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Katherine Green Anna

She Enjoys Writing; Conrad Does Not

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Forty-five years ago Anna Katherine Green published The Leavenworth Case. That mystery story still sells. In 1923 she publishes The Step on the Stair in which love and romance vie for place with crime and mystery. Critics have said that this novel, written when she has passed her seventy-fifth birthday is one of her best, that it returns to the manner and method of The Leavenworth Case, was better than The Filigree Ball or The House of the Whispering Pines. At any rate, soon after publication, it was found on the best-seller lists.

The other morning I found Anna Katharine Green (Mrs. Charles Rohlfs) of Buffalo, at the sedate Murray Hill Hotel. An active, agile little woman, she is, who says that she presumes that The Step on the Stair is her last book; but almost winks when she says it. She is a born story-teller. True, one does not find much of what is ordinarily known as fine writing in her books; but, neither does one find arid stretches. They are yarns built with a genius for amazing effects and drawing out suspense.

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She says that the reason she began writing her novels of detection and of mystery was not because her father was a lawyer, nor because she heard stories of trials and pleadings in the courts; but because she wanted to write stories.

"Sometimes I don't write a word for five years," she told me. "Then I have an idea which must be developed. I feel like writing."

This last fact seems to be true of the yarn-spinner. The writer who takes his trade seriously as art with a capital "A" finds the process of creating a masterpiece onerous. Take Joseph Conrad, for example, who made a statement on his arrival here, or was so quoted, that he had never learned to enjoy writing. But the raconteur, whose one guide is a brilliant imagination who lets his only guide be the swift telling of a tale of life, love, mystery and the complications along the side lines. That must be real joy.

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Of course I started to tell Mrs. Rohlfs of nights spent breathlessly in finishing one of her novels. She smiled, graciously.

"That," she said, "One hears often; but, honestly now, don't you think taking more time to a book is more of a compliment. When I like a book very much I grudge each page that I turn over."

Well—how many times have you gone over your shelves on a rainy night, when you were tired and depressed, looking vainly for another story that would pick you out of the mire as quickly as a Conan Doyle, or a Mary Roberts Rinehart or an Anna Katherine Green? What better compliment is there, Mrs. Rohlfs, than that?

J. F. than that?

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