

science. Now I know something about college professors, because my wife's sister married a college professor; and I want to tell you——"

"Wait a moment," said my unruffled associate as he apparently tried to assuage my rising indignation by handing me his cigar-case for the second time. "There's one key I haven't explained. Notice this last key on the ring."

"What about it?"

"It's the key to my lecture-room."

"What's that you say?"

"It's the key to the lecture-room of a college professor."

My confusion of mind was partly relieved by the thrusting aside of the curtain as the dusky porter announced: "Last call for breakfast!"

"Come on," said I, "be my guest at a sumptuous breakfast; I still feel sorry for these poor college professors."

FOR more than thirteen years now I have cultivated a habit of listing in a small note-book my "Books Lent." I owe the idea to my old friend H., from whom I have borrowed many a book, and to whom I believe I have lent as many, without the loss of a volume on either side. If all borrowers were like H. and me, records would be superfluous!

Confessions of a
Book-Lender

Some of my friends regard this account-keeping as ungenerous and ignoble; they do not say so, they may even commend it with their lips, but I can see reproach in the turn of their eye as they go out of my study with a book or two. These same reproachful glances, I am shameless enough to confess, have done much to convince me of the utility of H.'s plan. They furnish evidence that the consciousness of the borrower has been penetrated by realization of two wholesome facts: first, that I shall know where the book is, and, second, that he is expected to return it.

Going to my faithful list the other day to see what had become of a volume that had disappeared from my shelves, I found that I had lent it to G. nine months ago. Then I turned back over the pages of the little ledger with some melancholy reflections. The books marked "not returned" represent, it is true, no great value in money; but I have missed every one of them more than once. Some of them are not easily to

be replaced; some, which I valued for their associations, could not be replaced at all. Where shall I find another copy of that delightful story of baseball and Connecticut, "The Plated City," written in his youth by one of the wisest and best of my teachers? On an unlucky day I lent it to a too amiable colleague, who enjoyed it so much that he lent it to a friend of his. (I wish some greater master of malediction than I would devise a curse for the borrower who lends his neighbor's books.) I scarcely hope to replace "Enchanted Ground," the last and best novel of a friend and classmate whose career, full of promise, was early cut short. On the day I lent it my guardian spirit, which keeps me, had deserted his duty; for (I confess it with shame) I forgot to record the loan. I could replace "The New Canterbury Tales," which in an evil hour I lent to a thoughtless miss; but my copy was enriched with a screed of punning verse in the crabbed hand of the donor, my old friend S. Why should I recall the lack of my "Peg Woffington," lent to the more forgetful mother of the forgetful damsel, and the empty spaces in my shelves of plays? Plays for some reason seem to offer the strongest temptation to the unconscienced borrower; I have lost at least nine volumes of them.

As I thumbed over the leaves of my ledger with such thoughts, it occurred to me that the experiences there recorded might be of interest to others of the unhappy race of book-lenders. All of us, like Dogberry, have had losses. Those who don't know how many books they have unintentionally presented to friends may conjecture the extent of their generosity from my experience; those who have kept records may like to compare notes with me. For the benefit of fellow-lenders, then, I made a brief statistical investigation. When you see a favorite volume leaving your library under a friend's arm, you may be interested to consider what are the mathematical probabilities of your ever seeing it again. Not being born systematic, I have often forgotten to enter loans on my list; and some books thus lent, I know, have been *spurlos versenkt*. Such unrecorded loans and losses are not, of course, included in my figures. Probably the proportion of losses to loans would be at least as large as in the cases which are of record. Lenders who keep no records may be sure that their losses are proportionately heavier

than mine; for, not to mention the tonic effect of the mere knowledge of the record upon the borrower's conscience, I know that I have saved some books by dunning delinquent borrowers.

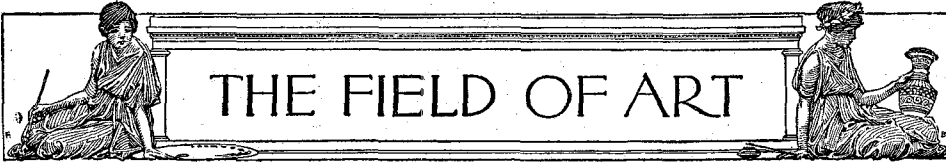
The list shows that in the thirteen years ending last January I lent three hundred books. Of these, fifteen have never been returned, though I made some attempt to reclaim most of them. Reckoned on this basis, then, the lender's chance of losing a cherished volume, if he keeps a list and duns the tardy, is only one in twenty. To be sure, the twentieth book may be the one he is most reluctant to part with; but then he still has the other nineteen. Unfortunately, however, such an inference from the figures is by far too rosy. We should probably be nearer the truth if we based the calculation on the ratio of negligent to punctilious borrowers. (This is a polite way of saying it, you understand. By "negligent" I mean those who resolutely refused, or indefinitely postponed, the returning of books; by "punctilious" I mean those who, with or without pressure, in fact returned them.) To borrowers of proved integrity, of course, I lent a far larger number of books than to the other sort; hence it would be misleading to draw a general conclusion from my ratio of books lost to books lent. The determining factor in the problem, "Shall I see my book again?" is obviously the character of the borrower. My borrowers were a rather selected list; they included students, teachers, college professors, business men, lawyers, ministers, writers, and musicians. Altogether there were eighty-six of them; and of these, twelve failed in at least one instance to return a book. Reckoned on this basis, your chance of losing your book is almost one in seven. But this inference is rather too gloomy; for of the twelve negligent borrowers, several returned some books, though each kept one or more.

Of my borrowing friends, fifty-two were men and thirty-four women; of the delinquents, nine were men and only three women. Apparently it is almost twice as safe to lend a book to a woman as to a man; with the man your chance of loss is better than one in six, with the woman less than one in eleven. Some would say that this is

because women have no real love of books. I offer no explanation; I simply present the facts. Regarding the relative unreliability of borrowers in different professions, my statistics point to a rather startling conclusion, which I deem it inexpedient to disclose. I will merely observe that, contrary to the general impression in academic circles, it is very much safer to lend a book to a student than to a professor; and that the villain of my list, who was responsible for the loss of three books before I stopped his depredations, was a colleague. *Verbum sat!* For the honor of the profession, however, I must add that this particular borrower has since gone into business; perhaps he was in training for it when he appropriated my books. I am told, and I readily believe, that he is making a great success.

Looking over my list of delinquents, I have tried to make some generalizations about them; to discover, if possible, some sign by which the unreliable borrower may be distinguished. But I have completely failed. They are all persons of good repute; some have exceptional ability, several have rare personal charm. Some approximate Lamb's description of the noble and lordly borrower, but others are as far as possible from that type. So far as I can judge, there is no earmark by which the lender may recognize the prospective plunderer of his shelves. We must e'en take our chances.

For of course we would not for the world stop lending books. Churlishly as we may grumble about our losses, we acknowledge to ourselves, at least, that we should risk them again with our eyes open. For the unreliable borrower as such I have nothing but anathemas; on no consideration, however, is the pleasure of introducing a friend to a good book, and talking it over with him, to be foregone. Among my seventy-four righteous borrowers many are of the salt of the earth, and there is also much Attic salt among them. I could not have known them so well had I not lent them books. Among the sinners, too, there is mighty good company; I should hate to have missed knowing them. I will never indorse the jejune and inhuman advice of Polonius; for (here is my last confession) I am too fond of borrowing books.



A garden scene in the purely decorative style of painting. Attributed to an artist of the Sung Dynasty.
Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum.

Chinese Art Through Western Eyes

BY MARY MACALISTER

THE unique position occupied by Chinese art is acknowledged by every one who has any familiarity with different styles of art and their history. For it is the one style that has survived in unbroken succession in the geographical area in which it originated and began to flourish as early probably as any art. If it was slow in reaching the high development of the great T'ang Dynasty, after both Greek and Roman art had risen and fallen, it was also slow in declining. Although critics place the limits of originality and growth at the time of the Mongolian Conquest in the thirteenth century, the brilliant Ming Dynasty arose later, lasting well into the seventeenth century.

And the most ancient forms and motifs, handed down to the present time, possess an astonishing vitality.

To the Western mind the unchanging characteristics of the East have not ceased to be a wonder. The fact that China was shut in upon herself for centuries at a time, and that when changes and upheavals did occur her art was never really destroyed, but merely modified, and sometimes strengthened technically by outside influences, accounts for some of the lively interest in Chinese art. But the changeless, age-old aspects would be only interesting from a historic and strictly archæological standpoint, if it were not for the perennially