

# NEW YORK'S REAL BOHEMIA IS DEAD AND GONE



"It's a Cert a the Besta Salad of the Wik."

ALL the world hears of a change, or even a contemplated change, in Manhattan's skyline. A year in the East or West—and the first view from liner or ferry becomes a stare, and a gasp, and an exclamation! Then, landing, you trace its avenues, or invade its commercial and financial districts—everywhere you find new-made mountings of steel and masonry. How many stop to think that underneath these are buried chapters of history and landmarks of New York's early times? It has been said that a man's house indicates his character. If that be true, one who reads "Father Knickerbocker's" palm will find that Destiny has diverted the old gentleman's heart line.

There was a time when New York held whom the world called bohemians; now it holds places dear to the hearts of those who love to call themselves by that name—and have thereby made the title odious. Many things and much genius have died as a result of overpopularity. At some time enthusiastic admirers scolded the wails of bohemia and proceeded to scotch it within their embraces. Forgetting the delightful task they sent word broadcast of their remarkable discovery. Before that invasion, to be a bohemian was, and is yet when rightly interpreted, a state of mind. Dress, occupation, and mode of living have nothing to do with it—no more than a love of rare meats may be said to typify an Englishman. Today the popular conception of a bohemian is one who washes little and indifferently, and whose manner of dress is studiously freakish, rather than carelessly following the lines of least resistance, as one is apt to do in all incidental matters when the heart is set on a great purpose.

And so with New York's bohemian resorts. The places not killed by prosperity have been driven out by commerce. Only a little more than a year before trade condemned the home of the "Amen Corner," Engle's Chop House had been crowded out of existence. Three things were found at their best in this good place on upper Sixth Avenue: Congenial company, chops as they should be cooked, and Welsh rabbits that were dreams in themselves. The thought of the loss of this place may bring a lump to your throat, but beware of the moisture at the corners of your mouth.

If you would recall other losses, guide your memory downtown. Let it halt a moment in West Broadway, near Bleeker Street, and worship beneath the windows of the old building that at one time housed the hospitable "Black Cat."

The newspaper men knew this place best. It was here they sat and ground out their daily toil of copy, taking it for granted that the purchase of a glass of magazan entitled them to an unlimited supply of "the old man's" stationery as well as of a table for hours at a time. The veterans of Park Row love to tell of the wives employed by the chief when striving to detach a persistent reporter from his favorite table—but each insists on telling it of another.

The death of "Black Cat" seems shrouded in somewhat of mystery. The advent of the elevated road, that darkened its doors and rattled its windows, might be held responsible for several of its lives, though it drew out its remaining existences for years after the building of this structure.

The Tile Club, that wonderful gathering place of genius in the days when New York counted its followers of the fine arts by tens instead of by thousands, was probably the most remarkable association of true bohemians this country has ever known. The club drew its name from the pastime to which a number of its members devoted their leisure hours—painting on tiles.

Of the eighteen men who made up the organization twelve were painters, three writers, and three musicians. Here of an evening could be found Abbey, Vedder, Stanford White, Gustav Kobbe, Hamilton Wright Whipple, and the least among them, F. Hopkinson Smith, who at the club's birth was counted among the painters, though his pen has long since outstripped his brush.

The disbanding of the Tile Club came as a natural result of the wanderings of

its members and of the ever-increasing demand upon their time that finally drove one and then another away from the fold until it left the charming little clubhouse at 51½ West Tenth Street well-nigh untenanted.

It was at a table in the Tile Club that "Colonel Carter" sat while expressing his delightful and original views. In fact, F. Hopkinson Smith has given charm to more than one spot in New York by weaving a romance around it.

"Oliver Horn" is a sketch of the author's early life, or at least so much of it as he spent in an old Union Square boarding house. A gas company now occupies the first floor of the building, but the room at the top of the house where "Oliver Horn" lived remains practically the same.

Another of Mr. Smith's stories, "A Day at La Gaz," made famous "The Hermitage," a charming eating and meeting place far up in the Bronx. Here bohemia gathered when an outdoor frolic was in order, here came the painter to lunch and sketch, or the writer to work at a table beneath one of the arbors.

Many stories are told of the place and

When Eighth Avenue was a post road there thro' at one point along its western border a quaint hostelry known as "The Old Homestead." Then it was far uptown in New York, though as a matter of fact only a stone's throw south of what is now Twenty-third Street.

Sometimes good things stay a while, for you will now and then come upon a man, still young, who speaks in loving remembrance of an evening and a meal at "The Old Homestead." Here it was that Allen Gilbert one evening made the acquaintance of Peacock, a delightful beverage apparently obtainable nowhere else.

The friend who introduced Gilbert to the ale happened there again a few nights later and called for a bottle of his favorite. The waiter, instead of acknowledging the order, submitted the apparently irrelevant statement, "Your friend was here."

Thinking the waiter either had not heard the order or wanted to be sociable, the patron nodded his head and repeated the request. "But," with emphasis, "but your friend has been here."

The guest being of a patient disposition endeavored to make clear that he comprehended the waiter's information and for the third time expressed a desire for a bottle of Peacock ale. "You don't understand," and the servant spoke resignedly, "your friend was here last night, he brought a gentleman with him, and they drank up all the Peacock ale we had on hand."

Many years ago there used to be a picturesque German resort where the Café Bonaventura now stands. At that time the place had a reading room where illustrated magazines from all over the world were kept on file. Here one could sit with his stiel, or coffee and assorted cakes, and read undisturbed for as long a while as he wished. On the fine days of Summer there could always be found a number of Germans at cards in the tree-shaded back yard.

There was another place, long since passed from view, designed for the entertainment of the sons of the Fatherland, that stood at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Twelfth Street. It was a typical, old-time wine shop, where were dispensed the finest that bore the name of the Rhine, but the trend uptown carried away its custom.

However, "The Grape Vine," a block further south, remains to-day, and is probably the gathering place of the truest bohemians there are in New York. It is truly a tavern of the old type, and there is nothing about its clapboard exterior or its sombre interior to attract those who would destroy its charm for the men who met there, who are careless of everything except their art.

Of the unique places still to be found where such establishments are least expected, the majority are on the lower end of Manhattan Island. There is Ferrish's Chop House that has been neighbor to the old John Street Church since 1850, and John Brosnan's place on Fulton Street, where Garibaldi used to spend many of his evenings. To Old Tavern on West Duane Street, and, if report is correct, Balto's, an old French restaurant in a Nassau Street basement, where the racks of dusty bottles stand alongside the tables, and scores of champagne corks hang in festoons from the raftered ceiling, has still an open door for the appreciative.

These places cling to their weather-beaten signboards, and it is only to be initiated that their scarred faces hold out an enticing invitation. Long after Garibaldi's day the table at which he had sat was one of the interesting features of Brosnan's. A few years ago, however, the proprietor presented the historic board to the Garibaldi Society.

There were so many charmingly unusual places in New York at one time, and they passed out so gradually, that it is with difficulty the lover of such resorts comprehends the full extent of his loss. "What," he inquires, "has become of those delightful old wine stubes that used to make Tompkins Square what a pilgrimage? And you reply, "Changed conditions drove out Eisenbach's—it has gone the way of the wine stubes of Tompkins Square, the way of Oscar Pusch's place that rang so merrily of nights when the National Academy stood where the Metropolitan Building now stands; the way of Café Hungaria that used to lure us to Union Square. They are all in the land of the past along with the place that Pedro kept, when he ran his table d'hôte on Duane Street, and along with Paff's old joint, where Riley and Aldrich and W. C. Gilman used to hold forth."

So, also, with "Old Tom's" on Thames Street that fed the bohemian hungry for more than a century. It was closed years ago by the widow of the third "Old Tom" and in a manner worthy of a place filled with so much romantic history.

This good time chose New Year's Eve to give her farewell dinner. To this last feast were bidden all the old patron-friends who had sipped at her board for years past.

At the stroke of 12 the company rose

and drank the health of their hostesses—and the mugs from which they drank were given to them as souvenirs of the occasion. Then the door was bolted from without.

The generation of to-day know Beef Steak John only in time of need. The man with 50 cents in his pocket passes by John's wooden bill of fare. But there was a time when so much as the mention of that name would whet the appetite beyond control, for Beef Steak John, the real Beef Steak John, knew the secrets of the grill as the conjuror knows his cup.

Do you ask if Solari is yet to be found in the old place on Twelfth Street—but why ask such a question? If you knew Solari and his dinners you would know before to-day that they are no more. One of New York's real bohemians, the possessor of a name too well known to mention, tells of his first and only meal there, for Solari's was not designed for the purse of the coming, but for the arrived.

It so happened that our hero was one day attempting to pass the door of this restaurant with a sum in his pocket that fell only a trifle short of \$5. It was then past the noon hour and he was bearing in the direction of Sixth Avenue, where he knew of a place that cut the meat for sandwiches less thin than most of them.

Fate, however, had plotted otherwise, and, without giving him time to consider, thrust him through the door of Solari and led him to a table. Then, that Polly might crown indiscretion, some black spirit whispered in his ear that the place was trying to throw a stage effect and could not serve one-half the dishes named on the menu.

To see if such could be the case he ordered a duck that bore as long a string of foreign titles as the head of an impoverished noble family of Europe. Then, waiting what sort of an excuse the menial would give for not having the dish, he was stunned to notice a quiet bending of the shoulders and to hear the low spoken "Very well, Sir."

Recovering in a moment, he glanced up and looked to see the waiter return and apologize for not having the title-encumbered duck. But a glance about the room proved to him that he was lost.

Our hero's eyes fell upon a most radiant being, the only other guest, and he saw that this person wore a monocle when eating his midday meal. From the expression on the face behind the monocle, as it watched the blue-green flames of the alcohol lamp beneath the chafing dish that stood in front of him, he was sure the man must be a relative of his royal duck. That fowl served for both lunch and dinner on this day—and for days to follow the thought of the bird had to supply the meat course for several meals.

Last came the two bohemian resorts that, in passing, form New York's greatest loss. The "Restaurant de Paris" was cleverly sketched, a number of years ago, by Alice Rix, in "Clic," a publication Frank Nankivell started, during his coming days, in San Francisco.

There are those who will remember the "Restaurant de Paris" when it was in Washington Square, but those who did not know it before this time, those who did not follow in the train of its now forgotten discoverer, may not speak of the real charm of the place, the charm it left behind when making its exodus from Wooster Street. Of the old French couple who kept the "Restaurant de Paris," the husband was accredited with having fought under Napoleon and wished it understood that he was a "perfect gentleman"—the wife was known as an excellent cook.

It was when in Wooster Street that the place had its sanded floor, white ruffled curtains at the windows, and green door boxes filled with geraniums. The "perfect gentleman" appeared to the diner as one who kept close within the lap of luxury.

The dinner hour found him arrayed in an extremely individual form of evening velvet coat and Persian smoking cap, but without the ornate shirt front, to apologize for having kept his guests waiting, explaining that it was not his custom to arise before noon.

When the late Morton McMichael of the Philadelphia North American found Maria del Prado and her little Italian eating house down on the water front he made a chapter in bohemian history. Not content with finding the place and telling his friends about it, he painted to the ambitious Maria the wonderful possibilities if only her kitchen stood within the walls of bohemia.

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## Famous Old Places Where the Elect Used to Congregate Have Passed Out of Existence.

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is the only one of record where either bohemia or its chefs have prospered—but here the path was laid out by the elect.

In her new quarters Maria ruled with an autocratic hand. She served what she liked, knowing what best suited her guests, and in her own good way, knowing that also pleased.

Dinner was promptly at 7 o'clock, and the tardy arrival found the door locked beyond all hope of admission. This was a family affair, and the member who came late was compelled to go to bed without his meal—or look elsewhere for it. All must be seated when the great bowl of steaming soup was brought on, and Maria, with the door between kitchen and dining room propped open, kept order, after a fashion, among her guests, while at the same time preparing some dishes, the very smell of which made all willing to obey.

With the subsiding of appetites spirits began to rise. The intermission between the serving of each course was emphasized by an ever-increasing number of guests.

This was maintained until the time duly appointed for the row of the evening, which, to do it justice, was a recognized celebration. "The passing of the salad" was a contest as to who should mix the ingredients that composed the dish. Each guest demanded his rights. And then proceeded to go after them.

The fitting conclusion to this affair was when Maria came in, as the victor had prepared the dish, and, sitting him on the shoulder, declared: "It's a cert a the besta salad of the wik," after which she took the taste that was supposed to influence her decision. Then the man who by force had claimed the right to prepare the dish was toasted by all present.

So distinctly bohemian was Maria's that the most humble member of the tribe was given the same good cheer as that bestowed on those who were already among the stars for fame. Booth and Barrett often dined here, as did the elder Salvini, with Henry Irving.

Ripley Anthony, who spent several years of his eventful life in the service of The New York World, and Texas Smith, about whom the Latin Quarter of Paris has many stories to tell, could be found at the same table as Recorder Goff—and they all did what they could to drive dull care away.

But Maria's passed long years ago—perhaps it opened the trench, now so deep, that separates New York from yesterday. Who knows just where the change began, or when, or just how much we, who love the things that make for fellowship, have lost in the bohemia that has gone?



The Worthy Host Flying at a Pace Seemingly Impossible.

its proprietor, an aged Frenchman of good family, who, it was understood, had been requested to leave his native country on account of a too active interest in political affairs. Hunting the small birds of the neighborhood was a favorite recreation of the old man's. One day late in the Fall, when guests were few and time hung heavily, this amateur Nimrod took down his ancient fowling piece, loaded with tiny bird shot, and started to scour the surrounding country.

It so happened that John O'Sullivan had chosen this day to make some winter sketches of the woods at the back of "The Hermitage." As frost was in the air, and to shield himself from a nipping wind, had taken his position on the slope of a wooded ravine.

Thus it came about that the age-dimmed eyes of the sportsman saw from a distance what might be a rabbit or squirrel hopping about, apparently in one spot, on the edge of the ravine. Without a moment's hesitation the impetuous Frenchman let fire, and with a howl of

stand the varied meanings words acquire in our easy-going vocabulary, by planning to have printed at the bottom of his card the line: "The best shady hotel in New York." A friendly patron was shown the original copy for the card and he succeeded in restraining this ill-considered burst of enthusiasm.

To those who had not time or inclination to travel so far uptown as a dinner at "The Hermitage" required there was the good cheer of "The Studio," just above Twentieth Street on Sixth Avenue. Here could be found, on almost any evening of the week, the shining lights of bohemia.

And the chief charm of the place was the delightful harmony of it all. "The Studio" has been named, by those who knew the best that New York afforded, the finest place of its kind. The proprietor was one of those rare geniuses who are able to prepare a feast for the mind and the eye as well as the body, and, still more rare, had the means to do all.

The furniture was of the most perfect



The "Perfect Gentleman" Engaged in Scrubbing the Floor.

Colonial design, with table ware to match in every detail. The walls were hung with pictures by such masters as Cabanel and Innis, while Chase's "The Newsboy," occupying a place of prominence, was pointed out as the work of a then coming painter.

The owner of "The Studio" was also the owner of one of the finest collections of silver points in this country, and when, after his death, the furnishings of the place were sold at auction, the collection of antique arms that had decorated the walls of the restaurant surprised connoisseurs with its completeness.



"Bohemians."