BELLES OF YESTERYEAR PRAISE THE MODERN "DEB" BUT REGRET SHE IS ALLOWED SO MANY LIBERTIES

Matrons of Philadelphia Society Draw Aside Curtain of Mignonetted Past and Present Wonderful Visualization of "My Lady of the Crinoline," Who Did Not Smoke—or Drink

ONCE upon a time, when the world was young, a sage remarked that comparisons were odious, and the wise old world has smugly quoted that ever since.

But comparisons are often interesting.

For instance, when prominent women take a peep into the past—the days when they were young—and draw comparisons with the youth of this age, who shall call such comparisons odious?

For these matrons rule the world.

So when they consent to express their opinions they carry weight.

And women prominent in the social life of Philadelphia for years have expressed their thoughts on many things—but especially on the changes that have come since they were in their 'teens. They open a chapter of old Philadelphia and give the world a hasty glimpse at the demure maiden of those days—the days when Philadelphia had more of the habits of the Quaker than now.

The war and the automobile have wrought tremendous changes. From Mrs. George Boker, who made her debut in 1868, when the memory of the Civil War was still green, to those who have debutante daughters of their own this year—all testify to the importance of the part played by the two forces.

Older Generation Frowns on Present

Some of these women think the modern age, with all the rush and dash has developed a type of girl far superior to their day, while others lift hands in horror at the present generation, and with a sad shake of their heads, mourn for the good old days that are no more.

Mrs. Boker, who embodies all the traditions of the old exclusiveness that made Philadelphia society the most aristocratic in the country, told of the yesterdays of life in Philadelphia—the quiet time when she was a girl. Mrs. Boker, as Miss Edith Wharton, was a belle of the year 1868—back in the days when there were but ten debutantes a season, and when those ten were virtually "nobodys."

"For you know," said Mrs. Boker, reminiscently, "in those days the debutantes never held the center of the stage the way they do now. The debutante was a nobody, and nothing special was ever given for her."

And Mrs. Boker drew a sorry comparison between the girl of today and the girl of her times. Years ago she was the hostess of the Monday Evening Dancing Class, a class for the debutantes of the season, and next to the Assembly, the most important social affair. That class met six times a year. It has since died out.

"The girls were brought up very, oh very much better in those days. Drinking was unheard of—and as for smoking," Mrs. Boker raised her hands with an expressive gesture that spoke more of the horrors of smoking than any number of words.

"This awful make-up that the girls nowadays put on their faces was never even thought of. Our elders used to say to us that only Western girls used powder and that we would be like them if we used it." Mrs. Boker smiled at the quaint custom of blaming everything novel or awful on the wild and woolly West. "And," she went on, "girls were prettier without the make-up—and they stayed prettier longer.

"The girls used to be much more natural and unaffected then. I am afraid the girls of today are common and vulgar. There may be some well-brought-up girls, but I have not seen them. It does not pay to be polite now—of course, if the girls happen to know who you are, they are polite, but if they do not, they are not courteous. Of the old-time politeness, there is none—and the manners are awful."

"This change seems to have come with the war," said Mrs. Boker thoughtfully, trying to put her finger exactly on the cause of the vast difference between the sweet refined girl of the nineteenth century and the wild young miss of today. And to any one raised in the staid mid-Victorian Philadelphia of the 60's, the modern girl must be somewhat of a shock.

"With the war, the girls became independent. Even the closely sheltered girls left home to do some sort of war work—becoming nurses, though they had no training, and meeting all sorts of men. All this gave the girls a different outlook on life. Yes, I think the war is greatly responsible for the change in the girls."

Says Modern Girl Has Far Too Much Liberty

"The girls have too much liberty—far too much. A girl of sixteen goes out much more now than in my young days. And the sad part of it is that now that they have had a taste of this freedom they will never be willing to return to the restrictions of the old days. We were always chaperoned—never went out alone."

Mrs. Boker told of the Monday Evening Dancing Class.

"I tried to keep the class as simple as it was possible to be," she said. "I would not allow the young men to bring flowers, and if they did the flowers were put in the dressing-room until after the dance was over," and one can picture a young blood of the last century slipping in the door with a bunch of posies for the lady of his choice, only to have them confiscated and locked up in a room, to waste their sweetness on the quiet air.

"The class was from 9 o'clock to 12, and in those days there were no late comers—the days before it was stylish to be late. They would not miss one tiny step of a waltz or one figure of the stately quadrille.

"At 12 I sent the musicians home and locked the piano. Then saw every one out."

No lingering behind in those days. As in some sets father dropped the shoe on the floor above to let the young people know that it was time to go home, so Mrs. Boker locked the piano as a signal to depart. She continued:

"Hotel life was unknown then. We had two hotels, the Colonnade and the Continental, but we never went to them—and no one ever entertained there. Everything centered in the home—there was a great deal more home life. I daresay hotel entertaining is necessary now, because society is so much larger one could not entertain satisfactorily in the home.

"In those days there were no teas. I never went to a tea in all the time I was going around. We used to call a great deal. The calling was very formal and regulated strictly. When we were debs we would go calling with our mothers. We were very unimportant persons, and we were very pleased to be invited at all. The second winter girls were the important persons then. Nowadays, after a year of lavish entertaining a girl is shoved into the corner to make way for her younger sisters.

"There was none of this terrible tearing around the country at night. Everything was simpler. All parties were over at 1 o'clock in the morning at the very latest, though I remember I once got home from a ball at 6 o'clock, and that was a very exciting night for me. It was not a frequent occurrence to be out till dawn.

"Perhaps that is why there was no rouge then. Instead of rouge the girls took a good long beauty sleep.

"The ball that lasted until 6 o'clock was at the Philadelphia Club. It was a beautiful affair." And Mrs. Boker's eyes grew soft at the memory of the days when she was the belle of the ball. "All the members sent their silver for the supper—that is, all the members who had silver handsome enough to send.

"A great thing was evening visiting. One had to have a different young man every night to be considered popular. Now there is very little entertaining of guests. Many hostesses let their guests flounder and get along as best they can, so long as they themselves are managing to have a good time.

"The general run of boys have bad manners, and have always had them. We cannot blame the present generation for that, at least. But if girls were more particular, manners would be better. There may be truth in this. If a girl stood before a closed door long enough, perhaps her escort would open it—but this method requires a lot of patience.

Does Not Like the Idea of Girls on Slumming Trip

"This new idea of girls going slumming and to queer places late in the day is dreadful. I am not at all sure that a girl of today has more outside interest than we had. Of course, they talk a lot, but that does not prove how deep these interests are—more fads I imagine." Nor has Mrs. Boker any time for the present-day styles.

"Indeed they would not have been permitted in my time," she said decisively.

And Mrs. Frederick Thurston Mason agrees with Mrs. Boker—about the styles, at least. Mrs. Mason was also at one time a hostess of the Monday Evening Dancing Class.

"The modern styles are frightful—I disapprove heartily of the manner of clothing now—or rather of unclothing, I should say. But I must admit that I like the short skirts—they are more sanitary and cleaner—we used to carry our trains even on the street. Why, yes," Mrs. Mason explained, "we used to have trains on our street dresses. This immodest dressing was unknown. We would wear little colored silk dresses with round necks and puffy sleeves. They were so pretty," and Mrs. Mason smiled, perhaps at the image of herself, a young girl in an old-fashioned dress, dancing gaily at her first ball.

But Mrs. Mason thinks more of the modern girl than does Mrs. Boker. "Of course, the girls of today have much more liberty than we ever dreamed of—or," she smiled, "at least they take more liberty. And they have so much spirit and go—and are so useful. Just look at all they do now—they have their charities and they sold Liberty Bonds and they lead such busy lives. They choose and think for themselves—oh, yes, I must say, I think the present-day girl is a fine specimen."

And Mrs. Mason, as she spoke her approval of the dashing young lady of the hour, was the picture of the quiet gentlewoman that is passing—out of style. She told of the society she knew, when as Miss Rebecca Stevenson she was a debutante in 1876.

"Smoking, of course, was not even thought of when I was a girl. But I think it is very silly to smoke—they tell me it discolors the teeth and the fingers. And the girls are so much more athletic than we ever were. Cricket was the great game for men. We would all go out to the Germantown Cricket Club and watch the matches, and the ones with England were the best.

"Society is much larger now than it used to be. Our parties were small. If 400 persons were at a party it was thought a huge ball, and now they have 1000 at a dance. Champagne was always served at the suppers—they did have fine suppers. Never, never, never would a girl take enough wine to affect her." The thought of the old etiquette books arose—the books that told a "lady" she should never refuse to have her glass filled with wine, but should never really drink it—merely touch it to the lips. This etiquette made prim little maidens, with delightfully stiff and correct manners.

Everything Peaceful in the Dear Old Days

"Everything is very rushed now—it used to be peaceful. The girls were sweet and dear then, and though we had chaperones, we really didn't need them. Of course," said Mrs. Mason whimsically, "we had our little affairs, and received our shares of flowers and proposals and all that sort of thing."

"The modern girl is a splendid type," Mrs. James Large said; "she is wonderfully self-reliant, and strong and healthy. She is as much at home in the kitchen as in the drawing room. Due to the servant problem, she knows more about housekeeping than we did when we were young."

Mrs. Large made her debut as Miss Ethel Page, daughter of S. Davis Page. She contends that the war had much to do with changing the attitude of the girls. The war and the automobile.

"With the war came a great change in the girls. Mostly every girl was engaged in some sort of war work—some asked for money in the streets for the Red Cross and Liberty Loan drives—some worked in hospitals and a great many girls took positions. All combined to make them independent and to give them a different outlook on things—restraint became unbearable. But I think that the automobile has made the greatest change of all.

"The automobile makes it practically impossible for the parents to chaperone their children. When we were debutantes there was no flying around the country in machines. It was not possible to race to two and three parties in the one night. Life is much swifter now—everything moves so quickly—it is rush, rush, rush.

"Smoking was never thought of—except, of course, in Europe, where, even then, women were smoking. The styles were simpler—we would wear little white muslin dresses to the dances—and the dances began much earlier.

"This talk of smoking and drinking is, I think, largely just talk. And the manners of the girl of today are as sweet as when we were girls—there were as many rude people then as now. It is this new independence that is the spirit of the age, differentiating it from a generation ago."

Mrs. Large is the president of the Colonial Dames of America, Chapter 2, of Philadelphia.

And Mrs. James Francis Sullivan is heartily in accord with Mrs. Large.

"The girls of today are as sweet, as well educated, as ambitious and as thoughtful as they were in my girlhood days. Of course, the desire for luxury and excitement is on the increase, but not to any alarming degree. That verse about girls

Standing with reluctant feet,
Where the brook and river meet,

is as true now as ever before. Girls are as timid, modest and reluctant now as they ever were.

Modern Life Is Hard on Debutante's Nerves

"There is much more doing in the big cities now, and it is hard on a debutante's nerves," and Mrs. Sullivan told of the parties they had then—dancing to the beautiful, graceful waltz—and she also told about sledding parties. Mrs. Sullivan was a deb in New York, Miss Lulu Nichols. And sledding parties are the vogue today—completing the cycle which the debutantes of years ago began. But picture the difference in the appearance of a sledding party then and now. Then the girls bundled up, with perhaps a flannel petticoat or so, and long trailing skirts acting like so many little brooms sweeping the snow along. And even when flying swiftly down a long hill, sitting on the sled the representation of a perfect lady. But now: Knickers and a big, woolly boy's sweater and a perky little hat—that's the rig for a sporty young lady of today—and there is more of the wild masculine than the perfect lady in her pose as she skims the surface of the snow."

Mrs. J. Willis Martin disposed of the question in her brisk, bright manner. She was Elizabeth Price.

"I can't say enough in favor of the modern girl—you will never see her sitting with her hands folded waiting for something to happen. She does so much—and is interested in so many things. Why I can call on any number of girls at any time to do work for me—social work or charity, or anything at all, and they are always willing to help. They dance more, but they do a lot more than the girls of my time did.

"Of course, they do smoke, and things like that, but that is entirely up to their parents. All I can say is that I think the modern girl is fine—great."

Mrs. Charles Stewart Wurts, who has the Friday Evening Dancing Class, and thus sets the younger set—the set supposed to be finish—contends that though smoking is almost universal, drinking among well-bred girls is practically unknown—in a great measure it is newspaper talk. She told of the time when she attended the Monday Evening Dancing Class as a member—when, as Miss Elizabeth Wister, she made her debut in 1886.

"The mothers always went to the Dancing class," she said, "and sat along the walls during the dance. There were no dinners or theatre parties before a dance. And we always wore white. For the assembly the dresses were white tulle, with a round neck, puffy sleeves and a sash, but for the ordinary dances we wore white muslin. And it was a great thing to have the sash and shoes match—red, that was the popular color."

Then Mrs. Wurts told a little secret of her debutante days. It was a feat of which to be proud—to dance through the slippers—actually to dance a hole in their sole. That was the test of popularity.

"While the girls now are much more athletic than we were, we had tennis and riding," continued Mrs. Wurts. "It was a great thing to go to watch cricket matches. We would go in coaches, carry our lunches and spend the day there. It was a pretty sight to see the boys talking to the girls in the coaches.

"The automobile has brought about a great change in conditions. When I was a debutante it was only possible to go to one place in the evening. It was a long, cold drive in a carriage. I think the girls of today have a gayer time—But, I doubt if they have a better time than we did.

Dancing Styles Were Prettier in Olden Days

"The dancing was different—graceful and pretty, and not so many cut-ins. This was much nicer for the boys, who could count on a complete dance with their partners. They would all line up and take their turns."

Wonder if the girls of 1890 would not have had a little thrill from a cut-in?

Mrs. Edward S. Dunn, who, as Margaret Shippen, was a bud of 1889, is also a great admirer of the modern girl.

"Much more is expected of the modern girl than ever was of us when we were girls," she says. "She has more liberty, but she is expected to know how to use it. She is able to take care of herself and stand on her own feet—but she has a lot of responsibility thrust on her.

"When I was a debutante it was bad form, very bad form, for a girl to drink anything intoxicating. There is more drinking now, but I truly think reports of it are greatly exaggerated. And, of course, this tearing around the country in motors at night is a very bad thing.

"I can notice more change in the boys than I can in the girls." Mrs. Dunn continued. "After being entertained, the boys used to pay party calls religiously. Their manners were infinitely better and little conventions were more strictly observed. Nowadays boys accept everything and give nothing. If they go to a dinner-dance they hardly bother to dance with the girls—and as for 'party calls,'" Mrs. Dunn smiled a smile that fully explained how passe was that call.

"I think the girls of today make excellent wives, when they finally marry. Usually they can keep house, and by the time they marry they have had so much entertaining and going around that they are willing to settle down. In the old days if girls didn't have the running around before they married they took it afterwards, and there you are."

Mrs. Joseph Price Tunis has grave doubts about the status of the girl of today.

"The smoking and drinking are shocking. Of course, most of the girls will puff a cigarette when they get a chance, but I think that the well-brought-up girls will not drink to any extent. Even when I was a debutante there was a sporty element, and probably there always will be.

"There is very little change in the parties now—we used to go to dances that were not over until 3 and 4 in the morning, but we never had breakfast served at dawn, as they do now. And we had card parties, though euchre was the game then—not bridge.

"The greatest difference between the girls of today and the girls of the year that I was a debutante is noticeable in their manners. It used to be the custom to say good-night to the hostess and express thanks for the pleasant time enjoyed, but today a great many young people slip out without a word.

"I admit that the girl today is more progressive and will get further on anything she starts. And there is one saving point about the modern girl. She settles down beautifully now as a wife—she can cook and manage a house splendidly. I once went to cooking class, when I was a debutante, and I went until I got indigestion from trying to eat what I cooked, then I stopped." And Mrs. Tunis laughed at the thought of herself, once Miss Annie Lee Rossell, and her adventures in the kitchen. "It takes too much time to be polite. There are very little consideration and manners now. And a girl today is so sophisticated. A girl of sixteen now is like one of twenty when I was a girl.

Modern Youth Spoiled by Paint and Powder

"The make-up the girls use nowadays is abominable," she went on. "And it is silly, too—why spoil youth by paint and powder? We were very strictly chaperoned. I don't believe I ever went to a party without a chaperone, but now all that is changed today."

What a contrast between the follies of the nineteenth century and those of 1922! And the miss of 1922 can see herself as others see her—others looking at her in comparison with the days when they were the debutantes.

But those who pine for the girl of long ago, dignified and sweet as a little quakeress can be grateful for memory. It has been said that God gave us memory so we could have roses in December—and the same memory can treasure, through the mist of gathering years, the soft, far-off strains of a dreamy waltz while actually listening to the hideous din of a jazz band. Memory can picture the dainty little lady of the last century, with her gentle voice and quiet ways, while one is looking at the modern miss, flinging around with cigarette and talking as loud as she can, acting as though she believed vulgarity were the spice of life.

MRS. CHARLES S. WURTS

MRS. J. WILLIS MARTIN

MRS. FREDERICK THURSTON MASON

In the Olden Days

In 1868 there were ten debutantes.

The girls were prettier and stayed pretty longer.

It was the test of popularity for the girl to wear a hole in her slipper at the dance.

The girls were always chaperoned—never went out alone.

It was not stylish to be late at the dances and dinners.

Hotel life was unknown—everything centered in the home.

The girls wore trains even on the street and silk dresses with round necks and puffy sleeves.

Never, never would a girl take enough wine to affect her; it was not proper to refuse it, but she merely touched it to her lips.

There were no automobiles and it was not possible to race to two or three parties in one night.

MRS. JAMES FRANCIS SULLIVAN