

CLINICAL NOTES

BY H. L. MENCKEN AND GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

On Being Happy.—Happiness, as I have encountered it in this world, consists chiefly in getting no more than one wants and wanting no more than one can get. There is an obvious corollary: *unhappiness* consists (a) in wanting something that one can't get, or (b) in getting something that one doesn't want. The second form of this unhappiness is probably the more distressing. The man who goes to a party, drinks too much gin, and, on reaching his office the next day, finds a note indicating that he is engaged to a girl with beer-keg ankles—this man is obviously far more unhappy than the fellow who, mistaking a transient inebriety for love, offers himself and is rejected. The latter, of course, may suffer. His vanity has been affronted; even his dignity is compromised. But he has not suffered any serious and permanent damage. He can recover. So all through life. The thought that I haven't a million dollars seldom makes me unhappy, though I could use the money judiciously. But if I were informed tomorrow that I had become a grandfather or been awarded the Pulitzer Prize I'd be very much distressed, and my distress would continue, at least in retrospect, all the rest of my life.

The prudent man tries to mold his desires to the probabilities, or, at all events, to the possibilities. He puts away from him all thought of things that are clearly beyond him. Privately, I'd like to be the Shah of Persia, with the right to kill Christians at so much indemnity a head, but the yearning never makes me really unhappy, for I realize that my theology is a bar. It would be scarcely more absurd for me to want to be one of the Twelve Apostles—a longing which broke the heart

of the late Woodrow. But Woodrow was not alone: most politicians, I believe, are intensely unhappy men. The reason therefore lies in the fact that it is a sheer physical impossibility for any one of them to amass all the honors he craves. If he is an assemblyman he longs to be a congressman; if he is a congressman his eye is on the Senate; if he is in the Senate he is ridden all night by dreams of the White House.

Even in the White House there is no peace for a man so bewitched. The case of Woodrow I have mentioned. All the rest are just as unhappy. Think of Roosevelt. His last days were downright tragic. He wanted a third term, a fourth term, an *n*th term. The news that Woodrow was being cheered in the movie parlors cut him like a knife. Were he alive today, he would be envious of Coolidge. It seems incredible, but I believe it to be a fact. Coolidge is walled in by hordes of politicians who envy and hate him. What his own ambition is I don't know—probably to be a Wall Street lawyer. Whatever it is, it makes him unhappy.

That is, unless he is one of the rare men who know how to hold their desires in check. Perhaps he is, though his laugh is rather too sour to make it probable. Dr. Taft, I believe, belongs to the sublime and fortunate company. His laugh is magnificently hearty and innocent. All his life, even while he was in the White House, he was consumed by a desire to sit upon the bench of the Supreme Court. Today he is safely anchored there, in the very best seat, directly on the aisle. His notion of pleasure, I confess, is not mine. If I had to listen to lawyers five hours a day, it would cause me intense suffering; not even listen-

ing to bishops would be worse. But every man to his own poison!

God's House.—Far from getting weaker, it seems to me that the Christian church, if not the Christian religion, is yearly getting stronger and stronger. It is gaining this strength numerically not because of the doctrines it preaches, not because of the irresistible persuasiveness of its tenets of faith, and not because pagans are becoming honestly converted to it, but, very simply, because it has become increasingly, as year chases year, the fashion and the mode. The Christian church is thus succeeding on a large scale precisely as the Berlitz School's French course is succeeding on a smaller scale. Christianity has, in a manner of speaking, ceased in a measure to be a religion and has become a style. Just as the American, German and French male mammal has long aped the Englishman in the matter of dress and social deportment, so today are an increasing number of infidels, led chiefly by the Jews, aping the Christian in a hundred and one ways. And, since this aping is most convincingly to be negotiated from the inside looking out rather than from the outside looking in, it is the Christian church that has been the benefactor. Things have got to such a pass, indeed, that when a Christian clergyman today speaks from his pulpit the name of Jesus Christ, half of the congregation thinks that he is swearing.

Jack Ketch as Eugénist.—Has any historian ever noticed the salubrious effect, on the English character, of the frenzy for hanging that went on in England during the Eighteenth Century? When I say salubrious, of course, I mean in the purely social sense. At the end of the Seventeenth Century the Englishman was still one of the most turbulent and lawless of civilized men; at the beginning of the Nineteenth he was the most law-abiding. What worked the change in him? I believe that it was worked by the rope of Jack Ketch. During the Eighteenth Century the lawless strain

was simply choked out of the race. Perhaps a third of those in whose veins it ran were actually hanged; the rest were chased out of the British Isles, never to return. Some fled to Ireland, and revived the decaying Irish race; in practically all the Irish rebels of the past century there have been plain traces of English blood. Others went to the Dominions. Yet others came to the United States, and after helping to conquer the Western wilderness, begat the yeggmen, Prohibition agents, footpads, hijackers and other assassins of today.

The murder rate is very low in England, perhaps the lowest in the world. It is low because nearly all the potential ancestors of murderers were hanged or exiled in the Eighteenth Century. Why is it so high in the United States? Because the potential ancestors of murderers, in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries, were *not* hanged. And why did they escape? For two plain reasons. First, the existing government was too weak to track them down and execute them, especially in the West. Second, the qualities of daring and enterprise that went with their murderousness were so valuable that it was socially profitable to overlook their homicides. In other words, the job of occupying and organizing the vast domain of the new Republic was one that demanded the aid of men who, among other things, occasionally butchered their fellow men. The butchering had to be winked at in order to get their help. Thus the murder rate, on the frontier, rose to unprecedented heights, while the execution rate remained very low. Probably 100,000 men altogether were murdered in the territory west of the Ohio between 1776 and 1865; probably not 100 murderers were formally executed. When they were punished at all, it was by other murderers—and this left the strain unimpaired. The murder rate is vastly higher in America than in England today because vastly more Americans than Englishmen are the descendants of murderers or potential murderers.

Question Box.—Does it occur to those republican Frenchmen who protest against the election of a professional soldier as first president of the German republic that the first president of their own republic after the Commune was similarly a professional soldier? Does it occur to those super-republican Americanos who, following the French, bawl against the election of a military leader as first president of the German republic that the first president of their own republic was just such a military leader?

In the Matter of Criticism.—It is not criticism that the loudest yodelers against criticism object to, but the printing of criticism. Oral criticism, though it be exactly like the published criticism, you will find they don't in the least object to. It is criticism set down in black and white that disquiets them. The average man, called a *lausub* by another man, simply laughs it off with genial unconcern. But the moment the other man calls him a *lausub* in print, he gets hot under the collar.

The Point of View.—"As you look out of Shaw's window—or rather windows, for the one side of the room is all windows—you see on the left St. Paul's and . . . at your feet the slow-moving Thames sparsely dotted with floating craft, and the prim coat of verdure of the Victoria Embankment, in striking contrast with the Needle of Cleopatra, Eastern in its suggestiveness and mystery. In the middle distance may be discerned the glittering lines of the Crystal Palace, and on clear days one may catch a glimpse of the far-away hills of Kent and Surrey." Thus Archibald Henderson. Never, until I became privy to this news, have I so greatly appreciated the eminent Bernard's true calibre. No man not a natural-born genius could write as he has written with such windows in his work-room. The man who could resist looking out of such windows long enough to compose even one-hundredth the amount of work that Shaw has delivered himself

of is surely blessed with an artistic urge of uncommonly hefty horsepower.

Democracy.—Democracy is the form of government that places responsibility upon the man who believes that if you give a check to your bootlegger made out to "Cash" instead of to "Bearer," the Prohibition spies won't be able to trace the purchase of schnapps to you.

No. 3652.—Women, as they grow older, rely more and more on cosmetics. Men, as they grow older, rely more and more on a sense of humor.

The Government as a Liar.—The Prohibition Bureau's reports of its operations against the bootleggers very forcibly recall the French reports of German losses during the late war. That is to say, they are obviously mendacious. Their one purpose is to keep up the heat of the Methodists in the small towns, and so make the Prohibition "enforcers" safe in their jobs. Their one effect is to give crooked bootleggers a chance to alarm and swindle the more innocent sort of bibuli. This last, of course, is impossible in the big cities, where everyone knows that the current supply of alcohols is immense, and apparently unimpeded in the slightest by the monkeyshines of the Coast Guard. The price of good Scotch whisky, in the open market, is now but little more than half what it was when these monkeyshines began. Gin is cheaper than ever before, and, on the whole, better. California wines are now everywhere on sale in the East at prices but little above those of pre-Prohibition days.

The padlocking buffoonery seems to be having as little effect as the heroic melodrama of the Coast Guard. As soon as one restaurant is padlocked, two new ones open. Certainly the number selling drinks, at least in New York, is obviously increasing. Of late their number has been enormously augmented by a simple device still baffling to the Prohibition snouters and blackmailers. The *Wit* forestalls pad-

locking by doing it himself. That is, he puts steel bars across his windows, and erects a steel front door, with a convenient peephole near its middle. Only those whom he knows, and considers safe, can get by this door. If Prohibition thugs try to batter it down, he has plenty of time to remove all his jugs and bottles to a safe place, usually somewhere upstairs or in the next house. By the time the scoundrels get in, his place is as bare of booze as a Baptist Sunday-school. All of his patrons are industriously guzzling White Rock, ginger ale or near-beer.

This scheme is apparently very successful; the number of such bastiles increases daily. Many of them, if my agents are to be believed, offer excellent food and sound wines at very moderate prices. To get in, it appears, one must be elaborately introduced. New Yorkers, a childish race, greatly enjoy such hocus-pocus; it gives them importance. Thus business is usually good, and, since there is no need to bribe either the Prohibition agents or the police, profits are good too. The one drawback, from the standpoint of the proprietor, lies in the fact that the sense of honor is not as richly developed in America as the sense of morality. It is not unheard of, I am told, for an Americano admitted to such a place to resolve a dispute about his bill by tipping off the Prohibition agents. This risk the honest Italian who runs the establishment must run. In return for the great boon

of living in a free country, second to none in virtue, he must expect to be nipped, now and then, by its peculiar *mores*. In the more pretentious and exclusive places, where the cooking is of the first rank and only genuine wines are served, even that difficulty has been surmounted. There no one is admitted who speaks English without an accent. By this simple device the risk of being betrayed is obliterated.

Alcoholia.—I heard four animals carrying on a conversation in English about a friend of theirs, a lamb with seven eyes. I saw a large muscular angel with a book under his arm making several loud remarks. I saw some mountains and islands move themselves about like so many Fords, and horses with the heads of lions breathing fire. I ate a small book that, I assure you, was as sweet as honey. I saw a lady *enceinte* who had twelve stars in her hair, and a red dragon with ten horns and seven lovely crowns on his head. I saw a woman who had the wings of an eagle, and a leopard with the feet of a cinnamon bear. I saw someone sitting on a cloud wielding a sickle. I saw three frogs jump out of a man's mouth, and a long sword come out of the mouth of another man. I saw a tree that bore twelve different kinds of fruit, and an animal with a man's face full of eyes back and front.

Drunk again! you say? Not at all. I simply quote from the Bible.

AMERICAN POLITICS: A CHINESE VIEW

BY YUA-LING CHIN

IT HAS been said repeatedly that in America there is hardly any difference between a statesman and a politician. A statesman is simply a politician in office; a politician is a statesman out of office. Facetious as this statement may sound, it contains some element of truth. Office seems to be the chief, if not the only, aim of the American statesman and the American politician alike. Few, if any, play politics without some connection or other with political patronage. Where are the American Brailsfords, the Angels, the Hobsons, the Keyneses, or the Wallases? Outside of a few publicists who indulge in drum-beating in the suburbs of the political arena, and a handful of professors who become administrative officials of no political importance, there is hardly any American of political influence without some kind of organization or group interest back of him. The venerable Charles Eliot, of Harvard, is at best a feeble exception to the general rule of political indifference among the intellectual classes.

Yet it can not be said that there is no difference between the American statesman and the American politician. The difference is not, however, one of office, since both want to get it either directly or indirectly; it is rather rooted in differences between types of men. A statesman in America becomes a statesman through environment, while a politician is a politician by nature.

A statesman in America is generally well-to-do, thoroughly conventional, somewhat educated in the American sense, almost always versed in law, sufficiently respectable to move in society with ease,

and sufficiently poor and humble to start with to be acceptable to the people. He may never have heard of the Periclean Age or the Renaissance, but he can generally quote with facility either from the Bible or from Abraham Lincoln. It is not true that he is always in office. He is often out of it. When out of it, he organizes relief committees, presides over meetings, and floods the newspapers with his wisdom. When in, silence becomes his chief virtue. On week-days he goes to his office, and on Sunday he sits in one of the front pews in his church, worshipping God and the Constitution.

He is a solid and substantial citizen. Generally he is neither ostentatiously rich, nor frankly poor, for ostentatious wealth is just as disastrous to an American statesman as actual poverty. He may not be attached to the soil where he was born and bred, but he is very likely to have a homestead with closed doors and shuttered windows. As long as he has an income, the source of it does not bother him any more than it bothers others; and as a last resort he can always practice law. His personal appearance is the incarnation of respectability. He wears a Chesterfield overcoat in Winter, and a cutaway all the year round. If in office, he sometimes wears a top hat, and when on an official mission to Europe, he wears spats.

It now remains to sketch the leading mental traits of this American statesman. To start with, foreign observers are apt to deny him intelligence. Most people, in using this term, do not know exactly what they mean, and the writer of this article does not claim to be an exception. Cer-