

sensibly recognizing that it is not a difficulty at all. To take your husband's name in vain, that is to say, to take it and not use it, may comfort a woman's sense of her own value, but it is a very bothersome business and is hardly worth the trouble. And, after all, millions of women for centuries have endured the indignity without noticing that it is an indignity. An indignity which is not known to be one is not an indignity: it may actually be a delight.

## CARL SANDBURG

By Sherwood Anderson

HE comes into a room where there is company heavily and slowly, staring about. His eyes are small and blue-faded. Everyone knows a personage has arrived but there is no swagger to him.

He is not a physically strong man although he looks like the stuff out of which champion middleweights are made—a fighter who has given up fighting, gone out upon another road, out of condition for fighting. His eyes are not strong and he reads little. He is an eternal sitter-up o' nights drinking quantities of black coffee.

In conversation concerning the two subjects that absorb him—labor and poetry—he is unsure of himself, makes startling statements hesitatingly and covers his uncertainty with a blustering manner. There is no intellectual smartness and oddly enough no intolerance.

A distinguished Frenchman came to my house and wanted much to meet Sandburg so I had him up for an evening. They sat and stared at each other—both helpless. Sandburg took

from his pocket a paper covered with figures and began to tell the Frenchman of the number of tons of coal mined in the state of Illinois each year, the number of miles from Chicago to Dallas, Texas, how many railroads come into Chicago, what Mr. Gary said at the time of the steel strike.

Silence settled down upon the two men. One might have cut the silence into little squares and rolled it into balls.

I led Sandburg to the piano and he began to sing, thumping steadily on two or three chords.

His voice is mellow and rich and he has the gift of song. He sang nigger songs, a song of the boll-weevil, one about Jesse James, another about a tough girl of the city streets whose lover had proved unfaithful.

Sandburg singing, naively, beautifully, was something the Frenchman understood and loved. Later he told me that the evening was one of his really fine experiences in America. On that evening we were all so absorbed that while Sandburg sang a robber crawled in at a window and going into his sleeping room robbed the Frenchman of his clothes, his money, and his luggage—thus giving him, in addition to his evening with Sandburg, a strikingly true picture of what life in Chicago is like. I've a notion that he went home to France inclined toward the suspicion that Sandburg and I were in league with the robber.

There is a growing tendency, as his fame goes up in the world, to speak of Carl Sandburg as a He man, an eater of raw meat, a hairy one. In Chicago newspaper local rooms he is spoken of as John Guts. I do not think of him so although I've a suspicion that he

sometimes writes under the influence of this particular dramatization of his personality.

Buried deep within the He man, the hairy, meat eating Sandburg there is another Sandburg, a sensitive, naive, hesitating Carl Sandburg, a Sandburg that hears the voice of the wind over the roofs of houses at night, a Sandburg that wanders often alone through grim city streets on winter nights, a Sandburg that knows and understands the voiceless cry in the heart of the farm girl of the plains when she comes to the kitchen door and sees for the first time the beauty of our prairie country.

The poetry of John Guts doesn't excite me much. Hairy, raw meat eating He men are not exceptional in Chicago and the middle west.

As for the other Sandburg, the naive, hesitant, sensitive Sandburg—among all the poets of America he is my poet.

## MENCKEN AND MENKEN

or

### THE GIFT OF TONGUES

By William McFee

THERE is something to be said for the Æsopian fox who lost his tail. He made the best of a bad job. By careless neglect he found himself bereft of a beautiful and useful part of his personality. Without loss of time he began a publicity campaign. He employed scientists who declared that tails were germ-carriers. He interested educators who discouraged tails in the schools. The vixen's clubs invited him to lecture, and passed a number of resolutions calling for legislation prohibiting tails everywhere....

But what extenuation can one find for a fox, renowned for his courage and cunning, blessed with one of the finest, stiffest, and most bushy tails in the world, who preaches that not only are foxes better off without tails, but that the ideal fox has not sufficient sense to distinguish between the bark of a dog and the cluck of a hen?

To abandon the allegory, H. L. Mencken has demonstrated once more the eternal truth that very clever men must have their pet folly. It is most extraordinary how often a man of indubitable genius will founder in this most fatal quicksand of language-mongering. Many years ago, say in 1901, Bernard Shaw, then a newspaper man writing under a number of pen names, used phonetic spelling as an excuse to write immense letters to the press. The old "Morning Leader" would contain column after column of Shaw's amusing piffle about the mistakes we poor Englishmen made in pronouncing our own tongue. Spelling seems to have the same fascination for brilliant minds that perpetual motion and the punctureless tire have for young mechanics. But young mechanics have the great justification that they seek a stark utility beyond the realms of art. The spelling reformer has never betrayed the ultimate motives of his mania.

It is almost incredible that it should be necessary to call the attention of so shrewd a critic to the fact that a word may be logical and clear and correct, and ugly to look at. Yet Mr. Mencken seems never to have reflected that the beauty of a book may be enhanced not only by the arrangement of the words on the page but by the arrangement of the letters in the words. To take Mr. Mencken's own examples, *axe* and *centre* are prettier than *ax* and *center*. Which is possibly the reason why Mr.