

A dinner time discussion of plot like as not may result in a detective story in the home of William Cunningham, '25 journ., and his wife, Clarice Cunningham, ex '26, who write for detective story magazines in collaboration



Collaborators

There are ups and downs in the writing game, but the downs aren't so unpleasant and the ups are the more joyous, when it's a family affair. That is what makes writing for the magazines doubly interesting to the Cunninghams—Bill, '25 journ., and Clarice, ex '26. Mr and Mrs Cunningham collaborate in their writing and they are finding it a pleasant adventure.

Both started writing while in high school, Mrs Cunningham at El Reno and Bill at Watonga. Both had the thrill of seeing their first stories published, when freshmen, in the *University of Oklahoma Magazine*, which has nurtured John McClure, Muna Lee, Lynn Riggs and many other Sooners. May Frank, '25 journ., gave them the direction towards practical writing.

Mr Cunningham was graduated in 1925 and the following year was a teaching fellow. Mrs Cunningham was a student in the freshman English class Mr Cunningham was teaching. When the *American Mercury* published the group of Oklahoma poets in its May, 1926, issue, one of Mr Cunningham's poems was included. The poem he likes best, however, was the "Old Time Fiddler" in the *University of Oklahoma Magazine*, fall number of 1925. But poetry did not really interest Mr Cunningham and on leaving the university after 1926, he rarely wrote verse.

The romance that began in college was followed by the trying experiences of writing for a living, in which both husband and wife shared. While in New Orleans, where Mr Cunningham was a reporter on the *Times-Picayune*, both started collaborating on stories intended for the popular markets. They landed their first story in

a magazine. After they had sold about 25,000 words to the magazines, they decided that their fortunes were made, cut loose from New Orleans and went to Chicago.

But success is always like that—roseate when it isn't necessary. For six months in Chicago, the Cunninghams worked hard writing—and the total sales was nil dollars and nil cents. They gave up free lancing then, and when a check came for \$50 from a Canadian magazine, the *Chate-laine*, they spent the money on railroad tickets back to Oklahoma. They decided that free lancing was all right, but starvation as a reward wasn't so satisfactory.

They had not lost any of their zeal for writing through the Chicago experience. But they decided to make the literary adventure slightly less hazardous by assuring themselves of a monthly pay check. Mr Cunningham began teaching journalism in Drumright high school—and the checks began to come in from the editors once again!

"We have found that writing for the markets is possible only when we are free from anxiety," Mr Cunningham said on a recent visit to Norman. "Our advice to young free lancers is, stick to your steady job and cut loose on your own only when you have, for a long period of time, been earning by your writing at least double your salary as a shoe clerk, school teacher, or what not.

"We are writing for the markets and not for posterity, but in defense of the 'pulp' we might say that while they do not demand good writing, neither do they exclude it, as most newspapers exclude it."

The Cunninghams, who write under the names of Meredith and Clarice Cun-

ningham, have lately specialized in the detective story, which is about as interesting a writing avocation as one could want. They have written for various magazines, and for a while Mr Cunningham was on the staff of Commonwealth college at Mena, Arkansas. While the general magazines at times attract them, the Cunninghams find the paper pulp magazines an interesting field.

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Chicagoesque—dun't esk

Hicks Epton, '31 law, representing the university against the Kent school of law in debate at Chicago January 28, as a one-man team, lost a debate not verbal.

Out to see the Windy City, Mr Epton was nearing the Commercial Mart when a Chicago citizen stepped up to him at 11 in the morning.

"Change for a quarter?"

"No, I'm sorry."

"Well, give me what you've got then," replied the host.

A gun in the host's hands decided Mr Epton. He forked over his expense money, \$22, and his railroad ticket.

"How about letting me keep a couple of dollars?" Mr Epton asked.

"Thirty cents is enough for you," replied the bandit.

Finally, the bandit did return the railroad ticket.

Later in the day, Mr Epton saw another phase of the city that doesn't like English law and order. Racketeers had finished a man and wounded another. Mr Epton got there just as the smoke of battle cleared.