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WITNESSES OF FIRE GAVE EVIDENCE BEFORE COMMITTEE.

John Gommer Criticized Brigade—Chief Elmer and Assistant Chief Stratford Declared Building Was Ablaze When They Reached It.

The investigation into the fire department, in view of the criticisms made upon it after the late fire in the Wormwith Piano company's building, opened on Monday afternoon in the city council chamber before the civic fire committee of which were present, Aldermen Rigney (chairman), Nickle, McCartney and Hoag, City Solicitor McIntyre was in attendance to examine witnesses.

Only Efficiency Attacked.

In commenting upon this letter, Chairman Rigney stated that the reason the investigation was being conducted by the fire committee, was that only the efficiency of the fire brigade had been attacked. The fire committee was in a better position to deal with that matter than any other body of individual. Had there been charges of graft, or misappropriation, etc., then it would have been in order to hold an investigation before a judge, but he didn't think it at all necessary to hold an investigation into the efficiency of the brigade before a judge.

Ald. Rigney stated that notices had been sent to all persons known to have been interested in the fire, and to some who were known to have been present at it. They were invited to come forward and give information. Some of these parties had made statements in public reflecting upon the efficiency of the brigade, and the committee would like to hear from them directly.

The only person to come forward at the afternoon session was Robert Shaver, who said his father had been chief of the fire department in the seventies. All he wished to say was that a fire brigade could not be expected to fight a big fire in the middle of the night with the same coolness and precision as in the daytime. The men were not quite themselves when awakened suddenly from their sleep at two o'clock in the morning. That was all he had to say.

The committee remained in session an hour, and as there were no further witnesses, it adjourned till 7.30 o'clock in the evening.

From The Board Of Trade.

At the evening session of enquiry H. W. Richardson, president of the board of trade, appeared before the committee. He said he came on behalf of the board which had discussed the Wormwith fire. The board thought that the loss should not have occurred. It placed the big loss to the inefficient fire service. At the board of trade meeting, it was openly stated and denied that the water service was not sufficient to reach the upper storeys of the building. The board thought that the chief of the fire department should examine all large buildings so that he could acquaint the brigade with them. In reply to City Solicitor McIntyre, Mr. Richardson stated that he thought the conclusion of the board was based on the inefficiency of the brigade and its lack of equipment.

Again, in reply to the city solicitor, Mr. Richardson said that it was stated that workmen had gone up into the third storey and removed their tools. Hence, it was concluded that the firemen, if they had the appliances, could have with safety gone up there and fought the fire, which they did not do. It was stated that there was not enough apparatus for the firemen to reach the fire from the outside. For instance the ladder, equipment was alleged to be short.

Chief Elmer asked Mr. Richardson if the members of the board of trade had before them any information as to the condition of the building at six minutes to two o'clock, when the brigade received the alarm, or where the fire originated. Mr. Richardson said he didn't know if they had.

Hit The Brigade Hard.

John Gommer, who was present at the fire, came forward to give evidence. He said he was present at ten minutes to two o'clock. Some of the brigade were then present. The men were stringing the hose. He helped to do this. They tried to put up ladders to the building, but this was impossible. Three he saw wouldn't work. The ladders were so tightly attached that the sections would not slide. They couldn't be beaten apart with a couple of axes. Not one ladder reached further than the first storey. One of the ladders afterwards started to burn. There were lots of men to help to put them up. Mr. Gommer said there wasn't one suitable department ladder at the fire. He and Mr. Wormwith were on the third floor of the building when

the fire was burning in the one room facing Ontario street. When he was there no hose was taken up.

Mr. Gommer said that when the Chatham engine was put in operation there was a good stream, sufficient to reach the top of the building. There was a lack of water when the Merryweather engine broke down, and it became necessary to change the hose. He thought that the brigade could have done far better work had the Merryweather engine not broken down. This engine lasted perhaps two hours, he thought. At that time the fire had got only as far as the second wall. He thought the fire should have been chased towards the lake, instead of up Princess street way. Mr. Gommer said there were not enough men to help the firemen with the hose.

In reply to Ald. Nickle Mr. Gommer gave it as his opinion that the fire could have been put out in an hour and a half if ladders had worked and there had been sufficient help with the hose. The firemen, he said, should have taken hose inside the building and fought the fire inside. It was fully half an hour before any hose was taken into the building.

"He Had A Dream."

Chief Elmer was asked if he had anything to say and he replied that he had. "I think the man had a dream," the chief said. "He says he was at the fire at ten minutes to two o'clock, and yet it was just six minutes to two when we got the alarm."

Evidence Of Mr. Maclean.

Andrew Maclean, jr., was the next to give evidence. He reached the fire about 2:20 a.m. At that time the whole top storey facing Ontario street was in flames. One hose was going on Ontario street. Two firemen were on a ladder into the third storey. They were firemen John Hall and James Norris, jr. He got the chief to bring more hose into the rear and firemen were able to play into the third storey from the ladder. A ladder carried into the rear could not be used as the extension was frozen. He knew of three streams being in use beyond those on Princess street. Mr. Maclean said that the brigade had not enough apparatus, and it was not strong enough numerically. The brigade had to enough nozzles, for one thing.

When he arrived at 2:15 o'clock the Chatham engine was working on the wharf at the foot of Princess street. The fire appeared to be more in the north-east end of the upper storey. It was probably an hour and a half before the whole of the floor was in flames. The force of the water from the hydrants was not sufficient to reach the top of the building when two streams were on. A hydrant would send one stream up. There was sufficient pressure for the engines working. The brigade, Mr. Maclean said, should be at least twenty strong and should have more apparatus.

In reply to Mayor Ross Mr. Maclean said that men standing around would not aid the firemen. They stood on the sidewalks opposite and criticized. For instance, the firemen hadn't enough help to put up one of the big ladders, nor to draw along a line of hose. The firemen worked well when they got their bearings. It was a real serious fire when he arrived at 2:20 o'clock.

Assistant Chief's Story.

Assistant Chief Stratford was the first witness for the department. He said that Messrs. Blake and Murray came to No. 1 station at 1:54 a.m. and stated that the piano factory was afire. When the men at the station looked out they could see the flames issuing from one of the top windows. A minute afterwards a line of hose was attached to the hydrant at Ontario street and a stream was put right into the window. An attempt was made to get up a sixty-five-foot ladder. The wires overhead handicapped them. It required six men to raise it. Enough men could not be got until some policemen came over. Firemen Hall and James Norris worked from the top of the ladder until ordered down, as they were in danger.

The assistant chief denied that the ladder wouldn't work. When it was raised the whole varnish room, the partition and part of the roof were completely enveloped in flames. When enough assistance could not be got to raise the big ladder Fireman John Hall had to cut off his hose and aid in raising the ladder. Probably three minutes elapsed before this stream was played into the window again. There was another stream from the corner of Princess and King streets. On the first load 1,000 feet of hose came to the building and from the upper station 1,000 feet came. Afterwards 600 feet were brought down making 2,600 feet in all. The water supply, the witness said, was good. The steamer Merryweather fed two streams from three and a half to four hours. It was not started for three-quarters of an hour after the Chatham engine was brought into play.

The assistant chief declared that the sixty-five-foot and the thirty-foot ladders were in use to his knowledge. He didn't know if the forty-foot ladder was used or not. He was familiar only with the lower part of the building. The mill portion he knew. There was a standpipe in the building, so he understood some time ago.

Needs Of The Brigade.

Assistant Chief Stratford declared that he didn't think it possible to fight the fire inside. He didn't see what could have been done that wasn't done, for the fire extended pretty well back. He went into the building about ten minutes after reaching the fire and found that the men couldn't have worked on the fourth floor. There were plenty of nozzles, but some of them are not suitable and should be discarded. As far as he could remember the depart-

ment had twelve nozzles. Only four of these were satisfactory. The department chief said that about the only fire in larger buildings. This truck would require six or eight additional men. A new steamer was also needed to replace the Merryweather. Another thousand feet of hose was necessary.

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Chief Elmer's Opinion.

Chief Elmer said he had very little to add to the evidence of the assistant chief. When he arrived he found the upper storey of the building all in flames. He went up to the third floor a few minutes after reaching the fire. The chief said he was pretty familiar with the factory. He was through it a few months ago. He made a practice of going through churches, public buildings and other large buildings. The elevator shaft made it difficult to fight the fire. There was a standpipe in the building, but he doesn't know whether the hose was attached to it or not. The water and hose supply was sufficient.

The chief said that the city needed one fireman for every thousand population. At least four or five more men were needed. A thousand more feet of hose and a new engine were required. In his opinion, the chief said that Kingston at present did not need an aerial truck. This city had about the same amount of apparatus as other places the same size. Another sixty-five-foot ladder would be handy.

The chief gave it as his firm opinion that the factory could not have been saved even with the aid of an aerial truck. The fire had spread too far. James Norris, proprietor of the Ottawa Hotel, just opposite the factory, said that when he first saw the fire it had not broken out of the windows. It did break out shortly afterwards. The first engine was got into the rear very quickly. The original hydrant stream put on reached the top windows all right, but it wasn't strong enough to break the window. It was sometime after he reached the street that the fire broke through the roof. Mr. Norris said he thought the fire as quickly as could be expected. He thought that the firemen did all they possibly could. When he first saw the fire, it was a wicked looking blaze. With better apparatus the firemen might have done better.

Chief Elmer Explains.

Chief Elmer says that when he testified to the civic fire committee that Kingston did not require an aerial truck he had reference to the heavy and expensive trucks used. He would have liked to elaborate on the matter but was confined to answering questions. The local department, he explains, could not handle a heavy aerial truck. There is a truck of a lighter nature, however, which this city might add to its fire equipment. This is a simple truck that could be handled by the local brigade without difficulty.

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CORRIGAN'S.

THE SPORT REVIEW THE HOCKEY TEAMS ARE AT PRACTICE.

The 14th Teams Worked Out Last Evening—"Senator" Powell Announces His Retirement.

The senior and junior Fourteenth Regiment hockey teams had a good workout at the Kingston skating rink on Monday evening, from eight to nine o'clock. A large number of the seniors were out, including Vanhorn, Crawford, Bernier, Richardson, and a host of juniors. For the seniors all that can be said is that they are as good as last season and when all are out will be a strong seven. "Ed-die" Hiseock is still giving his ankle a rest, but will be back in the game before long. The injury he received by the fall will not hinder him any this season.

At the present time the soldiers want a point and wing man, but both are in view. "Senator" Powell says that he has made positively his last public appearance, and the Kingston hockey lovers are sorry to lose him. "Senator" had been one of the stars of the soldiers' team ever since its organization, and his playing helped them win many a hard fought fight.

The junior soldiers are in fine trim and at present look good. They will likely have a game on Wednesday night with the Gananoque junior team. St. George's junior O.H.A. team had a practice at the Kingston rink last night and show very good form. They have not as fast or as sure a team as last season, but still they have a crowd that play good clean hockey. Their first game is with the junior soldiers on January 15th.

The Mic-Macs have made final arrangements for their trip to Belleville on New Year's day to play the Belleville intermediate team. The boys will take up a strong team and try and repeat the trick accomplished by the Harmony Club, on Christmas day. A large number of supporters will accompany the team.

TWO MORE GO THROUGH

The Ice Below the Bridge, While Skating.

On Monday afternoon two more young hockey players succeeded in getting an unexpected bath below the bridge. One of them was skating along when, without warning, the ice gave way beneath him and he went down into the icy water. He succeeded in getting out before he was there long enough to freeze.

Shortly after another puck chaser came tearing along and went right into the same hole and in over his head. Some of his companions saw him on the scene and drew him out. He had been in the water some little time and felt the cold very keenly.

At St. Luke's Church.

The Christmas Day musical selections were admirably rendered by the choir, under the leadership of Mrs. Betts, and were in keeping throughout with the festive character of the occasion. The following deserve special mention. In the "Te Deum" (Towis), the quartette was finely sung by Mrs. Betts, Miss Newman, Messrs. Pardoe and Hainsworth. The anthem, after the third collect, was the old favorite by Sullivan, "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear." During the offertory Mrs. Betts gave the solo, "Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning" (Salvator) by Robertson-Goldes-Harvey. On Sunday last the programme was organized by St. Luke's is to be congratulated on having such a painstaking and efficient choir leader, and also in having such a proficient organist as Miss Newman. The choir is a numerous body and would be a credit to any church.

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A Coming Event.

The assembly to be conducted by the Social Five in the City Hall, on New Year's eve, promises to be a big success, and the committee in charge of the arrangements, are sparing no pains to make it a memorable event.

Notice.

Office and warehouses of the Wormwith Piano company at present are 232 Princess street, next door to E. J. Reid's furniture store. Phone 378.

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Pillow Cottons, 40, 42, 44, and 46 inches, Plain or Circular, 15c. a yard and up. Pillow Cases, Hemmed, 42 inches wide, 30c., 35c. and 40c. a pair. Hemmed Sheets, Imported Cotton, size 70x90, Special, \$1.85 a pair.

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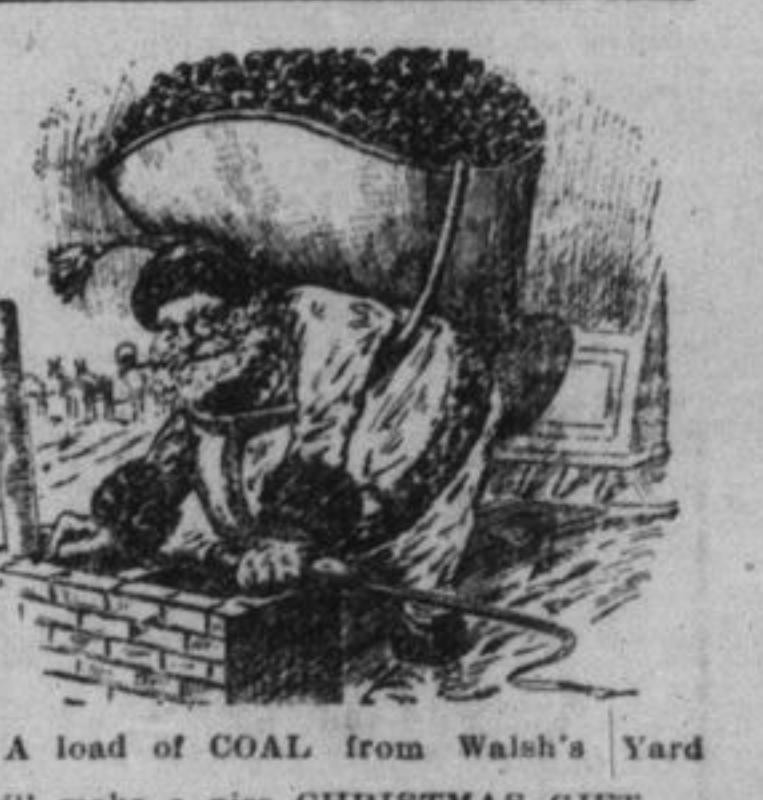
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