

CLINICAL NOTES

BY GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

The Question of Economic Independence.—Among the leading reasons assigned for the altered status in the sex situation amongst us is the increasing economic independence of women with its consequently induced ethical autonomy. I hope that I shall not unduly offend the sensibilities of the professors when I observe that, though the reason has a share of truth in it, it has, in my estimation, a considerably greater share of buncombe. What economic independence unquestionably induces in a woman is, true enough, a relative indifference to the hitherto feared opinion of those upon whom she was directly dependent, but what it simultaneously induces—and the professors seem conveniently to overlook the fact—is of necessity an increased and vastly more important regard for the opinion of those upon whom her new-found economical independence and all the comfort and happiness it carries with it are in turn dependent. It is today twice as necessary for the woman in the professions or in trade to be careful of her reputation as it is for her sister who leads what may generally, if unsatisfactorily, be described as a private or home life. For every “æsthetic” dancer or movie actress or lady novelist or Maeterlinck troupier who allows her wicked will a free functioning, there are a score who have to watch their steps with considerably more care than the débutante, the miller’s daughter or the pastor’s wife. If they do not, their contracts, under the new dispensation, may be annulled, or they may, as in a recent lamentable instance, have their profitable lecture engagements canceled by the Babbits, or they may find themselves, as in

another recent and equally lamentable instance, laughed off the platform into the discard. The woman in trade must be even more circumspect than the one in the arts and professions. The woman in business has her boss and the prejudices of her boss, often hypocritical, to bear in mind. Even the lowly upstairs maid who carries on with the chauffeur or with the son of the household when he is home from Harvard will be promptly booted out into the street, and she knows it. The increasing economic independence of women, whether considerable or relatively puny, tends coincidentally to increase women’s wariness in the matter of emotional indulgence. The theory that it does not is, like so much of the current sex philosophy, simply a theory.

But the fact remains, nonetheless, that the emotional freedom is here. That one fact, such as that noted above, collides with the other and greater fact no more gets rid of the second fact than the collision of a trolley car with the Twentieth Century Limited gets rid of the latter. The economically independent woman is not emotionally free because of her economic independence, but in spite of it. Because of it, she must have recourse to concealments and stratagems that other women need resort to in a lesser degree. The Queen must ever be more discreet than her laundress.

The Need for Illusion.—The greater the realist, the greater his need for illusion in order to stand life at all. This illusion a Zola finds hidden in the wines of the Château Beauséjour, a Hauptmann in periodic quilldriving excursions into fairy tales, a Nietzsche in the verse of senti-

mental German rhymesters. A world rid of its ritualistic churches, theatres, wine-cellar, pretty telephone girls and poets would blow up, out of its own despair, by nightfall.

The Seed of Matrimony.—The theory that the man who commits matrimony, once his younger years have passed, does so because he finds his life increasingly lonely and hard to bear, enjoys a fructitude hardly warranted by the nonsense which waters it. Such a man generally marries not to escape loneliness but to achieve it. As a man gets on in the world his daily life is invaded more and more by outsiders of one sort and another; his time is taken up more and more by persons who harass and burden him with their kindly but nuisanceful offices, with their genial and well-meaning but tedious and irksome demands upon his leisure, with their attempts to make him a partner in gaieties and pleasures that he has no taste for. He thus presently finds it almost impossible to get any time to himself, and he despairs. What he craves is a barrier against these good-natured but objectionable poachers, a shelter, if only of relative degree, from these gregarious friends, acquaintances and admirers. Marriage, while certainly not the best barrier and shelter, is better than any other that happens to be available, and so he adopts it as a cure for his ills.

The American Credo.—The accumulation of those articles of belief which, in their sum of delusion, go to constitute the basic faith of the American people, grows apace. Since the recent publication of the brought up-to-date encyclopedia listing more than twelve hundred such philosophical conclusions, various students of the native mind, including such eminent doctors of sociological science as the Professors Burton Rascoc and Paul Gould, have called to my attention certain cardinal tenets that were carelessly omitted from that master-work. These, together with certain others that presently occur to me, I set down herewith:

1

That smoking makes one thin.

2

That a baby brought up on mother's milk grows up to be much stronger and healthier than one brought up on the prepared article.

3

That a bully is always a coward.

4

That the American husband has to be dragged to a concert or an intellectual drama by his women folks, and that they have to use considerable force, too.

5

That every man who plays the stock market is sure to end up in the poor-house.

6

That the circulation of the *Saturday Evening Post* is already so big that the editor stays awake nights trying to figure out ways to keep it in check.

7

That William Randolph Hearst changes his newspaper editors every week and sometimes oftener.

8

That all poets have unusually large appetites, and that it is dangerous to invite one to dinner if one's funds are low.

9

That you can get a divorce in Paris overnight for a few hundred dollars.

10

That a boy brought up by women usually turns out to be something of a lizzie.

11

That the Creole ladies of New Orleans are something like the hotsie-totsie Negro entertainers in Harlem dives, only better looking.

12

That all the blind beggars on the streets of New York and Chicago have excellent eye-sight and at the end of the day's work drive home in limousines.

13

That if you drink a glass of champagne with cigarette or cigar ashes in it you will become promptly inebriated.

14

That the beverage dispensed at the numerous orangeade stands is made up entirely of salicylic acid, water and chemical flavoring and that not a drop of real orange juice ever gets into it.

15

That the city of Los Angeles is populated entirely by retired farmers from Iowa and Kansas.

16

That you can't tell a panatrope in the next room from an orchestra.

17

That the patrons of New York night-clubs are exclusively out-of-town buyers who are painting the town red on company expense accounts.

18

That mosquitoes grow as big as jay-birds in New Jersey.

19

That the residents of Milwaukee have never heard of Prohibition, and that beer saloons, serving the finest brews, run openly there in all parts of the city.

20

That if a good-looking soda-water jerker with two changes of clothes would save up a hundred dollars and go to Hot Springs and pose as a French count he could marry any one of two dozen heiresses.

21

That city swindlers almost daily sell the Metropolitan Museum or the City Hall to up-State farmers in New York on their first visit for a down payment of \$100.

22

That many human woes are caused by sunspots.

23

That a male baby brought up at its mother's breast will always, when he grows to manhood, particularly admire women with ample bosoms.

24

That so many American boys will foolishly try to emulate Lindbergh's flight across the ocean that presently countless fishermen off the Newfoundland coast will

have great difficulty disentangling their lines from sunken airplanes.

25

That the late Clyde Fitch stole all his plays from the German.

26

That every married Frenchman has a mistress, and that his wife not only does not mind it in the least, but frequently has her around to the house for a good dinner.

27

That cowboys dress like Tom Mix.

28

That whenever an actress gets her name starred in electric lights on the façade of a Broadway theatre, a rich admirer has imposed this on the producer as a condition under which he will back the show.

29

That all rich Detroit men have made their money in the automobile business.

30

That people who spend money in night clubs never get any fun out of it and are bored all the time they are there.

31

That by the same expenditure of brains and energy required to hold down a \$100 a week job in New York, a man could go to any other city and become the president of the First National Bank and chairman of the Chamber of Commerce within six months.

32

That Chinamen eat rats.

33

That the doormen at the Russian restaurants in New York are all former grand dukes and that all the headwaiters in the same establishments were colonels in the army of the late Tsar.

34

That Greek bootblacks are furnished by shrewd shoe manufacturers with a free polish that is very bad on the leather.

35

That half the plays produced on Broadway have been so tinkered with, changed around and rewritten by so-called play doctors hired by the producer that the

original author cannot recognize a scene or a line of dialogue as his own.

36

That every time the clock ticks John D. Rockefeller becomes richer by \$1,000.

37

That a certain *maladie d'amour* is no worse than a bad cold.

38

That, although all gin on the market is synthetic, all whisky is cut and all beer is spiked, all the Bacardi at \$9 a bottle is genuine.

39

That it is impossible to get a decent cocktail in Europe.

40

That if one drinks beer through a straw one will become gloriously cockeyed.

41

That the modern flapper is never as naughty as she pretends to be.

42

That to walk on dewy grass in one's bare feet is beneficial to one's health.

43

That a lynching takes place every night in the State of Georgia, but that the Associated Press correspondents down there are all sons of Confederate generals and dutifully keep the news out of the Northern papers.

44

That all the well-dressed women sitting around the Waldorf and Biltmore hotels in New York are wives sick of their husbands and hot for flirtations.

45

That if one stands in the rain, one will grow tall.

46

That all the red wine now on the market is made in Delancey street basements by Italians who have given up counterfeiting in order to enjoy the greater usufructs of bootlegging.

47

That in order to get a job shoveling snow in New York, you have to have a pull at Tammany Hall.

48

That before an American singer can get a hearing at the Metropolitan she must make certain concessions to the rich backers of the opera.

49

That if you slip a customs inspector a good bottle of brandy or Scotch on your return from Europe, he will let you get by with a whole trunk full of liquor.

50

That all the people in Tennessee believe in a Devil with horns, hoofs and a tail.

51

That if you breathe through the nose and keep your mouth closed you will ward off all the diseases you would otherwise acquire.

52

That an Irishman is especially gifted in the matter of keeping a match lighted, and that where other men fail he is able to keep one going even in a cyclone.

53

That Turkish baths are used exclusively by drunks who are trying to sober up.

54

That by slipping the Lord Chamberlain of the British Empire fifty bucks any New York or Chicago woman of whatever station in society can get herself presented to the King of England.

55

That anyone connected with a newspaper can get all the free seats to the theatre that he wants.

56

That all New Yorkers go out to the theatres, concerts, night clubs and dance places every night in the week and never get to bed until three o'clock in the morning.

57

That the babies of impoverished families living in crowded tenement districts have to sleep in the bath-tub.

58

That the streets of Brooklyn are so crooked and numerous that firemen on the way to a fire have to ask directions and that no native Brooklynier can help them out.

THE THEATRE

BY GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

Notes on the Movies

THE promiscuously voiced contention that absurd censorship is responsible for the childish quality of the movies is sheer buncombe. Censorship has nothing to do with it. I have investigated carefully the deletions that have been ordered by the various censorship bodies over a period of years and in not a single case would any one of the pictures have been perceptibly better had it been allowed to remain intact. The censors are idiotic, true enough; some of their recommendations are unbelievably asinine. But the pictures would have been just as bad if they had not meddled with them. The censors are the movie people's alibi. The latter groan that their great masterpieces have been ruined because an overly damp and prolonged smack or a Hun gouging out a doughboy's eye has been snipped out of them, when, as a matter of fact, the pictures have been given a modicum of gratifying subtlety, albeit unintentional, and a relatively increased merit by these very external interferences. Such pictures as the censors have horned into more broadly I find to have been out-and-out rubbish in the first place: cheap-jack sensationalism about prostitutes, social diseases and the like, on a par with the white-slave pamphlets got out by the moralists ten or more years ago, cheap-jack pornography and cheap-jack attempts at Continental sophistication. On such occasions as the movies have tried to do anything even remotely endurable, it is to be noted that the censors have very decently shut up. They didn't interfere with "The Last Laugh"; they not only let "The Big Parade" and "What Price Glory?" alone, but even allowed them to do and

say things that, in the instance of the drama, would have brought the police on at a gallop; they didn't harm "The Grand Duchess and the Waiter" or any one of a dozen other such attempts to lift the pictures out of the nursery book. All that they cut out of the Russian picture "Potemkin" were a few feet showing a wormy piece of meat and a baby having its head mashed in, both of which were nauseating and unnecessary and rid of which the picture was better than before. And if they made "Variety" foolish in certain hinterland communities by converting the old fellow's inamorata into his wife, let us remember that they did nothing of the kind in the larger cities and that one can't judge the movies by Podunk any more than one can judge literature by Boston.

The movie censors have, contrary to what the movie press-agents have insinuated into print, actually done no damage to a single reputable picture that I can discover. They have even allowed the movies a wider latitude in the matter of morals than is presently allowed the drama. The suppressed plays, "Sex" and "The Virgin Man," were baby fare compared with such freely circulated films as "Flesh and the Devil" or "A Night of Love." If you tried to put on in the dramatic theatre such seduction scenes as you may see daily at any neighborhood movie parlor, you'd land in the cooler before you could say Malevinsky, Driscoll and O'Brien. All that the movie censors usually do is to change a few subtitles, awful garbage in the first place, cut out exaggerated gum-suckings and brassière-squeezings that any artistically intelligent director would never have put into the film, and object to elaborations of incidents that every writer