

**THE SUNDAY TIMES
LONDON, ENGLAND
12 JUNE 1932**

A BOHEMIAN

**"Laughing Torso." By Nina Hamnett.
(Constable. 15s.)**

There is probably no cult that has been more misunderstood than Bohemianism. It has been the refuge of the self-publicist and the insincere for many long years, and this has been rather hard on the true Bohemians, of which Miss Hamnett is one. For the true Bohemian is first and foremost an artist. That is the *sine que non*, after which his peculiarities are his own.

In general he has an insatiable hunger for life and a blissful superiority to physical comfort and the material future. If he has money he spends it. If he is down to his last penny or franc, "something will turn up," a picture will be sold, or a friend will generously return an ancient loan of 100 francs, which will still in Paris buy a respectable meal.

The true Bohemian is also a protestant against conventional civilization. Miss Hamnett's "Laughing Torso" (the meaning of which will be obvious to any sympathetic reader) begins with the protests of a small girl throwing things out of the window, and ends in unanxious curiosity at what a new exhibition in London will bring forth. Between these two episodes is crowded forty years of varied and kaleidoscopic life.

The Charmed Circle

The Bohemian circle, though variegated, is a closely allied clan. Once in, all in. Miss Hamnett numbers among her friends Marie Beerbohm, Vanessa Bell, James Joyce, Erik Satie, Modigliani, Stravinsky, Brzeska, Cocteau, Aleister Crowley, Lady Cunard, Diaghilev, Van Donger, Epstein, the Sitwells, Gide, George Moore, Sickert, Augustus John, Valentino, Iris Tree, and many others both named and unnamed (the latter probably recognizable to the clan).

Miss Hamnett has talked to W. H. Davies about the relative values of beer and public houses, sung nursery rhymes with

James Joyce, "the most respectable and old fashioned man I have ever met," and provided Georges Auric with several of the themes in the last act of "Les Matelots." She has starved in garrets and dined at luxurious restaurants. She has, we imagine, been extremely happy and extremely miserable, and has in either case been saved by her vital sense of humour.