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TWO  
CHICAGO SKETCHES

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*When the City Wakes to Life*

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*Lake Michigan in Calm and Storm*

*by*

JOHN R. RATHOM



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To F. M. C. R.



## IN EXPLANATION

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*THE two sketches contained in this little volume are written in personal recognition of some betterment of mind and aspiration drawn by one individual from the lesson taught through a happy period of years in Chicago. When time permits, it is my intention to present at much greater length a further picture of the city's life.*

*In the Chicago of today there are over two millions of men, women and children, gathered from every part of the globe, engaged in every channel of activity known to mankind, living in palaces and hovels, building great office structures, pounding at the door of fortune, incessantly spreading the limits of their city out through an ever-increasing radius and making it one of the greatest centers of human unrest that the world has ever known.*

*Nothing that anybody may write about Chicago can add to her fame, for wherever civilization has penetrated it is known. Her mammoth flights of business, the loyalty of her citizens, her material growth and her capture of one after the other of the great markets of the world, are things as familiar in London, or Paris, or Berlin, as they are on La Salle street. Along material lines continued and ever-increasing advance is assured.*

*We cannot walk through the streets without treading, at every point, on ground made precious by the spilling of blood when the little village was an outpost of civilization, or by the humble beginning of some great enterprise, or by the fire-swept spots that almost at the same moment heralded a city's destruction and a city's regeneration, or by the tramp of the feet of marching troops answering the call of their country in its time of peril.*

## IN EXPLANATION

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*There is not an acre of its broad area on which men have not struggled, and conquered fate and set their faces on the forward path; there is not a landmark in it that is not consecrated to the remembrance of those who knew how to endure and bear a bright and smiling front in the face of the blackest despair that ever clouded a city's life.*

*Into its hospitable arms have poured, and are pouring, and will pour till the world gets better, the outcasts of every land, the down-trodden human beings who seek liberty and the right to live, the fugitives from despotism who speak forty different tongues, but have one common cause.*

*By the waters of Lake Michigan have been wrought some of the wonders of the world. Other centers, marveling at Chicago's growth, called her an overgrown village, and she planted her feet on the ladder and became a city. Then they said she had reached her limit of achievement, and she answered by making the greatest strides in population and the acquisition of wealth that had ever been recorded in modern history. Then they declared that she was the head and center and culmination of coarse materialism without an atom of high aspiration, and her reply in the building of the wonderful White City startled and thrilled the people of every nation and silenced her detractors.*

*And Chicago, in her own way, steadily and bravely mounts an eminence and shows signs, in a hundred different paths, that her people have not lost sight of these higher aims and that they are determined to make their beloved city as graceful as she is powerful, as noble as she is big, and to put her on a lofty plane of civic honor and civic beauty.*

## IN EXPLANATION

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*The inspiration she has for these ideals in her great heritage will become a powerful factor in the work. The men who built the first log cabin and who died by the tomahawk of the treacherous Indian, the women who cared for their babies in pioneer days and cheerfully suffered unnumbered privations, the citizens who found all their accumulations of toiling years swept away in a night, are not forgotten.*

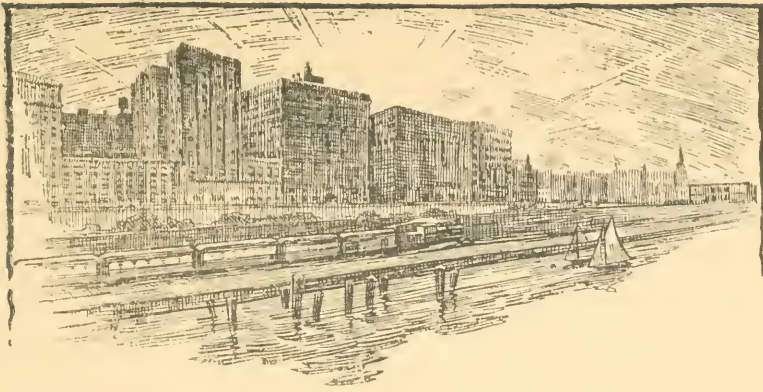
*There is another asset too that brings the brightest hopes for these higher achievements. It is the devoted loyalty of Chicago's citizens to her cause and future. At first glance it seems incompatible to think of "loyalty" in connection with her towering buildings, her thundering elevated roads, her smashing, crashing, never-stilled whirlpool of traffic, her miles of cobblestone thoroughfares, her smoking chimneys and her feverish activity. But nevertheless there is a something in her indomitable spirit, in her bigness—an indefinable, intangible magnet that first binds us to her fortunes and afterward holds us tight to her destiny and makes us jealous guardians of her further reputation.*

*And in spite of mistakes, in spite of imperfections inseparable from rapid growth, we all know, and feel a glow of pride in the knowledge, that the city has her face set steadfastly in the right direction and that she is building her own destiny, as she builds everything to which she puts her hand, enduringly and well.*

JOHN R. RATHOM

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND  
DECEMBER 25TH, 1910.





## WHEN THE CITY WAKES TO LIFE

**O**NE night in Chicago, not many years ago,—an especially strenuous night for newspaper men,—five or six of us foregathered after work was over in a place now swept away by the march of progress, but once dear to the hearts of many who still hold memories of Spanish beans and stewed ducks, and a veteran cook.

When the eating and drinking were over and the triumphs and defeats of the night fully discussed, we found ourselves stamping our feet on the sidewalk in the pure, bracing air of 4 o'clock on a frosty November morning.

“Well, let's go home,” said one of the members of the party, with a yawn.

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## WHEN THE CITY WAKES TO LIFE

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“No,” responded another. “I’ve got a new idea. Let’s cut out bed tonight and see this old town wake up.”

So while thousands of alarm clocks were bidding labor to its tasks all over Chicago and the first faint streaks of dawn became visible in the eastern sky, the little band of explorers began to grope into the morning.



We find the quiet broken at once by the rush and rattle of milk wagons. Out of the gloom with a flaming lantern bobbing up and down like a will-o'-the-wisp comes one of them now, waking the echoes, and on the uneven cobblestones making nearly as much noise as a fire-engine. Another bang and crash and he is away in the blackness on the other side of us, soon to be racing wildly up back stairs in the residence districts, leaving behind him the contribution of the cows to the morning breakfast.

He is not any too early. Already the little alarm clocks have clanged their warning signal in the ears of hundreds of thousands of sleepers, and men and women are groping out of bed to light the gas and the cook-stove fires and get ready for the work of the day.

Still the darkness. The few streaks of gray dawn have not increased perceptibly, and unless we happen



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## WHEN THE CITY WAKES TO LIFE

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to be near a fizzing electric light we can only dimly see the figures that come along the streets hurrying off to bed after a night of labor. Printers, many of these, and then there are telegraph operators and police officers just off duty. Here we come across a dozen laborers walking in a group, the smell of newly-turned clay all about them, and damp pickaxes and shovels over their shoulders. They have been doing emergency work all night on a leaking gas main and are now trudging homeward. Once in a while we see a straggler wander uncertainly out of the swinging doors of a saloon and gaze about him in a mystified way, as if he had expected to find himself in the middle of the afternoon.

A solitary pigeon strutting fearlessly in front of us starts from our feet with a whirr like a quail in the grass and circles overhead with a mild coo of protest at being disturbed in his early morning walk. Here we are now at the corner of Washington and La Salle streets, and here are more pigeons, in sole possession of the neighborhood. They wheel about in graceful circles, and flutter among the tall buildings as if, instead of being great structures of brick and stone, they were the forest trees that stood in the same spot fifty years ago.

Suddenly comes another noise that drowns out the murmur of the birds. It begins with a groan and a squeak, and soon breaks into a screech of metallic

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## WHEN THE CITY WAKES TO LIFE

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friction and defies and overcomes the stillness of the morning. The noise grows, coming from below our feet as if the old earth were stretching and yawning in a final tired motion before it decided to wake. It is the cable beginning to move, and then we know that the day is stirring to life in earnest.

In swift verification, a rosy searchlight pointed up into the heavens flashes into view right across the lake, rising out of Michigan and saying good morning to Illinois. Another and still another spring into being beside it. "Wake up, Chicago," "Wake up, Chicago!" "Wake up, Chicago"—that's what they proclaim, and in seeming answer the cable begins to rattle more fiercely still, with that peculiar sing-song lilt that shows it is not as yet burdened with labor, and is enjoying its few minutes of freedom before it begins to drag its overloaded cars downtown.

Well, we must be moving on. The neighborhood we are in now is not the habitat of early risers, and we would have to stay two, maybe three hours to get any sight of the things we have come out to see. So off over to the Desplaines street viaduct, that great murky, forbidding area of drab timbers that joins the downtown district to one of the most thickly populated parts of the city. On our way we note the gradual brightening in the sky, and as we pass the Haymarket we do not need the electric lights to see the long rows

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## WHEN THE CITY WAKES TO LIFE

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of wagons drawn up side by side, piled high with green stuff, and sending out a scent that takes us back out on the prairie, and among the loam of the market gardens. A dozen sleepy wagoners are moving the canvas covering from their produce and putting out the lanterns by the light of which they have just rumbled into the city along the country roads. Three more blocks, and we are at the viaduct, its overhanging cobweb of rusty iron bars showing plainly in the pink and blue of the fast coming day.

A sturdy fellow, with his coat collar turned up, hands thrust deep in his trousers pockets and a corncob pipe in his mouth, trudges out from Milwaukee avenue and turns onto the viaduct, nodding us a cheery good morning as he passes. Half a block behind him come two others of the same type. Up the great artery of the Northwest Side, little black specks appear, stepping out of the side streets. The light in the east grows brighter and brighter, until we are able to see that factory chimneys all about us are giving signs of life below. The soft hiss of steam from exhaust pipes tells us that we have been too late to catch some of the workers, who are already at their posts making ready for the day's production of power.

A belated freight train sweeps down over the tracks from the north, the sides and tops of the cars all covered with thin white frost. The street

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## WHEN THE CITY WAKES TO LIFE

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lamps along Milwaukee avenue are gradually being obliterated by the growing light, and give out only a sickly glitter. The little specks on both sidewalks increase every moment, and all are setting their faces toward where we are standing.

The daily parade of toil has begun, and here we are about to see a sight such as no other street in the United States can show—a sight that has long since given to this thoroughfare the immortal name of Dinner Pail avenue.

Swing, swing, swing; tramp, tramp, tramp; here they come. And to welcome them the morning sun peeps up over the waste of downtown buildings and shines full in their faces. With a rhythmic sweep of power and dignity and all-pervading strength they race down, a great river of labor, onto the viaduct that shakes and quivers beneath their feet.

Mingled with the tramp comes the hum of voices, broken not infrequently by a burst of hearty laughter. All are comrades. The fact that they are trudging the same way at this time in the morning is introduction enough, and, as they pass one another or catch up and go along together, they exchange salutations and drift naturally enough into friendly talk. Nothing strikes one so much in looking at them as the absence of the sad, gloomy heaviness always met with among the crowds of toilers in European cities, and even among

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## WHEN THE CITY WAKES TO LIFE

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the foreign elements on the southern boundaries of our own city.

There is nothing sullen about this great human stream. It seems to exude good fellowship, hope and the joy of living; intelligence shines out from every face. True, here and there are features that conjure up the story of the bitter struggle to keep the home supplied, of the long hours of dull plodding to come, of the black outlook ahead. But such faces are the exception, not the rule, and though in this swinging army of men and women many hearts may be heavy with fear for the morrow, there is everywhere, on the faces, hope for the outcome of to-day.

The Dinner Pail avenue army is only one of a hundred battalions marching on the downtown section of Chicago at this moment from every part of the city. They pour out of modest homes, from brick and wood cottages, from back alleys and side streets, from modest workingmen's flats, to swell the invasion. Before their day's work is over, every center of population, and every country in the world will draw on their labor and be the richer for the thousand things they turn out with their skilled hands. Here, in the middle of a group of sturdy laborers, is a trimly dressed young woman, who, on account of press of business, is going downtown early to take dictation and write business letters for her employers. Even with her evident

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## WHEN THE CITY WAKES TO LIFE

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refinement she seems rather proud of her company, and does not hesitate to answer with a cheery voice the respectful good mornings that come from all sides. Before night she will have written to great mercantile houses in Berlin, in London, in Paris, in Melbourne, in lands she only knows in books, for the energy created in Chicago scatters in world-wide circles, and reaches wherever enterprise can force its way.

Nearly every unit in this Milwaukee avenue host carries its means of sustenance with it, and as we watch we see that the variety of the dinner pails alone is astonishing. Many have their noonday meals under their arms wrapped in newspapers; others carry the familiar common round bucket; thousands have the oblong metal contrivance with a cup in the top, and then there are leather and japanned tin boxes, old canvas satchels and black waterproof bags.

There is something very hearty and wholesome about the sight of a well-filled pipe in the early morning, and eighty per cent. of the men in this great army have either corncobs or some more expensive variety in their mouths. You may look for a long while before you see a cigar; Chicago has not yet become a stogie town. Newspapers too are few and far between. Be not deceived in the condition of these people by their clothing. Labor is not particular as to its dress, but very few in all the vast surging crowd of men and

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## WHEN THE CITY WAKES TO LIFE

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women going townwards are without neat and suitable apparel for rest days and holidays.

Old coats once black, but now mottled green, shabby jackets worn out of all semblance to any particular color or shade, and head coverings of every description, all touched with age, are not the real index to the lives of these workers. To read that aright we must look into their faces, and there we see another and a brighter story. There are some employers of labor in Chicago who are called hard taskmasters, and others who treat their hands with scant consideration when good wages are demanded, but the faces here have not the look that slaves wear. Once having seen a procession of this character, very few to whom the sight is an unusual one would hesitate to say that if the appearance of these men and women told anything, it spoke of two overwhelming conditions—*independence and intelligence.*

Laborers, using the term in its ordinary acceptation, are so far greatly in the majority. A big proportion of the 100,000 metal-workers of the city are among them and mingled in with them, as may plainly be seen from the appearance of their clothing, are bricklayers, hod carriers and masons.

And now a warmer tinge comes into the air as the sun begins to conquer the frost, and as the minutes fly a change comes over the aspect of the steadily marching

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## WHEN THE CITY WAKES TO LIFE

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army. Its size does not diminish, but better clothing is making its appearance here and there, fur boas can be seen about the necks of the young women, trim walking jackets come in sight, topped by hats that are pretty, even stylish in character. The men are not smoking pipes now, but cigars; dinner pails are disappearing, and tucked under every second arm is a morning newspaper.

We will leave the ever hurrying army here and get across to the heart of the downtown streets where we can watch the swarming thousands pour into this confined area and marvel at the enormous needs of the city that can find room and opportunity for the combined labor of such masses of human beings. Down out of the elevated stairways and from the cars where men and women hold on to every available strap and overflow from the back and front, they pour, and tens of thousands flood down by every thoroughfare, from the North, South and West Sides, till it seems as if no office structure ever built could hold them all.



The newsboys come out and begin to cry their papers at every block. Stores open up and men struggle with display stands on the sidewalks, while from offices window washers and scrub-women, their work over, hurry out into the street. The sun's rays



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## WHEN THE CITY WAKES TO LIFE

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are flooding every thoroughfare; squads of police march out to take up their posts on the downtown corners; the pigeons, scared away from their lower haunts of the night and dawn, are circling higher and higher yet and find shelter under the eaves of the buildings; long processions of wagons rattle over the streets; breakfast restaurants are filling up; into every State street department store pass great throngs of young women and girls. The city is waking up with a vengeance.

From the West Side, in the heart of the great factory district, comes the whirr of wheels. Away out South is the black pall of smoke that proclaims life and activity at the great steel works, and the stockyards,—a city in itself,—is crowded in every corner with busy workers. Out along North avenue the gas lights still glimmer, though the bright sun is streaming everywhere and rapidly licking up the frost on the wooden sidewalks. The tin dinner buckets have disappeared from the elevated trains and surface cars. The hands that hold the straps have changed from the bare and grimy to the well-gloved, and there are rows of well-polished shoes and clean-shaven faces and umbrellas with fancy mountings, where half an hour before sat laborers with the evidence of their craft thick about them.

In the same seats where their own firemen and engineers may have rested a little while earlier,

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## WHEN THE CITY WAKES TO LIFE

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employers are now reading their morning papers and being whirled along down to offices made warm and comfortable for their coming. Bankers, merchants, architects and lawyers are mingled thickly in the crowds. Men worth millions and small shopkeepers, alike with laborers and artisans make use of the five cent transportation to convey them to their business; not three per cent. of all the moneyed men of the city reach their offices in automobiles.

The arc lights are spluttering in the customers' rooms of the Board of Trade, and sleepy-eyed boys are already mounting ladders to begin the stock record of the day on blackboards new cleaned of chalk. Here and there a victim of the craze is already seated in a chair, though there will be nothing on the boards to interest him for two full hours. Messenger boys race through the corridors and across to the Rialto in ever increasing numbers, and the din and hum of these two buildings that later on in the day will develop into an unceasing roar of voices and hurrying feet, has already begun.

Stepping from the door of the Board of Trade Building, we come face to face with the whole length of La Salle street. Like Dinner Pail avenue, it, too, is full of hurrying feet, all of them making in our direction, but there the comparison ends. Young men, sporting rather gaudy silk mufflers and the very latest

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## WHEN THE CITY WAKES TO LIFE

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brim in derby hats, skim—there is no better word for it—past the masses of older and more deliberate people, who cover the ground with their heads buried in overcoat collars and cigars held tight under close-cropped mustaches. On either side of the street the great banks show signs of life. Already thousands of clerks are sitting at ponderous ledgers, but as yet there is no rush of business on the marble floors outside the counters, where women with mops and pails of hot water are still at work cleaning up the dirt of yesterday.

Very soon, almost before another hour has gone, transactions involving millions of dollars will be carried on within these walls, tickers will be sounding away merrily as if with each merry movement they brought happiness instead of despair to most of the men that watch their story. Brokers, bankers, clerks, stenographers, keep pouring down into what Chicago calls, with unintentional sarcasm, the “heart” of its moneyed district. Soon the daily six hours of hope, disappointment, success, failure, wealth, ruin and shattering of nerves will begin.

This is the hour when every terminus of suburban railroads is a great, seething human hive, with great masses of people pouring in from out-of-town homes to take their places in the daily struggle. The trains bring them from all the wide north and northwest territory and the entire north shore; from Rogers

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## WHEN THE CITY WAKES TO LIFE

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Park, Evanston, Winnetka, Wilmette, Lake Forest, Highland Park, Wheaton, Oak Park, Austin and a hundred other points. The cars deliver great crowds at their various depots every few minutes, and on every weekday of the year ninety per cent. of the commuters travel the same path to their offices, hardly ever varying a yard in space or a minute in time. As they race along you see instinctively that almost every step brings them to a familiar piece of sidewalk; they have the depot stairs calculated to a nicety, and know within one circle of the minute hand on their watches how long it will take them to get to their desks and sit down ready for their day's labor.

And still the wonder grows where, even in a city with office structures like this, there is room for all these atoms of humanity that seem to increase rather than dwindle away as the clock points to 8:30. Looking down on the heads of the wobbling uneven lines converging toward us, we begin to see here and there a tail muff and a black ostrich plume—the advance guard of the upper ten is getting its eyes open.

Elevated trains continue to crash round the downtown loop in rapid succession. One of them, blocked for the opening of a bridge and nearly five minutes behind its schedule time, holds a frantic lot of citizens, who consult their watches every second, look at each other in consternation and generally act as if the loss

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## WHEN THE CITY WAKES TO LIFE

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of a few moments might do harm enough to throw the whole business world into a panic. There are no philosophers among railroad passengers of this kind when it comes to seeing the minutes slip away in unfortunate delays.

Overrun by the invading army of workers, the city still raises its head in the fast strengthening sunlight and makes ample room for all who come. Battering rams in the shape of surface cars from Milwaukee and Indiana avenues and West Madison, Halsted and Clark streets are hurled against it and it sends them back on their outward journey emptied of their closely packed crowds without feeling the added attack. Men may go to the wall ruined, with the savings of years swept away, but the stones that they themselves have raised still stand, offering an equal chance to all for either fortune or failure.



And now South Water street is filled to overflowing with teams whose drivers shout and curse lustily in their efforts to reach their destination; the stores are filling up with customers and cash boys begin to run between the aisles, and the cashiers at the pneumatic tubes downstairs know by the increasing drop, drop, of the leather boxes that buyers are coming in rapidly;

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*WHEN THE CITY WAKES TO LIFE*

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freight warehouses of railroads throw back their rolling doors, and great teams, with creaking and straining, haul away their loads to business houses waiting for their new goods; the florists run their displays onto the sidewalks and cry their wares lustily; the wholesale district about the main channel of the Chicago River is filling up and every thoroughfare is choked with horses and wagons; lawyers are looking over their almanacs and preparing for appointments and court trials; bootblack stands are overcrowded; the thousands we saw pass by us on Milwaukee avenue a few hours ago are already beginning to dream of lunch; the sun rises higher and drives the pigeons entirely out of sight in their effort to get away from its glare; the mists on the lake fly away by magic; at all the railroad depots the little locomotives that draw the suburban trains are pushed ignominiously to one side while their elder brethren of the limited trains for far-away points make ready with a great puffing and fuming, as befits their state, for passengers and mail; out in all the great residence districts, children are already off for school and mothers are figuring on the dinner that must be on the table for their return; courts are opening and prisoners are making ready to face their fate; here and there in churches a sexton bustles about in preparation for a morning wedding; along a boulevard moves an early funeral for one who is beyond all the noise and the hope and the striving.

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## WHEN THE CITY WAKES TO LIFE

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In the midst of life we are in death; but what a life! What a throbbing, all-pervading life it is, and who beyond the few immediate loved ones that have a sense of personal loss have time to give more than a passing thought to the falling back of one little unit in the struggle. Two millions of people full of energy and vitality have come into the battle ground of another day!

The city is awake. Awake to the desire for gain, the hunt for preferment, the struggle for bread, the craving for all the things that mean material prosperity.

Awake, too, let us hope and believe to the demands of conscience, to the power of a kind word, to the four-fold interest in peace of mind that comes from every merciful and sympathetic act; awake to the brotherhood of man, and the responsibilities of citizenship.

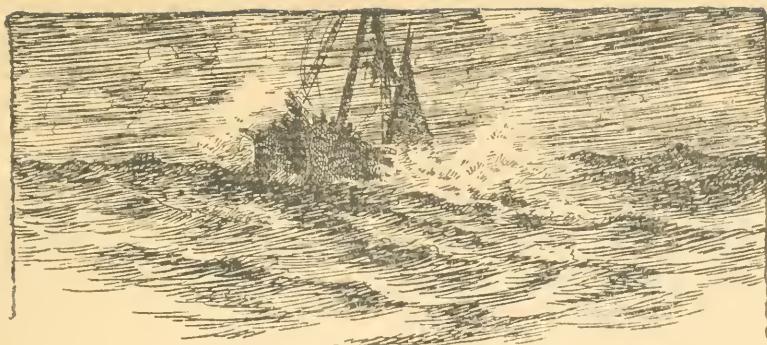






LAKE MICHIGAN IN CALM AND STORM





## LAKE MICHIGAN IN CALM AND STORM

**C**HICAGO people take Lake Michigan very much as they do their air and their cobble stones. Everybody knows it lies out there along the eastern fringe of the city; those who use the along shore suburban railway service are mildly interested at the glimpses they get of it now and then from the train windows; once or twice during the summer a number of them venture on its bosom in trips across to Michigan, admire its beauty and promptly forget its existence till next year. Many, many thousands of others have never even seen it at all.

Chicago ought to be better acquainted with Lake Michigan, to know more about its moods, its thousand and one changes, its delights, its perils, its calm and storm, and, above all, its real value to the city. It has a history, too, that is not uninteresting, for it is the history of the international struggle for western

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## LAKE MICHIGAN IN CALM AND STORM

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America. It is the only one of the great lakes lying entirely within the territory of the United States. And on its shores martyrs have died for their faith, soldiers of three great nations have died for their flag, and from one end of it to the other, deep buried in its shifting bottom sands, lie numberless victims of its fury.

There is a fascination in the infinite variety of changes that come upon the ocean, but here are changes as great and much more sudden, for every surface phenomenon that the ocean presents, Lake Michigan presents as well. It has its tides, waterspouts, fogs, moments of peace and moments of passion, thunderstorms, mirages and whitecaps. And, furthermore, it shows strange vagaries of wind and tempest that the ocean does not. The salt sea is a fair fighter always, and the mariner meets its wrath as an open enemy and asks no quarter. But this great inland lake of ours lulls him into security with its peaceful beauty and then destroys him in a moment with its treacherous humors of devastation and death.

The lake dons her various garments both bright and somber, without much waste of time. A Gloucester sailor man will often "feel a storm in his bones" for two days before it comes, and he knows by an exact weather lore handed down to him through many generations just about where it will come from and what

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## LAKE MICHIGAN IN CALM AND STORM

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kind of a blow it will be, and often gets very close to guessing its duration. But if he were put down on the shores of Lake Michigan and a magic voice were to command him, "Prophet, prophesy," he would never trust the shape of a cloud or the warning of his bones again.

Let us take a day in the summer, typical of many days along the shores of the lake. All afternoon hundreds of children race up and down the miniature beach beside the sanitarium at Lincoln Park, their screams of happiness entirely drowning out the splash of the baby waves that run across the sand in funny little imitation breakers. Right down on the edge of the water a peanut and popcorn vender is doing a rushing business, while mothers and nursemaids fringe the upper rise of the beach and watch that their charges come to no harm.

The lake is beautiful, with that dreamy, swaying, living beauty that only a waterscape possesses. Off on the horizon is a thin haze, blending the sky and the water line into a bluish gray. There is not a cloud to mar the picture, and as the afternoon comes to a close, the passing of the sun seems to make every moment even more enjoyable. The romping children are seized, after much trouble and coaxing, and when stockings and shoes have been pulled on they gradually begin to desert the beach.

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## LAKE MICHIGAN IN CALM AND STORM

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It is getting cooler now. A perceptible breeze starts up from the South and the haze out on the horizon is a little thicker, but the twenty beautiful shades in the sky,—shades of yellow and pink, purple, amber, red and all the rest,—are still there unchanged, and the wind only serves to tumble the surface of the water a very little.

Even before the sun has disappeared the moon, nearly at the full, comes into plain view, and we know that the night is going to be beautiful. Many thousands of others think so, too, and prepare for an evening in one of the parks or somewhere along the stretch of lake front that runs in perfect crescent shape from South Chicago far out to the north.

The moon is no longer gray, but silver. Her luster is a little dimmed though. Some tantalizing spirit seems to be throwing great strands of fluffy veiling between her and the earth and soon these strands begin to travel with marvelous rapidity and come so close that they sweep the tops of the downtown buildings. Half an hour more and many of the intending pleasure-seekers look up into the sky and decide not to go out tonight. The thin fabric has become a thick mist and the wind begins to whistle round the corners of the streets.

There are no clouds in sight, whatever there may be above the mist, and the open air pleasure places are

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## LAKE MICHIGAN IN CALM AND STORM

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being well patronized, notwithstanding the timid withdrawals. Nor are many of these people inconvenienced by the wind. They have a dim idea that some atmospheric changes are going on—that somewhere it is probably storming. But they are content to know that what threatened to be a bad night for their fun has turned out well enough. In the city the throngs rest in safety, only inconvenienced by a stray gust that carries away a hat or turns an umbrella.

But out here on the lake the loosened elements have a great pliable slate on which to write their pleasure, and their cruel pleasure tonight is a bitter tragedy. A little schooner running, tanbark laden, back home from one of the lower ports, moves heavily along, reaching a long easy tack into an edge of the south wind to get a slant for Chicago harbor. Seven miles on her beam she makes out the revolving light at the mouth of the river.

It is eight o'clock and Saturday night. In three hours at the latest she will be safe inside. Her skipper and crew of nine sturdy hands have been away from home two weeks. Three of them are roustabout dock floaters, without any ties of family to care about, but all the rest are already conjuring up visions of a few days with their wives and children round them.

Here are men who have spent years of their lives on the lake, and observant, as seamen generally are,

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## LAKE MICHIGAN IN CALM AND STORM

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of weather signs and nature's danger signals. And yet, if a voice were to whisper that danger was upon them, they would take a look at the loose flying scud above and laugh.

Suddenly a squall, not a heavy one, hits the little vessel aft. Another, and another, and another come in quick succession, and the man at the wheel with an oath calls for help to keep her out of the trough of the sea. Nobody knows what has happened, but the breeze that was due south a moment ago, has developed into a blinding gale and it is coming not from the south at all, but from the north and west,—and from both ways at once.

A great compact mass of tanbark roped on deck amidships gives way under the strain and one poor fellow, running across it at the moment, is thrown with it into the sea. His shriek is echoed by an answering cry from his mates, but they are powerless to save him and they know that, even as they think of it, he is already pounded mercilessly to his death. They are all too close to the same fate now to dwell longer on thoughts of him. The waves have the schooner's port side at their mercy, for the dropping of her starboard cargo has listed her and thrown her awash.

There is no welcoming red and yellow flash on her beam now. Everything ahead and about her is black. The main sheet, torn clear from its controlling pulleys,



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is flapping and tearing in the gale and its boom stands out lengthwise with the deck, hopelessly jammed into the deckhouse.

Thud, thud, thud; she pounds into the cruel tempest, smashing, splitting, giving with every fresh blow. The captain and four of his men are stretched full length on whatever they can find. The others were forward a few moments ago, but there is no sound from there now.

The storm is merciless and the wind shifts with the passing minutes. With each crash the vessel is thrown deeper and deeper into the waves until she lies like a log at the mercy of every blast and every sea. The boat swung aft has gone, smashed away from its davits, and now floats bottom up with a hole through its side. The schooner's sails have become strips of whipcord, her jib swept clean and its boom smashed to splinters. A flying spar crashes down from above and pins one of the sailors to the deck, killing him instantly before the eyes of his mates, who hang on in despair.

The vessel drifts and plunges madly, with the water sweeping her from end to end—drifts in the black night, but in what direction none of the survivors can tell. Half blinded and choked by the flood of the waves, they lie stretched there and know that a moment's carelessness, the loosening of a hand grasp, will send them down to death.

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The hours—two, three, four—go by with the gale still pounding above and all about them. Then, as if loth to release its victims, the wind gradually abates, though the waves are running as high as ever. It is two o'clock. Like magic the black clouds fly and part above, and the moon in all her beauty again appears. By her light the survivors can dimly see one another, the great army of whitecaps surging all about them and the hull of their schooner stretching out beyond.

Still they do not move, for the little vessel is being thrown up and down like a cork, with the wild seas pounding into her amidships. As the daylight comes on and they turn their eyes to the place where their comrade was struck down, they see with relief that both the body and the fallen spar have been washed away. As if the coming of day had been a signal for the withdrawing of the storm forces, the sea calms off rapidly. The same glorious streaks of color that we watched in the sky at sunset again glow over the surface of the lake, and, as then, they shine above a scene of tranquility and beauty. The sun peeps up and his beams fall on a peaceful sheet of water, its breast only disturbed by a gentle swell that nowhere breaks into an uneven ripple. A cloudless sky, a light, balmy air, and blue reflecting back the blue.

Nothing to tell of the terrible conflict of the night, save forty miles up the lake, like a dumb animal

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wounded to death, the hulk of a sinking schooner with four despairing, exhausted creatures staggering about her remaining planks and six poor storm-racked bodies in their last sleep beneath the sparkling waters.

A tug running down the coast takes the survivors to shore, and with them the news that will bring hopelessness and desolation into the homes of the dead.

And that same afternoon a little pink-toed baby girl paddling on the beach at Lincoln Park eagerly clutches a bit of new made drift that floats up inshore under her hand and cries to her mother:

“See! Look! The fairies sended me a boat.”



Lake Michigan spreads death-victories similar to these alike over summer and winter months, though it is in the late fall, just before the close of navigation that the most pitiful disasters generally come. Since the earliest days of settlement on the lake, one tragedy of the storm has succeeded another. Storm waves have often measured eighteen feet in height, and invariably when this happens they are very short and extraordinarily choppy in character. The distressed mariner on Lake Michigan always has a lee shore close by.

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The vagaries of the wind on the lake at all times, both in calm and in storm, are inexplicable. It is no uncommon thing to see two yachts within a mile and a half of each other running before the wind in opposite directions, and in bright weather one can often note the smoke from three different steamers blowing to different points of the compass at the same time. A still stranger trick of the wind is apparent in the experience of sailing vessels going across the lake to various points in Michigan. Many skippers of these craft have made the trip with the sea like glass and an apparent dead calm, with the lower sails all flapping idly, but with topsails filled out with a spanking breeze.

One of the most disastrous of the early wrecks on Lake Michigan was the destruction of the propeller Phoenix, a vessel of 350 tons, which went down fifteen miles north of Sheboygan, with a loss of 190 out of 195 lives. Of these, 160 passengers were Holland immigrants, and all perished miserably, those who were not drowned being burnt to death in a fire that consumed the dismantled hull of the vessel. The greatest of all the lake disasters was, of course, the loss of the Lady Elgin off Winnetka on September 8, 1880, when a collision with the schooner Augusta sent over 300 passengers to their destruction. The Lady Elgin sank entirely out of sight within twenty minutes from the time she was struck. This disaster, while not the

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direct result of storm, was brought about by reason of a high wind that made the *Augusta* unmanageable.

On October 16, 1880, the steamer *Alpena*, running from Grand Haven to Chicago, was wrecked with all on board, and in the same great storm, ninety other vessels either went down or were driven ashore and 118 lives were lost during the night. On October 28, 1892, a new steel steamer, the *W. H. Gilcher*, with a crew of sixteen hands and 3,000 tons of coal, disappeared when within three hours of Chicago and was never heard of again.

On April 7, 1893, on a beautiful afternoon, without warning, a fearful storm struck the lake from one end to the other, Chicago being in the center of its track. A great many South Siders will long remember this eventful day, for dozens of vessels were driven inshore and against the breakwater and smashed to pieces in the presence of thousands who lined the shore. The water rose four feet in a series of heavy waves, and kept at this level for several hours, a phenomenon never before noticed on Lake Michigan. The effect of this storm and rise in water was severely felt at St. Joe, the tide sweeping 700 feet up beyond the highest known high water mark.

On May 18, 1894, the schooner *M. J. Cummings* went down in a storm off Milwaukee in eighteen feet of water, and six of the hands were drowned in sight of

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the life-saving crew. On January 21 of the following year occurred the terrible midwinter storm that sent the steamer *Chicora* to the bottom with its crew of twenty-three men.

The efforts to protect life and shipping on the lake have always been extraordinarily complete. Lake Michigan now has thirty-four life-saving stations, and its shores are lighted by thirty-eight large lighthouses. The work of the life-saving stations has been very successful and the labors of the men attached to this department in the government service have at all times been coupled with the greatest heroism. In fact, any story purporting to give a history, brief or otherwise, of Lake Michigan's disasters that did not contain some particular reference to this heroism would be entirely incomplete.



Lake Michigan in summer, though its beauty is broken by occasional storms, is a picture to be turned to with relief after pondering on the long series of disasters associated with its history. As soon as the bracing coolness of early Spring is out of the air, there is bustle in all the bath-houses and little bathing beaches found here and there along the Chicago shore, and small boys begin their annual pilgrimage, amid

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warnings and threats from home, in order to enjoy what to many of them becomes the annual wash. Little steamboats start to ply from Lincoln Park to the downtown bridges, and many moonlight excursions—"twenty-five cents the round trip"—begin from these same bridges, though they are just as liable to end in Milwaukee as anywhere else.

Along the shores of the lake, patches of forest begin to show their beautiful green, and trailing creepers hang from bluffs in almost tropical profusion. Here and there, particularly on the eastern side, great peach orchards run right down to the shore of the lake, and dozens of romantic bays are crowned by smiling farms.

To many thousands of tired mothers and street-weary children the chief glory of Lake Michigan will always remain its "across the lake" excursions, when, loaded down with lunch baskets, sacks of fruit and crockery of every conceivable kind, whole families march off to the docks and start out down the river for the unknown land of Michigan.

In order to fully appreciate the joy that follows, when the beautiful expanse of blue water spreads itself before them for the first time, you must go and join one of these excursion parties and take in all the fun for yourself. To these people the lake is a source of never-ending delight; a common coal barge passing by

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is a merry fellow traveler. Every buoy is hailed with interest, while, between the desire to get a look at the white waters thrown up by the cleaving bow of the boat, the great stretch of sea on both sides of them, and the rapidly blurring and disappearing sky-scrapers, mothers, fathers and children alike nearly lose their heads.

The approach to the Michigan side gives the excursionists more beauties and strange sights to become enthusiastic about. And if they have been wise and have chosen a full moon period for their outing, their trip back home in the evening will also give them a fund of happy memories.

The movement of the water is almost imperceptible to those on board, and as the vessel glides along, a wonderful phosphorescent glow—one more ocean phenomenon that is duplicated by the lake—appears in her track, and lasts till it is swallowed up in the moonlight that floods the steamer and the water alike. Out in the distance, black hulls, with their two signal lights dimly gleaming, pass from time to time and whistle a discordant signal.

Two hours from the Michigan shore brings you to the center of the lake, and here, away from all land reminders, imagination can transport one to any water picture the fancy conjures up. Even the Mediterranean, with its balmy breath, is no more beautiful or more



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balmy than this. And we may lounge on the deck and dream on until brought back to a sense of our surroundings by the great light of the South Chicago steel furnaces in the sky, and by a gradually appearing necklace of electrical illumination that rapidly begins to map out the Chicago shore with great distinctness.

A few minutes more and hundreds of our excursionists give a simultaneous shout as the flashing red light at the river mouth—the same light that bade our poor lads of the schooner a welcome—comes into view. With the knowledge of gaping, tired babies all around them, mothers begin eagerly to pack up baskets, though they are still a good hour from the shore.

The moon rises higher and higher, and the higher it gets in the heavens the more enchanting its track in the water seems to be. One by one the city lights come out of the darkness, until people begin to point out eagerly to one another the various streets as they are outlined by the lamps. Then, with a grinding and a churning we slow up as we reach the mouth of the river, and with a great boom of blustering whistles, as if wanting to impress the importance of its arrival on every soul in town, the steamer makes its way back out of the lake and up to its dock.

As for Lake Michigan itself, the moon mounts to its zenith and sinks again, carrying its beautiful

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reflection up to the last moment and then plunging the great expanse of water into blackness.

But not for long. Soon, up out of the eastern sky, strange pale lights start to flicker and grow. The pinks and blues and golden colors follow each other rapidly and again the sun rises to begin another day, with the lake lying peacefully below as if no storm had ever swept its depth, or buried in its bosom the cruelly shattered playthings of its agony.



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