

OMAHA LETTER

Dear Eleanor:
If the lawmakers could only find time and inclination to concern themselves a bit with the unbridled, conscienceless tongues so plentiful in the communities of the land, they might spend a few days to the eternal benefit of a lot of people.

It is no new thing to deplore the frightful tendency toward gossip in our generation. Yards and yards of space have been covered by moral crusaders inveighing against it. Sermons have been preached and speeches delivered with about as much effect as the irate old gentleman had when he mopped at the sea.

But a nice compact little law which would compel one to "stand for" all the news—so called—which he disseminated, would undoubtedly render the drawing-rooms of the rich and the kitchens and the butler's pantry rather dry resorts for a time until we could adjust our mental furniture to a new order of things and find some topic other than our neighbor as a means of whiling away our leisure. Women are, and from time immemorial have been, supposed past mistresses at this degenerate art.

That they monopolize the talent in this line is a belief entitled to consideration simply because it is time-honored. My opinion leads me to think that gentlemen (?) who congregate at popular cigar stores, who ornament the street corners, or loll at afternoon teas, keep up their end with a diligence worthy a better occupation.

We are possibly no more ill-natured or cruel than the common run of human creatures, but on one or two occasions recently it has been forced in upon me that we are liable to have a great deal to answer for on the Day of Judgment which will be embarrassing to say the least, if evil is wrought by want of thought as well as want of heart.

I was spending the night at a friend's house last week and during the evening several neighbors dropped in, informally, and we talked. Oh! how we did talk—how altogether interesting we were. It hardly mattered that we ripped reputation gaily away from a few of our acquaintances. No one protested. No one called attention to the fact that we were wantonly a set of murderers. We were charmingly entertaining, much more thrilling than if the singer had sung, the player played or the literary woman told us about the books she had recently been reading.

A certain young married couple were under discussion most of the time, and they were promptly announced wretchedly unhappy in spite of the fact that their environments produce cheerfulness and happiness.

Incidents were cited of the most personal nature to prove the statement that they were miserable. It was her fault—it was his fault—it was the fault of everybody connected with them.

"I really cannot believe all of this," at length my friend ventured a trifle apologetically. "I have seen her everywhere lately and she looks the personification of good fortune."

"All put on, my dear," cheerfully responded the well-informed visitor. "She is wretched! Of course he does not throw dishes or furniture at her, but he does so and so—and so and so—which is much worse you know. I know for a fact what I am talking about, for Mrs. Blank told me all about it and although I am not personally acquainted with them, she is very intimate in the family."

Wasn't that a fierce commentary on the modern intimacy of womankind? Would you not enjoy having a long visiting list of intimate friends of that kind?

Then a recent tragedy which had occurred in our midst was talked over, and this same encyclopedia of universal knowledge knew just why the terrible thing was done. She knew things no one else could possibly know unless he could read the heart of the dead.

She recoiled to a finish finally, and then airily announced that she would really have to go, as she had left the children alone and they ought to be in bed.

She is not a unique specimen of humanity. On the contrary she represents a large, a deplorably large class. I went one afternoon not long ago to call upon a woman of my acquaintance whom I had not seen for some time. She was at home and came down stairs in a fetching house gown and greeted me effusively. After we were comfortably seated, each with a cup of tea of fragrant brew, my friend said, "Now, what do you know, Penelope dear?" "Nothing worth repeating. I am as densely ignorant as ever."

"Nonsense!" she laughed. "After all this while you ought to have some fine, juicy bits of scandal with which to regale me!"

Now this woman is not a natural gossip; she would not deliberately repeat anything which might hurt another; and yet so has the heaven worked that none of us seem quite averse to a nice, sensational bit. No one ever seems to be responsible for these things. One can never find the originator. If you attempt to follow the thread of one of these tales back,

the mirror maze is an open field compared to the labyrinth in which you will find yourself.

So unless we can induce the law to concern itself. I suppose there is very little hope for us.

I have a new gown, Eleanor—built by the most approved artist in her line in the city. I sat in the fitting room a few days ago, waiting for the high priestess to perform certain mysterious rites and I had a glimpse into the long room where these artistic gowns are fashioned. Such rows of girls—such a bewilderment of materials and implements! I wondered that anything logical was ever evolved. The manager was flitting nervously about and I could hear an occasional scrap of conversation. "How are you getting along with the Burt waist?" stopping before a dummy over whose shoulders was stretched a fluffy looking black waist. I could not hear what the girl bending over the work said, but she looked pale and tired. "You'll have to hurry that Jocelyn skirt up—it must be out by two o'clock"—and so on from one drooping worker to another. We need not expect any particular deference to our titles here where the tinsel is put on—we are just plain Burt, or Jocelyn or Mayfair—verily no man is a hero to his valet.

I was out driving yesterday north of Florence. We came home just at sunset, and it seemed to me we might have challenged comparison with the world, so beautiful was the scene. Away up and down the river blue reaches of mist hung ashore, away to the west where the sun dropped in magnificent state to a veritable sea of fire. Here and there autumn has dashed her colors recklessly. She has painted the hill-sides in vivid reds and touched the leaves with royal gold. Occasionally a field defying time shows still a tender spread of green. We drew rein on the brow of a hill. It was quiet—so very quiet we fancied we heard our hearts beat. Away to the south the smoke of numberless chimneys climbed straight into the evening sky. I breathed deeply in full, quiet appreciation of all the tender vanishing loveliness.

"Doesn't it make you feel half glad and half sad, such a scene as this?" I asked my companion, who seemed as fully absorbed as I. "Well, I hardly know whether I would express it quite that way, but I feel it, believe me."

"How would you express the feeling this still beauty and quiet evening vesper hour has upon you?"

"To be candid," he replied, turning a half fearful eye on me, "to be quite honest, it makes me feel as if it must be blamed near supper time." I shall never believe in a man again because

he has a musical voice and soulful eyes. Such things are a snare to the unwary.

Why do you not write to me?
Yours,
PENELOPE.

Omaha, Neb., Oct. 23, 1901.

Many a lobster loses his greenness in Tenderloin. It's easy to get into hot water there.—Town Topics.

"What is this grandfather clause in the new constitution of some southern states?" asked Cumso.

"It provides that no one can vote whose grandfather has been lynched," replied Cawker.—Town Topics.

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Gets the best talent that can be secured in placing his order for inside decorations for his houses. He desires the best material used, and something that will stand the wear and tear of the tenant. My experience of twenty-eight years has taught me how, when, and where to use economy. My prices are reasonable. Estimates cheerfully furnished.

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Ready-to-wear Hats in every style and color, each. **98c, \$1.50, 1.98**

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Extra values in Taffeta and Peau de Soie Silk Waists, at **\$2.98, 3.98, 4.98, 7.50**

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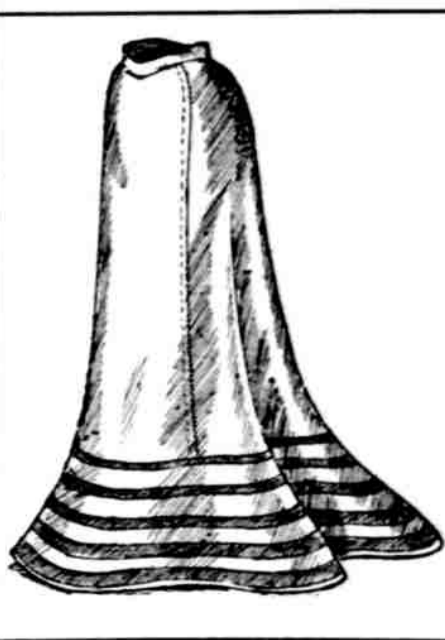
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