

FIREMEN'S SPIRITUAL WELFARE.

Leo Club Organized in Boston Department and Chaplains Appointed.



LEO CLUB.

In New York and other large cities of the east, as well as in several of the leading municipalities of the west and south, there are regularly appointed chaplains in the fire departments whose missionary work among the ladder and the hose experts has accomplished much for the firemen and incidentally has bettered to a certain extent the efficiency of the different departments.

In Gotham they have Rev Frs William St Elmo Smith and Henry Van Rensselaar, whose labors among the fire ladders are known and highly appreciated. These two clergymen are perhaps the best known of the fire department chaplains, as they have been identified with the New York fire service for many years and have been ready to answer the call of the tapper at any hour of the night or day. Every fire follower in Gotham, irrespective of creed, have the highest opinion of the two priests who have come to be known as the "angels" of the fire lines.

Both priests are well known in this city, as they have visited the different fire houses and enjoy a large acquaintance with the firemen. The good they have done for firemen in this city is frequently recalled by members of the force, who now feel positive that when the two New York fire chaplains learn that the local clergy have interested themselves in an association that has for its sole object the bettering of the spiritual welfare of the Boston firemen they will be elated.

Fr Van Rensselaar gave up a fortune when he entered the Jesuit order, and while visiting Boston a few years ago was presented with a fire badge by Col Russell that carried with it a welcome to any fire department in the country.

In Boston there is an organization, now in its infancy, which has done much in its brief existence for the firemen. The society is known as the Leo club and was founded about two months ago at the suggestion of John T. Logan, a South Boston young man.

Some months ago Mr Logan, who has visited several of the leading cities of the east, and who is also a close follower of the Boston fire department, thought that the formation of a society that would have for its object an interest in the spiritual welfare of the Catholic members of the department would be a good thing. To Rev Maurice J. O'Connor, DD, a curate at St James' church, Harrison av, he unfolded his plans and the well-known priest heartily approved of the suggestion.

It was but a few days later when the Leo club, named in memory of the late Pope Leo XIII, was organized with the following officers: John T. Logan of South Boston pres, Rev Maurice J. O'Connor of St James' church, Harrison av, spiritual director; ladderman Daniel F. Crowley of ladder company 18, Pittsburg st, vice pres; hoseman Louis C. I. Stickel of engines 38-39, Congress st, sec; and hoseman Martin A. Kenealy of engine company 7, East st, treas.

From the beginning the new society proved a success. It met with the approval of Archbishop John J. Williams, who said that it was a good thing, and it was also favored by Fire Commissioner Wells, to whom the organizers of the club feel greatly indebted for what he has done. At the outset the fire commissioner was given to understand that the work of the club would not interfere with the temporal duties of his subordinates, and since then he has aided the society materially in its work.

One of the first privileges accorded the Catholic members of the fire department after the launching of the new club was the right to change their meal hours on Sunday mornings so that they might attend early masses, beginning at 6 and 6:30. After this privilege had been granted St James' church, on Harrison av, became a regular mecca for the firemen at the early masses on Sundays. In the vicinity of St James' church there are located several fire companies, but on Sunday mornings ladders stationed further away came to St James' because of the early mass.

According to Pres Logan, 42 firemen received holy communion in a body at St James' church one Sunday morning shortly after the formation of the club. Another Sunday morning, at the same altar, 30 received the sacrament, and there would have been more, it is said, had there not been a big fire the night before. In order to make the club a success it requires considerable self-sacrifice on the part of the members,

and thus far they have not hesitated in attending to their religious duties.

Pres Logan declares that the chief aim of the club is to have the members attend mass regularly, and that they receive the sacrament of holy eucharist at least four times a year. The privilege of changing meal hours he says has accorded the firemen a grand opportunity to succeed in the matter of attending mass. The club is purely religious and has no desire other than caring for the firemen's spiritual welfare. On the death of a member of the club he is given a solemn high mass of requiem. The club now has about 400 members enrolled on its list, and it is expected that the list will swell before long. Sick members will be visited regularly.

Rev Fr O'Connor is the spiritual director for the entire department, and will personally look after the members located in the districts controlled by Dist Chiefs Garrity and Sennott. In other sections of the city Fr O'Connor has assigned resident clergymen to assist him in the work, owing to the fact that they are in closer proximity to the fire houses.

Charlestown has for its district director Rev Henry E Murray of St Mary's church, Warren st, while the members stationed in the ballwick of Dist Chief McDonough will be looked after by Fr McCormick of St Joseph's church, Chambers st. In the South End the Rev Thomas McCoy of the cathedral of the Holy Cross will devote much of his time to the firemen's interests. Fr John J. Harkins, who knows practically every firefighter in South Boston, will visit the peninsularites that are attached to the club, while Fr Mark Madden of St Thomas' church, Jamaica Plain, will confer with the members stationed in Roslindale, West Roxbury and Jamaica Plain.

Some time later Pres Logan says that district spiritual directors will be named for East Boston, Dorchester, Brighton and two sections of Roxbury.

John T. Logan, the young man who founded the club, was born in Dorchester in 1887, moving to South Boston later, where he attended the public schools. Since boyhood he has been a close follower of ecclesiastical affairs, having a large acquaintance among the clergy of the archdiocese. In South Boston he is regarded as a model young man and great praise is given him for the good he has done in founding such a club.

For years he was an altar boy at St Vincent's church on E st, and is now studying for the priesthood. To the clergymen who know him personally, what he is doing for the firemen appeals strongly, and they say that the founding of such a club is an event which in later years Mr Logan can recall with pride.

Fr O'Connor, who seconded the suggestion of the young man from South Boston and who himself has always been a great friend to the men in blue, is a Rockland boy and received his early education in the public schools of that town. Later he attended Boston college and the Brighton seminary, but received his degree of DD at the Catholic university, Washington. Fr O'Connor is a preacher of striking eloquence and is one of the most popular of the younger clergymen.

Daniel F. Crowley of ladder company 18, Pittsburg st, who was named as vice president of the society, has been a member of the fire department about five years, having served at engine 42, Egleston Square, and combination ladder 11, Walnut st, Neponset, before going to truck 18. Wherever he was stationed he was the same square fellow and it is the opinion of all that the vice presidency of the Leo club is in good hands.

Hoseman Louis C. I. Stickel of engines 38-39, Congress st, the secretary of the society, has been in the fire department nearly three years. After serving at engine 19, Mattapan, and engine 10, River st, he was shifted to the Congress-st double company, where he is universally liked. Stickel is another one of the bright young men of the fire department and that he will prove a capable officer is assured.

Hoseman Martin A. Kenealy of engine company 7, East st, the treasurer, is one of the most striking types of the brave young firemen. Having served with distinction for nearly eight years with one of the hardest working companies in the service, he has won great praise and is the possessor of a medal of honor for heroism. Kenealy had his name placed upon the department roll of merit by Col Russell and, like Crowley and Stickel, is true blue.