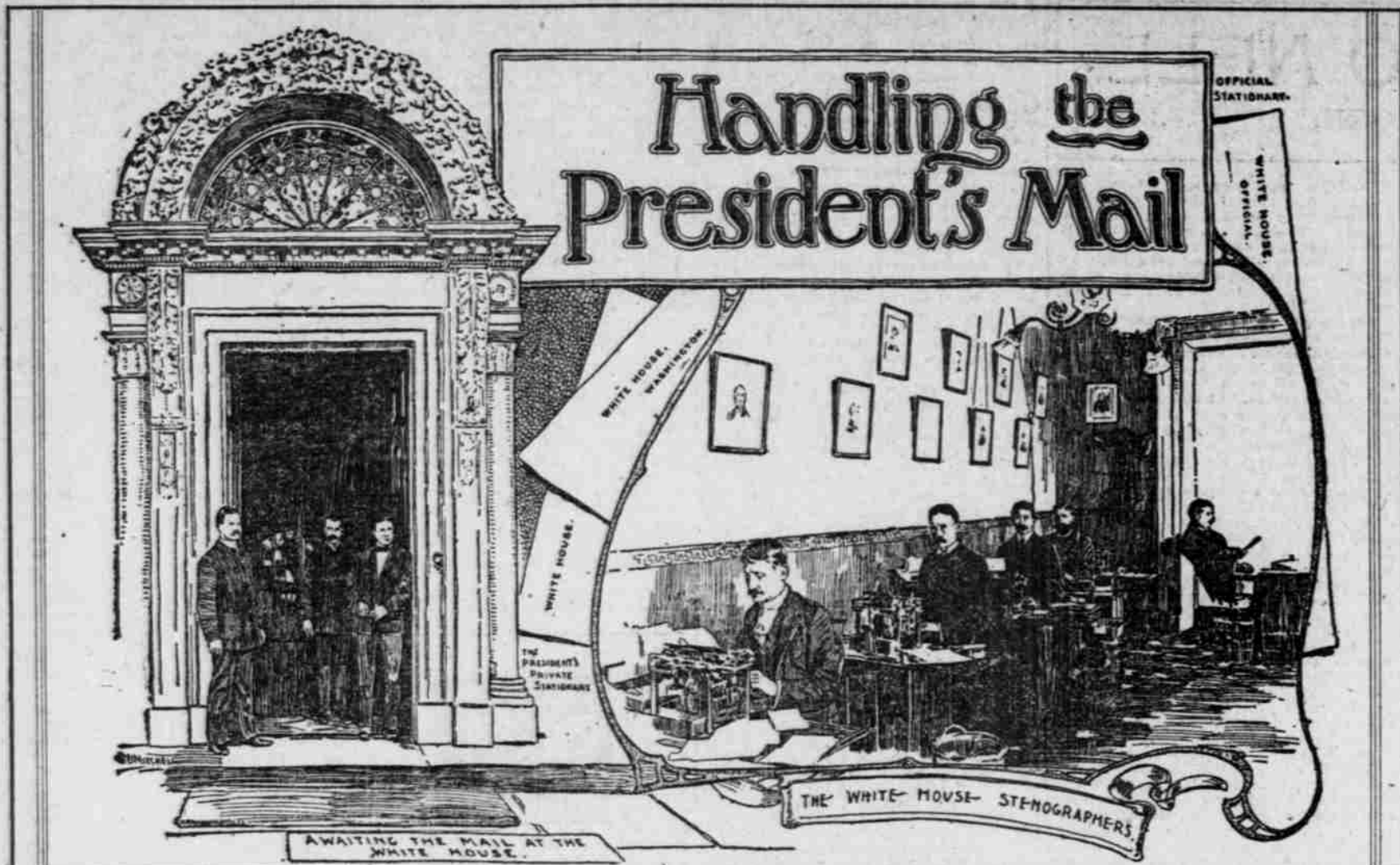




IF THE President of the United States were obliged to pay postage on every piece of mail matter sent out from the White House, the expense would amount to one-sixth of his salary. Since President Roosevelt has been in office the mail addressed to the Chief Magistrate has been the heaviest in the history and it is steadily growing rather than diminishing in proportions. Probably no other man in the world receives every day in the year so many personal letters as are sent to the President of the United States, and very certainly no other man receives communications of such varied character. At the present time anywhere from 500 to 1000 letters are received at the White House every day. In addition to this, hundreds of pieces of printed matter are received every day.

To consider and answer the half a million communications which come to the President's mansion each year requires the almost continuous services of upward of a dozen men. This too, without taking into consideration the employees of the General Postoffice at Washington who are detailed to distribute the President's mail.

The first step in the handling of the White House mail at its destination is taken by the trusted employee of the White House, who makes three or four trips daily to the postoffice to secure the mail. Upon the arrival of the letters at the White House they are turned over to a clerk whose sole duty is to open the envelopes and unfold the letters. The communications next pass to a clerk who sorts the missives. Many of the letters pertain to what might be termed routine Governmental matters and are turned over to one or another of the Executive departments. The great bulk of the President's mail goes to his secretaries, and most of it they answer over their own signatures without ever troubling the busy Chief Magistrate with the matter.

Cannot Read One-Tenth of Them.

The President does not peruse personally one-tenth of the letters which are addressed to him. Indeed, so communications a day is a liberal estimate of the number which come under his eye. The letters, which by reason of their seeming importance, or the doubt of the secretaries as to their proper disposition do finally pass the gauntlet and come into the hands of the President himself are disposed of in one of three ways. In the cases of many of them, he turns the letters over to the secretaries with an indication of the character of the reply to be sent. To a few of the letters the President dictates replies which he signs personally, and to a very limited number of personal friends he pens confidential letters. President Roosevelt writes very few autograph letters.

Naturally such inscriptions as "Personal" and "Private" cannot be regarded as opening the White House mail. But there are ways in which the intimates may insure their communications reaching the President personally. The approved plan is for the writer to place his initials or name in autograph in the lower left hand corner of the envelope. For instance, a confidential note from the President's personal friend Senator Lodge, bears in the corner the initials H. C. L. In a majority of cases the provision of these safeguards is superfluous for the clerk who opens the mail has come by experience to recognize instantly the handwriting of the relatives and intimates of the Chief Executive and their letters go through without molestation. Sometimes individuals not personally known to the President, but who have learned of the plan in vogue, seek to reach his ear by placing their initials on a missive or occasionally even resort to the ruse of affixing the initials of some one known to be close to the Chief Magistrate. Such efforts never avail, however, for if the deception is not detected by the assisting clerk, the schemer's letter is turned back into the proper channel by the President when he detects its character.

Stereotyped Answers.

The work of answering the Presidential mail is a task of herculean proportions. An effort is made to acknowledge in some manner every communication sent to the White House. Five or six stenographers are constantly employed typewriting the letters dictated by the President and his secretaries. Naturally great numbers of letters can be answered by what are known as "forms," that is phraseology arranged to cover any and all inquiries on a certain subject. For instance, the hundreds of people who, after the President has delivered an important address or sent a message to Congress, send congratulatory letters and telegrams to the White House all receive letters of acknowledgment which are practically identical.

Loeb, Roosevelt's Right-Hand Man.

The general public and particularly the feminine portion of it appears to cherish the belief that, whereas there is no possibility that a letter can reach the President inviolate, there is reasonable surety that a missive to a member of his immediate family will reach its destination unobscured. This is utter fallacy, for every letter addressed to Mrs. Roosevelt or any of the children passes through exactly the same channel as does the mail designed for the head of the household, and the chances that it will

ever come under the eye of the intended recipient are quite as remote. The general mail for the various members of the Roosevelt household must all come under the scrutiny of Assistant Secretary William Loeb, Jr., popularly known as the "President's right-hand man," and the social activities at the White House and the prominence into which Miss Alice Roosevelt has been brought by the christening of the Kaiser's yacht and other events has necessitated the devotion of an unprecedented amount of time to this class of correspondence.

Another important and decidedly arduous duty which has fallen to the lot of Mr. Loeb is the management of the voluminous correspondence connected with social activities at the White House. The dispatch of the invitations for dinners, luncheons, balls and receptions is not so serious a matter since all those designed for residents of Washington are delivered by mounted messengers, but the replies help to swell the volume of the regular stream of mail, and these make work for the force under Mr. Loeb's direction, for each declination or acceptance must be properly tabulated and each name checked off, so that it will be possible to estimate accurately the number of prospective guests at any forthcoming function.

Ludicrous Letters.

Every rich man of any prominence in America receives daily a number of the oddest requests imaginable, but it is safe to say that the communications in no case compare in novelty and absurdity with the curiosities which crowd the White House mail bags. There are letters humorous and sad, missives pleading and threatening and communications of praise and censure. Many of the letters received are infinitely sad, but a far



WM. LOEB, JR., ASSISTANT SECRETARY TO PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT.

greater number are in some degree ludicrous. Most numerous possibly are the appeals of persons who wish the President to aid them to secure positions either in the Government service or elsewhere. The "begging letters" form a vast proportion, ranging all the way from the importunities of professional beggars to the requests of churches and charitable organizations seeking subscriptions. It may be noted that every appeal for aid which bears the slightest evidence of possible worthiness is turned over to some charitable organization in the community from which it has emanated. Great quantities of anonymous letters are received and a surprisingly large number of appeals come from persons who seek to enlist the aid of the President in paying off mortgages. Finally there are the threatening and "crank" letters of various kinds and the number of communications of this kind received is simply astounding. Comparatively but a small portion of them, however, are deemed of sufficient importance to warrant investigation by the Secret Service.

Rats!

Many of the letters addressed to the President are induced by newspaper comment. A striking evidence of this was afforded recently when an item went the

rounds of the press to the effect that the White House was infested with rats. No sooner had publicity been given the report than there was an avalanche of letters recommending various plans for getting rid of the rodents. Manufacturers of rat poisons and traps donated their wares and one solicitous citizen sent five cats which were declared to be famous rat catchers. This latter donation still further complicated matters for the correspondence corps, for a report was printed to the effect that the felines were being persecuted by Jack, the White House dog, and this brought a number of indignant protests from sympathetic ladies who denounced as an outrage the supposed cruelty.

From the day the announcement was made that Miss Alice Roosevelt had been chosen to christen the yacht of the German Emperor, the letters addressed to the daughter of the White House increased in number until they threatened to rival those addressed to the President himself. Many of the persons who wrote to Miss Alice offered suggestions relative to the launching. Many ladies besought her use water instead of wine in the christening and others suggested that the baptism be marked with flowers.

Annoying Letters to the Household.

The President, Mrs. Roosevelt and Miss Alice have all three come in for most generous attention on the part of merchants and manufacturers seeking the indorsement of articles of various kinds. Mrs. Roosevelt receives proffers of sufficient eatables to stock a grocery store and both ladies are deluged with the wares of soapmakers and manufacturers of toilet preparations, many of whom plead for indorsement. Any gifts which are received at the White House with a request for indorsements are immediately returned. It will doubtless surprise

words White House for Executive Mansion as the official designation of the Presidential residence. Special paper is provided for the letters which the President signs personally and also for the social correspondence of Mrs. Roosevelt and Miss Alice. All envelopes, in which are dispatched communications bearing upon public business bear the inscription "White House-Official," and are transmitted through the mails without postage stamps or other franks.

With the increasing demand upon the time of the Chief Executive, and the inevitable curtailment of the number of callers whom he can see personally, the volume of White House mail has grown surprisingly. In order to prevent being overwhelmed, the Secretaries frequently work at the executive offices until long past midnight, day after day. However, the work has been systematized to a marvelous degree, as may be imagined from the fact that of all the thousands of communications handled during the past half decade, not a single one has been lost.

WALDEN PAWCETT.
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SILENT EVIDENCE THAT NEVER LIES

TREE BLAZES AND THEIR IMPORTANT USE IN LAND CASES.

BOSTON, March 16.—(Special Correspondence.)—One of the most curious collections to be found in this city of museums consists entirely of "blazes" cut from the trunks of trees. It is owned by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and is kept in the rooms of the department of civil engineering, where it serves not so much for the purpose of illustrating an out-of-the-way bit of woodcraft as to teach the young engineer the value of a kind of evidence which is almost as familiar to courts of law all over the Northern States and is accepted by them, in cases of dispute, where carefully drawn plans and formally attested title-deeds are set aside as untrustworthy.

Everyone who knows the woods at all knows what a blaze is—the sharp, glancing cut of an ax which exposes the fresh, clean wood beneath the bark so that one may follow an otherwise indistinguishable trail from tree to tree and from one end of the forest to the other. But the blaze is used, not only to indicate a path but to mark the boundaries of forest ownership. It follows the imaginary line of the surveyor, as well as the footsteps of the pioneer and the hunter, so that the knowledge of how a line is blazed, and of how to distinguish blazes that were cut a generation or more ago on trees still growing in the original forest is necessarily a part of the equipment of an all round surveyor.

How Trees Are Blazed.

As nearly as possible the trees selected for blazing follow the exact boundary line. If, as often happens, a tree is not quite on the line at a proper point of distance from the last blaze, the mark is made on the nearest side of the trunk; if on the other hand, a tree happens to stand so that the line passes directly through it, two blazes are made on opposite sides so as to point out the precise direction which the line takes. As a further safeguard, two lines come together, either a "monument," as such an official landmark is called, is erected, or a tree is blazed on all four sides—or sometimes three or four trees are scarred so as to indicate, as exactly as possible, the turning point around which they grow.

In making a blaze the hunter simply slices off a piece of the bark and of the wood beneath it as he passes by; the surveyor cuts into the bark, first an arrow which points the direction in which his line passes, then a private device which stands for his personal signature. In many states—Maine, for example, in New England, and most of the great commonwealths of the West—where the townships are for the most part laid out with uniform regularity, with a stone post as a "monument" every corner, the surveyor registers also the distance from one of these posts at every even mile—thereby establishing his line with absolute certainty at that point and giving a secondary basis for the written description of the boundary required in title-deeds and abstracts.

This Record Is Permanent.

The permanency of the record which these blazes thus carry is remarkable. The collection at the institution includes an even dozen sections which have at one time or another appeared as evidence in court, and are thus duly authenticated by legal decisions. When a tree has been blazed, as one may see from these specimens, the wound heals over in the course of time, but never so completely that the scar will not be discernible to the experienced woodman. The sap dries comparatively quickly, of course, and year after year layers of bark are put on in the tree's growth, until, by degrees, the bare wood is almost covered, but the edges of the cut will never join smoothly. At first, when new bark has partly hidden the blaze, there is an indentation in the trunk; later, additional outer layers seem to fill this up, but the thickened edges, which cannot themselves be welded by nature, turn the new growth outward until it becomes an excrescence,

which, taking on a fresh coat with the rest of the tree, remains always as a noticeable lump on the smoother surface of the surrounding bark and as a permanent indication of the record contained within.

Evidence That Cannot Be Disputed.

The blazing is, then, an ineffaceable record as long as the tree which bears it escapes the ax of the lumberman. The surveyor's recorded figures may be in error, and his written description may not coincide with the line he traced on the tree trunk with his hatchet, but the blazes are unchanging, and in a court of law they are indisputable evidence. They cannot be made to lie in any particular, indeed, for nature has arranged that they shall fix dates as accurately as they preserve inscriptions. The outer shell which has grown over the scar is sawed away, the rings in the wood beneath the bark are counted. In the Northern States, where the difference in the seasons is so sharp that a tree has never been known to take on more than one layer in a single year, these rings set the date when the record was made with absolute exactness. In most of the

Southern States, of course, this rule of date does not hold, since a tree may take on more than a single ring each year in a milder climate; in Louisiana, for example, the use of the blaze to distinguish boundary lines is not known, and even as far north as Tennessee its evidence is more or less doubtful; but when it is remembered that up recently the great forest domains of the North have been the ones chiefly developed commercially the importance of a surveyor's knowing how to use and identify the blazes will be apparent.

Dates Fixed by the Rings.

There are certain specimens among those at the Institute of Technology which show in a surprising way the value of tree blazes as legal documents. In one case the heart of a blazed tree had rotted, the surveyor's marks crumbling away with it, but a distinct impression of every line remained in reverse—marked only by the nearly closed, but never healing original split—on the inner side of the new growth which had formed while the tree was still healthy; and this impression was accepted by the court as conclusive evidence. In another specimen no less than 47 fine tell-tale

rings, each standing for the passage of a year of time, are easily counted by the unaided eye; though the reading of other blazes calls for the use of a microscope, so closely are the rings drawn together.

The collection of this remarkable evidence is not always an easy matter. The Maine woods, for example, are frequently surveyed in winter, when the snowdrifts are four to six feet deep and the surveyors are obliged to travel on snowshoes. In summer, when the level of travel has again been lowered to the normal and the foliage obscures, to some extent, the upper tree trunks, it is difficult to locate, from the ground, the outward indications of blazes, particularly if they are of some age. Then, at whatever cost of time and trouble, the most expert woodsmen are employed to search for them, with the result that a considerable portion of the expense of trying a "land case" is not infrequently charged up to finding and bringing to court these curious evidences of property which no cross-examination can confuse and no argument confute, so long as they are honestly gathered and fairly presented.

JUST A NATURAL AMERICAN GIRL

ALICE ROOSEVELT HAS NO "ACCOMPLISHMENTS," AND HER HEAD IS NOT TURNED.

PERHAPS the greatest compliment that could be paid to Miss Alice Roosevelt is to say that the friends who knew her intimately before she became the daughter of the President, or even the daughter of the Vice-President, could describe her every characteristic as truly today as then, for the fact that she is now the most conspicuous girl in America has not changed her in any respect.

Simple in her manner, unassuming, unselfish, eager to please, satisfied with whatever falls to her lot, considerate to a marked degree for other less fortunate girls, utterly devoid of self-consciousness, as fond of fun as her brothers—these and a lot of similar traits make Alice Roosevelt the daughter of the President, as dear to her friends as was Alice Roosevelt, the daughter of the Civil Service Commissioner and the Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

At Oyster Bay it was her habit to accept the every-day conditions of life in the same philosophic manner that she does the events of her life as daughter of the President, says a writer in the New York Sun. She is far too fond of outdoor life to be domestic, yet if household affairs call to her lot, she went about her work in the most cheerful manner possible, with her father's determination to get through with a thing begun, whether pleasant or otherwise.

It was supposed by other Washington society girls that they would be of secondary consideration where Miss Roosevelt was concerned, and would have to study her pleasure and their own discomfort. They were surprised to find that matters were reversed, and that Miss Roosevelt thought of their comfort and pleasure in the most natural manner.

Solicitous of Others.

As for the many attentions that fall to every popular debutante, while Miss Roosevelt gracefully accepts them, she makes no effort to gain them. She is solicitous to a marked degree where the comforts of her companions are concerned, and has been seen to change her seat at a cotillion this winter a number of times that some less fortunate girl might have the place of vantage. More than once this winter she has been known to feign fatigue after a few turns in a waltz and to request her partner to take upon the floor in her stead some girl friend who was sitting it out.

A woman who has seen many seasons both in American society and abroad was asked recently what she thought of Miss Roosevelt. To this she promptly responded: "She is the personification of just what every man and woman of the world likes best—she is tasting the sweetest sweets of life without caring who knows how much she enjoys them."

"She is enjoying everything that comes her way as does any other girl in her first season out and I will wager my diamond collar that Alice Roosevelt does not think once in 24 hours of her father as the President of the United States and of herself as his daughter or that anything comes her way on that account."

Miss Roosevelt is a most constant friend. Numbered among her intimates now are Miss Lillie McCauley, Miss Lydia Loring and Miss Carol de Peyster. She was her friend at Miss Flint's school when with her parents she made her home in Washington several years ago. These four girls were inseparable companions then.

In Her Home.

Now they discuss the next dance in company, talk over pretty dresses and spend whole mornings in one another's private apartments planning girlish enjoyments and discussing the latest social affair. Miss Roosevelt's rooms in the White House tell the story of her fast girlish friendships, for there are everywhere tokens of girlish frolics. Handmade picture frames, sofa pillows, table scarfs and a hundred frivolous small things that go to make up a girl's den are to be found in this sunny

corner of the White House. Almost the only drawback that Miss Roosevelt now undertakes is some pretty conceit for the cozy corner of a girl's room.

Mrs. Roosevelt is an exquisite needlewoman, and it is said by members of her family that she can plan, cut and make perfect garments for her children, while her dainty hand work is a revelation. She has never, however, succeeded in getting Miss Roosevelt to take the slightest interest in such manual things. Those who know the President's daughter best often ask if she is studious or accomplished, and the answer would involve considerable explanation. Miss Roosevelt generally has about her room a few classics, and a few late magazines, and almost any morning one would find her conversant with the contents of the latest novel, but further than that she seldom goes in books.

In fact, she is not a book lover and ruefully admits it. She plays on the piano only with medium skill, never polishes any other art, and she has no special accomplishments and yet she is never idle. She is remarkably punctilious in all social matters, and attends personally to all of her acceptances, regrets, keepings her own social calendar, and carrying on her social correspondence in her own handwriting.

Not Fond of Dress.

Miss Roosevelt is not fond of what the girls call dress, and probably the only article of her wardrobe which excites the slightest pleasure in her breast is her first ball gown, worn upon the occasion of her debut this winter. Those who know her accomplishments and yet she is never idle. She is remarkably punctilious in all social matters, and attends personally to all of her acceptances, regrets, keepings her own social calendar, and carrying on her social correspondence in her own handwriting.

She does not care for elaborate clothes, and further than being extremely dainty in her toilet she thinks less about dress than almost any other girl in Washington society. When she goes calling upon her girl friends informally she almost always walks. At other times she goes in one of the several "sporting" belonging to the White House stables, and often takes one or two of her girl friends with her. Several of the young girls of Miss Roosevelt's set own jaunty T cars, and with them she drives to the country roads when the weather is good.

It can be said that the White House was never treated to a more vigorous touch of young life than since President Roosevelt's family have occupied it. A few girls will drop in for a morning call and are invited to remain for luncheon. They remain late in the afternoon and are asked to dinner.

Miss Roosevelt disappears for a little early morning shopping and brings some friend whom she has met by chance back home with her. She goes to many an informal luncheon which does not appear in the next morning's paper.

"Miss Roosevelt is the most polite and the most pleasant person who has lived in the White House within my memory of its occupants," said a gray-haired man who has served various Administrations for more than 30 years. "If she only asks for the morning paper or that a note be mailed for her or that she be invited to thank you for it, and her consideration for the old fellows who have for years served the White House staff is very touching. She has ever a polite word and a merry heart, and almost more than any other member of the President's family has won the heart of everybody about here."

Daughter of the Cabinet.

Before her marriage, and before the tragic death of her brother, Helen Hay was naturally the leader of social affairs in the young set of Washington society, and this mantle of leadership would naturally fall upon the shoulders of her younger sister, who was not the family in mourning. Miss Alice Hay, unlike her sister, Mrs. Whitney, is not literary, and aside from current magazine reading and the latest book, cares little for that phase of life.

Although she is shorter and stouter than Mrs. Whitney, there is yet a remarkable resemblance between them and the picture of one might readily pass for the picture of the other. Miss Hay has a less serious turn of mind than Mrs. Whitney, and were the family not in mourning,

it is safe to say that she would be the close ally of Miss Roosevelt in the dance and other girlish social pastimes. Now she confines herself to a few girl friends for luncheon, and with her parents observes the strictest rules of mourning.

During this gayest of Washington winters, Miss Root, daughter of the Secretary of War, has been the leading spirit, and with the daughters of Secretary Hitchcock has entertained more than any of the other girls of the Cabinet. Miss Root is of medium height, with soft, fair skin, dark eyes and a wealth of beautiful brown hair. She has been a favorite in Washington society since her advent in the Cabinet family, and has attended in company with Miss Roosevelt all of the fashionable dances since the latter made her debut.

Miss Rebecca Knox is small, sedate and of a more serious turn of mind than any other of the girls of the Cabinet. She was graduated from the Misses Ely's school in New York, and took a post-graduate course at the University of Chicago.

She is perhaps the best-informed girl in Washington on literature and art, and while she is not an artist in the sense of painting, she has been coming in the purchase of a number of valuable canvases. While she plays but little she is a thorough musical critic, and her opinion is esteemed by those who know her, and her conversation on these subjects is full of interest.

Perhaps there never was another girl in the Cabinet family so averse to society as Miss Knox, yet her hospitable disposition makes of her an accomplished hostess, and the Knox house is the favorite resort of the Cabinet girls. A merrier, happier home circle than that over which Miss Knox is, next to her mother, presiding genius, is not found in Washington.

Like her father, Miss Knox is fond of horses, and when in California, often over country roads in Pennsylvania, drives a four-in-hand with great grace. She is the most accomplished whip of her sex in Washington.

The Misses Hitchcock have, unlike Miss Roosevelt, had several seasons in society, and while Secretary Hitchcock was Minister and Ambassador to Russia, they enjoyed the brilliant court life of St. Petersburg. They are fine linguists, and their apartments in the family residence on K street bespeak their bachelor proclivities. The walls are covered with hats, Alpine sticks, golf clubs and hundreds of trophies brought from many lands.

The niece of Postmaster-General and Mrs. Payne cannot be strictly called a Cabinet girl, but she has been a welcome guest at the White House many times this winter, and is a favorite in Washington society generally.

Melba Retaliated.

Field Marshal Lord Wolseley, hero of campaign, has not defeat in an engagement of wit. He has been vanquished by a woman. The victor in the little dinner-table tilt was Mme. Melba, and the scene of the occurrence the house of a member of the British aristocracy.

Mme. Melba, at this dinner, was seated at the right of Lord Wolseley, who was the right of the hostess of the evening. Lord Wolseley at the beginning of the dinner, asked of the hostess:

"Who is the lady at my right?"

"Why, that is Mme. Melba."

"Who is this Mme. Melba?"

"Is it possible that your lordship does not know the great singer?"

"Oh, yes; born in Australia, I believe."

And with that the General applied himself to the course then served. After a few minutes he turned to the prima donna, greeted her pleasantly and said:

"You are an Australian, I believe, madame? I know a great deal about your country. My brother lives in Melbourne."

"And pray, sir, what is the name of your brother?" the singer naively inquired.

"Goodness! Why, his name is the same as mine, Wolseley," answered the surprised officer.

"Who is Wolseley? I do not recall that name," Mme. Melba explained.

"Why, I am General Wolseley," replied the astonished officer.

"Wolseley? Wolseley?" whispered the singer, as if preparing to refresh her memory. And then the General applied himself again to the food. He had learned his lesson.—London Letter.

