

LANGUAGE THAT NEEDS A REST.



OWARDS the middle of the night I was awakened by a disturbance in the library. It did not seem to be the noise of burglars. It was more like the murmuring sound of many tongues engaged in a spirited debate. I listened closely and concluded it must be some sort of a discussion being held by the words in my big unabridged dictionary. Creeping softly to the door, I stood and listened. "I don't care," said the little word Of: "I may not be very big, but that is no reason why everybody should take advantage of me. I am the most mercilessly overworked word in the whole

dictionary and there is no earthly reason for it, either. People say they 'consider of' and 'approve of' and 'accept of' and 'admit of' and all sorts of things. Then they say 'all of us,' and 'both of them,' and 'first of all' and tell about 'looking out of' the window, or cutting a piece of bread 'off of' the loaf, until I am thoroughly tired out."

"Pshaw!" said the word Up, "I am not much bigger than you and I do twice as much work, and a good deal of it needlessly, too. People 'wake up' in the morning and 'get up' and 'shake up' their beds, and 'dress up' and 'wash up' and 'draw up' to the table, and 'eat up' and 'drink up' their breakfast. Then they 'jump up' from the table and 'hurry up' to 'go up' to the corner, where the street-car driver 'pulls up' his horses and the passengers 'ascend up' the steps and 'go up' into the front seats and the conductor 'takes up' the tickets. All this is done even before people 'get up' town and 'take up' their day's work. From that time until they 'put up' their books and 'shut up' their offices, I do more work than any two words in this book; and even after business hours I am worked until people 'lock up' their houses and 'go up' to bed and 'cover themselves up' and 'shut up' their eyes for the night. It would take a week to tell what I have to 'put up' with in a day, and I am a good deal 'worked up' over it.

"I agree that both Up and Of are very much over-worked," said the word Stated, "but I think I myself deserve a little sympathy. I am doing not only my own legitimate work, but also that which ought to be done by my friend Said. Nobody 'says' anything now-a-days; he always 'states' it.

"Yes" chipped in the funny little word Pun, "these are very 'stately' times."

Some of the words laughed at this, but Humor said: "Pun is a simpleton."

"No" answered Wit; he is a fellow of duplicities."

"He makes me tired," said Slang.

Then the discussion was resumed.

"I do a great deal of needless work," said the word But. "People say they have no doubt 'but that' it will rain, and that they shouldn't wonder 'but what' it would snow, until I don't know 'but I shall strike.'"

"What I have most to complain about," said the word As,

"Is that I am forced to associate so much with the word

Equally. Only yesterday a man said he could 'see equally as well as' another man. I don't see what business Equally had in that sentence."

"Well," retorted Equally, "men every day say that something is 'equally as good' as something else, and I don't see what business As has in that sentence."

"I think," said Propriety, "you two should be divorced by mutual consent."

There was a fluttering sound and a clamor of voices.

"We, too, ought to be granted divorce," was the substance of what they said, and among the voices I recognized the following named couples: Cover Over, Enter In, From Thence, Go Fetch, Have Got, Latter End, Continue On, Converse Together, New Beginner, Return Back, Rise Up, Sink Down, They Both, Try And, More Perfect, Seldom Ever, Almost Never, Feel Badly, United Together, Two First, An One, Over Again, Repeat Again, and many others.

When quietude had been restored, the word Rest said: "You words all talk of being overworked, as if that were the worst thing that could happen to a fellow, but I tell you it is much worse to be cut out of your own work. Now look at me. Here I am ready and willing to perform my part in the speech of the day, but almost everybody passes by me and employs my awkward friend Balance. It is the commonest thing in the world to hear people say they will pay the 'balance' of a debt or will sleep the 'balance' of the night.

"I suffer considerably from this same kind of neglect," said the word Deem. "Nobody ever 'deems' a thing beautiful any more; it is always 'considered' beautiful, when in fact it is not considered at all."

"True," said Irritate, "and people talk of being 'aggravated' when they ought instead to give me work."

"And me," said Purpose, "look at me. I get hardly anything to do because people are always 'proposing' to do this or that when no idea of a proposition is involved. Why, I remember the other day of a man who had 'proposed' to murder another when really he had never said a word about it to a living being. Of course he only 'purposed' to commit the murder."

"It is my turn," said the word Among: "I should like to protest against Mr. Between doing my work. The idea of people saying a man divided an orange 'between' his three children! It humiliates me."

"It is no worse" said the word Fewer, "than to have people say there were 'less' men in one army than in another."

"No," added More Than, "and no worse than to have them say there were 'over' 100,000 men."

"It seems to me" said the word Likely, "that nobody has more reason for complaint than I have. My friend Liable is doing nearly all my work. They say a man is 'liable' to be sick, or 'liable' to be out of town, when the question of liability does not enter into the matter at all."

"You're no worse off than I am," said the little word So; "that fellow Such is doing all my work. People say there never was 'such' a glorious country as this, when, of course, they mean there never was 'so' glorious a country elsewhere."

I saw that there was likely to be no end to this discussion, since half the words in the dictionary were making efforts to put in their complaints, so I returned to my couch; and I will leave it to any person who has read this account to say whether I had not already heard enough to make me or anybody else sleepy. — *Washington Post*.