



Dreiser looked at me half quizzically. "You win," he said simply. Outside the snow was blowing down the street like an army of fireflies, but inside, by the fire, it was warm.

Robert Benchley.

Mr. Benchley Interviews Theodore Dreiser

I FOUND the author of "An American Tragedy" reading a large volume of law reports.

"Working on a new book?" I asked. "It's a new book to me," replied Dreiser. "I don't know about you."

"Oh, I'm all right," I retorted. "A little dizzy when I stand up—but then, one doesn't have to stand up much, does one?"

"Does two, does three, does four," sallied the author, up to one hundred.

I could see that we were treading on dangerous ground and, fearful lest the interview be ruined, I continued, wetting my thumb:

"Do you get around to the night clubs much?"

"Much more than what?" asked Mr. Dreiser.

"I didn't say 'much more than' anything. I just said 'much.'"

"Well, you took a very funny way of saying it," said the pioneer. And added, "I *must* say."

Things had reached an *impasse*. The storm which had been gathering for centuries between Church and State was about to break, and with it the temporal power of Rome.

"Let's get out of here!" I said, taking Dreiser by the arm. "I don't like the looks of things."

"Some one was saying that very thing to me only yesterday," said the author of "The Genius." "Now who was it?"

"George Erlich?" I suggested.

"No," said Dreiser.

"Roger Hatney?"

"No."

"Mrs. Federber?"

"No, no! For God's sake, man, try and *think!*"

"Wentworth Whamer?"

"No."

"Ernst Timmerley?"

"That's who it was! Ernst Timmerley! How stupid of me not to remember. Ernst Timmerley, that's who it was."

"I thought of suggesting him at first," I said, "but it slipped my mind."

"You can't tell me that was just a coincidence," said the author of "Sister Carrie."

"Oh, I can't, can't I?" I retorted, not a little piqued. "Well, *it was just a coincidence.*"