1

Journalism

August 14, 1934

Dear Mrs. Crook:

I have been away from New York and not quite up to par when here so that between the two your letter and manuscripts have been neglected.

I suppose what you want is as practical advice as I can give.

When one has had a certain amount of genuine experience in life, as I should imagine from what you tell me of your past you have had, they should have material to write about.

When they feel that they would like to put this material into words then comes the tug of war. The material will be worth nothing until its meanings are clear and that only comes from a careful study, an absorption of the material. It can only be made to live, even if after you find a meaning in it, by lighting it with imagination, infusing it with feeling.

Looking over what you have sent me I should say that there was nothing here that was really based on your experience excepting this amusing skit, "A Cure for Rejection Slips." I do not know that the cure is workable, but that is not the point. You have a little satire here that came out of your own experience. This might be placed, though not very easily I fancy. You would have to try it on the Writer's Magazine and the Newspaper Literary Departments.

"Silver Steps" has a germ in it I think, but it is too light, too unfinished. You do not feel any reason for it, that is, a thing of this kind must have a meaning. I do not see it in this.

As to the story you send, "They Bought their Husbands," it strikes me as utterly unreal. There are selfish and foolish women no doubt in Oregon and if you want to deal

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with them try to deal with them as they are in an environment you know. I think this is a hopeless story myself, at least if it came to me as an editor that is the way I should feel about it, and so because it has no sense of being based on a real knowledge of the kind of people and the world with which you try to deal.

This may sound harsh, dear Mrs. Crook, but it is not meant so. What I am trying to emphasize is that if you want to write you have got to deal with material that you know, that you have got to absorb this material until you have an inner meaning and then you have got to labor and labor and labor again to get these meanings on paper. Writing is not invention, not imagination turned loose without a solid something to work on. It is made up of the knowledge of the thing you want to handle, a saturation in it, and then a willingness to work to get out what you feel inside of yourself.

I would be glad if I could write you otherwise, but I cannot and be of the least use to you, and I do hope you will not be too disappointed with what I have said and not above all be hurt.

Very sincerely yours

Mrs. C. L. Crook
Star Route #3
Tillamook, Oregon

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