

The BRAVE MEN *who* FIGHT *the* FLAMES

The Thrilling and Wonderful Work of the Firemen—The Old Volunteer Brigades, and the Surprising Speed of Modern Methods

FIREMEN. Do you know how quickly a fire brigade can get to a fire? You ought to be in a large fire-station some night when a call is received. A man sits at a desk under an electric light. Another man is reading. This is the night watch. The big motor engine's shining brass gleams in the light. Overhead, the firemen are asleep, half-dressed. Stout poles set in big rubber pads go up through manholes to the upper floor. You wonder what these are for.

Suddenly the brass gong strikes. That is the "forward charge!" for that fire-station. No need to shout orders. Everyone has turned out in response to the bells rung in the various bedrooms by pulling a single switch. The firemen drop through those holes and slide down the poles. They button their coats as they run. The driver starts the motor, and with a *clang!* and a roar away the fire-engine goes on its errand. The engine and firemen have turned out in less than a minute!

Setting-out for the Scene of the Fire

Clang! Clang! rings the bell. Clear the streets, get out of the way! The man on watch has shouted the number of the fire alarm the call came from, and the fire-engine makes straight for that place. The person who sent the alarm, or a policeman who stands there, tells the firemen where the outbreak is. In a few minutes the hose is screwed to a water hydrant and the engine is pumping water into the burning building.

The first thing to be saved in a fire is life; the second, property. The motor fire-escape is there as soon as the engine. Firemen run up stairways and ladders to make sure that the people are all out of the burning building. If



Battling with the flames from the top of a fire-escape, an everyday occurrence in the strenuous life of the men whose work it is to put out fires.

they hear a scream or a moan, they break down doors and go right through flame and smoke to the rescue, saving lives, with no thought of their own danger.

There are few sights more thrilling than to watch a fireman carrying terrified or unconscious people down a long shaking ladder. Through the smoke you see firemen creeping along dizzy ledges where you would think a cat could not go. They climb on roofs and drop through skylights. They make bridges across alleys and courts with ladders; they hang over roof cornices. Firemen every day do deeds of daring that you would think impossible.

These brave men are sometimes killed, or injured for life. Burning shutters, cornices, and windows fall upon them. Sometimes a roof falls

in with them, or an explosion blows up a building. More than once an upper floor has fallen into the basement, carrying the firemen with it. Smoke and poisonous fumes often render firemen unconscious.

Fire Fighters of Other Days

It is very important that the firemen reach the fire quickly. In bygone days messengers ran through the streets calling "Fire!" or a central alarm bell was rung, as is still done in villages and small towns. The volunteer fire-fighters tumbled out helter-skelter, and much time was lost in finding out where the fire was. Then cities were divided into districts, and when the fire-bell rang a man on a high tower indicated, by flags in the daytime and by lanterns at night, in which district the fire was. Later electric signals were used, and indicators in the fire-stations marked the number of the fire-alarm from which the call was sent.