

# An Early Morning Conflagration

## Disastrous Fire at Barcaldine.

### The Unlucky West End Block Again Suffers.

Damages Estimated at £10,000.

### Fire Brigade's Excellent Work.

### Lyric Picture Theatre Proves an Effective Break.

#### Narrow Escape of Eastern Section—Hotel Shakespeare Almost Ignites

For the third time within eight months an outbreak of fire has occurred in the West End hotel block, on this occasion unfortunately with disastrous results. Shortly after 1 a.m. Monday Mr. B. Culpan, owner of the Hotel Shakespeare, was roused from his beauty sleep by the restlessness of a Jersey cow which roams about the yard at night, and thinking there were some prowlers about got up to investigate. He was then astonished to find a fire blazing in the Allies' Cafe opposite; it appeared like two fires, but Mr. Culpan says probably a reflection on a window caused the supposition. Mr. Culpan at once gave the alarm to the West End people, and others, and sent his yardman, Mr. Clancy, to the fire station, which, happily, is only a short distance away in Ash-street, and this young man vigorously tolled the bell. Mr. Culpan had no easy task in rousing the inmates of the West End; everybody appeared to be dead to the world, and perfectly oblivious of the seething cauldron of fire which was maturing right alongside of them. Meanwhile the fire spread with great rapidity, and by the time members of the Fire Brigade arrived Mr. Rodger's place was practically blazing from end to end.

It was just about ten minutes past one o'clock when the firebell alarmed the people and almost immediately a loud whistle at the power house simultaneously apprised the residents in the eastern section of the town. This alarm was quite a surprise, and was much appreciated by business people and others in that part, some of whom had not heard the bell. Unfortunately the compressed air used for the purpose of blowing the whistle had exhausted the air in the reservoir for

starting the big engine, which, for a while afterwards, caused some inconvenience and this was really responsible for the little scarcity of water at the start of the Brigade's operations at the fire. Certainly the railway tank was running and the Turncock, Mr. E. Vale, could not find the key to turn it off, but this was not the chief cause of the trouble. It appears that when the alarm was given naturally the roused residents switched on their lights and the whole responsibility of the pumping and generating fell on to the small engine, with the consequence that she grunted and groaned under the very heavy load, and dropped her speed to about half. Mr. E. Hill, who had just relieved Mr. F. Fysh on shift, was really at his wits' end what to do. He wanted to keep the lights going if possible, owing to more air having to be provided by the compressor before the big engine could be got going. Mr. F. C. Parker, Inspector of Machinery, who lives adjacent to the power house, ran across to give Mr. Hill some assistance, and this was much appreciated. Mr. Parker says he is surprised that on such an occasion the whole of the work at the power house is left to one man. However, after the lights had perforce been extinguished to enable the small engine to speed up and pump, the big engine was got going and the lights restored. After this there was ample water.

Very soon there was a rush of people from all directions, and those coming from the outside suburbs could see a huge blaze apparently in the western section, and, furthermore, could locate it in the vicinity of the ill-fated West End Hotel. The fire had apparently got a good hold before the Brigade or residents had been alarmed.

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1915 fire started almost in the same locality, and was stopped at the same place.

Upon arriving on the scene, Mr. C. F. Lloyd-Jones, Superintendent of the Fire Brigade, thought there might be a hope of saving the West End, and he for a while concentrated his efforts in that direction. He connected up 300ft. of hosing at the Hotel Shakespeare plug and 300ft., at Hawthorne's in Oak-street. The Brigade for a time played on the West End from the Beech-street side, and then it became apparent that there was nothing for it but to transfer operations to the Oak-street frontage, and Mr. Jones connected up 400ft. at Hawthorne's and sent 300ft. round to Ash-street to attack in the rear. This gave the Brigade three good jets, and there was now plenty of water.

The West End burnt fiercely and quickly and had the Brigade fifty hoses nothing could have suppressed the solid body of flame that was enveloping the corner building. Mr. Jones says the hotel appeared to burst into flame in twenty places at once. The heat was terrific. As it happened, the scarcity of water at the start did not matter much, as the Brigade could not possibly have done more than it did—a metropolitan brigade would probably have chosen the Lyric from the start to make the

save and not waste time and water in trying to stem the fiery tide at the West End, in the first instance, when it was seen it was a hopeless task.

The demonstration on the previous Monday evening gave the Brigade an idea of what water could be relied upon, and confidence that they would be able to cope with a fairly big fire, and prevent it spreading. Of course once a large wooden building gets well alight nothing—not even a metropolitan brigade—can save it. The fire-fighters can only prevent it spreading. The night was fortunately almost a perfect calm, still the breeze created by the flames caused particles to be wafted in all directions, and some even went as far away as the R. C. Church.

When roused the West End people were quite panic-stricken, as the fire was raging most vigorously at the rear of the hotel and adjoining buildings. It was then patent to everyone that the fine building was doomed. The boarders and staff got away with little beyond what they stood up in; several took to the ladders on Mrs. Hawthorne's side of the hotel and thus got out of danger, but they were able to save but little of their goods and chattels. Some threw their be-

and chattels. Some threw their belongings over the balcony and that was the last they saw of them in some instances. Several ladies had no time to secure their trinkets and belongings and reached the street in night attire. A couple of them fainted and received attention at the hospital. One gentleman left a gold watch and chain on his dressing table, and others, too, lost valuables. Several of the male boarders lost all their clothes, and one gentleman lost a package of valuable official and legal documents. In fifteen minutes after the alarm was given the West End hotel was a mass of fierce fire, and so great was the heat that people stood as far back as the railway line, and the olla podrida of things pitched into the street were carted back to the railway fence.

When the fire was at its height the Hotel Shakespeare caused much uneasiness; the telegraph poles in Beech-street were already alight, and the acacia trees running along the centre of the street were being scorch-up; these trees, as in the October fire of 1915, went a long way towards protecting the building, which was in serious jeopardy, so much so that people on the eastern side of the hotel started moving stock. Mr. Sid Smith had all his out but afterwards put it back when he found the Shakespeare was safe. Mr. W. C. Peel, too, was taking no risks, and had removed a quantity of valuable leather stock and his safe. Others with business interests in the eastern section were feeling very anxious and were watching the progress of events at the Shakespeare very closely and feverishly. It really looked as if only a miracle could save the fine hotel, and therefore the whole section. The heat was very intense when the West End was burning at its height, and the curtain boards and ridging under the roof of the Shakespeare were smoking ominously. The lower curtain boards had, in fact, ignited, but the bucket brigade dealt with this; the danger was the top trouble, out of reach of those using the buckets. Some time previous Mr. Jones had made a request for wet blankets to be placed along the balcony, and this was done. He had also requested all doors to be closed to prevent probable draughts. Presently, things looking serious, urgent calls were made for a hose and assistance. The wooden walls were almost red hot, while glass in the doors was cracked—the slightest bit of wind and the hotel was lost. Mr. Jones, realising the seriousness of the position, then ordered 200ft. of the hose being utilized in Ash-street to be brought round

ordered 200ft. of the hose being utilized in Ash-street to be brought round to the Shakespeare. Mr. S. Hoy seized the hydrant and did the distance in the quickest time on record. Firemen brought along the hose—and it was no easy job either, the hose being full of water and was dead weight. The hydrant was planted near the hotel, and Fireman Frank O'Brien braved the heat and played on the smoking portions of the Shakespeare until danger was passed. When the roofing of the West End fell in the tension was relieved, but the heat was terrific. It was almost difficult to stand on the other side of the line nearly opposite the residence of the station master. It is generally agreed that the heat on this occasion from the West End Hotel surpassed that generated by the building demolished in 1915. "Frank" must have been a bit of a Salamander to stand the temperature as he did. The bucket brigade at the Shakespeare did good work, and much praise in this respect is due Miss ("Bob") Sullivan, who worked like a heroine, and, as it remarked, this young lady was standing to her guns—or rather to her buckets—when many of the male sex were thinking more about themselves and their belongings. Several have spoken to us regarding "Bob's" (as

Miss Sullivan is familiarly known) fine work. All the paint on the Beech-street side frontage and top boards of the hotel are burnt into ridges, and glass is broken in the doors. The hose was then turned on to the burning telegraph and telephone poles and the jets reached easily over the top. Some of the burning timber in the acacia trees was also chopped away.

While all this was going on business people and others in the western block, on the Oak-street front in the danger zone, were busy removing their goods and chattels as far out of reach as possible. The centre of the street presented a very conglomerated mass of stock-in-trade of varied descriptions, and furniture, &c., from the hotels. Mr. W. Greaves had removed a small amount of stuff, and Mrs. Hawthorne fortunately was lucky in this respect, too. Even the linoleum had been raised in the Federal rooms—this is a big item nowadays. Still, a lot of money is lost by removal. Mr. C. B. Plumb—in fact, all in need of such—had many willing helpers. His large stock was removed holus-bolus in blankets, &c., and dumped down near the railway fence. Every mortal thing in the shop was removed, even the clock and telephone, coun-

ters, &c. Mr. Plumb carries a very large and varied stock, and the pile of mixed matter the contents of the shop made in the street can well be imagined. Mr. Seth Farrington, Mr. Plumb's right hand man, mounted guard over the disturbed stock, and really "Seth" looked quite elevated in his new position, and his imitation of the "Cheap Jack" was very amusing. He was unblushingly offering his stock at pre-fire prices! We believe he disposed of quite a number of cigarettes at fabulous price! However, a little fun at such a time helps to pass the time, and does no harm. "It's a poor heart that never rejoices"

It is pleasing to learn that there appears to have been very little, if any, pilfering, as is usual on such occasions—in fact, everything appeared to be very quiet and orderly considering all things, as compared with some previous occasions we have in mind. Mr. Plumb informed us that so far as he could tell on Wednesday he did not appear to have lost much of his stock. Everything was so mixed up, however, that it would be some time before he could really tell how he stood. He expected to lose some hundreds of pounds owing to damage through removal though.

Mr. Arthur Plumb, too, had removed practically all his stock of tobacconists' requirements.

Mr. D. Stibbards had fortunately secured two programmes of films from the operating box of the Lyric Theatre. If these had been incinerated it would have been a serious loss. To make sure, Mr. Fred James, the operator, took the films straight to the railway station. The piano and canvas chairs had also been removed safely.

It was at the Lyric as in the fire of 9th October, 1915, where a determined stand was made, and the Brigade, with several assistants, worked like Trojans to stem the fire. The firemen were ready with three jets of water in the space of the Lyric enclosure, and it was hoped that as on the previous occasion the vacant enclosure would be the chief means of stopping further progress of the fire. And so it proved to be, but not until after a very strenuous time had been experienced by those who shared in the fight. It was a veritable inferno, and Mr. Jones says himself that he does not know how the men stood up to it. He stood it himself until the hairs were burnt off his arms and his eye lashes scorched, and yet there were those who faced the thing out.



his eye lenses scorched, and yet there were those who faced the thing out. In this respect the Superintendent specially mentioned to us Fireman H. O. Teasdale, Sub-Supt. H. Williams, the Messrs. Fysh Brothers (Horace and Fred), Mr. A. H. J. Clarke, Shire Engineer (who had done excellent work right through the fire—and his hands showed it next day), Mr. J. Schamberg (who wielded an axe as only a Joe Schamberg can), Mr. J. Fletcher, Mr. G. Brown, and others. In fact, so excessively fierce was the heat that wet bags and mattresses had to be thrown over the firemen at times to protect them. Every man of them grafted splendidly, and too much praise cannot be bestowed upon them, for their success meant such a lot. Several of them received nasty burns and cuts. The big crowd—at a safe distance near the railway fence— anxiously watched the fire-fighting operations. Over and over again the flames tried to get over "No man's land"—the tiers of the Lyric Theatre—to Plumb's, and on one occasion the operating box (situated mid-way between Hawthorne's and Plumb's) ignited, but the outbreak was speedily hosed out. The defence was too strong, and when Hawthorne's roof collapsed it was evident the fire was beaten. So strong was the opposition that the flames did not even ignite the front wall of the Lyric from Hawthorne's, and the end is flush up against the refreshment rooms. It will be remembered that in the 1915 fire this wall was pulled down. It was a splendid save, and the greatest credit is due all concerned. The water supply was tip-top, and ample for the purpose. The three jets gave out a good volume of water, and Mr. Hill informed us next day that the tank never once had been empty. The pump kept the supply going nicely. Mr. Jones, as we will probably remark elsewhere, is confident now he could use six jets of water providing he has the material for same.

It was about half-past two when it was quite evident the fire was in hand and although some people departed homewards many remained to daylight discussing the damage wrought in so short a time and what the probable consequences might have been, especially had the Hotel Shakespeare succumbed.

Naturally the telegraph and telephone lines became somewhat disorganised, but wonderful to relate, the town lighting system was maintained right through. This was a great convenience. In fact, the only serious break in the lines appeared to be the direct communication with Rock-

hampton, both as regards telegraph and telephone. The local correspondent of the "Bulletin" and other papers tried to get Rockhampton at 2 a.m. to send a message for the morning's issue, but it was hopeless. He tried again at 3 a.m. but without avail. Subsequently, on approaching Mr. J. McMahon, senior operator at Barcaldine, that gentleman very kindly delivered the message to Tambo per 'phone, to be forwarded thence to Charleville, to Roma, to Toowoomba and Brisbane, and then to Rockhampton. It is a very round-about way of sending a Press message to Rockhampton, but it was the only available way. This message was despatched at 3.50 a.m., and clearly shows to what extent a Pressman will go to enlighten the outside world as to what is happening in our little town if he is fortunate in striking an obliging official like Mr. McMahon. That the message was passed on O.K. was proved next morning when a telegram was received from Beaudesert (near Brisbane) inquiring for particulars regarding the fire. The Beech-street system was tangled a good deal, the telegraph line and electric light cables being twisted, and some were fastened in the acacia trees opposite the Shakespears. Mr. Slade, chief lineman, assisted by Mr. McMahon and assistants, did good work in clearing the streets of the hanging wires but owing to being dark they could not do much until early morning light appeared. By 10 o'clock, we believe, communication with Rockhampton was restored. Mr. Slade also worked very hard in getting out telephones, &c., but was unable to save all. Just in front of the Lyric at one time a cable fused and the flash was like lightning illumination. It was not possible to say what state the underground telephone lines—running under the West End footpath—were in. The town system appeared to be satisfactory, however.

How the fire originated is a mystery. Mr. Rodger states he left his rooms at about 11 o'clock the previous night and everything was all right. He had not had a fire in the stove at all that day. Sergt. Regan and Constable Colfax also went past the Allies' Cafe at about that time, and the Sergeant says they noticed nothing out of the way. A couple of West End boarders, we hear, smelt fire that night, but on investigating found nothing to cause any fears. Mr. Rodger says there was a little gate leading to the West End back premises and he had pointed out to Mr. Catip that it would be well to keep the gate locked. Anyone leaving in a hurry

that it would be well to keep the gate locked. Anyone leaving in a hurry from the back premises would perhaps light a cigarette and throw the match away. This could ignite any material lying about and result in a fire. The gate had been locked once, but someone broke the lock the next day.

Happily there were no fatalities, but a couple of girls at the hotel suffered from shock. One, Miss Mackay, was taken to the hospital. Of the people driven from home several residents (notably the Rev. P. E. Domuth at the Rectory) gave them quarters for the remainder of the night. A subscription list was taken round in town for the girls, who lost practically everything, and Mr. D. Stibbards generously gives them a picture benefit this (Saturday) evening, when we hope to see a big crowd present at the Glideo-graph.

In the morning the locality of the fire presented a sorry spectacle. Nothing remained of the fine hotel and the other buildings but a mass of twisted iron, burnt-out safes, ovens, bedsteads, cash registers, &c., while spirals of smoke were still issuing from the charred remains. Fireman J. Lennon, who had been on about an eleven hours' shift, was still pouring water on the embers. The owner of the West End Hotel, Mr. J. Lynch, would have been in Barcaldine last week, but was detained owing to sickness in the family; he however arrived on Wednesday's mail. Of course the scene of the fire attracted a lot of spectators while the juveniles had great fun and curiosity in scraping among the remains in search of "souvenirs."

The appearance of the Hotel Shakespeare plainly showed what a trying time it had had, and what a miracle it was that the fine building did not catch properly. Another few minutes delay in getting the hose there would have been fatal. While we are referring to this, it would be well to explain that something has been said about the Brigade neglecting to properly protect the Shakespeare from the commencement. We referred this to Mr. Jones, and that gentleman states that never once did he lose sight of the Shakespeare. He was continually watching it, and when things did look serious he immediately sent round the hose from O'Regan's, in Ash-street. He could not have provided a permanent hose at the Shakespeare for the purpose because he had not one to provide. Every foot of hose he had was in commission on the other block. Certainly, if he had had

any reserve hosing he would have established a hose and man at the Shakespeare, but what could he do under the circumstances? Mr. Jones states he has only two hydrants, and he cannot sink three if he has only two. It meant weakening the fire-fighting apparatus where the fire was if he had transferred a hose earlier in the evening, and many thought that the Shakespeare was perfectly safe. The top curtain boards seemed to start smoking strongly all of a sudden. However, as it turned out, everything was O.K., but still on a future occasion, if ever such a thing unfortunately occurs again it might be as well to detail a length of hosing to the opposite corner in case of eventualities.

Again, as testifying to the strength of the heat from Rodger's and the West End, the paint on Mr. Lyons' chambers, situated some distance from the scene of the conflagration, showed signs of singeing, while a couple of the ferro-concrete plates on the walls, supposed to be fire-proof, were cracked. Mr. Lyons estimates the damage done in this respect at £25.

Mrs. Hawthorne lost no time in doing business as usual, she having arranged a couple of tables inside the Lyric, but the loss of what was undoubtedly one of the finest restaurants in Central Queensland can be considered in the light of a calamity—the place, which was beautifully appointed and well-conducted, was a favorite with all classes. Mrs. Hawthorne says she was only just recovering from the previous calamitous fire, in which she was burnt out, and much sympathy is expressed for her.

Sympathy must also be felt for Messrs. W. Greaves and J. W. Rodger (who saved nothing whatever), who were just getting nice little businesses together, but it is pleasing to see their losses are fairly well covered. Mr. Greaves, who also lost his billiard table, can well claim to have had one of the most up-to-date hair-dressing saloons in Central Queensland, and the destruction of this is undoubtedly a loss to the town.

Mr. Greaves, who was also burnt out in the 1915 fire, says he is a heavy loser, to the extent of at least £300, but he also says the fact of being burnt out twice in four years disheartens and knocks all encouragement out of a person, and it is doubtful if he will start business here again. It all depends on whether Mr. Lynch re-builds. On this occasion he lost everything—books and papers, &c., which were incinerated in the safe.

which were incinerated in the safe. He also lost two gold watches and chains which were in the shop. As showing the great heat the handle of the safe was burnt right off. Mr. Greaves was one of the first on the scene after the alarm, and he did everything in his power to awaken the West End boarders. He must have been there shortly after Mr. Culpin discovered the outbreak. When he eventually forced an entrance into his own shop it was almost impossible to stand on the floor so hot was it. Very little was saved.

Mr. Joseph Catip will probably be a heavy loser—in fact, Mr. Catip's luck appears to have been out ever since he has been in the West End, for he has had no end of trouble one way and another ever since he took over the license. His furniture and stock is covered, we believe, to the extent of £1000, and it is very probable that this will not nearly re-imburse him. Besides, Mr. Catip has lost practically all his personal effects, clothing, &c., and also a large sum of money—his Saturday's takings.

During the course of an interview with Mr. Catip yesterday that gentleman assured us that he is indeed a very heavy loser—in fact, he estimates his personal loss in hard cash at £2000—the result of years of saving and studying economy. It is only some eighteen months since Mr. Catip took over the West End Hotel from Mrs. A. McLoughlin, and since that time Mr. Catip has been continually adding improvements to the place in his ambition to make it an ideal hostelry. The electric light was installed throughout the building, new furniture was procured—a good class of furniture it was, too—and expensive linoleum provided in each one of the 34 rooms, in addition to all the halls and passage ways. Mr. Catip took a special pride in his dining-room, and the table kept was of the best, everything being practically of first-class order. Over £500 had been expended by Mr. Catip in improvements alone since he became licensee of the West End. He carried a heavy stock of liquors, &c.—over £600 worth, and with a policy for about £200 on this it can be imagined Mr. Catip is indeed a heavy loser. He also estimates that he lost over £70 in the cash register in the bar, which he could not reach at the time of the outbreak. Mr. Catip says that when he was awakened the fire had a very big hold, and his first thought was, as the proprietor, it was his duty to arouse the inmates of his house, and he did his best in this respect, rushing

he did his best in this respect, rushing over the place calling out "Fire." The result was he just escaped himself in his pyjamas and singlet. He lost all his clothes and other personal effects. Mr. Catip said he was almost suffocated, as when he looked out of his windows facing Ash-street the smoke was rolling upwards in great clouds, and he immediately saw there was no hope. Afterwards he thought of his shop, in the section also, but lower down, and he rushed down there to get out his stock, which he did, but on the recommendation of friends, when it was seen that danger was past and the fire was going

to be stopped at the Lyric, it was replaced again. From the West End practically nothing was saved—there was no time—and Mr. Catip has been knocked very hard indeed. Several offers, during his tenancy, had been made Mr. Catip for the West End, and he could have sold out over and over again at a good figure, but he stuck to it. However, Mr. Catip still has his drapery business to rely on, and we trust he will soon recoup his heavy loss by the fire. It is hoped to establish a "shanty" at the corner to-day, when no doubt "Joe" will do his best to cater for the thirsty souls in the same pleasing manner as he did in the bar of the fine hotel which has just been laid in ashes. Mr. Catip still has about four years of his lease to run, but of course does not yet know what is going to be done as regards the corner in the way of rebuilding.

It is quite certain, too, that the West End buildings and Mrs. Hawthorne's property will not be replaced to-day for what they previously cost, and therefore Messrs. J. Lynch and W. J. O'Regan will be heavy losers. The West End property ran into over £5000, while we understand that £1400 will not replace the Federal refreshment rooms to-day. Therefore, Mr. O'Regan's cover of £435 on the building is not of much use—in fact, Mr. O'Regan is doubtful about building again.

While the West End Hotel was burning there was a danger to Mr. W. J. O'Regan's private residence at the rear in Ash-street. A number of volunteers, however, with buckets, kept the residence well drenched with water, and undoubtedly did good service, which is much appreciated by Mr. and Mrs. O'Regan.

The Caledonian Association suffers a loss to some extent also, as the library, Honor Board and effects, which



rery, Honor Board and effects, which were kept in Mr. Rodger's premises were all destroyed. These were, unfortunately, not insured.

We have been advised that the flames were plainly discernable at Aramac on Monday morning, but Aramacites thought the fire was a bushfire. The fire was also seen at Barcaldine Downs, we are informed.

The following are the insurances and companies affected so far as can be ascertained at present:—

J. W. Rodger, Allies Cafe, South British and New Zealand Company, £550 on stock and fittings, &c.

James Lynch, West End buildings (including Allies' Cafe and Greaves' Hairdressing Saloon property), estimated £3000.

W. Greaves, hairdressing saloon and tobacconist, &c., Commercial Union Company, £500 on stock, fittings, billiard table, and accessories.

W. J. O'Regan, Mrs. C. Hawthorne's building, Commercial Union Company, £435.

W. J. O'Regan, Lyric Picture Theatre, £300.

Mrs. C. Hawthorne, Northern Company, on stock and fittings, £250; £75 on Lyric piano (saved).

J. A. Catip, licensee of the West End Hotel, £1000 on stock and fittings in North British and Queensland Companies.

B. Culpan, licensee of Hotel Shakespeare, damages estimated at £250.

R. F. Lyons, damages estimated at £25.

C. B. Plumb & Co., insurances in Northern and Phoenix Companies, damages probably several hundred owing to removal.

An estimate, probably on the low side, gives the total damages at about £10,000.

We have been informed officially that the financial position of the Fire Brigade Board is far from satisfactory, and we are of opinion that a few subscriptions from those business people and others who appreciate the work of the members of the Brigade on Monday morning would be a pleasing acknowledgment of their services. Mr. Jones points out to us that the firemen are justly entitled to special fire pay, and there is not a red cent in the exchequer to pay it with. This is obviously an unfortunate thing, and we are sure the public will rally and raise the necessary amount—some £16, we understand. What these men stood at the Lyric alone—

these men stood at the Lyric alone—voluntarily, be it understood—is worthy of recognition—not only by means of what is due them as ordinary fire pay, but a bonus in addition. Business people in the eastern section should subscribe liberally, and two or three have already expressed their willingness to do so. Mr. Jones says the Brigade has been under very heavy expense lately and this has absorbed all funds at command. The transferring of the fire station cost £30, painting £24, and the skiffon at the rear £19. This work has proved worthy of its outlay, as the advantage of having the station in the central position is only too obvious, and the outlay was incurred purely in the interests of the residents as a whole—not merely the business people. Then again, there have been two or three extra fire payments for little outbreaks, in addition to the ordinary practice pays and general upkeep. Therefore, we consider it quite reasonable to ask support—especially as the Brigade has proved itself worthy of maintenance—under the circumstances. As regards the present occasion, it is indeed hard to think that if the amount—or an amount to cover the ordinary fire pay (which is 2/6 per hour for firemen

and 5/- per hour for the Supt. and Sub-Supt), and a bonus in addition—is not subscribed the men will have to wait owing to the exchequer of the Board being empty. Therefore, we appeal to the business people to send along a contribution to the Brigade, through the secretary, Mr. Jones. It will be appreciated, and who can say the men are not deserving of it?

In a foregoing paragraph we referred to the fact of the limitation of apparatus held by the Fire Brigade, and the big outbreak on Monday morning clearly proved to Mr. Jones (as Superintendent) the futility of trying to combat big fires with limited apparatus at his command, and more especially with no reserve hosing, &c. As is pointed out, if the hosing were available a permanent length could have been fixed at the Shakespeare right through, and so all danger to the eastern block averted. Mr. Jones says he really wants another 600ft. of hosing and two more hydrants. If the Brigade cannot get this how can it be expected to deal with a big conflagration—say a fire raging in two blocks at the same time, as seemed very probable last Monday. On being asked what he would have done had the Shakespeare got away, Mr. Jones said it

he would have done had the snake-speare got away, Mr. Jones said it would have meant letting one block go, and for preference it would have been the western section, as the fire in that portion would have stopped at the Federal Hotel, whereas in the other block it would probably have meant the whole section. We have referred times out of number to the risk that is only too apparent in the eastern section, and we cannot understand that some business people in that block do not take steps to erect breaks or other means of saving at least some portion of the section. It is no use waiting until the damage is done. It is a valuable business portion of the town, and it will be disastrous if an outbreak occurs here. There are five hotels alone in the section, and several of our largest business houses. Therefore, some means should be evolved of fully equipping the Brigade to meet all emergencies. It has been proved that ample water is available when required—Monday did that—so the Superintendent has a good idea now as to what he can do and what he requires. Mr. Jones is of opinion that he could have six jets going now if he had the necessary coupling apparatus and hosing, &c. The men are willing—they proved that on Monday morning—therefore should be encouraged. Nothing is more disheartening than to be trying to do the impossible with limited means. We trust the Council or somebody will move in the matter. Mr. R. A. Parnell, Chairman of the Shire Council, who has large interests in the eastern block, may be able to do something. Then again, the special fire main down Oak-street must not be lost sight of. This is very necessary, and we hope some day to see it put down.

A middle-aged lady came up by Saturday's train from Ryandale, Jericho, and stayed at the West End Hotel. She became confused at the time of the fire, and did not know her bearings amid the smoke. A gentleman seized the port she had saying, "Follow me, quick," and went down the back stairs. She followed the gentleman and found herself in a

back street. The gent. had disappeared, but a car came along and took her to friends. The gent. turned back to save some of his own belongings, but collapsed and is now in hospital.

The following telegram was received by the Shire Council from our one-time townsman, now the Hon. A. H. Parnell, M.L.C.:—"Regret serious fire; convey my sympathy to the sufferers." To which Mr. C. H. Fysh,

sufferers." To which Mr. C. H. Fysh, Shire Clerk, replied, "Your message appreciated; seven principal sufferers." When such occasions unfortunately arise a word of sympathy is invariably received from the hon. gentleman.

Mr. Hugh Gerard, A.P.A.N.Z., Fire Loss Adjuster, &c., arrived by the mail train on Wednesday, and has been busy since looking into the insurance business. Mr. Gerard is representing some four or five interested companies. Mr. Pumfrey, another assessor, is due to arrive to-day.

An inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the cause and origin of the fire will be held at the Courthouse, Barcaldine, next Tuesday, February 24th, at 10 a.m.