

A HAUNTING DREAM.

Read at Chicago Woman's Club, February, 1909.

Last night I dreamed that a Scotchman, a Dane, a Norwegian, an Icelander, an Englishman, a Swede, an Irishman, a Finn, and a Welshman came to Chicago and met here coming in from the West, an Australian, a Canadian, a New Zealander, a Kansan, a Tasmanian, a resident of Wyoming, one from Colorado, one from Utah, one from Idaho, and one from Natal, South Africa. They were all guests of the Average Chicago Man and, escorted by him, went out with their note books to study the wonders of this metropolis.

They greatly admired the marvelous enterprise which in less than a century had put a city of two million civilized inhabitants where only wild Indians had formerly roamed.

They asked questions about various civic problems and made extended notes from the answers of their host the Average Man.

"Please tell us," said the guest from Natal, "about your regulations concerning the suffrage. Do you have privileged classes who do all the voting?"

"No," said the host, "all citizens vote here without regard to rank."

"That's the way it is with us," said the New Zealander. "Men and women vote on all matters."

"You quite misunderstand me," said the Chicago Man, "I did not say women voted here, only that all citizens do."

"But are not women citizens?" said the Norwegian and the man from Wyoming. "Our women vote on the same terms as men because they are citizens."

"Well, I do get mixed on some of these legal questions," said the Chicago Man. "Some courts have been troubled as to whether women were citizens or persons or townsmen or countrymen or only inhabitants or residents or human beings, and I scarcely remember all the fine distinctions. One religious body once decided they had souls and I know they are surely human beings, but I am not positive about their being citizens. But I know this, that women do not vote for any high official in Chicago."

The polite Swede said, "I dare say your city has very good grounds for such disfranchisement. The women here are probably the ignorant natives, the aboriginees married to the incoming settlers. They are doubtless too low in the scale of civilization to really appreciate modern self government. Now in an old well settled

nation like ours, Sweden, there have been through the centuries so many intelligent women that a couple of hundred years ago Sweden recognized their value by allowing certain women municipal suffrage. Now more and more women are qualified. This point is very interesting, a city of brilliant able men associated with undeveloped savage women, a mixture of barbarism and civilization. I must put this down in my note book."

"Does this explain the situation?" asked the Icelander.

"No, indeed," said the Chicago Man, "you mistake our women. They are educated. They flock to every school in the city. They can secure professional education also of every kind. Really they sometimes lead their classes."

"But you doubtless have some other good reason," said the Australian. I can imagine it. In an early time my country too was a place to which criminals were sentenced, and your women, though intelligent, may be deported criminals, sent here from other States."

"You are mistaken," said the Chicago Citizen. "Our women are not criminals. They average very well with men. Only one-twentieth of the inmates of our State's Prisons are women. In our city jails there are never as many women as men, the women are sometimes arrested for things overlooked in men."

"Probably your women, tho intelligent and moral, are so lazy they never deserve or acquire property and thus need no share in government," suggested the Scotchman and Englishman together. "Some sort of property qualification has disfranchised your women as utter poverty in our country would disfranchise even men."

"Let me explain this too," said the Average Citizen. "Our women are not lazy. They really work. Chicago has 100,000 in shops and stores and factories. We have two or three times as many more at hard labor as mothers and housekeepers. Some have saved money from their earnings. Some have inherited it from parents and there are several millionaire widows. Yes, many women do have monied interests to protect and many more need protection in honestly acquiring money."

"Let me explain," said the Finn. "Your women are doubtless cowardly and unpatriotic, they cannot appreciate what love of country means. Our Finnish women worked with our men this century past to help regain our liberties, and when freedom came, women as well as men were fully enfranchised. But few women can be as patriotic and brave as our Finns. We must not expect too much of them in such a new country. Your women are doubtless traitors all."

"No, you misjudge them," said the host. "It is true no foreign enemy has troubled our shores for many years so that neither women or men could be constantly showing the warlike patriotism which inspires one to kill enemies. But there is a loftier patriotism than killing the enemy. It is shown in saving life. Women excel in this kind of patriotism. Women organize the corp of army nurses. They lead the Red Cross work. They go to districts desolated by fire, famine or pestilence. They rescue, they nurse, they heal. They lead great reforms which strive to cure the evils which impoverish, debauch and destroy. At the time of our great fire in 1871 our women were as heroic as our men in enduring peril and helping to rebuild this city. There are no cowards and traitors here among our women."

The men from Colorado, Utah and Idaho conferred together a moment and smiled wisely. One then said, "If the Chicago Citizen would visit our States and compare the present conditions with those which existed fifteen years ago, before women voted he would notice a great moral and civic improvement. It may be that Chicago women have no interest in civic questions."

The men from Kansas, Denmark, Ireland and Wales then joined in. "These civic questions our own people have decided were peculiarly in woman's sphere, and woman's exercise of municipal suffrage has been a great benefit to women, to the State, and to men as well."

The Average Chicago Citizen again defended, "Our women too have been very active in civic matters. Their judgment has been excellent. Their zeal abundant, and their courage wonderful, but they seem to have little political influence, and much of their work goes to waste. Their work during the World's Fair was splendid when we men were anxious to show off well, but they could not keep it up. After the Fair the women could not keep the streets clean, they could not get many public bath houses or small parks, or enough vacation schools. They let the teachers become overworked and underpaid. They do not reform the bad women fast enough to keep up with the speed with which men ruin them. With all their apparent devotion to home and children they could not manage to let the Ormsby quadruplets stay with their own mother who for the past six years, single handed, has struggled to support them. No, the famous 'quads' are parted from a mother who could not train and feed and clothe and keep clean these four babies and the three next older children. I must admit that our women do not always secure results."

The Canadian and the New Zealander explained, "No won-

der your women do not accomplish as much politically as ours. No matter how well educated, moral, industrious, patriotic, public-spirited and unselfish they may be, they lack the power of the ballot which our women have."

"Yes," said the Australian. "Our laws would have allowed that mother to care for her babies with State help. Our women vote. It is strange that your country should only pension the soldier who takes life and never pension the mother who gives life."

"Our Colorado women put Judge Lindsay back on the bench and your Chicago women have no power in your Juvenile Courts," said the Coloradian.

"What does all this mean?" said the Average Chicago Man, dazed.

"Well," said the Tasmanian, "It may be that your women are not allowed a share in municipal affairs because they are inferior to the women in all English speaking cities outside the United States and inferior to the hardy Northern nations represented here. Our women all have municipal suffrage and in half these places women have full suffrage. It means that your women must be very degraded and incapable, much below the women in all these countries and States from which we your guests, come."

"Please stop," said the Average Citizen. "Even if I am your host, I can no longer endure the slurs you are all casting at our Chicago women. I must tell you point blank that no women on earth are superior to ours. No women deserve more than ours. Our mothers come to this State and worked hard with their hands. When the Civil War came our women were the first to inaugurate the Sanitary Commission which saved the lives of thousands of our soldiers. The great fire, the World's Fair, our charities, show what women can do. Our great teaching force, our business women, our home keepers, altogether make a wonderful combination. Any city could be proud of our women. They are the peers of the noblest women on earth."

"Why then," said the Finn, "do you politically disgrace your women by classing them with men guilty of election frauds and with unpardoned criminals? Why do you not enfranchise them as our countries have done?"

Bewildered and dazed, the Average Chicago Man could only answer "I don't know. Should I join the Chicago Men's Equal Suffrage League and secure municipal suffrage for women at once?"

His guests united in joyful chorus, "Yes, oh, yes!"

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