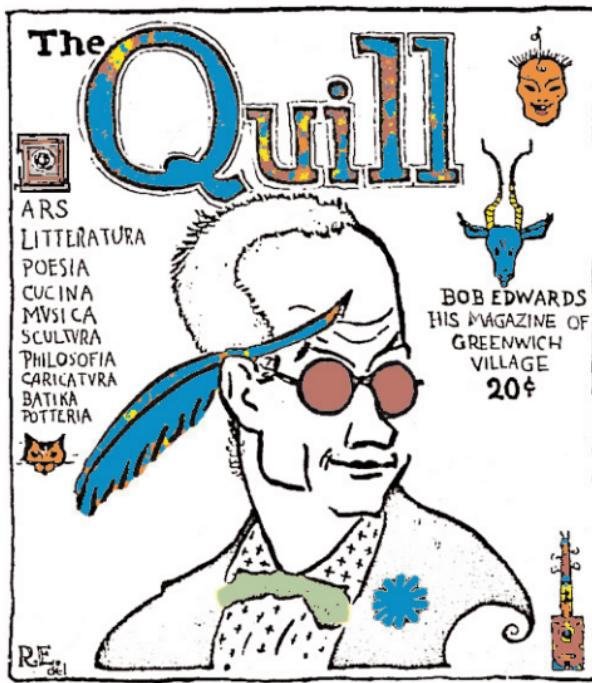


10
Penny
Players

THE QUILL
April, 1924



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 XV**

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Now we have traced Village Art and Literature to a magnificent culmination. We have cited a long list of artists and writers who spent their Bohemian days in the Village—by Bohemian we mean that period elapsing before a celebrity has become recognized by the great commercial brain and soul marts, when the neophyte is still enthusiastic, before he has learned to formulate a synthetic commodity out of the recollections of his divine afflatus, before that coagulation of the soul sets in that stamps the worker as a “hack,” before the wings of divinity have been clipped down to a stereotyped classification, before a certain particular specialty is expected of the young person of promise.

It is obvious that in this age, with a tremendous semi-educated public, art and letters must be so viti- ated of subtleties, complexities and niceties as to be readily comprehensible to the great masses, who are just beginning to read and observe. Otherwise, lacking a banal universal quality, letters and art products cannot be profitably marketed on a large scale. Many Villagers threw aside their ideals and went to work, once they found what the publishers

had to have — others, no good and absolutely lazy — blamed their non-activity on the stupidity of the buying publishers, whish is unfair, for few publishers are subsidized. A few still refuse to compromise. But though it cannot be denied that the great mass of the reading public has not as yet risen to any great faculty of discrimination, when we consider how tremendously this human army has grown in the last few decades and how many ungenteel people are reading now that never touched a book in the old days when magazines presented literature, we are also comforted by the fact that a great public demand for the best an artist can do is also increasing. This is due to the effect of Greenwich Village on the world.

The little theatres, the Washington Square Players and the Provincetown Players, have, through their example, done much to make the Broadway stage possible for humans. We trust now that the little magazine, through the Quill, the Liberator, and the programme of the Provincetown Players, will eventually do the same for literature. But, as we have said, this commercial era with its

millions of semi-educated art patrons, is not conducive to the best in literature or art. So don't blame Greenwich Village.

In the matter of real estate the development of the Village has been phenomenal. It was Vincent Pepe who conceived the bright idea of having artists and scribes colonize a slum and then gradually improve the district by crowding out the wicked, vicious and slovenly tenants. Perhaps it was through accident that this stunt was discovered; perhaps Pepe found that he could not get any money out of the artists, and that he might as well use them for any purpose he could. The gradual extinction of the horse left a few stables vacant, and as we all know artists and the like will live in places that the average laborer or gun-toter would sniff at. So, soon after successfully letting a few of these impossible shacks to artists, Mr. Pepe decided to colonize Minetta Lane (a picturesque rag-pickers' section, with a legendary creek running under it).

Meanwhile the Eno estate was slumbering peacefully on the south of Washington Square, being in the jeopardy of litigation, waiting for the

advent of the Strunskys.

The first effort to reclaim The Minettas was promoted with Harry Kemp, the poet, playwright and producer, as advance agent. Harry fraternized with the gangs of outlaws who hung about, but it soon grew too uncomfortable even for him.

Unfortunately it was impossible to dislodge the rag-pickers, who, though they lent picturesqueness, did not advance the value of the property enough to pay for further improvements. However, the project is still active, and gradually semi-artistic folk are moving in. Eventually it will be completely renovated and inhabited by rich amateurs—as is the case with all studio projects—and unfortunately, since the bricklayers' union gets \$25 a day, these rich amateurs are the only hope the investor has of getting his money back.

Just recently Spaulding Hall has taken over the Commerce Street section, which has been for years in a semi-dilapidated condition, with but a few remodeled houses flaunting their gay shutters in the historic sunshine. Soon it will be renamed Cherry Lane. Then it will be a fit place for anybody to live

in. But after a few years the artists will move again—unless they inherit money. It is necessary to change the name of the street on account of the police tradition, for if a street has ever had a name of being a way of ill-repute, no amount of remodeling will ever change the ideas of the police. If a street 20 years ago harbored a house of ill-fame, every unprotected woman living there will to this day be in constant jeopardy. She may be arrested at any time as a disorderly person. So it will be well when the name is changed to Cherry Lane.

Mr. Pepe and other Village historians have told us how the Villagers have gradually improved the property in many Village streets by usurping the domiciles of vicious and disorderly tenants. Third Street, Macdougal Street and many others have been made respectable, in fact, uplifted by the artist missionaries—though of course the police somehow do not clearly distinguish between an artist and a person of general disrepute. The same may be said of the Washington Square Association, which only confers respectability to a genius who has been dead as long as Poe or Tom Paine, or possibly Apelles.

(To be continued – perhaps)

