

THE ALARM.

Shortly after six o'clock last evening an urgent message was received by the Harpenden Fire Brigade to repair with all speed to the Red House, Carlton-road, as it was badly on fire. Without a moment's unnecessary delay the members of Brigade were on their way to the scene with such primitive and unsatisfactory extinguishing appliances as they possess, but it was apparent thus early to them that only a miracle could save the building and its contents, as flames and smoke were issuing in volumes from the roof, and the fire was being favoured with a strong wind from the north, which forced the flames towards the interior. Pending the arrival of the brigade everything appears to have been done that was possible with the limited means at hand to extinguish the fire, but from the first the case was apparently hopeless. All the water immediately available was used by Mr. T. P. Pratt and others who were early on the scene, but the fire had too strong a hold, and beaten back by smoke and flames they were reluctantly compelled to acknowledge their powerlessness to avert the impending catastrophe. As the house certainly must go, attention was turned to the furniture, and many willing helpers, including ladies, were soon at work removing portable articles, and so energetic were they that in a comparatively brief period of time the bulk of the furniture had been removed to a place of safety. The bedsteads, bedroom furniture, pictures, pianos, and ground floor appointments were all outside the burning building in an amazingly short period of time, many of the men engaged in the work only ceasing when the water from the tank streamed down hot upon them, and they could no longer in safety go about upon their hands and knees. The huge pile was

BLAZING FURIOUSLY.

and now and again a portion of the roof would fall in with a crash, and would momentarily check the flames, but immediately afterwards a volume of smoke and flame, and showers of sparks would leap upwards, illuminating the deepening twilight with their lurid glow. From far and near people attracted by the flames hurried to the spot, but they were powerless to assist, and had to stand idly by and see the house burn itself out. The Harpenden Brigade, it is true, got to work at the rear of the building, with a view to preventing the flames reaching the billiard room, but they could not get any water except from the rain-water tank, there either not being any in the main, or else the hose was not of sufficient length to convey it to the spot. The messages which had been sent to St. Albans and Luton quickly brought both brigades out. The St. Albans brigade, as usual, were delayed some time by the non-appearance of the horses, but at seven they were off at a hand-gallop, and going at a raze pace, they were on the spot in about twenty minutes, steam having been got up on the road. A new 6-in. water-main was being laid in Carlton-road. This was tapped by the Water Company, and the suction-pipe of the engine was directly attached to the main. There was a delay, however, in getting to work, as the hose brought was not of sufficient length. When the hose reel appeared upon the scene but little time elapsed ere two powerful jets were being poured on the building. Great efforts were made to prevent the fire spreading to the lower rooms, but crash after crash of burning timber at length had the inevitable result, and the house was now a

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