

Alarming Fire at Intake Narrow Escape of Six Children A Girl's Heroism

Early this morning a fire of an alarming character took place at Elm Tree Hill, Intake. About six o'clock the residents in the district were alarmed by screams of fire, and when it was discovered that the house of George Morewood, a collier was enveloped in flames, and that six children were in the place, the greatest excitement prevailed. It appears that Morewood had gone to work at the time. He got up shortly after five o'clock, and lighted a fire in the kitchen, and having had his breakfast, proceeded to the Birley Colliery, where he is employed. His wife had for some time been engaged nursing in Sheffield, and when Morewood left his six children were in bed. The ages of these children range from 19 down to five years, their names being Annie Maria, 19; Charlotte, 17; Jane Ann, 13; Emily, 10; Ernest, 8; and Ada, 5. The latter child had been sleeping in the lower chamber, in the same room as her father, but all the remainder were in the attic. Before the father left the place he saw that all was safe. The fire, which was not a very large one, was burning in the grate. In front of it was a fender; a hearthrug being spread over the hearth. The table was covered with a clean white cloth, and standing upon it was a candle and an oil lamp containing about a quart of paraffin, but neither of these were alight. It was about six o'clock when Charlotte awoke, and the first thing she noticed was a strong smell of smoke. She was not long in being convinced that not only was the room full of smoke, but that there was a fire in the house. She woke her eldest sister and told her, and at once slipping on a dress skirt she descended into the lower apartments. The child Ada, was, in the meantime taken into the attic. Charlotte, finding that the fire was not in the bed-room where her father and Ada had slept, proceeded further downstairs, into the kitchen. On opening the door the flames darted out towards her, and she was obliged to quickly make her exit to save herself from being burnt. Then it was that the girl Charlotte proved heroism and presence of mind. On getting into the attic she found that her eldest sister Annie Maria had fainted. This girl had not been well for some time, and the shock to her system on hearing of the fire was too much for her. This only made the task of Charlotte all the more difficult. There is little doubt that but for the courage of this girl all the six children would have been burnt to death. She first raised the alarm, but at the same time told her brother and sisters that if they kept quiet they would be all right. The screams of fire raised by the family, quickly brought a number of people to the scene. Many colliers were at the time making their way to the pits, and they at once showed their readiness to render all the assistance they could. Neighbours who had also been aroused joined the crowd of willing helpers. By the advice of Charlotte the girls Jane Ann, and Emily went to the chamber and jumped into the street below from the window of the apartment. The miner below divested themselves of their coats, and waistcoats, and bedclothes had been proved by those residing near, so that in case the children were not caught they would not be seriously injured. Fortunately the two girls named - Jane Ann and Emily - were caught safely, and were at once removed to houses of people living at hand. Charlotte, seeing that her sisters had escaped, turned her attention to the two little ones. First she threw out the child Ada and then the boy Ernest. Then lifting her fainting sister, Annie Maria, she dropped her into the arms of the men below. The men caught the girl but she received a severe shock. She, with the others, were taken into the houses of friends. Charlotte had stayed till last, resolved upon saving the others, even though she should perish herself. The flames by this time had reached the lower chamber and were fast making their way into the attic. The girl looked round to see if she could save any goods in the attic, or even if she could manage to get her own clothes and those of her brother and sisters who had had to make their escape in their night-dresses. But it was too late, and it was apparent that she must not longer delay or her life might be endangered. Going to the window she shouted that she was about to jump and the moment afterwards she did so. Those below endeavoured to catch the girl, but although they somewhat checked her fall they could not retain their hold of her and she was hurt about the legs, besides receiving a very bad shaking. When picked up she was unconscious. The strain upon her nerves and the shock to her system

had been too much for her. She was carried to a house near, and remained there. Later in the day she was attended to by a doctor, the latter also visiting the eldest girl, Annie Maria. Fortunately it was found that neither of them were badly injured, though they were naturally weak from shock.

While the rescue of the children had been proceeding the Fire Brigade had been summoned from Sheffield. The message was received at the offices in Rockingham street at 6.47. The tender was very soon on its way, and in very quick time was at Elm Tree Hill. Morewood's house was by this time completely gutted, and the flames were making their way along the roofs of the other houses. The colliers were helping the residents to remove their furniture, and the scene was still one of great animation and excitement. Two men, named William Leader, of Gleadless, and Arthur Chandlin, of Intake, were working especially hard. Chandlin climbed on the roof of No. 12 house, and by severing the rafters somewhat impeded the progress of the fire. Supt. Pound and his men found a good supply of water, and soon subdued the flames, though it was not until noon that they were able to leave the scene. Everything in Morewood's house was burnt to a cinder, and nothing remains but bare walls. In two other houses in the row the attics with their contents, were destroyed and the roofs of other places were burnt off. The property belongs to Mr. Crosby of Hagg lane, and is insured. The furniture that has been destroyed was, however, none of it covered by insurance. Morewood states that his home was nicely fitted up, and he estimates his loss at least £50. He is however, more thankful at the escape of his children, than upset by the loss of his belongings.

The girl Charlotte Morewood, who as previously stated, is only 17 years of age, was this afternoon interviewed by one of our representatives. She stated that with the exception of the youngest child, Ada, all the others were sleeping in the attic. She did not hear her father leave the house, but she awoke about six o'clock, and noticed the room was full of smoke. There was a very strong smell of burning, and she could tell that there was a fire somewhere. Quickly slipping on her dress skirt, she ran into the chamber, where the youngest child had been sleeping. All was right there. She then descended into the "house place" but immediately on opening the door she was obliged to beat a hasty retreat, in consequence of the room being one mass of flames. The child, Ada, had by this time gone into the attic and Charlotte rushing into that apartment told the children to scream for help, the house was on fire. They threw open the attic window, and raised an alarm. There were a number of colliers proceeding to their work, and they at once came to the scene. The eldest daughter, Annie Maria, was in anything but a healthy condition and on learning that the house was on fire she fainted away. Charlotte asked the colliers to catch the children as she dropped them out of the window. This they did, and the two young ones were rescued without injury. The girls, Jane Ann, and Emily descended into the chamber, and jumped from the window of that apartment, both being caught by the men below. Charlotte then took hold of her eldest sister and dropped her through the window, the men underneath catching her in their arms. Naturally, however, her weight prevented them from keeping a firm hold, and as a result she received a somewhat severe shock from the fall. Charlotte adds: "I then jumped out myself. I had been anxious to save all the others. I was greatly upset when I first saw the fire. I thought we should all be burnt to death, but I nerved myself up to save them. After I had dropped my eldest sister out, I thought that perhaps I might be able to get into the chamber and jump from the window there, and so I had to jump from the attic. I don't remember anything more after I jumped, because I became unconscious. When I got out of my faint I found myself on a sofa in a neighbour's house. I was rather badly hurt in the legs, and I have also a severe pain in my head. My brother and sisters had to make their escape in their nightdresses and all their other clothes have been burnt.