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EDITORIAL.

ACCIDENTS.

There are two forms of accident specially apt to occur at this season of the year to which it is well to draw attention. Matrons of hospitals and infirmaries will do well to impress upon all members of their nursing staffs the importance of care, and, we may add common sense, in the avoidance of both these dangers. The first is danger from fire, and the second from skating accidents in the event of frost.

Wherever a number of people are congregated adequate provision should be made for their protection in the event of an outbreak of fire, this is especially the case in hospitals and institutions for the sick, where many of the patients are helpless. The risks are undoubtedly increased at Christmas time, when lighted trees, Chinese lanterns, tissue paper, and cotton wool, are frequently used for decorations, though, in our view, so grave is the risk that no inflammable materials should be introduced into a ward, and it is very desirable that Christmas trees, if permitted—and they give an intense amount of pleasure—should whenever possible be lighted by electricity.

This year the word of caution is specially needful, as so many temporary buildings are just now in use, composed largely of wood, and, though use is apt to make those working in such institutions minimise the risk, yet vigilance should never be relaxed.

The British Fire Prevention Committee, 8, Waterloo Place, Pall Mall, S.W., have been well advised therefore to issue a special Christmas "Fire Warning" which is printed as a leaflet in red, and issued free for the use of the public on written application, provided money for postage is enclosed. This points out that fires at holiday time usually occur in buildings filled with people, and may become holocausts, that light in-

flammable decorations make fires easy to start, and facilitate their spreading, that an unguarded match, a candle flame, a gas-light, an electric spark, or defective wiring, may cause a conflagration.

Nurses will do well to note that all dry evergreens are easily ignited especially fir, and those which contain resin; that Christmas trees should not be placed near window curtains, or in positions in which a draught may cause inflammable draperies to be blown on to the lights, that bent candles drop down and set things alight; that paper lanterns, when used, should be hung on wire, and that a swinging Chinese lantern easily catches fire, that cotton wool is highly inflammable, and that asbestos fibre or slag wool are good substitutes, that celluloid is highly inflammable and should not be used for decorative purposes, that matches should not be left within the reach of children, that no change, even the slightest should be made in electric wiring without consulting a competent electrician, that in playing "Snap Dragon" the players should be warned not to shake lighted spirit near inflammable clothing, and they should also remove such accessories as celluloid bangles, beads and hair ornaments.

The second danger to which we have referred is that incurred by skaters, who venture on ice which is too thin, or, in too great numbers on ice which only bears a moderate weight.

Innocent fun and mirth may in this way be quickly turned to tragedy.

We therefore urge nurses in whose hands rests the responsibility of the care of their patients' lives, in arranging Christmas festivities to avoid all possible risks in the directions we have indicated. There are numerous ways in which great enjoyment can be given without increasing the risks from fire, while those responsible for the care of others should err on the side of caution in venturing on to ice with them.

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