

The Critical Circus

by **GEORGE JEAN NATHAN**

ADD Journalism as a career: The late Charles P. Taft, publisher of the Cincinnati *Times-Star*, left an estate appraised at \$6,367,374.63.

— F. P. A. in the *New York World*

Add Journalism as a career: the *New York World's* recent overnight blanket discharge of thirty or forty employees, most of them old men without a cent, who had been devoted servers of the *World* since their youth.

TO BE a good student is one of the greatest accomplishments a person can possess. A good student is one who knows how to study effectively. Study is the medium by means of which the learner acquires his knowledge. It is the foundation of every art and every achievement. Any normal person can, through effective study, add very greatly to his appreciation and understanding of things.

— FRANCIS ROY COPPER in *Education*

The next issue of *Education* will doubtless be devoted to proving that one plus one equals two. Order your copy early and get in on the inside.

MUSIC is the only universal language there is. If one desires to read Goethe or Tolstoy or Ibsen in the original, one must learn German, Russian or Norwegian. But Beethoven and Tchaikovsky and Grieg wrote their masterpieces in the same tongue!

— WILLIAM LYON PHELPS

So far as the universal language of music goes, I suggest to Prof. Phelps the spectacle of a German audience listening to Chinese music and of a Chinese audience listening to Richard Strauss.

IT WAS after skirts became shorter that the "toddle" came in, that jerky way of dancing that has no dignity whatever.

— LOUIS H. CHALIF

in the *Outlook and Independent*

The idea that dancing should possess dignity is nonsense. Dancing is, in the aggregate,

simply a form of physiological whoopee. It is fun expressed in terms of absurd movements of the human body — that is, in all but its religious or pseudo-classical forms. Why try to be dignified about it? As well demand dignity in a chowder party, a game of one-old-cat, or a circus sideshow.

I STAYED in the United States too long — fully four months too long because intuition works instantaneously, and a protracted experience does not improve its processes. I took great care to read as little as possible about that continent before I went. During my travels about the country I guarded myself with almost old-maidish precaution against information. I looked at none of the obvious sights if I could help it; I asked few questions. . . . I went out little; I read hardly any papers; I did everything in my power to keep my conscience clear from accidental impressions.

— COUNT HERMANN KEYSERLING
in *America Set Free*

The ostrich school of socio-economic-political biography.

LET ANY American come to London for a month and write his impression of the literary world there and we'd be grateful for it. Why doesn't someone come over and be a visiting critic to us? We have our points: for example, that interesting old perennial question as to whether English critics neglect American books — it would be instructive to hear about that!

— HUGH WALPOLE in *Books*

Dear Hugh: You've been hearing about it from us for the last five years. So far as being grateful for it, most of your literary countrymen have proved themselves in print to be approximately as gratified as an elephant who has been fed a lighted cigar butt. When Sinclair Lewis visited you and spoke his mind, one of you wrote that, unless he were immediately recalled, there would be war between England and the United States. Sincerely yours, George.

AFTER ALL, what has the grave-diggers' scene to do with the character of Hamlet?

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW
in an interview on *The Apple Cart*

Is it possible that Shaw has become as poor a dramatic critic as a dramatist? That the grave-diggers' scene has its share in the creation of Hamlet's character should be obvious to him. It points Hamlet's undercurrent of sentimentality and of tender regard for the traditions in his line: "Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making?" It points Hamlet's combined cynicism, fatalism, and derisory humor in the speeches over the skulls. It points Hamlet's gift of sarcasm in the line: "I think it (the grave) be thine, indeed, for thou liest in it." It points his contempt for democracy in his sneering speech, "The age has grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe." And so on.

FASHION follows the figure as trade follows the flag.

—JACQUES WORTH

The eminent *couturier* and critic of modes here reveals himself a veritable Brillat-Savarin of boloney. Fashion does not follow the figure, but figure the fashion. A million dieting women humorously and sufficiently refute M. Worth's logic.

MR. TOMLINSON is a pipe-smoking author, and therefore apt to be calm, reflective, impersonal, and tiresome. The glowing briar seems to create a mood of philosophic abstraction which is not always as gratifying to the reader as it is to the writer. However, when Mr. Tomlinson's pipe goes out, and serves only as something on which to clamp his teeth, his detachment vanishes and the liquid fire of compassionate anger flows through his pen.

—ROBERT E. SHERWOOD in *Scribner's*

Mr. Sherwood has fallen for an item in the American Credo: that pipe-smoking induces a mood of detached calm and reflection, whereas cigar or cigarette-smoking induces one of relative nervousness and impatience. Where and how the legend started is difficult to make out. The Irish, a race of clay-pipe puffers, are the most bellicose living. The farmer, given to the corncob pipe, is the loudest arguer around the stove in the corner grocery store. It is the cigar smoker who is generally found

to be the calm, cool, and reflective fellow. Few good poker players smoke pipes.

I CHALLENGE Count Keyserling to mention one great man who, if he was an invalid, . . . was not obviously hampered by this invalidism.

—STRUTHERS BURT
in the *Saturday Evening Post*

Acting as the challenged Count Keyserling's second, I mention the following more or less great men who were not obviously hampered by their invalidism: Schumann, Rubens, Beethoven, Wagner, Heine, Molière, Strindberg, Ibsen, Swinburne, Rousseau, Chopin, Mozart, Swift, Cervantes, Bach, von Weber, Händel, Paganini, Samuel Johnson, Verlaine, Tschai-kovsky, Joshua Reynolds, Alfred de Musset, Homer, John Milton, De Quincey, William Cowper, Nietzsche, Sardou, Lafcadio Hearn, Mark Twain, and Robert Louis Stevenson.

THE ELEMENT that has been lacking in the practice of Christianity since the Middle Ages has obviously been that of beauty. The Bible itself does not supply it. Fine poetry as it is, Edna St. Vincent Millay is better.

—RALPH BARTON in *Life*

Recommended without reservation for the year's critical Pulitzer Prize.

LET ANY man in a city group quarrel with his wife at the breakfast table, and before luncheon every other member of the group will have heard about it. By evening it will be understood by psychoanalysts and by midnight the behaviorists will have learned of it. I return to the small town and breathe deeply of the open air. Here, at least, interests are not confined to personalities.

—ROSE WILDER LANE
in the *Pictorial Review*

What we engage here is the yokel's characteristic view of the city and characteristic lack of insight into the small town. In the city the interest in personalities is reduced to a minimum; it is mass life that interests the city man. Personalities and the gossip attached to them are the marked interest of the villager and small-towner. It is a platitude that in the city one hardly knows one's neighbor's name. In the small towns, the inhabitant not only knows his neighbor's name, but what he eats, how much money he has in the bank, how he treats his mother-in-law, when his wife's next baby is due, and how long he wears his socks without changing them.

The CURIES - Radium

Human Crucibles III



Drawings by Johan Bull

by **BERNARD JAFFE**

INTO a desolate region of southern Colorado, in the latter part of 1920, came a small army of men to dig for ore. Every acre of America had been searched for a certain rare mineral. Twenty years before it could have been imported from Austria, but now the Austrian Government had placed an embargo upon its exportation. So Joseph M. Flannery — the leader of this band of men — had to be satisfied with the peculiar sand of barren Colorado. This sand is called carnotite, and Flannery's gang of three hundred men worked feverishly collecting tons of it.

They threw the canary-yellow ore into wagons and sure-footed burros hauled it over eighteen miles of roadless wasteland to the nearest water supply, where Flannery had set up a concentration mill. Here five hundred tons of carnotite were chemically treated until only one hundred tons were left. This dirt was crushed into powder, packed into hundred-pound sacks, and carted sixty-five miles to the railroad at Placerville. Then they were loaded into freight cars and shipped twenty-five hundred miles to Canonsburg, Pennsylvania.

At Canonsburg two hundred men were set to work to reduce these tons of powder to but a few hundred pounds. Workers skilled in the handling of chemicals used immense quantities of water, coal, and acids to extract an invaluable treasure from the ore. Not a grain of the precious stuff was lost in innumerable boilings, filterings, and crystallizations. Months passed, and at last all that remained of the Colorado sand was sent under special guard to the research laboratories of the Standard Chemical Company in Pittsburgh.

Here the final task was a careful and painstaking procedure of separation, and when this was finished, a full year had

been consumed in all these operations and of the five hundred tons of dust there remained only a few crystals of salt. It was the most precious substance in all the world — a hundred thousand times more valuable than gold. To obtain it five hundred men had struggled with a mountain of ore and one hundred thousand dollars had been spent. These tiny crystals were put in ten small tubes, and these were placed in a steel box lined with thick walls of lead, which in turn was enclosed in a casket of polished mahogany. The precious casket was then locked and guarded in the company's safe to await the arrival of a visitor from France.

On May 20, 1921, the President of the United States stood in the reception room of the White House. Around him were grouped the French Ambassador, the Polish Minister, Cabinet members, judges, scientists. Before him stood a frail woman dressed in black. The President began to speak: "It has been your fortune to accomplish an immortal work for humanity. I have been commissioned to present to you this little phial of radium. To you we owe knowledge and possession of it, and so to you we give it, confident that in your possession it will be the means to increase the field of useful knowledge to alleviate suffering among the children of man."

THE POLISH GIRL

TO-DAY, in the chief laboratory of the Radium Institute of the University of Paris, this woman, now past sixty, works silently with her test tubes and flasks while all the world waits eagerly for another miracle. The years have not completely broken her, for her shoulders are still broad and bear witness to her unusual native strength. Her splendidly arched brow is crowned with

a mass of wavy gray hair, once blond. Her expressive, light blue eyes are full of sadness.

Marie Curie was born in Poland on November 7, 1867. She lost her mother when she was still an infant. Her father was Professor Sklodowska, teacher of mathematics and physics in the high school at Warsaw. Every Saturday evening he would sit before the lamp and read masterpieces of Polish prose and poetry. Marie would learn long passages by heart and recite them to him. Her father was to her one of the three great minds of history — Karl Gauss, mathematician and astronomer, and Sir Isaac Newton were the other two. When she confided this thought to her father, he remarked: "My child, you have forgotten the other great mind — Aristotle." And little Marie accepted his amendment in all seriousness.

In those days Poland was part of Russia. The czarist government imposed severe restrictions upon the subject population. The Polish language was forbidden in the newspapers, churches, and schools, and the Russian secret service kept jealous watch over the activities of the people. While Marie was still in her teens, some of her father's students formed secret associations to plot for the overthrow of the foreign oppressor. They met at night to teach in the Polish language, and Marie joined one of these groups. She even wrote for a revolutionary sheet.

At last the Russian police rounded up some of the young rebels. Marie escaped the net, but to avoid bearing witness against her unfortunate friends she had to leave Warsaw. So in the winter of 1891, at the age of twenty-four, she went to Paris. She rented a small room in a garret. It was bitterly cold in winter and stiflingly hot in summer. Up five flights