

had a field day and I had the worst record in the Club—only seventy-one birds identified in the course of the day. The Blackburnian Warblers are pretty thick now, aren't they?" After that you take good care that whenever Campbell comes along you are simply taking the air, simply gazing at the beauty of the fine old elms, simply taking a letter to be mailed at the post-box down the road. You had intended that morning, perhaps, to call up Campbell over the telephone and ask him what is a smallish bird, brownish above and grayish underneath, that goes "swee swee swee swee," but now you know that you will have to sit down alone with your bird-guide and decide whether the song was a "gay, warbling melody," or a "clear succession of notes ending in a whistle."

But I wouldn't have you think I'm discouraged; the birds have a habit of leaving the region in which I go a-birding and congregating about me when I'm playing my celebrated mashie shot on the eleventh hole and mustn't be disturbed; but I already have twenty-one on my list, and the season's not nearly over. And then, of course, I'll probably get up next Saturday morning at dawn and see a lot of new ones. Or at any rate, I'll make a fresh start next spring, and then I won't have to waste time on the robins and bluebirds, and I'll get a whopping big list. Yes, perhaps that's the wisest course on the whole: to take it easy this year and especially to take it easy next Saturday morning, and make a fresh start at ornithology in 1921.

#### LETTERS TO CERTAIN PEOPLE OF IMPORTANCE TO A DOCTOR

BY WINIFRED KIRKLAND

**D**EAR DOCTOR,—I write to you in a spirit not of censure, but of friendly warning to one near and intimate whose career I perceive beset with dangers. That prestige which you

have painstakingly built up through long, grudging centuries is so conspicuous that it is natural you should think it more secure than it actually is. As I look back into the revelations of literature and of social history I see you steadily advancing from a position far below the salt to one that goes steadily up and up, until to-day no other frequenter of any household is accorded the authority which you receive. Human nature, too proud to admit its helpless dependence on its own physical machinery, has been loath to acknowledge the dignity of the man who mends and oils that machinery. People once regarded the apothecary who treated their bodies as they still regard the veterinarian who treats the bodies of their horses. Your emergence from your humble origin has been so complete that you are no longer to be looked upon as the successor to the apothecary, but, rather, as the successor to the priest, the prophet, and the prince. You have attained, perhaps, the pinnacle of your glory, and this fact is the cause of my apprehension, for all pinnacles are dangerous.

Your peril, however, comes not from without, but from within. There is as yet no indication that the public has gone back upon you. You are still eminent, and deservedly, but are you going to protect this eminence with all the wise secrecy of your primitive yet canny predecessors, the medicine man and the voodoo? Dear friend, in this sadly astute old world, are you going to know enough to take care of yourself? You are incurably boyish, even when gray and palsied; you are even more naïve than a lawyer or a politician. That engaging infantine self-exposure of yours, where may it not lead you!

It is all very natural, your innocence. You are, in sober reality, the father confessor of a faithless generation. Many people who don't believe in a God do believe in a doctor. The mediæval confessor held in his hand the fate of families and dynasties and empires. So do you. The mediæval priest threatened the

refractory with the execrations of the Church, but you threaten us with all the execrations of Science. You enter a house, and every inmate bows to your commands. You order the mother away from the child, and direct the son how he shall deal with his father. Almost, but not quite, you issue mandates to the cook. You strike awe even into a child. The nations obey you, for you attend the statesman in the very council chamber, and you follow the financier to his stall in the Bourse. It is but natural you should believe the reverence everywhere paid you more secure than it is. But stop and think on what sand it is founded! What master ever safely trusted his slave?

Because you believe your patient trusts you, you trust him. You trust his sincerity, his confidence, his admiration. Too often you think the poor wretch so sodden with illness as to be incapable of any thought whatever. Doctors and nurses are unaware of the razor glance thrust into them from beneath eyelids heavy with pain. No matter with what confidence you may sail into the sick room, remember there is no shade of your word or manner but is recorded for or against you by that swathed carcass on the bed. Be assured there never yet was a patient who did not dissect his surgeon more exhaustively than any surgeon ever dissected him.

I beg you to understand the reasons for an invalid's acumen in order that you may believe in it and be on your guard against it. No cloak of professional pomp will protect you from a patient's insight because his life depends on you. Therefore he watches you as the trapped beast watches his keeper. He notes every quirk of your finger, every flicker of your eyelash, for you hold his very existence in the hollow of your hand. You are his judge and his executioner and his pope. And you naïvely suppose he loves you for your power! Of course he hates you for it. However kind his keeper, isn't the trapped beast always looking for a vulnerable spot to bite? And yet you,

poor dear, how blithely in the apparent safety of the sick room you exhibit the holes in your chain armor of reserve! Your patient is human, and he is your slave, and yet you are not afraid of him! Do you think he does not resent your intimacy, your intrusion, your dominion over his wife and his children and his grandchildren and his goods and his cattle and his men servants and his maid servants?

As if his helplessness were not affront enough, the sick man knows that if he is ever to get loose from your fetters he must temporarily bind them tighter; he knows that you'll never set him free until he has delivered you all his secrets. You must know exactly where his mind is crooked, you tell him, or you can never straighten out his body. People used to tell the apothecary merely their physical ills, and if the invalid happened to be a choleric, gouty squire, by no means all of those; but to-day, when our physiology and our psychology have become so intertangled, no one dares to hide even a thought from a doctor, for fear one won't recover. And for disobedience you threaten terrible penalty. The mediæval confessor could achieve no more compelling threat than mere spiritual disintegration and postmundane discomfort, but you can terrorize the most obstinate glutton with the loss of his money-making faculties if he does not eat less and exercise more. A soul is a vaporish unreality, but a gall bladder and an appendix and a bad heart are very present troubles, enough to frighten anybody into obeying you. I reiterate that it is because of your power over other people's fortunes that your own are insecure. The patient in these modern days is so abjectly helpless that he cherishes all a slave's rancor, and at any time may strike you in the dark. He has even been known secretly to laugh at you.

Now all this danger of your self-betrayal to some unperceived enemy is inadvertent and unconscious on your part. You are simply unaware that the patient is fooling you, and that is why I

warn you; but what can I say to you of that rashness with which you voluntarily expose yourself to the heartless publicity of print! You have lately taken to writing books, books of extreme lucidity and popular appeal, which dare to reveal the arcana of your methods. With an audacity insane in view of the consequences to yourself and your profession, you inform us, in book and magazine, attaching the magic seal M.D. to your statements, that you heal us by means of our minds. Pills and liniments and potions you prescribe, so you tell us, because we like to be fooled, in fact, because we insist on being fooled. You cure us through our minds, you dare to say it, and through your own magnetism! I told you at the start that you had perhaps reached the pinnacle of your success. It is a sorry fact about pinnacles that they are such prickly seats that no man sits on one very long. Nobody prods him from it; always he, himself, manages to tumble off any height to which he has climbed. The modern curse of publicity has undone you. Neither you nor your calling can exist if you cease to be occult, and yet here you go hurtling into print with all the mysteries your profession has guarded for ten thousand years!

But print has money in it, you say. Good luck! yes, but why? Your books sell, but why? We buy your secrets as fast as we can, because we want to know how to do without you. But when you have sold them all (and by your own account they are few and simple) what are you going to do then for a livelihood? Do you wonder that I rush to write you, begging you to stop these perilous revelations while yet there is time? Think how many people resent your sway so bitterly that they will rejoice to see your throne totter! Of these I am not one. I love you and I worry about you. Your despotism has been absolute, and yet devoted. Is it, perhaps, sheer kindness that has made you long at last to set us free? For when you voluntarily cease to be mysterious you voluntarily cease to

be powerful. By naïvely informing us how deftly you do the trick for us, presto! we spring from our beds and do the trick for ourselves.

It is not the patient's welfare, you see, but your own that makes me anxious. We others shall be better off, perhaps, but how about you? You have been my friend, you have raised me from languishment until I have become well enough to be impudent. I owe you a debt that I am here endeavoring to pay. Do be careful. Stop just where you are. Don't tell the public one more thing. Re-establish the pill in its prominence, re-sanctify the lotion, re-employ the cryptic phrase. It is not too late. Human nature is still human nature, and you might as well make something out of it. That's what it is for, and that's what we are all doing, making something out of it. Why throw away your chances? Don't doff your cloak: revert to the medicine man. Do you dare to dream that you can retain your prestige when you confess yourself no magician, strong in an arsenal of drugs, but a mere man doing his bit of mind cure? It's madness for you to confess that your cure is due not to the pellet you shoot into us, but to the incantation you pronounce while shooting. Such confession transfers our faith from a pill to a person. A pill is so mysterious that we shall always be afraid of it, but when you tell us that your power is not that of a pill, but of a person, we smile, for we know so much about persons that we could never be afraid of one.

## RARES AND ANTIQUES

BY CAROLYN WELLS

**M**Y friends are all collecting;  
I want to do it, too.  
And so, I am reflecting,  
And this and that rejecting,  
To choose what I shall do.

One friend's collecting Whitman,  
One has a George Moore shelf;  
If I could find a fit man,  
From Cadmus down to Pitman,  
I'd take a hand myself.