

Manhattan sketch

BY ELGIN E. GROSECLOSE, '20

LIFE IN NEW YORK

New York, February 1

I was about to comment on life in New York as it appears to the detached observer when someone remarked that there is no such thing as a detached observer of New York. It is true that if you attempt to stand still on the corner for a moment to observe the bustle and push of life you are apt to be knocked down by someone hurrying to catch the subway. It is also likely that you won't stand still. Before you know it you will be caught in the swirl, and rushed along yourself, a participant of the activity, with your viewpoint, of course, immediately distorted.

Nevertheless, there are occasions when it is possible to gain a more or less detached view, and in those blessed moments a degree of changelessness, a certain eternal and abiding quality, can be discerned in the life of Manhattan. I propose to set down a few instances observed in my own lucid moments.

The best place is a twenty story window, or higher, in midtown. From this view the panorama of Manhattan suggests little of the change and confusion which characterize life on the street level. It is a panorama of movement, but it is the movements of Nature, which are never convulsive, and are, after all, rather soothing and restful to the human spirit. Little of the street noises penetrate this far upward, and in comparative peace one may watch the grand spectacle of Nature as it plays over the city, reducing it to comparative insignificance. The clouds passing, sometimes pricked by the phallic points of the Manhattan Company tower, the glorious canvas of color which is spread about as the sun moves across the sky and descends into the Jersey hills, the mist which inveterately overhangs the city, constantly shifting from silver haze to heavy murk, all contrive to lift one from the world of affairs to the realm of thought. It is not until the sun descends, and the whole view is gradually sub-

merged in gloom that one is reminded of the surge of life below by the myriad incandescent points which appear, the beams of searchlights playing over the city, the electric signs blazing forth and disappearing, the jewelled radiance of the traffic lights constantly switching from ruby to emerald.

But an abiding quality, a resistance to change, in this city of movement, may also be observed on the street level. I have in mind those neighborhoods which, in spite of the wreckers' and the builders' apparati, in spite of the eternal shifting of population, cling to their locale and retain their atmosphere.

Thus there are many streets in which the same businesses have been carried on for decades, dusty windows which reveal no alteration from year to year, shopkeepers growing gray in the same tiny shops. As the city moves on and upward, it leaves behind its detritus of worn and fatigued humanity who hold to the remnants of a familiar life about them, its decaying districts which have been passed over by the real estate promoter, its ancient buildings still bearing the cornerstones dated in the eighties, still used, still cherished.

The observation and study of these localities, besides giving a certain satisfaction to those in need of certainty in this day of unrest and social eruption, is a subject of the greatest charm to those in quest of the quaint or the picturesque.

Too often, however, they are overlooked, submerged by the dazzling kaleidoscope about them. Occasionally one of them comes within the ken of a journalistic eye, it is dragged forth into the glare of publicity, it becomes touted, a resort for sightseers, and finally its very character, too delicate to withstand such white heat of public attention, melts and fuses with the life about it, or it changes and becomes a habitat for artists, concessionaires of the real estate promoter.

Such was the fate of Greenwich Village. Chinatown has retained its locale but lost its atmosphere.

Sometimes these places, like the quiet centre of a whirlpool in flood water, are to be found just off the busiest highways. Between Park Avenue, with its whirring, flashing stream of motor vehicles, and Fifth Avenue, growing more and more commercial, is Madison, along a section of which the shops are quite mid-Victorian in aspect. Many of them are French, and though the gowns sold there are of the latest Parisian mode, the atmosphere of the staid and conservative French *provincial* spreads out even into the sidewalks and affecting the character of the street itself. Others are devoted to antiques, and the windows are filled with those objects of art and abomination that characterized the Colonial days of this country or the period of Louis XVI of the Continent. Such is the quality of the atmosphere of these shops that even the traffic of Madison Avenue seems to subdue itself along these half dozen blocks and adopt a certain strange sedateness.

For those seeking in Manhattan those phenomena that give it a truly imperishable character, that bind it to all cities everywhere and give to the observer a feeling of having walked in the streets of Babylon or ancient Rome, the brass shops of Allen Street offer the greatest food for reflection, and withal, the greatest thrill of discovery. Allen Street is, or was until a section of it was demolished and widened, not easy to find. It is somewhere off the Bowery in that maze of narrow thoroughfares that intersect the East Side, and to find it twice one needs almost to use the method of the thief in Ali Baba. For the greatest part of its distance it is so narrow that the elevated structure fills it from wall to wall, and the gloom beneath gives it the appearance of those arched and covered bazaars of the East which it more nearly resembles than anything in this western world.

Allen Street is filled with nothing so much as brass shops. There are no bare-foot Orientals turning primitive lathes and beating out shapes, as in Alexandria or Ispahan, nor are the wares exhibited so delicately wrought as will be found in these Eastern shops, but brassware of all sorts and descriptions will be found, stacked high in tiny windows, piled on narrow counters, hung on pegs in the wall. Here will be found the samovars of Russia, the candlesticks dear to Central European Jews, the engraved and gaudily painted brassware of India, with its motifs of peacocks and cobras. There are andirons and fire screens for modern apartment house fireplaces, ash trays and smoking stands, trinket boxes and what-nots for the new-found opulence of new-found Americans.

Those who preside over these shops bear the airs of Asia and Eastern Europe

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BIRTHS

Mr and Mrs O. D. Smart of Seminole announce the birth of a son, Donald Bruce, at Seminole January 6. Mrs Smart is nee Elizabeth Reed, '28 home ec.

To Dr Leonard M. Logan, '14 arts-sc., and Mrs Logan, a son, James Duke, February 4 at Norman.

Rev. Loy Lewis Long, '25 arts-sc., of Cordell, has been given a life appointment with the American board of commissioners for foreign missions in the Marathi mission, India.

Everett F. Drumright, '29 bus., of Drumright, has entered the United States consular service and has been assigned to Ciudad Jaurez, Mexico, as vice consul. Mr Drumright is a son of Aaron Drumright, for whom the city of Drumright was named.



THE UNIVERSITY'S BUDGET

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 195)

100; stenographer, \$1,650; bookkeeper, \$1,237.

ANATOMY—professor and assistant, \$6,600; two instructors at \$1,800 each; student assistants, \$1,050.

BACTERIOLOGY—professor and assistants, \$6,800; instructor, \$1,350; student assistants, \$180.

BIOCHEMISTRY—professor, \$4,200; instructor \$1,800; technical assistant, \$1,000.

HISTOLOGY—professor and associate professor, \$7,400; two assistants, total of \$2,350.

MEDICINE—two instructors, total \$3,300.

PART TIME DIRECTOR OF X-RAY—\$600.

SIXTY CLINICAL LECTURERS—\$10,000.

PATHOLOGY—professor and assistant, \$7,100; instructor, \$1,800; technical assistant, \$1,350; museum technician, \$750.

PHARMACOLOGY—one associate professor, \$3,400; student assistants, \$360.

PHYSIOLOGY—professor and assistant, \$6,800; part time instructor, \$675; technical assistant, \$1,080.

CONTRACTUAL SERVICES—supplies, \$13,652; equipment, \$5,000.

The budget for the geological survey follows:

ADMINISTRATION—director, \$6,000; chief geologist, \$3,300; draughtsman, \$1,500; secretary, \$2,100; stenographer, \$1,600; clerk, \$500.

CONTRACTUAL SERVICES—general repairs, \$46; motor vehicle repairs, \$437; traveling, \$1,772; transportation, \$243; communication, \$220; printing, \$5,000; other expenses, \$244; supplies, \$1,940; equipment, \$1,092; special investigation, \$12,000.



MANHATTAN SKETCH

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about them. Bartering over price is not an insult, but questioning the quality of the wares is. In fact, although generally cruder than the exquisitely handwrought brass of Persia or Syria, the articles are for the most part made in lofts over the shops, where lathe machines are no doubt employed, but no mass production methods, and they are the nearest approach to handmade articles of everyday utility that are produced in this country.

The windows of the shops are tiny, as though glass were a luxury, but they glitter in the gloom with their overweight of display. The people in the streets wear European clothes, of course, but as though uncomfortable and somewhat strange. Their eyes often have that glint produced

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by snow or sand, and in winter an astrakhan cap may occasionally be seen on the heads of some.

When the elevated train has passed with its roar, and the sunlight creeps through its patches, the scene takes on an aspect far removed from Manhattan. The smell of the charcoal brazier reaches the nostril, the eyes close, and in a trice the street becomes the crowded bazaars of the East. After all, Manhattan is but one remove away, and not so very different from Damascus or Samarcand.

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A PULITZER POSSIBILITY

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stirred itself to produce it. But not so glad as Mr Riggs should be."

A two column article in the *Times* was headed "And Now Lynn Riggs. After Several Ventures in the Theater, He Arrives with *Green Grow the Lilacs*." It is a most favorable biographical sketch, in which it is revealed that Mr Riggs is at work on a new play, tentatively titled *The Cherokee Night*, dealing with the passing of the Cherokees. The article quotes Dr Isaac Goldberg in the *Transcript*: "It is a great man, indeed, who has the courage of his exaltations. This is the quiet but unshatterable courage that characterizes Lynn Riggs." The Newspaper Enterprise Association in its weekly drama letter from New York to its clients remarked: "Broadway will probably eat it up."

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THE MILBURNS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 208)

ed by B. A. Botkin of the English faculty and published by the University Press. John McClure, who is one of H. L. Menckens's favorite authors, praised George's contribution highly in his "Literature and Less" department in the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, and recommended George's work to the editor of *Mercury*.

Vivien talks some of taking an M. A. next year after she has finished—George talks some of going to New York and taking up a newspaper offer which has been made to him—they talk some of going to Arkansas and living on a farm there (this being his secret ambition)—and they talk some of this and some of that—

But the responsibilities of life are not weighing heavily on either of their shoulders and since the future has always taken care of itself it may continue to do so and so—

Well, the possibility that Norman may keep them remains.

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