

CHARACTER SKETCHES.

NO. 8.

WE have considered in these columns the nervous girl, and the girl who has an insatiable longing for masculine society, and we have, in passing, glanced at other girls; but we have not as yet, discussed the vapid girl with a frappe brain who is continually talking about "society" when she ought to be trying to piece out her most imperfect education with some plain bits of information, or else doing her share of the family sewing, or washing dishes in the kitchen.

My model for this class is a very pretty girl I knew a few years ago in a southern city about twice the size of Lincoln. COURIER readers who follow me to the end of this sketch may conjecture that the absence of proper material at home furnishes at least one good reason why I have gone to another city for a typical representative of a much too numerous class.

If there is any one word more offensive than another to cultured people it is "society" as it is used in a sickeningly patronizing way by extremely callow youths and immature young women. Society to these frizzled brain persons means, not fellowship in a broad and elevated circle or community, but has to do only with "our set," and its altogether frivolous and inconsequential comings and goings. The girl who receives "gentleman callers," goes to the theatre and an occasional party, belongs to a "club" or two, and chatters nonsense with much regularity, has all the qualifications for "society." She is wholly devoted to it, and she cannot see beyond the borders of her own set; albeit she has a most lofty contempt for those wretched persons who are not in "society;" who must perforce, find their pleasure in study, or in literary or musical pursuits; who are not educated up to the point where they can understand and appreciate the idle gossip of a set of silly men and women, or enjoy its puerile entertainments. The men of "our set" are, if anything, worse than the women. A woman who is daft on five o'clock teas and "parties" and "society" is bad enough; but a grown man in this land of pure and bracing air whose sole interests are in the ball room and the absurd doings of his particular section of "society," has a very slight reason for existence. He would do well to take a nap and forget to wake up. It is hardly to be wondered at that healthy men and women with intellects above the level of bon-hons and after-dinner coffee cups experience a feeling a nausea when they hear the inane babbling of these younglings about "society," and it is not strange that this word as now used has fallen into disfavor among people to whom society means something altogether different from "our set" and its nonsense.

The young lady under consideration, was, as I have already remarked, pretty, and on first acquaintance she sometimes made a very favorable impression. Two or three meetings disclosed her shallowness. The most commonplace question outside of her petty "society" interests would sound the bottom of her intelligence. She seldom talked of anything save "society," and she gave to this subject an importance that was most amusing. What, to her, were the latest tidings from Europe as to the probability of a continental war, or information as to the probable majority in congress on the silver bill or the tariff, or the price of wheat, or the progress of social science, or any kindred subject, beside the all absorbing question as to what Minnie's new dress was trimmed with, or who took Jenny to the theatre, or the date of the next reception! She never opened a newspaper except to turn to the "society" column, and I do not think she could have told whether the president of the United States was a democrat or a republican, or whether the next day would be the tenth or the twentieth of the month, except as she happened to know from some card of invitation or some incident in the social calendar. She marked off time by the parties she attended, and the weather was fair or gloomy according as she had a "good" or a "slow" time. Once in a great while she looked into a book because in some manner some member of "our set" had happened to tumble into the pages of a current literary freak, and then talked about his adventure. That is the reason I occasionally saw a carefully displayed volume of Jerome or Kipling or Rives, with the leaves appropriately turned down, on her parlor table.

This girl's mother was almost as foolish as her daughter. She thought Mary was destined for a brilliant social career, and though

the family purse was slender, allowing no servants, she willingly toiled in the kitchen while Mary sat with folded hands in the parlor talking to an effigy of a man, or doing nothing. Mary never ruffled her beauty by worrying over her mother's ceaseless labor.

A great many men called on her, some of them butterflies in the swaddling clothes of chappedom; a few were men of intelligence and position in the world, who were attracted by her beauty. These latter would listen to her rattling on about "society" and its fripperies with a pleased expression on their faces. They called an ingenué. She was a favorite, because she happened to be pretty.

She usually arose between 10 and 11 a. m., and by two o'clock she was ready to begin her devotions before the shrine of her divinity "society." She had absolutely nothing else to do. She was in for anything if any of "our set" had anything to do with it.

I do not know whether she has married. If she has she must have become a firesome, giddy matron, and if she is still single I am afraid she is on the threshold of a garrulous spinsterhood. TEYX.

THE TEA CUP AND SOCIETY.

Since the edict of fashion has decreed that the five o'clock tea should become and continue an important and fashionable function Americans have given the preparation of this slightly stimulating beverage more attention than in former years, although it has played an important part in the history of the nation almost since its birth.

For years it was considered a simple matter to prepare a pot of tea, but, as the woman of America has borrowed extensively from all other countries and placed every land and clime under contribution to furnish and decorate her table, she has grown wise in the preparation of this delicious beverage.

The Russian likes his tea as black as ink and insists upon having it strongly flavored with the juice of the lemon. Until recently Russia has been justly considered the greatest tea drinking nation, but although the plant is Asiatic in origin and ever will remain so in cultivation, its use has spread until it is now a popular beverage in every civilized land. Many celebrated philosophers, statesmen, poets and authors have been addicted to its use to an intemperate degree. Dr. Johnson drank it all times and insisted upon having it served so strong that it impaired his digestion and ruined his health. It is now a ration, regularly served in the English army and navy. The African explorer, the Australian miner and the Indian tourist, travels with a quantity of tea and the necessary apparatus for preparing it.

The Chinese have always been experts in the preparation of tea, but strange as it may seem are not given to drinking it in large quantities. When a Chinese lady wishes to prepare a cup of tea for an afternoon caller, she takes a pinch of the dried leaves, puts them in a dainty porcelain cup and covers them with boiling water. This cup is then carefully covered with an extra saucer, made for that purpose, and the drink allowed to stand until the flavor of the leaves is extracted, while it is partaken of in dainty little sips, always without milk or sugar. Every merchant or professional man in China, whether he be a native, European or American, invites his customer or caller to partake of a cup of tea on arrival.

To the daughters of the flowery kingdom belongs the palm for brewing the cheering cup, however. These gentle Oriental dames attend tea making schools and employ the services of instructors much in the same way that their western sisters attend cooking schools and the lectures of celebrated chefs. The Japanese nobility are not only fond of tea, but make its service a matter of great importance and a traveler in the Island kingdom sometimes sees tea services worth fabulous sums, many of them being of pure gold, studded with precious stones. One of the early rulers of Japan sought to check this extravagance by prohibiting the manufacture of a tea service above a certain value. But as this only started the court nobles to importing the most expensive wares of China and Corea, the law was soon repealed.

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