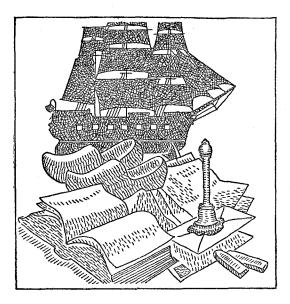
# AS I LIKE IT

## William Lyon Phelps

Mr. Wells as Seen by Mr. Wells . . .
Paul Elmer More on Religion . . . A. A. Milne on
Peace . . . Dr. Canby's Insight . . . Edna Millay and
Other Poets



N reading an Experiment in Autobiography by H. G. Wells, I am impressed for the hundredth time by the difference between a famous man's attitude toward himself and the attitude toward the same object taken by the public. Robert Burns expressed a wish that some power might bestow upon us the gift to see ourselves as others see us; for he very well knew that no man could get that viewpoint without divine inspiration. Tolstoi regretted that he had written Anna Karenina and War and Peace; he wanted the world to listen to his pleas for non-resistance and what not; but the only reason why the world listened at all to his views on religion, morals, economics was because he was the author of Anna Karenina and War and Peace.

The enormous popularity of Eugene O'Neill's comedy Ah, Wilderness! gives little pleasure to the author; it is his play Days Without End that is close to his heart.

Thus Mr. Wells insists he is not a novelist, but a journalist; he scorns art, and ridicules his great contemporaries because they labored so hard over the construction of sentences; he wishes to be regarded as a prophet and a reformer, and is interested only in that World State toward which the whole creation moves. Does it? But the only parts of this Autobiography which are dull are the parts where he talks about the only subject that interests him; and, indeed, no one would care a rap about his economic views or his ideas about the only true education if he had not written The Wheels of Chance, Kipps, Mr.

Polly, Tono-Bungay, Mr. Britling Sees It Through. I would gladly pitch all his Utopian and prophetic books out of the window for one more novel such as he used to write. As some humorist remarked, "Isn't life bad enough without having to look forward to the hell on earth Mr. Wells is preparing for us?"

The Shape of Things to Come bored me unspeakably, and I am glad it has no more relation to reality than a nightmare.

Finally, it is interesting to compare Mr. Wells's hopes for the future on earth (his only hope) with that expressed by the late Paul Cohen-Portheim in his book The Discovery of Europe. This Austrian cosmopolitan artist said the most precious thing in civilization was the European ideal as shown in the best culture of Greece, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, England, etc. It is a civilization made by great writers, painters, musicians, architects, sculptors, playwrights, whose ideal was a union of truth and beauty. This world of intelligence and art where the individual was free to follow the natural development of his talents, a world of freedom in creation, freedom in thought, freedom in expression, is now (according to Mr. Cohen-Portheim) threatened by two powerful and sinister forces-Russian communism and American mass-production.

Quite naturally it is to these two forces, Russian and American, that Mr. Wells looks for the salvation of the world. He believes the two men who can now do the most for that blessed World State (his world state) are Mr.

Roosevelt and Mr. Stalin; and his interviews with them bring his book up to date—they happened in 1934.

To turn to a more congenial portion of the Autobiography, he wrote this book even as some three hundred years ago Burton wrote the vast Anatomy of Melancholy-to relieve his own mind. Burton had suffered so much from melancholy that he became interested in his symptoms; and wrote a noble work on the subject, which, though it did not work the hoped-for cure on himself, has given delight to hundreds of thousands. Mr. Wells has found, as nearly every one alive has found, that it is almost impossible to secure the isolation and privacy necessary for the work he has in hand. He has hoped in vain that he might somehow combine solitude with comfort; and write in peace, uninterrupted by the telephone, the postman, and the innumerable social demands made today on every prominent man. For fame leads into a vicious circle; fame was attained in the first place by writing in solitary obscurity; and the wished-for fame and success, when attained, destroy the conditions necessary for continuance of the best work.

Well, he might profitably consider the only known modern instance of that perpetual isolation—the case of Henrik Ibsen. I have wondered, granted it were today possible for many writers to find that complete freedom from interruption Ibsen enjoyed for so many years, would the number of immortal masterpieces be increased? Henrik Ibsen received a stipend from his native country which enabled him to live in absolute seclusion in Rome, in Munich, and in other European cities. And this was the way he lived. His wife took care of the housekeeping and saw that he had his daily meals and necessary care. He received no visitors, wrote practically no letters, took no part whatever in any form of political or social life, in fact did absolutely nothing but write. He worked at his desk from immediately after breakfast till about five in the afternoon. Then he walked to a café, read the newspapers, from which came many of his plots, walked home again, spent a quiet evening, and went to bed at a regular hour. On the occasions when his wife accompanied him on his walk, she was about two paces behind, so that he did not have to talk. Apparently they were happy together; his comment on her was, "She suits me exactly!"

Every two years he produced a play. When he was an old man, he said it seemed as if his entire life had been just one quiet afternoon. And we know that it gave him no comfort, no happiness. That unspeakably tragic play When We Dead Awaken, his final production, seems to say that any one who has refused to live for the sake of artistic creation, is of all fools in the world, the greatest.

There must be many writers annoyed by constant interruptions, who envy the tranquillity and peace of Ibsen's hours, days, weeks, months, years of creative work. But Mr. Wells could not possibly have lived like that. He is a good fellow, at home in a crowd.

Although he scorns the art of the novelist, and treats with ridicule Henry James, Conrad, Galsworthy, and, at the last, even Arnold Bennett, how amazingly brilliant are the pages devoted to these contemporaries! For the truth is, that when Mr. Wells forgets his zeal as a reformer, forgets economics and biology, and writes about men and women, whether imaginary or real, his true genius—the genius of the creative novelist-shines forth in splendor. The half-dozen pages devoted to Arnold Bennett are magnificent. The two men started out with the utmost sympathy; both were sceptics in religion, both were untrammelled by certain scruples, both wanted fame and money, both wanted to write successful novels. But when these desires reached complete fruition, Wells wanted to reform the world, and Bennett wasn't even interested. He wanted to enjoy the world and he certainly did so with ever-increasing gusto.

All that Mr. Wells saw in the terrific efforts at "style" made by Henry James and Joseph Conrad, was an adult mind given over to piffling trivialities; he never even guessed at the grandeur and nobility of their real aim, and the devotion with which they followed it. I shall never forget a remark made to me one day by Joseph Conrad. "This is the difference between Wells and me. Wells does not love humanity but he thinks he can improve it; I love humanity and I know it is unimprovable." He laughed genially as he said it, which did not lessen its profound significance.

The early part of the Autobiography and indeed all the part before he obtained fame and ease, is enormously interesting, because he is writing a realistic novel with young Wells as the hero; and I think the finest thing that can be said about the character of our Mr. Wells is to speak of the way he treated his father and mother. He is modest about this as he is in most of the things he says about himself. But surely, in taking care of those helpless parents as he did, he lived the good life. I wish he would read Years Are So Long.

One final thing remains to be said. All of the reforming zeal of Mr. Wells, according to his own "scientific" beliefs, must be without value and without meaning. It is the brain and not the mind that determines our actions; there is no such thing as free will; we speak and act only as the physical and chemical combinations in our brains permit. In the last analysis, therefore, we are not actors in the world, we are only spectators. The absolutely logical conclusion of a belief in determinism is "What's the use?"

If Doctor Paul Elmer More should read the passages in Mr. Wells's Autobiography dealing with Plato, I should like to be in the room with him, to hear his comments. Mr. Wells apparently despises classical education; but in the belief that Plato upheld sexual promiscuousness, he thinks much may be learned from the Greek philosopher, and wonders that Christians permit the circulation of his works. It would be

interesting if Doctor More would interpret Mr. Wells's interpretation of Plato.

However that may be, I recommend to Scribnerians that they buy, read, and reread a little volume recently written by Doctor More, called The Sceptical Approach to Religion. This is a work where exact scholarship, deep thought, religious emotion, and clarity of expression are happily commingled. I do not suppose that all my readers share my own intense interest in religion; but every man is a theologian; every man thinks about God and life and death; and here in small compass is the fruit of a long career given to their consideration. Furthermore, while the book is not so easy to read as a detective story, it is written in non-technical terms. I found it thrilling. I was exalted by it. I regard its author as a truly great philosopher and an admirable literary artist. In every sense of the word, this is an important book. It will strengthen the religious faith of all those who have any faith, and it may help to enlighten those who have none. One of its effects will be to make its readers turn once again to Jowett's fine translation of Plato, now available in cheap editions.

A. A. Milne's book Peace with Honour is a happy combination of humor, wit, earnestness, and common sense. The author is universally known as a novelist, dramatist, humorist, and writer of books for children. This is the first time he has applied his talents to further world-peace. I think both pacifists and militarists will learn much from its pages; nobody will agree with what is said on every page, but the disarming (good word) candor of its style makes the book decidedly readable. Whatever doubts there may be about present necessities, the future is surely with Mr. Milne. He points the way the world is going.

It is agreeable to see on the side of peace an English gentleman, well-balanced, common-sensible, and wise. The pacifists whom I wholly distrust are the Communists. For your true pacifist wishes to attain peace by peaceable means; whereas the Communist can attain peace only by force of arms exhibited in bloody revolution, and maintained by military domination. It is somewhat like the kind of peace Tacitus described.

I Remember, by J. Henry Harper, is a charming autobiography, divided into Franklin Square, Personalia, and A Portrait Gallery, wherein are presented the interesting persons and personages with whom Mr. Harper came in contact, writers, artists, actors, politicians; and others. The House of Harper has already had its historian; this is wholly a personal book of delightful reminiscences. There are innumerable good stories of Mark Twain, Woodrow Wilson, Howells, George Harvey (who never forgave Wilson), Bryan, Henry James, Kipling, Theodore N. Vail, Bret Harte, Lew Wallace, Thomas Hardy, Charles A. Dana, Booth and Barrett, Helen Keller (to whom Henry Irving gave a pair of eyeglasses!), Oscar Wilde, and others. I enjoyed this book so much I hate to mention its sinsbut there are such, both of omission and commission. The former is shown in the absence of an index; the latter in many typographical errors and in one gorgeous bloomer about Walter Scott.

But I think every reader will love the book and its author. He says "I have lived and I have enjoyed life,"

Brinkley Manor, by the one and only P. G. Wodehouse, needs only one remark to ensure its being read. Jeeves is in it.

Wine From These Grapes by Edna St. Vincent Millay, the new volume of her poems, fully sustains her great and ever-growing fame. While I think it is a disservice to her to compare her with Shakespeare—as some reviewers have done-I do not see how her numerous admirers can feel anything but a glow of satisfaction as they read this book. It is easier to gain a reputation than to keep it; some of her previous work has placed her so high among contemporary poets that anything she publishes is judged by a much more severe test than would be applied to the work of any new poet. Let me say then, that these poems, incandescent with thought and feeling, are in their language and music all that I hoped they would be. Her most dangerous rival is her previous work; and perhaps I can express no higher praise than to say that Wine From These Grapes is worthy of herself.

The Age of Confidence, by Doctor Henry S. Canby, is a delectable combination of autobiography and social history. Looking back on Delaware days in the nineties and eighties (he was graduated from Yale in 1899) the author recalls the atmosphere of security which enveloped the good American homes of that period. The people he knew lived in houses and did not as a rule question the authority of parents; who were, however, not tyrants, but who knew more about life and the world than their children; which fact, combined with intense and sincere affection on both sides, worked for harmony and happiness.

The author is a fair-minded man, with a judicial and kindly temperament. The fact that all children, when they grow up, become judges of their parents, does not always lessen filial tenderness; indeed, the influence of parents is often stronger after they have left the planet. Doctor Canby has no desire to put back the clock; he weighs both loss and gain in what is called progress; and merely reminds us of certain values that perhaps ought not to be wholly lost.

Furthermore he looks back on a happy childhood with clear-sighted vision, and apparently without illusions. This is a good book, written with insight.

The illustrations are admirable—how solid and secure seem those houses!

The Reason for Living by Doctor Robert Russell Wicks, of Princeton, helps to explain his success as a preacher and teacher of religion in a great university. This is a clear-headed, unpretentious, informal, but profoundly sincere discussion of religious faith and life. The book will be especially welcomed by university audiences.

The Copeland Translations, by Professor Charles Townsend Copeland of Harvard, is an agreeable additional volume to the highly successful Copeland Reader which appeared a few years ago. These are Mr. Copeland's favorite passages in English translation from foreign authors. It is a whole foreign library in one volume.

Sails Over Ice, by Captain "Bob" Bartlett, is one of the best books of northern exploration. It is a succession of thrilling incidents told with dramatic fervor and there are passages that are beautiful in their natural eloquence. The illustrations are a valuable addition to the text.

Riders of the Sky, by Leighton Brewer, is a poem of 163 pages dealing with airplane service in the World War. When I say poem, I use the word advisedly because this is genuine poetry. The descriptions are often beautiful and the narrative of individual combats full of spirit. It is a rather curious thing in these days to read a book of the Great War which has hardly a touch of disillusion or cynicism. Mr. Brewer himself served as an aviator, and while many of the incidents in the poem are imaginary, they are all based on intimate experience. Whatever glory still remains to war is probably found in the individual duels in the air. No one, I think, who takes up this book can fail to read it through, as the narrative is sustained in interest from first page to last.

Here is a very interesting letter from the American poet Bernice Kenyon, who gives me information of great interest:

About your eat-ate-eaten question in the November Scribner's, which has just arrived —I recall a Mother Goose rhyme which seems to require your father's pronunciation of "eat" used as the past tense:

Tom, Tom, the piper's son
Stole a pig and away he run;
The pig was eat,
And Tom was beat,
And Tom ran howling down the street.

I remember that this *eat* used to bother me very much when I was a child, though the use of *run* didn't disturb me at all because so many people used it as a past tense.

#### ANTHONY ADVERSE CLUB

Mrs. M. S. Davis, Librarian of the Tarrant County Free Library of Grapevine, Texas, writes me that Mrs. Madora Culberson of Grapevine has finished reading aloud the whole of the novel to her family. She belongs. I am interested to see that in the coming screen version of *Anthony Adverse* (what a job in condensation) the leading part will be taken by the admirable Leslie Howard.

Mary Kinch, R.N., of Grofton, Mass., read the work aloud to her patient, Mrs. H. M. D., and thereby qualifies.

I am grateful to Miss Lydia B. Wilson of Allegan, Mich., for sending me the following extract from *The Kala-*

mazoo Gazette of September 16, which I am sure my readers will enjoy.

### BRADY WOMAN HOLDS READING CHAMPIONSHIP

Grandma Sadie Ettinger of Brady claims to hold the readin' championship of that township. She claims to have read Anthony Adverse straight through without skippin' a word in the third attempt, in two hours and thirty-four minutes. This comes close to being the world's record, it is claimed. Grandma Ettinger, who is eighty-two, reads without glasses and without understandin' most of the time

#### THE FANO CLUB

The membership grows apace. On August 25, Miss Lucy R. Gorham of Westport, Conn., saw the picture, and writes that Sig. Antonelli was very kind and helpful. On August 31, Mrs. W. B. Morris of St. Joseph, Mo., joined; on September 3, Miss Anita Bachiochi of Springfield, Mass., records her appreciation of Sig. Antonelli's kindness; on September 13, Susan M. Judge and Harold E. Judge of Sioux Falls, S. D., were enrolled as active members; on September 29, Miss Bertha Blum of New Haven, Conn., enters with an appropriate quotation from Browning; on October 12, Columbus Day, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Pieretti, of Centerbrook, Conn., were inspired by the painting. And here is a fact of interest to members of the Club. Mr. Pieretti writes:

I obtained my early education in Fano about thirty-five years ago, and left Italy for Connecticut in 1903. Returned to Fano for a short visit with my relatives.

He returned to America on the Rex, to resume the active management of the firm of Pieretti Brothers in Centerbrook.

And here is a letter, which will interest not only Fanians, but all who intend to travel in Italy—and who does not? It comes from Virginia Livingston Hunt, of Washington, D. C.:

Florence, Sept. 21.
I send this card as a proof of my eligibility to membership in the Fano Club! I

and my mother motored through that charming little town three days ago and lunched there at the Lido Hotel, overlooking the dancing Adriatic. Then we continued our way to Perugia, passing Gubbio en route. May I suggest to you, that if you do not already know that fascinating ancient little town you add it to your next Italian itinerary? It is little changed since the Middle Ages and its grassgrown Piazza bespeaks a peace, even unknown to your beloved Fano. The drive from Gubbio to Perugia is, to my mind, one of the most beautiful in Italy, and if one is in the vicinity on May 15, one can attend the delightful and amusing festival of the "Ceri," the origin of which is lost in antiquity.

### From Mrs. George H. Woodruff, of Pasadena, Calif.:

Thirty-three years ago, almost the first thing I did in my new home, I subscribed for Scribner's Magazine and have never missed a month since. I could not keep the home without it. I do not always agree with or approve of all the articles or the fiction but I am deeply loyal to you all and appreciate the high standard you have maintained all these years.

I feel I am entitled to a membership in the Anthony Adverse Club since I have read it through twice, once hurriedly, once painstakingly.

Alas, one might read the book through fifty times and yet not be eligible for membership; though it is certainly an achievement to have read it twice. It must be read *aloud* to one person.

Here is an excerpt from a letter illustrating the spirit of Christmas as celebrated in England. It is sent to me from London by DeWitt C. Barlow of New York City:

It was told me [the writer of the letter] by one of the Aquitania deck stewards, quite unaware of its merit.

"We shall not be home for Christmas this year, Sir, that's the bad part. We always make a great day of Christmas at home, you know; all the children about and the grandchildren. The next day is Boxing Day.

"When I was a little fellow my mother used to boil a plum pudding in the wash boiler. A great big one it was. First she would scour it out and then she would put the pudding in to boil. It would take twenty-four hours. It was big as a football. Then, if my father's ship was in, he would be home, and he would rig up a little block and tackle and

fasten it to the roof beam, and then put a sling around the pudding, and we kids would heave on the line and hoist the pudding out, singing a sea chantey. When it was out my mother would pour scalding brandy on it and light it, and it would burn with a blue flame."

From Howard James Conn, of New Haven, Conn.:

There was one detail in Miss Cornell's superb production of The Barretts of Wimpole Street about which I should like to ask you. When Mr. Rathbone read the poem in the first act and the letter from Elizabeth's father in the third act, I noted that he held the book and the paper at arm's length. I understood you to say in lectures that because of a difference in the focus of his two eyes Robert Browning read with one eye closed and with the printed page held close to his face. Could it be that this was a peculiarity which Browning did not have in his younger days? Or could he have read with the other eye if he had held a book at considerable distance? Or do you suppose it was a detail which was not reproduced by Miss Cornell's company because of the disturbing note which such an unusual gesture would have produced on the

It is quite true that Browning did all his reading with one eye, holding the page close to his face. He never wore glasses.

I had a most interesting conversation recently with Edward S. Martin, "who needs no introduction" to my readers. The following information will be of interest to those who founded Time, The New Yorker, Fortune, Esquire, The American Spectator, and other periodicals born in the twentieth century. Mr. Mitchell founded Life with a total capital of eleven thousand dollars, ten of which he contributed himself, and the other one he got from a friend. He made two million dollars out of it.

A review in *The New York Times Book Review* says that Ezra Pound "has been one of the most important influences upon the modern poets." I have been wondering what was the matter with them.

#### BOOKS DISCUSSED IN THIS ARTICLE, WITH NAMES OF AUTHORS AND PUBLISHERS

Experiment in Autobiography, by H. G. Wells. Macmillan. \$4.

The Sceptical Approach to Religion, by Paul Elmer More. Princeton. \$2.

Peace with Honour, by A. A. Milne. E. P. Dutton. \$2.

I Remember, by J. Henry Harper. Harpers. \$3.

Brinkley Manor, by P. G. Wodehouse. Little, Brown. \$2.

The Reason for Living, by Robert Russell Wicks. Scribners. \$2.

Sails Over Ice, by Captain "Bob" Bartlett. Scribners. \$3.

The Copeland Translations, by Charles Townsend Copeland. Scribners. \$5.

Riders of the Sky, by Leighton Brewer. Houghton-Mifflin. \$2.50.

Wine from These Grapes, by Edna St. Vincent Millay. Harpers. \$2.

The Age of Confidence, by Henry S. Canby. Fairar & Rinehart, \$2.50.

## Brain-Testers IV



Brain

How many of the How many of these questions can you answer?



HIS group of questions continues the series which for the past three months we have been printing for their stimulating quality and entertainment value. They are taken from a College Achievement Test used in a study, conducted by the Carnegie Foundation, of the relationship of secondary to higher education. They are used here by permission of the Co-operative Test Service. Answers appear on one of the advertising pages which follow.

Many requests for reprints of the questions have come in from those who wish to use them for groups or parties. Shall we continue to print the questions? What is the verdict of the readers?

Indicate which of the numbered phrases in the left-hand column below best applies to each of the phrases in the right-hand column. Do this by placing the appropriate number in the parenthesis to the right of the phrase.

| 3. Wa<br>4. Chr<br>5. Eleg<br>6. Wo<br>7. As                 | Penseroso His Blindness Ilt Whitman istmas Carol gy in a Country thuchyard ordsworth You Like It gar Allan Poe | "They<br>wait"<br>"When<br>bloom<br>"God I<br>"Full m                          | lilacs last in the dooryard<br>med''<br>bless us every one''<br>nany a gem of purest ray serene''<br>a beauteous evening calm and   | ( | )     |
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| <ol> <li>Sin,</li> </ol>                                     | uble-reed instrum<br>gle-reed instrume<br>(ther of the abov  | ents   | Bassoon<br>Clarinet<br>English horn (Cor anglais)<br>Flute<br>French horn<br>Oboe<br>Piccolo<br>Saxaphone   |   |       |

In the following questions, indicate which of the several responses best completes the given statement. Do this by placing the number of the preferred response in the parenthesis to the right of the statement.

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|------------|---|----|----|
| 6.         | According to the Gospels, Jesus regarded his mission as bring-  |    |    |
|            | ing 1. a release from the bondage of the Jewish law. 2. a national Jewish revolt against Rome. 3. the overthrow of the Pharisees. 4. the fulfillment of the Jewish law.   | (  | )  |
| 7.         | It was said of the 1. Persians. 2. Spartans. 3. Athenians. 4. Milesians that "they cultivated beauty without extravagance and knowledge without effeminacy."  | (  | )  |
| 8.         | According to Aristotle, happiness is 1. a settled state of the soul. 2. the complete functioning of the senses. 3. the attainment of an honored position in one's group. 4. an activity in accordance with man's pe- culiar nature. | (  | )  |
| 9.         | Mahatma Ghandi is a 1. Buddhist saint. 2. President of Calcutta University. 3. Indian nationalist. 4. Governor of Bengal.   |    | )  |
| 10.        | Rembrandt's work is distinguished for its 1. rich color. 2. animation. 3. strong contrasts of light and dark. 4. absence of human feeling.  | (  | )  |
| 11.        | Intracellular digestion is the only method of digestion in 1. mammals. 2. cœlenterates. 3. earthworms. 4. amæbæ.  | (  | )  |
| 12.        | The periodic law of the elements was enunciated about 1. 1810. 2. 1840. 3. 1870. 4. 1900.   | (  | )  |
| 13.        | At the end of the eighteenth century the chief source of architectural inspiration for public buildings in this country was 1. classic. 2. Gothic. 3. Queen Anne style. 4. the new conditions of life in America.                   | (  | )  |
| 14.        | Cement and concrete have been in common use as building materials for about 1. 75 years. 2. 150 years. 3. 225 years. 4. 300 years.  | (  | )  |
| 15.        | Most of the Canterbury Pilgrims of Chaucer represent 1. the nobility. 2. the lower classes. 3. the clergy. 4. the professions.  | (  | )  |
| 16.        | The principle of the conservation of energy grew out of experiments with  1. magnetism. 2. chemical analysis. 3. the production of heat. 4. radium.   | (  | )  |
| 17.        | A judge charges the jury as to 1. matters of fact. 2. legal responsibility of counsel. 3. what testimony to believe. 4. the law in question.  | (  | )  |
| In<br>pare | the following, if the statement is true, place a plus sign in in thesis (+); if false, a zero (O).  | tŀ | ne |
| 18.        | The functioning of the autonomic nervous system is not affected by the functioning of the central nervous system.   |    | )  |
| 19.        | Les chaises sont des objets presques inutiles.  |    | )  |
| 20.        | Inland regions generally have colder winters and hotter summers than coastal regions of similar latitude.   | (  | )  |
| 21.        | In most American states a child born out of wedlock can be legitimized by the subsequent marriage of its parents.   |    | )  |
| 22.        | Bondholders must be paid their interest before the preferred stockholders receive any dividends.  |    | )  |
| 23.        | Chekhov's plays reflect the futility and aimlessness of the upper classes in pre-revolutionary Russia.  | (  | )  |
| 24.        | The fugue was developed as a definite musical form before the sonata.   | (  | )  |
| 25.        | If a line is parallel to a plane, it is parallel to any line in the plane.  | (  | )  |

plane.