

THE MENACE OF THE MATCH.

(Franklin H. Wentworth, Secretary, National Fire Protection Association.)

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The eighty million people in America use as many matches as the eight hundred million in the rest of the world, according to the statistics of the National Fire Protection Association. This is a startling commentary upon the American nation, and supports the contention that we are the most wasteful and extravagant people in the world.

If one is in need of a match anywhere in Continental Europe he must seek it in its proper place. Matches are not wasted in the Old World. Centuries of training in thrift and economy make the Continentals conscious of the fact that matches cost money. Where does one find them in America? They are in almost every room, in almost every building, public and private. The American breathes imprecations if he cannot at any moment of the day or night reach out his hand and find a match. They repose in the pockets or linings of every old coat and waistcoat; they are scattered about desk and bureau drawers; they are found in every accumulation of rubbish wherever it may be; they are so carelessly and recklessly thrown about that rats and mice have adopted them as a standard article for nest building, certain always of an available supply.

THE CARELESS SMOKER'S RESPONSIBILITY.

Unfortunately the burden of this extravagance is not confined to the cost of the matches themselves. This little article unknown until 1832, while perhaps the most important factor in our civilization, has been doing its best ever since its creation to destroy the world it was designed to serve. The assistance given it as an instrument of destruction by the carelessness of the American people is a matter of amazement to Continental countries. The average per capita property loss by fire in Central, Western and Southern Europe is thirty-three cents; in the United States the average is \$3.02. The reason for this astonishing difference is obvious the moment conditions are scrutinized. While this is being written a continual shower of imperfectly extinguished matches is falling into waste baskets, rubbish heaps, upon the rugs of clubs, hotels, dwellings and offices, thrown by careless smokers. Men reputed to be good fathers have been known to light cigars in the hallway of their homes, throw the match in the general direction of a cuspidor and go out; to return in half an hour to see firemen rescuing their sleeping children from second-storey windows.

A CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE.

In Massachusetts in 1907, there were 5,974 fires, 1,230 of which, entailing a loss of \$568,346, were caused by matches.

The fire marshal of Wisconsin says that during a period of sixty days, twenty-five fires in his State involving a property loss of \$106,327, were traceable directly to the "parlor" match. In Ohio, another of the few States giving attention to needless fire waste, the fire marshal declares that match fires constitute a "continuous performance" at a cost of half a million dollars per year. In one year, of 446 fires from

matches in this State 122 were caused by children, 208 by the carelessness of adults and 26 by rats and mice—also through carelessness of adults.

Thirty-six women and children were burned to death in Ohio through having their clothing fired by matches. Of those who suffered death in this its most horrible form, thirty were children playing with matches left carelessly within their reach, and six were women whose clothing took fire from flying match heads. Among these are not included five mothers who were themselves burned to death trying to save the lives of their burning children.

ADVANTAGES OF "SAFETY" MATCH.

The number of persons burned to death in the United States each year by the "parlor" match is between eight and nine hundred, and the property loss more than \$2,000,000. The "parlor" match is the common variety which can be ignited upon any hard surface, as distinguished from the "safety" match which cannot ordinarily be ignited except upon the box in which it is sold. The original "lucifer" match, which when ignited gives off the choking fumes of sulphur, is still used extensively and is a safer match when handled carelessly than the larger headed "parlor" type.

Certain effort has been expended upon the parlor match to lessen its fire hazard. In some varieties the stick is chemically treated so that a live coal will not remain when the flame is extinguished. In others called "bird's-eye" matches, only a small white point of phosphorus on the head can be ignited by friction. These improvements are good so far as they go, but vast quantities of the most hazardous type are found everywhere in the United States. Denmark and Switzerland prohibit their use and other Continental countries impose restriction. It is in America only, where cheap wooden buildings abound, and where, therefore, restrictions are most vitally needed, that the "parlor" match is free to slay and burn.

It costs no more to make the safety match than it does to make the deadly variety, and it is ordinarily sold as cheaply. Modern match-making machinery can turn out from four to seven million of either kind in a day. It rests, therefore, with the people themselves either to continue the present endless snapping of match heads upon bed covers, curtains, carpets, clothing and other inflammable materials, for which practice so frightful a price is paid in property and life; or to protect the common interests of humanity and the life of their households, by thoughtfully exercising care in ordering their match supply. It is almost wholly a matter of education.

If the facts and statistics of the American fire waste, and the relation of the "parlor" match thereto, could be brought clearly to the attention of the American people, it is impossible to believe that our laws would long permit the manufacture and sale of so great a menace to our common safety.

Directors of the Prudential Trust Company have authorized a dividend of 2½ per cent. for the six months ended June 30th last, payable to shareholders of record that date. This is the second dividend declared by the Prudential Trust Company, the first, at the same rate, having been declared at the beginning of the year for the six months ended December 31st last.