

Synonyms: A Game for Rainy Days

BY ONE OF THE GIRLS

There were five of us, all cousins, spending our summer vacation at Uncle Sam's.

The weather had been glorious and we had been having glorious times, boating on the river, picnicing in the woods, helping churn the butter, and Nell and Beth, the two bravest of us, even going so far as to drive the cows home at night. We told Uncle Sam and Aunt Bess every morning that we should like to live on a farm all our lives.

"But life isn't all summer weather," Aunt Bess would say, a little soberly, "and perhaps you would find the old farm house rather dull if you were shut up in it from one week's end to another."

One morning we awoke to find it raining. Not a gentle May-day shower, but a hard, steady pour. Nell came down the stairs singing

"'Tis rainy weather, my darling,
Time's waves they heavily run."

and we looked at one another dubiously.

"What shall we do?" asked Grace.

"Go fishing," responds Jack with enthusiasm.

But we girls couldn't see anything amusing in standing out in a pouring rain, waiting for some poor, deluded little fish to "catch on" as Jack expressed it. And finally as day after day went by and the storm continued, the ardor of the boys was somewhat dampened, and they applied to us for something absolutely new and entertaining.

We had played authors and cribbage and dominoes, and finally had written letters to everyone we could think of, including Uncle Will, who must have been surprised to receive such a budget of letters from that little out-of-the-way place called Field's Corner.

"Girls," said Nell, who for some time had been in a brown study, "I have thought of something. I have invented a game and you must all help me to get it ready. We won't show it to the boys until it is finished."

Jack and Tom begged to share our secret, but Nell said "no," and we meekly echoed her decision.

All the forenoon we were closeted in Aunt Bessie's little library, each of us furnished with blank cards, pens and red and black ink. A big dictionary and Soule's "English Synonyms" we divided between us.

Before dinner all was completed, and although the boys laughed at us a little at first, and told Nell she could now get a patent on her invention, it was so plainly an infringement on the old-fashioned game of authors, yet they finally settled down to the enjoyment of it with great zest, and we noticed for several days afterwards a great improvement in their use of the English language. This, Nell affirmed, was all the income she expected to get from her invention, and she was more than satisfied.

We had written on each card some word in common usage, at the top in red ink. Below it were three synonyms of the word in black ink. Four cards bearing the same synonyms with different words at the top in red ink constituted a set or book, just as in authors, the name of a writer and three of his works make up a set.

We shuffled the cards, divided them among

the players until all were used, then began to call from others those cards which we needed to make up our sets, a failure to call upon the one who held the desired card causing the player to lose her turn.

Of course the one who succeeded in collecting the greatest number of sets won the game. Here is a specimen of one of the cards: *Clever, Shrewd, Keen, Sagacious.*

The next card of the set had the word *Shrewd* written in red ink, and the remaining three, *clever, keen, sagacious*, in black ink, and so on.

The complete set must have each word in red ink, and of course we called only for the red lined words when we already held one of the words of which it was a synonym.

You see it was as Jack said, copied from the game of authors, but it was a pleasant change from that time-honored game, and we played it not only on that particular afternoon, but on many rainy days afterward. When we went back to school in the fall we noticed that it was much easier to write our compositions than it had been before, for our familiarity with Nell's game of words had greatly enlarged our vocabulary, and if we could not always think of just the word we wanted to use, almost instantly we recalled some other word that had the same meaning; a pleasant and helpful recollection of our rainy days at Uncle Sam's. —[Cottage Hearth.

Bill Nye on the Photograph.

No doubt the photograph habit, when once formed, is one of the most baneful, and productive of the most intense suffering in after years of any with which we are familiar. Sometimes it seems to me that my whole life has been one long abject apology for photographs that I have shed abroad throughout a distracted country.

Man passes through seven distinct stages of being photographed, each one exceeding all previous efforts in that line.

First, he is photographed as a prattling bald-headed baby, absolutely destitute of eyes, but making up for this deficiency by a wealth of mouth that would make a negro minstrel green with envy. We often wonder what has given the average photographer that wild, hunted look about the eyes and that joyless sag about the knees. The chemicals and the in-door life alone have not done all this. It is the great nerve tension and mental strain used in trying to photograph a squirming and dark red child with white eyes, in such a manner as to please its parents.

An old-fashioned dollar-store album, with cerebro-spinal meningitis, and filled with pictures of half-suffocated children in heavenly-white starched white dresses, is the first thing we seek on entering a home, and the last thing from which we reluctantly part.

The second stage on the downward road is the photograph of the boy with the fresh-cropped hair, and in which the stiff and protuberant thumb takes a leading part.

Then comes the portrait of the lad with strongly marked freckles and a look of hopeless melancholy. With the aid of a detective agency I have succeeded in running down and destroying several of these pictures which were attributed to me.

Next comes the young man 21 years of age,

with his front hair plastered down over his tender throbbing dome of thought. He does not care so much about the expression on the mobile features, so long as his left hand, with the new ring on it, shows distinctly, and the string of jingling, jangling charms on his watch chain, including the cute little basket cut out of a peach stone, stand out well in the foreground. If the young man would stop to think for a moment that some day he may become eminent and ashamed of himself, he would hesitate about doing this. Soon after, he has a tin type taken, in which a young lady sits in the alleged grass, while he stands behind her with his hand lightly touching her shoulder, as though he might be feeling of the thrilling circumference of a buzz-saw. He carries this picture in his pocket for months, and looks at it whenever he may be unobserved.

Then, all at once he discovers that the young lady's hair is not done up that way any more, and that her hat doesn't seem to fit her. He then, in a fickle moment, has another tin-type made in which another young lady, with more recent hat and later coiffure, is discovered holding his hand in her lap.

This thing continues till one day he comes into the studio with his wife and tries to see how many children can be photographed on one negative by holding one on each knee and using the older ones as a background.

The last stage in his eventful career, the old gentleman allows himself to be photographed, because he is afraid he may not live through another long, hard winter, and the boys would like a picture of him while he is able to climb the dark, narrow stair which leads to the artist's room.

Sadly the thought comes back to you in after years, when his grave is green in the quiet valley, and the worn and weary hands that have toiled for you are forever at rest; how patiently he submitted while his daughters pinned the clean, stiff, agonizing, white collar about his neck and brushed the little flakes of "dander" from the velvet collar of his best coat; how he toiled up the long, dark, lonesome stairs, not with the egotism of half a century ago, but with the light of anticipated rest at last in his eye; obediently as he would go to the dingy law office to have his will drawn, he meekly leaves the outlines of his kind old face for those he loved and for whom he so long labored.

It is a picture at which the thoughtless may smile, but it is full of pathos, and eloquent for those who knew him best. His attitude is stiff and his coat hunches up in the back, but his kind old heart asserts itself through the gentle eyes, and when he has gone away at last we do not criticise the picture any more, but beyond the old coat that hunches up in the back, and that lasted him so long, we read the history of a noble life.

Silently the old finger-marked album, lying so unostentatiously on the gouty centre table, points out the mill-stones from infancy to age, and back of the mistakes of the struggling photographer is portrayed the laughter and the tears, the joy and the grief, the dimples and the gray hairs of one man's life-time.

Have the courage to speak your mind when it is necessary you should do so, and to hold your tongue when it is prudent to do so.