

THE
Ladies Pictorial Weekly.

EDITED BY

MISS MADGE ROBERTSON, M.A.,

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made. To save time, photographs can be sent unmounted.

Letter Writing.

After a hundred years during which her fame has paled and
grown bright again, Lady Mary Wortley Montague is again to the
front. Irrepressible to the last, she is now cropping up in the
volume of her letters which is being published.

Letter writing has been so rare an accomplishment by any
women but those delightful old dames of the French Salons that
we eagerly anticipate the enjoyment these letters will probably
bring. Everyone knows of the famous letters of the women of the
Salons, who "were not trying to make a career for themselves;
they thought little, in many cases not at all, of the public; they
wrote letters to their lovers and friends, memoirs of their every-day
lives, romances in which they gave portraits of their familiar ac-
quaintances, and described the tragedy or comedy which was go-
ing on before their eyes. Always refined and graceful, often witty,
sometimes judicious, they wrote what they saw, thought and felt in
their habitual language, without proposing any model to themselves,
... their writings were but a charming accident of their more
charming lives, like the petals which the wind shakes from the rose
in its bloom." Ah, that was letter writing! One would be
tempted to wish that the days of the French Salons were back did
not that time involve a by no means model social era. Now-a-days
whether by reason of telegraphs or telephones, of hurry and a fast
rate of living, of the multiplicity of newspapers and books, people
have no time to read or write letters. It is such a great pity.
In a letter the writer is at his very best. I know a woman writer
whose writings are fairly good, but whose letters are so clever,
witty, bright, original, loving and sympathetic that her published
work cannot compare with them for an instant. In a letter to some
dear friend, she like the French women of old, writes such clever
impressions of people and events that it is a red-letter day when her
epistles arrive. The reason is obvious. In writing a letter she
knew to whom she was writing and was sure of a sympathetic
audience. Everyone recognizes the fact that one can write and talk
to some people better than to others. There are those rare listen-
ers and correspondents whose keen sympathy and congeniality in-
spires and one does one's best. There are others quite as kindly,
quite as well-meaning and perhaps of greater ability, who for lack
of that indefinable something which creates attraction, are about as
inspiring as a brick-wall.

Now this princess of letter writers, Lady Mary Wortley Montague,
whose lively physiognomy looks out of this new volume as "pearl" as
possible, is best known for her brilliant epistolary performances. She
was a earl's daughter, physically pampered and petted yet intellect-
ually neglected and triumphed by eminent talent, over the obstacles
put in her way. She grew up a piquant, beautiful girl, who, when
the opportunity came, eloped with Mr. Wortley Montague, rather
than marry the rich dunderhead selected by her father. As every
one knows Pope fell at her feet and addressed her in brilliant verse;
and then their famous quarrel ensued when the bitter verses of Pope
appeared. Horace Walpole flirted with and then alas! flouted her.
The sombre portrait of Dean Swift glowers out of one corner of her
correspondence, and she indulges in bitter raillery over his conduct
towards herself. Bishop Burnet was her teacher. She despises—
and eagerly reads—Richardson, "sobbing over his works in a most
scandalous manner." Of Bolingbroke she knew the philosophy
rather than the man, and she liked neither. Dr. Johnson she cen-
sures for treading the beaten tracks and giving the misnomer
Rambler to his ramblings. She liked Smollett, "who disgraced

his talent by writing those stupid romances commonly called his-
tory." She says that a venison pasty or a flask of champagne made
delightful Henry Fielding forget everything—even himself; for after
the death of his wife he married her cook-maid. Tom Jones and
Mr. Booth are, in this vivacious critic's opinion, both sorry
scoundrels, and Fielding himself was to be pitied on entering life
with no choice but, as he said himself, "to be a hackney writer or
a hackney coachman." She thanked God because she loved novels
and novel-reading, and revelled in what her daughter called
"trash." And all this told in letters!

In Turkey, when her husband was ambassador there, she pen-
etrated into the veiled life of the harem, and from Turkey dates her
chief exploit—the introduction of the Turkish method of inocula-
tion for small-pox into Europe. She was unwearied in her efforts
to educate her grandchildren, and had many wise thoughts on the
training of women. From her old Italian palace at Lovere she
sends sparkling letters home, which have never been surpassed for
point. At length she dies (a hundred and thirty years ago), in a
little house in Hanover Square, leaving behind a reputation for
vigorous and entrancing conversation, beauty and beautiful eyes
(disfigured by loss of the eye-lashes in small-pox), eccentricity, and
a wit like nitric acid. As one can imagine such letters as these are
more than entertaining. She knew everybody and went everywhere
and luckily for posterity wrote down most of the things she knew
about people. Nobody approved of her and yet they could not
keep away from her.

But to get back to letter writing. Is there no way of reviving
this ancient and lost art?

Visitors to the Sanctum.

The Editor is in the country. The sanctum is desolate and as
Moosey and the other poodle accompany her, silence reigns in the
gloom. The Editor is where the snow-drifts cover the fences, and
bank up a wall on either side of the road. The landscape is daz-
zling whiteness and the sky so pale that it meets the frozen snow-
covered bay, no one can tell where. Snow, snow, piles and drifts,
and dead levels of it everywhere. I look out of the window and
my eyes are blinded with the long stretches of massed whiteness.
A very high board fence stands somewhat out of the surrounding
drifts and to it is clinging a snow-clad grape-vine, a lace-covering
over a black silk gown. Leafless, the bare trees stand erect mak-
ing a net-work of the sky. The roofs of distant cottages are
thatched with a snowy covering and white masses cling to every
ledge. The dogs are scampering and taking it out of the house-
dogs. Great icicles are pendant from everywhere and youngsters
are skating on the creek using a broom as they go. The pedestrians
are flaked with the falling snow and a soft wind is blowing little
feathery bits off the drifts.

And then inside. I am away from all the stagnating effects of a
city life. Away from the region of gas and steam-heated houses,
away from four mails a day, away from the afternoon tea, away
from engagements and appointments and all other business and
social duties that make life not worth living; away from the rush
and scamper, away from late hours and hurried lunches, away from
the jingle of street-cars and muddy streets. But more, I am where
there are blazing open fires and soft lamps, where letters can reach
me only once a day, where I need never hurry to get any where at
any time, where the dogs have space enough to turn around in,
where no noise disturbs and where dear and loving hearts devise
each hour some new comfort, some added peace. Where there is
quiet delightful talk about books and writers. Where there is
Mendelssohn in the twilight, and I can watch the pure sweet face of
the player. Where one gets one's teacup from the hand of the most
tender and sympathetic of mistresses, whom the daughters of the
house call "Mother." Where one can be embedded in rugs and
cushions before the bright fire and share one's slices—home-made
bread!—with the dogs and drive the puppy mad by holding the tea-
cup just out of his snapping reach. Where a winsome little maiden
wants a fairy-tale accompaniment to the soft music, a sweet romance
in the simple story she tells. In every girlish heart a chord is
touched and a look of tender retrospect is on every girlish face,
the speaker's voice is soft and pleading and when she reaches the
pathetic end "and the beautiful princess was shut up in the tower
and mourned and mourned forever and the noble prince rode away
heart-broken," there were tears in several pairs of bright eyes. The
roar of a busy world without becomes softened to a hum when the
master of the house comes into the firelight at evening with the
daily papers. Where the "news of the day" is leisurely commented
on at the dinner-table—how different that from the mad rush at
breakfast and news together? And after the gay little dinner-talk
and bright loving home gossip, there is the evening and snow-
shoeing.

Ring after ring at the door-bell, peal after peal of laughter, girl's
voices and bass accompaniments, the soft tread of moccasins, the
clacking of snow-shoes, greetings and messages, and the snow-
shoe party has arrived. Upstairs the house-party are getting ready.
The Editor is among them, very much so. Considering five girls are
dressing in one room, any feminine reader can imagine the result.
Wild shrieks of laughter attendant on the extent and variety of some
of the costumes, filled the air with music. More than one girl was
asked if she put on all she owned when she went snow-shoeing.
Short skirts may not be graceful, but go snow-shoeing in long and
you'll wish the days of your childhood back again. We all thought
our own costumes were unique. Most of them were. —But that
tramp! Miles and miles of unbroken fields and a calm starlit night.

plenty of beginners, who made so much fun of themselves, that
there was little left for the rest to poke at them, plenty of good-
natured tumbles, plenty of laughter, no accidents, nobody crazy
enough to talk seriously, plenty of beautiful nothings—sayings I
mean—but you all know what a snow-shoe tramp is. You all can
follow us into the house where coffee awaited us, and all can follow
each pair of people safely home—you all know youths and maidens
far better than a staid and responsible editor can ever tell you.

What delightful experiences for one gifted with a sense of humor
—and the woman who is not fit for 'treason's stratagems and
spoils'—to meet the old family servant. You all know her and
him. But you don't all know Margaret. Margaret as you will
infer from her name is not Italian. But she's not from the north
of Scotland either. She has lived with the family many years
while the English gardener has seen one generation grow up and
depart and another take its place. You would fancy that during
three years they would at least have conquered the initial difficulty
of learning each other's names. You would be mistaken. He
always speaks of her and to her as Elizabeth and she refers to him
in such specific terms as "the mon." Once in a while every six
months. Once in a while, every six months or so, Margaret blazes
out in a rage and says "I'll no be callt out o' my name ony more.
My name's Margaret, no Elizabeth." However, long before John
has occasion to address her again she is Elizabeth once more in his
mind. Margaret is very economical, so much so that there are
frequent protests in the family circle. On one occasion the mistress
and daughters of the house weré out three nights in succession for
dinner. Margaret seized the opportunity to reduce the expenditure.
The lord and master who was dining alone was naturally the suffer-
er. On the third night a much aggrieved man rehearsed for the
benefit of the family, the bill of fare as it had been presented to
him. As each item and the scrumpiness thereof was mentioned
ending up with, "and an impossible tart," the family I regret to
say one and all went into convulsions of laughter. It was more
than funny. But besides regulating the expenses of the household,
Margaret rules it with a rod of iron. Another time, one of the
daughters, who is not easy to intimidate, came in to breakfast
and became enraged at seeing that Margaret's economic turn of mind
had taken away the loaf and left a couple of slices only on a plate.
Throwing a slice to each dog she rang for more bread. Margaret
came in, took in the situation at a glance and asked threateningly:

"Din ye want it for yoursel' or for the dogs?"

She said meekly, "For myself."

Then Margaret went for the bread and the daughter said indig-
nantly—but not until the door had safely closed on Margaret.

"What business is it of hers what I want it for?"

It is not necessary to say that the rest of the family gloated over
her discomfiture. Long acquaintanceship with the methods and ex-
tent of Margaret's tyranny never made them less amused by it.
They rather gloried in their subjection just as the strong man is
shamefacedly proud of the dominion of his child.

Margaret is very religious. She rarely goes to church. She is
afraid she will catch cold. But she is a strict sabbatharian. Once
a little cousin on a visit felt it her duty to entertain Margaret who
might otherwise be lonely. So one Sunday she went out to read
to her out of one of her own story books. Margaret gazed at the
volume suspiciously but composed herself to listen. After the first
few sentences with a sudden flounce she said severely.

"You'll no be readin' sich books as yon to me on the Sabbath!"
and despatched poor Rosebud back to the drawing-room in double-
quick time.

Is it because people in the country live more gregariously that
one hears more of the tragedies and joys of everyday existence?
In the city one doesn't hear much of personal troubles. People
are less unselfishly interested in each other. There is so much more
of outside matter to form the shape of conversation. But where
there are smaller communities one lives nearer the hearts of one's
neighbors. Their sorrows affect one as a matter in which each
has an interest. The most commonplace of lives has in it elements
of tragedy so dire that it would seem as if man must stand aghast
that the world must contain such suffering. Here is a woman
whose daughter hopelessly frivolous breaks her sober mother's heart.
Here a struggling man whose higher life is hindered in every way
by a narrow-minded house-centered wife. Here a wife whose
generous impulses are stifled at every turn by a parsimonious spouse.
Here a son who is a feeble reed to a sturdy father. Here a
shuffling father who is a heart-break to his honest children. Here
a miser, here a selfish hulk, here a slattern, here a mischief-maker,
here a domestic tyrant—are not each sufficient to wreck a hope's
happiness? to crush joy out of all recognition? And the neigh-
bors know of the failings and wrecked hopes and daily struggles
and weak yieldings and also of the quarrels. There is nothing
hid and life is lived out to its fullest. Heart is laid here before
heart and in the presence of these awful sorrows—which are just
the common everyday affairs of life—one is immeasurably saddened.

The careless superficial acquaintance one has in big cities with
hundreds of people prevents this intimate acquaintance with people's
joys and sorrows. We know little of what is behind the screens in
the houses where the hostess is agreeable and the dinners grand.
We are pleasant companions or not, and we meet, touch hands and
part. The drama of our lives is passed in other places and among
other people. We know nothing of the heart-burnings, of the
struggles, of the anxious preparation and over-sight, behind the
scenes. We don't know the real lives of those whom we meet per-
haps often. Nor would we wish to do so. There is plenty of
sorrow in life without going to seek it, is our selfish philosophy.
That is often why the city-bred woman is less sympathetic and more