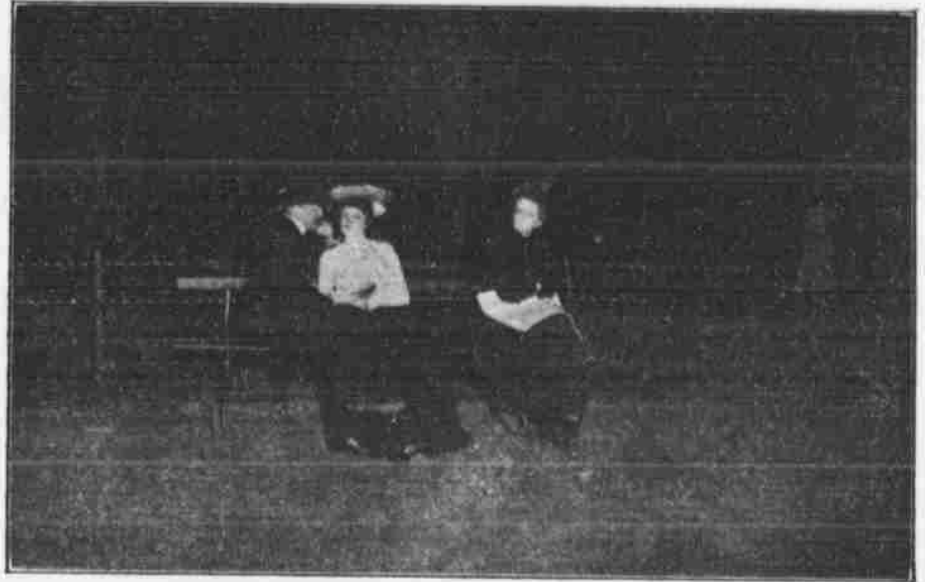


Where and When Flat Dwellers Make Love



THE FAVORITE PLACE FOR THE FAMILY IS BENEATH THE BAND PAVILION.



LOVERS NAIVELY HEEDLESS OF THEIR SURROUNDINGS.



SOLITARY FIGURES WHO LISTEN TO THE MUSIC FOR THE THOUGHTS IT BRINGS UP.



THE MAN WHO SQUATS DEJECTEDLY AT THE PARK'S FRINGE.

(Copyrighted, 1903, by Guy T. V. Iskniakki.)

AS THE rain ceased its gentle fall and turned into a slight drizzle, two figures emerged out of the darkness into the glow of an electric light and walked along the park path to a bench, whose background was a clump of fragrant flowered bushes.

"Such a perfectly cosy place!" breathed the young woman, as the man took a handkerchief from a pocket and carefully wiped the water off two seats.

Then they sat down with contented sighs; and a few minutes later, when the dwellers of the neighborhood poured into the square with the peeping out of the first star, they were "two souls with but a single thought." Neither the constant shuffling of feet on all sides nor the varied procession before the pair caused them to unloose interlocked hands, or her to take her head from close proximity to his shoulder. Their mutual contemplation bespoke ignorance of the presence of broadly smiling strangers.

It is such scenes as this that makes the small park of New York City on a summer's night an excellent chart of the human heart and mind. Day in the average metropolitan park is tame and monotonous. Everybody is more or less conventional. Humanity is on its dignity. Even the few children scattered about and the grown idlers on the benches play and doze with a restrained air. But with fall of night the park becomes a board on which the gamut of human feelings is run; and much that is serious and tragic, amusing and comical, and frivolous and inane is seen and heard in and beyond the reach of the yellow lights.

This is true of any night when the city gasps for breath, but especially is it the case when the band plays. Then the people pour out in greater numbers. Then, under the spell of the rollicking notes of the latest ragtime, or the memory-awakening strains of "My Old Kentucky Home" and other old-time favorites, the conversations usually kept for family or friendly circles take place with refreshing freedom in the open. No one seems to give a thought to the probability that the person seated next on the bench is unwillingly being taken into heart and home confidences.

The small park of the metropolis on a summer night is always the favorite trysting place of the lovers who live thereabouts. It is the only place left to them where they can whisper their "sweet nothings." A flat takes no thoughts of the heyday of youth; the parlor and sitting room is too often one. But when the bass drum thunders and the trombone's sonorous notes float over the benches the lovers are legion. Young couples who are timid on other nights and envious of the braver spirits across the path forget all about their surroundings, lose their bashfulness and tenderly clasp hands and draw closer under the mellowing bars of "Annie

Laurie."

This is the best time of all for the photographer after studies to get in good work. So intent will the lovers and the other people be on their affairs that they would not notice the camera pointed in their direction, and when the flashlight goes off they will still remain ignorant of the fact that they have been taken holding hands or wrapped in reverie.

The couples a-wooling are not to be found beneath the band pavilion. Thither flock those who love music for the noise it makes—the small boy and his sister. There, too, are found the staid married couples and the children's parents, so that the favorite place for the family party in the park is marked and made unchangeable by the youngsters.

The wooers are found on the outskirts of benches in company with solitary figures

who listen to the music for the thoughts it brings up, and the homeward-bound workers, who pause for a moment to catch a strain and then tramp on again.

Here, as the melodies sound softly from the bandstand, such scraps of conversation as these are borne on the air for all who happen around to hear:

"Ar-thur?" very timidly from the seat along the walk underneath the big elm tree.

"Yes, dearie," in a heart-mellowed masculine voice.

"Ar-thur, do-do-oh, Ar-thur, do you still-love me, after—"

And a smacking sound tells the wide, wide world that Arthur does.

The "Humph!" of a man in overalls as his pipe-and-music reverie is disturbed, and the "Gee, listen to the damn jitsu!" of a rounder on the same bench, follow.

A few minutes later, as a drawling bass voice asks, "Lucindy, reckon it's putty nigh de time us two been gittin' married, ain't it, honey?" an urchin scampering toward the pavilion calls the park's attention to his discovery:

"Eh, dere's a big black coon makin' love to a yaller gal back dere!"

Whatever the comments of the outside world, they seem to have no effect on the lovers. They are usually as oblivious to them as a well-dressed couple, who had come from a private house bordering on the square, were to an old woman who dropped beside them for a few minutes' rest before trudging on again with her laden basket. They did not loosen hands for an instant, and the girl did not even turn around to look at the woman as she seated herself. Small wonder that the man who squats dejectedly at the park's fringe carries home with him many a lover's secret when he would far rather go to his bed comforted by the knowledge that on the morrow he would be at work again.

But the lovers, naively heedless of their surroundings, are matched by the fathers and mothers within the glare of the pavilion lights. Even he who walks afar off cannot escape their frank remarks.

"Johnny! John—ny Rob—erts!" screams a mother, holding a struggling child in her arms, to a small boy fast making his way into a crowd of youngsters farther in the park. "If you don't come here this minute I'll give you another whippin' like last night's!"

"Didn't I tell you she treated her children shameful?" triumphantly asks a woman, evidently Johnny's mother's closest neighbor, of her companion. "She's the one that deserves the licking!"

"And I says to her"—from a pugnacious type of woman farther down the human border of the walk—"I says to her, 'Mrs. Brady, I'll break your face if you steal another one of me petticoats off me clothesline,' I says. And Mrs. Brady, she—"

"And so that's the baby, is it?" from a passerby, who has recognized an acquaintance. "The dear little thing—and you've got a new baby carriage for it, too. That's what I'll have to be getting if I have any more—the old one's been used so much it's all worn out."

Equally as enlightening as the conversation heard around the bandstand or on the seats that have come to be known as "lovers' nooks" are the attempts at repartee to be overheard on the less crowded portions of the walks leading to the bandstand. Here groups of youth take their first lessons in mashing.

"Hello, Mame!" an overgrown boy, with a cigarette sticking to his lips, calls seductively to a passing girl.

"Hey!" breaks in one of his companions, as the girl looks straight ahead. "Leave Mame alone. Can't you see she's a lady?" Then they laugh.

But often Marie, or whatever name she

(Continued on Page Fifteen.)



GLADYS LILIAN M'GINTIE OF WILBER, Neb., AGED 18 MONTHS, AND HER PET PLAYFELLOW—Photo by Hare, Wilber.