

# FEARLESS BOSTON FIREMEN

## Who Take All Kinds of Chances

A SERIES OF PERSONAL STORIES,

### DISTRICT CHIEF WILLIAM J. GAFFEY

"While I have had at least my share of thrilling experiences during the 35 years I have spent in the fire service, what I consider 'the' thriller of the lot did not occur while I was engaged at a fire. It is more than 10 years ago since it happened, but undoubtedly many of the so-called fans will remember it.

"At the time I was captain at Engine 13, Cabot st. An alarm came from old box 87 at Shawmut av and Lenox st. The apparatus left quarters with Thomas J. Kenneally, now at Mason st, driving the steamer. I was riding on the rear of the engine.

"On the way to the fire the sudden lurching of the apparatus caused the reinsman to be hurled from his seat to the street and the horses started on a rampage.

"Knowing that the runaways were a menace to life and traffic, I acted quickly. I crawled from the firebox over the suction pipe, thence to the seat, and from there worked my way down onto the pole and recovered the reins. Getting back to the seat I got the horses under control again and proceeded to the fire.

"Telling this story is much easier than the execution of the feat was, as every moment I feared that I would be swept off the suction or dislodged from the pole or seat.

"The late Col Henry S. Russell was the Fire Commissioner at that time, and he commended me in general orders and allowed me a day off in recognition for the act.

"Some years prior to the checking of the runaway under such unusual con-



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ditions, with Ex-Lieut Joseph A. Webber, son of the late Chief Webber, I saved a child from being burned to death on Bradford st. To know that I had saved a life made me supremely happy, but I certainly obtained the thrill of my life when I navigated my way to the pole via the suction to stop the runaways."

Mr Gaffey is 56 years old and joined the service in 1881. He saw service with many busy downtown and South End companies. He was named a lieutenant in 1893 and a captain in 1896 and a year ago in January was advanced to district chief and placed in charge of the Charlestown district. He has been at his present station since August last.