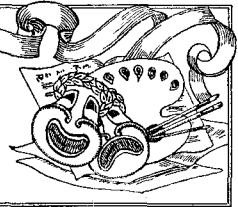


AS I LIKE IT

BY WILLIAM LYON PHELPS



THIS week I have been in South Dakota. The reason why I was excited at entering South Dakota was because it was the only State in the Union which I had not seen, and I wished to add this jewel to my crown. When the train paused at Millbank, the first stop in the State, I sprang to the ground, seized a handful of the soil and shouted SOUTH DAKOTA! For years I had longed for that moment, as I did not wish to die until I had been in every State in my country. (Nor do I wish to die now.) A few hours later I reached the town of Aberdeen, the end of my journey. Here I gave three lectures in the State Normal School, an admirable institution with an exceedingly able president, and a body of devoted teachers. The young men and maidens come from isolated farms, and receive culture and inspiration. SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE enters many households, and when, at the end of my lectures, I gave the audience an opportunity to ask questions, I was kept busy for an hour, and quit only because I had to return East. The questions displayed an interest in and a familiarity with the most "modern" of modern novels, essays, and plays. Aberdeen is a town on the prairie, and from the front door of the house where I was delightfully entertained, I gazed twenty miles into the sunset, with no building, tree, or hill to break the view.

The whole journey was interesting. I left New Haven on a Thursday noon, attended a matinée of the New York Theatre Guild and saw Bernard Shaw's "The Devil's Disciple"—a splendid play splendidly staged and acted. The picture of the parson's wife and the young Disciple at tea in the old Colonial room was so beautiful that it "haunts me still." I caught the five-o'clock train for Detroit, arriving early Friday morning. I played golf there all day (33 holes) and that evening addressed 350 bankers at the banquet of the Detroit Bankers Club. Sat-

urday morning I played another round of golf, and caught the noon train for Chicago; and from there the night train for Aberdeen, arriving Sunday evening. Monday morning was spent in golf on the prairie course, and after lecturing Monday afternoon, evening, and Tuesday morning, I caught the noon train East. I arrived at New Haven about one o'clock Thursday, played four sets of tennis that afternoon, and in the evening addressed the Connecticut Medical Society at their annual banquet.

"Fie upon this quiet life! I want work." On the train I read through seven books, of which the worst was Arnold Bennett's "How to Make the Best of Life." No one who praises this should ever breathe a word against Doctor Frank Crane. Compared to such a collection of platitudes, Doctor Crane is as paradoxical and unexpected as Chesterton. The doctor's stock is rising fast; the Theatre Guild has a long quotation from him on its programmes.

With all this golf and speaking and reading, it is possible that some reader may believe there was no time for meditation, no time for sober thinking. He would be deceived. It is curious that people say railway corporations have no sense of humor when I spent four nights on what they call a sleeping-car. I had and used abundance of time for the sessions of sweet, silent thought.

The morning in Dakota I played golf. I stood in the vast circle of the horizon, as complete as the circle of the sea. One of the printed rules I transcribe: "Ball lying in gopher-hole may be lifted without penalty." I am thinking of writing a book about golf. I shall call it "Thirty Years of Looking Up."

It was a heavenly morning, there were many wild flowers, and the air was vocal with singing birds. I was glad to see a pair of my old friends, the upland plovers (Bartramian Sandpiper), who trilled their

incomparable song, and lifted their wings above their pretty heads with an inimitable gesture. I can easily understand how those who have lived in Aberdeen would, if transported elsewhere, be homesick for the prairie.

Speaking of the plovers reminds me again of W. H. Hudson, who wrote of these birds so affectionately. Eight or nine volumes of the beautiful, limited complete edition of his works have appeared during the past month, and I counsel those who love the writings of Hudson to secure a set of these books before they are gone. They are in every way admirable specimens of the publisher's art, a fine frame for Hudson's pictures of life.

The most notable literary event of the year 1923 is the visit to America of Joseph Conrad. In contrast to almost all others he came not to be seen but to see. His novels are characterized by such dignity and reserve and austerity that I imagined he might be rather unapproachable. Nothing could be further from the truth. One would naturally expect simplicity in so sincere an artist, but I was quite unprepared for his irresistible charm. He is one of the most lovable of men, and his personality in conversation leaves as indelible an impression as his books. I shall never cease to be grateful to my friend Henry Canby, the accomplished editor of the "Literary Review" of the New York *Evening Post*, who, some twenty years ago, insisted on my reading Conrad's novels. Of these, I still place first "The Nigger of the Narcissus," and I do not wonder that the author is willing to have his fame stand or fall by that book. But to those who have never read Conrad, I recommend their beginning with "Typhoon," the best description of a storm at sea I have ever found—nor can one forget the practical unimaginative captain, who conquered the elements because he had no more self-consciousness than they.

Joseph Conrad is the finest illustration of a remark I made in the May issue, namely, that it is possible to attain complete fluency in English without pronouncing it accurately. A sensation was to hear this distinguished English author

read a page of his own writing. The foreign accent was so strong that it was astounding to remember that the man who was pronouncing English words so strangely has, in mastery of the English language, no superior in the world. That Conrad should understand the composition of a novel, the construction of the plot, the presentation and analysis of human character, that the work should be filled with the evidences of original thought and vivid imagination, all this is comprehensible; but one of his chief titles to fame is the nobility, flexibility, and general perfection of his English prose style. The standards of competition in England are high; that he should hold an undisputed place in the front rank of living English writers is phenomenal.

Even so, the man is greater than his books. To read him is to admire him; to meet him is to have that admiration deepen with the addition of affection. He is an extraordinary personality.

The committee selected by Columbia University to award the Pulitzer prize in American drama for the season of 1922-1923 had an unusually interesting year, there being a number of American plays that in some past periods would have won easily. The choice of "Icebound," by Owen Davis, seems to me particularly wise, because I was on the committee. It is an original, vital, wholly American comedy, and in other respects conforms to the conditions distinctly set down by the donor. It is worth remembering that in the June *Bookman*, which reached me this morning, John Farrar hazarded the prediction that "Icebound" would win. It was a good prophecy, for, unlike most prophecies, it seems good after the event. The award of the biography prize to Burton J. Hendrick, for his "Life of Walter H. Page," has met, as it deserved to, with universal approval. It is pleasant to see Mr. Hendrick gradually receiving recognition for his talents and devotion to truth. The novel and drama awards were naturally not so generally commended, nor would they have been had any other novel or drama been chosen. Every objector has his own favorite in these broad and diversified fields. Had I been on the novel committee, I should have

voted for— But what is the use of talking about that now?

Men and women equally share in the four literary awards: Burton Hendrick and Owen Davis in biography and drama, Edna St. Vincent Millay and Willa Cather in poetry and fiction. America may well be proud of the four.

All persons except hopelessly reactionary "patriots" will rejoice that the prize for the best editorial of the year was given to William Allen White, of Emporia, Kan., for his magnificent defense of free speech in the short leader called "To an Anxious Friend." Here it is:

You tell me that law is above freedom of utterance. And I reply that you can have no wise laws nor free enforcement of wise laws unless there is free expression of the wisdom of the people—and, alas, their folly with it. But if there is freedom, folly will die of its own poison, and the wisdom will survive. That is the history of the race. It is the proof of man's kinship with God. You say that freedom of utterance is not for time of stress, and I reply with the sad truth that only in time of stress is freedom of utterance in danger. . . . Whoever pleads for justice helps to keep the peace; and whoever tramples upon the plea of justice, temperately made in the name of peace, only outrages peace and kills something fine in the heart of man which God put there when we got our manhood. When that is killed brute meets brute on each side of the line.

So, dear friend, put fear out of your heart. This nation will survive, this State will prosper, the orderly business of life will go forward if only men can speak in whatever way given them to utter what their hearts hold—by voice, by posted card, by letter, or by press. Reason never has failed men. Only force and repression have made the wrecks in the world.

We ought to respect the law, but the legislators should not make it difficult to do so. What a difference there is between sin and the law! I have no respect for sin, but I have profound respect for many sinners. On the other hand, I have profound respect for the law, but none at all for many lawmakers. The tyrannical control of the individual's habits, manners, speech, and thought has reached such a pitch that before long the "paramount issue" in America may come to be Individual Freedom. For there can be no national freedom, any more than there can be national happiness; these affairs concern only the individual. How happy Germany might have been if she had not filled so large a place in modern history!

That ordinary laws are sufficient to restrain vicious stage plays becomes evident in the recent legal decision against a drama produced in New York. Censorship will never be necessary if the laws against obscenity and indecency are properly enforced. It is curious that those who ridicule plays for "teaching a moral lesson," insisting that didacticism is contrary to rules of art, are the ones who most loudly insist that a book or play attacked for indecency "teaches a great moral lesson." Cant.

One of the most interesting books of the year is Werner's "Life of P. T. Barnum." It is safe to say that Barnum will never be forgotten, and whenever his name is mentioned, both speaker and hearer smile, not with contempt, but with a compound of humor and affection. He was a public benefactor, and I gaze with unconcealed respect at his statue in the park at Bridgeport. His enterprise in bringing Jenny Lind to America, which is told with detail by Mr. Werner, was an international event of such magnitude that Browning alludes to both persons in "Mr. Sludge, the Medium," the one poem of its author's filled with American colors. Browning mentions Barnum as he mentions the immortal prize-fight between Tom Sayers and Bill Heenan, the "Benicia Boy." Barnum was forever doing the unexpected. He who had been identified with so many swindles, in the case of Jenny Lind gave the public the full worth of their money. She was even greater than the advertisements. Of all the men and women who sang before I was born, she is the one I would choose to hear. Her "goodness" was a tremendous asset, as it was in the case of Mary Anderson; but virtue alone is no more sufficient to give an artist permanent renown than is the absence of it.

As a rule, Barnum knew the American public loved to be gulled. It was a shame *not* to take the money. His genius—for he was a man of genius—consisted in knowing exactly how to swindle them. He swindled them in a way that called forth their admiration, affection, and delight. When I was a small boy in New Haven, one of the side-shows in his circus advertised "a cherry-colored cat,"

which you must pay extra to see. No one had ever heard of such a phenomenon, and accordingly crowds streamed into the tent. What they saw was an ordinary black cat, a common enough sight on any street. "What does this mean?" they inquired of the attendant—receiving the dry answer: "Some cherries are black." Now Barnum had accurately known in advance what would happen. Instead of becoming enraged and demanding their money back, they all grinned foolishly, ejaculated the then equivalent of "Stung again!" and immediately went out and implored every one they met on no account to miss seeing the cherry-colored cat. The result was an enormous intake of the people's money. In this case I happened to know the cat. It lived in a house at the corner of York and Chapel Streets, and I had often stroked it. The day before the circus reached town, the cat disappeared. The day after, the cat was returned to the house, with a ribbon around its neck, bearing a card: "With Mr. Barnum's compliments." So that his "overhead" was nil. Every cent he took in was as "velvet" as the cat's fur.

My friend John Rodemeyer, the accomplished editor of a newspaper in Greenwich, Conn., knows an infinite number of stories about Barnum, many of which have illuminated his journal. Barnum was as unique a figure in comedy as Abraham Lincoln in tragedy, and both were purely and wholly American; they could not have flourished in any other country. Both, too, have become legendary heroes. I—*moi qui parle*—saw Barnum. At a certain moment during the progress of the greatest show on earth, there was an impressive silence. In the midst of this vast silence, the large bulk of the showman moved majestically to the centre of the ring, turned around once slowly, so that all could behold his face, and as majestically departed. He remained exactly the right number of seconds. His benevolent features had an amazingly unctuous expression—but little did we then know how absolutely aware he was, of himself, of his expression, and of the spectators.

Apart from his genius for guessing, I find his physical vitality no less astound-

ing. When we remember what hardships he endured on the road, what reverses of fortune he suffered, enough to shatter a less indomitable spirit, when we remember the long weeks without hardly any sleep and the wretched cold food he ate in impossible conditions, the fact that he lived to be over 80 must be reckoned among his achievements.

Another distinctively American biography of the present year is Edward W. Bok's life of Cyrus H. K. Curtis, called "A Man from Maine." Barnum revelled in humbug, and rejoiced when his enemies attacked him for it. In the career of Mr. Curtis there is exactly the opposite of humbug, for he always gave full value, being even fanatically honest. This volume is not so rich in anecdote nor so dramatic in events as the "Americanization of Edward Bok," but it is immensely interesting. It shows not only the rise from obscurity to prominence, and the reasons therefor, but it breathes the very poetry of "business." It successfully demonstrates that there need be nothing humdrum, nothing mechanical, about a business career. It may be full of the spirit of romance and adventure. After all, this depends, in the last analysis, on the individual. Those who find a business life "dull" would have probably found a professional career equally so. Some are bored by work, some by play, some by mountains, some by the sea, some by the plains, some by humanity, and some by themselves. Happy are those who can look on every morning with fresh eyes.

Brigadier-General Henry Martyn Robert, U. S. A., died at Hornell, N. Y., on May 11. He was 86 years old. He was the author of a popular and useful book and had a long and distinguished military and scientific career. I wonder how many of the thousands of men and women who have been faithful to "Robert's Rules of Order" for the last forty years knew anything about the author. He had become the oldest living graduate of West Point. He served in the Civil War, was president of the United States Board of Engineers for Fortifications, was a member of the New York Harbor Line

Board and of the Rock Creek Park National Commission, and in 1907 was consulting engineer for the construction of the bridge and causeway connecting Galveston with the mainland. His services to his country both in war and in peace were numerous and important; but he will popularly be remembered longest because of his standard work on parliamentary law. When William Dwight and I organized the Hartford Public High School Debating Club in 1882 we decided that "Robert's Rules of Order" should determine our procedure. The club is still flourishing, and I dare say uses the same manual. It is unfortunate that more men and women are not familiar with parliamentary law. Over and over again I have seen men called to the chair in some public meeting, and immediately display painful incompetence. The best presiding officer I ever saw in action was the late John M. Hall, who as speaker of the Connecticut House of Representatives maintained absolute discipline, was invariably courteous and invariably right, never guessed inaccurately at a viva-voce vote, never heard an appeal from his decision but once, and then had the satisfaction of being supported by an overwhelming majority.

Speaking of West Point, I have been reading Arthur Sherburne Hardy's autobiography, called "Things Remembered," which has just been published. I confidently recommend this book to all intelligent men and women. Every page is interesting, and there are many enlivening anecdotes. I was particularly glad to see his admiration for the system of education at West Point, of which institution he is one of the most notable graduates. I have had opportunities for observing that system, and I believe in it. Thanks to the discipline, to the small divisions, where every pupil recites every day, and to the liberal course of study, every graduate of West Point and of Annapolis is an educated man. I have not met one exception. I shall never forget the good times I had at West Point some years ago, when I made weekly visits there. The conversation of such men as Hugh Scott, Colonel Larned, and Edward Holden was an education in itself. Doc-

tor Holden, who had been astronomer at the Lick Observatory, president of the University of California, and was then librarian of the United States Military Academy, was a most interesting man. The range of his knowledge and information, his keen wit and spontaneous humor, his prodigious mental vitality, made him an ideal conversationalist. Shortly before his death, he quoted to me the famous verses of Landor, and although the first line was no more true of Holden than it was of the author, the poem, cited by him, seemed doubly impressive.

"I strove with none, for none was worth my strife.
Nature I loved, and next to Nature, Art.
I warmed both hands before the fire of Life:
It sinks, and I am ready to depart."

Mr. Hardy's last chapter on religion is frank and sincere. Yet it seems a little strange that because knowledge of religious truth cannot be proven, he should find it necessary to take no attitude at all. If we were to subscribe only to what can be verified, no intelligent man would cast a vote at any political election, choose any career in life, believe in his friends, or work for his country.

In a previous paper, I chronicled the fact that the American poet Anna Hempstead Branch had read the entire Bible through in a few days. To those who are interested I give the following facts communicated to me in a letter from the Reverend M. L. G. Proper, of Long Hill, Conn., who, on March 16, 1923, read the New Testament through in one day. He will be glad to hear from other students who may have performed this feat, for feat it surely is.

I did not begin to read at midnight, although I am sure that I had the correct time, but waited until one minute past midnight so that if I succeeded in my attempt the reading would certainly all have been done in one day. I began at 12.01 A. M., Friday, March 16, 1923, and at 8.25 in the evening I had read the entire text of the English Revised New Testament. . . .

Note that I had read only the text of the Revised Version of the New Testament and that there might not be any question as to my having read the Revised Version of the New Testament. I then read the foot-notes in 1 hour, 48 minutes; and the chapter outlines at the top of the pages in 26½ minutes. It was now 11.30 P. M.

I slept less than 1 hour during the 24 hours that

had just passed. It would be the same as if one got up at 7 o'clock in the morning and worked until 7 o'clock the next morning, with only 1 hour sleep during that time. I drank freely of water during the entire 24 hours. I had no physical trouble of any kind; not even as respects the eyes or the head. It was a very, very rainy day, raining hard almost all of the time. And the dark day seemed to be most excellent for reading. At 11.30 I wanted to go out for an hour's walk (exercise) but did not because the country roads were so muddy. I was not tired; but felt as good as if it were morning and I had had a night's rest. I went to bed at 12.05 A.M. Saturday morning. There was no physical reaction from what I had done.

The reading was a rapid non-meditative one. But occasionally a verse, a paragraph, or a group of chapters would stand out as especially important.

This is the important fact: The entire text of the English Revised Version of the New Testament was read in one day in 15 hours, 14¼ minutes.

I find that the words of Jesus in the New Testament, including the repetitions of various passages, can be read in 3 hours, 11 minutes.

I have read the Old Testament 9 times. This includes the Authorized Version, the Revised Version, and the Jewish translation. I have read the New Testament 20 times. This includes the Authorized Version, the Revised Version, the 1911 New Testament, and Moffatt's translation. There are a number of translations in English that I have not read, as the Catholic Bible, the Modern Readers' Bible, the Baptist Bible, the 1911 Old Testament, the Twentieth Century New Testament, and Weymouth's translation of the New Testament. I suppose there are others.

I should like to know of others who have read the Bible a large number of times, or who have read it rapidly, as I have done.

Now behold a subject that ought to arouse animated discussion and sharp controversy. The famous naturalist W. H. Hudson was certain that we cannot remember *smells*. Sights we remember perfectly; any one in the midst of a blizzard, by exercising his memory, can see with the mind's eye last summer's landscape as plainly as if it were actually before him. How well we remember sounds would differ with different individuals. Hudson believed that no man could remember smells. He thought that the smell itself had to reappear in order to stimulate the senses.

The sense of smell in man is not nearly so strong as the sense of sight. And yet I am not convinced by Hudson's argument. It seems to me—I am willing to admit I may be mistaken—that I can remember the smell of pond-lilies, although I have not held one in my hand for sev-

eral years. Hudson also says that although unpleasant sights recur to the memory and afflict us, unpleasant smells once survived cannot give us any further trouble, nor does the attempt to recall them bring any disgust. I am by no means sure of this. It is true that, although for some days after an operation I was nauseated by the smell of ether, and some months later was nearly overcome merely by entering a hospital, I have at this moment completely forgotten the smell of ether, and it gives me therefore not the slightest distress to attempt to recall it. But there used to be a soap-factory near New Haven with a particularly evil odor; and it seems to me now that I can recall that. I think I can remember how my dog smells when he is very wet, although at this moment he is dry; and I am afraid I remember all too well how he smelled when he had succeeded in achieving his highest happiness—rolling in the carcass of a rotten sheep. It is astounding that the dog, whose sense of smell is so enormously superior to that faculty in human beings, should delight in what is to us the intolerable odor of decay.

Hudson, in his book "Idle Days in Patagonia," chapter 14, says:

The reason, I imagine, is that while smells are so much to us they cannot, like things seen and things heard, be reproduced in the mind, but are at once forgotten. It is true that in the books smell is classified along with taste, as being much lower or less intellectual than sight and hearing, for the reason (scarcely a valid one) that there must be actual contact of the organ of smell with the object smelled, or a material emanation from, and portion of, such object, although the object itself might be miles away beyond the sight or even beyond the horizon. The light of nature is enough to show how false the arrangement is that places smell and taste together, as much lower and widely apart from sight and hearing. Rather the extreme delicacy of the olfactory nerve raises smell to the rank of an intellectual sense, but very little below the two first and higher senses. And yet, while sights and sounds are retained and can be reproduced at will, and their phantasms are like the reality, an odor has no phantasm in the brain; or, to be very exact, the phantasm of an odor, or its presentment or representation, is so faint and quickly gone when any effort is made to recover it, that, compared with the distinct and abiding presentments of sights and sounds, it is as nothing. Imagine, for example, that you had often seen Windsor Castle, and knew a great deal about it, its history, its noble appearance, which will look familiar to you when you see it again and affect you pleasantly as in the past; and that yet you could not see it with the mind's

eye, but that when, after a recent visit, you tried to see it mentally, nothing but a formless, dim, whitish patch appeared, only to disappear in an instant and come no more. Such a case would represent our condition with regard to even the strongest and most familiar smells. Yet in spite of our inability to recall them, we do distinctly make the effort; and in the case of some strong odor which we have recently inhaled, the mind mocks us with this faint shadow of a phantasm; and this vain, or almost vain, effort of the mind seems to show that odors in some past period of our history were so much more to us than they are now that they could be vividly reproduced, and that this power has been lost, or, at all events, is so weakened as to be of no use. . . .

. . . So indistinct was the reproduction in my own case, even of the smell of coffee, that after reading this passage I began to fear that my own brain had misled me, and so, to satisfy myself on the point, I consulted others, friends and acquaintances, who all began trying to recall the sensations produced on them by the odors they were most familiar with. The result of their efforts has restored my peace of mind. With the exception of two or three ladies, who, having no male relations to make up their minds for them, profess to be still in doubt, all sadly acknowledged that they find themselves poorer by one faculty than they had supposed themselves to be; that they began trying to recall smells in the belief that they had the power; that they found that they could almost do it, then began to doubt, and finally with a feeling of impotence, of being baffled, gave it up.

A simple mental experiment may serve to convince any person who tries it that the sensations of smell do not reproduce themselves in the mind. We think of a rose, or a lily, or a violet, and a feeling of pleasure attends the thought; but that this feeling is caused solely by the image of something beautiful to the eye becomes evident when we proceed to think of some artificial perfume, or extract, or essence of a flower. The extract, we know, gave us far more pleasure than the slight perfume of the flower, but there is no feeling of pleasure in thinking of it: it is nothing more than an idea in the mind. On the other hand, when we remember some extremely painful scene that we have witnessed, or some sound, expressing distress or anguish, that we have heard, something of the distressed feeling experienced at the time is reproduced in us; and it is common to hear people say, It makes me sad, or makes me dizzy, or makes my blood run cold, when I think of it; which is literally true, because in thinking of it they again (in a sense) see and hear it. But to think of evil odors does not affect us at all: we can, in imagination, uncork and sniff at cans of petroleum and saturate our pocket-handkerchiefs with asafetida or carbolic acid, or walk behind a dust-cart, or wade through miles of fetid slime in some tropical morass, or take up some mephitic animal, like the skunk, and fondle it as we would a kitten, yet experience no pain, and no sensation of nausea.

I rejoice that George Santayana has at last consented to collect and publish his

poems in one volume. He is so well known as a professional philosopher and as a prose essayist, that many have forgotten the poems he wrote in his youth. Some of them are extremely beautiful; and I regard his Sonnets as particularly fine. They first appeared in 1894, and were the fruit of the decade extending from 1883, when he was a freshman at Harvard, to 1893, when he was a member of the faculty. At last we have his "Poems, Selected by the Author and Revised," an attractive volume of 135 pages, with a disarming preface.

These verses, in my judgment, belong to literature—and here is a question—do they belong to American or to English literature? The author is a full-blooded Spaniard, but as he came to America at the age of nine, learned English here, and wrote most of his poems here, I think we must claim him as an American poet. I also insist that W. H. Hudson is an American writer, because his father and mother were both Americans, born in the United States. It is true that Hudson wrote all his books in England—but does that alone make him an Englishman? Patriotism has nothing to do with art; yet I think the classification of Santayana and Hudson as American writers can be justified, even as there is not the slightest doubt that Joseph Conrad belongs to the literature of England.

I am mildly shocked to observe in two books by reputable authors an apparent ignorance of the difference between "counsel" and "council." In Nathaniel W. Stephenson's excellent "Life of Lincoln," page 208, I find this sentence: "As associate council in a case at Cincinnati, three years before, Lincoln had been treated so contemptuously by Stanton that he had returned home in pained humiliation." In Ludwig Lewi-son's "Up Stream," page 32, I read, "Though his life had been, however rash and foolish, of an unblemished honor, he counselled my mother to secrecy. She blamed herself bitterly in later years for having followed his council."

One of my correspondents wishes me to insist on the proper distinction between "latest" and "last." I wish we could, but upon reflection I find that good

usage has so sanctioned the words as synonyms, that it will be impossible to put through a reform. Every one knows the gibe: "Have you read my last book?" "I hope so." The distinction would have saved the author from that humiliation. Yet we find one of the greatest of Browning's poems called "My Last Duchess." Now so far from being the last, he is talking about her to the envoy who is arranging for a successor. I surrender.

I also surrender on the question of "*n'est-ce pas*." Carolyn Wells and I have organized the "am't I" club, of which we are the original charter members. We have decided to say "am't I" brazenly, and then glare. We invite all respectable persons and others to join in the "am't I" "drive," in an attempt to "sell it," or to "put it over." Perhaps if we can get "in touch" with some influential persons, we can make some progress "along these lines." I would say "a'n't I," but it sounds too much like "aren't I," and all except those from the Middle West might think I was using that detestable phrase.

One of the worst foes to human happiness is the fresh-air crank. I love fresh air as much as anybody, but I love it where it belongs—outdoors. I do not like too much of it in the house, and I particularly hate the mixture of in-and-outdoor air, because the ingredients are never correctly amalgamated. I hate a wind blowing across a library table, and I hate a draft down the back of my neck. One of my grievances against the fresh-air crank is that he has a positive genius for the inopportune. Just when I am absolutely comfortable in a warm interior on a winter day, and can laugh from my security at the accursed cold, some crank is sure to say, "Don't you think it is very close here?" then walk across the room, and open a window on the back of my neck, letting in the poisonous chill. For the invariable fact is, that in a meeting or anywhere else, the fresh-air crank stealthily opens the window on somebody else's back. He then returns to his safe chair with smiles that say "That's better." I remember once when this

happened, a friend of mine remarked that we had been absolutely comfortable until this idiot opened the window; as he emphatically closed it, he added: "I've got only one drop of blood in my whole body, and I want that to circulate."

When you are travelling on a railway-coach and a fat man in front of you opens the window, thus getting the pleasant air himself, and giving you the cinders, an excellent plan is to raise your newspaper directly between you and the onslaught of dirt, and read it with absorbed attention. This causes a superb funnel. The draft and the dirt pour copiously down the neck of the villain, and unless he is a hard-boiled rhinoceros, he will close the casement.

Another extremely common and reprehensible habit is that of a host who gives a dinner-party, and arranges that the guests, immediately after the feast is over, shall repair to a room that would answer admirably for cold storage, but is no place for immortal souls. After eating, one is naturally cold, and should go into a warm room. This is easily proved by the fact that if an open fire is burning on the hearth of the room to which the dinner-guests adjourn, every one instinctively makes for that fire. Usually a large man reaches it first, stands with his back to it, and addresses the company for fifteen minutes.

Dining-rooms and their successors should never be cold. (There is only one thing worse than a cold dining-room, and that is a cold bathroom.) I felt a strong affection for a convivial and cheerful guest, who, at a dinner-party, in the midst of winter, when the host inquired, "Shall I open a window?" replied firmly: "No! Shut all the windows and open all the bottles."

We are told it is unhealthy to be in a warm room. But how much better it is to be unhealthy and deliciously comfortable than to be perfectly healthy and perfectly miserable. My advice to the fresh-air crank is to stay outdoors, where he belongs, for he has never been civilized. If he must enter the house or the hall, and must have fresh air, let him open the window on his own back, and here's hoping that he catches a terrific cold.



MY only companion in the smoker of the Pullman dropped his morning newspaper with a "Humph!"

As he caught my look of polite interrogation he explained: "I am disgusted by the continual whinings of these mendicant college professors and their wives.

Keys

Here is a dispatch from the Pacific coast chronicling the lamentations of the wives of university professors. The wives complain that they are dressed by the charity of relatives and friends. One publishes to the cold, hard, and cynical world that she has not had a new pair of shoes for five years; another has worn the same winter hat for seven years; and two of them have worn the same capes for eleven years."

"Well," I unsympathetically snapped (my wife's sister happens to be married to a college professor), "we surely have starved the college professor."

"Yes, that's the common notion, but there's no truth in it."

"The trouble with men like you," said I, as I made another inventory of his complacent and rotund prosperity, "is that you know nothing at first hand about the privations, sacrifices, and social habits of the 'intellectuals.' I have known you but for half an hour, but I have gathered enough to know that your own habits of thought disqualify you from sympathizing with the needs and ideals of a college professor. You look and talk like one born with a platinum spoon in his mouth and a Bolls-Toyce in his garage. You belong to the class that writes articles on how to live on an income of thirty thousand dollars a year."

"You must be a brother of Sherlock Holmes," laughed my sleek, broker-like-looking companion. "It doesn't take you long to get a man's number."

This softened my resentment, because I felt that he had recognized one of my strongest characteristics. I really am a very accurate and rapid judge of human nature. I felt even more kindly disposed as he extended his gold-decorated cigar-case in my direction. As he had pulled his cigar-case from his pocket, his bunch of keys had dropped to the floor. This suggested my

favorite theory as to the reading of a man's social and financial standing.

"Ah," said I, as I handed him his keys, which I had picked up for him, "you name the uses of the keys and I'll hit you off to a T, for whereas Goethe says a man's character is his history, I say a man's keys are his biography."

I could see the mounting admiration in the eyes of my companion, who ejaculated: "Well, well, indeed you are a most remarkable man; I have never surmised that keys are such a revealer of man's life."

"Go ahead," I rejoined, "call off the keys and I'll give the exegesis."

"This is the key to my house; yes, I say MY house, for I pay no rent, and I may add that the house is built of stone, has hardwood floors, plate-glass windows, and all the conveniences. This is the key to my box at the post-office, and this is the master-key admitting me into the building where my office is located; and here is the key to our country bungalow; this one opens the safety-box in the vault of my bank; here we have the one that opens my locker in the country club; and this little cluster of keys has to do with the garage and the sedan that there reposes. There's another key, but I'm not going to tell you what that key is for until you have declared your deductions up to the present moment."

"The whole matter is very simple," said I. "Any man who owns his own home, who has a safety-box in the bank, a sedan in the garage, a bungalow in the country, and a locker in an exclusive country club is an individual who cannot have any possible sympathy with an underpaid college professor. You must be a banker or an oil plutocrat, or, if you excuse plain talking, it is likely that you have inherited a lot of real estate that has increased greatly in value because of the enterprise of your neighbors."

"You're wrong," interjected my victim; "I've never inherited a dollar."

"Well, then," I continued with rising voice, "you're the average successful American with no ideals beyond the dollar, and with no understanding of the idealism that is willing to suffer for the sake of art and