

ery and to after-dinner occasions. Scores of magazines, and thousands of printers and writers endeavor in vain to satisfy the modern appetite for stories which has grown to astonishing proportions by what it fed on. I think we may assume then that a well worked short story of about a thousand words and filling four or five pages of the JOURNAL, would be as interesting and as well worth space as anything that now appears.

I do no need to prove that for the writer himself the short story is an excellent literary exercise. Rather, I apprehend the objection that it is too far beyond the college student's powers, calling as it does, for observation of life in the selection of details, originality and ingenuity in the construction of plot, and imagination and emotion to vitalize the whole. But these qualities are surely not rarer among college students than elsewhere, while the art of the short story is much more conscious and definite and therefore more teachable and imitable than that of either the novel or the drama. Owing to its brevity, the short story has been thoroughly studied and its effects traced to their causes. Laws have been discovered which the writer must obey, and obedience to which, plus natural feeling and intelligence, will ensure success. The short story is a short prose narrative, presenting artistically a bit of real life, such as you may find any night reported in the newspapers. Indeed, the greatest short story writers have admitted taking many suggestions from the newspapers. Round some bald piece of news the writer weaves details, description and dialogue, until a complete story is the result. The short story has the limitations of its brevity.

Characters are introduced but not fully analyzed. The atmosphere or setting can only be suggested. Love, or any other emotion requiring for its normal development, times, moods and varying scenes, cannot be properly treated within the limits of the short story. By far the greater number of these stories are based, indeed, upon the old elemental plot of two men in love with one woman and therefore generally the mortal enemies of each other, but the interest lies in the complications resulting from the passions rather than in the passions themselves. For the same reason stories of adventure and of the supernatural are, after the so-called love-story, the most numerous. The short story writer may present pretty scenes and word pictures if he will. He may describe character, analyze emotions, and suggest the atmosphere or setting as fully as the limits of the story will permit, but he must have a plot. His story must be a definite thing. It must have a beginning and an end. It must progress constantly. It must arrive somewhere. The chief aim of the short story writer should be a plot in which the climax has been carefully prepared for and worked up to at some length, but so well concealed from the reader that when it is reached he is made to jump mentally if not physically. Given this startling effect and sufficient description of character and situation to humanize the whole, and success is assured.

My reason for thinking that such work is not beyond us is, besides the prevalence of a taste and faculty for narrative, that it is done elsewhere by college students. The Tennessee University Magazine for November, for example, contained a short story of