THE LITERARY DIGEST

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# THE "FLAPPER PROBLEM" IN THE NEWSPAPERS




The same general moral, that the greatest danger is to be found among girls of high-school age, is pointed by a series of widely advertised full-page articles in the Boston *Sunday Advertiser*. "The girl of fourteen is the problem of to-day," we are told, in large, black-faced letters, in the introduction to one of the pages of exposure and criticism. Among the "modern conditions" assigned as causes of trouble are:

"1. Auto 'pickups.'

"2. Modern dances and commercialized dance halls.

"3. Modern fashions.

"4. The pocket-flask habit, an outgrowth of prohibition.

"5. The occasional unclean movie.

"But the first blame is being placed on the mother—the child-girl's first guardian."

Dr. Kate W. Barrett, national president of the Florence Crittenton League, is quoted to this effect:

"When I began the work of the Florence Crittenton League for Unfortunate Girls, some forty years ago, the girl we had to deal with was the girl of twenty-eight or twenty-nine, who had taken the step quite deliberately, after some unfortunate experience. We rarely got girls younger than twenty-six. Then the age began to be lowered, until it was eighteen or twenty. But now it is the little girl of fourteen or fifteen who is the problem. For her, society is responsible.

"Parents and older folk are the natural guardians of youth. Beyond them, the community, the city, is responsible—responsible for the amusements, the temptations, the conditions generally that, outside the home, constitute the environment of the child.

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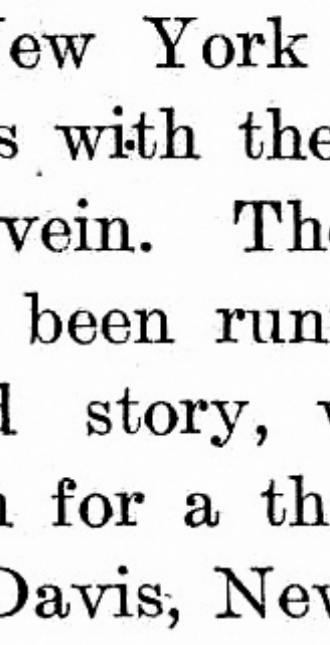
"I believe that those girls whose parents are unfit to give them the environment and training they should have should be taken from the parents and placed in good homes, where they will have the care and supervision they need.

"Girls are older, spiritually, than boys. A little girl of seven, or even less, will have thought as much of her future life, of babes, of marriage, and the home which she may one day have, as a boy of eighteen. But, physically, the boy develops much faster. For this reason the girl has not the reserve and poise she needs for her own defense. She responds to impulse too easily.

"I do not believe the present situation is the result of a wave of immorality—it is just a yielding to normal human impulse. The trouble is that older men—men of thirty or forty—are taking advantage of these little girls for base purposes. To stop this practise, the severest penalties should be imposed.

"The pitiless warfare between youth and old age has been going on ever since Adam and Eve first faced the problem of bringing up a family. Now youth has the upper hand. Youth is saying: 'Through all the past we have heard about the wisdom that goes with gray hairs. Gray hairs plunged the world into the carnage of war—and now look at the mess things are in. I don't believe Age knows so much after all.' And of parents youth says: 'Oh, they're hopelessly old-fashioned. They don't belong in the modern world.'"

This paper prints scores of letters and interviews, signed and unsigned, including numerous "confessions" of young girls, all pointing the general moral of Dr. Barrett's interview. The New York *American*, a Hearst paper, deals with the matter in a somewhat similar vein. The New York *Herald*, which has been running what it calls a "continued story, with modern mistakes of women for a theme," quotes Dr. Katherine B. Davis, New York Commissioner of Correction in the Mitchel administration, and Mrs. Evelyn Smith Tobey, resident director of the Carroll Club, with a membership of 6,000 working-girls and business women. Both these observers believe that, while present conditions may be a little worse than usual, they are "little more than a passing phase."



## SOME PROPOSED REMEDIES

Mrs. Tobey puts the cure of the situation largely up to the girls themselves. "The younger generation can not be handled and controlled as absolutely as they have been in the past," she says. "When we who are older place the responsibility for their conduct up to them, there is not likely to be any serious trouble." For the rest:

"It is the custom of some historians and publicists, and I think a very stupid one, to assume that all manner of excesses follow a war. This has a bad moral effect in itself and encourages the unbalanced in

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the belief that any conduct of theirs, no matter how outrageous, is to be condoned.

"It lets the young man off too easy, and besides that it places too much responsibility upon the young women, for at their doors is laid the responsibility for maintaining the moral standards. Once we can rid ourselves of such cant we shall be able to face calmly and squarely the problems of to-day."

President Wallace W. Atwood, of Clark University, Worcester, Mass., writes in strong approval of this general attitude of leaving the matter to the young folks themselves:

"In my judgment, based upon observations, the young people in the colleges are doing more to correct the customs which have led to the charge of 'indecency' and 'a shameless laxity' than any other group of people in American society.

"At one of the college dances here at Clark a member of the student committee made the announcement that no close dancing would be permitted on the floor. No further announcement has been necessary. Such customs depend upon the *esprit de corps*, and the sooner our girls and women learn that a man who is worthy of their admiration does not respect laxity in dress or action, the sooner these customs will be stamped out of American life."

Perhaps half of the several hundred recommendations received are summed up in a letter from President Gaines, of Agnes Scott College, Decatur, Ga. He suggests as remedies:

"First, the influence of the home. I am informed that in many places parents themselves indulge in modern dances. What can be expected of their daughters but to follow their example? I am also informed that frequently mothers approve of the way in which their daughters dress. Can we not secure the cooperation and influence of the home in correcting these deplorable evils?

"My second suggestion is to secure the influence of the press.

"My third suggestion is that the entire influence of religion shall be exerted against these great evils. I suggest that all church papers, the influence of the pulpits of all the churches, should be brought to bear against these evils.

"My fourth suggestion is to enlist the colleges. In the colleges of the country are the future leaders. If they can be enlisted even while they are in college they may be able to begin a crusade against these evils which will be most effective. Especially should this be true of the colleges for women.

"These four great centers of influence could do much toward creating a healthy public sentiment which would counteract the evils of which you speak—namely, the home, the press, the church, and the college."

The college press, by and large, consider it a hopeful sign that the movement for reform should come, as is the case in so many colleges, from the students themselves. The immediate methods may vary somewhat, but in scores of institutions, the student editors testify, various student governing associations have been able to do away with suggestive dancing and clothing. The Oberlin College *Review* states that the objectionable dances have

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been banned by the influence of the recreational director and some of the students. The daily *Nebraskan* says that they have not been bothered much by "the Eastern dances," but does admit that "the knee-length dresses of the modern girl have cast modesty from the dictionary," and says that recently some of the girls in the upper classes, "who are by no means the prudes at this school," at a large mass-meeting "passed resolutions to the effect that an era of simple dress for co-eds should be launched at Nebraska University," and advises:

"If our country is to return to normalcy again in regard to dress, we must not look on with a critic's eye and take on the guise of reformers, but we must wear sensible clothes ourselves. If we start this as the 'fad' of the day, it will not be long until everybody is wearing simple garments because it is 'being done.'"

At Minnesota, we are told by the editor of *The Minneapolis Daily*, methods of reform were adopted through the women's association, and the "situation is better than in many Western universities." It is true, says that editor, that antagonism was created among some of the more "tea-houndish" students, but that soon passed, and "I am proud to say that Minnesota is now a place where only respectable, non-suggestive dancing and clothing is permitted, not by faculty ruling, but by action of student opinion and the student body themselves." And further support is given to his pronouncement by the Minnesota *Alumni Weekly*, which brings out another method in dealing with such matters:

"The University of Minnesota solves a number of its social problems by maintaining its standards of scholarship so strictly that the student is kept pretty well under the yoke from the beginning of the college year up to the end."

The Mercersburg *Alumni Quarterly* reports the following action taken at that academy: "The dances at Mercersburg have been discontinued for the present. When the craze for 'jazz music' and 'cheek dancing' is over, when girls paint less and dress more, the dances will be resumed." The Columbia *Missourian* states that a ruling against objectionable dancing was made by the presidents of the local fraternities, and the enforcement is "up to the students." The Amherst *Student* takes the question up in a broadly philosophical manner, endeavoring to trace the cause and suggest the cure, in an editorial, entitled "Our Reply to Mrs. Grundy *et al*," which we quote in part:

"The world is becoming more and more conscious of a Demon, only lately sighted on the borders of civilization and now looming more and more conspicuously in our very midst. It is the Demon of Radical Reform. Its motto is 'Reform Everything' and its methods include exaggerated publicity and a conscious antagonism rather than a call for sane thinking.

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# "FLAPPER PROBLEM"

"The dancing of the present generation has certainly made rapid strides away from the minuet, and the conventions of the past, including that of dress, have not been slow to follow the minuet in its relegation to some well-hidden storehouse of mere memories.

"But are these tendencies separate features of a civilization which is otherwise unblemished? We offer a most emphatic denial. Rather are they the outstanding symptoms of some undiagnosed world-malady for which most conscious humans are seeking a remedy. It might well be described as a malady of uneasiness and restlessness. Its key-note is speed and its disciples are the exponents of 'pep.'

"The malady will not be wiped out with one blow, least of all by a blow from those who desire to change things in a minute. Radical Reform movements ofttimes place potent weapons in the hands of those who wish to see the world plunged still deeper into the mire. They serve only to antagonize and to generate a spirit of retaliation. Proposed Blue Laws have helped to promulgate increased Sunday festivities. They aim to blot out an evil and they increase it.

"What the world needs is not radical reform, but a breathing spell. Civilization has made rapid progress in the past few centuries. It can well afford to 'mark time' if by that means it can do away with the chaff which has accumulated as the result of too excessive speed. Modern tendencies, as exemplified in the charges made against current practises in colleges, will die a natural death or be relegated to an unimportant sphere if they are not aggravated but instead are modified by general concession as the result of inner realization of the need for change. The world-malady of uneasiness rests upon unstable ground. Its sudden upset by radical reform would do more harm than good, for it would disfigure the patient. It might better be subjected to the cure of sane living and thinking under the patient doctoring of Time."

The Cornell *Sun* considers that there's no use in trying to make the modern youngsters submit to the ideas of their predecessors, for—

"If Cornell is an astute judge, she will conclude that any 'solution' lies along evolutionary rather than reformative lines. The modern male youth will not submit to being put to bed at a designated hour, nor will the modern young lady accept any statutory limitations on the length of her skirt or the airiness of her hose. But both parties are always open to new influences—to slightly more pleasing music and slightly more artistic apparel. The girl who depends for her charm solely on her purely physical attractiveness does, inevitably, get the best results by wearing the least clothing. And the male who depends for a good time on the purely physical enjoyment of the hirsute horn orchestra does, inevitably, find the greatest pleasure in the most uncouth music. But these persons do not compose modern society, and all alike are open to the refining influences which subtler music and tidier dress can bring. The person who can do most toward raising the general tone of modern society is he who can write and appreciate good dance-music and he who can design and approve fine clothes."

The Smith College *Monthly* writes that Smith College students have taken a decided stand in favor of dress reform and are conducting a vigorous campaign against

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immodest clothing. In an editorial in that paper an attempt is made to explain the "petting" youngsters in a way both kindly and keen:

"So long as the older generation 'views with alarm,' so long will the younger generation glory in its naughtiness and invent prodigious reasons.

"The real reason is, I believe, simply this: young people are forced by the exigencies, customs, and inventions of modern life — such as newspapers, magazines, 'movies,' telephones, and facilitated modes of travel—to be cognizant at an early age of the world about them. Formerly, the family was a child's world till he left it for the larger one of school or business; nowadays, he comes in contact with persons, facts, and problems not at all connected with family affairs almost as soon as he can read and can run about by himself. He has to make up his mind for himself by himself; and he early learns the value of experiment.

"Young men and women discover and face the idea of love by themselves; they experiment in that as in other things—not reckless, as is commonly supposed, but cautious.

"As for remedy—well, gone long ago are the days when an evil might be checked by crying 'Wicked!' Passing now is the detracting influence of 'Danger!' and coming soon, I hope, the days when the only warning necessary will be 'Foolish!' The 'wild young people of to-day' are not fools, and do not want to be considered so. They will change their ways as soon as they have proved to themselves that their ways are—not wrong, not dangerous, but—unnecessary."



## "THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH THE GIRL OF TO-DAY"

A thoroughgoing optimist appears, ready to try conclusions with practically every real pessimist on the girl question. "There is nothing wrong with the girl of to-day," asserts the Dean of Women of Northwestern University, and she finds plenty of authorities, with excellent opportunities for observation, who agree with her. Several critics, not satisfied with denying the allegation that we are experiencing "an immorality wave," declare that, in spite of much talk and certain appearances, the younger generation of to-day is actually better, "more clean-minded and clean-lived," than its predecessors." Such is the view of President Sills, of Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine, who writes:

"Ever since the time of Horace at least each generation has thought the succeeding generation worse than anything that has gone before, in manners and morals, and in criticising the youth of the present day we ought, I think, to keep this in mind. It is my opinion that the influence, to quote from your letter, "exercised upon our young people by some of the new dances and the costumes worn by those attending them" is much more patent on the side of manners than on the side of

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morals. The undergraduate of the present day is, I am sure, as good as any of his predecessors, probably more clean-minded and clean-lived. If he can be taught to avoid what is vulgar and cheap, and also be made to see that some of the new dances are very silly, some good might result."

"There has been some gain for women in the newer modes of dress which give them greater freedom of action and tend to better health," President Wilbur, of Stanford University, points out. "The oncoming generation will have grown accustomed to the exposure of limbs and neck and will not react as does the passing generation." President Smith, of Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Va., after admitting that abuses of the freer modern manners may have occurred, presents the following considerations which, he says, "may serve to comfort those inclined to pessimism":

"1. Ignorant innocence is not true purity nor is prudery true modesty. Freedom of intercourse and constant association of boys and girls does not increase but rather diminishes sex-consciousness and immorality. And I have long since come to the conclusion that the suggestiveness of any mode of dress disappears entirely as soon as we become thoroughly accustomed to it. To the orthodox Persian a woman's uncovered face is shamelessly indecent and suggestive.

"2. I have spent a lifetime in onstant association with young people, and I am fully convinced that, surprizing as it may seem, in view of present social laxity, the level of sexual morality is higher to-day than formerly in those localities with which I am familiar.

"3. The present dancing mania and general social laxity is probably a passing 'craze,' due to exceptional present conditions, which is already awakening universal condemnation, and like most epidemics will prove temporary and self-limited."

Faith in the rising generation is also expressed in the letter of Preceptress Mary A. M. Gardner, of Bartlett Hall, Ripon College, Ripon, Wis. Mrs. Gardner, who is also associate professor of economics in her institution, writes:

"The opinions of many of the faculties indicate a sad lack of faith in young people. The mere fact that a certain member of the faculty is easily shocked, or has exprest abhorrence for jazz and modern dances, only arouses antagonism in the minds of the students and a desire to show them something that will shock them. Is that not just what we should expect? Is it not true to human nature?

"It seems to me that no one should attempt to handle or discuss this problem with the young people who does not dance themselves; I include the modern dances. They will then be in a position to understand the lure of the rhythm of jazz and the modern dances. Then, and only then, are they equipped to express opinions on these subjects. It is just as feasible to expect a person to teach mathematics who has never worked a problem in mathematics as it is to suppose that one who has never danced is qualified to issue ultimata on dancing.

"Remember that young people are full of life; that it is natural that they should

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want to dance; that they want sympathy and encouragement to do the right thing and not harsh criticism; do not try to make them what you were when you were young."

Both President Kolbe, of the Municipal University of Akron, O., and President Felmley, of the Illinois State Normal University, find that "The problem of indecent dancing is as old as dancing itself," that the present-day young people are "morally sound as a class," and are contributing to the passing of certain "ungraceful and indecent forms of the dance." A score of college presidents, speaking chiefly for their own communities, declare that conditions are either normal or better than the average. "Moral conditions in this community are unusually wholesome," writes President Gray, of Bates College, Lewiston, Me. "We feel that our situation here is quite satisfactory," testifies Professor Hitchcock, Chairman of the Committee on Student Affairs of the University of North Dakota. The College of Industrial Arts, of Denton, Tex., says President Bralley, prescribes a uniform dress for all students under thirty years of age, and it is his opinion that "the ideals, the ambitions, and the moral fiber" of the young women students "are as sound and as free of improprieties and wrong-doing as those of any group of young women of ten, twenty, or more years ago in this country." President Apple, of Hood College, Frederick, Md., says that "our dances are completely free from the objectionable form so much complained of," and practically the same statement is made by President Crossfield, of Transylvania College, Lexington, Ky.; President Woods, of the University of Maryland; President Sisson, of the University of Montana; President Penrose, of Whitman College, Walla Walla, Wash.; Mrs. Una B. Herrick, Dean of Women of the Montana State College; Henry A. Buchtel, Chancellor Emeritus of the University of Denver; President Blodgett, of Adelphi College, Brooklyn, N. Y.; and President Morgan, of Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pa. "In my opinion," writes President Maney, of the University of Kentucky, "there has been a change for the better in the last year and a half," and President Upham, of the University of Idaho, agrees that "already the reaction seems to have set in." President Upham adds:

"In the present concern over the dances our young people are dancing and the costumes they are wearing I am reassured by the fact that all the complaints we hear to-day, and many more, have been uttered by English essayists and other writers of satire for centuries past. These offenses against decorum appear to have come in century-long cycles, always accompanying a general liberalism in thought and action—including various forms of emancipation for women."

Two of the most outright, authoritative, and widely circulated statements in defense of the morals of the present generation are credited to Chancellor James R. Day,

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Syracuse University, and Prof. Franklin H. Giddings, Professor of Sociology in Columbia. Professor Giddings was quoted in the introduction to this article, and Chancellor Day, whose views are set forth in a symposium conducted by the New York *World*, takes a similar stand. There may have been "changes of standards," he admits, but "there is no more immorality among the young than there was a quarter of a century ago." He is quoted further:

"Dresses to-day are a bit short and filmy. Dancing is a trifle bizarre. But these facts do not constitute a grave problem. I do not favor more than reasonable restrictions on the conduct of young people.

"Syracuse University is a Methodist institution and formerly forbade dances, with the consequence that the students went to places in the city where they could dance. The rule against college dances has been abrogated now."




## COLLEGE EDITORS IN DEFENSE OF THE MODERN GIRL

If some college student editors have taken the lead in speaking harshly to and about the short-skirted, free-acting, free-talking girl of to-day, others of the youthful brotherhood present defenses equally pungent and pointed. Thus *The Tartan*, the newspaper of the Carnegie Institute of Technology at Pittsburgh, rises up to defend the girl of to-day:

"Just at present it seems to be the custom for every college paper to take a slam at the girls. It would appear that the younger generation is going to rack and ruin unless a halt is called in the terrible downward trend of the fashions. No ray of hope lightens the gloom which is, in the minds of most of our contemporaries, descending upon our colleges in the form of an assurance that all the young women are going from bad to worse. They not only wear clothes which would shock the most sophisticated of a few years back, but they dance—well, they dance simply awful.

"Of course girls are wearing shorter skirts than they have ever worn before. But what wholesome, clean-minded man would not rather see a woman in a sane, short skirt, with plenty of freedom to move as nature intended she should, than in one of the 'sheath' creations which emphasized her every contour while hobbling her movements almost beyond endurance, sweeping the ground in an attempt to trip her at every step. And yet we are supposed to have become so much more immodest with the innovation of the sensible short skirt.

"Yet the gentler sex must be reformed before it is too late, say our virtuous youth. We have attended several dances during the last week, and no shocking décolletées were noticed except possibly on matrons who should have known better. The débutantes were even conservative in their manner of covering the throat.

"Dancing has progressed far from the day of the waltz and two-step, it is true. One seldom sees anything but fox-trots, and few of them are danced alike. The

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'shimmy' is spoken of quite heatedly, but we have never seen it carried to the extremes which others rave about, and we have attended not a few parties which were said to have been just a trifle rough. And in the case of regular campus dances, it is almost never attempted at all. The regular fox-trot, with its comparatively quick time and movement, can never compare with the slow, dreamy, clinging waltz for effects on the emotions. Still, we must be reformed.

"The girls of the present day are as good as, and as bad as, the girls of any generation. They have their fads and foibles as their mothers had before them and as their children will have after them. But, as a whole, they are just a little more sensible, we think, a little more frank and honest with themselves and with their friends, and a little more able to take care of themselves without any preaching from the smug members of the opposite sex than they have ever been before."

The Columbia *Spectator*, of Columbia University, New York, speaks for the metropolitan college:

"The day is past when trusting parents confine their offspring to convents and monasteries, bringing them forth in due season, mature, worldly innocent, unsophisticated, and still none the less educated. Living as the college student of to-day does, in the heart of New York, Chicago, Boston, or San Francisco, in direct touch with city life—in fact, a part and parcel of it—that the scholar should conduct himself any differently from those about him is impossible.

"When the student—and in this article everything which we say refers to both college men and college women—arrives at college—he comes with a pretty well-defined moral code. While higher education undoubtedly results in greater tolerance, nothing which is learned in any college can cause a general upheaval of ideals. If these same perplexed educators and harassed parents will urge the laying of the proper foundations in the home, if the proper example is set for the youth up to his sixteenth birthday, he is pretty apt to come through his four college years unscathed despite any extramural courses he may pursue. In the main, college students lead as clean, sane, and wholesome a life as is conceivable, and the cry that is going up now, with the impending tragedy which is implied, is only a repetition of the furor created when toes first began to peek from beneath the flowing skirts of colonial dames."

The *Spectator's* colleague, the Columbia *Jester*, with the liberty traditionally permitted to cap and bells, declares that it stands—

"Unequivocally and irrevocably for the continuance of 'petting' as a national institution, in order to guarantee sufficient contributions to bring out one magazine a month. We fail to take a more serious view of the situation, because we feel that the situation exists largely in the minds of bloodthirsty reformers and copy-by-the-inch hounds. They always have and they always will—which refers to fretting as well as petting."

The Wisconsin *Alumni Magazine* thinks that, as far as costumes are concerned, if a skeptic will attend a school-teachers' convention, a gathering of the League of

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Women Voters, or a mothers' meeting, he will be convinced that teachers, practical politicians, and mothers do not neglect fashion any more than do the college girls. "The controlling factor, after all, in the matter of dress as well as in the dances themselves here is a wholesome democratic student sentiment which, while not prudish, does not tolerate offensive extremes. . . . If one is disposed to long for the grand old days of the stately minuet and the mirthful quadrille, such longing will continue with him if he comes to this institution, for we have modern jazz here in generous quantities. Doubtlessly, too, there are some critics of these dances who are almost as severe as were the early critics of the modern waltz."

Improvement is reported from some of the large Eastern universities. We are informed by the editor of the Cornell *Alumni News* that "the dancing at Cornell is not particularly bad, by comparison, at least. Certainly seems cleaner than that of last year, with its 'jowl dance,' etc. I don't believe the colleges can do much on this. The Cornell man who tried to clean up a metropolitan dance hall by dancing in his accustomed manner would have the chance of the proverbial raisin in home-brew." The Yale *Daily News*, in discussing the Yale Promenade that took place early in the year, says that—

"From every side comes comment not only that a 'pleasant time was had by all,' but that the pleasant time was achieved without the assistance of abnormal accessories. Thus the guns of caustic criticism loaded with gossip and sighted by supercilious lorgnettes have been abruptly silenced.

"Conditions in regard to dancing, costumes, and other objectionable features were far better than they have been for some years. Possibly this is an indication of the inevitable reaction to the social excesses which have been prevalent since the war."

The Princeton *Pictorial* informs us that with President Hibben, Mrs. Gerould, Mrs. Trowbridge, and Scott Fitzgerald, all of Princeton, leaders in the crusade against the "modern degradation" of youthful society, that university has become "a prominent battle-field upon which the youngsters and oldsters are fighting it out." From one Eastern college an editor writes us, with a touch of melancholy, that "in our small, conservative college nothing of the sort exists. We continue to dance quite conventionally at our drab New England social affairs." This vigorous summing up by a champion of modernity appears in the Ohio State University *Sun Dial:*

"Too much concern is being manifested over these matters of dress and dancing. They are no more a problem to-day than they were fifty years ago. It is unfair and impossible to generalize on their effect. They are solely questions of individual reaction. The weak will be weak and the strong will be strong, whether few clothes or many are worn, whether the prevailing dance is the waltz or the toddle. Chastity

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is not the difference between a dress six inches and a dress sixteen inches from the ground, nor is it the measure of the intervening cubic feet of atmosphere between two dancers. Some of the most moral ages were those in which relatively few clothes were worn, while, if we know our history, the costume ages have often been among the most vicious. This outcry is merely another phase of that philosophy which casts a glamour over the past, attributing to it the absolute in splendor and virtue, and toward which all things of the present are as dross."

Two of the largest and best-known women's colleges in the East, Wellesley and Byrn Mawr, reply that their own dances have given them little concern, since, in the words of Wellesley's director of publicity, "objectionable and extreme dances are so comparatively rare."



## JOURNALISTS AND AUTHORS WHO SEE NO "MORAL DECLINE"

"Salvation this new generation doubtless needs—like every other. But it has its virtues and they are large ones, we are convinced—candor, frankness, sincerity, seriousness of purpose, for a few items." So an editorial writer in the New York *Tribune* takes issue with the present "prophets of evil" in the social world. Dante, who died six hundred years ago, a correspondent of the New York *Herald* observes, predicted that a time would soon come—

"When from the pulpit shall be loudly warn'd
The unblushing dames of Florence, lest they bare
Unkerchief'd bosoms to the common gaze."

It is all a very old matter, agrees Winifred Kirkland in *The Outlook*, this "scrimmage between next-door generations." It may be important to keep up the scrimmage, too, for—

"To let every era suppose it is inventing the very newest thing in revolutions is history's way of safeguarding her stability. The emancipation of women will have to travel a long way before it gets as far as Deborah had already arrived in the neighborhood of 1200 B.C. Freedom of speech between the sexes is a custom so recurrent that one hesitates to call attention to the robust dialog of the youths and maidens of Shakespeare or of Fielding. License to-day has still much to learn from the Court of Charles II., and is any one so illiterate as to fancy that all the lords and ladies who danced at those mad balls were on the further side of sixteen? Sixteen was an age considered fully mature in those days, and for long and long afterward. In fact, it is only within the last forty years that we have tried forcibly to extend the age of infancy, possibly quite against nature. It is not Shakespeare or his audience, but ourselves, who would have considered Juliet precocious. In

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passing, it may be noted that Juliet's balcony had many advantages over the 3 A.M. roadster, notably the constant menace of the nurse's appearing as chaperon when there is no longer any chaperon to circumvent, a great deal of zest is sacrificed. The strongest argument for keeping up all the appearances of convention is that each incoming generation may have something against which to revolt.

"Among history's most incessant repetitions is the conviction of all adolescence that it is staging something brand new in the matter of sophistication. For several thousand years no boy has come to twenty years without believing himself more knowing than his poor dear father in all respects, but especially in his insight into the heart of woman; and for an even longer period no girl has ever reached sixteen without conceiving herself cleverer than her mother in manipulating the hearts of men. Yet the relations of the sexes are so hoary with antiquity that it is highly improbable that any youth has found out anything about women unknown to Solomon, who had a thousand specimens for experiment, and equally uncertain whether the very youngest débutante of 1921 will find any methods of popularity in which Cleopatra had not anticipated her."

Professor Giddings's defense of our contemporary moral tone, even tho it may not be precisely the moral tone affected by our grandparents, finds particular favor with the New York *Morning Telegraph* and *World*. "Perhaps it takes no extraordinary amount of courage to state a truth so obvious to well-poised persons," says *The Telegraph*, referring to the statement that present-day morality is quite up to the average level, "but at the same time we extend the thanks of the community to Professor Giddings." "A heretic to moral reform," *The World* calls the Professor, in an ironical editorial approving his ideas. Gertrude Atherton, the novelist, writing in *The Forum*, is similarly indignant with traducers of the new social freedom. "Take it all in all, it seems to me that if the United States of America is conquered by internal or external enemies," she writes, "it will not be from bad morals but smug stupidity." An editorial writer in *The Nation* also has this fear that we will be injured, not by immorality growing out of relaxed manners, but rather by the reaction that is likely to follow our present little taste of frankness and naturalness in the social relationships. Taking a historical view, he says:

"The rank and file of the virtues have not greatly changed, so far as we can see, during the comparatively few years in the life of the race over which the memory of man runs. All that appears is a certain pendulum swing from one repression or indulgence to another, reaction setting in whenever the virtues or vices of an age begin to bore it. Instead of repining that the present generation is unmitigably naughty, we observe that drunkenness throughout the world is pretty certainly on the decline and that the improving status of women bids fair to make them able to look out for themselves—a condition which we candidly prefer to all the chivalry that ever was invented. What worries

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us is not the age itself but the fear that its hilarities portend a reaction in the direction of insipid, smug propriety."

THE LITERARY DIGEST



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