

HAS WOMAN NO WITS WHEN SHE FACES FIRE ?

By Eva McDonald Valesh,
President National Woman's Fire Prevention Association.

YOU, woman, upset an alcohol stove. You, another woman, wear a flimsy, fluffy white dress and you step on a match-head.

What do you do? We all know. You scream, you wring your hands and you rush up and down, fanning the flames. Then you die, or else you are scarred with burns for life. And it is all unnecessary.

Only the occasional woman is cool and self-poised. The average woman is subject to panic; in time of danger she is paralyzed with fear. What is the use of denying it? In facing death and disaster the average woman is not the equal of the average man. Why shouldn't women admit this obvious fact?

Some of us do. So we have organized the National Woman's Fire Prevention Association with the idea of teaching women poise, nerve, self-control, caution—in emergencies. Thirty seconds of wits is worth thirty minutes of screaming. We propose to teach women to use their wits, not their voices, when the calamity comes which a little calm will prevent or lessen nine times out of ten.

Our main idea is—poise in thirty seconds.

Suppose a woman catches fire at the stove or from the grate; or another steps on a match, or a puff of wind blows a gas jet against her dress. Our purpose is to instill in them just one thing—stop! think! just for a moment. Don't run. Pick up the nearest rug or table cover and wrap up in it. Then roll on the flames, or beat them out under the covering. But what does the average woman do at such a time? She screams, runs up and down, often jumps out the window and dies miserably.

Again, your home has its little fire. Don't waste time trying to put it out. You may catch on fire yourself. Turn in an alarm. Very often you will have the engines in one minute. And every woman ought to know the location of the nearest fire-box.

One of my friends saw just what a



Eva McDonald Valesh.

Mrs. Valesh Urges Upon Her Sex the Necessity of Remaining Cool-Headed in Times of Danger, and Also Presents Some Practical Rules of Prevention.



When you fill the lamp near a light—

woman ought not to do at a fire the other day. In the rear of an apartment house a big shed caught fire. The flames were shooting up two stories high, threatening at least two buildings filled with people. This woman could have turned, in an alarm in fifteen seconds and brought the firemen. Instead, she filled a dishpan with water and poured it on the roaring flames below; then she filled another and another. It took three engines pumping like mad to get the flames under control when they arrived ten minutes later. If the lady, with the dishpan had turned in an alarm instead of running to her kitchen sink the damage would have been nothing, and \$100,000 worth of property, besides a hundred lives, would not have been put in danger.

How many women know what to do in a theatre horror?—and we will have one some day. There is fire to face, and panic, too. The impulse of the

in a crowded store. What women in the store will know where the stair-cases are when they must get out in a hurry? We will have another factory fire. How many of the girls will know the quickest and safest way out?

Take another case of poise—a friend of mine who lived on the sixth story of a big apartment house was waked in the small hours of the morning by smoke and the cry of fire. Her husband was rescuing their little girl and their small store of jewelry. They had to climb down the rear fire-escape, with the crackling flames below them—the fire was on the first and second floors. It was raining and pitch dark. Back of them was a big apartment house, the windows filled with screaming women, who were not in the slightest danger. Yet those who were in danger could not see to clutch the rungs of the ladders down which they had to climb through smoke to safety.

"Turn on your electric lights, all of you, so that we can see to climb down!" cried my friend.

And so they saw their way to safety. But nobody had thought of the lights before that. That was an example of poise, and in a woman!

As we get further along in our classes we purpose to show the women some real examples—horrible, perhaps, but none the less real. We may read of a woman burned to death—very well.

"Please, Mrs. So-and-So, go down to that address and find out for yourself how the woman's life could have been saved."

The real thing is to get that subconscious help to self-control which we all have in us if we can only bring it out. And right here let me say it is easier to teach the working girl or business woman this very thing than it is to teach the society woman or the housekeeper; and the housekeeper is the hardest of all.

Many society women have the fad that they owe a duty to the community. But they are nearly all hazy as to what particular duty they owe, and just how much time they ought to spend in doing it. Suppose we send one of these ladies down to the home where a little mother has been burned to death. Let her see the poor, tired, fragile frame at rest at last—then perhaps she may do some thing.

This is what happens.

crowd is to escape by the way it came in, heedless of, perhaps, the twenty other exits which the law requires. We shall teach our women to look about them when they settle in their seats before the curtain goes up and pick out the nearest exit in case of fire or panic. That will divide the fleeing audience into a dozen streams of humanity and perhaps let every one escape. But who are the women today who take a look about them and pick out their particular exit in case of emergency?

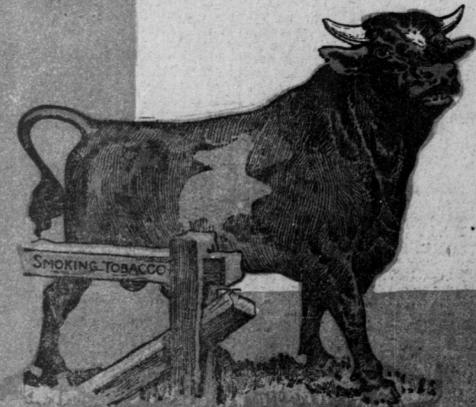
Some day we shall have a great fire

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