

## A Winter Night College

By W. A. Platt

For two seasons we have had in Colorado Springs an institution the plan and the practical working of which are so admirable that perhaps if it were more widely known it would be of use to other cities. This institution is called the Winter Night College. The originator, organizer, President, and engineer of it is the Rev. Livingston L. Taylor, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, and the sessions are held in that building. It is in no sense, however, a denominational institution. The membership is from many churches, and more than half the Faculty are not Presbyterians.

Perhaps the easiest and clearest way to describe the institution is to give a short account of the way in which its work is begun. The initiative lies with the President or organizer, who invites to meet him a few persons—from six to ten—most of whom he regards as probable leaders or teachers of "circles." These persons constitute the Council. They decide what topics shall be taken up and who shall lead the circle in each topic. The consent of the appointed leaders having been obtained, announcement is made in the newspapers that there will be a preliminary meeting for enrollment, and that circles will be formed for the study of certain topics. This year in our College the courses offered were Current Topics, Civics, Social Science, Geology, Sanitary Science, Shakespeare, Classic Myths in English Literature, and a "Journey Club" to make the "grand tour" of Great Britain and the Continent. At the preliminary meeting—which was held nearly a month before the first regular session—and during the time intervening between that and the first session, all the circles enrolled a satisfactory number (from seven to twenty-one), except that in Sanitary Science, which was then dropped. The work of the circles has now been going on for two months, and there has been an average attendance of about one hundred and fifty in all, and four of the circles have averaged over twenty members at each meeting.

The circles in Shakespeare, Myths, Civics, and Geology use a text-book, and the Social Science circle for four meetings used Dr. Strong's "New Era" as a basis for their discussions. The circle in Current Topics and the Journey Club use no text-books, but make free use of books of reference.

The method of conducting the work of each circle is necessarily left largely to the discretion of the leader. In Current Topics the leader announces each evening the topic for the next, the members reading up meantime whatever they can. This circle has occupied itself thus far largely with the discussion of the recent elections, the Hawaiian question, and the tariff, but is now proceeding to discuss immigration, Socialism, and other topics of the day. In Geology, Le Conte's book is used as a basis for study, and the leader delivers lectures upon which the members of the circle take notes and ask questions. In Civics the text-book is Cocker's "Government of the United States," and the Constitution is the basis of study. Topics are sometimes assigned for outside investigation and short reports, and the leader conducts the circle by means of question and answer. In the Journey Club topics are also assigned for reports, but the leader does most of the work, illustrating his ciceronian discourse with photographs and maps. In Classic Myths the question and answer method is used to some extent, supplemented by the fuller information of the leader. In the Social Science circle there is a free discussion, based upon the book in hand.

The leaders of the circles are of varied professions. Two are ministers (Social Science and Shakespeare), two are teachers (Current Topics and Myths), one is a professor in college (Geology), two are newspaper men (Civics and Journey Club). One of the leaders (Myths) is a woman, and her circle is one of the largest and most enthusiastic.

The finances are in charge of a Secretary-treasurer, who

keeps the minutes, receives fees, disburses money upon authorization of the Council, and makes a record of attendance. The fee for the whole course is one dollar. This money pays for lighting and heating the church during sessions. Text-books are obtained at special rates from the publishers, and sold at cost to members.

Last season the enrollment was something over one hundred, and the average attendance, including visitors, about the same. This season the enrollment and average attendance are about one hundred and fifty.

The plan has proved a most practical one, elastic enough to be adapted easily to new or changing conditions, but firm enough to insure some real work and intellectual improvement on the part of those who attend. The sessions are held every Friday evening from 7:30 to 9 o'clock. The opening exercises consist of a hymn, reading of Scripture, and prayer. Circle work begins at 7:45 and ends at 8:30. A fifteen-minute report follows, before the whole assembly, by one of the leaders, on the work of his particular circle, so that members of all the circles are kept somewhat informed as to what each of the others is doing. Such reports have been made on the Hawaiian question, the formation of the Constitution, the tariff, classic myths, Macbeth's character, and the formation of metalliferous veins in granite. Following the report, if there is time, there may be miscellaneous exercises.

Colorado Springs, Colo.



## The Writer as a Wage-Earner

By Charles Howard Shinn

The other day several young writers were discussing the "bread and butter problem." "We write," they said, "and some of our articles are accepted, but we cannot earn as much as if we were teaching country schools or hoeing corn. We are heedful of the good advice given us by older and better-known writers, though much of what they say consists of platitudes—and priggish, exasperating platitudes at that. As we know very well, there is 'room at the top,' but that does not seem to improve our tempers any. What we want is a safe and modest income that we can depend upon, and then we can perhaps bring out what is in us."

If one reads even a tenth part of the articles that are printed in these days about "literary compensation," it becomes evident that a great cloud of witnesses have agreed upon its inadequacy. Let us for a moment consider both sides, and see if some working suggestions cannot be evolved.

The editorial side of the matter has been stated with great force and clearness in the Easy Chair of "Harper's Monthly;" in a delightful essay by Mr. James E. Learned, of the New York "Evening Post," entitled "The Worm Turns," and printed several years ago in the "Forum;" and in various articles that have appeared in the leading publications of the country. To be frank, some of the most brilliant writing of the times has gone into bits of pleading and argument with that troublesome personage, the "Young Writer." Whatever else in a magazine goes unread, a calm, judicial article upon such a subject as "Why Strephon's Verses were Returned with Regrets" is certain to strike a hidden chord in many an unsuspected place. So universal in these days is this sort of warning that every well-equipped editorial office might easily contain a scrap-book entitled "The Discourager of Authorship," in which should be placed every obtainable magazine article, editorial, and newspaper clipping that is calculated to warn young writers of the difficulties of the literary path. This should be given to every one who brings a manuscript, or calls to ask about the fate of one.

There are a few geniuses among writers who take everything by storm, command their own rewards, and need only the warning that from him to whom much has been given much shall be required. There is also a whole army of hopeful, patient workers, full of every-day talents, and much in earnest. These "stand in the market-place,"

waiting for a call; these bear the heat and burden of the day, and make up the host of the toilers of literature. It must be their highest praise and greatest consolation that, in the aggregate, they are "the interpreters to the people." Like the "minor poets" of the land, they come and go; but the succession endures, and keeps the undercurrent continually fresh and sweet. It is only when the minor poets claim to be great poets that they lose their place and value; it is only when these writers forget the law of usefulness to their fellow-man that they sink towards the class of "incapables," of which more anon.

The supply of "fairly passable" literary work far exceeds the demand. Waste effort and futile struggle, under these conditions, are inevitable. No man may number the host of "rejected addresses" that vainly woo busy editors. The worst of it is that many a writer picks up his waif when it returns disconsolate, and sends it to another editor, and another, and yet another, until it seems like a water-logged, barnacle-covered hulk, drifting heedlessly about the ocean, the terror of every voyager. The "old editor" may be forgiven if he shrugs his shoulders when such manuscripts drift his way, and sends them back unread. "Passable literary work," all of it, but there is no room in these days for the hundredth part. When a magazine has fifty bright short stories accepted, the aspirant must bring to its relentless critic a new story that is better than any of them. By that law of competition the standard is being raised every year. Many a writer who does work that would have been good enough for the best magazines of a quarter of a century ago is now barely able to keep his place in the second rate or third-rate publications.

Again, as we all agree, nothing can be done for the "incapables." Those men and women who cannot do effective writing, and cannot teach themselves how to do it, cannot be taught how by any one else. They cannot be helped by social aids, by personal friendships, or by the tin trumpets of "mutual admiration societies." No one else can write them into a permanent literary reputation. If they have money and publish their own books, those books will fall flat on the market; and if they start their own periodicals, those periodicals will not obtain subscribers.

Among the incapables are all kinds of interesting personages; but the editor who allows his sympathies to run away with him is doomed to sorrow and failure. Ah, the pity of the struggle that one sees and cannot possibly help! Sad mothers write out their girlhood experiences, their shattered dreams, their pretty pet phrases—for the sake of bread for their hungry children. The daughter of some old and stately family—some brilliant, luxurious Lady Serena, full of dainty ways and graceful refinements, but suddenly left poor, helpless, and without a salable talent, flies to the inkstand for refuge, remembering how often she has been told that she "ought to write a novel." These, and such as these, may stand for illustrations of the pitiful, ineffectual struggle of which every editor is aware. All about the charmed gates the incapables crowd, fascinated beyond recall by the basilisk eyes of the demon of *cacoths scribendi*, and nothing can be done except to hand them back their articles. Sometimes I doubt if there be a more hopeless, horrible sight on earth than this, of the army of men and women writing day and night, neglecting home duties, besieging their friends and every editorial office, watching the mail with feverish eagerness, and never meeting with any success worth the name.

The editor of a monthly magazine once told me of his experience with one of the "incapables." The would-be writer had published much verse for glory in the country newspapers. He called on the editor with letters of introduction, stayed a long time, and left an assorted lot of poems, which were all found to be inconceivably bad, and were returned as "unavailable." The next day the indignant poet appeared, and wanted the subject reopened. He said there was certainly a mistake somewhere, and offered in evidence of the value of his poetry a number of testimonial letters from individuals who had said nice things about it, and had called him the "rising young poet of Ophir Gulch," the "Shakespeare of the Sierras," and

similarly convincing names. "Was the editor prepared to impugn the good faith and judgment of the Honorable Patrick Malony, ex-Assemblyman from Mount Shasta District, and the candidate of the county for Governor?"

"But," said the editor, "these admirable letters are entirely irrelevant. I had the honor to read some of your poems, and they did not make me feel that way. There is no opinion to be consulted in this matter except my own. Bring me poetry that I want to use, and I will print it."

The poet then stated that he and his friends thought that his poetry was much better than any that was appearing in the magazine, and he asked, with fine scorn, whether such autocratic decisions were justifiable by any editorial code of morals.

The editor felt that the case was hopeless, but he made another effort: "Why should you not get an unbiased opinion on your poetry, since you doubt mine? Make a list of ten of the leading publications of the United States, and send the same poems that I have returned, to these publications, one after another, inclosing stamps for return if not 'available.' The only test you can trust is the test of market value."

The poet went away without another word, and, after some years of vain battering at the doors, began to publish his verses in pamphlets and give them away to all his acquaintances, with the declaration that the whole country was run by literary cliques who were the enemies of genius.

Successful writing, like any other kind of success, is the result of long training and first-rate mechanical skill. The same faithful attention to details that is necessary to success in a trade or profession is necessary to success in literature. A young lawyer or physician expects to work hard and earn little for years while he is "becoming known;" the young writer must pay the same price for success. He must study "all the side issues," the newspapers that pay, the pamphlet-writing, report-making, and specialist work of a thousand sorts. The greater part of many a well-equipped writer's income is from sources of whose very existence the amateur is ignorant. I remember one case where the prospectus of a great vineyard company had to be prepared to go to England. A writer who knew outdoor California thoroughly was sent for, and the maps and experts' reports were laid before him.

"We want two thousand words in the best of English. What will it cost, and when can we have it?"

"It will cost fifty dollars; and you can have it to-morrow at nine o'clock."

Just as soon as a writer is known to be honest, capable, reliable, and "as professional as a lawyer," his services are in demand. He can do a great many things that pay at least as well as the ordinary work for the periodicals does, and much of it can be made more or less educational. A fellow-worker of mine used to say that a man ought to get a newspaper sketch, a story, and a magazine article out of every investigation he takes up.

"Take your coat off," was his phrase, "jump in, and seize the bottom facts, whether the subject is yacht-racing or custom-house frauds. When you know all about it, utilize the material in as many ways as possible, then drop it out of sight and out of mind."

He justified his own theory, for he was certainly one of the most successful of writers. He wrote for "bread and butter," but he took solid comfort in the business. Yet I am sure that he had no especial talent as a writer except a really remarkable lack of worry. He never "talked shop;" he never "fussed," or wasted time, or sent his "stuff" to impossible markets. Editors soon discovered that he was safe, straightforward, and always turning out work of a high average. One editor was heard to say of him that he "lacked all the ordinary vanities of writers, and was therefore the most delightful of men." He once said of himself that his land grew potatoes, which he could always sell in one market or another, and he "never cared a continental which boarding-house took them." He added that he had many consolations out of his work as he went along; that he greatly admired the orchid-houses



and innumerable experiments of horticulturists with more capital and better chances, but for his part, he swore by potatoes, which exactly suited his land.

On the whole, is not my fellow-worker's philosophy sound to the core? For the incapables there is no hope whatever; but for the writers who are doing good work, are there not often unsuspected resources about them, in writing that does not bring fame but does bring money? My fellow-worker says that the moment a reasonably sensible and careful writer gets rid of the hunger and thirst for doing something that will set people talking about him, and picks up the subjects that are nearest and most familiar, and sets to work in a professional spirit, the markets begin to develop quite fast enough, and he earns his bread and butter by his own potato-growing, without envying the rest of his horticultural rivals.



## The Will of a Pauper

By Emily Huntington Miller

In Two Parts—I.

It was four o'clock of a Sunday afternoon. Along the narrow foot-path that kept company up hill and down with the stony turnpike, the Squire was soberly plodding, leaning forward a little on his cane, and shaking his head occasionally, as if absorbed in argument with himself.

He was not a man to indulge in vain Sabbath wanderings: he had come straight from the meeting-house at the end of the village street, where he had conscientiously dozed through the afternoon sermon, and he was still examining the deduction from "fifthly," with a question of its logic. He mused upon the indications that the minister's powers were failing a little, and congratulated himself upon his own perfect preservation, at an age five years in advance of his spiritual adviser.

"Shows the advantage," argued the Squire, "of a profession where a man has to prove his positions against an opponent. A minister, now, simply charges the jury, and he can't be too hard on the prisoner—has to give both sides a fair showin'."

A troop of quails ran out of the sweet-fern at his very foot, and scurried across to the shelter of the tangle under the opposite wall, but he scarcely glanced after the pretty creatures. The goodly smell from a wild grapevine, matted with clematis over a stone-heap, tempted him to lift the branches with his cane and bring to light the irregular purple clusters, but he would have counted it a sin to gather them, though the temptation was undoubtedly less because his practiced eye assured him that the color was not of the tinge to accompany sweetness. Just at the top of the hill the foot-path turned suggestively aside to a pair of bars, set in the rickety wall whose infirmities were half hidden by the friendly hedge of briars and barberry-bushes that snuggled up to it.

The Squire stopped, pushed up his hat, and hesitated, while his dog smelled inquisitively around the bar-posts, and took a short excursion into the rye stubble on some errand of his own. Half a mile or so across the fields stood the red farm-house where his business lay—a tedious walk by the road, but pleasant enough over the smooth mowing-lots, green tufted meadows, and crisped pastures.

It could hardly be accounted idle strolling, and the Squire was not so young as he had been. He let down the lower bars, bent his stiff back to go under, and stopped conscientiously to put them up before he went on. The stubble was bleached by the weather, and half hidden under a rampant growth of weeds, but it crushed pleasantly under foot, and there was a warm, aromatic smell from the grayish-green bunches of pennyroyal scattered through it. Grasshoppers rose in short flights, and settled to rise again, in a continually repeated bravado, all the way from the bars to the wall that bounded the pasture beyond, one big fellow skimming over with a crackling sound, as if snapping his fingers, or toes, at the Squire's slow clambering.

The Squire stopped to loosen the buckle of his stock a

little; he was getting a trifle asthmatic. But every step from the road was a step toward youth. The boy, frozen up, grown over, mummified somewhere within him, began to revive. The song of a little brown bird, perched on a tall hickory-tree under which some cows were lying, somehow took him back to the days when he waited at the bars for the cows to come through, and a bird—it must have been that very same bird—sang just so, a little dingy spot against the yellow sunset. It was not a memory of something past—at that moment he was there again, barefooted, hungry, and impatient, hearing the very clatter of the bars as the cows stumbled clumsily over them.

He came into the meadow and turned a little out of his way to gather a bunch of spearmint by the brook that only kept here and there a shallow pool of water in the deepest places, and was a moist green path the rest of the way. A tall spike of cardinal-flower, into whose scarlet hood the bees were gossiping, went down unheeded under the ruthless tread of his foot. There was a fine but clear distinction between the gathering of flowers and of spearmint. Mint and dill and fennel and lavender were Sunday herbs. Their fragrance had the very odor of sanctity associated with the warm, still atmosphere of church—the flies wheeling in endless circles, and the wasps crawling on the staring windows. He went on, smelling and biting at the leaves, until, remembering his errand, he began to sing Windham, as a suitable way of relieving his exuberant spirits.

No doubt he was thinking,

Our days are as the grass  
Or like the morning flower—

but what he said was,

Te—um, te, ti, to—tum,  
Te—i, te, to, te—ti,

and so on, with a strongly marked measure which showed the advantage of his method over the use of rugged syllables which must be hummed at the expense of melody.

The appropriateness of the tune lay in the fact that he was on his way to draw up a will for a dying man—a man who could hardly have been expected to put anybody to that trouble, since he had lived for ten years at the poor-house, and belonged to a class of people who usually manage to die without such luxuries as wills.

But if a man has all his life suffered deprivations, should he not at the last have his heart's desire? Some pagan nations grant their condemned criminals that grace. Alexander Fergusson, whose experience, so far as known, had been quite barren of delights, longed neither for brave attire nor sumptuous viands to fortify him for his last journey: he wanted a will; and a will the poormaster declared he should have, drawn up with all the fine-spun, double-and-twisted, wear-resisting formalities which would suffice for conveying the estate of a millionaire.

The poormaster was a wag in his way, though half his drollery was the result of a burn which had drawn his mouth into an odd pucker and closed one eye in a wink of perpetual shrewdness. While the Squire was making his slow progress across the fields, the poormaster sat on the back stoop with his chair tilted against the house, not whittling, out of deference to the day, but opening and shutting the big blade of his jackknife with his horny thumb in a way that would have sent shivers down a sensitive spine.

Fortunately, there was nothing to be annoyed except a discouraged-looking hen, clucking pettishly about the steps, as if vexed at her own indiscretion which forced her to provide for a young family at this unseasonable time of year. Presently, with a warning "cawk," the hen scurried away with her brood, and a round-shouldered, short-legged dog trotted demurely to the water-logged trough, over whose side a slender stream was spilling, and lapped eagerly at the little pool it made among the chickweed and plantain.

"There's the Square," said the poormaster, shutting his knife with a sharp click, and giving himself a shake to settle his blue-jean trousers. "I swan, ef he hain't come 'cross lots!"

The great man was making his approach by the humble