

ley was not one of these. He was there to growl. He was there to protest. "Against what?" says somebody. Against the Bookworm Species, for Notley had a grievance. Being an ex-professor, possessing ample means by his late mother-in-law's will and having nothing to worry him and no cares, he naturally evolved a grievance. With others, easy circumstances produce nerves, for such people are never happy except they're miserable. Notley's was quite a cultured grievance, not a mere plebeian one against tradespeople and artisans, but—as has been remarked—against Bookworms. If you wish to reduce your grievances to this standard then lose no time but become a professor and provide yourself with a genial and wealthy mother-in-law with a weak heart and an ominous cough. Then such matters as food and rent will not trouble you and your mind will be free for a healthy crop of grievances.

The kind of bookworm Notley was out against was not the one that burrows little awl-hole tunnels through mouldy volumes, but rather the human specimen who often knows as little about the contents of his books as his tiny prototype.

As the intending purchasers came into the auction-room, towards noon the day of the sale, Notley now and then seemed to lose restraint of his feelings, which burst forth in such remarks as "Here's another of the tribe!" as some inoffensive individual sidled in and took his place—having examined the collection of books earlier in the day.

The auction went on as all such auctions do, the veteran bookworms—usually men of means—pouncing on rare volumes, first editions, and the like, to the chagrin of the professional second-hand booksellers, and of others who come in quest of books which they had long yearned to possess as sources of information, to peruse and consult as occasion might demand. As the bidding became brisk for some "treasure" and the coveted tome was knocked down to one of the above "collectors," Notley's rage mounted higher and higher in spite of the gentle remonstrances of his sweet-faced daughter, who, it was evident, exercised considerable restraint on his excitable temperament. That the indignant ex-professor's wrath was shared by many in the room was quite evident from the fiery glances that shot at the auctioneer when after the bidding had been keen and the price made prohibitive, he rapped his pencil on the rostrum and the book fell to one of the moneyed faddists.

It was on that particular day that various book-lovers and literary men, inspired by ex-Professor Notley, met after the auction and discussed the formation of the now famous anti-Bookworm Society. For McCleod's library was of the choicest and contained many volumes which were marked "rare" and "very rare" or "only fifty printed for presentation," and all these were snapped up by private collectors, to the bitter disappointment of many genuine men of letters who would have enriched the reading public with the lore which those "finds" contained. To be brief, a movement was originated that day which grew in momentum during the following weeks, and culminated in a public meeting which can only be described as an epoch-making event. Those interested in such matters should turn back to the newspaper files for an account of the interesting proceedings we recall and which are here barely summarised.

Ex-Professor Notley presided at the meeting, which was thoroughly representative of the world of letters. There was a large sprinkling of the fair sex amongst the audience, many of whom had passed the age of frivolity and romance and were devoted to literary culture and kindred pursuits. Savants—whose grave countenances suggested the Stone Age—sat on the platform, fixity of purpose sculptured on their features. There was no boisterousness whatever, no unseemly interruptions, none of that banter which one expects at political or municipal assemblies. That meeting was about to break new ground. As those who filled the body of the hall came in and took their places they nodded to right and left, for there is a freemasonry

among book-loving people which levels all social distinctions. Motors continued to buzz up to the door of the hall from which old gentlemen and ladies in furs and wraps alighted whom only a great cause could have drawn from their homes on such a night. Young gentlemen in evening dress piloted the arrivals to their places, with silent foot-fall and graceful gesture. At length a subdued air of expectancy settled on the gathering and ex-Professor Notley rose in his place and was greeted with prolonged applause, the audience standing.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "I think that we may flatter ourselves that the purpose for which we are assembled here this evening is unique in the annals of any country at any period of its most chequered history. We are about to strike a blow for culture, for the dissemination of rare literature. We look with feelings of admiration on those who embody their thoughts in current literature and provide the masses with a mental pabulum which is at once educative and ennobling, or who by flashes of genius dispel the gloom that broods over multitudes of silent toilers whose paths lie amid the cypress-clad slopes of existence. But to-night we inaugurate a work which bids fair to eclipse the most prolific energy of modern writers, for our object is to rescue from oblivion the pearls of thought which lie locked up in books to which the public are debarred access, for they are in the possession of men who to put it gently—are careless of the common weal. Let us not mince matters, ladies and gentlemen, we declare war to-night on the Bookworm Tribe." (Enthusiastic applause, which lasted several minutes.) Have the great writers (continued the speaker) of the dim and distant past committed their thoughts to paper or to vellum that their intellectual parturitions might be buried in some library of a private collector who can neither appreciate their contents nor estimate the good which their publication would confer on society at large? A private collector, ladies and gentlemen, is justly called a Bookworm. I go farther. I stigmatise him as a dog-in-the-manger. (Murmurs of approval.) Hitherto the appellation of Bookworm has been a title of respect ambitioned by small-minded individuals who regard it as a claim to rank as litterateurs, and are credited by an unreflecting public as persons of worth, falsely presumed to be acquainted with the message of the volumes which they so graspingly retain in the recesses of their studios. We proclaim our conviction here-to-night, that rare volumes are the property of the nation at large, and we call upon the Government which asserts its rights to resume or if needs be, commandeer, whatever may promote the public welfare—we call on the Government, I repeat, to order an inspection of private libraries or collections with a view to compelling the owners of such—with reasonable compensation—to deliver over their precious spoils to competent custodians who will so allocate them as to be at the disposal of the general community.

Mr. Notley sat down amidst a storm of applause while his charming daughter helped him on with his fur-lined overcoat, lest he should catch a chill.

"May I make a few remarks?" shrilled a little old man from the left side of the hall, with ferret eyes. All heads were turned in his direction. Many recognised the distinguished Vivisectionist of European fame, Dr. Steinbach. "I rise," said he, "purely in the interest of public health. While admiring the intellectual aims of the promoters of this select gathering, may I be permitted to submit some reflections of a humanitarian kind?"

"Certainly, certainly," said the president of the meeting.

"Mr. President, ladies, and gentlemen, I feel it incumbent on me to sound a note of warning on this momentous occasion, lest your zeal for the enlightenment of our fellow beings should cloud your vision as to the exigencies of public health. I view the matter solely from a humanitarian standpoint. Have you sufficiently pondered on the risk to general health