

Well, after we had loaded and despatched about seven car-loads of children, the doctor suddenly called out:

"Where's Allegra?"

There was a horrified silence. No one had seen her. And then Miss Snaith stood up and *shrieked*. Bets took her by the shoulders, and shook her into coherence.

It seems that she had thought Allegra was coming down with a cough, and in order to get her out of the cold, had moved her crib from the fresh-air nursery into the store-room — and then forgotten it.

Well, my dear, you know where the store-room is. We simply stared at one another with white faces. By this time the whole east wing was gutted and the third-floor stairs in flames. There didn't seem much chance that the child was still alive. The doctor was the first to move. He snatched up a wet blanket that was lying in a soppy pile on the floor of the hall and sprang for the stairs. We yelled to him to come back. It simply looked like suicide; but he kept on, and disappeared into the smoke. I dashed outside and shouted to the firemen on the roof. The store-room window was too little for a man to go through, and they had not opened it for fear of creating a draft.

I can't describe what happened in the next agonizing ten minutes. The third-floor stairs fell in with a crash and a burst of flame about five seconds after the doctor passed over them. We had given him up for lost when