

seems to be no hard-and-fast line. Swearing is an unqualified sin of speech; slang is a sin diluted, but it is all perversity begotten of the depths.

As to the profuse and ubiquitous use of the latter, it is not difficult to assign causes, however impossible to ascertain the origin. Reflecting on its growth, one sees that one of the early causes must have been the ignorance both of the bourgeois and the gentleman. Meagreness of vocabulary, and its consequent inarticulateness, forced the untutored to express themselves in words coined for the occasion, and suggested by the whim of the moment.

Indeed, the latter principle is very evident still, and we constantly add words more or less spurious to the colloquial language, so that in time these even creep into standard dictionaries. This, of course, is often really a valuable principle, for thus far makers of dictionaries have safeguarded us admirably.

It is, then, pretty safe to conclude that, had early standards of education been of a high level, and equally so amongst all classes, the use of slang would probably have been unknown. In this connection, slang, of course, includes grammatical errors and wrong selection. Indeed, the whole waste-heap might as well be rolled together—of such height, we suppose, that an Archimedes could not calculate it—to await the coming of the consuming fires that all "wordists" and literary people generally hope some day will descend upon it.

All will agree that the best antidote for this intellectual poisoning is to be found in the reading and memorizing of pure English—John Ruskin, Lord Macaulay, Lord Morley, Lord Rosebery (Lordly sounding group, but thus much the Lords have accomplished)—any of these authors can be recommended. One's mind cannot be too well saturated with the prose of language-artists.

Thus much in a limited survey. Let us add one single thought: Language is a most inscrutable criterion! If

you wish to be classed among the commonplace and the nonentities of the human family, use slang and spurious English. This will keep you there as certainly as a foot-square label painted red. If, on the other hand, you care to rank yourself with the only aristocracy that this nation possesses, or ever can possess—the aristocracy of culture—then, be studiously careful to keep your speech pure. No need to elaborate. Every one can be classified to a considerable extent by five short minutes of conversation.

True, the tendency of the century is towards more widespread use of indifferently language, with commercialism to thank for it, partly; but not all of us need follow, and none of us deliberately.

Something of an effort required, of course—a sort of Alpine climbing—but the survey from the summit is, here, too, a vision worth the toil—to all, perhaps, but 'Arry, of our mutual acquaintance, and 'E'll be blown if 'e'll bother, bah jove! Let it console the purist that 'Arry's strength lies in numbers, and there only.

Our English Letter.

V.

SOME DEVONSHIRE CHARACTER SKETCHES.

The weather all over England has been more or less of an uncertain type, and even down here in sunny Devon, brightest gleams of sunshine have been too speedily chased away by sudden gusts of wind and unwelcome downpours of rain to make feasible the excursions I had planned to enjoy, and tell you about afterwards. Meanwhile, as I am in close proximity to the Moorlands of which Eden Philpotts writes of graphically and so understandingly (as only those can write who know by personal experience the people and scenes which their pens portray), I have been reading two or three of his latest works, which are so vivid in their descrip-

tions of life and character that I feel impelled to make a few extracts for my column in "The Farmer's Advocate." Those of you who live in towns where there is a public library might ask for "The Mother," "The River," "The Whirlwind," in all of which are pen-pictures of what one knows to be real life, though given under the guise of fiction. It is perhaps difficult for us in Canada, where everything is marching onward with rapid strides, everything shaping itself into fuller developments, aided by the marvellous discoveries of the age in which we live, to realize the unchanged conditions under which so many spend their lives in the Motherland. As it was with their forbears, so, in many of the rural districts, is it with them now. "Us don't want any of your newfangled ways; what was good enough for them as is gone, is good enough for we." And it is of such as these, and of their unique and picturesque surroundings, that even Philpotts writes so charmingly. He evidently knows every foot of the land, every river and stream, every bird and beast, every tree, shrub and flower, every legend of the past, as well as, through frequent intercourse with them, the men and women of whom he tells us. At any rate, so well he knows their types, their quaint utterances, their humor, their blunt manner of speech, their religious views, often tinged by a fatalism of which they are probably unconscious, that each of his characters is as real as if photographed.

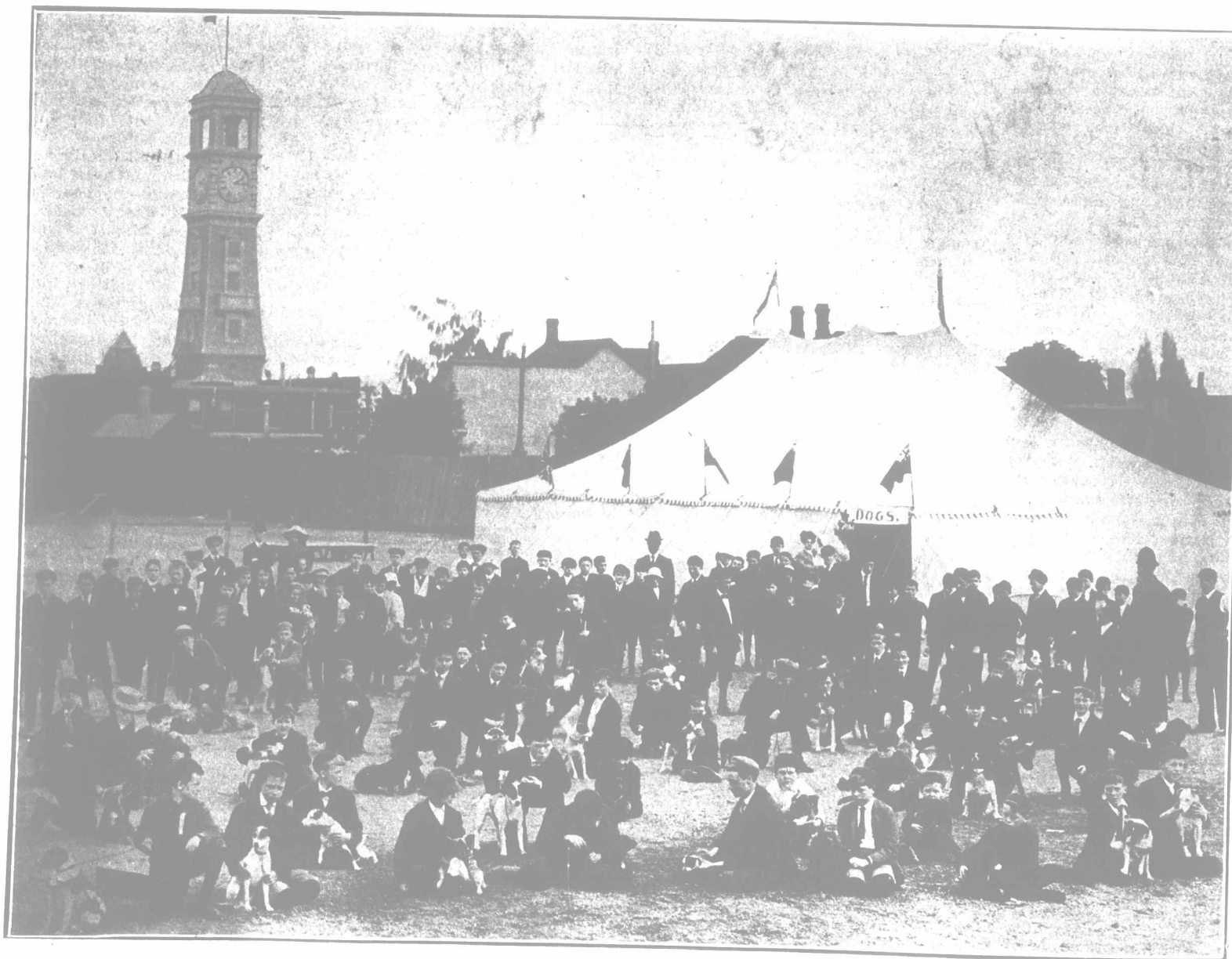
Readers of his books may sometimes be startled at the "calling of a spade, a spade," by the plain-spoken references to incidents which are usually presented in print by names more euphoniously veiled, but, had our author followed this method, it would have been at a sacrifice of truth to conventionalism, and his pen-pictures of Moorland Devon would have been lacking in the vividness which is their peculiar charm.

"A feature of Devon," our writer tells us, "are those cultivated penin-

sulas of land that thrust forward up the surrounding coombs, and point into Dartmoor's bosom. The foothills of this great tableland are fledged with forests and rich with fertile earth, but here and there, greatly daring, the farms have fought upward and reclaimed a little of the actual desolation. Thus was Ruddyford driven like a wedge into that stony wilderness beneath the northwestern ramparts of the great moor." And this is Ruddyford Farm, introduced to us in the story of "The Whirlwind." But it is less to the plot of the story itself than to the characteristics of the men and women who live in its pages, that one feels oneself drawn. Perhaps one might have preferred that the big Daniel Brendon, with his many fine and even lovable qualities, had been less stern and unbending in his interpretation of what a Christian should be; and that Sarah Jane, with her keen wit, outspoken ways and loving heart, had followed less blindly a more Pagan interpretation of hers; but if so, we should probably have missed many fine passages of pathos, as well as humor, both of which are to be met with in nearly every chapter of the books written by Mr. Philpotts.

Tabitha Prout, the housekeeper at Ruddyford Farm, is by no means as insignificant a person as the men-folk, who depend upon her for so many of their creature comforts, thought fit to consider her, probably believing that the belittling of the weaker added something to the dignity of the stronger sex. But it is thus even her brother, honest old John Prout, the Farm's overseer, describes Tabitha:

"There is only one female in this house, and you can hardly say she's a woman. Merely a voice, and a pair of hands, and a pair of eyes, and a few bones tied up in a petticoat; my sister Tabitha—as good a soul as ever fretted a houseful of males. 'Bachelor's hall,' they call this place down to Lydford. And so 'tis, for only the plowman, Joe Tapson, have ever been married,



Broadview Fall Fair—Some of the Prize Dogs.