

# Trying to be Human in New York is a Problem



By O.O. McIntyre

I sprang from home-spun people, who believed in the Bible, had faith in the soil and loved their farms and villages. It appears I am the only wanderer. All my cousins are farmers or live in small towns. And at heart I'm the veriest rube in Manhattan.

The nature of my calling has tossed me among people of all sorts. I rub elbows with all conditions of life. It seems to me that the biggest problem that faces the New Yorker is merely to be human.

Just this morning on Thirty-eighth street I met a boyhood friend of mine. We used to go camping on Racoon creek and once we had to bury our clothes because we came too close to a strange cat—distinctly not a mallee.

He has lived in New York eight months. He had a worried look. He had invited some neighbors to dinner and the play. He discovered that he could not secure seats for any of the big hits. And so instead of taking

people. The breach now is too wide between art and life.

At luncheon a few days ago I sat next to a man who used to grubstake with me on Park Row. We were always about one jump ahead of the sheriff. We smoked each other's cigars and exchange neckties for certain functions. He has written several plays—two are a hit.

He was talking with a bob haired girl who wore hoot owl glasses. She is one who insists, though married, on preserving her maiden name. No one knows her anyway. It doesn't matter.

My friend of the old days was saying: "The influence of Cozzine and the experiments of Picasso—"

He got no further. I asked him to please pass the cheese and then reminded him of the time we got put out of Beefsteak Dolan's for being disorderly. I know our friendship is smashed. But I nailed a four-flush.

And the crudity of the films—there is a high topic for intellectual brows



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them to a celestial morality or futtily play, he was compelled to take them to a vaudeville show.

### Miserably Unhappy.

The poor boy felt disgraced. All of them would enjoy vaudeville more. Yet so great is the fear of not impressing one's neighbors that he was living in terror. His work would suffer and he and his wife would both be so miserably unhappy.

There is a young producer in town who came out of Kansas—an earnest, sincere, fine fellow. He started New York with his first play; it ran a year and made him a fortune. I don't know what has happened, but he has suddenly gone in for high-browism and is producing freak plays that even the critics confess they do not understand. Of course, he will wake up in time. But it is typical of a phase that keeps New York from being a real human city.

If a young man or young woman writes a successful book in New York something happens to him or her. There is a young man in particular. He was once a breezy, fine fellow. Success has made him posour. He likes to appear a languid creature of a decadent civilization. He looks at life through dark glasses—and sits in a detached way in Washington Square cafes sipping surreptitious absinthe.

### Plain Food.

Of course, he is a plain fool. In a small town they would yank him off his pedestal in a jiffy. They'd have him hunting snipes.

Conversation of almost any New York gathering is becoming merely name driven—a driving effort to impress the other fellow. Last night I washed into a gathering that was discussing art in the near east. They were actually thrilling to artistic activities in such unfamiliar countries as Siquia, Bahama and Bulgaria.

I began to talk about Goldberg, Herriman, Briggs, Webster and Tad. And eyes were lifted in supercilious decision. I'm growing stubborn, however. The complications of Cuban men nothing in my life. Neither do those of Paulson. The show-bizder paintings, I think, are atrocious. And while many doors opened to me are going to be closed. I'm going to speak right out at meeting. I've been bored for the last time discussing topics that I know nothing about with people that know less.

I have never seen a play that interested me at the Theatre Guild or the Provincetown Players—with the one exception of "Empress Jones." The work of the negro actor is that was splendid. Eugene O'Neill doesn't write me any more than Lincoln J. Carter would write me for producing plays today. I don't imagine he excites me any other people either, if they were truthful.

I prefer the poems of Edgar Guest to John Dos Passos and I think Dr. Frank Crane now and then is inspirational.

ing. One would think that a person who goes to the movies is only half-educated and quarter-cultivated.

Chinese porcelains are beautiful. I know as much about them as the puzzle editor of the Sandpiper, Iowa, Star. The Kang-She or the Sam-Lee porcelains may mean a lot to some folks, but they are less than nothing in my life. Because I am not versed in Chinese porcelains there is no reason why I should be the object of stony stares. Certainly it is no disgrace.

I can do a match trick that one of the greatest patrons of modern art cannot perform. But I am not at all puffed about it. In fact, I'm democratic and very easy to meet.

### Over His Head.

Expressionism in the theater, too, is something that is way over my head. I have never felt the impulse to reach beyond the limits of realism. A stage Irishman in green whiskers who slaps his flapping pantalooned partner over the head with a bladder always extracts the gurgling hilarity.

It is more real to me than Ethel Barrymore talking as if she has a mouth full of oysters. I prefer the plays of Don Marquis, Sammy Shipman and Gene Buck to those of Ibsen, Strindberg, Tchekov and Wedekind. I can make nothing of the symbol. And the horribly actual dramas with their sexual smut leave me cold.

All of these things appall the New Yorker. And, of course, I'm quite hopeless. But at least I'm honest in my convictions.

It would be difficult to convince me that a neighborly home life is not more thoroughly enjoyed by all those present than those stilted studio sessions where brilliant sophistries are attempted by morons.

I'm off the mental wizards, the intellectual screwdrivers, enchanters, succubi, incubi, insurance-brokers and the like. I want to mingle more with people who "saucer" their coffee, read Harold Well Wright and wouldn't know the Odyssey if it jumped up in their laps.

I'm going to knock off work this afternoon—skip the exhibit of a color exhibit of a French color—and go around the corner and play rummy with Mike McKans, who laments in an apartment house.

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### Teacher Gives Pointers.

Popple Bluff, Mo., Nov. 18.—"Be kind, but firm" is the recipe for the control of children offered by Miss. M. C. W. Williamson, of this city, known to more than 2,000 school children who have been enrolled in her classes during the last 24 years.

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Rockford, Ill., Nov. 18.—"When the disease of arrested tuberculosis will positively cure itself through proper diet and correct living," declares a report filed at the conclusion of a six-week fast made here. The report said there were 219 cases in this city and that the most susceptible and dangerous age is from 21 to 25 years.

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