

things about the character—and only the best and fewest of those things—that contribute to the impression you want the reader to have of him should be mentioned. And they needn't be mentioned in catalogue style. You don't have to start out by saying that "Bill Jones was a tall young man, had sandy hair, a slight limp, and a habit of talking at the top of his voice." That's the information you want to get across, but think of the better ways of presenting it.

He's tall. Very well. Maybe in the opening paragraph he's seated at a desk. Have him stretch his *long* legs. That's enough to give the impression of height. If the story later on has nothing to do with his height, or with any of the points mentioned, you had better leave them out. But if you're showing what a handsome, manly chap he is, and the story is a love story, the height will help.

Second point, has sandy hair. Have him run his fingers through it or clamp his hat down on it, or any of a hundred other things besides the bald statement that Bill Jones has sandy hair.

Likewise with the presentation of the problem he's facing. Don't say, in the manner of the historian, "He sat there perplexed. This was the second time Maisie had refused him a date," etc. Let Bill do something to show that he was perplexed and what about. Have him reach for the 'phone and give a piece of his mind to Maisie.

And don't start the story at the beginning of Bill's love for Maisie. Start it, if possible, on the morning of the day on which he actually does something to make Maisie change her mind. Cover as little time and territory as possible.

The watchword of the short short is simplicity. To be successful, the author must get himself into a "brief" state of mind. He must develop a taste for terseness in his plotting and writing. He must hit directly.

He is not the connoisseur displaying his collection of diamonds. He is the craftsman, polishing one small stone to a hard, satisfying brilliancy.