

The Debutante Game in Los Angeles

Hollywood's Beauties Are Not Far Away, and Society Buds In the City of the Angels Must Hold Up Their Heads And Offer Good Competition For a Place in the Public Eye



Rowena Thom... A rose is named for her. (Ray Huff Studios photo.)



Louise MacFarland... A crack tennis player. (Maryland Studios photo.)



Virginia MacFarland... will celebrate her debut with a trip to Europe. (Maryland Studios photo.)



Alice McReynolds... came out at a dinner dance in the Berkeley Square mansion of her parents. (Curtis Biltmore Studios photo.)



Elsie Jane Myrick... Last to come out, she was launched in a blaze of glory. (Curtis Biltmore Studios photo.)

SOCIETY

Most persons in Los Angeles and its surrounding towns would say, "What is it?" Because society here is comparatively unimportant.

There was a time when Los Angeles society flourished. It had its recognized leaders, its own "four hundred," its own annual crop of debutantes. And its parties were looked upon as outstanding events on the social calendar. Then the movies came along and picked Hollywood as the center of the motion picture industry.

With that the "royal four hundred" were shoved roughly into the background—where they have been ever since, while the spotlight of attention and fame beams continually upon the celebrities of filmland.

Of course the California city still has its crop of debutantes who "come out" annually. But they are limited in number and their coming-out parties interest only their own set. The charming young things in Los Angeles can't begin to compete with their sisters in New York, Boston, Chicago or other eastern and middle-western cities from the viewpoint of local standing. In those cities coming-out parties are the highlights of the season's social functions and hundreds of thousands of dollars are expended to make them the talk of the town.

But east is east and west is west—and the two just can't be compared. In the east, homes of the socially prominent families are pointed out with pride as places of interest to visitors. Around Los Angeles it is different. The socially prominent aren't so prominent. It is the mansions of movie stars that Angelenos point out and that visitors want to see.

AND as for the social functions—the most elaborate coming-out festival for a debutante does not compare with an ordinary party that a movie star will give for a few friends. An entertainment Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks may give for some prince, duke, lord or other European nobleman, far overshadows anything the social elite have to offer.

Then, too, there is the lack of public interest such as is exhibited in high society functions in other cities. Readers of society pages in Los Angeles newspapers aren't interested in parties given by the "four hundred." They want to read about some big affair in filmland.

Again it is the gigantic film studios that have robbed southern California society of possible recruits. Social buds from eastern cities who migrate here don't care to continue being pretty society girls and do nothing but attend endless rounds of parties and afternoon teas. They want to do something—so they turn to the movies.

Eleanor Patterson, daughter of one of Chicago's leading families, came to Los Angeles about two years ago and immediately signed a motion picture contract. Sue Carol, known in Chicago society as Evelyn Lederer, came to Hollywood and soon afterwards embarked upon a movie career that has made her famous. And only recently Virginia Cherrill turned her back upon society to become Charlie Chaplin's leading lady.

Those are only a few instances. There are many others which might be cited. In Los Angeles and its suburbs, in fact throughout southern California, the movies came first and society a bad second.

HOWEVER, though they lack a recognized leader, the small circle of society folk in Los Angeles still cling to the regulations laid down years ago—many of them dating back to the old Spanish families who first settled the southern part of California. Their daughters make their bows into society at coming-out parties just as formally, if not as extravagantly, as they do in other cities.

It is said that coming-out parties in many sections of the country cost the fathers of the debutantes as much as \$50,000. In southern California one-third of that sum is considered a lot of money to spend on a single social event. But then not a single one of the Los Angeles debutantes is rated as heiress to a fortune running into eight figures.

This season the girls came out as usual—after years of preparation in convents, exclusive finishing schools both here and in the east. And, for some, a trip through Europe. This season's crop of debutantes is small, amazingly so when com-

pared with the number in other cities, seven in all composing the entire group. And three of them reside in Pasadena, about 12 miles distant.

Making out invitation lists for coming-out functions in Los Angeles is a comparatively simple matter. Yet in some places the guest roster is the most complicated of all matters pertaining to the big events. No one must be invited who does not belong, but neither can anyone be neglected who should receive an invitation.

In Los Angeles everybody in the "four hundred" knows practically everyone else so it is just a question of inviting friends. There is no leader to dictate social procedure such as is done, for example, by Miss Sarah E. Burnham, who is looked upon as the czar of Detroit society.

ANOTHER great advantage of being a Los Angeles debutante—even though little attention is given such a social light—is the ease with which the man problem is solved. A number of scions of wealthy eastern families have come west to make their way and of course they are welcomed, not only as dancing partners for the young belles but also as prospective husbands.

Then, too, the social regulations which govern the "four hundred" are freer than they are in many other places. Consequently the bars are down to young men who would be barred from the social circles of some cities.

Any upright young man who comes from a good family, regardless of his financial standing, is considered a fit companion for the daughters of the social elite. And these heiresses-to-be often have preferred these poorer men to the youths of their own set when it came time to take their marriage vows.

Such recognition being given to the work-a-day men is, no doubt, due partly to the fact that many of the men now listed in the social blue book were penniless when they first struck Los Angeles. Men who, by hard work and some luck, have amassed sizable fortunes. You do not have to be born into Los Angeles society. In fact, few persons are born into anything in this city—they all come here from some other place. The social register is always open to the person who deserves a place and has the proper financial standing—unless that person is in the motion picture industry.

There was a great furor aroused in Los Angeles a few years ago when the editor of the "blue book" announced that she would exclude the names of all film people. The screen folk themselves, having never mingled much in society principally because they preferred their own crowd, were not greatly worried about the edict. But out of it has come a wide division between the movie colony and so-called society.

One of the most exclusive country clubs in Pasadena has even gone so far as to exclude motion picture persons from its membership. That rule has been in effect for years and there is little chance of it ever being repealed.

AND now let's get down to a few of the coming-out affairs—all of them parties that were talked about months beforehand and will be discussed for some months to come by the small circle called "society."

The highlight of the entire group of events was the elaborate dance at which Mr. and Mrs. Fred C. Fairbanks, of Fairbanks

scale fame, introduced their daughter, Cornelia, into the social ranks. Miss Fairbanks, by the way, is a granddaughter of the late Charles W. Fairbanks who was vice president of the United States during Theodore Roosevelt's second term from 1905 to 1909.

More than 200 guests attended the reception for Miss Fairbanks, which was held at one of the city's most exclusive country clubs. Several thousand dollars was spent for decorations alone for this party, but when the job was finished the ballroom was declared the most beautiful it has ever been. A few more thousands went for the full-course dinner which was served. Another thousand was expended for the Pacific coast's best orchestra, which played the latest "hits" until the wee small hours of the morning.

Then, of course, there were the highly expensive engraved invitations and numerous other items. All in all, Cornelia's father must have felt a bit dizzy when the whole affair was over and he commenced checking up the bills.

But dizzy though the elder Fairbanks may have been, his daughter was not a bit behind him when the last guest departed and she went home to take off her very expensive new party gown. For weeks preparations were being made for her coming out. This thing and that thing had to be done until by the time the guests started to arrive Miss Fairbanks was on the verge of being a nervous wreck. And then she had to stand and be formally introduced to people whom she had known more or less intimately for years.

In addition there was an endless round of afternoon teas, bridge parties, dances and social benefits, some of which were enjoyable and some bore some, but all of which required a lot of time. And not only Cornelia Fairbanks but all of the other debutantes were forced to suffer through the same procedure.

ERSKINE PEMBROKE THOM, one of Los Angeles' leading realtors—which gives him prominence in a large class since California real estate men are thicker than ears in a cornfield—must have had to sell a good many lots to pay the expenses of launching his daughter, Rowena, into society.

Thom's pet hobby is raising roses and his beautiful estate is covered with practically every conceivable species of them. Hundreds of these flowers were used in decorating the fashionable Wilshire Country Club for Miss Rowena's coming-out party, with Rowena roses—a new species named for her—predominating.

The affair itself rivaled that of Miss Fairbanks for elaborate-

ness. As for the guests, practically the same ones attended all of the functions at which the belles of southern California made their debuts.

Nineteen-year-old Suzanne Stephens, daughter of Moye Wickes Stephens, a prominent attorney who handles the legal affairs for some of the largest corporations in Los Angeles, was another of the chosen few who made their initial bows into society at brilliant parties—at a cost of some thousands of dollars to their fathers.

It is estimated that nearly \$100,000 was spent by fond parents to give their daughters fitting introductions to the "four hundred" this season in Los Angeles alone.

Dr. and Mrs. Robert Phillips McReynolds formally introduced their daughter, Alice, into society a few weeks ago with a much-talked-of dinner dance in their Berkeley Square mansion.

The Wilshire and Midwick Country Clubs have come to be the favorite places for coming-out parties during the last few years but some of the families still prefer to stage the affairs in their own homes.

Dr. McReynolds, in addition to being a physician of considerable note, is president and treasurer of Coulter's store in Los Angeles. He married Frances Coulter, daughter of the store's founder and herself a Los Angeles debutante a generation ago.

AN INTERESTING sidelight to this year's debutantes is the fact that mothers of three of them—the Misses Thom, Stephens and McReynolds—made their bows into society in this city during the same season a generation ago. And all have been close friends ever since.

Mr. and Mrs. Hugh M. MacFarland helped the debutante game along when they introduced their daughters, Virginia and Louise, into the social circle at a huge and formal party a short time ago. In celebration of their daughters' coming-out the entire family will soon leave for an extended tour of Europe. Louise, who is an ardent tennis follower and considered one of the best feminine players in Pasadena, expects to compete in several tournaments at Nice in the spring.

Completing the list of debutantes for this season and the last one to have her coming-out party is Elsie Jane Myrick, daughter of Nathaniel W. Myrick, secretary and treasurer of the Consolidated Pipe Co.

Elsie Jane's "big event" may have been the last of the season but it was by no means the least. Nothing was spared to make it a success and the young girl was introduced amid a blaze of glory, extravagant favors for the guests and beautiful surroundings.

And now that Los Angeles' buds have come out, what are they going to do? Marry, probably, and until then keep in the game of society as it is played in the city whose social glory is eclipsed by the glamor of Movieland.