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"Reveries"

The Classical Library.

The classical library is not hard to find—room 205, on the second floor, opposite the west chapel door. If you open the door you will be met by a flooding sound of laughter mingled with the drone of voices and a peculiar incessant rattle, as though many dice players were at a game. When you enter, you find that this rattling proceeds from many pencils drumming incessantly and aimlessly on the rough wooden tables. No one notices you—everyone is talking. This is the secret of the place, its essential spirit—"no silence allowed." Everyone talks; no one studies. The good fellowship that meets here knows no limits, no ambition, no duty. Time is measured by the drum of idle fingers; ambition is satisfied when wit gains applause; duty lurks outside the sacred door, but never enters. If you have never been there—if you would have rest—go, and be contented.

* *

Chapel Time.

There is only one thing better than going to chapel, and that is watching other people go. Human nature escapes in the crowd, passes control, and plays strange tricks. Here comes a petite demoiselle with blue eyes, wind-fluttered hair, and a laugh which echoes above the surrounding voices. She talks to a lounging boy, punctuating her words with alluring side glances and witching noddings of her pretty blonde head. He only pushes his hat farther back, thrusts his hands more deeply into his pockets, and nods superciliously. Through the current little eddies run. Knots collect in the troubled crowd, grow larger, swing and sway a moment with toss of hand, tip of hat, question, answer and repartee—and finally explode in a burst of laughter scattering them into the mass. Individuals make troubled journeys. A girl in a red waist and wide, flopping hat starts from the library steps, has an escort on each side before she knows it, smiles, talks to both, bows to tipping hats. She collides with a crowd of girls, who surround and overwhelm her, loses her two masculine friends, emerges laughing, finds a waiting boy who smiles sympathetically as he joins her—and goes on her way. Everywhere the girls laugh and talk, the boys laugh and nod, the hats go up and down, and the crowd glides merrily on.

* *

The Third Story Window.

Outside the office window the dusk closes in heavily, blotting the dull sky. Far on the prairie, beyond the city roofs and the twinkling lights the night mists eddy gloomily, blotched with trailing smoke. It is to be one of those cold, soggy nights when the world sleeps in a blanket and the stars are only a memory. After all, on such nights winter is at its best. Your clear nights with a soft moon and friendly stars are entrancing enough in summer when young folks go walking and old folks dream in the warm dusk. But on these cold nights, when the fire draws and the wind whistles, an outward gloom only makes indoors the merrier. Winter is the time for the home circle and the evening lamp, and cannot dress too soberly for his mission.

* *

A Chop House Idyl.

At last I have found a chop house that suits me. It is a little box of a room on one of the side streets, where a staid old ducky with a black, pointed beard and white apron bakes waffles

in the front window, and where a handsome, middle-aged ducky, with very black shiny cheeks and a very black, curly moustache and very white teeth rushes about in a dim background of white tables and chatting guests, with a perennial smile on his face and a pyramid of steaming dishes in each hand. You can eat at one of the square, prim tables, or at the more democratic counter, sitting in a swing chair, with your hat pushed back on your head. The pie melts in your mouth and everything is cooked "like yo' mothah cooked it, sah."

* *

Social Service.

On the other side of the wall tonight four girls are singing. The song runs lilting smoothly, the piano thrums steadily, the voices rise and fall. I would like to be over there. Ordinarily I am the least social of human animals, but tonight I am lonely. The old pasteboard shade casts its quiet round of light on the floor. The little clock ticks monotonously. In the far corners the shadows become tangible and unfriendly. On such evenings as this I am saved from becoming a dreamer. The touch of music or the sound of distant voices pierces below the superficial content of self-knowledge and I find within myself a desire for the experiences of others. I become dissatisfied with mere theory and must have a touch of practical life. So it is good for us all, I suppose, that we be dragged forth, as it were, by our social instincts and made to perform our part in the common life; at least to appreciate the actuality of that common life and give it rightful place in our thoughts. It is as often society which saves the thinker, by a word, a song or a touch from its outer sanity, as the thinker who saves society.

M. S.

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