

# CLINICAL NOTES

BY GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

*The Decay of Emotions.*—As a man grows older, his emotions steadily decay and, with their decay, his capacity for the fun of the world synchronously grows less and less. Ever a posturer and mountebank, he seeks solace and apology for himself in the philosophy that, as his emotions stale, his mind becomes sharper and clearer and that he thus is able to laugh sardonically at the world's show and what the world, jackass that it is!, believes he is missing. But there never lived a man who in his heart didn't know that the experience and wisdom of age, however blessed with the gift of ironic contemplation, were a poor substitute for certain of the emotions of which age has robbed him. Every time a philosopher over fifty buys himself a new necktie or has his shoes shined, he betrays himself for the quack he is. Wisdom, contrary to our friends, the rev. clergy, doesn't bring happiness. At most, it brings but a pseudo-happiness; it bequeathes to the mind only that happiness which it has stolen from the heart and the body; it converts actuality, with all its pungency, into mere memory and fancy, with all their impotence.

Emotions fade in the case of man just as noise fades in the case of the soldier. The thrilling racket of life's gun-fire gradually makes less and less impression upon his inured tympanum. A starlit sky, a pretty girl, a 100-pound tarpon, a Sousa march, a shooting motor-car, the enchantment of Southern seas, a rough-house at Dutch Sadie's, a tramp through the woods in the rain, a set-to with the bouncer, a new checkered waistcoat, an introduction to Rabelais, a straight flush, the Place de la Concorde in the springtime, another pretty girl, the first thousand dollars, an achieve-

ment in triumphant repartee, around in par, an initiation into the Elks—the original kick inherent in each of such transcendental emotional phenomena diminishes year by year. And with the diminution man's capacity for making an ass of himself, which is to say, man's capacity for enjoying himself, grows weaker and weaker. The moment a man becomes permanently sensible, that moment does biology snicker, quote Daudet, and buy itself a drink at his expense. The moment a man begins to say that he can now see through the emptiness of youth's pleasures, that moment is he himself most transparent.

*The Amusements of Homo Sapiens.*—Of all living creatures, the human male mammal is the most pitiable in the matter of devising pastimes for himself. The games and diversions that man invents for the pleasure of his leisure hours are of such an unbelievable stupidity and dullness that it is impossible to imagine even the lowest of God's animals and insects indulging in relatively imbecile relaxations. Surely it would take a pretty imagination to conjure up the picture of a donkey sitting up half the night trying to find a rectangular piece of heavy coated paper with red or black spots on it to harmonize with four similar pieces, or of a bedbug going into the dining-room while a dozen other bedbugs in the parlor think up the name of Gutzon Borglum and then returning to the parlor and trying to guess it.

The diversions which man relies upon for the gratification of his spirit are, in point of fact, infinitely more fatuous than those upon which the lower animals rely. When a dog, for example, wishes to dis-

port himself and forget his cares, what does he do? Does he sit in a stuffy room with a number of other dogs and strain his eyes laying out little blocks with Chinese figures on them, the meantime carrying on a conversation about the relative merits of Beluga and Astrakhan caviar and the superiority of Eddie Davis's jazz band to Emil Coleman's, or does he very intelligently curl up in a corner, take a squint at the human idiots, grunt and go into a good, comfortable snooze? Or take a guinea-pig. When a guinea-pig claps his eyes on a lady of his set who moves him strangely, does he put on a boiled shirt and a butterfly tie, sit around with her for six hours in a French restaurant owned by an Italian and run by a Greek, periodically get up and, with her, bump his anatomy against a hundred other anatomies to the tune of a wind instrument with a derby hat hung on the end of it, and then ride around the Park with her in a taxicab without any springs, or—I ask you, gentlemen—does he not?

A horse, in his moments of play, runs around a beautiful green field, eats a bit of delicious, cool, green grass and lies down under the spreading shade of a tree and lets his imagination dwell upon a score of presumably lovely fancies. A man chases a small round hunk of gutta-percha for three miles through a series of mudholes, patches of poison ivy and cow-streams and then, after engaging in some dubious mathematical calculations, guzzles half a pint of henna'd wood alcohol. And so it is with the other merriments of animal and man. When a goat wants diversion, he eats a *New Republic*, plays with some tin cans, and neighs. When a man wants diversion, he reads a *New Republic*, listens to a jazz performer play on the same tin cans, and sings "Dixie."

*In Memoriam.*—The late William Jennings Bryan goes down into history as the shrewdest and most adept self-advertiser that America has known. The fellow's genius in this respect was awe-inspiring.

The moment one publicity dodge showed signs of petering out, he was ready with another and even better one. Politics, war, theology, science—each provided meat for his sandwich. Even his death was calculated with an eye to the main chance. If he had died on a week-day, he would have got a column on the first pages of the newspapers and the rest of the story would have been buried on the inside. So, astutely aware that Sunday is the dullest news day of the week and that the Monday papers are always hard up for news, he cleverly passed out on the Sabbath, with the result that half of the first pages throughout the country were his.

*Every Man Has His Price.*—A recent editorial in the New York *Sun* (which, as we go to press, had not yet been consolidated by Frank A. Munsey with the *Police Gazette*) comments on a decision by Superior Judge Lindsay of Illinois, who ordered stricken from the calendar the trial of a man convicted of manslaughter after he had paid the victim's family \$12,500, and goes on to suggest that in the decision, as reported by the Associated Press, lies the possibility of a revival of the old institution known as the wergild. The wergild, which went back to the time of the eminent Babylonian law-maker, Mr. Justice Khammurabi, set, as you know, a price on the life of every man, from king to serf, and was accepted as final by the community. Supposing that the wergild were to come back into style, what would be the market quotations on various Americans at the present time? Risking indelicacy, I venture a number of stock prices. The values, true enough, may conceivably change from day to day, but I consider my share of the job done now that I have formally opened and dedicated the Exchange.

James A. Reed . . . . .	\$100,000
Henry Ford . . . . .	\$ 3,200
Babe Ruth . . . . .	\$ 17,480
James Branch Cabell . . . . .	\$100,000
Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. . . . .	\$ 4.75
Oscar, of the Waldorf . . . . .	\$ 22,000
Ponzi . . . . .	\$ 15,000

Jack Dempsey	\$ 40,000
Will Hays	8.25
John D. Rockefeller	\$ 17,500
John D. Rockefeller, Jr.	\$ 750
Fatty Arbuckle	\$ 4,500
Rube Goldberg	\$ 56,000
Calvin Coolidge	\$ 19,000
Alévy, <i>maitre d'hôtel</i> of the Beaux Arts Café	\$ 19,000
General Pershing	\$ 19,000
George Bickel	\$ 20,000
Brander Matthews	\$ 11,265
Frank E. Campbell	\$ 1.00
Florenz Ziegfeld	\$ 64,000
Senator Smoot	\$ 8,000
Houdini	\$ 8,000
Gimbel Brothers	\$ 10.00
George Harvey	\$ 2,300
Bishop Manning	\$ 7.25
Roland Hayes	\$ 35,000
Al Smith	\$ 42,000
Al Jolson	\$ 43,000
Senator Borah	\$ 3,000
Sinclair	\$ 67,000
Doheny	\$ 67,000
Fall	\$ 67,000
Augustus Thomas	\$ 10.00
Eugene O'Neill	\$ 90,000
John S. Sumner	15
Edward P. Mitchell	\$ 75,000
Nicholas Murray Butler	\$ 75,000
Sam Bernard	\$ 32,550
S. Stanwood Menken	\$1.00—10% off for cash
James Weldon Johnson	\$ 48,000
Gillette, the safety-razor man	\$ 36,000
Rear Admiral Fiske	\$ 1,200
Bud Fisher	\$ 47,000
E. W. Howe	\$ 72,000
Lionel Strongfort	\$ 285.40
Charles H. Fletcher	\$ 20,000
William Allen White	\$ 35,000
Bosco	\$ 25,000
Eugene V. Debs	\$ 6,000
Paul Whiteman	\$ 25,000
Senator Heflin	\$ 175.00
Benny Leonard	\$ 18,000
Edwin Arlington Robinson	\$ 3,000
Bernarr McFadden	\$ 2,000
George Creel	\$ 750
Old Dr. Grindle	\$ 72,000
Sinclair Lewis	\$ 73,000
Samuel Goldwyn	\$ 3.25
Henry Fairfield Osborn	\$ 20,000
Oscar W. Underwood	\$ 21,000
Dr. Beeman	\$ 21,000
The Rev. Dr. Stephen S. Wise	\$ 10.00
Victor Muddock	\$ 2,750
Bozo Snyder	\$ 12,000
Jacob Ruppert	\$ 22,000
Wladeck Zbyszko	\$ 13,000
Louis Brandeis	\$ 2,000
Rudolph Valentino	\$ 2,500
William Randolph Hearst	\$ 75,000
Janssen	\$ 10,000
Jascha Heifetz	\$ 14,000
Elihu Root	\$ 13,000
Albert S. Burseson	No bid

*The Artist and the Republic.*—The esteemed and valuable *Nation* has lately been conducting a series by American writers answering, in the light of their personal experiences, the question: Can a literary artist function freely in the United States? From those of the articles which I have read, I deduce that the American writer—Dreiser excepted—concludes that the attempt to free his æsthetic *geist* in the Republic is about as difficult a job as avoiding the itch in a sailors' bed-house. It appears (1) that the literary artist gets no sympathy in the United States; (2) that he meets with actual opposition; (3) that the spirit of the country is against beautiful letters; (4) that the country is possessed solely by thoughts of money and has no soul; (5) that a Puritan attitude toward life makes free artistic functioning impossible; (6) that blue-nosed censorship soon disgusts the sincere and honest craftsman; and so on through 7, 8, 9, 10 and up to 495. The arguments need not be further rehearsed; they are perfectly familiar. And what is in them? After due deliberation, I believe—absolutely nothing.

For all the circumstance that now and then some lodge of smut-smellers descends upon a first-rate, or approximately first-rate, book and makes trouble for its publisher, the fact remains that there is little more moral interference with the literary artist in America than there is, or has been, in many European countries. For one reputable author who has been pounced upon by the moralists, you will find a dozen who are simply dirty boys and who deserve what they get. It is these who let out the loudest yawps on the narrowness and bigotry of the country. The first-rate author generally contents himself with a snicker and perhaps a sardonic *mot* or two, as he knows full well that it will not be long before a higher court will reverse the decision of the indignant magistrate and that, as a result of the publicity he has got, his book, when put on sale again, will earn him an Hispano-Suiza instead of merely a second-hand Saxon. If there is a first-rate

book by an American author that, whether at one time suppressed or not, isn't on public sale today, I do not know its name. The Cabells and Dreisers and Andersons are each and all in the book-dealers' show-windows once again soon after Sumner has enjoyed his fleeting hour of triumph; the Greenwich Village geniuses with their mink heroes and rabbitry heroines are, fortunately, not. And it is the latter who strum ceaselessly the ukeleles of their indignation, let loose rich abuse against the so-called provincialism, hypocrisy and ignorance of the country, and take the steerage for la belle France and two-sous schnapps.

There is no more opposition to the literary artist, and no less appreciation of his talents, in the United States than in any other country. There is always a measure of such opposition; there has always been a measure of such opposition. As a matter of fact, it is this very opposition that has helped the cause of beautiful letters. If the United States were a nation of one hundred million Otto Kahns, each hot to help art with many dollars and more speeches, I daresay the sum of worth-while novels wouldn't be one-third what it is today. Literature is as often the product of challenge and defiance as it is of patronage and pats on the back. "Main Street" is a defiance and a challenge; "Babbitt" is another; "Arrowsmith" is another; "Jurgen" and most of Cabell are others; Dreiser is of defiance all compact; "Winesburg, Ohio," is a defiance. You will find defiance in some of the best of Cather and in some of the best of the early Robert Herrick. Among the younger generation, defiance has produced the only literature that has been worth its bindings: such things as Dos Passos' "Three Soldiers," Smits's "Spring Flight" and Harvey Fergusson's "Capitol Hill." The finest poetry produced in America in the last twenty years is from first to last the fruit of opposition

and a defiance of the popular philosophy.

All countries, as I have observed no less than 8,623 times, are in the mass much the same. The literary artist would have just as much to grumble about in England or Germany or France as he has in the United States. Fine literature, like vintage champagne, is for the few, and there are such appreciative spirits in America as there are in any European country. In point of fact, there are more in America than in any European country. No country in the world today has so receptive and hospitable a critical press as the United States. No country buys so many good books. In no country is the first-rate author's financial reward so great. In no country do the Babbitts and butter-and-egg men and their wives send out so many dinner invitations to outstanding men of letters. In no country are the first-rate author's lecture fees so high and do so many stockbrokers and automobile salesmen wish to take a look at him, hear what he has to say and give him a swig out of a private bottle after the show is over.

The truth about the matter is that the literary artist has altogether too soft a time of it in the present-day Republic. If there is no old and established civilization to inspire him in one way, there is a young and hansdoodlish civilization to inspire him in a hundred other ways, for in the young and hansdoodlish there is ever the infinite food of mirth and irony. If now and then some T. Everett Harré gets the moral lid clapped on him and lets out a yell that can be heard for miles around, a score of fellows superior in devious skill get away with murder. Flaubert was prosecuted in France; Goethe could not publish one of his finest pieces of writing in Germany; Swift had a tough time of it in England. In the United States of today, the only literary gents who are experiencing any trouble at all are the Maxwell Bodenheims.

## NOTES & Queries

*Queries and Answers should be addressed to The Editor of Notes and Queries, and not to individuals. Queries are printed in the order of their receipt, and numbered serially. An answer should bear the number of the query it refers to.*

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### QUERY NO. 49

I would like very much to get a copy of the words of "The Little Black Bull" complete and some suggestion of the tune. An excerpt from it, contributed by Mr. L. W. Beers, appeared in your June Editorial Notes. Like much of the rich masculine army humor, "The Little Black Bull" will probably never appear in a book.

GEO. H. ROGERS, *Chicago*

### QUERY NO. 50

Can any one tell me the name of the author of a short poem entitled "In the Interregnum"? I saw it about fifty years ago in a Boston paper taken from an English magazine, and I remember four lines:

We cast about, we mildly doubt,  
We compromise with sin;  
The old time guides have all gone out,  
The new have not come in.

SAMUEL WARBASSE, *Lafayette, N. J.*

### QUERY NO. 51

Can any of your readers tell me: (1) how many of the plays of Menander were saved from the Alexandrian fire; (2) what is the age of consent in the State of Delaware; (3) what has become of Pawnee Bill; and

(4) was Mrs. Murphy ever jailed, or even indicted, for criminal carelessness in allowing her cow to kick over the lamp that started the great Chicago fire?

GEORGE W. BACKHOUSE, *Oil City, Pa.*

### QUERY NO. 52

Have Mr. Sumner and the other gentlemen of dirty book fame ever realized what a rich field for their noble work there is in the Baptist and Methodist hymns? This question came to my mind a few Sundays ago when I attended the evening services at Dr. Straton's church. While the congregation was raising its voice to God, I read carefully the words of several of the hymns and was shocked to see what very improper thoughts were entertained by the writers of these hymns. One hymn, in particular, sticks in my mind; it is entitled, "There is Power in the Blood," and is as suggestive as anything I have read for many months.

SON OF A BAPTIST MINISTER,  
*Albany, N. Y.*

### QUERY NO. 53

What is the physiological fact underlying the popular notion that fat men are almost worthless amorists? Or is it just imaginary? While Byron's etching of Don Juan is that of a lithe, sensitive fellow, Jacques Casanova's best bedside weight was 180 pounds or more, according to Le Gras. And what of other stoutish, rampant Romeos, such as Tristan, Sir Philip Sydney, M. Balzac and Edward VII?

BELLAMY ROSENFELD, *New York*

### QUERY NO. 54

I have read so many glowing references to William Marion Reedy that I would