

are apt to be less self-conscious and more naturally prone to self-revelation than men.

Contrary to the general impression, the editor is constantly looking for the new writer of promise. The literary discovery is the one touch of romance and adventure in an otherwise routine existence. And there is more joy in the *Century* office over a new man brought to light—a man, for instance, like Stacy Aumonier, author of *The Friends*—than over a dozen fixed luminaries signed on. But though there is to-day a very high average of what may be called clever mediocrity, there are very few high peaks in a year's chart of literary production; and most of these peaks are still held by our English friends. Perhaps this is because in America writing is almost universally a means to an end, whereas in England there are those to whom artistic achievement itself is the goal.

Of the minor writers, the English have undoubtedly the greater facility—too often lifeless—and the Americans, in spite of their crudeness, the greater promise for the future.

It is, of course, true that a writer with an established audience and a known method is *persona grata* with many editors. He marks the line of least resistance. He can be depended upon to “deliver the goods.” He is likely to crowd out the younger writer. But this applies to the magazine that is built to order—a sort of standardised product which aims to give the public only what it is used to receiving. The more flexible magazine which has a very real concept of its mission as an educational and directing force deprecates this policy, and is willing to put forth considerable effort to develop the new writer, with the entirely selfish—but admirable—motive that in this way, and in this way only, a magazine of any pretensions can grow with the times and reflect the life of its day.

A great many good stories are rejected every month because of a similarity in theme to some previously accepted *ms.* This happens with surprising frequency.

A great many others display splendid craftsmanship wasted on unlikely, unlikely or trivial themes. These are the brilliant exercises of the novice, important only in their promise. The young author's natural affection for his own work often blinds him to its limitations from the editor's point of view. And it is a fact that the magazine demands more of a new writer than of one with a reputation. The work must show a warmth, a vitality, a freshness of touch—and the faultless style of a spent writer is a poor substitute for these qualities. The high hurdles come first in this race for fame—as properly they should!

The beginner is apt to go to one extreme or the other. Careless of form, he makes a frantic bid for popularity, and produces a “thriller”; or, eager to be recognised at once as a master, he polishes and polishes his semi-precious stone, hopeful that by some magic it will turn into a diamond. In each case the man is too conscious of an audience. The result is a *cliché*. The elements of the story unite in a marriage of convenience rather than in a love-match. Neither impudence nor preciosity is a successful suitor of Art. She demands to be loved for herself and not for her favors.

Douglas Doty.

COLLIER'S WEEKLY

The great bulk of the manuscripts we buy is divided into articles and fiction. Of articles we receive fully five times as many acceptable ones as we can print. Of fiction we cannot get enough of the kind that appeals to us as good.

The number of articles we print a week does not average over two. One of these is very apt to have been conceived and planned in the office, such as our war articles, our political articles and the like. This leaves very little demand on our part for articles from chance contributors who send their manuscripts through the mail. The result is that we are compelled to decline a great many articles which, if we had the space, would be entirely acceptable,

either without change or with a certain amount of adaptation.

Of fiction, as I say, we cannot get as much as we should like. The incoming mail is searched with the greatest care and we accept just as many as come at all close to our standard. Speaking of manuscripts generally, I think it is largely like the phrase that was used either by or about "Maggie" in Barrie's play, *What Every Woman Knows*: it is all a matter of charm. If you have it, you need not have much else. If you have not got it, nothing else will do. I really think all the arts are the same. If the artist has charm he attracts. I can remember only two fiction manuscripts I ever accepted which were purely what might be called synthetic efforts, efforts in which the intelligence only was used, omitting emotional feeling. Of course, even if the writer has charm he may yet fail to achieve some unique standard of technique. Short stories which were accepted and made great successes in the popular magazine of fifteen to twenty years ago would not be accepted to-day. This is due to the fact that a vogue has been created for stories with a different technique—stories, one might almost say, with a different formula. This formula, in one degree or another, has O. Henry for its father, grandfather, or great-grandfather.

Mark Sullivan.

THE COSMOPOLITAN

The freest art market in the world is that of fiction, inclusive of the short story. The writer who has the gift of telling tales that interest his fellow beings is not dependent either upon the whims or the judgment of any editor. If one editor makes a mistake, or if his conditions of supply or of immediate programme are such that he cannot buy a fine short story at the time it is offered, some one else will get it—that's all. Not every good novel is a good serial, but the supply of novels with serial pulling power never catches up with the demand.

Non-fiction articles, from the fact that they express opinion, are of course considered and purchased on a journalistic basis. I hardly believe, therefore, that your question, "Why are Manuscripts Rejected," refers to articles as a class.

Why, then *are* fiction manuscripts rejected?

The fine story never is rejected by the whole market, but it may not be bought by the first or second magazine to which it is offered. Business as well as literary reasons make the market situation. The magazine that wants the story may consider the author's price too high, and the magazine that is willing to pay the price may find that it couldn't use that particular story soon enough to warrant its purchase. But neither of these reasons reflects upon the merit of the story, and, having merit, the third magazine likely will want the story and be willing to pay the author's price.

So the fine short story gets along all right, and so does the competent serial.

It is mediocrity that gives bulk to rejection totals. The mediocre story compares to the real story in the way that the tailor's dummy compares to a man. It may be clothed in fair words, but it isn't human.

The really talented new author, too, will get many rejection letters, but they are only a part of the scenery of the road up which he is climbing. The only way to learn to write well is to write, write, and then write. Much of the early writing of genius itself will be bad writing—as genius, looking back, sometimes will admit.

The more undigested matter rejected, therefore, the better for talent and genius. Their way to "success" is too easy for their own good. They need the discipline of discouragement, toil and earned victory.

Edgar Sisson.

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

In comparison with the number of reasons why manuscripts are accepted for magazine publication the reasons