FIRE AND ACCIDENT PROOF.

Brave Men Come and Go, but Old No. 3 Goes on Forever.

THE DAYS OF THE BUCKET LINE.

The Victims of the Grand Central Holocaust, the Home of the Present Veterans and Their Many Auxiliaries.

All the veins and arteries of Omaha's magnificent fire system center at No. 3 engine house, located on Harney street between Thirteenth and Fourteenth. Here come all the "still alarms" by telephone to be repeated in an instant to all the different stations of the city. Here is located the big bell whose voice are familiar to everyone and at whose first boom all the streets in the heart of the city is cleared and everybody halts to count. Here is the "brain" of the electric system, the battery with its many tiers of cells. Here is the huge hook and ladder truck which shoots a rescuing arm to a window ninety feet from the ground. Here is "the chemical" with its burnished copper cylinders and retorts, and here is the central station.

No. 3 was born on a July evening away back in 1866 and christened Engine Company No. 1. Its predecessor wrs the bucket brigade manned by such men as Benjamin Steckles, William J. Kennedy, J. S. McCormick, Henry Gray, Fred Krug, George A. Hoagland and others who are almost forgotten in fire circles. The first possession of No. 3 after the buckets was the now historic hand engine "Fire King," which subsequently was passed over to the care of No. 2.

The charter members were Gus Windheim, afterwards assistant chief under J. F. Sheeley; Charles Goodrich, Mart Ramge, Louis Novotny, A. Schlessinger and Frank Winship. Gus Windheim died in 1871 from consumption brought on by a cold contracted while battling with the Trinity church fire in 1871. He was one of the greatest fire-fighters ever connected with the Omaha department and is referred to by all the old-timers as the builder of the foundation of the present department. All the companies of Council Bluffs and Omaha were at his funeral in a body and his name has an honored place among Omahas fire archives. His son George is now captain of No. 3 chemical. Schlessinger and Novotny are gone too, and only Goodrich, Ramge and Winship are left.

In 1867, engine company No. 1 became the proud possessor of a Silby steamer and in honor of the event changed its name to Omaha No. 1.

The engine house was then on Twelfth street, between Farnam and Douglas, but in 1868 it was moved to Sixteenth and Farnam, on the site now occupied by the board of trade. Very proud of their engine in those days. The brass was never dim, the red paint never soiled and it would take a very clean handkerchief to find dust on the glossy coats of the team of horses which pulled her. Ernest Shiden was driver, T. L. Van Dorn engineer and W. Jersey stoker, and to many a great fire did they conduct their pet.

There were the gas works fire, the Union Pacific shops fire and the Beindorff bakery fires among them. The last occurred on a night so bitterly cold that when the engine stopped pumping for a few minutes she froze up and dry goods boxes and old lumber had to be piled around her and set fire before work could be continued.

The Silsby steamer was used for two years and then shelved to make room for Nebraska No. 3 when the name of the company was changed to No. 3. The Nebraska did excellent service till 1881, when the water works were completed with C. A. Salter as engineer.

With the coming of the water mains, the electric alarms and all the rest of the metropolitan system, went out the red shirts and pyrotechnics of the fire service in Omaha. No. 3 began her new era under the water works system with a two-wheeled cart manued by five men with C. A. Salter acting as captain.

In 1883 a four-wheeled cart was purchased and in 1887 the company became possessed of chemical engine No. 3.

From the days of its organization down to the present, No. 3 has been noted for the work it has done rather than her dress parades. On the list of her volunteer members are the names of Henry Lockfeldt, Lou Wilson, Lou Randall and John Lee, the brave men whose lives were sacrificed at the Grand Central hotel fire; Steve Mealio, and every fireman knows what faithful work he did from 1870 to 1881 as fireman, foreman and assistant chief The other volunteers were Bill Henry, Mart Ramge, Port Kimball, P. A. Peters, George Ketchum, Charles Rapp, Bill Flynn, Jerome Pentzel, Bill Webb, Charles Creed, George Roeder and others.

Volumes would not contain all the legends and traditions of No. 3. Probably the fastest and most daring hose cart driver in the city was Ed Kesters, nicknamed "Pawnee Ed," who drove the famous fire horse "Old Bolivar." They were a good pair; "Old Bolivar" ran like the wind, and no pace was too fast for Ed. Bolivar is winding up his long life in peace and quiet in Mike Lee's barn dreaming of the days when his slumbers were broken by the sound of a gong.

No. 3 engine house is now the most interesting of all the fire stations to the visitor. On the main floor there is behind the chain No. 3 chemical gorgeous in polished brass and nickel. On each side in their stalls stand the veteran fire horses Pete and Dick, always ready for the summons of the gong. Back of these is the huge hook and ladder truck No. 1, the perpetual admiration of the small boys and many larger boys, and its heavy team, Gray Jim and Bay Jim. Back of these again, facing the entrance from the alley, is the chief's buggy, and over each machine is suspended the harness, ready to drop upon the backs of the horses before the gong has finished sounding the alarm.

The alarm system is a stud a itself. It consists of the great gong, to which is attached a switch, which will either keep the horses in their stalls when the alarm is turned or send them out, as may be desired; the repeater, which simultaneously rouses one or all of the outlying engine houses, as may be desired; the fire alarm telephone over which come the "still alarms" sent in from the police patrol boxes to the operator, who sits day and night at his keys in the central police station, and all the complicated machinery which when the alarm is turned in releases chains, bolts and bars, unhitches the horses, stops the clock and sends men and horses at an instant's notice to their places on chemical, truck and buggy. Besides the fire telephone there is the city telephone and one connecting with the American District telegraph. There is also a private alarm operated by push button from Rector, Wilhelmy & Co.'s.

The room upstairs looks like the ward of a hospital with its rows of cots. The walls are one mass of lithographs giving a pictorial history of the drama in Omaha. There are twelve cots in the room, and each is so located that its slumbering occupant springs from his dreams to the sliding pole nearest him with the least waste of steps, sliding into his fire suit on his way with a single motion.

Just back of the long sleeping room is the battery room and the workshop and office of the linemen, who also have quarters in the home of No. 3, with a stall for their horse. George Coulter, superintendent of fire and police alarms, has charge of this department, and under him are Frank Gardner and William Inge, linemen.

Back of this again is a store room of supplies for the entire department—extra harness, oils, waste and what not. Everything, up stairs and down stairs, is in apple-pie order and always ready for business.

No. 1 hook and ladder truck is manned as follows: Joseph Lank, captain; Joe Wavrin, acting lieutenant; Frank Mezik, tillerman; Charles Pringle, driver; Eli Kling, assistant driver; Ben Winslow, assistant chief driver; James Trainer and Joe Loux, known as "Dutch Joe," laddermen.

No. 3 chemical is handled by George Windsheim, captain; Tom Dowling, driver; Charles Cox and Bert Head, pipemen.

Assistant Chief Charles Salter and his driver, Ben Winslow, respond to the alarm in the chief's buggy drawn by gray Billy.

Salter has an enviable record as a fireman in Omaha. He first became associated with old No. 3 in the volunteer service in 1876 and in about three years was made superintendent of the fire alarm telegraph. When the waterworks were established he was made second assistant chief, a position he held till Jack Galligan became chief, when he was made first assistant.

In No. 3 also J. C. Farrish reclines his long ungainly form. Who does not know "Spud," the length without breadth, which is always to be found where the heat is the most intense and the danger the greatest? He is the chief's secretary, but he is also one of the most daring and intrepid members of the force. He has been thrown from his buggy, cut by falling glass, bruised by timbers and burnt by the flames, but shows up smiling at the next fire eager for the fray.

Another important member of the family must not be forgotten, and that is "Keno," the station dog. "Keno" is really the property of Chief Salter, and is not much larger than a rat, but all the boys claim an interest in him. The tricks that dog can perform are wonderful.

The married men of No. 3 are Joseph Lank, Frank Mezik, Joseph Warrin, Charles Cox and George Windheim. "Dutch" Bill will be mar—but that is not decided. All the single men state that if there are any nice girls who want a real handsome husband who will be allowed to visit them for twelve hours each week, No. 3 is the place to find him.

THE ACCIDENT.

McKendree Bangs in New York Epoch: Within a few miles of its terminus the railroad passed through a valley, narrow, to be sure, but of great and unusual beauty. The sides and crests of the surrounding hills were dotted with the pretty cottages of suburban residents, but the country was not yet so closely settled as to have lost all picturesqueness, and, although the houses were neat, they were simple, and the lawns, though well kept, were still undisfigured by brazen or cast-iron statuary. The neighborhood had not yet reached that stage in its development where its new houses were built upon uninteresting plans furnished ready-made to rural carpenters by enterprising publishers. Nor had its occasional churchyard yet lost all sense of rest and peace. Simple gravestones there were, but no pretentious monuments. But even here death slyly took his victim unawares or stood forth to fight boldly for his own as he pleased.

It was here that many years before John Dorsey had made for himself a home, and it was here that he was now about to die.

There had been an accident. It was a very slight one, and its cause was almost ridiculous. John Dorsey, the conductor of the sleeping car train, had been the only one hurt. He, however, although atally injured, suffered almost no pain and was entirely conscious of his surroundings and condition. He had indeed stated his belief that he was to die long before the doctor had been able to ascertain the character of his injuries or to form any opinion of the probable result. His insistance upon this even annoyed the doctor.

"Dorsey," he said, "you must not speak so. You are too young to die, and we shall save you."

As soon as could be after the accident Dorsey had been carried to a neighboring house, and Dr. Irwin had been sent for by men on the train who had known of the intimate friendship which existed between the two. This friendship was of earlier date than Dorsey's connection with the railroad, and that seemed to Dorsey's fellow-empioyes to have begun almost ages before.

Although Dorsey had always been as frank and candid as a man well could be in reference to all his later life, in regard to his earlier past he was singularly reticent. Among his fellows there had always been considerable speculation as to what his youth had been. Some, who had known of his intimacy with Dr. Irwin, and of his ability to meet upon terms of personal equality the high officials of the road, and of their regard for him, believed that he had been an old college friend of the doctor's and that some accident of fate had made him a working railroad man while the doctor had secured his profession. Others, less charitable, or with an unhappier experience of the world, and puzzed by the reports which reached them of the repeated refusals of Dorsey to take other positions higher and more remunerative, believed that he must have committed some crime, and was therefore careful not to expose himself to too bright a light. As a matter of fact, he and the doctor had been classmates, but after their graduation they had lost sight of each other for a few years while Dr. Irwin pursued his studies in various foreign hospitals. Upon his return from abroad he had heard of the death of Dorsey's wife and child. He had looked Dorsey up and had expostulated with him upon his selection of a vocation. But Dorsey was silent as to the reason for his choice and quietly persistent in his determination not to change his work if he could help it.

But as frequently as he could Dorsey would visit the doctor and stay with him as much as possible, and their early friendship had grown and ripened.

"Tom," Dorsey said to the doctor almost upon his arrival, "I am glad they sent for you, but you cannot do anything."

As time went on the doctor reluctantly began to believe that Dorsey was right—that his recovery was impossible.

Deeply as the doctor was grieved he was annoyed, too, to feel that his skill would be of no avail to his old friend.

"Why did you follow such an infernal business?" he asked impatiently.

"Don't, Tom," Dorsey replied. "Don't call it that."

"And why should you be the only one to be hurt?"

"Was I the only one?" Dorsey asked.

"Yes."

"That is strange, maybe," Dorsey said, and then his calmness, which had been so remarkable, deserted him, but only for a minute.

"What caused the accident?" he asked. "Do they know?"

"Yes," the doctor replied, and he told of the little land-slide which the engineer had seen almost in time, but not quite, and the engine had run into with barely enough force to jar the train its length. "We suppose," he added, "that you must have been shaken between two cars in some way."

"Will it hurt me to talk?" Dorsey asked.

"No," the doctor answered.

"And my brain is entirely clear?"

"Certainly," the doctor replied, wondering a little.

"Then let me tell you a great deal. I had a fondness always for all cars and trains. The earliest, the pleasantest recollection I have is of the noise of coupling of cars as they were made into trains in the yards. No music was ever so sweet to me as that. I used to spend all the time I could watching the trains made up and going. No novel ever pleased me so. They made me go through college, you know. I have never regretted it, but then I wanted to be an engineer. That seemed the only place worth having.

"Then you went abroad and I married. I have always regretted that you never knew Mary.

The doctor interrupted: "You must not tell me this if it will distress you."

"It does not. I want to tell you; I have so many times wanted to tell you about her, and all. It is easy to see her now as she used to sit sometimes with her head upon my knee, and her big blue eyes looking into mine so trustfully. She had faith in me." And he paused a little.

"Yes, and it gladdens me so now I think it was. Matters, too, looked well for us. Success seemed worth striving for. Mary was jealous a little of my love for the railroad. I alway love to it, as I said. I was in business then, but our little home was close by the line. I could hear the trains go by all night if I happened to be awake. You can see the house now from the window yonder. Lift me up a little—so. Mary at first hated the railroad, but she got used to the noise, and I think after a little she paid no attention to it. She furnished our house prettily and we were happy, but she would ask me to conquer my liking for the railroad. She feared that I could not be fit for anything else, my thoughts were so occupied with it, but I laughed gently at her and went on in the same way and with the same hopes. She never doubted my love and she used to say that some time I would obey her slightest wish and follow her wherever she might lead. It may be there was a little complaint in her manner.

"When the baby was born a love of the railroad seemed to have been born in her. She would as soon as she could clap her little hands at the sound of the engine whistle. As she grew older we called her Mary, too—she would ask me in her baby way to come early to see the trains go. I needed no urging and when I could I would. Out there on the grass we would sit, and I would tell her of all the strange places we sometimes would go on the cars to see. Even then in fancy little Mary and I would go with the trains all over the world. It was rare sport to her."

Dorsey had spoken as rapidly as he could, but now he talked more slowly.

"One day I was ill at ease. Nothing that I had to do seemed worth while. I only wanted to be at home; I only wanted to feel them near me, and safe. But try as I would, it was late in the long afternoon before I could get away. It was warm, but as I hurried home a gentle breeze met me. It was a bright, beautiful day, just such a summer's day as this. It was so peaceful, and the leaves so kissed one another in the light breeze that I was calmed and the feeling I had suffered from all day left me. I was glad that we lived in the country. I was glad to be alive at all, The sun was almost behind the western hills and all that side of the valley was in shadow, but on our side it was light and everything was rarely beautiful in the sunlight. The slanting rays made our house brilliant and glorious in its color.

"As I neared home Mary came to the door, and I could see her welcoming smile. Then, shading her eyes with her hand, she looked over toward the railroad, and in a minuute screamed and ran rapidly from the house. Alarmed and wondering I ran after her. Down below on the track stood little Mary, her curls and all her pretty ribbons fluttering in the wind. Around the short curve came suddenly the fast express, and the child, as she saw the great engine bearing down upon her and heard the startling whistle, waved her little hat as though in greeting.

"Another minute and Mary would have been in time. Her dress caught in something, or she stumbled, and was so delayed; but she recovered herself quickly, and hurrying on caught little Mary in her arms, and then——it ought to be easy to tell it now."

For some little time Dorsey was silent. The doctor did not ask him to continue nor did he urge him to stop when Dorsey began again:

"For Mary it was over at once, but our child, held firmly in its dead mother's arms, lived a little while. I think she must have been hurt as I have been. She could speak, and when they brought her to me she put her little arms about my neck and said: 'I am going with the cars now.'

"It many seem strange to you," Dorsey went on shortly, "but the railroad had a greater fascination for me than ever. I staid about the cars and trains as I had in my hoyhood. I almost feared they would order me away from the yard.

"My business went to nothing just then. Perhaps my neglect hurt it, but I think not. At all events I gave it up. Then I secured a place as brakeman without much trouble."

"Was that pleasant?" the doctor asked. It was easier to interrupt Dorsey now.

"Yes, to me," he answered, "but still I was glad when I was promoted, as I was through the various grades to be a conductor."

"Has there been no chance for further promotion in all these years?"

"Oh, yes; but I have never wanted to leave my train. After a long while I applied for the place in the sleeping-cars."

For a while neither spoke. The doctor, keenly observant, thought that Dorsey had more to tell; but he waited patiently.

"Life has gone very evenly and smoothly with me since then until last night. Until last night," he repeated slowly

"Well, what happened then?" the doctor asked as Dorsey paused.

"The train had been made up with the sleepers first, nearest the engine. I was standing on the platform waiting for the starting signal to be given, when suddenly a woman passed me. Something about her—her disordered hair maybe—attracted my attention; but before I could look more closely at her an engine behind me whistled sharply, and I turned to see what was the trouble. Later, as I passed her on the train, her face seemed to bear a strange, far-off resemblance to some familiar one, but I laughed at what I thought my foolish fancy. There were very few in the first sleeper, and I returned to it after I had made my first trip through the cars. I seated myself opposite, across the aisle, from this woman. I thought it strange that although the other passengers had had their berths made up she had not; but the porter was within her easy reach and I did not feel it necessary to offer her any service.

"She was alone in her section. She sat quietly for the most part, looking out of the window, although the night was very dark. Sometimes she would become restless and excited. I thought her very nervous and that the frequent whistling of the engine startled her. As I remember it now it seems to me that she became excited a little before the blowing of the whistle. After a while I closed my eyes—it may be I fell asleep—but I was recalled to myself by a very unusual and prolonged whistle of the engine. (Our engineer was determined, it seemed, that none of us should sleep that night.) As I opened my eyes this strange woman came in from the front. Where she had been I do not know, but there was a bright and happy light in her eyes. Perhaps I should have spoken to her, but I was very tired and the temptation to rest there quietly was a very strong one.

"In a few minutes I surely fell asleep—I know I broke the rules, but it was for a minute only—I surely fell asleep, for I dreamed that dreadful day over again. Once more I was rudely awaked by the engine's whistle. As I started up a cold wind blowing through the door met me, and there stood the strange woman holding the front door open looking out into the night. Her hair had fallen loose as Mary's was that day. It was Mary. I hurried toward her.

"With a look of confidence and almost a smile of welcome, she turned to beckon me on. She sprang upon the tender and laughed joyfully, and it seemed to me she danced there. In another moment I would have held her in my arms. Then the shock came—"

As Dr. Irvin leaned over his old friend he smiled a little, but his eyes glistened strangely. Had the circumstances been otherwise it may be he would have been tempted to discuss the matter with Dorsey and attempted to convince him that he had been led by a simple hallucination. As it was he tried only to make him comfortable for the little time remaining to him.