

porch was somewhat of an abortion and the County Council took a part and arranged for the present structure. During the days of the big sheep sales, a marquee had to be put up with plenty of straw to accommodate shepherds and drovers. The house, like most others, has had many occupiers, some have prospered, some have suffered, and some have caused suffering to others.

If you have lived in North Canterbury you will do nothing but grin and ask for more.

#### AMATEUR GOLD-DIGGER

**GOLD IN THE RIVER.** By Frederick W. G. Miller, A. H. & A. W. Reed, Wellington and Dunedin.

THIS is a good book, and could have been very good if the author had been a little less anxious to be bright. However, it is still good enough to be a safe recommendation to anyone who has ever seen the Molyneux river, or rocked a miner's cradle, or dug or panned for alluvial gold. It is the story of a journalist who left Dunedin in the last big depression in the hope of discovering a new method of maintaining himself in the upper Molyneux gorge. His gold-digging experiences (panning, cradling, and sluicing) are very well told, and those who know Central Otago will feel that his background is authentic. When he turns to social and cultural questions he is still easy to follow, but he is now a pleasant companion rather than a character. Like the author, the illustrator (T. H. Jenkin) has been a little too eager to entertain, but he does other things too.

## Writing is Difficult . . . .

*And it Never Gets Any Easier*

A CORRESPONDENT to *The Listener* last week discussed, with reference to the leading character in the film *The Lost Weekend*, the difficulty which literary men have in making their inspiration flow. Another slant on the subject is given in a recent book called *Writers and Writing*, in which Robert van Gelder, editor of the *New York Times Book Review*, gathers together the testimonials of some 90 authors whom he has interviewed in the course of his work. These show that, contrary to the common belief of the public that authorship is a pleasant and easy occupation, most writers find their work desperately difficult, no matter how long they have been at it; they regard the whole literary process as one part pleasure and nine parts drudgery, and have to drive themselves to it in order to make a living.

Here is what a selection of authors told van Gelder:

**Sinclair Lewis:** "Writing is just work—there's no secret. If you dictate, or

use a pen, or type, or write with your toes it is still just work."

**Thomas Mann:** "My unvarying schedule—seven days each week," beginning after breakfast and ending at noon. His average daily output: a page of longhand.

**Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings:** "Writing is agony. I stay at my typewriter for eight hours every day when I'm working and keep as free as possible from all distractions for the rest of the day. I aim to do six pages a day, but I'm satisfied with three. Often there are only a few lines to show."

**J. P. Marquand** calls writing a "curse," says he "heartily dislikes it, always has and always expects to."

**Ernest Hemingway:** "Most of it is tough going." *For Whom the Bells Tolls* took 17 months of work, on a daily 7.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. schedule.

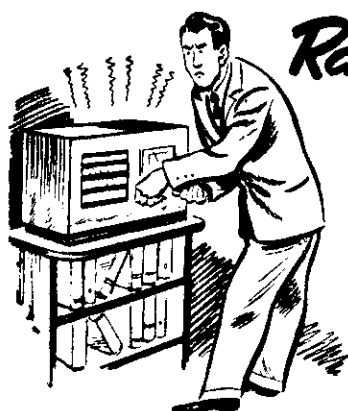
**H. G. Wells** had to rewrite "four, five, six or seven times" before his books took on "shape and form."



"Writing is just work"

**Robert Nathan:** "When I'm really working I keep at it eight to twelve hours a day, usually writing by hand. I cross out a lot, revise constantly. In impatience I turn to the typewriter and write rapidly, then cross it all out and try again by hand. The work never gets any easier."

**W. Somerset Maugham:** "I sit down with a fountain pen and paper and the story pours out. However lousy a section is I let it go. I write on to the end. Then the subconscious mind has done what it can. . . . The rest is simply effort. . . . polishing, rewriting the lousy parts. . . . going over a chapter time and time again, until, though you know it isn't right, it is the best you can do."



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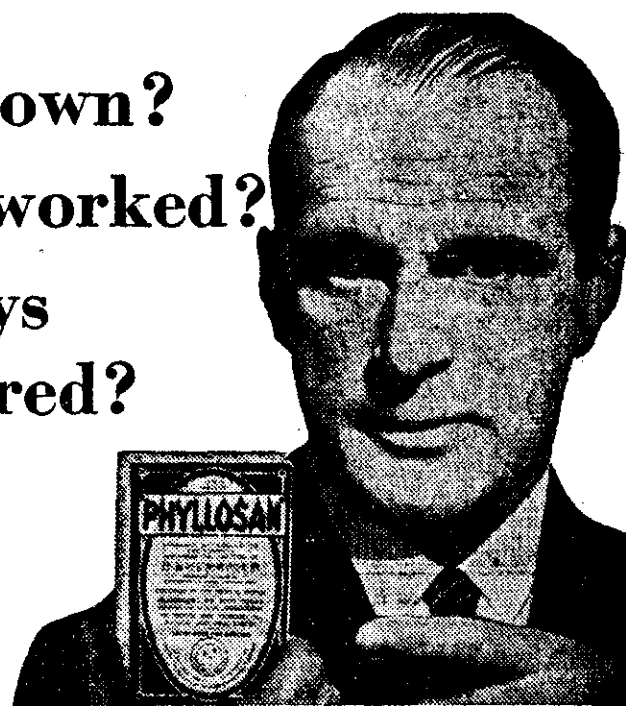
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