

TOPICS OF AN OLD-TIMER

**More of the Irish in America—
The Career of Dennis J. Sweeney, Chicago's Distinguished Fire Chief, who saw Fifty Years of Active Service and was never known to make a mistake**

In a late contribution I claimed the superiority and adaptiveness of the Irish as policemen. That claim, I think, is now generally conceded. There is another branch of strenuous American life in which I choose to put in a claim for them as being unsurpassed, and that is as firemen. The greatest fire city of America is Chicago, and as in the case of the policemen, it is from there I am going to draw my samples too.

There is no class of citizens that people go crazy over more readily than their heroes; men who have distinguished themselves in war, or athletics, just as we have here now a small craze over Sherring, the young Irish-Canadian of Hamilton, who took the first or Marathon prize in walking at the Olympic games of Greece a few weeks ago, and just as Canadians have in the past gone crazy over the rowing achievements of Hamilton, O'Connor and others.

I do not know that Chicago has any particular claim to put forward in this particular line of heroes, but she certainly has in others that are more practical and enduring. In the war of the rebellion she gave to the Union cause General Mulligan, the hero of Lexington; to the police service she gave John D. Shea, an officer who knew no fear nor no failure; and to the fire-fighting service, Dennis J. Sweeney, the greatest fireman America ever produced. And it is of him I am about to write to the readers of the Register to-day.

Dennis J. Sweeney, like Peter Donahoe, San Francisco's leading Captain of Industry, was born in Glasgow, Scotland, of Irish parents, and came to America and settled in Chicago, when about fourteen years of age. At the age of fifteen he joined a volunteer fire company and served the city for fifty long and eventful years, many of those years as Chief of the Fire Department, in which capacity he won the respect and esteem of the citizens of Chicago generally and renown throughout the United States of America; and when he died a few years ago there was general regret and no small amount of lamentation.

In the year 1848, the year in which Chief Sweeney's parents brought him from Glasgow to Chicago, he was apprenticed to a saddle and harness-maker. The following year saw him a member of a volunteer hose company. In 1856 he was elected first assistant engineer, and two years later was made chief of the volunteer department. Against bitter opposition in 1858 he organized the first fire company under full pay, and which was called the Atlantic engine company, No. 3. In 1861 he was made foreman of Liberty engine No. 7, and in 1867 was given command of the new engine, "Fred Gund," the buying of which was regarded as an epoch at that time by the citizens of Chicago. In 1873 the fire department of Chicago was re-organized, and Foreman Sweeney became Assistant Chief under Chief Matt Benner. In 1879 he became Chief. His first care in assuming the command of the Fire Department was to put it on a business basis. In an American city like Chicago, where everything in the nature of a public service takes on a political bias, this was a hard thing to do, but he suc-

ceeded in it, which was greatly to his credit. This was two years after the big fire of 1871. He began his work of reconstruction by calling to his assistance another renowned Irish fire-fighter named William H. Musham, whose work had been almost as essential to the building up of the Fire Department to its present standard as that of the Chief himself. It was to the added credit of Sweeney that he was able to judge of the ability and capacity of men and had always kept himself surrounded by those who were as able in their respective positions as he was in his own. He made another Irishman, one Chas. S. Petrie, his second assistant, and Professor Barrett superintendent of the fire alarm department. Barrett is another Irish American, who still holds his position and has proved his worth and value by his successful endeavor. He worked out the splendid fire alarm system that now protects the city of Chicago. Many of the ideas that he embodied in the system were, however, suggested by Chief Sweeney. The latter also suggested the building of fire tugs or steamers, and it was on his recommendation that the four fire boats that guard the property along and near the river, were put into operation. Sweeney also introduced what were known as the pompiers ladders, a system much used in European countries for the saving of life.

So many things in Chicago date from the great fire of 1871 that a sketch of any man who was a fireman at that time would be incomplete without a reference to what he did during that terrible ordeal. Chief Sweeney was at that memorable crisis captain of Engine Company No. 14, located at Larrabee street and Chicago avenue. At 9.00 o'clock of the fatal Sunday night when Mrs. O'Leary's celebrated and destructive cow carelessly placed her left hind foot on top of the kerosene lamp that overturned and set Chicago on fire, Captain Sweeney's company was ordered to the West Side to help fight back the flames. The Captain wanted to make a stand where he would have had an advantage. It must be remembered there was a very large and serious fire the night before the great fire, and big fires are anything but uncommon in that city, where the atmosphere seems to be surcharged with the elements that favor flame and destruction. Sweeney wanted to make his stand where he would have had the burned region of the night before on one side, as he felt certain no effort could stop the conflagration from reaching that place. He thought hard work could stop the flames from coming around on the side of the already burned area, and the fire would burn itself out there. But he was finally ordered to place his engine at Canal and Van Buren streets, and there he and his company fought a hopeless fight. The flames swept all around them, and finally scorched and blistered, they had to turn and run for their lives, leaving their engine behind to become a prey to the fire and the general ruin. Sweeney and his men took possession of another engine over in Michigan street and then fought the flames by retreating a block at a time in front of the roaring mass of fire. It was not until late on the Tuesday morning following the breaking out of the conflagration, which was on Sunday evening, that Captain Sweeney and his men sought the rest they so badly needed.

While Chief Sweeney's work of an executive nature had been far reaching in its results, he was better known for his personal work as chief in command at all the fires of any importance that had occurred for twenty-five years. Night or day the breaking out of a fire that made a second call for engines necessary, brought him to danger's spot. Spectators at fires have stood breathlessly watching the flame and smoke until suddenly the firemen fighting back the destructive conflagration seemed to take on a fresh enthusiasm and attack with redoubled vigor the destructive besom, and the word would go around in the crowd, "the old man has come." The "old man" is a term that could be used to conjure with at Chicago fires, and it stood for only one person, and that one person was Chief Sweeney. His men had supreme confidence in his judgment and manner of fighting fires. More than that, they knew he would never send a man where he would never willingly go himself. He had had a dozen or more of the narrowest kinds of escapes from death, and before his death he bore as fine a lot of scars as ever soldier won in battle. He had been carried out of basements overcome by smoke; he had been blown for feet by the force of ex-

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plosives, and had run races with falling walls, hardly keeping more than two feet in the lead, more times than he had fingers and toes.

In what was known as the Northwestern elevator fire he led an engine company into a desperate place, but the only one that offered a good stand from which to battle against the fire storm. He remained with the company because he would not leave men alone in a place where death menaced them every moment. When the explosion came the gallant men, nine of them, were blown into the air. Three of the poor fellows were killed outright, and Chief Sweeney and four others were badly wounded.

In a fire in what was known as the old Empire warehouse in Jackson street, near the river, the chief led a hose company into the building. A draft of air slammed the door, which was an oak one, shut, and cut the leads of hose and shut off the water. Assistant Chief Musham outside hacked like mad at the doors, but could not break them open. The room was filled with smoke and the imprisoned men began to fall on the floor, overcome by the fumes. The Chief made all his men lie down, and carrying along the unconscious ones, they worked their way to a small door which no one had noticed on entering the warehouse except the Chief himself. Just as he crawled into the open air he swept his eyes around and saw four firemen on the edge of the roof. He had made up his mind that an explosion was about to occur. He raised his megaphone voice and ordered the men to come down the ladders as fast as they could slide. The last man had hardly struck the ground before the explosion came and the roof was whirled high in the air.

In a fire near Green street the Chief was overcome inside of a burning building by the smoke. No one saw him fall and he would have died in the flames had not Assistant Chief Musham, who had missed him, gone in search, and stumbling over his prostrate form, carried him to the open air. In a fire on Randolph street once he tried to swing himself across a break in the walk by means of a hook. The hook broke and the Chief shot down into a basement and landed in a barrel of paint. He floundered out, but got into two or three other open paint barrels before he got onto the sidewalk again. "I'm a walking rainbow," he shouted as he gained the street, but my eyes are not painted. Play away No. 4."

Chief Sweeney was a very modest man and it was ever difficult to get him to talk of his achievements and adventures. "Yes," he would say, "that was a good fire. Bad place that. Full of kerosene barrels and things. Mean fire to do anything with." Like most brave men he was modestly personified. He was willing and eager to talk about "the boys" and glorify their deeds; he would gladly shower encomiums on "Bill" Musham, his first assistant, and afterwards his successor, for his bravery and ability.

At a big fire his position and manner were unique. He was never carried away by the excitement of the occasion. While men were shrieking madly all around him as lives or property were endangered, engines puffing and gongs clanging above the roar of the fire, Sweeney would stand where he could command all his forces and with a calm demeanor and a low voice, give his orders. These were transmitted to the captains and other fire-fighters, who at times were half-frenzied with excitement, things required to be done so quickly; but the master of the situation never was worried.

On one Thanksgiving day the Chief received a testimonial of which he was very proud. It came from the International Association of Fire Engineers, composed of chiefs and com-

A Gift From Mrs. Savage

(Brantford Expositor, May 31st.)

Last week Rev. Father Lennon received, for St. Basil's church, a gift of a valuable gold-plated sacred vessel for the sanctuary, from Mrs. Arthur Savage of Brantford. The article in question is an ostensorium, and is the vessel used at the benediction and exposition of the blessed sacrament. It stands 28 inches high and is of graceful proportions and most artistic and chaste in design, and is said to be one of the finest productions of Fealey & Co., of Providence, R.I., who are famous designers of sacred vessels. This one was made specially to order for St. Basil's church, and must have been very costly. The base or stand is in six panels, there being a cherub at the place where the panels meet, and the centre of each panel has an emblematic medallion. The upper part of the vessel is formed of a framework of bars of metal, in the centre of which is the tabernacle in which is placed the lunette containing the Sacred Host. The Trinity is emblemized in the design; near the top is the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove descending, the Sacred Host in the centre represents the Son of God, and a figure representing the Eternal Father occupies a niche between these two. On either side of the tabernacle are figures of St. Joseph and the blessed Virgin, the earthly protectors of the Redeemer, and beneath is the figure of an angel in the posture of adoration. At the top is a crucifix. Around the frame of the chamber for the lunette are set 32 large brilliants. Back of the upper structure is a circle of golden points, representing rays of glory, in harmony with the words of the sixth verse of Psalm xviii: "He has placed His tabernacle in the sun." On the base of the vessel is the inscription: "To St. Basil's Church, Brantford, From Mrs. Arthur Savage, 1906." Rev. Father Staunton mentioned the presentation on Sunday, when the vessel was used for the first time. He commended the piety and generosity of Mrs. Savage, and said the gift was an expression of devotion to the house of God, of appreciation of her pastor, and of remembrance of the ordination of her son to the priesthood. The ostensorium dates its origin from the year 1264, when Pope Urban IV. extended the feast of Corpus Christi to the universal church. This vessel will be an addition to the equipment of St. Basil's and a delight to the good Sisters of St. Joseph, who display so much delicate taste in the adornment of the sanctuary of the church.

missioners of fire departments of the United States and Canada, and congratulated Chief Sweeney on accomplishing his fifty years of honorable service as a fire-fighter and wished him many more years, in which all Chicago joined. But there is an end to all things. Although Chief Sweeney was a very healthy man and never experienced a day's illness, the end came suddenly. It was in 1899 that he finished his fifty years successively in the service of Chicago, and it was only a very few years later that he died, regretted more keenly than any officer that was ever in the service of the city. He was married and left a large grown-up family, to which he was greatly devoted. Although born in a Scotch city, he never forgot that his blood was Irish and his creed Catholic, and his fellow countrymen and coreligionists were ever proud of him. If ever there was a man who deserved to be remembered for his achievements and occupy a place among the foremost of the "Irish in America," it was Dennis J. Sweeney, the great fireman, with fifty years of active service to his credit.

WILLIAM HALLEY.

SENATOR H. J. CLORAN

United in Matrimony to Miss Mary Inez Goodwin, one of Ottawa's Most Accomplished Young Ladies.

In St. Joseph's Church, Ottawa, the marriage was solemnized in the presence of a large number of guests, of Hon. Henry Joseph Cloran, of Montreal, to Miss Mary Inez Goodwin, eldest daughter of Mr. Geo. Goodwin of Ottawa. The church was decorated with white lilies, apple blossoms and greenery, the ceremony being performed by the Rev. Father Murphy. Solos were delightfully rendered during the service by Miss Weir and Mrs. Mayne Davis, and Miss Juliet Gauthier played the violin. The bride, who was given away by her father, wore a gown of ivory Duchesse satin, with tulle veil and orange blossoms, and her ornaments included a diamond pendant, the gift of the groom. Her shower bouquet was of white roses and lilies of the valley. The bridesmaids were Miss Irene Goodwin, Miss Florence Goodwin (sisters of the bride), Miss Francis Cloran and Miss Inez Whelan.

After the ceremony Mrs. George Goodwin held a reception at her residence, which was decorated throughout with quantities of cut flowers and palms. Senator and Mrs. Cloran left by noon train for New York, Washington and Atlantic City, and upon their return will reside in Montreal and Hawkesbury.

Amongst the large number of valuable presents received by the bride was a handsome oak cabinet filled with table silver from the members of the Senate. A large number of Montrealers were invited to the wedding, among them being Hon. Senator J. P. B. Mrs. and Miss Casgrain, Senator and Mrs. Beique, Speaker, Mrs. and Miss Dandurand, Senator and Mrs. and the Misses David, Sir George and Lady Drummond, Senator and Mrs. Forget, Sir William, Lady and Miss Hingston, Senator, Mrs. and Miss Mackay, Senator and Mrs. Owens, Senator and Mrs. Thibaudau, Mr. and Mrs. H. B. Ames, Mr. and Mrs. Bergeron, Mr. and Mrs. Miss Beckerdicke, Mr. and Mrs. Rodolphe Forget, Mr. and Mrs. D. Gallery, Mr. and Mrs. H. Gervais, Mr. and Mrs. F. D. Monk, Hon. R. and Mrs. Lemieux, Hon. L. P. and Mrs. Brodeur and others.

Commencements at Nazareth Academy

The Commencement Exercises at Nazareth Academy and Barbour Hall, Nazareth, Kalamazoo Co., Michigan, took place on the 12th of June. Bishop Foley and a very large number of priests were in attendance. There was also a number of strangers. Misses Kathleen Kenny, Zola Brown and Majil Wright were graduates from the Commercial Course. Gold Medals were awarded to Misses Borgia Wheeler, Margaret Youngs, Majil Wright, Zola Brown, Edith Evans, Aileen Carney, Bertha Evans, Irene Baumann, M. McGurrin, O. Evans.

At Barbour Hall, a school for little boys, gold medals were awarded to: Masters Clarence Currie, Joseph Marantette, John Maher, Charles Burnham, Hilary McGrath, Giles Riggs, John Logan, Carlos Puett.

About one hundred students were on the roll at Nazareth during the past year. This college is in a very flourishing condition, demonstrating that private rooms for each student is to be the way of the future. It is under the direction of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

The following programme was well executed by the pupils:

The Bishop's March Band
Chorus—O Lovely JuneBohm
Salutatory.
Violin Solo, Hungarian Fantasy.....
.....Tobani
The Spirit of the Age.
Piano Duet—"Gone".....Gimble-Pratt
Cornet Solo, "The Message".....Brooks
TaltoppedGaynor
Brass Quartet—FanciesStrauss
Chorus—"Tantum Ergo"Cagliero
AidaVerdi
Pianos, Violins and Trumpets,
Conferring of Diplomas and Gold Medals.

Valedictory.
AddressThe Right Rev. Bishop
Band and Chorus—The Star Spangled
Banner.
Recessional March.

SESSION OF CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES ADJOURNS

The Washington Post gives the following account of the third Catholic Missionary Conference:

The third Catholic Missionary Conference adjourned last Wednesday evening. It is declared that the conference was the most successful ever held, the papers read being of an exceptional character. The attendance was large, and the interchange of thought of great benefit. The closing hour of the convention was of special interest, the delegates summing up their impressions and the lessons of the gathering. Short speeches were the rule, and then the conference sent greetings to the Pope, thanked the secretary of the gathering, Father Curtin; thanked the Paulist Fathers for their activity in the missionary field in this country, and extended a vote of thanks to The Evening Star "for its full and accurate accounts of the conference." The singing of "Holy God" and the blessing of Father Elliott concluded the session.

Missionaries from all parts of the United States, representing various orders of the church, were in attendance at the conference. The delegates passed a resolution to have the papers published in book form. It is expected to print about 15,000 copies of the work and to send copies to every religious institution for men and women in the United States.

A prominent figure in the conference was Mgr. Thien of Wichita, Kan., who last evening read a paper on "The Blessed Sacrament as a Convert Maker." The paper was of particular interest to the delegates and to Catholics-at-large. "God with us," he said, "has been at all times in the history of the human race the expression of the joy and contentment of the present as of the hope of the future. God with us was the fact that constituted the great delight and charm of paradise. God with us was the pregnant note of idolatry among the pagans, for what else is idolatry but the agonizing lay of benighted minds for the presence of their God. God with us made the era of Christ a new starting point for humanity, from which it began to ascend to the heights which it occupies to-day."

An interesting paper was by Rev. Roderick A. McEachen of Barton, O., who took for his text, "The Apostolate of the Immigrant."

Father McEachen told many stories illustrative of a wholesale defection from the faith among later immigrants. After explaining the difficulties under which a foreign priest labors in this country through ignorance of local conditions, Father McEachen declared that "the American priest is fitted for the strife. He understands the dangers and struggles of American life; he has been brought up in a commercial air. The flower of the work is without doubt the mission school. The children become the little apostles that very often awaken their parents to their Christian duty by a sense of Christian training. It requires an energetic effort to gather up the children, and even a more persevering strife to keep them in attendance."

Mrs. Burke, in a paper on "The Sunday School Movement," advised the organization of training classes for catechists, and pointed out the success that has been achieved by non-Catholic churches through such activity. Father Smith of the Paulists, contributed a paper on "The Literary Propaganda," and Mr. Wm. F. Downey of this city explained the workings of the "Good Samaritan League." Father Daniel Cunio of New York, who conducts a mission on the Bowery, told of the work that is being accomplished in that field.

Much regret was expressed in the closing talks that the missionary conference is not a yearly event, and furthermore that there is no national organization.

The delegates attended Mass in a body at 7 o'clock in the morning in the chapel of the Apostolic Mission House, said by Rev. Walter Elliott, the dean of the institution. It was followed by benediction, and at its conclusion the delegates separated to take up their work anew in distant parts of the country.

Rev. Father McGee of St. Joseph's Church, Stratford, has been appointed Dean by his Lordship Bishop McEvay of London.

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