

THE PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

Manly P. Hall, President and Founder

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CONTRIBUTORS' BULLETIN

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GRANDMOTHER WROTE LETTERS



Dear Friends:



In long, quiet evenings and by the light of a lamp, Grandmother wrote letters. When her husband died she always used note paper with a black edge and enclosed it in an envelope with a similar border. Because of her frequent changes of address, she always took with her a writing box made especially to keep up correspondence while the owner was in transit. A blotter was set into the lid of the box which opened to store the paper and envelopes, an old fashioned pen, and a china container for postage stamps. In those extravagant times, it cost two cents to mail a letter and while Grandmother's epistles were sometimes overweight, the black edge was respected and I do not think she ever was charged for postage due.

I can still see Grandmother sitting quietly in the evening, meditating over epistles she had recently received. Each one had its own particular fascination. An acquaintance in Chicago had her first grandchild. This required special consideration. Another acquaintance was in the midst of a painful attack of rheumatism. This would require overtones of spiritual consolation. A second cousin, for whom Grandmother had no special fondness, justified a brief, but polite recognition. In many instances, it was necessary to refer to previous correspondence and, from a convenient drawer, came a neatly tied bundle to refresh Grandmother's memory. There was one handicap, however. While searching for the proper note, Grandmother frequently mislaid her glasses and like as not my assistance was required.

Like most Wellesley girls, Grandmother wrote a beautiful Spencerian hand and she did it all with an ordinary pen with a fine nib. This type of writing was a proof of good breeding, but was not appreciated by graphologists who could find none of the peculiarities necessary to character delineation or prognostics. She had three signatures. For strangers, or those outside her social circle, she was Mrs. Arthur Whitney Palmer. For close friends and near relatives, she

was Florence L. Palmer, and for the Wellesley girls, she was Florence, or Flo. She never forgot a birthday, Christmas, or a wedding anniversary. In those days, it was quite possible to purchase a limited assortment of commercially printed tokens of remembrance. These were usually printed in Germany, were brightly colored, and with embossed designs. They carried appropriate statements, but Grandmother would have none of them. To her, a printed greeting could be the end of a beautiful friendship.

Because she had spent many years alone, Grandmother liked to write and receive lengthy epistles and was especially gratified when one of her closest lady friends included a pressed flower with her note. It was hard for me to understand how Grandmother could write so many lengthy and completely different notes and letters. A note was two pages, a letter at least four, and on long winter evenings there were few notes, and even the letters were considerably expanded. Like many elderly widows of her generation, Grandmother considered her letter writing an avocation and a profound responsibility. On rare occasions, I was permitted to look over Grandmother's shoulder while she was writing. I suspected that she might be saying things about me, but if so, she always selected times when I was not around.

My esteemed Grandmother had a deep personal appreciation for postmen. The morning after letter writing, she was always watching for the mail carrier. The moment he saw one of the black edged envelopes, he took off his cap, put on a very solicitous expression, and accepted the letter with a gesture suggestive of a French cavalier. Grandmother was completely convinced that he came from poor, but honest background, and rewarded him with a slight smile. She also liked to receive kodak snapshots of her friends and their families. It seemed to bring her back with pleasant memories to days gone by. She saw the children growing up, and then came a formal note announcing a marriage or graduation from the university. If she was planning to stay in one place for more than a few weeks, she pinned the pictures on her curtains, but always carefully removed them when she moved away.

Of course, twenty five years of carefully saved letters resulted in a bundle, or more correctly, several bundles. There was always the time when some of them could no longer be kept. A sorting process then took place. All the letters were re-read and the less interesting were regretfully discarded. It's a pity that Grandmother's correspondence was not preserved for a modern writer could do wonders with it today.

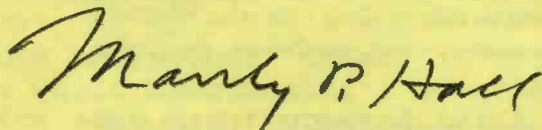
Some of the most curious of Grandmother's lengthy missives were exchanges of notes on health problems. When her oldest daughter died, all of her friends were informed of the event. Her personal sadness was never permitted to burden her associates. The news was for all those she knew, the pain for herself alone. On one occasion, my uncle sent Grandmother a nice package of black-edged paper and envelopes as a birthday gift. What she really thought

when she received it, no one will ever know, but she confided in me that the black edging was rather too wide.

In her closing years, I tried to induce Grandmother to use printed cards and personalize them with her signature and a few words of appropriate sentiments. She agreed, if she could find just the right cards. I took her to a store where they had a considerable stock and she looked over rows of cupids, violets, and fireplaces with burning logs. In the end, she hobbled out of the store shaking her head sadly and murmured, "I don't dislike anyone that much."

In those days of long ago, but now beyond recall, there was a kind of leisure which we may never have again. There was no television, radio, motion picture, or inflammatory journal to intrude upon the quiet evenings. To sit in peace by the front of the open fire with a good book or the box of letter sheets was a reward and not a penalty. Very few persons were sorry for themselves or rebelled against the problems of daily living. Memories were nostalgic, but consoling, and those no longer in this world were born again in the realm of the unforgotten past. In sober fact, Grandmother herself lives on only as a brave and gracious person who has left this world, but lives on in the thoughts of those who knew her for the gracious lady that she was.

Most sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Manly P. Hall". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

MANLY P. HALL

HEAR YE! HEAR YE!



PRS ANNUAL LIBRARY BOOK SALE

Saturday, March 16: 9:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

Sunday, March 17: 9:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. (Before and after lecture)

Auction: 1:30 P.M. Sunday, conducted by Roger Weir

Now is the time to renew or join "Friends of the Library":

Annual Dues—\$2.00 Life Membership—\$50.00

A private library of metaphysical books will be offered along with other books on health, reflexology, the arts, Orientalia, biography, travel, psychology, theosophy, music, and metaphysics.

Any contributions of appropriate books would be appreciated. Mr. Hall personally goes through all the books—some are placed in the PRS Library, others sold, and duplications of scarce books are put up for auction. Donated books are tax deductible.

Books may be brought or mailed to the PRS Library, or arrangements may be made for pickup in the local area by calling Pearl Thomas, (213) 663-2167 or 662-3682. *Please*—no textbooks, digest condensations, or popular magazines.

