

SKETCHES FROM THE WINTER GARDEN



Back from Suburbia to a City Flat's Dear Discomforts Goes Polly

Having Tried the Simple Country Life She Decides That Its Joys Have Been Overrated.

It is settled. We are going back to the city to live in the autumn. We will be suburbanites no more. The last winter has settled that. The reaction from the "back to nature" enthusiasm is bound to come, and Polly and I am ready to be among the pioneers.

and we have found it wanting. Decidedly so. The cost of the simplicity is appalling in more vital matters than that of dollars and cents. There may be gains for all our losses, but in the suburban life there are losses for all our gains. Perhaps I should explain, in justice toward other suburbanites, and by way of defence, that we are a childless couple, and therefore need not make a virtue of necessity.

Abdul Baha Talks of Things Spiritual and Mundane. Baha met my assent with a most Chesterfieldian expression of pleasure. Mr. Mills, president of the Bahai Society in New York, had placed his car at the disposal of Abdul Baha.

Touring Libraries. Libraries to teach them the use of reference books. "One of my most interesting school experiences," she continued, "is with the Manhattan Trade School. That is run by the city now, and hundreds of small girls who have to leave school early and go to work are there taught useful trades. Once a month I go there for a story hour. As a result of our attempt to show these girls what a world of enjoyment there is for them in books 150 of them have joined our branch library across the street.

A DIFFERENCE. George Ade, at a dinner in New York, urged a subtler use of words. "Use words with delicate care," he said. "Observe all their subtle distinctions. Never write 'vision,' for instance, 'when sight' is what you mean."

HIS CHOICE FOR CHARITY. Frank Morrison, secretary of the American Federation of Labor, was condemning in Washington, senseless economies. "Economy is all very well," he said, "but some of the latter-day scientific management economy you hear about reminds you of the skintight millionaire whose only charity was foreign missions."

profit, and her complaint that at least half of her shopping has to be done in town anyway. Let us at once to her more serious argument, in which, with wifely devotion, woman embraces man.

THE DRUGGERY OF GARDENING. "An intimate knowledge of the fall treatment of the lawn," she says, "spoils my pleasure in its summer verdure. I want my daffodils to take the winds of March with beauty in unexpected places. I object to all this fertilizing and planning and plotting, this repulsive hunting of things that creep on fruits and shrubs and flowers. I want to feel that Nature can make herself beautiful in my garden without the constant supervision of a horticultural guardian. It is just like smelling the coal tar before the perfume that is extracted from it, or like having to put a glorious poem into type and printing it before reading it, and, of course, doing it in a bungling, amateurish fashion at that."

NATURE'S ELUSIVE MUSIC. "The music of nature," exploded Polly, reverting to her major grievance. "It is most beautiful at sunrise when one is too sleepy to listen to it, and silent at night, when one is wide awake and ready to hear. Why, we have no song birds here, only chirpers and rustlers, and none at all in children's ears. The real music season, say what you will, last January there was a hoot-owl, and we both wanted to murder him."

TRUMPED-UP SCANDAL. "There is our 'fast set'—three married women, four uninteresting men and a girl of twenty-eight. They are really not fast at all; they merely invent the fastness for them. They will disappoint us, nothing will happen, so after a while we shall start gossiping about some others, until each and every one of us has a purely imaginary story. From sheer lack of genuine social interest we attempt to graft the 'House of Mirth' upon 'Back to Nature,' and the result is a Jane Austen chronicle with Guy de Maupassant trimmings, but without the art of either, I believe."

IRRESISTIBLE. A New York broker was praising, apropos of his probable return to Wall Street, Charles W. Morse's ability as a money raiser. "They tell a story about Morse," he chuckled, "Morse went to a millionaire one day and said: 'Lend me three million. I must have three million for this deal of mine.' 'Sorry, Mr. Morse,' said the millionaire, 'but I've only got two million in ready money today.' 'Is that all?' said Morse. 'Well, then it's over then—you can owe me the other million.'"

laborious living with no food for profitable thought at all. We have tacitly given up reading. You are too tired at night, and so am I. We have not visited a picture gallery in three years; I have not been inside a bookshop in ages, just to rub up against names and titles to refresh my memory and get into the atmosphere again. It was two years before I got to see the Sherman in the Plaza—the greatest equestrian statue since the Colosseum, mind you—and then I had to miss a train and a stilled, stupid, most important afternoon tea.

THE TIME-TABLE FACE. She looked at me with critical fondness, then observed calmly, "And you are setting the time-table face, and the collar of your coat always looks as if you had slipped it on in a tearing hurry."

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND. Andrew D. White stated recently that murder in America was a safer pursuit than hunting—that only one in a hundred murderers were punished with death.

VIVIDLY HIT OFF. "The late General James B. Weaver," said a Des Moines Populist, "had a just faith in the American farmer. He believed that from the farmer the Republic's regeneration would come."

THE FORERUNNER. Mme. Maeterlinck, on the French liner pier in New York, praised the Harlem flat ardently. "Our foreign flats, beside your Harlem ones," she said, "seem as slow as—as slow as well, as a Provencal railway. 'In white, sun-drenched, glittering slow there is a railway remarkable for its slowness.' 'I was waiting at a Provencal station one day, and my train was three hours behind time. Out of patience at last, I said to the station master: 'Isn't this train coming soon?' 'Just then a dog came trotting up the line, and the station master smiled. 'Oh, yes, madam,' he said, 'it is bound to arrive soon now. Here comes the engineer's dog.'"

of a gift for self-suppression instead of for self-development, of an interest in small things, and of self-denial of the wider interests of life. It will make an amateur handy man of one, and in the process will reduce that part of one's brain which is not devoted to the daily task, the part that has striven through the ages to get away from Nature, and he probably knew what he was about. He certainly has widened his horizon in the process. Back to Nature! Oh, yes, when one is sixty-five and the mind is beginning to lose its elasticity, when it begins to crave rest and quietude upon till the end of its days. But while I live, let me live in the midst of the struggle and its fruits, let me be near the centre, where are found the builders of the past, where I can hear Beethoven and Wagner and witness the rise or fall of a Strauss or a Chopin, where I can cheer I can see the wheels go round, and listen to conversation that is not of the

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little things of daily life, but of the men who turn the wheels, their aspirations and their achievements. "And for all of me," concluded Polly, with flushed cheeks, "if I can do that, the caterpillars may eat the foliage, and the ants may ruin the lawns, and the little boys may steal the pears on our two trees. I won't even worry if there is a draft in the outhouse. There will always be people enough content to make it their life work to prevent all these calamities."

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