

ever knew; to construct presentable log cabins and frame buildings which will be comfortable under the worst weather conditions; to direct the construction of trails; to construct and maintain telephone lines; and to repair all his tools.

These are among his minor qualifications. Let us pass to those that really matter. The ranger must be able to assume personal leadership of as many as three hundred men under perilous and swiftly changing conditions that very closely approximate warfare. The mastery of fire-fighting tactics entails years of study and actual experience. He must be able to organize and keep going without fail a combination system of rail-roading, auto-trucking, and horse-packing which will assure him his supplies. And when he has no fires to occupy his attention he must have the personality to keep on its mettle a large organization of guards and improvement crews, so that when fire does come the men will be like athletes, of the highest morale and physical fitness.

THIS is the type of man who is submerged by the flood of overhead of which fifty per cent has openly demonstrated its almost amusing inability to perform the most elementary tasks of the field force which it is paid to direct. These "superiors" are made up of two types of men—old-timers who have attained their rank through seniority, who see conditions as they were fifteen or twenty years ago, and hold down their jobs on the prestige of long service alone; and totally inexperienced and theoretical young men who fail to recognize that common sense is the just requirement of the Service.

It is the men in the latter category

who are most dangerous and who find themselves in the Service because of the policy that believes we should follow European methods of theoretical, exact, rule-of-thumb forestry. I see it differently. We have a Forest Service with the prestige of only twenty years; with conditions vastly different from those of Europe; with public indifference and merely toleration on the part of the Government; and, above all, with the single outstanding problem to face which Europe never had to face on the same scale—namely, that *no forestry practice can be of any value whatsoever unless we can first keep the forests from burning up*. This is a practical problem, not to be solved by technicians, but to be met with money, men, and common-sense business principles.

But the Forest Service is flooded with mere boys, without a pretense of competency except what they have learned in four years in a forestry school, who enter upon their professional career at high salaries, with magnified ideas of their own importance and with a feeling of patronage for the lowly ranger. *Think of it—youthful college graduates working for \$180 a year more than the ranger gets!* This condition has been now reluctantly changed by the administration, and the green entrants are only on a *parity* with the experienced men! No sensible executive would hesitate for a moment between an educated and an uneducated man, other things being equal; but I maintain that the present system is altogether wrong. What is needed for saving our Forests is men with practical experience in fighting fires. Nor is the system fair on the college graduate, for it puts too heavy a burden on shoulders not yet firm enough to bear

it. The Service will be the gainer if it acquires well-educated men of innate ability, but it must first subject them to a long and thorough seasoning process before inducting them into responsible positions.

Protests from the field are already making themselves effective on this point, but the process is slow.

ONE other element enters into the question of accounting for this overhead, and that is "politics." I doubt if the spoils system is as persistent of life in any branch of the Government which is controlled by the Civil Service rules as it is in the Forest Service. I do not mean the influence of outside pressure; I mean the feeling of the higher officers that they must surround themselves with subordinates of absolute personal loyalty, who are willing to sacrifice their opinions for steady jobs.

The wrongly induced influx of inexperienced college men who are not provided with any systematic novitiate, the poor handling of all the personnel, and the intrigue incident to all bureaucracies point to a continuation of the present intolerably poor control of the fire situation.

It is necessary that the rangers, first of all, be as flawless as humanly possible, but, above all, it is essential that supervisors, Assistant District Foresters, and District Foresters be better men as to experience and native ability than the rangers.

There is an old aphorism of card players: Never send a boy when you need a man. This axiom must be recognized by the Forest Service if the Nation is to be saved from the continuing loss of merchantable timber through forest fires.

"I Do Not Choose"

By LAWRENCE F. ABBOTT

Contributing Editor of The Outlook

THE President's terse phrase, "I do not choose to run for President in nineteen twenty-eight," has sent the grammarians scurrying to their dictionaries as well as the politicians scurrying to their committee rooms. Many intelligent men thought they saw in Mr. Coolidge's dramatic sentence a shrewd and skillful scheme for both closing the door and leaving it open at the same time—a feat sure to be impossible in physics and likely to be unsuccessful in morals.

I do not wonder at the flutterings of the politicians, but the grammarians need not have been disturbed if they had stopped to think that Mr. Coolidge is a master of English and knows exactly how to speak his mind in the fewest possible words. A little investigation will show that he is given to using words of Saxon rather than Latin derivation. Those who recalled his inaugural address when he was installed as President of the Massachusetts Senate in 1914 were not surprised at the brevity of the statement

which he handed to the newspaper correspondents at the summer White House in South Dakota on August 2—twelve words which have been the text of hundreds of thousands of words of comment, discussion, analysis, and interpretation. His Senatorial inaugural was almost as striking in its style. This is all he said to the assembled Senators, accustomed on such occasions to flowery orations:

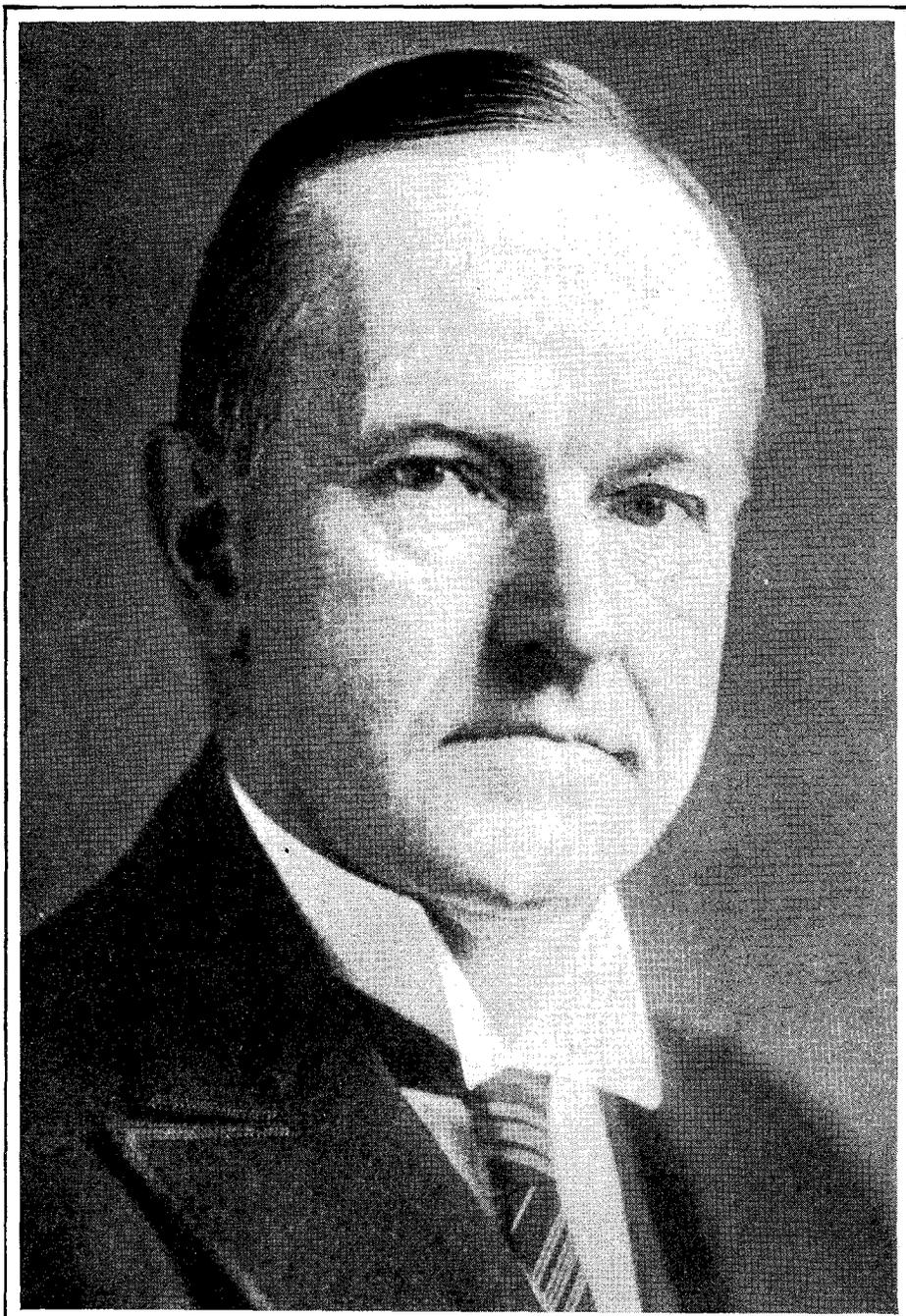
Do the day's work. If it be to protect the rights of the weak, whoever

objects, do it. If it be to help a powerful corporation better to serve the people, whatever the opposition, do that. Expect to be called a standpatter, but don't be a standpatter. Expect to be called a demagogue, but don't be a demagogue. Don't hesitate to be as revolutionary as science. Don't hesitate to be as reactionary as the multiplication table. Don't expect to build up the weak by pulling down the strong. Don't hurry to legislate. Give administration a chance to catch up with legislation.

It will be observed that this wise but laconic address is couched chiefly in monosyllabic Saxon words. There is no introduction, no ornamentation, no peroration. The force of such a style is manifest. But its very simplicity makes a certain type of mind suspect that it is complex. Thus it is with Mr. Coolidge's simple assertion, "I do not choose to run for President in nineteen twenty-eight." It is so obvious that it seems mysterious.

But if the politicians cannot fathom the mystery, the lexicographers can. The politicians seem to think that Mr. Coolidge meant to say, "I prefer not to be a Presidential candidate in nineteen twenty-eight." The lexicographers knew that the Saxon verb "choose" implies, not gentle inclination, but decisive action. The word is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *ceosan* and the Middle English *cheosan* or *chusen*. "Choose," says Professor Whitney, "always represents an act of the will." When it is used with the infinitive as an object, choose means "to prefer and decide." What Mr. Coolidge, therefore, really said in round Saxon English was, "I will not run for President," etc. Thus we see that a little knowledge of etymology and philology may be a very present help in a political crisis. I suggest that the Republican National Committee might very well create a new position on its staff—that of Etymological Secretary—and I nominate Professor William Lyon Phelps, of Yale, for the office. In the present case he could have protected some of the Committeemen from much anguish of spirit and saved them at least two or three days of delay in grooming their new candidates. For he would have known at once that Mr. Coolidge was, and will continue to be, definitely out of the running.

The politicians—except those who have Presidential bees buzzing in their bonnets—may not be wholly grateful to Mr. Coolidge for his abrupt statement, but teachers, professors, and men of letters ought to be extremely grateful. For he has given a new zest to the study of



Underwood & Underwood

President Coolidge

"I do not choose to run for the Presidency in nineteen twenty-eight. . . . This is not a one-man country"

English. Nobody but a New Englander could have done it so well, for the Yankees of New England still speak the Saxon English of the translators of the King James Bible. The Messrs. Fowler, authors of "The King's English"—a text-book which is almost as readable as a best-seller—begin their attack on slovenly syntax in these words:

Any one who wishes to become a good writer should endeavor, before he allows himself to be tempted by the more showy qualities, to be direct, simple, brief, vigorous, and lucid.

This general principle may be translated into practical rules in the domain of vocabulary as follows:

Prefer the familiar word to the far-fetched.

Prefer the concrete word to the abstract.

Prefer the single word to the circumlocution.

Prefer the short word to the long.

Prefer the Saxon word to the Romance.

The Yankee has been doing this ever since the day when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. The result is that the native New Englander who has been unspoiled by a superficial urban culture is famous for his incisive speech.

During the Russo-Japanese War I was spending the summer on an island of Penobscot Bay, in the State of Maine. One summer afternoon I employed a ship carpenter from a neighboring island to come over and repair my landing-stage. While we were working together he plied me with questions about the causes and progress of the war. When I

explained that it was not a racial conflict for white or yellow supremacy, but the inevitable attempt of the Japanese to break the geographical shackles that bound them, his comment was: "Wal, I guess it's a case of 'live dog eat hatchet!'" I had never heard the adage before; I have never been able to trace it since; but its meaning is clear. A dog about to be brained by an angry human may continue to live only if he succeeds in swallowing his enemy's weapon. How more succinctly could be expressed the contrast between the power and resources of Russia and the desperate plight of Japan?

Those who will take the trouble to read James Russell Lowell's introduction to the "Biglow Papers" of the Civil War period will find a remarkable tribute to the vigor and charm of Yankee diction. No American man of letters has ever equaled and no English-speaking man of letters has ever surpassed the combination of linguistic scholarship and literary taste which Lowell possessed and in his prose and poetry displayed. "In choosing the Yankee dialect," he says, "I did not act without forethought. It had long seemed to me that the great vice of

American writing was a studied want of simplicity, that we were in danger of coming to look upon our mother-tongue as a dead language, . . . and yet all the while our popular idiom is racy with life and vigor and originality." Lowell found the Yankee dialect, or "lingo," as he preferred to call it, not only a perfect vehicle for the humor and satire of Hosea Biglow and Birdofredum Sawin, but capable of expressing very deep and affecting sentiment. Mistral never wrote in Provençal a tenderer poem than "The Courtin'."

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"You want to see my Pa, I s'pose?"

"Wal . . . no . . . I come dasign-in'"—

"To see my Ma? She's sprinklin' clo'es

Agin to-morrer's i'nin'."

To say why gals act so and so
Or don't, 'ould be presumin';
Mebby to mean *yes* and say *no*
Comes nateral to women.

He stood a spell on one foot fust,
Then stood a spell on t'other,
And on which one he felt the wust
He couldn't ha' told ye nuther.

Says he, "I'd better call agin";
Says she, "Think likely, Mister":
Thet last word pricked him like a pin,
An' . . . Wal, he up and kist her.

When Ma bimeby upon 'em slips,
Huldy sot pale ez ashes,
All kin' o' smily roun' the lips
An' teary roun' the lashes.

For she was jes' the quiet kind
Whose naturs never vary,
Like streams that keep a summer mind
Snowhid in Janooary.

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New England may be losing its cotto spindles to the South and its farm products to the West, but it has a quality and character of thought and speech which can no more be taken from it than its rocky hillsides. Mr. Coolidge's "I do not choose" will revive many homely and affectionate memories in the heart of Yankee sires and sons in all parts of the country; and the National stir which the phrase has made will incline him to agree with the opinion of Coleridge, that "there are cases in which more knowledge of more value may be conveyed by the history of a word than by the history of a campaign."

Labels

By PHILIP CHILD

THE theoretical division of human beings into the saved and the damned has for centuries been sufficiently well known by the public to provide a tolerable livelihood for the practice of speculative theology. Still, not until the era of the revival meetings was there a large enough number of people willing or able to suffer classification with the damned to make the problem of labeling an acute one. About the time, then, when revivals were inaugurated, and salvation by public avowal began to be the fashion, a certain spellbinder put the all-important question to an Anglican clergyman of the old school—the old lusty, trusty, honest, dignified, and conventional type of clergyman:

"Tell me, my friend, are you saved?"

"Sir," said the clergyman, drawing himself up with dignity, "I am a member of the Church of England."

The Church of England has always been one of the dignified amenities of the English squirearchy, and the honest clergyman rightly side-stepped the evangelist's classification, partly, no doubt, through the perfectly understandable arrogance of class, but mainly because

he felt that neither of the alternative states offered (namely, of being saved or damned—such rigid alternatives!) quite fitted his spiritual condition.

Is there not a sort of universal and amiable egotism which makes us all believe that the rest of mankind is divisible into certain categories, but that we ourselves—by nature of that variety and that subtle elusiveness of our personalities of which we are well aware—quite defy classification? I for one am willing to confess that I have more than once had a fellow-feeling for that resolutely independent clergyman, especially when my friends—taking gross liberty with my many-sided personality—have labeled me with this or that *ism*. "You talk like a young radical," they say; or, "What! you don't believe in a second bottle? Why, you're as strait-laced as a Puritan." Strait-laced, indeed! I had as lief be called grim-corseted.

I ruefully submit that I have frequently had to choose between being saved (or damned) with the Fundamentalists or damned (or saved) with the Modernists. I have had thrust on me a

Hobson's choice of expressing up-to-date enthusiasm for the latest pornographic novel, because it was "true to life," or—if I chose not to grovel before Ashtaroth—of being called Babbitt, Philistine, grape-juice moralist, or one of the similar cachets that have the approval of the *intelligentsia*. I have had many another unfair alternative thrust on me in the certain knowledge that if I plumped for the wrong side there was an unpleasant label waiting for me; and the whole time all I wanted was the right to express a private opinion, entirely local in its application, without being either damned or saved or otherwise pigeonholed in any way for it.

It is both the genius and the misfortune of the American people that they should wish to label almost every sort of tangible and intangible phenomenon in uncompromising black and white—by means of a law, or by a definitive document of some sort (a doctoral thesis, say), or, failing a document, by a classification. The belief is that you have only to define a thing in order to understand it clearly and thoroughly,