Cards From H. S. Crocker Co., A. M. Robertson, Cooper & Co. and Dodge Stationery Company.

Pose by Miss Marion George. Photo by Stanford Studio.

THE bit of pasteboard is a trifle, perhaps, but it is one of the most significant trifles in this complex world, where the knot of a tie or the size of a pompadour may testify to the wearer's social status.

The calling card may seem even less than either of these, but it tells far more.

Wouldn't our ancestors back in the days of primeval man have thought us a strange race if they could have known that we were to be judged by a two-by-three-inch scrap of pasteboard, on which only a name—perhaps an address—sometimes a day, is engraved? And yet, after all, how simple a diploma that two-by-three card is, certifying to our knowledge of the forms correct.

The hostess who sits down in the hush following the 7 o'clock diminishing clatter of good-bys at the end of her tea can read a good deal of social law as she runs over the contents of the silver tray that has been heaping since 4 o'clock in the butler's hand.

There is the married woman's card. It is always a trifle over three inches long and a trifle over two inches wide. Some are larger. Mrs. Hobart uses a card three and a half by almost two and a half. Mrs. Henry Crocker does also. Mrs. Hugh Tevis has a card that is only three by two, no larger than an unmarried woman's.

It is fashionable to engrave the married name in full, as "Mrs. Josephine Sadoc Tobin" and "Mrs. Henry Edwards Huntington." This, however, depends somewhat on a husband's choice, and if he has always been in the habit of writing his name with initials he usually prefers that his wife should follow suit. Both initials are sometimes written, as "Mrs. S. G. Murphy," or the middle inital, as "Mrs William H. Crocker."

Mrs Crocker, by the way, has no period after the abbreviation "Mrs." This is modern and smart.

The head of a family often uses only the surname, as "Mrs. Hobart," but this is not advisable unless the name is uncommon.

When the address is engraved on the card it appears in the lower right-hand corner; the day at home in the left. A card may have either, both or neither. Mrs. Henry T. Scott has a card giving her Burlingame address in the right, her San Francisco address in the left corner. If one lives on a street corner it is smarter to write out that statement as, "Laguna and Washington streets, northwest corner," instead of the simple house number. If the card is to be used while you are away from home it is good form to engrave merely "San Francisco" for the address.

A card used in making farewell calls has "P. P. C." in the left corner. This is an abbreviation of the French form, "Pour prendre conger," or "To take leave."

A widow's card shows her own Christian name instead of her husband's. Thus, "Mrs. Jane Stanford" would be according to custom, although Mrs. Stanford is in the habit of signing herself "Mrs. Leland Stanford."

The width of t. › mourning border is a matter of personal taste. Sometimes it is almost a third of an inch wide; sometimes hardly more than a black line.

One item worth noting is that many of the newest plates have no period after the name. This is true of Mrs. Murphy's, Mrs. Hobart's, Mrs. Will Crocker's, Miss Toy's and others. It is a custom gradually creeping into America, this omitting of the period when it is unnecessary. It is omitted after book titles and the like.

Two by three has been the conventional size for the young lady's card, but some of the new ones are larger and it is said that they will soon be the same size as a married lady's. Miss Bertie Bruce has a large card. Another large one was Miss Mary Crocker's. The same rules for address and day at home are observed for the girls' cards as for mamma's. The eldest unmarried daughter omits her Christian name, as "Miss Hager." Younger daughters write the name in full, as "Miss Genevieve Carolan." Sometimes sisters use one card and have it engraved thus; "Misses Borel." Mother and daughter may do the same, as "Mrs. C. N. Ellinwood. Miss Ellinwood," the former name above the latter. Where the mother's name appears the card is as large as her own.

Another combination card is that of husband and wife. This is used when they call together or sometimes when the lady pays "duty calls" alone. Leaving this card means "My husband sends his regards" and it usually means also "he does hate to make calls." This is the longest card of all in some cases. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Crocker and Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Whipple Spear use cards almost four inches long by two wide.

The pasteboard used now is very thin and in some cases it has a dull surface like that of kid-finished paper. It must be either dead white or cream to conform to good style. The pink and blue tints are not approved.

A man's card, like his hat, is much smaller than a woman's. It is a domino-shaped affair, seldom more than three by one and a half. The address does not often appear, unless he uses his card in much traveling. In such a case the city's name appears in the right corner and the club's, if he has one, in the left; as, "Mr. Peter D. Martin, Pacific Union Club, San Francisco." Charles Rollo Peters has his San Francisco address in one corner, his Monterey address in the other. Judges, professors and the like leave off their signs of honor and become "Mr. Carroll Cook" or "Mr. Benjamin Ide Wheeler." Army and navy men, on the contrary, display all the rank to which they are entitled and appear as "Major General Young," "Captain Frederic Johnston" or "Arthur MacArthur Junior, Lieutenant United States Army." Doctors, too, use "Dr." before their names.

Not every young lady or gentleman who enters this world is presented with an engraved plate and cards upon arrival, but the babies of fashion are. The tiny card engraved with the new name and date of birth is tied by a little ribbon to the parents' card, thus, "Dr. and Mrs. James Alexander Black," and attached to it, "James Ream Black, born December 23, 1900." It would be a mean trick to play on a girl, wouldn't it, engraving and spreading broadcast such record of her age?

A few years later the young person has another card engraved without the prefix, as "Dorothy Helen Jardine," and thus it must remain until the debut permits "Miss."

When a death occurs and many messages of condolence are sent a card of acknowledgment is often issued in this form, "The family of General W. H. L. Barnes gratefully acknowledges your kind expression of sympathy and condolence. San Francisco." The card is large and black-bordered.

Cards issued for special reception days are exactly like any calling card, the day in the left corner. Thus Mrs. McNear has one reading, "Friday, the ninth of January."

The matter of type is just now so unsettled that hardly any style can be wrong. Not long since script was the only possible form of engraving. Lately old English and Roman types have come into fashion, but many still hold to script. Stationers say, however, that old English is soon to be universal. Those who have had script usually have their new plates in one of the recent styles; thus, "Miss Crockett" in script became "Mrs. Laurance Irving Scott" in Roman letters.

The fad that once existed for turning down the corner of a card intended for more than one person is of the past. A card for each person called upon must be left. Fashion recognizes no petty economies.