

ginning of my success. The parasol still stands in the closet! I could buy one now like it if I chose.

Ah *petites choses*, how little *petites* you are, *enfin*. As to the philosophy of dress, is it not I ask you (Sartor Resartus à part!), is it not, *bon Dieu*, of a profundity?

THE PRESIDENTIAL STYLE

BY FREDERICK L. ALLEN

THERE is one thing that I wish the excavators would find out for us about our friend King Tut-Ankh-Amen (aside from the little question of how the boys who played round with him pronounced his name). I should like to know what sort of letter he used to write to the Federated Nile Dredgers of Thebes or the National Pyramid Study Institute, declining their very kind invitation to attend their annual banquet and get-together and to say a few words on Egyptian foreign policy. It would be instructive to learn whether the sort of literary style which is employed on similar occasions by our American presidents, cabinet officers, governors, mayors, and other lords temporal is an inherited perquisite of authority, or whether it is a new native growth.

You know the sort of style I mean. Occupants of the White House seem in general to be more completely addicted to it than anyone else. The public correspondence of the President of the United States is always of a peculiarly sonorous and pontifical quality, suitable for large-chested declamation to an accompaniment of brass instruments and kettledrums. His letters and messages are the modern equivalent of the epic; very few Americans would appreciate an allusion to the surge and thunder of the Odyssey, but everybody would understand a reference to the surge and thunder of a presidential letter endorsing the annual membership campaign of the Tallahassee Boy Scouts.

It must be an awful strain to have to

write presidentially. If the President is invited to the fiftieth anniversary picnic of the Bridgeport Dancing Masters' Club, he can't just sit down and dash off:

DEAR SIR:

It was perfectly corking of you to invite me to your party, and I know I'd have a swell time if I went, but honestly I can't make it. I'm all tied up, and the Secretary of State says to stay round while we try to think what to do next. Isn't that just rotten?

Regards to the boys.

No, he can't write that way. What he has to turn out is more like this:

DEAR SIR:

It is with profound regret that I find, on consulting my list of engagements, that pressure of important business renders it impossible for me to be absent from the Capital at the time of your fiftieth anniversary picnic. No exercise, no pastime, no sport suited to the polished surface of a ball-room floor is more essential than is dancing to the recreative development and orderly progress of the two sexes upon which, more than upon any other factor, depends in the last analysis the ultimate welfare of the American people. No form of celebration so befits an association of instructors in this historic art as a picnic, combining as it does the dignity of co-operative nourishment with a suitable regard for the need of healthful play. May I take the liberty of expressing to the members of the Club my very sincere wishes for their continued prosperity?

That sort of style, like a silk hat on the Fourth of July, is a mark of high political rank. A President never says "makes it impossible" when he can say "renders it impossible." He likes to announce the results of "the last analysis," whatever that may be. (Presumably, it is related to the "acid test.") To read a presidential document aloud one should stand erect with the weight of the body evenly balanced on the balls of the feet, inhale deeply several times and let the words come booming out one by one from the dia-

phragm with more or less the effect of a large church organ with every stop pulled out and all three keyboards in operation. Even then one can hardly do justice to some of the letters without an amplifier.

A peculiarity of these presidential outpourings is that they seem to be especially valued when incorporated, not in mere messages or letters, but in telegrams. There is a certain flavor of urgency about a telegram which adds to the effect. It is one thing for the chairman of the Amalgamated Felt Hat Salesmen's dinner to rise and say, "I have here, gentlemen, a letter from the President of the United States, whom we had hoped to have with us to-night"; it is quite another thing for him to hold up a real telegram. There is a spasm of excitement all over the room. A telegram! Well now! That shows what the President thinks of the Amalgamated! Not only does the President congratulate the Felt Hat Salesmen on the enterprising and farsighted spirit in which American business men to-day are collectively meeting the problems of the new era which has succeeded the disturbances of war and the perplexities of reconstruction; not only is he aware of the unquestioned public service rendered by any industry which undertakes, in a spirit of devotion to the common interest, to protect the heads of a free people from exposure to the elements, and thus to avert those ailments, bronchial or catarrhal, which might render them unfit for the exercise of their constitutional rights and for the support of their families in accordance with an American standard of living; but he is so worked up over it that he just can't wait for the mails, and pays a dollar and nineteen cents for a telegram! This addiction to telegraphic correspondence on the part of high officials has gone so far that I look shortly for the publication of the "Life and Night-Letters" of some of our public characters.

I am curious to know how many of

these documents the President actually writes himself; all the more so because I once wrote a letter and several telegrams for a corporation president's signature, and they went up to him through official channels, and he finally signed them and sent them off just as if they were his own productions. It was exhilarating, in a way, to hear that my compositions had been signed by the President; but it was disillusioning, too. Ever since then I have wondered, whenever I read a White House document, who actually wrote it. Don't think that you can tell by the style. You ought to have seen my letter. It contained at least one "may I not" and a few sets of nicely balanced parallel phrases with the word "very" in them, and it ended "Cordially and sincerely yours." To write pontifical letters for a White House President would be just as easy.

But I am afraid the wear and tear would begin to tell, after a while, in the official letter-writer's outside life. His manner would be liable to become a little too portentous. The effect on his own private correspondence would be something like the effect of the life-and-letters mania.

The life-and-letters mania, I should explain, is an obsession that strikes people when they first become sufficiently prominent to get the idea that their letters are likely to be preserved for ultimate publication. Sometimes it comes over its victims all of a sudden. One day a man will be writing, "Dear Mr. Jones: We have your order and will buy Utah, Texas and Northern according to your instructions"; and the next day, with a far-away look in his eyes, he will astonish his stenographer by dictating:

DEAR MR. JONES:

We are making ready to buy Utah, Texas and Northern according to your instructions. And what an inspiring business it is, my dear friend, this purchasing of property-rights in the great and growing West! To feel that one has a stake in it: is not that, in

the last analysis, the feeling of the pioneer, the spirit which has made America what she is? And yet fools say that there is no romance in business! I tell you, Jones, the West is the land of the future. There's little enough that any of us can do for the upbuilding of our great nation, but at least we can have the satisfaction of doing our part, as simple, big-hearted business men in bringing about trade expansion and port development and who shall say that we have not thereby served the cause of American prosperity?

You can see by the fellow's expression while he dictates that he's wondering whether some day that letter won't look pretty well in print.

The temptations of the official letter-writer would be similar. After a while it might become difficult for him even to pay his house rent without indulging in a few mighty periods on the patriotic significance (in the last analysis, of course) of the American home, with references to Abraham Lincoln, log cabins, the influence of good mothers, and the flag. Probably, the job would have drawbacks after all, and it is best to discourage an ambitious young man from thinking that he had rather be writer than be President. The President, unfortunately, has to be both.

TOO MANY HUSBANDS

BY WINIFRED KIRKLAND

FROM my earliest teens the husbands I have never had have caused a good deal of concern to a good many persons. In those distant days female relatives would from time to time shake their heads over me and groan in unison, "I pity your husband!" Those early insinuations of domestic incapacity were not then painful to me, for at that time I thought little about husbands, and cared less; but now that I have attained to tenderer years, I have suffered—and recently—an acute jab to my self-esteem—this at the hands of a personage no less important than our cook. In the

absence of the housekeeping member of the family, I had assumed authority, but my best efforts elicited merely the comment, "You don't care much for housekeeping, does you, miss? It's a good thing you ain't never had a husband!" Somehow I feel it a little hard on my character, which, without undue conceit, I consider to have been on the whole inoffensive, that people should have pitied my husbands both before and after my *not* taking them!

But this spontaneous commiseration is not the worst trouble I've had with spouses. To go back a decade or so in my history, I had the misfortune in early life to graduate, or in the vernacular, to be graduated, from a worthy female college, and afterward to keep on picking degrees, or parts of them, from several other equally worthy, and equally female, colleges. In short, there are four institutions on whose early rolls an enterprising secretary may discover my name, a name that has remained absolutely unchanged from that remote day to this. Now my bitterest complaint is that every year every one of those colleges writes and asks me how many husbands I have acquired since their last date of asking. Oh, of course, they ask me other questions, too, under various circumstantial headings, with directions in smaller print calculated to keep me veracious to the *n*th detail. These learned ladies wish to know not only how many husbands I have had since last April, but also:

No. of books or articles.

1. a. Published. b. Unpublished.
2. a. Original. b. Plagiarized.

No. of natural teeth still in active employment.

No. of motor cars owned, make, and age limit of each.

Church affiliation of maternal grandfather.

Previous matrimonial affiliation of male parent before marriage to present mother.

Contributions to charities, state whether voluntary or conscripted; if in trillions, write commas plainly; if in cents, ditto decimal point.