

HOW TO WRITE A GOOD STORY.

INTERESTING INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE LITERARY AND THE CITY EDITOR—MODERN PROCESS OF STORY MAKING.

"Flamerock can do about a column an hour," said the city editor, as they sat over their cigars last evening.

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed the new literary editor, who was receiving some of his first practical information about journalism and journalists. The man they were talking about was one of the reporters on the paper. After a pause, during which the literary editor seemed to be enjoying a pleasant reverie, he said again:

"You don't mean it! We literary men could hardly believe that possible, you know. It is such a contrast to the way we work. But I can understand him doing hack work at that rate perhaps; of course he takes much longer to turn out that delicate, human story-telling manuscript that you use of his on Saturdays."

"Not a bit of it," was the reply. "You remember that gem about the boy that was lame? He came across that idea one Friday afternoon; it was in type before the composing room shut down that evening."

"Wonderful! wonderful!" said the literary editor; "wonderful in two ways; that he could write it in that time, and that he could have the satisfaction of seeing it in print so soon afterward. Did you use it the next day?"

"Why, of course. You don't suppose I can afford to let stuff like that get musty on the hooks, do you?"

FOURTEEN YEARS AFTER.

The literary editor went into his reverie again, and it was something of a task to get him back to the coffee and to journalism.

"I should like to tell you a story of the way we work," he said at length; "but I am afraid you will think it perfectly dreadful. What would you think of a reporter to whom you gave an assignment who came in with the story you wanted just fourteen years after you had asked for it?"

The question amused the city editor so much that he forgot to say that such a contingency was impossible, for no man remains either a city editor or a reporter for fourteen years. What he said was that his men were sometimes given fourteen hours to bring in their copy, and sometimes fourteen minutes; that the man who could be depended upon to do three sticks in the latter period was the man he wanted.

"Ah, yes," replied the literary editor; "but he can't write like this, you know." And he picked up a current magazine and read from it:

THE STORY ITSELF.

"He awoke in the small hours of the night. The stars of the zenith were quenched. Blackness walled and roofed him in close about his crumpled form, save when at shorter and shorter intervals and with more and more deafening thunders the huge clouds lit up their own forms, writhing one upon another, and revealed the awe-struck sea and ghostly sands, waiting breathlessly below. He rose to lay on more fuel, and while he was in the act the tornado broke upon him. The wind, as he had forecast, came out of the south-east. In an instant it was roaring and hurling against the farther side of his island rampart like the charge of a hundred thousand horses, and tossing the sand of the dunes like blower hair into the north-west, while the rain in one wild deluge lashed the frantic sea and weltering lagoon as with the whips of the furies.

"He had kept the sail on the beach for a protection from the storm but before he could crawl under it he was as wet as though he had been tossed up by the deep, and yet was glad to gain its cover from the blinding floods and stinging sand. Here he lay for more than an hour, the rage of the tempest continually growing the heavens in a constant pulsing glare of lightnings, their terrific thunders smiting and bellowing round and round its echoing vault, and the very island seeming at times to stagger back and recover again as it braced itself against the fearful onsets of the wind."

GREATEST EVER KNOWN.

"Did it take fourteen years to write that?" demanded the city editor.

"I was in that storm," answered the other, paying no attention to the persiflage. "It was the greatest storm that ever swept over the Gulf. I think I will tell you about it, for I have been wondering all day how it happens that only now has the story of Gregory's Island been told. You read it? Is it not superb? You don't believe that any magazine editor left that on his desk fourteen years, do you? And after having given the assignment, as you would say, to George W. Cable?"

"Cable and Joe Pennell and a man you never heard of, a Frenchman of infinite cleverness, and myself formed a yatching party in the Gulf of Mexico in the spring of 1882. We were out for a couple of weeks; and we sailed all through the wonderful waters on either side of the mouth of the Mississippi river. Lejune was there for the fun of it; so was I. But Cable and Pen-



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nell were there for a purpose; Cable to get information and colour and atmosphere for the story of Gregory's Island, and Pennell to make 400 of his extraordinary sketches—which was about his fortnightly capacity at that time; he works more slowly now, I think.

THE TERRIBLE STORY.

"We all knew that Cable had a story on hand, and that its seen was to be laid on one of the unique islands that we were visiting; but for a long time we could not get him to tell us the story. It might be a breach of faith, he said; what he meant was that one of us might be tempted to repeat it. But people become very confidential on a trip of that sort. We had adventures enough in ten days to make us all friends for life, if fate had not scattered us so far apart afterward; and one night, after that terrible storm, in which—well, I won't say anything about that, after what I read to you—Cable said that he was going to get that into his story, and then it was easy to induce him to tell his fellow survivors what the story was in which he was to figure the greatest night of their lives.

"And so lying on the deck of the schooner yacht Sapho—I saw her a year ago, and she still spells it with one P—Cable told us three the terrible story of Gregory's Island. Each of us was pledged to the most absolute secrecy, of course it would have been a crime ever to tell the tale until after he had written and published it. But when I listened to it, I must say I had no idea that I should have to hold my tongue about it for fourteen years.

"After waiting eight years I asked Cable if he had given up the intention of writing the story. He was indignant at the very thought. I think he said he had already done some work on it; at any rate, he renewed the pledge of silence. To-day I read the story, and now I want to ask you whether it was not worth waiting for."

A "BULLY" STORY.

"It's a bully story," said the city editor. Then, seeing the expression of pain on the face of his friend, he hastened to add:

"Not Cable's. Don't think for a moment that I am such a brute as to speak of that in such a way. That is exquisite, charming, delicious. It is powerful, and was worth waiting for, especially after you had heard the author tell it. But what I meant was that your own story is rattling good stuff. I'll use it to-morrow."

The literary editor did not understand. "What will you use?" he asked.

"Why, your story of the storm, and the yatching trip with two big bugs, and the fourteen years and all that. It will make just the kind of 'special' that we are always looking for, for the page opposite editorial."

"But, my dear man, what do you mean by saying that you will use it to-morrow? It would be quite impossible for me to write it out in less than a week."

"Oh, that will be all right," replied the city editor, with perfect indifference.

"You can't intend to do it yourself, you know. It is midnight now, and you have a lot of work to do in the morning."

The city editor smiled. "Yes," he said. "I do keep pretty busy mornings. But it will be all right. I'll give it to Flamerock to do."

"To Flamerock!" The astonishment of the literary editor knew no bounds. "But he knows nothing about it; he has not

heard a word of what I have been saying. It would take you longer to tell him about it than to write it yourself."

"Ten seconds," was the laconic reply of the city editor. "I'll just give him the magazine and touch the main points, and he will do the rest."

And he did. This is it.—*New York Mail and Express.*

EMILE ZOLA, THE AUTHOR (Continued from page 2).

speaks positively, ex-cathedra, as one having absolute knowledge. Suddenly he pauses, readjusts his pince-nez. His face at once loses its animation. The expression, however, remains congealed as it were. All the sorrow and pain are invisible there, and the indomitable will. It is "the face of one wholly in protest and life-long, unyielding battle against the world. Affection all converted into indignation, an implacable indignation; slow, equable, silent, like that of a god." That is Zola, the polemic, the defender of Dreyfus.

He prepares his books with great care and spends much time in thinking over the motif of the story, in sketching in the plan, in defining the characters, and placing them in the scenes. Then he begins his studies of human nature in its natural environment. For "La Faute de l'Abbe Mouret" he took copious notes from mountains of religious tomes and attended mass constantly for many months at the little church in the Bagtignolles. For "La Ventre de Paris" he visited Halles an innumerable number of times. He spends much time in the libraries, in the newspaper offices, in the prefecture of police. Like Balzac he believes in naming his characters so that they will not be forgotten. For this the Paris directory and the signs on the street furnish him with symbols he wants.

Over the fireplace of M. Zola's beautiful summer home at Medan in Seine-et-Oise is inscribed a line from Pliny: "Nulla Dies Sine Linea." The author's daily literary labor consists of about 1,500 words. And, figuratively, he applies the Latin legend to all that he does. He works fiercely at everything he undertakes. His brain is always active. He believes in carrying things to their logical conclusions. He has never but once failed to accomplish what he set out to do. And even this defeat may not be final. The doors of the Palais de l'Institute have not yet opened at his knock.

Just now he is fighting for recognition of his dominant principle where its prevalence or downfall may mean the fate of a nation. A cell in Ste. Pelagie yawns before him. Practically he stands alone. Perhaps, like Ibsen's "Enemy of the People," he is strongest that way.—*New York Times.*

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