

IN THE CITY ON SALT CREEK.

BY FLORA BULLOCK.

Some folks—poets mostly—
like the way the sparrow sings,
An' the music of the frogs
a-croakin' in the pond,
An' the hummin' of the insect's
(just a-scrapin' of their wings),
An' the song they say
the stars sing up beyond.

I'm right glad to have 'em voice it,
for it's just another way
Of assertin' that there's music
all around and everywhere;
But I have a mighty preference,
if you'll let me have my say—
For the music that the band plays,
evenin's on the square.

The band concert is a composite of many things. It is easy to call it a musical event, but after that is said classification of its various shadings is not so easy. Music is the magnet, but not the only one; and to some faithful attendants it is apparently not the principal part of the program. So the band concert partakes of the nature of a campmeeting, a neighborhood reunion, a sparking club, a country hoe-down, a ladies' sewing club,—minus the sewing,—and a meeting of the faithful at Eleventh and O. In short, it is just an ordinary gathering of gregarious human beings, with nothing particular to do except wear out time. It is a place to meet an old acquaintance whose path has not crossed yours for years, and a place to study strange faces and read characters.

Let us be thankful that with all its various characters the band concert is not a political meeting; there is no craning of necks to see the great ones gesticulate while trying to send their voices out to the edge of attention; there is no kissing and hooting on the part of the audience; no bumptious panegyrics of sophomore orators. But even if the audience is not so still as it should be, it cannot drown out the melody, and the players preach a silent gospel of beauty, which may have as much to do with saving the nation as the ousting of an office-holder now and then.

The band concert is a good place for flirtations. I witnessed a scene the other evening that led me to reflect. This may have been a case of true love at first sight. Anyhow, the parties concerned were only between two and three years of age, so no great harm was done. Infant No. 1 espied No. 2 at a distance sitting in her buggy; and before papa knew what was happening, the young hopeful was there by the baby in the buggy, patting her cheek, smiling, and getting acquainted in true baby fashion. Papa followed and made the acquaintance of the other papa. Then everybody around there looked pleasant, as if sitting for a picture, and by'm-bye the other papa enticed infant No. 1 away. Curtain on this scene. Any romancer who wishes may have this as a starter for a two volume—I draw the line at two—novel.

One sees just about the same faces every evening as he threads his way through the crowd. Perhaps there is a capitol grounds attendance and another set of worshippers when the band plays on the square. But if you attend at one place regularly you will soon feel at home. You see it gets to be a habit—this going to the concert, and some people would sooner miss a good supper than the concert. Stay at home once, and though you have a feeling that something is lost or gone, the charm is broken, especially if the wind has been favorable and has aided you to hear at least "The Star Spangled Banner." The

next time it is easier to play stay-at-home; I do not mean

"Each vict'ry will help you
Some other to win,"

for the band concert is a free education and should be a rendezvous for all music lovers. "Going" is a habit too strongly developed in many, but when there is a worthy goal at the end, lethargy is wicked.

"Why, hello, Nell; you here?"
"Why, how d'ye do; glad to see you."
"Here's May, too."
"Hello, hello."
"Why, Jen, you here?"
"Of course, I'm always here."
"Well, I'll declare if there isn't Mag. Come on, join the happy circle."

And so it goes on. Some people are always so surprised at everything that happens. A bevy of sweet girl graduates greets each other as if they had not met for years, "de gang" of boys remind one of an old settlers' annual reunion, so gladly do they meet and go around. But every one is friendly and cheerful.

Except, perhaps, the young man alone. Some times he looks despondent, disgusted, and there's the impenetrable look of questioning about him as he lies on the grass and gazes on the people who pass. He reminds me of a story I've heard of a young university instructor, and perhaps the story may explain the mystery of the young man alone. This young instructor was once looking up a good position as principal of a school. He seemed able to convince the school board that he possessed every qualification—save one. He was unmarried. So he came back rather woe-begone. Shortly after, it was observed that he began to haunt the steps where the co-eds. passed frequently, and his eyes took on a searching look. One day he said to a friend, after a long siege on the steps, "I've been watching the girls go by for an hour, and there isn't one I would have." What the girl said is not recorded.

There are those who come to the concert early, pick out a camping spot and stay there throughout the evening. They are there to hear the music and see as much of the crowd as comes their way. But others are always threading their way through and around, peering into faces—always "trekking," as it were. Restless spirits—or, may be, some times they are normal animals tired of sitting Turk fashion. And of all tiresome things! Sufficient to account for a nation of sluggards.

It is a dreadful thing to say, but my observation goes to indicate that the popular Indian War-dance is the selection most gratifying to the crowd. I am afraid those eastern reporters will discover that and relate it for the amusement of the Bostonees. The band plays that when it is tired of subdued applause and desires an encore. And they are seldom disappointed.

But though the applause is not so vociferous, the real feeling of the people responds to finer things. A lady said to me, "I never knew what Schubert's 'Serenade' was until I heard it at the band concert the other evening." That is the common feeling, too, though it is not translated into the applause of the gallery.

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