

THE FIRE FIGHTERS

(By Herbert Fiddes).

"FIRE! FIRE!" Is there a word in our vocabulary that quickens the pulse so readily? The shriek of the siren, the clanging of bells, the roar of the Brigade as it dashes down the street, is the sign for work to be left aside for the moment, windows to be thrown open, and a rush made for the scene of the fire. Everyone—young and old alike—is fascinated by the spectacle of the Fire Fighters' wild rush to save.

The Demon "Fire" commands respect. It may be but the summons of a nervous old lady whose chimney smokes, or it may be a conflagration of immense proportions, where lives are at stake. It matters not which it is—with the right of way over all traffic—the Fire Fighters rush to lend their aid.

When a fireman jumps to his position on the engine, he knows not what adventure lies ahead. It may end in a pleasant run through the streets on a glittering engine, or it may result in hours of weary fighting with smoke and flame. It may be his last run.

Vancouver is blessed with one of the most finely equipped and efficient Fire Departments in the world. Citizens may go to sleep, satisfied that they are in the safe keeping of men who place duty first.

The system adopted in Vancouver is such as will commend itself to all citizens. A few facts and figures should prove of interest to readers of this magazine.

Distributed throughout the city are 304 street Fire Alarm Boxes (Gamewell system). These red boxes are familiar to all citizens. The system works well, as anyone who has had occasion to turn in a call will vouchsafe; the response from the various halls being remarkably smart.

It is interesting to know, however, that 75 per cent. of the alarms received by the Fire Department, are received over the 'phone.

In addition to the Gamewell system, a number of the leading firms have installed the May-Otway and Western Union systems with sprinklers. These are of great importance, and have been the means of great saving in lives and property.

When an alarm (other than Chemical calls) is turned in from a down-town locality, three Halls generally respond (9 engines and 3 chiefs) and in the case of outside districts,

two halls (with from three to four pieces of apparatus and two chiefs) answer the call.

Located to the best advantage in the various districts of city are eleven stations, with a total of 25 engines, consisting of three combination gasoline pumpers and hose-wagons, seven hose-wagons; three chemical engines; two aerial ladder trucks (75' and 85'); two City Service trucks (with chemical tanks, 55' ladders); three combination chemical and hose-wagons; four chief's automobiles and one mechanic's auto for repair work.

This equipment is manned by a staff of 191 men, consisting of one chief, one assistant-chief, three district chiefs, one secretary, one assistant-secretary, three mechanics, one blacksmith, seven fire-wardens and 173 captains, engineers, drivers, tillermen, firemen.

It is to the everlasting credit of the Vancouver Fire Department that of the 191 men on the staff, 93 served with the colours during the Great War. Sixty-five of that number saw actual service in France, while one was with the Overseas Navy. With such men on her engines Vancouver is justified in her pride of her Fire Fighters.

Water is seldom used to extinguish a fire, unless found absolutely necessary. The reason for this is obvious, as water cannot be used without doing a certain amount of damage to property. Where the hose is brought into use it only takes on an average of 25 to 30 seconds from the time of arrival at the scene of the fire, to have the water playing on the flames.

In a city so largely built of wood, it is a matter of surprise that so few really large fires occur. This is in large measure due to the prompt and able manner in which the Fire Department responds to calls. Within the last ten years the most notable fires in Vancouver City, have been Coughlan's Shipyards, Kelly, Douglas Company, New England Fish Company, and Balmoral Apartments.

As evidence of the hazardous task our firemen undertake when they don the uniform, within the first six months of this year 30 casualties occurred in their ranks, and within the last 10 years eight gallant men answered their last call in performance of their duty. Their duty lay not in the glamour of the battle-field, but in the self-assumed duties at home. "They saved others, themselves they could not save."

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