

# CLINICAL NOTES

BY GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

*Psycho-Osteopathy.*—It is passing strange that the moral police of the country have thus far overlooked those chiropractors of the subconscious who begin to flourish in every community that boasts so much as a brick railroad station and a gilt movie parlor, and whose occult enterprises constitute what is undoubtedly one of the high-voltage engines of sinfulness amongst us. I allude, of course, to the profession of psychoanalysis, an art that has summoned to it as professors such a body of quacks and charlatans as has not been heard of since Christian Science first got under full steam. There are, plainly enough, a few professional practitioners of the Freudian pathology who are competent men, but the great majority of fellows that one finds ploughing the field in search of easy pickings are simply so many illicit emotion plumbers, as devious and crooked as their colleagues in the gold brick, shell game and oil stock businesses.

The Freud-Jung-Adler psycho-pathological science has gradually passed out of the hands of those best fitted to understand and further interpret it—of those for whom it was designed—and has become simply a playing-ground for shrewd mountebanks. The latter have had an easy time of it, as the rank and file of half-wits have assimilated only the superficial elements of the doctrines and are hence ready and eager to swallow at one gulp anything that is told them. Many of these mountebanks do no actual harm, as their activities are confined to such absurdities as the confection of novels in which a bull-fighter afraid of cows is cured of his fear complex by being forced to eat a two-foot rump steak, and German moving pictures in which phallic symbolism is subtly indicated by a flash

of the Kochelbräu chimney. But there are others, and they outnumber the rest by twenty to one, who are breaking up more homes, assisting more greatly in the spread of muco-purulent inflammation and raising more hell generally than all the whiskey ever made in Kentucky or all the literature ever produced in France. I allude, it must be obvious, to the women's club lecturers and, more especially and directly, to those doctors and dentists who have lost their licenses and set up shop in the side-streets as psychoanalysts, and to the considerable company of fortune-tellers, osteopaths, phrenologists and Italian counts who, observing the ample supply of impressionable suckers, have closed their old places of business, sprouted whiskers and followed suit.

The procedure of this light-fingered gentry is simple. The women's clubs, to begin at the beginning, have long since tired of sitting through lectures on Jacob Wassermann under the delusion that it was August the orator on the platform was going to talk about. They have rebelled, as well, against sitting through two-hour lectures on Cabell for a measly five minutes confidential disquisition on the nature of Jurgen's implements of war. Deeply as it pains me to say it, it yet has always been plain to anyone acquainted with these women's clubs that what they really wanted was a little hot stuff carefully and politely wrapped in a literary, philosophical or scientific cloak, and that the payment of dues always fell off alarmingly when the lecturers engaged by the secretaries did not come up to expectations. These secretaries, who are customarily the only women in the clubs who get paid for their services, were not long in seeing

which way the wind was blowing and in feeling the ground gradually give way under their jobs, and they presently removed their intellectual spectacles and got busy. Appreciating that many more lectures on the style of Georges Duhamel and the iambic pentapody of Salvador Novo would find them back at their old, less glamorous posts in department stores or teaching school, they promptly cast about them for a means to get the old girls to continue sending in their checks, and they were quick to find it in the lecturers on psychoanalysis. These gentlemen, of whom there are so many available that the lecture bureaux have to hire special clerks to keep them in line, could be relied upon to give a good dirty show under cover. Under the guise of informing the women's clubs on the scientific aspects of the Freudian alectryomancy, it was an easy matter for them to go safely into hitherto forbidden territory, to the huge delight of the lady scientists out front and the secretaries.

The *modus operandi* of the gentlemen was and is readily recognizable. They begin with a lot of harmless whiffle on such relatively innocuous matters as the nutritional instinct, intellectual elaboration of instinct, the conflict between social urge and individual craving, anxiety as a protective cloak against asocial tendencies, narcotomania, Wagner-Jauregg's observations on the infantile root of the tendency to steal, and a couple of illustrations of children setting fire to chicken-coops—to the polite boredom of the assembled girls. They then move cautiously ahead and discourse, a bit more easily and with fewer pulls at their whiskers, upon such subjects as the Œdipus complex, the Electra complex and the more discreet cases cited in other directions by Wimmer, Weinberg, Leppmann and Duboisson—and the girls begin to prick up their ears. The lecturers, gaining confidence, now move on to Janet's theory of dromomania, with its impulse to flee home and husband, the significance of dreams about conflagrations, the sexual symbolism of sleep-walking and the dangers of repres-

sion—and the girls are now leaning so far forward in their seats that the ushers have to stand guard lest they fall out.

The lecture over, the girls duly rush back to congratulate the speaker (and to find out covertly how strong his grip is), disperse to their homes to nag their husbands—and to consider the lay of the land. Thus meditating, they conclude that all is not well with them and that it would be meet for them to consult, as soon as possible, one of the local psychoanalysts. The latter they have no more trouble in locating than formerly they had in the case of fortune-tellers. A suave fellow, they find him to be, with the voice and manner of a stock company actor, with a consultation chamber soothingly dim and with perhaps some Turkish smell-powder burning in a corner. To this professor they address their woes and beseech advice. The professor glances at the size of their diamonds, learnedly strokes his Van Dyke and deliberates. A dozen or so negligible questions follow; there is a laborious and copious taking of data; there is a measure of punditical ear-stroking; and the professor—if the diamonds strike him as big enough—informs the fair one that hers is a difficult case demanding much study, and will she return again in three or four days' time. (If the diamonds are deficient, it is a matter of ten dollars and goodbye.) At the expiration of the stipulated period, the clothes-horse shows up again and the professor goes through the same rigmarole. Four or five visits will be necessary; the client presents a problem—but, let her rest assured, he will solve it. Now, as the client knows precisely what she wishes to be told—and as the pseudo-psychoanalyst knows that she knows—all that the latter need do is to slick up his beard with a little more bear-grease and bide his time against a sufficiently sizeable fee. At length, feeling that the customer has been properly impressed with his stupendous ratiocinations and is ready to be nicked to the limit, the charlatan confides to her that, as a result of his findings, he believes the trouble with

her to lie in the direction of a suppressed libido. The customer, obviously, is immensely pleased with the professor's sagacity in discerning the true nature of her malaise, gladly remunerates him for his wisdom, and departs. And the moment she departs another American home is due for disruption and another American husband for murder.

The number of women, young and old, who have been dispatched on fleshly errands and been convinced by the psychoanalyst frauds of the moral legitimacy of their quests cannot accurately be determined, but it must run well up into the tens of thousands. Many of these women are of the sort who would not indulge their emotional whims save they honestly believed such an indulgence to be warranted by their deep psychic and physical needs, in other words, save they believed that they had a scientific justification for their peccadilloes, and with this justification the Freudian fakers provide them. Nor are married women whose husbands, to put it euphemistically, devote too much time to their business, the only class of females who fall for the necromancy of these humbugs. . . . There was a day when men used to hang around stage-doors. Today, you will find the same men, bent on the same mission, hanging around outside the offices of the Freudian practitioners. They are the psychoanalytical Johns of 1927.

*Psalm 51.*—Perhaps the saddest lot that can befall mortal man is to be the husband of a lady poet. It is, of course, bad enough to be a husband at all, so I am reliably informed by authorities, but to be the husband of a woman who squats on Pegasus and is pleasurably flicked by his tail must be the apex of human misery. The first year or so of such an alliance may not be un-

duly trying to the kind of man who can so much as look at a lady poet without a violent sinking of the tummy, but once life gets back into its usual humdrum the poor fellow's days must be filled with agony. It is not that he has to spend his nights, after he gets back from the day's grind at the shoe store or rolling-mills, listening to his wife's rhythmical inspirations about whippoorwills, nightingales and weeping-willows, but that he is compelled to listen for a very much greater period of time to her romantic tributes to lovers with which he often is hard put to it even vaguely to identify himself. He cannot for the life of him know whether her prosody is boosting him or some other fellow, either living or dead, real or imaginary. And if he is at all sensitive, it is not long before he takes to drink to salve his wounded pride.

The husband of a lady poet is soon or late doomed to be the butt of her Parnasian athletics. Long after other wives have quietly forgotten their husbands, he is forced to endure his spouse's slyly indirect criticisms of himself as a hot flame and, worse still, her eulogies of some other man as being all that he is not. It is the custom, I am told, of wives to refer lovingly and with a considerable nostalgia to their beaux of the days before they married, but surely no husband can find this half so katzenjammerish as a constant allusion, whether the verse be good or bad, to longed-for beaux of the future. The woman who marries a poet has an easier time of it, for the simple reason that a woman is capable of the technique of imagining herself to be even more beautiful and aphrodisiacal than any creature that her husband lyrically idealizes. But it is a rare man, once he has been married for a few years, who can persuade himself to find in his wife's idyls any analogy between himself and Benvenuto Cellini.

# THE THEATRE

BY GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

## *Certiorari*

THE late activities of the moralists in connection with the theatre would seem to prove once again that a playwright's characters may safely say anything they choose to, provided only that they do not, whether by gesture or act, visualize the subject matter of their discourse. Looking back over those exhibitions that the censors have objected to in the last thirty years, it is easy to see that what has dismayed the guardians of the public psyche is not what is said, however piquant, but rather what is done. The only exception in the three decades in question where objection has been lodged against a theme and not against stage business was "Mrs. Warren's Profession." In every other single instance, what has brought the moral boys down upon a play has been a physical antic of one kind or another. Olga Nethersole's "Sapho" was condemned not for its theme and dialogue, but simply because of one unduly prolonged "Carmen" kiss and a scene showing the hero carrying the heroine upstairs to bed. Sadie Martinot's "The Turtle" attracted the attention of the moral police because of a two minute episode in which the heroine was supposed to disrobe behind a screen, and Blanche Bates's "Naughty Anthony" simply because an actress crossed her legs at one point in the evening and took off her stockings.

Paul Potter's "The Conquerors" would never have had a voice lifted against it had it not been for the moment in which a German *Ublan* seized a woman with fell purpose just as the curtain discreetly lowered itself. "The God of Vengeance" offended the smutsers because of the scene at the end of the first act in which a

woman fondled a young girl with what seemed to be saphistic intent, and "The Clemenceau Case," years before, because one of the actresses showed herself for ten seconds in a mild approximation to the altogether. "The Demi-Virgin" got into trouble, so it eventually came down to cases, because of a single amorous scene played by an actress in an allegedly aphrodisiacal nightie, and "The Girl With the Whooping Cough" because of some love-making on a settee. Even in the case of the harmless music show, "The Black Crook," it was only the girls' tights that alarmed the celestial ambassadors of the era. "Countess Coquette," though it managed to avoid actual police interference, came very near suffering it because of the scene at its conclusion wherein the deserted Lothario listens at the keyhole of the door leading to the boudoir of the reunited husband and wife, and a flannel nightgown in "Desire Under the Elms" was instrumental in causing what trouble that drama experienced in certain communities. The dramatization of Tolstoi's "Resurrection," which Blanche Walsh took around the country, was jumped upon in various cities because of the scene at the end of the prologue in which a man and woman sat down together on the edge of a bed, and Charmion's trapeze act, to come to that, was all right with the gendarmes until the lady removed her garter and threw it to the audience.

Take the three suppressed plays of the past season. What really drew the eyes of the moralists to "Sex" was surely less what was said in it than that single widely remarked on bit of stage business wherein an actor employed a Rabelaisian gesture to indicate a certain anatomical virtuosity. "The Virgin Man," equally innocuous