

THE ARTS AND SCIENCES

Criticism

SENTIMENTALITY

By JOHN McCLURE

SCAMANDER—I have just seen a criticism in which a critic with red whiskers scorched a poet for sentimentality.

POLYCRATES—Did you learn, by any chance, what he meant by the word?

SCAMANDER—He neglected to mention it.

POLYCRATES—Sentimentality, as used by the critics, when it designates anything at all, designates an emotion they do not share or an emotion they disapprove. Usually, it means nothing at all.

SCAMANDER—I have heard another explain that the word means false emotion.

POLYCRATES—False emotion is a contradiction in terms. If there is any emotion at all, it is emotion. Simulated emotion, in histrionics, is, of course, possible, but histrionics, you must remember, is a respectable art. We are discussing a term of opprobrium.

SCAMANDER—The critics draw a gulf of distinction between emotion and sentimentality.

POLYCRATES—That is absurd. It is possible to distinguish between two types of emotion—the mental agitation caused by a reaction to sensation and direct experience, and the mental agitation caused by a reaction to symbols. But this is not the distinction drawn by your critic, who has no idea what he means. To sentimentalize is to emotionalize one's thinking. Sentimentality is the emotionalizing of thought. The sentimentalist is simply a person of emotional opinions, a person whose conduct is guided by emotional rather than by rational ideals. We are all, including the red-whiskered critic, sentimentalists. When he uses sentimentality as a term of opprobrium in the

arts, he is attempting to hide an intellectual deficiency.

SCAMANDER—He was, it seemed to me, merely using an oath with which to swear at a form of art he dislikes.

POLYCRATES—Precisely. He was using a catch-word which saved him the trouble of explanation. Such critics denounce genuine emotion as sentimentality, when the idea they actually intend to convey is simply that they do not share it or do not approve of it. Loose thinking of that sort is all about us. Those who weep over baby shoes are said by the sterile and the sophisticated to be guilty of sentimentality. The indictment signifies nothing except that the sophisticated personally experience no emotion when viewing baby shoes. The same confusion is present in the case of home and mother, the tradition of the service, and *noblesse oblige*. Those who do not share an emotion or who disapprove of the ideals which engender it shout "Sentimentality!" at the top of their voices. And your red-whiskered critic who thrills sentimentally at the name of Picasso is unmoved by the name of Robert E. Lee, for whom the Army of Northern Virginia went sentimentally to its doom. The patriot's deep reverence for the flag is termed sentimentality by cosmopolitans, cowards and traitors, yet we can hardly say that his emotion is not genuine.

SCAMANDER—That sort of thing, I think occurs in a multitude of instances. But I believe the critics who denounce the tears shed over baby shoes often do so because they believe the tears are not genuine.

POLYCRATES—Not sharing the emotion, it is but human that they should challenge its authenticity. But let us grant that the tears are not genuine, that they are simulated. If the person who weeps does so from an ulterior motive, he is a hypocrite and should be denounced, not as a sentimentalist, which is absurd, but as a hypocrite. On the other hand, if he weeps or attempts to weep because he believes it is the proper thing to do, he is simply indulging in ceremony, and his procedure is as honorable as eating with a fork. Is there anything opprobrious in manners?

SCAMANDER—Not that I know of. But the critics seem to believe that one should feel a powerful emotional urge to eat with a fork, else one should not eat with it.

POLYCRATES—Let us grant again that the tears shed over baby shoes are not genuine. In this instance, let us say they are simulated for the sake of simulation. The person weeping is indulging now, not in ceremony but in histrionics. It is a respectable art. We praise it in dramatists and actors. Why should we condemn it in conduct or lyrical poetry? If it is morally reprehensible or inappropriate, we should say so. It is absurd to take refuge in a catch-word like sentimentality.

SCAMANDER—The critics often use sentimentality and insincerity in the same breath as if they meant something similar.

POLYCRATES—Ideals, ceremonies, and emotions that are foreign to them, and histrionics, when they disapprove of it, are all bundled together under the term. I have spoken of the genuine emotion of patriotism, which is often sneered at under the name of sentimentality. The average citizen, who seldom feels the emotion of patriotism, is also denounced for revering and saluting the flag. But we must remember that he salutes the flag because he believes that that is the proper thing to do. He salutes the flag

for the same reason that he eats with his fork. It is a form of ceremony. To denounce the conduct of the patriot or the citizen as sentimentality is to invoke a form of cant to express contempt for the emotion of patriotism and for the institution of ceremony. The denunciation can be expressed in precise terminology and should be. To use jargon or cant in such cases is beneath the dignity of a thinking animal.

SCAMANDER—Usually, the critics tear their shirts over sentimental poetry, oratory and romances.

POLYCRATES—In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, what they loosely denounce as sentimentality is simply bad art. The Rotarian orator at whom so much fun is poked is usually guilty, not of sentimentality but simply of abominable rhetoric. His emotion is nearly always genuine and his ideals are often as practicable as ours. But he gets his metaphors mixed or is seduced into absurdity by hyperbole. The critics accordingly excoriate him as a sentimentalist. They have the habit of saying that good art expresses emotion, and bad art sentimentality. That is ridiculous. The difference between "My love is like a red, red rose" and a barber-shop lyric is merely the difference between good and bad verse. It is not a mark of intelligence to say that an artist clever enough to make us share his emotion is not sentimental, but that a bad artist, whose technique is faulty, is maudlin. Your red-whiskered critic despises ineffectual lyrics, because of their sentimentality, yet he will read "The Pot of Basil" over and over. And he will thumb Shakespeare's sonnets for hours—which, if he actually abhorred sentimentality, would burn his fingers. Nine-tenths of the world's lyrical poetry is sentimental, much of it maudlin. Critics who call good art emotional, and bad art sentimental, do not as a rule know what they are talking about. Art, in so far as it is an expression of our experience, must be sentimental, for man is a sentimental

animal. To denounce expressionistic art because it is sentimental is the sheerest nonsense.

Sentimentality is, of course, a term of opprobrium, when applied to criticism or philosophy. The purpose of criticism and philosophy is to evaluate emotional

experience and emotional opinion, not to revel in them. Criticism should be as free from emotionalism as possible. It should be completely objective and rational. Emotional opinion is nothing more than lyricism, and a sentimental critic is not a critic at all.

Medicine

THE CANCER PROBLEM

By E. S. PICKERING

IF MERE diligence in research were everything, the cancer problem would have been solved long ago. It has been attacked with great vigor and ingenuity in all civilized countries, and especially in England, Germany and the United States. Nevertheless, it remains unsolved, and the fact that it is still not near solution is shown by the difference of opinion among salient investigators as to what cancer basically is. Gye, the Englishman, whose work lately got a great deal of attention in the newspapers, believes that it is a parasitic disease due to an ultra-microscopic organism, operating in combination with a somewhat mysterious "specific factor." Bell, another Englishman and equally distinguished, holds on the contrary that infection has nothing to do with it, and that it is simply "a reversion on the part of the starving cell to the nutriment-seeking proclivities of its ancestral type"—in other words, that it is a matter of cells running amok. What causes this running amok Bell does not say, but he proposes to halt it by using colloidal lead, which has a lethal action upon lawless cells.

But if the primary causes of cancer thus remain undisclosed, a great deal has been learned about its method of progress in the body. Cancer cells may now be differentiated very clearly from normal cells, and at a relatively early stage. It is known that they pass through a stage in which their malignancy is scarcely more than potential—in other words, that a cancer always

starts out as something that is not a cancer. It is known how they proliferate, once they are in being, and it is known how they are conveyed from one part of the body to the other. And if a direct and positive cure of the resulting disease is yet lacking, it is known that, if taken in time, it may be headed off. No one, so far, has ever cured cancer, in the sense that syphilis and malaria may be cured, but many thousands of patients have been saved from death by surgeons who have cut their cancers out of them.

This must be done, of course, at any early stage—before the cancer has reached its maximum malignancy, and above all, before it has begun to set up secondary cancers in remote and vital parts of the body, beyond the reach of the knife. The struggle against the disease thus resolves itself into an effort to get into action against it at the earliest possible moment. Nearly all cancers, in their earliest stages, may be removed, either with the knife or with radium or the x-rays. The problem is to detect them in those earliest stages. It is complicated enormously by the fact that most cancers, when they first appear, are relatively harmless in appearance, and may be readily mistaken for lesions that are quite harmless—lesions so common that everyone is familiar with them.

Nevertheless, there are certain signs that serve to distinguish these harmless lesions from lesions that are beginning cancers, or may conceivably develop into cancers, and it is chiefly to educating the public in the recognition of such signs that the American Society for the Control of Cancer ad-

dresses itself. Many of them are simple and plain enough, and may be detected by the layman. There are, for example, moles. Nearly every human being has a mole or two, and most of them are harmless, but when a mole is dark in color and begins to show irritation it is a potential cancer, and should be cut out at once. So with lumps in the breast, especially in women. The majority of such lumps do no damage, but there is a minority that is extremely dangerous. Now that the women of America have been taught that any such lump deserves a careful examination they are seeking advice earlier than they used to, and so a great many beginning cancers are being detected, and their prompt and complete removal is undoubtedly saving many lives.

The statistics published by Bloodgood and his associates at the Johns Hopkins show plainly, indeed, that the practical business of dealing with cancer today is largely a matter of getting it early. Given enlightened patients and family doctors of reasonable skill and alertness, this is ordinarily not difficult, for it has been found that ninety-seven per cent of all cancers show themselves in time to be removed—that is, that only three per cent are hopeless from the moment of their first appearance. The percentage of definite cures among the former runs exactly parallel with the time of operative interference. In the very earliest stages of most forms of cancer, provided the site is not in a vital organ which makes operation impossible, a cure is almost certain. But in the later stages, even of relatively mild cancers, it is reduced to nothing.

Thus it is of the utmost importance that patients get to the table early, and to that end the Society for the Control of Cancer and its subsidiaries devote their main efforts. Their work already shows excellent results. American surgeons are finding that the proportion of inoperable and hopeless cases reaching them tends to diminish, and that the number of very early cases, in which the chances of working a cure are

very good, are increasing steadily. Thus the relative death-rate from cancer is probably decreasing, though the gross death-rate seems to be growing. This gross death-rate is growing, no doubt, largely because the disease is more often recognized than it used to be, and more patients are seeking competent advice. Here the gradual increase in the average span of life also has some influence, for cancer is mainly a disease of the later years. But the number of people who have had cancer and still live is unquestionably much greater today than it ever was before.

No cure for cancer, in the usual sense, is known today. Bell's experiments with colloidal lead are watched with great interest by American pathologists, but his case is still to be proved, if, indeed, he can ever prove it. Hundreds of drugs have been used against the disease, but always without success. Every few weeks a new one is announced in the newspapers, but it never lasts long. One may be discovered, of course, at any minute, for medical history shows that a disease may be cured, given luck enough, before its cause is definitely known. But the discovery, if it is ever to come, has not yet been made. The only measure against cancer that works is that of destroying it physically.

This is commonly accompanied by surgery. The surgeon simply cuts all around the cancer, and removes it bodily. If the job is cleanly done, and early enough, the cure is apt to be permanent: the patient, perhaps, is no more likely to have cancer again than a healthy person is to have it in the first place. Unfortunately, some cancers are in situations which make surgery extremely hazardous and even impossible, and some have gone to such lengths that they have spread to remote parts of the body. In such cases surgery would be forbiddingly mutilating at best, and sheer murder at worst.

In consequence, aid has been sought from radium emanations and the x-rays. Both seem to have the property of destroying cancer cells—at least of certain varie-

ties. Moreover, they do it without also destroying the normal cells adjacent. Yet more, they can go through such normal cells and reach cancer cells beyond—a thing of great importance in some situations. In the early days of their use they were employed ignorantly and recklessly, and so they probably did more harm than good, for exposure to them causes burns and even cancers. But now their effects have been studied scientifically, and they are used with more discretion and less risk. Certain mild forms of cancer appear to yield to them readily. In other forms, though they do not cure, they at least produce an appreciable amelioration, and thus increase the comfort of the patient. They are frequently used after operation as a sort of extra precaution, and to good effect. Here they destroy any stray cancer cells that may have escaped the surgeon, and prevent a recurrence.

But surgery remains the chief weapon against cancer. When the tumor is in an accessible place and there has been no implantation of other tumors in vital places, the obvious thing to do is to cut it out. If that is done early enough the percentage of permanent cures is very high—in some situations as much as 95%. Very elaborate and accurate techniques have been worked out by the surgeons. They know, by long experience, just what to cut out, and what not to cut out. They can determine precisely what type of cancer they

are dealing with—there are great differences in malignancy between the different types—and plan their procedures accordingly. But when they confront a patient in the late stages they can do little, and sometimes they can do absolutely nothing. Once a cancer has begun to run wild it is beyond the reach of anything known to medical men today. Surgery, in many cases, can still make the patient more comfortable, but it cannot cure him.

The one feasible way to diminish the cancer death-rate is thus to get patients earlier and earlier. Getting them earlier resolves itself into teaching the public how to recognize the first signs of the disease. If every woman with a lump in her breast went to a good surgeon immediately after its first appearance, very few women would die of breast cancers. A majority, perhaps, would find that what they feared was harmless—a benign tumor, needing no operation. The rest would go to the table in plenty of time, with the odds greatly in their favor. But today only too many temporize. They wait to see what will happen. What happens is disaster.

It need not be risked. The Johns Hopkins figures show that, before 1900, with the public still ignorant, the percentage of 5-year cures after operation, for all forms of cancer, was less than 10%. But since 1918, with the public beginning to be enlightened, the percentage of 5-year cures has run beyond 70%.

HORSES

BY JAMES STEVENS

AS A BOY in a prairie town I early learned to revere the work horse. To me, as to all boys, a dog was a slave, but a horse was a hero. And the men who handled him were heroes, too. On Summer Saturday mornings I would lie in the grass under a maple tree, drowse in the heavy prairie heat, and watch the town-going farmers pass. The surrey and buggy teams never touched my fancy; I could see such light, lively horses any day in the town streets and in the livery barn. And the rough-haired, scrawny, hungry-eyed teams of the shiftless Soap Crickers were beneath notice, of course. But let me catch sight of a team of work horses such as Mister Barrick drove; and then how I would lift my head, prop my chin on my fists, look with wide eyes, and feel the glow of a waking dream!

The road, with a cloddy ridge in the center and a wheel-marked path on each side, ran straight down a small hill and twisted sharply into the green trees of Elm Hollow. From these trees sounded the lusty rumble of a lumber-wagon and the jingle of harness. Suddenly the massive heads of two gray horses emerged from the greenery. There was a flash of polished brass from the studded ornamental tabs of leather that flapped over their wide foreheads, and a shine from the small colored rings which were strapped in their headstalls. Their big hoofs struck the wagon tracks forcefully as they tramped soberly on. A red neck-yoke hung from heavy breast-straps, and it swung now to the right, now to the left, as the front wheels rolled into chuck holes and jerked the tongue. At each swing there was a sharp

tug at the stout oak hames of the horses, but they tramped on unwaveringly.

Their bodies came into full view. Short, thick necks, and waving curly manes. Immensely wide shoulders and deep chests, the dappled gray hair rippling over moving bands and rolls of muscle, the thick leather traces tight over the wide shoulders and fat sides. What broad, inviting backs under the brass-studded leather of the backbands! It looked as if you could spread out a bed on one of their backs and go to sleep there. The breeching slipped from broad hip to broad hip and tightened and loosened over round, thick buttocks. The gray tails, brushed glossy and clean by Mister Barrick, swung out in sweeping waves at the pestiferous Summer flies.

The wheels of the rumbling wagon were yellow; the wagon box was green, with strips and curlicues of red for decoration. The spring seat slanted to the right under the weight of Mister Barrick. He himself was a regular work-horse of a man. A straw hat shaded his eyes, a brown beard curled over his cheeks and chin, and between suspenders and sleeve-holders muscles bulged the cloth of his hickory shirt. He rode with a straight back, and he drove with tight lines. Mister Barrick was as proud of himself as he was of his clean wagon and fat, glossy work-horses.

How great and strong Bob and Jake appeared as they plodded into the shade of my maple tree! They were the strongest and most dangerous horses in the whole country, but Mister Barrick could do anything with them. I knew, for he often let me ride with him on the days when he hauled milk to the cheese factory.