

MISS OMAHA VISITS MISS CHICAGO.

[Some extracts from a story in the Omaha Bee written by Mrs. Matheson.]

There was one possible result of the Trans-Mississippi exposition which was not taken into consideration and would probably never have been demonstrated had not Miss Omaha recently written a letter to her cousin, Miss Chicago, stating that "if it was quite convenient she would like to run over and pay the latter a little visit, as she needed a rest."

I am credibly informed by an Eye Witness that he thought Miss Chicago would have strangled to death in the paroxysm of laughter which seized her when the suggestion bore in on her that Omaha desired to visit Chicago for the purpose of taking a rest.

This conversation took place on Tuesday and on Friday the Eye Witness told me he escorted Miss Chicago to the station to meet her cousin. After the train drew under cover a young woman alighted from the rear sleeper and looked inquiringly about. "Do you suppose that is her?" asked Miss Chicago, raising her lorgnette. "I fancy that is she," replied the Eye Witness severely.

There is nothing more difficult than the adjusting to an easy, graceful condition of affairs the intercourse between relatives who have not been together familiarly for some years. They ought to have interests in common, but the chances are they find they have not; if one has been more successful than the other, has more money or better clothes, it immediately engenders an antagonism that, like Bauquo's ghost, "will not down." In the case of women, if one looks critically at the other, the gaze imagines that the gazer is trying to discover more gray hairs or wrinkles than her own portion; or one says innocently to the other, "I wonder you wear green, my dear, I should think blue might be more becoming." The possessor of the blue gown, if she is not already turnip colored, becomes so exasperated, without any escape valve, that the overflow of bile would be warranted to ruin the complexion of Eve. The Eye Witness tells me that it was really amusing to watch the efforts of the cousins to assimilate.

Miss Omaha did seem tired out and professed a disposition to take it easy for a few days, which she was permitted to do. "She actually makes me tired," confided Miss Chicago to her guardian. "She flops herself down on the divan in that tailor-made gown of hers as if she wished me to understand she had clothes to burn, and she digs her head in my embroidered cushions, Ugh!" with a shudder, "I wonder if she uses pork grease on her hair." Omaha, who has not been napping, as supposed, overheard. "Chicago is certainly becoming 'catty' in her old age," she remarked sweetly to their mutual friend later.

The visitor after a few days was sufficiently recovered to do a little sight-seeing, but after all there was not much to show her. The Eye Witness, whom I regard as a perfectly just and reliable man, told me regretfully that he regarded it as unfortunate that one so young should be so blasé. Architecture did not interest her; the splendors of International hall still before her, bric-a-brac and china failed to convince; she reeled off the names and makes of plaques, statuary and glass with a dizzy glibness which betrayed the newly made connoisseur. "We thought she would all but have a spasm the day we suggested taking her into a Mirror Maze." "Now, do not be too severe," I muttered soothingly, "she breakfasted, lunched, dined and supped off Mirror Mazes for six months; there wasn't a decent looking glass outside in the town; if she wished to see how her skirt hung she had to pay ten cents and go into a Mirror Maze.

The day after this we took her over to the lake front. The wind drove inland smartly and ruffled the water to the base of the pier and tossed the draperies of Miss Omaha and blew her loosened hair until she looked a veritable etching against the misty day. "O," she murmured dreamily, as if she gazed upon a vision, "I wish you could have seen our lagoon this summer." "Chicago's lip curled impatiently, as she asked: "Ah, was it larger than this?" "No," replied this wild rose as she turned her eyes, in whose depths seemed still reflected the windswept spaces of her prairies, "no; but it was so much better lighted."

"Omaha," said the Eye Witness later, "the forcing process which your education has undergone recently, while it has advantages in some respects, in others it is unfortunate; you have burst into bloom to be sure, but the flower is a little heavy yet for the stalk." Omaha eyed the tip of her tan boot reflectively, as she said, "O, to be sure, we might have continued to run along the ground. I suppose pumpkins have their use."

"Don't be flippant, my dear; I am your friend, and you are young to assume such blasé airs; does nothing interest you any more?" "Yes," she responded with asperity, "but it is not miles of asphalt, nor high buildings nor yet lake fronts; I was brought up on view, now I want to study people and conditions, I am interested in 'types.'"

The Eye Witness smiled indulgently as he turned to Miss Chicago; "I wonder how she would like to meet Billy," he asked.

"Who is Billy?" inquired the little visitor with interest.

"Well, he is a person, a type, and has represented many conditions in his time; to be more explicit, he was for twenty years a boot black belonging to Chicago, and at present manages the two largest boot blacking parlors here; will you go with us to call on him?" She not only would, but seemed anxious, so the matter was speedily arranged.

"I think," said the Eye Witness in telling of the visit, "that Omaha was distinctly disappointed to find Billy as well groomed with his head checked as high as any other man of business who is able to afford a white collar, but when he greeted her cordially and insisted on shining her shoes himself she began to recover. As Billy was busy arranging his cleaner, rage, sponge and paste, Omaha tried her prentice hand at the interviewing of a "type." She did it awkwardly enough; indeed, had not Billy's normal state been with his mouth in action she might have fared badly.

"Yes," he began in answer to some inquiry, "this has been my business all my life since I was knee high, 'cept a little while when I was cash boy at Marshall Field's; that was pretty slow and I soon took to the street; it wasn't no big business in them days; this is some different," as he waved his sponge to indicate the pretentious parlors, "from the time we went a hull day and never got a shine; why the day before Easter we took the rake-off from 1,567 pairs of shoes and we average between 700 and 800 shines a day; course this business wasn't no bed of roses to start on; we took it hot or cold as it came; you see that corner across there," pointing to the opposite side of the street, where a tall building rose, "well, twenty years ago there was a man had a grocery store there and in the winter he had a big stove going and he used to let us kids come in and get warm; we could stay if we didn't make no noise, but if we squealed we had to git. One awful cold night 'Sooty Dick' and 'Scrappy Mark' got down there ahead of the gang and when we come along they was nice and warm and ready to vamoose; they didn't do a thing but get to shooting off their mouths just to aggravate the man; he wouldn't listen to no explanation, but

just shoved the hull push in'o the street; you bet we made it lively fer them kids fer awhile; it's slow working up in this job, but once I had \$2,400 saved up and I didn't do a thing but get stuck on some kind of a high-toned crap game and blow the hull thing in a few nights."

Billy was warming to the work and Omaha's feet were beginning to shine like rising sun stove polish. "My partner he's a top-notch, he was fetched up in a cradle and a baby carriage, but he's all right and we're going to make a go of this thing. You ought to seen us the night we knowed we'd got the 'free shines' knocked out. We had 700 boot-blacks in line, with a float in the middle draped in crape and an empty chair on top saying, 'Free Shines Died Tonight,' on it. Ed, that's my partner, he headed the procession and I come along behind and when we rounded them up for a speech the boys kept up such a racket my pardner couldn't be heard. It made me hot an' I jumped up on the stand and I hollered, 'Let up, kids; Ed's got a h—l of a cold and he can't talk less you keep yer mouths shut.'"

"Billy looked perfectly innocent of any idea that this was not just exactly the style of conversation Miss Omaha had been used to," the Eye Witness chuckled at the remembrance, "but she wished the opportunity to study 'type'—and Billy was affording her the chance with a generosity that was prodigal."

"No," Billy continued again in response to an inquiry, "we ain't no union; we can't make it go. The American boys don't like the dagoes, and the dagoes don't like the niggers, and there you are. I ain't no cause to complain. I got some of the best people here as customers—Mr. Higinbotham comes here, and Mr. ——— and Mr. ———, mentioning several well known names, but I wouldn't take no more interest in shining them than I would you, Miss."

"How beautiful are the feet of them from the sand hills," murmured Miss Chicago as Omaha rose from the chair. Billy, flushed with his proud flood of recollection, would no doubt have rambled on ad infinitum, but it was getting late and we had another call to make, so we drew Miss Omaha reluctantly from her contemplation of class and condition.

An hour later we were seated in the pretty parlor of Mrs. M——, on the south side, chatting informally of "things" rather than people. The call proved unusually interesting, as Mrs. M—— is a cousin of Mrs. McKinley, and it was at her home the president and his wife stopped during the recent peace jubilee. She naturally, since we made curious inquiries, gave us some conception of how the ordinary pulses of life are quickened when royalty trails its purple across the threshold.

"Fancy us, a quiet, law-abiding family, being compelled to keep three policemen in the yard and two in the house continually; and then being almost unable to keep the crowd at bay. We had a telephone operator in the house night and day, and were literally buried in flowers; some of the boxes we were unable to open for lack of time to do it and space to put any more; one morning a large box was brought in for Mrs. McKinley, and on opening it, it appeared to be a collection of huge yellow roses embedded in smilax; a closer investigation showed the roses were made of butter delicately moulded as a flower, with the compliments of the ——— Dairy company. Our luncheon hour seemed a matter of supreme moment to the caterers, who continually begged the privilege of sending in some dainty for the consumption of President and Mrs. McKinley. On the one occasion when we went for a drive the waiting crowd made grand rushes for the carriage, climbing to the wheels or steps as they could; the president shook as many hands as possible, since he is only pro-

vided with two himself, and then as the driver urged his horses forward he called: "Down carefully. Look out my man, do not get hurt." The last morning of their visit a policeman came to him and said: "Mr. President, it looks as if they would mob the house; they are determined to see you." Mr. McKinley arose with his fine smile, and turning to the officer of the peace, said: "Open the doors." He then took his stand in the parlor and the crowd poured in, and with a "Hail to the Chief" expression grasped his extended hand and passed quietly out the side door and dispersed.

"They were not office seekers, I suppose," said Miss Omaha. "No, they were not," laughed Mrs. M——, "they were simply the people to whom the president belongs."

The day following but one Miss Omaha set for her return home; we could not prevail on her to remain longer; she evidently thought the pendulum had swung as far both ways as possible and when the limit had been played the game for her was over. We checked her luggage, saw her safely located, handbag, umbrella and magazines, in "Lower No. 10 of the sleeper Rosemont," then, as we turned to go; she extended her hand to her cousin, that great royal creature with her heart of stone, and said cordially, "I hope you will come out some time and make us a visit."

"Thank you," replied Miss Chicago, "I shall be glad, some time—when—I need—a rest."

"O, these dear women," sighed the Eye Witness, as he carefully wiped and readjusted his spectacles.

FOR A VALENTINE.

What shall I send as a valentine,
Mating the one she sends?
Love that I hold in my heart's closed shrine?
Tender longings that ne'er can tine?
Happy dream of her hand in mine,
While above her my fond love bends
Ever till being ends?

What shall I send her? my heart to lay
Down at her feet in tears?
All of myself as I am today
All unworthy? Perchance I may
Thus in the giving of self away
Grow more worthy a love that veers
None in the passing years.
—Lewis Worthington Smith.

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