

“THE LIBRARY”

by Virginia Cary Hudson

The library is full of dust. Mrs. Simons sits in the middle and George Washington hangs in the hall. In the library are three kinds of books. Books people like to read. Books people do not like to read, and books people will never read. Mrs. Simons says people like books with spice. Spice comes from India. The porter mops at the library. He is black and so is his mop water. Mrs. Simons is white and George Washington is dead. The porter says, “Move along.” Mrs. Simons says, “Where is your card, you owe me three cents.” George Washington says, “In time of peace prepare for war.” The library has a wide stair rail. That is where I split my best bloomers. My mother said, “Have you been in Dr. Grenfell’s tree?” “No.” “Have you been on Mrs. Bannister’s gate post?” “No.” “Then where have you been?” “Only sliding down the library stair rail to get a better view of Washington.”

The Library is where my father took his check book when I broke the window. I was only trying to kill a fly. It would take too long to tell you what my mother said. My father said the window was old and thin. So is Mrs. Simons. I bet if I killed a fly on her she would crack, too.

In the Library are signs. Silence! Mrs. Simons must not know they are there. She talks the whole long day. The Library is never busy, but Mrs. Simons is. I know a lot about Mrs. Simons because she lives next door. One time she thought I broke the picket off the fence. But I didn’t. It came off its own self when I squeezed through to smell her poppies. And after all that trouble they didn’t even smell.

Miss Lulu Johnson comes to the Library looking for her ancestor. I wonder who she thinks she is fooling. Miss Lulu knows ancestors are on walls and in coffins. I bet if she ever finds him in that book he will be mashed flatter than my cabbage rose.

On one side of the Library is the Carter Planters Bank. Mrs. Carter came to our house. She had a cramp in her leg. She called it Charliehorse. After that she had a baby. Mrs. Carter named him Charlie. I bet she named him for the horse. Mrs. Carter is very old and she wanted to surprise Mr. Carter about the baby. She went to Rome and stayed and stayed and stayed. I bet she stayed over a year. When Mr. Carter got the telegram about Charlie being born, Mr. Carter fell out of the chair and butt his head on the bank floor. My father picked

him up and my father hurt his back because Mr. Carter is too fat. I hope I never get fat.

On the other side of the Library is Dr. Lothrop's stable. Dr. Lothrop is fat, too. He has a big gold watch chain stretched all the way across his stomach. It looks kind of greenish to me. I mean Dr. Lothrop's watch chain, not his stomach. Dr. Lothrop is Miss Sarah Foley's beau. They walk in the graveyard and rock on her porch. Dr. Lothrop said to Miss Sarah, "Miss Sarah will you please ma'am marry me." Her brother said, "No!" Now she walks and rocks all by herself. My father keeps his saddle horse at Dr. Lothrop's stable and my father said to Dr. Lothrop he said, "Dr. Lothrop, Miss Sarah looks badly she is so thin," and Dr. Lothrop was combing our horse's tail, and all he said was, "The nearer the bone, the sweeter the meat."

The Library is a memorial. A memorial is something that somebody says or gives or builds after you are dead and can't hear it or get it or see it.

And now may God grant us all a good night's rest and not let the fire whistle blow. Amen. Hallelujah and so be it as it may.