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OLD FOGGY'S COLUMN

By FOGGY, '21

A favorite philosophical expression of that engineer, scholar, and gentleman, Professor Christopher E. Sherman of Ohio State's civil engineering department, is a sort of paraphrase of one of the fundamental laws of physics. It is "for every positive proverb there is an equal and opposite negative proverb." The encouraging "He who hesitates is lost" is negated by "Look before you leap." The opposite of "All things come to him who waits" is "Time and tide wait for no man." And the rolling stone that gathers no moss is praised for the quality of its polish.

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained" counteracts the saying, current before modern sun worship made the solarium a familiar object in any residential district, to the effect that inhabitants of glass houses should not be guilty of hurling fragments of rock. When it is a matter of expression, defects in the armor of the critic are most dangerous. The vulnerability of the critic is good for him, however; it spurs him on to a great searching of his heart and dictionary before opening fire on the particular persons or expressions that he is going to attack. And so, with full realization of the rashness of the deed, I venture a few jibes at some who, as the self-vaunted exponents of culture, have commented upon the crudity of engineering. My observations and opinions are entirely personal—as indeed all feeling of nicety in language and arts must be—and, although the editor of *The Ohio State Engineer* has not specifically stated in his magazine that he assumes no responsibility for expressions made by the various writers, I hereby absolve him from all blame and complicity in the matter.

Again, enjoying a contributor's personal liberty, I shall wander somewhat from strict attention to matters of language, and mention taste in moving pictures, books, and appreciation of other arts, subjects that form so great a part of the conversation of those who are ordinarily considered cultured.

And now for a little stone-throwing. It is my belief that many who have spoken of the engineer's crudity and lack of culture, of his failure in speech and writing, are themselves lacking in fundamental culture and saved from going to the awkward squad in language and manners only because they have devoted themselves intensively to a study of what to do and say. I venture to guess that a great many of them would be poor engineers if they had studied engineering.

Without feeling and imagination, no amount of study will save anyone, even those who "just love English" from some of the pitfalls of our language. It's impossible to look up every word in the dictionary. Not long ago I heard a graduate student majoring in English refer to a young man as the "sky-on" of a famous family. And I know an English teacher with a master's degree who says such things as "I'm going for to take a course in Shakespeare next quarter."

Since appreciation and likes are personal, my only standard is a comparison of what I like with the tastes of others who—judged by the same personal standard—seem to have discrimination and dignity. You may not agree with me. We are both independent, for the writer—within the lim-

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its set by the discretion of the editor—can write what he pleases, and the reader doesn't have to read if he doesn't want to.

So, agree with me or not, here are a few items from my rating scale of beliefs, likes, and aversions:

I believe that engineers write and speak as well, on the average, as men in the other professions who do not make a specialty of writing and speaking.

"Eats" used for the picnic lunch or for anything to eat anywhere is the lowest form of expression. Any other word is better, food, or fare, or viands, or even victuals, chow, or grub. "Eats" ranks even lower than "put on the old feed bag."

"The Doctor's Secret" was the first good talkie, and one of the best that has ever been produced.

"The Taming of the Shrew" and Will Rogers' "They Had to See Paris" are top-notchers.

The Saturday Evening Post is, on the average, the biggest nickel's-worth on the market.

The prose of Joseph Conrad is the most satisfying in English literature, and *The Mirror of the Sea* is the finest thing that Conrad ever wrote.

The plays of J. M. Barrie are satisfying both to read and see, particularly to read because the stage directions are so charmingly written.

George Bernard Shaw is almost too clever to live.

Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* has the musical comedy of the same name beaten forty ways from Sunday.

Donn Byrne's *Messer Marco Polo* is one of the most poetically beautiful stories ever written.

But that's a long enough list for this month. By next month I'll have read some more books and seen some more movies, perhaps heard some music and looked at some pictures, so that I can propose some more controversial matter. And my readers, if any, are invited to send in their own likes or dislikes, or violent disagreements with me in care of the editor.