

April 14, 1923

Miss Ruth R. Edwards,
900 Second National Bank Building,
Akron, Ohio.

Dear Miss Edwards:

I am shocked when I realize how long I have held your manuscripts. My only excuse is that they were received when I was out of town last December, that I came back to a rush of work preparatory to the annual speaking trip on which I go, that I fully intended when I left New York to take the manuscripts with me, read them en route and write you, but did not do it. I am only just back and I have taken the first time that I could command to read the stories.

I wish I could write you enthusiastically that I thought you were on the right track, but I cannot do that, dear Miss Edwards. As a matter of fact, I think you are on a track that will lead you nowhere.

There was a day when the kind of thing that you do here might have been favorably received by a certain public, but it has passed. Fiction must come out of life - out of experience and observation of life, reflection, feeling, understanding. Imagination not fed by this is a vapid imagination. I get from these stories no feel at all of actual life, you really have invented these things, not built them up out of yourself. Is not that true?

What you should do, if you really are desirous to write is to turn about face, learn to observe - observe men and women and things around you - set down what you see just as nearly as possible as you see and feel it. Learn to do that, and then out of that construct your plot, build your character.

I hope this does not sound unsympathetic or hard; it is simply the best advice I can give you, and therefore the most sympathetic and the kindest advice. I only wish that I had been more prompt in writing it; I hope you will forgive me for that. I trust you will begin again, if you are ambitious to write.

With all good wishes, believe me

Sincerely yours,