# A Philistine in Bohemia

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George Washington, with his right arm up-raised, sits his iron horse at the lower corner of Union Square, forever signaling the Broadway cars to stop as they round the curve into Fourteenth Street. But the cars buzz on, heedless, as they do at the beck of a private citizen, and the great General must feel, unless his nerves are iron, that rapid transit gloria mundi.

Should the General raise his left hand as he has raised his right it would point to a quarter of the city that forms a haven for the oppressed and suppressed of foreign lands. In the cause of national or personal freedom they have found a refuge here, and the patriot who made it for them sits his steed, overlooking their district, while he listens through his left car to vaudeville that caricatures the posterity of his proteges. Italy, Poland, the former Spanish possessions and the polyglot tribes of Austria-Hun- gary have spilled here a thick lather of their effervescent sons. In the eccentric cafes and lodging-houses of the vicinity they hover over their native wines and political secrets. The colony changes with much frequency. Faces disappear from the haunts to be replaced by others. Whither do these uneasy birds flit? For half of the answer observe carefully the suave foreign air and foreign courtesy of the next waiter who serves your table d’hote. For the other half, perhaps if the barber shops had tongues (and who will dispute it?) they could tell their share.

Titles are as plentiful as finger rings among these transitory exiles. For lack of proper exploitation a stock of titled goods large enough to supply the trade of upper Fifth Avenue is here condemned to a mere pushcart traffic. The new-world landlords who entertain these offshoots of nobility are not dazzled by coronets and crests. They have doughnuts to sell instead of daughters. With them it is a serious matter of trading in flour and sugar instead of pearl powder and bonbons.

These assertions are deemed fitting as an introduction to the tale, which is of plebeians and contains no one with even the ghost of a title.

Katy Dempsey’s mother kept a furnished-room house in this oasis of the aliens. The business was not profitable. If the two scraped together enough to meet the landlord’s agent on rent day and negotiate for the ingredients of a daily Irish stew they called it success. Often the stew lacked both meat and potatoes. Sometimes it became as bad as con-somme’ with music.

In this mouldy old house Katy waxed plump and pert and wholesome and as beautiful and freckled as a tiger lily. She was the good fairy who was guilty of placing the damp clean towels and cracked pitchers of freshly laundered Croton in the lodgers’ rooms.

You are informed (by virtue of the privileges of astronomical discovery) that the star lodger’s name was Mr. Brunelli. His wearing a yellow tie and pay-ing his rent promptly distinguished him from the other lodgers. His raiment was splendid, his com-plexion olive, his, mustache fierce, his manners a prince’s, his rings and pins as magnificent as those of a traveling dentist.

He had breakfast served in his room, and he ate it in a red dressing gown with green tassels. He left the house at noon and returned at midnight. Those were mysterious hours, but there was nothing my-terious about Mrs. Dempsey’s lodgers except the things that were not mysterious. One of Mr. Kip-ling’s poems is addressed to “Ye who hold the unwritten clue to all save all unwritten thing.” The same “readers” are invited to tackle the foregoing assertion.

Mr. Brunelli, being impressionable and a Latin, fell to conjugating the verb “amare,” with Katy in the objective case, though not because of antipathy. She talked it over with her mother.

“Sure, I like him,” said Katy. “He’s more politeness than twinty candidates for Alderman, and lie makes me feel like a queen whin he walks at me side. But what is he, I dinno? I’ve me suspicions. The marnin’ll coom whin he’ll throt out the picture av his baronial halls and ax to have the week’s rint hung up in the ice chist along wid all the rist of ‘em.”

“‘Tis true,” admitted Mrs. Dempsey, “that he seems to be a sort iv a Dago, and too coolchured in his spache for a rale gentleman. But ye may be mis-judgin’ him. Ye should niver suspect any wan of bein’ of noble descint that pays cash and pathronizes the laundry rig’lar.”

“He’s the same tbricks of spakin’ and blarneyin’ wid his hands,” sighed Katy, “as the Frinch noble-man at Mrs. Toole’s that ran away wid Mr. Toole’s Sunday pants and left the photograph of the Bastile, his grandfather’s chat-taw, as security for tin weeks’ rint.”

Mr. Brunelli continued his calorific wooing. Katy continued to hesitate. One day he asked her out to dine and she felt that a denouement was in the air. While they are on their way, with Katy in her best muslin, you must take as an entr’acte a brief peep at New York’s Bohemia.

‘Tonio’s restaurant is in Bohemia. The very location of it is secret. If you wish to know where it is ask the first person you meet. He will tell you in a whisper. ‘Tonio discountenances custom; he keeps his house-front black and forbidding; he gives you a pretty bad dinner; he locks his door at the dining hour; but he knows spaghetti as the boardinghouse knows cold veal; and — he has deposited many dollars in a certain Banco di — something with many gold vowels in the name on its windows.

To this restaurant Mr. Brunelli conducted Katy. The house was dark and the shades were lowered; but Mr. Brunelli touched an electric button by the basement door, and they were admitted.

Along a long, dark, narrow hallway they went and then through a shining and spotless kitchen that opened directly upon a back yard.

The walls of houses hemmed three sides of the yard; a high, board fence, surrounded by cats, the other. A wash of clothes was suspended high upon a line stretched from diagonal corners. Those were property clothes, and were never taken in by ‘Tonio. They were there that wits with defective pronuncia-tion might make puns in connection with the ragout.

A dozen and a half little tables set upon the bare ground were crowded with Bohemia-hunters, who flocked there because ‘Tonio pretended not to want them and pretended to give them a good dinner. There was a sprinkling of real Bohemians present who came for a change because they were tired of the real Bohemia, and a smart shower of the men who originate the bright sayings of Congressmen and the little nephew of the well-known general passen-ger agent of the Evansville and Terre Haute Railroad Company.

Here is a bon mot that was manufactured at ‘Tonio’s:

“A dinner at ‘Tonio’s,” said a Bohemian, “always amounts to twice the price that is asked for it.”

Let us assume that an accommodating voice inquires:

“How so?”

“The dinner costs you 40 cents; you give 10 cents to the waiter, and it makes you feel like 30 cents.”

Most of the diners were confirmed table d’hoters — gastronomic adventuress, forever seeking the El Do-rado of a good claret, and consistently coming to grief in California.

Mr. Brunelli escorted Katy to a little table em-bowered with shrubbery in tubs, and asked her to excuse him for a while.

Katy sat, enchanted by a scene so brilliant to her. The grand ladies, in splendid dresses and plumes and sparkling rings; the fine gentlemen who laughed so loudly, the cries of “Garsong! ” and “We, mon-seer,” and “Hello, Mame! ” that distinguish Bohemia; the lively chatter, the cigarette smoke, the interchange of bright smiles and eye-glances — all this display and magnificence overpowered the daughter of Mrs. Dempsey and held her motionless.

Mr. Brunelli stepped into the yard and seemed to spread his smile and bow over the entire company. And everywhere there was a great clapping of bands and a few cries of “Bravo! ” and “‘Tonio! ‘Tonio!” whatever those words might mean. Ladies waved their napkins at him, gentlemen almost twisted their necks off, trying to catch his nod.

When the ovation was concluded Mr. Brunelli, with a final bow, stepped nimbly into the kitchen and flung off his coat and waistcoat.

“Flaherty, the nimblest “garsong” among the waiters, had been assigned to the special service of Katy. She was a little faint from hunger, for the Irish stew on the Dempsey table had been particularly weak that day. Delicious odors from unknown dishes tantalized her. And Flaherty began to bring to her table course after course of ambrosial food that the gods might have pronounced excellent.

But even in the midst of her Lucullian repast Katy laid down her knife and fork. Her heart sank as lead, and a tear fell upon her filet mignon. Her haunting suspicions of the star lodger arose again, fourfold. Thus courted and admired and smiled upon by that fashionable and gracious assembly, what else could Mr. Brunelli be but one of those dazzling titled patricians, glorious of name but shy of rent money, concerning whom experience had made her wise? With a sense of his ineligibility growing within her there was mingled a torturing conviction that his personality was becoming more pleasing to her day by day. And why had he left her to dine alone?

But here he was coming again, now coatless, his snowy shirt-sleeves rolled high above his Jeffries-onian elbows, a white yachting cap perched upon his jetty curls.

“‘Tonio! ‘Tonio!” shouted many, and “The spaghetti! The spaghetti!” shouted the rest.

Never at ‘Tonio’s did a waiter dare to serve a dish of spaghetti until ‘Tonio came to test it, to prove the sauce and add the needful dash of seasoning that gave it perfection.

From table to table moved ‘Tonio, like a prince in his palace, greeting his guests. White, jewelled bands signalled him from every side.

A glass of wine with this one and that, smiles for all, a jest and repartee for any that might challenge — truly few princes could be so agreeable a host! And what artist could ask for further appreciation of his handiwork? Katy did not know that the proudest consummation of a New Yorker’s ambition is to shake bands with a spaghetti chef or to receive a nod from a Broadway head-waiter.

At last the company thinned, leaving’ but a few couples and quartettes lingering over new wine and old stories. And then came Mr. Brunelli to Katy’s secluded table, and drew a chair close to hers.

Katy smiled at him dreamily. She was eating the last spoonful of a raspberry roll with Burgundy sauce.

“You have seen!” said Mr. Brunelli, laying one hand upon his collar bone. “I am Antonio Brunelli! Yes; I am the great ‘Tonio! You have not suspect that! I loave you, Katy, and you shall marry with me. Is it not so? Call me ‘Antonio,’ and say that you will be mine.”

Katy’s head drooped to the shoulder that was now freed from all suspicion of having received the knightly accolade.

“Oh, Andy,” she sighed, “this is great! Sure, I’ll marry wid ye. But why didn’t ye tell me ye was the cook? I was near turnin’ ye down for bein’ one of thim foreign counts!”