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MANDARIN IN MANHATTAN by Christopher Morley

UPPER WEST SIDE

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Where I should most like to live in your city,
Said the Old Mandarin,
Is that mansion at the South corner
Of 89th and Riverside,
For there, the Guide Book tells me,
Was founded (by Mrs. Isaac Rice)
The Society for the Suppression
Of Unnecessary Noise.

(And what, by the way,
Has become of that Society?)

Then, at lunch time, I might stroll gently
To the restaurant of the Roerich Museum,
Surely the most esoteric of rendezvous,
Where, among Thibetan paintings
And magazines of New Thinking,
An Oriental mahatma
Would feel at home.

Is it the sunset breeze from New Jersey
That makes the Upper West Side so mystical?
But one dark evening
As I passed the front door
Of the Rosicrucian Fellowship
I saw a young couple exchange a secret kiss
In the vestibule,
And said to myself
Even the occultists are human.

And at Riverside and 99th
I found the symbolic American home:
An apartment where the corner window
Is occupied by your sacred idol
(Shaped like a tiny church)
Faced inward to its devotees
With its naked little tubes and kilocycles
Exposed to the passer-by.