

**THE FIREMAN'S OWN BOOK:
CONTAINING ACCOUNTS OF
FIRES THROUGHOUT THE
UNITED STATES**

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The Fireman's Own Book: Containing Accounts of Fires Throughout the United States by Geo. P. Little

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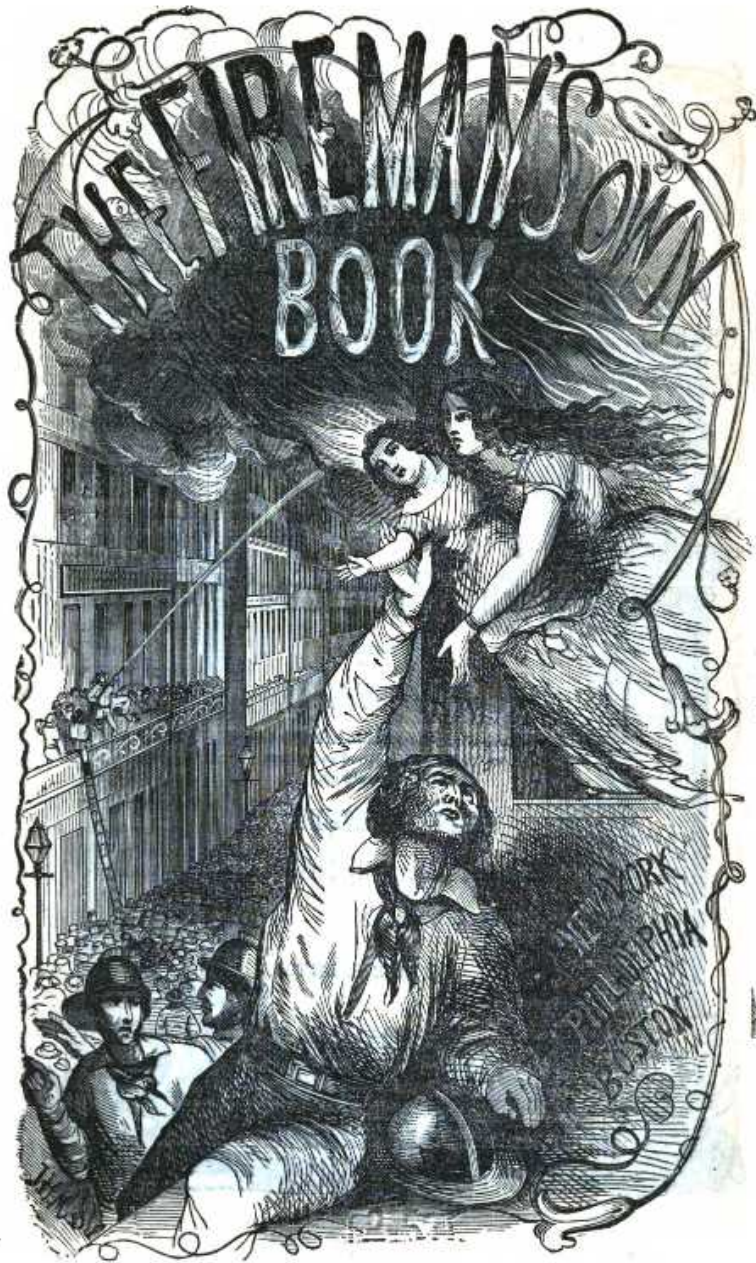
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GEO. P. LITTLE

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THE FIREMAN'S ONLY BOOK

NEW YORK
PHILADELPHIA
LONDON

THE
**FIREMAN'S
OWN BOOK:**

CONTAINING ACCOUNTS OF

**Fires throughout the United States,
AS WELL AS OTHER COUNTRIES;**

REMARKABLE ESCAPES FROM THE DEVOURING ELEMENT;

Heroic Conduct of Firemen in Cases of Danger;

MEANS OF EXTINGUISHING FIRES;

**ACCOUNTS OF FIREMEN WHO HAVE LOST
THEIR LIVES WHILE ON DUTY;**

TOGETHER WITH

**Facts, Incidents and Suggestions, Interesting and Valuable
to Firemen and Citizens generally.**

BY GEO. P. LITTLE.

Ornamented with Numerous Engravings.

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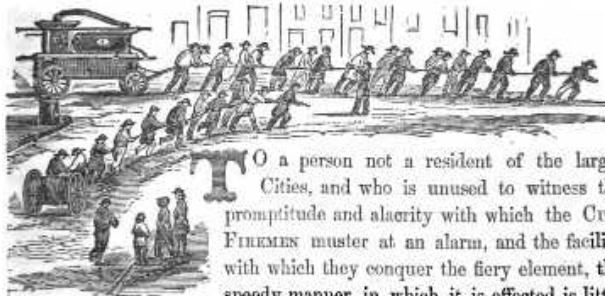
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THE GREAT
ILLUSTRATED
BOOK OF FIRES.

The Scene of a City Fire.



TO a person not a resident of the larger Cities, and who is unused to witness the promptitude and alacrity with which the CITY FIREMEN muster at an alarm, and the facility with which they conquer the fiery element, the speedy manner in which it is effected is little less than miraculous. You are horror-struck at viewing erections of the most combustible description, exposed to the combined action of vast sheets of flame, and a raging wind; and before you have time to reflect on the amount of property likely to be destroyed, the exposure to be endured, and the lives placed in jeopardy—Behold! the destructive element is conquered! its crimson tongues, which hissed defiance, are silenced, and the languid struggles of the palsied flames, exhibit the impotence of the dying gladiator.

Although I have become so far identified with the City by a residence from childhood, that its sights and sounds are incorporated with my earliest recollections, — yet even in me the occurrence of an imposing fire at night creates no little excitement and interest. First, the slow meas-

ured chimes of the deep sounding bells come booming over the roofs of the houses, insinuating themselves into your ear in the dead watches of the night, when your senses are locked in oblivion; and if you are a heavy sleeper, and the mammoth sentinels fail to arouse you, there are brazen tongues of lesser note, which one by one swell the nocturnal chorus, until the most deeply magnetized slumberer is startled by their rude summons. But if fatigue and lassitude cause you to turn sluggishly on your side, and you endeavor, by burying yourself under the coverlets, to shut out the discordant notes, lay not the flattering unction to your soul, that success has crowned your exertions. Lo! from beneath your casement the cry of "*Fire! Fire!! Fire!!!*" is screamed with sufficient force and energy to frighten you from your propriety; and, as if that was not enough, the ponderous engine rattles along the pavement with such vehemence, that your very bed trembles beneath you. The foreman of the company shouts through his trumpet with appalling vigor; the watchman sounds his rattle, or strikes the sidewalk with his well-seasoned club, the echo from which reverberates with fearful distinctness; the noise increases, until you are doubtful whether your own house is not on fire: and at length, what with alarm and vexation, you are fain to submit to your fate by leaping on the floor, and raising the sash to take an observation.

If the night is dark, that optical illusion which has led many a poor wight to follow the light of a City Fire, until it seemed, like the fountains of Tantalus, to recede from his approach, causes you to hastily array yourself in suitable apparel to encounter the night air; and a moment finds you among the moving mass, shouting *Fire!* at the top of your voice, determined, if compelled to the encounter, to demean yourself like a well-bred citizen, by extending to your neighbors the same interesting information which the multitude has lavished on you.

And now the scene really becomes exciting:—the rolling engines have imparted to you a portion of the ardor which animates their leather-capped propellers: you forget that street after street has been passed, since you emerged from your door; your walk insensibly increases to a trot, your trot to a gallop—until, nearly exhausted, you are confronted by the curling flames.

If you are deeply interested in the stock of a fire insurance company, your first reflection leads you to ponder on the risks taken in that locality—if in the jobbing trade, your memory reverts, with surprising

facility, to the debtor side of your ledger, to ascertain whether the names of the sufferers are therein recorded; and, if exempt from the calamities incident to either position, you look, with that placid composure, on the scene, which ancient and modern philosophers have ever exhibited when dwelling on the mishaps of their particular friends!—But soon the enthusiasm of the less sober part of the crowd communicates itself to your inner man; you view, with thrilling interest, the movements of yonder brave man, who has, at the risk of his life, succeeded in rescuing the infant which he brings to the arms of its frantic mother,—and now



your attention is fixed upon his brother Fireman, ascending the roof of an elevated building, the interior of which is in flames! You hold your breath, as he quits the falling rafters to perch, like an eagle, on the brick or stone abutment which trembles beneath his weight, and are dizzy with gazing on his form, now blackened with smoke, now crimson with flame; until your alarm is converted into admiration as you see him grasp the pipe and shout, with perfect self-possession, "*Play away, number twelve!*" But soon the sounds rapidly increase in breadth and volume. Engine

after engine rolls along, until scores are stationed around the scene of action; the Engineers and Foremen direct the course of their machines from point to point; the junior members of the brotherhood fly with the speed of thought from front to rear, and from rear to front, displaying all the impetuosity of youth, with the regularity of experience. The well-disciplined senior, with anxious but collected countenance, directs his efforts with precision and force. The more timid of the unhoused sufferers rush along in wild alarm, while the self-possessed gather up the fragments, snatched from the devouring element, and are occupied in transporting them to a place of safety. But a huge column of flame and smoke now pierces the heavens, and the crash of falling timbers, and masses of brick and stone, is heard high above the din. The well-trained Fireman has just quitted his perilous station on the wall, and covered with cinders, ashes and mortar, appears unhurt among his comrades.

And now look about you, if a lover of the picturesque, and view a scene worthy of the delineation of a Hogarth. Stretched as far as the eye can reach on either hand, the motley crowd are illuminated by the ocean of flame which rolls and darts from side to side, as if lashing itself into fury, preparatory to a final struggle. Here may be seen standing out in bold relief the haggard lineaments of Vice—the bloated face and distended eye-balls of Dissipation—the fierce glance of Passion—the clouded visage of Anxiety—the wrinkled brow of Care—the furrowed cheek of Grief—the withered form of Disease—the tattered garb of Penury. Yonder stands the pampered favorite of Wealth jostled by the beggar who was but now spurned from his door; virtue and vice, male and female—all conditions, sexes, colors and ranks, are here mingled in temporary fellowship—every feature exposed, and every form distinct in the glare of this artificial day.

But the scene appears not alone to the eye. Every emotion which agitates the human breast here finds a voice. The wild cry of terror, the boisterous shout of merriment, the reckless glee of boyhood, the feeble wail of infancy, the agonizing shriek of suffering, the rude rebuke of austerity, the alluring accents of deceit, the stern mandates of authority, are all blended in strange discord.

The wily courtesan is playing her insinuating tale into the charmed ear of some country dupe; the curious searcher after hidden secrets accosts each bystander, in turn, to ascertain the cause of the conflagration, the names of the sufferers, and the amount of loss; the mechanic whispers to his fellow that it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good; the