

HARPER'S MAGAZINE

VOL. CXXXI

JUNE, 1915

NO. DCCLXXXI



THE BATHERS OVERFLOW THE SANDS

City Summers

BY HARRISON RHODES

THE dreadful truth about the summer is that most of it is, by most of us, spent in work rather than in play. The summer blazes through three splendid months, the average vacation lasts through three weeks at best, and is gone. The holiday season, paradoxical as it may sound, is spent at the desk or in the workshop, and the so-called empty town swarms with people as the country never does.

The city summer is indeed the general fate of humankind.

All of us have read, doubtless many of us have written, the articles which appear regularly in the newspapers upon our great cities as summer resorts—they are indeed the classics of journalism, and much of their philosophy must unavoidably be repeated here. But some of their strongest arguments have become weakened with time. Chief among them was the statement that only in your flat in town could you enjoy the real luxury

Copyright, 1915, by Harper & Brothers. All Rights Reserved.

of the bath. Plumbing is now all-pervasive; Mr. Punch, commenting upon us from his tin-tubbed England, says that now, of course, no simple summer hotel in America dreams of having less than two bath-rooms for each bedroom! So luxurious have we become, too, that fresh country eggs, milk, and vegetables are now supplied to the inhabitants of the remotest rural districts. And disappearing is that lovely traditional woman who, refusing to leave the town, entertained so pleasantly at a ridiculously inexpensive dinner her husband and all his male friends—she herself, so the articles always specifically

stated, "fresh from a hot tub" and "delightfully" attired in "something crisp and cool."

It is perhaps the automobile which is changing all this. The delightful male friends who ply her with their pleasant and honorable attentions can now easily motor to the near-by country where she lives, from which she comes to town often to dine at some summer restaurant and to do a "show" at some roof-garden theater. In the quaint days of the nineteenth century it was eccentric—almost dishonorable—to be seen in town in mid-summer. Do you remember the legends about those families who, pretending

they had gone to Long Branch or Saratoga, really lived in the back of the house and only went out, furtively, by night? Nowadays it is astonishing how many things seem to bring people up from the country for a night or two, and how fashionable and gay such expeditions are. It is smart, too, to be passing through from Long Island to Newport, or from Bar Harbor to Lenox, and to pause upon the wing. The people whom you see in town in August are nowadays extremely pleased with themselves, rather proud of being there. Their eyes are clear, and they bring to city pleasures an unbounded enthusiasm. The great truth is being constantly rediscovered that nothing gives one such a zest for the town as a little time in the country.

And the town—the great working town which knows little of fashion and motors and the country—feels the arrival of the holi-



H.F.

THE CITY SUMMER IS THE GENERAL FATE OF HUMANKIND



"SUNDAES" AND "COLLEGE ICES" MARK THE EVOLUTION OF THE MODERN SODA-WATER FOUNTAIN

day spirit, even while it toils. There are, after all, half-holidays and early closings. There are twilights prolonging the day and warm nights crowding the pleasure-parks and suburban beaches. It is tacitly understood that labor is to take things a little easily. Mortality among the grandmothers of office-boys is expected to run high during the baseball season, and no one begrudges the lads an extra bereavement or two when the championship is at stake. The town in summer is not merely hot—it is genial. And with each succeeding year it becomes pleasanter as a habitation.

The time was—it is not yet so very distant—when the chief, almost the only, possible recreation during the heated spells in town was drinking soda-water. And this is still, perhaps, the king of

city summer sports. There are, of course, adepts of the fountain who keep up their favorite recreation all winter. Who of us has not seen, on some bleak January day, half-frozen district messenger-boys take refuge in a drug-store and there fortify themselves against the bitter cold by huge mugs of ice-cream soda? But the taste, though preserved in winter, is formed in summer. It is then that doors are flung wide open to the street, while glittering fountains, towering like fairy castles, cast their magic spell upon those who pass along the burning pavements. In certain fortunate regions, where the tide of national civilization must be admitted to be rising very high, the drug-store serves its soda to the music of a string-quartet, and, in one happy Southern city, to the accompaniment of a "cabaret show."

Let those who are approaching middle age remember the corner drug-store of their childhood, with its modest white-marble fountain dispensing six simple syrups. Nothing better marks the triumphant progress of the country, the

is the flow of new drinks and fantastic nomenclature from the exuberant fount of our national imagination.

Drinking, to the refreshment of both body and soul, is important in the city summer. So is eating, but paradoxically

it is almost more important not to eat than to eat—that is to say, it is the fashion to eat very little. American hot weather is really hot, and American light eating really light. Those who have ever happened to be in London during one of those British heat-waves which drive the thermometer up beyond sixty-five, are familiar with the elaborate advice given by the newspapers as to diet necessary in such tropical moments. Monsieur Adolphe of the Savoy, or Monsieur Jacques of the Ritz, is always interviewed; he always advises fruit, cold food, little meat, and little alcohol. He then submits to the reporter a characteristic light menu for lunch, the sort of thing he is apparently suggesting to apoplectic noblemen and gentlemen. It is usually something like this:

Melon cantaloup
 Consommé froid en tasse
 Filet de sole à la Normandie
 Chaudfroid de poulet à la
 neige
 Jambon froid
 Salade de laitue
 Glace aux framboises
 Pâtisserie



A CONEY ISLAND FAIRYLAND

richening and deepening of its life, than these gorgeous modern sources of a thousand strange concoctions of exotic names and irresistible allure.

There is a vast science of drinking at drug-stores—there should be treatises on “sundaes” (why “sundaes”?) and text-books on the art of choosing “college ices.” Yet they would become almost immediately obsolete, so constant

If you eat no more than this, says the great authority, and drink only perhaps a light Mosel cup with coffee and liqueurs to follow, you will not over-heat the blood and will be able, if you manage to make a decent tea, to last comfortably till dinner. This “snack,” if one may so term it, can be secured, so it appears, for not more than three or four dollars a head. In America most of us would be in luck if we got such a meal in mid-



BAND CONCERTS ARE THE FIRST TRAINING OF OUR MUSIC-LOVING PUBLIC



SUNDAY MORNING WITH THE NEWSPAPERS

winter. The problem really does face our *mâitres d'hôtels* and head-waiters how to make small meals and large bills synonymous, but the problem does not daunt them. There are plenty of ways, besides spending it on food, of making the money fly.

Foreign cities merely provide charming summer restaurants in their parks and boulevards; we in America perform complete Aladdin-like transformations of our winter haunts, and upon our dull flat roofs raise magic kiosques of pleasure. Rooms heavy with brocade and gold are lavishly redecorated with green-latticed walls, garden furniture, and flowers and vines swaying in the cool current from countless electric fans. As for roof gardens, since Babylon hung them above the dusky splendors of her ancient Broadway, no miracle so lovely has been wrought in the hot city night. Trellises of flowering creepers, hedges and arbors of box and bay, parterres

ever freshly blossoming, pools where nocturnal gold-fish flash, fountains plashing and cascades coming gaily down small, green-clad precipices, pergolas and canopies of multicolored lights, and the high view over the hot brilliant streets and the town itself flaunting its thousand electric signs against the paler illumination of the stars and moon—such is the fantastic setting which the twentieth century provides for even such simple pleasures as a lemonade. Not, indeed, that roof-garden beverages are necessarily of this simple character—the Orient and the tropics are searched for strangely insidious, wildly named drinks—and the introduction of one of them almost always merits at least a paragraph next day in the local papers. Such things are of public interest, for we all, when summer comes, do to some extent what Voltaire's *Candide* was advised to do—we cultivate our roof garden.

There is no need for the city-lover to

disparage the country—it is well enough, even when one is dining in town, to think of moonlit lawns, or the long swash of the surf, or the lapping of some little lake upon its pebbly shore. But the summer town is for some moods pleasanter than the pleasant country. Then the fashionable restaurant is perhaps the best place to catch the especial note, informal, gay, and elegant, of urban hot weather.

At the entrance, guarded by a *chef's* assistant in white linen, is usually the *buffet froid*, a cool expanse (topped with ice sculpture by the greatest kitchen artists) upon which lie plates of strange eggs, of exotic fish, and of flesh and fowl masquerading in all kinds of jellied and truffled disguises (it is an international affair, this cold table—a week after the grouse-shooting opens on the British moors, these admirable birds lie waiting your patronage at the restaurant's door). Near by stand the suave headwaiters, always several degrees cooler than the thermometer, ready to exchange the polite compliments of the season as they show you your table. There is no question but that it is pleasant to sit under a great green-and-white striped tent, within an inclosing hedge of clipped box and flowers that grow as they never do in rural airs, and have friendly aliens bring to you, exquisitely cooked, the fresh eggs and fish and fruit and chickens—all that spoil of the country which can never be easily secured except in town. It is pleasant to realize that by half-past eight or nine all the fair fashionable women, and all the brave rich

men left in the desolate town will have drifted in for dinner. It is pleasant to be in a short coat, if indeed you are not in flannels. It is agreeable to notice that young foreign noblemen and other strangers of distinction who are passing through sometimes appear in tropical costumes of pongee. It is delightful to find what pretty frocks women find it worth while to wear, and certainly not unpleasant philosophically to contemplate the diaphanous version of costume which the August heats make possible, though perhaps not exactly necessary. It is soothing to realize that entertainments in roof gardens and musical comedies in artificially refrigerated theaters can be as well visited at half-past nine as at any earlier hour—perhaps better. It is encouraging to remember that



H. J.

PERPETUAL DISPUTATIONS ENGROSS THE BENCHES



DANCING HAS BECOME OUR ONE GREAT NATIONAL INTEREST

motor-cars and taxicabs exist, and that there are long roads through shadowy parks, and in all the surrounding country wayside restaurants upon whose breezy verandas cooling drinks again may flow. Last, and perhaps best of all, it is amazingly heartening to know that if you like you can merely go home early enough to get a good night's sleep.

Of summer theaters and "shows" in the great cities there is perhaps not much

to be said; they are chiefly notable, and indeed to be recommended, according to the measure in which they lack mental stimulus and supply girls. That famous "tired business man" comes wholly into his own in the hot weather. In the smaller places he is subjected to a more strenuous discipline, for it is the season of stock companies which plunge headlong through the whole dramatic repertory and give many of our leading actors

and actresses some slight opportunity to learn to act—a chance denied them during the forty successful weeks of the winter, all spent in one play. Here are—at least here should be, according to the serious dramatic critics—the *Théâtres Français* of our stage.

Music, heavenly maid, should be the chief and loveliest ornament of the town in summer. Perhaps the best thing to be said for the alarmists who wish to increase our American army is that if they succeeded we should have more military bands, more concerts in the parks, and more musical evenings gratis. The matter might suitably be subject for consideration at The Hague. But even on a peace footing the flow of park melody is increasing—in most of our larger cities there are many band concerts, often one somewhere every evening. Sometimes they are good concerts, and in our great metropolitan centers of population it is on such occasions that you get a sense of the artistic sensibilities and traditions which our foreign-born citizens pack in their flimsy, rope-bound trunks when they make the great migration to the West. To sit under the park trees some August night (in a heat that might indeed at once melt and fuse these alien races) and watch queer, eager, dark faces light up all around you, is to believe that we have here in America, from one source and another, all the materials for that “musical public” of which we have all so long talked and dreamed. But nothing so unimportant as music—or the drama—must delay the majestic and inevitable flow of our thoughts toward something greater—the dance.

It was only a short while ago that America became definitely enmeshed in the tango, tripped up by the turkey-trot. During the past few years dancing has been almost our one great national interest, as indeed it appears to be becoming the chief interest of every other great nation. At intervals during the long, dim history of our ancient world, dancing manias have seized upon it. Generally the frenzy has been for religion instead of, as now, for hygiene and pleasure; but, fantastic though it may appear, the present craze for “rag-time” dancing has to the imaginative observer something of the same barbaric and epic

quality. When Cleveland opens a municipal dance-hall in one of her parks, it is as if Rome threw open the Colosseum for the Saturnalia. It is interesting to see the mayors of cities, who in modern American life have replaced the church as the guardians of our morals, endeavoring to regulate the dance—why do mayors not visit Niagara Falls of a Sunday and try to stop the cataract by throwing a little sand in front of it? The dance regulates itself, and the action of the national good sense and taste has already worked wonders with it. The questionable features with which it arrived—straight from San Francisco’s late lamented Barbary Coast, so it was alleged—have already subsided. The “turkey-trot” has become a simple “one-step,” and since we are naturally, as dancers, a lithe and graceful race, beauty has already begun to emerge from its grotesqueness. We still like rough and coarse words in America, and lovely and refined young girls still say that they do the “kitchen sink” or hope to learn the “hang-over” (both sweetly named), but the dance itself has grown charming. Incidentally, there is perhaps too much talk of its “Americanism” and its “modernity.” The “one-step” as it is most prettily executed by us is exactly what you may see the Spanish peasants dance upon the greensward in little country *fiestas* of a Sunday afternoon—little festivals which have not changed their character for a century.

For many years there has been no dancing in towns during the summer. There was an early, pleasant period of it in our grandfathers’ and great-grandfathers’ days, when our great cities were still almost like villages; it is quaint and agreeable for the New-Yorker to read that in the warm weather of the early nineteenth century they had “hop night” at the old Astor House. At last we are again able to dance in the city—every summer night is “hop night” now. There is dancing on the roofs, in the moonlight, on the verandas of suburban road-houses, and even in the hot dining-rooms of restaurants. It flourishes in winter, too, but in the city’s summer it seems somehow more spontaneous. And the pleasantest feature of it is that in these free, wholesome breezes of ours the

dance-hall, though often called a "Jardin" or a "Palais de Danse," loses what in our parlance may be termed its Parisian quality. It is the respectable haunt, if not exactly of families, at least of young men and young women who in the best possible way cling to our good old tradition that the American girl needs no chaperon. There are certain of these new dancing-places where, so it is said, an official introducer will, upon urgent application and with the consent of both parties, allow the forming of an acquaintance, but it must be for one dance only! In the intervals of performances by the general and amateur public, professional practitioners appear upon the floor in "whirlwind waltzes," or stately "tangoes" from the Argentine, which at least serve the purpose of letting the public get its breath for the next round. The dance is, to sum it all up, the one new great feature of our American summers. It must ultimately have some considerable effect in diminishing the tide of travel to Europe, for they say the "trotting" is still very bad abroad.

But we are perhaps keeping too long away from the bathing-beaches; the cooling-off processes of the summer are, after all, more permanently important than the warming-up ones. A beach, near a city, is wherever water of any description meets land. A delightful example is a resort near the metropolis advertising "surf-bathing," the waves for which are mechanically produced in a large fresh-water tank which stands on a high cliff overlooking a river!

The cities themselves have at last come to see that they must begin to provide their citizens with chances for immersion. New York floats baths in her great salt rivers, Chicago and the other lakeside towns utilize the parks that lie by their blue inland seas, and Boston has constructed a palatial establishment on her chief beach. But more interesting, fuller of the piquant contrasts that make our latter-day America romantic, is the bathing-place in the New England capital which lies at the very tip of the ancient town, under the shadow of Copp's Hill and that lovely steeple of the Old North Church where they hung the lantern for Paul Revere. There, in the

grime of the commercial quarter, by the clatter of the elevated trains, there is a small cove and a little sandy beach. (Near by, just to remind us that Boston does not forget her slums, at morning and night floats the hospital-ship which daily carries ailing children out to the healing airs of the great bay of Massachusetts.) And in these historic waters swim and frolic the small Irish and Italian and Hebrew progeny of Boston's three great alien races. There is a swimming-master; there are races under his direction and that of local committees of aquatic sportsmen. There is, in short, under almost impossible conditions, an amazing atmosphere of that remoter seaside where the rich can go, and it is brought to the very door of the tenements.

Bathing at the great beaches on a Saturday or Sunday or a hot holiday is on a gigantic, almost a monstrous, scale. The capacity of sea and sands becomes almost a matter of mathematical computation. Land and water are just barely visible—the human body and bathing-suit completely fill the eye. In the waves certain restricted arm movements and short kicks are possible; on the beach the packing literally forces upon the observer the allusion to the sardine. Coney Island may stand as the type and symbol of such beaches. It is the arch bathing-place of the whole world—nowhere else do so many human beings simultaneously touch water. There the tide of bathers overflows even beyond the sands. Groups may be discovered, still in swimming costume, sitting peacefully down to eat lunch or to imbibe soda, even to play cards. It is regretted by many that dancing in bathing-suits is forbidden at the best pavilions. The ideal of a large part of our population unquestionably would be to spend the whole day in a bathing-suit; the supremely elegant might possibly, when the suit was dry, pull on a pair of ordinary trousers. Such a life permits of the burning and tanning processes being carried on to perfection. The ordinary American young man realizes that he is enjoying himself at the seaside only when his skin begins to peel. And at the city beaches, the bathers, who are all snatching a mere occasional afternoon from work, can afford to lose no time at

the serious work of broiling and browning.

And yet it is difficult even for them to bathe all day, for a myriad other delightful experiences beckon, so tantalizingly rich does life seem at our pleasure-parks. When you have cooled your blood in the water you may curdle it on land by risking your life upon roller-coasters, or in the loops, or, even more satisfactorily, by seeing others risk theirs in various foolhardy exhibitions. There is a melodramatic richness and abandon in the language used to advertise such "shows." Automobile races are pleasantly described as "neck to neck with Death," but they seem mild compared with "auto polo," which is alleged to be nothing less than "Hell's Pastime." The appeal to primitive emotion is indeed made whenever possible. Most of the innumerable "mirth - provoking" devices reduced to their essentials are really only variants of the funniest thing in the world—the man who slips upon a banana-peel. The philosopher will find food for his meditations everywhere—in fact those who purvey pleasure to the multitude are often themselves consciously philosophers. For example, the manager of a recent successful novelty which displayed a wealth of cheap crockery and allowed you to throw a ball and smash as much of it as your skill permitted appealed very felicitously to the domestically inclined in these terms: "If you can't do it at home, boys, do it here!"

There is no need for description of the various amusements of the summer carnival grounds; almost every city in the country has its Luna Park, modeled on the one at Coney which made the moon famous. Comment alone is possible. One may note, for example, the eternal appeal of gambling—how for almost twenty years now the Japanese have flourished on the rolling ball, the dulllest of all games. One may call attention to the ebb and flow of various amusements in the public favor—of the rifle-range, for example, which after long years seems to enjoy fresh vogue. One may felicitate the nation on its sentimental loyalty through the years to "scenic" representations of Niagara Falls. And one may marvel at the millions upon millions of

money invested in our summer pleasures, and the thousands upon thousands of people engaged in serving them up to us, hot as the "dogs" from their grill, or the lobsters and chickens and green corn from the daily clam-bake. There is a huge permanent population at the beaches, filling hotels, boarding-houses, furnished rooms, and odd shacks tucked away in odder corners. It must be an agreeable and strange world which gathers together at the close of the day, if, indeed, the day ever closes—a world which rouses a curious man's social ambitions.

The city Sunday brings the height of the gaiety of beaches. The morning has been spent at home in the flat. Even in the winter here the gentlemen of the household are in shirt-sleeves (our national sign of intimate domesticity); in the summer they are often merely in undershirts. The minimum of costume and the maximum of newspapers make time pass pleasantly. The newspapers will, unluckily, not be finished before the visit to the beach. They will be carried there ultimately to litter and degrade the sands. The cheapness and the monstrous size of our newspapers are indeed the chief cause of our national untidiness in public places. We open great, green, flowery parks in the middle of our streets and we build great white pleasure cities by our suburban waters, only to cover them each day with a tattered and wind-blown profusion of dirty paper. It must, perhaps, be taken as part and parcel of the inextinguishable careless gaiety of the race; of our unflagging, cheerful vulgarity. The pleasure-resort of Sunday afternoon has indeed all the qualities of the comic supplement of Sunday morning. Buttons and hat-bands with mottoes, donned by bands of larkish young men (the *Apaches* of our cities) are all evidence of the deep influence newspaper humor has had upon our national life.

Amid such tumults and pleasures, linguistic and otherwise, Sunday passes on. Toward the day's end there are usually a few drownings or rescues from drowning by the life-guards. This is invigorating to the crowds—it supplies, indeed, the sensation which they are accustomed to get from their evening paper, which

is lacking on Sundays. As the light fades over the waters, lights more brilliant begin to flash upon the land. One of the inevitable failures of language lies in any attempt to describe American electric lights—English cannot be made to sparkle like ten million incandescents. It is safer to pass from these coruscating evening hours to the crowded trains and street-cars homeward bound to the tired end of the happy day, and to those few hours of sleep grudgingly devoted to making ready for Monday morning.

In town, too, there have been life and crowds. Zoos and aquariums claim attention. And the parks themselves, with their simple beauty of grove and lawn, never pall upon the city population. There is, indeed, something about park nature very different from what one might call *native* nature. The constant streaming of humanity through it, the perpetual disputations upon benches, the eternal courtships in shady corners, seem to change the aspect of flowers and shrubs, lakes and dells. At night, especially, under the dusky trees, the air seems, to the real park-lover, to be filled with a kind of golden star-dust of human happiness and sorrow; the beauty of the town's bit of country is more poignant to him than ever that of the simple countryside itself.

Year by year we learn more how to utilize our parks. They come to have their festivals. May-day—with white muslin and a May-pole—is celebrated all the length of May and June. Public-school children, who have been taught folk-dances and revels as well as gymnastics, disport themselves upon the greensward. We play tennis and baseball, too, in the parks. And we are at last learning to eat lunch there, and to put the waste paper and egg-shells in the proper receptacles.

We watch others play tennis, and, chiefly, we watch them play baseball. Here again the subject grows out of hand, becomes epic. To sing of bats and the men who toss the nation's heart to and fro might perhaps be the greatest American literary achievement. It must suffice here to say that for hundreds and hundreds of thousands, professional baseball makes the city, with all its withering heat, infinitely preferable to

the country with its fourth-rate amateur games.

Amateur games, however, flourish and give great joy to those engaged in them. They are part of what might be called the amateur country life which city-dwellers somehow manage in the summer. Besides parks there are vacant lots—no one's boyhood is so remote that he does not thrill at the possibilities of a vacant lot. With a little courage and imagination even children of a larger growth can somehow believe that the trackless wilderness exists wherever there is space to pitch a tent. Camp colonies within the city limits are among the latest and most winning manifestations of the beneficent paternalism of our municipal governments. New York, to take perhaps the most striking example, assigns to respectable citizens who make application in due form the right to pitch tents in one of its loveliest unspoiled country parks, by the edge of one of the prettiest reaches of the Sound. Nothing more unpretentious, more charming, more characteristically American, can be imagined than such a white city for the populace; nowhere else could the return to nature be so naturally accomplished. The oldest (and fewest) of old clothes do for the inhabitants. Life in such a camp is frankly, but decently, free from shackles. Here in six or seven hundred tents you find the really simple life led by families whose men come out from the town at night, or by parties of young people who thus at a minimum of expense obtain from their vacations a maximum of joy. To plunge in the sea, to cook one's own food, and to dance in the moonlight to the music of a concertina—what more could one ask before one retires to sleep like a top beneath snowy canvas? *Rus in urbe* becomes no impossible poet's dream.

So far we have treated mostly of the devices by which those who must stay in town contrive to solace themselves. But we must not forget that these pleasures can draw people to the towns who might easily be healthy and dull at home in the country. There is a definite summer season for city hotels and a regular demand for furnished flats—at reduced rates, naturally, and for the

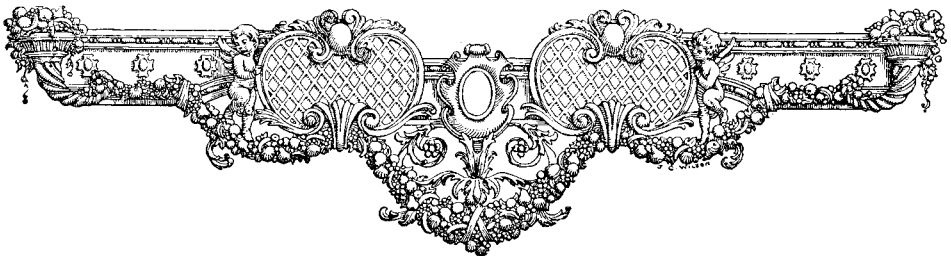
lightest of light housekeeping. People from the West come East, people from the South come North. They swarm in the museums and galleries till you might almost think yourself in the British Museum or the Louvre. They crowd the sight-seeing automobiles till you almost believe there really are sights to see. And they fill the restaurants and theaters till you doubt whether there is any one in town except people from out of town.

Boston is, perhaps, the greatest tourist center, in the regulation European red guide-book manner. It is at once the cradle of our liberties and the inventor of the sight-seeing trolley-car. Here education bears fruit and the Daughters of the American Revolution come into their own. The intelligence of Boston is amazing, but it is as nothing compared with the intelligence of other cities about Boston. If you will sit peacefully some summer morning in a quiet corner of that beautiful old Faneuil Hall you will see all America go by—in samples—and you will be forced to admit that your chair compares favorably with those somewhat more famous ones of the Café de la Paix in Paris, from which, if you sit long enough, you see every one in the world pass. The realization is gradually coming to us as a nation that the land is growing old, and that our seventeenth and eighteenth century relics have as much the romantic and picturesque quality as buildings of that same period in Europe, where we have long and affectionately recognized them as “antiques.” There is something stirring in the little troops of city sight-seers; they mark our national coming of age, they are witness of the finer bloom which,

while most of us are unaware of it, is stealing over the surface of our old civilization.

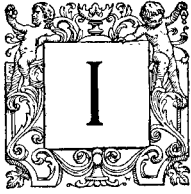
It is not altogether fantastic to suppose that we are upon the point of becoming the playground of Europe—which has so long been ours. Once, to take but one example, it was sufficient for a connoisseur of painting to know the European galleries; now he must at least know New York, Boston, Chicago, Pittsburg, and our private collections. The city summer may yet undergo stranger transformations. We may soon hang our “*Je parle Français*”—“*Man spricht Deutsch*,” and all the signs that correspond to that pleasantly ingratiating “*English spoken*” which one sees everywhere abroad. The red-capped negro porters at the railway stations may begin taking courses at the school for languages. And the foreign waiters, whose inadequate English we now so loudly curse, may be found admirably suited to cater to our tourist trade.

One way and another, is not the summer city a pleasant place?—and the city summer, if your heart is gay, as happy as any other period? The town-dweller is never really town-bound; if he has a half-day only, he can escape by boat or rail for what the advertising folders so prettily call a “vacationette.” And aren’t many “vacationettes” pleasanter than one long sentence to the country? The year-round country-dweller is the man who can tell you the truth. For him the summer town is one round of pleasure. Aren’t there even “movies” that begin at nine in the morning, when in the country there is nothing better than the futile dew upon the grass?



The Eyes of the Blind

BY MARY HEATON VORSE



WAS not the only one of Alison Deming's friends to whom her marriage with Scarboro seemed menacing. I was one of those nearest to her when the calamity of blindness befell her. I saw her go through with this crucifixion with incredible gallantry. As far as she let me or any one else see, she accepted blindness as another woman might have accepted old age—I mean that blindness might have been the inevitable lot of all mankind, for all the outward signs she gave. She had the intense spiritual modesty that keeps the wounds of the spirit concealed. She only showed what it must have meant to her by achieving in the end the hard-won and beautiful serenity of spirit that is sometimes given to the blind. She showed it, too, by her altered attitude toward the men she knew. She seemed to be somehow beyond any one's reach—twice born, unapproachable, as if she had returned to us from the holy places of the earth. I suppose it was sentimental on my part to feel that this marriage with Scarboro had an element of the sacrilegious, like some ordinary person aspiring to the hand of a haloed saint.

Perhaps it was this unapproachable quality of hers that made us dubious as to Godfrey Scarboro. One could understand her loving him; it wasn't that. Any woman might have loved Godfrey Scarboro. Indeed, it might well have frightened us, considering what he was—one of those peccable, lovable creatures perpetually being forgiven for everything.

One felt that Alison should have married some one having her own other-world, unattainable quality, instead of a man who smiled in the eyes of the world, as sure of his welcome as an unusually attractive child, and who had denied himself as little as a child. In marrying

Alison there had to be a certain consecration. A man had necessarily to be sure of his own temperament before he had the right to join his life with hers. No man had the right to make her risk anything. The thing which I felt most keenly about Scarboro was that he lacked the unshakable quality that a man should have for such a marriage. There are only a few men and a few women who have that quality—who make you feel of them that they will go on caring from the other side of the grave. Godfrey was not one of these. He had everything except this one thing which he should have had. That was how it seemed to those of us who loved Alison the most.

After five years we had to admit that our forebodings had come to nothing. Indeed, it seemed as if all Godfrey asked of life was to devote himself to her service. Under his love Alison bloomed into a creature of extraordinary perfection. It seemed as if life had taken her sight from her so that she might specialize in love, taste more deeply of love, than would otherwise have been possible to her. For once it seemed as if life had miraculously compensated for an apparently irreparable disaster. Godfrey was an artist in life, and he set himself to making the relation with Alison a perfect thing. He loved her with greater delicacy, with more imagination, with a higher degree of completeness than any one else could have done.

Such unions have an element of fatality to me. One is then so at the mercy of life; any alienation means such a terrible and mortal rending of the fibers of the spirit.

I had often visited them, and Alison's letter asking me to come to them roused in me happy anticipation. It was a warmer letter and more urgent than usual, and conveyed to me a flattering impression of their being eager to see me. Their greeting, when I arrived, bore out