

About the Hobby of Writing

I've just finished writing an article about my hobby. Here it is:

I've been thinking lately, about hobbies that people have. Mine costs almost nothing, can be pursued any time and at any place I happen to be, and it has brought me, in all these years, the most satisfying rewards. It is simply this: Keeping a Journal.

I think I must have started when I was 12 or 13, that age when bottled up feelings and emotions must be let out, when the burden of all the mystery of this unintelligible world falls heavily on one's heart and one must simply write it out to ease the weight. Looking back over them now, I am amused at the sometimes trite but typical outpourings of my early adolescence, but also I see a touch of pathos in it all and feel almost tender about it. And I hope it has made me more tolerant and understanding with my own daughters who are at present experiencing the joys and suffering some of the "agonies" of young womanhood.

There were later haphazard journals of my college days. For some reason I threw most of them out years ago--much to my regret now. Full of the outpourings of an imagined maturity of mind, of unrequited love, of sophisticated mutterings about Man, God and the Universe, they make me smile at myself now. That a long process this growing up can be! Then there were the journals kept in Europe where I spent a year with my family in Prague after a two month adventure into many countries on that continent--sometimes brief jottings, sometimes lengthy accounts, about people and places, many impressions that bring back exciting memories even now when I glance through the Pages.

By the time I was married, keeping some sort of journal had become a habit with me so I continued to pour out words by the hundreds about the extraordinary happiness my married life was bringing me. When my first daughter was born I decided it would be a fine thing to keep a journal about her and set myself the pleasant task of recording something about her almost every day for a year. I think I began the day after she was born, in the hospital, first writing a detailed account of what I could remember of the delivery and what emotionally it meant to me to be having a child. I must say, I stuck to my goal so now at least one of my daughters has a comparatively complete year's account of her early babyhood. It was fun trying to observe something new each day that I might remark about--a look, a smile, a gesture, whatever it was, was full of meaning to me. I have a feeling that some day she may treasure this book about herself, for, whatever it may lack in literary merit, it was full of love and full of herself. There is something rather fascinating about the mystery of one's own babyhood. Most typical baby books have spaces for weights, measurements, first words, date of first tooth or first smile but they are just cold recordings of facts common to all normal babies. Seldom a description in detail of the little golden curl that falls over her right eye, that she twists at bedtime, no knowledge that her mother's heart leaped when baby put her little fat hands on her mother's cheeks and patted them gently, no words about how much she was loved and what daily delight she was bringing to her parents.

And so time has passed. My oldest daughter is now 18 and has 3 sisters. As time grew more scarce with each new baby, I found myself neglecting the daily jottings - days were over before I realized it and often they found me falling into bed early. However, my journal was never entirely abandoned. I'd take it up, times when I felt rested or particularly aware of my wonderful family and ^{write,} write, write, trying to catch with events long past or just putting down something special priceless that had happened that day. ^{Every} mother knows that a child is a gold mine of funniness and I have tried not to miss recording the hundreds of fantastically humorous things ^{my} children said or did in their early (and even later) childhood. I can sit back now, re-

reading they, and laugh with delight. Many of these things would have been forgotten entire not too long after they happened for our lives are so full *of* a number of things! On rare occasions I've even read parts of the journals to the children and they seem hilariously amused. Even now, my youngest, who is ten, asks me when she is bored to "please get out your journal and read me about the funny things I used to say when I was little!"

At the present time my book contains scribblings of odd and varied things: stories the children bring back from school, remarks about how they're getting on, reflections on their different personalities, each so complex and interesting, on parenthood, on my reading, cooking and housekeeping, on love and happiness, on problems that arise, on friends and acquaintances, the weather, the garden and all the countless surprises that one day can bring.

This may seem a strange hobby to some but as far as I can see it is fully as rewarding (more so to me, of course), as collecting stamps, or vases or paper napkins,--the very thought of which distresses me! One does not necessarily have to be "literary" or even have a "flare" for writing to follow my hobby, I've written many, many stories and verses, a few of which have been published, but I still maintain that anyone who can write a letter (and who doesn't?) can keep a journal if the urge is there. For one thing it is an excellent discipline for those who imagine they can't "write" at all. You may feel, in the beginning very hesitant about expressing yourself. The words won't come. There is really nothing to write about, you say. After all, you're just a housewife like me. The routine goes on in the same ordinary path day after day. That would there be to record?

But wait---things have happened now that you stop to think about it. Your daughter, for instance, just as she dashed out of the door for school this morning, turned back and called, "Gee, Mother, that was a swell breakfast. Thanks a lot! Bye!" And you remember that happy look, that pleasant wholesomeness and something stirs in your heart--something nice to remember. It takes so little *Ville* to record such a simple thing, but if you're like me you'll get a deep feeling of satisfaction just expressing it on paper, storing it ix away in a memory book that may come alive for you any time, any hour you choose.

There are blue days too when you take up your little book and write. You write sadly and you wonder why you are writing at all and gradually you feel better when it is finished and that too is part of the record. Over and above all there is somehow a feeling of self respect that comes with the creative expression of your own thoughts, simple though that expression may be. It cannot fail to heighten the sense of one's being of one's place as a definite and distinct personality in the scheme of things. It is good for one's ego and good besides for one's mental health.

Many people realize, once they begin a journal, that life is full of a number of things to which they had never given more than a passing thought. That little surge of pride that comes over you when you quietly observe one of your little daughters reading in the lamp light, her face so beautiful in its rapt attention to her book, her golden hair shining with a lustre you never realized it had. You say to yourself, "I must not forget this." You want to keep it forever, that lovely picture, that special sweet feeling it have you. Then the doorbell rings and your dream is shattered for the moment and perhaps for most of us it becomes but a fleeting image crowded out too soon by other more pressing thoughts. It is true, we cannot keep forever the memory of every nuance of emotion that we feel, but now and then we can stop and savor again some of those rare delicious moments- when life seemed almost perfect. For me, that mere writing of it intensifies the experience. This verbal expression puts a stamp of unforgettability on it and gives me a sense of taking a more vital Part in this fascinating adventure of living! Perhaps I am mistaken in believing that many another person would find satisfaction in this kind of hobby. But it is so

within reach of almost everyone, it takes so little time to record now and then, not necessarily daily, but when one feels the inner need, the little unforgettable moments of daily life. And the rewards are permanent and rich, not only for yourself but someday, perhaps, for your children.

So, if you are searching for a meaningful hobby, try this one for awhile and test its value for yourself. Buy a notebook, keep it handy at your desk or near your own most comfortable chair, keep a pen always near, and one of these days when you drop into that chair after a long session with the ironing or cooking or scrubbing, take up your notebook and write something. Your mind will come alive in a new way, even though you may record simply this: "The sun is shining. My ironing is finished. There is a sweet clean smell in the room, I feel good now that I have accomplished that job." And something happens. For a moment, perhaps longer, the world becomes a magic land and you do feel good. What is it that makes it so? You explain it.