

ASHLEY SCHOOL ON FIRE.

A SUFFRAGIST OUTRAGE.

CAREFULLY-PLANNED A::SON.

NEW BUILDINGS BURNED.

Ashley Road School was the scene early this morning of a deliberate act of incendiarism by suffragists. About half past 1 o'clock the police received information that the school was on fire. The alarm was given at the Fonthill Police Station, and the Central Fire Brigade was at once summoned.

On the arrival of the brigade it was found that the roof of the new buildings at present in course of erection at the rear of the main school, was on fire, and flames were shooting upward, and the outbreak appeared to be very serious.

Fortunately the brigade had come fully equipped, and although the distance of the affected buildings from the street was considerable a hose was quickly rigged up and in a very short time the fire was under control.

It was then discovered that the firing of the building had been deliberately planned. The building consists of two floors, designed for manual instruction and cookery, and on the upper floor a search revealed that a fire had been carefully laid below the ventilator. A small space was enclosed with bricks, and into it had been placed some jackets and other garments belonging to the workmen on the job, and these clothes had been liberally saturated with paraffin. The first was neatly laid in a small heap, and in addition to the paraffin, shavings and other inflammable material had been gathered together. Chief Constable Anderson entertains no doubt that a suffragist outrage has been committed. Access to the building is, of course, a comparatively easy matter, and the Ashley Road district is quiet and unfrequented during the night. There are no doors on the uncompleted building, so that neither great skill nor much daring was necessary on the part of the incendiary.

Any theory that the fire may have been caused by carelessness or negligence on the part of the workmen is disproved by the fact that they have not been in the place for some time. That the fire had been lighted a considerable time before it was discovered was evidenced by the progress which it had made and by the damage wrought before the brigade arrived. All who had any right to be in the building had left by 6 o'clock yesterday evening, and as nothing untoward had been observed by the caretaker it is probable that the outrage was committed about midnight.

The fire will entail considerable loss, although no doubt this is covered by insurance. There are no furnishings in the block, but the ceiling and the roof will probably have to be entirely renewed, and the damage may be put at £200 or £300. In a sense, therefore, the plot was foiled by the prompt action of the fire brigade. But for this the whole fabric, valued at £4000, would have been destroyed, and the outbreak might quite easily have extended to the main school building.

Great alarm and intense excitement prevailed in the neighbourhood. A very anxious spectator was Mr Carle, convener of the Buildings Committee of the School Board, who had been summoned from bed. He went through the building and satisfied himself that the outbreak was the work of incendiaries.

The brigade remained on the ground until all possible danger was over, and subsequent search discovered, in addition to the combustibles already described, several cans which had contained paraffin, and which the authors of the outrage had left behind them in their flight. These cans and several other articles were taken possession of by the police.

There is no direct clue to the identity of those concerned in the fire-raising.
