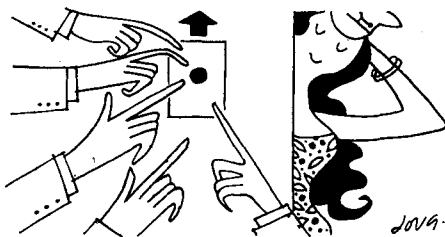


# TRADE Winds

## THE ELYSIAN FIELD'S

**M**ARSHALL FIELD's will be celebrating its one hundredth anniversary throughout the year 1952, and in the same measure that Field's is a most extraordinary institution this will be a most extraordinary centennial.

The opening gun will be fired on January 10, when a monster cocktail party and buffet supper will be tossed in honor of former employees who have gone out into the world and made good in the Field's manner. Invited are luminaries like Vincent Minelli, who once did window displays; Henry Sell, who arranged special promotions; Felix Adler, the famous clown, who sold rugs; Burt Lancaster, who was a floorwalker; Arlene Dahl, who modeled lingerie; Burt Tilstrom, who started Field's marionette theatre; and Dorothy Lamour, who ran an elevator. In fact, says Miss Lamour,



she's always ready to go back in a pinch. "I learned all about pinching while I was running that elevator," she adds. "Field's is famous as a family store—but a lot of the men who rode my car had forgotten to bring the family with them."

Field's is also hoping to round up some of its oldest living customers for this kick-off party. Some will come under their own steam. Others, like Fred Babcock and Emmett Dedmon, may have to be wheeled in. On the greeting line will be Chicago's Mayor Kennelly, also an alumnus of the store. He sold neckties, and rolled up some daily grosses his successors are still shooting at.

It is impossible to exaggerate the hold that Marshall Field's has on the entire Middle West. Chicagoans themselves steer tourists there ahead of the Art Museum and the stockyards. The Centennial looms so high as a civic event that two books have been written in its honor. The first, "Through Charley's Door," is by Emily Kimbrough, one of her typically witty and

disarming efforts that chronicles her own adventures as a somewhat different Field's employee. (The "Charley" in the title is the impressive major domo who guarded the Washington and State Street entrance for fifty years.) The other book, by Lloyd Wendt and Herman Kogan, is named after Field's time-honored slogan, "Give the Lady What She Wants."

Field's not only faithfully lives up to this slogan, but displays its wares so seductively that "the lady" wants everything. Visitors to the store find themselves spending money as freely as a government loan agency. It's fun to shop there. I know. Often I've cheerfully shipped home from Chicago items I could have picked up just as easily two blocks from my house on Lexington Avenue. To Field's a dissatisfied customer is a catastrophe. There haven't been many.

Though this be the hundredth anniversary of Marshall Field's as a whole, the book department, one of the greatest in the world today, is only thirty-nine. It dates back to 1913, when a dynamic and despotic lady named Marcella Burns Hahner moved over from McClurg's and detonated a series of explosions that bounced the entire book industry off its feet. True, in 1908 Field's departed sufficiently from its dedication to "dry goods" to set up a small book section devoted to bound "sets" of classics, and somberly bound, old-fashioned dictionaries and Bibles.

Mrs. Hahner cleaned out the old stock instantler, engineered a move to new quarters on the third floor, and instituted a regime compounded of intimidation, cajolery, and sheer skill that carried all before it. Mighty publishers in Manhattan trembled when Marcella stamped her little foot (and tore up orders). What she lacked in literary taste she made up for in sheer gall. Furthermore, she was backed up by a remarkable staff—notably Rose Oller, John Scheele, and Harriot Smith—and an unholy pull with the top brass upstairs that occasioned raised eyebrows in many a crisis.

Marcella began throwing her weight around the moment she was installed in her job. The workmen weren't effecting repairs for the new location as fast as she desired. "Stop playing with

that string," she commanded one (he was an electrician, but she didn't know it), and yanked a wire out of his hands. The resultant shock knocked her cold for fifteen minutes. Revived, she raised such heck the whole squad of workmen walked out on the job. Ollie coaxed them back. Ollie was always around in a pinch. Marcella started her off at the princely wage of \$8 a week, promising, "If you stick to me, you'll be getting twenty-five before you retire." Apprentices today begin at about \$35—but it must be remembered they are a different kind of dollars!

As originally planned, the new book section didn't suit Mrs. Hahner at all. It was too small. The "talking machines" and records hemmed her in on one side, and, worse still, on the other was an elite shoe shining parlor, with marble floors, but redolent polishes that constantly assaulted her delicate olfactory apparatus. Mrs. Hahner took steps. First she lured the president, John Shedd, downstairs for a series of confabs. During each visit her assistants would be stationed in adjoining phonograph booths, with the doors



open, playing Sousa marches and Caruso arias at top volume. Naturally, poor Mr. Shedd couldn't hear a word Mrs. Hahner was saying, though she valiantly lied, "I'm shouting as loudly as I can." "Nobody can buy books in that din," Mr. Shedd finally decided, and the Victrolas were moved elsewhere. The shoe shine parlor was harder to dislodge, but the day was carried when Marcella persuaded the management that the bootblacks were characters straight out of Kraft-Ebbing and Havelock Ellis, and that the suggestions they were hurling at prospective customers were not conducive to detached contemplation of the poetry of Tennyson. Mr. Shedd was horrified. Besides, he didn't like the smell of shoe polish either. Marcella soon had all the space she asked for. Years later Mr. Shedd commented wryly, "Our motto is give the lady what she wants—and we sure gave it to Marcella Hahner."

As the Marshall Field book business grew and grew (it reached the million and a half mark last year), Marcella began to introduce a series of innovations. Notable were the first depart-



Kathleen Winsor poses with Fred Babcock...



... Marcella Hahner with Amelia Earhart.



"Even Carl Sandburg failed to cause the excitement that ensued when ...



... Judy arrived to 'autograph' a juvenile ... she refused to leave [and] they had to build a special ramp to get her out."



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ment-store autographing parties and book fairs. Today they are abominations, but in 1920 television had not raised its ugly head, and authors were not yet scurrying about the country lecturing their heads off. The sight of a real, live author was still a thrill. When Edgar Guest appeared Field's sold 6,000 copies of his new poems. Admiral Byrd signed so many books that he lost the use of his right hand for a week. "Get me out of here and let me go back to the peace and comfort of the South Pole," he pleaded. Queen Marie of Rumania attracted such a throng that Her Majesty had to get down on her hands and knees and crawl through the customers' legs to reach the platform. The customers loved it, but the girl who sold etiquette books fainted.

On the day Sinclair Lewis visited Field's he got into such a battle with



Mrs. Hahner assistants had to pry them apart to prevent physical violence. John Galsworthy, on the other hand, charmed her so that she overbought his new novel scandalously, and had to sell the last five hundred for a quarter a copy. Prize visitor was a benign and distinguished Englishman of letters who entered the private office with faltering steps, but upon spying Rose Oller got a speck of lust in his eye, and ended up by chasing her all over the department. When Carl Sandburg visited Field's to talk about his four-volume Lincoln sets sold so fast that Miss Oller says, "You'd have thought twenty-dollar bills grew on trees. People literally threw them at us." She adds, "It really was Abe Lincoln who first sent us over the million-a-year mark."

Even Carl Sandburg, however, failed to cause the excitement in the book department that ensued when Judy, a three-year-old elephant, arrived to sign her "autograph" on a new Rand McNally juvenile. The trouble was that Judy refused to leave. They had to build a special ramp to get her out of the department. Rose Oller's book on the episode has netted her a tidy sum in royalties. There was also a day, not talked about so freely in the store but described with great gusto in Miss Kimbrough's book, when a man entered the book section with an arma-

dillo in leash. Clerks, customers, and store officials closed in to study the strange pet—also to see that he didn't eat any of the merchandise—the while the man who brought him browsed unconcernedly through a copy of "Human Behavior." In the meantime, also, one of his business associates, completely unobserved, was picking off several hundred dollars' worth of merchandise from nearby counters. From that time forward armadillos have not been encouraged in the book department.

Marcella Hahner died in 1940. Since then Rose Oller has been the head of Field's book department—a wise, jolly, and infinitely kind lady who has won favors and advantageous deals from salesmen that Mrs. Hahner, with all her shenanigans, could never have begun to bring off. Now her turn has come to abdicate. On January 24 some three hundred of the people who love her will attend a banquet to wish her well and signalize the completion of thirty-nine years of outstanding service to Field's.

The new regime in Marshall Field's book department will be headed by Bob Bangs, Princeton '41, a 1952 model executive—sophisticated, brainy, assured. Bangs is headed for high places in the department store hierarchy. Some think he'll plow ahead faster even than Princeton's other prodigy, Dick Kazmaier, did against Cornell, Harvard, and Yale. Meanwhile, flanked by such stalwarts as Harriot Early, Mrs. Ruth Luke, Loretta Klink, Mrs. Olive Peterson, and Ija Adler, he hardly can fail to shoot book department totals to a brand-new high.

If you visit the Field centennial any time during 1952 be sure to step off on the third floor and get an eyeful of how a really perfectly stocked and staffed book department functions. Watching the books scooped up in a steady stream by satisfied customers, you will understand the often-quoted prayer of one of the store's bigwigs: "God protect the person who enjoys reading a good book. God protect him—and send him to Marshall Field's!"

—BENNETT CERF.

### SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 927)

**BERNARD SHAW:  
SHAKES VERSUS SHAV.**

I, William Shakes, was born in Stratford town,

... Hither I raging come  
An infamous impostor to chastize,  
Who in an ecstasy of self-conceit  
Shortens my name to Shav...  
Tell me, ye citizens of Malvern,  
Where I may find this caiff...

# Do Women Make Good Poets?

RUMER GODDEN



Rumer Godden

Woman is emancipated now. She can vote, she can own property, she can work—though not on equal pay; almost all professions are open to her if she can find the means to follow them. Then why does she so seldom follow that of the poet? The woman poet has always been a rarity; she is still rare today, yet all she needs is a few pieces of paper, a pen . . . and herself. Is it that last that balks her?

It would appear to be a suitable profession. The popular conception of a poet is effeminate, long-haired, delicate, temperamental, unpredictable. It is true that a male poet always has an admixture of the feminine, just as the woman poet has traits that are essentially masculine. What is needed seems to be a peculiar balance of the sexes in each sex, each working on the other to produce a kind of chemistry—it might be called alchemy, an attempt to transmute other metals into gold, to discover the elixir of life. But if the male poet is partly feminine he is also male, intensely virile; he has wives, mistresses, children without impairing the force in his work. Indeed, often he has to work

Rumer Godden, English novelist, playwright, and poet, is best known in this country for her novels of Indian life, "Black Narcissus" and "The River."

THERE ARE many women writers who write good prose; in the novel especially women are the equals, if not the betters of men. Why have not more of them written good poetry?

off his physical energy on hedging or hoeing or sawing wood. The saw goes well with the pen, the thimble does not. Perhaps sewing is the most purely womanly of all things a woman does. Men cook and garden, they seldom sew. Thoughts when a woman is sewing are intimate and personal; this may be the clue to the nature of the gulf between the woman and the poet. The womanly woman is beset with little visions, and the poet needs a large vision. She is attached, and the poet must be detached. A poet must have the power to inhabit space, to float, to disappear, like Ariel, in an essence of himself; most women are too personal to disappear. For all woman's emancipation, for all the professions she may follow, she is still trammelled by herself. Ann Elliot's cry from the heart is still the cry of most women: "We live at home . . . (even if we are not there, even if we are out following our bent as lawyer, doctor, economist) . . . our feelings prey upon us." Ann Elliot is still right; it is, and always will be, very difficult for a woman to free herself, to leave the walls and hedges of her home, to escape whole from her feelings.

But, surely, feeling is the first essential for a poet? It is the first, but only the first. The rest must follow, and too often a woman can travel no further than the range of her own feelings. She cannot soar above them and look down on them, look through them, hold them as burning glass—in Katherine Mansfield's simile—between the paper of her poem and the sun and let it be the sun's rays that set the paper alight, not a match she has bought in a packet or made herself from a splinter of wood and a little sulphur she has kept handy.

Women poets are inclined to write

short and personal poetry. Though they have shown that they can subordinate themselves to a theme and write with grandeur, they are usually best suited if they distil what may be called chips of personal experience into poems. But to be successful, the small experience, the starting point should be linked to poetic experiences—i.e., to the vision. Either catch it—as in that burning glass—or, like a lamp, illuminate it; one is a leading in, the other a sending out. These are homely similes—a burning glass, a lamp; but the poet knows how to use them.

CONTRAST these two poems by a minor woman poet of our own time, E. J. Scovell, who writes serious and often exquisite poetry:

Now at edge of evening, the flowers  
Near the window, holding the light  
rarefied,  
Seem like human shapes on a sea  
shore.

These show black on plains of light,  
yet keep  
All the light sea and the lonely  
space  
Gathered in their eyes, their still  
and meaning stance.

So the small azalea, with winged  
Transient seeming flowers (as  
though there pitched  
There by day night-journeying but-  
terflies,)

Drained of color, shape, become sea  
foam  
Limitless at dusk, draws to itself  
the sparse  
World-wide light; holds like a cup,  
enhanced,  
Possessed, and gives it back, a foun-  
tain, to the dark.

Compare it to her

This is heaven, the winter park they  
walk in,

