

ably weary of their names, and of their writings, but for the constant spice of variety afforded by new claimants for a place in the literary galaxy, whose work, if only as affording a means of comparison and contrast, saves our palate from becoming jaded, and our appetite from satiety. Let us be thankful, then, for the volunteer contributor, some outline of whose evolution I am venturing upon in this little paper.

"A lyric conception," the beloved "autocrat" has confessed, "hits me like a bullet in the forehead. I have often had the blood drop from my cheeks when it struck, and felt that I turned as white as death. Then comes a creeping as of centipedes running down the spine, —then a gasp, and a great jump of the heart—then a sudden flush, and a beating in the vessels of the head,—then a long sigh,—and the poem is written."

In similar terms, if he only knew how to do it, might the volunteer contributor describe his sensations when first there broke into his brain the daring thought of submitting something of his own to a periodical of recognized position.

With what punctilious care is the manuscript prepared—with what pathetic humility is it commended to the favorable consideration of that awful despot, the editor—with what painstaking accuracy is it addressed—and with what a strange admixture of pride and shamefacedness is it posted! And then comes the long waiting for the response, when every morning dawns in hope, and every evening ends in sinking of heart.

In due time the reply is received, "Declined with thanks," of course. There are writers, I know, who can truthfully boast of never having tasted the bitterness of rejection, but they are as rare as black swans, and need hardly be taken into account.

The first effect upon the volunteer contributor is, usually, to produce blank despair, and he probably pitches the unfortunate manuscript into the deepest drawer of his desk, vowing never to touch it again.

Some are faithful to their vow, and by being so escape many a heart-ache, though it is quite possible that the world

has thus lost the help of voices that might have added welcome notes to the chorus led by the Muses.

But the vast majority, after the first pain has passed, summon courage for another venture, and so go on until they have either established their footing, or else the fact that they have not a leg to stand on in a literary sense. It takes a good many lickings to train a dog to "toll ducks," and so it requires a good many rejections to teach the volunteer contributor the meaning of the word, "available."

How savagely he hates it at first! How dearly he learns to love it when his own work, three times out of five say, falls within its application!

It is so comprehensive, so elusive a term, that it is no wonder he is long in coming to understand it. There is no rule by which to measure, to analyze it. The editor of the *Cycle* uses it in an entirely different sense from the editor of the *Cosmopolis*, while the editor of *Limners* would define it in another way altogether than the editor of *Fiddlers*, and so it goes on all down the list, until there are times when the volunteer contributor is almost forced to the conviction that like a certain virtue mentioned in the good Book, of which many editors seem to have none too ample a stock, the over-worked term, "available," is made to cover a multitude of sins.

Perhaps one of the most surprising examples of its application fell within the experience of the present writer, who had a solicited contribution returned to him by the editor of a renowned periodical because, although it was an excellent story, etc., etc., it was not "*ideally available*."

The blessed saints preserve us! Hard indeed would be the lot of the writers for periodicals if only "ideally available" manuscripts were accepted, and thrice happy forsooth the lot of the editor who could always command a supply of such manuscripts sufficient for the needs of his publication.

The word "needs" suggests another stage in the evolution of the volunteer contributor. When he has fought his way to a fair comprehension of the meaning of "available," let him not