

Life in a Looking-Glass

WITHIN the last two or three years so many marine disasters have happened—even the staunchest ships and the most experienced captains being involved—that people no longer look upon the trip across the Atlantic as a little jaunt practically devoid of danger. For a long number of years few mishaps occurred, and immense improvements were at the same time being made in the class of vessels employed in the passenger trade. The public consequently came to regard ocean-travelling under modern conditions as almost absolutely safe. But the fearful accidents at sea, that have been following so rapidly one upon another for many months back, are reminding us once more that, notwithstanding his ingenuity, man is but a puny creature when he comes to deal with the larger forces of Nature.

ALTHOUGH there is to-day undoubtedly a more widespread distrust of navigation as a practically infallible science than existed a few years ago, passenger-traffic on the Atlantic does not seem to have been adversely affected. On the contrary, it has expanded marvelously, and is said to be greater this year than at any former time. People read about collisions, and the breaking of shafts, and the destruction of mighty ships on rock-bound coasts, and straightway get their trunks ready for the voyage of business or pleasure, as if nothing of the same kind ever would or could happen again. It is one of the useful delusions of life that each individual fancies he bears a charmed existence, and has a lurking faith that the accident, the disease, the financial ruin, yes, even the death, that has overtaken his neighbor, he will somehow escape. I say a useful delusion, because if every mishap we see or read about had its full logical effect upon us, there is not one but would hesitate to enter a railway train, a ship, a street car, or even his private carriage, or to walk in a crowded thoroughfare, or to do any of a thousand and one common things which must be done, but in which people sometimes meet their death.

AND, as regards traveling by sea, notwithstanding the disasters that have so shaken public confidence in the safety of trans-Atlantic voyaging, a man is still probably quite as secure in an average ship as he would be following his ordinary occupation on dry land. The chances of injury or death from accident are as great, every moment of the day, for the average individual in a crowded city, as for the traveler thousands of miles from land on a craft that, comparatively speaking, is but a dust speck on the bosom of the ocean. I remember having seen a statement that more people are killed by accident every year, while walking in the streets of United States cities, than are killed by lightning in the whole Union during the same period. Yet, people fancy there is special danger of death during a thunderstorm and practically no danger in walking to or from their business.

DR. C. W. COLBY, in his speech at the dinner of the St. James' Literary Society the other night, characterized the addresses of Edmund Burke as models for the young speaker of to-day and spoke of the desirability of a polished literary style in all public speaking. I do not suppose Dr. Colby meant that Burke's style would be the best for use before an average audience at the present time. Doubtless what he did mean is that the young speaker cannot adopt a better method of purifying and elevating his own style than the reading and study of Burke. That we have very few first-class speakers in Canada goes without saying. The present House of Commons does not compare in debating ability with the House as it was eight or ten years ago. Sir John Thompson, Edward Blake, Sir

Adolphe Chapleau, and Dr. Colby's father, the late member for Stanstead, were all speakers of rare polish and marked ability in debate. A loose style has been creeping in—not only at Ottawa, but on the public platform. Speakers mistake a slangy fluency for eloquence, and the public tolerates the error. Sir Wilfrid Laurier is one of the best models we have in the art of graceful and dignified speech. Probably the very best model is one who has seldom been heard in Quebec—the Hon. G. W. Ross, Ontario's Minister of Education. Mr. Ross, both in manner and matter, is always effective. Inexperienced speakers as a rule pay too much attention to matter and too little to manner. Thought is the most important ingredient of a good speech, but it is not everything. The most unsatisfactory dinner is the one in which good materials have been spoiled by faulty cooking or slovenly service.

ADMIRAL DEWEY kept his head at Manila, but if he does not lose it after all the flattery and fuss of which he is being made the centre he will have proved his title to be regarded as a great man, in the most convincing manner. If he is really the simple, unaffected seaman he has been painted, the New York reception must have been a more trying ordeal to him than sailing into Manila Bay in the darkness; but should he be either a wily self-seeker, or a weak man whom sycophancy can allure from his proper path, we shall yet see him out for the Presidency, notwithstanding any disclaimers to date.

THE chief value of any athletic game, properly conducted as an amateur sport, is not in the physical development obtained from its practice (though physical development counts for much), but in the code of morals that it unconsciously inculcates and in the qualities of character that it brings to the fore. Football, in which so many Montrealers are interested—and not only Montrealers but citizens of almost every town of importance in both Ontario and Quebec—is a game that professionalism has touched as yet but lightly, if at all. Professionalism has ruined every sport in which it has gained a foothold. The value of such games as football, hockey and cricket is in the fact that they are played by amateurs and are characterized by the honor and uprightness that gentlemen bring to their recreations as well as to their business. The true sportsman wants to see the best man or the best team win, even though it means his own discomfiture; but professionalism wants to win at any cost: wherefore professionalism and true sportsmanship cannot and will not go together, any more than oil and water will mingle. Amateur sport cultivates generosity, the spirit of give and take. It seeks its own but seeks it by fair means. It abhors everything that is underhand, and does not shun honest defeat. It would rather any day suffer defeat than purchase victory. It is courageous, because honest. These are the virtues of amateur sport and of the amateur sportsman.

Who misses or who wins the prize,
Go lose or conquer as you can;
But if you fail or if you rise
Be each, pray God, a gentleman.

It is some such inscription as this that the true sportsman, whatsoever the game may be, keeps before him as his motto. Perhaps Oliver Wendell Holmes has given the thought its neatest turn: "To brag little, to show well; to crow gently if in luck; to pay up, to own up, and to shut up if beaten; these," says he, "are the virtues of a sporting man."

ALTHOUGH the greatest good feeling prevails between Sir Thomas Lipton and the owners of the Columbia and other members of the New York Yacht Club, Sir Thomas has not entertained or suffered himself to be entertained, except in the most modest and informal way. The owner of the challenging yacht explains this by saying that he must look after his boat every day and all day long so that she may be ready when the time comes, "to lift that cup." He has, therefore, given up all thought of either business or pleasure till after the races. His decision seems to be a wise one. When he has either won or lost the cup, there will doubtless be an outburst of hospitality on both sides, in which disappointment and elation (for there are bound to be both) will be fittingly tempered.

FELIX VANE.