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Woman's Sphere

THE DANGER IN INK.

A wise woman once removed the label "Poison" from an empty bottle and pasted it on the family ink bottle.

"Why, mother, ink isn't poisonous, and besides, no one ever things of drinking it."

"I know; but, if the label leads us to give a second thought to what we write, it will serve its purpose. Ink, my dear, has often proved to be a deadly poison to the affection of relatives, to friendship, to love. It will kill every affectionate impulse if used indiscriminately."

If it were possible to gather statistics on such an intimate subject, it would be found that seventy-five per cent. of the letters in the postman's bag are uninteresting, stupid, unnecessary, and are read only once by those who receive them. The letters of sweethearts and those of children to their mother do not come into that class; but even they are not above criticism, for the sweethearts write too many, and the children too few.

When you are away from home what kind of letter pleases you most?

Here is one received by a woman many miles from her kinsfolk and set aside as the one letter received in six months that did the most to make her heart glad:

Dearest Big Sister, We miss you very much. This morning I wore my blue and white gingham to school, and the teacher admired it. We had waffles for breakfast. Mrs. Sparks' tiger lilies are in bloom. Oh, what do you think? You could never guess. Minnie's gray cat has six kittens, and Minnie's mother says I can have every one of them. Won't that be just grand? Last night when we had lemon pie Father said you ought to be here because it is your favorite kind. He has a new hat. Mother is in the dining room mending a hole Uncle Jim burned in the table cloth with his cigar. Mother didn't say anything. I guess she wasn't glad about it. Auntie Green comes to wash to-morrow. Mother says I can put my doll clothes in. The new family across the street has a girl my age, and a baby. Mother says maybe they will let me take turns in wheeling the baby. The baby buggy is light blue. I think I shall be busy with my kittens. I haven't told mother about them yet. She seems too upset about the table cloth. It was her best. The one with the poppy pattern. I have on my blue hair ribbon. Father says I look like a butterfly. The kittens' eyes are shut. With love and a big kiss.—Alice.

There were letters from other members of the family. An older sister told of a party to which she had not been invited and the letter was in the nature of a wail; mother's letter, though dear, was devoted to suggestions to the recipient for safeguarding her health. Father's letter was a homily on the need of saving her money; brother wrote three lines, two of them about a new baseball mitt. Only one letter contained the news that her homesick heart longed for, and that was written by a child of ten! Guileless, sincere, loving, newsy, it was an ideal letter.

"I laughed over it, and I cried over it. I read it when I was depressed, and I read it when I was happy, because of the steadying influence it had on me. I really felt that I could not do anything that was not generous and kind, because of the influence of that letter. It visualized home."

In writing a letter put yourself in the position of the person who will read it. If you are writing to one who is resentful or quick-tempered, avoid jokes; never make comparisons; leave out all criticism of the recipient or of others who are common acquaintances. Never write, "Burn this." It is a long way to the furnace downstairs. Never write, "Don't show this to So-and-So." If you must give a confidence, don't label it as "secret," "private" or "personal." Slip it in casually, as you would slip in a comment on the weather.

Never write your troubles; the reader may have greater ones. Do not mention your ill health; it may cause needless anxiety, and you may be better when the letter is received. Never write a criticism. You might say the same thing with a disarming smile, but the smile doesn't appear in the ink. If you have won a great success, only mention it when you write to your mother. If you have failed, say nothing about it. Never seek praise or sympathy through the mails—or in any other way.

Don't write too many letters. If the recipient—unless it be your mother—is able-bodied and has had a good education and fails to answer your first letter and your second letter, take a lesson in pride and do not write a third. If your letters are welcome, they will bring replies.

When you fail to receive a letter don't blame the postman. The government is not interested in keeping your mail from you. When you read a letter that hurts put it away until you are in a more philosophical frame of mind. Never go near the ink bottle when you are angry.

Don't make excuses for not having written before. There are few reasons for procrastination that ring true. Devote no space in your letter to disappointment because the recipient waits so long to reply. Perhaps there is a reason you do not guess.

Answer promptly the letters from your father or mother and those of a business nature. Do not glory in the number of your correspondents; limit the list to those you sincerely like, and who you know sincerely like you. To reckon your popularity by numbers is a childish thing. Remember that old friends are more interested in the little intimate affairs of your life than new friends are. If a married brother does not write, do not blame his wife. When a man marries he sometimes shifts the duty of writing to his relatives to his wife's shoulders. She may not want to take his place in a matter like this, but she learns that unless she writes to his family they will never hear. Respect her for her attempt to make up for his omission.

There is the paper; a clean sheet of paper. There is the pen. There is the ink. And there also should be the label on the bottle in red and white—"Poison." For ink is poison unless you write in a spirit of helpfulness and understanding.

OUTDOOR STUDY.

The best kind of outdoor study is contemplation. Get a notebook, a book on botany, a book on birds, if you will, and pack your mind with fixed and irrevocable facts. But do not teach your child on that principle. A curious ignorance, gilded with a happy enthusiasm, is better than the labeling, pressing, analyzing knowledge that plays a large part in modern "nature study."

Let the children "run wild" without at first teaching them even rudimentary truths about the trees, grass, flowers, birds, animals or fishes. Teach them one or two things at a time and encourage them by letting them see that you appreciate their memories when they repeat the next day what they have learned about outdoors. Do not let them memorize names only, but teach them to memorize sensations. Teach them the sureness and beauty of nature, not merely the individual marks of her heraldry.

A bright small boy had been taught at school that the crawfish was an invertebrate. He showed little enthusiasm about the fact, but when he was taken to a stream and the queer clay-celled home of a crawfish was pointed out to him, when he saw the way the crawfish has of moving backward, the strength of its pincerlike claws, its waving prehensile beard filament and its strange surroundings, he became greatly interested and on his return to the class astounded his fellow pupils with his newly found and to him marvelous knowledge.

Enthusiasm is the very marrow of nature study. And the more you delve in nature's storehouse the more your enthusiasm grows. As you point out the things outdoors that are strange or beautiful the child will take them into its mind and repeat them without much appreciation. But by and by appreciation will come, and presently the child will conceive new and surprising ideas and startle you with an original train of thought.

"Were all these shells made in a shell mint?" asked a little girl.

"What put that into your head?" was the reply.

"Well, you told me that dollars were made in a mint."

A mighty mint indeed wherein the world was cast; a mighty Sovereign whose seal is stamped thereon!

For Sore Feet—Minard's Liniment.

Church Incense Comes from Cannibal Isle.

"Socotra, isolated island off the north-eastern point of Africa, where a lighthouse keeper is rumored to have been the victim of cannibals, has alway been associated with much pleasanter thoughts than man-eating savages," says a bulletin from the headquarters of the United States National Geographical Society.

"For it is the Isle of Frankencense' from which once came most of the pleasant aromatic gum burned as incense in the churches and temples of both the west and the east. It is even possible that one of the gifts of the Magi to the Infant Jesus came from Socotra, for in the past the island was almost the sole source of this highly prized gum.

"The suggestion that there are cannibals on Socotra is somewhat surprising. The island people became at least superficially civilized ages ago through the influence of gum traders. They were at one time Christians, but since the seventeenth century have been Mohammedans. They are ruled by a Sultan under British protection. Nor is the island small; it is nearly half as large as Crete or Porto Rico.

"Socotra is not often visited by westerners, but this is rather because of the religious jealousy of the Sultan than because of any danger from the natives. The latter were described a few years ago by a visitor writing for the National Geographic Society as 'a kindly folk, hospitable and quite harmless'."

Continuing, he wrote: "Hadibo, the capital, or Tamarida, as the Arabs call it, from tamar, the date fruit tree, is a collection of flat-roofed white houses scattered among the palms.

"The Sultan's 'palace' is a large mud structure with flat towers, and the two prayer houses are suggestive of the graceful Arab mosques only by contrast. The poorer population, chiefly of African descent and much older in the history of the island than its Arab aristocracy, lives in huts of thorn and plaited grass, invariably overrun with luxuriant gourd vines.

"Surrounded by tiny garden plots, in which tombac, or native tobacco, lentils, melons and yams grow abundantly, they are more picturesque outside than inside.

"There is not much to be seen in Hadibo. The principal amusement afforded the visitor is that of being seen.

"Nothing could be lovelier than the sight of slender Socotran cattle grazing knee-deep among the grasses and palm branches that line the banks of the lagoons near Hadibo. Clouds massed above and mountains near behind; long shadows dappling the water, and the sun turning to gold the tawny flanks of the cattle make a picture of pastoral beauty rare to behold in this part of the east.

"Socotra exports nothing except ghi, a rancid butter, made from goat's milk and highly prized in Zanzibar. The inhabitants number about 5,000, and the bulk of them are of African descent, though Bedouins live in the mountain caves, and the ruling class is Arab.

"The language is distinct in itself, though possessing many Arabic and Mahri words. It has a wondrous wealth of gurgles and impossible noises in the throat. There are no words for horse or dog, because these animals are not found on the island.

A fine breed of camels and donkeys, which are the tamed sons of the wild asses roaming in thousands on the interior plains, are the beasts of burden.

Scissors or File.

"You told me to file these letters, sir," said the new yeoman.

"Yes," returned the officer.

"Well, I was just thinkin' that it'd be easier to trim em with a pair of scissors."

Is Your Wife Still Your Sweetheart?
If so, treat her to a meal at Mumby's Dining Room, west end of Grand Stand, Toronto Exhibition.

PENNY PLAIN

BY O. DOUGLAS

Shopman—"You may have your choice—penny plain or two-pence colored."

Solemn Small Boy—"Penny plain, please. It's better value for the money."

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CHAPTER X.

One afternoon Jean called for Pamela to take her to see Mrs. Hope.

It was a clear, blue-and-white day, with clouds scudding across the sky, and a cold, whistling wind that blew the fallen leaves along the dry roads—a day that made people walk smartly, and gave the children apple-red cheeks and tangled curls.

Mhor and Peter were seated on The Rigs garden wall as Pamela and Jean came out of Hillview gate. Peter wagged his tail in recognition, but Mhor made no sign of having seen his sister and her friend.

"Aren't you cold up there?" Pamela asked him.

"Very cold," said Mhor, "but we can't come down. We're on sentry duty on the city wall till sundown," and he shaded his eyes with his hand and pretended to peer into space for lurking foes.

Peter looked wistfully up at him and hunched himself against the scratched bare knees now blue with cold.

"When the sun touches the top of West Law," said Jean, pointing to a distant blue peak, "it has set. See—there. . . . Now run in, sonny, and tell Mrs. M'Cosh to let you have some currant-loaf for tea. Pamela and I are going to tea at Hopetoun."

"Aw," said Mhor, "I hate when you go out to tea. So does Jock. So does Peter. Look out! I'm going to jump."

He jumped and fell prostrate, barking his chin, but no howl came from him, and he picked himself up with dignity, merely asking for the loan of a handkerchief, his own "useful little hanky," as he explained, having been used to mop up a spilt ink-bottle.

Fortunately Jean had a spare handkerchief, and Pamela promised that on her return he should have a reel of sticking-plaster for his own use, so, battered but content, he returned to the house, Peter remaining behind to investigate a mole-heap.

"What a cheery day for November," Pamela remarked as they took the road by Tweedside. "Look at that beech tree against the blue sky, every black twig silhouetted. Trees are wonderful in winter."

"Trees are wonderful always," said Jean. "'Solomon spake of trees'—I do wonder what he said. I suppose it would be of the cedars of Lebanon he 'spake' of, and the hyssop that grows in the walls, and sycamores, but he would have been worth hearing on a rowan tree flaming red against a blue September sky. Look at that newly plowed field so softly brown, and the faded gold of the beech hedge. November *is* a cheery time. The only depressing time of the year to me is when the swallows go away. I can't bear to see them wheeling round and preparing to depart. I want so badly to go with them. It always brings back to me the feeling I had as a child when people read Hans Andersen to me—the storks in *The Marsh King's Daughter*, talking about the mud in Egypt. Imagine Priorsford swallows in Egypt! . . . As the song says:

"'It's dowie at the hint o' hair'st
At the way-gaun o' the swallow.'"

"What a lovely sound Lowland Scots has," said Pamela. "I like to hear you speak it. Tell me about Mrs. Hope, Jean. I do hope we shall see her alone. I don't like Priorsford tea-parties; they are rather like a foretaste of eternal punishment. With no choice you are dumped down beside the most irrelevant sort of person, and there you remain. I went to return Mrs. Duff-Whalley's call the other day, and fell into one. Before I could retreat I was wedged into a chair beside a woman whom I hope I shall never see again. She was one of those bleak people who make the thought of getting up in the morning and dressing quite insupportable. I don't think there was a detail in her domestic life that she didn't touch on. She told me all her husband could eat and couldn't eat; she called her children 'little tots,' and said she couldn't get so much as a 'serviette' washed in the house. I thought nobody talked of serviettes outside Wells and Arnold Bennett. Mrs. Duff-Whalley rescued me in the nick of time before I could do anything desperate, and then *she* cross-examined me as to my reasons for coming to Priorsford."

Jean laughed. "What a cheery afternoon! But it will be all right to-day. Mrs. Hope never sees more than one or two people at a time. She is pretty old, you see, and frail, though she has such an extraordinary gift of being young. I do hope you will like each other. She has an edge to her tongue, but she is an incomparable friend. The poor people go to her in flocks, and she scolds them roundly, but always knows how to help them in the only wise way. Her people have been in Priorsford for ages; she knows every soul in the place, and is vastly amused at all the little snobberies that abound in a small town. But she laughs kindly. Pretentious people are afraid of her; simple people love her."

"Am I simple, Jean?"

Jean laughed and refused to give an opinion on the subject, beyond quoting the words of Autolycus—"How blessed are we that are not simple men."

They were in the Hopetoun Woods now, and at the end of the avenue could see the house standing on a knoll by the river, whitewashed, dignified, homelike.

"Talk to Mrs. Hope about the view," Jean advised. "She is proud of the Hopetoun Woods as if she had made them. Isn't it a nice place? Old and proud and honorable—like Mrs. Hope herself."

"Are there sons to inherit?"

Jean shook her head. "There were three sons. Mrs. Hope hardly ever talks about them, but I've seen their photographs, and of course I have often been told about them—by Great-aunt Alison, and others—and heard how they died. They were very clever and good-looking and well liked—the kind of sons mothers are very proud of, and they all died imperially, if that is an expression to use. Two died in India, one—a soldier—in one of the Frontier skirmishes; the other—an I. C. S. man—from overworking in a famine-stricken district. The youngest fell in the Boer War . . . so you see Mrs. Hope has the right to be proud. Aunt Alison used to tell me that she made no moan over her wonderful sons. She shut herself up for a short time, and then faced the world again, her kindly, sharp-tongued self. She is one of those splendid people who take the stings and arrows thrown at them by outrageous fortune and bury them deep in their hearts and go on, still able to laugh, still able to take an interest. Only, you mustn't speak to her of what she has lost. That would be too much."

"Yes," said Pamela. "I can understand that."

She stopped for a minute and stood looking at the river full of "wan water from the Border hills," at the stretches of lawn ornamented here and there by stone figures, at the trees *thrawn* with winter and rough weather, and she thought of the three boys who had played here, who had lived in the white-washed house (she could see the barred nursery windows), bathed and fished in the Tweed, thrown stones at the grey stone figures on the lawn, climbed the trees in the Hopetoun Woods, and who had gone out with their happy young lives to lay them down in a far country.

Mrs. Hope was sitting by the fire in the drawing-room, a room full of flowers and books, and lit by four long windows. Two of the windows looked on to the lawns, and the stone figures chipped by generations of catapult-owning boys; the other two looked across the river into the Hopetoun Woods. The curtains were not drawn though the lamps were lit, for Mrs. Hope liked to keep the river and the woods with her as long as light lasted, so the warm, bright room looked warmer and brighter in contrast with the cold, ruffled water and the wind-shaken trees outside.

Mrs. Hope had been a beautiful woman in her day, and was still an attractive figure, her white hair dressed high and crowned with a square of lace tied in quaint fashion under her chin. Her black dress was soft and becoming to her spare figure. There was nothing unsightly about her years; she made age seem a lovely, desirable thing. Not that her years were so very many, but she had lived every minute of them; also she had given lavishly and unsparingly of her store of sympathy and energy to others: and she had suffered grievously.

She kissed Jean affectionately, upbraiding her for being long in coming, and turned eagerly to Pamela. New people still interested her vividly. Here was a newcomer who promised well.

"Ah, my dear," she said in greeting, "I have wanted to know you. I'm told you are the most interesting person who ever came to this little town."

Pamela laughed. "There I am sure you have been misled. Priorsford is full of exciting people. I expected to be dull, and I have rarely been so well amused."

Mrs. Hope studied the charming face bent to her own. Her blue eyes were shrewd, and though she stood so near the end of the way she had lost none of her interest in the comings and goings of Vanity Fair.

"Is Priorsford amusing?" she said. "Well" (complacently), "we have our points. As Jane Austen wrote of the Misses Bingley, 'Our powers of conversation are considerable—we can describe an entertainment with accuracy, relate an anecdote with humor, and laugh at our acquantances with spirit.'"

"Laugh!" Jean groaned. "Pamela, I must warn you that Mrs. Hope's laughter scares Priorsford to death. We speak her fair in order that she won't give us away to our neighbors, but we have no real hope that she doesn't see through us. Have we, Miss Augusta?" addressing the daughter of the house, who had just come into the room.

"Ah," said Mrs. Hope, "if everyone was as transparent as you, Jean."

"Oh, don't," Jean pleaded. "You remind me that I am quite uninteresting when I am trying to make believe that I am subtle, or 'subtile,' as the Psalmist says of the fowler's snare."

"Absurd child! Augusta, my dear, this is Miss Reston."

(To be continued.)

Moths do not usually attack dyed furs.

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There are few animals better known than the skunk. Every woman has admired its handsome fur.

In its wild state the skunk roams the whole of North America from Canada to Florida, and although it walks about in broad daylight is rarely molested. The reason is that, if annoyed, it can discharge from a special gland a spray, the odor of which is extremely obnoxious.

The writer speaks from experience when he says that there is nothing else to compare with it, and that a whiff of it will make any human being deadly sick. A sporting dog, if "skunked," is useless for days, losing all power of scenting game.

There is a small beetle known as the bombardier, which defends itself, when attacked by discharging an acrid fluid. But this beetle's ammunition is not only offensive ;it is also volatile, and actually explodes with a sharp little report when it meets the air. A bombardier can fire a dozen charges of this kind in succession.

There are other insects which have this peculiar habit, one a kind of ant lion of which a specimen can be seen in the London Zoo. The spray is formic acid, and the range is about twelve inches.

Another insect gunner is the peripatus, which is something between a scorpion and a worm. It is about three inches long, and has legs and powerful jaws. Crawling up to its prey, it shoots out a pellet of intensely sticky stuff which renders its victim incapable of movement.

Minard's Liniment Heals Cuts.

An Alpine Village.

Their world stands all on end; no place at all
Is left for even the little fields to lie
That they have hung aloft like tapestry
Upon the granite reaches of the wall
That towers around them. There they cling and crawl
And still contrive between the earth and sky
To reap the fruit of their brief industry
Before the snows and the swift silence fall.

Then in the church the meager women pray,
And in the huts the patient cattle sleep,
And earth the vow of her white peace fulfills,
And heeds them not who with such passion pay
Into her icy breast the faith they keep
And still lift up their eyes unto those hills.

—Anne Goodwin Winslow.

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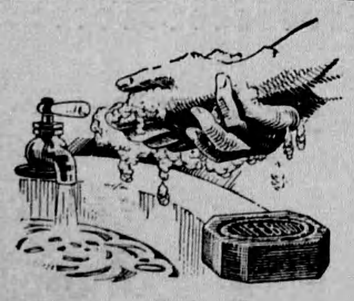
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