

MANCHESTER AND FIRE.

NEW STATION OPENED.

The great block of buildings at the junction of London Road, Whitworth-street, and Fairfield-street, Manchester, which is to be used mainly as a Central Fire Station was opened yesterday by the Lord Mayor of Manchester (Mr. J. H. Thewlis). A description of the buildings, together with an illustration, has appeared in the "Manchester Guardian." The buildings are a notable addition to the public institutions of the city. They include, besides the fire station, accommodation for testing gas meters, a police and ambulance station, and a coroner's court. In the fire station everything has been done to facilitate the speedy turning out of the brigade on an alarm of fire, and in this connection electricity is brought largely into use. The men are warned, their dwellings above the engine-house lighted up, the stalls opened, and the doors of the engine-house rolled back by this means. The men's quarters are spacious and equipped admirably, and all other portions of the building are fitted for their respective uses in the best manner. The designs were prepared by Messrs. Willoughby, Woodhouse, and Langham, of Manchester, and the work has been carried out by Messrs. J. Gerrard and Sons, Limited, of Swinton. The original estimate was for £120,000. In consequence of extra provision this has been exceeded.

The members of the City Council and a number of invited guests were conveyed from the Town Hall to the new station in trams, where they were joined by the Lord Mayor and Mrs. Thewlis, the Lady Mayoress, and the Mayor of Salford (Mr. Alderman Frankenburg). In the absence, owing to ill-health, of both the Chairman (Mr. Alderman Trevor) and the Deputy Chairman (Mr. H. Samson) of the Watch Committee, Mr. Fildes (chairman of the Fire Brigade Sub-committee) presented the Lord Mayor, in lieu of the customary ornamental key, with a gold cardcase as a memento of the occasion. The Lord Mayor opened the doors and the company gathered at one end of the great engine-house, where he declared the building opened. Criticism, he said, would probably be offered as to the cost of the scheme. It was conceived during the Lord Mayoralty of Sir Thomas Shann and consummated that day. It was one of those schemes which both of them would be able to say they were glad had been carried out on a splendid scale, and which formed an event marking their tenures of office which was greatly to the satisfaction of the City Council and to the advantage of the community.

Before making an inspection of the buildings, the Chief Officer, Mr. Bayliss, at the suggestion of Mr. Fildes, directed a turnout of a portion of the brigade as if for a fire. As the alarm was given firemen came sliding down the poles which lead from their apartments above the engine-house, and had the engine ready to start in fifteen seconds. Then the use of the great Magirus fire escape was shown in the drill yard, and a general inspection was made. At the close of the inspection luncheon was served in the Town Hall.

THE LORD MAYOR AND THE SCHEME.

The Lord Mayor, who presided, expressed regret that they were deprived of the presence of both the chairman and deputy chairman of the Committee—men who loved their work and did it conscientiously. The scheme of the new fire station, he said, was conceived shortly after he became a member of the Watch Committee, and he therefore knew something of the initial difficulties to be contended with, also of some of the later difficulties with which Mr. Fildes had to deal and of the manner in which he had fought them. It was probably true that a little more money had been spent than some people thought desirable, but anyone who would take the trouble to go through the buildings and see their equipment in its entirety would, he thought, be bound to come to the conclusion that whatever money had been spent had been well spent, and in the general interest of the community.—(Hear, hear.) Everything, as they knew, was in a transition state in connection with the matter of provision against fire. Rapid strides would be made in the next few years, and they were right in making provision to meet development in the shape of motor plant and in other ways. The new police station, Gas Meter Testing Department, and coroner's court would add to the efficiency of the public service in these particulars. He proposed a toast congratulating the Committee.

THE BRIGADE AND THE WORK.

Mr. Fildes, who responded, said all would agree that the work was a credit to the city, and that they now possessed a chief fire station worthy of the name. It was well equipped, and was manned by a staff equal to any emergency. In view of the new provision for dealing with fire they could not but remember the miserable little drill-yard and the impossibilities of exit of the old station in Jackson's Row, which necessitated the expenditure of some pounds a week upon policemen to keep the way clear for the engines to come out. They possessed now every provision for the efficient training of their firemen. A fireman's life was not passed on a bed of roses. He was always on call, night and day, a condition of things which applied to no other class of workpeople, and he only had a holiday every thirteenth day. It was the duty of the Corporation to see that these men were well housed in healthy quarters, and that they were provided with recreation, so that dull monotony did not lessen the enthusiasm with which they carried out their duties. With regard to the cost, the original tenders amounted to £120,000, but additions in connection with gas meter testing and the coroner's court amounted to £14,000. The whole of that amount would be made up by the rents coming from these departments. Another source of income came from the insurance companies, from whom they now received £2,000 a year. In face of the increased protection from fire now provided, he thought the Corporation would be justified in approaching the insurance companies and asking them to increase that amount. The Council and the citizens might feel assured that in handing over the fire brigade portion of the buildings to Mr. Bayliss and Mr. Corlett, the second officer, they were committing a trust to men in whom the Committee had the greatest possible confidence.—(Hear, hear.)

Mr. Alderman M'Cabe, who also spoke to the toast, pointed out that the new police station was not an increase of the police accommodation; it was merely the replacing of an old station by a new one, the old premises having been sold to the London and North-Western Railway Company. The additional ambulance provision which was now provided was an important consideration from the citizens' point of view. In this connection it had been said that the ambulances did not get along as quickly as they ought. To fix a gong to the ambulance for clearing the way would be a nuisance to the patient inside, and he therefore asked people when they saw an ambulance to give it every facility for passing through the streets.

The Mayor of Salford, who responded to the toast of his health, said that in his opinion the Corporation had acted wisely in providing such a building as they had that day opened. It would be found in the long run that the best was the cheapest.

The health of the Lord Mayor, proposed by Mr. Fildes, concluded the toast list.

A FIRE EXPERIMENT.

During luncheon the Lord Mayor announced that in order that the efficiency of the brigade might be put to a more severe test than that already seen he would, at a given moment, cause an alarm to be sent to the new fire station as though there were a fire at the Town Hall. No one outside the room knew that this was to be done, and no intimation of any kind had been made to the firemen. A little later the alarm was given. The new chief fire station is some distance from the Town Hall, and the intervening streets were thronged with traffic, but the first engine from Fairfield-street arrived in front of the Town Hall in four minutes and nine seconds from the time of the alarm. It was quickly followed by other engines and by the great Magirus fire escape. The escape was run up to its full length, hose was attached to the mains, and a fireman, carrying a pipe to the top of the escape, threw volumes of water to a great height. The clouds of spray were very fine, and some hundreds of people in Albert Square watched them and also the pleasant effect of a rainbow in the beams of the sun. Half-a-dozen other hose were got to work in the Square, and they sent up a great combined column of water. The Lord Mayor and the guests in the hall crowded out on the walls and were cheered.