

proach disaster do arise from the peculiar methods of bookkeeping followed by amateur bookkeepers managing the affairs of small organizations. And why not? The treasurers are almost always untrained."

It seems perfectly feasible for a trained bookkeeper to keep the books and bank accounts of small organizations. Bills could be "O. K.'d" by the proper committee or person of each organization, and sent to the office of the professional bookkeeper and accountant, who should be authorized to send out the checks. A small percentage on the volume of business would meet the expense, and the organization could at its business meetings have the treasurer's statement put so concisely and professionally as to be easily understood. Where the treasurers of organizations are men, they are usually business men greatly overworked; the toil of keeping a set of books is as arduous and complicated for an organization the income of which is \$5,000 a year as it is for one the income of which is \$50,000 a year. Sometimes it is impossible, with the stress of private business when men are the treasurers, with the complications that come from housekeeping and a family where women are the treasurers, to keep the books up to date, and the advantage of having professional bookkeepers whose business it is to keep the books, as all bookkeeping books should be kept, posted to date, would certainly keep the business affairs of many organizations much more businesslike than they are at present. An influential man or woman might act as treasurer, and be responsible for the moneys, but the work could be done by a professional. This method would have the advantage of securing valuable names for these officers which cannot be obtained now because of a knowledge of the absolute drudgery the position involves. Eliminate this, and the intelligence and indorsement of men and women needed to give confidence and stability to organizations could be secured.



## A Novel Club

By W. S. Collins

At the present day a good many young people are afflicted with the desire to be authors, but do not know just how to put their literary talent in use, or else they lack the stimulus which would set their pens at work. To such, and to any persons willing to do a little work in the way of imaginative writing, I would suggest the formation of a Novel Club on the following lines, which have proved successful in two Novel Clubs, of which I have been a member, in different places. Each club not only furnished a great deal of entertainment and fun to its members, but also produced a readable novel or novelette. The club should consist of ten or twelve members, and there may be as many officers as are desired, though only one, the Trustee of the Novel, is necessary. One of the clubs of which I spoke had a constitution drawn up, on the principle that there is many a serious word spoken in jest. The person who started the club named eighteen officers, from the president down through the porter to the "Lord Pooh-Bah;" but in the article on elections he provided that there should be no election, because he had unanimously elected himself to fill all the offices! The necessary provisions of a Novel Club constitution, however, are only two: first, that every one shall pledge himself, as a condition precedent to becoming a member, that he will write, when requested by the Trustee, a chapter of a given number (at least ten) of pages of letter-paper within the time fixed, say two weeks, after he receives the copy of the previous chapters. He must also endeavor to keep the continuity of the story, though he may introduce new characters and places. The second requirement is that every member shall promise not to reveal or hint to any one (whether a member or not) that he has written, expects to write, or has been asked to write any chapter of the novel. In order to enable every one to keep his promise, the constitution referred to above provided that: "No member shall believe anything that any other member, or any

one else, may say or write in regard to the authorship of any chapter, until the truth shall be revealed at the final meeting of the club." In other words, it was mutually agreed and understood that no member was expected to tell the truth in regard to his connection with the novel. Of course the Trustee, who always has charge of the manuscript of the novel and selects the authors in turn, knows as to each; but he is under the same pledge, and nothing that he says is believed. It is quite important that each chapter should be typewritten, or copied in uniform hand, in order to prevent any author from recognizing other chapters by the handwriting.

The object of this close secrecy is twofold: to leave each author entirely free, in writing his chapter, from any delicacy in running counter to what may have been written by his particular friend; but chiefly to allow perfect freedom of criticism when the chapters are read at the meetings.

When the Trustee has three chapters finished and typewritten, he calls a meeting of the club, or asks the secretary, if there is one, to do this. So also when each succeeding three chapters are ready to be read. If each author takes the two weeks to which he is entitled in writing his chapter, the meetings will occur about once in six weeks. At the meeting the chapters are read aloud by one or more members. It is very interesting to each author to note how his chapter is received, and to all the other members to speculate who the writer of each chapter is. It is curious to notice, too, the varying style of the different chapters, or sometimes the similar style of two which one knows to have been written by different persons. A great deal of amusement can be obtained if every one is determined not only not to be sensitive as to any criticisms which may be made on his chapter, but is free to make comments, serious or laughable, on his own and other chapters. It is curious to hear several persons each claiming as his own any bright remark or interesting incident which is read. Of course there can be no personal feeling in any of the comments, since no one knows (except the Trustee) whose composition he is criticising. The Trustee, to be sure, has to be rather guarded in his remarks, and make them mostly in a complimentary strain. I was amused, I remember, to be told in confidence that my chapter in one of our novels was evidently written by two persons, its style varied so greatly; and also, by another member, that it was not nearly as well written as the preceding chapters. If the three chapters read at any meeting are of reasonable length—the only limit set being that no chapter must contain less than the minimum number of pages—the reading of them, with frequent comments and interruptions, will pretty well fill an evening, especially if light refreshments are served.

At the last meeting, when the final chapter has been read, a vote should be taken as to which is the best chapter. Probably every one will follow the example of the Athenians when every man voted first for himself and second for Themistocles for a certain office. Then every member should be asked to write whom he thinks the author of each chapter to be. The person who names the most authors correctly receives the novel as his reward. If two or more have the same number of correct guesses, each votes again on the chapters which he has missed.

It adds considerably to the interest of the novel if one or more members can furnish original illustrations for it. Three or four drawings may be accepted as a substitute for writing a chapter. In counting up the members, it is usually best to reckon husband and wife as one, not only because even the small amount of talent needed for writing a chapter is not always found in both of a married couple, but also because it is almost impossible for each to conceal from the other the fact that he, or she, is writing a chapter. When necessary, this provision of counting two persons as one member may be extended to two sisters living in the same house. There are often persons who think that they cannot write chapters, and who could not, perhaps, write a complete story, who find, on trying, that they surprise both themselves and their friends by the excellence of their compositions. It is not difficult to continue a novel for

twelve or fifteen pages, if, when one gets his characters in a tight place, he can adopt Mark Twain's plan and let some one else get them out! It is rather trying, however, when one has formed a certain estimate of a character, or has expected a certain outcome of his plot, to have the subsequent authors change these expectations entirely—prove his good characters to be worthless and give his plot a turn which he never dreamt of! In conducting a Novel Club successfully a great deal of work falls on the Trustee, and he (or she) must be a person of good judgment in selecting the succession of authors, so as to have a dull chapter followed by a brilliant one, if possible. Of course each writer should endeavor to end his chapter in as exciting or interesting a place as possible, like the stories "to be continued in our next." As the Trustee is not allowed, of course, to vote as to authorship, though he is expected to write a chapter, it may be thought his position is a thankless one; but he is more than repaid by the secret laughs he has and by the continued private fun he obtains in hearing, during the writing of the novel, the wild guesses and curious comments which are made as to the authorship.



### From the Day's Mail

We have received very frequently at this office applications from our readers living out of town asking us to put them in communication with some organization or society that would secure for them servants. That we have been unable to put these inquirers in communication with the right parties has been to us a source of regret; knowing well, on the one hand, the very great need in hundreds of homes in the country for just the help that the overcrowded cities could give, and, on the other hand, the great need of the homes offered, has only increased the regret at failure on our part. The State Charities Aid Association has now established an agency for placing destitute mothers with babies or very young children in country homes.

Every student of sociology knows that it is almost fatal to separate a mother and child; it deprives the one of the love and protection and care that it ought to have, and it deprives the other of the incentive of self-sacrifice, of the discipline and joy that come from caring for one's own child, of the development that comes from meeting life and bearing all one's own personal responsibilities. The persons for whom the State Charities Aid Association wish to secure homes are mothers and children so situated that, if they cannot be placed in the same home, then the child must be placed in an institution, and the mother, who is homeless, must find a place. This new enterprise of the State Charities Aid Association is six months old. Fifty-seven women have been provided with situations in the country. That there must be a degree of satisfaction with the women so placed is proved by the fact that every week more applicants come eagerly seeking situations through this new department.

People living in the country districts know that the greatest enemy they have to deal with in the kitchen is the loneliness of its occupant. Certainly those who work among the poor in the city know that the excuse given for not being willing to leave the city is always: "I know I shall be so lonely." But a mother with a little child takes her company with her. Often letters come to this office saying: "We should be so glad to help you in bearing the burden of the misery that comes from poverty in the city. We haven't money, but we could give homes if only the people would come to us." Here is the opportunity, not only to give a home, but to give training, to a mother and child. Full information can be had by applying to the Agent of the State Charities Aid Association. The following advertisement may meet some need of our readers at the present time:

Wanted, by fairly competent women (each with infant or young child), situations to do general housework in the country for small wages. Those wishing such service please apply to

Agent, State Charities Aid Association, Room 503, United Charities Building, New York.

There have recently come to this department several inquiries for a list of books for reading circles. It is almost impossible to prepare a list of books that will suit every circle of readers. Certainly people of education would require an entirely different list of books from working girls and boys, whose educational opportunities are naturally limited. Workingmen would certainly want an entirely different line of reading from clerks and business men. The Round Robin Reading Club, No. 4213 Chestnut Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa., has prepared courses of reading adapted to all classes of readers. The special aim of the reading club is to arrange courses of reading for literary clubs; and for those who wish it there is an opportunity of corresponding with the Director, Miss Louise Stockton.

If "M. C. L.," of Englewood, N. J., will send her address to this department, the addresses of organizations that furnish work to the deserving poor will be sent to her. The list is too long to be published in these columns.

I have had several discussions with a very intelligent and original Quakeress, a great reader of radical literature, and a person of the highest independence and rectitude, regarding the characters in George Eliot's masterpiece, "Middlemarch." I have always regarded Dorothea as the noblest and most living, flesh-and-blood creation of modern fiction. But my Philadelphia friend thinks she was too much of an idealist, and decidedly prefers Mary Garth as a "simple creature not too good for human nature's daily food." I inclose her summary of some parts of our discussions, and, if you think it worth the space, would ask the verdict of your readers on the points at issue. Here is the extract from my Quaker correspondent.

C. F. W.

"I do not run down Dorothea. To me she is the most natural, the most understandable of George Eliot's women. I was only trying to make you see that in real life she would not be appreciated. It took an artist, not of her locality, to discover her beauty; even Lydgate passed her by almost unnoticed until they were brought together under peculiar circumstances. If she had lived unmarried, she would have been to those around her one of the disagreeable women with quixotic notions. I think neither she nor others would like her if thrown with her in daily contact. She was critical, and her mental criticisms were felt when not expressed. Farebrother is undoubtedly the strong man of the book—the man who conquered self for the sake of others, and went on uncomplainingly, unflinchingly; but he had blessedness, if not happiness, for his compensation; while Lydgate's lifelong struggle to make the best of life as he found it, to go on trying to love more and more what was admirable in Rosamond, without expecting love in return, required the hardest kind of heroism—that of endurance. But what I cannot understand is why Lydgate should have fallen in love with the type of woman he did; and it always seemed to me a pity that, as they both saw their mistake so soon, they could not have separated without scandal or fuss of any kind. That is a totally different thing from separating because either wants to marry some one else."

This gives an opportunity for discussion.

I have a dear little neighbor not yet quite three years old. He is a fortunate little neighbor in many respects, but especially because his mother is helping him to learn the important lesson that the attitude of the world toward him is much what he himself makes it; that it is dark or bright according as shadow or sunshine reigns in his own little heart. Now, it happened the other day that Little Neighbor was angry with Anna, the young nurse. He even stamped his tiny foot to emphasize matters, and altogether made quite a disturbance. When his mother reached the scene, Little Neighbor had persuaded himself that Anna was in every way to blame, and that he was a much-abused little boy. "Naughty Anna!" he said; "I don't love Anna." When his mother tried to show him that Anna was kind and patient, he only repeated, "I don't love Anna," and for the time the heart of Little Neighbor was filled with bitterness. "Very well," said his mother, and sat down before the fireplace, leaving him to think over the condition of things. There he was, all by himself. His mother was in her favorite chair, but her face was sad. Anna was dusting, and she, too, looked sad, and the child began to feel forlorn. Presently he said, in a tearful voice, "I want to wock." His mother took him up, and he cuddled down,