

## >> Why Reformers Are So << *Psychological Portraits of Politicians*

IF YOU are concerned with general attitudes toward public affairs, you will find, probably, that your associates are of two sorts; those who view with a rather hard-boiled, cynical scepticism the words and deeds of public officials, and those who are naïvely credulous about gifts of leadership. Seldom indeed do you find a compassionate realization that from the humblest city employee who collects your garbage to your esteemed president at best and at worst you have only human beings with all their possibilities of twisted thinking and their tendency to interpret life from personal experience.

Professor Harold D. Lasswell has for some years been studying case records of politicians, and the conclusions of his research are now published by the University of Chicago Press in *Psychopathology and Politics*. The fact that some of his cases were in institutions for the mentally disordered proves nothing except that they were unfortunate in not being able to remain at large with the rest of us. Although the book is evidently addressed to a limited group, the author is pioneering in a field which affects us all, whether we like it or not. Take one of his illustrations. A certain judge found himself acutely irritated by the presence of an attorney in the courtroom, even before the trial began. His sense of annoyance was so intense that in his endeavor to be fair and not allow prejudice to affect him, he was overfriendly to this attorney's side of the case.

It happened that the judge had been analyzed and realized he was acting from some inner emotional motive which had nothing to do with the situation, but was related to his own life. Using the technique of free phantasy, sometimes called free association, he began probing his thoughts about the man, letting out whatever came into his mind, without regard to logic or scruple. "Cigar smoke—black cigar—vile—pungent and stuffy—corridor." The word corridor reappeared several times, and finally the judge recalled a scene in the corridor of the law school where he studied, which involved a quarrel with a brilliant competitor. The man had treated him with insolence and he had had great difficulty in subduing his impulse to "sock" him, and, instead, receive the apology offered. Of course he thought the incident closed. It appeared, however, that something in the attorney's manner or looks was sufficiently similar to

the offending fellow-student to touch off the center of antagonism which had never been drained. His attitude toward the attorney was actually hostile and prejudiced, and if he had not been a developed and sensitive individual he might have used his judicial power to humiliate and punish an innocent person.

Professor Lasswell's purpose is to discover the sequences of experience which have affected the character of public officials, chiefly agitators and administrators. In detailed analysis he shows how shocks of childhood and lack of guidance, particularly in sex matters, have warped the mind of the adult. As to political types, he concludes that the agitator is usually a Narcissist or self-lover, with an excessive desire for public response, and the administrator is more concerned with coordinating and continuing activity.

Several years ago, Joel Rinaldo wrote a little book, *Psychoanalysis of the Reformer* (Lee Publishing Co.). His diagnosis was that "the typical reformer shows marked symptoms of Anaesthesia, Amnesia, Motor Disturbances, Abulia, Phobia, Fixed-Idea and Ego-Mania, and that such a coordination of symptoms can argue nothing but a chronic abnormal psychic condition, definable as meddling hysteria." In a highly Freudian manner the prohibitionist is analyzed, showing that his meddling hysteria is due to some inhibition, repression or perversion of his sexual life. We are shown that the desire to drink alcoholic beverages is sexual, hence the prohibitionist gets a masked pleasure in thwarting the drinking habits of the public. Whether this diagnosis will be accepted or not, it is evident that the author, not being inhibited, vented his spleen on puritanical hypocrisy and a grand time was had by all—except the poor prohibitionist.

Looking backward now, from contemporary America to 16th century Italy, we find a politically minded man analyzing himself. To Jean Stoner we are indebted for the first English translation of *The Book of My Life*, Jerome Cardan (E. P. Dutton), written in 1575. Plots, counterplots, imprisonments, escapes, hazardous journeys and thrilling events so filled the days of this famous Milanese physician, a contemporary of Cellini, the Florentine, one wonders how he ever found time to write more than 100 books, filling 7000 pages of folio. Everything was of interest to his busy brain. Be-

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tween epidemics and operations he wrote with equal authority on Poisons, Dreams, Geometry, the Uses of Adversity, the Planets, Music, Morality, and the Care of the Teeth. He was so great a mathematician that even today students of algebra use some of the principles and formulae which bear his name.

*The Book of My Life* is the autobiography of a man sufficiently in advance of his time to be deeply interested in the workings of the mind. He examined himself critically, analyzing his faults, his virtues, the many events of his unusual career, with candor. Since he was far from normal, his record has a certain clinical value for all schools of thought in psychology. In particular, Freudians will find significance in a sexual situation, in his early relationships with his parents and in his many dreams. For the disciple of Adler there is the story of a lifelong battle with pain and an organic deficiency; there is the soul struggle of a man who became the greatest doctor of his day, who stuttered, boasted, believed in guardian angels and omens, exhibiting, in fact, all the symptoms of the well-known Inferiority Complex with its many compensations.

FLORENCE GUY SEABURY.

## ► The Theatre ◄

USE all the supercilious, patronizing words about it you like; call it uneven, melodramatic, preachy and cheap. I'll agree to all that and then some, but it's the "then some" that makes *Five Star Final*, Louis Weitzenkorn's play, for me the most interesting and exciting now in New York. Its very faults—glaring and obvious as they are—by their magnitude make the skill with which the author and Worthington Miner, the director, make you forget them in moments of undeniable drama or pathos all the more amazing.

*Five Star Final* is, to begin with, based on several utterly untenable premises. You are asked to believe, for example, that a notorious acquitted murderess of twenty years ago and her husband would commit suicide because a tabloid newspaper was going to run a story about her. True, it looks as though the exposure of her identity as the murderess would endanger their daughter's prospect of marriage with a rich and otherwise desirable young man, but why would a woman with the fortitude to go through the original trial and the character to live an apparently happy married life for that long since think that suicide would help anybody, let alone herself? Why wouldn't those people go straight to their daughter and her fiancé, on learning that the tab was going to print the exposé, and find out whether the young man was worth bothering about? Incidentally, he proves that he is by sticking loyally to the girl even after the scandal and the double suicide.

Well, these and various other dubious points are never rationalized. Messrs. Weitzenkorn and Miner and some of the most skilful and forceful actors seen around here for a long time will make you—unless you're a good deal more blasé and/or hardhearted than I am—forget all about them. I have to confess that, dramatic critic though I am supposed (by myself, at least) to be, that time and again, immediately after saying to myself, "Why, that's cheap, false reasoning as bad as anything in the *Mirror* and the *Graphic* and the *News*!" I would be grabbing the arm of my seat or my companion with genuinely uncontrollable excitement or with my eyes suddenly filled with disgraceful (for a critic) tears.

To relapse again into critical analysis, *Five Star Final* is a violent polemic against the practice of sensational newspapers of probing into people's lives for stories, even to the extent of reviving ancient scandals the participants in

By OTIS CHATFIELD-TAYLOR

which had lived down through exemplary behavior. In order to make the old affair "news" the tabloids resort to

### Recommended Current Shows

**Art and Mrs. Bottle:** Jane Cowl and a good cast, including Leon Quartermaine, in an English comedy.

**Bird in Hand:** Drinkwater's delightful play seems to have bobbed up again.

**Civic Repertory:** They may overreach themselves but at least they're trying.

**Ruth Draper:** Unsurpassed character sketches. **Elizabeth the Queen:** The Lunt's perfect teamwork.

**Fine and Dandy:** They play music from this now at the 125th St. Burlesque show. It's better at the Erlanger.

**Girl Crazy:** As Ethel Merman sings in it, "Who could ask for anything more?"

**Grand Hotel:** Just broke the box-office record of all time. Depression? They never heard of it.

**Midnight:** Latest Theatre Guild offering. Sincere melodrama about justice and newspapers.

**Mrs. Moonlight:** All right; I am sentimental. **Oh, Promise Me:** Roughhouse expose of breach-of-promise technique.

**Once in a Lifetime:** How the master minds of Hollywood function.

**On the Spot:** Edgar Wallace about Chicago.

**Sweet and Low:** If you must pay revue prices for your vaudeville.

**That's Gratitude:** Aunt Susie would like Frank Craven but you wouldn't be bored either.

**Vinegar Tree:** Mildly rough, very funny farce with Mary Boland.

provoking themselves some sort of minor trouble which they will put on the front page and follow with a series of articles about the past and present and their miserable victim. Mr. Weitzenkorn knows what he's talking about, as he was recently managing editor of the *Graphic* for Mr. Bernarr Macfadden, and I have been assured on the best possible authority that all the incidents in *Five Star Final* are factual—indeed, that some actual happenings which the author included in his original script had to be removed as being too hard to believe. I need scarcely explain that my objections above to some of the premises of the play bear not on the events themselves, but on the use which is made of them.



Like *Grand Hotel* Mr. Weitzenkorn's play is episodic and cinematic in form. In fact, not only does he top the German lady in the number of scenes—there are twenty-one in *Five Star Final*—but once or twice he uses two small scenes played simultaneously with the main one, to show happenings in several parts of the newspaper office. Naturally, a revolving stage is employed. To continue the comparison, I was unable to detect any ideas which would get in the way of the sheer "theatre" of *Grand Hotel*. *Five Star Final*'s weaknesses are almost all caused by the fact that the author is most of the time preaching—either at those who publish and edit tabloids or those of us who (now, don't say you *never* do) read them.

Al Woods, the producer, and Worthington Miner have done the author great service in assembling and directing the cast. There are twenty-six in all and, with one exception about whom I do not propose to be churlish enough to be specific, they are more than uncommonly good. I am sure, however, that without the superlative work of Arthur Byron, Malcolm Duncan, Merle Maddern and Frances Fuller I shouldn't have been moved as I was. Some excellent comedy, too, is contributed by Lillian Bronson and Allen Jenkins, while Alexander Onslow makes himself thoroughly loathsome as the religious editor of the tabloid. I only hope I've made it clear that *Five Star Final* is something very much to be seen.

Although I wasn't asked, I'd like to butt into the discussion which Mr. Hiram Motherwell of the Theatre Guild Magazine promoted with eight eminent but anonymous dramatic critics as to "Which actors and actresses in America possess in your opinion a matured technique which enables them to enact many dissimilar rôles with equal sureness?" The number of players named by each critic ranged from ten to twenty-three. On every list appeared the name of Alfred Lunt and on all but one that of Lynn Fontanne. With that I won't disagree. They would both appear on any such list that I might be so silly as to compile. What astounds me is the inclusion on only one of the lady who has, without the aid of any repertory organization, appeared and made notable successes in such widely different things as *East Is West*, *The Dream Girl*, a musical comedy, *Jealousy*, and has acted both the title part and Kalonika in *Lysistrata*. Bainter. Fay Bainter; that's the name. What do they mean, technique?