

Belles Lettres and Bell Ringers

Professional Writing, by W. S. Campbell.
The Macmillan Company, New York, 1938.
\$2.00.

A REVOLUTIONARY method of teaching beginners to write well enough to compete successfully in the national literary market is outlined in this new book, *Professional Writing*, by W. S. Campbell of the University of Oklahoma English faculty.

Mr. Campbell, who is a prolific and successful writer under the name of Stanley Vestal, concluded some time ago that there is a vast gap between English composition and the actual production of literary types such as short stories and novels for competition in the professional market.

He believes that most of the heartbreaks and discouragements suffered by beginning writers are due to the fact that they tried to skip the study of professional technique before trying to produce finished work.

Professional Writing is intended to help the beginning writer bridge this gap. It is planned to teach the beginner (or more accurately, to show him how to teach himself) the viewpoint and the methods of the successful professional writer.

Instead of concentrating on the structure and theory of certain literary forms such as the short story and the novel, this book gives the beginner a program of work to follow that will develop his skill and prepare him to work from a professional viewpoint when he tackles actual literary production.

It is this concentration on viewpoints and methods for the professional training period that makes this new book stand out from the general run of books on how to write.

The difficulty of acquiring professional skill by the usual trial and error method is well proved by the records of innumerable writers, now successful, who wrote for many years before beginning to sell their stuff.

In the preface to his book, Mr. Campbell remarks: "Though not a manual of instruction for writing any particular kind or type of literature, this book should, if faithfully digested, spare the beginner months and years of blind struggle, and materially shorten his apprenticeship. It should prepare him to undertake any chosen type with some hope of early success. It aims at showing the student what is to be done, how it may be done, and when to do it."

In *Professional Writing* Mr. Campbell first discusses the professional point of view. He shows the beginner how to make intelligent choice of a subject, a reader, a model, an effect, a style, a market, and a particular writing project.

Having learned the professional viewpoint, the beginner is introduced to methods of work. He is shown how to make all his reading useful for gaining technical



W. S. Campbell

skill, and how to collect technical literary devices for his own adaptation and future use.

Finally the book goes into the creative process—the way in which the writer's mind has to work to produce successful literary material.

The sketchy outline given above makes the book sound theoretical. As a matter of fact, it is highly practical and at no time is the beginning writer in doubt as to what step he should take next toward acquiring professional skill. It is noteworthy that such abstract matters as the way in which a writer's mind functions, and methods of studying literary technique, are discussed and explained in simple terminology.

At all times the reader of this book can sense that it was written by a man who knows how to write from actual experience, and not by the type of literary pedant who prefers theorizing to facing realities.

Publication of this book by the Macmillan Company adds considerable prestige to the creative writing curriculum being built up at the University of Oklahoma under the direction of Mr. Campbell.

During the first semester of the present school year, the University offered for the first time a 10-hour course in Professional Writing, which follows the general plan of Mr. Campbell's book. Some twenty beginning writers, about half of them adults, enrolled for the course, which is said to be the first of its kind offered anywhere.

The course, like the book, is unique in its emphasis on learning professional methods instead of beginning immediately on attempts to produce finished literary types. Although the class assignments do not include any complete fiction forms, at least two of the members of the class received enough inspiration and instruction that they had sold pieces of fiction to the Street and Smith company, pulp magazine publishers, before the Christmas holidays.

During the second semester of the present

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school year, another new course will be offered for writers. This course, which will follow the Professional Writing course but will also be open to other writers who have had sufficient background and experience, will be taught jointly by Mr. Campbell and Foster Harris, '25, a veteran writer of short stories.

The course will be devoted to actual production of short fiction, with Mr. Campbell giving lectures and Mr. Harris conducting laboratory sections. It will be a five-hour course.

Mr. Campbell is author of nearly a score of books, and numerous short stories and articles in such diverse publications as *Adventure* magazine and the scholarly *Southwest Review*. Mr. Foster has written several thousand published short stories and is ranked by authorities as one of the twenty most outstanding authors in the United States in the pulp magazine field.

The team of Campbell and Foster probably has a far greater record of published material than any other two persons in the country who are offering instruction to beginning writers.

Mr. Campbell's course in Professional Writing will be repeated the second semester and also is being offered by correspondence. A brief newspaper announcement that the course could be taken by mail brought a flood of inquiries to Mr. Campbell's desk last month.



Sooner writers

A poem, "Silver King," by Kenneth C. Kaufman, '16, '19ma, professor of modern languages in the University and book page editor of the *Sunday Oklahoman*, was published in the December issue of *Esquire*. A full page was devoted to the poem and illustration.

The Houghton-Mifflin Company has published a new chemistry book, *A Course in Qualitative Analysis*, written jointly by Dr. Guy Y. Williams, '06, head of the chemistry department in the University, and James E. Belcher, assistant professor of chemistry.

Poems by Dr. E. E. Dale, '11, head of the history department of the University, and Lucile Searcy, '20, '30ma, instructor in English, are included in the fourth annual anthology of poetry by Oklahoma writers, compiled and published by Aletha Caldwell Conner, of Fallis.

G. V. Williams, '36m.ed, of Wewoka, is author of a new workbook for pupils in elementary Oklahoma history. It is being published by the Harlow Publishing Company, Oklahoma City.

Hollis Russell, '37, and Janet Huckins, of Oklahoma City, are collaborating on radio plays and recently sold a play, *Retake*, for presentation on a national network through WGN, Chicago.

An article on *This Business of Writing a Column*, by Kenneth C. Kaufman, '16, '19ma, professor of modern languages and

book page editor of the *Sunday Oklahoman*, was reprinted in a recent issue of *Column Review*.

C. L. Douglas, '21ex, of Fort Worth, Texas, has written a biography of the governor-elect of Texas. It is called *The Life Story of W. Lee O'Daniel* and is published by Dealey and Lowe of Dallas.

The last two volumes of a series of elementary English textbooks of which Dr. Chester O. Newlun is co-author, have been released by Doubleday, Doran Publishing Company. Dr. Newlun, who is director of the University Training School, prepared the texts with the co-operation of Lucy H. Meacham, supervisor of elementary schools, Wichita, Kansas. The texts are based on a "spiral system," which enables a child to review the work of previous grades along with additional material each year.



Notes on Sooner books

The Book-of-the-Month Club, New York City, has placed all three of the Fall books issued by the University of Oklahoma Press on its list of recommended reading for club members.

The books include Richmond Croom Beatty's *Lord Macaulay: Victorian Liberal*, Carl Coke Rister's *Southern Plainsmen*, and John Walton Caughey's *McGillivray of the Creeks*. Rister is professor of history in the University of Oklahoma, while Caughey is of the history faculty of the University of California, Los Angeles, and Beatty of the English faculty of Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, is a native of Shawnee, Oklahoma.

In his new book, *Powder River*, Struthers Burt, widely known writer on the West, pays tribute to two other University of Oklahoma Press authors. *Powder River* is the latest addition to the well known Rivers of America Series. After quoting from and giving frequent mention of their books, Mr. Burt says: "The bibliography of the northwest is voluminous and steadily increasing but if you wish to read a few volumes that will tell you all you want to know, I cannot recommend too highly *Red Cloud's Folk*, the definitive History of the Oglala Sioux, by George E. Hyde; I am indebted to Mr. Hyde for the various Indian names in Chapter III; if you wish a clear and dramatic picture of the Sioux, Stanley Vestal's *Sitting Bull* is excellent, and if you wish a clear picture of the trapper, his *Kit Carson* is equally good.



To the Alumni Secretary:

I have been so busy lately that I had forgotten that my dues to the Alumni Association had not been paid. I am enclosing a check.

My congratulations to you upon your magazine. I think it is the best alumni publication in the mid-west. All of the Sooners around here, of course, are also elated over the great football team that O. U. has this year.

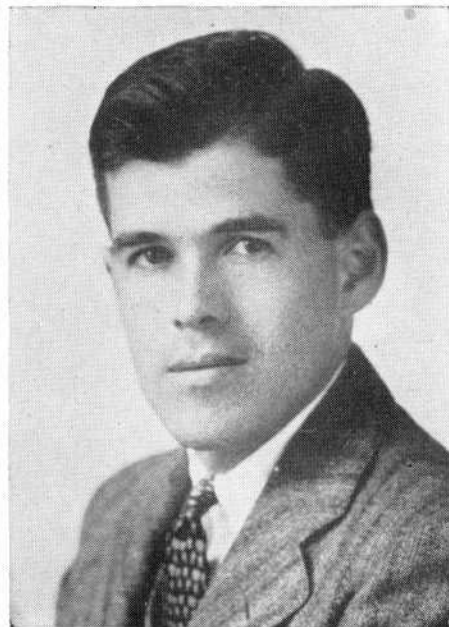
Best wishes for your work. Don't fail to drop by to see me if you are around this part of the world.

J. N. TIDWELL, '33ma
Fulton, Missouri

A New Mystery Novel

by

Todd Downing



Death Under the Moonflower

Here is a new mystery novel by Todd Downing, '24, '28ma, author of *Night Over Mexico*, *The Last Trumpet*, and other popular books. Mr. Downing introduces Sheriff Bounty, a new and interesting crime investigator. *Death Under the Moonflower* is published for The Crime Club, Inc., by Doubleday Doran & Co. ----- \$2.00

Lord Macaulay:

Victorian Liberal

This is a distinguished new biography from the University of Oklahoma Press. The author is Richmond Croom Beatty, member of the English faculty at Vanderbilt University. *Lord Macaulay* carries the recommendation of the Book of the Month Club ----- \$3.00

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