

emotions. The more definite your character is, the happier time you will have when putting him into action.

To be convincing a character must be consistent to his characterization. Don't let a timid man suddenly become a lion tamer. Once he makes a move that seems a bit out of the ordinary you become unconvincing. In a longer story you might use a few hundred words to explain this seeming contradiction, but in the short short the next hundred words are off the page.

5—Give good motivation for the actions of your characters. Go over your stories carefully for actions that appear "just to happen." Is the hero suddenly taking a walk in the middle of the night for no better reason than that he wants fresh air? If it's necessary to get him outside, bring him out with a pistol shot or a landslide or a message to deliver, or something else that would in the nature of things bring heroes out into the open. The reader, who likes to feel that everything in the story is working out inevitably, will be quick to detect weak spots. The whole story will then become artificial.

Try to motivate from within the story itself as much as you can. If the heroine has to climb a fence to retrieve a lost riding whip, be sure she loses it earlier in the story, not before the story began. At least "plant" the riding whip in some way or other. If a group of characters suddenly decide it's time for lunch, let the reader know you set the table a few lines ahead. This can be carried to extremes, it is true, but outstanding lines of action should have their causes clearly identified in the plot.

6—Start the story as close to the climax as possible. This is an oft-repeated warning but can stand repetition. Trimmed down to its essentials, a short short presents a character, then victory or defeat. Of course a story may be written in such a way that the difficulty is presented first and then the character, as in the case of a man fighting against a flood, etc. But for our purpose, let's assume that the character comes first.

The opening of the story is the most difficult part of the writing. Shall I tell all about the hero's past? Shall I describe him from the shoes up to the hat? Or should I work the other way and go down?

You need do neither one. No fast-moving story these days has time to wait for a long inventory of hats, complexions, shirts, shoes, and manner of holding a cigarette. What, then, is the cue? Those