

may belong to the Lord's Day Alliance or wear two-piece woolen underclothes or tell unclean stories in unclean Pullman washrooms. But I don't know and I'm afraid not.

So I'll have to make the best of a rotten assignment.

The faintest praise with which I can d——n the book is to say that it's a d——n good b——k of mostly ——verse, readable and buyable because the poems have story interest and are written in the language we, this means you, speak. Pure American, nearly. The few impurities are a lifesaver for the critic. We can't hope to land the old K. O. on the writer's jaw, but we can fret him a little with a few pokes to the ear.

For the most part this organ has served Mr. Weaver well. But I think that on occasion it consciously or unconsciously plays him false. It has told him, for example, that we say *everythin'* and *anythin'*. We don't. We say *somethin'* and *nothin'*, but we say *anything* and *everything*. There appears to be *somethin'* about the *y* near the middle of both these words that impels us to acknowledge the *g* on the end of them. Mr. Weaver's ear has also give or gave (not gi'n) him a bum hunch on *thing* itself. It has told him to make it *thin'*. But it's a real effort to drop the *g* off this little word and, as a rule, our language is not looking for trouble. His ear has gone wrong on the American for *fellow*, *kind of*, and *sort of*. Only on the stage or in "comic strips" do we use *feller*, *kinder*, and *sorter*. *Kinda* and *sorta* are what us common fellas say.

And how about the lines, "Now that I'm sure he never won't come back" and "You don't know how to dream and never won't"? *Never will* and *won't never* are American. *Never won't* ain't. Other lines I challenge

WHAT IS THE "AMERICAN LANGUAGE"?

By Ring W. Lardner

THIS is my first and last chance to review a book and I wish I could give it a good pasting. There's even less fun in writing eulogies than in reading them, while infinite enjoyment can be found in hopping on a literary cripple, knocking it for a corpse, and strewing the grave with an elegant shower bouquet of raspberries. Anticipation of that was what persuaded me to take this job. But they crossed me. The book ain't a cripple.

And not having met Mr. Weaver, I can't even paste him personally. He

are, "I crope up on him" and "You should of hearn the row there was". I don't say *crope* and *hearn* are impossible. I do say *crep'* and *heard* are a great deal more common.

The line, "Look what I done for you and him and me", is good American, but better American, I believe, would be, "Look what I done for him and you and I". This, however, brings up a subject to which one ought to be able to devote a whole volume, but one ain't goin' to. One is only goin' to state that mysterious rules govern the cases of personal pronouns in our language and one hasn't had time to solve the mysteries even since prohibition. We say, "He come up to me in the club", but we also say, "He come up to Charley and I in the club" or even "He come up to I and Charley in the club." Charley's presence in the club seems, for "some reason another", to alter my case. The other night I was reading a play script by one of this country's foremost dramatists; and recurring in it was the stage direction, "A look passes between he and So-and-So." But this playwright wouldn't think of saying or writing, "She passed he a look."

My theory on this particular point is that when the common American citizen, whom we will call Joe, was in his last year in school (the sixth grade), the teacher asked him how many boys there were in his family. He replied: "Just Frank and me." "Just Frank and I," corrected the teacher. And the correction got Joe all balled up.

But you don't want my theories and I can't find any more fault with Mr. Weaver's ear. Nor any with his book except to say that no book can be really "in American" that denies admission to the favorite American adjective—*lousy*. Doubtless delicacy,

not defective hearing, kept this out. But it's unquestionably our busiest adjective today; it describes so adequately such a great variety of things. Including this review.

In American. By J. V. A. Weaver. Alfred A. Knopf.