

More frequently, though, the person accommodates himself to the life of the rooming-house world, as did the "charity girl." Old associations and ties are cut. Under the strain of isolation, with no group associations or public opinion to hold one, living in complete anonymity, old standards disintegrate, and life is reduced to a more nearly individual basis. The person has to live, and comes to live in ways strange to the conventional world.

I get along fairly well, now. I am no longer lonely. I am surprised to find that I can actually enjoy the girls I pick up at public dance halls, at restaurants, along the lake front, in the park. I know a great many of them now—many of them pretty and clever, and good companions for a night. I no longer go with prostitutes. I soon found that was unnecessary. For the city is full of women who are just as lonely as I was, or who draw on their sex as I would on my bank to pay for the kind of clothes they want to wear, the kinds of shows they want to see. Then, too, there are the "emancipated" women, who don't want to marry, who are not "gold diggers," but who feel the need of a man and a normal sex life.¹

Such is the world of furnished rooms—a mobile, anonymous, individual world, a world of thwarted wishes, of unsatisfied longings, of constant restlessness; a world in which people, in the effort to live, are building up a body of ideas that free them from a conventional tradition that has become fixed, hard, and oppressive; a world in which individuation, so typical of the life of the city, is carried to the extreme of personal and social disorganization. People behave in strange and incalculable ways; quick and intimate relationships spring up in the most casual way, and dissolve as quickly and as casually. Behavior is impulsive rather than social. It is a world of atomized individuals, of spiritual nomads.

¹ Document 18.

CHAPTER V TOWERTOWN

As one rides up North Michigan Avenue atop a bus one pauses for a moment at Chicago Avenue. Across the street rises an anomalous structure in grey stone, too ornate to be gaunt—the old Chicago water tower, the sole relic to be found on the North Side of Chicago before the fire. To the north looms the skyline of Streeterville and the Gold Coast. But to the west and south lies a nondescript area of business buildings and rooming-houses, where the "world of furnished rooms" merges with the district of cheap lodging-houses and the slum. If one gets off the bus at the water tower and rambles the streets within a half-mile radius of it one discovers, however, tucked away in dilapidated buildings, quaint restaurants, interesting art shops and book stalls, tearooms, stables and garrets with flower boxes, alley dwellings, cards in windows bearing the legend "Studio for Rent." For this is the "village," Chicago's Latin Quarter, dubbed by the newspapers "Towertown" because it lies about the foot of the water tower. Ironically enough, the last remaining landmark of the sternly moral, overgrown village that was Chicago before the fire becomes the symbol of the bizarre and eccentric divergencies of behavior which are the color of bohemia.

"THE KINGDOM OF BOHEMIA"

In Chicago, as elsewhere, the "village" has a flavor of art. Before the war, in the heyday of the "village," painters of some distinction tenanted its studios. Original and creative writers from time to time walked its streets—Sherwood

Anderson, Floyd Dell, Ben Hecht, Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters, and Alfred Kreymborg among them—engaging personalities who, while loudly denouncing and renouncing commercialism, were quite as eager for money as other literary aspirants.

With one breath they pledged themselves to poverty—though not, surely, to chastity or obedience!—and denounced such well-heeled poets as Kipling and Shakespeare as harlots of the marts. With the next they bargained with such editors as ventured to buy their wares, like Potash tackling One-eye Fligenbaum. But from this lamentable trafficking Kreymborg held aloof, a genuine Parnassian. He composed his bad poetry and worse novels on a diet of *schnecken* and synthetic coffee, and paid for that meager fare by teaching Babbitts chess.¹

Kreymborg was the true type of the bohemian literati. Many young men and young women live like him today, in the back rooms of Towertown, working in bookshops or on newspapers by day and over the typewriter by night, picking up a precarious living, selling an occasional verse or book review, attending Harriet Monroe's "poetry evenings" at the Petit Gourmet, adding a few pages each night to the "great American novel." But since the war Towertown has degenerated, so far as art is concerned, into a second-rate bohemia. Successful art has looked beyond the approval of Towertown to the wider recognition of Greenwich Village and the Latin Quarter, or to the publishers' offices of Fifth Avenue and Broadway and the bounty of "philistia." The "artists" who remain, writers or painters, are for the most part obscure adherents of bizarre schools and "isms" of color or of verse.

On an alley off La Salle Street is a typical bohemian studio which has become the rendezvous of Towertown's struggling painters.

¹ H. L. Mencken, *Prejudices, Fifth Series*, "Greenwich Village."

W— once taught in the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts. But he felt that conventional art forms were stifling his individuality. So he threw up his teaching and took a room in an old building opposite the Dill Pickle Club. He supported himself by odd jobs of commercial painting and began to paint as he chose, to seek "self-expression." He held continual open house in his "studio," and it soon became a rendezvous for a lot of serious but impecunious painters as well as for many of the literati. Hecht, Bodenheim, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Helen West Heller and others were found there many evenings. It was the center of the real artistic bohemia. There would be much talk until the small hours of the morning, when tea would be served. Then a fire burned all W—'s paintings and belongings, and he moved to his present alley location. Open house—it is part of the ritual of bohemia—still makes of his studio a rendezvous for the impecunious and struggling artists and near artists of Towertown. W— looks upon himself as the prophet of a new art, the little group takes itself quite seriously, the all-night discussions continue—indeed, W—'s child has learned to sleep no matter how many overcoats are thrown across his bed. Occasionally one of the more successful painters, who for the most part hold aloof from the bohemian life, is drawn into the little group. Professional and business men of means who have a dilettante interest in art and in bohemia, and who enjoy posing as patrons of art, have also been drawn into the group, as have a few students and "intellectuals."

There is considerable solidarity in the little group, though old members are constantly dropping out of sight and new members are constantly drifting in. If an artist gets into difficulties his friends give a benefit for him, or raffle off his worthless canvasses, or appeal to one of the "patrons" on his behalf.

It was in W—'s "studio" that the idea of the Chicago No Jury Exhibit was conceived. Every year a No Jury Ball is given to finance the No Jury Exhibit, and to help out needy No Jury artists who can't get the patrons that "Lorado Taft and his gang of fakers have on their strings." The expenses usually eat up all the receipts, but it is a carnival occasion, and any "patron" or "friend" who did not buy tickets or help to underwrite the expenses would be considered cheap indeed.²

² Document 19.

In the "studios" of Towntown the artist who earns a comfortable living by painting conventional portraits and landscapes is likely to be looked upon as prostituting his talent—and yet the prospect of eviction and hunger sometimes makes it necessary to descend to the painting of hosiery and lingerie advertisements.

Towntown has, too, a student flavor, for on the Near North Side live many of the students of the Art Institute, and of the North Side's many schools of music, opera, dancing, and dramatic art. At the corner of Dearborn Parkway and Goethe Street stands the commodious Three Arts Club, a home for Near North Side art students, erected by society patrons of the arts. The majority of these students, however, live in furnished rooms in Towntown, eking out an existence as ushers in the theaters, "supers" at the opera, singing for women's clubs, dancing at movie palaces, or modeling. They mingle with bohemia at its studio parties and many evanescent little theaters—the Jack and Jill Players, the Impertinent Players, the Studio Players, Neo Arlimusc, and a score of others which are scattered about the "village."

Towntown, like bohemia everywhere, has its tinge of radicalism. Be it in Chicago, New York, or Paris, bohemia has always welcomed the radical as one of its own. Over tea-room tables, or in the Dill Pickle Club or Ye Black Cat Club, or at the Radical Book Shop, one will hear Towntown's radicals and "intelligentsia" airing their ideas on capital, or government, or sex. It is largely a radicalism of "wobblies" and poseurs. On a warm summer evening one may find a crowd of anarchists, socialists, proletarians, communists, syndicalists, I.W.W.'s, and curious loiterers gathered about two soap boxes from which the "social am-

bassador" (of the faculty of the "hobo college") and the "proletarian queen" guy at each other. Like as not the affair breaks up in a street row. Or on a winter evening, at the Dill Pickle Club, one may find assembled the "intellectuals," rebellious but sterile souls whose radicalism runs to long hair, eccentric dress, lilies, obscenity, or a Freudian interpretation of dreams.

The Towntown of today, however, is largely made up of individuals who have sought in its unconventionality and anonymity—sometimes under the guise of art, sometimes not—escape from the conventions and repressions of the small town or the outlying and more stable communities of the city. Some of these individuals have a genuine hunger for new experience, a desire to experiment with life. They run the tearooms and art shops and book stalls of the "village," or work in the Loop by day and frequent its studios and restaurants by night. Perhaps, like Collie, they keep a little red notebook with a list of the things they have always wanted to do, and strike them off as one experiment in living after another is completed. Most of these experimenters are young women. For Towntown, like Greenwich Village, is predominantly a woman's bohemia. In Paris the "Quarter" is a bohemia of young men students. In London bohemia belongs to the man about town, to the older artists—cultivated, clever—who like the adventure of the night life of the city. But of late years, in New York and Chicago, with changing mores and the emancipation of the younger generation of American women, Greenwich Village and Towntown have become women's bohemias. It is the young women who open most of the studios, run most of the tearooms and restaurants, most of the little art shops and book stalls, manage the exhibits and little theaters, dominate the

life of the bohemia of American cities. And in Towertown the women are, on the whole, noticeably superior to the men.

But these genuine experimenters with life are few. Most of Towertown's present population are egocentric poseurs, neurotics, rebels against the conventions of Main Street or the gossip of the foreign community, seekers of atmosphere, dabblers in the occult, dilettantes in the arts, or parties to drab lapses from a moral code which the city has not yet destroyed. On the occasion of the suicide of Wanda Stopa, who had sought in Towertown escape from the life of Little Poland, Genevieve Forbes vividly portrayed the studio life of the "village" of today:

BABEL OF BUNK AND SEX—THAT'S SHAM BOHEMIA

Studio.—The working room of a painter, sculptor, or, by extension, one engaged in any more or less artistic employment (Webster's dictionary).

And it's the elastic "more or less" that gives your real artist pause.

For it is this amateur flair for pseudo-studio life that is sending more than one Wanda Stopa from Poland, Czechoslovakia, or from Sleepy Hollow three steps down or four flights up to a studio apartment in the "near Bohemia" of the near north side. It is sending them to incense and psychoanalysis; to old-fashioned plumbing and new-fashioned talking; to "freedom" and to dirt.

It was about five years ago, the historian of Chicago's Latin quarter will tell you, that these amateur intelligentsia began to splash a bit of red paint over a rickety stair and call it a studio. To sprawl scraggly letters of a flip phrase across a shingle and make a tea shop. To drape gauze scantily about the girls and name it an aesthetic cult of intellectual liberty.

This influx, the same historian will explain, coincides pretty well with the rise of the futuristic in art and letters. The old days of rigorous apprenticeship were going. Anybody could be an artist or a poet.

And pretty nearly everybody was.

Some of them weren't even sincere in their own desires to be

"artistic." Many began to exploit what they couldn't do, rather than what they could. And they flocked over to the near north side, to be with the group of serious minded artistic folk who had amiably and quietly congregated there.

The newcomers insisted upon plenty of scenery.

And they still keep up that tradition. Lots of paint and plenty of funny Russo-French teapots, battered candle sticks. Exotic drawings, a few "daring" books, and not too many brooms or dust pans. They live in tiny rooms, sharing kitchens and baths with other "artistic" tenants.

Nobody locks doors; it's so unfriendly. And trailing kimonos add to the picture.

A few blocks away, prim landladies are refusing to permit their girl guests to entertain men visitors in their bedrooms. But the studio is a bedroom as well as a reception hall. The bed, covered over with a brilliantly colored scarf and piled high with pillows, a bit dusty, is there.

And so are the men callers.

They sit about in the dimly lighted room and talk about life. They scoff at repressions; they speak loftily of "live your own life." Phrases of self-conscious daring tumble from the lips of young girls "asking advice." Free love, marriage a "scrap of paper"; "those who really understand"; "living, not existing." The whirligig of words revolves perpetually.

And it's all very modern and enlightened, they argue.

Physically, the life isn't so modern. The living-room may be more colorful than in a suburban bungalow; but the bathroom is likely to be darker and danker. Dirty dishes, perhaps, are piled high in the tub that doubles as a dishpan. The morning egg is fried in the midst of toilet articles and tooth paste.

It's the same in many of the nearby tea shops. Candle wax dripped in lumps all over the bare and dirty floor; penciled nudes, poorly done, about the walls; cracked panes of window glass—all give the place "atmosphere." There are no table-cloths, but if there were there is indication that they might show a Volstead bump.

And the same talk of sex.

Nobody quite dares to puncture the balloon. They all keep on seeking the thrill they think they're going to get. They haven't the

courage of a Chicago woman whose diary was recently made public. In commenting on the discourse of a lion of the village colony, at a recent studio party, she said: "Interesting, but not especially intelligible."

But she didn't say it "out in meeting." For she would have been thought more guilty than Wanda Stopa, who not so long ago attempted to shoot this woman of the diary. At that meeting, one of the group, and she is widely known in Chicago, murmured to the speaker, as he voiced a twisted idea:

"It's so limitless it makes me shiver."

And the village accepted her for its own.

The following pages from the diary of a Near North Side student give perhaps a more intimate picture of the unconventional and bizarre life and personalities which move about the studios and tearooms of Towertown:

October 10. Went with F— to M—'s rooms on East Chestnut. [M— is business manager of the poetry magazine.] M— took us to a studio a few doors away. It is in a ramshackle two-story frame building, reached by a rotten board walk and a precarious back stairway. We entered a little kitchen which was furnished with a low table, a one-burner oil stove, and a single chair. The walls were bare, the yellow plaster cracked and falling. In it two young men and a girl—one man fair, with careless dress and long hair; the other dark, with normally cut hair, a small moustache, and a marked southern accent. He is of a good southern family, says M—, of literary tastes, and feels he is "sowing his wild oats" in Towertown. The girl was vivacious, with dark eyes and hair. She had evidently been cooking their supper. She soon left. As she did so, she caressed T—, the dark chap, and said, "Perhaps they'd like to see my studio, too? But you boys don't know where I live, do you? Well, it's over the garage in the alley, two blocks up."

We went into the next room—the most bizarre room I have ever been in. It was hung in violent batiks—the four walls—and the ceiling draped to the center. The total effect was that of a booth on the midway. The only furnishings were two pallets on the floor. The walls were hung with deafening futuristic paintings, in glistening color

effects, the work of R— the blond boy. (M— says he paints these things, then holds them this way and that until he finds in them a faint likeness to something or other, mostly an imaginary likeness, and then gives them names.)

We sat around on the floor and smoked, R— with his hair hanging over his face, and talked. T— was eloquent in his eulogy of the "professional bohemian," whom he defines as one who gets by without working, picking up a bit here and a bit there. He will live off one friend after another, sell a few pencils, do a little commercial work if he is an artist, or get a part-time job in the Loop, pick up a little through little theater plays, and the like. Then when times are lean, he "hitches" his way to New York. Everyone is glad to see him. He works the "village" in the same way for a few months, and then comes back to Chicago. R— told some amusing tales about B—. He went to New York, looked up a friend, showed him both hands bandaged, and said he'd been caught riding "blind baggage" and had burned his hands against the fire-box. His friend took him in. It went on for weeks. B's hands didn't get well; he couldn't work; and his friend got tired of keeping him. Then one day he happened into B—'s room and found him with the bandages off, busily playing *solitaire!*

There was much glib talk of modern poets and schools, most of which have never been heard of outside of studios and "village" magazines. They talked of one another's work, each professing a profound contempt for that of all the others. R— said that if he were an editor he would have none of T—'s. Oh yes, Harriet Monroe would take it; but *he* wouldn't. R— prides himself upon being a "professional bohemian," and goes in for the long hair-cut and the Bill Jones' blue denim and corduroys. He was recently hailed into court by his landlady, who couldn't understand anyone's "not having beds and chairs, and wearing long hair!"

November 11. Met W— at six and walked down State to Pearson. Dark, and a fine rain falling. Turned into W. Pearson. Met C— hugging a lamp-post. The lighted windows of 19 West shone mistily at the end of the dark street. No one downstairs—a couple of men sitting upstairs smoking and playing chess.

V— came in, fairly sober after being pretty well "lit" for four days. She is a model—one dollar an hour, nude. M— of the *Journal*.

drifted in ten minutes later, and we ordered dinner. M—— entertained us with stories of newspaper life from Greenwich Village to Melbourne and the Cape. Clever man, has lived an intense, interesting life; leans to poor puns and lewd stories.

Later, E—— B—— and "Larry" joined us. E—— B—— is a clever, pretty, dark little thing, an ex-wobbly, who during the war visited the wobblies in prison, but who now addresses locals and distributes literature for the American Federation. "Larry" was another model, and dumb. E—— B——'s brother-in-law dropped in. A handsome, dark sheik who has lost one job after another, and now is living off his friends in the village, the girls mainly, in the grand manner of the "professional" bohemian.

A group of "homos" from the South Side also came in. They drank tea and talked loudly of labor. One was a beautiful boy with red hair and a dead white skin. He was a blouse-maker. Another was named "Alonzo." He claims to be a Spaniard, but the village suspects him of being an octoroon, and will have nothing to do with him. The waitress was a pretty little Russian. She was enchanting a group of college boys who had been to the Dill Pickle and were slumming. About eleven-thirty the crowd from Keedy Studios came in—a group of little theater enthusiasts desperately trying to be bohemian.

The whole village was out, almost. F—— K——, who holds the international suicide-attempt record, a "dopey," and who recently picked out the doorstep of the Dill Pickle for her attempt, did not come in, however, and we were all disappointed.¹

As one watches these types merge and mingle in the restaurants and studios of Towertown, one is struck by the fact that in Towertown nearly everyone plays a rôle, wears a masque. "Self-expression" is the avowed goal of "village" life. And where talent is lacking, self-expression runs to the playing of rôles and the wearing of masques, sometimes of the most bizarre sort. F—— K—— goes about the streets of Towertown the picture of cynicism and despondency, and periodically takes poison—always being careful not to take too much, and that she shall have an audience for her

¹ Document 20.

"suicide." "Durfie" writes the story of her life—it is the conventional pattern of the wayward girl, and everything "Durfie" is not. Then she contracts tuberculosis, assumes the rôle of the "pale spectre of death with hectic cheek," and extracts every ounce of drama from dying. These, however, are the pathological extremes one finds among Towertown's masques. The villager is usually content with assuming an eccentricity in dress or manner, an indifference to opinion that is far from real, a contempt for Rodin, Debussy, or Shakespeare, or a pose as the prophet of some new movement in drama, poetry, music, or painting. Once the rôle is adopted, or perchance thrust upon one, the whole "village" plays up to it, and a personality is crystallized.

The Neo Arlimusc recently held an exhibit for "Chicago's primitive artist." This primitive artist is P——, a conventional, small business man of sixty-two, who a year ago suddenly began to paint. He had been a clothing peddler in the ghetto, had earned a very mediocre living, but had managed to save a little and had retired. One day the old man dropped some papers from his pocket on which a friend saw some sketches. The old man was much embarrassed, but the friend insisted on taking them to W——, who exclaimed, "This man is a genius, a primitive artist!" P—— had never had a lesson in his life, and paints very crudely. With this encouragement P—— began to paint more crudely than ever. Then it was arranged to give P—— an exhibit. Only his own things were hung. They had an art critic from the University who came and discussed P——'s primitive technique, and a psychiatrist who probed back into P——'s primitive unconscious for the explanation of his turning to painting at so late an age. De K—— got up, and pointing to some Jewish sweatshop scenes painted on old cardboard, exclaimed: "See that? The artist's expression will out! Poverty stricken, he seizes on the only medium available." Then P—— was sent off to New York, where Greenwich Village hailed him as the exponent of a new art form. Under this definition by the group, P—— has ceased to be the timid clothing peddler, sketching and secreting his sketches, having constantly to be reassured he is an artist

and has a place in the world, and has accepted the rôle created for him as the creator of a new and primitive art, and continues to paint more and more crudely.¹

Behind these masques which the "villagers" present to one another and to the world one usually discovers the egocentric, the poseur, the neurotic, or the "originality" of an unimaginative nature. Occasionally, however, one finds behind these masques young persons who are struggling to live out their own lives, to remake the world a bit more after the fashion of their dreams—young persons who have come from north and west and south, from farm and village and suburb, to this mobile, isolated, anonymous area of a great city where they imagine they may live their dreams. It is these occasional dreams behind the masque, and the enthusiasms, intimacies, disillusionments that are a part of the living out of these dreams, that lend the "village," despite its tawdry tinsel, a certain charm, make of it what O. Henry termed "the Land of Illusion," "the Kingdom of Bohemia."

"FREE LOVE"

Transient but intense personal contacts are characteristic of this "bohemian" life of "studio" and "tearoom." Combined with the unconventional tradition of the "village," its philosophy of individualism, and the anonymity which its streets afford, these contacts give rise to unconventional types of sex relationship. Moreover, Towertown's debates on free love and its reputation for promiscuity, coupled with its unconventionality and anonymity, attract to its studios many individuals who are not bohemians, but who seek in Towertown escape from the repressive conventions of the larger community. Many of them become

¹ Document 21.

hangers-on of bohemia, but others isolate themselves in its midst.

Disregard of sex conventions has always been characteristic of the bohemian, who sees in marriage only an institution for hampering one's freedom and self-expression and cramping one's personality. This is especially true of the woman in bohemia, who objects to giving up her individuality, independence, and name. It is not uncommon to see two names—John Jones; Mary Smith—on "village" mail boxes, indicating a man and woman living together unmarried. Such a union is usually extremely casual, taken up because you like the back of someone's head, or agree that John Masefield is an old maid, or that the proletariat is being crushed under capital's heel; and terminated when it gets in the way of your ambition, or interests diverge, or you meet someone who suits you better, or the other person begins to bore you by talk about getting married. It's all in the open, an accepted pattern of behavior in the "village." All these attachments are sincere while they last. Occasionally one lasts for years, or passes over into marriage.

The anonymity and unconventionality of "village" streets attracts to them many who merely want to be "let alone." I was talking one night, near "Bughouse Square," about life in the "village." Afterward a girl came up to me and said: "Why can't social agencies let us alone? There's at least a year in everybody's life when he wants to do just as he damn pleases. The 'village' is the only place where he can do it without sneaking off in a hole by himself."

Plenty of individuals do use the anonymity of "village" life, however, to sneak off into holes by themselves. Business and professional men use its studio apartments to keep their mistresses. B—— and her mother live in a beautiful apartment, with Japanese servants and every luxury. B—— is supported by a wealthy business man, married, with a wife and family, who spends occasional week-ends with her. Intervening nights she entertains an army officer, a penniless adventurer, to whom she even gives money. G—— is a well-to-do lawyer and bachelor and keeps his mistress in the village. There are many such cases, especially of young men, "philistines" through and through, who nevertheless like the *laissez faire* of bohemia. R—— is a wealthy dilettante in the arts whose elaborate studio parties are celebrated for

the fact that all the women present are his mistresses—past, present, and prospective.

Distorted forms of sex behavior also find a harbor in the "village." Many homosexuals are among the frequenters of "village" tearooms and studios. B—— L—— keeps a vermilion kitchenette apartment, with a four-poster bed hung with blue curtains and an electric moon over it. When he has his loves he gets violently domestic, tailors, mends, and cooks. S—— was married, but indifferent to her husband, and lived in a "village" studio, posing as a homosexual and having a succession of violent affairs; when she finally "fell" for the blond lion of the "village" she went around and bade her former "flames" dramatic farewells featured by long, passionate kisses and embraces. A number of times I have followed a cab through the "village," the lights of my car revealing its occupants, two men or two girls, fondling each other. A nurse told me of being called on night duty in an apartment in the "village" and of being entertained every night by the girls in the apartment across the well, some of whom would put on men's evening clothes, make love to the others, and eventually carry them off in their arms into the bedrooms. A friend of mine was asked by an acquaintance to accompany him to the studio of a well-known "villager" to Sunday afternoon tea. There was a large group there. The men were smoking and talking in one end of the room, the women in the other. There was a good deal of taking one another's arms, sitting on the arms of one another's chairs, and of throwing an arm about one another's shoulders. But he thought it was merely that the group were old friends. He was asked to tea again a few weeks later. This time he remained in the evening. Soon the men were fondling one another, as were the women. A man he had met that afternoon threw an arm about him. He got up, went over to the acquaintance who had brought him, and said, "I'm leaving." When they got out on the street he asked, "What sort of a place was that, anyhow?" "Why, I thought you knew," his companion replied, "the best-known fairies and lesbians in Chicago were there." There used to be a group of male homosexuals who frequented the "village" known, after their leader, as the "blue birds." Warm summer evenings they would distribute themselves along the benches on the esplanade. The leader would start walking by, down toward the Drake. From bench to bench would go

the whisper, "Here comes the blue bird!" They would flirt with him as he passed by until he selected a partner for the night. Then the rest of them would pair off and seek their "village" haunts.¹

GARRETS AND STABLES

The intimate and artistic life of the "village" is passed unnoticed by the rest of the city, to which Towertown stands only for these bizarre garret and stable studios, long hair, eccentric dress, and free love. This is due largely to the fact that certain shrewd individuals were not slow to see possibilities in the commercialization of bohemia. Some of these individuals were of bohemia themselves. A group of young women writers in Towertown organized "Seeing Bohemia" trips, at seventy-five cents a head, and conducted curious persons from the outside world through tearooms and studios bizarrely decorated for the occasion. Tradition has it that the Dill Pickle Club had itself raided two or three times, secured an injunction to make it safe, gazetted itself, and began to charge admission. The Coal Scuttle and the Gold Coast House of Correction were other efforts of Towertown's business men to commercialize bohemia. They were dingy, out-of-the-way places, marked by an ostentatious bohemian poverty—catch-penny devices to lure the slummers who nightly crowd the district. Few real bohemians crossed their thresholds.

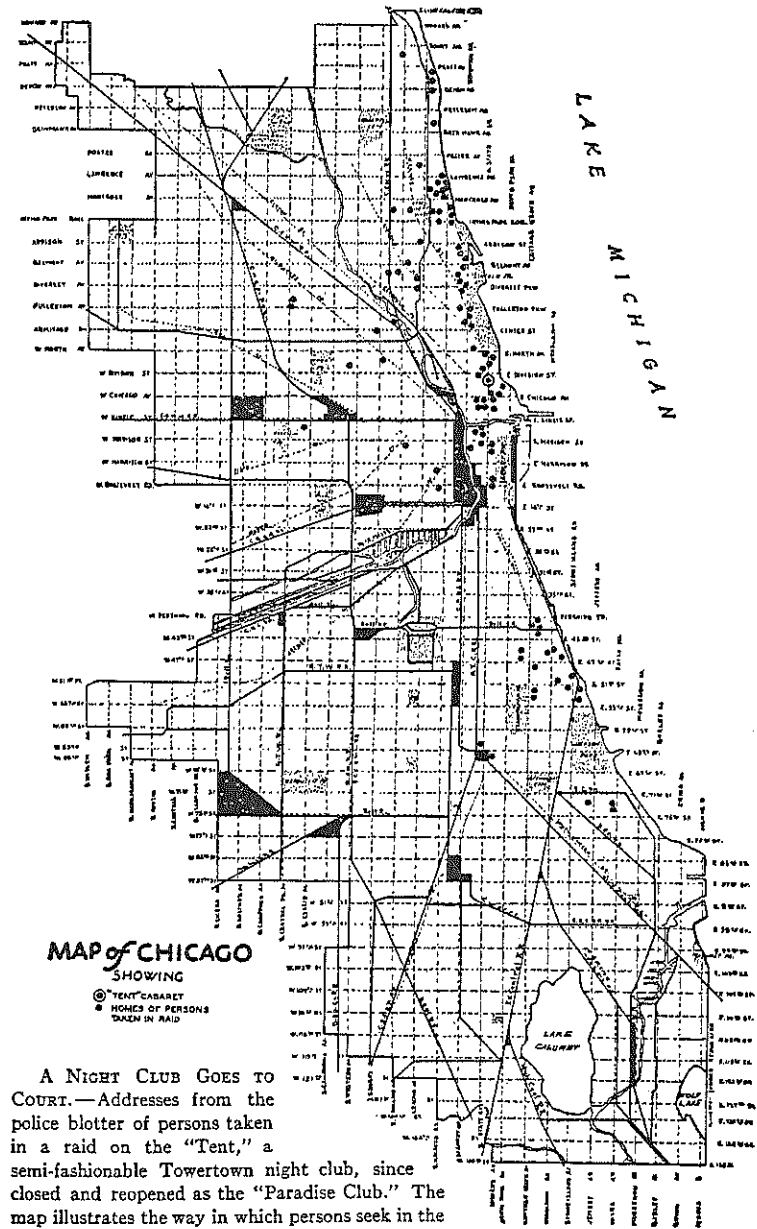
In Towertown, as in the Latin Quarter and Greenwich Village, the night club has seen the possibility of exploiting the reputation of bohemia. Bert Kelley's Stables, the Tent, the Paradise Club, the Little Club, and Chez Pierre are among the better-known night clubs of Towertown. Unlike the "Rialto" cabarets that draw a local patronage from

¹ Document 22.

"the street" and "Little Hell," unlike the bohemian tea-rooms with their little groups endlessly discussing obscure poets and schools of art, Towertown's night clubs, with their "Paris revues," singing waiters, and jazz, trade upon the fast-spending, semifashionable after-theater crowds out to "make a night of it," or upon the respectable citizens of outlying communities seeking stimulation and adventure. In the anonymity of this mobile area "anything goes," and persons seeking unconventional experiences escape from the regulations of better organized communities into the promiscuity of its supposedly bohemian night life.

THE "VILLAGE" PASSES

The days of Towertown would seem to be numbered—even of the "village" of the would-be artists, the bohemian experimenters with life, the persons who seek license under the cloak of artistic freedom. The passing of Towertown, as of the bohemia of Paris and New York, is incident to the march of the city. The old *Montmartrais* looks sorrowfully at the seven-story buildings cutting into the sky, annihilating with their immense façades the small one-story houses around with their stuffy *gargotes* and cafés, all adorned with windmills like a Flemish landscape, in which painters and sculptors worked and lived their reckless lives, and sighs "Montmartre is dead!" The "Quarter" gives way before the modern Paris of commerce. The Greenwich Villager somberly watches the old dwellings that harbored cheap studios leveled to the ground as great apartments as splendid as those on Park Avenue rear their ten, twenty, or thirty stories from Fourteenth Street down to Eighth Street; laments the building of a new subway and the approach to a new vehicular tunnel which cut block-wide swathes through the



A NIGHT CLUB GOES TO COURT.—Addresses from the police blotter of persons taken in a raid on the "Tent," a semi-fashionable Towertown night club, since closed and reopened as the "Paradise Club." The map illustrates the way in which persons seek in the disorganized areas of the city unconventional forms of life denied them by public opinion in their own better-organized communities.

heart of the Village; observes apprehensively the northward press of business and the renovation of picturesque old houses into a real estate agent's paradise; waxes indignant at the enforcement of a tenement law that forbids gas plates and sterno stoves; bemoans the passing of the pleasant Italian and French table d'hôtes with the convivial bottle of wine, the spaghetti "meccas," the "chip-in" sketch classes, and the open-house studios that only a short time ago made the locality famous.

And so, in the tearooms of Towertown, one hears talk of the "good old days" when Sandburg and Kreymborg walked its streets, and of the "fine old radicalism" of before the war. Meantime the Loop, crossing the river, pushes northward. Great office buildings and towering apartment hotels cast their shadows over the old stone fronts that harbor studios. Rising land values and rents make Towertown too expensive a place for young artists and students, for bohemians and itinerant radicals, to live. Studios and tearooms are replaced by offices and shops. The tides of the city rush along the streets. The life of the "village" begins to disintegrate. There is talk of demolishing the old water tower to speed the flow of traffic down Michigan Avenue. A decade more, and Towertown may be little more than a memory.

The passing of Towertown has a deeper significance than to serve as an illustration of the succession of the city. It is indicative of pervasive changes in the nature of the city's life. As the city expands, the slum moves on. Towertown, the Village, bohemia, however, passes out of existence—passes out of existence because it no longer has a rôle to play in the life of the city. As the outlying areas of the city become increasingly mobile, as contacts become increasingly

secondary and anonymous in the great areas of apartment-house life, group sanctions disintegrate, unconventional behavior is tolerated or ignored, and the "radical" no longer faces the necessity of seeking refuge from community opinion. The bohemian way of life becomes increasingly characteristic of the city at large.

CHAPTER VI

THE RIALTO OF THE HALF-WORLD¹

In the heart of the Near North Side, in the center of the rooming-house district and on the frontier of the slum, lies North Clark Street. By day it is a street of queer contrast between the shabbiness of the slum and the march of the city. Occasional new office buildings, real estate offices, and banks mark the struggle of business in its conquest of the slum. But its atmosphere is more that of busy dilapidation than of hurrying commerce. Most of North Clark Street's buildings are run down, many of them ramshackle old dwellings unconvincingly converted into store fronts. And the stores are largely such as cater to the migrant population of the rooming-house, or the submerged population of the slum—pawnshops, cheap theaters, second-hand stores and resale shops, white tile restaurants, cigar stores, news and taxi stands. The people who walk its streets are cheaply and carelessly dressed, and stand hesitatingly before store windows before they enter. The few short blocks from the smart shops of North Michigan Avenue to North Clark Street seemingly take one into a commonplace and workaday world.

But at night North Clark Street shakes off somewhat its shabbiness and its dinginess. Its electric signs and brightly lighted windows, lighted late into the night, have earned for it the name "little white way," for at night it is a street of lurid cabarets, of all-night "chop sueys" and "chili parlors," of innumerable small dance halls where jazz is king.

¹ The identity of all persons referred to in documents in this chapter and throughout the book, has been disguised. Where names occur, they are fictitious.