

*and struggle with superstition  
things which are not so  
with superstition as*

*Oct. 13, 1914*

THE EFFECT OF SAFETY ON THE COMMUNITY.

Outline of address for Safety Congress.

The interest of a community in the life and health of its citizens is an accurate gauge of its intelligence and humanity. Sickly men and women, epidemics, a big death rate, mean ignorance, superstition, indifference to human beings. If an outbreak of typhoid should come in New York or Chicago, the community would be ashamed and shocked. These are intelligent communities as far as their attitude towards disease goes. They have learned what causes epidemics. They will not put up with them. The distance between their present attitude and that of 100 years ago can be measured by comparing them with such communities as still exist in Eastern Kentucky where disease is regarded as a sign of the wrath of God. Babies die there as they once did in New York and Chicago, because God is angry with the family not because the milk is impure. Children grew up anemic, misshapen, dull-witted because the wrath of the Lord is on their parents, not because they have always been underfed, dirty, and cold.

The march of civilization is measured by the way men look at disease and treats it. Where it has come to be looked at as the logical result of ignorance and not superstitions and the spirit of a community is improved - as much as the health. Joy, courage, faith - take the place of sadness, hopelessness, unbelief. Human sympathy becomes an active helpful force. When disease is regarded as a visitation of the Lord a man friend are Job's comforters reminding him of his sins - but open their eyes to scientific causes of disease and they will explain to him the laws which govern the blood.

There is now going on in this country a change in our attitude towards accidents not unlike that which has been accomplished in our attitude towards disease. The acceptance of the loss of life and limb in industry as inevitable has been like the former acceptance of epidemics. The community regarded them superstitiously. They were "unavoidable" we were told, if you were going to do big things. Nobody has been more fatalistic towards accidents than the working men who suffered most from them. The train man - steel worker, mill operator, each held that it was "coming to them" someday. The management and public agreed. Industry was a Juggernaut demanding victims, wealth and progress and plenty were gods like those of Greek and Rome which needed blood sacrifices to keep them in good humor. One of the most real sources the safety movement is doing the community is to destroy superstition. It refuses to consent that industry is an angry God crying for men's legs and arms and eyes. It says boldly that accidents are avoidable, that they are caused by ignorance, inefficiency, recklessness - a failure to adjust mind to the matter in hand.

If a street railway cuts off a man's leg it is not an accident in the old sense of something unavoidable. There is a reason. It may be a heedless reckless pedestrian, hence the campaign to make all pedestrians careful -- realize that each must take care of himself. It may be a bad track or a defective brake -- or a drunken or untrained motor man or carelessness in giving signals. There are a hundred causes for the street railway accidents. The gain has come in recognizing that there are causes which are avoidable. They must not be fate or bad luck. To undermine the superstition of a community - its habit of falling back on fate or bad luck as an explanation

of its catastrophe is a solid contribution to its rationality. It sets men and women to looking at things as they are not as some mysterious and malicious super-power wills they shall be.

Reducing the superstition of a community increases the active brain work of the community. There are certain educational values in this safety campaign which run high. Safety means an increased use by men and women of their power of attention. If a community is ineffective, slovenly, half-hearted as so many - perhaps all are - it is due almost entirely to the inattention of individuals to those things which are nearest to them - to eyes which see not - ears which hear not. The base of safety is attention - sustained attention. William James says that the best educational system is the one which will do the most to cultivate sustained attention. The cult of safety means that - sustained attention to that which concerns you and your task. If you gentlemen can have your way and teach children this habit of attention to their surroundings, - to their goings and comings - their handling of articles and their conduct in games and in work, you will be contributing substantially to this great desideratum - the end, - we may say of all education that is the habit of sustained attention.

The effect on the mental habits of men who have caught the safety idea and try to apply it is remarkable in other ways than this of stimulating attention. They are more alert - more interested, more suggestive. It has given them something new to think about - put them in an entirely new relation to their task. Spread through the community as these effects will be with the triumph of universal safety and you will have toned up perceptibly its general efficiency, alertness and promptness.

These mental effects are good but the social effects

are quite as substantial. It would be quite impossible for even the experts of this body to estimate the loss of life and limb the spread of wretchedness and poverty which has come in the past through the indifference of the individual to the effect on others of his actions. The habit has been almost universal among us of considering the thing we did or did not do as our private affair/ It has been look out for yourself in business from top to bottom - and let the other fellow do the same. The handling of the automobile is a very fair illustration of what this selfish attitude does for a community: Automobile accidents come very largely from the habits of drivers of owning the road - "we're coming - look out for yourself for we shall not look out for you." There's hardly a day in our great cities where life - often the life of children and women is taken by the sheer ~~wanting~~ wanton indifference of drivers to those in their path. If he can get the thrill of excitement of high speed he cares for nothing else.

Universal safety is based on consideration of the other man. It recognizes that you cannot probably hurt yourself without hurting another - it holds you responsible. Thus the social sense is quickened wherever this safety idea takes hold. *if you care for community -*

A very important influence in developing this social side, *ally -* is recognition that if we are to have safety we must have complete co-operation action. In a great industry - on a great railway you cannot have safety without money spent for devices - for supervision - for constant and intelligent efforts to improve machines, and processes - but have all that, and what are your results without the co-operation of the

men in the ranks. The money and brains spent at the best are hardly 33% of the problem. An indifferent, sullen - selfish man at a switch, or boiler, at one of a thousand places may blow your system to pieces in an instant. Safety means the working together of everybody in the organization from highest to lowest. It is a great co-operative system and here is one of its most valuable effects on the community. It is a constant reminder that we must work together - that men who attempt to achieve and neglect or despise any human element enlisted are endangering their whole work. A great industrial undertaking is like building a bridge or sky scraper - you can have nothing weak in it everything must pull together. And this realization and the effort to achieve it which we find on all sides is one of the most humanizing and civilizing influences at work today in these United States. It is sound effort to make the idea of the brotherhood of man something more than talk. There are floods of fine idealism and high sentiments poured on our communities and they do their work. They stir men and women to desire that they come true. But there is too little effort to realize them. For realization is slow work. It means experiment and hard thinking and failure and setting about it again - it means education of the ignorant, ~~enlistment~~ enlistment of the indifferent, conversion of the suspicious and the selfish and the busy. And the people who do the talking do not always have the patience or the intelligence to work out their own dreams. Perhaps it is too much to ask men both to talk and to act.

The industries which achieve safety are the most telling arguments a community can have of the practicality of humanity in business.

A profounder effect still is wrapped up in this movement - and that is what it is contributing to respect for human life --

what it is doing to swell the sense of the sacredness and preciousness of human beings and their right to live out their days. The tone of men who once accepted slaughter as inevitable and schooled themselves to see it with at least outward indifference has greatly changed under the influence of this safety movement. Their sense of justice in the matter of life is awakened. Could there be a greater gain for civilization than a universal opinion that men - all men - are too valuable <sup>life an end itself</sup> to kill. That no human activity should claim a death toll that there should be other ways to progress - to produce - to settle quarrels - to satisfy honor than by killing of men. Consider what it would mean if nations should come to the same conclusion that you have; that is, that the destruction of human life is a confession of ignorance or bad management. Would not such an idea spreading through the nations do something to make war a less honorable business, than it has been regarded. One of the reasons that wars have been so freely made, has been contempt for human life entertained by those in power. Men were cannon-fodder - we shiver at the idea but it is exactly what we have heard in defense of the reckless destruction of life in mines and on railways. "These common men are cattle." They are reported as saying out in Colorado "a few ~~are~~ more or less of them don't matter." An increased sense of the sacredness of life, such as the Safety Movement unquestionably awakens, ought to lessen the respect for militarism. And if there is any aim to which civilization should devote itself today consciously, persistently - it is that of undermining militarism. I thoroughly believe ~~that this movement is~~ that this great movement is contributed to that - because it is a movement based on a regard for human life.