

# PSYCHOPARALYSIS

## *An Analysis of Psychoanalytic Results*

EDNA YOST

**T**HE colored gentleman who invented a method for taking the kinks out of woolly hair reaped a fortune — but the kinks come back! So too, the psychological gentlemen of the psychoanalytical fraternity have grown fat and oily ironing out the mental kinks of people who are victims of inversions, perversions, and other Freudian versions. But Miss Yost says the kinks come back, or are replaced by other kinks even worse — thus reminding us that nothing resembles a hollow so much as a swelling.

**Y**EARS ago, in a murky town in the Pennsylvania coal fields, I assiduously attended Methodist revival meetings. I still have a thrill at the memory of some of those services, when the Holy Ghost Itself seemed to waft around the altar and pour its forgiving benediction upon the penitents who knelt there. Particularly I remember our next-door neighbor — a drunken brute of a man, who used to turn his terrified wife and yearly babies out into the middle of a cold night, screaming with such terror that I would lie in a fright until daybreak. One night he, too, crept shamefacedly to that altar, and what songs of freedom we sang as he arose, shaking with emotion, washed in the Blood of the Lamb! Free at last! Henceforth a bond servant to the Lord! It was a genuine conversion, too. The power of God had never been more evident to my adolescent eyes than it was the day the money that once went for liquor put teeth into the toothless jaws of that once bedraggled, unhappy, toil-scarred mother who was John Palmer's wife.

The part of the meetings that interested me most, I think, was the giving of testimony. It fascinated me to see and hear these men, for of course it was the men who rose to speak in meeting. There was the one, for instance, who was a driver in the mines — by common consent the cruelest man to mules in town. He had a soft voice, gentle blue eyes; and when he became filled with the love of God and rose to tell us about it, I could actually make myself forget the mules. Most fascinating of all was the black-mustached, sincere old Christian who had once hurled a shoe at the devil, which threw him back out of the window; and who ever after rose shyly to his feet at testimonial meeting to gulp out: "I'm-very-glad-that-I-can-rise-and-testify-for-the-Lord-Jesus-Christ-and-what-he's-done-for-me," and then sat down.

It seems a far cry from that day to this — a great change from that congregation of coal miners to the metropolitan group of middle-aged, intellectual men and women with whom I mingle now. But there has been no change in our underlying need for the personal experience through which this mysterious thing called freedom is to be brought about. Religion, in the usual sense of the word, is for most of us a cast-off insufficiency. Instead of finding freedom, we have felt its shackles. With an intellectual fearlessness we now discuss its psychological aspects along with the sex appeal of Aimee McPherson. We understand so much! And with the next breath we raise our new songs of freedom. For it has been off with the old to be on with the new! In one way or another our underlying personal need has urged us into the acceptance of something — some science, some philosophy, some intellectually satisfying experience through which we are finding expression and in which we feel we are finding freedom.

Theoretically, we have all shied our shoes at the devil; and though our vocabulary is different, we rise to give testimony in behalf of our symbol of freedom just as breathlessly and with the same compulsion as was manifest at those old revival meetings of my childhood.

Since advertisers always invite investigation of their products, I suppose the increasing number of people who ceaselessly prattle about the marvelous results of psychoanalysis are welcoming any honest attempts to appraise what it achieves. I am aware, of course, of the scorn of the scientist — particularly of the pseudo-scientist — for the amateur who discusses his subject; and psychoanalysis, like chemistry, is primarily a subject for experts. But the amateur must have some rights other than the one, merely, of being practised upon. If a certain brand of soap caused a rash on the skins of nine out of ten people who used it, the problem, doubtless, would be one for the chemists; but we amateurs would feel justified in telling what we knew about the appearance of the rash. Admittedly the field of human behavior is more difficult of appraisal than a skin rash. Nevertheless, there are some things that can be said by the truth-seeking observer in even so difficult and complex a realm as that of human behavior and relationships.

Possibly no science — or pseudo-science — offers more attractive possibilities to the seeker for truth than psychoanalysis. The opportunity to reveal one's soul, to strip it naked before another,

is a delightful temptation to the ego. It seems reasonable, too, that in this revelation lies much that would be good for us to know. But there is a price we pay for every experience, and to a certain extent we have the power of choice. It is but the part of wisdom, therefore, that before plunging into any tempting experience, we should evaluate as best we can its profit and loss.

For ten years I have been in close contact with people who were being, or had been, analyzed; and the more I see of them, the less I trust psychoanalysis. This is not for the most obvious reason frequently given by its opponents: that it too often seems to free one merely to buy teeth for the other man's wife — though there seems to be something in that, too! Nor is it because, in the midst of the most beautifully inspiring testimony of my analyzed friends, I find myself so often wishing I could forget the mules. Though here again is a disturbing fact; for the "mules" — that is, some "objects of cruelty" — do exist almost invariably in the backgrounds of these people who have achieved an ability to work out their problems in human relationships with what looks like a tragic disregard for the other person's problem with them.

Freedom purchased at the expense of another is priced too high for universal expedience. There is not enough of it to go around. But I am willing to concede that freedom even at that price may be worth all it costs to some individuals, and let the devil take the hindmost! I lack confidence in psychoanalysis because it gives one a false sense of freedom. Like the old-fashioned convert at the Methodist altar, the penitent arises from the months, even years of his agony, drenched in the blood of his self-inflicted wounds, to cry, "Free at last!" but in reality to remain henceforth a bond servant to psychoanalysis. This, in my experience, has been so universally true as to be of paramount significance.

Psychoparalysis — rather than psychoanalysis — would be the more fitting term, judging from my observations of a liberal group of analyzed women. Whatever the method, a certain paralysis has resulted. In the "process of putting a person in full possession of her mind and emotions instead of allowing the latter to dominate" (I quote from a letter from an enthusiastic exponent), some point seems to be reached where this fine balance of mind and emotion is visualized, and the prospect is apparently so entrancing that the patient, having by this time been brought to the place where she can stand off and look at her real self, congeals on her detached spot in her desire to hold the picture. They call

themselves "integrated personalities." I see and hear them every day. Frames they have become that should be pictures! Personalities that are being sapped by a paralyzing dry-rot.

The dry-rot, it seems to me, lies in the psychoanalytic method itself. The introspective, psychoanalytic approach to life creeps subtly over one, and clings. To some few it may possibly cling well and becomingly. To the great majority, however, it is both unspontaneous and unnatural. *But it clings!* Analyzed people cannot, or at least they do not often, get away from it. The result is inevitable. Unable to throw off this unnatural approach to life (which may have had excellent effects upon patients while being dominated by the analyst) and abnormally grateful for what it has done for them, they accept it as their own. Since it is impossible for them to assimilate that which in reality is not a part of them, it becomes a sort of cud, forever being thrown back to chew upon. The well-learned psychoanalytic tags and labels take the place of assimilated thought; and situations continue to be interpreted and then controlled according to the hit-or-miss label. Such a process eventually stops genuine thought and feeling.

This was my contention when, in an earlier paragraph, I remarked that psychoanalysis gives one a false sense of freedom. It provides one with a nice, satisfying box of tags that take the place of understanding. No matter what arises, the labels are always ready. Not only do they apply to oneself, but to all one's fellows as well. An "inferiority complex" here, a "sex repression" there. Stick on the tags, and life is understood! In some such fashion these pseudo-analytic dilettantes sit in their self-appointed, superior position with their boxes of tags at their sides. They escape from the necessity of thinking and actually living with their fellow creatures in the way that could lead to the path of genuine understanding — without which freedom always eludes.

As I talk with analyzed people or, more accurately, as I live with and among them, year after year, it is this beautiful quality of sympathetic understanding which seems to be so conspicuously absent. In evaluating the profit and loss of psychoanalysis, this should surely be put down on whichever side of the ledger is preferable. Personally I put it on the debit side. For I notice that those who have lost their capacity for giving sympathetic understanding actually boast of the fact that their analyst is the only person in the world who has ever really understood them; and they continue, in reality or in fantasy, such contact with the

analyst as will give them the satisfaction of this very understanding which they seem unable and undesirous to give to others. The experience with the analyst is sufficient.

Here we have come to the joker in the whole psychoanalytic method. Analysts are called upon to be what no modern human being could possibly be. Jesus Christ Himself — granted that He was human as well as divine — might have found Himself at a loss to cope with situations arising out of the psychoanalytic technique. Here is dangerous ground for the layman, indeed! But such are our egos that occasionally we, too, prefer to identify ourselves with the fools that rush in rather than with the angels who fear to tread.

When two people come into a relationship as intimate as exists between patient and analyst, and when one is so completely under the domination of the other, it requires nothing short of an All-Wisdom to keep things straight. Who is the person called upon to exercise this All-Wisdom? (Forget about the quackery in the profession at this point and consider only our competent, high-principled analysts.) They are, first of all, just men and women, principally representatives of the medical profession. I happen to be among those who have always regarded doctors as a trifle above the average of any other profession, so presumably I endow them with all they deserve. But assuredly they are human beings like the rest of us and subject, unfortunately, to the same diseases they spend their lives curing or attempting to prevent and cure in others. Knowledge of disease does not immunize them. The careful, lovable old surgeon who successfully removed my appendix died from his a few months later.

Now I find it hard to believe that analysts, who know a lot about emotions, handle their own emotions any better than other specialists handle their hearts and livers. Moreover, I believe that the doctor who can look around at life to-day and then set himself up as a psychoanalyst must have a pretty terrific ego to start with. For he is daring to be an investigator in a field that still must tamper — and not too learnedly — with the very souls of men and women. What an ego it must take for the inexperienced analyst to believe that in so personal a way he can save a tortured soul from hell! For the relationship between patient and analyst is necessarily exceedingly personal, made so by the skillful technique of the analyst. When the analysis reaches this very personal stage, the analyst alone is responsible for what happens.

And here is the tragedy. For as a human being he cannot approximate the All-Wisdom that is demanded in this unnatural relationship. At the moment of stress he is subject, under the proper stimuli or aggravation, to an emotional difficulty of his own. In a personal situation which is emotional, at least on the patient's part; with a patient who has been struggling for months to be her uninhibited self to the analyst to whom she now has a transference; and with two people of the same, or opposite, sex who felt a spark of mutual attraction in the first place (it must have been so or the analysis would not have continued far) — well, submit any two human beings to an experience like this and the chances are that no matter how much one of them knows about emotions, he may become a bit involved, and something even more personal is likely to emerge. It does, in many cases. A sex relationship, perhaps, or an even more devastating absence of sex expression. Or the acceptance of a child-to-God relationship, such as a nun most often experiences.

A friend of mine, analyzed by a woman, says she always thinks of Deity as "She" instead of "He." At any rate, two people must be extricated from the situation arising from this terrific emotional experience they have gone through, more or less together. It is the analyst who is in control of the situation. He is All-Power without being All-Wisdom. When I stop to think of human nature as it is, I cannot for the life of me see how psychoanalysis, regardless of what it does to the patient, can help but be disastrous to the analyst. The human being does not exist whose ego could face what his every patient's submissive attitude must foster, and rise above it. No less an authority than Freud once remarked: "Psychoanalysis seems to bring out the worst elements in the analyst himself."

So it seems that the technique, at its best, cannot stand the searchlight of truth-seeking thought upon it. Experience, bringing out the analyst's worst elements, unfits him personally for his work as it develops him professionally. And the patient must always be caught somewhere in the vicious circle of the analyst's experience or lack of it.

In spite of all I have said, psychoanalysis, in its fundamentals, may have something important to contribute to the individual. Self-knowledge, which is its aim, is laudable; and if analysis does nothing but call our attention heartily to the necessity for know-



ing ourselves, it will have been of value. But I do not see how it can continue to send out its "cures," as it is doing to-day, without rousing skepticism or even antagonism among the very people who are — or once were — willing to be convinced. The disparity between the case records so glibly and colorfully described in the technical journals and the analyzed people one sees and lives with every day, is as great as the disparity between what the advertisements said would happen and what actually did happen to my aunt long ago when she became a prey to a well-known patent medicine. Which makes us wonder whether these analysts who write them are fools or knaves. That is, are they so blindly interested in performing the "psychoanalytic operation" that they see the results in some such fashion as the old physician who pronounced the operation a success though the patient died? Or are they knaves who — for the sake of financial gain or ego or the satisfaction of their own compulsion to experiment — misrepresent things willfully?

No, not knaves, surely! An exceptional analyst here and there may merit the name. We can credit the majority with the high intentions of the medical profession as a whole. With a kind of blindness, though, we must also credit them. Possibly it has been a necessity to develop this blindness. The doctor who buries his mistakes has an advantage over the one who cannot; and the latter must develop his own technique of self-protection. In psychoanalysis, the very element which works as a protection to the analyst — blinding him to the fact that very often his patient does die a living death — helps to paralyze the patient.

I have spoken above of the close personal relationship which the patient is very conscious of with her analyst and of the fact that the analyst is the dominating factor in that particular situation, brought about by the skill of his technique. She has laid bare her every thought and emotion until she is like a sensitive photographic plate exposed to her scientific confessor. When she comes out of the intensity of her experience, the stamp of her analyst in the way he appeared to her is imprinted on her innermost being. In any deep, personal relationship the influence of one person upon another is recognized. In psychoanalysis this influence is intensified a thousandfold because of the submissive, emotionally exposed attitude of the patient; and she reflects back to the world not herself alone but this superpicture of the analyst, overexposed and highly developed.

Let me illustrate from my own friends and acquaintances to see how this has proved itself. Two went to a man-poet-analyst, and each is developing a form of artistic expression and is married to an æsthetic husband. One went to an analyst who is a homosexual and she has accepted homosexuality. A New England friend went to a Russian analyst and she has had a most tragic and un-New-Englandlike affair with another Russian. One went to a devastatingly power-mad analyst and she is proudly power-mad herself. And as for the ones who went to Vienna, they, more than all the others, seem hell-bent on analyzing everybody and everything that come within their reach!

This desire on the patient's part for identification or unity with the analyst is flattering in the extreme. And rare indeed is the individual who could continually be fed upon it and not be blinded to a lot of things. I imagine when an analyst looks at a patient and sees her accepting his way in anything, it is easy to believe she has found the right way. Easy to send her on her way rejoicing now, and not see the devastating effect, in the years that follow, of her attempt to be what she is not. That is left for the rest of us, who watch her in the environment in which she had her roots. The price she so frequently pays (and in her bondage, pays all too gladly) could be exacted by a high-principled analyst only provided he kept himself in ignorance of it. His blindness to the whole life of his patient, particularly after she has been led into discontinuing their relationship, is the protection that enables him to continue the work that too often is nothing more than soul-tampering. For it is the human soul — the whole man — that the analyst attempts to handle. In a way he is daring something greater than others of the medical profession have ever attempted. Not the mind alone, but the emotions, too, are his field — those tender, most delicate, and complicated strands that interweave to make the human being.

When I made the remark — which may have sounded sacrilegious — that Jesus Christ Himself might have found it difficult to cope with some of the situations rising out of the psychoanalytic technique, I had seriously in mind the fact that the Great Teacher used a method very different from the twosome method of the analyst. Whether He recognized human limitations or not, we can leave to the theologians; but the fact remains that He established Himself as a teacher *par excellence*. In some such way, too, I see Plato surrounded by his group of pupils, seeking to-



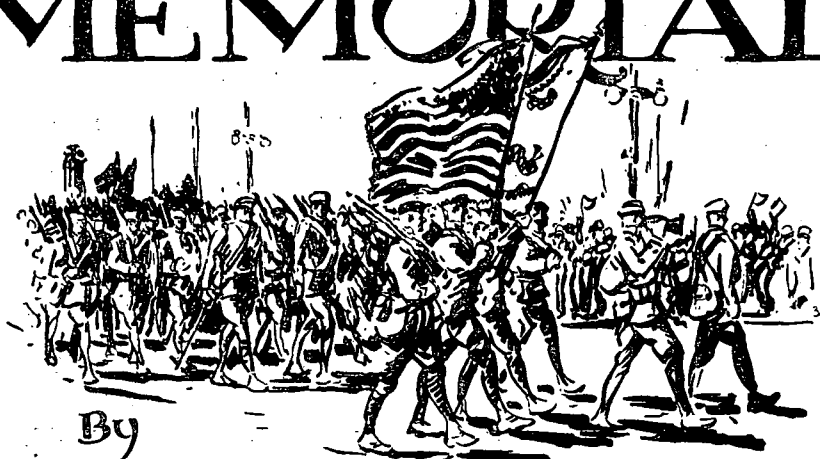
gether for the way that would lead them into Truth—not, to be sure, avoiding the personal relationship, or the long talks of teacher with individual pupil, but not building on this personal relationship as the keystone of the pupil's whole structure.

It may be that the human soul will still have to be handled in this more detached way if it is to be saved from the frightful effects of the too personal experience it goes through in modern analysis. "Know thyself" was recognized as a motto of paramount importance by wise teachers long before Freud. It is his method, rather than his idea, that is unique. And the rot in psychoanalysis lies in its method. Its technique must be made to start with what the human soul is capable of, rather than with what analysis wants to do. From the vantage point of an observer who has found herself for ten years in the midst of women who have embraced analysis, I see no reason for believing that human beings — of the female sex, at least — are yet capable of accepting the close relationship with the analyst which is so great a part of its method, without being unduly marked by it.

When we appraise individual cases, there is always one unanswerable argument. "O, but you don't know what I should have been like if I had not been analyzed," my friends tell me. Or, "Yes, I see that analysis seems to have done so and so to her. But suppose she had not been analyzed. You don't know what might have happened," they say. If I could believe that psychoanalysis has saved all these people from a worse fate, its bungling "cures" might not seem so unethical and unfair. Even if it has, it suggests the same kind of cure as that which helps a patient over a period of physical suffering by chaining him to a drug habit and then leaves him with an unlimited supply of the drug.

These observations have been based on psychoanalysis as it affects — from the layman's point of view — what the world calls "normal" women, and when administered under the guidance of analysts who, as far as I can ascertain, are reputable members of their profession. I admit that psychoanalysis has accomplished certain very definite and valuable objects. My quarrel is that it is too deeply an exponent of the old Mosaic law. An eye for an eye, it demands, a tooth for a tooth, a bondage here for a freedom there. "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away," with the analyst assuming the Lord's rôle!

# MEMORIAL



By

LOUISE LEONARD

A FIRST SHORT STORY

*Drawings by Lowell L. Balcom*



THE hump under the bed clothes that was Peter McGinley, one-time hero of the Marne, writhed as the sun, striking a small square mirror above the washstand, directed its blazing spotlight toward the bed. Towsled red hair and one squinting eye appeared from the mound of covers, an unintelligible mutter sounded, then Peter yawned and flung out an arm. His gesture was cut short by a curse, which, of late, had oftener than not been on his lips. To the priest who remonstrated with him Peter said grimly, "Cut off one arm and one leg of any Irishman, give him a touch every now and then of septic poisoning, and see how he likes it."

He had not added that the arm and the leg weren't the half of it. Even an Irishman, he reflected, is proud of his face. His own had won for his mother no honors at the Dublin Baby Fair, but it was his own. He had grown fond of its red bristles that were as difficult as a scrubbing brush to shave; of its wide mouth and strong, square jaw; of all the humps and bumps which made it into Peter McGinley and not into Major Rutherford Giles Rooke

## THE FORUM



of the King's Guard. Then, too, Kathleen had unaccountably been attached to that face, which had made Peter regard it with a certain vanity.

These, however, were not the thoughts that struggled sleepily in the young man's mind as he turned onto his good side and blinked at the sun. Rather, he thought with a forceful reminder that he hadn't eaten for twenty-four hours and if he expected to eat in the next twenty-four he'd better get up and get busy. It galled his pride to have to sit in the back room of the Poppy Gift Shop, jig saw and paint pot in hand, fiddling away his life when he had hoped to be a politician or a policeman at least by the time he was

thirty. But these, along with Kathleen, had gone the way of all dreams, and he was left in life with a bit of wood and a left-handed whittle. He realized now that even those had no advantage. For Peter had been ill a week, and the boarding house lady was only as patient as any practical Christian should be.

Shaving the growth of wiry red stubble was always painful business. Peter loathed the crooked twist to his nose, the queer, pincushion cast to his cheek, and the tuck, or whatever it was, which the surgeon had put in his chin. *Blessé au visage*, they had said in the hospital in France, and Peter, who hadn't minded half so much his arm or his leg, cringed at the words. "*Blessé*, I'll say!" he had muttered when he took the first glance at himself in the mirror. As soon as they would let him, he had taken his kit and had climbed out to the rocks beyond the hospital overlooking the sea, and he had written Kathleen, setting her free. He had explained it all, simply, neatly. What was left of him would make one large German sausage — there really wasn't enough to call it a man. And his face — Kathleen, who was pretty and in love with life, must marry a politician in a plug hat, a diamond in his tie; and she must live happily ever after.

Now, holding one eyebrow, Chinese fashion, as he gave a final flourish with his razor, Peter's eye fell on the calendar tucked under the edge of his mirror. "I keep it there just like a woman," he explained to the doctor. "I like to know when it's Sunday."

A red cross against a date brought his hand down with a jerk, and he cut his chin. He covered the slash with powder and the blood seeped through, like jelly in a sugar tart. He had wanted to look grand this morning, grand as a major. For he had promised to march in the parade. "March" wasn't the word if you were a stickler for truth. "Appear," then, Peter substituted grimly. He had been "marching" one way or another for ten years. To-day he had promised to help fill a car, to join that rowdy, rollicking returning Army from Paris.

"No, count me out, boys," he had replied when they had urged him to go along. "Count me out, but say a how-de-do for me to the Eiffel Tower and to any stray arm and leg you find around the country." Peter had then flipped his cigarette out an open window and had drunk their health in a nameless hair-tonic concoction.

Now they were back and Peter had promised to march in the parade. They'd dock at Fourteenth, then march across to the Avenue, and up to Madison Square. He'd hook on where he could. Some wealthy old lady's limousine, if he wasn't careful. Peter preferred an open Ford.

He hurried now, for he had a way to go. His uniform had long ago been discarded. Blue suit, shabby in the sunlight, a straw hat with a red and purple band, and yellow varnished crutches. Peter swung himself down the three flights of steps and on to the crowded side street. The walks had been freshly sprinkled and the hot sun drank the moisture greedily, letting it linger in the hot, humid air. Perspiration stood in beads on the young man's forehead and his face glazed with palor. He cursed softly and a lady in a black bonnet, smelling liquor, shied toward the curb. A boy in a white apron stood in the doorway of "The Coffee Pot" and called a hello. "Hey, it's McGinley. We thought you waz dead. Eatin' at the Ritz these days?"

Peter shouted a reply, not



daring to look through the window at the piles of doughnuts and shiny nickel coffee tanks beyond. He made his way rapidly through the crowd. "Meet promptly at the docks at ten," his card had notified him; but Peter was an old-timer. He would wait on a corner curb, watching the mounted police come prancing up the Avenue, clearing the streets. Then the band, sun flashing on silver horns, gleaming on gold braid and the brass buttons of their uniforms. The standard bearers next, the flags heavy with metal fringe. A row or two of self-conscious women in khaki suits and Sam Browne belts. Then the fellows, some in uniforms grown tight and unshapely; others like himself, in baggy blue suits and straw hats.

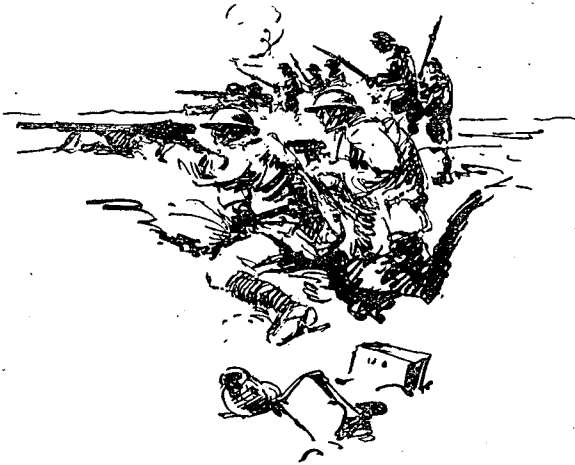
The crowds at the corner let him through, and he was glad of a lamp-post for support. Perhaps he would have to give it up. Waves of hot, gray pavement sprang at him, and pain coiled about his hip. A breeze sprang up and he felt better. Flags, high on the buildings, fluttered like gay birds, whipping their wings jauntily. Peter lifted his head, a light in his eyes. Far down the Avenue the parade had started, its band playing a military march that beat like a pulse in the air. It reminded him of the May day they had marched to the pier. That same march, march, march, as in *The Tale of Two Cities*. Or so Bud had called it. Left foot, right foot — how Bud had laughed. Flags like red and white and blue balloons. Kathleen had stood on the corner, and when he had passed, she had run out and caught his arm, and he'd kissed her in front of the crowd. How Bud had laughed! Damn the pain, coming up in waves like black clouds with curling white edges; coming closer — the throb, throb, throb of music, of feet tramping, like *The Tale of Two Cities*. Peter pushed back the pain, took off his hat, and wiped his forehead. God, to be whole again, to go swinging on both feet down the Avenue!

"Somebody's sick," he heard distinctly, and a policeman's whistle. "Better get out of this, boy," the cop said. Peter struggled against the crowd. "Better move on boy," like that. But not now. There was Kathleen. Kathleen in a gray coat, an orchid pinned on one shoulder, little purple hat to match her eyes. Her head thrown back, the sun in her eyes and shining white on her teeth as she flung a laughing remark at her companion — a stout, pompous man, a politician — Peter knew the kind. Pretty girl coming, Peter, take off your hat. The black cloud thickened, but Kathleen, leaning in, pushed back its foaming white edges. It was

Kathleen, coming to speak to him. He'd bow, like that, his hat in his hand.

"Somebody's sick," came to him, quite distinctly, and Peter saw a flash of silver in the sun.

"My God, Kathleen, not that. No, no, no, not that! My God, Kathleen, not a quarter in my hat!"



## WING MU SI SPEAKS OF THE VANITY OF MAN'S ILLUSIONS

**T**HE souls of men  
Are birds with beaks of glass,  
Which they break knocking  
At the adamantine gates  
Of Paradise!

— *Paul Eldridge*