

Fire at Sheffield Public House Damage £500

Last night a fire took place at the Three Merry Smiths, Holly street, damage being done to the amount of over £500.

During the day the landlord, Mr. George Robert Hall, who has had the place almost six months, noticed a strong smell of gas. He mentioned the matter to a neighbour, and the latter said he had also thought there was an escape somewhere. An examination was made of the pipes, and brackets, but nothing was discovered. About ten o'clock, while the landlord and his son were getting supper, they were alerted by a man running into the house and informing them there was a fire in one of the bedrooms. Mr. Hall at once proceeded upstairs, but before he reached the top he had to stop. The bedroom facing Holly street was filled with flames and the fiery element was fast making its way along the staircases. At this moment Police-constable Boniface entered the house, and the Fire Brigade was at once summoned.

Superintendent Pound and his men were on the spot with the tender and plenty of hose at ten minutes past ten. They were quickly at work, but their task was not easy. There was none too much room for them to work in, besides which the flames had got well hold of two bedrooms and one staircase. Fortunately there was a good supply of water, and several jets were brought to play. Shortly before a quarter to eleven the fire was mastered, but it was some time afterwards before all danger was at an end.

An examination of the premises showed that two bedrooms had been completely gutted, on staircase burnt out, and two attics badly damaged. The whole of the windows on the first floor, and most of those on the second were broken. The damage by water was as great as that by fire. The liquid found its way through the floors of the two bedrooms into the tap room and bar below and most of the things there, including a piano, are irreparably damaged. The presented a sorrowful appearance after the fire. But for the promptness of the Brigade it is doubtful what would have been the result. The property is old, and the flames must have spread with great rapidity had they not been early checked. In the bedroom in which the fire broke out, Mr. Hall kept, in a wooden box, a quantity of money. He states that at the time of the fire he had in it £170 in notes, and something like £5 in gold. The notes are all burnt, and the gold has not yet been found.

How the fire commenced is not known, but the supposition is that there had been an escape of gas in the bedroom in which the flames were first seen. This idea is rather confirmed by the fact that the flames at the outset spread with great rapidity.

It was impossible last night to form an actual estimate of the damage. The landlord believes that, including the notes and gold, his loss will exceed £500. He has an insurance in the Queen office, but he is doubtful whether the whole will be covered. The property belongs to the Newark and Sheffield Brewery Co., and is insured.

The idea that the fire at the Three Merry Smiths was due to a leakage of gas is probably correct. A large hole has been burnt in the flooring of the bedroom near the pipe which conveys the gas to the upper part of the house. No trace of the gold and notes has been discovered, but it is possible that the metal will be found when the debris has been

cleared away. The box in which notes to the amount of £170 were deposited was all but totally destroyed, a small portion of charred material alone remaining. The property is old and but for the speedy discovery of the outbreak and the prompt arrival of the fire brigade the whole block of buildings would have been destroyed, as the work of the flames was extremely rapid. The extent of the loss has not been estimated but it is expected to reach £500.