

FIRES IN CATLETTSBURG.

[CONTINUED.]

FROM the coming of Sawney Catlett, in 1808 or thereabout, down to July 22, 1878, no widespread conflagration had ever fallen on the place. Fires had at different times broken out, and single dwellings, shops, stables, or outhouses had been consumed, but had always been extinguished, or ceased further ravage for lack of adjoining buildings to spread the flames. The town authorities were both unable and unwilling to provide either a fire-engine or a ladder and bucket company, to buffet with the flames, should they be put in motion by some unforeseen cause.

In all alarms given of fire, no people could have responded to the call with greater unanimity or alacrity than did the population of Catlettsburg; for not only would stalwart men rush to the rescue, bucket, ladder, or ax in hand, but women and children were often first to appear on the scene of danger, to add a mite toward extinguishing the flames which threatened the destruction of the houses of the place, dearer to them than any spot on earth. For nearly a generation fires occurred, either at short or long intervals, doing, it is true, but slight damage to property,

entailing but a small loss on some one only, who if not able to stand the loss alone, was helped by the charitably inclined.

As no one had badly suffered by a fire in the place, although the buildings generally were of wood, and many were mere fire-traps, the inhabitants had somehow fallen into a state of false security, and expected, or at least hoped, that the same good fortune would continue to fall to their lot. But the hope proved delusive in the end. A bitter day came when none expected it. A repose of many months, in which no fire-bug had kindled a flame in any building in the place, had led the inhabitants to believe their property was safe from the incendiary torch, or the accident that kindles a spark that burns up great cities, as well as small towns. This hope was scattered to the winds.

On the 22d of July, 1877, at just twelve o'clock, noon, the alarm was sounded that Peter Paul Schauer's bakery on South Front Street, was on "fire." Scores then repeated the fearful little monosyllable. Dinner-bells continued ringing after their usual call for dinner, while the large church-bells pealed forth in louder tones, warning the people of approaching danger. Above the hoarse voices of the people and loud ringing of dinner and church bells, the whistle at every mill and factory screamed shrilly, like some wild monster raising his voice above the clamor of pandemonium. The noise was terrific, equaled only by

the sight of the towering blaze from the burning building. Two minutes after the alarm was given, the streets and alleys approaching the ill-fated house were a surging mass of terror-stricken humanity. One look from even the least practiced was sufficiently convincing that no human aid, without the immediate help of a fire-engine, could quench the flames and save the building.

The fire had burst through the brick chimney or stack of the bakery, and had set the house to burning, inside and outside, near the roof. It was a two-story frame and as dry as powder. Before any one could form or express an opinion as to the best thing to do under the circumstances, seeing they had no fire-engine, the fire was spreading to other buildings. All hands, including young ladies and elderly matrons, the fairest of Catlettsburg's womanhood, almost instinctively betook themselves to saving the goods, merchandise, and household effects of the people whose houses lay in the range of the devouring element.

The day was not only intensely hot, but not a breath of air stirred sufficient to put in motion the down on a gossamer-plant; yet the flames and smoke caused an artificial motion that propelled the fire from the river backward. So rapid was the spread of the flames that in two hours from the first alarm, all the buildings, from the foot of Main Street to Center, thence to Louisa, and onward to Clay Street, were a mass of ruins, or were fiercely

burning, save only the dwelling of Mrs. Alex. Botts; thence to South Front Street, on Sandy, and down to Main. A cordon of men, with blankets, carpets, quilts, etc., was formed on Main Street, opposite the burning houses, and all the way up to Clay Street, who, by keeping the cloths saturated with water, prevented the wild flames from reaching across the avenues named, and firing the buildings on the opposite side.

Within an hour and ten minutes after the fire had started on its wild career, farmers living two miles below Catlettsburg in Ohio had hurried over the river with their teams, to assist in hauling goods, merchandise, and household plunder to places of safety.

By three o'clock P. M. all was in ruins. The people, or all save a very few left on guard, retired to partake of refreshments, the first since breakfast, while many of them had no food, nor house in which to eat it if they had the food, having lost all, every thing but their lives and energy; yet God is the Father of all, and every man is a brother. No one returned to look again upon the awful wreck and ruin caused by the fire-fiend that had not partaken of food to his full satisfaction. Those who were not burned out fed their brethren in distress out of their larders with a heartiness so liberal as to show the true principles of benevolence and charity.

Great occasions bring out great deeds. Hu-

manity was touched by the great stroke. The wail of distress from the sufferers affected all the family of man dwelling in the place. All felt stricken. All suffered directly or through the sympathetic touch. Catlettsburg people, who were not material losers by the fire, most nobly dispensed their charity in tokens the most substantial.

But Catlettsburg people were not alone in their deeds of charity at this period of sore distress; for before five o'clock P. M. had been measured by the sun's steady tread, Ashland, through a delegation of her generous citizens, had sent up large stores of food, clothing, bedding, and general household goods, and established a commissary near the burnt district, from which supplies were furnished to those who had lost all or had suffered by the great fire. The Ashland store was kept open night and day for more than a week, from which every one who asked was assisted, without money or price.

When gratitude is no longer held as a cardinal virtue as well as grace, Catlettsburg will forget the noble charity bestowed upon her stricken children by Ashland's generous sons and daughters, but not before.

A few days after the fire took place the board of trustees of the town passed an ordinance that no wooden houses should be erected on that part of the burnt district lying between Main, Center, Louisa, and Franklin Streets, and the Sandy and

Ohio Rivers, a space covering at least four-fifths of that burned over by the fire. Nine-tenths of the houses consumed were of wooden material, and the town board was morally bound to legislate as far as possible to provide against a future calamity like the one just passed. They provided, by solemn ordinance, that ever after no frame or other wooden building should be erected on the burnt district, except that part lying above Franklin Street. The ordinance, no doubt, worked hardships to a very few, but that it was a wise measure, calculated to advance the private interests of the many and redound to the great benefit of the general public at large, no one whose opinion is valuable has seriously doubted. The block upon block of palatial brick structures built since the fire, covering four-fifths of the ground burned over, is a standing proof that the Fire-line Ordinance, as it is called, was passed none too soon.

There was sadness in the hearts of the people as they viewed the ruins spread out in hot ashes and burning cinders before their smoke-swollen eyes. But they were buoyed up with the hope that a brighter day would dawn upon them. And with this hope to cheer them onward to activity, many had planned in their minds at least to build again as soon as the ashes could be cleared away. This determination was entertained by many before sleep came to their eyes after the great fire.

Where to obtain brick with which to lay the

walls, was the problem to be solved by every one. Home supply had never been good, nor even sufficient for ordinary demands. Now many were wanted, and few to supply the great demand. Captain Honshell, in three days after the conflagration, solved the problem to the satisfaction of nearly all who wanted to build. Representing his son, Gus. Honshell, and James W. Damron, doing business on Front Street as Damron & Honshell, he contracted with the Messrs. Blair, of Cincinnati, to furnish brick from that place, and to lay them in the walls at a less sum than had been thought possible by even home builders; and the material was greatly superior.

That stroke of Captain Honshell opened the way to all who wished to commence at once to build. In a very few days most of the spacious brick structures adorning Front and Division Streets were under contract. The merchants were permitted to erect temporary store-houses in which to transact business while their permanent houses were going up. Ten days after the fire all was life and bustle. Only during the timber-running season and in war times had Catlettsburg shown so much business life and activity as during the building period after the great fire. The great buildings went up as if by magic. By the 1st of January nearly all had moved into their new quarters, and were doing well. In fact, they had a splendid trade while in their temporary buildings.

The usual Winter trade being followed by an extra Spring and Summer boom placed Catlettsburg's merchants and business men in as good financial shape as before the fire; perhaps better. Especially was this true of those who had been prudent enough to carry even a minimum of insurance in proportion to their loss by the great fire. Thus in a year after this calamity, Catlettsburg was richer in all of the elements of substantial wealth than ever before. Of course there were cases where men, well stricken in years, or with broken health, or with some other draw-back, fell out of business line, and either disappeared from public view, or linger still in poverty's vale.

The losses by the fire were: two drug-stores, two hardware stores, two jewelry-stores, one fancy store, two shoe-stores, one clothing and custom-work store, five hotels, two saddle and harness shops, one leather and shoe finding store, two bakeries, one artist's gallery, two tin and stove stores, every grocery in town but one, six dry-goods stores, most of the lawyers' and other offices in the place, Masonic and Odd Fellows halls and regalia, and sixty dwellings.

NEW ENTERPRISES AFTER THE FIRE.

FROM the coming of Sawney Catlett near the birth of the nineteenth century, who was the first inn-keeper at the Mouth, good eating-houses were

the rule, and not the exception. But when the great blaze swept from the earth every hotel in the place, D. W. Eba, an old Catlettsburg merchant, without asking co-operation from any one, employed an architect to draw plans and specifications for a hostelry commensurate with the progress of the times. Mr. Eba spared neither time nor expense in putting up and completing the building in the most substantial and artistic style, and, more still, desiring that the advanced house should not suffer for want of a fit person to run it, procured an old-time city caterer to take charge of and conduct it in a way to win the patronage of the most fastidious travelers on the road. As long as the "Alger House" stands, it will proclaim the public spirit and private enterprise of Daniel W. Eba.

The magnificent Opera-house is also a child of the fire-king, and a very stately song princess she is. Formerly all concerts and entertainments were given in the ill-adapted court-house, or found reluctant quarters in one of the churches; but now no city twice the size of the Gate City can boast of a finer structure devoted to the drama and song. The late Arthur F. Morse, like the builder of the Alger House, was an old-time merchant and business man of Catlettsburg, who possessed the New England pluck as well as taste peculiar to his section. Unaided from any quarter, he gave to Catlettsburg, in the noble structure bearing his name, an educator more potent, in a refined, cultivated

sense, than can be found in any other part of East Kentucky. Mr. Morse needs no marble slab to commemorate his life. "Morse Opera-house" is a perpetual reminder of his good taste and noble deeds.

The reader will conclude with us that a worse misfortune may overtake a town than a fire—perceiving that, while nature made the Mouth of the Sandy the Gate opening up the valley above, it was not until after the building of the large business houses, but more especially the Alger House and Morse Opera-house, all consequents of the great fire, that *City* could properly be added to *Gate*, making Catlettsburg the "Gate *City*" of East Kentucky.

THE SECOND FIRE A HOLOCAUST.

ONE would have thought that no time would have passed, nor money have been withheld, in procuring an engine to guard against a future conflagration. But the people who controlled, to a great extent, the purse-strings of the corporation felt secure in their thick, well-laid brick walls, with metallic roofs, and regarded the possession of an engine and hose as unnecessary after the destruction of so many fire-traps; and then the cost was beyond the ability of taxation to justify the expense, they argued; and as one great fire had already baptized the town in flames, it was very unlikely,

when so many causes to feed another had been removed, that a like calamity should invade the city. How delusive was that hope! A worse calamity was then knocking at the door, taunting the authorities for their indifference in not providing means to stay the flames when first they started on their furious round of death. The inhabitants, while resting in false security, suspecting no danger from the fire-fiend, were startled from their early slumber, soon after midnight, on Sunday morning, in August, 1884, by night-walkers, while on their busy rounds of sin and shame, and by one not polluted with the stain begotten of the social evil, who was going hurriedly for some son of Esculapius to administer a balm to a sick child, then lying in its crib, tossing to and fro upon its downy little bed, racked with pain and scorched with burning fever. The dismal cry of fire uttered by these was heard by others within their houses, who rushed frantically to the street and added their voices to the alarm. Soon the great church-bells pealed forth in loud, clanging tones, calling the people to the scene of danger.

When it was made known by sight or voice that Patton Brothers' great Drug Emporium was the place from whence the flames arose, a shudder ran through every breast, knowing that, in all large wholesale drug warehouses, combustible matter in great magnitude is ever piled up on shelves and platforms, and lying round loose, an inviting medium for a

fire, once under way, to feed its fury on, and to extend its sway of destruction, and sometimes death. Then it was also the very center of the best blocks of brick buildings in the city. Must they all fall before the devouring flames? Yes, they were destined to fall a prey to the fury of the flames. In a few minutes after the bells were rung, the street in front, and the alley in rear of the burning house were packed with people, drawn thither to see the progress of the fire, or to assist in extinguishing it, if possible, and to give aid in removing the goods from the burning or adjoining buildings. All saw at once that no human effort could stay the fire, so far as the Patton building was concerned. Yet all realized that, were an engine at hand, the fire could be intercepted and the adjacent buildings saved. Scores rushed into the Patton house, and as the flames spread to Andrews's dry-goods store on one side, and Prichard & Wellman's wholesale grocery and the Carpenter Mammoth wholesale dry-goods house farther on, men were busy in carrying out goods from these busy marts of trade.

All was wild confusion, when suddenly the wall between the Patton and Andrews building fell in, with a loud crash. Soon a wail of anguish went up from the red-hot bricks and blazing rubbish—a wail that struck terror to every soul who heard the awful sound. The news passed through the surging crowd that James McKenzie had been

caught beneath the falling wall, and that there were no possible means of rescuing him from the fiery furnace. Some prayed, while others cried aloud in agony! The cool-headed and more practical hastily procured long scantlings, and made a causeway on which to reach the point from which the shrieks arose, hoping to snatch him as a brand from the burning. Scores tried to make the point; but as often as they essayed, were driven back by the hot blazes and stifling smoke which met them from the first step to the last. Groans and sighs continued to arise continuously from the sufferer imprisoned in his fiery cell. Heroic men rushed forward at the great risk of life and limb, as if determined to save the suffering boy who called so piteously for help. More than half an hour had passed (some said a full hour) since first the terrible cry was heard. The father, mother, brothers, and sister of the wretched sufferer stood by and looked more dead than alive. After the long agony, a shout went up from hundreds of people when they saw several brave men bearing to the street the charred body of young McKenzie. When it was known that he still lived, their thankfulness to God was expressed with equal warmth. The poor young man, more dead than alive, was placed upon a mattress, and borne to his home, accompanied by Dr. Smiley, the family physician, who did all that it was possible for science and skill to do, in behalf of the sufferer; but science and skill,

as well as the affectionate nursing of mother, father, and sisters, all combined were impotent to save his life. He was burned to a crisp from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet, and how he bore up under the terrible stroke is a mystery. He lingered, however, for ten days before death came to release him from his great suffering, which he bore with stoic fortitude.

Shortly after McKenzie was carried home daylight appeared, and the Huntington fire company, with engine and hose, arrived, having been summoned to Catlettsburg's relief. All danger from further spread of the fire was soon quelled, when the engine began to pour vast streams of water on the burning mass and on the adjoining buildings.

About this time the news spread that a young colored man, who had come but a short time before from Virginia, and had conducted himself so well as to gain the respect of all who knew him, had been taken from the fiery mass, so badly burned as to make his recovery impossible. To add to this horror, it was soon discovered that John Graham, a colored stone-mason, had perished in the flames.

Many of the people had gone to their homes to partake of food, as the great tax upon their bodies and minds had awakened a keen sense of hunger, when reports of a fresh horror startled them. A young man by the name of David Kinner, a son of David Kinner, Sen., and a cousin of S. G. Kin-

ner, Commonwealth's attorney of the district, who was reared in Catlettsburg, but at that time had his home in Williamsburg, Ky., was visiting at Catlettsburg. Hearing the alarm of fire, he had rushed from his bed to the scene of danger, and was reported to be missing. Search was made at the home of all his relatives (for he had several uncles and aunts living in Catlettsburg), but he could not be found. The young man's relatives and the entire community were horrified to think that, in addition to the casualties already mentioned, another victim, under the most distressing circumstances, was to be added to the holocaust. The Huntington fire company had left as soon as all danger had passed of the further spread of the fire; and now men went to work with shovels, spades, and picks, to bring up from the ruins the remains of poor Kinner and the colored man, John Graham. The workmen were driven back by the pent-up heat whenever they essayed to ply their tools. To overcome this, a line was formed from the ruins to a cistern two hundred yards away, and water was passed for deadening the heat, in order to give the men a chance to proceed. The long strain upon the men of the town had well-nigh exhausted them; but others fresh from Ashland and the surrounding neighborhood, as well as a number of the more delicate sex, urged on by the instincts of humanity, took their places in the line, and passed the buckets of water for hours, or during the whole forenoon.

Among the men who stood the rays of the scorching sun was the venerable Harman Loar, of near Louisa, who was stopping at Catlettsburg at the time. Mr. Loar was not only an old man, but a cripple as well, and had to stand on one foot supported by his crutch; he proved himself a man of noble instincts. Patrick Moriarity, a popular Irish citizen of Ashland, not only labored, but his generous nature was all broken up with sympathy for the dead and their heart-broken friends.

At noon the charred remains of the young man Kinner were exhumed, only recognizable by some metal substances impervious to fire. They made such a ghastly appearance that none of his relatives dared look upon them. John Graham's mutilated body was found about the same time. The people sat down in silence, and wept. It was Sunday; but few of the people were found in the churches that day. They remained away to mingle their tears with the relatives of the dead and suffering.

A dispatch was sent to Williamsburg, Ky., notifying the parents of Mr. Kinner of the sad taking away of their noble son. They could not reach Catlettsburg before Tuesday, and on that day the funeral took place from the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, of which the young man's family were members, being closed for repairs. The beautiful edifice was most handsomely draped in weeds of mourning, and the auditorium was packed to its utmost capacity.

Rev. J. H. Jackson was equal to the occasion, and delivered a sermon of great power and pathos.

John Graham, the colored man, was buried almost as soon as his remains were exhumed, his people hurrying up the funeral. The other colored man who was injured by the flames, and died next day after the fire, had been but a short time in Catlettsburg, but had conducted himself so well as to win the esteem of all who knew him, both white and colored. The trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church opened the doors of their Church for the funeral ceremonies. The ladies of the place festooned the Church in the most appropriate style, although the man was nothing but a negro. The house was packed with an audience composed, not only of black people, who were the chief mourners in front, but the wealth and heart of the white people were out. Humanity was touched as never before in Catlettsburg. Rev. Thomas Hanford, the pastor of the Church, delivered a grand oration, and Rev. Mr. Jolly, of the Baptist Church, offered the most sublime and eloquent prayer that the author ever listened to.

Ten days after the fire poor McKenzie ceased to live. How he survived so long is a mystery past finding out. His remains were taken to the Methodist Episcopal Church, where the family worshiped. An immense audience was present, showing great sympathy. The pastor, Rev. Thomas Hanford, delivered a grand eulogy on the deceased.

McKenzie, like Kinner, had just come to manhood, and was the stay of his father's family. He was a tinner by trade.

The death of young Kinner was doubly sad for his relatives and friends to bear, from the fact that as his father, by reverses in business, had fallen somewhat into decay financially, the son was the stay of the family. Under the guidance of that clear-headed and kind-hearted business man of Lawrence, Colonel Jay H. Northup, in whose employ he had been for some time, he had grown to be an expert in measuring and judging the quality of timber, and was called down into the southeastern part of the State to take charge of one of the largest timber interests of Kentucky, at a handsome salary. Perceiving that the condition of the whole family could be financially improved by joining him at his new quarters, young Kinner induced his father to move to Williamsburg, his head-quarters in business, where the family are still living. He was spending a few days at Catlettsburg with friends, and had arranged to leave for home the day before the fire occurred, but yielded to the entreaties of a fond aunt to defer his departure for another day, by which his valuable life was brought to an awful termination.

The incineration of so many Catlettsburg people caused a reaction, and the authorities immediately procured a first-class fire-engine, with hose, and put up a substantial engine-house, at a cost

altogether of over twelve thousand dollars. The machine is first-class, and will throw a double stream with force on the roof of a six-story house. The people now have no fear of a wide-spread fire, although no number of fire-extinguishers can be expected to prevent single houses from burning. Another lesson taught is, that it is not necessary for people to rush into a burning building to save property, regardless of their own safety, in order to prove their good citizenship, as every prudent business man has it in his power to protect his interests by insurance. Mr. N. P. Andrews, in whose house the men lost their lives, warned all of the danger; but they failed to heed his advice.