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HARRY N. RUSSELL, Head Master, Kearney, Neb.

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## CENTER OF OUR CONTINENT

Longacre Square, Which Everyone Visits Some Time.

## GREATEST SIGHTS IN OLD GOTHAM

Little Patch of Manhattan Where There Are Scores of Theaters, Clubs, Famous Restaurants, Big Hotels and Crowds.

NEW YORK, Dec. 18.—In a little book called "A Summer in New York," written six or seven years ago, the author has a young lady from the west write home of an adventure with her city cousin, thus: "Will you take me to a place called Long Acre square. It is a part of Broadway which looks as if it had been struck by an earthquake, a landslide and a blizzard all at once. We climbed a pile of rocks so high that the automobiles which tried to run up down had to give it up, and then Cousin Will began like the man who explained the views in the panorama: "Here you see what the span of a few brief moons is destined to be to the known world what the Place de la Concorde, Paris, now is to Europe—its center. Aye, the center of gayety, of art, of literature, drama, of civilization in all its moods. In the near future here we shall find transportation unequalled, views unsurpassed, climate glorious, society various, fresh eggs and milk in abundance, theaters, hotels, polky shows, cab stands, waxtrains in red and yellow, fresh every hour. Here stands caravansaries to house an army, temples of Theseus to seat a city full, repositories of painters' inspirations, of sculptors' dreams, will wall the clifflike sides of the broadening lane we love as Broadway."

The author should be in fact he is proud to see with what a prophetic understanding he wrote of Long Acre as he writes now when it was the most hopelessly torn up clutter of a place in New York and land, for the most part, with ramshackle buildings. If not then, certainly a few years before it was the dreariest place at night to be found on the island of Manhattan.

## Prophecy Game True.

The whimsically worded forecast of the Acre has more than come true. There are more theaters, hotels, restaurants and clubs in the neighborhood than even were seen by the author's prophetic eye, and if the old Acre is not yet the center of the world, by the general consent of the world it certainly is to America, including

Canada and Mexico and most of South America, what the Place de la Concorde is to Europe, the center of a continent.

Long Acre square is not very long; it is more than an acre and it is not square, yet that is its name, beloved by its habitues, and no laws of the state or ordinances of aldermen can change it. The space to which the name applies is that irregular widening of Broadway as that thoroughfare make its slow crossing of Seventh avenue, where the two combine at Forty-third street, to their separation at Forty-seventh street, only four blocks in length, and at no point much wider than many broad village streets.

But Long Acre district, as distinguished from the square, is more extensive, beginning at Broadway and Thirty-eighth street and spreading for about half a mile to Fifth avenue on the east and Eighth avenue on the west. Within that compact little patch of Manhattan there are, to be exact, twenty-one first-class theaters, about the same number of clubs, among them some of the finest and most exclusive in the city; America's most famous restaurants, including Delmonico's, Sherry's, Shantley's, Rector's, Churchill's, Harvey's and the restaurants of the Hotel Astor and Knickerbocker.

## Hotels by the Dozen.

There are not less than a dozen hotels, such as the Algonquin, Iroquois, Seymour, Royaton, Woodstock, any of which twenty years ago would be observed for its great size and elegance. There are literally hundreds of apartment houses of every grade of excellence; there are art studios where artists paint and studios where people of no visible means of support seem to exist in comfort and even luxury, and there are furnished room houses where people sometimes go hungry. It is even said that there other kinds whereof nearly all who know the Acre are familiar—except the police.

But one mentions such sorts for the value of contrast; the characteristic of the Acre is gayety, light, laughter, good dressing, feeding, drinking and good fellowship, and people will crawl into its corners and snare there they fall to diminish the general tone of the Acre, which is exceedingly lively—not dead at all.

Before consideration is given to the activities of the Acre which have in so short a time made it the best known spot in America, the most written about, the Mecca not only of the stranger in New York, but of all New York as well, a bit of a stroll about the district will help to an understanding of the mighty forces, social, professional and business, which converge in the Acre itself. Take, first, the two short blocks running east from the center of the Acre, Forty-fourth street.

## Some Features of the Square.

At the corner of the Acre is the Criterion theater and a few steps toward Fifth avenue one comes to two little French restaurants as unlike anything on the Acre itself as may be, yet of the Acre, too. And then some little hotels, such as the Hotel Royal, home of notably prosperous showgirls, and of some who have been, as for instance, Mrs. Harry Thaw.

A little further is that surprising Walters' club, in size and appointment equal to many of the old aristocratic clubs. Almost opposite is the fine club house of the Alpha Delta Phi society, and a few steps further the Lamba, oldest of American players' clubs and an offspring of a still older Lamba of London. Opposite that is the Hudson theater and just beyond the Hotel Gerard, build when that block was almost out in the country and surprised to find itself now in such lively company.

Then, on the same side of the street, is Belasco's Stuyvesant theater, where Belasco's fellow San Franciscoan, David Warfield, has made fame and fortune. Beyond that, but still west of Sixth avenue, is the famous entrance of Burns', with its small paneled windows, its costly lace curtained window seats, looking like some old English inn of the quietest and sedatest class. Oh, Burns!

Opposite you see an empty brown-stone residence, and as an empty building in the Acre district is a novelty, you inquire

the reason and learn that it is being converted into an extension of the Army and Navy club, whose main building is on Forty-third street.

## Around the Hippodrome.

Crossing Sixth avenue, one comes to the block of Forty-fourth street which, until a few years ago, was a block almost entirely of stables, beginning with the big stables of the Sixth avenue horse car line, where the great Hippodrome now stands—and that is a part of the Acre district now, as is the rest of the wonderful block, formerly stables, which one strolls along to reach Fifth avenue.

On the north side of the street, opposite the side entrance of the Hippodrome, is Henri's, the most Parisian little restaurant in town, beloved of ladies lunching alone. Then, on the same side, following the big hotels—Algonquin, Iroquois, Seymour; the New York Yacht club with its granite front, in reproduction of an ancient warship; the City club, large, sedate, but said to contain one of the best cellars in town, one may be very fussy about municipal reform and also about the age and character of one's wines at the same time; and the Harvard club, severe almost in its simplicity of architecture, yet they do say that when the score of the recent football game was posted there—but this is not the reason for our stroll. Further east on the same side is the Berkeley theater of various art attempts—and others, not all art—and, strangely located, a very fashionable girls' school.

On the other side of that wonderful block, chief feeder of the Acre, the south side, is the Hotel Royaton, with its quite amazing variety of private dining rooms, the somberly vast library and club of the Bar association, the Yale club, the Racquet club extension and the home of the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen, founded in 1776, but newly housed; and at the corner of the avenue, Sherry's.

Across the avenue as one reaches the eastward of the Acre district is Delmonico's and the Day and Night bank, and, of course, the Acre of all places in the world would be the busiest a bank which never closes its doors.

## Where the Highborn Lunch.

Returning to the Acre by Forty-third street one passes the Century club—the deans of all the learned professional lunch well there—the Racquet and the Army and Navy clubs, the Royal and the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen, and of these all but the Century extend through the block to Forty-fourth street. Finally the Hotel Woodstock, on the edge of the Acre, and then a stroll across—your don't stroll, but hop, skip and jump to escape the gasoline cars—a start on another short block along Theater Row; that is west on Forty-second street for one block only, but in that one block you pass Hammerstein's, Belasco's, the Lyric, the News Amsterdam, the Liberty, Hackett's and the American, seven theaters in one block, with Harvey's restaurant, the East association, and the Theatre Royal; and, if you turn out from playhouses in that one block every night.

On the southern spur of the Acre, along Broadway itself, are other theaters, the Broadway, Metropolitan, Empire, Casino, Knickerbocker, and just off the main street East side, the new playhouse, and, by Maxine Elliott's new playhouse, and, by the way, there is to be an Annie Russell playhouse in West Forty-fourth street, just off the Acre.

In the Acre itself are the New York, the Criterion, the Astor and a little way to the east the Lyceum theater. They may not all have been mentioned here, but including the Annie Russell, there seem to be twenty-two theaters nightly pouring their crowds into the Acre.

## Center of the Show World.

What this means as to the daytime in the Acre only those who have closely observed the phenomenon realize. In the Acre is the business center of the theatrical world in America. Referring now to those who have to do with the business of the theater, "the front of the house," their number is surprising, and they may all be seen in the Acre during some part of the day, at lunch time particularly.

A business so varied, employing so many millions of capital, so many thousands of people, with the companies scattered throughout the whole of the United States and much of Europe, has to be elaborately organized in its administrative end. Owners and managers of theaters, owners and managers of companies, producers, stage managers, costumers, employment agencies, play brokers, authors, composers, scene painters, must all be in close touch, for there are many and sudden shifts to be provided for. A failure at some point requires the changing of several routes, the organization of a new company, the shifting of players, the rehearsal of a play sooner than planned or even the production of new costumes, new scenery; and the army of business men, of writers, artists and others concerned must meet, as they do almost daily to learn of new or changed intentions.

By common consent these meetings, many of them are at some club or commonly in some restaurant in the Acre. This is the business end of it, the practical work by practical men whose efforts bring the many thousands of pleasure seekers to the Acre and make its more characteristic life.

## When the Acre Lights Up.

That pleasant life begins when the Acre takes on its first brilliance, when the fronts and roofs of a score of theaters and restaurants are lit with hundreds of electric lights, when dozens of hotels and restaurants are lit with bright lights and attractive illuminations, when the highway of the Acre is alive with hundreds of brilliantly lighted cabs, automobiles, street cars running lither and thither like countless distracted glowworms.

Then the Acre takes on its show aspect, the restaurants fill with gay crowds of diners as the streets begin to fill with hundreds of players hurrying from their earlier dinners to prepare for their nightly entertainment of those thousands of more deliberate diners. But the hurrying business of the day, the eager preparation of the early evening are all as nothing in comparison to the scenes after the theaters are closed and the players and audiences rush into the Acre for its night gayety.

Then begins a confusing scurrying of cabs and automobiles, a quick filling of the popular restaurants, cafes, refreshment places, college inns, chop houses and the famous lobster palaces of the district. The Bar association, the Lyceum, the Normandy, the Knickerbocker and the Normandy closed and all its furnishings were sold.

## One at Low Prices.

But some out-of-town men saw an opening—and out-of-town men have seen about all the good New York hotel openings—and returned under new management, and has a college inn basement which accommodates a younger set of joyous temperament who have not the price demanded in the Acre itself.

In the newest Acre supper resort, the grill room, the white room and the various other rooms of the Hotel Knickerbocker, the professional life of the Acre is most represented just now after the theaters close. There, rather than at any of the

other places, you are likely to see supping Miss Barbers, Miss Talarferro, Miss Loftus, Miss Scheff and a score more women stars, when in town, generally patronize the grill room. In the white room Oscar Hammerstein usually takes supper-dinner, it really is, though midnight—at a corner of the white room, all alone.

## Playrights Are Social.

The playwrights seem to be social and not jealous, for you may see so many of them gathered that tables are joined to accommodate the number. Paul Armstrong, James Forbes, Henry Blossom, George Broadhurst and George Ade may be seen in one group and the artists foregather, too, for Will Fisher—it's "Fisher girls" now, not Gibson girls—Archie Gunn, Eddie Unit, who designs and paints scenery; Will Barnes, who designs the stunning costumes of the stage, and Hy Mayor, who draws funny things in English, French and German, hobnob at one table. Victor Herbert, who really is Irish, in spite of his slight German accent, comes into a grill room, a white room or any other kind of a supper place like a breeze, wafers about from table to table until he has said "Howdy" to half the people in the place before ordering a modest repeat impartially composed of French, American, German and Irish dishes. If George Colman and Sam Harris are not there for supper they surely are for lunch, for they belong to a "Knick" lunch club, and every member must stand for the price of the lunch and a tip for the waiter, whether he is present or not.

Other managers drop in with friends—George Tyler, who looks ever so much more as if he had just come ashore from a private yacht than coming from counting the house at half a dozen theaters; Frederic Thompson, so absurdly young looking that strangers have to be reassured that it is the genuine Frederic; "the" Shuberts, suave, handboxy looking, and now and then Mayer Livingston, little known by the public, but who is said to be the financial manager of the theater syndicate.

## Homes for the Actors.

Few actors, the reader observes, perhaps? No, the stars and leading men have their own clubs, the Players and the Lamba, and the latter claims most of those who sup in the Acre district. The others, the lesser men players, do not sup at such places as have been considered, for obvious reasons, or an obvious reason—the price.

The lesser women of the profession sup numerously in the high-priced places of the Acre, generally in the company of non-professional men. They sup well, too, and their presence lends liveliness to many of the places.

Leaving the "Knick" and going north in the Acre, Shantley's and Rector's are next in line. The managers of these two famous places will assert, with some heat perhaps, that there is a distinction between the class of patrons of their respective places. There may be; to the casual observer those who sup there are some alike. In Shantley's perhaps there are more New Yorkers, strangers being more likely to favor Rector's, but those strangers are people of about the same class apparently in their native Pittsburgh, Boston, Philadelphia or wherever as the natives in the other shop.

Rector's patrons is a division of classes, so old patrons assert, which is physically marked by a certain aisle. North of that the ushers seat those they size up as of a certain financial or social standing, south of that aisle is another class financially or socially. It would, of course, be unfair to tell which, according to the ushers, are the goats and which the sheep. Perhaps it isn't so at all, but the belief that it is cannot be disturbed in the minds of those who hold it.

## Look for Good Food.

At the many supper rooms of the Acre the patrons are not so much of the class who frequent the Acre at that hour because it is the Acre. They are more, rather, people who are in search of good food, drink, music and agreeable surroundings

and take it where they find it, in the Acre or elsewhere.

Not that the Acre is without Acrean characteristics, so to speak. Attractive show girls may be seen there in quiet company and wholly on their good behavior. Also David Belasco, David Warfield and others of the "Belasco crowd" seem to find satisfactory nourishment in the victuals of the Astor and may be seen there now and then with some of the Belasco women stars or leading women.

Yet further north, in the heart of the Acre, is Churchill's, a restaurant of a class more popular, or at least more frequent, than now. Society may be a little less conventional there than elsewhere; but it is none the less fashionable in part at least, for if you haunt the Acre much you discover that the same individuals seen earlier in the night at Acre resorts are supping again at Churchill's later in the night.

Patrons circulate about more freely, they drink to each other with something more moist than eyes, from table to table. The late men patronize the place freely; men who have been working late find a welcome relaxation there, and even some women may go to Churchill's with a friend later, that is, after passing the shank of the evening, from midnight to, say, 1 or 2 o'clock in other restaurants.

## Late at Night.

And at about that hour, that is, sometime after midnight, another class of restaurants in the Acre are crowded with patrons; restaurants where some kind of meal may be had for 10 cents, and where the patrons are glad to have the price. They have seen better days most of them, at least brighter days, and no doubt many have dined where a \$50 supper was as common as a 10-cent supper is where fortune sends them to sup now.

The edges of the district retain their faithful patrons; over on Sixth avenue in Jack's and Burns', tables are crowded with men and women who assert that only there can they get the kind of supper they like. None of the newer fancy dishes of the Acre, itself, for them.

And still you note, as you did when as a very young man you first supped at Jack's or Burns', that the waiters all look

like pugilists in good training—as they should. In Jack's there is a peculiar rule: A woman may not leave her table and visit at another table. You may say that this is unconstituted, and threaten to write to Mr. Roosevelt about it, but that rule, and, as has been remarked, the visit, among the tables, no matter how socially inclined she may be, no matter how much she may desire to cross to another table than her own and ask Besse where she got her new hat, or what her route will be when they go on tour. A rule is a rule, and, as has been remarked, the waiters all look well trained.

## When the Lights Go Out.

The glaring theater lights are out, the big signs of colored electric globes which implore you when you drink water to drink Somebody's, or if beer or whiskey are yet on your mind, be sure to consider the merits of So-and-so's. The Acre is not so bright with light, the milk wagons begin to crawl slowly up Broadway, the street cars run with an appreciable interval between, the latest of the evening extras have been called in and the earliest of the morning papers are out, but there is not much change in the amount of human activity in the Acre.

The astonishing number of cabs it takes to convey the woman residents of the district still makes the Acre dangerous crossing, the crowds are thinned some in some of the supper rooms, but the little thrushism is just as thick as ever—a little less, perhaps. The Acre never sleeps; even as the latest of the supper parties break up the day also breaks and calls upon thousands to begin the activities of the next day, just as other thousands are closing the activities of the day before.

## Vells that Please the Grocer.

"Those vells the women folks are wearing, all nalled down tight under their chins, are a great boon for us all right, all right," said an East End grocer. "Women, you know, are the greatest people on earth to come in and sample things. They'll take a taste of this and a taste of that while you're wrapping up some for a month or so. They'll tell you they've eaten up about a nickel's worth of stuff. We can't say anything to a woman, particularly those that are good customers. Now we don't have to, I haven't seen a woman taste anything in the store for a month or so. Those vells are put on so tight that the only way they can sample anything would be to take it through a straw."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

# PIANOS



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## The Midwest Life

There appeared a few days ago in the "More or Less Permanent" column of the State Journal a short article, the first sentence of which read: "It is the proper thing in Lincoln now to ask for Lincoln-made flour." Of course it is. Why not? If it is the proper thing in Lincoln to buy Lincoln-made flour, and in Omaha to buy Omaha-made flour, why is it not the proper thing for all Nebraska to buy life insurance in a Nebraska company? Here is a business which above all others can be successfully developed in this state. The Midwest Life offers life insurance to the men and women of Nebraska at as low a premium rate as any other old-line company, east or west. Why send premiums to eastern companies, some of which now have assets which amount to more than the assessed valuation of the whole state of Nebraska? If it is necessary for them to get bigger, let the people of the state where they are organized do the swelling of their assets. The premiums paid to The Midwest Life remain right here in Nebraska. Home Office, 197 O St.; Omaha Agency, room 22 Board of Trade Building.

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