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THE WAY TO MAKE A BOOK

(Continued from page 24)

the ideal. But our own ideal must be behind it all. A writer must keep his eyes open for material; but in the last analysis his characters must be the creations of his own mind if they are to be consistent and natural.

Right here, let me say that a writer of books must cultivate the "note-book habit." Keep a blank book; jot down in it every helpful idea that comes your way, tevery helpful idea that comes your way, every amusing or dramatic incident or expression you hear, every bit of apt description that occurs to you. Be all eye and ear in your daily walks and social intercourse. If you meet a quaint personality write down its salient characteristic. If you see a striking face or feature describe it for future use; if you hear a scrap of native wit or unconscious humor pathos, preserve it: if you see some or pathos, preserve it; if you see some exquisite, fleeting effect in sky or sea or field, imprison it in words before it can escape you. Some day you may create a character in whose mouth the long-preserved sentence of fun or absurdity preserved sentence of tun or absurdity may be appropriate—you may stage your story in a landscape where the bit of first-hand description furnishes exactly the necessary touch of reality. I have, time and again, evolved some of my most successful tales or chapters from the germ of some such 'bit,' hurriedly scribbled in my note-book when I heard or saw or thought it.

Write only of the life you know. This is the only safe rule for most of us. A great genius may, by dint of adding research and study to his genius, be able to write of other ages and other environments than his own. But the chances are that you are not a Scott or a Cooper. So stick to what you know. It is not a narrow field. Human life is thick around us everywhere. Tragedy is being enacted in the next yard; comedy is playing across the street. Plot and incident and coloring are ready to our hands. The country lad at his plough can be made just as interesting a figure as if he were a knight in shining armor; the bent old woman we pass on the road may have been as beautiful in her youth as the daughters of Vere de Vere, and the cause of as many heartaches. The darkest tragedy I ever heard of was enacted by people who lived on a backwoods farm; and funnier than anything I ever read was a dialogue between two old fishermen who were gravely discussing a subject of which they knew absolutely nothing. Unless you are living discussing a subject of which they knew absolutely nothing. Unless you are living alone on a desert island you can find plenty alone on a desert island you can find plenty of material for writing all around you; and even there, you could find it in your own heart and soul. For it is surprising how much we are all like other people. Jerome K. Jerome says: "Life tastes just the same, whether you drink it out of a stone mug or a golden goblet." There you are! So don't make the mistake of trying to furnish your stories with golden goblets when stone mugs are what your characters. when stone mugs are what your characters are accustomed to use. The public isn't much concerned with your external nothings—your mugs or your goblets. What they want is the fresh, spicy brew that Nature pours for us everywhere.

When you have shaped out your central idea and brooded over your characters until they live and move and have being for you, then write about them. Let them have a good deal of their own way, even if it isn't always your way. Don't try to describe them too fully; let them reveal themselves. As somebody has said, "Don't tell your readers that a certain describe them too fully; let them reveal themselves. As somebody has said, "Don't tell your readers that a certain woman growls; just bring the old lady in and let her growl." See to it that your incidents and chapters grow out of one another naturally, as they do in real life. Don't drag some event in, however dramatic or amusing it may be in itself, if it has no real connection with your plot or your idea. This doesn't mean that you must never indulge in any pleasant little

(Concluded on page 27)

Easter

As pearl shafts pierce the shades o'er yonder night

Slowly the King of Earth's glad life appears And with his radiance doth dispel the fears, With all the shapes of terror and affright, That wait upon the sombre steps of night. And still from dawn to dawn, thro'out

the years Echoes the Word that yet the spirit hears: God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

So from the blackness of the grave's dark Gleams the sweet radiance of the coming

Behold the Sun of Righteousness arise, And with His beams drive Death's wan

Again the Word: "I am the Light," He

saith,
"Behold, I vanquish the dread night of

-Florence T. Robinson.



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