Literary Lights Reflected in Traditions of Washington Square

Romantic Memories Cling to Old Homes and Haunts of Famous Men and Women of Letters

Some of Their Best Works Inspired by the Bohemian Atmosphere in Which Writers Found Delight

By ARTHUR B. MAURICE.

IN recent years the eccentricity of that part of Greenwich Village which clusters about Sheridan Park has overflowed into Washington Square, absorbing its side streets to the west and taking possession of various structures of the streets to the south. But long before the oldest patron of Polly's, or the Pirate's Den, or the Purple Pup, or the Mouse Trap, or the Mad Hatter's saw the light of day, when the Village was American, and conservative, and as bourgeois as Bunner considered it, the Square boasted its literary traditions and was in flavor and atmosphere the nearest approach to a Latin Quarter that New York had to show to a stranger. Even back in the years when all publication offices were far downtown, and lower Broadway was still residential, and the new Fifth avenue did not extend beyond Twelfth street, the Square was a favorite haunt of men and women of letters.

The late Amelia Barr, at the beginning of her career as an author, in order to be conveniently near the old Astor Library in Lafayette place, established herself and her children in an apartment in a street just to the south of Washington Square. She did not know at the time that the apartment was one that many years before had housed the gifted but always financially unfortunate Edgar Allan Poe. It was Poe's last New York residence. There Lowell once visited him and found him "not himself that day"; and there he wrote "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," and "The Philosophy of Composition," and "The Literati of New York," which caused a stir comparable to the stir caused by Byron's "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," or Robert Buchanan's "The Fleshly School of Literature." In fact, in the neighborhood of the Square were all of Poe's New York homes, with the exception of the one overlooking the Hudson from what is now Eighty-fourth street, and the Fordham Cottage where Virginia, the child wife, died and from which he went forth, already in the shadow of his own tragic end.

Where Poe Read "The Raven."

About the Square are other Poe associations than those involving existing or demolished structures in which the poet actually lived. On Waverley place was the home of Anne Lynch, who afterward became Mrs. Botta, and who wrote "The Battle of Life." It was a literary salon of its day, and to it Poe, a shy lion, was invited to read the newly published "The Raven," and probably to be stared at and criticised by the more affluent and conventional members of the writing fraternity. Others who frequented the salon were Bayard Taylor and Taylor's friend Caroline Kirkland, and Margaret Fuller and Lydia Child and Ann S. Stephens, who wrote "Fashion and Famine" and "Mary Derwent," and young Richard Henry Stoddard and Elizabeth Barstow, who became his wife.

Bayard Taylor lived in a house facing the Square at the point where Waverley place joins Macdougal street. There he wrote "The Epistle From Mount Tholus" and some of the "Poems of the Orient." Subsequently the house was torn down and on the site was erected the apartment dwelling in which George Parsons Lathrop penned some of the verse of his "Days and Dreams," while his wife, Nathaniel Hawthorne's daughter, composed parts of "Along the Shore." Almost within the memory of the present generation is the old University Building that faced the Square from the eastern side. There, just before the outbreak of the civil war, Theodore Winthrop wrote "John Brent" and "Cecil Dreeme," the latter one of the most widely read books of its day, and from there he went in the blue uniform of the Union army to meet death at the Battle of Big Bethel.

Birthplace of Henry James.

At 21 Washington place, just off the Square, Henry James was born. In his novel "Washington Square" he left a picture of the neighborhood as it was when he knew it in his boyhood. Even then it had "a kind of established repose not of frequent occurrence in other quarters of the long, shrill city; a richer, riper look than any of the upper ramifications of the great longitudinal thoroughfare—the look of having had something of a social history."

The actual house which Henry James had in mind, and which he described with minute detail as the residence of Dr. Sloper, is on Waverley place, between Fifth avenue and Macdougal street. In 1835 when Dr. Sloper first took possession, moving uptown from the vicinity of the City Hall, which socially had seen its best days, the Square, then the ideal of quiet and genteel refinement, was enclosed by a wooden paling. The structure in which the Slopers lived and its neighbors were then supposed to embody the last results of architectural science. It was then and is today a modern house, wide fronted with a balcony before the drawing room windows and a flight of white marble steps ascending to a portal also faced with white marble. In the twenties Mrs. Sloper had been "one of the pretty girls of the small but promising capital which clustered about the Battery and overlooked the bay, and of which the uppermost boundary was indicated by the grassy waysides of Canal street."

From Henry James to O. Henry the novelists have found delight and suggestion in that line of stately houses that stretches along the northern boundary of the Square. In "A Hazard of New Fortunes" William Dean Howells wrote of the "old fashioned American respectability which keeps the north side of the Square in vast mansions of red brick, and the international shabbiness which has invaded the southern border and broken it up into lodging houses, shops, beer gardens and studios." Basil and Isabel March of the story went there when worn out by futile flat hunting and "strolled over the asphalt walks under the thinning shadows of the autumn stricken sycamores."

The late F. Hopkinson Smith introduced a wing of the stretch in "Caleb West," the story which grew out of the author's experiences in building the Race Rock lighthouse. Sanford lived in a five room apartment at the top of a house with dormer windows on the north side. His guests looking out could see the "night life of the park, miniature figures strolling about under the trees, flashing in brilliant light or swallowed up in dense shadow as they passed in the glare of the many lamps scattered among the budding foliage." Another of these houses was tenanted by Mrs. Delaney of Edgar Fawcett's "Rutherford"; and the Square was the scene of Mrs. Burton Harrison's "Sweet Bells Out of Tune."

But of all the older men it was Henry Cuyler Bunner who loved the Square best and who described it with greatest sympathy. When he lived there in his younger bohemian days, it was not in one of the red brick and white trimmed edifices of the north side. Therefore while to other writers the Square was something to be studied in its architectural aspects or as a problem in social contrasts, Bunner liked best to describe it at night, with the great dim branches swaying and breaking in the breeze, the gas lamps flickering and blinking, when the tumults and the shoutings of the day were gone, and "only a tramp or something worse in woman's shape was hurrying across the bleak space, along the winding asphalt, walking over the Potter's Field of the past on the way to the Potter's Field to be."

In Bunner's Bohemian Days.

After "The Story of a New York House," in which he pictured reminiscently an old romantic structure that still is to be found facing Battery Park, Bunner's best novel was "The Midge," in which is the essence of Washington Square and the streets adjoining the Square as they were thirty-five or forty years ago. The hero of the book, Capt. Peters, or Dr. Peters, as he preferred to be called, lived on the top floor of 50 Washington Square South, a three story brick structure on what Bunner called the "dark south side," between Thompson and Sullivan streets. It is gone now—has been gone a dozen years or so—but there are plenty of New Yorkers who remember it as it was, adjoining the Judson Memorial, standing back from the street, even darker and gloomier than the houses about it.

A low iron railing, once green, separated the sidewalk from the poor little plot of sod and stunted grass. The door, a single step above the ground, was flanked by thin grooved columns. From the second story windows jutted little balconies, and from the dormer windows jutting from the roof Peters looked down upon the Square, studying it with his wise, kindly philosophy. When he was tired of looking out at the Square he sought another view, that afforded by the windows to the south, for in the rear of No. 50 were two vacant lots, stretching through to West Third street, or Amity street as it was probably then called. "These yards in summer were green and bright, and in the centre of one there was a tree."

Formerly the streets to the immediate south of Washington Square were the French Quarter, which later migrated to the Twenties west of Sixth avenue, and then somehow disappeared entirely. Bunner, who in the days when he was editing *Puck* from its Mulberry street office, was in the habit of lunching frequently in Macdougal street and South Fifth avenue restaurants in company with such men as Brander Matthews and James L. Ford, drew in "The Midge," a picture of a typical old time cabaret of the section, calling it "A la Ville de Rouen," which specialized in "Fine Wines, Brandies and Liqueurs," and of which the patron was J. Piguult. A curious conceit of the tale presented the window sign backward, from the point of view from which the clients of the establishment liked best to read it, and thoughts of that sign and of the warmth and cleanliness within, and of Mme. Piguult, neat and comely knitting, and of the sawdust covered floor and the little noises of a gentle sort inspired Bunner to that fine anti-prohibition sermon in which he showed with truth and keen humor the "estimable gentlemen who go about this broad land denouncing the Demon Drink," that there were wine shops not wholly inquitous and that bred not crime but gentleness and good cheer.

The "Charlemagne" of "The Midge" was in all likelihood the old restaurant of the Grand Vatel, which in the late '70s was on Houston street. It was the prize exhibit of the bohemia of the French Quarter, to the south of the Square. There not only the strugglers of the quarter, some of them communards who had fled from France to escape the penalty of their crimes of 1871, but also American artists and authors in embryo used to dine substantially and with amazing economy. Why not when the bill of fare provided a soup for five cents, beef with vegetables for ten cents, veal Marengo for twelve cents, mutton stew with potatoes for eight cents, braised beef with onions for ten cents, macaroni au gratin for six cents, celery salad for six cents, and either Gruevere or Neufchatel cheese for three cents, and for three cents the small cup of coffee needed properly to finish the repast?

A block or so from the Square, at the southeast corner of Fifth avenue and Ninth street, is the structure where Mark Twain made his home during certain years of his New York life. No. 21 Fifth avenue, the dwelling in question, is a house of red brick, a house with a high basement and three stories above, and incidentally built by the architect who designed Grace Church. Samuel Clemens went to live there in the autumn of 1904, remaining for a time in the nearby Grosvenor Apartment, in order that the new habitation might be put in order and the home furniture that had been brought from Hartford installed. When No. 21 was ready for occupation only Mr. Clemens and his daughter Jean went to live there, for Clara Clemens had not yet recovered from the strain of her mother's long illness and the shock of her death, and was in retirement under the care of a trained nurse. Mark Twain, according to his biographer, Albert Bigelow Paine, was very lonely in No. 21 and sought to liven matters by installing a great Aeolian orchestrelle. In January, 1906, Paine paid his first visit to the house and found Mr. Clemens propped up in bed with his head at the foot, turning over the pages of "Huckleberry Finn" in search of a paragraph about which some random correspondent had asked elucidation.

Eighth street is an outlying possession of Washington Square, and when it was more familiarly known as Clinton place the thoroughfare was rich in literary traditions and associations. The *Century* was there when it entertained Thackeray so well. Evert Augustus Duyckinck, author of "The War for the Union" and co-author with his brother George of the "Cyclopedia of American Literature," lived there. Mrs. Botta, who as Anne Lynch, had entertained or tried to entertain Poe in her Washington Square salon, made her home for a time in Clinton place. In a third story back room of No. 33 Thomas Bailey Aldrich, then a young clerk with aspirations to authorship, wrote his "Ballad of Babie Bell." At No. 84, which was the home of Judge Daly, Paul du Chaillu wrote some of the chapters dealing with his African explorations and brought down upon his head the incredulous laughter of two continents. In Clinton place, until ten or fifteen years ago, was the home of Richard Watson Gilder, poet, *Century* editor and good citizen of the city of New York.

Scene of Van Bibber Adventure.

At the northwest corner of Ninth street and Fifth avenue is the house where Richard Harding Davis's Van Bibber ran into the adventure that was related in "Van Bibber's Burglar." It is known as the De Rham house. But fiction was not needed to invest the structure with a romantic story. It ceased to be commonplace—if it ever were commonplace—soon after it was erected in the early half of the last century by one of the Brevoort family. There, in February, 1840, was held the first masquerade ball in the history of New York, the most splendid social affair of the first half of the nineteenth century. But it ended in a manner that placed a ban on masked balls for many years to come.

The British Consul to New York was Anthony Barclay and he had a daughter Matilda, a belle of great charm and beauty, surrounded by a group of persistent suitors. Of course, among them the one she preferred was the one of whom her parents most disapproved, a young South Carolinian named Burgwyne. Opposition served only to fan the flame of attachment, and they met by stealth, and in the good old fashioned way he wooed her by quotations from Tom Moore's "Lalla Rookh," which was their favorite poem. To the ball they went in the guise of their romantic favorites, she as Lalla and he as Feramorz, the young prince. Till 4 in the morning they danced, and then, still wearing the costumes of the poem, they slipped away from the ball and were married before breakfast. Natural and harmless enough as it seems after all the years, it caused a great uproar and scandal and brought masked balls to be soon to-day.

Where Phillips Found Success.

In a three story red brick structure of Washington Square, South, between Sullivan and Macdougal streets, David Graham Phillips was living when he wrote "The Great God Success," and there he laid many of the scenes of a tale that was in some respects autobiographical. From the inside he knew the boarding house with the high stoop, on the steps of which the boarders gathered of summer evennigs to watch the children of many nations play in the Square. In imitation of the Pension Vauquer of Honoré de Balzac's famous "Père Goriot," in the Sands Boarding House, a new lodger began by taking the best rooms. Then, slowly or swiftly as the case might be, came the social and financial disintegration, marked by ascending step from story to story until the cubby hole under the eaves was reached.

"The Great God Success" was the step by which Phillips passed from newspaper work to novel writing. It was a step that many of his closest friends deplored and advised against, pointing out that it was giving up a comfortable position in journalism for the uncertainties of fiction, and calling it "spoiling a good newspaper man to make a poor novelist." That it was a step requiring courage is indicated by the fact that Phillips's only perceptible resources at the time were two articles that had been accepted by a weekly publication but not yet paid for.

On the north side of Tenth street to the east of Sixth avenue is the old Studio Building, which, since the days when Henry T. Tuckerman lived there, and there wrote some of his later volumes, including "The Criterion" and the "Book of the Artists," has housed many men of letters, either aspiring or arrived, and which has been introduced again and again as a scene of fiction, for example by F. Hopkinson Smith in "Felix O'Day," and by Robert W. Chambers in "The Common Law." But just across the street is a structure, or rather remnant of a structure, that is even more interesting. Back of No. 58 West Tenth street was a frame building that served as the studio of Abbey, as the meeting place of the old Tile Club that played a part in Brander Matthews's "The Last Meeting" and was a background of "Colonel Carter of Cartersville." "An old fashioned, partly furnished, two story house, nearly a century old, which crouched down behind the larger and more modern dwelling fronting on the street" was the accurate description in the tale.

It was there that Col. Carter resided during that period of his life when he was in New York for the purpose of trying to interest the agents of British syndicates in a railroad scheme which would have given easy access to the Atlantic seaboard to some of Virginia's very first families. The street in the story was called Bedford Place, and the spot was indicated as being within a stone's throw of the tall clock tower of the Jefferson Market. The street entrance to this curious abode was marked by a swinging wooden gate, just the kind of gate that is to be found to-day where one enters the nearby Milliken Place from Sixth avenue just above Tenth street. The Bedford Place gate opened into a narrow tunnel, which dodged under the front house. "It was an uncanny sort of passageway, moldy and wet from a long neglected leak overhead, and lighted at night by a rusty lantern with dingy glass sides."

When the Tile Club flourished, and made merry ashore and afloat, this quaint bit of local color existed practically as it had been some eighty years before, when it was an outpost of Greenwich Village. Then Maitland Armstrong, the owner of the modern front house, was moved to remodel and add to his own dwelling, and part of the old structure had to go. The entrance and the eastern half of the white frame building in the rear, where the Colonel builded dreams as he watched the logs crackle and flare on the hearth, remain intact. The swinging wooden gate whence Carter's faithful negro retainer Chad swooped down upon the complacent shopkeepers of the quarter, long a familiar landmark of this corner of old New York, opened into the tunnel directly under the stoop No. 58 West Tenth street as it

WHERE F. HOPKINSON SMITH'S "COLONEL CARTER of CARTERSVILLE" PRACTISED REVOLVER SHOOTING FOR A DUEL.

THE HOUSE of DR. SLOPER IN HENRY JAMES'S "WASHINGTON SQUARE"

THE OLD RESTAURANT of THE GRAND VATEL ON WEST HOUSTON STREET.

THE OLD STUDIO BUILDING IN WEST TENTH STREET, THE ABODE of WRITING MEN SINCE THE TIME of HENRY T. TUCKERMAN.

THE OLD BENEDICK ON THE SQUARE, EAST, OFTEN USED IN FICTION, FOR EXAMPLE IN ROBERT W. CHAMBERS'S "THE KING IN YELLOW."

THE De RHAM HOUSE AT 5TH AVE. and 9TH ST. HERE RICHARD HARDING DAVIS'S "VAN BIBBER" FOUND THE BURGLAR

Clemenceau Guided by His Father's Precepts

THROUGHOUT his long and crowded life the influence of his father's precepts and example has influenced strongly the thought and the career of Georges Benjamin Clemenceau, the Premier who led France to victory and then made peace for her —not the least of "The Big Three" statesmen of the world.

Georg Brandes, famous Danish man of letters and long an intimate of the Premier, relates that long after Clemenceau had reached middle age, when he had become one of the most noted figures in French journalism and public life, he used often to say:

"If I should do (this or that) what would my father say?"

What sort of father was this who thus could set his indelible impress upon one of the world's great minds and greater heart? Must he not have been a remarkable man himself?

He was.

Gustave Geffroy, who knew him and all his children, at last has written for *L'Illustration* the first study of the elder Clemenceau that has reached type. It is illuminating because it shows how many of the Premier's splendid qualities—his lifelong enmity to autocracy in all its forms, his earnestness and steadfastness, even his wit—were and are his by right of inheritance.

It is hard for us nowadays—we of the younger generation—to realize that France not long ago was under the rule of a monarch. We have read it in histories, certainly, but it is not vivid to us. It is vivid enough to Clemenceau.

Benjamin Clemenceau, his father, a physician, as is his son and as four generations of Clemenceaus have been, was married in 1839, and after their first child, a daughter, and their second, the Premier, were born, went to live at Nantes. Benjamin Clemenceau sympathized with the revolution and his father had played a part in it. He was an ardent democrat, a Republican. Under Louis Philippe and under Louis Napoleon, he frequented a secret meeting place of the Republicans in Nantes, in the home of one Plancon, where admission was by password. There were some famous Republicans in the group, statues stand in Nantes now to two of them—Gen. Cambronne nad Dr. Guepin. There were twelve leaders. Benjamin Clemenceau was one.

When in December, 1851, Louis Napoleon decided to cast aside his pretence of republican rule and assume the title of Emperor Napoleon III., his ever active police did not overlook the Nantes physician. He was ordered interned. Seven years later, he felt the imperial wrath more strongly. He was seized and ordered deported into exile in Algiers.

The incident made a permanent impression on the mind of his seventeen-year-old son. When the prison van arrived to carry his father away he pressed close to him and whispered.

"I will avenge you."

"If you would avenge me, work," replied his father.

In 1906, when Clemenceau had become Minister of the Interior, in peace time the most influential post in the French Cabinet, he paid a visit to his native La Vendee and recounted the story in a speech delivered at one of the great celebrations in his honor.

"And I have worked," he added, "and to-day, when I see all the Republicans doing me the honor to acclaim me far above my deserts, I cannot restrain myself from turning to him to whom I owe everything and saying to you: 'It is he who should be honored.'"

It is almost anti-climax to record that the father never reached Algiers. The imperial edict of banishment was revoked by the time he reached Marseilles.

Like father like son! Benjamin Clemenceau fell in love as a youth with Mlle. Sophie-Emma Eucharis Gautreau, daughter of a neighboring land owner in Mouilleron-en-Pareds, Vendee. His father, Paul Jules Benjamin Clemenceau, opposed the match. There was a violent clash between them, but the son won and the marriage took place.

That is not the French way. In France the parents arrange the marriages, with a careful eye on the dot.

Everyone remembers the story of the Premier, how he came to America upon graduating in medicine, was unable to make a living practising in New York, went to teach French in a girls' school in Stamford, Conn.—and fell in love with one of his pupils.

Then history repeated itself. His father objected. It is related that young Clemenceau made two trips to France to endeavor to overcome the parental opposition—and he won, as his father had won the same battle before him.

It is a wonderful thing that the six children born of that marriage eighty years ago are alive. They are Emma, now Mme. Jacquet; the Premier; Mlle. Adrienne; Sophie, now Mme. Bryndza; then Paul, an engineer, and Albert, a lawyer.

All of them were exceptionally well educated, under a rigorous regime.

A new Clemenceau anecdote comes to light in this connection. It appears that when he was about 14, he spent a lazy year in school. At the end of the term there were prizes for nearly everyone except for him—prizes consisting for the most part of beautifully bound, gilt edged books. To watch the other boys strutting the streets of Nantes with their arms full of these treasures, and to walk empty handed himself was more than he could stand. So he rifled his father's bookcases for a good armful and made a promenade himself. He was disciplined for it by the head of the lycee—or as we would say, high school.

It will spoil the story for juvenile readers to relate that young Georges made up his deficiencies that summer.

From his father Clemenceau inherits also his well known love for the arts. His father was an amateur draughtsman, painter, lithographer and sculptor. Also he played the violin well enough to be heard at the soirees of the period in Nantes.

One of his paintings in time may be preserved by the French Government as carefully as any of the treasures of the Louvre, for it is a portrait of his distinguished son at the age of 10 years. It is well painted, too, and shows an intelligent, mischievous lad with eyes set wide apart under rather straight and heavy brows; a good nose, a short upper lip with rather a marked indentation, and a chin that is, in irreverent language, some chin.

The likeness to the Clemenceau of to-day is easy enough to see, particularly in the high, Mongolian cheek bones, but there is one striking dissimilarity. The boy of 10 had a beautiful shock of fluffy hair that hid the odd configuration of the Clemenceau skull that later was to tempt the caricaturists of two continents.

When the son went to study medicine in Paris the father went along to install him in the rue de l'Estrapade, near the Pantheon. Every year he made a pilgrimage to see him, going with the young man to the museums, the theatres, the libraries and losing no chance to imbue the son with his own burning spirit of patriotism and hatred of social injustices.

In the old gentleman's later days he was a witty and charming companion—to those who could gain access to his fine old home in l'Aubraie. "He recounted as well as a Balzac or a Maupassant the manners and customs of the peasants," says M. Geffroy, "for while he had retired from practice in Nantes he was still a country doctor and he knew the country folk profoundly well."

The old home was surrounded by a foss, and the proprietor used to recount that he was standing on the little bridge that crossed it when news came of the battle of Waterloo and its outcome. He was 5 years old then.

He loved his lands, loved the country. And he was a kindly landlord. Sometimes it was suggested to him that it might be well to scrutinize a little more closely some of the accounts submitted to him by the farmers. He would listen "with a heavy ear," and reply, "Well, what would you? They've kept us alive for eighty years now."

There is another story of the old man:

A peasant sought him out, seeking to buy a young tree set out in the middle of a field.

"Well, look it over," said the squire.

The peasant did so, carefully and minutely.

"I'll leave it to you," went on the old gentleman. "You set the price. Whatever you say it's worth you may have it for. Let's hear your estimate."

The peasant looked the tree over again.

"It isn't worth anything," said the peasant.

"I'm a man of my word. That which is worth nothing, take for nothing."

And he forced the shamefaced peasant to take the tree on those terms.

M. Geffroy went to see him one day, "I want to invite you to my funeral," said the old man suddenly. He was right. He died soon afterward, July 23, 1837, at the age of 83.