



NERO

FIDDLED

**WHILE
ROME
BURNED . . .**



LEAVE THE FIDDLIN' TO NERO

THE NIGHT that Nero was presented to the Roman soldiers as their sovereign the Tiber river ran four miles up-stream and all musicians went into hiding. This emperor, who murdered his wife and ruled an empire with an iron hand, believed himself to be the greatest musician of the day. He recited poetry and sang ballads while accompanying himself on the lyre (progenitor of the fiddle). He was so bad that he had to hire professional Claquers. In fact his music was so terrible that his subjects began to think he was crazy or that anyone who listened to him was crazy. Deciding that his singing and poetry needed new inspiration, Nero ordered most of Rome

burned to the ground. As the city was burning, this would-be musician fiddled and sang a dirge while watching the flames.

Most historians agree that Nero was crazy—not because of his fiddlin' but because of his blood-thirstiness in ordering Rome burned. Anyone who would maliciously cause a building or a city to be burned would be judged as insane today as they were in Nero's time. Yet every year 400,000 homes are destroyed by fire, 12,000 persons are burned to death and property loss is in excess of \$800,000,000—most of which is caused by the carelessness of individuals. A fire caused by care-

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