

THE PENALTY of LEADERSHIP

This is the text of an advertisement of the Cadillac Motor Car Company which appeared in the Saturday Evening Post, January 2, 1915.

In every field of human endeavor, he that is first must perpetually live in the white light of publicity. Whether the leadership be vested in a man, or manufactured product, emulation and envy are ever at work.

In art, in literature, in music, in industry, the reward and the punishment are always the same. The reward is widespread recognition, the punishment fierce denial and distraction. When a man's work becomes a standard for the whole world it also becomes a target for the shafts of the envious few.

If his work is merely mediocre he will be left severely alone. If he achieves a masterpiece, it will set a million tongues a-wagging. Jealousy does not protrude its forked tongue at the artist who produces a commonplace painting. Whatsoever you write, or paint, or play, or sing, or build, no one will strive to surpass or to slander you, unless your work is stamped with the seal of genius.

Long, long after a great work or a good work has been done, those who are disappointed or envious continue to cry out that it cannot be done. Spiteful little voices in the domain of art were raised against our own Whistler, long after the big world had acclaimed him its greatest artistic genius. Multitudes flocked to worship at the musical shrine of Wagner, while the little group of those whom he had dethroned and displaced argued angrily that he was no musician at all. The little world continued to protest that Fulton could never build a steamboat while the big world flocked to the riverbanks to see the boat steam by.

The leader is assailed because he is a leader, and the effort to equal him is merely added proof of that leadership. Failing to equal or excel, the follower seeks to depreciate and destroy, but only confirms once more the superiority of that which he strives to supplant.

There is nothing new in this. It is as old as the world and as old as the human passions: envy, fear, greed, ambition and the desire to surpass. And it all avails nothing. If the leader truly leads he remains a leader. Master poet, master painter, master workman; each in his turn is assailed and each holds his laurels through the ages.

That which is good or great makes itself known, no matter how loud the clamor of denial. That which deserves to live... lives.