

Iowa City, Iowa,
December 19, 1929.

Dear Mrs. Draper:

I am very glad to have "Fourteen" for The Midland. We shall publish it soon. I hope you won't worry about whether it gets three stars or none. I expect it to get three, but that is not the reason why I am accepting it. I am accepting it because I believe it to be a significant story well-told. I think you should feel satisfied in having written it for the same reason.

I am not sure that you are right, or fair to yourself or me, in saying that you wish to postpone availing yourself of my criticism until you feel that you can pay for it as you go along. If I can help you at all, you need the help now rather than after you have made more extensive sales; and I believe I can help you, not only to make sales but to write things that will satisfy you. I am afraid that "doing what editors want" is something I should never urge upon you. I should always want you to bring out the possibilities of a given piece of material. That is what you are not doing at present in many cases, I feel.

Take, for example, this "Coolie Coat." It's a highly interesting situation; the people have vitality; the action is convincing; and the final sentence hits very hard. But in spite of all this, I am afraid that no editor is likely to take the story; and in the case of one editor at least, that is because the possibilities of the thing are not realized, not because of the thing itself.

I do think one has to make a more or less definite choice in writing, between doing things for specific markets and just doing things because they are worthwhile. I think you could do the first successfully but I imagine you would find it too unpleasant to be really worthwhile. What I should prefer is for you to write the things you want to and let me help you to see, in some cases and for a while, how they should be written. Some of these things, I feel reasonably sure, will sell. There was your story in the Christmas "Household Magazine." I was very glad to see it there. I am afraid I didn't help you very much with that story but I feel sure that you can do others that will sell, and that at the same time will please you better than this one probably has.

And the novel. I am perfectly sure from the stories of yours that I have seen that you have the material for a novel of very real significance in the experience that has gone into the making of the "Fruit at Singapore" and "Fourteen". I believe that it

would be a satisfying thing for you to do. The chance for publication of a novel distinguished by literary merit is relatively greater than that for short stories of the same kind. It is very true, of course, that many such novels fail to bring much money. What I am thinking of is the psychological satisfaction that I think it might be to you to do this work. I don't believe that it would be so hard a job as you should think. To some extent I believe that it would be possible for you to fit together the material you have already written for this purpose.

I am leaving here in a couple of days for a brief vacation in Michigan. I shall return about January 5th. Perhaps you will care to think the matter over until that time and I hope you may decide to let me help you with at least one or two manuscripts on a commission basis. If you care to send me several stories, I shall be pleased to read them, to select those that I think best worth working on, and then if you approve my choice, to give you my criticism of them; the understanding to be that if the manuscript were sold I would receive a fairly liberal fraction of the sum realized and that if it did not sell you would be under no obligations to me. I am doing this with one or two other students and assure you that I should not suggest it if I did not feel that it is fair to me.

My very good wishes for the Christmas season go to you with this letter.

Sincerely yours,

John T. Frederick