

LEST WE FORGET!

New York, April 23.

Every once in a while the slow processes by which man's pride and arrogance, man's greed or misunderstanding, make of the car of progress a juggernaut which grinds under its wheels those whom it should carry to peace, plenty and happiness—every once in a while these slow processes become crystallized into one grim concrete example, bringing the lesson home to all.

It has happened now, in a more appalling degree than ever before. And New York is stricken, numb and sick with horror. This great city by the Sea, loving all things of the Sea, but iron-clad in its selfish strenuous pursuit of profit and pleasure, shivered to its rocky heart at the blow which wiped out of existence the newest and mightiest Queen of the Seas.

Public and private festivities were called off, public and private business neglected. There was but one topic of thought and conversation. Many thousands to whom the disaster had brought no blow of personal grief, sorrowed in sincere sympathy with the bereaved hundreds. It was one of those great moments when unessentials are swept away and human nature stands out in the raw. And both on the doomed ship and in the sorrowing city, human nature in the raw stood the test well.

Which goes far to refute the belief that those of us who would bring about better conditions of living in the world today will be obliged to change human nature to do so. Human nature in the main may be depended on, once we can get at the heart of it.



And now in this moment when the heart of it is touched by a great catastrophe, the lessons of the catastrophe are being brought to the understanding of all. Could these lessons be brought home with a force, the effect of which would not lessen as the sensation of horror grows dim, then those who went down with the Titanic will not have died in vain. It is beginning to be understood on all sides that, whatever the details, the actual fundamental cause of the disaster was the "speed mania" which is a disease of the times. In the idea expressed by the word is gathered all the senseless greedy rush and hurry, the vulgar exaggeration in haste and luxury which marks our life today, and in which this nation unfortunately leads.

The ship that went down was the very last word in the expression of this dominant quality of modern life—of modern American life. Nothing could have happened to bring the lesson home more acutely. And in spite of our sorrowing sympathy there is for the thinking mind all the more point to the lesson—and some slight compensation—in the fact that this time the juggernaut of progress crushed many of those who usually profit most by it.

The public mind and its utterances in the public press, minor exaggerations excepted, are this time unusually sane and sensible. While trying with a natural human instinct to fix the blame on some definite person or group of persons, under it all can be clearly understood where the real blame lies. The captain who went down with his ship, and

even the company who let him so clearly see that his position depended upon the records he could make, are after all not, at the last, responsible. A commander who risks his own life and reputation, and a business corporation which risks its financial life, its capital, are not taking these risks unless they know that the public demand it of them and are willing to pay them for it. So that at the last we come back, as we always do in any question of today, to the public attitude of mind. We come back to public thoughtlessness, to public selfishness, to bad qualities which creep in and choke up with weeds, in the daily run of human activities, the real greatness and the real beauty that is at the bottom of every human heart.

It is being realized now, and now is the chance for those of us who would awaken and keep awake this true humanity of feeling—aroused now—to point the lesson of this great catastrophe in its application to what is going on every day around us.

Every day human lives are being crushed out by that very Progress which should bring benefit to them—every year the roll call of actual victims is far greater than those who went down in the ice-fields last week. And those who live are often worse off than those who die. All this is just as preventable as the Titanic disaster was preventable.



It is foolish now to worry over what might have been done on the ship in the providing of a greater number of life boats, in a greater discipline which would have filled the life boats properly, in all and every one of those minor details which after all would not have been necessary had there not been the "speed mania" back of it all. Life boats, discipline, all these things are well in their way, but they are like the palliatives on which society has been for years now wasting so much time and energy; palliatives which after all can bring only a passing help to a few. Back of it all is the haste and hurry, the greed and arrogance, the lack of thought and consideration, which are driving the ship of society into danger just as surely as they drove this great ship onto the iceberg.

Lest we forget! We have had a concrete lesson now. Let an aroused and horrified world stop and think, and carry the analogy further.

GRACE ISABEL COLBRON.

INCIDENTAL SUGGESTIONS

THE "TITANIC" DISASTER.

New York, April 27, 1912.

I cannot express with sufficient force my sense of the obligation we are all under to you for so truly phrasing the "lesson of the Titanic disaster." I wired you my hope that you would put it in leaflet shape for wide distribution as an envelope enclosure* and let your readers know that they can obtain

*The editorial referred to has, in accordance with Mr. Peabody's suggestion, been put in leaflet form for envelope enclosure, and may be had of The Public at 25 cents for 50 copies. It originally appeared at page 385 of The Public of April 26th.—Editors of The Public.