



STICK TO YOUR TRADE.

IT is an old saying that he is a wise man who knows his limitations. It is all very well for us to take the world for our parish, and to boast that nothing human is indifferent to us; but when it comes to achievement—and not merely taking a spectator's interest in the thing—we had better confine ourselves to doing what we can do well. Of course, I fancy that we are all agreed on this; but the thing is to know where our capacity stops. This line of reflection has been started to my mind by wasting an evening at Richard Carle's musical comedy—"Jumping Jupiter." Now Richard Carle is an unusually delicate and compelling comedian. He has given me some of the heartiest laughs of my life. I would have said, off-hand, that he must have a very keen sense of humour—moreover, a discriminating and selective sense. Yet he is accused of writing "Jumping Jupiter," an alleged musical comedy which gives neither himself nor anybody else much chance to be either musical or comic, and which is—worse still—packed full of the stalest "chestnuts" ever found outside of a patent medicine almanac. And if there can be a still worse worse still, it is suffered in the awkward and "malice-afore-thought" manner in which these worn witticisms are introduced.

EVEN if Carle cannot create humour, one would have expected that his critical sense would have rejected most of this stolen junk. But it didn't. Can it be that he doesn't know a good joke from a bad one? Still when he gave himself a chance to be genuinely funny without saying a word, Richard was quite himself again. He can act a funny situation with his long, serious face, and his long, comic legs, in such a way that you wonder how long one can be helpless from laughter without danger to the diaphragm. And you say to your neighbour when you recover—"What a funny man he must be in private life. I'll wager he thinks up half the jokes in the libretto." Then when he frankly admits on the programme that he thought up all the jokes in the libretto you are being tortured with, you revise your opinion. He must, you think, be a great bore in private life. He is surely the kind of man who reads the clipped jokes in the morning paper, and then retails them at dinner as his own.

NOW this sort of disappointment has happened me twice this year. Last autumn, the advance notices told us that Francis Wilson was coming in a play he had written for himself. Francis Wilson! No comedian could be funnier than Francis Wilson; and, if he could, it ought to be against the law. You always felt that he, at least, must certainly have contributed a whole lot of the humour of the comic operas in which he usually appeared. You imagined him taking the rather ordinary libretto of the writer, and polishing it up here, and adding a quaint quip there, and putting some deliciously original matter in another place, and so converting it into a roaring success. So when he would take time to write the whole play himself, you were sure that it would be a "scream" from start to finish; and you looked to the buttons on your vest before you went. Well, it wasn't. It was a succession of hackneyed situations, worn threadbare, where they were not torn violently apart to let in a most improbable comic "stunt." The "characters" changed their character several times during the evening, and did things in the last act which they would have gone to jail rather than do in the first. The thing kept you in a state of mental "jumps," never knowing—so to speak—when the "hero" would turn into the "villain" or the tragic soprano into the "singing chambermaid." Of course, being a comedy, there was no hero in the piece, except droll Francis Wilson, who actually tried to be a hero in spots.

NOW what I want to say is this—why cannot these men, who are superb comedians, be content to stay comedians and let someone else write their plays? There are lots of better playwrights in the business; and I dare say not one of the latter could pretend to play his own comic creations with a tenth part of the skill of these men. The playwright's "metier" is to think of comic situations and witty comment; that of the comedian is to send

these situations and comments over the footlights. Every man to his trade. Did you ever—by the way—hear an author try to read his own works? It is usually one of the most pitiable exhibitions possible—especially for an auditor who had greatly admired the author previously. Some people like authors to read their own works even when they butcher them in the process, so that they will be able to say that they have heard So-and-So reading his or her own writings. They like it, as we like to see monstrosities in a museum. But usually—not always—an author had better let a professional reader do his reading for him. It is surely a mistake for any man, author or otherwise, having secured public recognition as one of the ablest men in the country because of your supreme ability in one field, to insist on calling public attention to yourself in another field where you rank with the poorest. However unjust it may be, it mightily



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THE Great West is radical, democratic, sure of itself, assertive of its rights. Even in Parliament the Prairie Provinces reveal their sentiments in their representatives—thorough-going, sturdy, vigorous, down-thumping fellows, most of them. They have enhaled the atmosphere of the big out-of-doors; they have fought their way among fighters. None of the subtleties of the more delicate circuitous diplomacy for them. They "want what they want when they want it." They speak in strong, strident tones. They talk in italics and capitals—all emphasis. They force, rather than win, their trail-blazing way.



J. A. M. AIKINS,
M. P. for Brandon.

All but one. Yonder, about half-way up the Government benches the man in the gallery notes a quiet, scholarly, usually bespectacled and altogether kindly face. It is the leaven of the western parliamentary lump. It belongs to J. A. M. Aikins, King's Counsel, the successor to Hon. Clifford Sifton in the representation of Brandon, and the man who wrested the home of the Manitoba grain growers to the cause of Conservatism and anti-reciprocity last September. That he did this—and did it by a substantial majority—marks him as one of the distinctive personalities of the present Parliament.

There is a strange anomaly between the man and his constituency. The West is radical; Mr. Aikins is essentially conservative, in more than party affiliation. The West sits at the feet of King Demos; Mr. Aikins' democracy, while none the less real, takes account of the memorable dictum of Sir Robert Peel: "In every village there will arise some miscreant, to establish the most grinding tyranny by calling himself the people." The West looks askance at the metropolitan capitalist; Mr. Aikins is a millionaire resident of the city of Winnipeg. The West is engaged in fighting the aggressions and rate schedules of the railways; Mr. Aikins has been for many years an eminent counsel and solicitor of the pioneer transcontinental, and has

discounts your standing in the field where you shine.

OF course, there is a somewhat kindred question to which the answer is quite different. We will admit that you ought to take an interest in everything you can, and avoid being tied to your "hobby," when you are thinking of the development of your own character. But it is not necessary to impose this "interest" on the public. You need not insist upon appearing on the concert stage, just because you go in for a little singing at home and desire to cultivate a taste for good music. You may be as catholic in your interests and occupations as you like; and undoubtedly the more the happier. But that does not mean that you must "star" in them all. When you step before the footlights, you should appear in the character surely which becomes you best. Adventures into other characters are not, of course, always as fatal as those of comedians trying to write their own comedies. The secondary role may not so cruelly interlock with and destroy the first. This instance is as if a painter made his own paints, and made them poorly; whereas, in most cases, it would be as if the painter only thought he could also play the 'cello, when he couldn't. But I rather fancy that, if you look around you, you will find that the most successful people are those whom you know only through their successes.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

managed to save that company many expenses which the Westerner thinks it should legitimately have paid. Yet, withal, Mr. Aikins is close to the people of the West. He has much of its confidence. He has seen its vision.

The West is no respecter of persons. It is, perhaps, a tribute to the member for Brandon that early in his Western career he irretrievably lost the "Mister." It was characteristic of the West that it adopted his initials. "Jam" Aikins isn't a particularly euphonic or classical designation, but it gets a man close to the people, and that's where Mr. Aikins has landed. It helped him considerably in getting into Parliament. "Jam" Aikins, you know, is a much more likeable and approachable fellow than the austere and forensic Mr. J. A. M. Aikins, K.C. And when the latter, in conjunction with his old friend, Mr. James Ashdown—"Jimmie Ashdown," of hardware fame, if you please—erected the splendid Broadway Methodist Church in Winnipeg, the irreverent proletariat promptly designated it the "Jim-Jam" church. But they think none the less of it on that account.

And just here is where Mr. Aikins gets a good deal of his "grip." He is a lover of humanity and a doer of good deeds in an unobtrusive way. He is, moreover, a pulpit orator of some note, a strong supporter of Wesley College, and a member of the University Board of Manitoba. The West shrewdly suspects he was dragged into politics on the "pro patria mori" plea. In the House he has more than made good. His speaking shows thought, and he has the happy habit of putting his points in a most effective and telling way. He has a touch of the divine spark and can raise the tone of a debate with a few deft sentences. The habit of a lifetime, however, still envelopes him, and, ever and anon, he persists in addressing Honourable Members as his "learned friends." Already he has won for himself an unusual place in the affection and confidence of his parliamentary associates.

Mr. Aikins left Ottawa on the prorogation of the Parliamentary session with a characteristic resolve. He has developed a worthy sense of public service, and has been considerably perturbed by the serious economic problems which have been confronting the producers on the prairies during the past four months. While travelling the West this summer he will be engaged in seeking a solution of the great unrest of the new Western Canada, and it is an open secret that the Government will look to him with considerable confidence for guidance when Parliament reassembles.

IT has fallen to the lot of the ill-fated Newmarket canal to be the "goat" of many a cynical corridor anecdote. But the tale credited to Captain Tom Wallace, the member for Centre York, takes the