

Free!

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Photograph [woman's back with shell]

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candlesticks, a collection of 315 hand-turned brass candlesticks that she began at the age of seven. Many of her candlesticks date back to the time of Ben Franklin; the youngest is seventy-five years old. "Each has its own history," says Myrt.

She has written a book, *Myrtle Knows the Answers*, which was published by the Exposition Press of New York, and she is now working on a novel titled *The Gadfly*.

On her higher education, she comments, "I have never had the privilege of attending college. My education, as far as higher learning is concerned, consists of my experiences and nothing more."

She's still crusading for a downtown bathroom and travels every year to Britt for the National Hobo Convention. She wouldn't miss it.

Myrtle, born in Aurora, Illinois, was a "million-

aire's daughter" and her family had been very wealthy when she was a child. However, she lost everything (including her inheritance) through a poor business speculation made by her aunt, which had also left her a heavy burden of debt. At the age of 21, a few days before she was to be married, her fiance Tom was killed in a plane crash. This all changed her life tremendously. "Our lives are made by hardships we keep," she explains. But I wonder *who* answers her questions and solves her problems.

Before leaving, Myrtle read my palm and told my fortune. "You have a good thumb and finger . . . you'd make a peach of a hobo," she said. I thanked her and invited her to Cedar Falls for a visit. And I know of at least one dinner engagement waiting for me the next time I'm in Burlington, that I won't miss!

