

FICTION

Carolyn Wells

The Eternal Feminine



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A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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ONYX SERIES

THE ETERNAL
FEMININE

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THE ETERNAL
FEMININE

By
CAROLYN WELLS

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THE ETERNAL FEMININE

CONTENTS

- [I.](#) AT THE LOST-AND-FOUND DESK
- [II.](#) TOOTIE AT THE BANK
- [III.](#) THE DRESSMAKER IN THE HOUSE
- [IV.](#) THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS
- [V.](#) A NEW RECRUIT
- [VI.](#) SHOPPING FOR POSTAGE STAMPS
- [VII.](#) AT THE BRIDGE TABLE
- [VIII.](#) SHE GOES SHOPPING
- [IX.](#) A QUITE AFTERNOON
- [X.](#) TAKING CARE OF UNCLE
- [XI.](#) IN THE DEPARTMENT STORE
- [XII.](#) THE HOUSEWIFE'S HELPER
- [XIII.](#) MRS. LESTER'S HOBLETTE
- [XIV.](#) AT THE COOKING CLASS
- [XV.](#) AESOP UP TO DATE: THE MILKMAID AND
HER PAIL OF MILK

THE ETERNAL FEMININE

AT THE LOST-AND-FOUND DESK

Yes, that's my bag. I left it at the lace counter. Thank you. Please give it to me. What? I must prove property? Why, don't you see it's mine? That twisty silver monogram on the side is really E. C. S. That's my name, Ella C. Saunders. I told Jim I thought the letters were too wiggly to be easily read, but I never thought anybody'd want to read it but me. Describe contents? Why, of course I can describe the contents! In one pocket is a sample of lace, just Platte Val, you know, not an expensive lace, and with it--I think it's with it--is a sample of rose-colored crepe de Chine--that is, not exactly rose-colored--sort of crushed plummish or burnt magenta--but no--come to think, I left those samples with my

dressmaker. Well, anyway, there's a Subway ticket--or let me see, did I use that coming down? I believe I did! Well, there's a little memorandum card that slips in--the celluloid sort, you know. No, there's nothing written on it. I don't use it because, though they pretend you can wash them like a slate, you can't. They just smudge. What do you mean by saying I haven't told a definite thing yet? I've told you lots! Well, there's some money--I don't know how much; some chicken feed, as Jim calls it--and a five-dollar bill, I think--oh no--I paid that to the butcher. Well, there must be a one-dollar bill--two, maybe. Oh, and there's a little pencil, a goldy-looking one; it came with the bag. And some powder-papers--those leaves, you know; but I believe I did use the last one yesterday at the matinee. Oh, dear, how fussy you are! I tell you it's my bag; I recognize it myself. Can't I tell you of some personal belongings in it so you'll be sure? Why, yes, of course I can. My visiting-card, Mrs. James L. Saunders, is in that small inside pocket.

"Why didn't I tell you that in the first place? Why, you rattled me so; and besides, I thought I had to tell of my own little individual properties, like samples and tickets and things. Anybody might have her visiting-card in her bag!"

TOOTIE AT THE BANK

"Oh, how do you do? Are you the Paying Teller? Well,--that is,--could I please see somebody else? You see, I've just opened an account, and I want to get some of my money out. There's the loveliest hat in Featherton's window, marked down to--but, that's just it! If I get my money from a Professional Teller, he'll tell all about my private affairs, and how much I pay for my hats, and everything!"

"Not at all, Miss. We are called Tellers because we never tell anything about our depositors' affairs. We're not allowed to."

"Oh, how lovely! Well, then,--if you won't tell--I've never drawn a check before, and I don't know how! Will you help me?"

"Certainly; but I must ask you to make haste. Have you a check-book?"

"How curt you are! I thought you'd like to help me. Men 'most always do. Yes, I have a check-book,--that other clerk gave it to me. But I don't like it, and I want to exchange it. See,--it has a horrid, plain black muslin cover! Don't you have any bound in gray suede, with gilt edges. I'm willing to pay extra."

"We have no other kind, Miss. How much money do you want?"

"Why, I don't know. You see, Daddy put a thousand dollars in this bank for me. I suppose I may as well take it all at once. What do you think?"

"I think probably your father meant for you to take only a part of it at a time."

"Yes; I think so, too. He said it would teach me business habits. He chose this bank because you have a special department for ladies. But if this is it, I don't think much of it. To be sure the plate glass and mahogany are all right,--but it looks like 'put up complete for \$74.99.' Don't you think Mission furniture and Chintz would be cozier? Yes, yes, I'll draw my check! Do give me a moment to draw my breath first. You see I'm not used to these things. Why, with a real bank account of my own, I feel like an Organized Charity! I suppose I ought to hunt up some Worthy Poor! Well, I'll just get that hat first. Now, let me see. Oh, yes, of course you may help me, but I want to do the actual drawing myself. It's the only way to learn. Why, when I took Art lessons, I made a burnt-wood sofa pillow all myself! The teacher just stood and looked at me. He said I had Fate-sealing eyes. Why, you're looking at my eyes just the way he did! You seem so rattled,--why do you? Don't you know how to draw a check, either?"

"Oh, yes, indeed; I have drawn millions of checks."

"Millions of checks! How exciting! What do you do with all your money?"

"Oh, it isn't my money, you know."

"Aren't you ashamed to be drawing millions and billions of other people's money! I have a friend who is engaged to a bank president who got caught drawing checks."

"Excuse me, but how much money do you want to draw?"

"How much is it customary for ladies to draw?"

"Well, that depends upon how much they need."

"Oh, I see. People in need draw more than those in comfortable circumstances, I suppose. I am not exactly what would be called 'a needy person.' Since I left school, of course, I have my own allowance. Do you approve of girls being put on an allowance, or do you think it is nicer for them to have accounts with the trades-people, and not be treated like children?"

"I should think that would depend. Would a check for \$100.00 be enough for to-day? What did you have in mind to use it for?"

"I think you are very impertinent. I am surprised that people in banks are allowed to ask such questions. Why should you concern yourself with how much money I want?"

"I was endeavoring to help you about your check."

"Oh, yes, certainly. How could you possibly draw checks if you didn't know how much the checks were to be! I like checks much better than stripes or plaids. Lucille is making me a beautiful walking suit that is the loveliest imported check that you ever saw. And checks are nice for men, don't you think?"

"Is it for the hat or for the suit that you want to draw a check?"

"Yes, of course, it is for the hat at Featherton's that I want the check. I am afraid you will think I am silly, but really I have so many things to think about that it is hard to keep my mind on just one thing. You must make allowances for girls who have so many things to think about. Of course, with a man like you, who only has checks and money to think about all day long, it is so easy--I'd be bored if I had nothing but money and checks all day. I should think it would be diverting to have somebody call and talk about something else."

"It is. Come, now, let us make out this check. You must write the number first."

"Oh, isn't it exciting! Now, wait, let me do it. You just watch out that it's all right. But are you sure you know how yourself? I'd rather have an Expert to teach me. You know, nowadays, skilled labor counts in everything."

"I assure you I'm competent in this matter, but I must beg you to make haste. Write the number in this blank."

"What number?"

"Number one, of course. It's your first check."

"There! I knew you were ready to tell everything! Suppose it is my first check, I don't want everybody to know it. Can't I begin with a larger number, and then go right on?"

"Why, yes, I suppose you can, if you like. Begin with 100."

"Oh, I don't know. I guess I'll begin with 4887. I can make lovely 7's. Don't you think 4887 is a pretty number?"

"Very pretty, but--"

"Now *you're* wasting time. There, I've written the number. What next?"

"The date, please. And the year."

"Well, I've written the date, but it spilled all over the year space. It doesn't matter, though, 'cause it'll be this year for a long while yet, and this check will be vouched, or whatever you call it, before the year is out."

"But you must write the year."

"But how can I, when there isn't room?"

"Tear that up, and begin a new check."

"And waste all that money! Oh, I didn't want an account, anyway! I told Daddy it would make me more extravagant! And you're so cross to me. And here, I've spoiled a lot of my money the first thing!"

"Oh, no, Miss Young, you haven't! There, there, don't look so distressed! I'll make it all right for you."

"You'll make it all right! How dare you, sir? Do you dream for a moment I'd take your money to replace my own losses?"

"Now, wait, you don't understand. This check is worthless until it's signed. Now, we'll tear it out, so, and begin again. Make smaller letters and figures, can't you?"

"Oh, how cute that check comes out! You just tear it by the little perforated dots, don't you? Let me tear one out!"

"Write it first; you'll probably spoil it, and have to tear it out."

"How unkind you are! And I'm doing my very best. Don't find fault with me,--please, don't!"

"Well, don't wrinkle up your nose like that,--it looks like a crumpled rose petal! And don't write your name there! That's the place for the amount!"

"Oh, what a fuss! What does it matter, so long as all the spaces are filled? My goodness, the check's all done, isn't it? And it's quite entirely all right, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's irreproachable. How will you have the money?"

"If I take the money, do I have to give you this check?"

"Certainly."

"Then I won't take any money, thank you. I want to take this check home and show it to Daddy. He'll be so pleased and proud! I know he'll keep it as a souvenir, and then he'll give me some of his money for the hat!"

THE DRESSMAKER IN THE HOUSE

SCENE.--A sewing-room, with the usual piles of unfinished or unmended clothing heaped on tables and chairs. Mrs. Lester, a pretty, fussy little woman, is trying on her own gowns and then tossing them aside, one after another.

Enter Miss Cotton, a visiting dressmaker.

Mrs. Lester: Oh, Miss Cotton, I'm so glad you've come! I'm nearly frantic. Excuse the looks of this sewing-room. I don't see why a sewing-room never can keep itself cleared up! I suppose it's because they never have any closets in them; or if they do, you have to hang your best dresses there--there's no other place. And so this room gets simply jammed with white work and mending and hats, and I don't know what all! My husband says it's like the Roman Forum

done in dry-goods. But he's a regular Miss Nancy about neatness and order. Now, to-day, Miss Cotton, we're going to do sleeves. See? Sleeves! And nothing else. I'm simply driven crazy by them.

Oh, don't look as if you didn't know what I meant! You know, all my gowns have elbow sleeves, and I must either have long ones put in or throw the whole dress away.

Yes, I know I said I'd wear the short sleeves, if other people did insist on having long ones. I know I said I'd be independent, and at least wear out the ones I have. But I'm conquered! I admit it! It isn't any fun to go to a luncheon and be the only woman at the table with elbow sleeves!

Yesterday I went to Mrs. Ritchie's Bridge, and my partner, that big Mrs. Van Winkle, with chains of scarabs all over her chest till she looked like the British Museum, kept pulling her long sleeves down farther over her knuckles just to annoy me.

Yes, I know it, my forearm is white and round, but I declare it makes me feel positively indecent to go with it bared nowadays. If those suffrage people would only get for women the right to bare arms, they'd do something worth while.

No, indeed, I can't afford to get new gowns. These are too good to throw away.

Well, they may not be the latest style, but I don't want those bolster-slip arrangements for mine.

Mrs. Van Bumpus, now--you know her, don't you? Well, it would take two kimonos to go round her, I'm sure; and I saw her the other day in one of those clinging satin rigs. My! she looked exactly like a gypsy-wagon, the kind that has canvas stretched over its ribs.

No, it's sleeves, sleeves, I'm after to-day--and that's why I sent for you.

I'm going to superintend them, you understand, but I want you to help, and to do the plain sewing.

Well, to begin on this mauve crepon. I want to wear it this afternoon, and I think we can easily get it done, between us.

I've bought a paper pattern--I bought three--for I mean to spare no expense in getting my sleeves right.

So I bought three different makes, and think this one is best. It was a sort of bargain, too, for they sold the sleeve pattern and a pattern for little boys' pajamas, all for ten cents. I don't know what to do with the pajamas pattern--so that does seem a waste. I've no little boy, and I shouldn't make pajamas for him if I had. I think the one-piece nighties far more sensible. If you know of any one who has a little boy, I'll sell that pattern for half price. Still, ten cents wasn't much to pay for this sleeve pattern. You see, it's really three sleeve patterns. One plain, with dart; one plain, without dart; and one tucked. I'll use them all, in different waists, but for this mauve crepon, I think, we'll try the tucked one. It would be sweet in net or chiffon. Yes, I bought both materials, for I didn't know which you'd think prettier; I trust a great deal to your judgment and experience, though I always rely on my own taste.

Now, here's the tucked sleeve. Merciful powers! Look at the length of it! Oh, it's to be tucked all the way up, you see, and that brings it the right length. Wouldn't it be easier to cut the sleeve from net already tucked? No, that's so--I couldn't match the shade in tucked stuff of any sort. I tried in seven shops. Well, let's see. These rows of perforations match these rows. No--that isn't right. That would make the tucks wider than the spaces. Why, I never saw such millions of perforations in one piece of paper before! Look here, this isn't a sleeve pattern at all! It's a Pianola roll! I'm going to put through and see if it isn't that old thing in F, or something classic. Cut out the tucked sleeve, Miss Cotton. Oh, wait, I didn't mean that literally! My husband reproves me so often for using slang. I mean, I won't have my arms done up in Bach's fugues; I should feel like a hand-organ.

Let's try this plain sleeve with dart. H'm--"lay the line of large perforations lengthwise of the material." And here are large perforations sprinkled all over the thing! Oh, no, that isn't the way! Yes, I'm quite willing you should show me, if you know yourself--but I see these directions confuse you as much as they do me; and if there's to be a mistake made in cutting this expensive material, I'd rather make it myself. This says, "developed in pique it will produce satisfactory results." Well, I can't wear pique sleeves in a crepon gown! Can I? There--I've cut it! Now, "close seam, gather between double crosses, make no seam where there are three crosses, bring together corresponding lines of perforations--and finish free edges!" Well! I rather guess those free edges will finish me! However, baste it up, Miss Cotton, and I'll try it on. It's easy to make sleeves, after all, isn't it?

Why! I can't begin to get my arm into that pipe-stem! What? I should have allowed seams? Why didn't you tell me? Oh, no, I didn't scorn your advice! Why, that's what I have you here for! Well, those sleeves are ruined. A living skeleton couldn't get into those. It's most confusing, the way some patterns allow seams and some don't. I was going to get one with "all seams allowed," but it had another part to it--a "brassiere." I don't know what that is, but probably some sort of a brass pot or other bric-a-brac junk, and I don't want any more of that. The den is full now. Well, I'm tired of making sleeves. What do you think, Miss Cotton, of just adding lace lower halves? I bought a lovely pair, in case the sleeves didn't turn out well. Now, I'll put on the bodice, and you pin them on, and we'll see how they look.

Oh, they're not nearly long enough! They ought to come well below my wrists. And such beautiful lace--it's a shame not to use them. Yes, perhaps a band of lace at the elbow might help. No, that looks awfully patchy--take it away. A ruching at the wrist? No, nobody wears that. Oh, dear, what can we do? I must have this gown for this afternoon!

Here's a pair of long lace sleeves, whole ones, I bought in case I needed them. Would they do? No--the lace doesn't match that on the bodice. Dye them? No, thank you! I bought some dye once, and the package said on the outside in big letters: "Dyeing at Home! No trouble at all!" and it gave me such a turn, I never could think of wearing a dyed

sleeve! What can I do? I believe I'll wear them as they are. I hate long sleeves anyway. They get so soiled, and they bag at the elbows, and they're terribly unbecoming. Oh, I've a whole black net guimpe! I bought it, thinking it might be useful for something. Suppose we rip out these sleeves, and the lace neck, and just wear the bodice over this guimpe!

Oh! oh! it looks horrid! just like an old-fashioned "jumper" suit! You'll have to put the neck back as it was.

But then what can we do with the sleeves?

Nothing! Just nothing! I shall have to stay at home until I can get some entirely new gowns made. It's a sin and shame, the way we poor women have to be slaves to Fashion! And I know, just as soon as I am fitted out with long sleeves, the pretty, short ones will come in style again!

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

SCENE.--The Pelhams' living room. It is decorated for Christmas, and on tables are displayed many beautiful gifts that have been sent to Mr. and Mrs. Pelham.

Mrs. Pelham (in pretty evening gown and a spray of holly in her hair, looks wistful and discontented. She stands by a table and fingers some of the gifts, and then sits at the piano and hums a snatch of a Christmas carol, and then throws herself into an easy chair. She speaks): Dick, do stop reading the paper, and be Christmassy! It might as well be the eighteenth of July as the twenty-fourth of December, for all the Christmas spirit you show! I do think this is the pokiest old Christmas Eve I ever spent, and I thought it was going to be the loveliest! I thought for once I'd have everything ready ahead of time--and now look at the result! Nothing to do, nothing to enjoy, no surprises. Everybody said, "Let's buy our gifts early, and so save the poor shopgirls' lives." And goodness knows I'm only too glad to help the poor shopgirls in any way I can!

Why, I never wait for my change,--if it's only a few pennies,--and you'd be surprised to see how pleased and surprised they are at that. It's pathetic to see their gratitude for six cents. Why, the other day Mrs. Muchmore kept me waiting with her a long time to get her nine cents change, and when I suggested that she come away without it, and let the shopgirl have it, she looked at me as if I had robbed her. Well, then we were late for the matinee, and had to take a taxicab; so she didn't make much, after all.

No; I'm a great friend of the shopgirl, and I'm glad to do all I can for them; but this buying Christmas presents in October is so tame and uninteresting! Then I bought all my tissue paper and holly ribbon and fancy seals in November; and early in December I had the whole lot tied up and labeled. I had three clothes-baskets full of the loveliest looking parcels! And then they sat around till I was sick of the sight of them!

Don't you remember, Dick, how you used to tumble over them in the guest rooms? And you said I was a dear, forehanded little wife to have them all ready so soon? You'll never have such a forehanded little wife again, I can tell you!

And then, to save the poor expressman, everybody is urged to send their presents early nowadays. So I sent mine all off a week ago. And everybody sent theirs to me a week ago. To be sure, this plan has the advantage that often I can see what someone else sends me, before I send a return gift. My! it was lucky I saw Bertha Hamilton's Armenian centerpiece before I sent her that veil case! I changed, and sent her an Empire mirror, and she'll think her centerpiece rather skinny now!

But, all the same, I hate this fashion. Why, I've had all this junk set out on tables four days now, and I'm tired of the sight of it. And even the p-p-paper and st-string are all cleared away. No--Dick--I'm not crying, and you needn't try to coax me up! Well, of course, it isn't your fault, though you did egg me on. But everybody does it now, and we've even written our notes of thanks to each other. I always used to dread doing those the day after Christmas; but now it makes me homesick to think they're all d-done. And even this lovely necklace you gave me I've had it a w-week, and it doesn't seem like a Christmas present at all! Yes, I know I gave you your gold cigarette case two weeks ago; but I wanted to be sure you liked it before I had it monogrammed. It seems now as if I had given it to you last year.

Oh, I think it used to be lovely when we didn't get our things until Christmas Eve or Christmas Day--and then some belated presents would come straggling along for days afterward! And the night before Christmas we were madly rushing around tying up things, and I'd be up till all hours finishing a piece of embroidery, and you'd have to tear downtown for some forgotten presents, and the bundles were simply piling in, and the expressman would come at midnight, grumbling a little, but very merry and Christmassy! Then I'd have to set the alarm, and get up at five o'clock Christmas morning to press off my centerpiece, and pack off Clara's box, and do a thousand things before breakfast. And we'd eat breakfast by snatches between undoing parcels and sending off boxes. And the rooms were knee-deep with a clutter of paper and strings and excelsior and shredded tissue, and--oh, it was lovely! And now--all that has been over for a week! And it really didn't happen then; for it's all been gradual since October. And here it is Christmas Eve, and not a thing to do! And to-morrow morning it'll be Christmas, and not a thing to do! Oh, Dick, it's perfectly

horrid, and I'll never, never get ready for Christmas early again! I'm so lonesome for the hurry and rush of an old-fashioned Christmas Eve!

What's that? You'll take me downtown--now? Down to the shops? 'Deed I will get my coat and hat! There isn't a soul left to buy a present for; but we can buy some things for next year--Oh, no, no, not that! But we'll buy some things and give them to the shopgirls. And, at any rate, we'll get into the bustle and cheer of a real Christmas Eve! Come on, Dick, I'm all ready! Merry Christmas, Dick!

A NEW RECRUIT

"Oh, good morning, Miss Coggswell! Do sit down. Yes, isn't it? So spring-like and balmy. Oh, not at all; I'm never busy. I'm always glad to see callers. On business? Oh, I don't know anything about business! About Suffrage! Why, you look so lady-like! Become a Suffragist? Me? Oh, I'm happily married! Oh, excuse me! I don't mean but what you are far happier unmarried--of course you are, or you wouldn't have stayed so. But--well, really, I don't know the first principles of this suffrage business. Not necessary? Oh, I think I ought to know what I'm joining; and, besides, the suffrage people are such frumps. What! They're going to dress better? Well, I'm glad of it. But, really, you know, I'm not a bit suffragy. Why, I'm afraid of a mouse, and I just love lingerie ribbons! And, anyway, I should vote just as Bob told me to, and I'm sure everyone else would, so it would just double the men's votes, you see. The unmarried women? Yes, that's so; I'd forgotten them. But I suppose they'd ask their brothers-in-law or their ministers or somebody, for you certainly can't tell how to vote by reading the papers!

"Oh, it's all in the future, and you only want me to help the cause? What! as an ornament? Oh, Miss Coggswell! Why, I don't know? Who? Oh, Mrs. Hemingway-Curtis! And Mrs. Vanderheyden-Wellsbacher! Oh, why they wear lovely clothes! They're the kind of people that might be called 'classy.' I never use that word, but somehow it seems to fit them. They want notoriety, the same as the people in the country papers who have their back fence painted.

"And you want me to write papers? Oh, yes, I could do that. I belong to the Pallas At Home Circle. You just tell the government how to make the laws, and you purify politics, and things like that. That part is easy enough. Of course I've kept up with the suffrage movement; one must be intelligent. I know all about how they want the shirtwaist makers not to make so many waists, and I don't wonder! I don't wear them any more, anyway; nobody does.

"And vivisection? Oh, yes, I read a lot about that. They want poor, dumb animals to have a vote. Oh, I understand those things well enough, but I'm really too busy to do much about them. Oh, you only want me to lend my name. Yes, I do want honest politics; but I think they're too honest as it is. They won't let you smuggle in a little bit of lace or anything like that, as we used to do. I don't mind paying the customs, but it's so much more fun to smuggle! As if two or three little bits of lace would hurt the United States government!

"Equal rights? Have half of Bob's money? Oh, I have more than that now! What! Some women don't? Well, if they don't know how to get it, they don't deserve to have it.

"And, then, you see, I'm such a home-body, and I'm perfectly daffy over my children! You should see Bobbins since he had his curls cut off! Broke my heart; but such a duck of a mannie! And Gwen is the dearest baby! Just think! Yesterday she was eating her bread and jam, and she said--Oh, well, of course, if you haven't time to listen--Yes, I see,--business.

"Well,--Oh, I never could speak in public! Oh, just sit on the stage and wear lovely gowns? Yes, I'd rather like that.

"Well, I suppose I might be persuaded to become a suffragist; but I think I'd rather have an aeroplane.

"Yes, I do believe in independence. I think every woman ought to have a mind of her own and decide upon her own actions. I hate a wobbly-minded woman! Well, about this suffrage business, I'll ask my husband and do as he says."

SHOPPING FOR POSTAGE STAMPS

"You keep stamps, don't you?"

"Yes, Miss; what kind?"

"Why, I don't know. But I want something that will go well with blue note paper."

"Yes, miss; do you want letter postage?"

"Of course! I want to post letters, not chairs or tables!"

"Where are the letters to? United States?"

"Be careful young man, or I'll report you for rudeness. I won't tell you where the letter is going, it's private correspondence, but it is in the United States."

"Then you want a two-cent stamp; here you are."

"Oh, red ones! Never! Do you suppose I'd put that sickly shade of crushed gooseberry juice on my robin's egg blue envelopes? Is this the nearest thing you have in two-cent stamps?"

"The very latest style, I assure you."

"Well, they won't do. Why, they aren't fit for anything, unless to make a stamp plate with. Haven't you any blue ones?"

"Yes, we have a nice line of blue ones, at five cents each."

"Oh, the price doesn't matter; let me see them, please."

"Here they are, beautiful shade of blue."

"H'm; good enough shade, but it doesn't quite harmonize with my envelopes. You see they are a sort of greenish-blue, and your stamps are more indigoish. Do you expect any new ones in?"

"Well, not any different colors."

"Oh, dear, that's always the way! But maybe I could take some of these and dye them with my Easter egg dyes, to match my paper. I did that with some lace, and it worked awfully well! What's the lightest color you have?"

"These pale green ones are as light as any. But if you dye them blue you can't use them."

"Why not?"

"The government won't allow it."

"How mean! As if it made any difference to them what color stationery people use! It almost makes me want to be a suffragette when I hear of such tyranny! Not that I'd really be one! I'm too fearfully afraid of a mouse! But I'd like to have a few rights about postage stamps. I do think the selection is very limited. There's more beauty and variety in cigar bands. Well, I'll look at these violet ones. How much are they?"

"These are three cents apiece."

"H'm, two for five cents, I suppose. Well, I could get violet note paper, and use violet ink; then these stamps would do nicely."

"And they'd match your eyes fairly well, too."

"Isn't that queer! Everybody says I have violet eyes, but, really they're not a bit the color of these stamps, you know."

"No? Look at me and let me see; well, no, they're not exactly the same shade, but they're violet eyes, all right. How many stamps will you have?"

"Two, please; but won't you give them to me out of the middle of the sheet? Those around the edge seem a little faded."

"We can't tear stamps out of the middle of a sheet!"

"Oh, yes, you can, if you try--if I ask you to try! I'll take that one, and that one!"

"Well, I suppose it doesn't matter. This one did you say? And this one?"

"Yes, please. Will you wrap them up in a neat parcel, and send them? Good morning."

AT THE BRIDGE TABLE

"Yes, indeed, Mrs. Sevier, I'm going to play at this table. Where do I sit? Here? Perhaps you'd rather have this seat, with your back to the light, don't you know? Cut for partners? Ace low. Why, isn't that funny! I always thought the ace was the highest card of all, if you don't use a joker. And you don't in Bridge. Do you? No; I haven't played very much, but I'm quick at catching on. I always say Bridge is for those who are too old or too married to flirt. Oh, I beg your pardon, Mrs. Sevier, of course you're not either! Well, I know you've been married twice, but that isn't much nowadays. I'm perfectly sure I never shall be married at all. Of course, I'm only nineteen, but I think I look older. No? Well, one can't tell about one's looks. Mother says very few sensible men would want to marry me! But I tell her very few would be enough. Now, you needn't laugh at that, Mr. Chapman, it's quite true. Are you my partner? No? Oh, I play with Mr. Ritchie, and you play with Mrs. Sevier. Very well, let's begin."

"Shall we play Lilies?"

"Play Lilies? Why, Mr. Chapman, I thought we were to play Bridge! I took half a dozen lessons a year ago. I haven't played since, but I've a marvelous memory. Oh, I see, you're just chaffing me, because my name is Lilly! You mean you'll play Lilly's game. Now, you'll excuse me, won't you, if I sort my cards face down, on the table? Why, I seem to have five suits! I declare, my hand is a perfect rubbish heap! Oh, Mrs. Sevier, have you joined that new City Beautiful Club? I'm on the Rubbish Committee, and I have to read a paper on the aesthetic decoration of ash cans, or Art in Rubbish. It's such fun! I love women's clubs. I'm going to join another. I forget what it's called, but they want poor, dumb animals to have a vote, or something like that. Well, come on, people, let's play Bridge. Oh, don't look like that, Mr. Ritchie! Gay and festive, please! Is it my deal? Well, you just deal for me. I always come out wrong."

"What are my conventions? Really, I haven't any. I'm the most unconventional person you ever saw. Why, mother says--but speaking of conventions, our Federated Clubs are going to have a stunning convention next week. That's where I'm going to read my paper. I've a screaming new costume--and a hat! Well, if I began to tell you about that hat it would interrupt our game. Wait till I'm Dummy, Mrs. Sevier, and I'll tell you. I expect these men wouldn't really care to--Oh, my discard? Yes, indeed--I--why, yes, of course I always discard spades. They count the least, you know."

"Unless they're lilies."

"Oh, Mr. Ritchie! How dear of you! Do you really set such store by my spades? Now, that's a partner worth having! I love to play Bridge, if I can have my own way. Do you know, of all things, I hate disapproval. I just can't stand it if people are cross to me!"

"You don't even avail yourself of a cross-ruff, do you?"

"Oh, Mr. Ritchie, how witty! Did I overlook a chance? That reminds me of a lady in our club, Mrs. Ruff. You see, she hasn't a very becoming husband--at present--and she always looks so discontented, we call her the Cross Ruff! Yes--yes--I am going to play. I was just thinking."

"My heavens and earth, Mrs. Sevier, don't look at me like that! Your eyes are perfect sledgehammers! No, I wasn't peeking into Mr. Chapman's hand! But I just chanced to catch a glimpse of his Queen of Hearts--Oh, Mr. Chapman, are you going to the Muchmore's fancy ball? Because, I'm going as Queen of Hearts, and if you wanted to go as King of Hearts--Hal Breston insists he's going to take that part, but--well, I want to pique him--Yes, yes, Mrs. Sevier, I know it's my play, I was just thinking. Bridge isn't a game you can play thoughtlessly--like Tit-tat-toe. You see, the Dummy is on my right hand--don't you think that phrase has a funny sound? 'She sat on her hostess' right hand?' How could the poor hostess eat? Yes, yes--there, I'll play my king. Oh, he's taken it with the ace! Why, I thought that was out long ago! Well, you made me play so fast, I scarcely knew what I was playing. I'm afraid you'll think I'm flighty, but really I have so many things on my mind, it's hard to think of only one at a time. Of course, it's different with you, Mrs. Sevier. Your life is more in a rut--if you know what I mean. Well, being married, you can't help that. Yes, I know it's my play--I was just thinking. I guess I'll play a diamond. I know I'm returning my opponent's lead, but I have a reason. Now, don't scold me, Mr. Ritchie; I simply cannot play if people disapprove of what I do. Yes, smile at me like that, it's ever so much nicer! You seem a little put out, Mrs. Sevier! Are you holding poor hands? Come, come, if these two gentlemen and I are having such a pleasant game, you must enjoy it, too. What did you bid, Mrs. Sevier?"

"I think I shall have to bid adieu."

"Oh, must you go, really? Too bad! Well, good night, and thank you for such a pleasant time."

"Now, let us play three-hand auction; it's a splendid game."

SHE GOES SHOPPING

"Why, Mr. Willing, good afternoon! How pleasant to meet you on the avenue like this. But what are you doing in the shopping district? Hunting bargain neckties? There, there, don't look so utterly galvanized; I didn't mean it. Besides, I know perfectly well why you're here; you came on the mere chance of meeting me! Ah, ha, you needn't look so embarrassed about it. I don't mind being seen with you; I'm not a bit exclusive. Well, it was a shame to tease him--so it was. Now, as a very special favor, how would you like to go into Price's with me, while I shop a little?"

"H'm, you don't seem awfully eager. What? Walk up the avenue instead? Well, we will, afterward. But let's run in here just a minute while I buy a veil. It won't take any time at all. And then we can go for a walk."

"Oh, what a crowd! I do think the people get thicker every year. Well, did you get through? I thought I'd lost you. When I saw you wedged in that revolving door with that fat lady you looked so funny. She was real cross, wasn't she? But you were so meek, I had to laugh. You looked like a feeble-minded jelly fish."

"Now, now, Willy Willing, don't peeve. Smile a little bitsy; yes, you do seem to be the only man here. But I'm glad to have you, it is so nice to have a man to pilot one through a shopping crowd. Oh, of course, the floor-walkers are just for that purpose, but they can't go outside their diocese, or whatever you call it. Now, you can go ahead and blaze a trail. The veil counter is over that way, I think, anyway, it's quite near the ribbons and catty-cornered across from the artificial flowers."

"Yes, here we are at last. Now, I'll sit on this stool and you stand right by me. Don't let women push in between us, for I want your advice."

"Oh, look who's here! Why, Tottie May! I haven't seen you since we were in Venice. Do you remember Venice? And those two long lines of Hoffman houses each side of the Grand Canal! Wasn't it stunning? You, darling, how lovely to see you again. Yes, yes, I do, I do want to be waited on, but do wait a minute, can't you? Yes, I want veiling, by the yard--there, that's the kind I want. Oh! please don't let that woman carry it off!"

"Goodby, darling, must you go? Yes, the large meshed kind. Oh, no, not that one covered with little blue beads. I should feel as if I had turquoise measles. I want a sort of gray--the shade they call 'Frightened Mouse'--though why a

mouse should ever be frightened when we are all scared to death of them--There, Mr. Willing, do you think this one is becoming? When I hold it up against my face, so. Where's baby? Peep-bo. Oh, gracious, that floor-walker thought I peep-boed at him.

"Mercy me, I have rubbed all the powder off my nose. Oh, no, it won't hurt the veil. I beg your pardon, madame, did I push you with my elbow? Indeed, I'm not taking up all the room. I'm fearfully crowded. And I rather fancy I can try the effect of a veil if I want to.

"Now, Willy Willing, how do you like this one, with the big polka dots? Yes, I know, only one dot shows, they're so big and so far apart. But polka dots are so fashionable.

"Do you know the polka is coming in again--the dance I mean? They call it the panther polka? It's awful sinuous--a sort of stealthy glide--makes you think of Sarah Bernhardt, or Elinor Weeks, but the best people have taken it up.

"What? you're afraid they'll get taken up? Oh, Willie Willing, how witty you are.

"There, do you like this veil? Don't you think it suits my hair? Mr. Dow says my hair is a yellow peril. I don't know what he means.

"You like my face better without my veil? Why, how pretty of you. Now, just for that I'll let you select one.

"You'd select a bridal veil? Oh, fie, fie, Mr. Willing. You don't really--Yes, I do want a veil. Please show me some of your other styles. And Mr. Willing, what do you think? At Gladys's wedding next week, she is going to have--Certainly, my dear girl, I'm ready to look at your goods, but these are not the veils I want. Show me something newer, these are all--Why, Gladys said that Polly Peters said--do you remember Polly Peters? Well, you'd never know her now. Slim! She's nothing but a spine--Yes, my girl, I'm looking at your veils, but I want the piece that lady has just picked up. Let's wait till she lays it down.

"Now, Mr. Willing, you mustn't get impatient. You men don't realize what hard work shopping is, until now--Oh, my gracious! I have to be at our culture class by 4 o'clock. There's a lecture on 'Art Uplift in the Kitchen,' and I know it will be fine.

"No, I don't cook, but it's such a satisfaction to know that one's soup is made in a Greek-shaped jug, instead of a crude iron kettle--Oh, mercy, no! I wouldn't wear a veil like that! Why, Mrs. Bailey had one like that once, and the very day I saw her wearing it I lost my amethyst hatpin. I've always considered a veil like that unlucky ever since.

"Well, I don't seem to care for any of these veils, they're not a bit distinctive. And a veil is such an important part of a costume--it dresses up the face so. These patterns are most uninteresting.

"Come on, Willing Willy, let's go down to Storer's and look at veils there--shall us?

"Why, you don't seem to want to go a bit. Now, don't go just to please me. I thought perhaps you were interested in--

"Oh, do you want to go? Do you know I believe you men just love to go shopping, and you only pretend you don't.

"I am sorry, dear, that your veils don't suit me, but, of course, I can't buy what I don't want just to help the store along; you couldn't expect that, could you?

"And, anyway, I wasn't exactly buying a veil--I was just shopping for one."

A QUIET AFTERNOON

"Oh, how do you do, Mr. Willing? I'm so glad to see you! I was just saying to myself it's such a dull afternoon I'd be glad to see anybody."

"Even me!"

"Now, you're just fishing for a compliment, but you won't get it. Sit down in that big easy chair and we'll have a nice, quiet, comfy afternoon, and you can talk to me."

"I can do what?"

"Oh, well, I'll talk to you, then. I want to ask your advice about something. I'm in a--well, a sort of a dilemma--and I want the judgment of a man of the world--an all-round knowing man--if you know what I mean. Oh, there's the telephone--pardon me, Mr. Willing--I'll just see who it is--no, you needn't leave the room--it's probably Tottie, or some of the girls. Hello! Oh, hello! Is that you, Jack? Why, you dear boy, I'm so glad to see you--hear you, I mean.

"What? Not really? Oh, the idea! Now, don't you flatter me like that--oh, no, no--I couldn't possibly!--well, maybe--if you'll promise to be good.

"What, now? Oh, no, Jack, you can't come up here now. I'm--just going out! No--you didn't hear a man's voice exclaiming! That was Fido! Yes, he has a human sort of a bark. Well, yes, it is a little like Willy Willing's voice--he's a perfect puppy! What! No! Of course, I mean Fido. No, Jack, you can't come now; I tell you I'm going out. I have on my hat and coat already--yes, that was Fido again--he always makes that queer sound when anybody telephones. (Puts hand over transmitter.) Mr. Willing, you must keep still, or I won't tell all these fibs for your benefit! But I don't want our

nice quiet afternoon intruded upon--Yes, Jack, come to-morrow. I have something I want to consult you about. I really need the advice of a (covers transmitter again)--Mr. Willing, please step into the library for a moment. Look at the new books on the table--Yes, Jack, truly, I need the experienced advice of an all-round man of the world--like you--oh, yes, you are--you're awfully well balanced and all that--don't talk when I am talking--wait till I ring off--oh, Jane is just bringing me a card--wait a minute, Jack--why, it's Mr. Strong--I like that man awfully well--show him in, Jane. Goodby, Jack--no, I can't listen now--good-by."

"How do you do, Mr. Strong? Do sit down. Take this easy chair. I'm so glad to see you--yes, isn't it dull weather? So good of you to come and brighten up an otherwise lonely afternoon. Excuse me, just a moment; there's a new book in the library I want to show you. (Goes into next room.)

"Now Mr. Willing, you must stay here till Mr. Strong goes. Because, if you show yourself, you'll have to leave here before he does----"

"I won't!"

"Hush, he'll hear you--now, I won't be a bit entertaining to him, and he'll soon go--and then we can have our nice, quiet afternoon. Now, will you be goody-boy and stay here and not make a sound?"

"Yes, but I'll eavesdrop everything you say."

"I don't care. I shan't mean a word of it!"

"And if you don't fire him pretty swift I'll come in there and stir up a hurrah's nest!"

"There! there! there! little one. Rest tranquil! Read a nice, pretty book or something, but don't smoke, or he'll know somebody's in here."

(Lilly returns to drawing room.) "Yes, I'm so glad you came, Mr. Strong--what book?--Oh, yes, I was going to show you a book, but I--it wasn't there. Never mind, let's just chat--I want to ask you something, something serious, you know. May I?"

"Oh--I don't know--you see, it's Leap Year!"

"Now Mr. Strong, don't frivol. It doesn't suit your iron-bound countenance. And, truly, I'm in earnest! You know, we women like to get the ideas of a man's brain! A man of judgment and experience--a--well, what they call a man of the world--oh, yes, you are. I often quote your opinions--they're so profound. Now, what I want to ask you about is--oh, there's the telephone--excuse me--just a tiny minute--no, don't go. Oh, hello! Is that you, Flossy? Darling girl, do come over, can't you?--yes, now--right away--oh, I wish you could--I want to hear all about it!--only last night?--a ruby and diamond!--oh, heavenly!--well, come to-morrow morning, then--yes--yes, indeed, dearest--goodby--goodby--yes, I think so, too--perfectly horrid, but, oh, of course, yes--goodby--no, nothing of the sort--yes, I'll come right over--goodby--"

"Oh, must you go, Mr. Strong?"

"Well, yes, I did tell Miss Fay I'd go over to see her, but I meant after your call was over--please don't go yet--you must? Well, come again, do--I always enjoy a talk with you--you're so--so profound--if you know what I mean. Good afternoon, Mr. Strong.

"Now, come back, Mr. Willing! Didn't I tell you I'd get rid of him in short order? But he's such an everlasting talker it's hard to make him go. Now, we can have our nice, quiet afternoon. Excuse me just a minute first--I want to telephone just the leastest word to Tottie May!

"Oh, hello! Is this you, darling? What do you think?--oh, you know already? Did Flossy tell you?--oh, no, not really! Well, for gracious goodness' sake!--yes, coral-pink chiffon, in one of those new smudge designs--oh, yes--a black chip Gainsborough, with practically all the feathers in the world piled on it--no, Thursday afternoon--why, about five--violets? Well, rather! Oh, Tottie--and, yes, Mr. Willing is here, but he can't hear what you say--no, he doesn't mind waiting--oh, Tottie! I can't believe it. Yes, she did! And she said that Billy said if she ever did such a thing again--Oh, Tottie, what do you think? Mr. Willing has gone!"

TAKING CARE OF UNCLE

"Hello, Uncle Abel! Here's me! Here's your little ray of sunshine. Aunt Hetty sprung a C. Q. D. at me over the telephone and said she had to go to a meeting of some Hen's Club or other, and would I come around here and sit with you. So I came just as soon as I could skittle over. You poor dear, are you awfully tired of staying in the house? Well, I suppose gout is annoying. Why don't you try Mental Science? They say it's fine! You know, you just think you haven't any gout, and then you don't have any! Though, for that matter, you might as well think you hadn't any foot."

"And, then, wouldn't I have any?"

"No, I suppose not. But that wouldn't do any good, because I've heard that soldiers, or any people with their feet cut off, feel them hurting just the same. But, never mind, my poor darling, I'm going to be so entertaining this afternoon that you won't know whether you have any feet or not."

"Entertaining, hey? I suppose that means you'll chatter like a confounded magpie till I'm nearly crazy. I don't see why women have to be eternally talking!"

"There, there, Uncle Abel, your foot is bad to-day, isn't it? Aunt Hetty said you were as cross as a teething baby--"

"Oh, she said that, did she?"

"Yes, and she said she hoped to goodness I could chirk you up some, for she'd just about reached the end of her patience!"

"Pooh! She never had any patience! Now, if she were in my plight--full of chronic hereditary gout, and just getting over the grippe--"

"Well, you ought to be thankful it isn't chronic hereditary grippe! But men can't stand a bit of discomfort!"

"Confound your impertinence, Miss! What are you talking about? I don't know what your aunt meant by getting you over here this afternoon! You've no more feeling or sympathy than a Dutch doll!"

"Oh, yes I have, Uncle, dear! Here, I'll rest your foot in an easier position--"

"Ooo! E--E! Ouch!! Gosh, Lilly! I wish I had something to throw at you! Get away, girl!"

"Oh, I'm so sorry for your poor, dear, suffering old wrapped-up bundle of foot! Here, let me put another sofa cushion under it. Say, Uncle, I saw the loveliest burnt leather sofa-pillow in Van Style's window as I came along! It would suit my room beautifully. There, there, dear, let me rub your forehead with this cologne; isn't that soothing?"

"Soothing nothing! You've doused it all in my eyes, they smart like fire! Oo, ouch! Lilly, get out!"

"Well, try that mental science again. Think they don't smart. Think you haven't any eyes!"

"I wish I hadn't any ears! Do stop chattering, Lilly!"

"My! Aunt Hetty sized up your state of mind all right, didn't she? Well, Uncle, I guess I'll read to you. Here's a lovely story in this new magazine. Listen: 'The pale young man fairly trembled as he looked at her. "Ethelyn," he murmured, in sighing tones, "you are so adorably subtle, so tragically intensive, that I feel--I feel--"'

"I refuse to know how that young nincompoop felt! Shut up that fool book, Lilly! If you must read, read me some Wall Street news."

"All right, Uncle Abel, here goes. I'll read from this morning's paper: 'Coffee declined rather sharply at the opening. Why, how funny! What was the opening? A sort of a reception day? And if people declined coffee, why did they do so sharply? Why not say, 'No, thank you,' and take tea?'"

"I don't want that column; turn to 'Gossip of Wall Street.'"

"Yes, here that is. But, Uncle, do the magnates and things gossip? I thought that was a woman's trick! Well, here we are: 'Steel rail changes discussed all day!' Oh, Uncle, and then to call women chatterboxes! When men talk all day long about a foolish little thing like changing a steel rail! Why, I can change a whole hat in less time than that! Say, Uncle, there was the dearest hat in the Featherton's window--"

"I'll bet it was dear if it was in that shop!"

"Well, but it had been reduced; marked down to \$27.99. Such a bargain! Uncle, you know my birthday comes next week--"

"Well, which do you want, the hat or the sofa-pillow you hinted for a while ago?"

"Oh, Uncle, how lovely of you! But it's hard to choose between them. Suppose I had them both sent home on approval--and then I can see--"

"Yes, I know what that means!"

"Oh, here comes the maid, with your beef tea. No, Jane, let me take it; I'll give it to him. You may go, Jane. I'll just taste this, Uncle, to be sure it isn't too hot for you. Oh, how good it is! I've often thought I'd like to be an invalid just on account of the lovely things they get to eat. Why, this beef tea is delicious! And such a pretty cup and saucer. Do you know, Ethel Wylie has a whole set like this. 'Coalport,' isn't it? Say, Uncle, what do you think about the coal strike? Do tell me all about it--I'm shockingly ignorant of politics. Do they call it a strike because the men get mad and strike each other? Or what?"

"Lilly, if you don't want all that beef tea, I believe I could relish a little."

"Oh, Uncle, how thoughtless of me! I've sipped nearly all of it! I suppose I sort of thought I was at a tea. But I think there's as much as you ought to take. Dear Uncle, it's so nice to see you eat something nourishing. I'm sure it will do you good. It must be awful to have the grippe. And you have headache, haven't you? Now, don't say no--I can see it in your poor, dear eyes. I'm going to tie this wet bandage round your forehead--so--oh, no, it isn't dripping down your neck--it can't be. Well, it will soon stop. Now I'll rub this menthol on the bridge of your nose--now, now, Uncle, don't scowl like that. If you won't try mental science we must use remedies."

"Lilly, if you don't let me alone I'll throw this cup and saucer at you!"

"Oh, Uncle, dear, don't be so peevish! There, now, I'll pat your poor foot and sing to you."

"Ooch! Oh, the devil! Lilly, get out! There!!!"

"Oh, Uncle, you've smashed that lovely 'Coalport!' Did those gentle little pats hurt your foot? I don't believe it! I declare a man is worse to take care of than a baby! Thank goodness, here comes Aunt Hetty!"

IN THE DEPARTMENT STORE

I have some material here I wish to exchange--I say I have--Will you kindly wait on me?--Busy?--I have some--Now, I must be waited on; I'm in a great hurry! Oh, very well. I have some material here I wish to exchange. It's marquisette, but it isn't the right shade. Not marquisette?--Chiffon marquisine? Well, I don't care if it's linsey-woolsey! I want to exchange it, or rather, return it. No, I don't have a charge account; I want the money back. Please give it to me quickly. I'm going to a matinee--What! You can't take it back here? I must go to the desk? Why, I bought it here, right at this counter, of that thin girl with the hectic flush. She doesn't look well, does she? She ought to go to some good sanatorium. Well, you see this chiffon, or whatever it is, is the wrong shade. I asked for elephant's breath, and this is more on the shade of frightened mouse. It doesn't match my satin at all.--Oh, dear, how unaccommodating you are! Well, where is the desk? Ask the floor-walker? Oh, very well!--Please direct me to the desk. What desk? I don't know, I'm sure! Any desk will suit me. I want to return some goods that doesn't match my own material, and you know, this season, if--Near the rear door?--Of course they'd put it as far away as possible!

Is this the exchange desk? Well, I want to return this piece of goods--Oh, no! It isn't soiled! That's the original color. Frightened mice often look soiled when they're not at all! Yes, that is the name! No, it isn't taupe, nor mode, nor steel common, it's just frightened mouse. I can carry colors in my eye just like an artist. Now it doesn't matter what color it is, anyway, for it's the wrong color!--Cut off the piece? Of course it's cut off the piece! There's two yards and a half of it--Remnant? No, it was not! I don't buy leftovers!--Then you can't change it? Well, come to think, maybe it was a remnant! Yes, I believe it was! I don't often get them, but this just matched my satin,--I mean it didn't match my satin, and that's why I bought it. No, I mean--well, anyway, I want to return it.--Had it a long time? Well, I couldn't help that! The dressmaker disappointed me,--that is, I had to go to some bridge parties and things unexpectedly, so I had to put her off. But the minute she pinned it on the pattern I saw it was the wrong shade. Pinholes in it? Nonsense! They don't show. Of course we had to pin it. Seems to me you're making a lot of fuss about a simple exchange--I mean a return. I'd like the money back at once. A credit check? No, I want the money; I haven't any with me, because I depended on getting this. What! You don't give back the money? Why, it says in your advertisements, "Satisfaction given or money refunded." Some other shop? Well, I'm sure I thought it was this shop that did that or I'd never have bought the stuff here! Rules? Regulations? Oh, dear! Well, then, take it and give me a credit check. Yes, I'll sign my name! Dear me, what a lot of red tape! I suppose you have to go through all this to keep from being swindled--Yes, that's my name and address.

Now, can I get anything in the store for this check? Why, that's rather fun! Seems as if you were giving it to me for nothing! Oh, how pretty that chiffon looks as you hold it up to the light! Do you know, it doesn't match my satin, but it would go beautifully with my voile gown, and I want that made over. I do believe I'd better keep it. It was a good bargain, I remember. I wonder if it would match it. I'm sure it would,--I carry colors in my eye so well,--and it's a lovely quality. I think, if you please, I'll take it back. What, sign my name again? Well, there, I've signed off again. My! it's like going to law or a divorce court,--not that I've ever done either, and, after this experience, I hope I never shall! But just hold that stuff up again. Oh, now that they've turned on the electrics, it's a totally different shade! Oh, I don't want it now at all! Can't you turn off the lights again? I'd no idea it was getting so late!--Oh, well, if you're going to be disagreeable, I'll take it, then. The value is nothing at all to me! My husband is a prosperous broker. Yes, I'll take it. Please send it home for me, and if I don't like it when I get it, I'll send it back.

THE HOUSEWIFE'S HELPER

"Oh,--how do you do? Are you Miss Allfriend?--the Housewife's Helper? You must excuse me, but I never saw a Visiting Housekeeper before, and I'd no idea they looked so,--so correct! Well, since you're here, please begin to housekeep at once. I'm in such a flurry. You see, I'm standardizing my housework, and it makes so much confusion. You understand--don't you,--all about Lost Motion and Increased Efficiency? I'm a perfect crank on those two things. They mean so much to us enlightened women. Am I a suffragette? Oh, mercy, no! I'm happily married. But I believe in Ethics and Standardization and all those modern conveniences.

"Now, Miss Allfriend, if you'll please set the dinner table. I'm having a little dinner to-night for Senator Caldwell and his wife. They're terribly swagger, and, of course, I don't want to put on any airs, but I do want things to be nice. So, you set the table--Where are the things? Why, hunt them up from the cupboards and buffets? If I get the things out, I may as well do the work myself! I thought you were to help! Here's the center-piece I want used. Oh,--it is creased, isn't it? Well, just press it off. Do it carefully,--there's so much in pressing. Well, yes,--it is a little spotted. I guess you'll have to wash it. Use only a pure white soap,--and don't let the colors run.

"And you'd better dust the dishes. Some of them haven't been used lately. Of course you know how to set a table? If you're uncertain look in the 'Perfect Lady's Home Guide.' It's in that drawer, I think,--or, no,--perhaps it's upstairs,--or

maybe I loaned it to Miss Jennings,--she's going to be married next week, and she has the loveliest--

"Oh, Miss Allfriend, don't begin on the table, now. It's only three o'clock, and Mrs. Ritchie's children are coming to spend the afternoon with Gladys Gwendolyn. I wish you'd fix up a sort of little party for them. The Ritchies are new people, and I want the children to have a good time here. Can't you telephone to the caterer for some ices and cakes? Nothing elaborate,--I think children's parties ought to be kept simple. Who is our caterer? Why,--well,--the truth is, we haven't one just now,--for I scolded Lafetti so that I don't like to call him again. You see he was rude because we hadn't paid--well,--anyway, he was impertinent,--so--don't you know of some nice caterer to telephone to? Order only simple things,--say a Jack Horner pie, with pretty little gifts in it,--and ices in novel shapes,--and plenty of bon-bons,--children love candy so.

"But before you do that, please just finish off Gladys Gwendolyn's little frock. It's nearly done, but the seamstress had to leave it to finish my dinner gown, so you just look after baby's dress. It only needs one sleeve set,--and make it a bit larger round the belt,--it's too tight for her,--I don't believe in cramping the little growing bodies.

"I'm awfully careful with Gladys Gwendolyn. I boil her toys and I bake her books every day. And won't you see,--since you're here,--that she uses her germicide spray on the even hours, and her antiseptic douche every other half hour? It is a help to have you here, I'm sure. And I wish you would entertain the kiddies. Not professionally,--you know,--just tell them stories and make up games for them. Oh, and be sure to arrange prizes,--children just love prizes. Are you knacky about such things? Some people are,--and others are so different!

"Can you play Bridge? I've just two tables running over for a rubber at four, and I'm most sure one lady won't come! And you look so,--so,--presentable, I'd be glad if you'd take a hand, if necessary,--and I'm pretty certain it will be.

"Now I must fly and take my nap. Then I have to go for my short walk. I have to exercise, or I gain at once. Now please attend to the things I've asked of you. If you standardize, you can easily have time for all. And in your spare moments, here's a piece of my cross-stitch embroidery,--you may as well do a little. Be sure to cross the stitches the way I do.

"And please answer the telephone when it rings;--oh, say anything you like. You must have wit enough to know what to say! If you're qualified for a Visiting Helper, you ought to know such things!

"And be very careful what you say before Gladys Gwendolyn. I'm bringing her up in an ethically artistic atmosphere. I want her to come in contact only with what is true and beautiful. And unless I'm ethically pure myself, how can I expect her to be? So bear that in mind, Miss Allfriend.

"Oh, and by the way, our telephone is on a party wire. If you overhear any interesting gossip, be sure to remember it, and tell me!"

MRS. LESTER'S HOBBLETTE

"Yes, I went to New York yesterday, and, if you'll believe me, my dear, I never had such a day in all my life! You see, I thought I'd shop a little in the morning, and then meet John for luncheon, and go to the matinee afterward. Well, we did all that, but such a time as I had doing it!

"I didn't go in town with John. He goes on that eight-thirty-nine--all our best commuters do; but it's too early for me to get off. He said we'd lunch at a swell hotel--John's a perfect dear about such things, if we have been married nearly two years. So, of course, I wanted to look my bestest, and I put on my new blue gown. I'd never had it on before, and--Yes, it is a hobble skirt; but I begged Miss Threadley not to make it extreme. I do hate extreme fashions. So she said she'd make a modified hobble, a hobblette, she calls it--and she assured me it would be all right. It's a perfect beauty, my dear; but, good land! It's exactly the shape of a bolster slip, and round the knees it's fitted tightly and boned.

"Well, anyway, I got into the thing and started for the ten-forty-eight train. As I started to walk away I fell over at the very first step! Luckily I fell into a chair; but I bruised my knee and ankle dreadfully. Jane brought hot water and witch hazel and fixed me up, and I started again, for I didn't want to lose that train. How I got downstairs I don't know. It was a series of jumps and jounces. But, after this, I shall slide down on a tea tray, as I used to do when I was a child.

"Of course I knew it was only a matter of learning to walk in the thing, and I was bound to learn. I went along the street pretty well as long as I remembered to take little, tiny steps, but as I reached Maple Avenue I heard the train coming. You know there's a good two blocks to go after that, so I ran! My dear, if you could have seen me! Talk about contortionists! Of course my running was just a sort of jiggety-jig trotting, but I had to keep going to preserve my equilibrium. I reached the train just as it was ready to move out of the station. I tried to step on, but you know how high the lowest step is. I simply couldn't reach it. I tried first one foot and then the other, and neither would come anywhere near that step without tearing my skirt. And it wouldn't tear! If it would, I should have let it go, for I was filled with mortification. At last the conductor and the brakeman took me by my elbows and swung me up or I never should have got aboard at all.

"Then in New York it was dreadful. You know how I cross the street? I simply have to do it my own way, for it

makes me nervous to depend on those policemen. I always cross in the middle of a block to escape them. I just watch for a good chance, you know, and then I run across fast, and I always manage all right. But, yesterday, I tried to run, and that awful skirt held me back, and when I was about half way across I stumbled in it, and the trolley cars and motors just clambered all around me! How I got over alive I don't know. I shouldn't have, only two nice men and a boy seemed to spring up from somewhere to help me. Well, then I went on, and I suddenly discovered the lovely satin hem was getting awfully soiled. So I tried to hold it up, but--My dear, have you ever tried to hold up a hobblette? Well, don't!

"It's much more unmanageable than a sheath! I wanted to turn it up, like a man does his trousers legs, but I felt I was attracting enough attention as it was. Then, my dear, it was time to go to meet John, and I tried to get on a street car. Well, the board of aldermen, or whatever they are, will have to have those car steps made lower! I had my pay-as-you-go nickel all ready, but I just couldn't get up to the place where you go. And the wretched conductor wouldn't help me a bit! He just grinned, as if it were an old story to him. I tried three or four cars, but they all had high steps and unhelpful conductors; so I took a taxicab.

"They do have sense enough to build the steps of the taxicabs fairly low, so I got in all right and went straight to the hotel. Well, I had been shopping, you know, and I had spent much more than I thought I had--I always do, don't you?--and, if you please, I didn't have money enough in my purse to pay that cabman! But that isn't the worst of it! I did have more money with me, but it was in my stocking. I always carry some extra bills there, and I'm rather an adept at getting it out, if need be, without anyone knowing what I'm doing. But that skirt wouldn't budge! I stepped back into the cab and shut the door, but I simply couldn't raise that hobblette enough to get my money. What could I do? Well, as good luck would have it, John came along just then, and I opened the cab door as if I had just arrived. John paid the bill.

"We had a lovely luncheon--John is a dear man to go about with--and then we went to a matinee. But, O, my dear, if my knees didn't get cramped! Both feet went to sleep, but they wanted to walk in their sleep, and they couldn't. Well, when we did come out I could scarcely stand, let alone walk! And John hurried me to the station. And when we reached the boat it was just beginning to move from the dock.

"Jump!" said John. "It's perfectly safe. I've got hold of you. We'll jump together now!"

"I won't!" said I firmly, and I didn't. Why, my dear, if I had we'd have both gone into the water.

"So we waited for the next boat, but John didn't know why, and never will!"

AT THE COOKING CLASS

"Oh, am I late? I'm so sorry! My dear Miss Cooke, have I kept your class waiting? Now don't look at me like that! Cheery and blithe, please. And Milly,--just wait a minute till I fold up this veil; they get so rubbishy if you don't,--truly, I started early enough, but, you see, I met Roddy Dow, and--we took a walk around the block,--it's such a sunny, shiny, country kind of a day, we just had to. Of course, I told him I was in a hurry to get to class, and I babbled on about all the whipped angel food and eggless omelets we're going to learn to make, and he said,--girls, what do you think he said? He said I was fluffy-minded! Me! the greatest living example of a young woman with earnest aims and high ideals! Well,--so I said--yes, yes, Miss Cooke, I am folding it up as fast as I can,--I'll be ready in a minute,--don't make that foolish noise, pretty lady. Shall I sit here by Flossy Fay? Oh, what winsome looking creatures! Live crabs? Are they? And we're to learn to make "Crab Flakes a la Pittsburg?" Oh, how perfectly gorgeous! Do you know, Flossy, I met that Pittsburg man last night,--that Mr. Van Roxie. Yes, the one with one lung and thirty millions. He's too ducky for words! He didn't approve of me at first,--I sat next to him at dinner, you know,--because I asked him whether he'd rather talk politics or have a lover's quarrel. He looked at me sort of gimletty,--if you know what I mean,--and he said I was a Pink and White Mistake! Me! the Only Original Magazine-Cover Girl! Well--so I said,--yes, Miss Cooke, I'm listening. Certainly I know what you said; you said,--well, you said something about eggs. No, I don't recall exactly what,--to me, there's always an air of mystery about eggs, anyway. And, besides, most all the recipes are eggless, nowadays,--it's the latest fad. Oh, cream the yolks? Now, isn't that funny? My new mauve messaline has a cream yoke,--that heavy lace, you know,--I think they call it,--My heavens and earth! Miss Cooke! One of the crabs is loose! Oh, girls, get up on your chairs! That's right, Flossy,--climb up on this table, by me!

"O-o-oo! Police! Turn in an alarm, somebody! Miss Cooke! Don't try to pick him up! He'll attack you,--and rend you limb from limb!

"Don't you step on him! I'm a termagant S. P. C. A. and I won't see a poor dumb crab cruelly treated in my presence! There! He's run under that cupboardy thing! You'll have to poke him out again!

"Oh, Flossy, don't jump about so! This table will break down; it feels wriggly now.

"Please, Miss Cooke, don't scold me! I can't help feeling nervous when that terrifying monster is walking abroad. Well, I will keep still, but maybe I won't resign from this Cooking Class, if we have to have such frisky viands!"

"And, Miss Cooke, I hate to seem intrusive,--but there's another crab flew the coop,--and he's grabbing your apron string,--it's untied.

"Oh, I thought that would make you jump 'Calm yourself,'--as you said to me; 'he won't hurt you, if you pick him up properly,'--you said.

"Oo-oo-ee-ee! They're all out! The whole dozen! Oh, Miss Cooke, scramble up here, for your life!

"Cissy Gay, if you get up here, too, this table will break down! Get on the big table; never mind the eggs. Will you look at those awful beasts! They're all over the floor. Oh, I'm so frightened! I wish Roddy Dow had come in with me! I wish Mr. Willing was here. I even wish I had that Pittsburg man to take care of me! Let's all scream, and maybe the Janitor will come. Oh, there you are! Please, Janitor, brush up these crabs somebody spilled, won't you?

"Well! I never saw a man afraid, before! Get down off that chair, Dolan! What do you mean? I'll report you to the owner of this building! No, they won't hurt you! You just pick 'em up by one hind leg, and they can't bite. I'd do it myself,--only I've just been manicured.

"Talk about new-fangled housekeeping devices,--what is most needed is a crab pick-upper. That would fill a longer felt want than all their fireless napkins and paper cookers.

"You know, they cook now in paper bags. No, I don't know much about it, but I'm going to learn. They say it's a great time-saver. I suppose they just take the paper bags of rice or beans or anything, as they come from the grocer's, and put them on to boil. I expect they take the strings off before they send the bags to the table. It's largely theoretical, of course. All these new movements are.

"But I'm for 'em! This cooking class, now; I only wish I could have brought Mr. Dow.

"Sitting this way, cross-legged on a kitchen table, with a frilly, bibby apron on, I know I look exactly like a Gibsty picture. And it's all wasted on you girls!

"Crabs all corralled? Thank you, Dolan. Now, Miss Cooke, shall we go on with the lesson?

"Oh, you're sorry, but the time is all used up!

"Well, never mind, Cooksy-Wooksy. I think they must have been suffragette crabs,--they agitated so terribly.

"And I don't mind missing this lesson,--I've had enough deviled crabs for one day!"

AESOP UP TO DATE THE MILKMAID AND HER PAIL OF MILK

A milkmaid having been a Good Girl for a long Time, and Careful in her Work, her mistress gave her a Pail of New Milk all for herself.

With the Pail on her Head she tripped Gayly away to the Market, saying to Herself:

"How Happy I am! For this Milk I shall get a Shilling; and with that Shilling I shall buy Twenty of the Eggs Laid by our Neighbor's fine Fowls. These Eggs I shall put under Mistress's old Hen, and even if only Half of the Chicks grow up and Thrive before next Fair time comes Round, I shall be able to Sell them for a Good Guinea. Then I shall Buy me a Monte Carlo Coat and an Ermine Stole, and I will Look so Bewitching that Robin will Come Up and Offer to be Friends again. But I won't make up Too Easily; when he Brings me Violets, I shall Toss My Head So-and--"

Here the Milkmaid gave her Head the Toss she was thinking about, and the Pail of Milk was Dislodged from its resting-Place on her Head.

But, being a Member of a Ladies' Physical Culture Club, she Deftly Caught the Pail and Replaced It.

All Turned Out as she had planned, and when Robin married her he gave her an Electric Automobile.

Moral:

Don't Discount Your Chickens Before they are Hatched.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Printer errors have been fixed.

Spelling retained as written by the author.

[The end of The Eternal Feminine, by Carolyn Wells]