have been demonstrated as at present.

Q. You do not remember what those suggestions were?

A. I stated two of them. Mr. Damrell is here, and he would, I think, substantiate that portion of my statement.

Q. (By Mr. WILLEY.) Do you understand that all the members of the department there are under pay by this commission?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Their constant duty is to attend to the Fire Department?

A. Entirely, in New York, as I understand it, both in the patrol and regular Fire Department.

Q. There is no volunteer system about it?

A. No, sir.

Q. (By Mr. DEAN.) That has been in existence only a short time, has it?

A. For several years in New York; the patrol has been in existence a shorter time than the other, I think, but I am not certain.

Q. Do you know how many years?

A. I do not know how many years.

Q. (By Mr. WILLEY.) Does the City Government have control of the commission, or is it an independent department, acting on its own authority, and on its own powers?

A. There has been some change in regard to that since the new charter was granted at Albany last winter. I think the members of the commission are appointed by the Mayor, and confirmed by the Board of Aldermen. That is my impression.

Q. And act entirely independent?

A. Act entirely independent.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) Do you know anything about the cost of running the Fire Department in New York city?

A. No, sir, but I have heard it stated that it is hardly larger than the cost of the department in Boston; with what truth, I cannot say; I have no definite knowledge.

Q. Are their engines all operated by steam, or do they use smaller engines?

A. I have been to quite a number of fires in New York, but I have never seen any other than steam engines. They may have the Babcock engines there, although I do not know that they have. I am not certain about that. I have never seen them.

Q. Up to the great fire in November, what was your opinion of the Boston Fire Department, compared with others?

A. My knowledge of the Fire Department prior to that time was very limited indeed. I could give a better opinion of it since than before.

STATEMENT OF MR. W. W. DOHERTY.

I believe one of the requests of the petitioners is that the Fire Department be made a permanent one and placed upon a paid basis, so that they shall give their whole time to the city as firemen. I simply want to say a word upon that particular point; it struck me as something worthy of consideration by the committee. It is often said of us Bostonians, that we are behind the times, and I think we are in that particular, at least, and perhaps in others. The matter of the establishment of a commission strikes different minds in different ways, but it seems to me that all must agree that a permanent department is just what we want in Boston, because it will operate in more ways than perhaps we are aware of at first thought. Suppose we have the services of every man in a permanent department, we can then have them, not on duty at their engine houses, because that is not just what is wanted, but assign to each company a certain district, and to each member of the company a portion of that district, over which the men are to go from day to day, dividing the men all round among the different districts, and paying them three dollars a day; that is not too much, — we pay our policemen three dollars; they can do special police duty as well as firemen's duties, and, in addition, they can go through their districts and learn something about the houses and stores in it, and be ready to go into the large warehouses and elsewhere, in case of fire, and know how to go to the back part of a building, if necessary. When an alarm is given, they need not rush to the station houses, but can go at once to the fire. We might have these hand pumps, if you please, and when a small fire occurs, the firemen might, in

many cases, extinguish it without an alarm being given. I think we can save money by that. I am told that every alarm of fire that is given costs the city of Boston \$500, aside from the loss to the owners of the buildings and property. This loss is occasioned by the wear and tear of the engines, the expense of the coal and kindlings, and the damage that the engines suffer. Now, nine-tenths of the fires might be put out without an alarm, if we could have these men distributed in the way I have suggested. It seems to me there is a point where we can save money to the city, aside from what would be saved to the citizens at large, if the fires could be extinguished before they had made any headway.

That is the only point I care to speak about. This is a matter (excuse me for saying so) in which the citizens feel a very deep interest. It is true that in our city, as in all cities, the people will bear a great deal, and until some emergency arises they will submit, without serious complaint, to many things; but I think the people of the city of Boston now feel that they want something done. There has been considerable talk and clamor in the newspapers against the Fire Department and the head of the department. I don't think the fault lies there, wholly and entirely. You cannot expect men to go beyond their means, and if you give men limited and small means to work with, you cannot expect them to accomplish so much as they would accomplish with larger means and appliances under their control. But in regard to the appointment of a commission, I would not have a commission appointed to choose another commission. You are here for the purpose of deciding whether a commission should be appointed or not, and if it is the opinion of this committee that it should be done, the sooner it is done the better; and I believe the citizens will support the committee if they believe that such a commission is required. Should a commission be appointed, give them the most comprehensive power, give them almost plenary power; power to do all that the Committee on the Fire Department can do, and more, if more is needed. This must be done; because a commission that is limited in its power is worse than no commission at all. Then let that commission be independent of everybody, except the appointing power.

Mr. BIRD.—I think the complaint has come from the Chief

Engineer, and from every one acquainted with the operations of our Fire Department, that the men are not in their houses; that one hoseman is here, another there, and another there. I think they should all be in their places. I agree with the gentleman who last spoke, that somebody should attend to the duty which he has described; but I do not think it should be the Chief Engineer or the firemen. I think that the men who are to be leading hosemen should be in their engine houses, and not be round looking at other places.

MR. DEAN. — I would like to get Mr. Bird's opinion on one subject while he is here. He has spoken of the great number of expert firemen that would be created by having a large number of small engines. A query occurred to me, contrasting those remarks with the remarks of Mr. Doherty, whether by our new paid department, with steam engines, we do not reduce the material, and thereby reduce the efficiency of the Fire Department by reducing the number of expert firemen that now exist, compared with the number under the old system; whether we do not have too small a number of expert firemen now?

A. Yes, sir; I have no doubt that is so.

Q. Then your opinion would be that somehow or other we ought to have a larger force of skilled men to go to fires; men who are capable of making a big use of small means; making the best use of what they have?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Now the query occurs to me, whether you would have all the men permanently employed?

A. I certainly should do so. I should not care anything about the money. The steamers should be made as efficient as possible. I think they cannot be made efficient when part of them have to run a mile, or two miles, to a fire.

Q. Then the question arises, when you pay them permanently, get them attached to a certain business, — the business of firemen, — will it not lead to their holding on until they are too old, as Mr. Dunham described? Is there not danger of running into trouble in that direction?

A. I don't think there is much danger of that. I think an ex-

pert fireman of fifty or even sixty years of age is better than a ranting young fellow of eighteen or twenty.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW to Mr. HOWES.) Do you know whether the whole department in New York is paid?

A. I believe it is. I have been told so by competent authority.

Q. Something has been said about the Fire Alarm in New York, — do you know anything about that?

A. It is very different from ours. I think they give no public alarms. There is an alarm in the engine houses and where the hose carriages are stationed; therefore, the alarm is only given to the paid men at the station.

Q. Has not that a very much better effect?

A. I think it has; it prevents crowds from gathering at a fire until it is a little under way, at least, and then only in the immediate locality.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) You consider that an improvement?

A. I do, decidedly.

Q. Do you know of anything else they have that is an improvement on what we have here?

A. Well, in the matter of paid patrol, — I presume that is included in this matter, — and they have also their engine houses located very centrally and very closely together in the business sections of the city. Where it is not an engine house, it is a hose carriage. In walking through the city below Canal street, you cannot go more than four hundred or five hundred feet without coming to an engine house, and at almost every block you see a patrolman. I don't think the force is so very large, but they seem to utilize it to a very great extent.

Q. (By Mr. WEST.) Do you know how many steam fire engines they have in New York?

A. I do not; but I think it is something like sixty. I am not certain. The city is divided into three sections, I believe, — the lower, centre, and upper.

On motion of Mr. Dean, the committee then adjourned.

SECOND HEARING. X

THURSDAY, June 26.

The committee met at four o'clock, and the chairman stated that the hearing would be continued on behalf of the petitioners.

STATEMENT OF F. W. CRANE.

I presume no one here knows me, but it is barely possible that an unknown person may help a little in this matter, where we are all interested, and that a man who is only a mechanic, and who has not had the advantages of education, and perhaps small observation, may have seen something which will help the rest of us.

I would like to call the attention of the committee to one or two things. During the last great fire, there was at one time a steam fire engine and two hose carriages blocked, unable to go through the crowd of teams, and we outsiders had to take hold and release them; for when I tried to find a policeman to aid me and others in doing that, I was not able to find one, but was referred to some gentleman who has charge of the Common, and with his aid, we were able to release those teams, and finally the steamer got to work. It must be evident to all, that this is a point to which the committee could direct their inquiries properly, — whether there cannot be some means adopted, by which transportation through the streets during a fire can be secured. At the last meeting, Mr. Donahoe, for one gentleman, said that his goods were burned in Washington street, and he was very much discouraged by it. Had there been a rapid means for transporting them from there, the fire would not have burned so furiously as it did, for the goods were inflammable, and the goods would have been saved, and his insurance companies would have been so much better off. Had there been a system of that kind at the time of our great fire, no insurance company in Boston, or out of Boston, need have failed in consequence, and we should not have had so large a fire, for

the inflammable matter contained in the buildings was worse than the buildings themselves.

That is the point to which I wish to call the attention of the committee. I do not, of course, attempt to take the place of the attorney, who, I presume, will argue this matter. I presume the committee are aware of this fact, and now I wish to suggest a method by which the difficulty may be remedied.

It will be remembered by the committee, that at the time of our great fire the police arranged the teams on that portion of Tremont street nearest the fire, so that they travelled in two lines. The only part of the city where the teams were straightened out was right in the midst of the flames; but wherever four ways meet, and that is at every corner in Boston, there were eight rows of teams attempting to go through. The police obliged the teams on Tremont street going toward Roxbury to keep to the right, and those going toward the north end to keep to the right in that direction. It was a pretty good plan, but it only gave two lines of travel, when there is room in that street for four or six. Furthermore, you were obliged to walk your teams, for the fastest team could not go any faster than the slowest. The police would not permit a man to break the line and slip ahead.

Now, what we want, I think (and I think the committee will perhaps agree with me in this), is a system of travel through our streets such as is adopted on the railroads near Paris, London, and other cities in Europe. There are certain places where hundreds of trains pass each other daily without delay or accident. We could do the same thing in our streets. I ask the committee's attention to Exchange street, where blocks are constantly occurring. Let the travel through that street be only lawful from State street to Dock square. Let a team have the right of way going in that direction. Let a team going through Devonshire street have the right of way coming towards State street, and so arrange the streets throughout Boston. Then, if a fire occurs at the corner of State and Exchange streets, teams could be driven into Exchange street, turned round, and be obliged to go out that way, and they could load up with the goods in the lower stories of those buildings, and remove them without any difficulty. Chauncy street need never have lost a dollar's worth of goods in the great fire, and

in this last fire, all the goods in the buildings on Washington street could have been loaded into teams from the lower floors, if such a system as I have described had been in operation. I respectfully suggest to the committee that in my view there is a chance to do something that will be of great advantage. There are a few other matters, but I do not wish to injure one cause by attempting to introduce too many.

STATEMENT OF HON. WM. B. SPOONER.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) You have been a merchant in Boston for many years?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. What is your impression as to the advantage of having a commission to take charge of the Fire Department, instead of leaving it to the City Government?

A. I suppose that the petition which has been presented, signed by many thousands of people, is a fair expression of the feelings of the people. I doubt whether anybody, scarcely, has refused to sign it. I think the community feel that sufficient importance has not been attached to the organization and management of the Fire Department. It is a great job to protect the city of Boston from fire, and I think the citizens are convinced that there ought to be a very strong commission appointed, who should devise ways and means by which we shall be protected from the ravages of fire.

Q. Have you conversed with other merchants of Boston on this subject, so that you are able to give any judgment in that way as to the strength of this feeling?

A. I have talked with quite a number, sir, and many of them are here to-day, and some of them, perhaps, will express their opinions, if they are asked to do so. So far as my observation is concerned, there is a universal demand for a strong commission to take this matter in charge, and see if something cannot be done whereby we shall feel that we have a department of the most efficient kind.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) Will you please state to the committee wherein you think the present Fire Department is inefficient?

A. Well, sir, I can only say, that it seems to me that it has not done what we wanted. It has not protected us. After the great fire in November, we were all disposed to guess or feel that there was something which could not be provided against. I believe that disaster was generally attributed to the horse disease—to the delay which was caused in consequence of that; but so far as I have observed, although there was a commission appointed, and the matter fully investigated, nothing has been done since that time, and this late fire has led people to believe that the Fire Department really is not competent to the job which they have in hand. I do not wish to say a word against the officers or men of our Fire Department. I have the greatest respect for, and feel the greatest gratitude toward, the Fire Department of Boston, for what they have done to protect me and my fellow-citizens; but, certainly, the machine has not shown itself adequate to the work; and if you are going to leave this to the Chief Engineer, it seems to me you are requiring altogether too much of him. I think he has got enough to do without setting his head at work to devise a new system, with all its details.

Q. Then you are under the impression that the Fire Department, at present, is left under the control of the Chief Engineer?

A. I suppose it is chiefly so. I suppose there is a committee of the City Government, but I suppose the Chief Engineer has the control during fires, certainly.

Q. You are not aware, then, that the department is pretty much governed by a Board of Engineers?

A. I suppose the Chief Engineer is the general. A general of an army has officers of every grade under him, engineers and all, but he has the control. I do not know but it should be so in future; but I want a commission to consider the matter, who will go to work and see if some system cannot be devised, upon which we can rely with confidence. As I said before, I do not wish to say a word against the department. I feel the greatest gratitude toward them, but the machine is not up to the work. That is my judgment in the matter.

Q. Can you tell us if a board of three or five commissioners could be selected, in what way they could govern and control the Fire Department any better than a strong board of engineers?

A. I should think that would be a commission, would it not?

Q. We have such a Board in existence, have we not?

A. I have never heard much of them. I do not know how that is, but I want some independent men, — men who do not care for the salary, men who have an interest in the city, men of public spirit, men of independence, and known character, who will set to work and look this matter up, and think it out, and say what ought to be done. I do not know what ought to be done. I want somebody to tell me. I want somebody whose business it shall be to look the matter up.

Q. Do you think you could get a commission that would accept the position for pay, that would be as independent as a commission that would take it for the honor it might confer on them, or for the honor they might confer on Boston in discharging the duties?

A. I have not thought of that matter particularly. I have thought it was possible, perhaps, to appoint gentlemen who would serve without pay for the time being. You could not expect a permanent commission to serve without pay. I do not know, after all, but it would be better to have a paid Board, who would feel that it was their duty to devote their whole time to this matter, for the present.

Q. Do you know anything of your own knowledge of the working of such commission in other cities?

A. No, sir; I have no particular knowledge.

TESTIMONY OF CHARLES E. GUILD.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) You have been President of an insurance company in Boston, have you not?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Of what company?

A. The American.

Q. How long were you President of it?

A. About ten years.

Q. What is your present position?

A. Agent of the Liverpool, London and Globe Company.

Q. How long have you been agent for that company?

A. About six months.

Q. Whether you have been directed to reduce the amount of your insurance in any sections of the city? If so, will you state to what extent, and for what reasons?

A. I was asked to reduce the amount of insurance in the vicinity of the late fire, especially in Chauncy street. I think this was from a variety of causes; partly because the buildings are high, and partly because less confidence was felt in the management of fires after this second fire. The amounts have been considerably reduced.

Q. You mean less confidence was felt in the efficiency of the Fire Department?

A. In the efficiency of the department; and the fact that there are no steamers very near, and the further fact that the fire spread over the ground that it did May 30th, made the manager of the office in New York feel very desirous to limit the amount of risks in that vicinity.

Q. And you have reduced the amount of your risks in Boston, simply and solely, as far as you have stated yet, on account of the inefficiency of the Fire Department, or what is believed to be the inefficiency of the Fire Department?

A. Largely, yes, sir.

Q. To what extent have you reduced them?

A. I cannot tell you exactly; but I think that within a fortnight I have taken from 50 to \$60,000 of insurance out of Washington street alone, and from other parts of the city somewhat less amounts.

Q. Do you know anything of the comparative efficiency of the Boston and New York Fire Departments?

A. Only by hearsay. I have, however, the opinion from statements made to me, that the rapidity of action of the Fire Department of New York, and the water facilities, so far as the calibre of the pipes is concerned, make that city vastly superior to our own.

Q. What do you mean by "rapidity of action"?

A. The rapidity with which they spring to their carriages and get to fires. I cannot say that I know personally about this matter. Possibly you might find some other gentlemen who have a more intimate knowledge. One reason of their superior efficiency

is, that they have a larger number of men, whose time is entirely paid for there, who are able to man the engines, and get them to a fire in a shorter time than we can here.

Q. From what you have heard of the effects of the commission in New York and London, what is your judgment as to the importance of having a similar commission in Boston?

A. The importance seems to me very clear of having a commission of one or more men who will give their whole time to the study of the question of fire facilities, and putting out fires, and make all the arrangements for the Fire Department. It has been found to work extremely well in New York.

Q. Are you able to state how much the average loss of property by fire has been reduced since the introduction of the commission in New York?

A. I am afraid I cannot tell.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) What offices do you represent?

A. The Liverpool, London, and Globe. It is but one office.

Q. You have stated that you have had instructions to reduce your risks in Boston?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Have you had any instructions to reduce them in any other cities in the United States?

A. No, sir. I have charge of New England only. My orders have been simply to reduce them in Boston; not to reduce the risks elsewhere.

Q. In no other part of this country?

A. Simply here.

Q. You state as one of the reasons for a commission, that you think that there should be three gentlemen selected who would make it a study?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do you not think that a Board such as the Board of Engineers, who have made this matter the study of a lifetime, would be much more efficient than a Board who would be selected now, and begin their studies now?

A. Well, I think that is possible. I do not know how the selection might be made. Two or three persons might be found who would devote their time to it, and be not so much engineers,

as men competent to consider the whole matter, — the system of water supply, and everything concerning fires. I cannot tell as to that.

Q. I suppose you are aware that any lack of knowledge the Fire Department, or those governing the Fire Department of Boston, may have of the water supply is no fault of theirs? You are aware of the present mode of managing the different departments of the city, and that each Board is independent of the other, at present?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. So that any lack of knowledge that may have existed in the past is no fault of theirs. If they have not had that knowledge, it is not owing to any failure of duty on their part?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. I suppose, as agent of the underwriters, you have taken an interest in fires here, and have attended them?

A. Somewhat; but never to any great extent. Living out of town, I have not been at fires much.

Q. From what has come under your own observation, what is your opinion of the efficiency of the Fire Department of Boston?

A. Well, sir, I can judge by results as well as others. I cannot say that I have an intimate personal acquaintance with the Fire Department, but I find that, naturally enough, both here and abroad, it is criticised as not being able to confine a fire to one or two buildings; and I must own that it seems to me a fair criticism.

Q. Did you ever hear it criticised previous to the large fire in that respect?

A. Possibly not. The large fire drew attention at once, and the fire of May 30th still more, to the want of efficiency.

Q. I suppose you have seen the engines when they have turned out at an alarm of fire here in Boston?

A. Yes, sir, often.

Q. Well, do you think it was possible for engines to be got to a fire much quicker than they have been?

A. I should say, from the time of the alarm, it has been proved time and time again that the engines could be moved more rap-

idly. I cannot of my own knowledge go very far. I do not know.

Q. Do you know of your own knowledge why it is that the engines are moved more rapidly in other cities?

A. Perhaps because of the greater amount of drill. In regard to that, I cannot answer. I know the drill is very severe and constant in New York. I speak particularly of New York, because my inquiries have been confined mainly to that city.

Q. Do you think that, if we did not have blockades in the streets, the engines would get to a fire about as quick as it is possible for machines of their weight to be moved?

A. I should say there could be more rapidity, but perhaps I am wrong.

Q. Have you any personal knowledge of the workings of commissions elsewhere?

A. No, sir. I have seen the reports from year to year in the city of New York, so near us, and I know that they are thought favorably of elsewhere.

Q. Well, sir, in your opinion, whether or no, speaking as an insurance man, a risk to-day in Boston is not a better risk than it ever was before?

A. No, sir, I could not say that.

Q. Why not, sir?

A. Well, sir, I feel that we have not had the opportunity to improve our buildings as we should, and I have felt since the fire in May, more strongly than I did after the November fire, that the department are not able to control a fire, and confine it to one or two buildings. Now, a great many of the risks taken by my office have been taken upon the idea that a fire would be controlled within one or two buildings from the place where it started, and the instant it goes beyond that, it affects insurance people unfavorably.

Q. But with the extensive widenings that the city has gone into, and with the improvements in the construction of buildings, of course there is no reason why the department should not be as efficient to-day as it was at the time of the November fire; why then should you consider a risk a poorer one to-day than it was before the fire?

A. Well, you constantly discover new facts about the management of the department. I see more clearly than ever that many parts of the city are unprotected by any engines in their immediate vicinity. I see that the calibre of the pipes is small. Perhaps the water may not have failed at any fire, but it may fail at the next large fire we have, if we depend upon six-inch mains. The other day, a six-inch main was put down in Devonshire street, and it so happened that an insurance gentleman from New York was walking through that street with me, and he said to me, "We have felt, since the fire in November, that a large conflagration was possible in an eastern city, and we have felt that possibly New York would be the next city attacked, and we immediately besought our Board to put down large mains in one or two of our principal streets." He mentioned particularly Church street, a dry goods street, where he said they had a six-inch main, which had done very well in the olden time, but they were rather surprised when their attention was directed to the matter, to find that they had no larger main than that. They commenced putting in a larger main, and the work is now very nearly completed. That is one of the things which make insurance companies feel a little insecure, — the calibre of the pipes. I may be wrong in that. I do not know that the water has failed materially in any fire as yet.

Q. Are you acquainted with the construction of buildings in London?

A. No, sir, I am not.

TESTIMONY OF JOHN H. THORNDIKE.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK). You have had to do with the management of real estate largely within the last few years?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Have you had an opportunity of observing the workings of the Fire Department?

A. I have.

Q. Whether or not, in your judgment, the transfer of the management of the Fire Department to a commission would be advantageous or not?

A. I think it would, decidedly.

Q. Do you think it would be well to establish a commission which should devote its whole time to the devising of measures to protect the city against fire?

A. I think we must have some change.

Q. What have you observed as to the efficiency of the Boston Fire Department?

A. I was near by when the fire first commenced in November. After it had got well under way in one building, I found one engine that was at work was playing on the outside of a building, and three-quarters or seven-eighths of all the water that was thrown from that engine went on the outside of the building.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) Where was that?

A. That was the first house south of the corner building that first took fire on Kingston street. Three-quarters, at least, of the water was running in the gutters, and it was played on the outside of a brick wall. And the last fire was just about equal to that.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) Was there any improvement, in your judgment, in the management of the last fire over the first?

A. No, sir; not any. I anticipated that there might be some, but I was sorry to find that there was not any improvement. The building that was owned by James Paul, on the corner of Hayward place, called the Chickering building, because occupied by the Chickering's, was built as well as any building will be built now under the new building law. It had no Mansard roof, no Lutheran windows, nor anything on the roof that would take fire; it had a metal roof. I stood where I could see that roof, and no portion of it was on fire until the story underneath was burnt out and the timbers fell; then the roof fell with them. No water was put on that building in front, that I could see, and I don't think there was any, for I do not think if there had been any water put on the front of the building, the fire would have gone into the upper windows, as it did. At first, the fire went into the upper windows, then into the next story, then the next, until the building was burnt down. Mr. Paul tells me that he urged a man who was in the building with a hose-pipe in his hand to put some water on the outside of the building, on Washington street, and his reply was that he was waiting for orders.

Q. Taking the result of your observation in both the late great

fires, — on the 9th of November and the 30th of May, — you were satisfied, were you, that the Fire Department was inefficient and not properly disciplined?

A. I am satisfied they were not properly disciplined. There are some first-rate men in the Fire Department, I know, but they are not properly disciplined. I do not believe they are drilled. If they are, they are very poor scholars. I do not believe there is any drilling done in the Fire Department at all. Some men, in my experience, do not know how to get into a building. Up here at the corner of Tremont street, I had a door to an entry, that was made of mahogany and pine wood — mahogany outside. The door was about eight inches stile and about three inches thick. The men who went there with their axes to get in began to pound away on the stile of the door. Now, any mechanic could have told them better. After they had broken the stile, but not enough to get in, they knocked through a panel — probably with one blow, it would not require more than that — unbolted the door, and opened it. It could have been done without so much damage, and with one quarter the labor. Therefore I feel that if the men had been drilled, they would have known better how to get into that building.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) Do you know anything of your own knowledge of the working of any existing commissions in other cities?

A. No, sir; only by report — only by results.

Q. Were you present at this last fire when it commenced?

A. Yes, sir; I was there within fifteen minutes from the time it commenced.

Q. And you say that during the whole time you were there you never saw any water played on the Chickering building?

A. No, sir. I was not where I could see any little spirt of water, but if there had been any quantity thrown, I should have known it.

Q. Where did it catch?

A. It caught in the front of the building; it caught in the upper story, in the window. Only the slight casing to the window probably took fire first.

Q. Were there any engines about there?

A. Yes, sir; there were engines very near; on the corner of Essex street, — a little this side of Essex street.

Q. You know about the large fire in November?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Will you state what you saw of the department during that fire? You say that all that came under your observation at that fire also led you to consider that the Fire Department was inefficient?

A. I would not want to say "all;" some of it was very efficient. I think some of the work done in the neighborhood of Hovey's store was very good. Not on Hovey's store, because that was done by the young men who protected that building. They were the best firemen I have heard of lately. At the fire the other day, Mr. Cotting, on the corner of Essex and Washington streets, got two or three men to go on the roof and dash water on the Lutheran windows to prevent them from catching fire, and I understood him to say that he got them to put a little water on some clothes that he hung out in front. I have a different opinion about the supply of water from that which is entertained by the community generally. I feel that there is water enough. Not that I would not have more, but I think there has been water enough for all our purposes. We have our reservoirs, and we have the Cochituate water, more than we had years ago. If the water was used where it ought to be used, and as it ought to be used, there would be no difficulty. At the fire in November, the men stood there directing their streams on a brick wall — three streams at the same time — and the Lutheran window on the end of Mr. Carney's building, on the other side, was smoking when I saw it. No water was put there. There was no difficulty in getting water up there and putting out the fire. There was a vacant building next to it — an open building, the front of it was not in — where they could have gone up on Mr. Hall's building and put their water easily on the building, which was scorching. The little window-frames — like those which you see here — are liable to take fire, if there is nothing put on them to prevent it.

Q. What is your opinion as to the equipment — that is, the engines, hose carriages, etc., — whether or not you think there are sufficient engines and hose carriages in Boston?

A. I feel that there should be a few more, but not any more at present. I don't want any more until you get somebody to take care of them. We have got as much as the present Fire Department can attend to, it seems, and a little more, according to my notion.

Q. You think, then, a commission which would have to be selected of new men, would be likely to be more efficient than the present Board of Engineers?

A. I do, if the present Board are the parties who have been directing the matter so far. I should prefer anything that was new.

Q. Whether they have had any experience or not?

A. I would risk them, if they are smart business men.

Q. If they have not had any experience, rather than the present Board?

A. Yes, sir. If we get smart business men, I will risk them.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) What is your opinion of the power of the present engines?

A. They are powerful enough, but rather too fanciful.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) Did I understand you to say that you would prefer a fire commission composed of new men, rather than the present Board of Engineers?

A. If they are the men who have been directing this matter for the last seven or eight years. I don't know who the present Fire Engineers are, and I put in the "if," because I don't know anything about them. I merely mean, that if that is the system by which the department has been conducted, we had better change it. I do not want it conducted upon the same system on which it has been conducted.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) The engineers are subordinate to the Chief Engineer, and you want men upon whom the whole responsibility of the department should be thrown?

A. That is what I should rather have. I would rather have three men who would make it their business to direct others what to do.

Mr. SHATTUCK. — The engineers, as I understand it, have no power in providing, no power in making schemes. Of course, they can be consulted, and no doubt they are. But I want to state

here, because there seems to be some misapprehension, that what we desire, and what we ask for, is a responsible commission, who will take the place, in many respects, in the first place, of the committee of aldermen and councilmen, who now alone have authority in providing engines, engine houses, and the large amount of material required. That power is now in the hands of a committee of the Board of Aldermen and Common Council, and it takes so long to exercise it, in many cases, that it is of very little value. Now, we wish to have that power placed in the hands of a commission. On the other hand, as I understand it, the Chief Engineer now buys a great many things. We wish to have that power placed in a commission. Some of the engineers are now elected by the City Council, and the subordinates are recommended by the engineers, and then appointed by the Mayor. We wish to have that power placed in a commission of three intelligent men, so that when any difficulty occurs, we can point to that tribunal, and say: "You, gentlemen, are responsible for the inefficiency." The power is scattered now. We want to have a commission that shall have something to do with the water, which now belongs to the Water Board; that shall have something to do with the Fire Alarm, which now belongs to the Fire Alarm Department; that shall have the control of all this business, following the suggestions, in many respects, of the commission which investigated the causes of the fire in November. We wish to have all that power placed in this commission. We do not want a substitute for these engineers; we do not say that these engineers should not remain just as they are. We do not suggest that that is not a good system, having engineers with the limited powers that these engineers have. We do not say that you should not have a Chief Engineer, just as you have now. But what we say is, that over all, there should be this small body of gentlemen, who shall take the whole charge, and whom the community may hold responsible for this whole business. I make this statement because it seems to be considered by some that this movement is in conflict with the present Board of Engineers. It is not, at all. I do not know that they would not have precisely the same powers that they have now, excepting, perhaps, in the matter of nominations.

Q. (By Alderman POWER, to Mr. THORNDIKE.) Would you

have this commission, consisting of three, have supreme control over the Fire Department, and the management of fires?

A. I would give them the whole control of the Fire Department.

Q. Then you would have three heads of the department to go about and command at fires? .

A. Three or five men. I don't know as I would have them go about. I think there ought to be some head-quarters for the parties who are regulating these things.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Have you experienced any difficulty in getting insurance upon your buildings?

A. Yes, sir; after the great fire, I paid from twenty-five to fifty per cent. more.

Q. But the underwriters have not declined to take risks at any time?

A. I think they have. One gentleman who was here declined to take risks from me, which he would not have declined before the fire.

Q. Have you been notified by any underwriters that they desired to cancel existing policies?

A. No, sir; not yet.

Q. Would you consent to make the Water Board subordinate to the Fire Commission?

A. That would be a big job, to put the Fire Commission in charge of the whole thing.

Q. How would it be in case this commission had no control over the pipes in the streets?

A. There is no difficulty about that. The Water Board will do whatever is necessary to be done. There is one statement I recollect in the Chief's testimony, that word was sent to him to mind his own business and that the Board would mind their own business. That is a matter in his brain. Nothing of that kind was ever sent to him.

Q. Then you would not make any such change in the Water Board?

A. I would make just such changes as were thought expedient. When I was in the Water Board (I am not there now, thank the Lord!) we were ready to make such changes as we considered

proper and desirable ; but we did not make any change that anybody wanted, who came in with a dash and said he wanted this thing done, or that thing done. There is more than one thing to be considered in making these changes.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) The location of hydrants, for instance?

A. In locating hydrants, the matter was looked into carefully, and the Board decided what was best. I believe the Chief Engineer stated what he wanted, and, so far as it was right, the Board would grant his request. I hold that there is water enough and pipes enough in the streets, if the water is used properly ; but I don't believe in putting water on the outside of a brick wall merely to show that something is being done. I believe in going up on top of a building and pouring water into it, as was done in one case at this last fire. They went up, after Mr. Paul's store got well on fire, and poured the water from the building on the opposite side of Hayward place into Mr. Paul's. That was too late. If it had been done in the first instance, it would have saved the building. The Globe building, also, might have been saved by the same means. If it had not been a holiday, I feel that the Chickering's might have had men enough there to have saved their own building.

Q. (By Alderman Power.) Were you in the Water Board at the time Mr. Damrell made that request and received the answer, as he alleged, to mind his own business?

A. Yes, sir ; I was President of the Board at that time.

Q. You say that there was never any such answer made to him when he made that request?

A. No such answer was given at the time he made it, or afterwards. No such message was ever sent to him. He came into the office, when some three or four of us were there, and made his statement. I think it was a verbal one, but he says it was written, and I don't know but it was. I don't remember anything of that kind, but he made a statement that he must have several things done,—quite extensive,—and left. We told him we would consider it, and we did, and it was considered a matter which nothing should be done about. There was no answer sent to him at all.

Q. But the request was not complied with?

A. No, sir. One gentleman said, I remember, that we had

better run the Fire Department ourselves; put in hydrants enough, and run it ourselves. That would not answer; the pressure would be taken off; and if we should put in larger pipes, as some think advisable, it would be a disadvantage all round. The larger the pipes, the more pressure there is.

Q. Do you think the underwriters are justified in increasing their rates in Boston?

A. I think they have got them as high as I want them now; but I don't feel myself very safe, and I suppose they feel in the same way.

Q. Don't you think a Boston risk is better to-day than ever it was, with the widened streets, and the improvements in building?

A. No, sir; I don't think so much of widening the streets as many do. The fire went across Franklin and Summer streets, where they were sixty feet wide. It did not make any difference.

Q. Would it not, in an ordinary fire? Such a conflagration as that was what we never had before; but don't you think a wide street would do more to prevent the fire from crossing than anything else?

A. No, sir; I do not. I think the thing to prevent it is to have men there in good season, putting the water on the front of the buildings, and keeping them wet down. Narrow streets are not the only places where fire crosses. It did not cross Avery street the other day, but it went across Washington street, because there was no water put on the front of the buildings.

Q. Do you think it would be possible for a fire in one store on Franklin street to cross to the other side?

A. No, sir, I should not think it would be likely to. When Trinity church took fire, I considered it a most unpardonable affair. Trinity church stood there isolated. The way it took was from the Mercantile Building, after the roof fell in. It took from that, and burnt the windows and the roof. A very little washing down of that building would have saved the whole thing, and there was no difficulty in washing it down, so far as the men having the opportunity to get at it was concerned. There was plenty of opportunity. If they had gone on the high building on the other side — the building next towards Washington street — they could easily have thrown water over it, and kept the roof wet, and then

gone into the church, and kept those windows wet. Mercantile building was a very low building, and burnt very slowly. I was where I saw the roof a great deal of the time it was burning, and it made me in favor of the composition roofing, as it is called. It did not burn through; it looked as if there were drops of fire on it. They kept changing, like a heavy shower on a placid lake. The fire would burn through, because it was so hot on the under side, and in a moment, the gravel, or something else, would quench it, and then the fire would come up in another place. That kept burning very slowly, until the floor timbers were burned off, and then the roof fell in. It was not so excessively warm on that side of the building. I did not see any water put on that building after twelve o'clock.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Do you remember distinctly what Mr. Damrell did ask for?

A. I do not know as I could tell precisely what he asked for. He asked for more pipes down on Franklin street, and in the square — I don't know what it is called — in back of Morton place. He wanted some hydrants put there.

Q. When was that?

A. I should think it must have been in 1867 or 1868. I should say 1868.

Q. Since then, you have been President of the Water Board some years?

A. No, sir, I went out about '68, I think.

Q. Do you remember any other request that he made to the Board which was refused?

A. Nothing else. There was some question about hydrants, which I do not remember distinctly about. But the Board were in favor of putting in the Lowry hydrants, and in the course of conversation — nothing very formal — I think there was an objection to carrying the heads of the Lowry hydrants on the engines; but I would not state that positively.

Q. (By Mr. DEAN.) Objection was made by Mr. Damrell to using the Lowry hydrants on account of the trouble of carrying the heads on the engines?

A. I am not sure whether part of it was not that we would

not pay for them for his engines, or whether part of it was not the difficulty of carrying them safely on the engines.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) You were present when the fire crossed from one side of Washington street to the other?

A. Yes, sir; I was there.

Q. You think that could have been prevented if water had been properly applied?

A. Perfectly well.

Q. There was water enough?

A. Water enough. The water in that very building was drawn by the owner of the building in buckets, and he attempted to put it on as far as he could; but he was only one man.

Q. (By Mr. DEAN.) You say there was some objection on the part of Mr. Damrell to the Lowry hydrants, on account of carrying the caps?

A. Yes, sir; it was the matter of carrying the caps that was the subject of conversation, and perhaps the expense came in. We preferred that he should pay for those things, in the room of paying for them ourselves.

Q. That is: it should come out of the Fire Department appropriation, instead of being paid for by the Water Board?

A. Yes, sir. We considered it was personal property, not real estate, and we wanted him to keep his personal property himself, and we would keep our real estate ourselves.

Q. Could the Fire Department have had the hydrants if they wanted them?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. You would raise no objection to putting in the Lowry hydrants?

A. No, sir.

Q. But if they wanted them, you didn't want to pay for them out of your appropriation?

A. No, sir.

Q. You were to furnish them and put them in, and therefore it became a question for your Board to consider?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) If I remember aright, your Board had recommended the Lowry hydrants?

A. I don't know that ; I am not sure. The Board were in favor of it, I think, as a general thing ; we never came to any positive vote in regard to it, because the preliminaries did not lead to it.

Q. (By Mr. DEAN.) Then, if I understand it, Mr. Damrell called on you and requested your Board to put in Lowry hydrants?

A. No, sir ; I think it was generally talked about among ourselves, and Mr. Damrell was consulted, not in our room, but elsewhere, whether he would like to do certain things. Our Board had seen them in Charlestown, and felt in favor of them. I know I did, and I think the rest of the Board felt in the same way. Then came this objection to his department paying for them and carrying the caps, and it is my impression that that was the reason why we did not adopt them in this city. The things that he did ask for were larger pipes in Franklin street, and in this little square back.

Q. And these you declined to put in ?

A. Yes ; we declined to do anything about it. We never came to any positive decision. He merely came and made his conversation in regard to it, and then left. No one applied to the Board whether we were going to do it or not, or anything of the kind. It had the go-by.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) Didn't he ask for a large pipe in Summer street?

A. No, sir ; not while I was there.

Q. Did this matter of the Lowry hydrants comprise any part of his request?

A. That did not come in when he spoke about the pipes. I don't know that he ever made any direct application to have the Lowry hydrants put in. I don't remember any. We had been invited over to Charlestown, and went there and saw them ; liked their workings, and my impression is that we thought we would like to put them in — thought well of them.

Q. There was no difference between you and Mr. Damrell on this question, I understand you to say, except as to whether the expense should come out of the Fire Department appropriation or the Water Board appropriation?

A. No, sir. The Board was always ready to do anything which they thought was right and proper to do, with proper regard to economy.

Q. Did he ever make any request of the Board, while you were there, for larger pipes or for hydrants, which you refused to grant?

A. I don't recollect of anything being refused him at all; nor do I distinctly recollect of any request that he made other than that one.

Q. Then these statements that he makes in relation to the requests he made from time to time of the Water Board, are false, — that is, false as far as it applies to the time during which you were in the Water Board?

A. I don't know what statements he has made in regard to that, other than the one to which I have alluded. I have not said it was false. You may cipher it which way you please. It was not true. We never sent any such word to Mr. Damrell.

Q. You say that the statement which he makes in his letter — that he made the request, and the Water Board told him to mind his own business and you would mind yours — is false?

A. Nothing of that kind ever passed between us. We never talked in that way in our Board. We never had any such conversation. It is merely an imagination of his.

X TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM B. SEARS.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) I want to ask you whether you ever made any investigation as to the comparative efficiency of the Fire Departments of New York and Boston?

A. A very limited one, indeed.

Q. Will you state to the committee in what respects, if any, you have observed an advantage in New York?

A. In the first place, as to the starting of engines in the case of an alarm, I should say that, owing to the larger paid Fire Department, they have better facilities than we.

Q. State in detail what.

A. I would state, from what limited knowledge I have, that a steamer there would have a captain, assistant captain, two licensed engineers, and eight other men employed, making twelve men em-

ployed, whose whole time is given to the department. The whole time is paid for, and the whole time given exclusively to the department.

Q. As to the time in which they start and get under way, ready for the fire, how much difference is there between New York and Boston?

A. I can only state in regard to those instances that have fallen under my own observation. I have only timed them two or three times. I have seen one steamer, after the alarm was sounded in the engine house, equip itself and go out in eighteen seconds; another in fourteen seconds, and another in eleven seconds.

Q. Can you state whether there is any difference in the thoroughness of the examination of buildings, or in the patrol, in New York and Boston?

A. Owing to their different organization, it becomes the duty of the captain of a steamer to be perfectly familiar in his territory with all the hoistways, the storage of fireworks or combustibles, and the construction of the buildings, which is of great advantage in the conduct of fires.

Q. Do you know whether the system in New York is much more efficient than in Boston, on the whole, under their present commission?

A. I should say that, owing to the perfect discipline of the men, and the larger number of men whose whole time is devoted to the service, they have a much better chance than we do.

Q. Should you not say that the fire risk was much less in consequence of the efficiency of the Fire Department, in New York, than it is in Boston?

A. I should put it, perhaps, in a little different shape. I should say that one hundred men could do more work than thirty men, and the committee can judge whether one hundred men of equal ability, whose whole time is devoted to putting out fires, can do more work than twenty or thirty.

Q. Whether or not the discipline of the Fire Department in New York is superior to that in Boston?

A. I can only say from my own personal examination, which, of course, is my own individual opinion, that their discipline is remarkably good.

Q. How does it compare with the discipline in Boston, as far as you have observed?

A. I think the proper reply for me to make to that would be, that our firemen in Boston have always shown great readiness to do the best of their ability; but I think we as citizens, have asked them to do too much work. I think they are willing to do all that men can do, and we are willing to demand more of them than men can do.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) I want you to understand that we do not make any charges against individuals; but our system has been defective, so that the men have not been brought up to the standard of efficiency that they have been in New York; that's all. What has been the annual diminution in the loss by fire since the commission was established in New York? Have you any report that shows?

A. I have not examined it carefully. I know there is such a report, but I have not examined it.

Mr. SHATTUCK.—The commission was established in 1866 in New York, and they give here the results of the working of that system in the reduced loss by fire. For the year ending October 31, 1868 (that would be the first year after the commission started), the loss was \$4,057,376. For the second year, ending October 31, 1869, it was \$3,416,402. For the year ending April 4, 1871 (the time at which the report was made, you will observe, was changed, but that does not materially affect it), it was \$2,643,387. For the year ending April 4, 1872, it was \$1,545,748. They attribute this reduction to the fact (because the number of fires has not been diminished) that they have been able to control them as they were never able to before. They have reduced the losses so that they are now but a little over a third of what they were when the commission was first established. This report from which I read is the annual report of the Fire Marshal of New York, for the year ending April 4, 1872.

Q. (By Mr. DEAN.) What is there in it to show that the reduction has been due to the commission?

A. It is undoubtedly due to the superior efficiency of the Fire Department. That is, they so attribute it, and it very clearly appears, from the way in which the fires are controlled. One

thousand and nineteen fires, or 73.84 per cent. of the whole number, show a loss of less than \$100 each; 304 fires show a loss of between one hundred and five thousand dollars; 57 fires show a loss of over five thousand dollars. The number of fires showing a loss of over fifty thousand dollars was five. In 1869, there were 18; in 1870, there were 9. That is, they have been reducing the number of fires that get beyond the control of the department, so as to extend beyond one building.

Alderman POWER. Does that book also give information as to the cost of running the Fire Department of New York, each year, from the time the commission was appointed, up to the time you have quoted there, and also the strength of the equipment, in New York; how it has been increased, if increased at all, during that time?

Mr. SHATTUCK. I do not think it gives the cost of the Fire Department. I presume that could be ascertained, however, and I will try to furnish it.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) You speak of the duties of the captains of the engines to become acquainted with the merchandise stored in their particular precincts. Do you know anything of the working of what they call the "Bureau of Combustible Property," which exists in the New York Fire Commission?

A. I am not familiar with it, beyond the statements I made—that the captain of each steamer is required to have an accurate map of the particular district assigned to his steamer. And besides that, the district engineer, or chief of battalion, is required to have an accurate map covering his entire district. Chief Damrell, or Captain Monroe, and other members of the Fire Department, have all these matters completely at their fingers' ends, are perfectly familiar with them, and would be able to afford the committee definite information.

Q. Do you know anything about the system of drill to which the New York Fire Department are subject, if any?

A. I can simply say this much; that I know they have been drilled.

Q. Whether or not the men have certain hours for drill, and are put through the drill regularly?

A. I have certain documents which show the amount of drill,

which will be at any time at the service of the committee. I think our Chief has some documents and statistics showing the character and amount of the drill.

Q. You have never had occasion to compare their system with ours in that respect?

A. The only time I have noticed their discipline has been when they were going to fires, or when an alarm happened to be sounded when I chanced to be near a steamer house. I want to say that the New York Fire Department are very much surprised at the amount of labor we demand of our men here. They say we cover an immense territory, and we expect that if a fire breaks out in a certain portion of this town, the steamer located, for instance, on Dover street, shall start out with only three paid firemen and drag the hose carriage behind, and do as good execution as if it had the hose carriage disengaged and drawn by horse power. We expect, perhaps, on the other side of that district, to go to Bulfinch street and get another steamer, or to go in still another direction, to East street. We are covering a large territory with a few steamers. They are surprised that we expect so much of our few paid firemen—at the fact that we have so few paid firemen, and at the fact that we attach the hose carriage behind the steamer—which must weigh from fifteen to twenty-four hundred pounds. I would like to inquire of the Chief the weight of those hose carriages.

Mr. DAMRELL. From thirteen to fifteen hundred pounds, loaded.

Mr. SEARS. When you realize that you are drawing fifteen hundred pounds behind a steamer, you can see it will take off her headway.

Q. (By *Mr. SHAW.*) Where does that statement of New York parties appear—at any public meeting of theirs? It certainly does not appear at the meeting they had a week ago, where they criticised the action of Boston, and condemned it.

A. Individual members of the New York Fire Department have made that remark to me.

Q. There is no public record of it anywhere?

A. I don't know of any public meeting. I have never attended

any public meeting. It is from the examination that I have made from time to time, casually.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) What is your business?

A. I am an insurance agent.

Q. Have you ever had any experience in the Fire Department?

A. Only with the hand-engines, in my boyhood.

Q. How many years is it since you have had any fire experience?

A. I am not a practical fireman now; and have not been since the war.

Q. Not since the hand engines were in vogue?

A. I have attended fires since, but not in the capacity of a fireman since the war.

Q. I understood you to say that the New York engines get to fires quicker than ours do?

A. I think the statement I made was, that twelve men employed at the steamer house had better advantages in getting to a fire than three of ours. That is what I intended to say.

Q. The moment an alarm is given, all the engines are supposed to start; now, will you state how the New York engines, drawn by two horses, can go any quicker than a Boston engine?

A. One reason is, they do not have to draw a hose carriage behind them, like a bob to a kite, which would delay them.

Q. If the Boston-engine did not have to draw any more weight, there is no reason why she should not get to a fire as quick as a New York engine, is there?

A. I should think there was. It is very difficult in New York to go as long a distance as from Dover street to Bulfinch street, or East street, before you reach the scene of action. Their routes are shorter than ours.

Q. Why are their routes shorter?

A. Simply because their steamers are put more closely together in the business portion of the city.

Q. Why can an engine in New York go a mile any quicker than an engine in Boston?

A. I suppose any gentleman who has been present at a fire in New York has noticed that when an alarm strikes, in the first place, every man who has a vehicle in the street is laboring under

the impression that the steamer's wheels are heavier than his, and he takes good care to get on the sidewalk. That is one reason why they have the means of getting to a fire quicker than we can. It is an understood thing in New York, when an alarm strikes, that everybody clears the streets. They are not blocked up, as Chauncy street was during the late fire.

Q. Then, if the Boston engines cannot get to a fire as quick as New York engines, it is because they are more blocked up?

A. That is one reason. Another reason is, that at present, in certain portions of the city, they have a longer distance to go.

Q. That I can't understand. The engines have to go to a fire, no matter where the fire is. A mile is a mile, in New York as well as here, and if the fire is a mile off, the engine has to go to it.

A. They do not have such a thing, in the lower portion of the city of New York, as a fire half a mile from any steamer. I think I am correct. I think, if you will refer to our Chief, you will find that they have located their steamers quite thickly in the business part of the city.

Q. But when an engine, located at the Battery, has to go to a fire at Harlem river, she has to go about eight miles; and when we have a fire in Milton, an engine here has to go about eight miles. Now, I would like to have you explain how an engine in New York goes eight miles any quicker than an engine here does?

A. I don't know how I can explain my idea any better than to say, that during the late fire of May 30th, a steamer going through Chauncy street to Bedford would require at least twenty minutes to get through that street. That could not occur in New York. I should say that was one reason why a steamer here cannot get to a fire as quick as a steamer in New York.

Q. Then there is no other reason why the Boston engines do not get to a fire as quick as an engine in New York, except on account of the streets being blocked up. Is there any other reason that you know of?

A. Owing to the fact of their having a larger number of men in the engine houses, they have very great facilities in starting.

Q. Well, but grant there is no delay in starting — that each engine is out of the house when the alarm is given — is there any

reason other than the blockade in the streets why a Boston engine cannot get to a fire as quick as a New York engine?

A. Then there is the hose carriage attached. That is a third objection.

Q. The extra weight and the blockades in the streets are the only reasons?

A. I should think so, sir. Those were very serious reasons in our late fires.

Q. So far as the Boston Fire Department goes, considering its number, and the extent of the territory it has to go over, what is your opinion of its efficiency?

A. I think we ask too much of our Fire Department.

Q. If you will excuse me, that is not exactly what I asked. I want you to answer the question squarely — your opinion of the efficiency of the Fire Department, considering all the duties it has to do?

A. I understand your question, merely as to the efficiency of the men who are now employed in the Boston Fire Department.

Q. Yes; and the management of fires.

A. I think, owing to the experience of a large number of the men in our Fire Department, they are very effective men indeed; and I would furthermore say, that the members of the New York Fire Department have spoken very highly of our officers, and of our Boston Fire Department.

Q. You think, then, that our Boston department is a good one, considering the large amount of work there is to be done by a few men?

A. I think the material is good; but I come back to the starting point, always, that we demand too much labor from any one set of men — that is, we expect an auxiliary force to arrive at a fire just as soon, and do just as much work as if they started with the hose carriage right for the fire, or as if they were employed wholly by the Fire Department, and paid for it, and so able to reach the fire in the same condition as the other men.

Q. Then, you think if we had as many permanent men, in proportion to the number of our engines, as they have in New York, there is no reason why our department would not be as efficient as that of New York, or any other city?

A. I should want to introduce the idea of more steamers in certain localities, in order to gain the same results. I should hardly think it fair to demand of our department, with the same number of men, and the same number of steamers, and the same discipline, to cover a larger territory than they do; but give them the same territory, and add to our paid firemen, detach the hose carriages, and have it distinctly understood that the streets are to be cleared, and I believe our Chief would show a good result.

Q. You think, then, that all that is necessary is an increase of the number of men and an increase of apparatus? With an increased number of permanent men, you think there is no reason why our department would not be as good as that of New York?

A. I think that would assist it very much indeed.

Q. Do you think they would be as good then, as they are in New York?

A. I do not believe, while there are joint committees in the City Government, you can produce the same results.

Q. How would you have it constituted and organized?

A. By simplifying the power in some way. I have no pet theory of my own, and no special reason to give, beyond the fact that I think it is more difficult to get two committees — that is, a committee from the Common Council and a committee from the Aldermen — together, than it is to get a committee from one body together; it may be from the Council or from the Aldermen.

Q. You think it would be better managed under a committee from the Board of Aldermen than from the City Council?

A. That is merely my impression.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Do you know of any particular difficulty in getting a joint committee together?

A. I have never been a member of the City Government, and of course I am not as thoroughly posted as other gentlemen, but I would say, in answer to your question, take for instance, Aldermen Cutter, Clark and Stebbins. If I am correct, you expect, for instance, Alderman Cutter to do good service on the committee on bridges, paving, police, Fort Hill, claims, finance, institutions, and other committees — something like ten or twelve committees. I can readily see that if you demand that amount of service from Alderman Cutter, there may be times when it would be possible

for the Councilmen on the committee to appear, when it would not be possible for Alderman Cutter to be present.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) How do the Fire Department conduct their business after they reach a fire? Alderman Power has taken the department from the engine houses and stations, and carried them to the fire. Now, I want to get your opinion, so far as your experience goes, as to whether they conduct their business well?

A. I should think they did.

Q. You think they are well disciplined in that particular, so as to conduct matters well at a fire?

A. We have gentlemen here who are much more familiar with the matter than I am.

Q. I want your opinion.

A. My own opinion is that they have done remarkably well.

Q. You spoke of the question of discipline. Do you think they are well disciplined, under the present Chief, at fires?

A. As well as they can be under present circumstances.

Q. How would you change the circumstances, so that they should be better disciplined at a fire?

A. By having a larger paid Fire Department. If I understand the matter, you have three men on a steamer, who are paid, and give their whole time to the department; then you take three men off from their work, wherever they may be, who are paid for only a portion of their time. I should suppose that the man who gave his whole time to it would be more under the control of the engineers.

Q. Why should he necessarily be so, when he reaches a fire? Why should he not be as capable of transacting his business as under other circumstances, if there is proper discipline?

A. I am led to suppose that a man who gives his whole time to any one employment is more likely to make a success of it, than if he distributes his time between two or three different occupations. He will, undoubtedly, be more efficient if he gives his whole time to one thing. All he knows will be at his fingers' ends, and be available.

TESTIMONY OF FRANCIS M. JOHNSON.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) You are a merchant in Boston, and also one of the Railroad Commissioners of the Commonwealth?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Won't you state to the committee your views in regard to the necessity for the appointment of a fire commission?

A. MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN :—The merchants and citizens of Boston come up here to day to give expression to the anxiety which they have reason to feel for the safety of their property. They have a decided conviction, as I understand it, that the present Fire Department, as organized and controlled, is not adequate to the work which they were organized to perform, and cannot reasonably protect their property against destruction by fire; and they ask you to perfect some plan which will make it more efficient when called upon for active service, and also some plan which will insure the erection of safer buildings.

I have not given the subject sufficient thought to recommend any new plan with confidence, better than the plan of appointing Commissioners, whose duty it shall be to reorganize and control the Fire Department, and all things pertaining thereto. This plan has many supporters, and it has the merit of having been tested with good results, as I learn, in other cities—New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and perhaps others.

If this plan is adopted, I trust the gentlemen placed upon the commission will be men competent in every respect, and that it will be made their duty, while they control the Fire Department, to keep themselves informed of the condition of every building in the city, with power to decrease the risk of fire in every building to the minimum, by seeing that all stoves are properly set, that all ashes are placed in proper receptacles, etc., and that all new buildings are so constructed that there shall be no openings left back of the plastering, to communicate from one story to another. I think that is one cause of the spread of fire. It gets in back of the plastering, where no water can reach it; no matter how large your mains are, you cannot put it out. It sometimes commences in the basement, and before it is discovered, it is coming out of the roof, for the reason that it runs up behind the plastering, out of the reach of water. I am informed that in building warehouses in

Chicago, no furring is used on the walls, the plastering being spread directly on the brick walls. This is much safer than the old method of furring, as practised in this city. Competent commissioners, who would give this subject careful study, would be able, I believe, to suggest many inexpensive changes, which would make our structures safer against fire. In the city of Brussels, in Belgium, no land-owner is allowed to build or alter a structure until his plans have been approved by the city architect, who decides as to the style, stability, and fire precautions. The city is thus made to present a better appearance, and is less liable to conflagrations. I hardly think, however, that our citizens would be willing that any city officer should decide for them in matters of taste; but I have no doubt that in matters of fire precaution they would be glad to co-operate with the city officials.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) Do you know anything of the present workings of the City Government, so far as its management of the Fire Department is concerned?

A. I do not. I only know that by common judgment success is the test of merit everywhere, and on all matters. This Fire Department has been tested and found a failure.

Q. What was your opinion of it up to the 9th of November?

A. I never had my attention directed to it. I never had any property burned until that time. I do not live in the city.

Q. You are not a citizen of Boston?

A. No, sir.

Q. You are not a tax-payer in Boston?

A. Yes, sir. I had three stores burned, and a stock of goods.

Q. You have no knowledge of the present management of the Fire Department in Boston?

A. No, sir.

Q. Have you yourself been an eye-witness of the efficiency or inefficiency of the department at any particular fire in Boston?

A. On the evening of the 9th of November, I was taking tea at the United States Hotel. That was near where the fire broke out, and I do not know how many minutes, but it seemed to me as much as twenty minutes after the alarm was given, I saw a steam engine, drawn by men, drag its slow pace to the scene of the fire. It struck me then that philanthropy was misplaced.

Q. Excuse me a moment. Do you know where that engine belonged?

A. No, sir.

Q. So that you do not know whether it belonged in Boston, Milton, or Dorchester?

A. No, sir. I thought then that the groans of an epizootic horse ought not to move any man, in view of the fire king; every man ought to rise to the magnitude of the occasion, and let those minor matters take care of themselves.

MR. SHATTUCK. Of course, Mr. Chairman, no private citizens can be expected to have a very intimate knowledge of the working of our Fire Department, or of its needs, but there are five gentlemen who were appointed last winter, after the November fire, to make a thorough examination of the whole subject. They were appointed for their intelligence, and they held forty-two meetings, and examined witnesses from every quarter. Certain parties who signed this petition, desiring to know their views on this question, addressed to them a letter, which I would like to read:—

BOSTON, June 11, 1873.

TO HON. THOMAS RUSSELL, SAMUEL C. COBB, CHARLES G. GREENE, ABRAHAM FIRTH, AND E. S. PHILBRICK:—

GENTLEMEN: We desire to call your attention to the accompanying, petition, which asks for important changes in the Fire Department. Believing your experience as a committee to investigate the cause and management of the great fire of November last peculiarly qualify you to form a correct judgment regarding the changes proposed, we shall esteem it a favor if you will give us your views respecting them, and particularly regarding the establishment of an independent Board who shall have control of the department.

Very respectfully,

J. G. Abbott, E. D. Jordan, Patrick Donahoe, William Gray, William Perkins, E. R. Mudge, Geo. C. Richardson, F. W. Lincoln, Alexander H. Rice, F. Haven, P. L. Everett, Cyrus Wakefield.

To this letter, the following reply was received:

BOSTON, MASS., June 26, 1873.

GENTLEMEN: In reference to your communication of the 11th instant, while we feel some hesitation in replying at all as a body, we feel no hesitation in stating that we earnestly favor the adoption of the changes in the Fire Depart-

ment for which you ask. Our reasons for desiring these changes are set forth in our official report, and more fully appear in the testimony accompanying it. We most of all feel the need of an independent Fire Board, who shall have both the responsibility and the power of controlling the whole matter of preventing and subduing fires. Until unity and energy of action are secured by such a measure, all the skill and courage of our firemen will be inadequate to save the city from the chance of disastrous conflagrations.

Very respectfully,

THOMAS RUSSELL,
SAMUEL C. COBB,
ABRAHAM FIRTH.

To J. G. ABBOTT and others.

The other two members of the commission were not in the city, and could not conveniently sign the letter, But I understand they concur in the sentiments expressed.

TESTIMONY OF DAVID L. WEBSTER.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) You are a merchant in Boston, and were in business in High street before the fire?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. You have also been in the City Government, I believe?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Will you state your views as to the expediency of having a Fire Board appointed?

A. If I understand the matter about the Fire Department, it is simply this: that there is a joint committee, composed of three members of the Board of Aldermen, and five members of the Common Council, who have the general control of the Fire Department, of contracting for the purchases, and the general appointments of the department. This committee is a committee which is liable to be changed every year. It cannot be made a permanent committee. It is subject to political influences, and subject to such influences as no Board managing the Fire Department of this city ought to be subject to. There is a tendency (I will not say that the thing has ever happened) that the members of the Fire Department, who owe their places very much to this committee, will be influenced to use their efforts to keep these men in their places in the City Government. This, it seems to me, ought not to be. Every

man who is engaged in the Fire Department must necessarily feel something of that influence. He would not be a man if he did not feel it. It is his business to take care of his office. He cannot do his duty unless he is permanently there, and if he is liable to be turned out, he must see to it that he is protected himself; and you cannot expect that any man would not be influenced by such considerations to use his best endeavors to return the committee who have favored him. Now, I want this thing to be entirely removed from such influences. This Board ought to be a Board entirely above political influences of any kind. It should be a Board which looks to the business of protecting our city against fire. If I could have my way about it, I should go for a more radical change than any I have heard proposed. I should be glad to see this matter of selecting the men who are to comprise a Board of Commissioners to manage this department placed in the hands of a business Board. I should be glad to see a portion of the power given to gentlemen whose business it is to make insurance, perhaps the Board of Underwriters. I should be glad to see one member of this commission appointed perhaps by the Board of Trade; another, perhaps, appointed by the Mayor, and all to be confirmed by the City Council. But of course this is a mere suggestion. If we could have a commission that should be appointed by the Mayor of the city, and confirmed by the Board of Aldermen, who should hold their offices for three or five years, unless removed for cause, and have them well paid, I have no doubt we should get an efficient Board, who would examine our territory thoroughly and carefully, and see that the engineers were assigned to proper districts; that they understood the topography, if I may say so, of every single building in that district, and understood all its capacities for producing a conflagration, and all its facilities for putting out a fire. All these things should be fully understood by the men who are particularly set over certain districts.

I do not want to find any fault with our present Chief Engineer, nor with his Board of Engineers. I have no doubt they have done their duty as well as they could under the circumstances, but no men can act so independently, subject to the political influence which these gentlemen are under, as they could if they were not subject to them. They are elected by a large Board every year.

That Board have various political duties to perform, and one of the principal political duties that they do perform (except, of course, the present committee) is to secure their re-election.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Why should you except the present committee?

A. "Present company is always excepted." I do not know that I have anything further to say.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) I would like to have you state how a commission, who would accept the position for the amount of money they could make out of it, would be independent of this political influence you speak of?

A. I do not understand that political influence would have anything to do with electing them. The Mayor, or whoever appointed them, would be responsible for them, and would be able to remove them at any time if they did not perform their duty.

Q. You know that they could not be elected except by vote of the Board of Aldermen and Common Council?

A. I do not understand that, if they were appointed subject to the confirmation of the Board of Aldermen, the Board of Aldermen could select those men. They would be, of course, removed to a certain extent from political influence.

Q. Of course you know that they could not be elected except with the concurrence of the Board of Aldermen and Common Council, and when they were elected, their salaries depending upon their retaining their positions, why would they not be just as anxious to cater to the political tastes of gentlemen, who, they might suppose, had influence, as the present Board of Engineers?

A. Because there would not be so many men that they would be obliged to cater to.

Q. They would be just as anxious to retain their positions as the present Board of Engineers, would they not?

A. The probability is that they would attend to their duty for the purpose of retaining their positions, and not attend to political caucuses and running primary meetings, for instance.

Q. Do you suppose it is possible for such a commission to be as independent as the general run of aldermen who are elected, take them good and bad, as they come? Do you suppose it is possible for these gentlemen, who are dependent upon the salary they get,

to be as independent as gentlemen who are elected here for one or two years?

A. Yes, sir, I do. I suppose it is possible for them to be a great deal more independent. The gentlemen elected here are elected by the popular vote every year. This commission would not be elected by the popular vote. They would be appointed by a man whose duty it would be to select the best possible men for the places.

Q. Do you think, from your own experience here, that men are selected for such positions simply on account of the qualifications they possess fitting them for those positions?

A. Well, sir, they are frequently so; I do not say there have been no exceptions.

Q. As a general thing, do you think that is the reason of their selection, simply because they are the best qualified people to fill those places?

A. So far as I know about the appointments of our present Mayor, he has tried to appoint men to office who were the best qualified for the positions that he had to give them. He has not always been able to succeed in getting the men he wanted to take the offices.

Q. I do not mean to reflect upon the Mayor in any selections he has made, because he is only one of the parties in the matter, after all. He may select whom he pleases, and it is for the Board of Alderman to say whether that selection shall be confirmed or not.

A. I do not understand that the Board of Aldermen have the power to select men; they have the power to confirm.

Q. And they have the power to defeat a nomination?

A. They can defeat a nomination, of course.

Q. (By Mr. WEST.) Do you suppose the Board of Aldermen would try to defeat too many good nominations?

A. No, sir, I do not.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Do you know any instance where political influence has been brought to bear upon the Fire Department?

A. Only from general notoriety.

Q. Then you do not know anything about it?

A. No, sir.

Q. Did you ever know any political influence from the Fire Department to be exercised in your ward upon elections, when you have been a candidate?

A. I never have given a great deal of attention to political matters in our ward.

Q. You make the whole substance of what you say here bear upon the question of political influence. Has it ever been brought to bear upon the members of the Fire Department, or by the members of the Fire Department upon the citizens?

A. I suppose you have ten times as much knowledge about that as I have.

Q. I presume I have a good deal more; but I ask if you have any knowledge. Will you be kind enough to answer my question, as you are giving your testimony before the committee, and the substance of what you have said against the present department is that political influence is brought to bear? If you can name a single instance in which, to your knowledge, it has been brought to bear, I should like to hear it. I may not differ from you in your statement, but I would like to know the facts.

A. The general tone of men situated as our firemen are must necessarily run in political ruts.

Q. Does it run in political ruts?

A. I have no doubt of it.

Q. Well, what are its ill effects, to your knowledge?

A. Some of its ill effects are to lead men to neglect their special business, and devote themselves to wire-pulling.

Q. My object is to draw out information. I want to know whether any influence of that kind is exerted?

A. I have given you what information I have. I say that is the general tendency, as far as my judgment goes.

Q. (By Mr. WILLEY.) Would not the City Government have the same power to control a person nominated for a commissioner that it has to control a person nominated for engineer, for instance? Would not the same political, or personal machinery be applicable to and have the same influence substantially whether you call the man a fireman or commissioner?

A. I do not think it would.

Q. Would not the Aldermen and Councilmen have the same power to control the nomination of a Mayor for that office that they would for Chief Engineer, or any other officer?

A. I should think not.

Q. Why?

A. Because they are now elected by the Common Council and Board of Aldermen.

Q. Could they not reject until a man was nominated with whom they were satisfied?

A. Yes, sir; but it is not very likely that they would reject a good man.

Q. Is it likely they would reject a good and competent man, simply because they did not like his politics or religion?

A. Such things have happened.

Q. I know they have, but are they not the exception to the rule in the action of the men who are entrusted with the duties of Aldermen and Councilmen? Take the twenty-five years of your experience, more or less, with successive Mayors and successive City Governments, do you not think that such cases are the exception to the general rule?

A. I will say this, that there have been many excellent men elected by our City Governments. As a matter of course, I suppose that a majority desire to do the best they can in the discharge of their duty.

Q. Can you conceive why there would not be just as much personal, religious or political influence operating on a Board of Aldermen in regard to the election of a commissioner, as there is in regard to the election of an engineer, or any other officer who is nominated by the Mayor? Can there be any difference in the two offices, in their action upon the nomination, politically, religiously, or otherwise?

A. You mean to say, if a man is nominated by the Mayor —

Q. All these nominations are made by the Mayor, and I want to know if a commissioner would be less likely to be assented to, or dissented to, by the Board of Aldermen and Common Council, than any other officer?

A. I do not see why he should be.

Q. Then why should your Board of Commissioners be further

removed from political influence than your engineer is, who goes through the same process of nomination and approval as any other officer?

A. I do not understand that our engineers are nominated by the Mayor.

Q. Suppose them to be. I understand your proposition to be, to have these commissioners nominated by the Mayor. Now, the Board of Aldermen and Common Council will be political, more or less, as they now are. Will they not have the same means of operating upon the nomination of a commissioner as they have upon any other officer whose nomination comes from the Mayor?

A. The probability is that it would be precisely the same thing.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) Don't you wish the committee to understand that the principal advantage of a Fire Commission over the Fire Committee, as now constituted, is that they would be a permanent Board, not changed every year?

A. That is one advantage, the principal advantage; that it would be a permanent Board, not changed every year, and a Board selected because of the special fitness of the men who compose it.

Q. This other matter of political influence is secondary?

A. Certainly.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) During your experience here, did you ever know any Alderman who was elected by catering to the Fire Department, in the way you allude to?

A. Well, sir, I think I should rather you would answer that question than I.

Alderman POWER. I want you to answer it.

Mr. SHATTUCK. That is rather personal, I think, even if he could answer it.

Alderman POWER. Well, Mr. Webster's principal reason for wanting a commission seems to be that we shall get rid of political influence.

Mr. WEBSTER. I should be very glad to hear your answer to that question.

Alderman POWER. I should be glad to hear yours.

deposed, TESTIMONY OF EBEN W. BEARD.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) Where has been your place of business?

A. For the last ten months previous to the fire on the 3d of May, at No. 23 Causeway street.

Q. Were you burned out at that time?

A. I was, sir.

Q. What can you say of the efficiency of the Fire Department on that occasion, — what did you observe?

A. I made it a practice, knowing that I was in a tinder-box, to come into the city from Reading (that is my home) on Monday morning, and stay until five o'clock on Saturday. Then I left my shop in the hands of my son until he went out, usually in the late train. On the morning of the 3d of May, when the alarm was given, I was asleep on the bench in the shop, as had been my custom from the time I commenced business up to that time, five nights out of the seven. I was awakened by the arrival of some portion of the Fire Department on Portland street, and heard some remarks made, — “Where is the fire?” They finally found it. The night before I went out late for my supper, at my usual place, — the Crawford House, in Brattle street, — and got quite wet in returning. I had spread my clothes out somewhat, and I had difficulty in lighting the lamps which I usually used, which were naphtha lamps; they do not light readily; they want warming a little before they will catch; consequently, it took me some little time before I could get a light; but as soon as I was able to, I set the doors open, so that the firemen should have free access to the building, and fight the fire to the best advantage. I went downstairs and saw some men, whom I supposed to be firemen, start to go upstairs; but for some reason or other, I do not know what, they turned and went back. I said no more to them until the fire came into the most easterly corner of the room, burning on top of the sawdust gently. A stream of water would have kept it back, in my opinion, without any trouble whatever. I went down and begged, appealed, and coaxed the firemen to come up and see it; but no one would go up to look at it. I could not prevail on any one even to go and look at it, although they were standing idle at

the time. The hose had been withdrawn from the liquor stores beneath at that time, and it was some time before I saw any stream whatever carried on to that building. At one time in particular, I noticed there were ten streams playing along on Causeway street, and there was only one stream going in where the fire was. The other streams were going against a wall as bare of fire as this wall appears to be. It was something over two hours before I noticed any ladder raised on that side. The way I judge of the time is, that it was said the alarm was given at a quarter before one. That I cannot vouch for; but I can vouch for the time when the ladders were put up, by the clock on the Eastern depot, which pointed twenty minutes past three. About the time the ladders were raised, I noticed a hose carried up that stairway. That was the first of my noticing any hose being put up that stairway. In my opinion, there were six stores burned out there, of small capacity, that might have been saved by a proper application of water.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) What fire are you speaking of now?

A. I am speaking of the fire in the wooden buildings on the corner of Portland and Causeway streets. It was said the place that it took in was Capen's Planing Mill. I supposed at the time that it either took from his furnace or his dry-house, somewhere from fifty to one hundred feet below my place of business.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Who did you apply to?

A. I applied to a man with a white hat on. I cannot tell you who he was.

Q. A fireman's hat?

A. Yes, sir, a fireman's hat. The one who had the hose I judged to be an officer. He gave me the impression that they had no business to do any duty until they received their orders from the Chief. I do not want to say anything against the Fire Department, but there is something wrong somewhere. That is, the understanding between the Chief and his under officers does not seem to be in such a shape as it ought to be. It appears to me that when the firemen reach a fire, they should do some duty, wherever they can find anything to do, until they are ordered otherwise.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) What is your business?

A. Cabinet making, and manufacturing chamber sets.

Q. You are a citizen of Boston?

A. No, sir; of Reading. I formerly resided in Boston.

Q. How soon did you say you were present at this fire after it commenced?

A. The arrival of the machine on Portland street wakened me. I was asleep on my bench in my shop, at the time the alarm was given. I was wakened by the rattling of the machine, and other noises.

Q. Do you know the time that had elapsed from the beginning of the fire?

A. No, sir, I have no means of knowing; but I supposed by the appearances that was the first arrival, as I heard the question asked, "Where is the fire?" when they arrived there.

Q. You say this man had a white hat on?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do you know whether he was an engineer or not?

A. I supposed him to be an engineer at the time.

Q. I understood you to say that he had a hose in his hands?

A. The first one I applied to had a hose in his hands. He did not have a white hat on. The next man I spoke to, almost directly after that, had a white hat on.

Q. Did he appear to have as much business as he could attend to?

A. He did not appear to have anything to do at that time. He was standing in the street waiting for orders, apparently, or to see it burn up, something of that kind.

Q. You think he was an engineer?

A. I had that idea at the time, as he answered me that there was a white hat above him.

Q. Do you know anything about the rules of the Fire Department?

A. I do not know. Formerly, I know firemen possessed all the immunities, except the officers, of course, commanding them; otherwise, they were expected to do their duty, whatever they could find to do, when they arrived at a fire. That is what I understood.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) Are you a member of the Fire Department?

A. No, sir; but I was once.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) Since they have had steamers?

A. No, sir.

Q. You do not know what authority the Boston engineers have when they go to fires?

A. I do not know their authority, only formerly, under Mr. Barnicoat's government, I judged that they had supreme authority, especially the Chief Engineer, both in clearing the streets, and in managing fires.

Q. Whose building was it on which the engines were playing nine streams of water, as I understood you to say?

A. There were ten streams playing, all on the side of a wooden building.

Q. That was not on fire?

A. It was on fire inside, but not outside.

Q. Was the fire so intense inside that it would not have been safe for any one to go inside of it?

A. Perhaps, at that time, it might not have been proper for them to go inside, but they could have played the water into the windows instead of on the walls. I think I could have so managed the hose, as far as one stream was concerned.

Q. You are sure there was no stream playing at the windows? Were there any windows on that side?

A. There were windows on that side.

Q. And there were ten streams playing, and no stream going into the windows?

A. There was one stream out of the ten going into a window.

Q. You acknowledge that it would not have been safe for the firemen to go into the building?

A. It would not have been, at that time, safe for them to go in; but at the time I applied to them, there was perfect safety in going inside.

Q. Do you know of your own knowledge whether or no there was any one inside of the building?

A. There was no way of getting into the building on that side, on Causeway street, unless they went in through the windows.

No one went in from Causeway street. There were windows on Portland street. I do not know whether anybody went in there or not.

Q. Do you remember about the size of that building?

A. I cannot tell the exact size, but I should judge it might be nearly 100 feet on Causeway street, and possibly 60 feet on Portland street.

Q. You were on the long side, the 100-foot side?

A. Yes, sir; that is the way my rooms ran.

Q. Then you knew nothing about what was going on on the other side?

A. I knew nothing of what was going on on Portland street. The most accessible and best point of fighting the fire was on the Causeway-street side.

Q. That was your opinion of it?

A. That was my opinion of it.

Q. Is it not possible you are mistaken about that being the best point of fighting the fire?

A. I think not, sir, knowing all the rooms in that building as I did.

Q. But you have no knowledge, and do not pretend to say, whether or no they were playing in it, and doing all they could on the other side?

A. I am satisfied there was no one belonging to the Fire Department doing anything from that side.

Q. How long a time did you spend about the fire there?

A. I was about there from the time it broke out until between four and five o'clock, I think. A large portion of the time I was standing on the steps of the Eastern depot, getting partial protection from the pelting rain and storm that was coming, where I had a fair view of the fire.

Q. Was not everything in and about that building of the most inflammable nature?

A. Well, there was considerable many shavings, and a considerable amount of furniture manufactured in different portions of it.

Q. You could not very well get any better material to make a fire than there was there, could you?

A. I think, if we had applied some kerosene and oil, we could have got better material.

Q. But aside from that, you think the materials were about as good as could be got for a fire?

A. They were not nearly as good as if they had been pine shavings. Most of it was sawdust and turning shavings about the building. The pine shavings, such as mechanics usually make at the bench, were pretty much burned up. We used them up nearly as fast as we made them for the purpose of heating the glue and warming the shop, and helped burn up some of the other parties' shavings also.

Q. If you were standing at the side of a wooden building which was all on fire inside, how could you get a stream of water into that building through a window that would do any more to prevent that side from burning than by playing upon it from the outside?

A. Perhaps they could not, at the particular time that they were doing that thing, do much better than that. I think they might have done some better; but if they had heard to me at the time I asked them to do so, it is my opinion that that fire could have been kept back with two or three streams of water without any trouble, and I should not have suffered but very little.

Q. Well, sir, in a department where there is any discipline, what should you think of a fireman that you met on the street who would obey every man's orders who came along?

A. Well, I should not hardly expect that. I did not order them to do it. I simply asked if they would look at it.

Q. What should you think, as a man who has been in the department, of a fireman who would obey every man's order or suggestion who came along? Should you think he was fit to be a fireman?

A. I think, if I was a fireman, and was standing idle at the time, and a man should ask me to look at a fire, as I did those men, I should grant his request so far, and run the risk of discipline. That is my opinion about it. I think I had better do a little something than nothing.

Q. You think it is better, on the whole, for a fireman to do that, than simply to obey the orders of his superior officer; in other words, to confine himself to discipline?

A. I should think it would be a better way to confine himself to discipline, if everything is working smoothly, as it ought to work; but if everything seems to be going wrong, and there does not seem to be any one to remedy the evil, then I should think it would be better to do something rather than stand entirely idle.

Q. Do you think there is any better way to be sure that everything shall go wrong than to have everybody obey every person who comes along?

A. I think that would be a very good way to have it go wrong.

Mr. DEAN. I do not know that there is any rule of discipline which requires that the firemen shall not receive information. Here is a man who gives a fireman information, and the fireman does not take any notice of it.

Alderman POWER. There is a great deal of importance attached to discipline, and I want to get this gentleman's view whether it is better to adhere to discipline.

Mr. SHATTUCK. I do not suppose we have any rules to prevent a man from putting out a fire when he sees it.

Alderman POWER. If every witness should come up here and say that he met an engineer or fireman, and that man went off and did just what he asked him to do, it would show us that there was no discipline at a fire.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) You do not happen to know whether this engineer whom you saw with a white hat on, who did not seem to be doing anything, was a Boston engineer or a Charlestown engineer, do you?

A. Well, sir, in the course of conversation, I cannot express the exact words, perhaps, that I used to him, feeling perhaps a little aggravated from the way I was answered; but at any rate, to use his words about it, he said he thought he knew his duty, "as he had served in this little town of Boston twenty-seven years."

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) That is, in answer to your request to do something, he told you he thought he knew his duty?

A. Yes, sir; "that he had served in this little town," to use his own words, "twenty-seven years."

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Won't you tell us just what you asked him to do? What did you say to him?

A. I cannot say precisely what I said to him, but I think my

request was to have him look up there to see how the fire was working. If he had looked up there, if the result had been the same as it was, I should have felt very differently about it from what I do now.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) You did not undertake to order or direct him in any way?

A. I did not mean to be so understood. Perhaps they might have understood it so, but I did not mean to give that impression, that I wished to order them to do anything; but seeing how it was myself, and just coming from there, I thought perhaps I might give them some information, so that they would know better how to reach the fire, and put it out.

Q. (By Mr. WILLEY.) How near were you to him when you spoke to him?

A. Close by; nearly as near to him as I am to you.

Q. He could see the building you called his attention to just as well as you could?

A. We might have been away from the building possibly 25 feet.

Q. You each had an equal opportunity for observation?

A. On the ground we had, but not upstairs. I was on the ground with him after I had come downstairs. The fire, as I told you, came in at the south-easterly corner of the building, and was working very slowly on top of the sawdust. A stream of water, in my opinion, at that point would have kept it back entirely. Further along, it might have required two streams; perhaps it could not have been saved at all; but I am of opinion that it could have been saved with a proper understanding and proper discipline throughout the department for one and all to do their duty. I got the idea from the way I was answered, that if a fire should start at the south end of Boston and the chief is at the north end, it must continue to burn until the chief gets there to give orders.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) Did you ever see any practical demonstration in your life of that theory having been carried out in Boston?

A. I cannot say that I had before that time.

Q. You say you have been an old fireman. When he said he had had so many years' experience in this town, did you make any allusion to the experience that you had had?

A. I cannot tell you whether I did or not. It seems to me that I did make some reference to it, but I cannot tell you whether I did for certain or not. I was somewhat excited at the time, losing, as you might say, my all, and it would be natural to say something that I should not remember under the circumstances.

Q. It would be perfectly natural, being so excited, that your tone might have been rather dictatorial?

A. Possibly. I know that people have very often said that I appeared to be excited and cross when I have had no feeling that way whatever. I am naturally rather cool.

Q. Suppose you had been in his place and he in yours, and he had proposed what you did to him, is it not barely possible that you might have answered him just as he answered you?

A. It is barely possible, but hardly probable. That is not my way of doing business usually.

Q. You say you were excited?

A. It is possible that I might have been, somewhat. I cannot say whether I really was much or not. I might have appeared that way. I am naturally rather cool,—said to be, in my operations.

Q. (By Mr. WILLEY.) In Captain Barnicoat's time, was he accustomed to allow his men to take directions from the passers-by in actual duty at a fire?

A. I cannot say positively whether he was or not.

Q. I do not mean whether it was possible that it occurred, but whether the Captain and his engineers allowed a man to take directions from outsiders or passers-by instead of the officers?

A. I should rather judge not; but I presume he would have allowed it if the firemen were not otherwise engaged.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) You have been an old fireman, and should you consider a man a first-class fireman if he would take orders from any outsiders at a fire?

A. I should think he was a good fireman, if he was not otherwise engaged, if he went and looked after the fire a little.

Q. Leaving out that qualification, I say, if he was on duty at a fire?

A. I do not know what you call "duty." If you call it duty to go and stand like a post, then I suppose he was on duty.

Q. I consider it duty for a man to stand at his post, whatever it may be. Now, when a man is at his post, wherever it may be, do you consider it proper for him to take orders from any outsider?

A. Perhaps not.

Q. Is there any qualification about it? You have been a fireman; just state that squarely, whether or no you consider that a fireman who has been assigned to some duty would be doing his duty if he took orders from an outsider?

A. He had no appearance of being assigned to any duty at that time. Perhaps he was.

Q. I am not speaking of that. I say, if he was assigned to duty?

A. If he was assigned to it, and was doing his duty, it was all right that he should stand there, and that all Boston should be burned up.

Q. Do you know whether he was stationed there or not? Do you know anything about it?

A. I do not; but I judge he was not, as he was moving about.

TESTIMONY OF ALANSON W. BEARD.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) You have been a merchant in Boston, and reside in Boston?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Are you in favor of a commission?

A. I am in favor of a system that shall place the responsibility where the public will know where to look for it.

Q. What is the difficulty in that respect now?

A. That the great mass of the public do not know who is responsible. If they look to the Mayor, they find the Mayor has no authority. If they look to the Chief, the Chief says the trouble is not with him; and they have very little knowledge of the committee who have charge of it. I believe in having a commission that shall be permanent and responsible, that the public can look to, and can commend if the results deserve commendation, or can blame if they are inefficient.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) Do you know, of your own knowledge,

whether that is the general opinion among merchants with whom you are associated?

A. So far as I can judge, there is a general want of knowledge among merchants who to look to.

Q. I mean whether your opinion coincides with theirs with reference to a permanent commission?

A. I should think so, as far as my knowledge extends. There is hardly anybody knows where to look for responsibility, outside of the City Government.

Q. (By Mr. WILLEY.) Is that not in part attributable to our republican system of putting Aldermen and Councilmen into office and out every year? Do you not think it would be better if we had them appointed and paid, serving two, or four, or six years, instead of this yearly election of Mayor and Aldermen, and the departments under them?

A. I do not know as I could go into all the reasons that led to the present state of things.

Q. Is it not due, in part, to our system of elections, putting into office and turning out the Mayor and Aldermen every year, so that these men whom they appoint may be put into office every year? Does not the same objection appertain to this Board, that they are not elected for two, four, six, or eight years?

A. I believe our judges are appointed by the Governors, who are elected every year, and appointed during good behavior; and I think that the question that you ask would apply to the appointment of judges as much as to the appointment of a commission.

Q. Would you have the commission appointed during good behavior?

A. I do not intend to go into the details. I would have a commission, because I think there is a necessity for the existence of some Board to whom the public can carry their complaints, and to whom they can look as a responsible body.

Q. Your idea is, that the Fire Department now is better than it was ten or fifteen years ago, is it not? Has it not grown with the other improvements of the day? Everything pertaining to commerce and inter-communication have grown, and do you not think the Fire Department has kept pace with the progress in these other things?

A. Fires are more extensive now than they were.

Q. There are more buildings, and more opportunity for large fires ; but do you not think the department has kept pace with the growth in other things, in the last ten or fifteen years,—all defective, all needing improvement?

A. I have paid but very little attention to the Fire Department until recently.

Q. Did it occur to you that there was any defect until this terrible calamity of Nov. 9th?

A. I did not know anything about it. I knew we had had some very severe conflagrations. There was one in East Boston, a few years ago.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) Do you think there is as much need of a Board of Fire Commissioners as there was once for Street Commissioners, or for a Board of Health?

A. I should think there was more.

Q. Why?

A. Because it seems to me that the duties are more important for the community at large. I think the principle is the same.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) What is your business?

A. Clothing—Beard, Knowlton & Co. My place of business was burned up on Summer street.

Q. Have you made any inquiry into the different departments, as to the power that the Chief and his engineers have, and as to the power, so far as his connection with the Fire Department goes, of the Mayor, and, also, of the committee governing the Fire Department?

A. Some little.

Q. You say you want the responsibility placed somewhere. I do not exactly understand what you mean by that.

A. I mean that I do not know, from what I have read in the papers, and what I have heard in conversation, and from the inquiries I have made (and I have made some of parties interested), I do not know to-day where to place the responsibility.

Q. The responsibility of what?

A. Of the present system of the Fire Department, and its management, and the results arising from it ; and I find that there

is a general ignorance on this question among the men of my acquaintance.

Q. You confess that you share in that general ignorance in relation to the management of the department?

A. Yes, sir; and I also confess that I have made some little effort to find out where the responsibility should be placed. I think I can sometimes find responsibility, and it seems to me the fault of the present system is, that there is nobody but what shoves the responsibility of that management, or the ill effects, upon somebody else.

Q. Who have you found in your seeking for information who has wished to shirk any responsibility so far as his duty is concerned?

A. I have not stated, sir, that I have found anybody who wished to shirk, but the general way seems to be, in all the speeches I have read from different parties, and the reports I have read —

Q. You allude to such things as where the Chief has found fault with the supply of water. I infer that you mean that he has tried to place the responsibility on the Water Board, as far as some parts of the responsibility go.

A. I do not allude to the Chief in particular. I mentioned, when I first spoke, that the community naturally looked to the Mayor and found he had but little authority, and then they looked to the other officers of the City Government. The nearest I can trace the responsibility, the charge seems to be in the hands of the committee.

Q. Then you would have a commission to control all these departments, so that everything, the Water Works, and Fire Alarm, as well as the Fire Department, should be under their control?

A. We have a Water Board now.

Q. But, as I understand you, you want to place the whole responsibility on the commission. Of course, that commission would have to control all these things.

A. You could not expect any man to stand up here and go into all the details of these things, as he would if he was on a committee to look into all these matters. I merely give my own idea, and I think the committee are competent to take up the details and say

how far one Board shall trespass or infringe upon another, and who should have the general supervision and control over the whole.

Q. Do you know how or why any commission can conduct this matter any better than the committee from the City Government, and the Board of Engineers, if they attend to their duty, and give it the time and attention that the people think they ought to give it?

A. I think there have been reasons stated this afternoon why such a committee cannot do the duties, however well disposed they may be. They have other duties to do, and other things to attend to.

Q. Will you give your reasons?

A. The reasons that have been given, that every member of this committee is on other committees, and has a multitude of other duties to attend to, beside the duties of this position. Throwing out the question of political influence and political results entirely, they have not the time nor the opportunity.

Q. You confess you do not know anything about the present management of the department?

A. I do not confess any such thing. I know as much as it is possible for any citizen outside to know who has tried to obtain knowledge.

Q. You say you know of nobody who has any responsibility about it?

A. I say I do not know a person to whom the public can look as responsible. I say there should be a commission to whom the public can look, and upon whom they can place the responsibility for the results.

Q. In that case, to what use would you put the Board of Aldermen and Common Council? or would you do away with them?

A. That is hardly in the line of this inquiry. I did not propose to speak upon that.

Q. Do you know that the Board of Engineers and the Chief Engineer run this Fire Department, and that the committee have very little to do with it, any further than passing the appropriations through that the Chief Engineer and the Board of Engineers ask for?

A. I should presume that the committee had very little to do with it.

Q. Do you know that it is not necessary, and that they do not pretend to have much to do with it, any further than passing the appropriations is concerned?—that the Board of Engineers are in fact the Fire Department?

A. I do not *know* it. I might have presumed it.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) I suppose what you mean to say is, that you do not understand the details of the management of it; you have had no occasion to?

A. I think I understand something about it, from what I have learned here to-day, and from what I have read, and from the personal inquiries I have made of officers of the City Government.

Q. Now, from your general observation, you are entirely satisfied that the public opinion is in favor of a permanent commission?

A. I am.

Q. And that that is the general opinion of many merchants?

A. Yes, sir. I know of no exception to that.

Q. That it is the general opinion and general wish, that there should be some controlling and responsible power?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) How many persons did you employ before the fire?

A. I should say an average of 300 in the building, permanently; and a great many outside.

Q. You had an opportunity to observe something of the workings of the department at the fire in November, did you not?

A. I was there from a little after eight o'clock until nearly eleven.

Q. From what you saw there, you have the impression that we need a radical change?

A. What I saw I should hardly wish to see again. I should want to see, in case of another fire, more done than I saw done at that time.

TESTIMONY OF EDWARD BANGS.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) You have charge of real estate here?

A. Yes, sir, to some extent.

Q. How long have you had charge of real estate in this city?

A. It is more than 20 years.

Q. What is your opinion of the appointment of a commission to look after the Fire Department?

A. I think it is very much needed. I think that some change is indispensably necessary, which will place the responsibility where real estate owners and insurance men will understand that they can look for it, if we wish to retain the business of Boston. I think we are in danger of losing our business in consequence of the feeling of insecurity which exists.

Q. So far as you have opportunity to know, among the persons with whom you have conversed, what is the general opinion in regard to this matter?

A. I think the general opinion is strongly in favor of some change. I have never heard any expression of a contrary opinion from any person with whom I have conversed on the subject.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Do you know anything about the workings of fire commissions in other cities?

A. No, I know nothing except by report; nothing except what I have heard on the subject.

Q. What cities have you had reports from?

A. New York and Chicago. I have heard accounts of the workings of the fire commissions there, which satisfy me they work well, and better than our system.

Q. Simply because they had a fire commission?

A. That their Fire Departments under a fire commission have worked better than it did under the former system, which I understand to have been somewhat similar to ours. But I have no personal knowledge of the workings of their Fire Departments.

Q. You know nothing of the workings of fire commissions in other countries?

A. Nothing at all.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) Is it your idea that there should be a permanent fire commission, who should stand in the same relation to the Fire Department as the committee who now have charge of it?

A. My idea is, that there should be a permanent, paid commission, who should hold their office during good behavior, and be

well understood to be at the head of the Fire Department, so that the public might know where to look, and where to make their complaints, if they had any to make, and know who was responsible. And I believe that the present material of the Fire Department, arranged in that way, would be likely to work perfectly well. I do not know why a fire commission, composed of the gentlemen who now have the management of it, if they had the control and worked permanently, so that they could arrange things as they liked, should not manage perfectly well. Take any three good business men, and let them manage it as they would their ordinary business, on business principles.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) As a tax-payer, what would you say to a paid department?

A. I should much prefer that it should be arranged in that way. The labor is very arduous and dangerous, and ought to be paid. So far as I am concerned, as a tax-payer, I should cheerfully pay my share.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Do you reside in Boston?

A. Yes, sir.

The Chairman then read a communication from a committee of the underwriters of New York, stating that they would meet this committee on Tuesday, July 1st.

On motion of Alderman POWER, it was voted, that when the committee adjourn, it be to meet on Tuesday forenoon next, July 1st, at 10½ o'clock.

The committee then adjourned.

THIRD HEARING.

TUESDAY, JULY 1, 1873.

Good — TESTIMONY OF HON. JONAS FITCH.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) You have been an Alderman how many years?

A. Two years.

Q. You have been a builder and owner of real estate for many years in Boston, have you not?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. You have been also a member of the Governor's Council for two or three years?

A. Two years.

Q. You have had an opportunity to see the workings of commissions having the charge of special departments. You know, also, as an Alderman, the working of the Fire Department in Boston, or something about it, do you not?

A. I was on the Committee on the Fire Department when I was in the Board of Aldermen.

Q. How long were you on the Committee on the Fire Department?

A. Two years.

Q. You understand, generally, the workings of the department. Let me ask you whether, in your opinion, it is desirable and expedient to have a commission or Board to take charge of this business?

A. My impression is, to have the Fire Department managed judiciously, you have got to put it into the hands of a small number of men, and hold them responsible for it.

Q. So far as you know, is that the general opinion of the citizens of Boston — so far as you have had an opportunity of observing it?

A. So far as I have conversed with people, and people have conversed with me, since the two large fires, there has been a feeling in the community that there must be some change in some way or other.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) Don't you think, after your experience in the Fire Department, if this, instead of being a general committee, were simply a committee from the Board of Aldermen, that that would accomplish the designed purpose? The committee was a general committee when you were in the government?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Don't you think, if it was simply a committee of the Board of Aldermen, of three, that the management would be more satisfactory than it is now?

A. I don't know that it would. I believe, sir, that the great difficulty in the Board of Aldermen is in consequence of its changes. To have efficient management in any branch of business, you want the men permanent. You want to get the proper men into the proper place and keep them there; this changing from year to year (as some of the committees do every year, and must do) brings new men in every year, and they have got to learn the business.

Q. There has been something said about political influence. Do you think a commission would be any more exempt from that influence than a committee of the Board of Aldermen?

A. I suppose almost any man that would be selected for commissioner would have some political notions. If he didn't, I don't think he would be the best man for the place. I don't know that political influence would be brought to bear upon men; but so far as my experience was concerned in the Board of Aldermen, I never saw much political influence used there about it. One great difficulty is in having so many changes as we have in the management of the departments. Each committee has its own opinion about management. I think, if it were in the hands of a commission, this would be avoided.

Q. I ask that question, Mr. Fitch, because it has been stated here by some witnesses that have appeared that a committee from the City Government would be a good deal affected by political influence, but that a commission would be free from any political influence, and that consequently they would act more independently than a committee of the Board of Aldermen. It has been so stated here by some gentlemen, and that is the reason I asked

you the question, as you have had experience in the City Government. Do you think that political influence, so far as you had any experience, had any effect? Has not that political influence been this — that the gentlemen who occupy positions in the City Government as superintendents of various departments have been actuated by a desire to retain their positions? You have been in the City Government long enough to know; is it not a fact, that if you wanted to change one of these men, it was very difficult to do it? Are they not all looking out for their re-election, and button-holing all their friends in the government and outside of the government to get re-elected, especially if they are unpopular?

A. That is where I suppose the political influence comes.

Q. Do you think commissioners would be any different from other departments?

A. I think, if there were a commission appointed, where the responsibility entirely rested upon them to carry on the Fire Department, that these men would feel the responsibility and carry it on in a way that would be very judicious.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) I would ask you if these heads of departments are not elected annually, while a commission would be permanent; consequently the heads of departments are subject to these influences, while the commissioners would not be?

A. They certainly are elected annually, and by being elected annually, they work from year to year to get re-elected, while, if a permanent commission were appointed, they would look over the whole thing and take it into view, and carry it on and manage it as any merchant would manage his business, or any other man would manage his business.

Q. (By Mr. DEAN.) Would you not have, after all, very much of the same trouble; you have got to elect your commissioners?

A. I should not propose to elect each commissioner each year.

Q. You would have to elect them at some time. I am a believer in frequent elections. Suppose you were going to elect one every year?

Mr. SHATTUCK. That is not the form which we ask for. We ask to have them appointed by the Mayor, and confirmed by the Aldermen, making the Mayor responsible.

Q. We now have the Chief Engineer and all the engineers

nominated by the Mayor and confirmed by the Board of Aldermen. Suppose you got a really efficient Chief Engineer nominated by the Mayor, then the responsibility is upon the Mayor himself. There you get the responsibility. Then let him be elected by the Board of Aldermen, or City Council, or whichever you see fit; is there any more business than an efficient Chief Engineer, in conjunction with any committee of the Board of Aldermen, could manage?

A. I do not believe, if I were to run the Fire Department, I would have a Chief Engineer, myself.

Q. What would you do?

A. I would run it by a commission, and I would have the chairman of that commission the man that should manage the Fire Department; and it should be his business to go to every fire. He should have a horse standing at the door of his office with the saddle on him all the time, and the moment an alarm was given, he should be in the saddle and be at that fire. That is the way I would manage the Fire Department.

Q. You would have this commission paid?

A. Yes, sir; of course I would not take any man's services unless he is paid for them. I think the city of Boston can afford to pay a very liberal salary to proper men to manage the thing judiciously. Suppose your commissioner goes to a fire and saves ten thousand dollars! I have seen ten thousand dollars saved by an engine coming in the nick of time. I happened to be one of the unfortunate men thrown out when Mr. Elliot disbanded the Fire Department in 1848. I served nine years in the department; for eight and a half I was foreman of "Old Nine." I knew what it was to go to fires in this city. We dragged our "tub" by hand and put the fire out. We adopted a different course from what they do now. I suppose the way now is an improvement; but we always fought a fire from the inside of a building. Now, I notice that they fight it from the outside, but we always went inside and fought it in the inside. We didn't waste any water or any labor that we could help, because it was all manual labor. Nowadays, it has come to be done by machinery, and now they stand in the street and throw the water on the outside of the buildings, where it is not of any use. That is what I have noticed in regard to the modern way of putting out fires. I don't believe in it. Old Cap-

tain Barnicoat always took us to the inside of the building when he was Chief Engineer, and so did Amory ; and Bird, when he took Barnicoat's place, followed in the same footsteps.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) You think it is possible for men to handle this hose from a steam fire engine and carry it through buildings, and up on the ladders as they used to do with the hose connected with the old hand engines?

A. No, sir. They have too large a hose, but in my opinion there should not be a hose larger than two inches attached to any engine. We had a good illustration of that at the fire at Boylston Market. I went to some parties that had a leading hose and asked them why they didn't go up through the Boylston Bank building and play down on Brown's building. They said they were waiting for ladders. They waited, but before those ladders were up, nearly twenty minutes had gone by. There might have been a hose carried up through that building and a stream put on twenty minutes sooner than it was. But there appears to be a dread of going up through a building. I noticed the same thing in the fire of the 9th of November. I tried to get parties to take a hose into a store which I was building, instead of standing in the middle of the street and playing on the outside of the building. They were then in the street throwing two streams on the outside. They said there were no ladders. I said there were ladders, and went and got them and had them placed in position, but they would not go up. We might have saved six or seven thousand dollars if they had ; but they would not go up. When I was in the department, we had mechanics, who worked every day for a living, and were not afraid to take hold of the hose, and they did take hold of it very effectually. We have got to get a class of men now who are not afraid to take hold of hose and go into buildings. I believe we have got an efficient Fire Department ; that is, I think there is good material in it, but I don't think they are properly handled.

Q. You think the community desire some change in the department?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Suppose a change were to be made, and a man should be recommended, which do you think would be the most competent power

to appoint that man, and get the best man — the Mayor or the Aldermen?

A. I have not given any thought to that subject at all. My impression is, by appointment by the Mayor and confirmation by the Aldermen, you would get the best man.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Do you think it is possible that a commission sitting here, depending on the salary they get for their livelihood, would be as independent and feel and act as independently as a committee of three from the Board of Aldermen?

A. I think, if you appointed a commission of the right class of men, they would.

Q. Looking back on your experience, knowing, as you do, how people are appointed, you think they would be as independent?

A. If the commission is appointed for five years, I think they would. Of course, the power that appoints has the right to remove for cause. It appears to me there is no difficulty in getting the right man in the right place. I don't believe that for three thousand dollars you can get the right man. I doubt if you can for five thousand dollars, because the man who is the right man can earn more in his own business, if he has any business.

Q. Of course, being a man depending on the salary, he would be likely to try, as most all such men do, to make himself agreeable to everybody, and to please everybody?

A. I don't think that follows. I know that some men who have been in the Board of Aldermen have displeased almost everybody during the time they have been there.

Q. Of course, I am not referring to Aldermen. I am asking if it is possible for any men who would be hired, and who would be dependent on their salaries and the keeping of their places for a living, to act as independently as a committee of three from the Board of Aldermen?

A. Perhaps a man that had to depend exclusively on his salary might not be independent, but I am strongly of the opinion that if I were in the Mayor's chair, and the power devolved on me to appoint, I could find men to take the position who are not dependent on the salary.

Q. I am excluding that class of men. I am saying men who are dependent on their salary for their livelihood.

A. There might be something of that kind. Every man that is actually dependent on what he earns for his bread and butter might shape his course by that fact.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Do you think any committee of the City Government feels the same responsibility, and can be held up to the same responsibility by the community, as a commission appointed for a specific purpose?

A. It is not possible, in my judgment, or according to my experience.

Q. I mean any committee of the City Government for any department?

A. I have served six years in both branches, and I don't believe it is possible.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) When you were in the City Government, did you not feel the same responsibility, and did you not act just as zealously, for the city of Boston (and perhaps more so), as you would if you had had a salary?

A. When I was in the Board, I acted for the interest of the city of Boston, and almost everybody got very much provoked with me that came in contact with me.

Q. Do you think, if you had had a salary, you would have been any more zealous?

A. I might have given more time, because there were times I let slip by when my duty required me to be at the City Government, but I had my own business to take care of, and I took care of it; but as a general thing, I was pretty prompt at my committee meetings, as the Clerk of Committees, whom I see present, will bear me out in saying.

Q. Didn't you attend to all the business of the committees which you were put on?

A. I did the last year, I guess. I was chairman of four committees that year, and I attended to all the business of the committees.

Q. Do you think any man that had a salary attended to his duties more faithfully than you did to yours?

A. Yes, sir; because he gave all his time, and I did not.

Q. What is your opinion as to the rest of the Aldermen — as to their performance of their duties?

A. There were some of them that got along with very little work.

Q. There were undoubtedly some who had less work imposed on them than others, and were on fewer committees.

A. That may be; but what committees they were on; they always came in at the eleventh hour, when they attended a meeting.

Q. Do you think it is possible for a committee of the Board of Aldermen to attend to the specific duties of any department as closely and faithfully as they could if they were only on one committee?

A. Of course not, sir.

Q. It is not a possibility, is it?

A. No, sir.

Q. Did you ever have any difficulty in attending to the duties imposed upon you by being a member of the Fire Committee?

A. No, sir.

Q. Was it not considered a committee on which there was very little labor called for?

A. There was considerable labor when I first went on to the committee. There were several things I found that did not meet with my views. I do not know but that it is out of place here to state them. I found, when the first batch of bills came to me for approval — it was the batch of bills for the month of December — that it was the habit of the foremen of the engines to buy all their supplies of a corner grocery. They would buy axes for \$2.75 apiece, when we could go to the Douglas Axe Co. and buy them for \$15.00 a dozen. They bought their castile soap by the pound, and brooms by the single broom. I summoned the engineer, and told him that was not the way I did business, and asked why they were not bought by the quantity. He said they had no place to put them. We provided a place, and instead of buying brooms singly, we bought them by the dozen; and instead of buying axes singly, we bought them by the dozen; and instead of buying leather preserver for hose by the gallon, we bought it by the barrel; and we went through and reformed the whole thing; and it was a great saving to the city of Boston; and I presume

that has been followed out ever since. I do not know anything to the contrary.

Q. Is not the business of the Fire Department pretty much done by the Board of Engineers, the committee having little more to do than you have specified — that is, the approval of bills, looking after appropriations, and, perhaps, visiting the apparatus, unless the chairman sees fit to impose more duties upon himself by looking close after the houses?

A. It is the duty of the engineers to look after the Fire Department, and report to the committee. It was when I was there.

Q. So in reality the duties imposed upon the Committee on Fire Department are lighter than the duties imposed on other committees of the City Government, say, for instance, the Paving Committee?

A. I never was on the Paving Committee and cannot say what duties are imposed on it. I know I had all I wanted to do on the Fire Department Committee.

Q. Is it your idea that the commission should have more to do with the engineers and Fire Department than the committee now has to do with them?

A. That is my idea. If there is a commission appointed, I think the commission should be held responsible for the Fire Department in every respect, and that they should have the whole control of the Fire Department, and of the men they appoint to certain positions.

Q. Not to take the place of engineers altogether?

A. No, sir; but I think they should be at the head, and appoint their own engineers. They could do as they see fit. If I was on the commission, and was a younger man than I am (after a man has lived threescore years, he does not feel like running to fires), I should go to every fire which was anywhere within distance. And, I think, if you get a commission, they will attend, at least one of them, as a general thing, to every fire, if not the whole, making that their business. I think it should be so.

Q. If they did that, would they not be taking the place of the engineers?

A. No, sir. Of course the engineers go and put the engines to work the moment they get to the fire. In old times, the engines

used to go to work when there was no engineer around. That was the old system; but they do not do it now; they wait for an engineer to tell them to go to work.

Q. Do you know anything of the working of any commission?

A. I do not know about the working of any commission on Fire Departments. I wish to digress a little here. I was on the Committee on Streets. That was before there was a commission on streets. Mr. Cumston, who is now dead, and myself, and Mr. Gaffield, were on that committee; and we made a report recommending that there should be a commission appointed on streets. One of the Board of Aldermen came to me and asked what I supposed the Board of Aldermen were going to do when the whole business was put into commissioners' hands? I told him, if I was going to serve on the Board, I should prefer to come up here, and sit down, and talk with the citizens of Boston, find out what they wanted, and let the commissions do the work. I think any man can see that no Board could attend to all the business of widening the streets at the present time. One of the gentlemen who was so much exercised about the appointment of that commission is on the commission to-day.

Q. When you were in the City Government, were you chairman of the Fire Committee?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And you say you had as much as you could attend to, or more, as chairman of the committee?

A. I attended to all the duties that belonged to me on that committee.

Q. Could the committee well do any more duty than they did?

A. The committee did, so far as I know, all the duty that was required of them.

Q. Has Boston increased in territory since then?

A. It has some.

Q. Roxbury has been annexed since?

A. Roxbury, I think, has been annexed since.

Q. And Dorchester?

A. And Dorchester.

Q. So the duties of the committee would be more now than at that time?

A. Yes, sir. Our committee used to visit — I think we visited nearly all the engines and hose houses in the city of Boston, and examined the works. We generally took a day to go around when nobody knew anything about it, and went to the houses and examined the apparatus.

The Chairman then addressed the Committee of Underwriters from New York, who were in attendance, as follows:—

Gentlemen of the Committee of Underwriters:—His Honor the Mayor has laid before the committee a communication announcing your visit, and its object. His Honor considered that this committee would, in this matter, most fitly represent the municipal authorities with whom you were desirous of communicating, inasmuch as to this committee has been delegated the important task of examining the working of our present system of protection against fire, and of pointing out its defects, and suggesting remedies. We cannot deny, gentlemen, and it cannot be denied, that in this epidemic of conflagration, which has swept across our land, our city has been a heavy sufferer. Before our memorable fire of November last, we did not suppose that, among American cities, Boston was peculiarly and exceptionally liable to such a calamity. That a terrible liability does exist, gentlemen, here, as well as in many other cities, there can be no doubt — a liability only to be counteracted by the most vigorous measures. That there is anything in the character of our citizens which would warrant an apprehension that these measures would not be taken, and that therefore Boston should be considered as a city exceptionally liable in comparison with other cities which have suffered, of course we should be loth to admit.

We are glad to see you, gentlemen, in the first place, for giving us an opportunity of assuring all whom it may concern, that no one can be more interested than Bostonians themselves in protecting their city against the flames, and that the present municipal authorities are alive to the danger, and hope to be equal to the situation; and also, gentlemen, for the opportunity which we have of receiving from you advice and information in regard to the working of other and different systems of organization for the combating, subduing, or for the prevention of conflagrations.

We believe, gentlemen, we have as indefatigable and brave firemen as those of which any city can boast. And if those qualities, owing to some defects in our system, are not sufficient for our protection, it is the business of this committee to endeavor to find out the defects and apply the remedy.

It has been said, sometimes, that Bostonians have shown an undue reluctance to accept outside assistance to recover from their calamities. But I hope it will be shown that the outside assistance that comes in the shape in which you intend to offer it — in the shape of counsel and advice from abroad — will be accepted, and receive its due consideration.

The committee are ready to hear any communication from the Committee of Underwriters, or in its behalf.

HON. ALBERT BOWKER. Allow me to introduce to you Mr. Heald. Mr. Heald represents the Home Insurance Co. of New York.

MR. HEALD. Although a representative of the company named, I do not appear before this committee as its representative, but as one who was chosen to represent the general insurance interest of the country. A meeting was held in the city of New York, of all underwriters interested in insurance in Boston, and, as a result of that meeting, which was very largely attended, and at which were representatives of the leading American companies, indeed, all the American companies, and all the English companies, this committee was appointed.

We come here at this time, not to foist our views upon you, and not because we suppose we can instruct you any further than as we may have derived information from the experience which has been going on before our eyes from day to day, and from year to year.

We appear before you with the greater pleasure, because we believe it is a question in which you are as deeply interested as we are, as property owners in the city of Boston, and as custodians of the public interests. You certainly should feel as deep an interest in the welfare of the city, as we, from our personal relations, or our pecuniary relations to the property to be insured. The great fire at Chicago, and the fire following in quick succession of less than ten months in Boston, when we least expected it, has

taught us, and has taught the community, that the day of sweeping conflagrations is not passed. It has also taught us another fact; that the introduction of steam, as an element for fighting fire, is not entirely what we could wish it to be; in fact, that we must cast about us now for a new element with which to meet this difficulty,—for a new source of protection, and a new element of safety. It is with that view that we appear before you. And we shall hope, during the time we may be before you, to give you the results of the experience which we have had in New York; and we shall endeavor to do that through gentlemen who are entirely familiar with the practical working of the system of the city of New York. There are some gentlemen present from Philadelphia, from Hartford, and other places, whom we hope will give you the benefit of statements, and all the information they can in regard to the Fire Departments of those cities.

And, first, we desire to urge upon you, if our arguments shall be satisfactory to your judgments, if experience warrants the position we take,—we desire to urge upon you the propriety and the necessity of the appointment of a commission, or of some body, whose exclusive and peculiar duty it should be to manage the Fire Department of the city of Boston. We think, in general terms, it works so advantageously—the advantages are so far superior to those we experienced under the old system—that we are prepared to-day to urge that upon you, and to present such facts as we deem advisable as having a bearing upon the subject upon which the effectiveness of your Fire Department that is to be organized, or re-organized, will in a great measure depend. We also desire to urge upon the authorities of the city of Boston, the enforcement of such building laws as now exist (if any do exist; I am in total ignorance of what your building laws are, but I assume them to be good); that the city authorities should be wide awake to the importance of enforcing the salutary provisions of building laws.

Gentlemen, we build too much for to-day, and we build structures exposed to fire, extremely dangerous to the security of the city, simply because they pay us a better immediate return. We do not build for time. Our structures here in America are far

different from those in older countries. Our rates of premium are five or six times as much, if not ten times as much, in the city of Boston, as they are to-day in the city of Milan, or Florence, and in other cities of Europe, in proportion; and particularly in Italy, where they build altogether of brick and stone. Their buildings are of a different character; they are permanent, and have stood there for ages; and the rates of insurance upon those warehouses, in those old cities of Europe, would astonish underwriters of the present day, and create dissatisfaction among the policy holders. Experience has demonstrated that no rates of premium will afford the insurance companies ample protection based upon the structure of buildings we are now erecting all over the country. The degree of mortality in our buildings is altogether too great for the successful prosecution of fire insurance. We feel that it is largely due, in addition to the characteristic moral element which enters so largely into this country, to the class of buildings that are erected in our cities. We feel that our citizens, in erecting cities, should pay more attention to ultimate results, and that our structures should be built for time, and not for to-day.

I do not propose, gentlemen, to go into any details, but rather, as the spokesman of the committee, as the chairman of the committee, to introduce to you different gentlemen who will speak to you upon the particular subjects to which I have alluded. I am not familiar with the practical working of the Fire Department, never having been a member of one. I reside, or sleep, outside of New York, and am not brought in contact with the working of the Fire Department of New York, except as I judge from the results. And looking at the matter as the result of figures, there can be no doubt but that the system adopted in New York, of a commission, has worked very advantageously to the city. At the time we changed from the volunteer department to a paid Fire Department, we had a series of fires which were, no doubt, the result, in part, of that change; but, since the department has been in working order, we, as underwriters, have had little to complain of. I will introduce Mr. George T. Hope, President of the Continental Ins. Co., of New York, who has had a large

experience as a practical fireman, and who has also been intimately connected with the Fire Department of New York.

Mr. GEORGE T. HOPE. It may be asked, perhaps, by some gentleman, why we should come to Boston,—why the underwriters should come to Boston? There are good reasons for it. Boston was among the earliest to make improvements in her Fire Department. While New York, for a great many years, remained a purely volunteer department, Boston had learned that such a department was defective, and had inaugurated, long before, essentially the system which she now has. It was a vast improvement; and when the underwriters of New York city sought to secure something better, the example of Boston was of great value to them. Long ago, Boston learned that it was better to have brute force take engines to fires than to have human force, and to have steam do the work of propelling the water and forcing it upon the fire than to have men, who had done it before. Boston has been useful to underwriters in the past in her example; and Boston, we assume, is crammed with men of breadth and intelligence, who will adopt that which their judgment shall make them convinced is best. We are anxious that Boston should come out of its present position, because, while we were once able to quote Boston, its present position is now quoted against us to our disadvantage.

The experience of Boston has been used in Brooklyn, recently, to prevent the accomplishment of that which the underwriters considered the best mode of protecting the city from fire. Of course, the tendency of all improvements, when applied to any department, is to reduce rates. Those of you who may be directors of insurance companies know that the risks that are sought the most by underwriters are those which rate the lowest when the rates are graded in proportion to the hazard. More money is made from the low-priced risks, if they are properly rated, than from the high-priced risks; therefore, we are anxious you should make your risks better, that the rates may be reduced, and the profits of the companies be substantial and safe. Theoretically, it is true that the underwriters have nothing to do with making hazards. It is the business of the citizens to make their hazards greater or less; and the business of underwriters is to

find out what the hazards are, and to charge for them. Nevertheless, while underwriters recognize this truth, they know another truth, — that they remain citizens of the nation, and have an interest in the city of Boston as they have in Philadelphia, or Hartford, or Providence, or New York, or elsewhere; and, therefore, being closer to the edge of the catastrophe, they are compelled to investigate as others do not. Consequently, it is no great assumption to suppose that they are rather better posted as to what is good. It ought not to be assumption, and I think it is not. He who lies nearest the edge of a loss, or disaster, will regard it more critically than one who does not. That is our position. We simply argue from what we know.

✕ Another thing which justifies underwriters in coming before you is what they have done. So far as my own experience extends, so far as my acquaintance goes (and it runs through a great many cities), I know of none, where I know of the origin of improvements in this direction, that were not originated by the underwriters. The first steam fire engine that I ever heard of was paid for by the underwriters of the city of New York as long ago as 1840. They had it built, but there being, at that time, a volunteer Fire Department, the prejudice, which many of you understand, as regards firemen, obtained to so great an extent that it was next to impossible to bring that apparatus into effective use; and it was done finally through the company with which I was connected. I remember how splendidly it performed in comparison with the apparatus then in use. Of course, it was defective when compared with the apparatus of to-day, but still it was used for a couple of years, and then, improvements having been made in hand engines which seemed to answer all purposes, it was abandoned. And not until comparatively recently, not until Cincinnati set its noble example, through Miles Greenwood, of steam apparatus (and in the matter of a paid Fire Department, that city was also before all others, so far as my recollection serves), not until that time was steam used again. And even then, in New York, the underwriters built the engine which was called the "Experiment," and its successor, the "Manhattan," without which two engines it would have been impossible to have secured a paid Fire Department in New York.

That made it possible, because the whole thing was opposed most strenuously by the old regime. But not only were these engines made and introduced and put to work under the action and influence of the underwriters — beseeching and assailing Common Council men, Chamber of Commerce men and the Legislature — not only did they do that in regard to this, but also in regard to the introduction of the paid Fire Department in New York — which was also the work of the underwriters. They knew, as well as we know, that the tendency of every such improvement is to depreciate rates; and that is what we want, and what you want. Your rates are not high, we beg you to understand. If you look over the length and breadth of the country at all the companies that have existed — to my knowledge — you will find that if there had never been a dollar invested in fire insurance stock, they would have been richer. The rates are simply too low for the present risks, and the risks can never come down to the proper point unless the cities take hold of it and reduce them.

So far as the New York paid Fire Department is concerned, it was introduced solely and managed in all its incipient stages — that is, the measures which led to the establishment of a paid Fire Department there — by the underwriters. The Common Council of New York was opposed to it. The Fire Department was too useful to them as a political machine, and they used it from end to end. Without an exception, the companies were debauched and used for political purposes, as long as there was a volunteer department in any degree. An act was passed by the Legislature, which provided for the appointment of commissioners. The chairman of the committee has alluded to the effect of commissions. To us in New York, and to those in other places, that such a thing should be questioned seems strange.

It seems strange that there should be any question as to whether there should be a commission, or whether a number of men, though they may be the best men that Boston or the earth can furnish, shall take the position of volunteer supervisors of the Fire Department. It is a matter of such great breadth and importance as to require the constant, incessant and closest application to know what can benefit and extend the use and efficiency of the department; and no man, no matter who he is, or where he is, will do that

as a volunteer affair ; or ever did, in Boston or out of it. I am quite convinced of that, sir, from my observation for many years. I was a fireman myself, and waited upon fire and water committees, and saw what they were. They were honorable men and manly men, but they have other things to do. It was not the prime necessity of their lives, and I should just as soon undertake to run a bank by a committee of the stockholders, or an insurance company by a committee of its stockholders, instead of by an efficient paid board of officers, whose whole life, whose whole present, depended upon whether it was well done or illy done. We find it so in New York in that department. Let me say that the department is under the control of commissioners. There have been, I think, as many as seven, and five, and now there are three. I don't know but what the three are quite as effective as the seven. They are men who devote their time to studying all that is done. They are the supervisors ; they are those who establish its laws. It has chief engineers, it has minor engineers, and they make what suggestions they please, but these are brought before the commissioners finally for adoption, before anything is done. They have in New York these commissioners ; they have their chief engineers ; they have a principal assistant engineer ; they have a corps of district engineers scattered throughout the city in such a way as to be best applicable to the case on hand. We have thirty-eight steam fire engines, fifteen hook and ladder companies. All of the hook and ladder companies, and all of the engine companies are composed of two officers and ten men.

In the first instance, those located in the upper part of the city were not fully paid firemen. Four men were attached to the apparatus and were to remain there all the time and the others were to come when the summons came. After working the matter in that way for a little while, these commissioners, in their examination and intelligence, decided on having all the men fully paid men and acting constantly with the department, and the old plan was changed, and we have nothing else to-day. They have abandoned the old plan altogether, and adopted the plan of fully paid firemen, and constant attendance of the men. Before this change was made, however, they were careful, more careful, I should think, perhaps, than your department in Boston has been, because they

provided that the men should be located near the apparatus, and that there should be a written authority given by the employers of these men that they should leave and go to fires whenever an alarm came, and they were there more rapidly and promptly than if they were scattered throughout the whole length and breadth of a large city like this. In the first place, all the men were not carried to a fire ; but they found that was a great defect. I recollect that on one occasion, while a volunteer fireman, after running with all the power I had for two miles to reach a fire, I sat down on an old-fashioned slanting cellar door, and if they had given me the block that was burning, and all adjoining, I could not get up until I got rested. I was so exhausted, I thought I would die. I have done that, or approximated to it, many times, fool that I was. I never should have done it, if I had not been an underwriter. It illustrates the impracticability of a man running to a fire with all his strength, and then expecting him to do competent duty when he gets there.

These engines are uniform, as far as they may be ; their apparatus is uniform ; they carry the same tools, and, more than that, in the same place. The harnesses of the horses are identical ; everything arranged so that part will exchange with part. It is done by the careful consideration of the commissioners ; they found it was better. They have an order that each man shall take his place in going to fires. They go fast ; they have a perfect right of way, and about the most rapid apparatus that goes through our streets is the Fire Department. One man is sent to run ahead as a pioneer or forerunner, or whatever you may call him, to clear the way. He runs a few blocks, and is relieved by another one, who does the same thing. It is all done systematically. Engines are expected to arrive at a fire in a given order. If the fire is in a certain block, the engines are expected to come in the order of their location ; and if they do not, they must explain why they do not. The commissioners hear the complaint, and if there is not a good reason for it, proper action is taken in regard to it. The men are allowed to go to their meals in a peculiar way, so that the apparatus is never left alone. The commission superintends the department and are in incessant session each day. Besides all this, and connected with each apparatus, all the engines have fire extinguishers (I assume that you know what they are), to be used in their own imme-

diate neighborhood. All the hook and ladder companies carry extinguishers with them, so that they may be used, and they often are used with great effect in preventing a fire from being a great one. I never heard, in all my life, except in one instance, where a fire extinguisher did not do great good when it was applied, and I have no doubt but that it did in that case.

The experience of New York, in regard to its department, has been, on the whole, satisfactory, although it is not perfect. We expect Boston to make a better one. We assume that the maximum of excellence will originate here, and we wish it should. We wish to get your example, and we want you to do the best that in you lies, for the sake of New York, and Philadelphia, and every other town, wherever we may insure. We want your help; that is one reason why we came to you. I may state one thing in regard to Philadelphia: — When that Fire Department was first created, — and I think it is the youngest of the three; younger than, I think, Boston, and than New York even, — its first measure was to have a portion of the firemen fully paid and constantly in attendance; but I am informed that they have abandoned that. It lies in exactly the same line as the experience of New York. We find the effectiveness of our department in its promptness; in the fact that it prevents fires. Cities are very different from what they were when you started your department. When you started it, it was a good one. But you have been running your stores to the skies; you have been building Mansard roofs, and doing all sorts of monstrous things to make cities burn, and what *was* a good Fire Department is almost good for nothing.

The New York firemen, in addition to what I have stated, do a great many other things. In every district they patrol, a certain number of them are out — two all the time, by day and three all night. They are not mere loafers; they do not sit there and idle away their time. They are obliged to enforce the combustible law in the city in regard to the storage of combustibles. They come to know all the characteristics of the buildings, and the foreman is bound to make a draft of the main buildings, with their hatchways and peculiar construction, and send it to the commissioners that they may be known there. They are busy, and considering how much time is occupied by se-

vere and extraordinary dangerous duty, they have no time to spare. We trust, for the sake of reducing premiums, for the sake of making risks better, for your good and for ours — if you would make insurance companies that can have capital enough to make you safe against such fire — that you will adopt such improvements as are necessary in your department. You cannot have insurance companies with capital enough to make you safe against such fires as you can have. You cannot pay the premiums that will justify it. It is important, and your recourse must be (if you have to build solid walls through the centre of your blocks that are as high or higher than the buildings themselves) to find some way to prevent the fires from extending, or you cannot have insurance companies that will pay your losses; you will be ruined in the rates you will have to pay. The matter rests with you rather than with the underwriters. They do all they can; they ask for help; they give you all the information they have, and they want you to make your city so you cannot be destroyed, and you will find your advantage in the rates of premiums.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) How long have you been in the insurance business?

A. Since 1835.

Q. As a question collateral to this (although not directly in the line of inquiry; but it has been suggested to some of the committee) — what is your opinion in regard to municipal insurance? You seem to understand all the ramifications of the insurance business.

A. The insurance companies are very anxious that some community should try it. They think it would be repealed fully within a short time; that it would never be discussed again on this earth. In the first place, political action must control that. I don't see how it can be otherwise. The interests of the stockholders would not be behind it. As you know, or as a great many of you know, half of our losses are from incendiary fires. A minority of the fires are incendiary, but a majority of the losses are incendiary. And this, when the companies are watching, day by day, and hour by hour, with men who are expert in that department, to ascertain where fraud lies. If you find a man who is expert at it, you will find that the moment he looks on the papers he can tell whether they are fraudulent or not. He knows

by an intuition, which is almost perfect and complete. Under a municipal organization, you would have no such investigation. If a friend of the political powers that be had a loss, it would be settled with ease, and one of the opponents who had a loss would find a way to make an easy settlement, and the result would be, in my opinion, that where there is one fire there would be three, and where a city has a tolerable credit to-day, if it embarked in such a business, I think it would not be able to negotiate its bonds. I would not have one, because there is no knowing what its losses would be. I suppose, of all the foolish ideas that ever entered a crazy man's head, that is the most fallacious.

Q. That suggests another inquiry in regard to political influence, and if you will excuse me — although there is a good deal said about New York politics — has it ever been charged that political influence had any effect on this commission?

A. I think, no doubt, that, to a moderate extent, political influence originally has had an effect on those occupying those positions. But they are appointed for a term of years. Their remaining there depends upon the effectiveness of their action. They know they have got one hundred and fifty insurance companies behind them, and if they don't do their business well, they know there will be such a noise and howling about the city that they will be driven from their places. They know that they must do their duty to keep their places, and consequently we have found — while here and there there has been a sporadic case where political influence is suspected — as a general thing, the department has been free from it. But if there had been political influence, a poor commission would be better than the best committee. Why, gentlemen, a poor commission would beat you out of sight in this matter of managing the Fire Department.

Q. In your opinion, political influence has not been injurious to the effectiveness of the commission?

A. No, sir; not particularly injurious.

Q. Have you any statistics as to the improvement in matters in New York since the establishment of the commission — that is, the diminution in fires?

A. Yes, sir; some of them are here, if you want to listen to them. I want to say, however, that that is a matter which must

necessarily be, more or less, accidental. We judge, not so much by the aggregate of losses, as the place where the loss occurs. Fires are like epidemics. Certain classes of property would burn at one time. We judge more by the manner in which they put out the fires. We can judge from our experience as to what a fire is likely to be, and we find them put out vastly better, and the tendency is to reduce losses, and that has been the fact.

Q. Can you give us any information as to the cost of running the Fire Department, before the commission was established and since?

A. The Fire Department of New York had become very extravagant. Under the old system, it did not cost so much as the new department, but it became almost impossible to find out what it did cost: it was covered up under grand houses and under all sorts of appropriations in different ways, until the supposition was it cost about three-quarters of a million dollars. There are now, as you will perceive from what I have said, 550 men — nearly 600 men, embracing all the persons connected with it — I should think, probably 600, and it costs a good deal to pay them. They get a thousand dollars apiece.

Q. Can you tell us how much the increased cost has been? The commission has been established four or five years; can you tell us what the cost has been from year to year?

A. I do not think I can tell you from year to year. Sometimes the cost has been greater than at others. There was, the cost of the electric telegraph, for instance. It cost something like a million of dollars to extend that through the city in all its connections and ramifications. That was an incidental expense; so with the increase and extension of the apparatus. My impression is that the cost of the department now is about \$937,000. I think that is the last printed report.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) Are not most of the departments in New York run by commissions?

A. A number of them have been run by commissions.

Q. You think the government of New York has been financially a success?

A. Yes, sir. They have issued a great many bonds. I do not propose to defend the city of New York. I propose to take care

of its Fire Department. That we know about. There have been other commissions that have been exceedingly good commissions. The commission on the park and various other commissions have been exceedingly good. Some of them were made through fraud, conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity. Tweed, the master, with his adjuncts, we do not propose to recommend to Boston, and do not.

Q. Is it not a fact that most of the departments of New York are run by commissions; that all these abuses that have been a disgrace to the country (at least we in Boston have thought they were a disgrace to the country) have arisen under the management of commissions?

A. That statement simply illustrates the saying, that falsehood goes leagues while truth is getting on its boots. You hear of the bad ones, but do not hear of the good ones. The bad commissions we have had have been those that have been purely political, and have been managed by a few people. There are commissions in New York to-day, and, I believe as a rule, they are being conducted, and will be, as well as any of the respectable gentlemen here conduct their own business. We were swindled, as you all know, on a set plan, by certain parties who controlled the city and State; but they are done with. We have reformed that altogether.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Which body stands best in New York, the Board of Aldermen or the commissioners, in the estimation of the people?

A. I do not like to answer that question. We have a very respectable Board now.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) Whether or not your Aldermen are elected from different districts, and not at large, by the vote of the whole city of New York?

A. I am not entirely posted as to that. I have not lived in New York for the last 10, or 15, or 20 years, although I ran with a machine there for a good many years; but I think it is under wards, or under limited districts. They are not elected by the whole city. We tried that, but it was such a failure we gave it up. They were worse than any other we ever had.

Q. Who appoints the commissioners?

A. The commissioners were originally appointed by the Governor of the State; after that, they were appointed by the Mayor;

and the last commissioners were appointed by the Mayor, subject to the confirmation of the Board of Aldermen.

Q. Were they not originally named in the act?

A. No, sir.

Q. What salary do they receive?

A. The president receives \$7,500; and his two associates \$5,000 apiece.

Q. (By Alderman POWER.) There has been something said here about the rates of insurance; and something that has been said would convey the impression that you underwriters have advanced the rates in Boston, while you have not advanced them in corresponding degrees in other cities. I would like to ask you whether or not the rates have been advanced in Boston to any greater extent than in other cities throughout the country?

A. To the best of my judgment, Boston is below the average. Your rates have been lower than those of other cities.

Q. That is, the risks are considered better?

A. No, they are not; they are considered worse. The rates are lower, because, down to November, we had a theory that Divine Providence watched over Boston. Everybody thought, or some people thought, that Chicago ought to burn up, it was so bad, but Boston was particularly good; and we thought that Boston would not burn,—that the buildings were granite. Some knew better; those who had studied the subject knew you had prepared splendidly for a fire, with your narrow and crowded streets. Its rates were low, however, because your local companies in your own town had done well so far as your own town was concerned. Boston's liability is, perhaps, greater to a great fire, than to have several losses by small fires.

Q. I wish you would state whether, since this fire, the rates have been advanced to any higher rate in Boston than in other cities?

A. No, sir. Let me say this: The officers of the companies represent two bodies. First, they represent their own stockholders. It is somewhat odd that while a little while ago they thought Boston was a good place, now they come and ask us, "Why do you take risks in Boston?" That is one of the parties that come to us. Another is our customers insured in other

cities. Some of them come and say, "What, does your company write largely in Boston?" Just as if Boston was the worst place for insurance in creation!

I have a map showing where our engines are located. Most of you are familiar with the fact that the main property in New York, and its liability to a large fire, is south of Canal street, on a line west of Broadway. In the midst of this property, you will see that there are fourteen or fifteen engines. They say it is not so here. But in New York we have got our engines just where we want them, which is a very important element, for time is everything.

Q. Who locate the engines?

A. The commissioners. Our commissioners do everything.

Q. Is the fire-alarm system under their control?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Entirely?

A. Entirely. The building law is a separate department. The fire marshal is under the commissioners. They appoint him, and he makes reports to them. He is a man who, when fires occur, goes about and examines the facts connected with them; and, if a man has set fire to his place, he puts him where he ought to be, if he caught him there. Our Chamber of Commerce, after your Boston fire, were a great deal excited, and a meeting was called at their rooms, and they discussed the question of great fires, and the proper means of meeting them; and, on motion of one of our principal merchants, a committee was appointed, to consist of underwriters, who should determine what should be done to aid the Fire Department in cases where the ordinary means of extinguishing fires failed. The result was the draught of a law appointing, out of the Fire Department, a certain number from each company, — three, I think, — who should constitute a corps of sappers and miners, who should be drilled to the use of explosives, and should be taught as far as an expert could teach them. And those people are to be ready when the officer in command says, "This fire cannot be put out by water," to use explosives to put out the fire. In some places they have extended fires in that way. But it seems to me in such a place as Boston, or New York, where there are so many educated and intelligent men, that such

a body as that could be organized and drilled in a way to be very useful. In our city, the law required the Mayor and two Aldermen, or recorders, and New York might burn down even before you could get them together. That law is now passed; and I should recommend to any large city, that an organization of that kind should be attached to the Fire Department.

Q. You gave us as a reason of the high rates in Boston the narrow streets, and the class of buildings we have here; now that they are putting up buildings that are considered by the underwriters a great improvement, the risk of fire is not so much, of course, as it has been; and with the extensive widenings we are making in all our streets, with the present department, taking it as it is, do you think that a risk in Boston is better than it has been heretofore?

A. I think a risk in Boston will be better in certain districts of your city than it has been. But there are hazards attending risks in Boston which the underwriters did not know of before.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Can you tell us something about the three bureaus: the Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Combustibles, and one other; can you explain them to us?

A. I spoke of one — the Bureau of Combustibles — when I was speaking about the firemen. There are superior officers appointed in regard to the matter of combustibles; and it is the business of special men in each district to know where the combustibles are, and have a watch upon them. They report to this bureau. So far as the other is concerned, I spoke of it as the Fire Marshal. The Fire Marshal is the head of one of the bureaus you named — the Bureau of Investigation as to the Origin of Fires.

Q. The third bureau has charge of the matter of extinguishing fires?

A. Oh, yes. That comprises all.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) I think I asked you about the statistics. You said some of the other gentlemen have the statistics?

A. I have a book that will show you what these expenses are; but, at the same time, I do not place implicit faith upon it. Fires for a year may burn peculiarly valuable property. We cannot tell definitely about it. While the aggregate of ten years succeed-

ing another ten years would be of value, one year succeeding another would be of little value.

Q. Can you tell us how the system of public alarms has been changed in New York?

A. I regard that as an experiment. I am not sure whether our commissioners will persist in it or not. The telegraph system sends to every engine house and police station; and, by the way, concerning that police system: without a badge designed by our fire-commissioners, and under orders regulated by them and distributed, no man can get inside the lines, no matter who he is or what he is. They are kept away so the firemen can work. You do not want a crowd surrounding a fire.

Q. How about the absence of bell-ringing? The experiment was tried with a view of seeing how much it would diminish the crowd collected by ringing the bells?

A. It is rather to prevent the general disturbance of the city. The crowd is kept away. Everybody knows that the engines have the right of way, and people must get out. The only people I know of who have been injured are those on the apparatus. They turn over now and then. But it is their lookout. They are hired for that. It is their business to be at the fire and put it out; but the citizens are kept away from it.

Q. In what manner is the water supply under the control of the Commissioner?

A. It is under the Croton Department particularly. The business of these men — (and you constantly suggest to me something which leads me to recollect what I had forgotten) — the business of the firemen, and officers, and patrol of these companies is to know just where the hydrants are placed, and to see if there are any obstructions in the way of them, boxes, or barrels, and order them away; and if the owners do not take them away, these patrol-men take them away and charge it to the occupants. So if they go to a fire, they know everything is in order. Their reports are made to the Croton Department. I think the Fire Department has no control over that. I think, with an intelligent commission, the two might be merged. But that is only opinion. They are now separated.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Have you heard of any action that has

been taken by the foreign offices in relation to risks in this country, since the great fire, as peculiar to themselves, in regard to lessening their risks in this country?

A. I do not know that that is peculiar to foreign offices. All the offices are reducing their amounts. The company I represent is largely reducing its lines.

Q. Any more in Boston than in other cities?

A. In Boston we are tentative. We are holding on to see what you are going to do. I did not want to say that, and did not really mean to say it. We do not want to indicate anything of that kind.

Q. Persons have testified here, or tried to convey the impression, that they were simply lessening their risks here, and not doing it in other cities.

A. That is pre-eminently untrue, I am confident. The same conservatism which attaches in Boston attaches out of Boston. The same in other places as here.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) You have spoken of hydrants. If I remember aright there was a question in New York, or there has been a question, as to the location of hydrants. Are they located by the fire commissioners?

A. They are located by the Croton Department — the Croton Board.

Q. (By Mr. DEAN.) Do you know the size of your engines? We have had some discussion about that. Some think we ought to get a few first-class, which is larger than we have got. Others think the ones we have got are powerful enough.

A. In regard to that point, it requires one who is peculiarly an expert to answer that, some one of whom I will put you in communication with, with a great deal of pleasure. You want a good many light engines, because promptness is important; and you do need some large ones — the largest that can be got to a fire with rapidity. In New York, we have some large engines held as reserves. In addition to these thirty-eight, they have four of unusual size in the yard (or whatever it is termed), in Elizabeth street, where they can be called upon in case of emergency. They are larger and have special purposes, and are held as a reserve.

No doubt our commissioners are trying the best they can to prevent New York from burning up.

Q. How many square miles do the thirty-eight engines serve?

A. The city would average a mile and a half wide, leaving off those above 59th street. There are 34 below that. I will take the engines simply. There would be about seven square miles; there being thirty-four engines to the seven square miles.

Q. You have about fourteen and a half square miles in New York?

A. Yes; but the houses are sparse above. In the district I named to you they are much more thickly crowded. All our large, heavy dry goods and other business and large stores are in that district.

Mr. HEALD. Allusion has been made to the Fire Department of Philadelphia. It was expected that Mr. McAllister would give you the results of his experience. I am informed that he has been called away by sudden illness. I do not know that we can supply the place by another delegate from Philadelphia.

Mr. HOPE. I alluded to Mr. McAllister particularly in regard to the experiment of Philadelphia in respect to the system of having three or four men paid, and others called from all parts of the city as the case may be.

Mr. HENRY KELLOGG, President of the Phoenix Ins. Co. **Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen:** I received notice of my appointment last Friday afternoon, without any notice of who my friends were on the committee; therefore, I come here with very few facts and data to lay before you. Perhaps you might inquire in relation to the city of Hartford. We have a paid Fire Department, and, as stated in regard to Philadelphia, and as I understand in Boston, there are four men to each engine that are paid, and that are continually on duty at all times. For hosemen, they are dependent upon men who are minute men, the same as you have in Boston.

The department there is entirely under the charge of the commission — entirely so. Even the Mayor of our city is not connected with our department at all. I think that commission has been established some five or six years; and from the inception of it up to the present time, there have been no changes that I am aware of. It was found to work well. We reorganized our department en-

tirely, and made it a paid department. There was great opposition on the part of the firemen in the first place. The change was radical. They had, in fact, to disband the companies and make new organizations. After having had so elaborate a report as you have had from my friend, Mr. Hope, I do not know as I can give any light. There was one remark made in relation to the rates of insurance in Boston as compared with other places. So far as my experience has been (and I have watched the thing with a great deal of interest), the rates of insurance in Boston have not advanced as in other places. They are less now in proportion. That is, the advance is less in Boston at the present time than even in Hartford. We have a very good Fire Department there. The thing is well managed and well organized; and the rates in Hartford are higher than they are in Boston at the present time. I understand in Boston there is no fire-marshal. We have a fire-marshal in Hartford, and it is his business to superintend the hearing of complaints made to him in regard to the storage of combustibles. And it is left to him to decide that matter of storage — of hay, of fire-wood, and any other combustible; and his orders must be obeyed. They are imperative. He has power to arrest a man who refuses to obey them, and also has power to remove the articles that are considered of a specially hazardous nature. He can employ men to remove them to a place outside, where they will not expose other parties. As I said before, I have not had an opportunity to meet my brethren of the committee until this morning at ten o'clock. There has been no arrangement for concerted action with any of the committee, so far as I am aware, and therefore I can only give you in this general way what few remarks I have.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) What is the comparative expense of the support of the department now and under the old arrangement?

A. It costs about one third more; about $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. more for the paid department than for the old system.

Q. How are the losses, comparatively, within the same time?

A. My impression is that the losses are about 10 per cent. in Hartford, — 10 per cent. of what they were before.

Q. Is it possible that there is that difference?

A. Yes, sir. It is astonishing. We are satisfied; if it cost us

four times as much to run our present department, we would pay it rather than go back to the old system.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) I do not understand you to say you attribute that to the fact that the Fire Department is managed by a commission. You simply attribute that to the change from a volunteer to a paid department?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. What are the advantages of a fire commission over the old management?

A. The control of the Fire Department in Hartford is very rigid. It is like a military drill.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) You consider it more advantageous to the public under the present management?

A. Decidedly so.

Q. It was managed, I suppose, by your City Government, the same as ours is now?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. How are your commissioners appointed?

A. I do not know. I think they are appointed by the Mayor, and confirmed by the Council.

Q. Which should you think would be the better system, as far as your judgment and experience go, to have a commission appointed by the Mayor, or elected by the people? In which of those two ways or modes do you think you would get the better men?

A. We have some commissions in Hartford that are elected. Each party has the privilege of putting one man on the ticket.

Q. Have you ever heard any charges that political influence is detrimental to the exercise of the prerogative of the commissioners in any way?

A. We are not troubled in our city in that way at all.

Mr. HEALD. We had designed to present some views in regard to building laws, and enforcing them; but I understand since we came into the room our committee have been furnished with a copy of your building laws, and I am told by gentlemen who are familiar with that subject that it is satisfactory to them. I desire to introduce to you the chairman of our rating committee in New York, as allusion has been made to the rates, and ask him to explain

to you the method of rating, with a view of showing the importance to the citizens, property holders in Boston, of erecting such structures as shall be entitled to lower rates. Everything being rated by schedule, they will be entitled to such discrimination as their building deserves. I will introduce to you Mr. Nicholas C. Miller, President of the Star Insurance Company.

Mr. MILLER. The gentlemen who preceded me have so well defined the object of our visit as to render any remarks in that direction entirely unnecessary. Since I have been in the room, a copy of the building law of your city has been placed in my hands; and, in running over it casually, as Mr. Heald has said, it seems to me it meets a great many of the requirements that we should ask if we had the framing of it. In some particulars, it is in advance of the law of New York. At the last session in New York, we deemed our law so defective that we attempted to make it better, but our bill was introduced so late into the Legislature it failed of passage. I see incorporated in the bill which I hold in my hand, one feature that we never have had, and that is the provision in regard to the height to which buildings may be carried. And, if I may be permitted to criticise that, it seems to me it is a little too high. Eighty feet capped by a Mansard roof is pretty near to 100 feet; and that is a considerable distance. I will also allude to the absence of legislation in regard to iron shutters. It seems to me if an amendment could be secured which would make it compulsory upon the owners of buildings to place iron shutters at least on the rear of the buildings, it would be a great advance. We demand them front and rear. And in the application of our tariff, we make a charge for them. The standard building, as adopted by the underwriters, is far in advance of the building which is permitted to be erected by the laws of New York. And it is such buildings as should conform to that standard that we seek to secure the erection of in making up our rates. The plan has been adopted in New York and other cities of describing a building which we consider to be nearly perfect. We do not ask for a fire-proof building. But a building, not exceeding a certain height; which shall cover not exceeding a certain area; which shall have an iron roof, and be protected front and rear with iron shutters, with five-foot walls, with closed hatchways, scuttle well

secured, — such a building, situated in a street at least 50 feet in width, we propose to write for thirty-five cents. Those familiar with rating acknowledge that this is very low for mercantile risks. If the building be situated on a street less than 50 feet wide, we should add 10 cents; if it be unprotected with front shutters, we should add something more; if unprotected with rear shutters, we should make another addition; capped with a framed Mansard roof, we should make an addition of 50 cents. And in this way, after the Boston fire, applying the schedule to some buildings which had been considered very good, we found they run up to $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. This rate was something very startling. It was startling to us and the community. But we held our position. The companies maintained a solid front. There was no break in the ranks. And the consequence has been that numbers of buildings have been altered in every respect that the landlord could conceive. Mansard roofs have been taken off, or, if not removed, the frame structure has been entirely removed and iron substituted instead. And now in the heart of our dry-goods district, which is south of Canal street, and west of Broadway, Church street being only 40 feet in width, and the buildings 100 feet high, we have secured in that district alone the removal of frame roofs from 45 of the buildings. What was before a perfect fever nest, has become a healthy locality. And if the Board of Underwriters in Boston would adopt the same tariff and apply it, it will result in a great measure in the same way. My idea is that the building laws themselves should be so framed that they would compel the erection of buildings substantially of that character; and the result would be that the citizens would not be groaning under the burdens of onerous premiums.

The rates of premium in the city of New York to-day are higher than they are in Boston. They are being gradually reduced. Owners everywhere are at work improving their buildings. That is what we want. We start by telling them we do not ask for high rates. We do not want high rates for the purpose of getting the money, but we want you to alter your buildings so as to lower the rates, and in that way the community have been benefited by the action of the insurance companies, and in that way the community would be benefited by the operation of that building law. In

walking through the burnt district, it does not require anything but a superficial glance to see the improvement in the buildings now being erected there in the place of those that were burned in November. And it is a gratifying thing to see in so many buildings that improvements have been adopted not embraced in the building law. Buildings with ledges to receive the beams instead of weakening the walls to receive them; parapet walls are carried up three or four feet; and Mansard roofs are exceptional. Owners in New York have urged that they cannot put up parapet walls, and have said they would be unsightly, and make the building look ridiculous. But I am glad to see it is capable of being done. There are high parapet walls in the burnt district which would not be seen from the street if the district were not so open. I think I have said enough to show you that the action of the city authorities themselves can do much towards reducing the burden of insurance premiums. As has been stated here, the risks that the company seek are those which rate low, and deserve to rate low. The burnt district is being built in a very substantial and elegant manner. But what can be done, or can anything be done, to improve localities which were built originally for dwelling-houses, and which since have been absorbed for business purposes? Generally speaking, in that class of buildings there is great danger. The walls are not heavy enough to sustain the weight. I think the experience of the Hanover street fire will illustrate the force of that statement. I hope we shall be enabled to see in the working of the building law, which I understand is now being codified and rearranged, that great good can come not only to your city, but to ours. There are some things in the building law which I have in my hand which I shall be glad to see incorporated into our building law there.

We do not come here as the exponents of a perfect system, by any means, but only to present such suggestions as our experience warrants.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) From your observation in passing over the city since you have been here, will you give your opinion as to a risk in Boston to-day, compared with risks in New York?

A. You allude of course to the new district?

Q. I include the whole city, taking it as you see it.

A. It is a very broad question.

Q. Would you consider a risk in Boston as good, or not so good, as a risk in New York?

A. A risk in Devonshire street, in a building now erecting, is not quite as good a risk, independent of the facilities for extinguishing fire — would not be as good as a building similarly located in New York, on a street of the same width, for this reason; that the requisite protection has not been applied to the building in the use of iron shutters. The rears expose each other, and, although I see that the eyes are there for the shutters to hang, I do not know that the law will compel their being put on. If they are, I think many of the buildings will be better risks, because built with projections, and with parapet walls, than buildings used for the same occupancy in the city of New York. They are better buildings.

Q. Whether or not on the whole a risk in Boston is as good for an underwriter as in New York?

A. I should say it was not.

Q. You know how wide Devonshire street is?

A. I see there has been a slight widening there. It is very difficult to make an estimate in the state the street was in; it was full of debris and stones. I should think it was about 50 feet wide.

Q. Suppose it is 60 feet. How does it compare with a street in New York, which you state is only 40 feet?

A. It is a better risk.

Q. I thought you said that this burnt district was being built up safer and better than New York?

A. I say so. I say the character of the buildings on their own merits seems to be better than the buildings now constructed in New York for business purposes, for dry-goods occupation; and, generally speaking, they are better. Still there are very few finished buildings here, and one cannot form a definite, decided opinion to guide future action, because there are very few that have been carried up as far as the roof yet. But those that are finished I consider very fine. And if the general provisions I have suggested, — the matter of security by placing iron-shutters on the buildings, — should be carried out there, I think the buildings, generally speaking, would be, with that protection, better

risks than in the city of New York ; and they certainly would rate lower than a great many of our buildings with a similar occupancy, under the schedule, thereby proving the correctness of the position I take, — that good buildings bring lower rates. But the same would not hold true of Tremont street, Washington, and other streets, built up without the same regard to firmness and security as the new buildings seem to be built.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Have you an agent in Boston?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Have you given him any particular instructions in regard to cancelling risks?

A. No, sir.

Q. Have you in regard to taking new risks?

A. He has general instructions in regard to taking new risks, — to be very light in his lines for the time being.

Q. Until such time as what?

A. Until such time as we can see what improvements shall be made, and what security we can have.

Q. Can you, from your own knowledge of Boston, and that which you have received through your agent, give any idea of what would be an improvement in the Boston Fire Department?

A. I have not given so much attention to that branch of the subject ; but I am strongly of the opinion that the adoption of a paid Fire Department, entirely run by a commission, would be advantageous. I think it is a good deal like many other improvements, — that once brought about, and the experiment once tried, you never would want to go back.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Is not the city of New York run by commissions, in most of the departments?

A. I believe they are pretty much. I am not so familiar with it, for, although I am native-born, I have lived out of town for the last few years, and I am not familiar with the changes in the charter, etc.

Q. Since the adoption of these commissions, do you think the government of New York has improved?

A. I can speak only of two or three of them : I think the government of the Fire Department, — I do not *think*, — I *know* the government of the Fire Department is improved, with a paid sys-

tem and run by a commission. I know that the Park Department has never been under anything else but a commission, and it never has been abused except a little while under the reign of Tweed.

Q. Was the department a volunteer department up to the time of the adoption of the commission?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. So they never tried a paid department up to the appointment of the commission?

A. I think the commission and the paid department came in together.

Mr. HEALD. The old department was not appointed by the city. It was a volunteer association, outside of the municipal government.

Mr. POWER. It was responsible to the City Government; ruled by the City Government, was it not?

Mr. HOPE. They were confirmed by the City Government, and every foreman was appointed.

Q. (By Mr. POWER to Mr. MILLER.) Are you familiar with the cost of maintaining the Fire Department in New York, since the adoption of the commission?

A. I am not, sir. But I think as long as it is run as well as it is now, it is cheap at any price.

Q. Are you aware whether or not it does not cost twice as much as it did before the adoption of the commission?

A. I do not know what it cost the city to run the old department. I think the estimates for the current year are something over a million dollars. I do not know that even. Mr. Heald states that the estimates of the coming year are twelve hundred thousand dollars.

Mr. HOPE. They have raised the salaries of the men two hundred dollars, which makes an addition of one hundred and twenty thousand dollars, or more.

Mr. HEALD. Allusion has been made to the action of the English companies, who are largely interested in the American business, and, particularly, in Boston. If you will give us a few moments longer, I will call upon Mr. Alliger, representing the Commercial Union Ins. Co., to make a few remarks.

Mr. ELIJAH ALLIGER. I am managing the United States, for the Commercial Ins. Co. of London. And I do not think, after a short experience of fourteen months' business in Boston, during which we have paid about \$350,000 in losses, I need make any apology for appearing before you. I think, if I can drop one hint which may enable you to increase the efficiency of your Fire Department, and preserve your city from another disastrous conflagration, I have not only done my duty to the company I represent, but have been of some assistance to you. I would like to urge, particularly, one or two points, that have been spoken of so freely by the gentlemen who have preceded me.

One point, particularly, is the management of the Fire Department by a separate and independent fire commission. I can but point out to you the success of the working in other cities as an argument why it should be adopted here. The question has been particularly asked by some of your members, whether a political influence upon that commission would not impair its efficiency? For one, I do not think it would to any extent. The commissioners of the New York Fire Department have no idle task before them. Day in and day out there is this duty devolving upon them. The Fire Department is exclusively under their control. They are paid liberal salaries to enable them to give their entire time and attention to the management of that so important defence of our city. They give it that attention. They give it that attention which you, gentlemen, or the Council of any city, engaged in your usual avocations, cannot give to it. A professional gentleman cannot neglect his business to give his entire time to the Fire Department. A merchant cannot neglect his warehouse, nor can a manufacturer his manufactory, for the purpose of giving the time that is essential to the defence of a city from fire. There are questions which arise in connection with the government of a Fire Department, which must be decided upon the moment, which should come before this commission, and do come before it every day, to which they give their immediate and anxious attention. I think that in any great city, whether the commission is appointed by its Mayor and confirmed by its Board of Aldermen or Common Councilmen, or whether they be elected by the people, that, where they are paid liberal salaries, the desire to do their duty efficiently and to re-

tain their places is a stronger incentive to well doing than the mere fact that they hold a political office, which the turn of parties may deprive them of to-day or to-morrow, but which the community at large will demand they shall retain, provided they have managed their department efficiently and well. And I think, with a commission well paid, composed of skilled men, you will get more benefit in the management of the Fire Department than with any committee which may be selected from any board of gentlemen who may be elected to municipal office. There is a question that has not been touched upon by the other members of the committee, which is this ; that you may have the best Board of Fire Commissioners in the world, the best managed department, the most efficient engineer and assistants, the most powerful engines, but if you have not the water facilities to give them, they amount to nothing. We have felt that thing in New York city, and we have felt it with trembling. And the Board of Public Works have taken into consideration the subject of a better supply of water to the lower portion of New York. There is no use in increasing the efficiency of your Fire Department unless you give them the wherewithal to work. Again, the expense of a volunteer and paid department has been referred to. As you have been told, the estimate for the New York department for the coming year is \$1,254,000. A large proportion of that will probably be expended in the support of the Fire Department. Compared with its efficiency and usefulness we consider that but a small portion of our municipal expenses, and when we look back to the experience of nine years ago, — it is eight years last September since the paid department went into operation in New York city, — when we take into consideration the difference in the cost of the department (although I have not figured down to each minute detail the cost of the volunteer department, the sums of money levied upon its members individually and as city officers for its support ; their excursions, their processions, their picnics ; for furnishing their houses, everything which was paid for by the parties in power), you will find that, to-day, costing a million and a quarter of dollars to the city of New York, it is cheaper for them to maintain their paid Fire Department than it was under the old volunteer system.

Again, as to its efficiency, the quiet mode of its work. The last few years of the volunteer Fire Department, it is a notorious fact

that while those companies had among their members some of our best and most efficient men, it also contained the lowest scum that could be found in the city. Their houses became the resort of the most desperate characters. There was not a fire that took place in the city of New York that did not terminate in a riot. Now, that these things have been avoided is perfectly patent to all. During the past eight years no disturbance of the kind has occurred. Again, in relation to the building laws, I do not think that I can urge upon you too strongly the necessity of a fully carried out building law in this city. You have all heard about working upon the schedule system. When that system comes to be applied here, your property owners will find that they can erect buildings which are fire-proof, which they can insure at a low rate of premium, and which in the end will pay them better to erect, and which at the same time will preserve your city from a disaster similar to the one you have just experienced. How manifestly unjust, not only to the insurance companies, but to yourselves, is the permission to a man to erect two stories of wood upon five stories of brick, outside of the reach of the Fire Department, outside of the reach of water, outside of the reach of anything that will extinguish a flame, when you would not permit that erection upon the ground, within reach of your whole department! So long as your building law will not forbid the erection of such fire-traps upon your warehouses, the insurance companies must do it by placing such a rate upon buildings of that class as will prevent property holders from erecting them. I believe it is the feeling of the underwriters throughout the United States to-day that the interests of their stockholders, the interests of the public at large demand that action. Now, sir, as to the action of the English companies in reducing their lines in Boston. For one, I would say we have given no instructions for the reduction of our lines in Boston to any greater extent than in New York, Philadelphia, or any other large city of the United States. We have never written any extravagantly large lines upon any of your warehouses here or in any other city, believing that a scattered business is more profitable in the end than too large lines in one place. Chicago taught us the fact that cities do burn up. We felt our confidence shaken considerably by that fire, but our pins were knocked from under us entirely when

Boston burned. We do not know how soon New York may follow suit; how soon Philadelphia may suffer the same calamity. And when the time does come that those cities burn, no British Ins. Co. to-day wants to have so large an amount in any one place that it will be obliged to ask its policy holders to submit to receiving a very small percentage upon the amount of their policies. I believe the insurance companies generally are pursuing that course. And while they have not selected Boston particularly as a point, through all the large cities there is an uniform desire to reduce their lines to the minimum amount. While we may feel a little uneasiness in regard to another fire in Boston, yet we trust it will not occur. I do not think it is from that fear in regard to those cities that the companies have asked us to reduce our lines, but rather to prepare for an emergency that may come, not only in this city but in others; in order that we shall not be found wanting when that time arrives, if it ever does. I doubt if there is a single English company that has directed its managers in this country to reduce its lines in Boston beyond what they have directed in other cities.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Has there been any change in the fire commissioners?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Give us the reason why the change took place.

A. It would be exceedingly difficult for me to give the reasons. There has recently been a new charter adopted which reduced the number of the fire commissioners from five to three. An ex-chief of the Fire Department has been placed at the head of the present fire commissioners; the other two gentlemen are new appointees, appointed probably from the fact that they were supposed, by the present Mayor, to have peculiar fitness for the appointments to which they were called.

Q. Cannot you state, from your own knowledge, that the change was purely a political one?

A. I consider the change that has just been made as of a political nature.

Q. You stated that there has been a great improvement in the morals, or in the character of the department, since this fire commission has been appointed. State whether or not that is not,

in your opinion, attributable to the total change from the volunteer to the paid department?

A. I consider it is due to the fire commission.

Q. Don't you attribute it to the change from a volunteer department to a paid department?

A. You must allow me to explain my reply. There were various improvements that were inaugurated by the introduction of a paid department instead of a volunteer department, and this was one of the great improvements that was made; and I consider that to the fact that it is supervised by an able fire commission, who have the thing continually before them, this very great improvement is due.

Q. Don't you think that the change—no matter who it was made by—from a volunteer to a paid department, has contributed more to the elevation of the department than anything else?

A. Certainly. I consider that that is very material.

Q. Whether the fire commissioners are subject to removal by the Mayor for cause?

A. The fire commissioners can be removed by the Mayor at any time.

Q. Can they be removed arbitrarily by the Mayor?

A. I presume he has the power to remove the fire commissioners. I am scarcely well enough versed in the new charter to give an opinion upon that point, but I presume he could remove them arbitrarily if he chose to.

The CHAIRMAN. We should be glad to have some gentleman of the committee explain what the Mayor's power is in reference to removal.

Mr. HOPE. The only removal power of the Mayor, I think, is for cause. I think he does not exercise an arbitrary power of removal.

Q. I should like to ask as to the kind of men that are fire commissioners in New York; whether they are expert firemen, or military men, or what their qualifications are?

A. In the present Board, in the first instance, we have a practical fireman. Then one has been a prominent military man,—the commander of the militia of that district. Another one has been captain of police. They have exerted a good influence. These men coming in together have brought into the department a military

discipline which is of great value. In answer to a question which was asked here, I will read this statement, although we do not put much faith upon any particular year : —

The aggregate of losses in 1866, was	\$6,400,000
“ “ “ 1867, “	5,700,000
“ “ “ 1868, “	4,300,000
“ “ “ 1869, “	2,600,000

That shows the tendency. I don't mean to have you take that as proving any more than it does ; but in the mean time, the city has extended and the losses ought to be greater. In regard to the cost of this department, it was, as has been stated, a very difficult thing to ascertain what the cost was. It was not less than three-fourths of a million. The lowest estimate that could be arrived at, taking all that could be got at, was three-fourths of a million. The average cost of the department would seem to be about one-third more than with the volunteer system, and the advantage far outweighs that increase. Of course, as the city grows, it requires constantly increasing apparatus, men and expense.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) What has been the increase of your population in the same time, and the increase of business within the same specific time?

A. As to the population, I do not know. I know they are building houses all the while, and extending the city more. The city is growing all the time. In proportion to the number of men, the expense has not been great, save that the last Legislature added \$200 to the salary of the men, which made \$120,000 increase.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) It is possible for a political appointment to be made to a vacancy ; when a vacancy exists, it is possible that politics may turn the scale in the matter of the appointment, but, as I understand it, there is no such thing to be contemplated as a political removal, unless you had a Mayor who pretended cause for the removal of a commissioner.

Mr. HOPE. We have had three series of commissioners in this time during the seven or eight years, and each one of them has worked so much better that we would take the worst of them twenty times over rather than the old system operated under a com-

mittee of the Common Council. Although politically appointed, as they will, be apt to be under any circumstances, once appointed, there is no political action felt in the operation of the department that is material.

Mr. MILLER. The last change was the result of the tide of reform that swept over our city, and which gave us a new Mayor. And in the operation of the new charter, he cleaned out the departments entirely. It seems as though he was impressed with the idea of wiping out everything that had a Tweed twang to it. As an instance of how the appointments have been made, the chairman is Mr. Perley, who has been for many years an engineer of the department. He was selected as chairman of the commission solely and purely on account of his merits. Of the other two, one is a republican and the other is a democrat.

Q. (By Mr. DEAN to Mr. MILLER.) Whether any of the evils attending Tweed's power reached the Fire Department, or these commissioners?

A. I do not think they did. But the new charter legislated everybody out of office. Their terms expired therefore. And, as the chairman of the committee has suggested, it was appointing new men to fill new positions. As I stated, the chief member of the commission is a man who has given some of the best years of his life to the working up of the department, as Chief Engineer. The impression from Mr. Alliger's answer might have been that the change was a political one, and so far I desire to correct it.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) When this change was made in the commission, was there not a change in the party in power in the city of New York?

Mr. MILLER. Yes, sir.

Mr. HOPE. Tweed is a bugbear in our town, and was for a long time. But to show how commissioners rise superior to their antecedents, of the commission which preceded this last one, three of the five were appointed by Tweed, but they no sooner got to be commissioners, than they were compelled to behave themselves; and they did. I tell you a bad commissioner, appointed for a definite time, is better than a good alderman.

Mr. HEALD. We have other points to present to you as to the supply of water, and as to the salvage corps; but we have already

occupied your attention perhaps too long, and lest we trespass upon it, we will give an opportunity to the members of the committee to inquire of the delegates generally. We have not put our best talent forward. We hold something yet in reserve. There are gentlemen here of years of experience in the practical working of fire departments. And if you desire to ask any general questions, they will be answered by some member of the committee. I desire to make one statement so as to correct an impression that may be derived from some of the remarks which have been made, which is this,—that during the changes in that commission from seven to five and from five to three, during all the changes from the time of Governor Fenton's first appointment until the present time, one thing is true; and that is, that the Fire Department, essentially, the Fire Department as such, has shown no perceptible political complexion,—that during all these changes, while the commissioners have changed, and the majority has been democratic, or republican, as I believe it was at first, there has been no perceptible influence of either party in the administration of the duties of the Fire Department. But, as it is a matter of prime importance to us as citizens, regardless of our peculiar views of domestic, or State politics, it is a matter of vital importance that we secure, at least, one arm of the public service which is removed as far as possible from political influence in its administration. And I believe we have secured this as nearly as it is practicable to be done in New York. I have been a great observer of the internal politics of New York, although not a voter. I do not know when I have ever heard any complaint that the department has taken on a political character. If, therefore, we are liable in the change of politics and change of parties to have the commission itself changed, if so be that the administration of that commission standing before the public as an isolated commission, chosen for a particular and specific object, confines itself to the honest administration of its duties, irrespective of the character for voting purposes of its members, or the human machine which it uses, then certainly we have made a great advance in removing it thus far, apparently, at any rate, from the influence of politics. And this being simply a question of internal municipal administration, it should be removed from any possibility of being influenced by national or State politics.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Has the press of New York, at any time, or any considerable portion of the press of New York, charged political influence upon the fire commissioners?

A. I am not aware that they ever charged any political influence on the administration of the department. There may be exceptions. There are papers that have little or no political influence. But I think the leading organs of both parties have seldom, if ever, found any ground of complaint against the Fire Department, or its administration, on that account.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Whether or not you think the great improvement made in the Fire Department was not as much to be attributed to the change from a volunteer to a paid department?

A. (By Mr. HEALD.) Undoubtedly it was; but, at the same time, the efficiency of that department depended upon its administration. A paid department, run as a voting machine, would not be essentially different from a volunteer department. On the other hand, it might be made more powerful on account of the stricter discipline. When you take 600 men who are dependent on their salaries, you have a political power which may exert a considerable influence. We try to direct the power of those 600 men to the extinguishing of fires instead of political affairs.

Q. Why was the pay of the firemen raised? How was that done; or how was it brought about?

A. The internal machinery at Albany I do not understand, but I believe it was on the merits of the question. I believe it met with general approval on the part of those who are familiar with the working of the Fire Department. I can only give you an illustration: Our salvage corps, or fire patrol, in New York, consists of about 50 men, with their apparatus for saving property. They are employed and paid a regular salary, by the insurance companies, by contribution. And when this increase took place in the Fire Department, a voluntary increase was also made to our salvage corps. The increase of pay was more a matter of merit than anything else. In fact, the system, as worked, was so satisfactory to the citizens of New York, that there was no fault found with the increase of pay of the department. In fact, it has been regarded as highly meritorious.

If there are no further questions to be asked, it is proper that

we should return to you our thanks for the courteous hearing which you have given to us, and to express a hope that you may be benefited by some of the suggestions made. And, if you should secure for Boston a character to its buildings, and a Fire Department which should be an honor to you, our visit will be more than satisfactory. We thank you for your attention.

The CHAIRMAN. In behalf of the committee, I certainly return to your committee our cordial thanks for the information which you have afforded us, and assure you it will receive every consideration, which it deserves.

The committee then took a recess until three o'clock.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

STATEMENT OF GAMALIEL BRADFORD.

I am sorry to trespass upon the time of the committee, but I have taken a great deal of interest in the subject of municipal government, and have thought it might be worth while to give a few minutes to the subject. I think anybody who reads the papers, or hears the remarks of the public, will be satisfied that they are convinced that the trouble or defect in the Fire Department lies in one direction,—in the too great division of power, and the want of responsibility anywhere. It is divided up between the Chief and his assistants, and the committees of the Common Council and Aldermen, and the Mayor. There seems to be no one place where there is anybody in particular upon whom the responsibility rests. There has been a great deal of discussion as to whether the Chief of the department is a thoroughly efficient and able man. I have nothing to say in regard to him; but I will say that you never will or can have a first-class man at the head of that department under this system. How does he get his appointment? He is elected by 70 men, more or less. Now, does his election necessarily depend always upon his efficiency in managing fires? In the next place, he has

14 assistants, chosen, independently of him, by the same 70 men, so when he sits at the head of his Board, he sits at the head of a Board as independent of him as any other citizens. He does not appoint them, and cannot control or remove them. As an illustration of this, you will recollect that it was put to a vote of the Board of Engineers whether the licenses for the sale of fireworks should be continued.

I could point out in other respects this division of power and responsibility, but, as I said, the public mind seems to be clear on that matter, — that there is no responsibility anywhere. Now the question comes, what is the remedy? The remarks so far have pointed to an independent commission to take charge of the whole affairs of the Fire Department and attend to that department. Undoubtedly, that would be an advance upon the present system, but I think that is only a partial and very partial remedy for the evil, for these reasons. In the first place, it is not sufficiently comprehensive; for a fire commission, unless it is to take the whole City Government, must be so limited in its powers that it is still inefficient. The inspection of buildings is quite as important to the security of the city, but the subject of the inspection of buildings cannot be put in charge of the Fire Department. I believe, if the matter of inspection is followed up, it will be found that there is exactly the same want of responsibility that there is in the Fire Department. The water supply is just as important as the Fire Department, but the control of the Water Department cannot be put under the Fire Department. Again, there is the Police Department, which is of equal importance, but that cannot be under the control of the Fire Department. The Police Department is just as important in the management of fires as the Fire Department. Mr. Dorman B. Eaton, who has taken a great part in the reforms in New York, states that he believes that in a time of great trial our Police Department would fail as our Fire Department has. However that may be, it is a department that is just as essential as any other. So through the whole list, you cannot have one commission that will control the whole.

The next question is, what, then, do you propose? Where is the real point of departure for a remedy? All the governments in this country, from Congress down to cities, are based upon one plan,

of two legislative bodies and one executive ; and the theory is that the executive and legislative are kept entirely separate. The theory all through is that the executive and legislative must be kept separate. Now, the fact is, that they have been consolidated. The executive power has disappeared, and the legislative has taken the whole. Anybody who will look into the powers of the President of the United States, the Governors of the States, and the Mayors of the cities, will be perfectly astonished at the utter insignificance of their position. They have no power whatever, or, at most, nothing more than advisory power, — power to recommend. The power is all taken by the legislative body, and divided among sections, or committees, and in this way it is diffused until responsibility has entirely disappeared. As a consequence of this, you will find, if you study the proceedings of Congress, if you study the proceedings of the Legislatures of the States, or the proceedings of cities, that they break down exactly in the same place, that the evils are the same in kind all through, from Congress down to the government of the cities, with this slight difference. In some places, it takes the form of corruption ; in some it takes the form of inefficiency. In the Congress of the United States, and in the Legislatures of the States, the work has not got so far as to be intolerable. If a session of Congress goes by and they do nothing, we laugh, because the country gets on pretty well ; so with a State Government ; we bear it and say nothing about it. But in cities, it has got to a point where it cannot be tolerated. In New York, it has taken the form of corruption, and you have seen the upheaval. They have made a step in the right direction. If we are going to have a reform, we must restore some executive power somewhere. I believe the Mayor should have the full power of appointment and the full and absolute power of removal.

In New York, they have got a new charter, by which they have reduced their government to a single chamber. They have made a serious mistake in electing the Aldermen at large. The district system was much better. They have also provided that appointment shall be made by the Mayor, and confirmed by the Aldermen ; and removals shall be for cause, submitted to some judges. I think that destroys the efficiency of the whole system. This matter of appointment by the Mayor, and confirmation by the Alder-

men looks as if it was a security. The fact is, it is just the reverse, because the first aim of the Mayor is to satisfy the Aldermen; and whenever he suits them, that is all he has to do. If he sends in a man whom they approve, they do not care to criticise him afterwards. They have committed themselves and taken the responsibility from the Mayor. If he has the absolute power of appointment, the Aldermen become a set of critics and watch him and see what he is doing; and if he has the power of removal, they are after him. That should be the function of a Legislature or a Board of Aldermen — to follow up and see that everything is done. You have a Board of Health. It has greater power than the old Committee of Health, but they have no greater responsibility. You cannot tell whether they are efficient until the cholera comes; nor whether the Fire Department is efficient until you have a fire burn up seventy million dollars' worth of property. You want to find out before. Under the New York charter, the Mayor and the heads of the departments sit in the room with the Aldermen, and are subject to constant criticism. The Aldermen are over the city, and when they find any trouble they go to the Mayor. He appointed the men, and is responsible for them. People may say that a Mayor could not hold his office a minute under such a system, on account of the criticism of the Aldermen. This would be so, if it were not that the people stand outside and watch the course of both Mayor and Aldermen. There is the trouble. You do not touch the public enough. You want to be before the public and let them hear the criticism, and that will be a constant check upon them. In the next place, you may say you do not want to give any such power as that; it is too arbitrary. But the Mayor stands before the tribunal of the public; and he never would dare to remove arbitrarily if he stood before daily criticism, where he was held up to observation, whatever he did. In the third place, you say it takes away the efficiency of the Aldermen. What they have to do, as a body, may be affected; but individually they have a far better chance, because each committee now has its department, and they attend to it. But on this plan, every Alderman would be all over the city in every part and department, and he would make his individual character tell far more than in any system of committees; and if he goes forward and shows himself

a man of industry and public devotion, he is in the line of promotion for Mayor. I submit to you. You get no pay for your duties. You give a great deal of time, and you have no direct chance of political promotion. I assume that the object of anybody who takes the position of Alderman is to work to the position of Mayor as next in course; but your work is not done before the public, where they can see you all the time, and where the strongest man becomes immediately a candidate for Mayor. You are working not directly under the eye of the public, but rather outside of public observation in the different departments of the City Government. You have, of course, the satisfaction of your conscience, and may satisfy your district, but you are not working in the line of political preferment. I dwell upon this, not so much because it is of immediate application to the present case, as because it seems to lie at the root of the whole difficulty. These gentlemen from abroad tell you about commissions in other cities. What do they come to? Why, the rates of insurance do not seem to be any lower in other cities than here. When you ask them about the powers and definitions of the different things, you run against the same stump. They have no definite power or responsibility in anybody. And they all bear to this point: that although the Fire Department may have powers of its own, it has no control of the Water Department; of the Police Department; or of the inspection of public buildings. The same brain that moves the hand must move the foot. There should be a certain point that all should emanate from.

Q. (By Mr. SHATTUCK.) If I understand what you want, it is that there should be a commission of three persons appointed by the Mayor, and have the Mayor have the power of removal.

A. I think he should have absolute power of appointment and removal.

Q. You believe in having a responsible body to take charge of it?

A. I think one man should be responsible, that the system of check which is involved in confirmation by other bodies simply destroys responsibility; and that the one man responsibility at the head of all the departments is the important point.

Q. You think the Mayor should have arbitrary power of removal?

A. I think it would be subject to the check of this responsibility. The cause would soon be brought out by questions of the Aldermen. He would have to justify himself before his constituents and the public. I hold he would be far more likely to have cause for removal under that system than under the system of confirmation.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) You would make him an autocrat?

A. On the contrary, I should make him more responsible. There is the point where we fail from one end to the other. We are afraid to trust anybody with power, but you cannot get responsibility unless you give power. If you have a man in your service to do a job, and you tell him how to take every step, he is not responsible; but if you tell him, "I want such a thing done," then you hold him responsible.

Q. What would you do in this case of the Fire Department?

A. As the public feeling stands now, I should propose to have a fire commission of three persons, and have them appointed directly by the Mayor, without any confirmation. Then the Aldermen have no interest in the appointment. They have not confirmed them, and are not responsible; and they hold the Mayor to responsibility for them. Then you will find out about your Fire Department beforehand. Suppose a year ago, before this fire had taken place, you had a Chief and assistants entirely appointed by the Mayor, and you, gentlemen, had come in every day and remarked, "I find a six-inch pipe in such a street, when there should be a nine." The Mayor goes to the Chief of the Fire Department and says, "What is the meaning of that?" and by cross-examination and criticism you would push the Mayor up so he would get it replaced. Each individual can come and attack the Mayor for a defect he sees. And the consequence is, you have the government held up to public view all the time. What I am advocating is not a new idea. It is the system carried on in the British Parliament and in foreign administrations. It has been perfectly well tried, with good results.

Q. Would you like to be Mayor and have all that responsibility?

A. I do not covet responsibility myself, but I believe you could command the best talent in Boston. I believe there are men who have no occupation, and are thirsting for public employment, if

you will give them the power and control. The same thing is done everywhere else. The minister stands up in the British Parliament subject to the same sort of attack, and he has to take it right and left from everybody.

Q. He has to resign if he is not sustained?

A. The English people say we cannot have that system because we cannot compel a minister to resign. I say our frequent elections meet that point. They have no right to make such assertions. They have seven-year parliaments. If they had annual elections, a minister could hold over from one year to another easy enough. Besides, they do not always resign when they get an adverse vote. It is only when they are defeated on some important measure.

Q. (By Mr. WILLEY.) You seem to have matured this thing very admirably. Why not have one engineer, one chief or commissioner instead of three, five or seven, as you do at the head of the departments at Washington, as we have a Secretary of War, having as many assistants as they want, but having one head?

A. I think it would be better to have one than more, but I do not think the point turns so much upon that as it does upon the matter of whoever is at the head of it, being subject to daily responsibility. Either he must be before the Aldermen himself to answer daily questions and examinations, or he must be appointed by somebody who is.

Q. Suppose you have him appointed, as you say, why have but one commissioner?

A. I should infinitely prefer one commissioner.

Q. What need of three, who are supposed to have equal power in the same department?

A. I think one would be very much better.

Q. Would you have one power at the head of everything? For instance, would you have the general of an army also fill the executive offices and buy supplies? Would you not think it would be better to have a body of two or three persons to do that, than to have all the duties vested in one head?

A. I think military matters are different. There is no direct responsibility in military matters. I think the general of an army should have the appointment of his subordinates. Take, for in-

stance, the case of the army of the Potomac. You never heard who was at the head of the supply department, or whether he was efficient. You heard only of General McClellan, or Grant, or whoever had the responsibility.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Does not the public hold the Chief Engineer now as that responsible man?

A. That is not my impression.

Q. Is not that the common impression? Is not all the hue and cry that is made now made against the Chief Engineer?

A. That is one of the reasons why I say you will never have a first-class man in that department, because no good man will be willing to take all the kicks and get none of the halfpence. He is abused as if he had all the power, when he has none of the power.

After some discussion between the members of the committee and the counsel, as to the course of future hearings, the committee voted to adjourn to Tuesday, July 8th, at 3 o'clock.

FOURTH HEARING.

TUESDAY, July 8.

The committee was called to order soon after three o'clock, by the Chairman, Alderman QUINCY, who said :—

The hearings thus far have been for the petitioners ; the present hearing is had for the remonstrants against this measure which we are asked to take. Several improvements are suggested in the Fire Department, and as a means to that end the petitioners ask us to adopt a particular measure—the appointment of a fire commission. We will now hear any person in behalf of the remonstrants against that step, and afterwards anything which they may have to suggest in regard to any other measure by which they may think the same end will be attained. We will hear first any person who appears in behalf of those wishing to remonstrate against this particular measure of the appointment of a fire commission.

STATEMENT OF M. F. LYNCH.

I have a few words to say, as a remonstrant. I simply appear here as a poor tax-payer, to remonstrate against what I consider will be a scientific system of robbing the tax-payers. I have been acquainted with the different cities throughout this country, and know as much about the Fire Department, and perhaps a great deal more, than some of those insurance men who appeared here last week. It is well known that when a man is arrested once, and brought before a jury of his countrymen for stealing, and found guilty of the charge, his opinion afterwards in regard to honesty is not worth a snap ; and it is well known that the insurance companies of this country have been brought before the bar of public opinion and condemned as common thieves. Therefore, their request that you appoint a commission for such a purpose is entirely unworthy to be received by the citizens, because they are known to be nothing else under heaven but a combined set of thieves. If they had been honest men, they would have paid

what they owed, honestly and conscientiously, after the fire of November 9th.

I do not wish to take up much of your time, but in order to show you my opinion in regard to it, I will say that I put in a petition at the extra session of the Legislature, but the insurance companies had such a hold there that they would not allow it to crawl in. I asked them to refuse to renew the charter of, or grant a new charter to, any insurance company in this Commonwealth that had become insolvent, or had not paid in full all losses by the fire of November 9th in the city of Boston, particularly when the books of the company making application for a renewal of the charter showed that they had paid dividends of more than eight per cent. per annum to the stockholders; and, further, that they would not grant a charter to any company when the name of any person appeared on the application for such charter who was known to have had anything to do with the business management of a company which had become insolvent, or had not paid in full its losses, on account of the fire of November 9th.

There is one question which you have got seriously to consider. The Fire Department of this city, I contend, is second to none in this country; I know it to be such. It needs a little pruning, as my friend Mr. Dunham has said. Put the Fire Department in the hands of the Chief; give him to understand that he is to be held directly responsible for everything that is done in the department, and then you will know where to find him. If he asks for larger water pipes in certain districts, he should have them. If it is necessary that he should have anything whatsoever, he should have it. But he should be held directly responsible to the people. When you go to work and appoint a commission, you take it directly out of the hands of the people, and carry it further away from them. The Fire Department, as I said before, is well organized at the present time, except it needs a little improvement. The Chief Engineer should have the control of the fire alarm, and everything that would have a tendency to improve the system of insurance.

Now, as I said before, those insurance men that came here from New York and Brookline have no interest here. Nine-tenths of them are stockholders, and ten chances to one if they ever make any

return of the dividends which they receive from their companies; they don't pay taxes on what they own, but we unfortunate poor devils, who have to pay taxes on all the property we own, have got to pay the expense of this infernal commission. We have had a trial of one commission — the Board of Health — and it is a humbug. I could prove it, if it was on trial to-day. So it will be with this commission; it will be nothing but a humbug; and in behalf of the tax-payers, I say, do not grant this petition. We cannot appear here by counsel; we have no money to hire legal gentlemen to come here and put it forward in the flowery language of Harvard; we cannot do it, we simply come here and remonstrate; and I say, woe to any man at the next election who shall record his vote for the humbuggery of a commission.

There was one gentleman from New York, — and he seemed to be a very intelligent gentleman, from the fact that he carried a bay window at each side of his nose, — who said the risks were not as good in Boston as in New York. I say he tells a falsehood. I am pretty well acquainted in New York, and I say the risks in Boston are superior in every respect. The city of New York is a fire-trap, and if they are not very careful, their time will come. They have not had their time yet. Chicago has had her time; Boston has had hers; and New York better be careful when they tell us that our Fire Department is not equal to theirs. I simply hope that every gentleman here will go to work and report against this humbug of a commission.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) If I understand you right, you say that the Fire Department needs some pruning. Will you state in what particulars?

A. By taking it out of politics.

Q. Well, how?

A. Well, so that the members of the Common Council and Board of Aldermen shall not cater to the Fire Department, and so that the different fire companies shall not have their private directions to favor the election of certain persons, who will bring forward any project that is for the interest of the department; for instance, increase of pay. If an increase of pay is required, it will come on its merits, without interference from the Council or Aldermen.

Q. You favor an increase of pay,—what else? It is an easy matter to throw down a pile of bricks; it is not quite so easy to build it up. Will you be kind enough to suggest how you think the department can be improved?

A. Hold the Chief directly responsible, as I said before, for everything that is done. In case there should come up any question,—for instance, about having larger pipes,—there has been a point made about putting larger pipes in certain streets,—let an application be made and put on file, by direction of the Board of Engineers, so that the public will know he has made an application for a twenty-inch pipe to go through a certain street, and if you refuse it, the responsibility will be put directly on the shoulders where it belongs. And, furthermore, I should say another improvement would be to abolish that portion of the building law which relates to the appointment of inspectors. The first building law said that the inspectors should report to the Chief Engineer—

Q. Excuse me, you are getting two or three departments together. The Fire Department and the Building Department are different departments. Will you be kind enough just to give me your idea as to how you would prune the Fire Department? Keep that distinct by itself. I want to know what the people desire.

A. That is one of the pruning points that you were asking me about, as I understand it. If I understood you right, you asked me what I consider would be necessary in regard to pruning or improving the Fire Department.

Q. Now, if you will confine yourself, if you please, to pruning the Fire Department. Let the other departments take care of themselves, for the present. How would you improve the Fire Department?

A. I would make the Chief Engineer the chief Inspector of Buildings, or his Board of Engineers. They are the ones who ought to know about the location of buildings, and all about them. That is what I should say, sir. That is one thing.

Q. You would have, then, the engineers, or fire marshals, whatever they may be called, inspectors of buildings?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Now, what would be your other point?

A. The other point would be, to give him just as much power as was necessary over the alarm boxes. The moment he gave an order, with the consent of his Board of Engineers, that a box should be put in a certain place, it should be carried out, no matter what other persons might say.

Q. You would have the fire alarm in charge of the Chief?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Now, what else?

A. I would also have him, with his Board of Engineers, have everything to say in regard to the water that is necessary for the Fire Department.

Q. Well, what part of the Water Department would you have in his charge?

A. Well, as I said before, everything that is required for the purposes of the Fire Department; for instance, the hydrants.

Q. Then you would have the Chief Engineer locate the hydrants?

A. Yes, sir, locate them, and fix the quality and the number.

Q. And the size of the hydrants?

A. Yes, sir; and the size of the pipes that should go through any district.

Q. Do you think of any other suggestions?

A. Well, I don't know that I can think of anything more than that. Those are all the practical suggestions that I think are necessary.

STATEMENT OF CHARLES H. MERRITT.

As a citizen and tax-payer, and a holder of real estate, I feel it to be my duty to oppose this fire commission, this wanton expenditure of money. We have been told here, sir, that they have a commission in New York, and that the Fire Department is much better in New York than it is here. We all know why a commission was formed in New York. We know that it was impossible for a fire to occur in New York without the members of the Fire Department getting into a flight, and what was the consequence? They took it out of the hands of the city, and appointed a Metropolitan Commission, by the State. Are we prepared for that? Have we any Tweeds here? No, sir. It has been said that we need

three commissioners, one to be a great financier, another to be a great disciplinarian, a sort of military man, and one to be an engineer, like Gen. McClellan, for instance. If any of you gentlemen were present at the fire of November 9th, I think you saw enough of engineering, — of the great engineer, Gen. Benham, — of his wholesale and wanton destruction of property that night. You, sir, can hardly be aware, I think, of the extent to which powder was used that night. Why, they even notified the officers of the Five Cents Savings Bank, and they absolutely removed their securities from their building, for fear of being blown up. That is your great engineer.

We know that the Fire Department of this city needs an addition. The Fire Department has not grown as the city has grown. We are all aware of that. And who is to blame for it? The Fire Department have had their annual inspection; the citizens have seen, from year to year, how many engines and hose carriages we have had in the city proper; they have been perfectly satisfied in regard to it; and who is it that is making all this trouble? Nobody but the insurance companies. And haven't they commissioners appointed by the State? And haven't they been paying forty per cent. to their stockholders? And at the very hour when we wanted their help, we were told that they would cancel our policies, or that they would assess us double the amount of our premiums and our notes. The citizens to-day, I believe, have confidence in the Fire Department. A great deal of fault has been found with the Fire Department, especially in regard to the last fire. If those who stand in the street knew the circumstances attending the crossing of a fire, I think they would not find any fault. Mr. Chairman, a fire will always cross the street whenever there is sufficient heat to it. Take, for instance, the hay stores on Canal st. A fire crossed there, years ago, and set fire to the Boston and Maine passenger depot; but the building was covered with ladders, and the fire put out. It will always cross a street, if there is sufficient heat. And then, again, Mr. Chairman, it was well known to the Fire Department that the coving on the Hayward block was not sufficiently balanced, that it was kept down by the roof; and if any of these gentlemen were present, they must have remarked how quickly that granite cornice fell. All these charges

are heaped upon the Fire Department without any cause. It has been said that they play on the walls. Don't we know that it is our duty, and the duty of every one, to prevent the fronts of granite buildings from being scarred or marred by fire? And by keeping them cool by the application of water, a number of granite buildings have been saved.

Several circumstances have been brought before you, one of which I will mention. One gentleman said that he saw, on the night of November 9th, one steamer playing three streams, neither of which went above the third story. Did that gentleman know that there was but one steamer in Boston capable of playing three streams, and that that engine was absent at the time of the fire? These circumstances ought to be investigated. But you are asked to appoint commissioners, which will involve us in an expense of two and a half millions, perhaps; I don't know what the amount may be, but something near that.

I hope, Mr. Chairman, we shall hear no more about scientific engineers for the Fire Department; we have got good engineers; we want men of judgment, men of ability; and we have in our Chief a man who possesses all these qualities combined. Give him the power, and he will fulfil all the requirements which the citizens of Boston demand. I have listened patiently to the arguments that have been brought forward here in favor of a commission, and I have not heard one which satisfies me that a commission is necessary; not a single solitary argument. Take, for instance, Mr. Mudge's building, who testified here that he had been notified that the insurance companies wished to cancel his policies. There was a building almost absolutely fire-proof, with corrugated iron cornices, and everything of the kind. The underwriters, he said, could suggest no improvement that could be made on the building, except cutting around the steam-pipe. And yet he was notified that they wished to cancel his policies. Why did he receive that notification? It was for the effect that it might produce on you, gentlemen, as a committee. No doubt about it at all. Why not, Mr. Chairman, do away with our whole City Government, and run every department by a commission—police, school, and everything? Are we not having the same trouble in our

School Board? They cannot agree. Why not run the schools by a commission?

I have the utmost confidence, Mr. Chairman, in the Committee on the Fire Department. They are the ones responsible. But the citizens themselves are familiar with the fact that the Fire Department has not been increased. It is said that it needs pruning. I do not know what is meant by "pruning." You see in me one of the oldest members of the Boston Fire Department, and yet I am able to do my duty to-day with any young man there is there. I do not shrink from mounting any ladder, or scaling any building, or any thing of that kind. "Self-praise," they say, "goes but little ways;" but there is one fact that I wish to mention, and that is, that at the fire on Washington street, the fire had got inside the cornice on Hayward Block, or Miller's building, and I was directed by Captain Regan to put it out. I put it out, and reported to him. The consequence was, the next day, the credit was given to Captain Green. Captain Green was there, I know.

I hope, gentlemen of the committee, that before you report in favor of this commission, you will sift these facts down that men have testified to, and who are the parties. To show the selfishness of these insurance men, I will state this fact. In conversation with the President of one of our insurance companies the other day, he said to me, "Do you know the worst thing we ever did for ourselves?"—"No; what is it?"—"The very worst thing we ever did was when we put into the city of Boston the Insurance Brigade, to run to fires and cover up goods."—"Why?"—"A gentleman looks over his stock of goods, and says: 'In case of fire, my loss will be about so much; my goods will be all covered up,' and consequently he will not get more than half the insurance; whereas, if he knew the goods would not be covered up, he would pay a higher rate of insurance, and get a larger amount." That is the selfishness of the insurance companies of Boston. They have been receiving forty per cent. dividends, and yet, in the hour of our trouble, they told us they would cancel our policies, or assess us double the amount of our premiums and notes. Don't listen to such men as these; take the citizens of Boston.

We have, belonging to each steamer, eleven men, and eight men to each hose carriage. The number should be increased. We

want some more permanent men ; not the whole department permanent men, by any means. We citizens are not prepared to go into the expense of a permanent department. The men would be enfeebled. If you go into that, and have more permanent men, they ought to have something else to do besides loafing round the engine houses. They ought to be obliged to inspect the buildings in their district, so that they may know whether the cornices are properly balanced or not, and whether there is a barrel of kerosene in every story, which the man is allowed to keep; and which is liable to be opened at any moment, or not. If we cover a building that is apparently safe, like that one in Hanover street, with ladders, and the walls fall, and two or three men are killed, people say, "If you want any greater evidence of the inefficiency of the Fire Department and the want of judgment on the part of the Chief Engineer, better have another fire." Then, if we know there is a building with the cornice not properly balanced, and we let the building burn, then they can't see why the fire crossed Washington street!

But, Mr. Chairman, I have done. I have nothing more to say. I hope the committee will sift the facts before they grant this commission. I do not mean to say that I think these men tell wilful falsehoods; but they are simply mistaken when they tell about three streams from one engine only going up to the third story. The gentleman did not see it. We had no engine in Boston at that time that could play three streams.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) You are a member of the present Fire Department?

A. I am.

Q. In what capacity?

A. I am a ladder man.

Q. What do you know about Mr. Mudge's statement with regard to his building?

A. I heard his statement here.

Q. Let me ask you one simple question: what do you know about Mr. Mudge's building?

A. I don't know anything about it, only his statement made here. I have probably seen the building.

Q. If I have not got you recorded right on my own notes, I want to set you right. I have it: "Mr. Mudge's building has not

been required by the underwriters to be changed in any respect, with the exception of cutting around the steam pipe." Do you know that to be true?

A. I know that is what Mr. Mudge said here. He stated that as a fact here.

Q. It is a matter of considerable importance, with regard to Mr. Mudge's building. If you know anything about it, I should be glad to have you state what you know.

A. I only know what he stated here.

Q. Don't you know that many of the underwriters on State street have refused to take risks on Mr. Mudge's building?

A. I know nothing but what he said here. If Mr. Mudge stated it correctly, I think the motive must have been —

Q. I am not questioning motives. What he said here is another matter. I want to know whether you know anything about the building.

A. I know nothing about the building, only that it stood the test of the fire, as he stated.

Q. What changes would you suggest that would be of advantage to the city?

A. I would suggest more permanent men, for one thing. I would not have them all permanent men.

Q. To what extent would you have them permanent men?

A. Well, I don't know.

Q. You have had some experience, and ought to know.

A. I should say that, in a ladder company, we would require twelve permanent men: for this reason — it requires twelve men to raise and splice a ladder. The first thing that is wanted when we get to a fire is ladders. Take, for instance, the fire that occurred in Bowker street on the morning of the 4th of July. We were requested by the Committee on the Fire Department to stay in or around the house, and we did so. The alarm was taken from box 3. We went up there and raised three spliced ladders, and the consequence was, when the steamer got there, we were ready to carry the water to the top of a five-story building, and they succeeded in putting out the fire, which bid fair to be a disastrous fire.

Q. Were you directed by the Committee on the Fire Department to stay in your house?

A. We were requested.

Q. Where was your Chief?

A. The Chief sent us the notice. I think you did not understand me. We were directed, or requested, by our Chief and the Committee on the Fire Department to stay in the house on the night before the 4th, and morning of the 5th, — 12 o'clock, — when we were dismissed. We stayed there two nights.

Q. Do you take your orders from the Chief?

A. Yes, sir, we do.

Q. Implicitly?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. You do not follow any committee?

A. No, sir, we do not follow any committee.

Q. Your rule is to take your orders from the Chief, and follow them?

A. Certainly.

Q. And with no interference from anybody?

A. No interference from anybody. But we do not understand that the committee or the Chief have any power to order us to remain in our house in anticipation of a fire.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) You understand that the Chief has no right to order you to remain in your house in anticipation of a fire?

A. No, sir; simply to request. I did not understand it as an order, because we do duty only when there is an alarm.

Q. Do you remember in what form it came? Was it a notification?

A. It was a printed notification.

Q. Then it can be referred to, of course?

A. Certainly. It was a point well taken. If we had not been in the house, there would have been a disastrous fire on Bowker street. The papers spoke of it as a very slight fire. I don't know as there were any reporters there; but it bid fair to be a large fire. It occurred in the fifth story.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) What is your custom or practice in regard to orders, on arriving at a fire?

A. Our custom is, in the absence of the Chief or any of the assistant engineers, to raise our ladders according to our own

judgment. If our superior officer is there, we obey him, of course whoever he may be.

Q. You have stated that you would like to have more ladder men ; what other suggestions have you to make?

A. I would have more permanent men in the engine and hose companies.

Q. Paid men?

A. Paid men ; to do nothing else, only, as I said before, I would not have them loafing in the house all the time, I would have them round the district, patrolling, looking out for the dangerous localities, and such things. I would not have them lying around the house, enfeebling themselves, and ruining their constitutions.

Q. You would have them act as inspectors of buildings, and examine the buildings in their district?

A. Yes, sir ; but not in any manner to interfere with the Inspector of Buildings.

Q. Can you give any opinion as to the number of men that should be attached to the other organizations?

A. I can give my opinion. I would have in a hose company at least five permanent men, besides the driver.

Q. (By Mr. DEAN.) How many are there now?

A. One ; and that is the driver.

Q. Would you leave the number otherwise the same that you have now?

A. No, sir, I should increase it.

Q. How much? It is a mere matter of judgment, and we would like yours.

A. Well, they have now, I think, eleven men ; I should increase it to at least twenty.

Q. Would you have twelve men permanently attached to the hook and ladder companies, and stop there, or would you have any outsiders attached to them?

A. Yes, sir. I think we have twenty-four men ; that composes our whole company. I would have twelve of these men permanent, and I would increase the number of rakemen and the number of axemen. I would want at least ten more men. You take four axemen and four rakemen from a company, when the ladders first arrive at a fire, and you take a large number away. They are in

the house, supposed to be raking off the plastering, cutting away, and doing that sort of thing, and they cannot be with us to raise ladders. I would increase the ladder companies at least ten men, and I would have twelve of the company permanent men.

Q. Now about your engine companies—how would you have them organized?

A. I am not so much acquainted with the engine companies, but I would suggest more permanent men, and an increase in the company.

Q. How many permanent men?

A. I should say five permanent men on the hose carriage, and I should say ten permanent men on the steamer. I don't know but I am setting it large, but you, of course, can reduce it to suit yourselves.

Q. And how many others?—as few as in your judgment would make them effective.

A. I should say the whole company ought to be twenty. There are eleven now, all told, I believe.

Q. You would increase the number on each engine from eleven to twenty. Is that it?

A. I would.

Q. Ten of them to be permanent?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Are there any other suggestions you would like to make?

A. Our water. I know it fails us. If the Water Board don't give us more water, we have got to depend more largely on reservoirs. Of course, that takes a greater length of hose oftentimes.

Q. Wherein does the water fail? Can you explain how it is and why it is?

A. Well, the capacity of the pipes is not large enough. The first engine takes all the water, creates a vacuum, and the next engine cannot get any.

Q. Is the capacity of the pipes the same everywhere?

A. I don't know; I am not posted, and cannot give information as to that.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) What is the capacity of the pipe right opposite City Hall?

A. I don't know. I presume they have the high service there.

Q. Is it two, or two and a half inch?

A. I suppose it is larger. Our hydrants are mostly branches from four-inch pipe. They branch off and go into the sidewalk. That, of course, reduces the amount of water that we get, taking it from a branch pipe. The Lowry hydrant is what they have been talking about, but there is a difficulty about this Lowry hydrant.

Q. What is that difficulty?

A. The difficulty is, that in winter time, being wanted in the street, we have to dig them up. We cannot keep them uncovered. Post hydrants, I think, would be better.

Q. Anything else in that line?

A. Well, our fire police. The great difficulty which we experience, especially in the ladder company, is from the crowd. We cannot get inside of the lines, or, if we do get inside the lines, to get near enough to the fire, the guys are taken by the police, and we are roped off outside; consequently, it occasions us a great deal of trouble to get our ladders through. We don't want to injure anybody by the picks of the ladders. I recollect, in one instance, a boy was killed by running the picks into his head. The old fire police, under Jabez Pratt, were better than the present police to-day, in clearing the streets. That is the great thing. I don't know but it may be necessary to have a machine, or two or three, with ropes, ready to go to every fire, and rope off the street, to keep the crowd back. That is another thing of great importance.

Q. What would be your idea of having a police force inside the Fire Department?

A. I think it would be a good idea. We used to have them. They were paid a dollar for every fire, nothing for an alarm; and we absolutely had better protection than we do to-day.

Q. How long have you been connected with the Fire Department?

A. Well, I have run with the department ever since I can recollect anything. I have been in the present department since 1851.

Q. Are there any other suggestions you would like to make?

A. I don't think of any others.

A. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Do I understand, with regard to those men who are not permanently employed, that they are under the command of their superior officers only at a fire?

A. Only at a fire.

Q. And if the Chief desired, for instance, to collect the members of a hook and ladder company for drill or practice, he would have merely the power to request them, not to order them?

A. Certainly—it must be so. I may say, however, that any request, coming from our Chief, of course would be listened to, and we should obey it, but not as an order. Our contract is to do duty only when an alarm is given. We have drilled, and to show you the proficiency of our drill, I will state that we received from the city of Boston a silver trumpet, for the quickest time made in raising a spliced ladder, sixty-two feet long. We unstrapped five straps, took off two brush-poles, two guy ropes, raised the ladder, took it down and put it back on the carriage in one minute and ten seconds. We can do it any time. I believe the men should be drilled. It would be an improvement.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Your longest single ladder is forty feet?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. (By Mr. DEAN.) Have you ever known the water to fail, except on the occasion of the fire of Nov. 9th?

A. I don't know as we ever had such a draft before.

Q. Have you known the water to fail on any other occasion?

A. Yes, sir; I have known them to be obliged to locate their engines at a greater distance from each other.

Q. What occasion do you refer to now?

A. I don't know as I can call to mind the times and places. That fact has been called to the attention of the different Boards from time to time.

Q. I want to get at what you remember about it. Can you give us any instance?

A. Well, I am not so much used to water, you know, as I am to ladders. I am posted on ladders.

Q. So that you do not feel competent to answer that question?

A. No, sir, I do not; only I know there has been a general want of water. Take Sea street (Broad street it is now), where the hydrants are all located on one side of the street. Then our Fire

Alarm Department being under a different head, why, the idea is preposterous to think of—so intimately connected as the Chief of the Fire Department ought to be with the Fire Alarm,—to have that under a separate head?

Q. Well, what difference does it make?

A. It makes a great deal of difference.

Q. In what respect?

A. Well, there is a sensitiveness, you know, between the two offices.

Q. Well, how does it affect the practical workings of the department?

A. Well, I don't know as to the practical workings; but then, of course, in all that appertains to the department, the heads of the department should be held strictly to an account to our Chief. We know that the fire-alarm telegraph often fails, and there is a sensitiveness about going up to the Chief to report that, or to the fire-alarm office to report it.

Q. When did it fail?

A. Well, it is all recorded. The Wells school bell has failed;—you can never depend upon it.

Q. Where is it recorded?

A. Recorded at the fire-alarm office, I suppose. Take, for instance, this alarm that was given down here at Richmond street, where it was stated that the officer was very nervous, and after he pulled the slide, he did not wait for the reply, but ran to box 13. Well, we have a little ticker in our house, by which the driver can tell from which box an alarm comes. That man was quick enough to pull the slide on box 13, and on his ticker he got it box 13. Still, the alarm was given from 15, the one that was pulled first, while the man had time to go from box 15 to 13.

Q. What has that to do with the question whether it should be under one department or the other?

A. Well, it shows that there was a fault, and whoever was at fault is amenable to nobody, only the Committee on the Fire Alarm.

Q. Well, who gave this alarm?

A. One of the policemen.

Q. Do you know who it was?

A. No, I do not.

Q. How did you get your information on the subject?

A. I got it from our driver. When it came out in the paper, that there was a delay in the alarm, that the policeman was nervous, and kept pulling, pulling, pulling, which they could not understand up here at the office, our driver says, "I caught it on the ticker, box 13;" so that the man must have pulled 13.

Q. Would he have been any less nervous if he had been under the charge of one department rather than another?

A. I don't know about that.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) You said you were present at the last fire, at the corner of Essex and Washington streets?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Was there any deficiency in the supply of water there?

A. I think there was great deficiency there.

Q. When you were upon the ladder, how great did you find any deficiency of water?

A. I think there was a great deficiency of water. If we had had four such powerful streams as we had at the trial down here in Richmond street, where, I suppose, they wanted to see whether we could play above the third story, as has been testified here, when they played something like 110 feet, I should think, perpendicular, if we had had four or eight streams of that capacity on Washington street, I don't think the fire would have crossed the street. But we did not have them. We could not get water there.

Q. Where were you placed?

A. Right directly in front of the building.

Q. Of what building?

A. A little below Hayward block.

Q. Below Chickering's, — near the Globe Theatre?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Didn't you hear that there was one of the water-pipes wasting water all the time, or during a considerable part of the time?

A. No, sir, I did not.

Q. (By Mr. DEAN.) Why do you say there was not water enough on that occasion, when you say you do not know that water was running to waste?

A. I judge from what we know our steamers can do, and what

they did do, and I know there must have been a deficiency somewhere.

Q. You were stationed on Washington street?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. In what steamer did you notice any deficiency?

A. I didn't notice particularly what steamer it was.

Q. You are undertaking to answer particularly.

A. You asked me if I thought there was a want of water.

Q. No. You say there was a deficiency of water. I want to inquire about it, to see whether you can say positively that there was. Why do you say there was a deficiency of water, when you now say you don't know anything about it?

A. I didn't say I didn't know anything about it.

Q. What do you know about it?

A. I don't know anything about what was the cause.

Q. What did you observe about the deficiency of water?

A. I saw the streams.

Q. Streams of what engines?

A. I couldn't tell, in the excitement, any more than I could fix the time.

Q. What deficiency did you observe?

A. I saw two streams in Hayward block that didn't do anything at all.

Q. How high were they thrown?

A. Well, they were inside the building.

Q. Were you inside the building?

A. I was.

Q. Did you observe any others?

A. No, I don't know that I did. I notified Capt. Green that I didn't think the building was safe. I knew that building, having worked upon it, and I knew that the cornice was improperly balanced, — tied down to the roof.

Q. What you mean to say is, that having knowledge of that building, you notified Capt. Green that it was unsafe; and you noticed two streams of water inside the building, and they did not seem to be effective?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. In what story were those two streams?

A. I can't say. They were up considerably high. The fire was underneath.

Q. Were they throwing water?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Into that same building?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. How far did they throw the water?

A. I can't tell you.

Q. Those streams were above the fire?

A. No, they were not above the fire, because the fire was in the roof.

Q. I understood you to say the fire was beneath them?

A. It was, and above them, too.

Q. Where were they throwing this water?

A. On the window-frames in front.

Q. How long did you remain there?

A. A very few minutes, as I tell you.

Q. The others remained but a very few minutes?

A. A very few minutes; a very short space of time.

STATEMENT OF PROF. A. TACCHELLA.

It seems to me that the question before this Board is, Shall there be a commission or not? "To be, or not to be;" or, in other words, shall we have any more fires in Boston or no more? The same as that beautiful law at the State House, "Prohibition, or no prohibition"? You are beginning, perhaps, a new game of that kind, thinking that by a commission you will extinguish all fires, or that by leaving the present Board, you leave the city to burn. I am only a citizen here. I have been only six or seven years in Boston, and of course I cannot speak with so much accuracy about all your affairs. Yet you will permit me, perhaps, to mention something of what we do in Italy. I heard, the other day, one of those gentlemen from New York speak of Milan and Florence. It is a very good thing sometimes to get out of the atmosphere of passion. Those who have been great losers by the recent fires want to fight somebody, but they do not know whom to fight. They would fight the devil himself, if he were here. And those who

are doing their work, and doing it honestly, think it is hard to bear the blame they do not deserve. By-the-by, I would say, that one of those who has been most eloquent in blaming the Fire Department, when I went to him and told him I was trying to do something to diminish fires, told me he had plenty to do in attending to his own affairs, and couldn't spend his time in doing anything else. He could spend his time in finding fault, but when it comes to the question of striking the nail on the head, where are our great, eloquent men? I had something to do with the underwriters, also, in trying to diminish the number of fires. They said, "Very well; we will run risks, but we will increase the rates; that is all right for us; we won't do a thing to help you." I was before the Board of Trade: very honest gentlemen; they regretted to see Boston on fire; and yet they would not stir one finger. There are times when fires get the upper hand, and the Fire Department is, for the moment, at a loss. We have in Switzerland many cities and villages that have been burned. Misfortunes may happen, but of course misfortune will teach some lessons.

But I was going to say something which I think should be considered by men of sense, and I know I am before men who mean well, and who will not always accept what the "big bugs," as they are called, say, unless they really talk to the point. Now, if you are going to increase your outlay, will you not, as men of sense, inquire what is the wisest way to spend your money? That is the question. You are ready to spend your money, if you know it will do some good. But will a commission do more good than is done under the present system? I will leave it to you to answer that question, but I would not turn my hand. The power that would come in would just balance what we have now.

But I was going to tell you something about Italy. We have very few fires there. Why? In the first place, our houses are built better than those in this country; and, in the next place, we understand that if we want peace, we must be prepared for war, and we have a standing army of firemen. Milan has over three hundred paid firemen (I do not remember the exact number), who are alternately at the service of the city, day and night. They have plenty to do. They must examine every house, from time to time; see that the stoves are rightly placed when winter comes round, the funnels

renewed, and put in the right places. You see, if they do their duty, they have plenty to do. Besides, they have drills every month, occupying very considerable time, and every year we build in one of our large squares of the city an immense shanty, which is filled with barrels of resin, and other combustible materials; and the citizens go to see how the firemen can work in case of need. They throw themselves down from the second or third story. They have a whistle of distress: the other firemen know what they want, and they come with a very large sheet, and you can see these firemen jumping down, walking on the slated roofs, and doing all the work that they are required to do in a real fire. I do not dispute that you have men in your Fire Department who would do this, but I have no doubt there are a good many of them who would not risk their lives walking upon a slated roof. I do not say it is so, but there is a very well-grounded suspicion that they would not. Every fireman ought to be trained and drilled to do his duty. Therefore, if you have any more money to spend on the Fire Department, and if you want to spend it well, you had better, I think, expend it in increasing the efficiency of the means you now have for the prevention of fires, rather than throw it away on things which will be perfectly useless, except as a political hobby, which will do no more good than your prohibition or anti-prohibition.

STATEMENT OF NATHANIEL E. CHASE.

I hardly know where to commence to express myself in regard to this matter. I, of course, have an interest in it, or I should not appear here. My interest may be said to be as large as that of any one who has appeared here, for all that I have is in Boston, and all of it is at risk. No one can say more than that who has property in Boston; therefore I contend that my interest is equal to that of any other man, although I am a very small property-holder.

I cannot lay claim to any great experience, either as an underwriter or as fireman. I do claim to possess a little common sense, which I think all of you gentlemen have. Now, then, in regard to the prevention of fires in the future. A little common sense, it

seems to me, would have taught us that a great fire was possible in the past. When we consider this subject, and consider why a great fire was possible, don't let us, because of one great fire, blame any one man, or any half-dozen men; for I contend here, with all respect to the underwriters and insurance men, that of all men, they were the most interested in the safety of property in Boston, and to them belonged the privilege and the right, exclusively, of investigating the risks of that property. And we see what their judgment was worth. They would not take a risk on a wooden building, two stories high, without charging an enormous per cent., but they would take a risk, and call it excellent, on a building sixty feet high, on a narrow street like Devonshire street, — forty feet wide, — where a fire, if it got well under way, must of necessity cross the street. The judgment of our friend Mr. Thorndike to the contrary notwithstanding, it seems to me the width of a street has something to do with the question whether a fire will cross that street or not. When the gentleman says he don't think so much of that as many people do, I don't know what he means. And then, again, I think the height of buildings on narrow streets has something to do with the spread of fires. I gather this, as I said, from my general observation. When tall buildings on a narrow street are on fire, I can conceive how it may be impossible (as I saw something of the late November fire) for firemen, or any class of people, to go into that street and fight the fire. I can see how it would have been impossible, with all the commissions you might have appointed, with all the hydrants you might have established, with all the water mains you might have laid, to have arrested the fire on Pearl street, for instance, and prevented its crossing. I don't think it was possible. Any man who saw that wave of flame must have seen that the efforts of man were puny.

Now, if you want to prevent fires in the future, I would suggest that a limit be put to the height of buildings, with your other precautionary measures. Your streets should be widened. You may perhaps feel, as we all feel, that there has been fault somewhere; but I say it is a general fault, and does not lie at the door of any one man; but if any class of men is more particularly to blame, it is the insurance men. They were more particularly

interested in this property than anybody else. Those who were insured supposed that if their property was burned they would get at least a large percentage of the loss, and did not feel so much interested; but the insurance men knew what the risk was, and their judgment has proved good for nothing. And yet you are ready to listen to them. As business men, common-sense men, when you want men to come and testify before you, why don't you call upon men known as good mechanics? Not men who have been educated, and learned to write, and stand behind a desk, but men of natural capacity, natural engineers. Those men you can have. There are scores of those men whose judgment you want. I listened the other day to our friends the underwriters; and when I came up, I proposed to say something. I felt, of course, that, insignificant as I was, it was almost preposterous egotism in me to appear before you; but reading the papers as much as I have since the fire, seeing there was so much excitement about it, and so many different ideas suggested, I thought it strange that men could come to such conclusions as were presented here by those underwriters — very good and intelligent gentlemen, and gentlemen of judgment in their way, but, as I said before, their judgment is absolutely at fault. A fire in a wooden building, two stories high, I conceive can be put out, or burn it to the ground; but a fire in a large building, fifty or sixty feet high, of granite or brick, on a narrow street, after it has got well under way, I can conceive will be very difficult to put out, and I can conceive that it will be very difficult to prevent a building on the other side of the street, forty or even fifty feet wide, from taking fire. I have not travelled a great deal, but I was at one time in Washington, and when I saw Pennsylvania avenue, I thought, "How difficult it would be for a fire to cross that street!" Some gentlemen seem to think that the width of a street has nothing to do with it. I should think that it would be almost impossible for a fire to cross a street like Pennsylvania avenue. But these gentlemen, who have always lived in Boston, have become wedded to Boston ideas. I do not wish to be understood by that, that Boston men have not sound ideas; but it is their home, and narrow streets have become familiar to them, and they don't know but the streets are plenty wide enough. When they have seen the broad streets in other cities,

they will perhaps think differently. I am told that in Philadelphia, for instance, they have some wide streets, and I imagine that a fire would not spread so rapidly, nor create so extensive a conflagration there as it may in New York, at some future time. Suppose you establish your commission, and put in your hydrants and large mains, and an embargo is put upon the water at its source, as happened at one time last winter, or suppose the streets blockaded with snow four or five feet deep, what would be the value of your commission, your hydrants, and your street mains? Nothing at all. Such an accident may never happen, and perhaps just such circumstances as caused our last great fire may never happen again; but I contend that so long as you will build tall buildings, and locate them on narrow streets, you will be liable always to extensive conflagrations. That, I think, is an axiom in common sense.

The New York gentlemen who were here, said they had a commission that worked very well; but, as I criticised their remarks, I came to this conclusion: their commission, it seems, consisted at one time of seven members, at another time of five, and at the present time of three; and I think it has been an improvement right along, and when they cut it down to one, it will be still better. They have concluded that five are better than seven, and three better than five, and they will soon conclude that one is better than three. These experiments, and our common sense, it seems to me, ought to teach us that we have one head or chief. Let him have, as one gentleman has suggested here, absolute authority in case of fire. When it is asked what advantage it would be to unite the Fire Department with the Fire-Alarm or the Water Board, it is evident to most of us, that in case of fire, we want a man something like a commanding officer in a battle. We want somebody who shall have full and absolute control of every possible thing. When you have given the right of way to engines passing through the streets, you have done a good thing. We know that a fire can be put out a good deal better at night, when there is nobody in the street, and no carriages in the street, than in the middle of the day. The presumption would be that a fire occurring in the middle of the day would be easily extinguished; but with our narrow and crowded streets, where it is

almost impossible to get a one-horse carriage through, how can the engines be expected to reach a fire as quickly as some gentlemen seem to think they should? Some of our large property-holders seem to lack every other idea of common sense except how to make money. I can look upon them in no other light. I hope no gentleman will think it unkind in me in speaking thus strongly.

Various improvements have been suggested, but, of course, not being an architect, and not being a builder, extensively, it might not be proper for me to offer suggestions. Still, I cannot refrain from suggesting something like this: for the construction of buildings there is generally an outer and inner wall. Somebody has suggested that, in brick buildings, the mortar should be placed directly upon the brick walls, with no intervening space of dead air, so to speak. That is impracticable, and cannot be done. It seems to me that there must be flues; and, in almost all of our buildings, the flues seem to have been built purposely for fires to run up between the finished walls and the outer walls back of them. There is a space of from one to four inches all round your buildings, and when a fire gets in there it runs right up, as it does in an elevator. It is another name for a wooden elevator. Some gentlemen may suggest that these elevators should be made of iron. That may be proper; but we must all come to the conclusion that these are minor considerations, and that an extensive conflagration is possible at any time, until you limit the height of your buildings, and widen your streets.

So far as I am directly interested in this matter, it is as a property owner, to some little extent, and as a man who has to pay insurance, and a pretty heavy one. I have lost what hold I supposed I had on the insurance companies, but I cannot blame them particularly. I say their judgment is not sound, and I don't think it is improving from day to day—not a bit.

Now, another idea. Soon after the great fire of last November, in observing some of its ravages, I came to the conclusion that the gas had a great deal to do with the spread of that fire. This may seem to be a very simple idea; but I have had, for the last ten years, some experience in kindling fires for my domestic purposes by gas. When I kindle a fire in my stove or range, I do it

by gas. I let a jet of gas in among the kindling-wood at the bottom, ignite it with a match, and the whole body of wood seems to be in a flame at once. When a fire occurs in a building, the gas-pipes are very soon broken, and the gas is let into the building, and you cannot put out that gas-light with water, unless it be possible to direct a powerful stream right upon the end of the pipe where the gas is emitted. In that case, you might put it out; but you could not do it in any other way. The great fire in November was not put out until the gas was exhausted in the gasometer. There should be cut-offs in every building, or certainly at the corners of the streets. I believe they are used in some cities; and I think you could not expend your money more economically than by putting them in here, if the Gas Company will not do it.

Perhaps I could speak as an expert in regard to the matter of flues; our business being setting up stoves, furnaces and ranges, I find there is a great defect in this respect. Costly buildings, constructed, apparently, with a great deal of care in every other respect, are without the proper and necessary precautions against fire. The breastwork usually stands out from one to four inches from the chimney; the thimble, or receiver, is put through the woodwork into the chimney, so that it is surrounded by a dead-air space; dust drops down on the receiver, and then, when the smoke-pipe is very hot, the woodwork takes fire, the accumulations on the receiver take fire, and the building is consumed. And yet such houses are considered safe!

MR. SHAW. You ask the committee why they have not called upon mechanics. We have advertised in all the papers of Boston for everybody to come; and it is not our fault if mechanics do not come. I have personally requested builders and mechanics to come.

MR. SHATTUCK. Several of the best mechanics in Boston have been here.

MR. CHASE. The mechanics are at work, and they cannot afford to spend their time in coming here, without pay. But if you will advertise that the mechanics will be paid their daily wages, you will have plenty.

Q. (By MR. SHAW.) Have we not a great many rich mechanics, who have made their fortunes in the business?

A. They have not all the "gift of gab;" but if you will oblige them to come here, they will give you what you want.

Q. We do not require any "gab;" we want facts. You say you are opposed to a commission. Will you give your reasons?

A. I wish to preface, for I want to be properly understood. I suppose most of the petitioners, or many of them, are merchants, business men, wealthy men, who have lost by the recent fires. I suppose they feel sore and injured, and that something ought to be done, and it is natural to suppose that, nobody proposing any other method, and somebody from New York saying that this is a good thing, they have pitched upon a commission. Now, then, to answer your question directly, my objection to a commission is this: I think that one man at the head, as I said before, will be more efficient than three. He must have, like a general in battle, absolute authority. The old adage, that "two heads are better than one," does not apply. In the control of a battle, two heads are not better than one. There must be but one head. That is one objection I have to a commission. Another objection is, that it is liable to corruption, like that which New York has experienced in its city administration; and I understand, gentlemen, that the corruption of the city of Boston will have just commenced when you appoint a commission. It seems to me a truism. I cannot, perhaps, explain myself, fully and explicitly, and give you all the reasons why I think so; but I do really think, that, when you inaugurate a system of commissions like this, you inaugurate a system of corruption. I do not know that it will be so, but that is my judgment.

Q. That is your chief objection, is it?

A. I may say that that is my chief objection.

Q. Were you a sufferer by the fire?

A. I was.

Q. Did you have trouble with the insurance companies?

A. Not at all, sir. I was satisfied they could not pay their bills, and I did not ask them.

Q. You say that the insurance companies were the parties most interested, and their judgment was good for nothing; what do you mean by that? That their judgment was good for nothing in taking risks, or in what particular?

A. In reference to great fires.

Q. Well, how? In what particular? You then go on and say that they would take a risk in Congress street, on a high building, and would refuse a risk on a two-story wooden building, except at an enormous rate. Is not that true the world over? Wouldn't you do the same thing?

A. No, I don't think I would.

Q. Well, what would you do? Suppose you were the president of an insurance company, and an application was made for insurance on a two-story wooden building on Cambridge street, where you live, and somebody else comes in and wants insurance on a four-story brick building in Congress street, — which should you think the better risk?

A. I should think, from what experience I have had — of course, the rate per cent. comes in here. You must put that in your question.

Q. I did. Which risk would you take?

A. At the same percentage, I should take the Congress street one. But whereas I pay two and a half per cent. a year, that one on Congress street would perhaps pay two and a half per cent. for five years.

Q. Well, if you were managing an insurance company, what, as a practical man, would be your policy?

A. I cannot answer you understandingly, unless you state the percentage. For instance: they have charged me two and a half per cent. upon a building two stories high, and on a narrow street, like Congress street, they will insure a high, brick building for two and a half per cent. for five years. I should say that the risk was greater on Congress street, and still it may be a brick building, — according to the amount of money paid. I suppose that is what it is regulated by, — the percentage paid. That would be my judgment.

Q. We are dealing with things just as we find them to-day. There are a great many buildings in Boston, and we cannot reorganize them all, I suppose.

A. No, sir.

Q. Now, we are providing for the safety of Boston as it stands to-day. In view of that fact, what suggestion have you to make?

A. You have already taken one great step towards it. You have given the engines the right of way ; you will reach a fire quicker. Now, you want your general, or Chief, whatever you call him, to have more absolute authority, — not only over the men when he is at a fire, but over the fire-alarm department and the water supply ; he must have control over all these to be efficient. He cannot be controlled, limited, or trammelled from any quarter.

Q. Your first proposition is, that he should have more control over his men at a fire. Has he not supreme control now?

A. I did not mean to be understood so. I don't know but he has absolute control. I say that he should not only have authority over the men there, but over these two departments.

Q. Then you think he has absolute control over the men at a fire?

A. I suppose so : I don't know.

Q. Now, in regard to his control over the fire-alarm. How can that be managed, practically, any better than now? The Chief cannot be at a fire, and control the fire-alarm here.

A. No, sir ; a general cannot be in more than one place at a time. But if there is no doubt about his authority, no nice point of etiquette or jealousy can creep in. There is an end of it.

Q. How can he control the fire-alarm, when he is controlling his army at a fire?

A. As I said before, I am not an expert in all these things ; but I can conceive how he might have his forces arranged beforehand so that, in case of a fire, everything would go on just exactly as he directed it.

Q. How can he direct it, if he is not on the spot? He is directing his army at the fire ; how can he direct the conduct of the fire-alarm?

A. I don't know but he might have an orderly to go to the fire-alarm, and one to go to the Water Board. I cannot lay out all these plans. I make the suggestions ; it is for you, gentlemen, to say whether they can be carried out.

Q. I want to know how we can get at it.

A. When I have considered it more, I will submit a plan. I have not considered the details.

Q. A portion of your argument is based upon the width of Penn-

sylvania avenue. Will you tell me whether you would widen our streets to the width of Pennsylvania avenue, and consent to be taxed for it?

A. I would not this year, or next year; but I would not have another street laid out less than a hundred feet wide. I think the life and health of mankind are of some consequence, and that profit is not the only thing to be considered.

Q. Then in regard to gas. I agree with you that gas helped the great fire. How would you have that managed? Would you have the whole arrangement of the gas under the control of the city?

A. I should be perfectly willing to leave the shutting off of the gas to the employés of the Gas Company. I would have the company, the city, or somebody, put in the cut-offs, and then I would leave it to some persons to shut the gas off in case of fire. I should prefer to have a cut-off at every building, but that might involve too great an expense.

STATEMENT OF M. F. WELLS.

I am opposed to a commission, partly on the grounds stated by the last gentleman, and I agree with the gentleman as to the reorganization of the Fire Department. I think there is a chance for improvement. If the gentleman wishes my theory in regard to the reorganization, I will give it to him. I think the Chief Engineer ought to have the nomination of his principal assistants, and he should be held responsible for the men he puts in nomination. That is the first point. The second is, I think that every foreman of an engine company, and hook and ladder company, should be elected during good behavior. My reasons for so thinking are these. A man will not be catering then for an election every year—for a majority of the company to select him. He will be his own master, as long as he does his duty, and will not be beholden to a majority of the company to elect him the following year; and his whole mind will be given, at a fire, to see that they are located in their proper positions. Then but one more improvement, in my judgment, would be required. The Chief ought to have the nomination of the men who compose the department, and ought to see

every man, and then you would not have the sticks in the department that you have to-day. Then you will have a good department, and I think it would be well enough to have twenty or thirty permanent men, to patrol, four hours on and four hours off. I think you would then have as good a department as you could get, and all the talk that has been made would be covered. There is the whole thing in a nutshell. That is all I have to say.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Willey, do you propose to call any witnesses?

Mr. WILLEY. No, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Does any other gentleman desire to be heard in behalf of the remonstrants?

STATEMENT OF A. H. HEATH.

I noticed, a little while ago, that one gentleman spoke of the petition that had been sent here, signed by eight thousand citizens, praying for a change in the department. I would like to say, that, for my own part, I have been very proud of the Fire Department of Boston; I consider it an excellent one. When I have seen the members on duty, at fires, or on parade, at any and all times, I have very rarely seen a man to whose conduct I could take any exception, as an intelligent and good citizen; and when this petition was presented to me for signature, the first time, I declined to sign it, because I had not much time to look it over, and I did not know but there might be something there that was intended to be condemnatory of the Fire Department. But I was again solicited to sign it, and did so, with another gentleman who was present at the same time. We were both of us of the same opinion in regard to the department, and distinctly stated that, if there was anything there which was intended to be condemnatory of the Fire Department, we would not sign it; but we were assured there was not. And speaking on this subject with a gentleman to-day, who, previous to the fire, was a member of a prominent firm on Summer street, he said the same. He said, "I have no idea whatever of condemning the Fire Department. I consider it efficient."

I noticed, in a report published of one of the previous meetings, that an honorable gentleman [Mr. Mudge], speaking of his store

on Chauncy street (and a very fine and beautiful store it is, and an ornament to our city ; I am thankful it was saved), said that his building stopped the fire. Well, the fire certainly was stopped at his building ; but there was next to it a building which was known as the post office, — the old Capen post office, — and which was denounced as an unsafe building at the time it was erected. That had windows and doors fronting towards the gentleman's store, and his own store had windows on the end. The staples are there to put iron shutters upon, but they have never been put there ; and yet his building was saved. He stated that there was no water thrown higher than the third-story windows. I am informed that an engine was stationed there, — No. 20, I think, — and worked there, and I have no doubt they threw water to the top of that building, and saved it from destruction ; because, if they had not, there is nothing that I can conceive of that could have prevented the destruction of that building. Then, again, on the opposite side of Chauncy street (which is a narrow street), the building which made the corner of Summer street was burned, but the next two buildings, I think, were only partially burned ; and they certainly were saved by no other means except those that the firemen used, and thereby stopped it there. They also saved this building that the gentleman spoke of as being fire-proof. It is a nice building, I know ; but as to its being fire-proof, it is preposterous to talk of such a thing, with unprotected windows on two sides, certainly, if not three. The front is perhaps as open a front as any store in Boston. I have nothing more to say.

The CHAIRMAN. Is any gentleman desirous of being heard, either for the remonstrants, or generally, on the subject of the improvement of the Fire Department?

STATEMENT OF H. H. BRYANT.

I am not connected with the Fire Department, but I have prepared a paper, which I have read to a number of the leading citizens of Boston, and I appear here to read it, as much at their suggestion, as at my own option.

To the Committee upon the Reorganization of the Boston Fire Department: —

GENTLEMEN: I have seen the communication which was addressed to Mayor Pierce by the committee appointed by the underwriters, who were brought together by the fire disaster enacted on Washington and Essex streets, wherein some fifteen hundred thousand dollars of public wealth was consigned to the GRAVE of taxation and competitive prosperity by the unrestrained selfishness of landlords.

I have also read the advice and opinions of many citizens, as given to this committee, in regard to the reorganization of the Fire Department.

That communication, and the opinions of those gentlemen, assume to point out the cause of that disaster, and to set forth an *adequate* remedy.

I am here, gentlemen, to say that it can be easily demonstrated that the measures, so proposed to you, are nearly worthless, since they are based upon untrue principles in building.

I have given some years to an exhaustive study of the question of security against fire, from a scientific, practical, and financial point of view; and I look upon the communication addressed to the Mayor, and upon most of the advice given to this committee as pernicious doctrine, because it leads the public to look for security in nearly worthless expedients, because they are founded in false principles, — principles that are false to security, false to individual economy, false to general capital and private interests, and false to public welfare and the fundamental principles of political economy. The position of this people upon this whole question is utterly *rotten* at the base. Consequently, no reliance is to be placed in the superstructure, as it stands to-day, or in any possible mere modification of it. But let me first consider things as they are. What is asked for by the underwriters and by public clamor? I believe it is, first, the appointment of a Board of Fire Commissioners; and, secondly, more fire engines and a larger water supply. A Board of Commissioners is asked for that shall be a distinct feature of the City Government, and clothed with full power, to do as they please, and spend what money they please, upon all questions connected with the Fire Department. Gentle-

men, what is the logic of that request? Is it not saying in pretty plain terms that no members of the City Government have the required amount of brains demanded by this question? or else, that they lack that integrity which would warrant the lodgment of such power in their hands? Bear in mind that we have, now, a committee that is supposed to do the duty which must be done by the Board prayed for. But let us suppose that we do need a Board of Fire Commissioners, — one that shall be a distinct feature of the City Government, and empowered with full authority over the whole fire question. The problem then, is, who shall constitute that Board? what are the best materials to form it from? Gentlemen, in my opinion, the very best and the only good material for that Board is — simply the Board of Engineers of the Boston Fire Department. Are not firemen the only men who have any practical knowledge in the premises, and the only theoretical knowledge that is really safe to go upon, since their deductions would be based upon and grow out of practical experience? There are some who will tell you that there are no great men in that Board, no geniuses to be found there. Well, gentlemen, suppose that there is not! What has that to do with the *root* of the question? Is it not true, that the whole sum of practical knowledge and experience in these purposes is represented in the Fire Department? Are not all outsiders mere “sidewalk engineers,” as they have been very aptly and justly branded by Chief Damrell? Does not every man of mature years know that mere common sense, when joined to prolonged, practical experience, is incomparably a safer guide than mere brains, no matter how superfluous their quantity may be? Human experience has made an adage of the truth of that proposition ages ago. If there is any trouble with the management of the Fire Department to-day, is it not because it is largely controlled by a power that lacks practical knowledge and experience in the premises, as does the Board of Aldermen and Common Council? And will it mend matters, in the least, to place the power of control in other hands that know no more about the practical details and wants of this department than does the general City Government? If full power is placed anywhere, then the Board of Fire Engineers is the place to put it, and the lodgment of it in any other hands will be as absurd as it would be for

a man to direct and control the doctor whom he has called to attend his sick wife or child. Let me say a word here in regard to the great mass of foolish criticism which I have read and heard spoken in regard to the management of fires. Under our present system of building, the question of conflagrations is greater than the controlling power possessed by any human being, or any number of them — fix Fire Departments or other contrivances as you may. As this is generally admitted by all truly broad intelligence, what must we think of the judgment of men, who admit that it is entirely possible for a conflagration to occur in this or any other American city, and then, because one does occur, turn around and damn some one man or some set of men because of it? Gentlemen, it is as certain as death itself that great fires will continue to devastate our cities, from time to time, and no Fire Department that can be proposed will ever abolish that liability.

You might as well talk about abolishing death as to propose to do away with a possibility which natural laws render possible, — unless you remove the possibility by bringing other natural laws properly to bear, and to that end. Conflagrations depend solely upon this possibility and that chain of circumstances, — inseparable from the general laws of our being, — which converts that possibility into a raging certainty. I know that you can find plenty of men who never had a single day of experience in a Fire Department, and who talk so much that they never have time to consider first principles, who can tell you how to run a Fire Department to a charm, and who, if you believe them, would put out all fires in the wink of your eye; just as you can find, after a railroad disaster, plenty of men on every corner and in every counting-room, who can tell you how to put a stop to all that sort of thing.

Gentlemen, such men are egotists, who speak after the manner of fools, and it will not do to listen to their advice, since they give counsel of that wherein they have not an atom of practical experience. I believe it is generally admitted that the best practical and executive ability to be found in the land is in charge of railroads. Why don't that great ability put an end to accidents — conflagrations of the companies' capital and of their character for safety to passengers? It don't do it because it can't, and never will be able to! Above that ability is the fiat of the Almighty,

and all that human power and foresight can do is, to do the best it can; and it is impossible that that will ever be more than partial security. No people on the face of the earth have ever found security against fire except in proper building, nor can they; the laws of nature prohibit it.

Gentlemen, the next request is for more fire engines and a larger water supply. In a question like that, practical experience is the only reliable foundation of true judgment, and I do not hesitate to say that experience pronounces the request to be absurd. If the city doubles the present number of engines and the water supply, it will not advance security one per cent. What caused the conflagration of last November, or that of May 30th? Was it a lack of engines and water?

Gentlemen, it was the lack of their being on hand at the right moment, joined to a criminal plan of building, which renders a delay of fifteen or twenty minutes equivalent to disaster. Will a further supply of engines or water do away with delays? The law of practical possibilities is the root of this question, and unless you remove that practical possibility, true security is impossible — and it can only be removed by that plan of building which makes delays of twenty, thirty or forty minutes a matter of slight consequence. When Boston and the other cities of this Union adopted steam departments, and, by so doing, increased the power to throw water some one or two thousand per cent., did they increase security in a like proportion? Gentlemen, it was never increased one particle, as fully shown by the Fire Department reports of various cities. Now, that is a startling proposition, — and more, it is a fact! I am not speaking of to-day!

I wish it distinctly understood that steam departments never advanced security either in the first, second, or any subsequent year of their adoption, in this or any other city. Now, what was said when steam departments were about to be introduced? What *was* said *then* may enable us to better estimate the value of what *is* said *now*. Was not everybody loudly assured that the great increase of security would fully warrant the expense? Was not every one assured, in the most positive terms, that fires would be wiped out — that is, drowned out? Was not insurance teased to pay part of the expense, because of the great benefit certain to ac-

crue to that business? Well, gentlemen, this city adopted the steam department in 1860, and ordinary prudence suggests that the *result* should be examined. Under the last five years of the old hand department, you lost some \$2,300,000 by fire, and the first five years of the steam department you lost some \$3,400,000. The only thing drowned out, was not the fire, but was a matter of some \$1,100,000, in cash, from the treasury of insurance. I presume the extra cost of the steam, over the hand department, was more than a million of dollars, and it may be said that the city spent a million dollars to do insurance that much damage, by a deluge of water. Why did not the steam department advance security *then*, when it did advance the quantity of water thrown to an enormous extent? There was no increase in the size of the city during those years, nor in the size or plan of buildings, that is worthy of the least attention. This looks as if water is useless for the purpose of extinguishing fire; but we all know better than that. The seeming paradox is fully explained by the fact that only a moderate quantity of water is, *in the least*, necessary to extinguish any fire that it can be made to reach. A large part of all the water thrown upon our burning buildings does no good whatever, simply because it cannot be made to reach the locality of the fire — the construction of the building *absolutely* prevents it. You will hear some persons talk about the water being decomposed by the heat, and adding its gases to increase the flames. They *guess* it is so, because they see great streams of water producing no effect, and, at times, the flames even increased while the water is being applied. Water thrown on flames has no effect! It must reach the source of the flame to produce any result; and as there are many parts of a building's construction to which an application of water is simply beyond human power, the phenomenon of an increase of flames, during an application of water, is frequently seen.

The moderate quantity of water which is necessary, and which can be made to reach the locality of the fire, was *more* than provided by the old hand departments, and the vast surplus thrown by steam departments only serves to increase insurance losses, by water damage to merchandise. As this *single* point covers the *whole* question of security in building, and of that to be had from a Fire Department, let me put it more plainly. Let us suppose

that fire has found a lodgment among the joists of a building one or two hundred feet deep — that it is a solid bed of flame to the depth of the joists, some ten, twelve or fourteen inches. What is the result? Why, it is the certain destruction of that flat, and, in the generality of cases, of the whole upward part of the building, as the fire has the tremendous advantage of the upward lift and under draught. Why is this so? It is because the angle of the joists bears such relations to the streams of water, that no human power can apply a single drop of it to their leeward face, and no adequate portion to their front face; the laws of nature prevent it.

The same principle applies to other parts of the construction, such as the furring and laths and plaster, applied to walls, which furnish a screen to prevent the application of water, and, at the same time, a draught flue to draw the flames up through the upper parts of the building, and in between the floors and ceiling, where no water can be applied.

Gentlemen, this whole question, so far as security, economy and common sense is concerned, is one of natural philosophy, and a principle in building; and any supply of water or of engines, beyond a given point, will have no more effect upon it, than to bid the wind to cease from blowing, and then expect that a *repetition* of your worthless commands will produce a calm; what one dead horse can't accomplish will not be done by two, nor by a dozen. I do not wish to be understood as saying that steam departments have no advantage, for they unquestionably possess one of great moment — that of being an untiring power; but that power, in my opinion, has been misdirected. It has been employed to throw vast quantities of water, and, thereby, has largely increased insurance losses.

So long as a building is burning in its erect position a moderate quantity of water will extinguish all the fire which it can be *made to reach*, and it is only when the floors have tumbled into the first flat, or basement, that large streams have any advantage — save for the one purpose of being thrown to high altitudes, without turning to spray. It is this fact that accounts for the seemingly wonderful results obtained at exhibitions of fire-extinguishers and small engines — the gas of fire-extinguishers being a mere humbug, prac-

tically, save as a force to throw water. At these exhibitions *complete* access is had to every locality of the fire, and as a natural — not a humanly devised — consequence, a small quantity of water does the business, and does it quickly.

The action taken by the underwriters at the Revere House meetings was brought about by a well-grounded alarm for the safety of the capital embarked upon that sea of Insurance, which is made treacherous and of an *unfathomed* depth by the American plan of building cities. But the measures there proposed for its security are nearly worthless. The chief measure for security which they urge upon your attention is the establishment of a Board of Fire Commissioners. And they cite you to New York and Chicago, where such Boards are in force, and endorse the working of them as beneficial in the extreme. It is true, gentlemen, that Chicago has such a commission, and that it was instituted for the purpose of wiping out fires; but it was under the auspices of that commission, and after it had been in power a number of years, that the great conflagration of 1871 laid that city in ashes. There are only two plans that have any true value to the security of capital embarked in insurance, — the one is higher rates, and the other, such legislation as will compel the adoption of the garnered wisdom of ages, as illustrated in the wise principles of European building laws.

With the exception of New York and Philadelphia, it is but a matter of ten years since our cities began to reach metropolitan proportions, and their buildings a metropolitan size and value, in themselves and in their contents; and in that time we have had three conflagrations, and there are plenty more to come. Underwriting is but just beginning to form data that will establish what it is worth to insure large cities built on the American plan; and I do not hesitate to predict that the coming fifty years will prove that anything under two per cent., as a base rate, will not prove profitable, unless the loss accruing to conflagrations is largely thrown upon the *insured*.

So long as we build as we now do, just so long it will be impossible to extinguish a burning building, when once well on fire; and so long as it is possible, for a large building, loaded with highly combustible material, to be burned up, just so long conflagra-

grations will be possible ; and so long as they *are* possible, just so long it will be utterly beyond any human power to abolish that train of accidents and circumstances which set them on foot.

Have Paris, Vienna, Florence and Milan narrow streets, with eight and nine story buildings? Yes! Have they acres of Mansard roofs, and wood cornice? Yes! Have they the same kind of walls that we use in building? Yes! Is merchandise and the principle of fire the same in those cities as in our own? Yes! Are the Fire Departments of those cities miserably mean and meagre as compared with those of American cities? They are! Is insurance fully one thousand per cent. cheaper in those cities than in our own? It is! and their people only need to insure a percentage of their risk, the large proportion being insured by the plan of the building. What is it, then, that gives those great cities nearly absolute immunity to fire ; that absolutely prevents the loss of even one building by fire ; and that makes insurance so enormously cheap? Gentlemen, it is fire-proof floors — *just that one principle in building*, so far as stores are concerned, and nothing else whatever, of any moment worthy of notice. Do they have laws compelling the use of non-combustible materials in floors? No! there is no such law, and such material is used, largely, simply because they build to endure for ages. The law simply compels the use of combustible floor-materials under a plan of construction that renders combustion impossible, for want of *air* to support it. It is well known and admitted throughout Europe, that wood floor-beams or joists, under a proper plan of construction, yield greater security than do iron beams and non-combustible arches.

Gentlemen, if it were at all possible — and two thousand years of experience proves that it is not — I say, if it were possible to obtain security from any Fire Department whatsoever, or from stand-pipes, watchmen, or other contrivances depending upon human agency for their operation — it would still remain sheer folly upon the part of *individual* economy, and a shameful neglect upon the part of legislation in regard to public welfare, to look to any of those fallible means for security. What is the logic of our present building laws? Are they economical to individuals? Do they protect general private interests, to say nothing of public ones?

No! Gentlemen, their logic is simply this: that they allow a class termed landlords to separate their interests from that of their tenants, and the general public, for purely selfish ends; and, by so doing, fasten an enormous burden and eminent hazard upon tenants, in the cost and insecurity of insurance, while taxation and competitive prosperity are given over to wholesale robbery by fire. Can that be called just and wise government, which permits a class to heap a huge burden and hazard upon all interests, both public and private, — to set up a dead-fall that entraps insurance into bankruptcy? Our plan of building is *utterly* false to merely private interests! For eight per cent. allowed upon the *extra cost* of making all our business buildings fire-proof — as secure as those of any European city, — is about the same as insurance at a fifth of one per cent.; and as *that outlay* would reduce the cost of insurance to a quarter of one per cent., or less, it is obvious that the total cost of this *broad* and *reliable* security is less than half of one per cent.; whereas the present cost of mere insurance, which is both *narrow* and *unreliable*, is fully three times that figure. And it must be borne in mind, that good building is the only possible security for many private interests, or of taxation and competitive prosperity.

Let me glance at this view of the question from another point. Suppose the Fire Department is reorganized as is now proposed, the cost of maintaining it will be about one million of dollars annually; and as the city of Florence never loses even one building by fire, while she has not even one fire engine, what is the logic of this matter? It means that one million dollars is some six per cent. on seventeen millions of capital — seventeen millions out of our landlords' buildings and into a Fire Department, at the general public expense; and vast sums of taxation and competitive prosperity given over to loss by fire, at that. Nor is this all! For in spite of your leviathan Fire Department the general public is *forced* to seek the stipend of security afforded by insurance, at the enormous cost of some two and a half million of dollars annually. Now, if our business buildings were properly constructed, the expense for insurance would not be half a million dollars, even if every dollar of the risk was insured that *now* is.

Here is a surplus of more than two million dollars, and that is

six per cent. on some thirty-five millions out of the buildings and into insurance. Seventeen million dollars in a Fire Department and thirty-five in insurance makes up a sum of more than fifty million dollars, as the burden laid upon the general public by the selfishness of landlords; and as for the interests of taxation and competitive prosperity, they are simply thrown to the dogs. Would it cost fifty million dollars to make all the business buildings of this city as secure as those of Paris, Vienna or Florence? No; less than half that sum is abundant. That is to say, gentlemen, legislation which compels good building, for the purpose of protecting taxation and competitive prosperity, *is a general blessing*, for, while guarding all public interests and shielding insurance from bankrupting disasters, it *reduces* the cost to about a half of one per cent. or about one third the cost of mere insurance at present rates. No man or set of men has the right to say to tenants, municipalities, states and nations — "Let the d—l take the hindmost!" But that is what they *practise* when they erect buildings with combustible floors! I wish it clearly understood that the only principle in building, worthy of mention, which yields the great security and cheap insurance obtained by European cities, is that of fire-proof floors, so called. Do you doubt it? Then turn your eyes to Europe, and the truth will blaze upon you as the sun at noon-time. And a moment's reflection will enable any one to see that if mercantile buildings had floors that would not burn of themselves, or if they did, that it would be like the burning of so much old punk; then there could never be much of a fire in a building, for there are *only a few* classes of merchandise that burn of themselves. At the first thought, one might suppose that dry goods, books and paper would be very combustible; but the truth is, that they can only be burned by applying proper fuel to keep them on fire. It is the floors of buildings that are the *sole* cause of the destruction of nine-tenths of all the property lost by fire. And even where the merchandise is of itself combustible, such floors yield a large percentage of security, by holding the fire to one given flat of the structure.

I suppose that taxation has an interest in the business portion of this city, and on that property which is subject to loss by fire — not far from three hundred million of dollars. If so the annual

tax is some four million five hundred thousand dollars thereon, and it is utterly impossible to protect that interest by any other plan, whatsoever, than that of proper building. That sum due to taxation is six per cent. on seventy-five million of dollars, which is fully double the expenditure necessary to render that property as secure to taxation and competitive prosperity as that of any European city — nearly absolute, as broad and prolonged experience fully demonstrates. That fact, gentlemen, shows at a glance the wisdom of European building laws, which are, at once, true to individual *economy*, and all interests, whether public or private.

And such building laws would be far wiser for us, since we are a nation of *borrowers*, instead of being *loaners*. What imagination can picture the grand possibilities of the two hundred and fifty million dollars of capital, utterly lost in the Chicago and Boston conflagrations, — preserved to a new country like ours! — a country of infinite resources, where every branch of business and manufacture teems with opportunities for its profitable employment, all of which may, justly, be said to languish from the need of capital sufficiently cheap and large to compete with *competing* Europe. There is not another nation on the face of the globe, where the preservation of accumulated wealth is a matter of such vast and far-reaching importance, as it is to our own.

I think that I hear some one say, "We must deal with things as they are, not as they ought to be!" Very good! I agree to that proposition heartily. And as it is impossible to find anything approaching proper security to individual interests, from any Fire Department whatsoever; — while if that were possible, it would still remain a shameful neglect of taxation and competitive prosperity, — let us deal with the question accordingly. We may wish as much as we please that things were different, but since they are not to be changed by that or any similar process, let us deal with them *as they are*, and at once set about placing a stop upon allowing landlords heaping any further burden and eminent hazard upon the community at large. Bear in mind that it is not simply conflagrations that we need to put a stop to! The loss of even one valuable building by fire is disgraceful to our intelligence and legislation, as fully illustrated by the prolonged experience of Europe. This whole question has no element of *theory* to-day.

Every principle in the premises is a practically and broadly demonstrated fact.

Gentlemen, what I would advise, is this, — First: That the City Government take immediate steps to establish a proper law for building — one based upon the garnered wisdom of ages. A law that shall be true to security, true to individual economy, and true to taxation and competitive prosperity. And when that law is enacted let it provide that every building damaged by fire, or otherwise undergoing repairs, shall have its floors rendered fire-proof, as the law provides. In this manner the city will gradually become fire-proof throughout; and in the coming centuries, the two or three millions of Boston citizens will have abundant reasons to bless the wisdom of those who framed that law. It will overthrow a false and pernicious system of building, and will be an event as conspicuous in the history of this people as was that of throwing a cargo of tea overboard in Boston Harbor, to the end of overturning taxation which was not based upon representation.

Second: In whatever changes are made in the Fire Department, be governed by the advice of firemen who have had prolonged practical experience. It will have far greater value than that of all the talkers, theorists and fault-finders, from one end of the city to the other, as every practical common-sensed man will fully admit.

Third: If any increase is made in the Fire Department, make it as light as *present* public opinion will admit of. For, as I cannot doubt but what the City Government will at once set about establishing a true law and principle for building, there will never be any *further* increase of danger; and the quantum at present subsisting will gradually grow less.

Hence, Boston will be able, gradually, to reduce her Fire Department, until its annual cost will not exceed two or three hundred thousand dollars, which will be fully as great an expenditure as will be required, even when she has two or three millions of inhabitants, as fully shown by European experience. Good building requires but little protection from a Fire Department.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there any other gentleman desiring to be heard on the subject?

STATEMENT OF J. BOOTH.

MR. CHAIRMAN:—I have just one point to make. It has been alleged here, as the reason for the appointment of a commission, that the appointment and action of a certain commission last spring had been of very great benefit. That is a side issue, but as it has been brought in, I want to say one word in regard to it. That is the popular idea, but I maintain that the public have never had the facts in regard to that matter. When they do have them, it will be shown that the idea is an entirely erroneous one. If that is to be considered by the committee as any argument for the appointment of a commission, I beg them to examine the facts, and I will put them in the way to get them. As I remarked, it is a side issue; it has been lugged in here; but, as it has been brought in, I say there are two sides to that question, and, in my opinion, the action of the Board did more harm than good.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Will you be kind enough to name the Board to which you refer, that we may understand you?

A. The Board of Health, or Health Commission. The Board chosen last spring; I don't know exactly what to call it.

Another thing has been brought in here, and that is, the report of the New York Fire Commission, if I understand it. I want to say another thing in regard to these commissions. There is such a thing as telling half a story to prove what you could not prove by the whole of it. I have seen reports from commissions in New York that I considered were cheats, and before I accepted the Report of the Fire Commission of New York as the basis of my action, I should investigate it a little more. That is all, gentlemen.

THE CHAIRMAN. If there is no other gentleman who desires to be heard, the committee will hear the arguments from the legal gentlemen who are present. Do you wish to say anything, Mr. Willey?

MR. WILLEY. No, sir; I think not. The hearing has taken a little different course from what we anticipated, and I should have very little to say in opposition to the suggestions which have been made.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Shattuck, if you wish to be heard, we should be glad to hear you now, and close this part of the subject to-day.

CLOSING ARGUMENT OF GEO. O. SHATTUCK, ESQ.,
FOR THE PETITIONERS.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN: — I do not think it necessary to say much in support of the petition which has been presented. More than eight thousand citizens and tax-payers of Boston have asked you to make a substantial change in our Fire Department. I believe there have been no formal remonstrants. Some half-dozen gentlemen have appeared here this afternoon and made their statements in opposition to it, and there could not be found clearer or stronger evidence of the necessity of this reform than those gentlemen have presented. Taking the statements of those gentlemen, — and most of them have had experience in connection with the Fire Department, and appear here, not to support this petition, but to oppose it, — they establish four points. Mr. Wells and Mr. Merritt show clearly that there should be greater responsibility in somebody for the management of the Fire Department. First, Mr. Wells suggests (and he has had, I know, long experience in the City Government, as I had the honor of sitting with him in the Common Council eleven years ago) that the Chief Engineer should be responsible for the appointment of the engineers, and that the Mayor should be responsible for the appointment of the subordinates in the Fire Department. These are his suggestions, and they bear strongly upon the point that we must have responsibility fixed somewhere. They tell us, too, that this department should have charge of the fire-alarm and control over building inspection; showing that in the minds of these men, intelligent men, as they are, coming here to oppose this petition, there is a strong conviction that we must have a reform, and that that reform must consist, in part, in fixing the responsibility somewhere for the management of this department. Next, Mr. Wells testifies clearly that political influence must no longer be permitted to exert an influence in connection with the department. He says that the foremen must be elected during good

behavior; that they must not be called upon annually to provide for their re-election. I know he would apply the same rule to every part of this department, and he furnishes us, from his experience and intelligence, the strongest argument that could be adduced for a department free from political influences.

In the next place, Mr. Merritt, who can hardly remember his first connection with the Fire Department, and who makes an intelligent statement in regard to the department with which he is connected, which shows that he understands it in detail and thoroughly, says that we must have a larger number of permanent and paid men than we now have. That is his first point. He then says that we must have more drill; that we must have men in every branch of this department who are permanently connected with it, who are paid for their services, and who, by daily drill and practice, are fitted to perform the duties which the public impose upon them.

Now, if you will analyze all the testimony we have brought here, or that has come here from New York or elsewhere, you will find that it agrees as to the general nature of the reform demanded with the testimony of these remonstrants who have come here and stated the wants of the department, and shows the direction in which reform must tend.

What change do we ask for? We do not make any charge here against the members of the Fire Department in any respect. The testimony is uniform that the men are not lacking in general intelligence or in courage to meet any emergency. There is no proposition here to overthrow the Board of Engineers; there is no proposition here even to remove the Chief of the Fire Department, unless a wise commission shall deem it necessary; but, on the contrary, to increase the power which shall be placed in the head of the Fire Department, and thereby increase his efficiency. But we do come here to ask that that mode of protecting life and property in large cities which the experience of this generation has found on the whole to be the best shall be adopted for the administration of our Fire Department. You, gentlemen, are called upon to deal with one of the greatest questions of the age: How shall we protect life and property in our large cities, and preserve our republican form of government? And, as I say, the best method

for the administration of this department which has been anywhere yet devised is by a responsible commission, appointed by a responsible head. There are certain advantages in popular elections. Legislators should be elected that they may sympathize with the people, that they may pass laws for the public benefit. But when you come to matters of administration, when you come to the employment of physical force,—to meeting fires, to building streets,—you want, not sympathy with the people, but power and efficiency; and that power and efficiency can only be obtained by securing intelligence, skill, permanency and responsibility in the Board which you establish. Originally, under our town governments, the money was voted at town meetings by the people; the administration was in the hands of Selectmen, elected by the people. Boston was governed in this way for almost two centuries; but when its population had increased, in 1822, to 50,000 or more, it became necessary to change that administration. The people could no longer meet in Faneuil Hall, and it became necessary to delegate the power of making appropriations and of managing the government. At that time, Chief Justice Shaw was employed to devise a method of administration suited for that time, suited to a city of 50,000 inhabitants. He took the old system, in part; he transferred the powers of the Selectmen to the Aldermen; he transferred, in part, the powers exercised by the people in town meeting to the City Council. That worked very well with a population of 50,000. The Aldermen were not to be paid. They not only held the powers of the Selectmen, but all the powers of the County Commissioners for the County of Suffolk were vested in that Board. This worked very well at that time. But the city has grown from one of 50,000 inhabitants to one of 250,000. Water, with which each man then furnished himself from his own well, is now furnished by the city. We have our Health Department—which was then unknown; our sewers—which each man built for his own house, if he had one—are now in charge of a separate department. The business of the city increased enormously, and it became utterly impossible for twelve Aldermen to properly administer it. The result was that, years ago, we adopted the system of employing commissions. The water supply was placed in charge of something of the nature of a commis-

sion. The term "commission" is perhaps a little odious; but the Water Board is substantially a commission. Our Public Institutions were placed in charge of a commission, under another name. Our streets, still later, were placed in charge of a commission. Our Health Department, to a certain extent, has been placed in charge of a commission. From the growth of the city, and because the large burden thrown upon the City Government has become too great for twelve men, elected from year to year, to manage, it has become necessary to place those powers, in order to secure efficiency of administration, in the hands of these more permanent bodies. And in 1850, when the State passed a law relating to the Fire Department, they contemplated the necessity of placing the Fire Department under a separate Board, and accordingly, if you will look at the statute, you will find a special provision that the powers now exercised by a committee of the Board of Aldermen, or by the Board itself, may be delegated to a separate Board. This, I say, was anticipated more than twenty years ago, and we have gone on too long, as the evidence here shows, without the change. The fact that it is conceded by almost every witness that our system is utterly wrong, that we are unable to grapple at any time with a fire of any great magnitude, certainly shows that we have gone on too long under an inefficient and irresponsible system. This system for which we ask is not an experiment, but has already been tried with success. We find it in the State Government. The Commonwealth found it impossible to manage our railroads, our charities, our labor department, our health department, without having them placed in the charge of permanent and responsible Boards; and accordingly we have so placed them, and I believe they give general satisfaction.

When this government was established, there was a grave question whether it could be properly administered with the system of annual elections. There was, in 1787, when the constitution of Massachusetts was adopted, a controversy on that question, and the ablest men in the Commonwealth were divided upon it, and many doubted whether our government could be efficient under this system; but this system of annual elections was adopted, and in most respects it has worked well. But it has been found that in the administration of affairs requiring peculiar skill and education,

the system fails, and we have, therefore, in the course of the last eighty years, been gradually remedying the defect, by establishing permanent Boards, not elected by the people, to take charge of matters which require efficiency, skill and peculiar knowledge. We ask you to apply the remedy to this case of admitted failure.

Now, what do we ask of this commission? I do not intend to go into details, and point out the defects in the existing system, but simply to address myself to the question whether we should have a commission or not.

In the first place, we ought to have a paid commission; and I think you will find it a universal rule, that executive officers are never efficient unless they are properly compensated. You cannot fix in the mind of a man a proper sense of his obligations to the public as an executive officer, if he is rendering his services without compensation; and I challenge you to find any case, under any government, where this practice of requiring services from executive officers without compensation has been successful. Take it in England. The members of Parliament are not paid; the legislators, the men who appropriate the money, are not paid; but the cabinet, the executive department, is paid with great liberality; and the member who serves on a committee is paid for his services there; so that the persons who are not compensated are only those who attend to the legislative business, to the appropriation of money, and to the supervision of the other departments, without any executive duties. And that, in my judgment, will ultimately be the duty of the Aldermen and Council. They will be the legislators; they will make the ordinances for the city; they will appropriate the funds of the city; they will supervise and look after the efficiency of all the departments. But to ask of twelve men, or any number of men, that, without compensation, they shall perform the executive duties of a government, is unjust to them. It is placing a duty upon them without doing that which will impose upon them a proper sense of responsibility. I say, therefore, that if you go the world over, you will find that men who hold executive offices are paid for their services. They should be paid, and then the people will hold them to a proper responsibility, and have a right to do it.

I would have, in the next place, a permanent Board. This

business of putting out fires requires peculiar knowledge. A man must be educated to it. I should like to read from a communication from the head of the London Fire Department, contained in a very able article published in the last number of the "North American Review." This article contains so much bearing upon this whole subject, that it is hardly necessary for me to argue it. I hope every member of the committee will find time to read it. Captain Shaw says:—

"I consider the business of a fireman a regular profession, requiring previous study and training, as other professions do, and I am convinced that where study and training are omitted and men are pitchforked into the practical work without preparation, the Fire Department will never be found capable of dealing satisfactorily with great emergencies."

In Berlin, I understand every fireman is trained two hours every other day. They are taught to climb buildings; to pass from window to window; they have arrangements by which a man can jump from a third or fourth-story window and be caught by his associates; they have signals by which they can communicate, which can be heard above the roar of the flames and the crash of falling buildings; they are trained in gymnastics; they are not allowed to do any other work, lest it should impair their efficiency. Buildings are being put up and maintained by the government to furnish opportunities for this training. You heard the statement of Professor Tacchella, in regard to the trained firemen in Italy. Similar training is required in London. This appears from a book written by Mr. James Braidwood, who did so much to revolutionize the Fire Departments of England, entitled "Fire Prevention and Fire Extinction." This book also contains the act establishing the Fire Department. All this shows that in order to make expert firemen, you must have efficient training, and you must have at the head of this department men whose duty it is to understand the whole subject and see that the training is thorough.

Now, will anybody pretend that a member of the Board of Aldermen, who goes in this year, and may go out next, who has had nothing to do with the Fire Department, nothing to do with a fire company, is a proper man to take this charge? I have said, therefore, that we need a paid department, and that we need a per-

manent department; and I now say that this department should have full power, in order that it may be responsible. I find, in the report of the commissioners appointed to investigate the cause and management of the great fire, that, in speaking of this matter of responsibility, they say: —

“It seems to us that the Committee on the Fire Department should have a wider jurisdiction, including all means of subduing and preventing fires. At present, another committee has charge of the construction and location of engine-houses; a third committee takes charge of fire-alarms, while a distinct department places or removes the hydrants. Thus, the means of extinguishing fires are parcelled out among four bodies of officials. Unity of action, rather than division of labor, would seem desirable in this matter.”

Now, we ask you that this commission, which you shall establish, shall have full power. I do not say that they need to have control of the water of the City of Boston. Perhaps it would be sufficient that they have power to locate hydrants. I think this commission should have the control of the fire alarm. They should also have something to do with the inspection of buildings. An efficient fireman ought to know the interior of every building in his district. That is a part of his education. They ought to study that matter carefully; and in order that they may do so, we must have a body with full power, with all this responsibility upon them, and with permanency enough to enable them to understand their business.

In the next place, we say that the commissioners should be appointed by the Mayor, that he may be responsible for their appointment. They may be confirmed, perhaps, by the Board of Aldermen. But let the Mayor select the men who are paid for this duty. Somebody has said here that the best men are among our fire engineers. That may be. I should not be surprised if the three best men to constitute this commission were to be found among the fire engineers of Boston. If they are, appoint them. If, however, anybody else should be found more competent, let him be appointed. But throw the responsibility upon the Mayor, or upon somebody, to select the men. Do not make it necessary for them to work to secure the popular vote. Do not make them

liable to be turned out at any time, unless for inefficiency or good cause. But make the Mayor responsible for their appointment; give them permanency enough to learn their business, and power enough to discharge their duties efficiently; and then, when a fire occurs, we shall know on whom to throw the responsibility. Look at the scene which has been presented to us during the last few months. People went to the Mayor, and complained to him about the great fire. He could only suggest and nominate; he could not control the Aldermen; he could not appropriate money; he could not do this or do that. You go to the head of the Fire Department, and he says, "I cannot control the fire alarms; I cannot do this, I cannot do that; I have been impeded at every point; therefore, I am not responsible." Who are the Aldermen? I do not think one man in fifty knows who the committee are who have charge of this department. If you should call on them, you would probably find—I do not mean any personal reflection on the excellent Board of Aldermen we have now—that they had not been in office long enough to master any of the details, perhaps had not made the acquaintance of the Chief Engineer; and by the time they begin to understand their business, by the time they know something about the *personnel* of the Fire Department, they go out of office. Can anybody seriously pretend that such a system is a proper one for the government of the Fire Department of a great city? We must have somebody responsible; and the people of Boston to-day demand that when another fire occurs they shall find somebody, some Board, upon whom they can charge the responsibility.

I do not think it is necessary for me to argue that a change is demanded by the public. There has not been a witness here who has opposed us, or who has ventured to assert that some change is not necessary, and vitally necessary. Everybody concedes it. And that change, the witnesses on both sides say, should look to permanency and responsibility; and these you can have only in connection with a permanent commission.

We are also, as we come here and ask for a change, to furnish you some evidence, if we can, that the system we ask you to adopt has worked well. It has been tried in New York, and as to the result there is no controversy. I have not seen a man who ques-

tions the superiority of the present Fire Department of New York over their old department, or even our own department at the present time. They have tried it in Chicago, and it has been successful there; they have tried it in Philadelphia, and it has succeeded there. They have substantially the same system in London; it succeeds there. Somebody has suggested here that we should have one commissioner, instead of three. Considering the amount of work and responsibility that is to be thrown upon them, I do not think we should have one commissioner. I have no doubt that it would be better to have but one officer in command at a fire; but the business and responsibility of providing for the department, and making the appointments, should not be placed upon one man. It has never been done in this country. The power and responsibility should be divided among two or three. The body should be large enough to take the responsibility, and not so large that the responsibility should be too much divided. A commission of three is probably the proper and best number.

It has been said by some of the witnesses, "The insurance companies favor this measure, and therefore we oppose it." Now, I take it the insurance companies have the largest interest in this question. They have insured, as we know, too much in particular localities. After the fire, those insurance companies were cried down because they had taken so many risks in the burnt district, and the Legislature of Massachusetts spent much time at the special session in attempting to devise a law to prohibit insurance companies holding such large amounts at risk in any particular district. The companies have been reducing their risks and have notified parties that they must terminate their policies, and now we turn round and charge them with an attempt to extort money by withdrawing risks and thus raising rates, because they do what our Legislature nine months ago said they should be compelled by law to do! There is now on the statute-book a law requiring that your Board of Aldermen shall within a few months make some regulations restricting the amount which any insurance company shall have in a particular locality. And yet because, in advance, they are trying to comply with the spirit of that law, it has been charged in this room that they are doing it simply to extort money. Some few of the companies withdrew a portion of their risks from that

locality before the fire, and I remember that their wisdom was commended; everybody said they were right; but now they are charged with extraordinary selfishness because they are taking the same step for the protection of themselves and for the protection of their customers.

Insurers make it their business to examine risks and the resources of the community for extinguishing fires; they are, therefore, and ought to be more intelligent upon this subject than the rest of the community. The representatives of the insurance companies in this country and in Europe have come here from New York, and told you that experience shows that the proper and best method of administration for a Fire Department in any large city is through a permanent and responsible commission. We appeal to their testimony. There is no question about it. I have not heard of anybody who has investigated this subject with a view to business, who has a personal stake in the question, who will not tell you that experience has shown uniformly that the greatest efficiency in this department has been secured in this country only from permanent fire commissions.

But we have not only the voice of these insurers and of more than eight thousand petitioners, including among them the largest tax-payers and the most intelligent citizens of Boston, who come here and earnestly ask that this department may be placed in the hands of a commission, but besides these, you have the testimony of the commission appointed by Mayor Gaston to investigate into the management of the great fire of November 9. They had over forty hearings, and took a mass of testimony, filling a large volume, in a thorough examination of this question; and after making that examination, after making themselves more familiar with the workings of the Fire Department than any men outside of it have ever made themselves, they come here and unanimously and earnestly recommend, as the best remedy for this evil, the appointment of a fire commission. And, as I have said, we have the experience of New York, of Chicago, and of London. We have also this testimony of the working of the fire commission in New York in the diminution of the losses by fire. As was very fairly said by one of the witnesses, a fire may be accidental, and there-

fore the figures for any small number of years cannot be a perfectly trustworthy test of the efficiency of any department; but when we find the loss by fire diminishing regularly year by year from \$4,057,376 in 1868, down to \$1,545,748 in 1872, I think that it is substantial and strong evidence of the efficiency of that department. But the fact that the number of fires promptly extinguished has been steadily increasing, is more conclusive evidence still. It appears, in the report of the fire marshal, that 73.84 per cent. of all the fires in New York show a loss of less than \$100 each; 22.03 per cent. show a loss of between \$100 and \$5,000; and only 4.13 per cent. show a loss above \$5,000. That is even stronger testimony than the fact that the losses were diminished between 60 and 70 per cent. between 1868 and 1872.

I have thus stated as briefly as possible the chief considerations in favor of a fire commission. It seems to me to be a movement which must succeed. If there is any one thing that the public desire and demand in this matter now, it is *responsibility*. They must have it, and they will have it. And they also demand a body permanent enough to understand its business, and that they will have; and these eight thousand petitioners, comprising a very large percentage of the voters of the city of Boston, have declared their determination to have it. And I wish to close as I began, by saying, that this is not to be considered an attack upon anybody, but by securing a permanent and intelligent commission, justice will be done to all. If we have an efficient head, he is more sure of his position with a permanent and intelligent commission than with any other. If we have capable engineers, they are more sure of holding office and of promotion with an intelligent and permanent commission than under any other. If we have brave firemen, they are more sure of proper compensation and of promotion under a commission which knows them, and whose duty it is to know their work, than they can be under a government which is changed every year, and cannot appreciate their services.

It has been suggested here, that if these commissioners are paid, they will be more anxious to hold their office. Admit it, if you choose. I should like to know how a Board of Fire Commissioners, whose duty it is to put out fires in the city of Boston, can secure a stronger hold upon their offices than by putting out fires, by doing

their work efficiently? Their duties will be understood by the public, and a faithful performance of those duties will be appreciated.

Thanking you, gentlemen, for listening so patiently to this long hearing, I leave the matter in your hands.

TESTIMONY

IN RELATION TO THE

CAUSES OF THE FIRE OF MAY 30TH, 1873.

WEDNESDAY, July 16.

JOHN J. HALEY, *sworn*.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) The committee would like to have from you an explanation of the plan of your building, if possible (perhaps you can illustrate on a piece of paper), to show them exactly where the room was situated in which the fire originated, and how that room was occupied.

A. I was not in town when the fire originated, but I can give you a plan showing where I understood it originated. I understood it originated in the back part of the second story. [Witness made a sketch of the room, extending the whole length of the building, from Washington street to Haymarket place, and pointed out the location where, as he heard, the fire originated — about two-thirds the length of room, back from Washington street.]

Q. How many rooms were there in the second story?

A. Only one.

Q. Running right through the whole building?

A. Yes, sir, running the whole length.

Q. How was that room filled?

A. Mostly with parlor furniture. The Freeman's National Bank was in the very front part of it, and the rest of it was filled with furniture — mostly parlor furniture.

Q. Then there must have been more than one room?

A. No, sir, there was only one room. The bank took our office, after they were burned out in Summer street.

Q. The furniture was chairs, tables, etc.?

A. Chairs, tables and looking-glasses.

Q. (By Mr. WEST.) Was the room an entirely open one, no partition across it?

A. Yes, sir; no partition across it. I say, open; there was a little water-closet in the corner, next to Haymarket place.

Q. (By Mr. BIGELOW.) Was the furniture completed, or in process of manufacture?

A. It was completed, ready to cover; all upholstered, ready to put on the covering. As we sold it, of course we selected different colors to put on.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Was it customary to do any work in that part of the room?

A. No work, except the usual cleaning work, to keep it in order. As the furniture got dirty, we cleaned it.

Q. What was used for that purpose?

A. They usually used spirits of turpentine, oil, and shellac. In the process of cleaning, we brushed it, and then we took spirits of turpentine to clean out the dirt that got into the crevices, then oiled it over, and if there was any place where it was marred at all, we used shellac on it.

Q. Was anything used upon the cushions of the furniture, to protect them from moths? — anything of the nature of benzine?

A. No, sir, not to my knowledge; I never knew a particle of benzine to be used there.

Q. So that this furniture was as combustible, and no more combustible, than any furniture would be that had been cleaned, in that way, with turpentine and shellac?

A. Not that I know of.

Q. You have seen this cleaning process going on? — You have seen it done?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do you know what sort of rags were used for the purpose, and what was done with the rags?

A. Well, we used common cotton rags. The rags were usually

picked up and carried away after they were done with — supposed to be.

Q. That is, you don't know of their being left in any instance?

A. I don't know that they were left. There might have been some rags dropped there and left; but we did not intend to have them left there.

Q. How often did this cleaning take place?

A. There was no particular time for it, we were cleaning more or less all the time there. If the weather was very dry and dusty, it got dirty sooner than it did at other times, and we were cleaning up the furniture, more or less, every day. We did not go into a general cleaning every day. We intended to keep it clean.

Q. Do you know who was employed to do this cleaning, generally?

A. The men who had charge of that room usually did that cleaning.

Q. Who were they?

A. Mr. Elton and Mr. Burr had charge of that room.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) This cleaning was not exclusively in this room? You did the same kind of cleaning in other rooms, did you not?

A. Oh, yes, sir. Different men had charge of different rooms. Mr. Elton and Mr. Burr had charge of this room.

Q. The furniture in other rooms was cleaned in the same way?

A. Cleaned in the same way.

Q. (By Mr. WEST.) This was a holiday?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. They were doing nothing else?

A. I suppose not. I was out of town, and I suppose the men came in to get their rooms in order for the next day.

Q. You don't know whether they had extra help about it or not?

A. No, sir, I don't.

Q. (By Mr. BIGELOW.) Is it an easy thing for a fire to arise from the friction used in cleaning the furniture?

A. I should think not.

Q. Have you ever known of any such instance?

A. No, sir.

Q. Over how long a period does your experience extend?

A. I have been in the business the last thirty years.

Q. And you never knew a fire to arise from the manipulation of the furniture?

A. No, sir.

Q. However rapidly it might be rubbed?

A. No, sir; I don't think that could be done.

Q. Have you ever known spontaneous combustion to arise from rags?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. That is not a very rare occurrence?

A. No, sir. We are very careful in our finishing-room, — we did not finish in this building. We burned our rags every night; we used more care in that than anything else; we felt that there was more danger from that than anything else.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Do you know, yourself, how this fire originated?

A. I do not.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) Spontaneous combustion from oiled rags only occurs where the rags have lain sometime, does it?

A. I suppose it would vary with the different composition of the rags, and the different circumstances. I suppose oiled rags, pressed closely together, with the sun shining on them, would ignite very quickly.

Q. But oiled rags thrown on the floor would not cause combustion spontaneously in a few minutes' time?

A. No, sir.

Q. It would require considerable time for them to get hot?

A. Yes, sir; I should think hours.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) What is your opinion, if you have formed one, as to how this fire did originate?

A. Well, sir, it would be merely guessing. I have investigated as far as I could, but, as far as the origin of the fire is concerned, I am probably as ignorant as either of you are here. The only theory that I can make in my mind is this: For instance, where they have a holiday, very often the men work part of the holiday, cleaning up and getting ready for the next day; and in cleaning this furniture, the way would be to begin at one end and shove

the furniture right along. As they cleaned they would shove it right back, and, perhaps, if it got quite close, they would take hold of the whole and shove it. It is about all on castors. I cannot conceive of any way that fire could have started, unless, in shoving that furniture, they struck a match that happened to be on the floor, or else that it was caused by spontaneous combustion. In my mind, if it had been spontaneous combustion, they would have smelt it when they went in there. That is only a matter of guessing, but I cannot figure out any other theory.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) Were they cleaning furniture there the day before?

A. Yes, sir; they were cleaning there the day before. It is possible that a bundle of rags got dropped and left there. But it was one of those two things. I cannot conceive of anything else.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Do you consider this furniture, which has just been rubbed in this way with turpentine, in a condition to flash into fire from the flame of a match?

A. For instance, if a chair-leg were rolled on the floor and hit a match, and the match blazed up, this leg, having just been cleaned, would burn very quick. It is oiled all over; a portion of the oil would be rubbed off, yet there would be enough of it left, in my mind, for the fire to run right up on the chair. I cannot conceive of any other idea. I have investigated, as far as was in my power, to get at a theory of my own as to how the fire caught. The men say there was no smoking there. I do not allow smoking there, and I cannot conceive of any other idea except the idea of spontaneous combustion, or this matter of hitting a match on the floor.

Q. (By Mr. WEST.) It is generally understood that that fire spread very rapidly indeed?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Was there oil enough on the frames to carry the fire over the building as fast as it went?

A. Well, it would carry it pretty fast, because the furniture was just as close together as it could be. The room was full of furniture, just room enough to get round, and as they cleaned it, it was shoved close together. It would be very natural, if the furniture

was close together, for the fire to communicate from one article to another.

Q. Was it piled up?

A. Nothing more than they might take up a chair and put it on a sofa, or a table. I don't know whether that was piled up, but they do that very frequently.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) All this furniture was covered with raw cotton cloth, was it not?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. This is all you know about the origin of the fire?

A. Yes, sir, that is all I know about it.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) Was there a hatchway in your building, up and down?

A. There was a skylight room.

Q. From top to bottom?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Was this furniture that was being rubbed near to this skylight?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. About what was the height of that room?

A. The height of that room was, I think, 13 feet.

Q. Was there any communication between the floor of this room and the ceiling, in the way of posts?

A. There were posts.

Q. Iron posts, were they not?

A. They were wooden posts.

Q. Was there any furniture hanging from them?

A. Yes, sir; there were some mosquito-bars hanging around that area, made of gauze, — such as hang over a bed.

Q. Set in frames?

A. No, they were just hung up like mosquito-bars over a bed. We hung them up around the edge of this area.

Q. That was netting?

A. Yes, sir, netting.

Q. That would be very likely to, and probably did, ignite at once?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Can you give us an idea of the area

of your building and its height, and the distance of other buildings, on all sides?

A. The whole height of my building, to the roof, was about seventy feet. I remember that by getting the plans for my new building. I am building by the same plans. I think my whole height, to the battlement walls, is 74 feet. It was 70 or 72 feet.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) You mean fronting on Washington street?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) What was the distance of the adjoining buildings?

A. It had a building each side of it, and a building immediately back of it, across Haymarket place.

Q. How far was that building from yours, and what was its character?

A. That is a private stable, belonging to Mr. Marsh, of Jordan, Marsh & Co.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY). A brick building, was it not?

A. Yes, sir. That did not burn.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW). Can you tell the depth of your building from front to rear?

A. Two hundred feet.

Q. I don't think the committee understand exactly. This fire was in the second story, in the rear of the building, and the rear was only two stories?

A. No; the rear ran clear up.

Q. The building on the front was seventy feet in height. Was it seventy feet in the rear, on Haymarket place?

A. Yes, sir, with the exception that the lower floor ran up. There were some steps to go up. It was not so high by a few feet.

Q. How soon after the fire began did you reach there?

A. I took the twenty minutes past nine train from Newton.

Q. Then you reached there about ten o'clock?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. How far had the fire proceeded when you reached there?

A. The fire had burned our building down when I reached there.

Q. Now, so far as your knowledge goes, how was the fire managed after you got there?

A. I could not get near enough to tell. I could not get any nearer than opposite Boylston market. I just crowded up and saw that our building was burned, and was then ordered back, and went to the rear of Dea. Gilbert's piano factory, to keep our factory from getting on fire.

Q. You have some opinion as to the management. Do you think it would have been an easy task to have prevented that fire from crossing Washington street?

A. Well, sir, I cannot answer that question fairly.

Q. Well, as matter of opinion. Of course, it is nothing positive. You are interested.

A. Well, I would like to be excused from giving an opinion on that. I could not give an intelligent opinion. I could not give my reasons for giving that opinion. If I was asked to give my reasons, I could not give them to you.

The CHAIRMAN. The witness is called to give his knowledge of facts. If he does not care to give an opinion, he is under no obligation to do so.

Mr. SHAW. Of course, he is not obliged to give any opinion. I only want to get at the facts.

WITNESS. If I had been where I could see the fire when it crossed Washington street, then I could have answered, but I did not get any nearer, for more than five minutes, than Boylston market. It would be only a matter that any man who did not know anything about the fire could give a judgment upon as well as I could.

Q. Have you had any difficulty in collecting your insurance?

A. I have collected a portion of the insurance on my building; on the stock, I have not. I did not make my proofs on the stock as quick as on the building, because the policies were locked up in a little box that was in the safe, in the ruins, and I did not get at it for two weeks.

Q. Has any insurance company refused to pay you?

A. No, sir. The sixty days have not expired.

Q. Have you any reason to think the fire was set by anybody?

A. No, sir, I have not.

GEORGE R. RICHARDS, *sworn*.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Mr. Richards, will you please give the committee, in your own language, just what you know of the origin of the fire, and what your experience was?

A. So far as the origin is concerned, I cannot give you any information whatever. All I know is concerning giving the alarm.

Q. What was your experience?

A. I can give you the same statement that I gave the Chief of Police, which was, that I left my house on the morning of the 30th of May, at 7.50; that I went to the post-office, and from thence walked to Haley and Morse's building, arriving there, to the best of my knowledge, about fifteen minutes past eight; that about ten minutes afterwards, as near as I can tell, as I did not consult my watch at all, I heard one of the men in the back part of the store sing out that the store was on fire. I was sitting in a chair in the front part of the room, and started and went as fast as I could possibly get over the ground to alarm box 53,—the nearest one to the store,—opened it, and Henry Young, a hoseman of Hose 8, was standing by the box (he was a member of the Grand Army of the Republic, Post 7), and I said to him, "Henry, pull the slide down, and see that it responds." I waited,—I can't say exactly how long,—half a minute, perhaps, until I heard the clicking that came from the box, and then I went back to the store. When I got there, officer Mitchell stood at the door.

Q. What was the condition of the fire when you got back?

A. The fire was burning. It caught on the second floor, and when I reached the store, after giving the alarm, the fire had reached the third story.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) How do you know it caught on the second floor?

A. Because I was sitting there in a chair on that floor.

Q. Were you sitting in the front or rear of the building?

A. In the front part of the building.

Q. How far is the rear from the front?

A. I am no great hand at measuring, but I should judge the building was half as deep again as City Hall.

Q. A hundred and fifty feet, say?

A. I am no great hand at measuring, but that is about the length, as near as I can tell. It extended back from Washington street to Haymarket place. I don't know the exact length; never heard it, as I know of.

Q. What did you see of the fire, if you saw anything, when somebody shouted that the building was on fire?

A. I saw the flames bursting out around the railing in the rear part of the store. There was a well-room, as I believe I said in my statement, extending from the cellar to the roof of the building; it was open on all the floors except the upper floor of the building, where it was sheathed in; a sky-light, that threw light clear through the whole building, from the roof to the cellar; and the fire was about the rear portion of this well-room when I looked up and saw it, when this man shouted fire.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) Was there a large amount of flame at that moment?

A. Well, sir, I believe I said in my statement, that it seemed to me to be about five feet square. I cannot give the exact area of the space on fire, but that is about as near as I can tell.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Did you notice what was burning?

A. Well, sir, the furniture on that floor was parlor furniture, covered with white cotton cloth. I believe there was no stock kept in the store that was covered with any material such as these chairs are covered with. They finished them afterwards, I believe. I did not work for Haley, Morse & Co. All I know is what I picked up from what I saw there.

Q. Did you notice what was burning there — sofas, tables, or what?

A. No, sir, I can't tell you. It was too far for me to see that.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Who did you work for?

A. I worked for the Freeman's Bank.

Q. With the exception of the railing around the Freeman's Bank, was the room all open?

A. The room was all one open room. I suppose you have been in there, and know what part of the building that occupied. There was no separation, even for the bank, except there was a counter, and a little wire railing above it, — to keep parties from getting

their hands on the money, I suppose was the object of it. There was no particular division, except that.

Q. How many persons were there in the rear of the store when the fire commenced?

A. I should think two, three, or four. I can't tell exactly. I believe I stated four at the time I testified before the Chief of Police.

Q. Were they working on the furniture?

A. Yes, sir, I believe they were.

Q. (By Mr. BIGELOW.) Were you in the habit of going around that part of the building, to observe what was there, and what the men were doing?

A. Merely in this way:—the wash-room and water-closet were in the rear of the building, and going to and fro to wash my hands, or get a drink of water, I used to go through once in a while, perhaps once or twice a day, or night, whenever I happened to be there.

Q. Was there anything there but furniture?

A. No, sir, there was not. To the best of my knowledge and belief, there was nothing but furniture on that floor.

Q. What were your hours there?

A. Part of the time I worked nights, and part of the time I worked days.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) What are your duties there in the bank?

A. I hold a commission from the city as special officer, and I have worked for the bank both as messenger and watchman. I have worked there nights and days, and sometimes both. About the time of the great fire, I worked there night and day for a week. I worked for them in the same capacity in Summer street, at the time of the November fire. I have worked for them about four years and a half, occupying the same position all the time.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) Messenger in the day time and watchman at night?

A. Yes, sir. Part of the time, I have worked as watchman, and part of the time as messenger. At present, in Sears' Building, they employ a night watchman, and I only work daytimes. I am liable at any time to be called upon to work nights, if they want me to; but I am not supposed to work nights now at all.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Do you know how the fire originated?

A. No, sir, I do not.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) Did it appear to flash up directly where some of the men were at work?

A. Well, it appeared to me like a pile of shavings. As near as I could tell, it seemed just like touching a match to a pile of shavings, and it blazed up.

Q. Right where the men were at work?

A. As near as I could judge. You must take in calculation the length of the building, and where I was sitting. That was the opinion I had of it, — that it flamed right up.

Q. (By Mr. WEST.) Quite a body of flame in one place, rather than running around?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Have you ever, in your walk about the rear part of that room, noticed any rags lying around on the floor?

A. No, sir. That room was merely used as a storage room. It was not used for finishing furniture at all; it was merely used as a sample room.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Where the fire took?

A. Yes, sir; merely as a sample room. There was no finishing done in that room, to my knowledge.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Have you ever observed any rags on the floor?

A. I never saw any rags on the floor. It was always kept very clean; swept morning and night.

Q. It was not a finishing room, then; only a sales-room.

A. No, sir, only a sales-room or show-room.

Q. (By Mr. BIGELOW.) Do you know the smell of benzine?

A. I never worked in a drug store, and I don't know as I could tell it from anything else. Perhaps I might, and perhaps I might not.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Were you very familiar with this room?

A. I was in that room from the 11th day of November until the 30th day of May.

Q. What part of it?

A. I have travelled over more or less of the whole building; when I stayed there nights, I used to travel from top to bottom.

Q. From where you were sitting when you saw this fire, it appeared to be in a certain location?

A. It appeared to be about the same as if it were back of that table.

Q. Had you been in the habit of visiting that spot?

A. Yes, sir. As I told you, I used to go right past it, to wash my hands, two or three times a day.

Q. Was there no polishing or finishing of the furniture done in that room?

A. No, sir; that was used as a store-room. No finishing was done in that room. I never saw anything done there. I never saw any furniture finished there.

Q. This was on the second story of the building?

A. Yes, sir. The first floor above the street. I call that the second story, and suppose you do.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) What were these men doing that morning?

A. I can't tell you; I did not go near them. I saw them, as I was sitting in the front part of the building, at work in the rear part.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Have you seen them at work cleaning the furniture?

A. I had not, that particular morning. I have seen them wipe the furniture over, but I had not seen them do it for some time. I did not see them that morning cleaning the furniture. I have seen them take rags and a dust-brush, and dust the dirt out of the little places where the furniture was carved, and wipe it over. What they used in wiping it over, I don't know.

Q. Did they seem to be doing anything that morning?

A. They seemed to be bustling round among the furniture. I couldn't see what they were doing. They seemed to be shoving it round from one place to another. I both saw and heard them, because when they moved the chairs over the floor, they would make considerable noise.

Q. Do you know what particular man had charge of that room, to keep it in order?

A. Well, the salesmen swept and kept the room in order. Mr. George Boutwell was one of the salesmen who sold on that floor;

but whether he was there on that day or not, I cannot tell. I did not see him.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Do you know Mr. Elton and Mr. Burr?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Did they have charge of that room?

A. I believe Mr. Burr had had charge of what they called the sponge department. I don't know exactly what his duties were in the store, but I know he had a great deal to do with the sponge mattresses and cushions. I don't know whether he had anything to do with any other part of the store or not.

Q. Did you see him that day?

A. No, sir, I did not. I can't give you the name of any party there, as I only saw them from a distance, not being able to distinguish any of them.

Q. You say you have no knowledge of the origin of the fire?

A. No, sir, none whatever.

Q. Have you any knowledge of its cause as distinguished from its origin?

A. No, sir, I have not.

Q. Did you see it flash across Washington street?

A. No, sir, I can't say that I did. As soon as I had given the alarm, I stood there in the doorway, and a stream of water wet me completely through, and I went home and changed my clothes, so that probably I did not get down there until after the fire had crossed Washington street. I helped them that morning shove some furniture round in the store, and in going out of the door I got wet, and went home and changed my clothes, and then went back again and stood there all day and part of the evening.

SANFORD S. BURR, *sworn*.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Will you be so good as to give the committee, in your own language, your experience in relation to the fire on the morning of May 30th?

A. I arrived at the store that morning about seven o'clock, an hour or two earlier than my usual time, for the purpose of cleaning some of the furniture, — the stuffed furniture, up one flight; our parlor and sitting-room furniture, — as I had spoken to one or two men the night before about it. We were not to open the store

that morning, and were to get our work done and go home on the ten o'clock train, as we call it, as I live at Dedham. I got my materials for cleaning the furniture, and went to work. I worked there some time, — I don't know the time, — perhaps half an hour or more; at least, some length of time, — and Mr. Elton came and joined me. Mr. Kassell, I expected, and Mr. Edward Morse was to be there; but I think he did not arrive until afterwards. I went to work on the furniture, and I suppose worked there something like an hour and a half, or twenty minutes, cleaning the furniture, rubbing it up, stirring it, and beating it, as we do, at this season of the year, once or twice a week, to see if we can start any moths from the inner linings, and, if we can, kill them. About twenty minutes past eight, — I have not refreshed my memory particularly about the time, but somewhere in that vicinity, — I commenced at the further portion of the room, on Haymarket place, working up towards the centre of the room, and as I was stooping down rubbing up a chair, I thought I saw a light somewhat in my rear; I turned round, and about twenty feet from where I was, there was a light flame running up over the furniture. I, of course, cried out "Fire!" and ran downstairs to get a pail of water. There were others on the stairs. I met some others, going down. I met Mr. Kassell; I passed him, — I can't say where he was, whether he was half way up the stairs or not, — and immediately, of course, rushed down. A young man from the bank went downstairs at the same time, and out-doors. I went downstairs and got a pail of water, but by the time I got back, the water was useless to stop the fire. Then I did various things, — moved furniture, to prevent the sparks from falling down upon it, and tried all I could to stop it until the engines got there; and of course I went to my own desk and got my private books and such things. That was about all.

Q. You say you were stirring up the furniture?

A. Beating it up. All our furniture was covered with light cotton cloth. None of it is covered as you have it here, delivered, or as we deliver it in houses; none of our sets are kept covered, but they are left with light-colored cloth on them, and we stir that up, and if there are any moths in it, they will come out. We take

up a lounge or a chair, and smash it down upon the floor, and by doing that, we get the moths out and kill them.

Q. Do you know whether benzine or naphtha has been used on that stuffed furniture, to kill moths, or for any other purpose?

A. I don't know of any being used.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) You would have known it if it had been used, would you not?

A. I suppose I should.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) What did you use for cleaning furniture?

A. I had turpentine, boiled oil, and shellac, and common oiled rags.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) Was there any one nearer this flame when first you discovered it than you were yourself?

A. No, sir, I don't think there was. I don't know of any one. There were parties passing through at times. I don't think there was any one nearer the flame at that time.

Q. Was there any one using the rags at the time the fire took?

A. There were one or two men at work there with me; one or two workmen, as we had them in our work-room.

Q. Were they nearer to the fire when you discovered it than you were?

A. Well, sir, I can't say whether they were a few feet nearer or not. I don't think they were much, if any, nearer.

Q. It did not blaze up from them?

A. No, sir, I think not.

Q. Did you have any other rags than those you were using in your hands? Were there any rags lying around?

A. There were some rags lying around there. I had brought some down, and there were some lying around there. Not any great quantity, but there were some around there.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) How long had those oiled rags been lying there?

X A. They might have been there two or three days. It was not commonly that we kept them there in the room, but still, there were some there; a few that had being used previously, that I had not carried out of the room.

Q. (By Mr. WEST.) On the floor?

A. I suppose so. I left them on the floor.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) What is the practice?

A. Not to leave them in the room at all. We burn them, or put them in the ash-barrel. That was our regular retail department; we did not use them there regularly.

Q. This room you speak of was the sales-room?

A. Yes, sir, the regular sales-room. It was not the practice to keep any there at all, but in the spring we use them more.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) Are you very sure there were rags there, other than those you were using?

A. I merely say I had some, and left them there; that they were there I would not swear to. The day before, or the day before that, I had some, and left them in the room; but I cannot say they were in the room at that time. Somebody else might have taken them away.

Q. You remember that you did not take them away?

A. I did not take them away when I used them before. I know that I left some there.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) You do not know of any custom or practice of using benzine, naphtha, or any such liquid on stuffed furniture?

A. No, sir; I do not know of any custom or practice of using it there at all.

Q. (By Mr. BIGELOW.) Would it be likely to be used there without your knowledge?

A. It would not be likely to be used there without my knowledge; still it might have been used without my knowledge. I will give you a sample of what happened the very day before the fire. I took some customers from out of town (I don't know who they were) up the elevator, three flights, to look at some goods there. As we went from the elevator on to the third store-room floor, the gentleman said, "This smells of benzine here;" and there was a smell of that kind around the room. I merely say that—that there was a smell like benzine, or something of that kind. I remarked at the time, "It does smell something like that;" but what it was, or where it came from, I know nothing about. That was two stories higher than the room where the fire was discovered. That was the store-room, that we kept filled with goods, from which we replenished the lower store, as fast as the

furniture was sold. You asked the question whether, if benzine, or anything of that kind had been used there, I should have known it. It might have been so, and I not have known it in such a case.

Q. You had charge of that room where the fire originated?

A. Yes, sir; it was partially in my charge. Mr. Elton was there also.

Q. How could benzine have been used in that room without your knowledge?

A. It could not, in that room. I said in the store-room it might have been used without my knowledge.

Q. (By Mr. WEST.) You said that that morning you went and got your material before going to work; where did you get it?

A. Out of the stock-room. There were two buildings. One building we had for finishing; it was occupied by a lot of men for finishing furniture, and the turpentine, oil, and shellac were kept there. We crossed over and went up the elevator to get into that building, or went up some back-stairs there.

Q. The other side of Haymarket place?

A. Not the other side of Haymarket place; toward Fayette court, over Brackett's piano room.

Q. You say you have turpentine, oil, and shellac there; is there no benzine or naphtha there?

A. Not that I know of.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) You spoke of getting material; what material did you get?

A. As I said, I got boiled oil and shellac.

Q. At that time you actually got boiled oil and shellac?

A. Yes, sir; and used it, and turpentine.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) I understand that the furniture was taken from the store-room into the room in which the fire originated?

A. It was taken from the store-room as fast as we wanted it.

Q. And you say you smelt benzine there?

A. Yes, sir. It was noticed the day before, by some customers—a gentleman and lady. The gentleman remarked, as soon as the door was opened, "It smells as though there was benzine round, or something like that."

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) I believe the question has not been asked you whether you knew the origin or cause of this fire; how is that?

A. Well, "the origin or cause"—I don't know the origin or cause of this fire.

Q. You state that with some little hesitation.

A. Well, I have a theory.

Q. As a matter of fact, have you any knowledge of either the origin or cause? There may, possibly, be a line of distinction. Have you any knowledge whatever of the origin or cause?

A. I will answer it as well as I know how. I should say, as I said before, I have not. I have my own ideas, but you ask me if I have any knowledge of the origin or cause, and I say I have not.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) If you were asked to give a theory, what should you say?

A. Well, sir, I should say I saw the fire, and know how it took; that is, in one sense. That is, being in the room and seeing it blaze up, my theory is, that a match might possibly have been on the floor, and the furniture might have hit it. It might have been done by friction, in shoving the furniture over the floor. It possibly might have been by spontaneous combustion, although, perhaps, I am no judge of that. I don't profess to be an expert, and I don't know. But my opinion at the time was, that it was from friction, rubbing the furniture over the floor, on a match, or something like that; or, if you shoved the furniture over the floor, one of the castors might strike a nail, and that might ignite a spark sufficient to catch such materials with.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Was the floor a varnished floor?

A. No, sir; a common, ordinary rough floor.

Q. A hard-pine floor.

A. I think not hard pine. Probably an ordinary soft-pine floor.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) Had you spilled any turpentine on the floor?

A. More or less had been spilled on the floor, as you would naturally, pouring it out of a bottle.

Q. As you cleared it, you shoved it back towards Haymarket place?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Then was that space on the floor filled in nearly solid with furniture?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Then the fire, when you first saw it, twenty feet from you — as you say — was right in among that furniture?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. If it was twenty feet from you, you could not have been in that place cleaning furniture for how long a time?

A. Well, five minutes.

Q. Do you think you could have cleaned the furniture in a space of twenty feet in five minutes?

A. No, sir. I said, I judged twenty feet. I may have stated the distance a little over. I take it, it is about fifteen feet from me to that door [about twenty feet]. That is about the distance.

Q. If a match had been ignited by the furniture which you were moving back that distance from you, it would have set the furniture on fire previous to the time you saw it, would it not?

A. Not necessarily. Understand me. I put this furniture, for instance — a sofa here, a lounge there, and so on, in a long row. Now, I have got here fifteen feet, — I may have overstated it in saying twenty feet. I should say the distance from here to that door was a fair statement of the actual distance; that may be fifteen or twenty feet, — and I have another sofa that I have been cleaning; that I push back, and if the end hits anything back of it, I give the furniture a shove, and shove it all back. I had been doing exactly that thing; and if that was the cause, I might possibly have been there five minutes before.

Q. It might have been, possibly, five or ten minutes?

A. I think it must have been more than five minutes.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) But by pushing the furniture, you might have communicated some motion, just before the fire, to some article that ran over a match that happened to be lying on the floor?

A. Yes, sir; it might have been done in that way. I know of no other way it could catch, that distance; and, probably, as you suggest, it was more than five minutes after I had been there.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) I understand that the furniture at that point might have been moved within five minutes?

A. Yes, sir, certainly; within one minute, or half a minute. I don't recollect my acts at that moment; but I was shoving the furniture back from time to time.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Then, according to that theory, it was impossible for the fire to have originated from your rubbing the furniture with your hands?

A. Yes, sir, entirely impossible.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Had there not been some means used for fumigating that building?

A. None that I know of.

Q. You would have known it if there had been, would you not?

A. I might and might not. I am not there all the time.

Q. You never heard of it?

A. No, sir.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) If there had been any oiled rags on the floor that morning, should you not have noticed them, while you were at work?

A. There might have been some there, and I not have noticed them. Take a room filled with furniture, and there are plenty of places where you could not see them, unless you put your head down and looked under the furniture.

Q. (By Mr. WEST.) You would have seen the rags, would you not, in pushing the furniture, if there had been any there to push over?

A. Yes, sir. I might have seen them, if they had been in the way.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Did you ever know, at any time, of any means being used to fumigate the building?

A. No, sir, I never knew of any.

Q. (By Mr. WEST.) They beat this furniture up to get the moths out and kill them?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. How did they kill them?

A. If you strike a chair down, the moths will come out, and if you are quick with your hand, you can kill them?

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) When you can catch them?

A. Yes, sir, when you can catch them. I have done that several times. I have done it every day ; — not every day, but I have done it a good deal.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) I have heard it stated that this fire might have caught from friction, by rubbing with your hand ; but according to your theory, I understand that to have been impossible, as you were a considerable distance away from where the fire began, and there was quite a lot of furniture between you and the point where it began, so that the fire could not have taken from your rubbing the furniture with a cloth ?

A. No, sir ; it could not have taken by my rubbing with a cloth at all.

Q. (By Mr. BIGELOW.) How much fire was there ?

A. There was a light blaze running over a chair or two. I can't say how large it was. There was quite a little fire ; so much so, as I said, that I hallooed fire and started for some water, for my impression was that it would go rapidly over the materials that had been used. The stuff was in a condition to burn. Goods of that sort will burn very quickly, and the wind was fresh, and the back window was open, leading into Haymarket place.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Was there any fire in the building, to your knowledge ?

A. Not to my knowledge. I suppose not ; I know of none.

Q. (By Mr. BIGELOW.) Is there anything volatile enough in the materials you use to make a fire spread very rapidly ?

A. No, sir. There is nothing in turpentine that will evaporate very fast. Still there is always more or less smell of turpentine, when you use it. Whether that would affect the burning of it in the air or not, I don't know. It might, and might not.

Q. (By Mr. WEST.) Don't you suppose that if, instead of running down for a pail of water, you had taken hold of the furniture and pulled it away from the point where the fire was, you could have got at the half-dozen chairs and the sofa or two that were on fire, and put it out ?

A. I don't know. I think it rather doubtful.

Q. It would have been too much for you ?

A. I think so. I don't think I could have stopped it there. If I had had some large blankets, or something of that kind, that

I could have easily put my hands on, to smother it, I think likely that could have been done; but I hardly think I had the material with me to put out the fire.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) Do you remember whether or not, just previous to your seeing the fire, you pushed any furniture? If the theory of a match is correct, the fire would follow, of course, very soon after you moved some of the furniture.

A. I don't remember. I might have done it. I can't say. I don't remember what pieces I handled just at that moment. I would not wish to say whether I did push some of the furniture immediately before, or did not. I was continually moving it and pushing it down, as I wanted it out of the way, but whether I did it half a minute or a minute before, I can't say. Very likely I did.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Was not that building lighted by gas?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Had you had light there in the evening, at any time within three or four months?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. What occasion was there for using matches in that room? Did you ever see matches used in that room?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. For what purpose?

A. I have seen cigars lit in that room.

Q. Then smoking was allowed there?

A. Smoking had been allowed there, but it was forbidden at that time. I have seen customers smoking there, and sometimes I have seen them light a cigar. That is, if they come in and are looking over a bill of goods, and the cigar goes out, they light it, no matter where they are.

Q. Then matches are frequently lighted there?

A. They were used more or less. Smoking has been prohibited in the room, since about the first of January. Before that, we were in the habit of smoking there; but since the first of January, it has only been allowed in the office. After five o'clock at night, after we get through work, we consider that we are at liberty to smoke in the office. That is the understanding I had of the rules that were given out.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Was this rule against smoking enforced against customers?

A. I have never enforced it against customers. I never spoke about it. I never had any instructions.

Q. So that some customers might have used matches there?

A. They might. I never was instructed to say anything to customers. Up to the first of January, we salesmen used to smoke as much as we pleased; but after the first of January, Mr. Haley gave out instructions that smoking should be prohibited in the store, and it was, pretty strictly, as far as I know anything about it.

CALVIN W. ELTON, *sworn.*

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Will you give the committee your experience on the morning of the fire, in your own way?

A. I arrived at the store about ten minutes of eight, and went directly upstairs, found Mr. Burr at work, and took off my coat and assisted him in moving the goods. I was there doing that with him until about eighteen minutes or quarter past eight,—somewhere along there. The foreman of the packing-room then called to me and said he would like some curtains that were going to be shipped. I went below, took the elevator and went up one flight, and from there up to the fifth story. While I was getting these things ready, picked out, I saw the smoke rushing up the stairway. I immediately looked into the other room, to see if the help had gone down; the help had gone down from the other room, and I took the elevator and came down on the run.

Q. What did you see when you got down?

A. Well, Mr. Burr was at the bottom of the stairs, and Mr. Kassell; there were one or two policemen, and the firemen were just coming in with their hose. There were quite a number of strangers there, that I didn't know.

Q. When did you hear the bells?

A. I heard the bells when I was up in the fifth story.

Q. How long after you saw the smoke?

A. I should think the alarm had been ringing perhaps ten minutes.

Q. Before you saw the smoke?

A. Yes, sir. I don't know that it was quite ten minutes; it might not have been more than eight minutes before I saw the smoke up there. You see I was five stories from where the smoke was.

Q. You had heard the fire-alarm bell ringing?

A. Yes, sir. It might not have been more than five minutes.

Q. You had heard the fire-alarm bell ringing five minutes before you knew that the fire was in your building?

A. Yes, sir. I didn't know it until I saw the smoke rushing up the elevator. The well-room is divided off from that room. There is a heavy brick partition there.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) So that from the room where the fire took this well-room was not a direct flue into the room where you were?

A. There was a partition that divided off that room; that was the only partition there was.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) Did you hear anybody cry "Fire," or anything of that kind?

A. No, sir; I didn't hear a thing.

Q. (By Mr. BIGELOW.) If anybody had shouted "Fire" from that story, could you have heard it in the fifth story, where you were?

A. No, sir, not where I was, unless they had rung the bell, and shouted through the pipe. They did not do that. They had done that in the back room, but I was not in the back room; I was in the front room. There were four young ladies at work in the back room, and there was a young lady in the front room with me, picking out some material there.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) As you passed down this elevator, what progress, apparently, had the fire made?

A. I couldn't see my hand before me, from the time I took the elevator until I struck the bottom, on account of the smoke.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) You were in the front room, on the fifth story?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. How many rooms were there in the fifth story?

A. Two; a front room and a back room. The well-room was built up around there — twenty-two feet by twenty, — and all open.

Q. Won't you describe just where this well-room was situated, in relation to the whole building?

A. Right in the centre of the building, midway between Washington street and Haymarket place. I should judge it was right in the centre. I never paced it exactly. You see this well-room was open, just merely a railing around, with the exception of that upper story, so, of course, the fire would communicate from one room to the other very easily.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Do you know anything about the use of benzine, naphtha, or anything of that sort, upon the furniture?

A. No, sir, nothing more than what is used in the varnish-room. I never have used any on the furniture.

Q. I mean the stuffed furniture, for the purpose of killing moths?

A. I never knew them to use benzine. It was turpentine, I think.

Q. Did you know of anything being put upon the stuffed furniture for the purpose of killing moths?

A. No, sir. We used, about once a month, to take some boiled oil, shellac, and turpentine, and rub over the frames, after they had been wiped off; we were in the habit of doing that.

Q. But about the use of benzine or any other liquid upon the stuffing, to kill moths, you know nothing?

A. No, sir, I never heard of it.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Do you know of any fire in the building?

A. No, sir, there was no fire in the building, that I know of, because they told me I couldn't go up in the elevator, because the fire had been put out the night before in the boiler, but they left just water enough in the tank to go up; it came back itself.

Q. Was it a water elevator?

A. Yes, sir; both of them.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Were there two elevators?

A. There were two elevators, in the rear and in the front. The engine pumped water for both; but the fire had been put out the night before, to clean the boiler. You see it was a holiday, and they took that morning to clean up, because our rooms were large, and we couldn't move the things round when there were customers there.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) How long did you say you had been upstairs before you heard the bells ring the alarm?

A. I can't say exactly. I should say perhaps ten minutes; might have been longer.

Q. And then it was five minutes or more after that before you saw any smoke?

A. It was five or ten minutes. I went from one room to the other and back again twice.

Q. As soon as you saw any smoke, you went down?

A. No, sir; I started then to go downstairs, to see what it was. When I got down there, I couldn't get any further, and then I made up my mind that the best thing for me to do was to get out as quick as I could. If it had been a steam elevator I couldn't have done anything; but as it was a water elevator, I let all the water out, pulled the valve, and let her slide, and she struck pretty solid. It was done very quick. Of course, I struck the second floor. I don't think I was a minute coming down from top to bottom. I couldn't see a thing, because I was calculating to regulate this lever when I got to the bottom, because I knew, if I struck solid, the chance was a pair of broken legs, or something of that kind.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Do you know of any means being used to fumigate that building, or any part of it?

A. No, sir.

Q. Never, at any time?

A. No, sir.

Q. Do you know anything of the cause or origin of the fire?

A. No, sir, I do not. When I left there and went up everything was just as natural as it always was.

Q. (By Mr. BIGELOW.) Did you notice any oiled rags lying on the floor as you were moving the furniture about?

A. Not of any size. There might have been some little small pieces, or something of that kind, in sweeping round there. I can't say whether they were oiled rags or not, or what they were.

Q. Do you remember seeing any?

A. No, sir; I can't say that I do. I didn't do any of the sweeping; I just merely shoved it back.

Q. Did they sweep the whole floor over?

A. No, sir ; they didn't sweep the whole floor.

Q. As far as they had gone?

A. Yes, sir ; as far as they had gone.

Q. You did not do the sweeping?

A. No, sir ; I moved the furniture, up to the time the foreman called me. They had got nearly up to the well then, from Hay-market place. They commenced in the rear.

GEORGE KASSELL, *sworn*.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Will you describe to the committee, in your own way, what you saw of the fire on the morning of the 30th of May?

A. I live out of town. I got there that morning about my usual time, from twenty minutes to half-past eight ; the train varies sometimes, so that I can't tell ; I didn't look at any clock. I went into the counting-room downstairs, on the first floor as you go in. There was nobody there ; it was all shut up. I walked round, loitered round, — I can't say how long I was there, — and from there I went upstairs. I had hardly got off the stairs before I heard an outcry, and some noise and confusion. I was not looking up, I was looking behind and alongside of me, and I looked up and saw what I thought was fire. I had hardly seen that before I saw Mr. Burr come running, and singing out "Fire !" As soon as I saw that, I went downstairs. Mr. Burr ran down further, and I went along to the elevator. My first idea was, if there was a fire there, to go and get the hose from the next building that we have ; we put in some hose there lately ; and I went to the elevator and sung out for them to get the hose out from the next building. The elevator was loaded, and I helped take off some things there ; threw them off any way ; and some person got on the elevator, — I don't know who it was. They said, "We can't all go up, take off this furniture, and let us go up." They went up, and from that I went out towards the front again, and went under the area, — the place that goes up to let down light, — and began to move some tables there. My first impression was, that the sparks would drop down and set fire there. I moved them out to the front door, shoved them along, and then the smoke and fire

got to be pretty heavy. Others came to the front door; a policeman was there, and stood around there; I don't know that he was doing anything particularly. I saw that I couldn't do anything. I saw a man come in with a hose; he stayed there a little while and then went out again; I went out after him, and went to the opposite side of the street, and from there, as the fire came along, I moved along.

Q. When you first saw the fire, how large a space did it cover?

A. Well, it is very difficult for me to describe the space. It seemed to be running along. The first flame I saw was perhaps as large as that table [about six feet by four], and it moved very quickly. And while I was down there under this elevator, there were some canopies of mosquito netting there, and one of them fell down that was on fire, and then I left.

Q. Do you know anything about the use of benzine or naphtha on stuffed furniture, for the purpose of killing moths?

A. No, sir.

Q. Never saw nor heard of any such use?

A. No, sir.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) You speak of going upstairs. You mean the front stairs from the Washington-street front?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do you know anything of the cause of the fire?

A. No, sir, I don't. The fire was burning when I got there.

Q. You do not know how it caught, or anything about the cause of it?

A. No, sir.

Q. (By Mr. DENNY.) You say you got there about twenty minutes past eight?

A. As near as I can fix it now. I didn't look at any clock.

Q. How long had you been in the store before you started to go upstairs?

A. Well, it wasn't very long. I merely sauntered round the office. We didn't calculate to do any business that day, and I merely looked around the office (the office was about half as large as this room), and slowly went upstairs.

Q. And before you reached the landing at the head of the stairs, you heard the confusion?

A. No; I was at the top of the stairs.

Q. You did not discover any fire until after you heard the confusion?

A. No, sir. The way I account for that is, that we had wall-pockets, brackets, and lamberkins hanging by the side of the stairs, and I was looking at those until I got up to the head of the stairs. Then, of course, I had to look around, to go into the room. After you had got to the top, the stairs made a turn across the width of the building.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) You spoke of a hose having been got shortly before the fire — where was the hose kept?

A. The hose was in the next building.

Q. Which building was that?

A. Over Brackett's piano rooms.

Q. Who did the hose belong to?

A. I really can't tell you. I suppose Mr. Haley had them put in. They were put into our workshops there.

Q. The workshops over Brackett's?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. How long before this fire were the hose put there?

A. I can't really say; but, to the best of my knowledge, about two months. I may be mistaken.

Q. They were under the control of Haley, Morse & Boyden?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Put there for their own purposes, and paid for by them?

A. That was what I supposed. I never made any inquiries about them. I thought it was for the better security of the building. It was after the large fire.

Q. (By Mr. Power.) Do you know whether that hose was used that day, at that fire?

A. No, I don't know.

Q. Do you know whether or not the building was on fire before you got into the store downstairs?

A. I can't tell you, because I didn't go to the back of the building at all.

Q. Do you know this Mr. Richards, the Freeman's Bank watchman and messenger?

A. Yes, sir, I know him by seeing him.

Q. Did he pass out of the building while you were in it?

A. Yes, sir ; I think I met him on the stairs. About the same time I saw Mr. Burr, or heard him, I saw Mr. Richards coming. The head of the stairs comes right out by the office.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Do you know of any means that have been used for fumigating the building there?

A. No, sir.

Q. Was there anything about the building that had ever been complained of as a nuisance, to your knowledge?

A. No, sir, not that I know of.

Q. Did you never hear or know of any bad smells about there?

A. Yes, sir ; I know there were some bad smells there. Those were in the basement, and they came from the next building, where they had their necessary. It smelt very badly there sometimes.

Q. Do you know whether or not any means have been used for fumigating that room, or any portion of that room?

A. No, not fumigating. We killed moths, when we cleaned the place.

Q. That is another question, the killing of moths ; but I mean, to prevent a nuisance or improve the atmosphere?

A. No, sir, I knew of nothing of the kind.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) How would you kill moths?

A. Well, I would just kill them with my hands, as fast as I could get hold of them. I have tried every other way, but I don't know anything that kills them any quicker than that. They get into the bottoms of chairs, and we put them down hard, and then put our foot or hand on them.

Q. In answer to the question of Mr. Shaw about fumigating, I understood you to say something about killing moths?

A. Well, that is the way I used to kill them.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Had any other appliance been used for killing moths, except what you speak of — beating the furniture, and killing them by hand?

A. No, sir.

Q. Were any substances used, to your knowledge, to drive them from the room?

A. No, sir. I have used various materials, that were called "anti-moths," and used camphor and all such things. I have used

some preparations, that there was a strong smell to,' to keep the moths out of furniture. I bought some a little while ago of a man who came in, and stuck it in between the seats and backs. That smells very strong.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Is that a liquid or a powder?

A. It is a sort of powder, put up in little rolls.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) You don't know what it is made of?

A. No, sir.

Q. Does it have any effect?

A. I hardly think it does. I don't think there is anything that has any effect on them. It may keep them away—the strong smell.

Q. There is a strong smell to it?

A. Oh, yes, to that material that I put in there.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Is that material used to any extent in your store?

A. No, sir; that was only two or three pieces that I bought from that man to try it.

Q. Bought it yourself?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) How long before the fire had that been placed there?

A. Probably some two weeks, I suppose.

Q. Is it a patented article?

A. Yes, sir; they call it a patented article.

Q. Is it a substance that is used elsewhere? Is it considered a preparation of any value?

A. I never heard of it before.

Q. Then you do not know the materials it is made of?

A. No, sir.

Q. You don't know whether it would ignite easily?

A. No, sir, I know nothing about it, only that I gave it a trial.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Was this merely a notion of your own, or were you ordered to do it by the proprietors of the store?

A. It was a notion of my own; I don't know as they know of it to this day.

Q. What is that called?

A. I can't tell you, really: "Moth-Preventative," if anything. That is the most that I know.

W. R. HOLMES, *sworn*.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) You are foreman in the packing and shipping department of Haley, Morse & Co.?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. I understand that you did not witness the actual outbreak of this fire.

A. No, sir, I never saw a thing of it.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Were you not present?

A. I was not employed in that building at all.

Q. Were you not present, so that you saw anything of it?

A. I saw the building when it was in flames afterwards.

Q. What time did you see it?

A. It had probably been burning ten minutes before I saw it. I can't tell as to the length of time.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) You are familiar with the inside of the building, and the manner in which it is used?

A. Oh, yes, sir.

Q. Do you know what is used, in the first place, for cleaning furniture, and, in the next place, what is used, if anything, for killing moths in the establishment?

A. Well, I know what is used in my department to clean it. It is always cleaned up there before it is delivered. I never mixed any of the material, but I know there is oil, spirits, and Japan. That is rubbed on the wood-work, and brightens it up, you know.

Q. Do you know anything that is applied to the stuffing of furniture for the purpose of killing moths?

A. I never knew anything to be put in but sponge. They tried sponge for a while; I don't know whether it worked or not. They tried this sponge that they use for beds as a preventative against moths getting into furniture; but they don't do it now. I believe they abandoned it; found it was of no value in that respect.

Q. Do you know of the application of any liquid or any substance to stuffed furniture to kill moths?

A. No, sir, I don't.

Q. Benzine, naphtha, or anything of that sort?

A. No, sir.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Do you know whether or not they had any fire in that building that morning?

A. I don't think they did. We were not going to open that day, and I don't think there was any fire in the building at all.

Q. Do you know anything about the custom of smoking in the store?

A. I know that smoking was positively prohibited. None of the employés were allowed to smoke. Sometimes a customer would come in with a cigar, but if he attempted to go upstairs, the salesman who was going to show him the goods was requested to ask him to leave his cigar. That was the rule of the store.

Q. Do you know of anybody smoking that morning in the store?

A. No, sir, I don't.

Q. Do you know how that fire occurred?

A. I don't know any more about it, sir, than a child.

JAMES MITCHELL, *sworn.*

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Will you tell us what you know about the fire on the morning of May 30th?

A. Well, sir, on that morning, I was standing on the corner of Essex and Washington streets, and there was a colored man, who keeps a barber-shop, at No. 8 Boylston street, I think it is, who happened to be passing by the door, and saw the young man run out, and when he opened the door, he saw there was a fire there, and ran across the street to me (this was before the alarm was given), and says, "I think there is a fire over in Haley, Morse & Boyden's." I looked right across, and saw no smoke nor anything. I started and ran just as tight as I could (it only took me two seconds), and opened the door, looked in, and saw there was a fire in the back part of the store, on the side of the railing. It appeared to me to be about twelve feet where the fire was running.

Q. Did you go upstairs?

A. No, sir. I saw it from the first floor. When I opened the front door, on Washington street, and looked in, I saw the fire running along the banister. There was a banister that ran round the well-room.

Q. You looked up the well-room, which had the railing around it, and saw the fire running around the railing?

A. It was running along straight; not very large when I saw it. You would think there were a dozen candles blazing up; but the blaze was a great deal more than that. It appeared to be on a straight line just round the banister. As quick as I saw it, I started and ran for the corner of Boylston street. It didn't take me long, you know, to run from there to the corner of Boylston street. This young man, who was at Haley, Morse & Boyden's, had just got there and opened the alarm-box. I asked him if he had turned in the alarm; and he said, "Yes." Then I waited until I got an answer from City Hall, and then started and went back to the store again. When I got there, there were some women up in the fourth or fifth story at work, and I helped to get one of them out. Then my attention was turned, after that, to trying to keep people out and the door shut. There was no other officer there, at this time, that I could see. When they opened the front door, the people began to rush in; some of them undertook to carry out some things; that made a draft, and it went pretty quick after the draft got in, when the front door was opened. There was a pretty good breeze blowing that morning. No person halloed "Fire!" or anything of that kind. The front door was shut when I first looked, and I could see no sign of any fire or smoke, until I ran over to see if there was a fire.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) No one called "Fire" at the first moment, but they called "Fire" after you stood at the door, didn't they?

A. I heard no person halloo "Fire." I was there all the time, and never heard "Fire" halloed at all.

Q. Until what time?

A. Until the engine got there, I never heard a word about fire.

Q. You mean, you heard no cry of "Fire" until you saw an engine on Washington street?

A. Not a single word. I was standing as close — well, it isn't much farther from where I was than to the end of the Court House.

Q. Some one said, "There is a fire at Haley, Morse & Boyden's"?

A. This colored man; he said he thought there was a fire when he saw this young man run out of the door to give the alarm.

Richards, I think, is his name. I saw him run out, but I didn't know there was anything up, you know. Then I ran right across and looked in. I didn't know he was going to give the alarm, or that anybody knew anything about it; and then I started for the box.

Q. Then the alarm could not have been given much quicker than it was?

A. It wasn't half a minute from the time I saw it until the alarm was given — I don't think it was more than half a minute.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Do you know anything yourself as to how this fire originated?

A. I don't know anything at all about that, because I was not in there; but some one told me (this is only hearsay,) that they were trying to put out the fire themselves. They didn't give any alarm, because, if anybody had halloed "Fire," I should have heard it where I was. I was standing right on the corner — stationed right there.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) If they had halloed "Fire" inside the building, could you have heard?

A. No, sir; of course I couldn't hear them if they were inside; the doors were closed. But then, I don't see why they should halloo "Fire" inside the building, with the doors all closed. I should have thought that they would have gone to the window.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) You say you think the name of this person who ran out was Richards?

A. He is a young man. I saw him when he came out of the store.

Q. Did you know the young man yourself?

A. No, sir, I did not know him.

Q. You say you afterwards learned what his name was?

A. He told me himself what his name was. He told me he worked up in the Freeman's Bank.

Q. What did he say his name was?

A. I thought he said his name was Richards.

HENRY C. MORSE, *sworn*.

Q. (By the CHAIRMAN.) Have you any knowledge of the origin of the fire at your store?

A. No, sir, I have not. I was at home that morning, and did not get down until about nine o'clock, and I immediately telegraphed Mr. Haley, although I found afterwards that he got a dispatch from his son-in-law, who came in on an earlier train, and mine did not reach him at all, he having left the house before it got there. I went over to Tremont street, and there was a messenger came down from my house, saying that my wife had fainted,—somebody had said I was killed,—and I went home, and did not get back again until eleven o'clock.

Q. Have you any theory of your own, from the inquiries and investigations you have made?

A. My partner, Mr. Haley, and myself, of course, have made this matter a matter of a great deal of thought and investigation. You ask me for a theory, and I will give you my theory; but, of course, it is only a theory. Our idea is, that there are two ways, and only two ways (leaving aside the question of incendiarism), that the fire could have taken; that is, from a match that may have been dropped upon the floor, and from spontaneous combustion. These are the only two plausible theories that I can accept.

Q. What substances were used for cleaning your furniture and for preserving it from moths?

A. Well, to my knowledge, turpentine and oil were used for cleaning, and shellac, of course. The beating up of the furniture was a matter that had to be attended to by the parties having the floors in charge. We had some little rattans for beating the tufted furniture and stirring up the moths, getting them out, and then killing them as they came out.

Q. Was there any substance, liquid or otherwise, used on the stuffed furniture for the purpose of killing moths?

A. Not to my knowledge.

Q. Either at this time or at any previous time?

A. No, sir.

Q. Should you have known it, if they had been in the habit of using benzine or naphtha on your stuffed furniture?

A. Yes, sir, I think I should.

Q. What were your regulations about smoking?

A. We did not allow smoking in the building. Of course, sometimes people would come in smoking, and we would not feel called upon to ask a gentleman to put out his cigar if he came up into the store. But it was against the rules.

Q. You were burned out once before, were you not?

A. Yes, sir; that is, the rear part of the Parker building.

Q. What was the cause of the fire in that case?

A. We never knew. We had a suspicion at that time that it might have been set on fire, but we could never develop the facts at all, and never were able to get any satisfaction about it.

Q. (By Mr. BIGELOW.) Do you know anything about the use of rags, and the custom in regard to the disposition of them?

A. The orders were that they should be burned every night. Those were the instructions, and, of course, as much as possible, I was looking about the store. But then, that there would not be rags left about the store, it would be impossible for me to say. That was the understanding — that every man who used rags should burn them at night.

Q. Were they held pretty strictly to that rule?

A. Yes, sir, very strictly. That was a thing we were always careful about. But you know, that when there are a large number of men about a building, you may have as strict discipline as you please, and sometimes matters of that kind will be overlooked. A man gets in a hurry to run home, and he will be careless. I always made it a point myself to be about the building constantly.

Q. Would they be permitted to lie, day after day?

A. I don't think they would, sir.

Q. How frequently were the floors swept?

A. The floors were swept every day, more or less.

Q. Would rags be permitted to be left on the floor?

A. No, sir, not unless they might — for instance, if there was a large lot of goods, there might be a rag underneath a sofa, or something, out of sight.

Q. The furniture was not moved in sweeping?

A. Not at the regular sweeping; but then occasionally there would be this thorough overhauling.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) How many people were employed in all your stores, altogether, — men and women, boys and girls?

A. I think we must have had from sixty to seventy-five. It is impossible for me to tell. I rarely see the pay-roll. The different departments would be likely to vary at different seasons of the year, and it would be impossible to tell exactly how many we had. I should say from sixty to seventy-five would be a fair average.

Q. I suppose you consider them all steady, reliable people?

A. Well, we were very careful about that. Of course, in a large number of men, we sometimes got men who were not right; but we made it a point to dismiss any man of that kind; we would not retain them, after we once found it out.

Q. Did any one use any powder, or any sort of preparation for killing moths on your furniture, to your knowledge?

A. No, sir, they did not.

Q. (By Mr. SHAW.) Do you know anything about any preparation that was used by Mr. Kassell there?

A. No, sir, I do not. Mr. Kassell was a prominent man, and a man whom we put responsibility upon, and I don't know what he may have done. I can't tell you that.

Q. (By Mr. POWER.) Did you provide a hose for the protection of your building?

A. We had a stand-pipe and hose in the 407 building?

Q. That building was connected with the one where the fire originated?

A. Yes, sir, and the hose was long enough to lead into the other building.

Q. That you put in at your own expense, for the protection of your building against fire?

A. Yes, sir. We put in a very large tank, and I think the expense of the matter was some six or seven hundred dollars — the tank, and what we put in there. I consulted Mr. Jones, of the Water Board, about the size of it, and his advice was to make it just as large as the space would admit; and I got the plumber to go and see him about it.

Q. You don't know any more about how this fire originated than you have stated?

A. No, sir, nothing; I wish I did.

Q. (By Mr. BIGELOW.) To which of the two theories you have suggested do you incline in your own mind?

A. I am inclined myself to the match theory, and yet it has objections. I know it would not be an unusual thing for a customer, coming into the store, to take out a couple of matches to light a cigar, and perhaps drop a match unconsciously, not intentionally at all, and it might get slipped under a chair, and a brass wheel might strike that, and if it did, very likely it might ignite in that way. Of course, any one else is just as well able to judge of these matters as I am.

Q. What sort of floor was it?

A. Hard pine. I think the first, second and third floors were hard pine. Above that, I think they were perhaps spruce. I am not sure about that, but I know three floors were hard pine.

Q. Was there any preparation put on the floors, — varnish, or anything of that kind?

A. They were oiled; that is all.

