

ASHLEY SCHOOL FIRE.

SEARCH FOR CLUES.

DISCOVERY OF SUFFRAGIST LITERATURE.

Police investigations regarding the attempt to burn down Ashley Road School on Saturday morning have settled beyond reasonable doubt that the fire was the work of militant suffragists. Two copies of "The Suffragette," the official organ of the militants, were found in the vicinity of the building, along with two postcards containing written messages. Chief Constable Anderson expresses himself as of opinion that the suffragists had deliberately planned to fire the building, paraffin having been used to attain that object. No arrests have as yet been made in connection with the outrage.

DISCOVERY OF FOOTPRINTS.

Immediately after the fire had been subdued, the activities of the police were directed towards the discovery of any traces that might lead to the identification of the perpetrators of the outrage. Under the charge of Superintendent Goodall, the officers commenced a thorough search of the premises. Dawn had broken before the investigation began, and in the grey light of the morning the police could be seen scrambling along the roof and wall-tops of the building seeking traces of the incendiaries. After several hours strenuous work the officers were, by the aid of a number of clues, able to reconstruct in large measure the steps taken in carrying out the plot. Not only so, but they were enabled to form a strong suspicion as to the identity of the authors of the outrage. In the soft earth just behind the north-west corner of the building, there were discovered several footprints, obviously those of two women. One of the suffragists had apparently helped the other to get on the top of the wall. Pursuing their investigations still further, the police found themselves in possession of a clue that gave definite information as to the sex of the authors of the outrage. In their struggle to get over the wall, the miscreants had encountered a serious obstacle in the shape of a hedge, and several strands of hair and a woman's hair net were found hanging to the twigs of the bushes. Inside the enclosure the ground was hard, and no further trace of footprints could be seen.

"LET RIGHT PREVAIL!"

The police were not long in obtaining what they regard as proof positive of suffragist guilt. In their search they discovered in a mound of lime close to the building a number of papers and postcards. The papers consisted of two copies of the "Suffragette," and prominent on the front page of one of the copies was the word "Raided." As is well known, this issue of the paper took place after the police had decided to suppress its publication, and the suffragists expressed their opinion on the matter in the method referred to. The dates of the two newspapers were April 25 and May 2. Beside the papers were found two postcards, bearing ample evidence of the fact that the incendiaries were not afraid to disclose their identity. Written on one of the postcards were the words:—

"LET RIGHT PREVAIL"

While the other read:—

"REBELLION! DESTRUCTION!

FRUITS OF INJUSTICE,

TYRANNY, COERCION, AND TORTURE."

POLICE ACTIVITY.

Following on the discovery of the papers and postcards, Chief Constable Anderson set his full detective staff to the task of running the perpetrators to earth. The police, however, have nothing to work upon, with the exception of papers, and the hair-net found on the hedge, the inscription on the postcards being printed on in such a manner as to hide all traces of handwriting. Aided by what they have discovered, however, the police are hopeful that they will soon bring the perpetrators of the outrage to justice. It was expected in many quarters that a raid would immediately be made on the suffragist headquarters in Bon-Accord Street, but nothing of this nature occurred. Current opinion attributes the outrage to militants who have come up north for the purpose. Great excitement prevailed in the neighbourhood of the school during the morning, and strong denunciation of suffragist methods was given by the crowds which collected in Ashley Road.

WATCHING THE SCHOOLS.

In support of the theory that the outrage had been planned some considerable time previously, it has been discovered that workers in a market garden adjoining the school have for some time had their attention attracted by mysterious footprints in the soft earth of their garden. As it was private ground, and the tracks were too dainty to be those of an ordinary worker, the gardeners, in the light of what has occurred, are certain that the militants had been in the habit of paying nocturnal visits to the school with the object of spying out the land. Further evidence of this is afforded by the fact that on Tuesday a fashionably-dressed lady was seen in the grounds of Ashley House. When the gardener was cutting the lawn he was surprised to notice a stranger in the garden hiding among the bushes, and as soon as she noticed she was observed, she ran off with but little ceremony, climbing over the gate instead of opening it, and rushing down the drive. A young man working in the market garden saw her as she passed out at the gate. He describes the lady as very "swankily" dressed in black, but as he only got "a back view," he could not say more than that she was very tall and thin.