

INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS
CONCERNING
ALL KINDS OF LITERARY WORK.

BY
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COMPILER OF
“Periodicals that Pay Contributors.”

PUBLISHED AND FOR SALE BY THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

This little volume of suggestions concerning the preparation of newspaper articles, magazine articles, poems, books, price and disposition of MS., etc., etc., has been rendered necessary by the large number of inquiries in regard to these matters called forth by the recent publication of "Periodicals that Pay Contributors." It embodies the answers to many letters received from authors desirous of instruction in some of the mechanical and intellectual phases of the work, and is offered as a help to all writers, especially beginners in the profession, by their friend and fellow-laborer

ELEANOR KIRK.

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INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS.

CHAPTER I.

THE LITERARY LIFE.

Literary Demands of the Day—Qualifications for Authorship
—Pleasures of Authorship—Moral Responsibility of Authors.

THE first requisite of a writer is to have something to write,—in other words, something to say. It should be, first of all, something worth saying; secondly, something which nobody else has said; thirdly, something said in an acceptable manner.

LITERARY DEMANDS OF THE DAY.

Commercial business now requires the lightning express, the telegraph, and the telephone. Social life is conducted on the same high-pressure principle. It no longer needs six months' thought and preparation to

get the lady of the manor started on a horseback trip of twenty miles to buy the silk dress of a generation. Her grand-daughters of to-day think nothing of running over to Paris twice a year for spring and autumn shopping. We want our literary business transacted in very much the same way. Reading is not the only recreation of the present age. Leisure is absorbed in a hundred other ways, unknown to us half a century ago. We may begin a novel as the palace car moves out of the depot, but only on condition that it shall be finished by the time we reach our journey's end, for at that point fresh intellectual fare awaits us. Writers are already legion, and the number is every day increasing; the public grows to be more and more of a reading public, consequently more critical, exacting, and less easily pleased.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR AUTHORSHIP.

There is at present no line of professional work in which there is sharper competition than in authorship. In many respects it resembles a trade which must be learned with the same industry and painstaking as a carpenter learns to build a house, or an engineer to run a locomotive. One who has for many years pursued this trade, must of necessity have learned about

it many things desirable to be known by beginners. It is for the purpose of helping such that this little book is prepared.

A desire to write does not necessarily imply ability to do so, though the probability is that this desire proves the existence of more or less literary talent. Except in the direction of purely mechanical work, it is doubtful if any one has ever succeeded as a writer who had no natural attraction to literary labor; but added to this native liking there must be some preparation for the profession. Burns, making the whole world listen while he sang his songs from field and furrow; Shakespeare, peopling that same world with his immortal creations; Bunyan, working out in prison his marvellous allegory, are exceptions to the general rule. It is not because of ignorance, poverty, and suffering that gifted souls win fame, but in spite of these obstacles. The world has lost many "mute, inglorious Miltons."

Genius, that "gift of the gods," being so uncommon a thing, can safely set at naught all common rules and precedents; but the majority of writers, even the most successful ones, cannot properly be classed as geniuses, and must serve an humble apprenticeship as a means of commanding attention and winning fame.

The most essential natural qualities for an author are imagination, observation, memory, and sympathy, all of which are developed and strengthened by use. Added to these natural endowments should be a thorough education, for the more thorough the mental training in every direction, the more solid and extensive the foundation for the intellectual structure. There is no line of knowledge which is not helpful to writers, and many are crippled throughout their whole career by the lack of early educational opportunities.

Experience of life, contact with many different personalities, the advantages of extensive travel,—all these are great aids to one who wishes to record the results of thought and observation, though that these things are not essential is constantly proved. On lonely Yorkshire moors, there came to the Bronte sisters inspiration which travel and worldly knowledge might never have given to them.

Added to natural and acquired qualifications, must be the homely, prosaic virtues of industry, patience, and perseverance. If there is truth in Carlyle's words that "genius is only great patience," one might well feel encouraged to cultivate the quality to an unlimited extent; but even if one feels disposed to quarrel with the statement, there is no denying the fact that even

genius must remain an abstract and indefinite quality unless embodied in outward forms; this embodiment requires work, and sometimes even drudgery; how much more then is such labor necessary to the ordinary individual? An author should have no super-sensitiveness, and should be always ready to receive honest criticism. If literature is a profession to be learned, criticism upon our work from persons of judgment is an invaluable aid. But good judgment is not the only requisite for a critic; it must be honest judgment as well. The writer's own family and friends may, on account of their connection with him, be incapable of seeing faults, or unwilling to be truthful in indicating them. Incalculable harm is done to young writers by persons, usually friends or relatives, who from a mistaken kindness of heart prefer to encourage them by falsehood, rather than to pain them by the truth. Honesty, therefore, which is generally in these cases the outgrowth of disinterestedness, is quite as necessary in criticism as is good judgment.

PLEASURES OF AUTHORSHIP.

Only the writer can know what satisfaction and pleasure are found in literary labor. As the singer

may sing from mere overflowing gladness of soul, careless whether the song is heard, applauded, or paid for, so the writer may find an absorbing joy in the mere work of composition, aside from any considerations of payment, whether in the form of appreciation or that of the standard currency. But as a rule, authors write both for the appreciation of the public and the more substantial result counted out in coin. In this as in all other occupations, "The laborer is worthy of his hire."

MORAL RESPONSIBILITY OF AUTHORS.

The writer is doctor, teacher, and preacher all in one. His mission is one of entertainment, instruction and improvement. Every one who enters the profession of literature should fully realize the important nature of the work and rightly estimate its power for good or evil.

The written, far more than the spoken, word has molded the destiny of the world. The most eloquent sentences of the most gifted orator can reach but a comparatively small audience, and die as they strike the ear. Through the labors of the reporter and the printer the "thoughts that breathe and words that burn" are preserved for ever and made the property

of the entire world. "After all," sadly said the late Rufus Choate in his last days, "after all, the only immortality is a book."

Writers are either a blessing or a bane to the world. Would that each one of them could have the opportunity of saying when his pen is laid aside forever that he had "never written a line which dying he could wish to blot."

CHAPTER II.

APPEARANCE OF MS.

Handwriting—Type-writing—Advantages of a Type-writer—
Spelling and Punctuation—Paragraphing—Arrangement
of Sheets.

THE appearance of a MS. must have some weight with editors. They are physically attracted at first, and while intellectual attraction may not necessarily follow, the physical certainly opens for it a very wide door. Let no young writer be led to suppose that because immortal productions have occasionally been written in pencil on brown wrapping paper or the backs of dirty old envelopes, the use of such materials is any indication of genius.

HANDWRITING.

Writing is the expression of thought upon paper. If the writing cannot be read, for what purpose was it written? It is the moral duty of every one who writes to write plainly, and there is no excuse for lack

of plainness. Grace and beauty are not essential, though desirable; plainness is indispensable.

Neither is there any excuse for the use of poor pens and pale ink. Good pens and good ink are now manufactured in such cheap and infinite varieties that each individual taste can be suited. Pencil writing is liable to be rubbed and thereby become illegible; consequently it is not desirable as a general thing; but a pencil will do in emergencies, when nothing but a pencil is available, when the MS. is short or for immediate use, and if the writing is very plain.

Scrawly, illegible handwriting is no indication of mental endowment. The syllogism—"Horace Greely was a great man; Horace Greely wrote a villainous hand; therefore a villainous handwriting is proof of greatness," is topsy-turvy logic, and the poorest sort of sense.

As says Lucas Malet in his late novel, "A Counsel of Perfection,"—"In this country—a country of many innocent affectations—there has always been a tendency to proclaim gentility, or, if the word has too provincial a flavor, good breeding, by doing certain things exceedingly ill. The practice of penmanship would appear to be a case pre-eminently in point. To write well socially, you should write remarkably badly

from all reasonable and useful points of view. Legibility is a mark of the bread-winning classes. Among the precious privileges of the leisure ones is that of being magnificently hieroglyphic."

And there is an ethical side of this matter which writers—as mentors and teachers of mankind—should not disregard. No one has a moral right to steal the time, strength, patience or money of another. The editor, compositor, proof-reader who is obliged to waste time, eyesight, temper, and sometimes money—as in the case of a type-setter paid by the piece, over faint or illegible writing,—is imposed upon and robbed by those from whom he has a moral right to expect better treatment.

TYPE-WRITING.

The invention of the type-writer has been an incalculable benefit to authors. It saves an enormous amount of time and strength, while the copy so produced is in every particular fully equal to print. Type-written matter is a joy to the heart of editor, compositor, and proof-reader, and well it may be.

The Remington Type-writer is the oldest machine in the market and the best for authors' use. It is perfect in operation, very easily worked and not liable to

get out of order. It is always desirable to retain copies of MSS. and business letters, and by the aid of the Remington any number of copies can be made. To obtain a single copy, a sheet of carbon paper is placed between two sheets of writing paper. But if so large a number is desired, fourteen duplicates can be produced simultaneously. Full particulars concerning the method of doing this will be found in the illustrated pamphlet issued by the manufacturers.

ADVANTAGES OF A TYPE-WRITER.

To any one engaged in literary work, money put into a typewriter is invested at compound interest. It is a mistake to suppose that the process of learning is a long and difficult one. On the contrary, a person of ordinary intelligence can learn the principles and manipulation in a few hours, speed in the use of the machine being, of course, a matter of time and practice. It is a great relief from the stooping posture rendered necessary over a desk. The saving of one's eyes is an important matter, and the use of the typewriter is a great aid in this direction. Those whose eyesight is so poor that they find writing in the ordinary way a difficult and dangerous process, will have no trouble at all with the type-writer. The Reming-

ton can be as easily learned and is as successfully used by persons who are totally blind as by those whose eyesight is perfect.

The type-writer prevents all danger of that serious and common trouble, "writer's paralysis." Any one who has the slightest premonition of this affliction should heed the warning, remembering the hoary adage concerning the "ounce of prevention and pound of cure." The first indication of this disease is a numbness in the ends of the fingers and pain in the shoulder, developing into tingling pains running down the arm. It would be a great advantage to every person to be able to use the left hand as well as the right, but especially so to writers, as it would afford relief from the continual strain upon the right hand and arm.

SPELLING AND PUNCTUATION.

Almost incredible stories are told by editors and "readers" of the ignorance concerning spelling and punctuation, even among those who are termed good writers. But the intellect which is of so sublime and dazzling a nature as to rise superior to the spelling of the words and the punctuation of the sentences in which its ideas are clothed, is a very rare possession. True, spelling and punctuation can be furnished by

thousands, where only one can furnish original ideas; but in this advanced age to read and write seems to come by nature, as Dogberry asserted that it did, and no man should pretend to write who cannot do it in a proper mechanical manner. Dictionaries and grammars are as numerous as the leaves on the trees. Countless "Guides" and "Mentors" and "Verbalists" are from time to time brought out by the press by authors who are interested in giving other authors grammatical and rhetorical points. One who sins in regard to forms of phraseology, is in these latter days sinning against great light.

PARAGRAPHING.

No rule can be given for paragraphing; it is a matter requiring good judgment. Too long paragraphs are tiresome and confusing; too short ones have sometimes the same effect. Unity is the principal thing to be considered, and a vital change in subject or form of thought should always be indicated. Practice, and the study of the best models will help a young writer in this particular.

ARRANGEMENT OF SHEETS.

Paper of note size is considered the best for ordinary MS. Any larger size is too large for the printer's con-

venience. Every sheet should be plainly paged. In book MS. sheets should be paged consecutively—that is, without regard to chapters. These can, however, be paged temporarily by smaller figures, for instance in the lower right-hand corner of the sheet.

Leave generous margins at the top, bottom, and on each side of the sheet. Not only does the page present a much better appearance, but the margins are convenient for the making of notes, memoranda, and corrections. Much handling of copy by the printer and proof-reader is sometimes necessary, and in case of the inevitable tearing and soiling of the sheets, wide margins prevent the writing from being injured.

MSS. should never be rolled, and should be folded as little as possible. If any reason for this is required, let the author put himself in the place of editor or reader, and judge for himself of the comparative ease and comfort in reading flat pages to reading those which are creased or rolled. It is the rule now in some offices to return all rolled MSS.

CHAPTER III.

METHODS OF LITERARY WORK.

Inspiration—Regular Hours for Work—Overwork—Materials
for Work—Study of Models.

INSPIRATION.

PROBABLY no great artistic work is ever accomplished without the impulse of that mysterious force, so easy to recognize, so difficult to define, which we call inspiration. Its peculiarity is that no man knows whence it comes or whither it goes, neither the time nor the reason of its coming. It is as intangible, as uncertain, and uncontrollable as the wind. No better definition of it can be given than is found in Emerson's description of its effect. "Yesterday not a bird peeped; the world was barren, peaked, and pining; to-day 'tis inconceivably populous; creation swarms and meliorates."

Painters, poets, and musicians of all times and places have experienced more or less of this "divine afflatus" which "lifts the feet from the clods of earth, setting

them to walk with the angels," and it is out of such full tides of inspiration that there comes the power for mighty and immortal work. It is easy to labor under such an influence; not only easy, but positively delightful. The artist knows no fatigue, doubt, or discouragement; it is only when this celestial fire grows cold within his brain that he relaxes, hesitates, and desponds.

But one of the dangerous effects upon those who are familiar with this occasional influx of creative power, is an undue reliance upon it, a feeling that no work can be done without it, and that the "mood" must be waited for. There are doubtless some cases where, owing to temperament or habit, this condition of things exists, but in general the reverse is true. It is easier to sail the sea with wind and tide in our favor, a strong incentive for the voyage, and the certainty of reward awaiting us in a desired haven; but it is possible to make some headway against both wind and tide, with only a sense of duty to sustain us, and under a cloud of doubt as to our final safety or success. If literature is adopted as a lifelong labor, as a means of support for one's self or family, it becomes absolutely necessary to disabuse the mind of the idea that it is either proper or profitable to wait for inspiration.

"Why do you not set about your work?" asked a college president of a student who was dilatory in producing a required essay. "I am waiting for inspiration," was the reply.

"Inspiration is all very well, but I advise you to try a little perspiration," was the sensible rejoinder of the elder and more experienced of the two.

REGULAR HOURS FOR WORK.

There is a law of periodicity in nature which operates as truly in the study as in the solar system. The muscles of the body trained to perform certain duties at certain times seem to acquire a consciousness not only of the work required, but of the proper time for its performance, the result being that we do a thousand things mechanically. It is possible to cultivate habits for the brain as well as for the body, and accustom the mind to accept certain tasks at certain hours. Experience has proved this point beyond the necessity for argument. Experience has also proved that application often opens the door to inspiration, and many an author who has gone to his desk from a mere sense of duty, or a mere hope that "something would come," has risen from it with the proud and happy consciousness of work satisfactorily accomplished. Generally

"something comes," the mere receptive attitude and desire to do one's best furnishing favorable conditions. The cultivation of regularity results in a mental habit which renders one less and less dependent upon inspiration, though no less ready and able to take advantage of it when it arrives.

OVERWORK.

Overwork is no less a sin than many other forms of excess, though the motive which induces it is falsely supposed to carry with it excuse and palliation.

When the duties of domestic and social life demand extra efforts of mind or body it is right that they should be made, and that the person so called upon should do his best under the circumstances. But it is stupid and wicked to tax one's self without cause, either in the pursuit of business or of pleasure.

The temptation to overwork is peculiarly strong to literary workers. Unlike most lines of labor, that of composition is enjoyable and stimulating, leading the writer on, and rendering him almost unconscious of the lapse of time, especially when he is working under favorable conditions or feeling any definite inspiration. There are occasionally circumstances which justify this extra exertion, but as a rule there should be as

much regularity in leaving off, as in beginning, work. Intellectual toil is a severe draft both upon the brain and the nerves, and sometimes upon the body as well; it is more exhausting to the vital forces than the same amount of time spent in manual labor, and this fact should be continually borne in mind. The sedentary nature of literary occupation demands extra attention to the laws of health. Nothing more effectually impairs the breathing power and thereby every function of the body, than the constant stooping posture which this sort of work necessitates, and regular exercise, particularly that of vigorous walking, is the only way to avoid physical injury.

All travel and recreation has a peculiar value to the writer, as he is liable at any moment to receive some impression, some hint or suggestion, which like a seed, carelessly dropped upon fertile soil, may develop into a vast and valuable growth. Nothing is more interesting than to read how certain books and poems came to be written. In many cases they were the outgrowth of some incident connected with a walk, a drive, or a conversation, and had the writer persisted in remaining at his desk, the experience, so fruitful in consequences, would never have fallen to his lot. Many writers can testify to this truth, and beginners in liter-

ary work should as far as possible avail themselves of all such opportunities.

MATERIALS FOR WORK.

It is true enough that "everything is grist which comes to the writer's mill." There is nothing in physical nature, human nature, science, or art, which cannot be made serviceable to literature, and in this advanced state of our civilization there is less trouble in finding what we want than in classifying and keeping it for use.

Every writer should have access to a library. The best education is not comprehensive enough to furnish every name, date, and item which may be required in literary work. But if such a privilege is impossible, it becomes all the more necessary to have certain reference books.

A dictionary is as indispensable to a writer as pen and ink, and should always be within reach of his hand. Experience has proved that Webster's Unabridged Dictionary is superior to any other for desk use, where synonyms and the derivations and meanings of words must be constantly referred to. This work is really a library in itself, containing, it is said, sufficient matter to make seventy-five 12mo. volumes that usu-

ally sell for \$1.25 each. A set of Cyclopedias is also necessary.

Beyond these, the only really indispensable books for a writer's constant use are those which form "Cassell's Reference Library," including a Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, a Dictionary of English Literature, a Dictionary of Miracles, and the Reader's Handbook. These four attractive octavo volumes are sold at the reasonable price of \$11.00 a set, by the publishers, Cassell & Co., of New York.

Newspaper and magazine items, bearing upon subjects in which an author is interested, are of the greatest possible service, but their constant accumulation makes the preservation and classification of them a weariness to the flesh and discouragement to the spirit. *The Writer*, a professional magazine published in Boston, and giving each month a great number of valuable hints to authors, has printed from time to time articles from various contributors on the different methods of classifying newspaper clippings, so necessary in all literary work.

This same publication contains in each issue invaluable suggestions concerning various mechanical devices for an author's desk, which can give increased facilities for work. It is certainly desirable to have all appli-

ances not only in order, but so economically and conveniently arranged that there shall be all possible saving of time and effort.

STUDY OF MODELS.

Every successful literary production possesses qualities which make it a profitable study for all writers. Language is a complex and mighty tool, available for a thousand different uses. It is well to discover how it has been handled by the master-workmen who have with it accomplished grand results.

Varied and extensive reading of the best authors will reveal many of the secrets of their success; such reading, moreover, enlarges one's vocabulary and gives a more thorough comprehension of the powers and possibilities which exist in words. Such study leads one also to a knowledge of various styles and forms of expression, serving to show their comparative euphony, clearness, and strength; it may suggest figures, examples, and illustrations, plots, even, inasmuch as a new plot is but a fresh turn of the literary kaleidoscope; and it not unfrequently happens that such study serves also for warning, admonition, and reproof, considering that in the works of the best authors

there are to be found occasionally faults which in recognizing we should be reminded to avoid.

We learn from such study how unnecessary is a dull or heavy style of writing, even on heavy subjects or in a purely didactic vein. When history is as interesting as the stories which delighted our childhood, when science becomes as fascinating as a novel, when philosophy holds us spell-bound over its words of wisdom, then we realize, as at no other time, what power and charm can be given by the skillful or painstaking writer, to the hardest and driest facts. Prescott and Macauley, Huxley and Tyndall, Whewell and Emerson did this, while numberless books on the same subjects by authors as truthful and industrious, have remained unnoticed. The difference was not in the facts, but in the manner of treating them, and this happy faculty is the result of careful labor quite as often as it is the gift of genius.

CHAPTER IV.

LITERARY QUALITIES OF MSS.

Originality — Brevity — Directness — Language — Choice of
Titles—Revision of MSS.

ORIGINALITY.

To have something to write means to have something original. Imitation is a good thing in its place, but its place is not in literature.

Chaucer could work over into poetic English form old French and Italian stories; Shakespeare could put those same stories into acceptable dramatic form; but in those days neither French nor Italian literature was the property of the English-speaking people, and those who could transplant its products for the benefit of our Saxon ancestors, earned a lasting debt of gratitude. But to-day one is expected to strike out, if he strikes out at all, in new and original directions, and this expectation is in keeping with the spirit of the age. If there is in you nothing but what other men have at some time said, forbear repeating it, or, yield-

ing to the temptation to do so, forbear calling the world's attention to it as a new thing. Paraphrase and parody are the second-hand clothes of literature, and always to be sold at a discount.

It is no compliment to an author to be accused of plagiarism, however complimentary it may be to the writer whom he imitates. At the same time Solomon told the truth when he declared that "there is no new thing under the sun." The great fundamental facts which underlie all human life and experience are as old as time itself, and yet are always as new as the daily sunrising, the yearly seed-time and harvest. A modern philosopher has said that "nothing can be evolved which is not involved," a mere technical variation of the words of the wise man.

Ethical truths can and must be repeated a thousand times. They cannot be original, for they have existed from the foundation of the world, but the writer's method of expressing them must be his own. "Fact, at best," says George MacDonald, "is but a garment of truth which has ten thousand changes of raiment woven in the same loom."

All plots and exceptional developments in novel or drama depend almost wholly upon the skillful combination of old elements. It is a common complaint

that plots are exhausted, yet even before the words die upon the air some writer surprises us by seizing upon a new and striking combination of the same well-worn materials.

All literary products are like musical compositions. From the seven notes of the scale are drawn infinite combinations of harmony, as from the emotions of the human heart are evolved all possible experiences. The writer no more creates these emotions than does the musician the laws of acoustics; it is the individual form of treatment which constitutes originality.

BREVITY.

Editors employ an expressive metaphor in their invariable direction—"Boil it down." "*Multum in parvo*" should be the motto of all writers—as many ideas as possible in the fewest possible words. Experience proves that nothing is more difficult or more desirable than condensation. It requires much time, great wisdom, and good judgment. It was the late Samuel Bowles, of the *Springfield Republican*, who apologised for a long editorial by saying that he had no time to write a short one. Nothing pays better than the time given to "boiling down." It often makes the difference between the acceptance and the rejection

of an article. Young writers are prone to verbosity. Guard against it as against an unpardonable sin. The reader should not be wearied with a mass of un-essential details. It is for instance of very little consequence whether your heroine has her hat trimmed with wide or narrow ribbon; whether in leaving a room she closes the door with her right or her left hand, or whether she is a blonde or brunette, if she is seen only when perpetrating some moonlight murder. Brevity is not only the soul of wit, but of wisdom, and especially is this true in literary work. The three-volume novel went out of fashion when the steam-engine and railroad train came in.

DIRECTNESS.

A just and relative proportion should be maintained in every literary composition. The main point of the article should be kept steadily in view, incidental matters connected with it taking a subordinate and proportionate place.

Avoid introductions and descriptions. Introductions are not needed, and descriptions, to be worth anything, must be written by those possessing that rare and peculiar literary ability which can paint persons and places as truly with ink on paper as in colors upon

canvas. General facts concerning persons and places are often necessary, and are not difficult to give, even for those who do not excel in descriptive writing.

The reader's attention should be kept sustained from one paragraph to the next, and the writer must not avail himself of the privilege of sitting down by the roadside to take a leisurely survey of the landscape while the reader waits on the high road, eager to push on.

Do not repeat. Pay your readers the compliment of assuming that they understand a statement once clearly and forcibly made; repetition is a tacit way of suggesting that they are either stupid or inattentive, and this exasperating implication, which results in a constant interruption of the reader's thought, is always resented.

Work on straight lines, that is with a view to the logical sequence of events. Under ordinary circumstances and in illustration of a great general principle, it is best to have the experiences of your hero's manhood follow, not precede, those of his boyhood. Do not require from the reader a constant metaphorical looking over the shoulder; do not explain things which need no explanation, or which in the natural unfolding of the work will explain themselves. The reader's at-

tention should not be confused by the introduction of many different characters at one time, and each character as it is presented should be clearly defined.

LANGUAGE.

One of the soundest of all rhetorical rules is that which forbids the frequent use of foreign and obsolete words. No conscientious or cultured writer will offend good taste and good sense in this matter. The English language is amply sufficient for the use of all English writers. Of course there can be no reasonable objection to the occasional employment of an expressive foreign word or sentence, especially those from the French or Latin, which have become familiar to the general reader; but there is no excuse for a sentence to be so interlarded with foreign forms as to make it unintelligible to any but the erudite reader.

CHOICE OF TITLES.

As we accept the truth of the proverb, "A thing well begun is half done," so we might say in regard to this subject, "An article well named is half sold." The name does not alter the character of the composition any more than it changes the fragrance of the flower,

nor will a poor literary production become available merely on the strength of its title. But a striking title adds at least fifty per cent. to the value of the production. On the other hand, a trite, commonplace, or neutral title is a disappointment to begin with, and cannot fail to prejudice the reader of the MS.

The name given to any composition must be a crystallization of the entire work; it must be brief, intelligible, not of doubtful or difficult pronunciation; unique and striking, if possible, stimulating curiosity but not satisfying it. The selection of a name answering to all these requirements is often as difficult as it is important; yet all thought expended upon it is profitably spent, and no writer can make a greater mistake than to attach an inadequate title to an article on account of his haste to dispose of it. It is a poor policy in an economical as well as artistic sense.

REVISION OF MS.

“No faithful workman finds his task a pastime,” says Carlyle, and the saying is as true of the literary laborer as of all others; the sudden inspiration, the enthusiasm of rapid composition, the pleasure in the completed work,—this is the pastime of the artist, but fidelity to his self-appointed task calls also for a cer-

tain amount of drudgery, which can seldom be inspirational or enthusiastic.

The highest degree of excellence should be aimed at by the writer, and no copy should leave his hands while he is conscious of its containing any imperfections which can be remedied by patient labor. Still it does not follow that the first draft of a composition is necessarily inferior to following ones. The contrary is sometimes true. Just at this point a writer should possess clear judgment concerning his own work, for as a man who is suddenly moved to speech by some tremendous emotion, utters words more eloquent than any which would rise to his lips in a less impassioned mood, so a writer, seizing upon some vital thought, often records it with little care of phraseology, in language which no change can improve. There is such a thing as too much painstaking. It is possible to prune and polish away all the points which give strength and character to the work,—to reduce it to the dead level of commonplace.

CHAPTER V.

VARIETIES OF LITERARY WORK.

Short Stories—Serials—Poems—Books—Compilations—Translations—Domestic, Hygienic and Educational Writing—Humor in Writing—Writing for Children—Journalism—Short-hand Writing—Interviewing—Newspaper Syndicates—Plays—Literary Criticism—Illustrations.

SHORT STORIES.

THE demand of the day is for short stories, and, strangely enough, the demand is at present largely in excess of the supply, though the same cannot be said of any other line of literary work. Public taste has created the demand, but it is not an easy one to satisfy. A story must first of all be interesting; secondly, it must be complete, and when to this is added brevity, it becomes no easy matter to satisfy all the requirements. The main difficulty is to compress it to the desired length, and at the same time to give strength and definiteness to the characters, sufficient incident, and harmonious development to the whole.

There has been much misconception as to what constitutes the length and style of a short story. First of all, it is not necessarily a love story; good domestic stories are in demand; but anything over five thousand words is not considered a short story. Editors are willing to pay as much for a story of two thousand words as for one of five thousand, or, as they express it, are willing to "pay for space." For "Harper's Young People" the publishers desire stories of only seven hundred words in length, and find it exceedingly hard to get satisfactory ones. Other publications are equally anxious to obtain this style of story. No field affords greater promise to the author who can succeed in doing this sort of work, and it is probable that for a long time to come the good short story will be eagerly welcomed by all editors and be liberally paid for.

SERIALS.

Only certain publications "run" serial stories, and it is well for an author to make a definite engagement with the paper or magazine for which he proposes to write before constructing the story. As far as incident, development, and general interest is concerned, all stories require the same treatment as the short story, but a serial or a novel affords infinitely more

scope in these matters. One of the chief points to be observed in the division of the work for weekly or monthly publication is to have each portion end as strikingly as possible, that is in such a way as to make the reader, as in the case of Sam Weller's valentine "Vish there vos more of it," and be eager for the next installment.

Stories as a rule should possess the dramatic element,—that is, a graphic, vivid, and lively style. It is well for the author to let his characters do the talking instead of doing it himself; there should be no long "waits," which are as tiresome in a story as upon the stage; there should be an effort made to present pictures to the reader,—that is, such grouping, arrangement, and movement of characters as to enable him to see, as well as comprehend, them; and, if any moralizing is to be done, let it be done by the characters, rather than by the author himself.

POEMS.

Well may one's pen pause in attempting to advise or suggest anything concerning the writing of poetry. Nothing is more surprising than the ease with which the average mortal "drops into poetry." Silas Wegg's facility was nothing compared to it.

Boys and girls of sixteen are called upon to write "class poems" for graduation, and no doubt appears to be felt, either by them or by their teachers, of their ability to do it. The average young man and young woman on a summer vacation easily writes verses to order—and sometimes remarkably good ones—to commemorate the incidents of a picnic, a boating party, or a lawn tennis tournament. Daily papers, even the smallest and most obscure ones, have respectable poems in their odd corners, while magazine offices are running over with poetical contributions. In this line of work, the supply far exceeds the demand, and bids fair to continue to do so.

Notwithstanding the enormous amount of poetry which is being constantly constructed, and the large number of surprisingly good verses which are constantly being published, the fact remains that good poetry is the most difficult and the most artistic literary work. Poetic feeling is not enough endowment to create a poet, even if to this is added a thorough education, and a fine sense of rhyme, rhythm, and harmony. Perhaps it is not too much to say that for the composition of what can in its highest and truest sense be called poetry, there is needed that subtle something which we call inspiration. It is the "vital spark of

heavenly flame," and makes all the difference between choice words rhythmically arranged, and words which contain the true poetic fire. It is probable that every true poet is conscious of this element. The writer of poetry cannot be too critical of his own work.

But there is no excuse for the existence of poor poetry. A writer should not be satisfied with anything less than perfection in rhyme and rhythm at least. The most utterly flat and commonplace thing in the world is a commonplace poem. There is no demand for it, no place for it, and to write it is to waste time, ink, and paper. It is what an English writer has truly termed "platitude sweetened with sound," and platitude without the sweetening is bad enough. The addition of the jingle is no improvement.

BOOKS.

Perhaps Ruskin has given, better than any other man, the only reason why any man should write a book: "A book is written not to multiply the voice merely, not to carry it merely, but to preserve it. The author has something to say which he perceives to be true and useful or helpfully beautiful. So far as he knows, no one has yet said it. In the sum of his life he finds this to be the thing, or group of things, mani-

fest to him; this the piece of true knowledge or sight which his share of sunshine and earth has permitted him to seize. That is, in his small human way and with whatever degree of true inspiration is in him, his inscription, or scripture. That is a Book." And "of all the things which man can do or make here below, by far the most momentous, wonderful, and worthy, are the things we call books," says Carlyle..

While it is true that "of making many books there is no end," it is equally true that there is no reason why there should be an end as long as the book is worth making. Whether or not it will find readers after it is made, is not a pertinent question, for any book worth making is sure to interest somebody, and has occasionally done greater service to a future than to its present generation. The only question then is whether the writer, in Ruskin's words, has found something specially true, helpful, or beautiful which he alone can give to the world. For this great growing world needs all the light, help, and enjoyment that writers can give it. Mighty moral and social problems are every day arising and calling for solution. "The pen of a ready writer," whose work will reach thousands beyond his immediate locality, can be made a great power for good in discussing and settling the

moral issues of the day. Fiction can do—and is doing—a great work in this direction, which proves that there are different kinds of pulpits for the purposes of preaching. Every good book adds to the world's treasures, and it is appalling to think what the world would have lost if many of its successful writers of books had followed the advice now so commonly given, "Don't." Yet let the writer be sure that what he has to offer to the reading public is of sufficient value to justify the offering, for it is no small matter to write a book or to insure its favorable reception. In 1887 there were 4,437 books published in this country. Of these, 488 were for children. In the line of Religion, Physical, Mental, and Social Science, 483. History was set forth in 150 volumes. Law was more prolific in 437. Biography filled 201 books, while all other lines of literary work were proportionately represented. Of 1,022 novels published during the year, 625, or more than one-half, are issues in paper covers or reprints of English novels. "Nine-tenths of these," says Dr. Henry Van Dyke of New York, "are either silly or pernicious, and nearly all of them bear the taint that attaches to stolen property."

Of the several magazines published in New York, the Century, Scribner's, Harper's, The Forum, North

American Review, American Magazine, and Magazine of American History, 650,000 copies are issued each month.

It is not possible to give any rules or many suggestions in regard to the writing of books, except novels, and even then the novelist must, in large measure, be a law unto himself; but certainly a study of the best novels and the closest possible study of human nature, are the first things requisite for the novel writer. The latter is indispensable and may suffice of itself, but in some cases a separate study of literary form and finish is necessary. The best pictures are those in which the objects portrayed appear to be the real things and not the mere representations of the things; the best novels are those which are so true to life that the characters seem real flesh and blood and not mere pen-and-ink creations.

Whatever may be the types or classes of characters which figure in a novel, they should first of all be true to themselves. It is a significant fact that the people who fill the novels of Charles Dickens are as real to us as those who live in the same house with us. In fact, they were not only so strongly portrayed as to be everlastingly remembered, but they were so faithful a representation of the type to which they belonged that

their very names become suggestive of certain qualities. To call a man a "regular Micawber," or a woman "a perfect Mrs. Nickleby," is to define their characters without need of any words. Dickens was never guilty of putting into the mouth of Bill Sykes words which could only be uttered by Chadband, or of allowing Uriah Heep to talk like Captain Cuttle. Whatever the character was, he was himself, from the beginning to the end of the book. No matter what criticism may be made of this particular author, whether one likes or dislikes his books, loves or hates his characters, the fact remains that he succeeded in creating real men and women for us to despise or approve of as we please. How is it with the writer of the average Modern Novel? The deacon of a Presbyterian Church has on one page the characteristics of a cow-boy, and the chaperon of a party of young ladies figures as the greatest flirt, and uses the most slang, of any of the number.

There is much controversy of late concerning Idealistic and Realistic novels, and we must admit that sentiment, which was one of the main elements of fiction, has now become subordinated to ambition and action. It has been well said concerning this point, "The fundamental conception on which the true

ideal novel should be written, is that man is naturally weak and evil, but he need not remain so. Make man in fiction as sinful as he may be, but do not keep him ever going lower. Try to unite reality and ideality by putting man as he is, to struggle with man as he should be, whatever that ideal may be. Realism errs in placing all great joy or sorrow only in the body."

Ruskin says, "Tales of interesting persons should not end with their marriage, and for the general good of society the varied energies and expanding peace of wedded life would be better subjects of interest than the narrow aims, vain distresses, or passing joys of youth."

While the plot is considered one of the principal ingredients of a novel, it is not indispensable, nor need it be outside of the most ordinary experiences of life. It is the work of talent and of genius to transform the commonplace into the uncommon, and some of the most striking romances ever written have contained no incidents which might not have happened—which perhaps have happened—in our own family or neighborhood.

The qualities necessary to the construction of a good novel are precisely the same as those required in the short story, though with the advantage of more time

and space in which to develop plot and characters. Probably the day will never dawn when a good novel will not find plenty of eager and appreciative readers.

COMPILATIONS.

To make one book out of many books is a perfectly legitimate, and often a profitable, line of work. It is carried on as a distinct and constantly increasing form of authorship. As books on any subject multiply, it becomes a greater necessity to select from them the vital matters which can be collected in a single volume, and therefore made more available from being presented in convenient shape.

Compilation calls not only for extensive reading, but for great judgment in selection, and great skill in putting together the selections. With these qualifications it is only necessary to make sure that the subject chosen is one of general interest for a certain class of readers. Much valuable service has been rendered the world by patient and painstaking authors who have "lived laborious days" in the dim alcoves of libraries, gathering into one casket the gems of history, literature, science, or poetry scattered and almost lost in various literary storehouses.

TRANSLATIONS.

The Scandinavian novelist, Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, declares that "the more replete a book is with the charms of style and imaginative coloring, the harder it is to translate." He considers that the United States have produced three of the greatest translators of modern times,—Longfellow, Bryant, and Bayard Taylor. He cannot sufficiently praise these men for their fidelity to plot and story, and also for their happy choice of words, which in some cases, he thinks, makes their work an improvement even on the original. Mrs. Wister of Philadelphia is undoubtedly our most famous and popular translator of German novels. She allows herself the greatest liberty in her work, even to suppressing or introducing characters, changing the plot or the climax. It is said that her answer to a young lady who applied to her to know what chance there was for her to succeed as a translator, was, "The question is not whether you can read German, but whether you can write English. Anybody can find out the meaning of a page of German,—that is simply an affair between himself and his dictionary; but to set down the meaning in good and attractive English is quite another matter. A trans-

lator is only a novelist who takes plots from foreign authors."

A translator, then, requires not only the most intimate and critical knowledge of the idiomatic structure of a foreign language, but as much skill in the use of his own as if his work were purely original. Few writers possess these requisites in marked degree. The literary field is full of bunglers like "the British barbarian" who undertook to put Goethe's "Sorrows of Werther" into English for the Bohn Library, and made such wretched work of it that nobody can discover its original charm, leading one to conclude that German literature must be a poor sort of a thing if this book is a specimen of the work of one of its greatest writers.

A translation must be exceedingly good in itself, and a rendering into English of some remarkably fine poem or novel, in order to make it acceptable. It is best to consult with an editor or publisher before undertaking this work to avoid the otherwise great risk of losing much time and labor.

DOMESTIC, HYGIENIC, AND EDUCATIONAL WRITING.

There is no line of literary work which has been so rapidly developed of late years as that having refer-

ence to the affairs of health, the home, and the school. There has sprung up a large number of papers and magazines devoted almost wholly to these subjects. "Babyhood," published in New York, has become almost as much of a necessity to mothers as the clothing which covers the little one. What would the mothers and the grandmothers of the present generation have thought of receiving each month, in attractive printed form, instruction upon every physical and moral interest involved in the life of the growing child—from directions how to save pain in teething, to equally explicit directions concerning the best means of amusing him and keeping him from crying? What hosts of distracted mothers, ignorant of all such matters, wearing themselves out in vain experiments, would have felt that the millenium had dawned indeed if such a magazine had existed in their day.

"Good Housekeeping" is an equally indispensable publication to all those upon whom devolves the care of the home, and it is fully appreciated for its valuable, because practical, help. There is no subject in which domestic comfort, economy, and elegance is concerned that is not helpfully considered in this publication.

All educational matters are coming to the front with amazing rapidity, demanding attention and adjustment. Reform of our school system is one of the most imperative duties of the day, and there is scarcely a periodical in the country which does not have articles and editorials upon this great question. But reform is yet, undoubtedly, a great way off, and in the meantime there is much hard work to be done by thinkers and writers to hasten along the day of better things.

All of these comparatively new lines of work are the inevitable and natural outgrowth of our developing civilization. There is constantly growing among men a more thorough realization of the intimate connection between good health, good house-keeping, proper education, and all the great social problems of the day. This realization constantly increases in strength, and clamors as constantly for light upon these matters, and such help in solving them, as writers alone can give. Aside from the publications devoted exclusively to these subjects, there is hardly a periodical that has not made some concession to this popular demand, and given some portion of its columns to the nursery, the household, and the school.

Any writer who has anything earnest and helpful to

say on these practical matters may be sure of a hearing. The best prices are paid for domestic, hygienic, and educational articles, and editors still cry for more. The world has enough, and, in fact, too many novels; it is flooded with poetry, good, bad, and indifferent, but these represent the sentiment of the literary life while the age is clamoring for hard, practical sense, hurrying to get on in business, society, and travel, and welcoming all suggestions as to economy and increase of social, domestic, and business force. The enormous impetus given to the one branch of cooking, alone, during the past half dozen years, is an indication of the utilitarian spirit which is striving to bring social and domestic life up to a higher plane. The subject of dress, too, has given rise to much profitable discussion, and will continue to do so, whether or not there is any immediate reform in the matter of costumes.

Here is a great and growing field for the wide-awake, practical, energetic author,—a field white for the harvest, in which all the work that is done can be carried on not only with the certainty of an adequate pecuniary reward, but in full consciousness that it is the very best form of missionary work for the entire world.

HUMOR IN WRITING.

“Wit,” says Emerson, “makes its own welcome, and levels all distinctions. We must learn by laughter, as well as by fears and terror, and get the rest and refreshment of the shaking of the sides.” If health of body and happiness of mind are good and desirable things, then blessed be the men who make us laugh,—the fun-makers of the world. A hearty laugh is the best kind of physical exercise, for it thoroughly stirs the blood, and thereby invigorates every organ of the body; it is the best kind of mental stimulus, for it can do more than anything else to put us “in harmony with our environment,” to make us patient, charitable, and good-natured. It is only in literature that we can keep this intellectual tonic in permanent form, and the world is under immortal obligations to its famous humorists.

The gift of humor—either the power of creating or of enjoying it—is not vouchsafed to all. It is almost as rare as genius,—in fact, can be said to constitute one form of genius,—but there is a large number of writers who have more or less of this divine gift, and there are many others who possess more of it than they use.

It is a mistake to suppose that a dull or sober style is necessarily more impressive and effective than a light, or even jovial, one. A writer should conscientiously cultivate the habit of looking at the most serious subjects in a cheery and hopeful manner, helpful to himself and inspiring to others. It is a moral duty, incumbent upon him by virtue of the office which he has assumed. It is one of the great responsibilities of the profession. Who can estimate the good which has been wrought in the world by the kindly satire, the delicate humor, of Thomas Hood and Charles Lamb, Charles Dickens and Oliver Wendell Holmes? The world's readers keep ever a warm corner in their hearts for such writers.

Practically considered, humorous writing *pays*. The editors of comic papers cannot get enough of the material suitable for their special publications, and good prices are always paid for it when it is obtained. "*Puck*," the brightest and most original of all our comic papers, calls attention to certain subjects which "are not favorably regarded by an enlightened populace." Among them are enumerated "The Mother-in-Law, the Wooer and the Bulldog, the Spring Poet, Boarding-house Fare, Plumbers, and Intoxication." Cheap wit is very poor stuff, and ridicule of a

person, place, or thing is not necessarily witty. The humorist needs good sense as well as brilliant brains. If he possesses both, he will be sure to use good taste, and with this equipment can well be encouraged to attempt humorous composition.

WRITING FOR CHILDREN.

One of the most marked intellectual changes of the century is the sort of mental diet now prepared for children. The almost universal education of the people has increased the taste for reading in all classes, and children are now from their birth surrounded by books, magazines, and illustrated papers. Experience has proved that good books for the little folks are the greatest possible aids to their entertainment and instruction, while publishers have been quick to perceive the enormous financial profit accruing from the sale of this special line of literature.

The character as well as the amount of literary work for children has changed greatly during the last half century. The particular primness and propriety which was supposed to be its most essential element has given place to something not less suitable and satisfactory in its moral purpose, but less didactic and "preachy" in form. The "Rollo Books" are still in

good and regular standing with children, and deservedly so, but "Sandford and Merton" is considered a little too slow and "poky" for the young people of the present generation. A new literary era dawned for children when "St. Nicholas," the "Wide Awake," and "Harper's Young People," began to cater monthly to their literary tastes.

No work proves more interesting and profitable to the young than books of travel and descriptions of famous places. Biography ranks next, but the subject chosen must be worthy of the labor bestowed upon it, and so treated as to charm and stimulate the young reader. Peculiar talent is needed for both these lines of work, as the requirements are hard to fill, but when successfully done they are among the most profitable kinds of literary labor.

Good stories for the young are always in demand, also good poems, especially of a narrative or humorous style. By "good" is meant, first of all, such as are suited to the mental capacity of children, and interesting them from the first line to the last. They should be free from everything objectionable in thought or expression, straightforward, clear, and brief. If the article contains a moral point or lesson, as is, of course, desirable, it should be subordinated to the main

interest, not obtruded or forced upon the attention of the reader. Children are quick to draw inferences and make comparisons when statements are within their comprehension, and a great point is gained when they are left to do so for themselves. Any moral lesson which cannot be thus absorbed from poem or story is generally valueless, and the child feels himself the victim of false pretences when discovering that he is really being preached to where he expected to be entertained. The ethical pill should either be coated so judiciously that it will be swallowed without suspicion, or not coated at all. Children hate sham and deceit, and are quick to detect it.

Pictures of suffering and misery are out of place in children's books. Nothing can be gained, while much is lost, by shadowing these bright young spirits with distressing revelations of the world's woe and wickedness, which actual experience will teach them all too soon. Children as a class are sensitive and sympathetic; their emotional nature is easily roused. It is one of the complaints of the age that we live too much in the sensational and the emotional, that the world suffers from a great waste of nervous force. Much of this tendency is the result of misdirected education. Let no writer's hand set itself to the lamentable busi-

ness of playing upon the heart-strings of children. A sad or depressing story is as unfit for a child's mind as the moss-grown walls of a cloister for his little bounding body. Pathetic tales of dead birds and maimed kittens and outcast dogs have made too much imaginative misery for the little ones. Let the birds sing and the kittens frolic and the dogs enjoy life in the children's stories, whatever sad fate may befall them in city streets. Children should be made happier and healthier by what they read as by what they play. The heroes and heroines of their stories should never die, but live in strength, hope, and helpfulness in the miniature world. The sorrows and negations of life are of course to be encountered in all human experiences, but it is a mistaken notion that children can be harmed by withholding from them such knowledge as long as possible, or that by giving it to them they are better fitted to meet and endure trouble.

Of course it is unnecessary to state that all writing for children should rest upon the highest moral ground, though the atmosphere of that elevation need not necessarily be too dry or too stimulating for the undeveloped lungs. Sunday-school libraries are constantly in search of suitable books for the young, and the need will continue. Many authors have gained

much fame as well as financial success by devoting themselves exclusively to this line of work. As successful writers for children are rare and the demand for such literature is constantly increasing, their work will always be sought for and always command a good price in the market.

JOURNALISM.

A newspaper is exactly what its name implies,—a *news* paper. The number of newspapers is to-day enormous and the news is of infinite variety, gathered hourly as it is from all quarters of the globe. A newspaper is a universal intellectual caterer, providing many different dishes for widely different appetites. As Emerson says, "It does its best to make every square acre of land and sea give an account of itself at your breakfast table."

In newspaper writing the quality of brevity is especially desirable, both from the great variety of subjects included and the absolute limitations of space.

Newspaper writing affords the best sort of practice for any one who desires to become proficient in that most powerful element of all literary work—condensation. To make five words do the work of fifteen and do it five times better,—not leaving out any of the in-

formation conveyed by the other ten,—this is the great secret of newspaper work in its principal department,—that of reporting the news of the day.

The reporter's profession is over-crowded, and the great mass of reporters work for less salary than is received by men who put the written productions into type. There is no mystery in the fact. Compositors learn thoroughly a regular trade which always commands good wages. The reporter's ranks are recruited from hosts of young men with a fair, common-school education, trained to no trade, possessing no mechanical ability in any direction, without capital necessary to start them in mercantile business, who think "newspaper work" easy and respectable and therefore eagerly seek it. Many succeed in this work, learning, it is true, by a sort of rough-and-tumble experience, which, like disagreeable medicine, is good for the patient; but too many meet with a fair degree of success for any one of them to attain a high position, or any considerable salary. Of course there are a few exceptions, but they are very few indeed. The inflexible rule of the newspaper office that no reporter shall comment or express any opinion upon the facts which it is alone his duty to state, is no doubt responsible for a good deal of the crushing of individuality and

real talent in some members of the reporter's staff, and does much to reduce each member of the force, whatever his ability, to the same commonplace footing. However, while this remains the law in most newspaper offices, the reporter must either refrain from complaint and make the best of the situation, or betake himself to more congenial fields.

Of course there are grades of excellence among reporters, who are known as Poor, Fair, or Fine. Even in the mere presentation of facts there is a vast difference between the poor and the first-class ways of stating them. Absolute grammatical and rhetorical accuracy, careful choice of words, conciseness, picturesqueness, vivid descriptions, logical sequence,—all these things add greatly to the value of even the mere news item.

The man or woman who is capable of great physical endurance; who is blessed with an abundance of patience, perseverance, and tact; who can occasionally "make something out of nothing," but who at any rate never fails to make the most of everything; who has more or less of the detective's quality, and can see the connection in apparently disconnected facts; who can ferret out the small items concerning a transaction, sometimes recognized by a man of judgment to be of

more consequence than some of the greater ones; who can accurately gauge the relative value of news items; above all, one who is alert "in season and out of season" to catch quickly any item of news whether or not specially detailed to do it,—these are the men who make a name for themselves in the editor's office, and who have in many cases risen to fill the editor's chair. Such men cannot be kept in subordinate positions. These requirements are extensive, but not impossible. They are the birthright of some few favored individuals, and for such persons there is no more promising field of labor than that offered by journalism. Even among those who are best qualified to judge, there is a vast difference of opinion concerning journalistic work, its difficulties, pleasures, emoluments, and chances for promotion. But in this line of labor, as in all others, it is undeniably true that some men, and some women also, have the "gift" which peculiarly fits them for this employment, and no discouragement may be felt by such in this era of newspaper power and opportunity, which is constantly on the increase.

SHORT-HAND WRITING.

There is no profession in which universal knowledge is so much needed as in short-hand. Not only is

thorough mental equipment necessary, but every mechanical aid and appliance is desirable, to the end that time and strength may be saved in the mechanism of his work, leaving so much the more power to be given to the intellectual labor.

Short-hand writing was invented for writers, and it is foolish to say that it is useless to writers, or that a writer can get along as well without it. Every author must sometimes at least copy or take notes. The use of short-hand is a great help in this direction; yet such is the difficulty of acquiring this useful art, and so great is the amount of practice needed in order to give facility, that its acquisition is recommended only to a special class of writers, reporters for a daily newspaper. Just so far as the exact words of a preacher or of an orator are preferable to another man's faulty recollection of them, so far is a good short-hand report of a sermon, lecture, or speech preferable to one written out from the memory alone. It is sometimes claimed that constant use of short-hand in reporting destroys originality. The only originality desired in a *verbatim* report of any utterance is the originality of the speaker, not of the man who reports him. Another objection occasionally made is that it destroys the memory. This, as well as all reasons advanced

against the use of short-hand, is generally the opinion of those who are ignorant—and sometimes envious—of the art. A knowledge of short-hand can no more injure a writer than good tools can injure a carpenter, while even the best of tools cannot turn a poor mechanic into a good one, either in intellectual or mechanical workshops. Above all, a writer must possess good judgment, and to this element he can safely add any knowledge which he can command.

INTERVIEWING.

Interviewing is a distinct branch of newspaper work and needs a peculiar kind of ability. While some of the best reporters make the poorest possible kind of interviewers, the reverse is also sometimes true. Above all things, the interviewer must possess that nameless magnetic quality which attracts strangers, makes friends, and inspires confidence,—a certain native tact which is not so much the result of education as of experience. It is “gumption,” pure and simple, in its application to a business transaction. It is this tact, and only this, which will tell a reporter how to proceed in each particular interview,—for no two can be any more alike than can the two different individuals from whom information is sought. This

tact will teach him to what extent it is wise to use a note-book, to make use of short-hand, to interrupt his informer. Of course much depends upon the peculiarities,—or eccentricities,—of the person interviewed, the subject of the interview, and the object of the particular paper which seeks it. A good memory is almost indispensable to an interviewer, for to some persons the sight of a note-book is as great a terror as that of a surgeon's knife; short-hand seems some mysterious process for revealing all their conversational defects, and no conversation is possible unless carried on under ordinary circumstances. The interviewer who can sit serenely beside the interviewed, and without the help of note-book or pencil, absorb and classify the facts he has been sent to gather, will always find congenial and remunerative occupation. The man who has a real talent for this department of journalism, but who is not blessed with a good memory, will find the exact aid he needs in Prof. Loissette's most original and wonderful system. This is an easy and fascinating study, as the author of these pages knows from personal experience, and useful beyond description to the men and women whose livelihood depends upon the best use they can make of their brains. A defective memory will neutralize the most

brilliant effort. "Facts are stubborn things," indeed, to the reporter who is not able to carry a date in his mind, or to write out the exact statement he is relied upon to furnish. But facts are the reporter's stock in trade, and everything that can assist him to successfully grapple with them, has a financial value which is in precise proportion to their mental worth. Many reporters upon daily papers have, on account of their marked ability as interviewers, made a good reputation for themselves, and found their success in this line a stepping stone to advancement.

NEWSPAPER SYNDICATES.

Book News, published by John Wanamaker of Philadelphia, gives the following information concerning Syndicates:

"The word 'Syndicate,' in journalistic parlance, signifies a combination of newspapers that publish simultaneously, one in each given city or region, special correspondence or literary matter of any kind. The original cost of an article or story is practically divided among the subscribing newspapers, with a certain per cent. added as a commission to the syndicate manager for his actual outlay in securing and handling the matter. A newspaper is by this plan of publica-

tion enabled to have, at a comparatively small expense, articles and stories of the greatest value, and by the most famous writers, that would otherwise be beyond its reach. The word syndicate is not applied to such corporations as the Associated Press, or to the American Press Association. Many journalists circulate their own correspondence without the aid of any agent or manager.

“The prices paid for matter published on the syndicate plan varies greatly. The English house of Tillotson & Son sometimes pays \$500 for a short story by a noted English writer. The ordinary magazine writers receive from \$10 to \$20 per thousand words for short stories, while writers of established popularity have been paid at the rate of from \$20 to \$50 per thousand words. Journalists and writers of special articles are paid from \$10 to \$50 per column, the average being about \$15. The price depends upon the popularity of the writer and the interest of the article. The cost of serial stories runs from \$1,000 to \$10,000, according to the author's fame, for newspaper novels usually sell according to the value of the author's name as an advertising card that will attract readers to subscribing papers.”

PLAYS.

Like the publisher, the theatre manager is always on the alert for something unique, something which has in it the elements of a great success. As the publisher instructs his readers to let nothing good escape them lest some other house may become possessed of the great American novel, so the managers of our theatres direct their critics to carefully examine every MS. offered them, for fear the great American play may possibly be overlooked. Here, as in every other department of literature, an author is obliged to wait his turn. The play market is as over-stocked with indifferent matter as the periodical market. Probably not more than one play in the hundred that wait the reader's scrutiny, will ever achieve success. The reader of plays has scarcely the stimulus of possibility to sustain him, for experience has proved that a good drama is a very exceptional thing. It may come though at any moment, and the thousands of pages of stuff that pour into managers' offices must therefore be carefully gone over.

Complaints are continually made of remissness on the part of managers in the matter of rendering decisions and returning MSS. Many of these complaints

are well founded. "I have sent and sent, and called and called for my play left at — Theatre over a year ago, and not the slightest notice is taken either of written request or personal visit. What shall I do?" a writer asks.

In such a case, a lawyer is the proper person to apply to. The play may not be worth the paper it is written on, but this fact does not affect the moral obligation of the manager, and affords no excuse for an unnecessary delay. In sending plays to managers it is best to observe certain business formalities. First, find out by letter whether the play can be read in a reasonable time, and if the response is satisfactory, request to be informed of the arrival of the MS. If a play is lost there is literally no redress for an author, unless the work has been ordered. Then the loss is shared between manager and writer, or some satisfactory compromise is effected.

Dramatic composition bears no resemblance to any other kind of literary work. It is a mistake to suppose that because an author can write a dramatic novel, he can construct a play that will "act;" or that a dramatic novel can be easily made into a play. In the few instances where novels have been successfully dramatized, it has usually been accomplished by the

total destruction of every element which has made the book popular, with the exception of the main plot and very few of the characters, while in most cases these have been changed to suit the exigencies of the stage. With a very few exceptions the novelist has always been obliged to collaborate with a playwright, or some one familiar with stage business. The novelist has several hundred pages to roam over at will. His characters can discourse upon everything in heaven and earth. They can have plenty of time to fall in love, fall out again, fall ill, convalesce and die, and the more trying situations there are the better. Such situations, properly arranged, make a dramatic novel, but it is doubtful if one of the author's thrilling combinations would be dramatic upon the stage. In a play the events of a life-time must be crowded into two hours and a half of time, and four acts,—each act containing from ten to twenty pages,—are deemed quite sufficient for the purpose. The dialogue of a play must be brilliant and telling, but a single remark that does not point directly to the plot or the evolution of the characters, be it never so sparkling, is a fault which the sharp-eyed manager will instantly detect.

The statement that it is utterly impossible for an author to write an “acting play” without a practical

knowledge of stage business, will discourage some and be resented by others, but it is a fact that admits of no qualification. To become possessed of such knowledge is not easy. A careful reading of standard plays will be of some assistance, but an experience behind the scenes, a chance to become acquainted with the stage manager and stage carpenter, a careful noting of the thousand and one important things that help to produce the successful play, are absolutely necessary. All this is difficult enough for a man, but for a woman it is well nigh impossible. In view of such obstacles, the wisest thing for the author who feels the dramatic inspiration, is to write out the plot, describe the characters, suggest the situations and climaxes, and submit the whole to a professional critic, who, in the event of a favorable verdict will provide the necessary collaborator,—the man who has made stage business a study and succeeded as a play-wright. By this means, the battle is more than half won. The collaborator having a pecuniary, as well as a professional, interest in the work, and an intimate acquaintance with managers, will know when, where, and how to bring it to the notice of the public, and in such a shape that the chances will be largely in its favor.

LITERARY CRITICISM.

It is proverbial that we must judge of the strength of a chain by the strength of its weakest link, but this method is not applicable to any literary production. In this direction it is the average excellence which must determine the estimate of the whole. Certainly the strongest and most brilliant passages are not to be accepted as a standard of measurement for the whole book or article, nor are the weakest and least interesting. There is presumably a certain degree of merit in every form of literary work; it will probably vary from page to page as does the record of the thermometer from day to day, but it is always possible in the aggregate to determine its average standing. This average is the plane upon which the author's work must be judged.

Both literary and dramatic criticism have become degraded under the universal money-making interest which dominates our country. Criticism to be valuable must above all things be honest, and this it can never be when its praise or its blame becomes a matter of dollars and cents. Moreover, no criticism can be worth anything unless the critic is competent by nature and education to form and pronounce judgment,

but "bought-up" criticism necessarily ignores all such qualifications. To be competent by nature, signifies the possession of a liberal, far-sighted, and unprejudiced spirit, as well as a charitable and generous one. The education which must accompany this should be of the broadest nature and a continually growing one. No criticism is of the least value which is based upon personal taste or preference instead of general principles, or without an exhaustive knowledge of the subject treated. The critic should, above all persons, be thoroughly "posted" in all human interest, present and past; he should be a universal reader; a close and logical thinker and reasoner. A great reform is needed in this direction. The establishment of international copyright will do much for authors; a reform in methods of criticism, or the manner in which authors deal with the work and reputation of other authors, is the next greatest help and encouragement to be looked for, and it must originate not in any act of Congress, but in the *esprit de corps* of the profession itself.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Although pictures are not, strictly considered, any part of literary work, the use of illustrations has be-

come so common that it is a very natural question with authors whether the ability to draw, and thereby illustrate one's own productions, is not a passport to favor in the eyes of an editor. Publishers do not agree concerning this point. Artists who make a business of illustrating books and magazines find steady and profitable employment, and, as a rule, an editor who is pleased with an article can without any delay or difficulty have suitable illustrations furnished for it, preferring in some cases to dictate as to the special places for illustration. Often old "cuts" on hand in the office are used if suitable, thereby saving the expense of new drawings. It is not worth while, considering the present artistic facility of the press, for any author to spend much time or money in procuring illustrations in the hope that the article submitted will thereby prove more acceptable. It will always be judged solely on its literary merit, and while the illustrations will doubtless add to its appearance and interest, they will by no means insure, or even influence, its acceptance.

CHAPTER VI.

MANUSCRIPTS.

Influence with Editors—Readers of MSS.—Prompt Examination of MSS.—Prices Paid by Different Periodicals—The Editor's Blue Pencil—Pseudonyms—Copyrighting of MSS.—Mendicant Literature—Rejected MSS.—Discouragement of Authors.

INFLUENCE WITH EDITORS.

The assumption that influence has anything to do with the acceptance of MS. is a great mistake. There is nothing more likely to prejudice one whose business it is to read and decide upon the merit of an article than a letter of introduction or an appeal to sympathy. The same principle holds as in other mercantile business. The butcher does not care who raises the beef, which, being of the best quality, his customers gladly pay well for. Writers should understand this great truth,—that editors are as anxious to get hold of good material as the writers are to secure fame and fortune. It is a mutual benefit.

An editor sells goods as truly as does the grocer or

the silk merchant. His goods, to be sure, are the products of the brain, not of the farm or of the loom; but it is as much for his interest to sell good stories and good poems, as for the grocer to sell good sugar, or the merchant to sell good calico. We can scarcely imagine a farmer going to a grocer with the remark, "I know these potatoes are almost worthless, but I need a new winter overcoat, and so you will please buy them at your regular rates," or the manufacturer saying to the merchant, "This cloth will very likely fall to pieces as soon as it is worn, but I want to enlarge my factory and so you will please buy my goods." Yet this is precisely the principle upon which many writers approach editors. "My mother is sick," or "I can't pay my rent," or, "I want a new summer bonnet," is often supposed to be sufficient reason for an editor to purchase literary productions with little, if any, reference to their value.

An editor, like any other business man, buys only what he wants, and of as good a quality as he can get. What he buys he expects to sell again, and the daily, weekly, or monthly publication is the counter over which he deals with his customers. They will buy his goods if they like them and want them, not because the editor needs money to pay a doctor's bill or to meet

the demand of his landlord. There is no more mistaken notion than that an editor's office is a charity bureau.

Every writer may rely upon the fact that the merit of the article submitted is the only thing with which the editor is concerned. He is constantly on the alert to discover something interesting, and, if possible, novel and unique, to offer to his readers. It is a question if, when successful in his search, he does not experience as much satisfaction as the contributor.

READERS OF MSS.

In no place is the law of "the survival of the fittest" more thoroughly exemplified than in an editor's office. In large newspaper and magazine offices, there are usually three readers of MSS. It is the duty of the first one to reject from the mass offered by each mail those which are manifestly unworthy of any attention. The remainder is read with a view to selecting the best for a second examination. The second reader culls from this number those which in his judgment are most acceptable, and from these the third reader selects the number required for use.

PROMPT EXAMINATION OF MSS.

There is nothing so gladdening to the heart of an author as dispatch in deciding upon the availability of his work. To the experienced and generally successful writer a quick return is better than a tardy acceptance. Authors can always depend upon Harper & Brothers, Perry Mason & Co. of the "Youth's Companion," W. Jennings Demorest of "Demorest's Monthly Magazine," N. Y., and Forrest Morgan of the "Traveler's Record," Hartford, Conn., for immediate decisions. Two weeks is the utmost limit required at either place, and in the majority of instances returns are even more speedy than this. There may be others just as prompt, but the editors of the above-mentioned periodicals make quick examinations a specialty. Short, bright, and sometimes amusing stories and articles are those most craved by the editor of Demorest's. "The Traveler's Record" is noted for its exceptionally fine poetry.

LITERARY COMPENSATION.

To give the information requested in regard to the prices paid for literary work by the editors of our numerous periodicals, is not an easy task. It is even difficult for editors themselves to furnish such figures

on account of the necessarily varying schedule. But many of them have been most kind in their attempts to serve the readers of this volume.

The usual rate paid contributors by Harper & Bros. is \$10 per thousand words. To popular authors, ten times this amount is doubtless given, and here the prices vary again according to the amount of success achieved. The "Century Magazine" pays from \$10 to \$100 per page for prose. There are no regular rates for poetry. Messrs. Hay and Nicolay receive \$50,000 for the Magazine right to use the "Life of Lincoln," which continues three years. Here, as elsewhere, the value to the Magazine is the principal thing considered. At "Lippincott's Magazine," prices vary from \$5 to \$50 per page, according to the reader's estimate of the article. The editor of this Magazine very kindly offers the following suggestion: "It would be a good plan to tell your readers that manuscripts had better be addressed informally to the 'Editor of So and So.' Many of the vexatious delays of which writers complain come from the fact that their articles have not gone through the hands of the clerk, who is always a better business man than the editor, and whose mission it is to see that MSS. are entered, checked, and returned."

The price paid by the "Forum" is never below \$10 per thousand words, and rarely above \$50, "but any attempt," writes the editor, "to name a rate between these would give an incorrect impression. Most of the matter that appears in the "Forum" is written by invitation."

The "Congregationalist" of Boston pays liberally for all matter. Articles adapted to the outside page receive a higher rate of compensation than those used on the other pages. "Our prices vary all the way from a small sum per column or per article to a very large sum," the editor writes. "We endeavor to pay whatever the matter seems to be worth to us and such sum as is satisfactory to the writer. It should be added that we pay for all articles, and do not ask any one to write without compensation."

The "Christian Union" rates are also generous, and "The Independent" has always been distinguished for its appreciative treatment of its authors.

The "Sunday School Times" of Philadelphia has no specified rates, but experience has proved their usual rates fair. From \$5 to \$10 for poems, and the same amounts for short prose articles, are paid to the ordinary writer. The editor of the "Christian at Work" reports the prices of that paper as "not differ-

ing materially from the large religious weeklies." It is impossible to give the prices paid by all these periodicals. Among those of the largest circulation, the writers of poetry are well remunerated. Very few of them pay less than \$5 for a poem, and sometimes \$10 and \$15 are given. Many of these papers, that can not afford to pay the best prices for contributions, refuse to give information as to their rates. This is unfortunate, because many excellent articles are declined by our magazines on account of lack of space which the writers would be glad to place at reduced prices if they only understood the market. Even \$2 per column, or sometimes \$2 for an article, would be gladly accepted in many cases by the authors of really valuable and helpful matter.

The same rule obtains in the secular as in the religious weeklies. Mrs. Frank Leslie, for instance, pays \$3 to \$10 per prose column. Robert Bonner's Sons, of the "New York Ledger," give \$10 for a poem or short story. In both these instances, as in every other, the successful author is remunerated according to the value of his work to the periodical. This average is so well kept in our story papers that to mention them all would be a work of supererogation.

Careful inquiry and a wide experience proves that

ten dollars a thousand words can be safely fixed upon as the average price paid for prose by our leading periodicals.

The comic papers pay well, but are generally crowded. To send a long story to a comic paper is to insure its return. Seven hundred words are quite sufficient; four hundred, better still.

THE EDITOR'S BLUE PENCIL.

Every editor is aware that a rejected article usually finds its way to other literary markets, and that to deface a MS. with blue pencil, or other marks, makes an entire copying of the page necessary. When it happens that the author (as is frequently the case) has no more paper like that of the returned MS., the whole article has to be copied. This is an act of cruelty on the part of editors, though in no instance is it ever intended as such. It is easier to hastily jot down the number of stamps received on the first page of the MS. than to make an entry in a book, but it is very unjust to the writer, and is a practice that should be stopped.

PSEUDONYMS.

The adoption of a fanciful or alliterative "pen-name" belonged to an earlier and more sentimental period of

literature than that of the present stirring time. It is of course a matter of personal taste or convenience, but has often led to much inconvenience in cases of persons who have later become famous. When the picture and the real name of such an author become the property of the public, it is a hard matter to keep the two names from becoming confused, or to correctly discriminate between them. Of course if the possession of a grotesque or disagreeable name makes its use undesirable or detrimental, or one's modesty shrinks from "the sight of his name in print," there is no reason why another one should not be chosen. But under ordinary circumstances it is better on every account to use one's own name.

There is a great deal "in a name" when it has acquired a certain commercial value. It carries with it almost the only form of "influence" which can ever be brought to bear upon editors, and decisions of this matter by writers who have any reasonable expectation of ever "making a name" for themselves, should be the result of careful thought, rather than of hasty impulse.

COPYRIGHTING OF MSS.

James Russell Lowell declares that "there is one thing better than a good book, and that is a book

honestly come by." It is certainly to be hoped that before long Congress may be brought, through the efforts of Mr. Lowell and his associates, to recognize the right of an author to the product of his own brains. Government has for years protected iron, wool, and cotton, but intellectual products have been the property of any country which chose to take them, and authors have suffered accordingly. This they must continue to do until they can as a class bring enough power to bear upon our legislature to compel them to recognize international copyright,—a matter which can be accomplished only by earnest and persistent work upon the part of these interested in securing this simple justice.

Says Dr. Van Dyke on this subject, in his article on "The National Sin of Literary Piracy," "It is idle to blame the men who print and sell books; indeed, it would be unjust, for the respectable publishers, heartily sick of the demoralized condition of their trade, are now united with the authors in protesting that the present condition of affairs is shameful and must be changed. The only thing that can prevent or delay such a change is the moral apathy of decent people and their willingness to buy cheap goods without asking whether they are honest. This is what needs to be

broken up. The public conscience must be quickened." Copyright entry can be made in the name of any United States resident, whether temporary or permanent; also by any citizen or native of the United States living abroad. The ultimate validity of copyright is determined by the courts. In 1838 a case was tried in which it was held that permanent residence is necessary to maintain copyright, but the decision has not been affirmed by a higher tribunal, the United States Supreme Court.

The process of copyrighting a book is simplicity itself, so far as the author is concerned; so simple, in fact, as to recall the old story of the laborer who merely carried a hod-full of bricks up a ladder, and the man at the top did all the work. Have a copy of the title-page of your intended book struck off by the nearest printer, or a type-writer, before the MS. goes to press. Enclose this title-page, and a one-dollar bill, in a note addressed to Hon. A. P. Spofford, Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C. The note may read somewhat in this style:—"Herewith is the title-page of a book which I am about to publish. Enclosed please find one dollar (\$1.00) copyright fee. Copies of book will be sent as soon as issued." Sign with your full name and residence. You will receive in return

various and sundry documents, which are to be preserved, and two copies of the book must be sent to Mr. Spofford before it is put into circulation.

That is all, for "the man at the top of the ladder does all the work."

"MENDICANT LITERATURE."

This is the title most appropriately given to the great mass of gratuitous contributions furnished for the press by those who can afford to write without compensation, and those who love to see themselves in print. Such contributions crowd out of the literary ranks many a needy and capable writer. There is no reason why a rich scribe with something to say should not say it, but let him, out of justice to the poor one, demand his pay. By such a course both writers will be judged by their merits, and this is just. It is an open question whether "the good of the cause," which furnishes the excuse for so much gratuitous writing, is ever good enough to warrant the writer who does not need, in crowding out the one who does.

REJECTED MSS.

It is one of the technicalities of an editor's correspondence with contributors that "the rejection of an

article does not necessarily imply lack of merit." This is the statement of a broad, general fact. At present the supply of good literary work is far in excess of the demand, and a large proportion must be rejected simply because there is a definite limit to the amount of matter which each publication can use.

Another common cause for the rejection of MSS. is that much of it which is good in itself is unfit for the publication to which it is submitted. There is nothing more necessary for writers to understand than the special character of the periodical to which they send contributions. A religious newspaper has no use for even the best written and most absorbing love story, nor a fashion paper for a scholarly essay on the moral virtues. Although it is preposterous to expect an editor to give reasons for the rejection of a MS., one is occasionally moved to volunteer some information concerning a particularly good paper in which he perceives much merit, but which is unavailable for his purpose, as, for instance, "Our paper advocates the interests of the poorer classes, and we cannot publish stories of fashionable life," or, "The policy of our paper is to refrain from publishing any article containing political or religious references," or, "Your hero eats beef and drinks wine. As our magazine is devoted to hygienic

reform, and discourages the use of animal food and intoxicating liquors, you can see that we cannot present our readers with such a story." The farmer does not carry his onions to a confectionery store, and a writer should as little think of sending his essay on the "Science of Evolution" to the *Weekly Joker*, or his verses on "My Lady's Lovers" to the *Monthly Moral Mirror*. Yet simple as this truth is, it is equally true that a mass of MSS., which, if sent to suitable places might have a fair chance of finding acceptance, wanders daily up and down the earth in quest of a purchaser. A writer should study the general character of a publication to which he intends to contribute, the length and general tone of its articles or stories, and as far as possible adapt his work to the particular market for which it is intended. Experience is a great aid in this direction; in fact it is almost the only means by which a writer can become fairly sure of the field, so that whatever reason there may be for the rejection of a MS. he may at least have the assurance that it is not on account of unsuitability to the publication.

The length of an article is often its only condemnation. It simply will not fit into the place for which it is intended and therefore it is thrown aside,—and

sometimes with regret,—as a mason rejects a stone too large for the niche in the wall which he is building. Many writers shrink almost as much from cutting the offspring of their brains as they would from using the knife upon their children. Every line, and every word of every line, is dear to them. Editors so generally recognize this fact that they seldom suggest the shortening of any article, even if its length is its only objection. The suitable length of a contribution can generally be determined by a study of the publication for which it is designed.

The large class of writers who assume that the chief aim of an editor's life is to disappoint and discourage authors, are prone to doubt that their MSS. have been examined, implying that if they had been, acceptance would be a foregone conclusion. They tell of various devices by which they have tested the case—for instance, by slightly fastening together the sheets, inserting bits of hair or cotton between the pages, etc., etc. A MS. reader can often tell by a glance at a page or two whether or not the whole article is worth reading, as truly as a customer at a counter can judge by examining a yard of silk whether she would care for the whole piece of goods. Many MSS. are a flash in the pan from the very first sentence.

They start off like wet fireworks or a rusty machine, and the first page of the production condemns all the rest of it.

DISCOURAGEMENT OF AUTHORS.

There is no reason why writers should suffer from discouragement any more than any other class of the world's workers. A good article, poem, or story, though it may be rejected nine times, may possibly find a lodgment at the tenth trial, and this experience is by no means an uncommon one. It is simply a case of "Try, try again," and the work needs patience, as well as ability and industry. If the ability is lacking, however, neither patience nor industry can avail, and where a writer is uncertain of his own power it is well to submit the matter to a qualified and disinterested critic. "The Author's Bureau" has been established for this purpose, and for a small fee, honest and prompt judgment will be passed upon every article submitted for examination, and suggestions made concerning any desirable change. Many writers have really brilliant ideas, but are not able to clothe them correspondingly. Such literary wardrobe is supplied by the "Author's Bureau," the advertisement of which will be found at the back of this volume.

CHAPTER VII.

EDITORS.

Correspondence with Editors—Responsibility for MSS.—Postage Stamps—Pigeon-holing of MSS.

Editors are neither myths nor monstrosities, though writers are sometimes tempted to believe them one or the other. As a class they are no more remiss in correspondence than ordinary individuals, yet there are sometimes cases of vexatious delay in letter-writing, decisions concerning MSS., etc., which lead impatient and impulsive writers to denounce the whole fraternity.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH EDITORS.

The rules which govern the conduct of business vary in different editorial offices. Of course some editors are more prompt, explicit, and generally satisfactory than others, but as a rule it will be found that all apparent neglect or delay, no matter how annoying it may be, is the legitimate result of an accumulation

of business, and an observance of the rule, "First come, first served."

Editors are busy men. Their work necessitates an ironclad adherence to special days and seasons, and a half hour of an editor's time is sometimes worth more than half a day of some other man's. For this reason, calls upon an editor in his sanctum are not only unnecessary, but extremely annoying. To appear before so busy a man with article in hand, either to read or to give to him, does not predispose him to a favorable judgment, while if an author calls for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not an article has been accepted, the editor might well be pardoned for hoping that it had been rejected and that the writer would be too discouraged to call again. The mail service is usually amply sufficient for the transaction of business between author and editor, to the immense saving of the time of both, and sometimes the temper as well.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR MSS.

As editors do not hold themselves responsible for MS. which is lost in any way, it is a proper plan for authors to preserve a copy of what they write. It sometimes happens that articles disappear or go astray in the mails, and occasionally—though fortu-

nately only occasionally—that they are mislaid and lost in the editor's office. About five years ago a voluminous MS. book disappeared in a most mysterious manner from the desk of a reader in one of the most prominent Boston publishing houses. As it has never been found, the probability is that it was destroyed in the office by mistake, and though the firm presented the author with a sum of money as partial compensation, it was with the distinct understanding that the payment was a matter of courtesy and could not be legally enforced.

POSTAGE STAMPS.

“In cases where MSS. are accepted for publication, why do not the editors return the stamps that necessarily accompany such contributions to the author?” This is a question that has frequently been asked, and at first glance seems a perfectly proper one. The reason is that such a proceeding would involve too much book-keeping and letter-writing, without any adequate reason for either. In a busy periodical office the service of an extra clerk would be necessary for such a purpose. So the value of the stamps is returned to the author in the amount received for his contribution.

PIGEON-HOLING OF MSS.

It is customary in some offices to send word to a contributor that his article has been received and will be duly examined. This, gratifying as it is as proof that the MS. has safely reached its destination, is the exception rather than the rule. In most cases its fate is not known until it is returned by mail, or its equivalent sent in the form of a check. The interval between the sending of an article and the response concerning it, varies greatly in different offices.

Of course the work of a writer is his business capital, his stock in trade, and it is only fair that an editor should so regard it. There is, however, too little editorial recognition of this fact, and writers as a class should combine their efforts towards effecting some reform in this direction. There is no reason why a MS., if worth only \$5 to an author, should be kept waiting months for a decision concerning it, and as many months more for publication, unless, indeed, this latter point is understood by the author and agreed to by him. The interest on \$5 in twelve months would purchase at least a few postage stamps, which to a writer are "always handy to have in the family." In this matter, as in many others, organiza-

tion and co-operation can do much, and if each author will make it a point to insist upon his rights in this particular, a new order of things may sometime be brought about.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MAKING OF BOOKS.

Paper and Ink—Appearance of MS.—General Suggestions—
The Preparation of “Copy” — Printing — Manuscript
Proofs—Author and Publisher.

Although many of the following hints regarding the preparation of MS. have already been given in the book, the exact words of one firm,—the popular publishers, Cassell & Company, Limited, of 104 and 106 Fourth Avenue, New York, and London, will be found particularly useful and interesting.

PAPER AND INK.

Buy white or manilla paper, made into pads if these are preferred, the size of the page no larger than that known as commercial note. “If you must have ruled paper, have it,” says the publisher, “but your writing master has not done his duty by you if you have not learned to write a straight line without artificial aid. If your paper is to be ruled, select that known to stationers as ‘sermon paper,’ as the lines are far

apart. Next, write with black ink. If you want the 'reader' of the publishing house to whom you send your manuscript to hate you, use violet ink. By the time the pages reach the twenties, the reader's eyes begin to smart and burn, and an unpleasant dizziness is the result. By the end of half an hour he will throw your story into a drawer and leave it there as long as possible. If, in spite of the ink he accepts it, the curse of the compositor will be upon you."

APPEARANCE OF MS.

"Do not write in a blank book, or have the leaves bound or tied. It tires the reader's hand to hold such MS. Have the pages loose, so that he can take up a few at a time, and remember that to roll manuscript is a more heinous sin than to use violet ink. Many readers decline to examine rolled pages. These professional critics are human, and are always prejudiced against an ill-written, slovenly looking page of foolscap, prepared with pale ink. If the author is so careless about his work, how can he expect the reader to feel any interest in it? Some MSS. have the pages fastened with ribbon, the title page written out in elaborate old English text, with symbolic initial letters at the head of the chapters. One can feel pretty sure

that such matter will not be worth the reading. An author who has so much time to devote to useless work is not likely to have much to say that is worth hearing."

Messrs. Cassell & Co. show with no little pride the MSS. of three of their authors, Miss M. G. McClelland, Miss Caroline B. Le Row, and Sidney Luska. These MSS. are perfect in every particular, and Miss Le-Row's chirography is as legible as the best type-writing. The fact that well-prepared copy should be on exhibition in a publisher's office, tells a sad story of its exceeding rarity.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS.

It would be well for the writer to pin the following rules over his desk:

- I. *Write with black ink on white paper.*
- II. *Number the pages carefully and use sheets of uniform size.*
- III. *Write only on one side of the sheet.*
- IV. *Write plainly and print with pen any proper name that may be at all unusual.*
- V. *Never roll a manuscript. If too thick to fold, send it flat between bits of thick paste-board.*

THE PREPARATION OF "COPY."

On this subject Messrs. Cassell & Co. recommend, first, the use of the type-writer. The charges for this work are probably the same all over the country,—five cents for a hundred words. By this slight expenditure the author not only sends an attractive MS. to the publisher, but can furnish himself with a copy which is sometimes of inestimable value. In response to the question whether publishers are ever responsible for the loss of MS., Mr. O. M. Dunham replied that they never were for "unsolicited manuscript." "Publishers take every precaution," he added, "and while MSS. are in their possession lock them up in fire-proof safes, but publishers, with all the rest of the world, are liable to accidents."

"After an author has written out his story or biography, or whatever it may be, let him read it over carefully, marking the paragraphs, and underlining the words he wishes to have italicized. It is a good rule for an author to proof-read his writings in manuscript, for in so doing, he will save himself and his publishers much unnecessary expense.

"In marking paragraphs this is the sign used by printers ¶. When you want a word all in capitals

draw three horizontal lines under it. If the first letter of the word is to be capitalized underline it with three short lines. If you use a word of French or any other foreign tongue, be sure to write it plainly. It is far better to avoid foreign words, using them only when necessary. It is a mistake of young writers to think that the use of foreign words gives an air of learning to their pages. On the contrary, it is a proof of juvenility, and means that the writer has a foreign dictionary at hand. If the author wishes to add anything to what has been written, let it be added in the manuscript. If more than a few words, write on the margin, and mark very carefully on the page just where it is to be inserted. These interlineations and additions should be written with a different colored ink, red or violet. There is no objection to violet for this purpose. Many authors are very careless in the preparation of work for the printer, and sometimes every word has to be gone over by the editor for the purpose of dotting the I's, crossing the T's, and the careful spelling out of proper names."

PRINTING.

"When a MS. reaches the compositor's hands it is called 'copy.' The foreman of the composing room

receives it, and cuts each page up into strips of about three or four inches in width, which are called 'takes.' These are distributed among the compositors, so that it is seldom that a man has a consecutive story to 'set.' Each of these 'takes' is numbered, and as they are set up, the type is lifted into 'galleys,'—long pans of brass with wooden sides, the width of the column or page. When a galley is filled, proofs are 'pulled,' and these are called 'galley proofs,' and are the first the author receives. These must be read with the greatest care, and all important corrections made on them. If certain words are too near together, make a mark like this \wedge between them, and like this \ast on the margin opposite. If two words are transposed, as 'cat that' instead of 'that cat,' draw a line under the bottom of 'that' and continue it over the top of 'cat,' while on the margin you will write 'transfer' or 'tr.' Where capitals are needed, mark a line under the letter, and three lines on the margin. If the word is to be italicized, draw a line under it, and write 'ital.' on the margin opposite the word. If certain lines are too near together, draw a line between them and write 'lead' on the margin. If a letter is turned up-side down, draw a line under it and make this sign 9 on the margin. To add a word or paragraph,

write it on the margin and make this sign \wedge where you wish it inserted, drawing a line from the \wedge to the added word. These are the signs in common use. For more instruction, consult a sample of proof reading in the back of Webster's Unabridged Dictionary."

MANUSCRIPT PROOFS.

"After the galley proofs have been read, they are returned to the printer. It is a good plan to make corrections in a different colored ink from that used by the publishers' proof-reader, whose hands they have passed through before reaching yours. When the proofs are returned to the printer, the corrections are at once made and the 'galleys' are made up into pages. It is well to see these revised proofs before they are 'cast,' but this is not always possible, for few printing houses have enough type to be able to hold it 'locked up' for any length of time. The next proofs are 'foundry proofs.' That is, electrotypes have been made from the type pages and the type has been 'distributed.' With these 'foundry proofs' the 'galley proofs' are sent, so that the author can see whether all the corrections marked have been made. This is the time to be careful about making changes, for it is an expensive thing to do after the pages have

been electrotyped. To change a word, a piece of the metal plate has to be cut out, and another with the new word soldered in. 'Overrunning' must not be done in the page proofs. If the author does this he must pay the cost. Instances have been known where the corrections of an author have absorbed all the profits of his book. If it is necessary to change a sentence, one must be substituted with the same number of words and letters, so that the page will not be overrun."

AUTHOR AND PUBLISHER.

"As may be judged from the elaborate processes to be gone through with, book making is somewhat expensive. The plates, paper, and binding for a single volume may cost hundreds or thousands of dollars. It depends upon the size of the type, the number of pages, the quality of the paper, the illustrations, style of binding, and numberless other things. And yet there are authors who do not take the expense of publication into account. 'My book retails for a dollar and I get only ten cents a copy. That means ninety cents for the publisher,' the dissatisfied writer sometimes remarks. Let us see if he is right. The book retails for one dollar, but does that dollar go to the

publisher? 'Forty off' is no uncommon rate to the trade, and frequently 'half off' is often asked and given in these days of lively competition. With 'forty off' and ten cents to the author, we have fifty cents. The book, after averaging the expense, costs about twenty-five cents; this leaves twenty-five for the publisher, out of which come the costs of 'press copies'—a hundred or more, the cost of advertising in the newspapers, the printing and distribution of show cards and catalogues, all of which expense is the publisher's. Then the publisher takes all the risks. If the book is a failure, and on this subject he is wholly in the dark, the loss is entirely his."

Yet, notwithstanding the apparent one-sidedness of this arrangement, the publisher is always eager for manuscripts. There is an idea among certain people that it is only the tried and found-popular authors who have any chance with publishers—that there is a clique of "ins" who shut the door in the face of the "outs." This is a great mistake. "Manuscripts are what we publishers are after," said Mr. Dunham, "for we are always expecting the great American novel, and it is impossible to say how, or from whom, it will come. Every manuscript that comes to this office receives the most careful attention, and the author is not

more pleased to have his book accepted than we are to publish it. The unknown author stands an equal chance with the known. It is merit that we want—the fame will follow. Usually a MS. is given to more than one reader; sometimes half a dozen opinions are necessary.”

Publishers are always glad to hear from new authors. Let the writers bear in mind this simple fact, and he will not think that his MS. has been returned to him unread. A reader's mind is too constantly tortured by the fear that he may reject a good story to allow of his neglecting a MS. He knows that the same MS. will be sent to other houses. Suppose another reader, more astute than he, sees its possibilities, writes a good opinion of it, and it is published and makes the sensation of the year. Fancy the first reader's chagrin! Fifty rejections cannot compare with it.

CHAPTER IX.

THE AUTHOR-PUBLISHER.

Reasons for Publishing One's Own Work—Risks and Costs of Publication—Method of Publication.

REASONS FOR PUBLISHING ONE'S OWN WORK.

No fact more strikingly marks the growth of ideas and the decadence of literary conservatism, than that authors in many instances are now publishing their own books. Formerly, it was only the writer who had made money and reputation who dared embark in such an enterprise, and he was spurred on by the thought of the larger amount he might have made had he not bound himself to accept a ten per cent. royalty. And here let it be stated that there should always be a clause in every contract between authors and publishers, providing for an increase of royalty in case of "a hit." The impossibility of making such arrangements as would benefit the author as well as the publisher, has had much to do with writers assuming the responsibility of publication.

Another reason for authors issuing their own books is the failure to have them accepted by publishers. Such writers feel, and often quite properly, that their work is equal, if not superior, to much that is sent broadcast over the earth, and so after a series of disappointments, they become courageous enough—or foolish enough—to strike out for themselves. In this connection a crumb of comfort may be extracted by those whose MSS. return to them with pertinacious regularity, by the statement of the fact that a large number of the books annually sent out by our first-class publishers are paid for in hard cash by the writers. The price asked by the publishers for the bringing out and advertising of such productions, is sometimes more and sometimes less, though it is doubtful if the sum ever goes below \$500. So when the book that “isn’t half as good as mine,” is announced with a grand flourish of trumpets, let the disappointed author solace himself with the reflection that if he had put his hand in his pockets to the same depth, his book would have occupied the same position. Of course there are exceptions to this rule, as to all others, and if a book is hopelessly poor, no money will induce a reputable publishing house to endorse it.

If a MS. is sold outright, there should be an arrange-

ment for future profits to the author in case of a large sale. What, for instance, can be more aggravating than to sell one's novel for a small sum, and then have it achieve a great success? But a bargain is a bargain, and the poor scribe has no case unless his publisher happens to be a man with a nicely adjusted conscience.

RISKS AND COSTS OF PUBLICATION.

The number of MSS. that have gone the rounds of publishers' offices without acceptance, and have afterwards been profitably issued by the writers, is larger than supposed, and every year the number increases. This process of book publishing is not difficult, but it may be disastrous. An author needs to exercise the most thorough business discretion in deciding such a matter. The first question should be, "Can I afford the financial risk?" The next, "Have I sufficient judgment in matters pertaining to the practical part of such work to make success probable?" If these questions are answered in the affirmative, the next step is to have the MS. carefully read by a professional critic. Than this, there is nothing more important. The writer who pays a regular publisher for producing his work, has the benefit of careful criticism, for

while the publisher may not be in the least sanguine of the success of the book, he is careful enough of his own reputation not to permit the author to figure very conspicuously as an ignoramus. Here is the writer's protection. But when he takes the reins into his own hands, and whips his Pegasus into market, under the stress of disappointment or anger, he will, in nine cases out of ten, come to grief. If he is a man of education and culture, the case is different. Such a man can afford to take risks which would be fatal to the literary amateur. And again, the literary amateur, with an imperfect education, may, and often does, originate matter that by careful pruning and arranging, puts the man of culture to shame. The book of the skilled writer may fail, but there is nothing in such a failure to make him wish that he had never been born, as certainly must be the case with the amateur author who publishes his own book, and afterwards finds it and himself a laughing stock for the world. It is one thing to say "Mr. So and So's novel was somewhat disappointing, the characters unnatural, and the plot weak," and quite another to have written against one, "There is no excuse for the existence of such a book as Mr. So and So's, published by himself. This novel has undoubtedly made the tour of all the publishers' offices,

and was rescued from a merciful oblivion only by the colossal ignorance and conceit of the author." One may speedily recover from the first disappointment, the second is a blow which authors will do well to dodge. This can be done by placing the MS. in the hands of an unprejudiced professional critic. To seek the opinion of a dear friend in such a matter—even though that friend may really possess literary taste and judgment—is to do a very foolish thing. The friend is afraid to hurt. The honest critic will cut deep, and save the enthusiast from making a public exhibition of his ignorance and vanity.

METHOD OF PUBLICATION.

After these details have been attended to, comes the choice of a printer. It is best to submit the work to three or four reliable houses, and get estimates from each. To do this successfully the writer must have a clear idea of the size of the book, the paper, the type, and the covers. A satisfactory printer having been found, the contract is next in order. This document should always definitely name the date of issue. The failure of a printer to have the work finished at the stated time, is prolific of annoyance, and sometimes productive of serious results. A verbal agreement be-

fore a witness is thought by some to be as binding as any other form, but a contract "in black and white" is preferable.

It is a safe thing generally to have a book electrotyped, although this process increases the first cost. Here, the advice of a disinterested professional critic is also in order. If there seems a reasonable chance for a second edition, the work of electrotyping, which renders a resetting of the type unnecessary, makes the second and all future editions very inexpensive.

Some authors who select cloth covers for their books feel of the market by having a thousand copies printed and electrotyped, and only five hundred bound. This diminishes the cost of the work, and in case of failure there are so many less bindings to be sacrificed. If there is a good sale for the five hundred, the remainder can be speedily put into covers.

When the book is finished, copies should be sent to the leading periodicals and newspapers for notices, and such advertising mediums selected as seem best adapted to push the work. If notices are favorable, and the book begins to make its way, there will be no need of any extra effort in putting it on the market, as orders for it will come in from first-class book stores all over the country.

It is safe for an author to allow \$500 as the probable cost of publishing an ordinary sized novel, bound in cloth. In this department of trade, as in every other, there are apt to be unavoidable extras, little things occurring to the author from time to time which would facilitate the sale of his book. This sum ought to pay for an edition of one thousand, nicely bound and electrotyped. If paper covers are selected, the cost will be materially lessened. If success attends the venture of the author-publisher, the money made by his investment is all his own. His book is paid for, and he is not obliged to take a ten per cent. royalty and give up the remainder. But if he fails, he loses everything. The result is the same if a book fails in the hands of a publisher who has been paid for production. There can be no royalty if there is no sale.

CHAPTER X.

A REPRESENTATIVE PUBLICATION.

One of the most popular and useful periodicals in the country, and one which offers unrivalled inducements to writers in the matter of quick decisions and adequate compensation, is the "Youth's Companion," published by Perry Mason & Co., Boston.

This paper was established in 1827. From the first, it has aimed to furnish the most desirable form of intellectual entertainment for the family, and in a nation of homes it has naturally found a wide welcome. "The Companion" is not a paper for children, but for young people, and it is one of its marked peculiarities that it is eagerly read by their elders. All its stories have a high moral purpose and are as interesting to the old as to the young. Aiming as it does to convey as much useful information as possible, it is really a weekly cyclopedia in which are always to be found valuable facts on the social and scientific interests of the day, set forth in articles written by some of the most eminent scholars and statesmen of the time. In

fact, nothing is more surprising than the list of famous names and interesting subjects which at the beginning of each year is published in the form of a prospectus,—an extensive bill of fare for the forthcoming literary banquet promised to its more than 400,000 actual subscribers, to say nothing of the many more thousands of additional readers. It is an indication not only of its interesting character, but of the good sense of some teachers, that in many school-rooms it takes the place of a regular reading-book, and old copies are given to the children to read in leisure minutes, as a reward for good behavior or fine recitations. Thousands of dollars have, during the past few years, been expended by the editors in prizes for the best stories, and the result, both to the publishers and the patrons, has fully justified the expenditure.

Three readers of MS. are regularly employed in the office, and the acceptance of an article is assured if two of them decide in its favor. Articles are never held over two weeks, and are paid for on acceptance, not waiting for publication. If stamps accompany them, they are returned as promptly in case of rejection, otherwise the contributors are duly notified of the rejection, and articles are sent when stamps are forwarded.

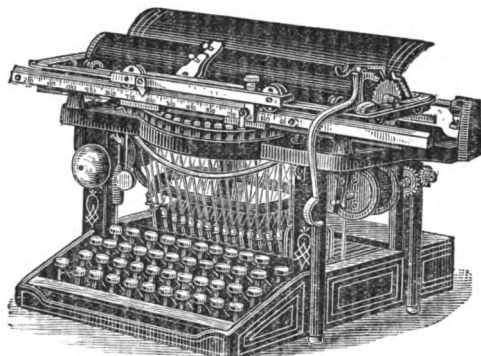
Writers should understand that no religious, political, fairy or love stories are desired. As a rule, no story should exceed 3000 words; shorter ones are still more in demand. They should create a lively interest, but be entirely free from morbid or sensational elements. Nothing is more marked than the high intellectual and moral tone of this deservedly popular paper, but writers will always blunder if they make the moral too apparent. "Preachy" stories have wings and fly back to their authors most speedily. Anecdotes of distinguished persons, bright reminiscences of noted scenes are always welcome at this office, provided they are worked up with power, are very short, and the themes are not hackneyed. The writers who can adapt their work to the readers of the "Youth's Companion" have the benefit of an immense audience; and as a medium to make known an author's work it is unapproachable.

WHEN two brands of the same sort of goods are selling side by side in the market, one bringing double the price of the other, what is it that enables the former to find sale? Always, because it is worth that much more; because it will wear longer, do better service while it lasts, keep one satisfied with his purchase instead of kicking himself for a fool all the time he has it, be reliable at the sharpest emergency instead of liable to give out just when it is needed most. And the concern dealing in such goods *has* to charge more for them, because it costs more to make them. That is exactly why THE TRAVELERS charges more for its Accident Policies than its competitors, why they are worth more, and why it can get more and do a greater business than they despite its higher rates. The rates are the lowest that permanent surety of paying all claims when due will justify. It paid claimants about \$1,400,000 in 1887, and has paid them over \$15,000,000 altogether. "Moral: Insure in THE TRAVELERS."

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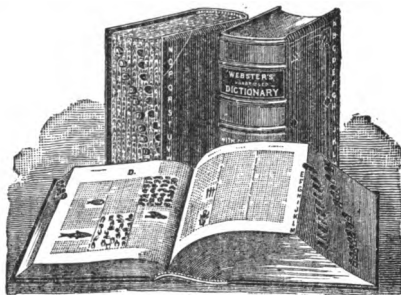
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