

answered all the telephone calls; she kept the accounts and paid the bills. In winter it was she who looked after the furnace, and she who, in summer, "got hold of a man to put in the screens."

She performed prodigies of suppression upon the two children that her husband, in fits of absent-mindedness, had somehow begotten. "Now, children, if you want to make a noise you must go right away from the house. Your father must not be disturbed." "No, Archie, you can't ride your kiddy-car on the porch. You know how it annoys your father." Naturally, they neither went out much in the evenings nor entertained. The evening was her husband's best time for work.

Her friends protested that she had a miserable life. If they were she they would not stand it for a day. This was among themselves. They did not dare to offer their commiseration to her personally; she would have withered them with scornful indignation. Moreover, their sympathy would have been wasted, for she seemed unaware that she ought to feel aggrieved. Throughout an arduous life she preserved her serenity. She believed in her husband's work. She shared in his successes, and her quiet strength and wisdom helped him through many a bad hour when he lost faith in the value of his work. Thus she had her compensations. When she came to die, not a little of her reluctance to go was caused by the thought that now she would not see the work completed. He was halfway through Volume III and the *Essence of Religion* still remained an obstinate mystery.

After her death some one said of her, "She was one of the few genuinely religious people I have ever known."

When this was reported to him, "Religious!" he exclaimed. "What? Margaret religious? Why, that is the last word I should have thought of using about her!" And he resumed his study of *The Sacrificial Meal* among the Basutos.

LETTERS TO CERTAIN PEOPLE OF IMPORTANCE

TO THE PROOF READER

BY WINIFRED KIRKLAND

DELETED ONE,—Do not be surprised at the abrupt animosity of this ascription. For years I have hated you. The object of this letter is to voice abuse with all the force of a vocabulary whose native gift for vituperation you have too long suppressed. You control my personal happiness and you regulate my public appearances by the exercise of a despotism that is no longer to be tolerated. Consider literary creation an orange—large or small, but still to every writer, obscure or famous, his own orange, unsucked—you puncture it as with invisible needles, so as to deny me forever the juice of my own elation. After the careless exuberance of writing, the sight of the proof sheets in their pitiless nakedness brings enough of reactionary despair, but it is your cruel pencil that affects the quintessence of disillusion. You are skilled to find a fleck in every flower of my fancy, and so to tag every blossom with offensive comment that, no matter how artistically the printer afterward trims my pages, I myself am condemned forever to image the blight of your criticism on the fair white margin.

I have never before had a chance to hit back at you, and, to be sure, I may not have it now, for both you and the editor may conspire to silence me, but for myself at least timely utterance shall give my thought relief. That you may know exactly where I aim to wound, allow me to enumerate your offenses. First of all, your cowardly anonymity. I myself am too obscure to need anonymity, but you, though an arbiter of my destiny, strike from the dark. You know precisely whom and where you are hitting. I could not hate you with such singleness of mind if I knew you, for I have sometimes tried to hate that other arbiter, the editor, and failed. I can hate him by letter but not in person.

The moment I enter his sanctum, and hear the genial squeak of his swivel chair, and meet the urbanity of his attention, and the sympathy of his twinkle, I succumb to his charms, and forgive him seventy times seven rejections. But it is not thus with you. I can and do detest you with utter absorption, for I never knew a proof reader in the flesh or even in the initials, so that my rancor remains as insatiable as it is impotent.

Your anonymity is not the only unkind advantage you have over me. My second grievance is your appalling erudition. I do not know precisely what academic preparation is deemed necessary for your calling, but from internal evidence I can readily believe you have taken a doctor's degree in every branch of knowledge. Instance the ease with which you handle that most exact of sciences, punctuation. With a ruthless hand you eliminate my dear dashes—and yet the only language in which I could express my feelings toward you would be in dashes. The mastery with which you correct my feeble and tentative efforts to punctuate is only equaled by the skill with which you employ punctuation on your own account. I refer, of course, to the inimitable compression of your marginal remarks. If only I could call forth a reader's emotions as instantly as you can prick mine to frenzy by the sneer you can put into an exclamation point, the sarcasm you can attach to a mere interrogation mark! You comprehend all the arcana of proof symbols, those hieroglyphics that pepper the page like this: # [9 □. The contour of my nose has been permanently impaired by burrowing in the back of the dictionary in repeated but hopeless efforts to understand the meaning of these "arbitrary signs used in writing and printing." These momentous little marks always sicken me with worry for fear they will make me say something in public that I never dreamed of saying. My poor, helpless meaning

is wholly in the proof reader's power to make or mar. That is why I distrust every symbol you employ. Of only one of those dangerous proof mysteries do I dare myself, as the writer, to make use. Whatever marks or remarks you indite in the margin, I feel myself always safe in replying *stet*. *Stet* is my only weapon against you. *Stet, stet*, my pen goes stabbing you! Little the reader of the published page suspects what battles I have fought on the margin with an invisible antagonist!

Punctuation is not the only department in which you are unassailable. All the strongholds of grammar and rhetoric are yours, all the grammar and rhetoric of the schools, the high schools. The diction of the juvenile valedictory is still as fresh and compelling for you as when you were in your teens. Unerringly you spot a relative clause that wanders joyously errant, or you impale a split infinitive on your knowing pencil. For you a coined word never means poetry, but always counterfeit. With Puritan morality you remarry the subject and predicate to whom I had granted the divorce demanded by their uncongenial union. If you could, you would make me into the pitiful slave to propriety that you are yourself.

I can never elude you by running off to pick words from some other language dead or living. I can't sneak in a little Sanscrit; you have been over all those ancient diggings, and detect me unerringly when I pilfer some bit of fossilized wit. In modern tongues you are polyglot. You adjust the angle of my French accents if I have sketched them in with an equivocal slant. Always abreast of the latest fashion, you are familiar with the newest drama of the newest Spaniard, and with the first lisps of every emergent Bengalese.

You command a storehouse of general information. You restrain all sidesteppings of my imagination into the privileges of picturesqueness, for you know the exact number of pigtailed into which a Kaffir miner plaits his wocly

head, and the precise height of St. Sofia, and just how many people lived in Chicago in February, 1879. When I contemplate the vastness of your knowledge, my personal abhorrence of your personal self is almost swallowed up in wonder. My fiction is not stranger to you than your truth is to me.

It is not really your odious learning that revolts me, so much as your using it always as if it were a pair of poultry scissors to clip wings that would soar above the henyard. Your literal mind, your offensive accuracy, are a curb on all joyous imaginings. You would straitjacket Pegasus if you could. You examine every figure of speech with a microscope, and record your findings in the margin, as if the proof sheet were a page of a laboratory notebook, until I feel as if not alone my writing but my soul were lying beneath your dissecting knife. And behold, that knife sticks in my gorge, and I can't swallow it, and won't, one moment longer! Surely if anything could cause you pain, it would be this paragraph, with its mixture of metaphors. And I want to cause you pain! But are you capable of feeling it?

The one thing more agonizing to me than your erudition is your superiority to all sensation. Though my pen might move multitudes, it could never move you. If there is one capacity beyond another that every writer must envy, it is the power to rouse emotion without feeling it, whereas it is a matter of everyday knowledge that no author can evoke laughter or sadness without himself being first wet with the tears incident to each. But you—with one quirk of your pencil you can stir boundless emotion in me, but do you ever laugh or cry over one word I write? What a sorry lot of idiots all authors must seem to you!

Yet does my animosity perhaps do you injustice? It may be the carping nature of your profession, rather than your own cynical joy in wounding, that is responsible for the ensanguined margin of my proof sheets. You are paid

to find blemishes, not virtues. Those "arbitrary signs used in writing and printing" are restricted in range. They include no symbols expressive of approbation, no "h.h." that would mean that a proof reader wishes to say "ha-ha," or "hear, hear," no "g.t.o.s." to be interpreted, "Go to it, old sport!" If there were arbitrary signs for approval rather than for opprobrium, would you use them? But, alas, you yourself have been so successful in your efforts to curb my imagination that it has become too enfeebled to conceive you as human enough to feel approval even if you were permitted the means to express it.

But why do I parade my vulnerability for the inspection of a foe who knows it only too well? Your caustic insight perceives that my abuse of you is but the inverse of my admiration. No one knows better than you that the impotent ill-will expressed in this letter is only the acknowledgment that the proof reader who corrects is infallibly the superior of the author who merely writes the manuscript.

OBITUARIES—FOR WOMEN

BY FLORENCE GUY WOOLSTON

WE used to wonder what Alicia would find to do after the vote was won. She was not the kind of woman to sit idly, holding the fruits of victory in her lap, beguiling the hours by reminiscences of the fray. Hers was a busy and aggressive temperament, requiring activity and a cause. We did not have long to speculate about her next work, however, for within a few weeks of the ratification of the Federal Amendment by Tennessee, she announced a campaign. It was—obituaries for women. And on September 15th, at Ardsley-in-the-Pines, the National Women's Obituary Association was formed.

"You see," said Alicia, "although we have apparently won some right to express individuality in life—we are deprived of that right, in death. Read the