

### Carper.

You have seen him—a man of down-cast visage, in which there is no place for a bright smile—whose face reflects his inmost soul, in which dwells an eternal dissatisfaction—demon—another devil worse than himself—whom he cherishes and nurtures, feeding him with every species of uncomfortable foreboding, wishes for things to be different, and all manner of fault-finding.

He began by thinking that the world might be better—that the state of affairs might be improved. He went a little further and thought he might be the agent by which such improvement might be brought about. Perhaps, at first, he made a faint struggle to be jolly—to break down the wall that seemed to be growing up round his heart, and let a little of the light of life stream in. But it was his nature, and his endeavours were vain. That nature assisted the demon at work—helped him to build his walls, and swept and garnished the dark tenement, and placed therein food for the demon's voracity. After that there was no more attempt to turn him out; had there been, it would not have been successful. You can train a young tree—the sapling is pliable; you can keep out a demon—for you can shut the door; but you cannot straighten a gnarled old trunk, you cannot eject a demon when once he occupies—he is a life tenant!

What a nuisance is such a man in his family—in the world at large, and especially in the world of College! Commencing with the authorities and ending with the College janitor, no one does what is right. Take him in a society, he is ever on the watch for something that needs correction; nothing pleases him. In a business meeting he opposes every measure, good or bad—criticises the management, and all his fault-finders are with minor matters, unimportant points that go for nothing. Sometimes it seems to be a spirit of patronage that possesses him—at others a spirit of spite. Explain away an objection, he meets it with another; reason away a charge, the very reason provides him with a second. He will shift his ground—deny a proposition one moment, admit it the next—if only he can find some fault somewhere. Conviction dawns not upon him; his intellectual being is too blinded to admit of any ray of light striking upon his soul. Is he on a Committee? Happy are ye if ye belong not to it, for verily is a Committee-man's life made a burden to him by one of these Carpers. How much better it would be if the President used a blue handkerchief at the meetings instead of a white one, and if the Secretary would have the minute-book bound in pink black ink instead of purple! Then, too, why should not the other members do more or do less? Does a man work? to the Carper he is a busybody. Does he keep himself quiet? he is lazy and good for nothing. What is done, is done wrong; what is not done, ought to be done. There seems to be a notion in his mind that all the labour lies upon his own shoulders,—a mistaken idea, since, in truth, your first-class Carper does no work at all!

But he is most unbearable when he is in a patronizing mood. "Ye poor unhappy mortals," as he would say, "ye are all wrong. Nothing ye can do can possibly be right! Such and such is the correct way. Thus and thus only, in my way, can you hope to attain anything like perfection." Ah, my fault-finding friend, yours, of all ways, is likely to be the wrong one, as being yourself a mere bag of words and not a man of action.

But if in a society he thus carries on his trade of carping, he is infinitely worse as a promoter of sports and the like. In the Cricket and Foot-ball Clubs, and on an Athletic Committee, his presence is no aid. He belongs to it but to find some place to pick a hole. If the place be a weak one, so much the better. He will pick his hole in it, but will he help to darn it? If there be no weak spot, why his imagination goes a long way, like that of the Irishman's horse. He will be in favour of changing some rule, supplying some new-fangled notion. Or he will complain that this or that man ought to be on the team, and this or that one put off. In fact, all that are on are failures—all that are off ought to be on. Let a change be made, he is not satisfied. A new man is not to be depended on, he will say. He may run well, but plays badly, or plays well and runs badly. The team disgraced the College because their belts were not straight at that last match against the town; or Brown had a hole in his cap; Smith wore breeches in stead of knickerbockers; Robinson didn't kick a goal, or Jones missed a catch, which *he* would'nt have done in their place.

Then, after the Committee have expended their energies upon a pitch, or in laying out a course, and think they have arrived at something that will do, along comes Mr. Carper and sees a small

bare place in the pitch, or a blade of grass too long, and he will see a hundred places that would have done better. And why see it laid in that precise direction? The slightest angle would free it from an imaginary sunbeam or breeze. He wouldn't have turfed it, but have had it sown—or if it were sown it ought to have been turfed, certainly. He wouldn't have and hasn't done anything towards it at all! He will say it wants rolling, but don't ask him to lend a hand!—Just came for a minute to look at it!—and find fault with others' labour—"Can't stop a second, &c."

He will discover that the cross-bar of the foot-ball goals are the eighth of an inch too high or too low; that the ground is too long or too short by half a yard; that there is something wrong with the ball; it is a couple of grains heavier or lighter than it ought to be, and a variety of other important (?) errors. Then, as to the rules, they ought to be altered in some way or other; they are entirely wrong, and so would any others you might find for him.

But of all the positions in which you find him the Carper is, perhaps, worst on an Editorial Committee. How he can revel in fault-finding—the paper did not appear early enough—the proof-reading was badly done—the wrong articles got into the paper! The poetry was bad—the paper was not properly delivered—advertisements were put in that ought not to have been. He would have done this, that, or the other thing differently. True, he was not there to do it or see it done; but then if he had been, how different it would have been! He never pauses to reflect whether the change would have been for the worse. That idea never strikes him. He never thinks that, as his place to share the labour. No, he has appointed himself Carper-in-chief—and does his work well. He can criticise the contributions of others, if he does not contribute himself; he can abuse the carelessness of the proof-reading, though he may never be on hand to do it better.

Humanity is assailed with many temptations, and is withal long-suffering. But a certain bound there is to all endurance. His fellows will often turn upon Carper, in which case he will consider himself as an injured innocent, too good for this world's ingratitude. His comrades are similarly minded, if only he might be removed to another! It is the lot of man to be afflicted, and it is his duty to bear his afflictions with patience; but there are some under which he cannot but be restive. It is the special duty of the Carper to keep us from being satisfied with ourselves and what we do and what we say. All things have their uses, and who shall say that this is not his,—to prevent other men from vain glory? But if that be his use, at least in fulfilling it he does as much harm as may be. No one can look at the world through rose-coloured spectacles while he is by. Under his interpretation everything is wrong. The light which he throws upon men and matters is sickly in its glare, giving all that it illumines an unhealthy, bilious appearance.

There seems no cure for them. There is only one cure—viz: to set to work and do, to act and discover the difficulties that beset action, and so to discover their own imperfections and compare them with those of others. It is wonderful how much is gained by comparison. Take one's own achievements and compare them with those of others. It is like applying the wrong end of a telescope to an object. How small and insignificant appear our own misfortunes when compared with others that are greater! If one of your Carpers could be made really and honestly a man of action, his carping would cease. Men who work are those who least find fault. But, sad to say, we must have a certain number of these dissatisfied wretches to worry out our lives; sometimes, thank fortune, to amuse us by the very depth of their stupidity and insufferable usurpation of the office of corrector where there seems naught to require correction. A bow-string and a sack is their just due! So it would seem, and so only might a confirmed Carper be led to think over the error of his ways, and perhaps he might then only be removed to another sphere of carping! Some men will find fault with heaven—if they ever get there.

We all have a tendency to find fault, especially with what does not belong to us or has not been done by us. There is in most of us an idea that self is the only person in the universe who knows or does what is right. It is just this tendency and self-conceit which combine to make one that awful instrument of torture, a Carper. We need not become so, but it requires care to prevent it, and with so many examples before us, and with the loathing in which we hold such characters, there is a powerful inducement in favour of our not becoming so.

In a college such men should be marked men. In no case should they be put on a committee, or allowed to have more than ordinary say in matters of college interest. How smoothly does