

# "Vollies," 3,000 Strong, Make Good Firemen

TIME used to be when New York people poked fun at the rural vamps, the same being volunteer firemen, as everybody knows. Nutley, N. J., was accounted fair game and the season was always open. In these very pages it has been opprobriously told how the Nutley vamps had improved their system and thenceforth fire alarms were to be sent in by special delivery letter instead of by mere post card as they had been sent.

Mark how the merry go round of time squares up raw deals like that. To-day New York has vamps of its own, 3,000 strong already and growing stronger. It's Nutley's turn to laugh, but not at our vamps themselves, for they are there.

They correspond, as firemen, to the Police Reserves. The idea dates from last spring. Its father was Commissioner Drennan or Chief Kenlon or Mayor Hylan or somebody, and its mother was necessity in the shape of a depletion of the regular Fire Department through the draft by some 400 members. (The number drafted is now 475.) The civil service age limit for firemen went up from 31 to 35, and at the moment bade fair to meet the difficulty. Then the draft age limit went up to 45, leaving the city's prospects of fire protection shot to hump worse than before.

## Prefer the Name of "Vollies."

Then the vamps were organized; "Vollies" is the pet name they prefer. Their full style is Auxiliary Volunteer Corps, F. D. N. Y. Their age limits are 18 to 55 and the requirements are good moral character and residence within the city limits; also, of course, physical soundness. They have a complete organization, with district chiefs, borough chiefs over the district heads and a special Deputy Fire Commissioner at the head of all.

This is Eli Joseph, prominent in the steel business during his hours off fire duty. Mr. Joseph is too modest to say much about the fact, but he is the man who, financially, has put the corps across. Its uniforms, rubber stuff and other gear with which it is equipped on the same footing with the regular department have all come out of his pocket and will continue to do so even though the corps should increase its enrollment to 10,000, which is being considered. Mr. Joseph and men associated with him are also stimulating the Liberty Loan canvass made by members of the corps with prizes in bonds for big totals of subscriptions.

Fifteen hundred of the members are to march with their equipment in the Liberty Loan parade.

The corps has its own headquarters and its own stations in every borough. Its Manhattan headquarters is the old 40 Engine House in West Sixty-eighth street, all slicked up outside and with interior renovations. There Deputy Chief George J. Kuss, detailed by the Commissioner as Mr. Joseph's aid, is very much on the job between the hours of 12 and 12, or pretty nearly. He is the live wire doing the organizing, coordinating and general arranging and administering, and he is as busy a wire as you are likely to be plugged into in these days of war time telephone service.

## Used Former Vamp Companies.

Where possible Chief Kuss has availed himself of former local vamp companies that still keep up their organization for old time's sake in the suburban districts. He canvassed the north shore of Queens and brought into line the sometime volunteer firemen of Flushing, Woodhaven, College Point, Whitestone and Jamaica and those of Richmond Hill.

When he explained that the idea was to piece out the local regular fire fighting forces with auxiliaries and thus release most of their regulars for the protection of the central high risk areas, he met at first with vehement opposition from local civic bodies. Flushing, Woodhaven, &c., citizens didn't want volunteer protection. They wanted the real thing. It was explained to them that all the local machinery of fire protection, including the ranking officers, would remain, and that the Vollies would be properly trained and their efforts directed.

Now these communities are strong for the innovation. They have seen the Vollies in action at more than one fire and what they have seen fully reassured them. The Vollies themselves are strong in the consciousness of a patriotic service next in value to the soldier's or the sailor's.

When the war is over and the corps disbands each member who has seen his duties through will receive a medal of honor to wear on great occasions ever

## Auxiliary Volunteer Organization Replaces Department Men Who Have Gone to War



Eli Joseph, Special Deputy Commissioner.

after and his name will be emblazoned on the roll of the Fire Department's Honor Legion. He will also have a certificate to frame and hang up in his room.

The well known Southern Volunteer Firemen's Association of the State, with its 13,000 members, who include New York men prominent in every walk of life, is arranging cooperation with the corps.

The volunteer on enrolling signifies that he will "devote in regular intervals" a part of his time gratis to serve in fire companies nearest his home where duty is not heavy, or else in fire companies nearest his home where duty is assigned. He will answer calls in emergency and give part of his time in manning the apparatus and assisting the regular firemen in their duties.

He states whether he will serve day time or night time on call, or both, the number of hours he can serve and the number of days or nights a week. This time for which he volunteers is largely optional with him, but having volunteered he must show up regularly or else his fire lines badge, uniform, &c., will be promptly taken away from him.

There is no idea of using Vollies for the full service of experienced trained firemen. It wouldn't be fair to the city and it wouldn't be fair to the men. When they go on duty where the risk is high, as the firemen say, the regulars will do the



Deputy Chief George J. Kuss.

risky—and critically important—work, while the Vollies, under command of the ranking regular fireman on the scene, will man hose lines, bring up fuel, gather up the apparatus when the fire is out and generally be useful in an auxiliary capacity.

## To Roll With the Regulars.

A suitable complement of regulars will at all times be on duty in the engine houses as heretofore. When the alarm rings the Vollies and their local chief will roll in along with the regulars and will report themselves to the regular chief and await his orders. Also if a fire starts anywhere, during business hours for instance, any corps members near by are expected to show up, report themselves to the ranking corps officer they find and stand by to help out as requisite.

No Vollie on duty having responded to an alarm may leave the fire unless the commanding officer excuses him.

One hundred and fifty retired members of the regular Fire Department have enrolled in the corps and are "on" three and four nights a week. Naturally when the corps was newly invented last June a lot of the regular department men found it hard to see and did their best to snub their volunteer associates out of countenance.

Chief Kuss made a round of speeches, more vigorous than flowery in tone, which

ironed out this tension and prepared a better feeling. The fact that the creation of the Vollies helped the regular men to have back their old one day off in five instead of the one in ten the depleted department had been putting up with promoted the change of attitude. Now everything goes smoothly and serenely.

The matrons at the station houses liked the innovation well enough. These women, who make up the firemen's beds and generally make the premises more homelike, are paid by the men themselves, each man chipping in. The draft depletions and the dilutions of the force at outlying stations reduced their pay considerably. As the Vollies give their services free it was not to be expected that they should ante. But Deputy Commissioner Joseph again came forward. He personally makes up the difference to every matron.

In addition to the quota of Vollies at every station Chief Kuss means to have scout wagons on the job; two in Manhattan, one in Brooklyn. A scout wagon will carry a sort of free lance Vollie crew, up to forty in number, who will be transported to duty wherever an emergency arises. The idea is always to have enough vamps on hand anywhere in the city.

## Already Are Making Good.

The volunteers are making good. There is Auxiliary Fireman Daniel Grady, attached to Engine Company 204, who jumped around in a varnish factory in Brooklyn when a disastrous fire was threatened on August 6, shutting doors and turning on extinguishers, thereby putting the fire out and earning the commendation of his regular department captain and of Commissioner Joseph.

Then there is Auxiliary Fireman Harry Israel, attached to Engine Company 57. On July 18 he did such good work helping with the hose on the grand old fireboat New Yorker, when she fought a blaze in an oil tanker's hold for six hours and finally conquered it, that he also received the chief's special commendation.

And only a few days ago, when a third alarm fire damaged a warehouse in Howard avenue, Brooklyn, along in the shank of the afternoon, a detachment of volunteers covered themselves with smoke, water and glory, working under the eyes of Chief Kenlon, Commissioner Drennan, Deputy Chief Thompson and Mayor Hylan himself, no less. All four commended them warmly, making special mention of Auxiliary Fireman Captain Peter Mitchell and his command. It is no wonder that Commissioner Drennan agrees with Mr. Joseph and the indefatigable Kuss that the corps is a going concern and a success.

The borough chief for Brooklyn is James L. Flynn of 670 Putnam avenue; for Queens, Charles F. O'Donnell of Jamaica; for Manhattan, Nicholas L. Stokes of 57 West Seventy-fifth street. All three found the day of their appointment the happiest of their lives, for they were famous buffs, that is, unofficial fire fighting fans, whose hobby is being around an engine house and helping the firemen at every opportunity.

## Refloating the St. Paul a Salvage Marvel

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the work. To facilitate the righting operation there were constructed and placed on the upturned starboard side of the St. Paul twenty-one tripods, technically termed A frames, fashioned of steel and timbers, and steel hawsers led from these to twenty-one cement anchoring blocks, each of ten tons, sunk in a trench dredged for them in the slip to the south and between Piers 60 and 59. The pull on these tackles was exerted by twenty-one hoisting engines firmly secured to the deck or floor of Pier 60.

"All during the month of May dredging operation continued on both sides of the wreck for the double purpose of clearing the way for the divers and on the south side of providing deeper water into which the liner might be shifted during the concluding work of righting and refloating her. The divers had to get close to the ship to attach the chains and steel hawsers which, with the aid of pontoons on the north side, were to help roll the craft upright. The other aid to the movement was the series of A frames just mentioned.

"After weeks of preparation the rolling operations were started on July 22 and continued until July 28, the ship by that time being brought up to a point where

her heel was reduced to 27 degrees, which was as far as the pontoons could be utilized effectively. This ended the first stage of the moving of the craft. The pontoons, which had cooperated with the A frames, were now taken off the job and the work was then started of completing the closing up of the entire ship so that she could be pumped out as a whole.

"Closing up called for the building of a cofferdam more than 360 feet long on the port side and something over 290 feet on the starboard side. By means of these cofferdams the liner was finally made watertight to a level just above the river's surface at high tide and she was, in effect, converted into a gigantic flask which could be drained deliberately by the array of pumps assembled upon her decks.

"The chains previously attached to the pontoons during the pulling on the A frames were next gripped forward and aft by two great wrecking craft, the derricks Monarch and Commander, which exercised a lifting and heeling force while the pumps were getting rid of the water within the St. Paul. In this way the salvors succeeded in bringing the vessel back within 16 degrees of vertical. This ended the second stage of the work.

"The third stage of the undertaking consisted in pumping the entire ship while

steadying her by four floating derricks, two on either side. This was done on September 11, and within five hours after starting the pumps the liner floated clear of the bottom fore and aft, assuming a position with a list of 4 degrees to port, which was due to the mass of wreckage that had gathered there when the vessel sank and turned over. This heel was overcome by the placing of compensating ballast on the starboard side.

"Once fully afloat workmen were placed on the ship cleaning her up and installing certain apparatus for the liner's machinery. While as much mud as possible was removed during the various stages of rolling and raising the St. Paul, still when she was finally afloat it was found that there yet remained a thousand tons of the oily, smelly silt throughout the craft on her port side. This was got rid of and the St. Paul was turned over to representatives of the American Line on September 27."

Great credit is due Capt. I. M. Tooker, the wrecking master, whose shoulders bore the supervisory burden of the entire job. Undismayed by snapping hawsers and the occasional failure of other apparatus, he watched over the task like a general guiding a battle and mustered his corrective forces with winning skill.