II—Monsieur Coué in New York

By Ernest Hamlin Abbott

It is the shrewdness in M. Coué's face that makes the first impression; then it is the humor; and, finally, the good nature and the kindness. If you like the provincial Frenchman, you will like Coué. He is typical of the substantial citizen of a small French town who has perhaps inherited a modest patrimony, has conducted his business wisely, and has saved his francs. He might well be the Mayor of Bazolles. With a reputation that extends over all the world and has spread greatly in America, this short, rather stout, gray-haired, gray-bearded druggist remains in outward appearance just as he would have been if he had continued in his former business.

He not only gives no sign of assuming greatness, but he gives no sign of assuming modesty. There is no assumption of any sort about him. When he disclaims any special powers, he does so, not in a deprecatory manner, but in the way of merely stating a fact that needs to be understood.

This man from Nancy (whose name as he pronounces it sounds like that of former Senator Quay spoken quickly and crisply) definitely disclaims being in any sense a healer. He does not pretend to cure people of anything. He has not the attitude of the physician. Neither has he any of the aspects of the preacher of religion. He is not a prophet of a new faith. He disclaims any special interest in religion or in anything like religion. He offers nothing as a substitute for faith, as he offers nothing as a substitute for medicine.

He seems to be more like a teacher; and not like a college teacher, but like a kindly teacher of children. His methods are simply those of the schoolmaster who wants to get an idea into the schoolchildren's heads.

He has seized upon one idea in psychology. It is that the imagination is the ruler of our unconscious thoughts, decisions, and acts. There is a great deal in our lives that is unconscious. Some writers, without much justification for the term, have called it the subconscious. The familiar old trick of a boy sucking a lemon in the full sight of a German street band in order to make their mouths water and thus incapacitate them for playing is a good illustration of the action of the unconscious.

Those German band players, try as they may, cannot avoid their plight. The very sight of that lemon appeals to their imagination and makes the saliva flow.

M. Coué cites an example of the novice on a bicycle who wants nothing at the time so much as to avoid the rock in the road and nevertheless because he imagines himself hitting it makes directly for it. It is this power of the imagination that he asks his fellow-men to employ for their own good. As he says, the imagination leads us. If we lead the imagination, therefore we shall lead ourselves.

He is apparently perfectly aware of the limits of the power to which he would have us appeal. He knows perfectly well that no amount of imagination will make an eye that is truly blind see, or will enable one suffering from true paralysis to walk. He is not interested particularly in diagnosing disease or in curing those ills with which modern medicine and surgery are battling.

For this reason, he does not greatly interest the modern scientifically trained medical man who engages in his work with the scientific devotion of the biologist. Nevertheless he has perhaps a contribution to make to the professional ideas of the practical physician. He would like to make a course in auto-

The most injurious effect is likely to be the same as that which follows any movement for self-improvement. It will tend to make people think about themselves. It will tend to confirm the no-

M. Émile Coué on his Arrival in America

(C) Keystone
tion that the end and the object of life is not character or service, but physical well-being or mental tranquility. It will promote one of the worst phases of modern life—the habit of introspection without the restraint of science or the inspiration of religion.

The other chief danger, perhaps not as serious but probably more general, will come from the false ideas that will cluster about this. People will get the notion that M. Coué is offering something as a substitute for faith. They will imagine that a piece of string with knots in it which pass through the fingers as one repeats his formula will bring to the world the same recuperative power that has been brought to thousands of simple believers who have told their beads. It will lead people to think that by working their own imagination they can seize upon the same kind of power that has made a Paul of Tarsus, a Savonarola, a Luther, and a Wesley. Even more probably, it will lead people to think that here is something that makes scientific medicine antiquated. It may lead them to think that by appealing to their own imaginations they can dispense with the knife of the surgeon, with the diagnosis of the physician, and the care of the nurse, and the treatment of the hospital. Thus it is almost certain to raise hopes that will be wrecked, to create illusions that will vanish, and to bring in the train of these baseless hopes and illusions disappointment, grief, and bitterness.

The unfortunate consequences of what may follow the attempts to cultivate the idea which M. Coué would propagate M. Coué himself would be the first to deplore. He has come to America, it is said, with no thought of personal gain, but only with the idea of benefiting his fellow-men. It is true that some of the methods of M. Coué remind one of the patent-medicine man. He undertakes to demonstrate what by his methods at least is undemonstrable. He reads letters from people who have followed his advice that read much like the testimonials for Father John’s Medicine or Lydia E. Pinkham’s Vegetable Compound. In this respect M. Coué shows how far removed his mind is from the mental atmosphere in which the scientific medical man moves. In fact, from the atmosphere of any science. There is nothing that is more easy to obtain and nothing that is less conclusive for the scientific man than a collection of individual testimonials. They serve, however, M. Coué’s purpose by appealing to the imagination, which he wishes to stimulate.

The secret of M. Coué’s success is in his evident sincerity, in his apparent desire solely to serve his fellow human beings, and, chiefly of all, in his extraordinary capacity for making his ideas seem simple. He speaks simply and clearly, he drives his point home by illustrations that everybody understands, he has reduced his ideas to formulas which people can repeat and get into their minds by that means. He has a genius for popularizing one small branch of psychology. If every teacher had M. Coué’s kindness, charm, shrewdness, and simplicity, young people would go to school and college for the fun that they could get in their classrooms as well as on their playing fields.

NEW MEXICO AFILAME AGAINST TWO BILLS

I—PARKS AND INDIANS

BY ROBERT STERLING YARD

Following the lead of the Women’s Club of Albuquerque, the Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs (two of the largest and most influential business men’s organizations in New Mexico) have also passed resolutions against adding to the National Parks System the queer collection of spots, from two or three to ninety miles apart across deserts, which Secretary Fall personally worked through the Senate as part of his Mescalero Indian Reservation Bill and now is trying to put through the House.

Besides its lack of any qualification whatever for National Park honors and the impossibility of its proper administration, Secretary Fall’s All Year National Park, as he calls it, will introduce irrigation, water power, mining, lumbering, and the leasing of industrial privileges into the National Parks System.

The resolutions against it show that the people of New Mexico have a remarkably clear conception of the public policy governing our National Parks System. They also seriously object to their State being misrepresented in the system by so ignoble a park unit. They protest to Congress against this bill comes from every State in the Nation, but it is greatest by far in New Mexico. In fact, the New Mexican state of mind over this and the Pueblo Indian Bill is altogether exceptional in any State at any time.

The central and northern parts of the State, where live the great bulk of the population, are greatly stirred up. The principal newspapers, led by the Santa Fé “New Mexican” and the Albuquerque “Herald,” devote columns of news and editorials to the All Year Park at intervals. The only New Mexican newspaper voices so far lifted in its favor are those of two weeklies in Las Cruces, near the southern border. One of these, the “Citizen,” appeals to “the wives and mothers of Albuquerque” in behalf of “the poor emaciated babies in the southern part of the State” whom the proposed All Year National Park will help “regain their rosy little cheeks.” The wives and mothers appealed to belong to the Albuquerque Woman’s Club.

As additional facts emerge and drop into the perspective of the whole, it is becoming apparent that this is no flare of momentary indignation, but an expression of a long-simmering resentment. Instead of calming the public mind the Pueblo Indian Bill, which followed in September, at once started still another determined opposition from end to end of New Mexico.

THE PUEBLO INDIAN LANDS BILL AN ALLIED MEASURE

This bill, ordering the United States courts to accept as prima facie evidence of title the Joy survey of 1914-16, which located the claims of all white squatters on lands which the Pueblo Indians have held since before the Spanish occupation, is the second of its kind. The original bill was introduced in 1921, and the Indian Rights Association promptly protested against it to Secretary Fall in person and denounced it in its annual report. Secretary Fall did not push that bill. Instead, he procured the appointment of R. E. Twitchell to the Department of Justice and had him assigned to visit the pueblos. Mr. Twitchell helped write the present bill, which, though differently phrased, is identical in purpose.

This new bill was worked through the Senate by the identical tactics which had been used so successfully with the All Year Park Bill. In that case a bill belonging in the Public Lands Committee was referred to the Indian Affairs Committee, which knows next to nothing about National Parks. In the Pueblo Indian case a bill belonging in the Indian Affairs Committee was referred to the Public Lands Committee, which knows next to nothing about Indians.

In both instances Senator Bursum, who sponsored both, used Secretary Fall’s official influence to secure favorable reports, the Indian Bureau and the National Park Service both being bureaus in the Interior Department. In both instances Senator Bursum secured passage through the Senate by claiming administrative reasons. In both instances Secretary Fall himself wrote to