for having preserved their property from destruction, and with the card, all thought of further obligation ceases. The next enquiry is of what number is the material composed. There are seventeen fire companies in our city, and your committee are of the opinion, from all the information they have been able to obtain, that the number of active firemen, whose services can be relied upon at all hours does not at this time exceed four hundred; indeed from information in possession of the committee, they believe that at one of the most destructive fires during the past winter, that on South and Commerce streets, there was not probably two hundred persons present, firemen and citizens. Your committee are also informed that although at one time the fire threatened to be much more destructive than it proved to be, it was found impossible to obtain the aid of the citizens who were present in working the apparatus at the fire; the small body of volunteer firemen, impelled by their ambition, continued to labor for more than five hours in one of the most inclement nights during the past winter. In 1848 there were 412 alarms of fire, 41 of which proceeded from chimneys, 148 were false, and 223 actual fires, none of which except that in the north-western section of the city, (where the supply of water is very limited) were destructive in their effects, which your committee think is conclusive as to the efficiency of our fire department to extinguish fires. The great body of our active firemen, those who do the labour, would hail with pleasure any measure that would relieve them from the odium that now attaches to their name. We fear that if their be not some efficient action on the part of those whose duty it is to prevent and punish, that our fire department will cease to exist. Already has the number been so reduced that what once was a pleasure has now become a labour. Whilst your committee are willing to award to the great body of our firemen all praise for the noble and disinterested discharge of their volunteer duty, they regret that they are compelled to admit that there are some who are attached to our fire companies who are a disgrace to themselves, to our firemen and to the city, — we are of the opinion that no man should be permitted to remain a member of a fire company or to attend with one at fires, who is known to have been engaged in a fire riot; all such should at once be expelled from any company, and if they should persist in running with the apparatus of the company they should then be handed over to the civil authorities for punishment. That the class of persons to which we allude are the cause of the riots among firemen is evident from the fact, that between the hours of 11 o,clock, P.M. and day-light a riot is almost unknown; and that their services are unnecessary is also evident from the fact, that between the hours named, fires are promptly extinguished

seldom extending beyond the house in which they originate. The limited number which compose the fire department proper, is insufficient to work the apparatus of our fire companies, and unless a different state of things can be brought about, the small number of active firemen will we fear be further reduced, as few or none now become firemen, and however much those who are at present members of our fire companies, may be impelled by ambition, pride and anxiety that the company to which they are attached should excel, their physical ability will not enable them to endure the labour and fatigue consequent upon the frequent demand for their services. No other class of men perform the same amount of labour and endure the same privations. The firemen are at all times expected to be ready; roused from his bed of slumber by the midnight alarm he repairs to the scene of danger, careless of all consequences to himself, and although he may have been laboriously engaged in earning for himself the means of subsistance the preceding, and must of necessity the ensuing day, he will toil for hours in peril and danger to preserve property from destruction, in which he has not the most remote interest. His acts are never heralded to the world, no promotion awaits the reports of his noble daring, further than his fellow members and brother firemen, his acts are never heard of.

To those who have never been engaged in the discharge of the duties of active firemen the excitement produced with that portion of our citizens may appear unnecessary and uncalled for; when the excitement consequent upon a fire leads to excess, it is unnecessary, but when it impels our firemen to prompt action and the efficient discharge of their duty, it is commendable. It is frequently the case that two or more companies arrive at a water source, at so near the same time that each think they are entitled to it, and from this cause difficulties will arise, and not unfrequently unpleasant collisions between the companies; in most cases such difficulties are amicably adjusted immediately after the momentary excitement is over.

A practice prevails to some extent, which your committee have witnessed with regret, and which we consider highly reprehensible. Baltimore street is the great thoroughfare for all companies passing east and west; the practice to which we allude, that of some of our companies when arriving at the cross street leading to their engine houses halting with their apparatus for other companies to pass, and which stopping of the apparatus, frequently leads to the most serious riots, which would not have occurred, had the company moved on without halting. For the honor of our firemen we trust the practice will be discontinued.