THE QUILL
MARCH, 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 II

Now, gentle readers, in the preceding installment of this history we arrived at the period when at last Bohemia seemed about to eventuate. Culture was spouting in the various spaghetti emporiums of the Latins, and among the Celts the science of politics had been rudely divined.

It was during this period that one noble Celt named O'Connor gave habitation to one of Britain's most distinguished bards. As O'Connor said, "John was a good boy," and although it was suspected that he wrote poetry, no attempt was made to throw him out as might have been expected. John Masefield, the young man, did not however, stay to found a Bohemia. The legend is that he was shanghaied and carried to London. Likewise Edgar Allen Poe, who was discovered to be quite a literary light after he was dead, did not get much of a start in the Village. The story is that the editors of *Putnam's Magazine* rejected his stories on the ground that they resembled Sherlock Holmes.

However, one O. Henry and others did manage to dine occasionally at the Italian restaurants, and he began to write about it—in a way that compelled people to read.

Early Bohemian Gathering

Now at this time sporadic attempts at culture had been made in Cambridge and New Haven, but these efforts, mainly theological, had been purely in literature, to the neglect of art, rugweaving and psychoanalysis. But no doubt the time was ripe for the civil war had been fought, the country had been settled and the Indians had been put on reservations, or in front of cigar stores.

So surreptitiously artists and writers gathered at one or another of the restaurants and mingled song and kisses with red ink and youthful philosophy. Very much like the early Christians in Rome, they kept their movements secret for fear of persecution. It was the golden age of Bohemia. Nobody, not even the participants, were aware of it. Only now, when they are old men and women, do

they look back and say sadly (to use the vernacular or the literary) "Ah, them were the happy days!"—and happy indeed they were, with wine and dinner for 55 cents.

What changed all this was the advent of one Guido Bruno and the appearance of a strange sect who called themselves radicals. Bruno brought publicity—he introduced the Village to the world. The radicals brought shame, psychoanalysis, and contubernal family relationships into our hitherto unblemished midst.

Before going into details of the workings of the mysterious forces that were to make Bohemia difficult, we will say something about a picturesque vagabond who for a short time ruled Bohemia with a stern hand. This person established himself as a sort of François Villon, though his verse was far inferior, and one of the first things the newspapers did when they discovered Bohemia was to proclaim this itinerant minstrel, king. Now in justice to this quaint character, we must state that on several occasions when he was approached by the police, he modestly refused to be crowned—he merely admitted his dictatorship.

The history of this absurd troubadouring person would fill a book, so we must perforce give

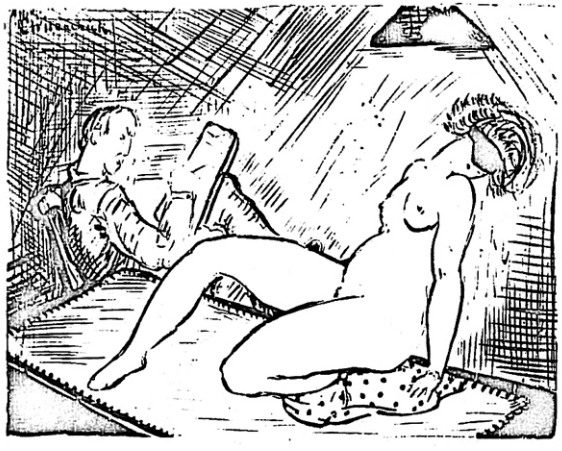
him a little space, though modesty constrains us. When he first appeared in the Washington Square district Bohemia had gone to seed. Jack Tucker had founded the Pleiades Club, which was a live affair until conventional people horned their way in, after the mysterious manner of such as are tired of home life. Oliver Herford had gone away somewhere. Rose O'Neill had gone back to the Ozarks, and Eugene was still in swaddling clothes. Nina Putram was in high school, while Red Lewis and Kid Steel were running about after Mary Vorse, trying to get her to teach them how to write.

THE GATTI MATTI

This indigent monarch we have spoken of went to Paul Paglieri and Enrico Fassani's very modest pension on Eleventh Street and suggested that by the formation of an association of Bohemians he would be able to make them and their house prosper greatly. Accordingly the Circolo Gatti Matti degli Stati Uniti was founded. The instigator had elected himself president and all that was necessary was to elect the members. In spite of the incredulity of Signors Enrico and Paglieri, a large body of members were produced. Every Tuesday

night thereafter merry youngsters came to dance the turkey-trot and chatter of the higher things of life. Jack Reed and Witter Bynner cast off the theological training they had absorbed at Harvard to frolic with those who have not as yet developed into fame and are still holding back the fruits of their mature genius.

Ira Remsen, Mary Pickford, Nina Putnam, Renee Lacoste, Sarah MacConnell, and countless other celebrities visited this merry club. Everyone did exactly as they pleased, but anyone who did not do the right thing was ignominiously ejected.



Art Study in the early Flapper Period

THE RADICALS

Now we will take up two of the disrupting forces that made it difficult for Bohemia to survive.

The invasion of the Village by the radicals was the most devastating, though Bruno and his publicity brought invasion from a less virulent type of person. These radicals, as they called themselves, came evidently to escape persecution. They had heard that artists and writers enjoyed comparative freedom in the Village, and they came down in hordes to see about it. In those days radicalism included everything from Votes for Women and Anarchy to a diet of dates and bird seed. No two radicals ever agreed about anything. Some wore togas but frowned upon matrimony . Others committed matrimony flagrantly for reasons of convenience, but refused to wash. These strange people opened a club house on Macdougal Street on the present site of the T.N.T. restaurant. Under it Polly opened her famous rendezvous for the old Villagers.

Now here we quote an ancient historian on the subject of Bruno and the radicals:

> Apparently, these people were too experimental. They experimented with

dress, life, art and even with food. They tried to break all the conventions at once. Many of them came from cruel small towns where no one had any freedom, and their pent-up souls busted loose. The women wore togas made of portières and the men discarded stockings and neckties. The Village was a lovely place until Guido Bruno spoiled it.

One morning, so rumor says, after a succession of monthly movings, the adventurous Bruno landed in his garret on South Washington Square, where Grace Godwin's is now (at present run by Chuckles and Nell). As he looked out he saw radical people, exalted by the joy of life, splashing wildly and gayly in the fountain—at least, so we were told by one of the Arcadian bathers. We asked her about the cops and she said the police looked upon their crowd as harmless nuts. Well, Guido started a magazine and got after the newspapers. Through his advertising droves of sight seers came to look at the new Bohemia, the Republic of Vincent Pepe. It became necessary to replace the Fifth Avenue stage

coaches with gasoline buses. Many culture seekers haunted his garret to hear tales of our eccentricities. The police were also admonished by vice committees who were alarmed by the newspapers, so they changed their benevolent attitude of contempt to one of morbid surveillance. There was no more privacy in the Village. Most of the radicals died of shame from being stared at, or got rich or married, or somehow lost their individuality and the Village became just like any other place—respectable. The remaining radicals have so long practiced their peculiar unconventionality that custom makes them live by what is practically a radical conventionality of their own.

(To be continued)