

MY PET PEEVE

Frank O'Keefe, '46

Until a few months ago I enjoyed every moment of life intensely. All my friendships were built of no brittle stuff, but rather of something staunch and lasting. But, alas, an incident occurred that disturbed my composure, and almost changed my whole outlook on life.

I remember it now as clearly as if it had happened an hour ago. Some friends and I were discussing a current topic, and in all sincerity I uttered some prediction or other that to me seemed most logical. Then out of a clear sky came the retort, "Corny". This was followed by a peculiar chuckle, then a series of chuckles. I do not remember who said it, but I do know that a pleasant conversation ended abruptly. No one dared to renew the topic. And I so was introduced to that fatal word which now annoys me in no small degree.

When I had recovered fully from the shock of my startling experience, I hastened to consult my faithful, old dictionary. Here was a true friend who would surely give me the secret of this strange, new word. At last there it stared straight at me. I became excited, but as quickly my excitement gave way to a queer sensation. An empty feeling came over me as I discovered this new expression to mean tipsy. Quickly I assured myself what "tipsy" implied. A friend said it. Did he think it? While I sat there pondering, I became lost to the din of the corridor. Voices and footsteps faded away. A slap on the shoulder brought me back to reality. I raised my head, and there was Rod. He only stared blankly and remarked, "Corny!" This was the last straw. I sprang to my feet, shouted, argued, and vehemently denied the accusation. He became pale, and suddenly the door closed on him. It was his last visit.

For several days I went about alone and worried. Every time I heard "Corny," shivers ran up and down my spine. I smoked more, whistled less, and was fast becoming a nervous wreck. In this state I attempted to busy my mind by reading stories, long ones, short ones, any kind at all. Again, here it was. The hero did something corny, the heroine was often corny. A dim light flickered in my brain, and

led the way to truth. I examined every suggestion of the word, and ultimately arrived at the general law of its application. It was a broad expression, suited to any occasion, any company and qualified to convey any feeling common to mankind.

While playing with the possibilities of this invader, I became alert to the fact that his presence was felt deeply in our midst. Every conversation was becoming punctuated by it. The epidemic was upon us with all the fury of the present wave of the mumps. It cramped our language in proportion to the effect of the mumps on the jaws. Nearly everyone attempted to master the word, each in his own special tones for the passing mood and circumstance. Everyone practised patiently from morning till night. The breakfast was corny. Classes were corny. And what was not corny? Those days are the saddest in my life. Alone, I fought off the great temptation even to use it once, to feel the thrill, and weigh it on my tongue. I was afraid of some great penance to follow from even a slight indulgence.

As this great wave of a new popular expression rolled onward, an almost infinite series of variations was noted. They ranged from a deep resonant "Corny" to a high pitched "Kearney". Imagine, if you can, the many strange effects on one so nervous from even the most modest enunciation of it. There is only one to whom I take off my hat for being a true master of the word, but I shall refrain from mentioning his name, lest he become haughty.

Not alone for selfish reasons do I abhor the word, for I am willing to continue my martyrdom in silence. When I think of all the beautiful range of expressions forced aside, and perhaps forgotten, I earnestly pray that this, like other great mistakes of the past, is only a passing thing.



Be wise to-day; 'tis madness to defer;
Next day the fatal precedent will plead,
Thus on, till wisdom is pushed out of life.

— Young.