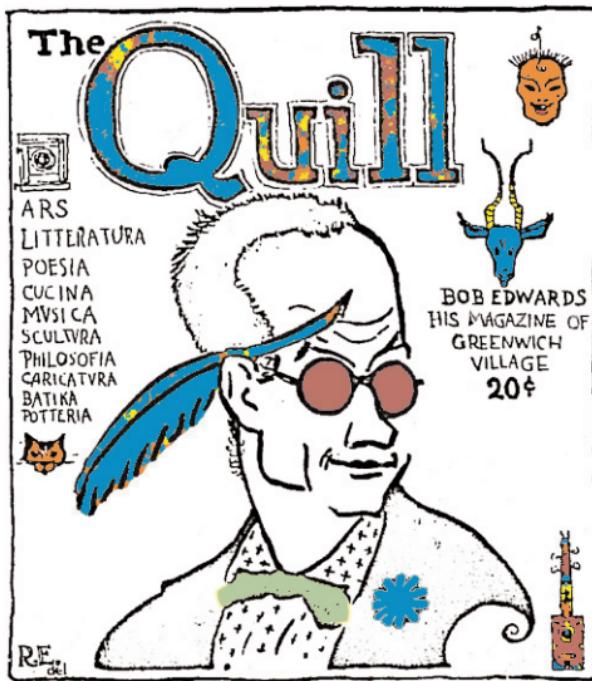


10
Penny
Players

THE QUILL
November, 1923



The STORY of GREENWICH VILLAGE
compiled from most original sources and
written comprehensible to both
morons & other artistic
folk.

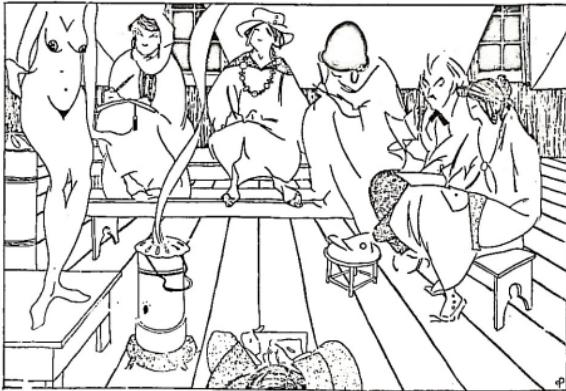
By ROBERTVS EDOVARDVS B.P.L.

Robert Edwards

**The
Story of
Greenwich
Village
Part X**

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Art Class in Ancient Greenwich Village by Fulop

X

In the preceding installment, while dealing with the distinctive crafts of the Village, we described the mysterious practice of batik. Now we continue with the other Village industries, viz., decorating tin boxes, beads, cigarette holders, vanity cases, tin cans and such with polychromatic paint, and thirdly, we especially dilate on "Snappy Story" fabrication—even at the risk of seeming to be a roller of logs.

Two charming ladies—Joan and Lin—started

the industry of painting chick ladies (generally nude) on tin objects such as vanity cases, cigarette holders, toothbrush holders, matchbox extractors, nutmeg graters, and endless other charming little ogetti nutti. They called their little shop the JoLin Shop and it was in the basement of where the Pepper Pot is now. They prospered and moved across Sixth Avenue when Vincent Pepe got busy and remodeled the house. Then Di Crisp decided to paint up beads of diverse absorbent materials in delightful colors. These were worn gleefully by the forerunners of the great flapper movement that swept the world later. Soon Di was installed in the "Bead Shop," which she still continues.

The only serious effects of the development of these trick cigarette holders was that it brought about a campaign on the part of the tobacco interests to make smokers out of all the girls. Many spurious commercial imitations of the "JoLin" cigarette holders were thrown upon the market as a decoy to corrupt our young womanhood into the slavery of the noxious weed — tobacco.

In the dim past, when the mastodon was roaming the woods of Van Cortland Park, an unkempt person named Poe was trying to sell stories to *Putnam's Magazine*. As far as we can gather, from the extant works of this early resident of Greenwich Village, he was hampered by a certain literary quality that tended to make him inscrutable to the bulk of the great American public—for we have no reason to believe that the public is any more intelligent now than it was then. O. Henry followed in Poe's footsteps, that is, he still preserved a certain literary distinction and succinctness. In fact, he too, had these subtle qualities of expression which though they tickle the effete college instructor, we are told



Washington Square before the sack of Greenwich Village by the landlords.
From a drawing by Rembrandt Washington Copley.

tend to annoy the plain honest citizen to whom all modern magazinedom bows its august though obsequious knee. So for many years authors came and went, turning out such products as the editors dared risk on the public, or starved, making books to please themselves. When the Judson Hotel was opened and board and room could be had for ten dollars a week, ambitious spinsters and gawky country boys came to town, with ambition burning in their bosoms. The Judson is a curious hybrid—part church and part hotel—which gave the home folks a curious but, we are sorry to say, specious feeling of safety for their offspring. Despite the psalm-singer in the church end of the Judson they were all soon to be corrupted by editors not only in their stern ideals of correct English, but into the vile practice of crap-shooting, cigarette smoking and atmosphere hunting.

But nothing really happened in the development of this particular art until Thomas Edgelow came over from London, read a few of our magazines, and in a whimsical mood dashed off the first real “snappy story.” Like the art of printing, this art

was born perfected. It is hard to describe the ineffable quality of this style of literature, and it is not our place as a historian to try to analyze—we merely say that there it is—as only Edgelow can do it.

Immediately all of the American Snappy magazines recognized this long-sought-for quality in Edgelow. He began to write in a dozen pseudonyms. Editors besieged him till he was obliged to flee to the more congested districts uptown and hide first in one palatial suite—then as he is discovered, he is forced to move to another.

Now, all the while there were other less original forms of literary composition being germinated in the Village. Miss Gertrude Stein, encouraged by Mabel Judge and Jo Davidson, attempted to make her unconscious mind do the work of poetizing—producing lists of apparently unarranged words, utterly devoid of euphony, sense kakophony or guile. Which though of doubtful artistic value, is no mean achievement. Many careless women of the Village indulged in free verse, which was somehow correlated with free love—or perhaps substituted as a safer if not saner form of expression. At least free

verse seemed to lack the responsibilities of the metrical effusion. Fortunately, conscientious poets like Edna Millay and Mary Carolyn Davies stuck to the strict rhythmical stuff—which in a way kept the Village from being regulated in toto to the booby hatch by the insidious reforming sects that were gaining in power at that time.



Glamour, Rapture and Bewilderment--
Alcy's first glimpse of Sheridan Square

Now there were several great dynamases that had their effect on the literature of the Village. First, was the Village magazines which permitted the publication of stuff no commercial editor would take as a gift. Second, the frightful hypothesis of a certain Sigmund Freud, whose dubious philosophies paved the way to all dirty modern literature. Third the invasion of the stockbrokers, which so increased the rents that writers were obliged to compromise with what the publishers thought saleable—or starve.

As we have said, when considering the radicals, there was a passion for experiment rampant in the Village, and literature got its full share of this unhappy influence. Village magazines—the fore-runners of the many little radical magazines that infest our post offices—grew into being to give vent to these unwonted innovations in literature.

VILLAGE MAGAZINES

Guido Bruno was one of he first to start a magazine, but fortunately he did most of it himself and

little damage was done to the art of writing. *The Masses*, a frankly radical book—that would print anything, no matter how rotten, so long as “capital” got it in the neck—developed incidentally many poets that the popular magazines dared to take up later. *Rogue*, founded by the ball promoter, Allen Norton, published much that was fliply unintelligible—a sort of Village *Vanity Fair* as it were. These books printed pictures as well, but we are not speaking of art at present. Peter Newton started the *Ink Pot*, which did not survive the start. Then Art Moss launched *The Quill*, America’s most interesting magazine, which gave encouragement to nearly every great name in American letters. The *Little Review* appeared at unsynchronized intervals and made no compromises with anything whatsoever, and as far as we can gather made no compromises with the demands of the intelligent.

The Quill was not so radical as the others. Mr. Moss had an eye to selling his product to visiting schoolmarms from the Columbia Summer School—who are to this day the chief patrons of the book he founded. Though it was the policy of Mr. Moss to

seek out many great writers and worry them into contributing to his paper and the glory of the "Little Moss," as he quaintly dubbed himself, many real poets and scriveners saw their first work in *The Quill*. F. P. Adams, H. L. Mencken, and Edna Millay are among the few who escaped the importunings of the busy mosslet. Lord Dunsany, being an innocent Briton, was intrigued into contributing. This all did very great credit to the persuasive powers of Moss, for at that time *The Quill* resembled a high school weekly more than the epoch-making, world-shaping bibelot it is today.

Now the next catastrophe that happened to American literature was the discovery of the works of Dr. Freud of Vienna.

(To be continued)

