

alcove of crucifixes, images, and invocations, was rapidly becoming "dévoté," dead already, but for her physical pains and her still active charity, a white, worn shadow. She would ask for her poor to come and see her—hers by the mastery of hearts; she knew them well: the respectable, the disreputable, the professional, the needy that are ashamed, and she sent Wendela among them with creature comforts; the spiritual fared but ill at that young lady's hands. Once the daughter, after long impatience, interrupted her mother's monotonous mumbling. "Are *you* happy, Mamma!" she asked abruptly. "No," whispered the Baroness, her pale eyes uplifted, as ever, to the solemn dying Christ. The girl went up to her room, and threw herself down in a passion of weeping, her eyes averted, long after, in dull, rebellious thought, from that great Sufferer who had watched her slumbers ever since she was a cradled babe.

She rose at last to get her father his beaten-up egg. Wendela Rexelaer was a thoroughly incompetent housekeeper, and naturally hated both her incompetency and its object. She stopped to inquire at the Baron's door, almost hoping that he would refuse; the mess was such a weariness to make. "Oh, no, I don't want it," called the Baron's feeble voice. She went into the kitchen, and dutifully prepared it. And he swallowed it without complaint.

[To be continued]



The Spectator

The French Academy has recently proposed a batch of reforms and changes in French orthography, and it is announced that "the alterations are to go into force immediately. Grammarians, dictionary-compilers, and printers will be busy making corrections." It seems remarkable that even so venerated a body as the "Forty Immortals" can exercise such authority over the language of their country. English orthography undoubtedly changes from age to age, but it is only by imperceptible degrees and despite strenuous opposition. It has taken fifty years to accomplish so simple a change as the dropping of the useless "u" from "labour" and "candour" in this country, and even now the old spelling is frequently retained in American-printed books; it will probably take fifty years more to make "filosofer" even occasional. Men usually hate to unsettle the habits of a lifetime; and it is very strange that any modern people should be so docile as to accept with unanimity the changes promulgated by a self-constituted committee in so vital a matter as its written language.

Sailors are almost the only class of workingmen who have considerable sums of money to spend on pay-day. In a jewelry-shop recently the Spectator was reminded of this economic fact. A jolly tar was buying himself a watch. The price was forty dollars. Jack bought the watch without any higgling, and carelessly threw down a twenty-dollar bill. The jeweler pointed out the deficiency. "Oh!" was the remark, "I didn't know I had that; I'm so much in." And he fished another bill out of a greasy wallet and threw it on the showcase. It was a fifty. The Spectator sighed as he thought of the probable destination, before another morning, of all those hard-earned dollars, the result of many months of perilous toil.

An employing printer recently related a curiously suggestive experience to the Spectator. He advertised for a "first-class proof-reader," and had answers sent to the address "Nonpareil." Of the twenty-one replies received, four were addressed to "Nonpareil," and one to "Nonparell." When it is remembered that one of the elementary and indispensable qualifications of a proof-reader is accuracy in spelling, the humor of such applications must be evident to every one but the applicants—they probably have no room for such a sentiment.

Observers agree that the Chinese and Japanese have remarkable powers of imitation. These powers, however, seem to be chiefly manual. For instance, they quickly acquire a good handwriting, but frequently make the most extraordinary blun-

ders with our language. There lies before the Spectator the letter of a firm of Japanese merchants, written in a free, bold hand, with a "practiced" look. The grammar is also free and bold, but, fortunately, it is of a kind not often "practiced." The letter apologizes for delay in the delivery of goods, as follows: "... We presumed at that time of your purchase we could surely forward the goods, but U. S. Custom rule concerning management of Fair Exhibits changed every minutes as you observe from newspaper. We regret that the vase which you made purchase of us is in delay to deliver untill today. ..." "Tariff-tinkerers" and anti-"tariff-tinkerers" will both probably agree with the opinion so happily expressed by this Japanese observer of our politics, that, whether we have duties for revenue only or duties for protection, "U. S. Custom rule" ought not to be "changed every minutes."

The Boston "Evening Transcript" strikingly contrasts the work for which a railroad pays \$2 per day and that for which a coal-dealer pays the same sum. The railroad employee described is suburban station agent, freight clerk, ticket-seller, switch inspector, telegraph operator, and order clerk, and is more or less responsible for the safety of the hundred and sixty trains that pass his station every day. He keeps accounts, looks after freight-cars and way-bills, and works sometimes from early morning till 11:40 P.M., and part of Sunday as well. The other man shovels coal for nine hours a day and then goes home. The moral which The Spectator draws from these facts is not that the coal-shoveler gets too much for his hard manual labor, but that the railroad cannot hire the right kind of man to do such work for such wages; and that if it can, it ought not to.

In the breast of the most peaceful man there is a latent love of "treasons, stratagems, and spoils," waiting to be evoked by martial sights and sounds. A midnight visit, a few weeks ago, to El Cid, the steamer recently fitted out in New York City as a cruiser by the Brazilian Government, was calculated to call forth this atavistic love of combat. The walk through the deserted streets, deep-wrapped in darkness, near the river, the watchman's challenge, the sudden fierce irradiation of the electric lights, the scores of hustling workmen beating plowshares into swords and pruning-hooks into spears, the prow through the vast underground regions of a great steamship soon to throb with the potencies of war—these things are sufficiently stirring to the imagination of a landsman to make him understand the feeling of Mark Twain as a boy—that, "if he were very good indeed, Providence might permit him some day to be a pirate"! Fortunately, however, these are days when this feeling can find satisfaction in the reading of really good stories of adventure. It is only the readers of the "penny-dreadful" trash who fail of this satisfaction, and who must actually imitate their heroes to quench their thirst for piracy.

An anecdote recently told to the Spectator by a friend throws some light on the psychology of "bossism." It seems strange that one man, not holding any political office, can acquire unquestioned control over thousands of office-holders who are under no legal obligation to the "boss." This is the way one of them binds his friends to him with hooks of steel: He has a very plainly furnished office, with no red tape around the entrance. Into this office came a workingman of the humblest type—perhaps a street digger—with a letter in his hand. He approached the great man with much trepidation. The "boss" at once broke off his conversation with another politician, shook hands with the newcomer, placed a chair for him at his elbow, carefully opened the letter, and read it very slowly, speaking now and then in a whisper to the man, who had probably never before in his life been treated so politely. Having finally read the letter, this astute student of human nature replaced it in the envelope, wrote his initials on the back, and handed it to the digger, saying, "You give that to Billy —, tell him I sent you, and he'll do what he can for you." And he bowed the humble citizen out, having won another lifelong follower of "bossism." Verily the children of light might sometimes take a lesson from the children of this world in the domain of "practical politics."

The Home

Guests

By Agnes Repplier

A very charming and vivacious old lady, who had spent most of her early life in the country, once said to me that the keenest pleasure of her childhood was the occasional arrival of her mother's guests; the keenest regret, their inevitable and too speedy departure. "They seldom stayed more than a fortnight," she observed, plaintively; "though now and then some cousins prolonged their visits for another week. What I most enjoyed on these occasions was the increased urbanity of my own family. Annoyances were disregarded, our somewhat precarious behavior was overlooked, conversation took an agreeable turn, and a delightful air of cheerfulness and good humor pervaded the entire household. It seemed to my infant eyes that life would be a matter of flawless enjoyment if we could only have visitors always in the house."

A little of this frankly expressed sentiment will find an echo in many hearts, and perhaps awaken some pangs of conscience on the way. It is the restraint we put upon ourselves, the honest effort we make at amiability, which renders social intercourse possible and pleasant. When the restraint grows irksome, the amiability a burden, we pay to those we love best on earth the dubious compliment of being perfectly natural in their company. "What is the use of having a family if you cannot be disagreeable in the bosom of it?" was the explicit acknowledgment I once overheard of a service which seldom meets with such clear and candid recognition. Hazlitt himself could have given no plainer expression to a thought which few of us would care to trick out in all the undisguised sincerity of language.

Guests are the delight of leisure and the solace of ennui. It is the steady and merciless increase of occupations, the augmented speed at which we are always trying to live, the crowding of each day with more work and amusement than it can profitably hold, which have cost us, among other good things, the undisturbed enjoyment of our friends. Friendship takes time, and we have no time to give it. We have to go to so many teas, and lectures, and committee meetings; we have taken up so many interesting and exacting careers; we have assumed so many duties and responsibilities, that there is not a spare corner in our lives which we are free to fill up as we please. Society, philanthropy, and culture divide our waking hours. Defrauded friendship gets a few moments now and again, and is bidden to content itself, and please not to be troublesome any more. I once rashly asked a girl of twenty if she saw a great deal of a young married woman whom she had just declared to be her dearest and most cherished friend. "I never see her at all," was the satisfied answer, "except by chance, at a tea or a club meeting. We live so very far apart, as you know. *It would take the heart of an afternoon to try and make her a visit.*"

Now, to understand the charm of leisurely and sympathetic intercourse we should read the letters of Mme. de Sévigné; to appreciate the resources of ennui we should read the novels of Jane Austen. With Mme. de Sévigné guests were not useful as an alleviation of boredom; they were valuable because they added to the interest, the beauty, and the zest of life. It never occurred to this charming Frenchwoman, or to her contemporaries, that time could be better spent than in entertaining or being entertained by friends. Conversation was not then small coin, to be paid out hastily like car-fare, merely in order to get from one necessary topic to another. It was the golden mean through which a generous regard, a graceful courtesy, or a sparkling wit lent beauty and distinction to every hour of intercourse. A little group of friends in a quiet countryside, with none of the robust diversions of English rural life: it has a sleepy sound; yet such was the pleasure-giving power of hostess and of guest that this leisurely companionship was fraught with fine delight; and its fruits are our inheritance to-day, lingering for us in the

pages of those matchless letters from which time can never steal the charm.

It is Miss Austen, however, who, with relentless candor, has shown us how usefully guests may be employed as an antidote for the ennui of intellectual vacuity. They are the chosen relief for that direful dullness which country gentlemen like Sir John Middleton experience from lack of occupation and ideas; they are the solace of sickly, uninteresting women who desire some one to share with them the monotonous current of existence. The Middletons, we are assured, "lived in a style of equal hospitality and elegance. They were scarcely ever without some friends staying with them in the house, and they kept more company of every kind than any other family in the neighborhood." This indulgence, it appears, while equally welcome to host and hostess, was more necessary to Sir John's happiness than to his wife's; for she at least possessed one other source of continual and unflagging diversion. "Sir John was a sportsman, Lady Middleton a mother. He hunted and shot, and she humored her children; and these were their only resources. Lady Middleton, however, had the advantage of being able to spoil her children all the year round, while Sir John's independent employments were in existence only half the time."

Guests play an important part in Miss Austen's novels, as they did in Miss Austen's life and in the lives of all the hospitable country-people of her time. Moreover, the visits her heroines and their friends pay are not little trifling modern affairs of a few days or a week. Distances counted for something when they had to be traveled in a carriage or a post-chaise; and when people came to see their friends in that fashion, they came to stay. Elizabeth Bennet and Maria Lucas spend six weeks with Charlotte Collins; and Lady Catherine, it will be remembered, does not at all approve of their returning home so quickly. "I expected you to stay two months," she says, severely—they are not her guests at all—"I told Mrs. Collins so, before you came. There can be no occasion for your going so soon." Eleanor and Marianne Dashwood begin their visit to Mrs. Jennings the first week of January, and it is April before we find them setting forth on their return. Anne Elliot goes to Uppercross for two months, though the only inducement offered her is Mary Musgrove's prophetic remark that she does not expect to have a day's health all autumn; and her only pastime as a visitor appears to be the somewhat dubious diversion of making herself generally useful.

It is a far cry from our busy age to either Miss Austen or Mme. de Sévigné. The bounteous resources of a highly cultivated leisure have never been very clearly understood by the English-speaking race. The alleviations of inactivity and *ennui* are no longer with us a rigorous necessity. Our vices and our virtues conspire to defraud us of that charming and sustained social intercourse which is possible only when we have the undisturbed possession of our friends; when we are so happy as to be sheltered under the same roof, to pursue the same occupations, to enjoy the same pleasures, to exchange thoughts and sentiments with entire freedom and familiarity. "I cannot afford to speak much to my friend," says Emerson, meaning that it is a privilege he neither values nor desires. We cannot afford to speak much to our friends, though we may desire it with our whole hearts, because we have been foolish enough to persuade ourselves that we have other and better things to do.



Is it Practicable?

A banker of whom the questions were asked, "Would it not be possible for a man to make a good living by keeping the books of philanthropic and charitable organizations whose volume of business did not justify keeping a private bookkeeper?" "Is it not true that the trouble and annoyance to which many societies are subjected are due to the ignorance of the treasurers of bookkeeping?" answered: "Without doubt, many complications that closely ap-