Sixth Day

VERBS GIVE YOU POWER

Do you remember your old schoolbook definition of a verb? It went something like this:

"A verb is that part of speech which asserts, declares or predicates something."

But a dynamic verb is more than this. It is the catalyst of the sentence. That is, it is the word that brings the sentence to life.

Choose your verbs with care.

If you pick a dull verb, your speech will be dull, barely serving its primary purpose of communication. It will be merely a succession of syllables that will make little impression on the mind of your reader or listener.

A choice of powerful verbs, on the other hand, will make your speech electric, galvanic. Like a powder charge, it can give the impact of bullets to all the other words in your sentence.

A single illustration of this statement will be enough. Which of the two following sentences has the greater force?

1. He is a moral leper; let us keep away from him and have nothing to do with him.

2. He is a moral leper; let us *ostracize* him.

The answer is obvious, isn't it? One word has expressed the meaning of ten.

So watch your verbs. They are packed with power.

I. Here are ten dynamic verbs that belong in a rich vocabulary. We are not going to give you their precise definitions. Just read the sentences in which they occur and see if you can guess the meanings of the ones you don't already know. Pronounce them aloud.

What are some of the things people do?

1. They *expiate* (ex′-pee-ate) their sins, crimes, blunders, or errors.
2. They *importune* (im-por-tyoon′) God for divine favors.
3. They *impute* (im-pyoot′) unworthy motives to their enemies.
4. They *scintillate* (sin′-til-late), the wittier ones, at gay gatherings.
5. They *mulct* (mulkt) the unwary or gullible public.
6. They *ostracize* (oss′-tra-size) members of religious, political, or racial minorities.
7. They *deprecate* (dep′-re-kate) the sins of this age.
8. They *procrastinate* (pro-krass′-ti-nate) and then vow
9. They *rusticate* (russ′-ti-kate) in the summer time, if finances permit.
10. They *vegetate* (vej′-e-tate) all year, if they are lacking in imagination, initiative or energy.

II. Referring to Section I only where necessary, write the proper verb next to its definition. The definitions do not appear in the same order as the sentences above.

1. Live in a passive way .....
2. Deprive of a possession unjustly .....
3. Make amends for .....
4. Beg for ceaselessly; beseech; entreat .....
5. Exclude from public or private favor; to ban .....
6. Put off until a future time; delay .....
7. Sparkle with wit or humor .....
8. Spend time in the country .....
9. To ascribe, attribute, charge an act or thought to someone, usually in a bad or accusatory sense .....
10. Disapprove of the actions of someone .....

III. Which of the verbs you have just had would most aptly describe the characteristic action of each of the following people?

1. He is too indolent to get his work done on time. He .....
2. He is accustomed to blaming others. He .....
3. He is a gay and witty person. He .....
4. He possesses a lively conscience. He .....
5. He is a person who is in a rut and leading a lazy life. He .....
6. He is an exclusive individual. He .....

7. He doesn't mind cheating others. He .....
8. He's an insistent beggar. He .....
9. He is ashamed of the acts of his associates. He .....
10. He is on a vacation at a farm house. He .....

IV. In each of the following divisions you will find two sentences. The first sentence has a group of italicized words. The second sentence has a blank space. In each case a slightly different form of one of the verbs you have just studied can be substituted for the group of italicized words before it. Decide what this particular form is, and write it in.

1. He has been *spending his time in the country*. He has been .....
2. Why do you keep *nagging me for favors?* Why are you so .....?
3. He *took* $1,000,000 from the public *by dishonest methods*. He ..... the public of $1,000,000.
4. *Excluding him from our group* is our most potent weapon against the liar. ..... is our most potent weapon against the liar.
5. For the past two years, I have been *accomplishing nothing and getting nowhere*. For the past two years, I have been .....
6. He *pled against* the exploitation of labor. He ..... the exploitation of labor.
7. In *atonement for* his sin, he did penance for three days. In ..... of his sin, he did penance for three days.

8. Do they *accuse* me *of committing these offenses?* Have they ..... these offenses to me?
9. I resent your *accusation that I committed* these offenses. I resent your ..... of these offenses to me.
10. She is a *gay and witty* speaker. She is a ..... speaker.
11. *Putting off till tomorrow* is the thief of time. ..... is the thief of time.