

THE VILLAGE REFORMER

Harrison Wells, Age 56; born in Hampton, Conn. of New England parentage; education, year of high school; occupation, farm laborer; married, has two boys aged 13 and 11.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Three times within the last ten years, Harrison Wells has been an inmate of this Hospital. Each time the difficulty has been of much the same nature. His zeal for reform has gotten him into hot water and the hot water has brought on a disorder of the mania type, characterized by excessive activity and pronounced ideas of grandeur.

Mr. Wells comes of an old New England family and is a product of a New England country community. As a young man he sought his fortune in the city. He worked for a year as deliveryman for a grocery store in Springfield. He then served as bookkeeper and all-around utility man for a real estate agent in Somerville. Here, after about a year, he suffered an attack of "acute maniacal excitement" and spent six weeks in Taunton. Upon his release he returned to his old job in Springfield. This he held for six years. Then, at the age of thirty, he returned to the country and has remained there ever since. At one time he had a small farm of his own, but was not successful. For the last eleven or twelve years he has worked as a hired man. Fifteen years ago, at the age of forty-one, he married a woman three years his junior, whom he had known in Springfield. They have two bright boys, one thirteen and one eleven years old.

In appearance, Mr. Wells is short and powerfully build. His most prominent features are his overhanging eyebrows and his determined-looking jaw. His expression is generally serious, but is frequently smiling. He is well informed and talks intelligently and shows a considerable degree of outward self-control.

S U M M A R Y O F M E D I C A L R E C O R D S

The first commitment was in April 1893, to the Taunton State Hospital. The onset of the disturbance was rather sudden. He had begun to get excited about three weeks before his admission, but while in that period he was not able to attend his work, he did not become troublesome until a day or two before admission. In the hospital he was restless and noisy and had to be placed in seclusion. He was then mischievous and full of foolish, rambling talk. His letters were full of morbid religious sentiment. He was discharged June 23.

The second commitment was in October 1915. The onset at this time was somewhat gradual and he showed certain paranoid trends. He thought people were after him with guns and that there was a plot to poison him. He demanded protection from the town and wanted the militia called out. Several days before admission he advertized a lecture to be given by himself on

"Physical Reverence and its Application to the Foreign War." To this he charged an admission of 5 cents. He invited the Governor to be present with his militia and called Central to find out if the militia had arrived. He was discharged on visit in June 1916.

The third commitment was in June 1921. He had shortly before this attempted to break up Sunday baseball in the village and had become greatly excited over it. He had also been greatly wrought up on the subject of patriotism. His chief concern in this was that the school flag should fly at the proper hours and in the proper position. He also talked much about the use of liquor and tobacco and was constantly consulting lawyers. Toward his wife he was very irritable and was excessive in his sexual demands. In the Hospital he was at first violently excited. He had ideas that his property was being taken from him and that his wife was mistreating him and was suspicious and abusive. He admitted auditory hallucinations. But he soon settled down and became quiet and cooperative. He was discharged in May 1922.

His fourth and last commitment came on May 8, 1924. For some weeks previously he had been hypomanic, writing letters and attempting to effect various reforms in the matter of selling cigarettes, keeping the stores open on Sunday, auto-speeding, swearing, etc. The climax came in a domestic difficulty. His wife had refused to come to his room and he retaliated by making a complaint about her sleeping with her thirteen-year old son. On admission he showed moderate hypo-mania reaction, talking loudly at night and full of all sorts of schemes, especially in regard to the various reforms he desires to make. But he was always courteous and self-assured. But he soon quieted down. He is strong and a faithful and willing worker. When not working he spends his time writing letters to relatives and government officials, and others. In his letters to his wife he has shown a domineering attitude, with many veiled threats. He refers frequently to his having kept her out of the hospital all those years and berates her for sleeping with her thirteen-year old boy. In the Hospital community he frequently complains of this thing and that thing which he believes wrong and interests himself to an annoying degree in the welfare of other patients.

The diagnosis is as follows: Manic-depressive psychosis, manic phase.

We have here a man of 55 in whom the first recorded attack of mental disorder occurred 30 years ago with a frank manic attack. Since then he has been twice confined at Worcester. He seems to have a chronic hypo-mania characterized by officious interest in his neighbors' business, a domineering attitude toward his family, excessive sexual demands upon his wife, and throughout a strongly woven system of ideas as to reforms of various sorts.

Personality: A domineering, hard-working man with extremely poor judgment.

Prognosis: He will probably never be entirely normal.

P E R S O N A L H I S T O R Y

The patient was born in Hampton, Connecticut, in 1869. His father was a farmer and he and a sister three years younger than himself were children of his father's first marriage. His mother died when he was less than five years old. He was seven years old when his father married again.

He can remember his mother only indistinctly and her memory does not play much of a part in his life. Her death occurred in her thirty-fifth year as a result of bronchial pneumonia.

His father died at the age of 56 in the patient's 21st year. Most of his life, the father had been a semi-invalid because of his asthmatic trouble. His father was a member of the Congregational Church, but was not particularly regular in attendance. Neither was he active in community affairs. He was, however, always an honorable and upright man.

In school the patient has gone as far as the second term of high school. He gave up school at that time in order to go to work because of his father's failing health. He was fond of studying and was considered one of the best scholars. He was always ambitious. "I wanted to be president of the United States (laughs), I guess I'll have made a better president than Calvin Coolidge. At least I would not have used tobacco." His health, however, was always poor. He was a nervous youngster with inherited weakness. For this reason he felt the professions out of the question. However, he studied a good bit by himself.

In his relationship with other young people he was not particularly shy or bashful. He never danced nor did he take part in athletics. His chief pastime was roller skating. He also did much reading, usually books of a serious nature. He did not go much with girls.

After leaving school at the age of fifteen he first went to work on his father's farm. He stayed there until he was twenty-one. During this period there was for him little social life. His father's farm was at some distance from the village and he did not have many contacts with the other young people. At the age of twenty-one he left home and went to Springfield. He took a position there with a cousin delivering groceries. Eight months later his father died. He returned to run the farm but soon sold the property and returned to Springfield, to his old position. After working here several months he accepted a position with a telephone company. He remained here about a year. Then he went to Somerville, where he worked as general assistant to a real estate dealer.

It was here after perhaps a year that his first attack developed. It was brought on by suffering and ill health. He had always been of an excitable disposition and he began to worry for fear he was going to pieces. He was losing sleep and becoming irritable and lacked energy. No, it was not due to

worry over a sex problem. He had never had any particular conflict over this. His interest in sex, however, began early. He was always an investigator and he found out about those things by reading medical books. He has always been of a "passionate nature" but his passion was a healthy one. He has never had relations with any woman except his wife, at least after puberty. Before that he had had mix-ups with some other youngsters. This happened when he was about twelve years old. But he has never worried over this.

Neither was he at that time involved in any particular love affair. While in Somerville he had been keeping company with a girl who worked in the telephone office, and when he was taken to Taunton, she and his sister accompanied him. He had previously, while in Springfield, had some sort of a love affair. There was a certain girl whom his father had wanted him to marry, but he knew that she was in love with another man. Neither of these love affairs were responsible for the disorder which took him to Taunton.

At Taunton he spent a good bit of time in a padded cell. He was a good bit excited and was hollering and yelling. He was frightened most to death at the thought of being shut up. He was afraid he would never be let out.

Upon his discharge he went into the country for a few weeks. Then he returned to Springfield and took his old job in his cousin's grocery store. A few months later he was made president of the Christian Endeavor Society. In accepting this office, he asked to have it understood that he was not a church member. He had been asked to join but had refused because of the action of the church in turning out a certain dacon. He has never joined the church although he has always been of a religious temperament and has always been favorable toward the church.

His term as president of the C. E. Society was marked by two outstanding events; the aid which the Society, through his insistence, gave to a poor colored man and the stand which he took against admitting to their membership a man who was a saloon-keeper. In this matter he was on the unpopular side. One of those who supported him most warmly was a Miss Phillip, who is now his wife. His connection with the C. E. Society was terminated at the end of a year because of his disapproval of the action of the church with reference to the deacon whom they had ousted.

After remaining in Springfield about six years he returned to work on a farm, largely because of his health. He had begun to worry over his inability to sleep. At first he worked as a hired man. Then he went to Maysville, where he rented his stepmother's farm. He has remained there ever since.

His marriage took place fifteen years ago. His wife he had known in Providence. He had boarded in the house where she lived and she had been chairman of one of the committee in the C. E. Society at the time he was president. They had kept up their acquaintance since and just before they were married she came up and visited his sister. Before her marriage Mrs. Wells had had a good position as bookkeeper in an insurance office. He was at this time forty-one years old and she thirty-eight.

He had at this time, with the help of his sister, who was or had been a teacher of domestic science at Cornell College, bought a small farm. He did not, however, succeed in making it pay and they had to sell it. About ten years ago he felt it necessary to apply for public aid. It was worry over this that brought on his second attack.

The interest in reform which characterized this and the succeeding attacks has been of long standing. It dates from his fourteenth year, when he accepted his father's views on the evil of the tobacco habit. While in Springfield he began writing articles for the papers. One of these was on the subject of expelling corruption from government. This article contained many quotations from Cate, whom he had been reading at the time.

As to the general trend of his personality, the patient thinks he has gained in power to be patient and to suffer without murmuring. He has also learned to look at things philosophically. The one thing which makes life worth living for him is his wife and his children. He thinks everything of his home and he wants above all things to win back his wife's affection and confidence. He has given her a hard life. He knows that, and he recognizes that he has been much at fault.

THE WIFE'S ATTITUDE

Maysville, May 24, 1924

Dear Sir:

Replying to your letter of the 23rd, I wish to say that I am not financially able to come to Worcester very often. I have not only my own fare to pay but the two half-fares of the children each way.

I am doctoring for exophthalmic goitre and need quiet and no excitement, I am taking in outside work and the children and I are now happy and comfortable. I realize that he wants to see the boys occasionally, and I shall see that he does see them. He loves his two boys. My life has been a hard one. I am not perfect, but I have always tried to do my duty as a wife and mother. My two boys are my life and joy. I have always done more than a wife's share toward the support of the home. I am glad that I could, I think that I can say that the past six months have been the nearest like living of the last fifteen years.

Mr. Wells was urged and advised not to get into reform work or to get excited again, as we knew the results if he did. But he persisted, and said if I interfered in any way he would make trouble for me. Almost daily he told me that the doctors at the hospital told him I ought to be in the hospital. Nobody likes to be told that too often. His reform work was against profanity, selling cigarettes to miners. Free-Masonry, village stores selling groceries on Sunday, prohibition, observance of the flag law and Bible reading in the school, and auto-speeding. Every village store in town has notices, etc., which have been hung up through Mr. Wells' influence.

Generally the last act commital is to turn on me and ask them to put me in jail, making insinuations of all sorts. I shall try to shield him so far as I can, knowing that if it were not for his mental condition he would be one of the finest and best of men and a good provider.

When I speak of the last year being a happy one here at home, I mean that Mr. Wells has worked faithful for Mr. George Mahoney, a farmer of this town for nearly two years.

For a short time Mr. Wells conducted a Sunday School at the Maysville School. It was not a success, however. He is a great hand to visit the schools and it makes it embarrassing for the boys. He is a kind father to the boys and he has their interest at heart. If I were stronger I could have helped him more.

Respectfully,
Helen R. Wells.

P.S. I ask you to read his letters to me and any that would be likely to worry or irritate me please destroy.

He need not worry about home affairs. We have been through this three times and my heavenly Father has always cared for me and mine. We just exist but we are happy and thankful we can keep the little home together.

Mr. Wells is a subscriber to "Signs of the Times" and to Ford's "Dearborn Independent." He has requested me to mail these papers to him.

Just before he went to the hospital he told me that he was a Jew and that he was to be president of the U. S. this coming year. I don't think he was sleeping well as he laughed and talked at night.

Do not think that because we do not come in that we do not care for him. His continual fault-finding is very tiresome.

Please do not let him visit here for the present. He will be fretting to do so. He always does. I want to rest and the boys do too. The town has helped us \$4.00 a week for some time. This is very humiliating to me.

His sister who comes from Tacoma to visit him within a week has always been inclined to criticize me if I refused to visit him at the hospital or allow him to visit at home. You watch him talk and I think you will find he is continually meddling or telling people of their sins. He has threatened to have me tried in court for profanity. I am not a profane talking woman but sometimes I feel like saying a severe word.

Excuse lengthy letter. It is all so sad. I wish there were some way he could stay with you and earn a little money for himself.

Since this letter was written, several letters have passed between Mrs. Wells and the Hospital. The Hospital has written suggesting that the time has come for Mr. Wells to be released. Mrs. Wells has replied that she would view his release with alarm, adding that the entire community is strongly opposed to his return to Maysville.

Meantime her attitude toward her husband seems to have become less kindly. She has asked him not to write to her, saying that she is not well and that his letters worry her. She is willing, however, that he should write to the boys, and through them he has been kept in touch with the situation almost as well as if she wrote herself. The boys also by an arrangement which the sister made have been visiting him once a month.

All this has of course been most trying for Mr. Wells, but he has borne it remarkably well. He takes the position that she is the only woman he has ever loved and that he is willing to do whatever is necessary to win his way back into her confidence and affection. Besides that he knows her and he is very sure that she will change her attitude. He also recognizes that he has given her a hard life and that she has not been well.

But while he thus talks most reasonably and shows in his words a very fine spirit, it is easy to see that there is a good bit of resentment present. He dwells on her weaknesses and talks much about his generosity in keeping her out of the hospital and he is very anxious to justify himself at her expense. In the course of the conferences on the situation many interesting sidelights were thrown upon the character of the man. Thus when it was proposed to visit Mrs. Wells, he insisted that it would be necessary for him to write her first to warn her of the coming visit. He knew Mrs. Wells. She was a very peculiar woman and would be very much offended if a visit should be made without warning. Just before the visit was to be made he came to the office with a long list of neighbors upon which he suggested calling and a letter of introduction from himself. That letter reads as follows:

To Whom it May Concern:

Rev. A. T. Boisen, the bearer, represents the State Hospital. All information and service you may render him in his labors will be appreciated.
Harrison Wells.

On one occasion, nettled by a very discouraging letter from his wife, he burst out: If everybody in this world were like me, this old world would be a wonderful place. There wouldn't anybody smoke or anybody drink or anybody swear.

T H E S O C I A L S E R V I C E I N V E S T I G A T I O N

The Social Service investigation was undertaken for the purpose of determining Mrs. Wells' attitude with reference to her husband's release, and also that of the community which she had stated to be strongly opposed to his return. How would she feel about his release if he should consent to work in

some other community? And how far were her wishes in the matter to be respected? Was she indeed as nervously unstable as her husband represented her? It was also hoped that it might in some measure be possible to modify her attitude.

THE VILLAGE MINISTER

Mr. Fair, the Universalist Minister, who was next interviewed, is a man of eighty-one. In spite of his years he is alert both physically and mentally, a kindly, courteous man, with a general information and education far beyond that of the usual country minister.

He has known Mr. Wells for fifteen years. His first recollection of him is his appearance at a town meeting. He came there with his wagon all decked out with American Flags, and in the meeting spoke at length. He has always been conspicuous at town meetings. He talks rationally and is a good public speaker, but he will sometimes make very peculiar speeches. For some years now he has not been permitted to speak in town meetings.

Mr. Wells is strong and a good worker. You could always count on his doing his work faithfully and well. But if he were going to do some work at the parsonage, he would be apt to put in his appearance about three o'clock in the afternoon, carrying a lantern, an umbrella and an axe. He might then work until ten or eleven o'clock at night.

Mr. Wells has always been a joke to the people of the town. He would get to dwelling on certain things. He would oppose vaccination, tobacco, Sunday baseball, etc. He has always been queer and is probably growing queerer. You can tell by the shape of his head that something is wrong. He must have some sort of mental disease, something wrong with his brain. There has been a feeling of relief in the community that he is gone. As long as he is there he will butt into things.

Mr. Paris feels that he ought not to come back if it is going to interfere with the development of the children. Mrs. Wells is a good woman and a devoted mother and is doing well by the children.

Mr. Simmons, a cousin of Mr. Wells, lives in a comfortable farm-house about three miles southwest of the center. He has known him all his life and has employed him in recent years. As a worker, he has found him an extra good hand, faithful and trust. He was indeed irregular in his working habits. He would often come to work at ten instead of eight. He was never willing to tie himself to the clock. He was hired with that understanding. But he was very careful about keeping accurate account of his time. He was especially good with animals. He took as much interest in another man's property as if it were his own. He could be trusted to take just as good care of a team as the owner would take.

Harry has no enemies. He is a pretty nice kind of a man. He would do

any one a favor. But he is queer in some things and he has been the laughing stock of the town.

As a boy, Harry was never shy or bashful. He has always been willing to talk as long as there was anybody to listen to him. He has always shown the same logicalistic argumentative interests. This was probably inherited. His father was somewhat the same way. He has always been of good moral character, strongly opposed to worldly pleasure. His interest in reform is of long standing. While he has never joined the church, he has always believed in it and he has wanted his family to attend.

It seems too bad to keep him in the hospital. He ought to be released under restrictions. He would have no difficulty about getting employment. In fact, Mr. Simmons would be quite willing to employ him, himself, provided he would give his promise to stay at home and not be running up the line. If Harry once gives his promise to do anything, you can trust him to keep it. But there is a question whether he will make any such promise. He has a mind of his own and if he once makes it up all the authority in the U. S. couldn't change it.

Mr. Simmons is a shrewed but pleasant-looking man of about the same age or perhaps a bit younger than the patient, his prominent features being a hatchet face and red hair streaked with gray. His wife is a pleasant motherly woman, who is genuinely interested in the patient. They have a good farm of, perhaps, two hundred acres.

WHAT THE LAST EMPLOYER HAS TO SAY

Mr. George Mahoney was the patient's last employer. He was found at work on his fences, a tall, lean man with reddish hair and a reddish mustache. He was at once interested when I explained my errand and spoke very kindly of the patient. He had found him a good worker, absolutely honest and faithful. He had worked for him more than a year, and was working for him up to the time he was taken to the hospital.

Yes, it had become quite apparent that he was getting disturbed. He could not get his mind on anything and he was talking a lot. He was especially concerned that last week about auto speeding. He had the idea that the autos were going to run him down and kill him. Then he began to develop marked ideas of grandeur. He came in one noon and announced with a smile: "What do you think I'm going to be president of the U. S." His sister, Miss F. thereupon said "Perhaps George can be Vice President." The patient thought this scarcely feasible, but he suggested that he might make him Secretary of Agriculture. Was he joking? Not in the least. He was smiling, and he talked in a bantering manner, but he was thoroughly serious.

Mr. Mahoney thought he ought to be released just as soon as he was in shape. He would certainly have no difficulty in getting work. He would himself be willing to employ him again, if he did not already have a man.