

FIRE FIGHTING.

Something About the Helena Fire Department, and How They Are Fixed for Fighting the Destroying Element.

Helena has not had a fire for many weeks. Believing that the absence of immediate danger might be leading to a feeling of false security in the Fire Department, a reporter of this paper yesterday stepped quietly into the fire engine house on Clore street, half expecting to find prevailing disorder in that institution and the fire lads napping. But no; Sam Richardson, the engineer, and his assistant were bustling around in a busy way and there was enough steam in the engine to keep up a continual hiss.

"Hello! Sam," said the reporter; "what's up? fire somewhere?"

"No, I guess not," was the reply; "what makes you ask?" and he sidled over toward the "Rescue," as if he thought the reporter might have come to give an alarm.

"Why, I see you have steam up and are rushing around as if there was something wrong."

"Oh!" said Sam; "that's all, is it? We never let steam go down entirely. That engine has been here seven years, and in all that time she has never been cool."

He here directed the reporter's attention to a "heater" with a tank on top of it that will probably hold a barrel of water. This heater very much resembles a small upright engine, and the fire is never allowed to go out in it. The water in the tank is kept in a boiling state and a stream of it is continually running into the boiler of the fire engine, while by another pipe the water is running back into the heater. This keeps the water in the boiler of the engine always hot, and it requires but a very short time to get steam up. The furnace of the engine is always filled with split pine sticks soaked in oil so that they will ignite readily. On what might be properly called the hearth of the engine, immediately in front of the furnace door, a sort of chimneyless lamp is kept constantly burning, and by its side lays a torch soaked with oil. The horses, which are kept in a stable that opens at the entrance to the engine house, are always harnessed. They are trained animals, and all that is necessary to do when the alarm bell is struck, is to throw their bridles on and open the stable door, and the horses without further urging run and take their places on the tongue of the engine.

Having heard of the unusual celerity with which the boys get the "Rescue" onto the street and desiring to get a correct idea of the manner in which it is done, the reporter asked Richardson if he would give a practical illustration.

"Certainly," said Sam. He first went on to explain that they never undressed at night, as they did not know at what moment they might receive the alarm, which is given them from the watch tower by means of a telephone. To make the trial as near like the actual as possible the two men took their places in their bunks, which are near the engine, and the reporter with watch in hand, prepared to

SOUND THE ALARM.

At the sound the men sprang to duty, Richardson to the engine and his assistant to turn in John and Jerry, the horses, which as soon as the alarm sounded began pawing anxiously in their stalls outside. The engineer ran to the engine and seizing the torch and lighting it, thrust it into the furnace. The inflammable material sprang into a sudden blaze. By the time this was done, which required but a moment, the bridles had been put on the horses, the stable door opened, and they rushed excitedly in and took their places. It was but the work of a moment to attach them to the engine, and in less than a minute and a half from the time the alarm was sounded everything was in readiness to start, with a roaring fire burning under the boiler and steam almost up. This is the regular routine when the fire alarm is sounded, and explains the short time required to get to a fire. The horses are put through this course of training every day.

THE DEPARTMENT

is a volunteer organization, consisting of seventy-five members, which is the full number allowed by law. These members are exempt from jury duty. The officers are T. H. Kleinschmidt, Acting Chief Engineer, and W. H. Bullard, Secretary and Assistant Engineer. There are three men employed constantly by the department—the two at the engine house and a watchman at the tower. They are paid a regular salary and are honorary members of the Library Association. The

DEPARTMENT EQUIPMENTS

are as follows:

One fifth class Silsby engine with tender and hose reel, the latter carrying 750 feet of hose. The Silsby is an excellent machine, having been in use for seven years, in which time it has not required repairs to exceed \$10 in cost. It throws 400 gallons of water per minute and will send a stream 200 feet vertically.

One second class Huneman hand engine with hose reel carrying 600 feet of hose.

One hook and ladder truck with fire hooks and fire ladders, the latter ranging in length from fifteen to forty feet. The equipment of fire buckets is not very imposing, but as they are seldom called into use, the supply is perhaps sufficient.

They have 500 feet of hose in coils, and there is in addition 500 feet of American Jacket hose now in transit, together with a new hose reel, which will enable the department to keep all its hose reeled and ready for use.

There are also in transit three new non-freezing hydrants of the Silsby pattern. They are intended to take the place of those now in use on Main street, which will be removed to less exposed points.

Following is a list of hydrants and cisterns, with location and capacity which furnish

THE WATER SUPPLY.

1.—Corner of Bridge and Main streets; cistern; capacity 185 barrels.

2.—Main street, in front of Zeigler's stable; hydrant; capacity unlimited.

3.—Main street, in front of the First Na-

tional Bank; hydrant; capacity unlimited.

4.—Main street, in front of Greenwood, Bohm & Co.'s; hydrant; capacity unlimited.

5.—Corner of Main street and Broadway; cistern; capacity 185 barrels.

6.—Clore street, between Price and Edward streets; cistern; capacity 185 barrels.

7.—Benton Avenue, between Clark and Edward streets; cistern; supply unlimited.

8.—Powers' Corner, Benton Avenue; cistern; capacity 185 barrels.

9.—Price street, between Clore and Main streets; cistern; capacity unlimited, the water running in as fast as taken out.

10.—At the United States Assay office, Broadway; cistern, capacity 1,000 barrels.

11.—Corner of Warren street and Fifth Avenue; cistern; capacity 540 barrels.

12.—Corner of Ewing street and Sixth Avenue; cistern; capacity 175 barrels.

13.—Corner of Broadway and Breckinridge streets; cistern; capacity 185 barrels.

14.—Academy Hill; pond; supply unlimited.

15.—At Mike Reinig's; cistern; capacity about 100 barrels, supplied with two-inch pipe.

Any ordinary fire, barring accidents, can be handled with ease with the present equipments, but as the engine is liable to accident at any time, it would add greater security to the city if another of the Silsby fifth class engines were added.