

10
Penny
Players

THE QUILL
APRIL, 1923



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

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PART III

Now, gentle students of history, in the preceding installment we spoke of a strange assortment of people called Radicals, but to speak in the vernacular of those people themselves, "You have not heard the half of it yet."

We will accordingly show how predacious and noisy individualists horned in, as it were, on many sporadic cliques where bohemia and culture had begun to pollute, to the absolute ruin of all art, fellowship and decorum. Culture, we will say in passing, is merely bohemia gone to seed.

THE LIBERAL CLUB

The first appearance of the radicals was the re-establishment of the Liberal Club, which prehistoric account tells us was an honorable association, much like a CLSC founded by one Dr. Grant, the Martin Luther of America, and devoted to the fellowship of those interested in new ideas. As it turned out in the latter Liberal Club, most everyone seemed interested in new forms of the "same old idea" that has worried unoccupied humanity for centuries. Now the original Liberalites harangued about industrial slavery, by which they meant that the bathroom and the newly invented horseless carriage should be foisted upon the humble wage-earner. They discovered, also, that most of the brave talk of our political leaders about democracy, liberty, patriotism, etc., was pure hokum—but naively they considered this discovery a new idea. Intellectually, they were, generally speaking, on a par with backward Princeton sophomores of the best families of Virginia. Obviously, they did not believe in government of any kind, inasmuch as government was not a new idea. So we find that most of them were anarchists. Along with that went the curious notion that free speech meant the prerogative of talking

your neighbor deaf, dumb and blind. Individuality, as they interpreted it, was the survival of lung power and the defiance of decorum. They were almost Celtic in their antagonism to vague abstractions which they denoted as the system, capital or whatever it was that forced them to work a little, once in a while, instead of gratifying their instincts and emotions. Though it had nothing to do with new ideas, these later Liberalites, through some oblique process of ratiocination, admitted Terpsichore to the club. Many a romantic damsel, with no ideas of any kind, joined, little thinking that she might be exploited as a subject for experiments in conduct between man and woman—experiments that included vulgar makeshifts for marriage. Meanwhile, the president of the Gatti Matti, who was then wont to play upon a strange painted instrument, took an intense dislike to these intruders who never stopped talking long enough to hear what he had to sing. Vagabond though he was, he did not approve of them. He ruthlessly fired them out of his Club, and would have fired them out of the Village if he had been strong enough.

Paradoxically, the government of this Liberal Club of mostly anarchistic members was an absolute autocracy, though every little while there

was a revolution whenever the Liberalites were asked to pay dues and not allowed to bring in their grafting friends. Then for a time anarchy would prevail until Ernestus The Bland or Justus The Subtle took a firm grip on the chaotic state of affairs and fired the bums and the remittance men. Then to cover expenses, a few simple folk from uptown were persuaded to become dues-paying members.



Prize Winning Costumes at the Pagan Rout

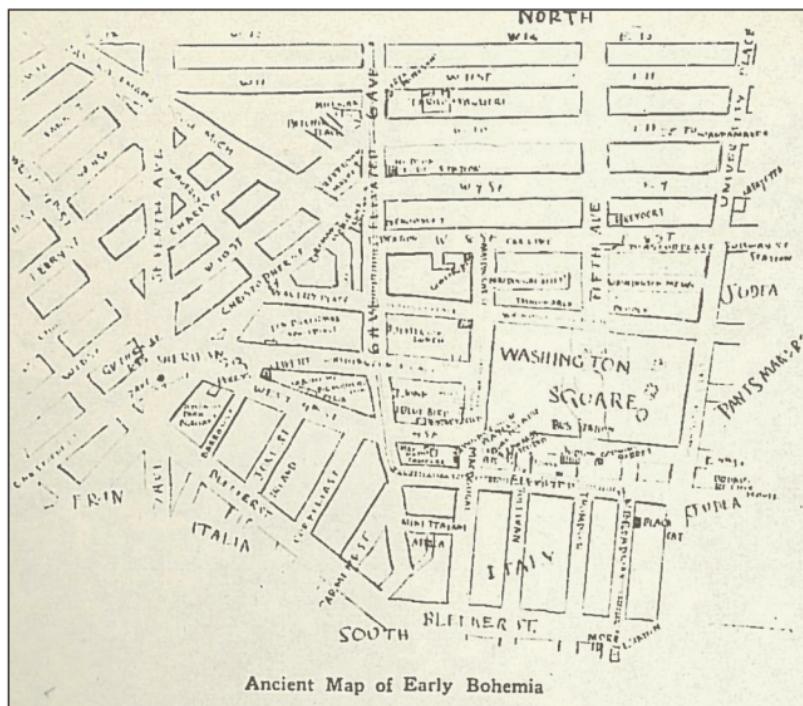
It was under this clubhouse of the Liberalites that "Polly" started her famous restaurant, where it is generally conceded that the Village of today had its inception. Polly did not stay there long, however. It was somehow taken for granted that her restaurant was started as a convenience for the club members. But they complained that her prices were too expensive. That was absurd on the face of it, as the Radical's idea of an inexpensive restaurant, like that of the Bohemians, is a place where payment can be indefinitely and pleasantly deferred. Shortly after Polly moved out, Norah Von Lingen started the "Dutch Oven" with Ray Rosenbaum. This thrived on a patronage mostly of kindly visitors, but that was years later.

Now the idea of giving a party in Webster Hall to make up the money for dues was discovered by accident. Floyd Dell wanted to put on one of his plays. Accordingly, the play was put on, through the energy of the playwright and the auspices of the Club. A dance occurred afterward and everyone had a good time, though none of the words of the play were heard. Soon after that Ernestus Lewis Langner or Ben Allen or somebody put on the Pagan Rout which still persists in spite of wood alcohol, the police and the vice crusaders.

A great many influences were at work during this era. It seems that a new contagion was prevalent which was known as syncopation. It was the forerunner of the present jazz and cubism. A form of dancing known as the Turkey Trot and Bunny Hug spread simultaneously all over the known world, including Oberlin College and Staten Island. Musically speaking, it was a sort of Semite corruption of Ethiopian rhythms and melodies which had long been buried in sentiment and minstrel traditions. This form of shaking the body occurred at the Gatti Mati and at the great balls at Webster Hall, but it remained for Charley Reed to introduce it to the tea rooms. He started a place called the "Purple Pup," but he was called away to the Great War. In his absence the police put the poor pup in the pound for mysterious reasons they refuse to divulge coherently.

Now, as it has been indicated previously in this history, there would never have been any trouble in the Village if it had not been for the newspapers. The police, as a rule, remain conveniently asleep unless prodded into action by publicity and complaints. We will not attempt a detailed account of the persecution of the Village by their tireless activity, but merely state that it was continuous.

When Guido Bruno, with the most innocent and benevolent intentions started the newspaper heresy that there was a "Bohemia," a "Republic of Artists" down in Washington Square, trouble began. Raw reporters from hick towns came down and wrote greatly exaggerated accounts of the alleged eccentricities of the Radicals, whom (F.P.A. please notice) they, in their innocently depraved minds, considered artists and their models.



Then many reporters came down and found the folk much as any other folk. This was disappointing, so they wrote volumes about the Villagers being fakirs posing as being naughty when they were not. Others, instead of getting peevish, wrote facetiously. Until it became the editorial custom to expect a boob story on the Village any time there was space. For a time they let up on the Zoo. Instead of saying that Papa Camel nearly passed out when a son was born to his wife, Fatima, they would invent side-splitting slander about the Coke in the Coffee or Bare Babies at the Bohemian Revel. Now this sort of thing brought thousands of pilgrims to the shrine of Bohemia, but most of them were not of the innocently romantic sort.

Also, it was only natural that many of the honest Celts of the Ninth Ward, who had hitherto tolerated the Bohemians, became excited by the lies in the papers, and complained to the police to put an end to such nonsense in their Village. Inasmuch as the Police Department is mainly a Celtic organization for the benefit of the Celts, action was sudden. Raids and pogroms followed forthwith.

(To be continued)