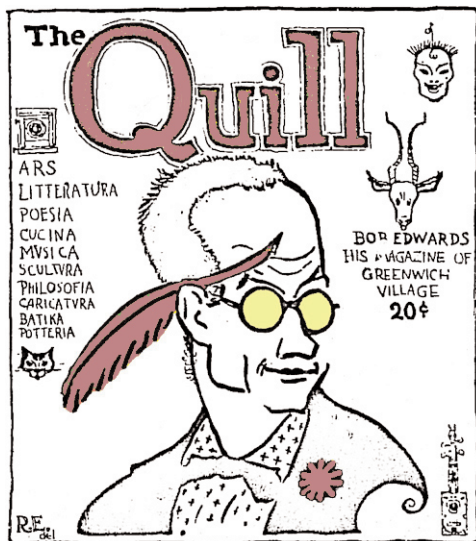


THE QUILL
July, 1923



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.

PART VI

As the Liberal Club began to peter out the Boni Brothers started the Washington Square Book Shop in the front room of that hectic conversation parlour. This had a tremendous effect on the culture of our land. In fact, all the world was like what Sinclair Lewis describes as Main Street until the great spirit of Greenwich Village swept over the continent. In this book shop radicals who had heretofore done nothing but talk found enthralling books to read — books not usually admitted to Sabbath school libraries — books purporting to make sex a mystery instead of a nuisance — books on socialism, adolescence, birth control — in fact, all the books the regular booksellers did not care to handle. It was through this book shop that the works of Dr. Sigmund Freud, Lord Dunsany and Old Doctor Robinson filtered into the thought currents of the age.

The radicals read these books as if they were part of some communistic free library, and by thumbprinting them rather spoilt them for more remunerative customers. The Bonis were forced to move out ere their stock was ruined or quietly confiscated in the cause of the I.W.W.

We have read how Floyd Dell put on one of his plays at Webster Hall, which somehow started the dionysiac revels known as the Pagan Rout, the Golden Ball of Isis, the Ball of the Golden Cockroach, the Art Models' Frolic, etc., etc., ad nauseum. In a way Dell foreshadowed a great theatrical upheaval as well. Encouraged by his example, Albert Boni, who was rather cursed with dynamic activity, instigated a movement to put on a play by Lord Dunsany, a celebrity Moritz Adolph Jagendorph had inadvertently discovered while snooping about the bookshop. Very few people saw the play, but a great idea germinated.

THE LITTLE THEATRE MOVEMENT

Our world it seems is full of people who are mad to act. Almost as many seem to be crazy to paint scenery, and many are so thrall'd by an insidious glamour that they are willing to give up many evenings to shifting scenery or stitching together miscellaneous garments known as costumes. They are eager to do all this for absolutely nothing at all. In the production of this early masterpiece of Dunsany the "Little Theater Movement" was born. These people organized loosely and called them-

selves the Washington Square Players. Being guided by shrewd leaders and being unable to find a theatre in the Village they promptly moved uptown. In a little theatre (now a bank) called the *Bandbox*, they had their premier.

A year or so later the Provincetown Players and the Harry Kemp Players were founded. In a collaboration with George Baker and Jack McGrath, Bobby Edwards wrote his infamous lampoon on the radical element of the Village known as "Down in Old Greenwich Village," – thereby obtaining a copyright on all the rhymes that go with *village*. Also the pernicious doctrines of Dr. Freud were mysteriously inoculated into our inhibited midst, but none of these great events could have happened had it not been for the founding of THE QUILL by Art Moss, who "never had a lesson in his life," but modesty forbids our dwelling on that matter.

There are no records among the ancients of Little Theatre activities. The Phoenecians were too busy making money and most of the other races were under the domination of the priesthood, who, of course, with no disrespect for the faithful, are very prone to keep all the histrionics to themselves in an innocent but greedy fashion. The Indian legends that monkeys put on amateur dramas cannot

be accepted as historically sound. We will not mention England at all, for we don't want Mayor Hylan to forbid the school children to read our history book on the ground that is pro-British. Nor can we class the Oberammagau productions as part of the Little Theatre movement. The Greeks had a lot of slaves to do their work, so there was no sense in their working their heads off for nothing just for a chance to act. They were much too wise to let their vanity get the best of them. To say Bottom invented the Little Theatre is absurd, for Bottom was but a fiction of Shakespeare's brain. It is incontrovertible that the Little Theatre was invented right in the Village and probably by Albert Boni.

The Washington Square Players were a great success from the start, so much so that they immediately tried to get players from everywhere but Greenwich Village to act with them. The great New York public, especially the foreign element, were fed up on "The Old Homestead" and "The Music Master" type of play. Furthermore they were vaguely irritated by the suspicion that the actors of the professional stage regarded acting as a form of raucous oratory accompanied by strutting and stretching of the body. The jaded dramatic critics got wind of the doings through the activity of Lucy

Huffaker and they whooped it up in frabjous eulogy.

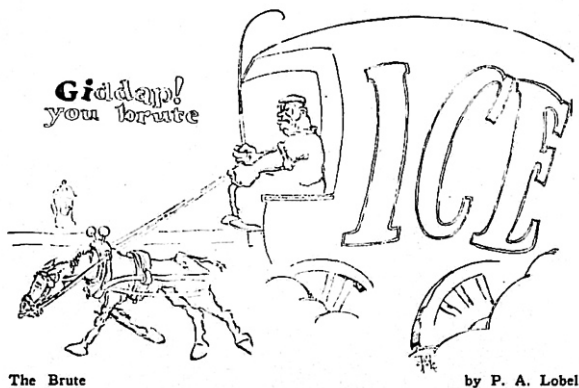
Now the principal difference between the Little Theatre and the speculators' or ordinary theatre is that the actors and scene shifters do not get any money. That is presumed to prevent the management—if there be any—from pandering to the tastes of the vulgar majority. It is a very good thing for those who are in the inside.

Of the prime movers of this enterprise to give vent to the exhibitionistic fervor of the Washington Square district Eddie Goodman became director, because he so fervently wished to direct something that he was willing to put on Maeterlink. Phil Moeller had a few plays up his sleeve so did Lawrence Langner. Lee Simonson had a passion to paint scenery, and was willing to put up with the meticulous comment of Goodman to achieve his ideal. Bobby Locher was willing to make scenery and to act, but not aggressively so. Pen Pennington has a disposition to monkey with the electric lights and Helen Westly was bound to act at all costs. Ralph Roeder never said anything at all, so history is unable to record his aim in the organization. So quietly these astute spirits allowed an army of young hopefuls to work their fingers off for the

cause of Art.

However, Frank Conroy and Harold Meltzer, not being parties to the whispered confidences, soon slipped away from the fold and started the Greenwich Village Theatre, which Marguerite Barker built to the glory of our Village.

(To be continued)



The Brute

by P. A. Lobel