

SING, AMERICA, SING!

BY DOROTHY KISSLING

SING, America, sing and awaken the sleepers.
The coastal thunder of guns is a dream to the dreaming,
the drone of wings in the sky is a midge in the dark,
whirring and whining; brush it away and turn
and sink back in the pillow; this is not morning,
even a sleeper can see with half an eye
under a half-closed lid that the night is abysmal,
the night is dark as destruction.

Not with a nightmare
of battle and blood, of backs laid bare to the whiplash,
of starving children, of women enslaved, of nations
flattened like flies by a giant's palm, will you rouse them;
these things are dreams that may plague a man any time
he chances to feed indiscreetly. Not for a nightmare
the slumbering animal awakens and is a man
once more, with a man's stern eyes and a man's taut shoulders.

Sing, America, sing! Sing them the prairie
empty under the stars, and the pioneer's cabin
small on the furrowed plain; sing them the slave
struck out of his chains and his head flung back and his tendons
straightening at the sound; sing them the river
rolling along in the wide white wash of the moonlight,
rolling along in the moonlight down to the sea.
Sing them the school in the sumac thicket, the children
shouting and laughing at noon and the string ball soaring
over the schoolhouse roof; sing them of worship,
of women in Sunday bonnets, and back-country preachers

walking and talking with God in the cool of the evening;
bid them remember their peace and their loves and their labors,
how grim is the shadow behind them, how short is the time.
For out of your singing, America, out of a murmur
(remember . . . remember . . . remember . . . remember . . .
remember . . .)
gathering to a roar will the summons assail them:

Wake, and to arms, and defend! Have you heard of the harbor
attacked by stealth in the dawn and its innocent dwellings
cracked open like eggs, the American life-stuff within them
spattered and spilled? It is not on the free list, that;
not while a bullet is left, a grenade in the hand,
or a fence rail torn from a fence; it is not on the free list,
not while a man remains who remembers the morning
he saw with his eyes or the eyes of his mind in the sunrise
a child, or part of a child, from a blood-stained rafter
dangle a scarecrow's arm.

Sing, America, sing;
they have asked for it; sing for their dancing, their terrible dancing,
their skeletons' waltz to the clucking and coughing of guns,
their wild tarantelle to the bombs! Give tongue to an anger
as clean as the core of a flame; set words to destruction
and chant them an ode of the flexible fury of steel,
the hissing of down-swinging blades; lay hammer to anvil
and forge them a fiery hymn; they have struck you the chord,
they have sounded the note; sing, sing, America, sing!



DUNKIRK BILL

By LOUIS GOLDING

THERE isn't anything you can call up-to-the-minute about the tale of Dunkirk Bill, any more than there was about the performance of Colin P. Kelly not so long ago, or of Leonidas at Thermopylae some time earlier. But he came my way, this lad and the symbol he was, and I want to get him down in writing, before the details are blurred. For the months pass. The years pass. The masses that are deployed in conflict grow more enormous, extended over broadening arenas of land and sand and sea. The deeds and characters of certain individuals are told to the whole earth by all the multiplex agencies of recording. Others achieve their final moment with none but the sea-gull or the jackal to witness it. As for Dunkirk Bill, he chanced to come my way and I feel I have a sort of duty by him.

Dunkirk Bill was a plain A. B., an able seaman. So were his father and his three brothers. So were their fathers before them. They came from Rochester in the southern county of Kent, and as small

boys fished and swam in the River Medway, or went out blackberrying along the hedges. Then they grew a little older and went to sea. When they came back, it was girls rather than blackberries. They would take their girls out of an evening and have a pint or two of beer at the Crown and Anchor and think themselves gay dogs. After the next voyage, or the voyage after that, they might get married. By now, perhaps, their country was at war again. They would go out into more perilous seas. Each time they went the vast interrogation was scrawled upon the sky. Will they come back? Will they not come back?

As for this Bill, he was only nineteen. He had a girl, but it had only reached the going-out stage. He was a gay youngster and pretty tough; he could put on the gloves with the next one.

His tale is chiefly a Dunkirk tale. It happened like this. A short time before the evacuation began, while the BEF was retreating foot by foot upon the coast, the cruiser in