

TYPES AND PEOPLE AT THE FAIR.

By J. A. Mitchell.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR AND CHARLES HOWARD JOHNSON.

IT is no reflection on the Columbian show to confess that perhaps the pleasantest moments are those spent in resting one's rebellious limbs upon a bench and in watching the crowd. It may be less novel and possibly less instructive than some other exhibits, but it is often more amusing. One realizes in studying this infinite stream of humanity how little he really knows, personally, of his own countrymen. New types seem to have sprung into existence for the sole purpose of appearing at this fair. It gives one a startling realization of the varying effects of climate, food, and mode of life upon our brothers and sisters. Voice, manner, color, size, shape, and mental fittings are so widely different as to suggest varieties in race. But we are all Americans, and those from the interior are more American than the others.

If the native Indian were of a reflective turn of mind, all this might awaken unpleasant thoughts. Judging from outside appearance, however, he has no thoughts whatever. He stalks solemnly about the grounds with a face as impassive as his wooden counterparts on Sixth Avenue. And yet *he* is the American. He is the only one among us who had ancestors to be discovered. He is the aboriginal; the first occupant and

owner; the only one here with an hereditary right to the country we are celebrating. Perhaps the native realizes this in his own stolid fashion. As he stalks about among the dazzling structures of the Fair, and tries, or more likely, does not try, to grasp the innumerable wonders of art and science that only annoy and confuse him, it may require a too exhausting mental effort to recall the fact that his own grandfather very likely pursued the bounding buffalo over the waste of prairie now covered by the city of Chicago. He, at least, if his education permitted it, could claim historic connection with the country when Columbus came so near discovering it; whereas our own connection with the discoverer is certainly remote, and sometimes suggests (with the fact that he from whom we have named the Fair never actually saw this particular country) that we are taking liberties with his name.

The unconquerable American desire to do things on a bigger scale than anybody else, which often results in our "biting off more than we can chew," has again run away with us. There are many illustrations of this gnawing hunger at the World's Fair. In fact the Fair itself, as a whole, comes painfully near being an illustration in point. A

colossal enterprise too vast and complex to permit of its attaining a perfect finish in the time allowed, seems to give more joy to our occidental spirits than any possible perfection on a smaller scale. Crudity has little terror for us. The whole scheme is so vast and comprehensive, and the scale so hopelessly magnificent that the visitor finds he has neither the spirit, spine, nor legs to even partially take it in. In fact the farther he goes the more he realizes the futility of the undertaking. And the hapless enthusiast who proposes to see, even superficially, the more important exhibits, should be fitted with a wrought-iron spine, nerves of catgut, and one

goes there with intent to thoroughly "do it" is laying up for himself anguish of mind and the complete annihilation of his muscular and nervous force. It is far too big for any question of conscience to be allowed to enter in. Its bigness is beyond description. No words or pictures can tell the story of its size. Experience alone can teach it. You must go there day after day, to return at night with tired eyes and aching limbs, and with the bitter and ever increasing knowledge that as an exhibition you can never grasp it. Where other exhibitions have been satisfied with a display of an hundred cubic feet of any special article, Chicago must have



Trying to Get the Better of the Native.

more summer. In all the departments, from the fine arts to canned tomatoes, there is more than enough in numbers and in area to wear out the energy and paralyze the brain. To visit the Fair with profit or comfort you must leave your sense of duty behind. Whoever

at least an acre. Of whatever the world has seen before this time it now sees larger specimens and more of them. This means for the visitor more steps, more fatigue, more confusion, more time, and more money.

But there is a good side to all this, if

one can forget his physical fatigue. Few of us fully realize what the fair is doing for this country aesthetically. Not so much by its art collections, for the average American sees, or can see, enough good paintings in the course of

tions and artistic excellence of the buildings, for which no praise is too high, we come gradually to learn, as we meander among the exhibits, that those things which excite our surprise and curiosity are generally the results of inge-



Fakirs.

a year to bring up his standard to a respectable level if he so elects, but by the architecture of the buildings themselves. Unless the aforementioned "Average American" is an undeserving barbarian who has made up his mind to prefer the wrong thing, these impressive monuments cannot fail to do him good. The honest beauty of their design ought to stamp itself with sufficient force upon his dawning reason to make him see the crudity of the United States architecture in which he has wallowed up to date. No praise is too high for what Chicago has achieved in this direction. There are, of course, at the Fair some painful examples of what the untamed American architect loves to do, but he is fortunately in the minority. And the very contrast he offers works for progress in the cause of good art and a higher standard. The United States Building, designed by a Government architect, is a melancholy warning.

The more intimate one becomes with this particular fair, the more forcibly he realizes the fact that we are, above all else, a practical people. After being duly impressed by the gigantic propor-

tion and manual skill. In those departments, for instance, relating to art, literature, and history, there is little to startle the traveller who is at all familiar with previous international shows. The best in the art galleries is, as usual, from Europe. There is no dodging the fact that the average American is not overladen with the artistic sense. His enthusiasm runs in other directions. When it comes to the outward manifestations of human ingenuity, he is "on deck;" he is "in it" and "with you." The application of electricity to filling teeth, or converting sawdust into table butter, kindles in his bosom an excitement he never experienced in the art department. It certainly seems, after a visit to the electricity and machinery, that human hands can do nothing that is not more quickly accomplished by some machine. Not only this, but time and distance count for nothing, and, if we keep on as we have started, the day will soon be here when the man in Maine can shake hands with his friend in Arizona. Already the sun is a hard-working slave. Light, air, water, and in fact all nature seems cruelly overworked.

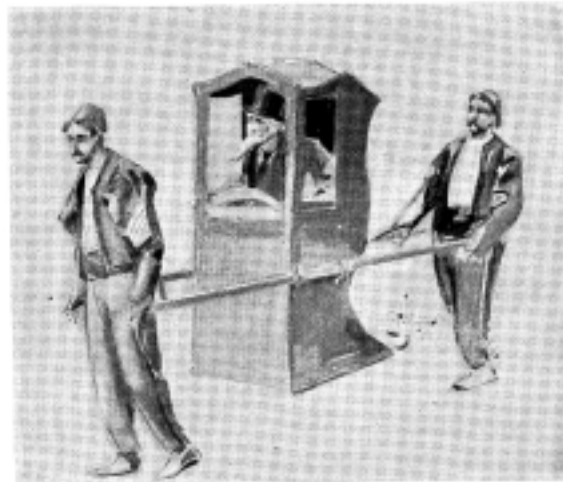
If she ever strikes, it will be an awkward period for us. These mechanical and scientific surprises make it interesting to speculate as to possible sights at our next grand exhibition, say twenty years hence. The man in China, for instance, need not go to the future fair at all. He will probably be able to see and hear it all at home. If he does go he can return to Shanghai for his lunch.

But the American as seen at this fair, although first of all practical, is not, from another point of view, so far behind in his artistic sense as we are in the habit of considering him. In the first place, he is found, as a rule, standing before the best paintings and passing by the poorer ones. Those galleries containing the finest works are invariably the most crowded. And this is the greatest compliment we can pay ourselves. If, on the other hand, enthusiastic groups collected about the impressionists, and took pleasure in the purple and yellow "effects," that are sprinkled about the French and American sections there would be cause for anxiety. But such is not the case. That the impressionists still count their warmest admirers among themselves, their wives, sisters, and aunts, is a hopeful sign. As a people, we take many things less seriously than some of our contemporaries, but in matters of art we like it with a purpose. Too little clothing still strikes us as frivolous and improper. Blood, violence, and all unpleasantness are sometimes historically instructive, but, as a rule, we are fond of comfortable subjects. We still like a taste of sugar in our art.

But the brightest sign of all is the universal and hearty appreciation by the multitude of the buildings themselves. The expressions of delight by those who see for the first time these marvels of architectural beauty, indicate at least a capacity for artistic enjoyment. In fact the American who steps for the first time upon the borders of

the Grand Basin, and looks upon the scene before him without a tingle of pride and pleasure is not of the stuff he should be. No words can give a just idea of the magnificence and restful beauty of this gigantic achievement. Rome and Greece were of marble and built for a more serious purpose. This is a city for a single summer. As such it is a complete and glorious triumph.

There is nothing like a colossal exhibition to emphasize the disastrous effects of wealth upon the human spirit. Your friend with plenty of money goes to the Fair because others do and because he hates to be "out of it." He reaches Chicago in a palace car, occupies luxurious rooms at a comfortable and expensive hotel, takes a carriage when others walk, and at the exhibition itself derives pleasure only from those things that are unexpectedly novel. And to him such sights are few and



The East and the West.

such sensations rare. What he does realize, however, continually and with force, is the enormity of the crowd with its thoughtless persistence in holding the best places in front of those exhibits he wishes to see himself. Moreover, there is an ever-increasing sense of physical discomfort, and that is something your moneyed friend is slow to



forgive. But he does his duty, and he is glad above all to get home again.

But how different with your less prosperous friend, who has been economizing for months in order to get there! It being an expensive business, his time is

gulps. It is hard work, but how interesting! That dull pain which overtakes the great majority of sightseers soon catches him in the back of his neck, but as long as he can see, hear, and walk, he profits by his opportunities. And he goes to his home mentally refreshed, a broader and a wiser man. He has gained an experience he would not exchange for many dollars.

An unlooked-for feature of the exhibition is the profusion of newly married couples. Whether all this individual ecstasy adds gayety or mournfulness to the Fair depends, of course, entirely upon the point of view from which the victims are regarded. It is evident that many happy grooms have considered this a chance to kill two birds with one stone, and, as far as one can judge results from outward appearances, there is no question as to the practical working of the scheme. The happy couple find themselves in a sort of fairy land, wandering about among countless strangers, whose very numbers seem to lend security and to harden the over-sensitive soul. The crowd also seems to create a feeling of isolation which the innermost recesses of a



A Bride and Groom.

limited, and he drinks it in through all his senses, excitedly and with large

virgin forest could never supply. Moreover, there is here so much else to occupy the attention of the usually obnoxious public that the bride and groom can hold hands with absolute security and be as bold or blushing as their temperaments may demand.

The rolling-chairs that run about the grounds and through the buildings are the salvation of many a fainting spirit. To thousands of human beings with nothing but a human back and human legs the fair would be a failure without them. They are support for the weary, strength for the weak, and hope and a new life for the despairing. The guides who navigate them are, as a rule, college students, profiting by this opportunity to see the fair and to secure additional dollars toward completing their studies. The result is, for the occupant of the chair, an intelligent and agreeable companion, who is ready and willing to give any information he may possess. And besides, they are neither sharks nor liars, but fair and honorable respecters of truth. There is sometimes a contrast in manners and education between the occupant of the chair and the man behind that is not in favor of the former. When one sees what is evidently a citizen with far more money than brains, and without the faintest appreciation of the beauties that encompass him, wheeled about at seventy-five cents an hour by a youth so far his superior that any comparison is impossible, it causes one to realize that Fortune is indeed an irresponsible flirt, who is never so happy as when doing the wrong thing.

A not uncommon sight, and one of the countless illustrations of what an excellent husband the American becomes when properly trained, is that of the weary, uninterested man, lingering patiently among laces, china, and views of Switzerland. His heart all the while is off with the machinery, possibly with that more than human little

machine that winds the cotton on the spools. Such cases are, of course, offset by the devoted women who wear themselves out in tramping through soulless acres of agricultural products, locomotives, wagons, models of ships, and all the other follies that appeal to man.



The burning question of the hour for the visitor from another city is the question of finance. He who is worth his million and intends spending a fortnight in Chicago, will do well to take his million with him. He may bring some of it away, but that will depend entirely upon his own capacity for economy. Before registering at the hotel let him be sure to secure his return ticket, for it is a long walk from Chi-



Café in the Midway Palace.

cago to New York. These remarks are not intended to discourage all who are not millionaires from visiting the exhibition. It can be done with less money. The writer has himself accomplished it. In fact, it is only fair to say that many of the stories of extortion which have come from the White City are much exaggerated. The most successful brigands are in the city of Chicago, and not at the Fair.

The writer can testify, from his own personal experience, that a very good lunch can be procured in the State of Illinois for less than one hundred dollars. Thirty dollars is more than enough for a sandwich, and a glass of water can be purchased anywhere for less than ninety cents. While to walk by the *cafés* and restaurants and look upon others who are eating, costs the promenader nothing whatever. But these moderate prices do not obtain at your hotel. The object of keeping a hotel is, like some other occupations, partly to make money. The Chicago hotel-keeper does not ignore this fact. His ideas of the relation of profit to expenditure are well calculated to startle the guest of reasonable expectations. If the guest is not overweeningly ambitious and is satisfied to sleep in a closet or hang from the stairs his expenses need be no greater than if he occupied a handsome suite of rooms at any first-

class New York hotel. But if he insists on having a real chamber, larger even than his own bath-room at home, and with a real window in it, then he must pay. And it is then that he begins to discover why his landlord keeps a hotel. Any previous extravagances in the way of horses, real estate, or precious stones are as nothing to the present outlay. He finds that the rate per diem is, as far as he can judge, based upon the supposition that the hotel is to be closed to-morrow and must be paid for to-day. And real estate is high, even in Chicago. In matters of nourishment, the wealth of Ormus is of no avail, unless the waiter receives a tip exceeding in value the handsomest Christmas present ever given to a dearest friend.

Within the grounds there is little extortion, thanks to the firmness of the ruling powers.

But let not the Chicagoan whose eye may fall upon these lines suppose for an instant that they are intended as reflections on his character. The city that secured the prize is simply fulfilling its inevitable destiny. Had New York drawn the plum we should have witnessed a worse extortion with the added mortification of a much inferior ex-

hibition. Moreover, there is no public spirit in New York, and there is a great deal of it in Chicago. This sentiment alone is more than enough to make the difference between success and failure. The woods are full of citizens willing to begin at sunrise and discourse to you until midnight of the wonders of Chicago. In ordinary times this burning desire to impart just that kind of information is not always appreciated by the outside world; but in times of fairs the spirit that prompts it becomes a mighty engine. It was soon demonstrated that these citizens could work as well as talk, and as a result the White City has risen as from a fairy's wand.

The important question for the individual citizen is whether it is worth his while to go to this fair. And this of course depends altogether upon his purse, his stomach, his back, his legs, nerves, wife, children, and business. He may never have another such opportunity for mental expansion and physical discomfort. It is a marvel of architectural beauty. It is days of instruction, of fatigue, of art and science, of surprise and exasperation, of mental development, fatigue, and financial ruin. In the end his personal preferences, however, will probably have little to do with it. All the world are going and he must go too.

