

Safety

There was a time - not so far back when accidents were generally classified as "Visitations of the Lord." Science has corrected most minds on that point. <sup>Outside</sup> of the people who still believe the world is flat and those who contend that Genesis disproves evolution, accidents are conceded to be the work of human ignorance, carelessness or stupidity.

This is a long stride on the road to safety but a second stride of almost equal importance, is <sup>to</sup> developing in the individual a sense of his responsibility not only to keep himself out of danger but to do nothing that will put others in danger. As things stand now most of us instinctively deny that we are in any way to blame if we are injured or if we are concerned in an accident where ~~there~~ <sup>others</sup> are injured. The other fellow is always at fault.

Yet analyse almost any of these accidents and you have to admit if you are candid that at least a fraction of the fault usually lies with you.

I am not basing this comment on what I have seen happening to other people but rather on what has happened to me personally.

Pardon me, if to illustrate the point I use a recent personal experience.

I was passing through one of those temporary corridors which our city authorities rightly require erected over sidewalks where buildings are being <sup>taken down</sup> demolished. The corridor was dark. I walked into it without attention to where I was going. There was a hole in the walk - I tripped, fell and broke my wrist.

How far was I responsible? The city authorities certainly were negligent in <sup>leaving</sup> having a dangerous public walk unlighted. But if my safety sense had been properly developed, I would not have walked absentmindedly into a dark passage. Or, entering, I should have had in mind the possibility of stepping into something or tripping over something. Clearly, I was as much to blame in the matter as those <sup>who</sup> left the corridor dark and the walk broken.

Our news columns are full of <sup>reports</sup> examples of accidents like this of mine, due to the fact that the safety sense has not been developed to a point where the victim instinctively sees and avoids danger. Possibly you remember Bobby Leach - a dare-devil who fifteen or twenty years ago thrilled the country with his performances - one of them, perhaps the most spectacular, was going over Niagara Falls in a barrel and coming out alive. But Bobby Leach soon after this, jauntily walking down the street, slipped on a piece of orange peel and had a fall which caused his death. ~~What was his share in his death?~~ I suppose we will agree that the major responsibility <sup>in this case</sup> rested on the ill-mannered and inconsiderate person who threw the peel on the sidewalk; but the habit of watching one's step is a primary responsibility of the individual who wants to

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pass through this world sound of limb and to die a natural death. Bobby Leach did not have it.

One of the greatest safety rules that has ever been devised if not the greatest runs: "Show me where an accident can happen and I will show you where an <sup>one</sup> accident will happen." It has come to be a basic rule - in the safety education which goes on in all our better industrial plants. It has been stressed in some places until a body of men has been built up who almost unconsciously recognize <sup>danger and act promptly when they see</sup> ~~when the ladder which they are to ascend~~ or feel its presence. <sup>They take upon themselves the</sup> ~~is properly placed, when that the hammer, the wrench that they are~~ using is placed where it may fall on the head of somebody below - responsibility for their own lives and the lives of their fellow workers is <sup>It has become an element</sup> ~~an element of daily practice - a factor~~ of their character as workers.

This is, I think, true in practically the <sup>modernized</sup> ~~whole~~ factory world. Unhappily, in one of our most dangerous industries, that of mining, the recognition of responsibility is not so general. There are well developed methods of making mines safe, but in parts of the country they are still flouted. There are still mine owners in ~~this~~ country who are too selfish or too ignorant to make safety a first consideration; and there are states where the legislatures are so intellectually backward, so indifferent to the well being of their own citizenship that they will not force mine owners to equip their mines <sup>properly</sup> ~~with every known safety device.~~

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Only a few days ago 59 men, most of them heads of families, were killed unnecessarily in an Oklahoma mine, -- one of the legislatures of the Union, still backward in looking after its people. Who can deny that this legislature as well as the mine owners were not accomplices in this awful murder of useful men?

But it is not in industry that we find the largest irresponsibility towards accidents. Curiously enough, it is in the American home. In 1928 there were 24,000 fatal accidents in the homes of this country. Nearly 10,000 <sup>of them</sup> were deaths from falls. Reasonable caution would have prevented most of them.

*It is* *Amazny word*  
Fire, electricity, benzine, kerosene, gasolene are still handled with ignorant confidence by hundreds of thousands of women. It seems as if we would never learn what a stray spark from an unscreened fireplace may do. One of the most tragic encounters of my life was with a young couple who had gone out for the evening, leaving an unscreened fire in the nursery where their little child slept. They were called home by a blazing house. It was too late to save the little one. All they could plead was that the fire was almost out, that they never dreamed a spark would fly. As long as there is a burning brand a spark may always fly.

The injuries and deaths from inflammable substances like gasolene, benzine, kerosene, naphtha, <sup>are</sup> an old story. Women cannot be persuaded that they are flirting with death when they use one of

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these substances carelessly. The ignition point in all of these is low. They vaporize readily into highly inflammable gases and their explosive energy is tremendous. Everybody knows this, yet in one recent year nearly 800 women lost their lives in the United States through the careless use of these inflammables.

A few years ago, I numbered among my acquaintances in this town a charming and promising young girl, the only child of a hardworking carpenter, and of course his hope for the future. She was cleaning a pair of elbow length kid gloves on her hands and in the kitchen where a gas fire was burning. Her father, knowing the danger, begged her to go into another room. "Oh, father, you are always fussing," she said, "there is no danger." <sup>as she said it</sup> And the defiant little creature to prove it swept her hand over a lighted gas jet.

There was an explosion, and she came out with fingers and arms permanently crippled and a frightful scar on her lovely face. People pitied her - she came to <sup>be</sup> pitied herself, yet clearly the responsibility was entirely hers.

Possibly our <sup>safely and for</sup> sense of responsibility <sup>to use it responsibly</sup> would be quickened if in youth we <sup>were</sup> ~~should be~~ sternly taught that we <sup>were</sup> ~~will~~ be held guilty if we are injured - at least until we can prove ourselves innocent. It should be held before us too that we are not the only ones to suffer. This young girl <sup>by</sup> not only crippled herself but she ruined her home. Her defiant gesture in the face of danger ~~caused a train of misery that cannot be calculated.~~

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Last Sunday night in Pelie a fire started by a cigarette in a public bar by a fire started by a discarded cigarette stub

The same night in the same city a man named Willie Lytle cigarette in his mouth he lit it and he burned

What we need in order to keep alive our sense of responsibility for our own and others' safety is to remind ourselves continually that some of the most terrible tragedies of our day were caused by careless acts of which we personally are often guilty.

Take the awful Triangle fire when 150 people lost of their lives. It came from a cigarette carelessly dropped in inflammable rubbish. There is scarcely a household in the country where there are cigarette smokers in which you will not find wood scarred from a cigarette carelessly laid down - draperies set on fire - waste baskets bursting into flames

If the matter doesn't go beyond a little damage - doesn't burn the house down or destroy a life, the matter is treated lightly and the smoker continues to drop cigarettes without knowing whether the fire is extinguished or not.

You drop a lighted match, into the waste basket. So did the man who caused the destruction of the Equitable Life Insurance Society's building in 1912, where six lives were lost and property worth \$2,000,000 was destroyed.

You allow rubbish to accumulate in your yard or cellar. It was a pile of rubbish that caused the Peabody School fire in Peabody, Mass., where 22 children lost their lives.

You light your Christmas tree with burning candles. Out in Oklahoma on Christmas eve, 1924, lighted candles set fire to a Christmas tree and 36 children were burned to death.

We should

After

where I have not been

Take one you drop it

You open the hood of your car with a lighted cigarette in your mouth. So did an important gentleman out in Chicago not long ago, with the result that there was a terrific explosion which killed him and destroyed valuable property.

You take your hands off the wheel of your car to light a cigarette. So have others - with the result that they and those with them and possibly innocent passers-by were killed.

Each one of us holds life and death in his hands. A thoughtless, irresponsible act and not only we but sometimes scores of others suffer. Let us frankly admit, we who do not and will not correct our careless ways that if as yet we have caused no great disaster, it is by no virtue of our own that we have escaped but rather by the grace of God.