

# LETTERS FROM A NEW CONGRESS MAN'S WIFE

*When Beulah Rural First Went to the Capital*

*And Her Husband Amos Took His Place as Solon*



DEAR ETTA: You remember our compact—my letters to you to be as frank as the old woodpile-confessions of our sunbonnet and copper toes days. But don't forget you have given your "cross your heart and body" pledge to reduce them to fine cut fodder before you consign them to the waste paper regions of your desk.

Do recall, Etta, how that awful Jennings boy patched together and used to recite Spencer Pratt's proposal, that you had merely "drawn and quartered" as it were, before leaving the library one afternoon! And even if the new janitor there is a divinity student from the seminary, I am a statesman's wife now, and what I write of Amos's career and my special experiences here at the national capital must be treated a good deal as Amos's truck Sims treated his will, which he divided up in seven yeast powder cans and buried all over the yard several feet deep.

I know you'll understand how important secrecy is, as I shall discuss the diplomatic relations of the United States, together with inside information of the secret service, and I mean to tell you all about the political situations in which the President asks advice from Amos, and what sort of clothes the President's wife and daughters wear when we drop in; so you can see, dear, that were such comments to escape fire our correspondence would be as impudic as the betrayal of the State secrets would be indiscreet.

I'll send some separate letters about the public hearings and other places of interest which are open to any unoffical person visiting Washington, and you can read them before the literary circle. It will get back at that "Sunrise on Mont Blanc" paper and those other travel letters from her second season that Jennie Spofford has read every winter since the club started.

Well, as we learned to say that winter you and I took our course in "French by Correspondence," *vous sommes arrivés!* And by the way, I'll have to brush up my phrases, now that I shall be obliged to mingle with the Ambassadors and other foreigners here in the diplomatic corps. Amos would not listen to my suggestion of giving up our sleeping car section at Harrisburg and going the rest of the way in a day coach. It would have saved seven dollars, for the mileage allowance which Amos will get from Congress does not include Pullman extras; but Amos was afraid some of the Government officials might be about the depot when we came in and think it strange that a Congressman should consent to travel without all the luxuries.

I was awfully sorry that it was after dark when



Drawings by Reginald B. Birch

our train got in; for Amos did not have a chance to bow to the people on the sidewalks as we drove to the hotel, as we used to do in going about to the different towns before election. Amos does look so dignified and impressive when he lifts his silk hat and smiles over the door of an open carriage, and I am a firm believer in the importance of the first impression made by a statesman.

As we pushed through the station, I could see Amos vainly trying to place the group which should make the "Welcome to our city!" remarks to us. At the door we faced each other.

"Where do you suppose the delegation is?" I asked.

Amos looked car sick.

"Well, let's take a trolley and save hack hire, just to spite them," I suggested, as Eve probably said it was good and roomy outside the gates, anyway.

But Amos, with the wisdom of ages and the policy of a statesman, has developed more strength of mind than the first man had, and he turned aside and peremptorily demanded, "A conveyance to the Hotel Rainey!" in a voice that made the station master's assistant, who was reaching for our bags, tremble.

I was glad Amos had rejected the economical fruit of his wife's brain; for just as we were stepping in along came that lovely Mr. Teale,—you know, the very wealthy Congressman from the northern part of our State, who made such splendid speeches for Amos and sent me those roses all the way from Topeka,—and of course I was glad to have him think that cab hire was a little thing to my mind, compared with the honor due Amos as a Congressman. However, I was really relieved as well as tickled to pieces when he made us get into his big automobile.

I shall never forget that going up Pennsylvania-ave. Why, Main-st., even when there are going to be fireworks on the common, is nothing to it! It is awfully wide, and with the long rows of light along the sides, making shining spots on the wet asphalt (it had been raining,

and Mr. Teale called it "Uncle Sam's tears for the new Congressman"), and lots of carriages and automobiles and wagons, and the trolley cars running through the center like great lightning bugs, it looked like that picture "Paris by Night" that you got for breakfast food coupons.

"Look back!" Mr. Teale called to me above the whirling hurricane that swept across the motor car's click.

But I felt like a stowaway just brought to light and able only to hold tight and blink.

"Look back!" he urged, however. "Don't be afraid. A new Congressman's wife has nothing in common with Lot's wife. Her salting is administered later in

small doses when she faces the other women."

Mr. Teale is always making queer sorts of jokes that you have to think over; but he is very handsome. So I turned around, and then I saw the Capitol.

It looks just like the postcard pictures; but somehow the sight of the reality—of the great temple of fame where Amos was to speak and command—seemed like a dream picture come true.

The hotel is very elegant; much bigger than the Mansion House where we stopped in Coal Center (it's the one Jennie Spofford's half sister, who is a clerk here in the Census Office, recommended), and everybody in the lobby seemed to have heard about Amos. But there weren't any of the reporters from the daily papers. Amos asked the clerk at the desk, and he said probably the papers would send up later.

Then we had dinner. Amos has so many virtues, Etta, and now that he is a Congressman and a powerful leader among men, I ought never to mention his little flaws; but, oh dear! I am so sorry he always orders corned beef! The waiter who took our order to-night turned to another and said, "The cabbage season has opened for sure!" And then they both snickered in such a rude way. Of course that waiter will be awfully frightened when he finds out who Amos is; but it would save so much misunderstanding if Amos could be persuaded



She Swept Out of the Room.

to order occasionally some of the unusual worldly wise sort of things on the bill of fare. Mr. Teale gives more than half his order in French; and even corned beef would not sound bad in French, it seems to me.

After dinner Amos said he had some business to attend to down street, and I was just starting to my room, wishing very much I could run across the lawn to your side door,—you dear old helpful listener of mine!—when a stylish looking woman came up to me. She had a paper, and wanted to put my name down for a series of dances that she said the congressional ladies of the hotel gave every winter. As she talked she sort of drew off toward the parlor, and of course I followed. There were lots of ladies there, and she introduced me to them all, and somehow got me to promise to subscribe to the dances, although I haven't waltzed since I was married, and Amos has a part of one of his speeches which says, "I will take the confidence of the people as a sacred trust with me to the nation's capital, and no rank intrigue and no lure of frivolity and dissipation shall ever cloud my mind and soul to the will of the people."

I suppose dancing would seem frivolous for us,



"The Cabbage Season Has Opened for Sure!"