For the WOMAN WHO THINKS and FEELS

"The Mail Bag"

CURIOSITY stands back of the popularity of the morning mail. The world is full of curious people who love to wonder what's inside an envelope, and there are those who work hard for the satisfaction of this early morning remembrance; they regard the letter sent on its way as principal and await the interest it will yield with an almost childish eagerness, if not an actually morbid curiosity. Were it not for this widespread anxiety, there might be a decided falling off in the weight of Uncle Sam's mail bags; but there is undeniably a certain pleasurable excitement in finding out "what they say."

If this has become a disease, we are suffering with the national ailment and we plead guilty. A well-controlled enthusiasm greets the city letter carrier on his morning round on the residence street; excitement reigns at the village postoffice with each arrival of a mail train; and as a paper, we thoroughly enjoy the contents of the mail bag and are hungry for it. Being very human, we find endless satisfaction in determining what people are thinking about us, and we arrive at a conclusion through the brave spirits who dare to speak out, whether the message be good or ill. In any case, we welcome it, and the merest whisper never goes in one ear and out the other, notwithstanding the suspicions of the incredulous. There is no such thing as an unheeding ear in an up-to-date newspaper office, and our own editorial ear is a keen one and susceptible to the slightest noise from without. The talks and the tales we publish are largely in response to an ever-increasing demand on the part of those who are sufficiently at ease with us to write and ask for space.

It may be verse or it may be prose, but it is so placed as to be read by the many and to be of benefit to the alert. Time-worn verse is given space as generously as the modest effort of a novice, if its theme be worth while.

Our readers are frequently our censors. They tell us how to run pages for women readers and they tell us why to publish what, and this is exactly what we want to hear through the morning mail.

We Lay Us Down to Sleep

WE LAY us down to sleep,
And leave to God the rest,
Whether to wake and weep
Or wake no more be best.

Why vex our souls with care?
The grave is cool and low.
Have we found life so fair
That we should dread to go?

We've kissed love's sweet, red lips,
And left them sweet and red;
The rose the wild bee sips
Blooms on when he is dead.

Some faithful friends we've found,
But they who love us best,
When we are underground,
Will laugh on with the rest.

No task have we begun
But other hands can take;
No work beneath the sun
For which we need to wake.

Then hold us fast, sweet Death,
If so it seemeth best
To Him who gave us breath
That we should go to rest.

We lay us down to sleep;
Our weary eyes we close;
Whether to wake and weep,
Or wake no more; He knows.

—Louise Chandler Moulton.

THE OTHER GIRL

DID you ever receive "the other-girl" treatment? I have, in small, large and frequent doses, and with the shake-well-before-using direction carried out to the letter. It is a method that quite a few young gentlemen employ in entertaining the young ladies upon whom they call. They, of course, are conceited, but that is a characteristic not uncommon in the sterner sex; and the entertaining promoters exploit other attractive women, probably as proofs of their own fascinating power.

One of these self-elected press agents of the Other One will pretty well disclose the methods pursued by all. A certain prearranged idea is followed out in a wonderful way; and it must be admitted extremely interesting is the campaign that aims at blighting any special hopes that you might entertain.

He comes; he sees something that starts the conversational ball rolling; he conquers by his powerful voice and insistent emphasis on the wonderful other girl.

I am not quite sure if this compelling visitor be idealist, conceited ego or just a plain, foolish man. He certainly uses the loud pedal when proclaiming the wonderful qualities of the absent one. It may be that he does not wish to encourage the present woman, and gives the dash of cold water to any hopes by putting each one in her proper second place, the other girl being number one.

Nothing ever is quite so beautiful or so inspiring or so brilliantly intellectual as the other one. If, in a happy moment, you manage to launch a fairly beautiful song on the little public of two in your music room, it brings a fond light to his eye; he breathes a semi-passionate sigh, and then says feelingly that it takes him back to a certain day on the bay of Naples, when Eleanor and he were sailing on the heavenly blue of an Italian sea. From which point he departs into Elysian fields of rapture, where the blue ribbons are awarded to the other girl. Nice proposition, isn't it?

If your hair has an auburn tinge, it only serves to remind him of the brilliant gold in Clarissa's locks or the blue-black shadows in Anne's. If it be scanty, he shakes the mass of the other girl's hair in your face, and if abundant, you will be informed of the wonderful arrangement of the other woman's hair, that isn't very much in quantity, but what that woman can do with it, etc., etc.

It isn't exactly comfortable to be entertained by the fact that some other woman is the most charming, glorious thing in the world. No matter how magnanimous you are, you are just a little resentful at being pushed back into the family circle while the spotlight is centered on another one. What are you going to do, fair, rebellious one?

Just a hint, if you wish. Give him a dose of his own medicine. When William comes with the glowing eye and the willing tongue, try to see something in his shoulder line that brings to your mind another broader frame. (Make the other always one better in this game.) Let the very name of his ideal be an opening wedge for the conversation about another man.

Don't brag. Merely hold the reins and jog easily along at your own pace and drag him with you. Of course he will protest vehemently. I never yet have met a man who did not jealously object to the introduction of an absent one. Your admiring friend will grow uncomfortable, will wriggle and make a few vain attempts to swerve you from your course. He may leave rather hurriedly. But do not let that worry you. He will come back just to prove that you cannot conquer him.

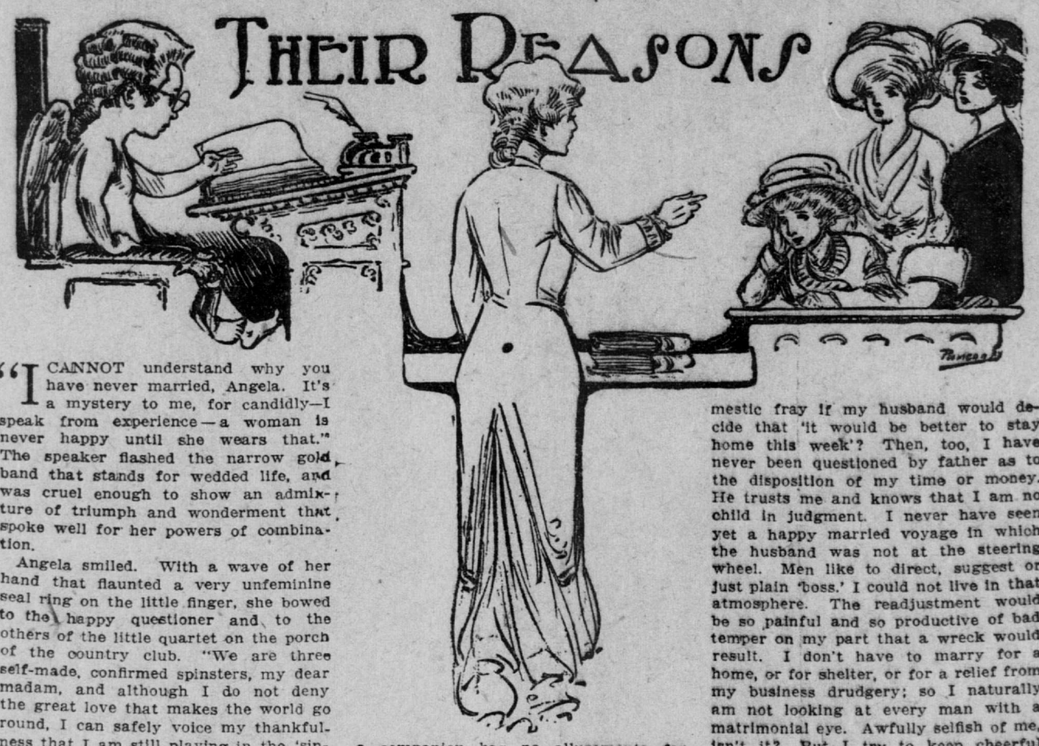
Then there is the opposite plan. Listen patiently to the enthusiastic recital of the other girl's qualities. Be the willing confidante. Let him talk Isabelle until the air is saturated. Let him enthuse, adore and admire Isabelle as intensely as he pleases. Let him burn himself out, and begin at Marcia. Assist him to heap on more wood, while you yourself remain quiet, and when Marcia has been talked out, take his hand, figuratively speaking, and go with him to Beatrice.

Do not be discouraged. Some day he will decide that you must meet Beatrice—just to prove to you that he knows a wonderful woman when he sees her, and to give you an evidence of his strong friendship. And here, little one, will be the astonishing end of the strenuous treatment that you have been given. You will find that Beatrice has also been undergoing the same course of instruction and that the other girl is you!

A man is a queer creature, isn't he?

BARBARA LEE.

THEIR REASONS



"I CANNOT understand why you have never married, Angela. It's a mystery to me, for candidly—I speak from experience—a woman is never happy until she wears that." The speaker flashed the narrow gold band that stands for wedded life, and was cruel enough to show an admixture of triumph and wonderment that spoke well for her powers of combination.

Angela smiled. With a wave of her hand that flaunted a very unfeminine seal ring on the little finger, she bowed to the happy questioner and to the others of the little quartet on the porch of the country club. "We are three self-made, confirmed spinsters, my dear madam, and although I do not deny the great love that makes the world go round, I can safely voice my thankfulness that I am still playing in the 'singles.' That was a remarkable serve out there, by the way. Billie always could be vicious. Now he is a flaming example of the tyrant. I hate to think of the husband that he will make for some poor girl. In the first place, he will demand his meals absolutely on time, and his egg will have to be cooked to fill certain ironclad requirements. He is a selfish thing, and his young wife will be discouraged and disappointed and heartbroken. 'How to Make a Household Drudge Out of an Innocent and Obliging Wife,' by Mr. William Jay, doesn't sound interesting to me.

"You perhaps think that I am selfish; that every wife should gladly shoulder the mop and broom and develop into a combination of servant, cook, laundress, nursemaid and receiver of complaints at—nothing a week. I don't. Housekeeping for a husband that marries for a home rather than for a companion has no allurements for me. I prefer to wait for my soul mate, who, I must admit, seems rather shy and reticent about making known his identity. Caroline there may be able to explain why she has not taken a few of the male persuasion at their word and married them."

"Well, of course, I shall not specialize, as you did, Angela. Every one knows why you are so keen against Billie. We were kind in refraining from criticising your shortcake, but the inner man—"

"Inner brute, you mean!"

"The inner man and the indigestible effort were too much for him, so he selfishly voiced his manly thoughts. But I never considered that phase of the subject when I refused—ahem! You see, I cannot give up my career. I know that some day I am going to startle this section, and I simply must not throw my future to the winds. Oh, I see your smile of disapproval and your pitying shake of the head! I suppose that I am missing the greatest joys in the world. Well, so are you. It is a difference in our points of view. I cannot give up my music. I would feel that I ought to devote much time to my home, because where would the household affairs go if I sat for six hours each day at my piano? I have chosen the road that, for me, leads to happiness. You will never know what it means, my married one, to feel the hush, the sympathetic silence or the mighty burst of applause of a huge audience. I will never realize the joy of my own little circle of an admiring, sympathetic family. The old question of singing to the wide world or to the nest cannot be answered."

"That is very beautiful—local color, juxtaposition of ideas and subjects, contrasts and all that," broke in the third spinstery voice. "But my reason is now due to bring all of you down from the clouds to the earth, earthy. Do you long for the reason why I am just plain Jane Dale? I make more money than any one in our circle of friends, and the proposing contingent is aware of it! I admit that my weekly salary has endowed me with certain independence that is second nature now. If I see a foolish French hat in the little shop around the corner, nothing deters me from buying it if I wish, or from wearing it when I like. My trip abroad this year will be conducted as I see fit and no staying hand will be laid upon my arm (or foot). If I wish to buy Angela an expensive duchess lace collar (never fear, Angela), why, I need not question the right to be extravagant with Harry's money.

"I am inclined to visit my friends and relations. Can you picture the domestic fray if my husband would decide that 'it would be better to stay home this week'? Then, too, I have never been questioned by father as to the disposition of my time or money. He trusts me and knows that I am no child in judgment. I never have seen yet a happy married voyage in which the husband was not at the steering wheel. Men like to direct, suggest or just plain 'boss.' I could not live in that atmosphere. The readjustment would be so painful and so productive of bad temper on my part that a wreck would result. I don't have to marry for a home, or for shelter, or for a relief from my business drudgery; so I naturally am not looking at every man with a matrimonial eye. Awfully selfish of me, isn't it? But I try to keep cheerful under the handicap; and so far I have nipped all budding propositions. At least, I have reasons to think it. No, thank you, the scrapings from the house money and the consent of a master do not attract!"

Thereupon she of the golden band smiled and shook her head. "The only punishment that I can suggest for the three of you is a speedy retraction of your fiery defenses. You do not deserve it, but I am too happy not to wish every one to share the gladness of love—for that, my dears, is the secret. You will forget yourselves when the greatest joy enters your lives. The pretty hands of Angela will be glad to work for her husband; Caroline will sing for joy when she finds that her 'career' has been narrowed to a smaller, though equally important, circle, and plain Jane will wear her last year's hat backward if she knows that it will please her better half. Such is the power of love!"

"TO FILL CERTAIN IRON-CLAD REQUIREMENTS"

"NOTHING DETERS ME FROM BUYING IT"

The PARTING SHOT

I DON'T like the idea of a parting shot; I am not in sympathy with the person who flings it, and I have no yearning to be the person flung at.

The world is filled with people who swim along serenely enough on the crest of the wave, holding each other up along their peaceful way; but let there dawn a day of parting, that promises a discontinuance of mutual usefulness, and plunk go the courtesies.

It would almost seem that, by the grasping, life is regarded as the continuous performance of a benefit, arranged for one side only—and they the benefited. But let anybody else claim the smallest atom of consideration, or even venture to adjust matters for the advantage of a fair number, when down goes the curtain and all is dark.

Now it is this darkness that concerns us all, because it pervades the popular little shoe shop and the scene of the well-arranged house party with equal gloom.

Walk yourself out on a glorious summer day to get a pair of white canvas shoes, or any other sort, from the flimsiest party slippers to the stoutest brogans, and you are taken into the very heart of the first shoe shop you enter; you are given a warmer welcome than is warranted by the mere purchase of one pair of No. 9's. Your shoe is carefully removed, but is it so carefully put on? Not if they happen to be out of your especial number, or if you don't like your foot in their shoes and you are unwise enough to breathe it. Hedge all you can; the moment will come when you make up your mind that the truth must out—that you don't want the shoes—and then get out of the store the best you can, because nobody intends to help you out; and do it as quickly as possible to avoid the parting shot. This may come in the form only of a cold shoulder or a chilling glance or merely through the fact that you tie up your own shoes, but you will usually "get it" in one form or another if you fail to benefit the shoeman.

The milliner whose capital is badly involved—or very much and very well involved—in a shop that is only exclusive because the grand army of hat buyers has been excluded from its four walls, will be gracious enough to you when you enter; but just wait till you've priced a hat or two and showed the first sign of dubiousness on the subject of your own possible headgear, and you may make your decision alone, for the milliner has vanished with a look that was a snub.

Mrs. Wolstoncraft, she of the house party, is not immune from this disorder common to humanity. You may have been very necessary to her happiness when she saw you as a possible sacrifice on the altar of her reprobate nephew. You were beautifully received as the fair unfortunate who was to redeem him from the error of his ways. As her victim you were paraded forth and made much of; but when Jack proved impossible and somehow you couldn't fall in love with him at the given moment, Mrs. Wolstoncraft dismissed you graciously at first, and then she immediately withdrew the glad hand and substituted sweet, womanish, refined sarcasm that was cruelty—a sort of birdshot that hurt you like a lump in your throat, and lasted you very generously through your hundred-mile journey.

The fickle-hearted take on new friends and kick off the old like a discarded overshoe in spring.

And then there is the householder who is landlord. Pay him his last portion of rent as amicably as you will, with all good wishes for his future happiness in your breast, but he will turn you out three days too soon at the final moment, with some trumped-up excuse on the score of your dishonesty flung at you in the presence of the incoming tenant, who happens to be—well, your clergyman!

But the poor boarder has to take it for all the imagined ills he has inflicted in a residence of years. Everything that ever happened has been patched up on the day of each misadventure. Things have been as amicable as they could during long years when that unhappy boarder has been persuaded to stay against his will, because his landlady had borrowed his money and there never was a time when he was free enough to venture until now. The day has at last arrived; the day, the hour, the moment is here! All past favors are forgotten; every evidence of friendship has vanished; his trunk is really out, and there are to be no more borrowings from that source, so let him take it—and he does.

"I've got my opinion of you, to leave a lone woman who has her living to make, and for no reason at that. It's plain enough what you are!" The trunk is being lifted into the wagon, and the new address has been given. "I know a real man when I see one, and you're not a man; and what's more, you're no gentleman"—barring the way down the steps—"Do you hear me? I want you to understand me well—you're not a gentleman!"

"No, madam, I believe that I am not; but I was one when I came here."

Evil communications corrupt good manners, and even this ugly sort of thing is contagious when it is hurled through a rapid-fire gun. Make up your mind as you will not to answer back, you are usually dragged into at least a word or two of defense.

Men and women, whether they be playing on the social side of existence or engaged in serious combat on the business field, should feel it a duty to muster up sufficient self-control to finish the job decently.

The mud in front of any boarding house or shop or town or country residence is there in plentiful quantity to mould into cannonballs, if you care to lower yourself to fling them.

Mary Dreams

ONLY lass in a household of great noisy boys, she learned early in life that it was not good to be a girl. If she joined her brothers in their outdoor sports, it was only to turn indoors, sobbing at their derisive taunts of "gal baby," "'fraid cat," "cry baby." Nor was any sympathy to be found with her hard-working, morbid mother, who was "no advocate of girls." Mary had many times heard her declare. Deep in her little, grieved heart, she many times wondered about it. Why wasn't she a boy, if girls were "no good," as they spared no pains to tell her? Boys only were allowed to go to places where sights were to be seen and great things came to pass. Bold, indeed, were the exploits of the brothers, permitted to ride with father to town for the weekly mail, and told to eager listeners in the light of the evening fire.

Not only were they brave and heroic in daylight, but wonderful encounters were theirs in dreamland. At the table they were wont to begin the day thus:

"Well, fellers, etc." Then followed a marvelous tale of adventure, which made the narrator the center of attraction, and for the nonce a great hero.

Heart hungry little Mary, yearning as all neglected children do for love and sympathy, listened, pondered and planned. A deep purpose was hers. Surely, girls could dream. Only she must be very sure how it was done. So, for three successive mornings she listened to the adventures in slumberland, watching the expression of the dreamer with painful scrutiny, until it seemed she could not forget. There was a significant pause after the first few bites, then the dreamer's eyes were fixed on a crack in the wall, above the door. She never was sure in her mind whether it was the zigzag, horizontal one or the short, curved one running up and down. Maybe it didn't make much difference. She devoutly hoped not. In the morning she would dream. To be sure, she did not know any big-named animals of her brothers' hair-lifting escapades—probably she could dream others just as good.

After a restless night she was awake with the dawn. They were early risers, and Mary, hastening through her toilet, slipped noiselessly into place at the table. The boys' accustomed teasing passed unnoticed; she bided her time, exulting in her knowledge of her precious secret. At many previous meals her throat, aching with suppressed sobs, was unable to swallow a morsel. This morning her porridge was eaten before the others had begun.

Her eyes sought the precious crack in the wall; in the night she had started up in nervous terror at the thought that it might vanish before morning. But it was there, familiar enough, and comforting in its homely prominence. Clearing her throat, she began, tremblingly:

"Well, fellers, last night I dreamed I saw a drate big, er—Walloopy Woodle, wif red, blue—nor—er wooden ears, an' red, blue wooden er—legs, an' red, blue wooden tail."

All eyes were turned on her, amazement depicted on each countenance. Big brother clapped his hands, and said: "Good girl! Bully for you!" Then a perfect uproar of merriment, which broke out afresh every little while. Her dream resulted better than she had ever planned in her wildest flights of imagination. With heart glowing with unwonted pride, she ran away to confide in "Tommie," the rag doll.

Joy in the discovery that girls could do something quite as well as boys brightened the day, and she resolved to continue the "dreams" until she was quite as tall as mother. Her greatest apprehension was that they might tire of the Walloopy Woodle. She would vary it with—maybe purple next time.

With the light of a new purpose shining in her eyes, she came to the breakfast table the next morning and began "dreaming," hurriedly, "lest she forget" before eating a mouthful:

"Last night I dreamed I founded a drate big Walloopy Woodle, wif yellow, spotted glass eyes—er—an' yellow, spotted wooden legs, an' yellow, spotted wooden nose."

She waited for Big Brother to clap his hands and the applause to follow. There was silence for a moment, broken by a titter from the youngest brother. Each countenance showed wonder, as before, but unbelief also showed all too plainly. Then hands were lifted, but not to cheer. Instead, each right index finger was pointed in scorn, and a shower of hisses, and cries of "Story teller!" "Bad man'll get you!" were hurled at her. Merciful heavens, what had gone wrong? In an agony of grief she buried streaming eyes in her hands. Perhaps she had made a mistake in the crack, after all! She looked up hopefully.

Probably her father would explain; he was coming toward her. If only he would take her in his arms, like the picture of the Good Shepherd; she was always wishing some one would.

Instead of the caress and explanation, she was whisked from her chair and given a "good whipping for lying," as her father put it, followed by one equally as "good" from her mother, "to make her remember."

Too stunned for words, the little broken-hearted thing stumbled out to "Tommie," the rag doll, for comfort, where she spent a long, bitter morning, trying to reason it all out, but to no purpose. Girls could not even dream, and what was "lying"? she vaguely wondered. Poor, wronged, misunderstood little thing!

Mary has lived long years since that memorable morning when she learned that dreams were not something to be conjured with; when she lost her newly found talisman for the overthrow of sex prejudice and the establishment of a reciprocity of love, sympathy and good comradeship. She has a happy home with children of her own now. Her boys are gaining high ideals of manhood by daily chivalrous regard for their sisters, who are growing toward a joyous, well-balanced womanhood through constant striving to give their best efforts to the common good. She is chum, confidante, sweetheart to both boys and girls, remembering sufficiently her own childhood's pitiful lack to meet their every need.

She realizes that imagination in a child is a God-given faculty. Unrestrained, it will, in all probability, lead to falsehoods, but guided into proper channels, it becomes a forceful factor in the higher development of the child. Deeming the moulding of plastic childhood into the perfection of its destiny the grandest privilege of motherhood, urging her children, daily, toward higher ideals and the attainment of perfect manhood and womanhood, with visions of "seats of the mighty," Mary still dreams.

CHARM of SPEECH

WE CANNOT all have the advantages of a course in elocution, nor have we all had the opportunity to practice the last fad of the American colleges for women, which is, after all, too valuable a part of the course to be termed a fad: that daily use, for a given time, of such lip movements as shall further the proper enunciation of many carelessly spoken words and syllables, and eventually tend to more correctly spoken English in the United States.

There has been a tendency to take this up in our primary schools, to the extent that phonetic spelling demands it; and it is significant of a great and acknowledged need that it is now a part of the higher education.

History repeats itself, and we see again Demosthenes on the shore of the Aegean facing seaward, with pebbles on his tongue. Back to the Greeks for beauty in any form! There can be no charm of speech without correctness of diction. Men thrown into intimate daily association with the most carelessly spoken English (such is their plea) have not the same opportunity, though a greater need, to brush up their English; but upon the women of the land rests the burden, if such it be, of this improvement.

Fortunately, good English and its close companion, a well-modulated voice, hold a charm for many of the fair sex, who find pleasure in cultivating the pure tone and the pleasant voice.

Pronounce "a brown cow" and see whether you can do it musically or whether you chew out the words with a nasal unpleasantness.

Those who teach these lessons in resonance demand that the breath be not wasted in speech, but saved, so that the last tones be as distinct as the first.

They suggest self-analysis, so that the speaker may catch her own false notes.

They protest against deadly monotones, and suggest modulation instead.

They propose that the pitch of your voice be suited to the time and place.

The perfectly controlled voice will give pleasure to all who hear it, for nothing so betokens real culture. "Speak, that I may hear who and what you are," says one; and his brother, in thought at least, has proclaimed that all that one has ever thought and felt and done comes out in one's voice.

If this last were believed by all, the human voice would hold terror enough in its revelations to insure the charm of speech demanded.