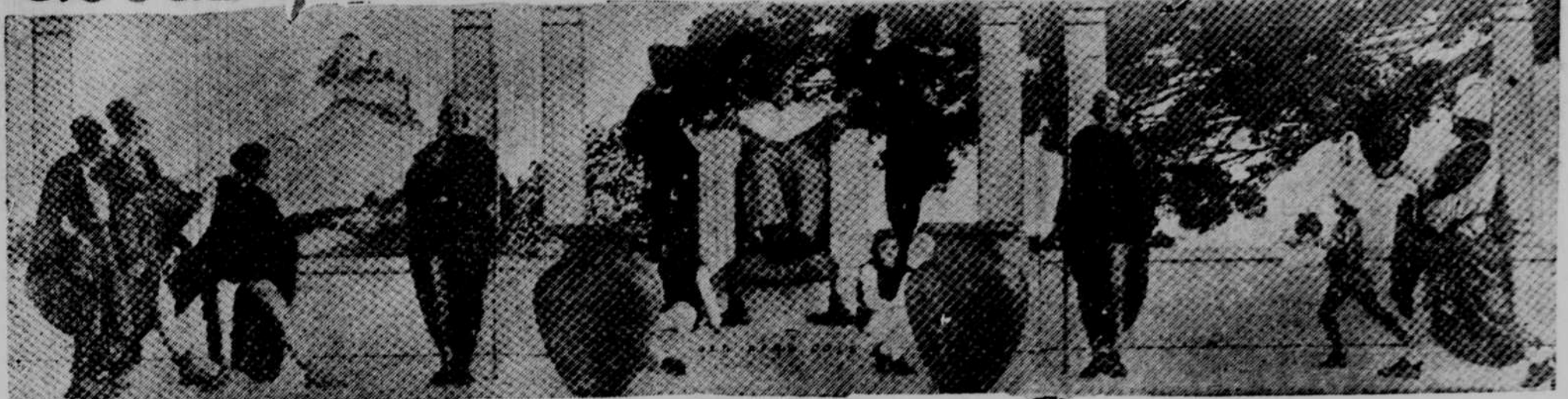


Good Bye Forever to New York's Gay White Way



Maxfield Parrish's painting, "Old King Cole," which hung behind the Hotel Knickerbocker bar in pre-Volstead days and formed one of Broadway's most admired wonders

Remember me to Herald Square; Tell all the boys on Forty-second street That I will soon be there.

So sang George M. Cohan in what many regretful Americans cannot help regarding as the "good, old days." But the Broadway of which Mr. Cohan and hundreds of other song writers have so enthusiastically sung—the gay white way, that was known from one end of the world to the other as the place of unending joyous light and laughter—will soon be a thing of the past.

Already it is nothing but a dull, drab shadow of its former brilliant self. And with every day seeing more of its bright lights dimmed, more of its joyous jazz stilled, more of its famous palaces of pleasure closing their doors, the time when it will be merely a prosaically busy street—differing only in size from the Broadways of dozens of other cities—cannot be far distant.

It's goodbye forever to New York's gay white way, the thoroughfare that for more than a score of years has vied with the boulevards of Paris as the place where anybody with the price could find at any hour of night or day any form of amusement that the pleasure seeking mind of man ever devised.

The street that never knew when morning came has been unable to survive the pall which national prohibition has cast upon it. Its laughter is being choked, its radiance clouded, its dancing feet paralyzed.

Impartial observers regard the transformation of Broadway from an international playground into a humdrum street of stores and theaters, dime museums and cafeterias as one of the most significant results of the passage of the 18th amendment has yet produced.

On the memorable night before the Volstead act went into effect an elderly man stood in the cafe of the Hotel Knickerbocker, facing Maxfield Parrish's glowing canvas of Old King Cole that stretched the whole length of the rich mahogany bar and formed one of the gay white way's most admired wonders.

He was a man whose name almost every reader of this page would recognize—a man who has passed the most of a lifetime on Broadway or within easy reach of it and who knows the life there as well as he knows his own right hand.

As he lifted his cocktail glass to his lips he turned to the young friend who was joining him in a drink and said:

"Keep your eyes and ears open tonight. You will never know Broadway again as it is now."

The young man look up incredulously. For a second he was almost tempted to think the cocktail had gone to his friend's head. It seemed so nonsensical to think that anything, even a constitutional amendment, could dull the brightness of the Gay White Way or chill its high spirits.

And who, at that moment and in that place, could have thought differently?

It was the height of the cocktail hour and the cafe was filled with a well-dressed, cheerful throng. Behind the bar deft, white-aproned men worked as if they faced an eternity of concocting delectable drinks.

From the grillroom, where youth and beauty were already beginning to gather for their nightly revels, came the strains of a gypsy orchestra's dreamy waltz music. And in the street outside the tide of light-hearted humanity was swelling toward the flood it would not reach until long after the clocks had tolled midnight.

But the young man who stood at the Knickerbocker bar that evening has lived to see how true his elderly friend's prophecy was. Before another 24 hours had passed he could see the beginnings of the great change that was coming over the Gay White Way, and each day since then has shown him a Broadway less and less like the Broadway of other days.

At the cocktail hour the next afternoon the Knickerbocker cafe was a strangely forlorn place—silent and deserted save for a little group of workmen busy taking down the Parrish masterpiece to carry away to the country estate of the hotel's owner.

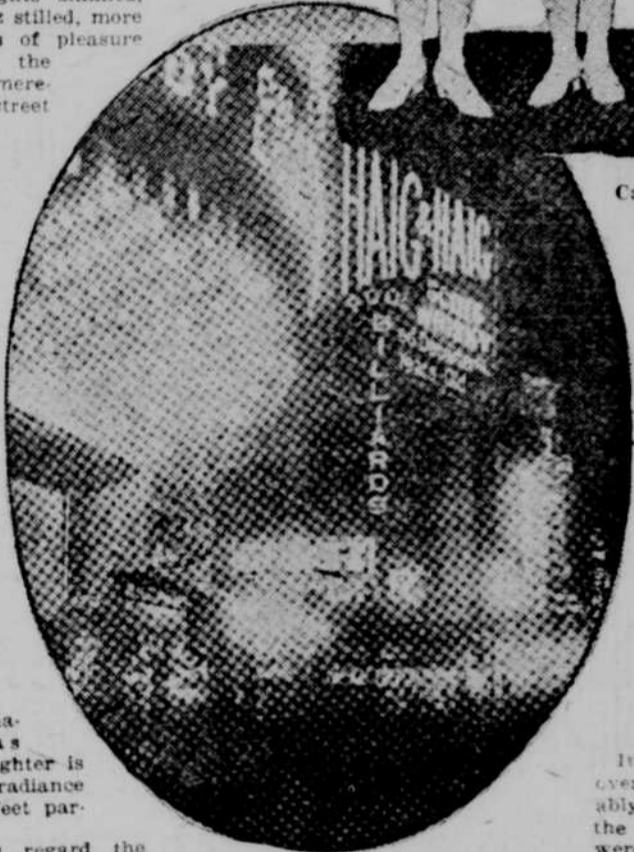
The scores of other hotels which crowd Broadway and the adjoining streets had the same story to tell. The luxurious cafes and bars where thousands of New Yorkers and visitors to the city had been in the habit of gathering at this hour every day to lay their plans for the evening's pleasure were empty alike of bartenders, waiters and customers.

The closing of these well-known



Cabaret performers at Murray's Roman Gardens restaurant, whose doors may be locked by prohibition officials

At the left, a night view of Broadway in days when it was no crime for the name of a certain well known beverage to sparkle among the bright lights.



In the cafe of the Waldorf-Astoria over whose massive bar has probably flowed enough alcohol to float the United States navy, carpenters were already busy with preparations for the installation of the soda fountain and lunch counters which prohibition demanded.

Only in the cabarets and the lobster palaces and the homes of jazz did life make any pretense of going on as before. The proprietors of these places made a brave show of trying to make themselves believe prohibition could never transform Broadway. They even spent many thousands of dollars on new furnishings and decorations and more expensive troupes of professional dancers.

But it was no use. It seems there is no surviving the suffocating influence prohibition has thrown over the life of the once Gay White Way.

The famous Rector's, Churchill's and the Hotel Claridge, all landmarks of the Times Square district, were the first to give up the losing struggle. Then came the closing of Reisenweber's Paradise cafe under an injunction secured by the prohibition enforcement officials.

Shanley's was among the next to go—one of the oldest of the lobster palaces and one that for years had been filled to capacity every night from twilight to dawn.

And now comes the announcement from the prohibition enforcement officials that they are preparing to close by injunction the following of the few remaining cabarets and jazz palaces on Broadway:

Murray's Roman Gardens, the fashionable Little Club, where Evan Burrows Fontaine has been one of the entertainers; the Knickerbocker grill, the Ringside, and the Club Royale, Gypsyland and the Three Kings restaurant.

The closing of these well-known



Evan Fontaine, whom prohibition has left without a cabaret to dance in.

and long flourishing places is sure to be followed by that of scores of others less prominent. When this is accomplished the thousands who crowd Broadway's theaters every night will have no place to go after the performance is over except to sedate hotel dining rooms and the cafeterias and the one-arm lunch rooms.

With no jazz or cabarets to distract their attention from the cares of life, they will be able to snatch a bite to eat and get home to bed in short order. By midnight Broadway, which once used to be just beginning to wake up at that hour, should be almost as quiet and deserted as any small town's main street.

Old King Cole was a merry old soul,
And a merry old soul was he;
He called for his pipe and he called for his bowl,
And he called for his fiddlers three—

But, when the jovial, ruddy-faced old monarch found the best he could get in that bowl was water or unfermented grape juice he promptly stepped down from his throne and vanished into obscurity, along with other familiar figures of the days when Broadway was one of the world's favorite playgrounds.

Below, the famous Waldorf-Astoria cafe before it was turned into a soda water and lunch room. Over this massive bar is believed to have flowed enough alcohol to float the United States navy.

A young woman from the west who has always been a loyal supporter of prohibition recently made her first visit to New York and expressed surprise at finding Broadway not half the lively place she had expected it to be. Her hosts explained that it was due to the pall cast by prohibition. "Oh, well," said she, "the people still have those wonderful electric signs to enjoy."

But the chances are that they will not have even those for very long.

The value of an electric sign depends on the number of people who see it, and the size of the night crowds on Broadway is steadily growing less and less.

When the cabarets and jazz palaces were in full blast for 10 or 12 hours every night a sign was sure of being seen by

thousands of pairs of eyes almost as long as darkness prevailed. But with the cabarets closed

and the theater crowds going home around midnight, one can readily see how greatly the pulling power of the signs is reduced and how many advertisers may hesitate to bear the heavy expense of maintaining them.

Perhaps this would be a fitting finale to the tragedy of New York's Broadway—to have all the sparkling electric signs that once made it a real fairyland suddenly cease to shine and leave the street to darkness and the regretful memories of those who can recall what the Gay White Way was like when it sparkled with wine bubbles, diamonds and merry eyes and rang with music, laughter and dancing feet.

Earnest supporters of prohibition point to the transformation of Broadway as evidence that New York is being dried up—that the law is being enforced in the city where it was expected to encounter the greatest difficulties.

But men and women who frequent Broadway have a different story to tell. They say the floods of wines, liquors and other alcoholic beverages are almost as abundant as before and that no one with the price need go long thirsty.

What makes Broadway seem dry, they explain, is that the drinking, instead of being done as formerly in the publicity of brilliantly lighted cafes, restaurants and cabarets, is now done in the secrecy of basement "blind tigers," hotel rooms and saloons masquerading as clubs.

Whether Broadway is dry or wet, it is certainly no longer the Gay White Way of other days. The lure that made it the joyous rallying place for the world's noisier pleasure-seekers seems to be gone forever.