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A PERSISTENT WRITER'S SUCCESS.

The young man who won the O. Henry Memorial prize this year (he is twenty-seven, to be exact) has demonstrated the proposition which is as old as the proverbial hills, namely, that if you start at the bottom and work like the devil, you will, some day, be "up amongst 'em."

Edison Marshall started this old and well known process in 1914, when the *Argosy* took a story of his entitled "The Divine Fire." I think he got thirty dollars for it. You might call this a humble beginning. Well, it was; Eddie isn't saying a great deal about those earlier days and those earlier stories. They set him going, however; that's the point. Now, briefly, let's catalogue his rapid ascent in the following eight years:—

In 1915 he placed stories in a wide field of magazines.

In 1916 and 1917 he made O'Brien's roster of the hundred best stories of the year.

In 1918 he went to war, and stopped writing.

In 1919 he was included in a volume of "best stories" of the year.

In 1920 he was mentioned as producing one of the best thirty stories.

In 1921 he made the short-story-writer's Parnassus, the O. Henry award, with his "The Heart of Little Shikara," originally published in *Everybody's*.

And all this time he wrote novels, novels, novels. Today, his "Voice of the Pack," "The Strength of the Pines," "The Snowshoe Trail," and "Shepherds of The Wild," are rapidly pushing him along into the small group of best-selling western writers.

That is n't so poor a record for eight years' effort.

Here's the secret of the whole thing, generously revealed by Mr. Marshall himself in one succinct phrase: "I worked like the devil!"

And that's the literal truth. The young man came down to the University of Oregon from his home town, Medford, with the idea planted firmly in his head that he wanted to write. "I had written before that, of course," he said. "Wrote poems, plays, novels, etc., by the boxful — all bunk, of course, but it helped me with style, and so forth."

He still needed a lot of helping with style, "and so forth," when he came to the university. His earlier stories, when turned in to instructors, used to be held up as horrible examples. But that didn't seem to affect him much. You see, he had that crazy idea in his

head that he wanted to write. "My father, the son of a forty-niner, was a newspaper man ; and my mother used to write mighty creditable verse for the lesser magazines when she was young. So I guess that explains partially why I wanted to write."

His method, in some respects, was unique. He'd go to the printshop of the journalism "shack," find a long roll of print paper and cut it into typewriter width, leaving it several feet long. This he would put into his machine, and forthwith the muse would spread itself over that great length of paper. He'd start at any time of the day and oblivious to all other things — classes, food, exercise — continue on until he had that story finished.

Marshall never finished college. Shortly after selling his first story he did the eminently characteristic thing of quitting the school. His idea ran something like this : "I want to write good strong, rugged fiction of this Northwest of ours ; I want to do it now.

I want experience. I'm not getting the sort of thing I want here." Therefore he went back to Medford and began anew his long friendship with nature, the hills, and animals. And it is just these things that he writes of the best.

Quite the best thing about Eddie Marshall is that he has no false standards about "art." Still, each story and each novel brings with it a surer sense of touch, a more rounded and matured view of life, a better and more original choice of phrasing and wording.

It's a treat to watch him at a reunion. He's the life of the party. Excess vitality bubbles continually to the surface. He's boisterous, eager to share the hilarity and be in on the fun. And yet he's always looking about, catching people's expressions, snaring their queer or fresh phrases, always pumping them on certain things they seem to know best. Now is that not the attitude of the artist?

And he works — "to beat the devil."

EUGENE, Oregon.

Ernest Haycox.

IF YOU WANT TO WRITE.

Do you want to write? I have met scores of persons who say they do. For instance, there is the Girl Who Wants to Write. She flutters up to you and says in her impulsive, confiding way : "I think it's perfectly wonderful, this being able to write! Really write. I mean! It's so inspiring and uplifting, IF you know what I mean! You know," (and here her voice sinks into a mysterious whisper, as if she were about to reveal the secrets of the Ku Klux Klan) "I've always wanted to write ; but between looking after the children and serving as secretary to the Browning Club, I can never find time for ANYTHING!" Or maybe it's a man. "Wonderful thing, writing," he says : "keeps you mentally alert. Often thought I'd like to try it myself. Office eats up most of my time, though. Still, I may get time to try it some day," but you never see anything of his pub-

lished, so perhaps he doesn't get time to try.

The successful writer is not the one who wants to write ; it is the one who *has* to write. When you feel that you have *got* to write, go to it — and all the powers of darkness, editorial or other powers, can't stop you!

There are many who write with great charm, beauty, and sincerity of style, yet they cannot evolve successful stories. What is it that their stories lack? Nine times out of ten, it is just one thing — plot. A mere portrayal of character, however brilliant and searching it may be, does not make a story. Stories, to be successful, must have a real plot. "But where am I to find a plot?" the novice asks. The answer is : "Everywhere ; but you must hunt for it." Keep your eyes open and your ears alert. The chance remark of some stranger or a newspaper paragraph may suggest an idea that can be developed into a plot. Put