

THE FIRE AT THE INFIRMARY.

The CHAIRMAN read the following special report from the Master of the union:—

The Master stated, with extreme regret, that he had the painful duty to report that a fire of an alarming nature broke out in the bathroom of the men's infirmary at three o'clock on Sunday morning last. Upon the alarm being raised, the officials were quickly on the scene, and the first care was to remove the inmates. This was a work of much difficulty and danger; in fact, after access had been cut off from the staircase, four old men had to be rescued through a window. The progress of rescue was much impeded by the iron framework and peculiar construction of the windows and the very narrow staircase. Very efficient assistance was rendered by all the workhouse officials, especially the porter, cook, and schoolmaster. The police, headed by Sergeant Bass, were promptly on the spot, and very quickly the workhouse hose, fire-pails, &c., were ably and successfully used. The Fire Brigade, under the direction of Captain Lyon, arrived within half-an-hour, and the combined efforts, with a good supply of water, soon succeeded in subduing the flames.

The extent of the damage comprises the destruction of nearly the whole of the roof of the men's infirmary, walls much injured, and the ceilings below greatly damaged by water. The nurse's sitting-room is entirely destroyed, and many useful articles belonging to her burnt. The apartments of the cook were so damaged by water that he now has the room formerly occupied by the assistant-matron. The destruction of bedding, &c., was also considerable, but the exact loss has not yet been ascertained. He had converted the girls' department into a temporary men's infirmary, and, although inconvenient, it would do until better arrangements could be made. To meet the difficulty of the four girls still remaining in the house, he had placed them in a cottage as a day room, with sleeping accommodation in one of the able-bodied women's bed-rooms.

It was with great satisfaction that he had to inform the guardians that none of the invalids are worse in health on account of the alarm and removal (although one had since died from other causes). The medical officer was sent for, and promptly attended, as a matter of precaution. The cause of the disaster had not yet been determined, but it appeared to have originated near the new chimney in the bathroom. The chairman and clerk were apprised of the sad event by nine o'clock on Sunday morning, and they, together with many guardians, visited the house during the day. In conclusion, he could only express the hope that the guardians would consider the action taken at the time of the fire satisfactory, and that they would also approve of the arrangement since made.

The CHAIRMAN characterised the report as a very satisfactory one, and eulogised the arrangements which the master had made to meet the emergency, and though there was a difficulty upon the question of classification, he had no doubt that it would be managed in a satisfactory way. He had come up to the house on Sunday after hearing about the matter, and was thoroughly well satisfied with what had been done, as detailed in the report just read. He thought they should place on the minutes a resolution, recording their high sense of the services of the master, who had shown very great courage, coolness, and judgment. He thought also that the Police and Fire Brigade deserved their thanks. He would propose that the clerk draft a resolution, and place it on the books.

Mr. DIGBY desired to second this resolution. He was the first guardian on the scene after the fire, and he had abundant opportunity of seeing and hearing of the great bravery of the master. That which deserved special mention in his judgment was the

circumstance that after all the people had been supposed to have been extricated, and one man was found to be missing, the master went up a ladder, got through the window, and at a great risk groped about amidst smoke, and falling ceiling, &c., until he found the poor creature crouching in terror in a corner, and brought him out, thereby saving his life (applause). This was a most courageous act, and they could not express too highly their sense of the admirable conduct of the master. All the other officials, the Police, and the Fire Brigade deserved their thanks.