



The Ella Wheeler Wilcox Society Newsletter

Richard A. Edwards, Editor

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2

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February, a winter month. The month of Valentine's Day. How better to celebrate than with the love poems of the "Poetess of Passion" herself. Several of [this month's poems](#) are chosen from Ella's book "[Poems of Love](#)" and the prose section is a chapter entitled "[Love Letters](#)."

President Abraham Lincoln's birthday is also celebrated in February and in 1909 while in Jamaica that February day, Ella was called upon by a Mr. Hadley to help write a poem to go on the menu for a special dinner honoring the one hundredth anniversary of Lincoln's birth. She entitled her small verse "[Lincoln, February 12, 1809-1909](#)."

Another event of February is Mardi Gras, the celebration just before the beginning of Lent. And what greater place to celebrate the festival than in New Orleans! [Ella was there](#) in February 1885.

One of our EWW eSociety members recently mentioned the value of Out of Print booksellers available on the web. I've certainly enjoyed purchasing several items from some of them over the years and it's also a great way to compare costs for particular titles. You can find a list of some of these booksellers on our web site at <http://192.211.16.13/individuals/edwardsr/ella/ellasoc.htm#op>

I'd like to thank Ruth White for her contributions this past month as well. She sent me copies of several old newspaper articles which have been reprinted on our eSociety mailing list and added to our web site.

This seems to be a new year of changes. In addition to our web site moving to Northeastern State University in the next month or two, our eSociety group has also moved due to Yahoo purchasing eGroups. You can now find our eSociety at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ellawheelerwilcox>

Joyfully,
Rich

This month in Ella's life:

February 4, 1836

Amos Wheeler (Ella's grandfather), born June 14, 1762; married to Eunice Hosford on August 20, 1788 (1789?) in Thetford, Vermont; died on February 4, 1836 in Thetford, Vermont.

February 13, 1881

Ella, residing in Milwaukee, wrote to fellow poet Arthur O' Shaughnessy. She wrote, "I am slowly but surely gaining ground in the East. I feel sure in another year they will begin to know me as one of theirs, and awoken to the fact that I have been doing much as good as their own -- for many years."

February 1885

"To continue those services, Mrs. Frank Leslie, in February, 1885, made a dashing visit to New Orleans to inspect the Cotton Centennial Exposition and, incidentally, enjoy a carnival ball. With her friend Mrs. Pierce and her advertising manager, Herbert Bridgman, she attended the Exposition, where the paintings of the Marquis de Leuville and the periodicals of Mrs. Frank Leslie were both on display. At the St. Charles Hotel she ensconced herself near the piano in the grand parlor and received the city's potentates and reporters. She called on one of her contributors, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, whose first check had come from the Leslie Publishing House and had immediately opened a floodgate for her poems of passion. Ella was a bit disappointed in her first sight of Mrs. Leslie, finding that her pronounced Roman nose militated against her beauty, but she readily accepted her invitation to meet Joaquin Miller. The untamed Poet of the Sierras was occupying George Washington Cable's house in the garden district, and received his literary sisters with éclat and breakfast. While Ella watched in vain for evidences of consuming passion in Miller's attitude toward Mrs. Leslie, Miriam quietly expressed, in passing, a desire that the poet escort her to the carnival ball. Since she had no ticket, Miller regarded the suggestion as an impossibility, though he approached the mayor, the governor, and two United States senators. Nothing could be done. Queen Victoria herself could not enter without a ticket."

[Purple Passage : the life of Mrs. Frank Leslie.](#) By Stern, Madeleine B.

Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, c1953.

p. 119-120

February 12, 1894

In a letter from the Westminster Hotel in New York City to the publisher, Mr. Bok, Ella wrote of a recent discovery. "I have found a new genius -- a girl who is wasting her strength in a sewing machine house on Bleeker St --but who writes with wonderful diction & insight. Her name is Eleanor Cox."

Eleanor Rogers Cox became a minor author. Her best known works are "A duel at dawn a one act tragedy ; and, A millionaire's trial : a comedy-drama in four acts" (1894); A hosting of heroes, and other poems (1911); and Singing fires of Erin (1916).

February 11, 1902

Ella's nephew, Leslie Couillard Wheeler, (son of her brother, Marcus "Mark" Pratt Wheeler; born December 20, 1877) married Mable Douglas on February 11, 1902. They had three boys and three girls and lived in Windsor, WI.

February 14, 1902

Ella wrote a poem to her husband, Robert, dwelling on the question "[How will it be?](#)" when one of them is gone and the other left behind. Luckily she was not to discover the answer for another fourteen years.

Poems:

HOW WILL IT BE?

How will it be when one of us alone
Goes on that strange, last journey of the soul,
That voyage on which no comradeship is known?
Will our dear sea sing in the old sweet tone,
Though one sits stricken where its billows roll?
Will whisperings of love be backward blown?

When our untied lives are wrenched apart,
And day no more means sweet companionship;
When fervent night, and lovely languorous dawn,
Are only memories to one sad heart,
And but in dreams fond kisses burn the lip,
Dear God, how can this same fair world move on?

February 14, 1902

[Sonnets of sorrow and triumph](#). by Ella Wheeler Wilcox

New York: George H. Doran, 1918.

LINCOLN, FEBRUARY 12, 1809-1909.

When God created this good world,
A few stupendous peaks were hurled
From His strong hand; and they remain
The wonder of the level plain.
But these colossal heights are rare,
While shifting sands are everywhere.

So with the race. The centuries pass,
And nations fall like leaves of grass.
They die--forgotten and unsung.
While straight from God some souls are flung
To live, immortal and sublime.
So lives great Lincoln for all time.

[Sailing sunny seas](#): By Ella Wheeler Wilcox.
Chicago: Conkey, 1909.

LOVE

In all earth's music, grand, or sweet, or strong,
To hear one name, as if 'twere set in song.

In all my poems, written 'neath the sun,
To find the praises, o'er and o'er, in one.

To feel thyself a lesser part of what
Hadst thou not found, the earth would be as naught.

To think all beauty, perfectness and grace,
As but the shadow of one worshiped face.

With that face's coming, to bask in warmth and light
And with its going to grope, as in the night.

To rather feel a dear hand's stinging blow
Than any caress another might bestow.

LOVE

The day is drawing near, my dear,
When you and I must sever;
Yet whether near or far we are,
Our hearts will love forever,
Our hearts will love forever.

O sweet, I will be true, and you
Must never fail or falter;
I hold a love like mine divine,
And yours--it must not alter,
O, swear it will not alter.

[Poems of Love](#) by Ella Wheeler Wilcox
Chicago: M.A. Donohue, 1905.

To rather sit in gloom, and hear one voice
Than, missing that, on mountain tops rejoice.

To lose all individual hope and aim,
And have no wish, but for another's fame.

To count grief naught, though great, if one is glad.
To feel no joy if that dear one is sad.

Do thy heart strings, responsive, answer this?
Then thou hast known true love in all its bliss.

[Poems of Love](#) by Ella Wheeler Wilcox
Chicago: M.A. Donohue, 1905.

Prose:

Love Letters.

It would be interesting to know who wrote the first love letter, and what he said. For, of course, it was he.

It is an odd fact, that while men are far more cautious than women in signing their names to business documents, they compromise themselves on paper at Cupid's command much more frequently.

A man scrutinizes with great care everything which he writes for legal purposes before he appends his signature thereto; but he signs his name boldly to reams of wild, extravagant utterances where love stands at his elbow, and hurries it off with a special delivery stamp.

Fine sport it proves sometimes for Cupid when the letters he has instigated are produced in court and read to an interested and jeering audience. A letter which causes the hearts of two people to palpitate when written and read usually stirs the risibles of everybody else who hears it.

A love letter, like a kiss, is news to be shared only by the two interested parties.

It is interesting to note the progressive addresses in a love affair carried on by correspondence. The first letter addressed to Miss Mollie Blank begins "Miss Blank, Dear Miss;" then "My Dear Miss Blank," "My Dear Mollie," "Dear Mollie," "Darling Mollie," "Darling!"

There is no fashion which can dictate the writing of a love letter. As the tones of human voice vary, so will love letters be varied by individual peculiarities of style, while all carry one message and tell one tale. The striking similarity of expression in all love letters does not lessen their value. Because the apple blossoms have ever the same color and perfume, they are none the less beautiful with each recurring spring.

Some men can talk love by the hour, but cannot write a word of it. Others are dumb in presence of the beloved one, but pour their hearts out on paper.

It is curious to note what absolute nonsense often drops from the pens of brilliant men and women when they are in love. It proves the sincerity of their passion far more than do studied literary efforts. It is not well to place too much confidence in the flowery and

extravagant epistles of a romantic man of literary tendencies. His imagination often runs away with him when he takes his pen in hand. A simple "I love you" from the pen of a practical business man carries more weight than a volume of poetic phrases written by the dreamer.

There have been men known to compose their love letters on a type machine. The less said of them, the better. They deserve capital punishment--to be shot until they are dead by Cupid's arrows.

It is a great art to know how to write an effective love letter. But it cannot be learned save in love's school.

To a person of any intuition and discernment, a letter conveys the reader's true mood. A man may be such a skilled actor that he can say "I love you" with convincing effect, when he does not love at all.

But if he writes the words from an empty heart, they convey emptiness. Written at white heat, from a full heart, they leap from the paper like electric sparks. The trouble with many women is, they illuminate the pages of a man's letter with the light of their own affections, and give the man the credit of the effort produced.

Sometimes a love letter proves a death blow to passion.

I knew a very young girl who worshipped a handsome lover, of whom her parents disapproved, for a period of two years. Then, during a separation, he wrote his first love epistle. So illiterate and ungrammatical was it that the girl's love died before she finished its perusal.

There are few things in life more unpleasant to encounter than old love letters full of ardent protestations of undying affection, exchanged by the people who have grown absolutely indifferent to each other.

A love letter is like a strawberry shortcake--delicious when it comes fresh from the oven, nauseating when it has stood twenty-four hours in the ice chest.

[Every-day thoughts in prose and verse.](#) by Ella Wheeler Wilcox
Chicago: W. B. Conkey Company, 1901.

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For those of you without email systems that can read HTML/Web code, the newsletter will also be available as a web page and an Adobe PDF file (for printing) on our web site at <http://192.211.16.13/individuals/edwardsr/ella/news/nindex.htm>

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