

March 20, 1921

Dear Mother, Father, and Pete:

Perhaps there are certain peculiarities about women's colleges, Pete, but one of them is that we have real college spirit. One of the splendid peculiarities of Vassar is that we have perspective in judging non-academic activities. We have a field in which native artistic ability can be manifested, dramatics; one in which native physical skill can be manifested; and one in which native brain power can be manifested. And the splendid part of it is that we glorify them all and give them equal prominence and that we do not fall into the sad error of men's colleges and turn out by the thousands for a football game and by the tens for a debate! It is a very commendable fact to realize that the whole Students' Building was filled last night, even the gallery, which means that a great many faculty and practically the entire college except those who were away for the week-end, were at the debate. And if you could have heard the cheering and the songs which Vassar sang to Smith and Smith to Vassar I think you would have realized that the audience goes to the debate in a spirit of interest and appreciation rather than in a state of boredom. I hope you are duly squelched. As Professor Riley said when he was a judge in class debate, one of the most splendid things to him about a women's college in contrast to a men's college was that we emphasise the student as well as the athlete, and that very often we have them combined in the same girl. I hope you digest the above discourse!

I wish I had time to write more about the debate, but when I think of the work I have to do for tomorrow I shiver. I was in a state of terrible suspense throughout the main speeches, because Peggy Bliss and the team had all told me to sit in the first row and take notes for full force, because if Minerva's voice shouldn't last throughout her speeches I would have to take the rebuttal! Inasmuch as she was the last speaker on our side, I had a long time to wait! But she managed all right, although she did lack pep. I imagine that was due to the precarious state of her voice. Altogether the debate was disappointing. We were not good, but Smith was decidedly worse. There was little humor on our side and no pep at all. But Smith was pitiful. They were very inflexible. They had their three speeches, and they gave them as they had practiced weak for a negative. Their second speaker was scared stiff. She sounded like a high-school speaker who had memorized everything she had to say. She got up to speak in rebuttal, said about ten words, then quickly said, "I'm sorry", and beat it off the stage. The third girl got up and took her place and Dr. B. went scooting out after her. She finally came back and took the third speech, but did it very poorly. We won[sic] by a two to one decision. More about that again. We went over to Senior Parlor and talked with each other and the judges till Midnight. It was very interesting. I had to sit on the sofa between Miss Thompson and Miss Ellory and one removed from Mrs. MacCracken! Prexie was there and as usual talked a lot.

Miss Palmer's tea and the debate dinner were moderately enjoyable.

The team sent the alternates very cute diminutive corsages and when I thanked Minerva, she said[sic], "Well, that certainly is the least we could do for you. We could not have won the debate without you". And I really think it is the truth because I flatter myself on having opened their eyes to quite a lot the last two days. I know I gave them a very stiff fight yesterday and the day before, even though it was mostly bluff. Helen sent me a beautiful big corsage of violets and red roses. I feel like main speaker instead of first alternate!

Just received your telegram, Pete. I take back all the mean things I said in the first paragraph, since you seem to have gone to the debate.

Love,

Fannie