

CLUBWOMEN AID FIREMEN'S FIGHT

Philomusian of West Philadelphia Realizes Justice of Cause

COMMITTEE APPOINTED

Another Important Step Taken in Organizing Public Sentiment

The Philomusian Club has enrolled itself among the organizations which have sponsored the cause of the firemen of Philadelphia for better living conditions. Aroused by the campaign of publicity that is opening the eyes of the citizens of Philadelphia to a hitherto overlooked branch of the municipality, the West Philadelphia organization, at its last meeting, made the firemen and their condition the theme of discussion.

As a result of the information laid before the club through its president, Mrs. E. F. Richardson, it was decided to make further investigation of the subject and, if the findings warranted, to lay the matter before Mayor Smith and the Finance Committee of Council. A committee was named to make personal inquiry and obtain first-hand information. The chairman of this committee is Mrs. Herman H. Birney, 4918 Chestnut street. Mrs. Birney is a social worker whose address from her girlhood. Her sister-in-law, the late Mrs. Theodore W. Birney, of Washington, was the founder of the American Congress of Mothers, and Mrs. Herman H. Birney has long been an ardent laborer in the cause of social betterment.

Her activities along this line have by no means been confined to the advancement of her own sex, and she enthusiastically entered into the cause of the firemen.

PLEDGED TO PROMPT ACTION
Mrs. Birney, in conversation with a member of the firemen's campaign committee, pledged herself to early action in behalf of the city's fire fighters. She has called together the members of her committee to assemble December 14 at the clubhouse, 3144 Walnut street, at the same time inviting the firemen's committee to be present and

in furnish whatever information may be required for the guidance of her fellow-committee members. Mrs. Birney, on behalf of her coworkers, accepted an invitation to inspect some of the principal fire stations for personal observations of the conditions under which the firemen are obliged to work and live.

The firemen themselves feel much encouraged by the widening character of the support they are receiving in their campaign. The prompt championing of their cause by the New Century and Civic Clubs, and now by the Philomusian Club, they consider cannot but bring to their aid a powerful pressure in the shape of an organized public opinion that must impel the members of Council to head their appeals for just consideration and relief.

That they have remained disregarded for so many years they attribute to their previous docility in standing back that "the other fellow" might be taken care of. The result has been that while salaries paid in other bureaus compare favorably with those in other American cities, the City of Philadelphia today pays its firemen less than any other first-class city, and ranks even behind the cities of the second class in this respect.

COUNCIL ADMITS JUSTICE
Members of Council's Finance Committee are fully aware of this condition and admit that they can find the funds necessary to remedy it if the public wishes to have Philadelphia raised to a proper level in this respect. If the citizens of Philadelphia desire to repay the fidelity and unselfish service of their firemen with a salary that yields more than twelve to fourteen cents an hour for twenty-one hours' duty out of every twenty-four, the way to compel councilmanic action is indicated by members of Council itself.

Finance Committee members have publicly declared that they will give the firemen what they ask, a fair increase in wages and more equitable working hours that will let a man enjoy more than a fleeting glimpse of his family daily, if popular demand is made upon them.

The only time some firemen's children have seen their father for more than an hour, save on his brief holiday periods, was when his mangled body was brought home to them from the ruins of a burned building, where he went down, with hand on the hose line, striving to save the property of another.

TELLS OF TRAGEDY
The widow of one of the victims of the Friedlander calamity, of December 31, 1910, commonly known as the "Bodine street fire," described this little known phase of a fireman's life. This woman is now employed as matron of one of the fire stations.

"The only time my husband and I really

had together was on his day off and during his vacation. His day off was my day off. Our home life really ended when he entered the service, and we were looking forward to resuming it. He had been in the department long enough to be eligible to retire within a few years, and we were counting on having a good time together. Our children were growing up and we were planning to spend our remaining days together when the Bodine street fire occurred. When that was over they brought him back home to me, so disfigured that no one could recognize him. But my lot was no harder than that of other wives and widows of firemen. There were thirteen men killed at Bodine street, and I suppose every one of the women made widows by that fire have the same story to tell of their experience.

"Our children seldom saw their father. When they were going to school his meal hours were such that he was never home between sessions, and it was only in the vacation periods that they met him at meals. As they grew older and the boys went out to work it was the same thing. He and they were not at home during the same meal hours.

"But as I say, I did not complain. My lot was no different from that of thousands of firemen's wives. It's the same throughout the department. A fireman's wife has to be father and mother, too, if there are children. Nobody loves more than I do that Council will devise a plan by which the men of the bureau will have more time devoted to their homes and more money to make that home what it should be."

DECEMBER FATAL MONTH
The advent of December recalls to the firemen the ominous record of that month



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in departmental annals. Records kept at five headquarters show that since the organization of the department in 1871 there have been ninety-six firemen killed in performance of duty or who have died from injuries thus incurred. Of this number twenty-eight have met death in the month of December, a record more than equaling the combined total of any other two months. February shows sixteen, March eight and August seven, while June and September furnish six each. January, July and November have claimed five lives each, while October has been the time of only two fatal mishaps in the bureau. The record of injury is appalling, the total for the last year alone being 638. The number of men disabled temporarily or permanently during 1916 is now being computed for inclusion

in Chief Murphy's annual report. It bids fair to exceed the total for 1915.

Many of the men disabled are doing clerical work at headquarters or are employed elsewhere about the pumping stations and departmental shops. The unfeeling condition of the pension fund practice their awaiting themselves of their privilege to claim its benefits, so maimed and limping, scoured and crippled they fill jobs that hold them on the active list, although honorably entitled to retire.

The work must be done. Councils have not provided funds to hire men to do it, so these firemen again become "volunteers," forgo their just and hard-earned rights to cover and hide from the public the evidence of its own neglect.

Says He Was Drugged When He Stole
BRADLEY, Pa., Dec. 1.—(Special C. 751)—A twenty-eight-year-old college graduate and stranger in Reading, when arrested by the police today on the charge of shoplifting, but up the unusual defense of shoplifting, before Magistrate Dunn that when he committed the alleged offense he was under the influence of drugs and didn't know what he was doing. He was committed to jail.

Count Szeptycki Heads Pole Armies
BERLIN, Dec. 1.—A Posen dispatch reports the appointment of Count Szeptycki as commander of the Polish legions. He is a brother of the Rev. Andreas Szeptycki, formerly Archbishop of Lemberg.

FOUGHT WILSON \$82,800 WORTH
Du Ponts Shown to Be Largest Contributor to Hughes Fund

WILMINGTON, Del., Dec. 1.—Official announcement in New York that Pierre S. du Pont, president of the du Pont Powder and du Pont Securities Companies, was the largest individual contributor to the Republican campaign fund, giving \$12,000, is taken here as proof of the charge made before the election that the du Pont interests were fighting the re-election of Wilson.

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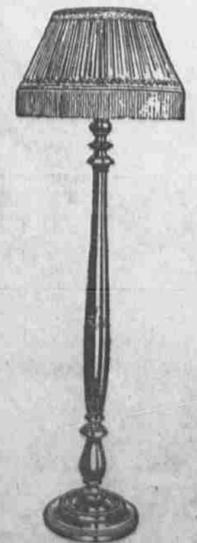
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