

I began now to turn my thoughts a little to public affairs, beginning, however, with small matters. The city watch was one of the first things that I conceiv'd to want regulation. It was managed by the constables of the respective wards in turn; the constable warned a number of housekeepers to attend him for the night. Those who chose never to attend, paid him six shillings a year to be excus'd, which was suppos'd to be for hiring substitutes, but was, in reality, much more than was necessary for that purpose, and made the constableness a place of profit; and the constable, for a little drink, often got such ragamuffins about him as a watch, that respectable housekeepers did not choose to mix with. Walking the rounds, too, was often neglected, and most of the nights spent in tippling. I thereupon wrote a paper to be read in Junto, representing these irregularities, but insisting more particularly on the inequality of this six-shilling tax of the constables, respecting the circumstances of those who paid it, since a poor widow housekeeper, all whose property to be guarded by the watch did not perhaps exceed the value of fifty pounds, paid as much as the wealthiest merchant, who had thousands of pounds' worth of goods in his stores.

On the whole, I proposed as a more effectual watch, the hiring of proper men to serve constantly in that business; and as a more equitable way of supporting the charge, the levying a tax that should be proportion'd to the property. This idea, being

approv'd by the Junto, was communicated to the other clubs, but as arising in each of them; and though the plan was not immediately carried into execution, yet, by preparing the minds of people for the change, it paved the way for the law obtained a few years after, when the members of our clubs were grown into more influence.

About this time I wrote a paper (first to be read in Junto, but it was afterward publish'd) on the different accidents and carelessnesses by which houses were set on fire, with cautions against them, and means proposed of avoiding them. This was much spoken of as a useful piece, and gave rise to a project, which soon followed it, of forming a company for the more ready extinguishing of fires, and mutual assistance in removing and securing of goods when in danger. Associates in this scheme were presently found, amounting to thirty. Our articles of agreement oblig'd every member to keep always in good order, and fit for use, a certain number of leather buckets, with strong bags and baskets (for packing and transporting of goods), which were to be brought to every fire; and we agreed to meet once a month and spend a social evening together, in discoursing and communicating such ideas as occurred to us upon the subject of fires, as might be useful in our conduct on such occasions.

The utility of this institution soon appeared, and many more desiring to be admitted than we thought convenient for one company, they were advised to

form another, which was accordingly done ; and this went on, one new company being formed after another, till they became so numerous as to include most of the inhabitants who were men of property ; and now, at the time of my writing this, tho' upward of fifty years since its establishment, that which I first formed, called the Union Fire Company, still subsists and flourishes, tho' the first members are all deceas'd but myself and one, who is older by a year than I am. The small fines that have been paid by members for absence at the monthly meetings have been apply'd to the purchase of fire-engines, ladders, fire-hooks, and other useful implements for each company, so that I question whether there is a city in the world better provided with the means of putting a stop to beginning conflagrations ; and, in fact, since these institutions, the city has never lost by fire more than one or two houses at a time, and the flames have often been extinguished before the house in which they began has been half consumed.\*

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\* This fire company was formed Dec. 7, 1736. It was designed primarily for the security of the property of its members, though they did not limit their usefulness to their own members when their property was not in danger. The Union Fire Company was in active service as late as 1791. In a roll of the companies of that day we find it heading the list, having thirty members, one engine, two hundred and fifty buckets, thirteen ladders, two hooks, no bags, and one eighty-foot rope.

It will be seen by the articles of association which follow, that the number of members was restricted to thirty. The applicants in a year or two much exceeded this number, and there being no possibility of uniting with it, measures were taken to form a new company, which resulted in 1738 in the establishment of the second voluntary fire company,

In 1739 arrived among us from Ireland the Reverend Mr. Whitefield, who had made himself re-

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“The Fellowship.” See a series of interesting sketches of the fire apparatus and the Philadelphia Fire Department, between the years 1701 and 1802, written for the Philadelphia *Sunday Dispatch*, by Thompson Westcott.

“Articles of the Union Fire Company of Philadelphia, originally formed Dec. 7, 1736.

“I. That we will each of us, at his own proper charge, provide six leather buckets and two bags, the bags to be made of good ozenburgs or wider linen, whereof each bag shall contain four yards at least, and shall have a running cord near the mouth, which said buckets and bags shall be marked with their own names respectively and company, and shall be kept ready at hand, and shall be applied to no other use than for preserving our own and our fellow-citizens’ houses, goods and effects, in case of fire as aforesaid.

“II. That if any of us shall neglect to provide his buckets and bags as aforesaid, or when so provided shall neglect to keep them ready for the uses herein mentioned, or shall apply them to any other purpose, he shall forfeit and pay to the clerk for the time being, for the use of the company, the sum of 1-8th of a dollar for each bucket or bag misapplied or wanting, except any of them happen to be lost at a fire.

“III. That if any of the buckets or bags so marked as aforesaid shall be lost or damaged at any fire, the same shall be supplied or repaired out of the stock of the company, provided notice be given thereof to the company within four months after such loss or damage.

“IV. That we will, all of us, upon hearing of FIRE breaking out, immediately repair to the same with at least one-half of our buckets and bags, and there exert our best endeavors to extinguish such fire, and preserve the goods and effects of such of us as may be in danger. And if more than one of us shall be in danger at one time, we will divide ourselves with the remainder of our buckets and bags as nearly as may be, to be equally helpful. And to prevent suspicious persons from coming into or carrying any goods out of such houses as may be in danger, two of our members shall constantly attend at the doors until all the goods and effects that can be saved are packed up and carried to a place of safety. And upon hearing the cry of FIRE in the night-time we will immediately cause sufficient lights to be distributed in such parts of the houses of such of our company as may be thought in danger, in

markable there as an itinerant preacher. He was at first permitted to preach in some of our churches ; but the clergy, taking a dislike to him, soon refus'd him their pulpits, and he was oblig'd to preach in the fields. The multitudes of all sects and denominations that attended his sermons were enormous,

order to prevent confusion and enable their friends to give them more speedy and effectual assistance. And moreover, as this association is intended for a general benefit, we do further agree, that whenever a FIRE breaks out in any part of the city, though none of our houses, goods or effects may be in apparent danger, we will nevertheless repair thither with our buckets and bags as before mentioned, and give our utmost assistance to such of our fellow-citizens as may stand in need of it, in the same manner as if they belonged to this company.

“ V. Provides for eight meetings during the year, and every member shall pay three shillings for his share of the reckoning of the evening. Members not there at the commencement of the evening to pay one shilling ; those not there during the entire evening to pay four shilling.

“ VI. Provides that each of us, in our turns, agreeable to the order of our subscriptions, serve the company as clerk or get some other member to serve in our stead, whose duty it shall be to inspect the condition of all our buckets, bags, ladders and engine, and make report at each meeting. The article also sets out the duties of the clerk, such as giving notice of meetings, keeping minutes, etc.

“ VII. Provides for the election of treasurer and prescribes his duties.

“ VIII. Provides that the company shall not consist of more than thirty members, etc.

“ IX. Provides that each member shall keep a copy of these articles and a list of all the members' names fixed in open view near his buckets, on pain of forfeiture for each, as often as the same is reported to the company.

“ X. Provides that all fines shall be paid to the treasurer for the use of the company.

“ XI. That upon the death of any of our company the survivors shall, in time of danger as aforesaid, be aiding and assisting the widow of such decedent during her widowhood, as if her husband had been living—she only keeping her buckets and bags in repair, and causing them to be sent to every fire aforesaid.”—B.