

August 24<sup>th</sup> 1896.

## DISASTROUS FIRE AT HARPENDEN.

### THE RED HOUSE BURNT DOWN.

£12,000 TO £15,000 DAMAGES.

The usual quiet and peaceful like serenity of far-famed Harpenden village was rudely disturbed last evening by the exciting news that fire had broken out at the Red House, Carlton-road, the residence of Mr. A. Vaughan Stevens. Soon crowds of people were hurrying to the spot, and on their arrival they found that the industriously circulated news was but too true, and that the splendid house, with its sumptuous fittings, was doomed to the flames. The Red House, it is known to all who are really familiar with Harpenden, was built a few years ago on the delightful northern eminence overlooking the village, and from this charming spot a lovely panorama is spread before the eyes—a truly

#### \* IDEAL LOCALITY FOR A COUNTRY RESIDENCE.

When the house was erected cost was not considered, and though it is difficult to obtain trustworthy information on this matter, there is no room to doubt that the cost of the house, laying out of the grounds, and the erection of the buildings essential to so palatial a structure approached £20,000. The matter was concisely put by a prominent resident of Harpenden to our representative last evening:—"I know the house well, and a more lovely place I never was in. It was superb. No mere tinsel work there. Everything was of the best, and the expense of completing this place as it stood was enormous. Splendid polished oak doors, beautiful and costly fittings, and a staircase of carved oak which cost anything from between £400 to £600. It was a really magnificent place, and it was furnished with exquisite taste—a veritable palace." Further inquiries elicited the fact that there was a

#### COMPLETE INSTALLATION OF ELECTRIC LIGHT,

the generating station being a short distance from the house, and there the electricity was obtained from a dynamo worked by an engine, and was conducted to storage batteries, whence the supply for the interior lighting of the house was derived. Around the mansion, as it may fittingly be termed, are beautifully laid out grounds, with conservatories, hot houses, forcing pits, etc., Mr. Vaughan Stevens taking considerable interest in floriculture and horticulture. Attached to the house, and connected with it, is a handsomely fitted billiard room, and this is practically all that is now left of what only yesterday was a residence of which any gentleman might be proud, and which was always spoken of in terms of enthusiastic admiration by those whose knowledge was not confined merely to the interior, though the outside of the building was sufficiently imposing with its many ornamentations, gables, balustrading and balconies, to arrest the attention of even the most casual observer. And now the place is a wreck, nought but the bare walls and a few chimney stacks remaining. At the time of the fire the

#### FAMILY WERE AWAY FROM HOME,

enjoying a stay at Worthing, but their holiday happiness was brought to a dramatic close by the telegram despatched last evening, in reply to which Mr. Vaughan Stevens left by first train, and reached Harpenden as quickly as possible, only to find that his residence had been consumed by the devouring flames. We sympathise with Mr. Vaughan Stevens and the members of his family in the great calamity which has overtaken them, and they have the cordial commiseration of all their fellow residents and many others beyond the borders of the village.