

ELEANOR'S LETTER

Dear S—My dear, is there such an institution as Lent where you are? According to the calendar this is the time for Lent, but society and the calendar have fallen out and Lent has made an inglorious retreat before the triumphant march of the chafing dish, the great army of kings, queens, jacks and aces, the gay minions of Terpsichore, the cackle of the Kensington and the clamor of the afternoon reception. If it is a sin to revel in Lent the devil must be shaking his thin sides with glee these degenerate days—that may sound a little wicked, but you know the little man with the pitchfork down below is an important factor in fin de siècle conversation. I am really worn out, and my eyes have a stayed-up-all-night appearance that is shocking. I am forced to use powder. No girl can go through what I have gone through since Christmas and retain the natural bloom, of youth undimmed. It wouldn't be so bad if there were not so many little informal "just happen in" affairs. These fill in between the parties, and keep one constantly on the go.

Are they playing cards in Lincoln again? Oh, no. They are just playing cards. In the afternoons they play cards. In the evenings they play cards. "They," and that means "we" are playing cards all the time now. It's almost as bad as it was four or five years ago, only it's whist now instead of high five. Some people are sunk so low in dissipation that they are playing hearts. Fancy! Imagine brave men like Frankie Z. and Dr. Spahr and our corps of university professors, to say nothing of state engineers and political big guns sitting docilely down and getting enthusiastic over hearts! Guy Hurlbut's most demoralizing dissipation has spread. Some of the men say that hearts is a good gambling game.

Maybe after the "visiting girls" have vanished things will quiet down a little. I hope so. Last Saturday Mrs. Tom Benton gave an afternoon card party—you know the Bentons are living in their own house now. It was a rather large party and we played German whist—confusing but interesting. Bobby Joyce and thirty or more ladies were there. And the same evening Mae Burr had a good sized card party for her friends. Pretty much all the crowd of young people was there—a few married ones. You know how Will Kelley beamed with satisfaction when he wins a prize at cards? Well, he got a prize this time, and he beamed. It was a lovely party, and I had an awfully good time because—well, you can imagine. He can be real nice when he tries.

Tonight, Friday, Mr. and Mrs. George H. Clark will give a card party at the Lincoln hotel. I don't know whether it will be large. The Clarks used to entertain a good deal, as you remember, before they gave up housekeeping and commenced living at a hotel. Quite a number of small card parties have been given during the week.

How foolish some people are! They go to a party and drink freely of the punch—you know you can call anything punch, and then the next day they tell silly yarns about other people having been made dizzy. There has been so much of this talk that some people outside have come to believe that in some instances the punch has made the guests at a party unduly enthusiastic. Now, I am not defending the punch—you know I never drink it; but these stories are, to my certain knowledge, ridiculous.

This afternoon the Clarks, Miss Clark and her sister Bertie, will give a Kensington. I really like Kensingtons, and

for once I am sorry I am not invited.

Really, I am getting alarmed. I see visions of a day when nearly all of the parties that will be given will be for men. Now, you will say I am inconsistent, complaining of too much gayety and then finding fault because there is danger that I will be shut out of a few things that are going on. My dear S—, you know very well that the people who complain of the exactions of society are the very people who would die without society. This winter has been prolific of dinner parties "for men only," and the idea seems to be catching. I like to go out to dinner myself, and I like to have a good partner—a man. Tonight, Friday, Mr. and Mrs. Ogden will give one of these masculine entertainments. There are to be six men around the table.

Miss Mount went home this week. She lives in Omaha, as I told you. She spent three weeks as the guest of Miss Slaughter, and I am sure she had a pretty gay time, as the two have a long string of friends between them. Miss McClure, of Mt. Pleasant, who has been visiting her sister, Mrs. W. F. Kelley, expects to leave for home in a day or two. The D. E. Thompsons have returned from Mexico, and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hall are back from Florida.

Only a few Lincoln people have had the pleasure of being entertained at the Patricks' in Omaha. Mr. and Mrs. Lambertson and Miss Sherwood had that pleasure last Sunday.

There have been several large receptions this season. The first one Mrs. W. M. Leonard gave, the second was given a week or two ago by Mrs. G. M. Lambertson, and then came Mrs. Kelley's. Mrs. McMurry received the same crush on Wednesday. The place where each of these ladies keep their gods is so large that it is not quite correct to call their receptions crushes. I had all the room I wanted and so had everybody else. Fancy a reception only moderately attended—each lady with the exact hygienic number of cubic feet of air about her and no necessity for screaming into the ear of her neighbor! Could anything be more stupid and bovine? Well! it was not that way at Mrs. McMurry's. The guests quickly drifted into groups which open and shut automatically to acquaintances. One should go to a reception only after at least a year's course in elocution and study in long distance speaking. A new beginner has no chance at all. Nobody, unless a man gets in, ever notices the babel, because everybody is talking, nobody listens. Frequently, though, when I am telling Jack in the evening about what Olive or Grace or Rose told me "at the reception" and he looks "smarty," the way men do when the superiority of the masculine is brought by a contrast into their minds I begin to wonder how it is that I have heard so much. I know I talked as fast as I could all the time and then I did not get through with half I had to say. All the same, things occur to me afterwards that other people have said. It is like an orchestra and I am playing first fiddle, but when I think of it I know the other parts too. Men have not the sense. In a busy world it is a valuable one. Men take twice the time that the duet style of conversation consumes. I have wandered somewhat from Mrs. McMurry's reception, but I wanted you to know that it was not entirely different from the many "How do you do's" we have attended together since our petals first uncurled; not that that was so very long ago either.

Mrs. McMurry stood in the drawing room near "Tote's" portrait. Except for this she stood quite by herself.

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