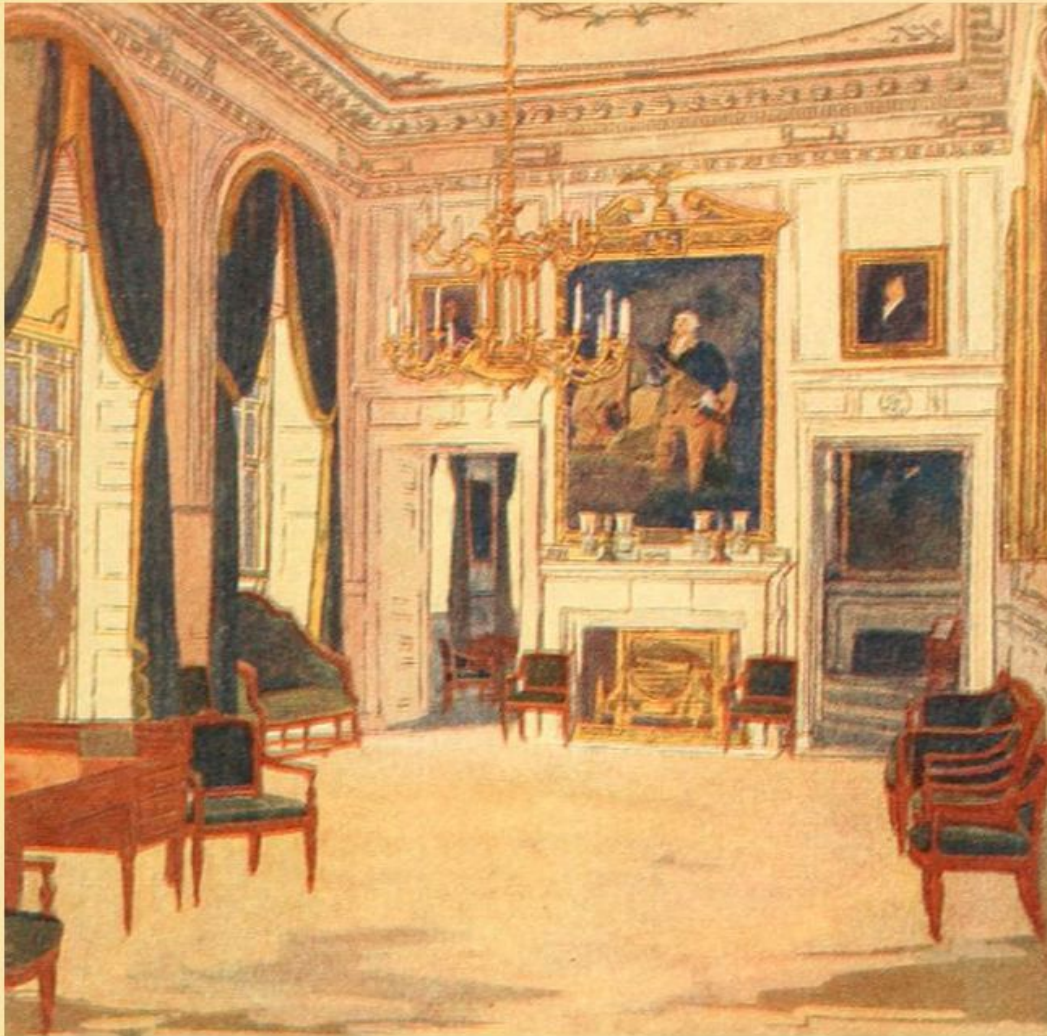


ROBERT SHACKLETON



THE BOOK OF NEW YORK

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CHAPTER I - A City Young And Old

FINE old Frenchman that he was, when he came back over the ocean to us a half century after his youthful advent, Lafayette appreciated to the full the finely delightful qualities which he recognized in the character of our principal city. "I shall love New York," he said; "Monsieur, I shall love New York so well that I may never be able to get away from it!" And this expresses the keynote of New York, its magnetic quality, the way in which it draws, attracts, allures. He who writes of New York should take the city seriously, yet not too seriously. The city is so great, so mighty, so tremendous, in population, in wealth, in power, in achievements, that any tendency to overestimate should be checked, that every claim to importance should be carefully weighed, that the subtle danger of over-admiration should be avoided. That excellent New York poet of long ago, Fitz-Greene Halleck, felt and expressed all this when he wrote:

"And on our City Hall a Justice stands:
A neater form was never made of board;
Holding majestically in her hands
A pair of steelyards and a wooden sword,
And looking down with complaisant civility —
Emblem of dignity and durability."

But when, with every tendency to yield over-admiration or over-importance fully in hand, one looks at New York seriously, soberly, with intent to see only what is fairly to be seen, it is seen as a city of immense and wide interest.

Far more than any other city, whether of the past or of the present. New York is one that is both young and old.

Insistently young, vociferously young, obviously young, it at the same time displays all the qualities of maturity. It is a city of today, yet also a city of three centuries.

This marks it, among cities, more than does any other of its myriad characteristics. There are the vivid, vital evidences of youth, the fire of youth, the strength and vigor and crudity and ruthlessness and inconstancy of youth; it is a city as new and as crude as the newest of mining towns and of as gay an irresponsibility: yet it is also a city with the sadness, the earnestness, the gravity, the solidity, the balance, the impressiveness, of age. Rightly seen, its chasmed streets are but wrinkles cut by the years.

Looking at the tens of thousands of new buildings, the miles and miles of new-made thoroughfares, it is the very newest of all cities: yet it is also one that possesses the salt and the savor of time. One needs but remember that in old St. Mark's Church there lies buried a man who, of powerful influence on the life and development of this, his beloved town, was ruler here while the long-ago Thirty Years' War was raging, was born when Elizabeth was Queen of England and while Shakespeare was splendidly in mid-career.

In everything. New York is the city that is different. When considering Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, San Francisco, it is customary to speak of what their people think or are or do, but no one ever speaks thus of the people of New York, but only of the city itself. For the city is so much greater than its people! With New York, the city makes the people; elsewhere, the people make the city.

Always it has been a restless city; and Adrian Block, who built the first handful of houses here, over three hundred years ago, and here built and launched the first vessel built in America, named that vessel of Manhattan the Unrest, as if with a touch of inspired insight. And Verazzano, who was here long before Block; coming, indeed, in the reign and in the service of him of "the longest nose in history," as the

New Yorker, Henry James, described that picturesque king, Francis the First; also saw Manhattan with the eye of prophecy, for he set down in his report that the island seemed to be a place of wealth! It seemed to him a place of gold, of jewels, of furs — and it is still a place of gold and of jewels and of furs.

Never was there any other city that so rapidly and ruthlessly tears down and throws away. It would seem as if the motto of New York were "Never save for tomorrow what can be destroyed today!" It builds swiftly, makes immense advances swiftly, but as swiftly destroys what it has built: dwelling houses and business buildings that have gone up like magic disappear like magic, in single gaps, in rows, in streets, in four-square blocks. Nothing, however new and costly, is permitted to stand for a moment in the path of public or private improvement. For new thoroughfares, for burrowing subways, for bridge approaches, massed houses vanish; and other buildings, in number innumerable, vanish that there may arise triumphant business structures or apartment houses such as elsewhere the world has never seen. The story, cheerfully typical, is told, of a visitor of note, that he was driven uptown, in the morning, to be toasted and greeted and to meet some of the city's best, and that in the afternoon he was taken back over the same route that he might see what changes had meanwhile taken place!

When New York is referred to, whether by New Yorkers themselves or by others, Manhattan Island, or the Borough of Manhattan as it is now officially known, is usually meant, although there are also the Boroughs of Brooklyn, of Queens, of Richmond, of the Bronx, within the limits of the Greater City. In all, it is estimated that now the population is more than that of London; that Greater New York leads the world!

Manhattan is an Indian word, Americanized. As, at one end of the State, the softly lilting "Neeawgawrah," with its

accent on syllables first and third, was harshly changed to "Nyaggaruh, " so, at this end of the State, the "Manattan" of the Indians, without an "h," and prettily pronounced, as it was, with its accent on syllable one, was harshly transformed in accent and given a "hat"! — with about the same effect indeed, as that of putting an American hat on an Indian in his native dress. There are still a few Indians in the region of the James River, in Virginia, where John Smith and Pocahontas and Powhatan played their drama of life and death, and I have heard them speak of their great chief of the past, with the easy ripple, accenting syllable one, of "Powattan," quite discarding the "hat," as Manhattan Indians would similarly do with their own name, were there any Manhattan Indians existent.

Never in history has there been such a magnificent city. It draws the great and the little; the masters of finance, of railroads and manufacturing, the leaders in law and surgery and authorship and art, and millions of little folk as well; while the rest of the country looks on jealously, feels jealous, is jealous — but New York, when she thinks of them at all, knows that the very men who talk depreciatingly of her are getting ready to come to her by the next train.

More and more of the wealth of the world centers here. In spite of misconceptions which come from extravagant statements, whether made seriously or as witticisms, New York is a safe city, a city to which capital gladly comes and where the average individual lives a protected and happy life. Naturally and inevitably, there is temptation where there is such vastness of wealth; naturally, there is crime; but on the whole, for those who wish safety, safety comes as a matter of course.

It is a city which is more criticized, by its own people and by others, than any other city in the world was ever criticized. At the same time it is essentially so great a city that not only is every New Yorker proud of being a New

Yorker, but every other American, away from his own home town, no matter what that town may be or how dearly he may honor it, is pridefully titillated if taken for a New Yorker, for the very name carries with it the implication of alertness, of power, of ability. "Whatever is, is wrong," is what people love to say of New York, yet all, no matter how reluctantly, or with what misgivings, admire its might.

That it should develop skyward is held against the city as one of the most common reproaches; yet this development was but meeting an exigence with sagacity. Narrowed closely between rivers and bay, and thus barred from the usual development of the usual city, sidewise and outward, this unusual city found its natural development to be up toward the sky; whereupon, toward the sky it went, with thousands of people in the offices of single structures, and with banks of elevators of from five to thirty or so; and with much of positive beauty, and not only costliness, in many of these wonderful office buildings. The streets between these dizzy heights are like roads through narrow defiles between mountains. I have seen, in the Alps, the white summits, far above me, aglow with the splendor of sunset, while the road itself was darkened by the gloom of evening, and I have often thought of this when, looking up from some canyon street of New York, where the shadows have already gathered, I have seen, far above, white towers still glowing with the sunset glory of purple and gold.

Fired by the greatness of New York, Fernando Wood, its mayor, in 1861 proposed in a message to the Common Council that it should secede from the Union and become independent. He looked upon the secession of the South as certain, and was anxious that New York emulate and outdo the glories of the long-ago free cities of Germany. New York, imperially alone, was to be the wonder of the world! — alone, except for Staten Island and Brooklyn, which it was to annex and then to take the name of Tri-Insula! But

with the firing on Fort Sumter the proposal of Mayor Wood was instantly thrust aside and forgotten.

New York is a kaleidoscopic city, an active city, a city with the touch and tang of leadership, a city that has always welcomed. Some other cities receive even the most worthwhile newcomer with hesitation and doubt. But make yourself a New Yorker, declare yourself a New Yorker, and New York accepts you, and is glad to have you, and is the more glad the more you are worth the having. New York welcomes and appraises, whereas in some of the other Eastern cities you will never really be accepted, no matter how wonderful, how able, how brilliant, you may be! If you would advance in art, in letters, in business, New York treats you as one of her children; if you would be a social climber, it is not necessary to have a family tree to climb by, as it is in Boston and Philadelphia.

From the first. New York has been cosmopolitanly planned. From the first it has stood for broad tolerance, and has welcomed all nationalities and all beliefs. As early as 1643, so it has been stated, there were people of eighteen nationalities here.

The Dutch set a broad example in a day of narrowness by declaring that all religious sects should be treated alike. The city, then a tiny place, gave shelter both to Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson when they fled from New England persecution. Jesuit Fathers, fleeing from the Indians, were welcomed and given free transportation to Europe. Hebrews, with wonderful tolerance for that early day, were admitted to citizenship in 1657 — and that it was really so wonderful is not without a humorous suggestion in view of the vast number of Hebrews who at the present day take New York citizenship as a matter of course. Intended victims marked for death by the witchcraft delusion fled here for safety, and found it; for the New York clergy, while those of New England were flaming with the terrible zeal of religious persecution, gravely resolved that "a good name

obtained by a good life should not be lost by spectral accusation."

A city of amenities, this great city of New York! And it is typical of the influence of the place that when a letter from Washington to his wife is intercepted by the British and sent to General Howe, he courteously, from his headquarters in New York, sends it back to Washington, expressing himself as happy to return it without the least attempt having been made to discover its contents. And some time after this, we find Washington sending his compliments to General Howe in New York and doing himself the pleasure to return a dog, picked up by some American troops and having the name of General Howe on the collar. And that Washington himself, who began his Presidential career in New York, owned dogs of such names as Juno, and Mopsey and Truelove, would alone point out that he himself was a man of amenities, a very human and a very likable man, indeed.

The very air of New York exhilarates. This is no fancy, but a very literal fact. There is something extraordinarily brisk, active, inspiring about it. And it is not only New Yorkers who notice this, but visitors as well. "I have," wrote Thackeray, "an irrepressible longing to be in motion. There is some electric influence in the air and the sun here which we don't experience on our side of the globe. People can't sit still; they must keep moving. I want to dash into the street now. "

And the mention of Thackeray is remindful that New York is a city which always presents the possibilities of adventure of one kind or another; for that great novelist had, in New York, an actual adventure, such as his great rival Dickens fancied in imagination as happening to Pickwick! For Thackeray wrote home that, after a dinner at Delmonico's, he went to his hotel and began undressing, only to be paralyzed by a woman's voice in the alcove — for

he had gone into a second-floor room instead of his own on the third! "I tremble when I think of it," he writes.

Always one comes back to the idea of change, as a characteristic of New York; and the very seal of the city is curiously typical of this. On it there still stands an Indian with his bow — no wonder Englishmen come to New York to hunt Indians on Broadway! (Before passing this off as entirely a joke it is well to remember that one so recent as Ellen Terry, the actress, has set down in her memoirs that when first she sailed for New York, from England, it was with the expectation of finding the men wearing red flannel shirts and bowie knives!) And still there stands, on the other side of the shield, an old-time sailor, in knee-breeches, with a lead-line in his hand and at his shoulder a double cross-staff such as was long ago used in taking observations, and such as, indeed, was used by Hudson himself as he entered the harbor of what was to become known as New York.

Between the Indian and the knee-breeched sailor is a windmill. A few windmills far out on Long Island have continued to represent, into this twentieth century, this picturesque feature of the past, but it is difficult to realize that windmills were ever a feature of city life, here on Manhattan! But it was necessary to have some kind of power for mills, and there was no stream on the island with current sufficient, and so it was that windmills naturally came. Tradition still hazily tells of the first one as standing just west of Broadway, and of the amazement of the Indians — something like, one may presume, the amazement of sophisticated New Yorkers who, wandering so far afield as toward the eastern end of Long Island, gaze in amazement at these lingering relics of the past.

There was a time when windmills stood on Maiden Lane, and on Cortlandt Street and Park Row, and at other places, and they show prominently in early prints of the city.

The barrels on the seal are not rum barrels, but innocent flour barrels, for an important industry of early New York was the milling of flour. And the two beavers! It is long since beavers were on Manhattan Island, even in the shape of finished skins. In early days, however, the island was thronged with beavers and a little beaver stream gave name to Beaver Street; even as early as 1626 one ship carried from Manhattan Island to Amsterdam over seven thousand beaver skins, besides the skins of otter, mink and other animals; and by 1671 the province was furnishing over eighty thousand beaver skins annually.

Immediately above the shield is an eagle; and it is certainly long since an eagle fluttered down Broadway! In fact, one sees that nothing on the shield is typical of the present day; that these things, so typical of the past, have gone.

Mrs. Trollope, mother of the famous Anthony, came over to America, almost a century ago, and wrote a book of the most narrow and unfair animadversions, but in one respect she was enthusiastic about America; she immensely admired New York.

"My imagination is incapable of conceiving anything of the kind more beautiful than the harbor of New York," she wrote. "I think New York one of the finest cities I ever saw. Situated on an island, which I think it will one day cover, it rises, like Venice, from the sea, and like that fairest of cities in the days of her glory receives into its lap tribute of all the riches of the earth,"

Lord Bacon, whose scientific mind loved to revel in details, enumerated among the things that ought to be seen by a traveler, the courts of princes, the courts of justice in session, churches, walls, fortifications and harbors, antiquities and ruins, libraries, colleges, gardens, warehouses, horsemanship and fencing, the training of soldiers, plays, treasuries of jewels and robes, and in conclusion, "whatsoever is memorable": and it seems as if

one who would write of New York should place himself, so far as possible, in the position of Bacon's traveler, and try to see the city from the traveler's standpoint.

And one likes to remember the words of Washington Irving when, in 1832, he returned from Europe and was proudly welcomed by his city: "Is this not," he said, "a city by which one may be proud to be received as a son! "

CHAPTER II - The Great Indifferent City

FROM early years the greatness and future growth of New York were recognized; and over a century ago the streets of the city were mapped out, in detail, for almost the entire extent of Manhattan Island.

Never was there a more amusing misconception than the often-repeated one that the north side of the City Hall was made of cheaper material than the front because no one was ever expected to live north of it and that therefore it would never be seen, for before the City Hall was built the growth of the city northward was recognized.

Commissioners, appointed to map out the streets for the population of the future, worked on the task from 1807 to 1811, and produced the most amazing prophecy in the annals of any city. For, after all, New York was then but small. It was lusty and vigorous and confident, but in well-nigh two centuries of existence had not extended thickly for much more than a mile from the Battery. And here came commissioners who, with the eye of faith, saw the coming development and planned out streets for miles and miles to the northward, over land that was then but sparsely dotted with tiny villages and scattered farmhouses, with here and there a mansion. They actually mapped out the plan of the city to 155th Street, inspired by the basic belief of the time; they were prophets inspired by the sense of popular confidence.

But they were not poetical prophets; they discerned the future, but they met the situation prosaically. They did not attempt charm in their plan; there was, with the streets, to be naught of circles and crescents such as those of Edinburgh or Bath, naught of great and ordered vistas or of

avenues radiating from a central point, as one sees in Paris or as had even then been begun in Washington. They saw, in the great slim water-girdled city of the future, a problem to be met, not prettily but prosaically; there was frankly to be a triumph of utilitarianism.

They themselves realized this. They discussed circles and stars and ovals and radiants, but then set down, stolidly, that "The commissioners could not but bear in mind that a city is to be composed principally of the habitations of men, and that straight-sided and right-angled houses are the most cheap to build and the most convenient to live in." And all the artists and art commissions of New York have never been able to get over the result of their work.

Pick up the map which they made, back before the War of 1812, and you will think that you are looking at a map of today, unless you notice the date, and unless you notice no Central Park, and that Madison Square was to be much larger than it was finally made, for their plan contemplated the extent of Madison as from 23rd to 34th Streets and from Third Avenue to Seventh, to give ample space for a reservoir of water and for the gathering and training of troops.

They felt dubious about developing above 155th Street, where the lower stretch of the Harlem, with its marshy flats, was reached. In time, they thought, a still farther district might be built up, but that, as they said, might not be for centuries. But so far as 155th Street it seemed to them a very practical proposition; and this at a time when the city had not seriously extended beyond City Hall Park and when little Greenwich Village was a distant and separate place!

They worried somewhat about how their plan, concretely expressing the city's vague dream, would be taken; some, they said, would expect them to chart streets even beyond 155th; to others, "It may be a source of merriment that the commissioners have provided space for a greater

population than is collected at any spot on this side of China"; but they bravely set forth their ideas, grid-ironing the coming city with streets all at right-angles.

Practical men though they prided themselves on being, they made a most unpractical blunder: a mistake which has proved to be both awkward and costly. For they ought to have known that the proper way to develop New York for the street traffic of the future was the exact contrary of their plan: that instead of having a few avenues running lengthwise and most of the streets running crosswise, it should have been seen, from the shape of the island, that the future traffic would need more highways and nearer together, lengthwise, north and south, and not so many near together, leading east and west. The gridiron should have been turned sidewise. If there had been more north and south highways, the natural direction of the city's main traffic, the congestion problem would have been avoided, and New York would not have had to meet and face, as it is still meeting and facing, an immense expense in the opening of more north and south thoroughfares.

"When the city came to the matter of laying out Central Park, a half century later — for thus rapidly had the city grown, as if to justify the early confidence! — men of an unutilitarian type were chosen for the work, and they succeeded beautifully. They were a small board, consisting of the Mayor, two other city officials, and three citizens; and what a three those citizens were! — for they were William Cullen Bryant the poet, and George Bancroft the historian, and Washington Irving! And the plans that they made and set in motion, or which they in their noble spirit inspired landscape artists to dream of, were of a kind so superb as to give New York one of the finest parks of any city in the world, with wealth of water and rocks, and diversified heights and levels, and greenery.

New York has quite forgotten that it ever possessed Bancroft; it has forgotten that it possessed Bryant,

although he lived for some time at 24 West 16th Street, and for a longer period at nearby Roslyn, on Long Island. And that it has not forgotten Irving is an exception to its usual indifferent way.

New York's way of ignoring even her greatest folk, and her readiness to be thoroughly critical when she does notice them, has had a marked effect in lessening the value of her historical and literary associations in the public mind. Alexander Hamilton and Washington Irving have been the two that have come nearest to receiving her whole-souled and continued admiration, but even these have not been given adulation approaching the adulation customary in such a city as Boston. In Boston, a man of ability has always expected to be taken very seriously, and has always taken himself very seriously. Boston, from the first, not content with its really great men and really great events, that it nobly honors, has also exploited even the tiniest happenings in its history, and has pinnacleed even second-rate and third-rate men, especially politicians and authors. New York, going to the other extreme, has taken its even notable events and people very lightly. Always, its tendency is to think of the future rather than of the past.

Before the Revolutionary clash began. New York had expressed defiance of England — but after the war was over forgot to talk about it! In January of 1770, long before the conflict at Lexington, even two months before the so-called Boston Massacre, men of New York skirmished with the British on Golden Hill, in the vicinity of John and William Streets, following disputes about taxes and imposts and the alternate setting up and throwing down of the Liberty Pole, and here on Golden Hill several lives were thus early lost: but when the war was over New York made nothing of this brave event in its history! Yet it was a notable thing, that fight on Golden Hill. It was not a thing to forget. For they were the British regulars that the New

Yorkers fought, and the blood shed was probably the first bloodshed in the War of the Revolution.

Washington Irving was born in this Golden Hill region, in a house, long since destroyed, on William Street, between John and Fulton. And it is owing, in considerable degree, to Irving that New York has refused to take itself seriously; although on the other hand it may be said that Irving was in great degree only reflecting, in this, the spirit of his native town.

For Irving wrote a history of New York: it was a humorous book, a Knickerbocker history, as he called it, thus coining that delightful word, which was promptly adopted as meaning old families of Dutch ancestry, and then also as meaning short trousers, after Cruikshank delightfully illustrated the volume with short-breeched Dutchmen. The history pleasantly made light of dignitaries of the past, and its success did much to intensify the general tendency of the city toward a sort of chaffing attitude, although Irving wrote only of the early Dutch regime.

His humorous viewpoint, his refusal to take dignitaries seriously, was adopted in the general viewpoint toward any sort of dignity or distinction. Dutchmen seemed funny to Irving, and he expatiated on that feature, emphasizing the size and quantity of their breeches, and the length of their pipes, and their general deliberateness of conduct. He might, had he wished, have written seriously enough of even the Dutch; of their frightful slaughter, for the mere lust of killing, of a hundred or so friendly Indians who had sought shelter on Manhattan from war parties of Mohawks; he might have written with much gravity of the war that followed, and of the hiring of a certain New Englander, one Underhill, who had displayed such cold cruelty toward New England Indians that the Dutch eagerly paid him to come here to manage a massacre, near what is now Bedford, with the shooting or burning of some five hundred men,

women and children, without the loss of a single life among those who did the killing.

But Irving frankly laid stress on the light and humorous features of the Dutch and their times, and the humor was really there in plenty, and he made himself and New York famous with it, even abroad; Sir Walter Scott read his Knickerbocker book and from it prophesied Irving 's coming greatness, and greeted him as a friend and literary brother when he went to Abbotsford.

With that book, early in his career, Irving sounded the natural New York keynote of frivolousness toward the past, and helped to intensify it. It was easy to encourage indifference in the great growing indifferent city which, though at times ready to flare into enthusiasm, quickly forgets. And perhaps New York could not be the greatest exponent of the future if she permitted herself to think of the past.

Irving was quite capable, when he chose, of handling historical subjects with sober dignity, as in his life of Washington; and that he and Washington once met, and how they met, is among the prettiest of all the incidents of New York history.

Irving was born in the year which marked the close of the Revolution, 1783, and therefore his first name of Washington came naturally; and in 1789, Washington, then living in New York as President of the United States, was one day spoken to, in a shop, by a Scotch maid, who modestly called his attention to a little boy beside her, of whom she was in charge; for, recognizing Washington, the maid wished him to know that the lad had been given the name of Washington in his honor; whereupon the tall grave man put his hand on little Irving 's head and said a few simple words of good wishes; and one knows that this chance meeting must deeply have influenced Washington Irving throughout his entire life, and that, no matter how excellent a man he would in any case have been, it must

have aided in keeping him to standards of sweetness and honesty and kindness: and never was there a sweeter and kindlier career than that of Irving.

He is directly connected with New York City. He lived for a time in that immensely distinguished line of buildings, with great long front of huge Corinthian pillars, on Lafayette Street (once Lafayette Place), known as Colonnade Row, which had been named, at first, likewise in honor of Lafayette, La Grange Row. The Row has dwindled in recent years; it has become shorter and shorter by demolition and soon it must all vanish. Long ago it lost all atmosphere of fine living, yet here wealthy New Yorkers dwelt, and in one of the houses President Tyler married Julia Gardiner of Gardiner's Island, the bit of land just off shore out toward the end of Long Island which, granted two and a half centuries ago as Gardiner's Manor, has remained the only unbroken manor in the country, for its extent has been neither altered nor diminished since the original grant; and, an even stranger fact, it is still in possession of a lineal descendant of the first Gardiner. There was no modest shrinking from publicity at the Tyler-Gardiner wedding! It was, indeed, an example to the contrary; for after the ceremony the bride and groom were driven down Broadway behind four white horses to a waiting warship.

Still more closely associated with Irving than Colonnade Row is the house, still looking much as when he lived there, on Irving Place, at the corner of 17th Street. The surroundings, however, have greatly changed, for in Irving's day there was a great open space stretching off toward the East River. It is a smallish building of gray brick, three stories and a basement in height. Fronting on Irving Place are pleasant windows, with an iron balcony running the width of the house, and a slightly projective bay, of white wood supported on slender iron rods; the entrance to the house being by iron balustered steps of brown stone on the

17th Street side. In this house, and even more in his charming home of Sunnyside, up the Hudson, Irving delightfully met the finest folk of his day.

Literary fancies change; but much of what Irving wrote is still as fascinating to modern taste as when he wrote it. His "New York," however, makes, in large part, hard reading, and one wonders that it so delighted his period. It pleased giants as well as little folk. Not only was the general public delighted with it, and Scott delighted with it, but Dickens has recorded that, coming down from New Haven to New York by boat, he cut short a nap, so as not to miss seeing Hell Gate and the Hog's Back and other localities made famous by the Knickerbocker volume.

Dickens also admired the other work of Irving, that which is still so fresh and so altogether charming, and when, later, he came down the Hudson toward New York, he looked eagerly for all the localities of that delightful region, made famous by the writer whom everyone loved.

It is interesting to know that there was for a time a pleasant association between Irving and John Howard Payne, and that the two collaborated in the writing of a play called "Charles the Second," which has usually been ascribed to Payne alone, and which, after being acted in London, was presented in New York, in 1824, in the long ago vanished Park Theater, the fashionable theater of early New York, which seated twelve hundred, and was the resort of the best people of the time whenever an excellent play was given.

That the author of "Home, Sweet Home" was a New Yorker, born here in 1791, is another of the facts that New York has never greatly heeded.

Joseph Rodman Drake, who died in 1820 at the age of twenty-five, was a New Yorker who, like Irving, recognized in the Hudson River a pictorial subject. He wrote the lilting rhymes of the "Culprit Fay," which, although it made no

fixed impression in literature, was notable as an early American work.

And he did write one memorable and remembered thing, his " Ode to the American Flag, " with its ringing lines:

"When Freedom from her mountain height
Unfurl'd her standard to the air,
She tore the azure robe of night,
And set the stars of glory there! "

Drake also discovered and wrote about the beauties of the Bronx, long afterwards to be rediscovered by F. Hopkinson Smith; and it is fitting that the early poet should be buried in that region that he loved, in a little graveyard now included within a park that has been called by his name.

There was a Damon and Pythias friendship between Drake and another New Yorker, Fitz-Greene Halleck, both of whom were born in the same year and both of whom struggled together for literary fame; and the death of Drake gave the sorrowing Halleck the opportunity that he would only too gladly have missed, for he wrote, in memory of his friend, some never-to-be forgotten lines, simple and touching in their measured beauty:

" Green be the turf above thee,
Friend of my better days;
None knew thee but to love thee,
Nor named thee but to praise. "

Halleck also made other contributions to fame, among others the fiery lines beginning, "At midnight, in his guarded tent." Recently, picking up by mere chance a book of selections of poetry, published in New York in 1840, with its credit of this or that poem to Shelley or Shakespeare or Scott or whatever British writer it might be, I noticed, in

casually turning the pages, that "Marco Bozzaris" was there — but with the author's name quite omitted! He was American; he was a New Yorker; why should he be remembered or named!

Not only New York City, but the country in general, ought to give far more honor to our early authors than it is customary, except in the case of a very few, to give. Leaving an author's name off altogether, in a formal collection, is not usual, but it is very usual indeed to depreciate the entire early American literary school. Even such writers as did not do work that is to live forever, did at least aid in giving that atmosphere of literature and art without which no country can well produce artistic or literary masters.

There are New Yorkers who will not even glance at a place associated with Irving or Poe or Howells or Mark Twain or other American authors, who go obediently about, following guide or guidebook, picking out the home and the grave of this and that New England or Old England writer, even of such as can only fairly be credited with what may be called good literary intentions.

Edgar Allan Poe was long a New Yorker, but he was an unhappy New Yorker indeed. He could not, either as author or editor, sufficiently impress himself to secure practical returns. An unbelievably few dollars, was, as a general thing, the extent of his literary remuneration; a possible five or ten dollars always loomed large. For his "Raven," written when he was a New Yorker, he seems to have been paid the pitiful sum of ten dollars.

He lived in grinding poverty in various shadowily remembered New York localities, and toward the end far up in the Fordham district, and he was so often without money to pay the stage fare down into the city that he frequently walked the entire distance in lonely discouragement. Such walks as, at other times, he took for the sake of walking, were usually at night; and one evening, crossing alone on the footpath over the lofty aqueduct over the Harlem River

— a bridge which, seen from below and from a distance, is positively beautiful, with its row of tall and symmetrical arches — he noticed a brilliant star directly in front of him, whereupon there came to him the inspiration for the lines, with their haunting rhythm and swing, about the star-dials hinting of morn, their liquescent and nebulous luster, their bediamonded crescent. After all, one remembers that Poe's first and most definite standard of poetry was that it be musical.

The poor little Fordham cottage has been preserved, although not quite at the original spot; the city, so indifferent to Poe himself, has at least kept his cottage. His wife, poor thing, died there, hungry and cold; she used to try to keep warm in bed by cuddling her yellow cat against her bosom, but at last even a cat was not enough to sustain life. And Poe himself soon wandered away from this great indifferent city and at Baltimore somberly closed his sorrowful career.

It is a curious thing, in regard to New York's literary history, that a majority of its early notable leaders were poets. In such an eminently practical city as this, one would certainly have expected prose. Irving, indeed, wrote prose, but he was exceptional; and even his prose, until he was well on in his career, was of gay insouciance. Poets have continued to arise, novelists have here distinguished themselves, short-story writers have here done splendid work — but historians and philosophers have not greatly flourished in Manhattan soil.

It may be added, too, that New York long ago seized the literary scepter of the country and took to itself the most prominent publications and most of the publishing houses.

In the great and even vast number of authors who in course of time have come to call New York their home, it is hard to pick and choose. A man may, like Howells, write with skill and smoothness and publish book after book, only to find himself not precisely deemed among the few to be

marked for permanent fame. It is curious, and one may if he wishes deem it unfair, but so it is, that a score of thick novels may be thrust aside when there suddenly appears, let us say, a thin-volumed "Colonel Carter." And, too, Howells has always seemed to consider himself more of a Bostonian than a New Yorker; a New Yorker by stress of circumstance, but still a Bostonian by choice.

Henry James, too — well, he did admirable early work, but so promptly made and kept a resolve to live as much as possible on the other side of the Atlantic, even long before he formally became a British subject, that perhaps he, too, need not be looked upon as a New Yorker. One is tempted to think that the most interesting of his associations with his native city is the fact that, as a small boy, he saw Thackeray, when the great Englishman was a dinner guest at his first New York dinner, at the home of little Henry's father.

And perhaps the best, or at least the cleverest, commentary on the works of Henry James, intricate and involved as he allowed his style to become, with interminable length of sentences, was that of the witty New Yorker who announced that a new serial by Henry James was about to begin, and that the opening sentence was to be continued through six numbers.

At the time I write, Richard Harding Davis and F. Hopkinson Smith, both of them now dead, loom the most prominent as New York writers, or at least as the most prominent among those who have not only done distinguished work in broad fields but who also have best presented the character and the life of the city itself.

But this, probably enough, will not be permanent. Not so long ago, Crawford was deemed the most notable of this class. Before that, and especially as exponents of New York, came Bunner and Sidney Luska — but Sidney Luska is quite forgotten now, and Bunner, with all his bubbling cleverness, is with difficulty kept in mind. Still further back

there was Winthrop; now and then you will still hear some old-fashioned New Yorker speak of him; but Winthrop died in the Civil War, and somehow his work seemed to die then too; not entirely without reason, either, if one may judge from his inept description of delightful Washington Square, as "a dreary place, drearily surrounded by red brick houses with marble steps monstrous white, and blinds monstrous green."

F. Hopkinson Smith should be remembered, among other reasons, for so breezily pointing out that, in a New York apartment-house room without a chimney, it is quite possible to put both a fireplace and a chimney, and to have friends gather there in confabulative happiness in front of a blazing fire, the ideal of "four feet on a fender." And he loved to point out that even in the heart of New York there may be the gleam of old mahogany, there may be the shining glow of lights from old brass andirons, there may be a glorious sideboard, there may be the lovely blue of old china, there may be the silver sheen of ancient stately candlesticks.

To the very end of his long life he kept all the enthusiasm of youth. How everyone loves his Colonel Carter! I remember his telling me that in essentials he was picturing in this character his own father; and it touched him to know that he had made his father so loved. He was describing a real house, in that story, on West 10th Street, at what was 58 ¹/₂, behind 58, near Sixth Avenue, but only a trace of it now remains. And it is sorrowful to think that in this great indifferent city there may before long be only a trace of the fame of Hopkinson Smith himself.

That New York so rapidly forgets and so frequently ignores is quite typical of a deep-based trait: that is, that New York is a city entirely without self-consciousness; it is so sufficient unto itself as not to be sensitive in the least

about its dignity or its reputation, or to care what people think or say or write about it.

As a world center, it must needs be that New York is greater than any of its people; and it carries this feature to an extreme undreamed of in other world centers. The individual, no matter how towering, no matter for a time how dominant, finds his importance to be little compared with that of the city itself. It is a city which treats individuals as the ocean treats drops of water. New York does not, like other cities, claim great men; she expects great men to claim New York! And over and over again one notices how carelessly she forgets.

Already New York has practically forgotten that President Grant, up at 3 East 66th Street, wrote the greater part of his Memoirs, under immense financial and physical stress, with the shadow of death creeping over him. The city has quite forgotten that President Arthur died at 123 Lexington Avenue. Still more amazing is it that New York long ago quite forgot the birthplace of Roosevelt, although the unusual personality of the man and his having been President for two terms would, one should suppose, have kept the house an object of constant interest. As I write, it has just been destroyed; it was at 28 East 20th Street; and for a long time before its destruction it stood drearily unoccupied, though a restaurant had for a time been there, and it bore in its window an invitation, so unintentionally humorous as almost to be pathetic, to "Come in and eat where Roosevelt was born."

New York has quite forgotten that he of the famous Monroe Doctrine, President Monroe, came to New York toward the close of his life and died here in 1831: fittingly, too, on the Fourth of July, as with two other Presidents, Jefferson and John Adams.

His home here was an old house, still standing, at 63 Prince Street at the corner of Lafayette. It is a house of brick, once red but now weather-beaten to dreary