

LETTER 90
1976

WRITING FOR PUBLICATION

It is not easy for an inexperienced writer to get a book published, unless he pays the cost of publication himself, and if he does it is very hard to get it advertised and distributed. Publishing companies put their own money into editing, printing, binding and distributing of the books they publish, and in many cases fail to get back what they have spent. Therefore they are very slow to accept a work unless it is unusually well written.

Some of our best writers were turned down repeatedly when they first sent magazine articles and books to publishers, and it was only after a great many efforts that they succeeded in getting one published.

Writing is an entirely different art from speaking, and in most cases a man cannot become a good writer without first expending great amounts of time and energy to develop himself in this regard.

Once I read a statement by a man who was an expert in this field in which he said that an aspiring writer should not start with writing short stories or articles, but should write a long novel. He explained his reason somewhat as follows:

After one has worked hard at writing a long novel and carefully revised his material as he went along, the practice in writing it has probably developed his ability to express himself in writing to so great an extent that when he finishes the book he will look back at the beginning and it will appear to him to be very poor. Then he should start writing the book all over again, bringing the earlier part of it up to the standard that he has attained for its latter part. As he goes on he will improve. If he is careful, thorough and self-critical, his ability to write will increase as he goes along to so great an extent that when he finishes he will look back at the beginning and it will again appear to him to be very poor. After having rewritten the entire long novel three times, he