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Editorial.

THE CALL OF DUTY.

No more alarming cry can be raised than that of "fire," and no occurrence seems to cause greater terror either to human beings or animals. People have been known to jump or throw themselves from burning buildings when rescue was near at hand from horror at the fate which threatened them, while it is well known that horses become so terrified as to be quite unmanageable.

Perhaps nowhere is a fire more dreaded, because the possibilities are so ghastly, than in a hospital, yet, whenever one occurs the history is the same, there is no panic, no confusion, everyone works with a will to achieve two things, the safety of the patients, and the suppression of the fire, and there are few hospitals in which fire drills do not regularly take place, so that, in the event of an outbreak, each nurse knows what is expected of her and all work together with order and method.

Quite recently three fires have occurred in hospitals, and on each occasion the report has been the same—no confusion, order, good discipline, and effective action.

At the West London Hospital, Hammer-smith, last week, a patient was being taken to the operating theatre when it was discovered that the theatre was on fire. The patient was carried to the out-patient department, where the operation was performed, and the fire in the theatre was dealt with.

Again, at the Ealing Isolation Hospital a severe fire broke out in the western portion of the north wing shortly before nine o'clock one evening. The hospital is placed in the fields between Ealing and Brentford, and the Matron, Mrs. Whittle, with some half-dozen nurses and a male attendant,

endeavoured to quench the outbreak, telephoning meanwhile for the Ealing Fire Brigade, and removing the children from the burning building. Within an hour the fire was practically extinguished, though not before the roof of the building in which it occurred, which was covered with tarred felt, was burnt through. The firemen, however, remained on duty all night.

Other fires also occurred recently at the Sanatorium, Whiteabbey, connected with the Belfast Union Workhouse concerning which Mr. F. J. M'Carthy and Dr. E. Coey Biggar, Local Government Board Inspectors, have reported to the Guardians, "The Guardians are aware that on two occasions recently outbreaks of fire occurred at the Sanatorium which might have been fraught with serious consequences if they had not been at once quenched by the nurses with the aid of hand fire extinguishers."

On each of the occasions referred to, the nurses did but their duty, and they would be the last to wish for praise. Nevertheless, such emergencies test character and capacity, and, as usual, when weighed in the balances the nurses have not been found wanting.

This means much more than readiness in emergency. It means that such readiness is acquired, by the faithful discharge of daily duties—the constant exercise of the qualities which go to make the disciplined worker; so the crew of a ship man the boats, put life-belts on the passengers, and remove them from the sinking ship, without any panic, though they know that their own lives are in danger, and may end within a few brief minutes. It is a magnificent example of duty and discipline. The same ideals animate nurses in emergencies, and we owe them therefore thanks and honour.

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