



WHY ARE YOU UNHAPPY?

D ID you ever stop to consider the true answer to the above question? If you attempt to tell me that you are not unhappy, I will merely rule your response out as boastful and unfrank. Of course, you are unhappy. You may have lucid intervals. Most of us do. They are moments of forgetfulness. Some of us achieve these rare and dreamlike periods of mental abstinence by drinking great draughts of music—or of something more constantly on tap; and others of us attain to the same cloudland of calm by playing golf or going hunting or losing money at “bridge,” or in some fashion accumulating artificial troubles which make us forget our real ones. But, barring these lucid intervals, we are all unhappy. And the question before the House is—“Why are you unhappy?”

I KNOW perfectly well. It is of no use to shut your closet door on your skeleton. I saw it, while you had the door open a while ago, gloating over it in greedy and satisfying misery. So I will tell you what it is. It is not the tooth-ache; it is the fear that that sensitive feeling in your tooth means it is going to ache if you do not let a dentist hurt it first. There is your secret. It may not, of course, be a sensitive tooth that bothers you; it may be only a sensitive bank account or a “grumbling” investment or a job that seems to be “getting loose.” But my point is that your bank account is all right to-day—your investment is not yet lost—your job is still there. In a word, you are not hurt yet, but are only going to be. Your tooth does not actually ache.

VERY, very few of us are unhappy because of active and present miseries which afflict us. We are not hungry. We are not cold. We suffer from none of the things which mean unhappiness to most living creatures. Most living creatures in our positions would be as contented as a cow chewing its cud. But that is because they lack the mental organ which tortures us. They have no imagination. There is no use going to a cow, lying in the shade of a great tree, chewing away in drowsy happiness on a juicy “cud” made of grass she has just cropped, and saying to her—“I see by the almanac that a drought is coming when there will be no grass, and then you will have no cud to chew.” You can’t worry a cow that way. It has too much sense, and too little imagination. But you can worry a human “calf” half to death by that very process; and make the sweetest cud bitter in its mouth. That shows how superior we are to the beasts of the field. We know more ways of being unhappy.

“TAKE anxious thought for the morrow.” That is the new commandment. And has it made us happy? I don’t mind you substituting new things for old if they are better; but if they are worse—We have grown so determined to look ahead and provide for all possible contingencies that we can no longer enjoy the bright spring sunshine which is flooding the world all about us, for thinking of the possibility that, on the Friday after next, it may rain, and we may be caught out in it without a raincoat, and a cold may fasten itself upon us in consequence which will develop into pneumonia, and—Then right across the spring sunshines moves slowly and sorrowfully our own sad funeral to which fewer of the neighbours have come than we would have expected, and “little Jimmy” had no black suit to wear, and—Well, what can that bird be singing about anyway? Bless you, the bird knows that spring has come; and you—great, wise, human—who may not see too many springs march with golden footsteps over this glorious old world of ours, cannot see the spring at all for the shadow of the autumn.

THE modern human being, if he lives above “the submerged tenth”—in this country, it ought to read “the submerged hundredth”—has very seldom any present cause for being unhappy. Sometimes his tooth will ache, of course; but he has only to telephone his dentist, drop in an hour after, and this source of unhappiness is removed. Again, a loved one will die. There is no escape from that

form of unhappiness that I know of. But, generally speaking, the modern man and woman ought to be always happy, judged by standards which once governed happiness. But they are not happy. I doubt if they are as happy as their careless, reckless, hand-to-mouth ancestors who had so much trouble that they did not permit it to trouble them. But the point I want to make is that our trouble is practically all borrowed. It is not that we suffer—it is only that we fear we may suffer.

WHO is it who said that a coward dies many times, but a brave man only once. It is as true as the verdict of a foot-rule. If we would cease suffering the ills which we anticipate, and which practically never come, our sky would be ever sunny. I do not know whether I gave you

some time ago the testimony of an old friend who told me that the things he dreaded never came to pass; but that all his troubles fell on him out of a clear sky. But, in any case, it is worth repeating. His is the common experience. How often—oh, how often—I have permitted apprehensions of the future to poison the joys of to-day; and, long before the date of their possible fulfilment, I have seen how impossible they always were. What this generation wants is not so much to let the “dead past bury its dead,” as to let the “fool” future do its own fool-killing. “Never trouble trouble till trouble troubles you.” That is sound advice.

DON’T worry! I know that that is a little like advising a friend not to take his money out of a bank, on which there is a “run,” when you have no money in it to take out. It is easy not to worry over other people’s troubles. But—believe me!—it is also quite easy to cultivate a habit of not worrying over your own which will save you from all minor misgivings so long as you are in good health. Let your nervous system run down a bit; and, I grant you, it is impossible to prevent the most ridiculous worries from putting pins in your pillow.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

Breaking a Blockade

Spring Freshet in the House of Commons, Lately Our National Sanatorium

By JOHN MELVILLE

WE now have upwards of 200 patients at the Sanatorium on Parliament Hill. Many of them are quite distinguished; names known from ocean to ocean. But they’ve all got nerve trouble, which for convenience’ sake we diagnose as parliamentary neuritis. Some have insomnia. Some drop off to sleep right in their chairs—poor dears! They are all subject to one grand illusion, which is technically known as Canadiana-Imperitis.

There have been symptoms of the outbreak since last November. But nobody ever dreamed it would become an epidemic. Now for two weeks they’ve all had it.

Of course, they don’t all stay at the sanatorium at once. In fact, the average attendance isn’t over 70. We find it better to let them out. They’re quite harmless. And they all come back.

Now we don’t give them medicine; except that every little while a few of them go to the dispensary upstairs and get a little harmless beverage. The best way is to let them do pretty much as they like, keep them cheerful, give them plenty of light and air and mild exercise. Besides, there’s one grand game that delights them all. They play it hour by hour, day after day, week upon week.

They call it—Talking-out-a-Bill.

This is far better than charades or ping-pong or bridge-whist. It’s a very simple game. The patients choose sides. One of them is made a chairman; sometimes a Speaker—just to see that the rules of the game are observed. The patients choose sides, about equal in number. One side brings in the bill. The other side undertakes to talk on it without a break for six days, while the others listen—most of the time. In this way it’s a good deal like a Cree thirst-dance where for six days the tomtoms never stop and there’s always somebody dancing.

Of course, it isn’t necessary for everybody to listen. Because this bill is known as the Naval Service Act; and it concerns ships and emergencies and Dreadnoughts and the armour-plate press and fleet units and autonomy and Imperial Federation—and \$35,000,000; concerning which it’s quite possible to say a great many things that have nothing to do with the case. Though it’s really surprising what a lot of interesting things can be said by the Talking side, if you only give the patients a chance to read the books in the big library.

Everybody is allowed to read. Any patient who wants to talk may bring in with him as many books as he likes, and read extracts—so long as it has something to do with the case.

But we must introduce you to some of the patients whose behaviour throws a good deal of light on this epidemic Canadiana-Imperitis in the game Talking-out-a-Bill. The other morning here was Douglas Hazen, Minister of Marine, reading the Round Table (Imperial Quarterly) and holding in his left fingers the stump of a cigar. Frank Oliver on the Talk side sprawled himself over two seats as though he had been camping on a Red River cart trail. Michael Clark from Red Deer wrote letters home—

he’s one of the patients that reads a lot in the library and talks a good deal; Manchester free-trader and autonomist.

Sam Hughes sat on his own seat and hoisted his slimy gaiter boots over the arms of another. Sam Barker reads and reads—great thick books that sometimes put him to sleep. George Graham keeps lifting the lid of his desk and looking for a chance to interject a joke; very genial George! “Whip” Stanfield keeps bustling about from one desk to another; he looks after the players on the Sit-it-out side, just as F. F. Pardee does the Talkers; lively lads!

Somebody palavers in French. Once in a while he reads English—just for a change. That’s a rule of the game; both languages allowed—and, of course, that makes it necessary for the scribes who write out the talks for “Hansard” to keep very busy.

But Rodolphe Lemieux doesn’t bother much with his native French, in which he is very skilful, because he does so well in the very best of English. And R. L. has a wall of books behind and a rampart of papers below. The books are all earmarked where he wants to turn something up about sea-power or Canada and the navy. He is one of the best talkers of the lot, and much enjoys being personal with both Mr. Borden and A. E. Kemp on the other side.

Kemp is always so neatly dressed that he doesn’t mind being jibed by Rodolphe. Mr. Borden smiles and looks like a magnificent Egyptian—such a dusky complexion. H. R. Emmerson, of the curly grey hair and the nonchalant looks, now and then puts a word in, which nobody hears, because everybody is either talking or reading or sleeping while the talker talks.

Then there’s Claude Macdonnell, of irreproachable togs and a fine slanting tie-pin. He looks just about the antipodes of Frank Carvell on the other side, who glowers with folded arms looking as though any minute he would erupt into another pugilistic diatribe. Sorry Frank has lost his red vest and is beginning to get bald.

Mr. Pelletier, alongside Mr. Borden, wears a subordinated and quite guileful giggle as he hears Lemieux twit him about “colonial nobility.” He enjoys the game. Frank Cochrane lolls superbly on a seat and a half, and once in a while shuffles over to the Premier’s desk for a quiet little confab. The member for Ste. Hyacinthe rises to introduce a little game of his own—baiting Coderre. Mr. Borden listens gravely and replies courteously, stipulating Monday as the day to bring up the Coderre matter again.

Robert Rogers—ah! there’s a clever patient. You never can tell what he might say from the way he looks when he’s silent. He never needs to talk. He is the Minister of Works. And to him this game is a very childish thing.

But the man who sits most apart just beyond the Cabinet rows and writes and reads and cogitates and calls pages hither and thither—is Billy Maclean. He doesn’t care at all for the game called

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