

# A Wandering Essay

By a Deranged Mind on a Preplexing  
Problem of His Mental Health

or

Is the Principle Symptom of Talking to  
Yourself a Sure Sign That You Will Soon  
End Up in a Nice Quiet Rest Home?

ROBERT LEE HOWELL

NOTE: All STUDENTS are asked to read this essay as a requisite of English Composition 102 b. Thank you! Signed the English Department, Butler University, May 2, 1946.

## DEDICATION

DEDICATED TO ALL PEOPLE WHO  
WOULD LOVE TO VISIT A NICE QUIET  
REST INSTITUTION

## THE PROLOGUE

Great men do funny things; and since I am not great and yet do funny things, I owe the readers of my bored reading audience an explanation of the principle symptom of a disordered mind. What observations and experiments that I have made in regard to insanity have been made on my own body. Therefore I rest as a final authority on any mental problem that has ever come into existence.

## THE MONOLOGUE

A friend of mine called Ralph Waldo comes so close to quoting one of my philosophical views of life — "To be great is to be misunderstood" — that I once had and still have a mind to sue him for plagiarism; but since he is always giving me another idea or two for writing something that never amounts to anything, I doubt if I'll ever press charges against him. He has a warm spot in my heart; he turns out good essays and I get all the criticism for trying to translate his scholarly works.

NOTE: There is a transition in thought here.

Boy! It was a great night to be alive. I had just finished my work at the cafeteria and started homeward.

NOTE: There is a transition in thought here.

Butler after dark, even though there are a few street-lights sprinkled on corners where the least amount of human traffic is likely to pass, is a wonderful place to do what is the most unusual or funniest thing that you have ever wanted to do. This excludes speeding a car across the vacant lot, necking — necking — N. Arch. a. Any small molding near the top of a column. See IONIC, Ilust. b. A gorgerin, WEBSTER'S COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY, Fifth Edition, G. & C. Merriam Co., Publishers, Springfield, Massachusetts, U. S. A., 1945. — wrestling matches, and the like. Naturally you will pick many things that I would never consider, but remember Emerson my friend gave me the idea that the funniest thing that would ever happen to me would come about when I was completely alone. God bless his heart; he was right.

NOTE: THERE is a transition in thought here.

I had just gathered the loose ends of my trailing arms and legs together and started across the campus when I decided that I would have a little talk with myself.

Yes, I'm Napoleon Bonaparte! What does that signify? Now when I talk to myself, as I realize I am doing as I write this Emersonian essay, (I apology to Ralph for using his name in the prescribed manner of this work.) I talk out loud. I mean that I don't just let my thoughts run through my head and imagine that I am talking to myself. But truly I move my lips, hear my voice, and communicate my thoughts to the Invisible or to the Nothing.

What did I think about? Oh! "Since the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts," I think about anything and everything that happens to pop into my mind. True my mind doesn't amount to much, but since God decided that I needed something between my roof and my protruding awnings to keep the water from effecting my entire nervous system and soft brain I accepted his gift graciously and attempt at least once annually to clean off the roof, that is by getting a hair-cut and washing what the barber left intact, and to remove all rubbish and dirt that might perchance fall on the inside and outside of the awnings. Don't tell me you don't know what the awnings are? They must be a figure of speech that all great writers use and that all readers do not understand. Really, God truly knew how to build a house when he made the "little two-legged joker."

NOTE: There is a transition in thought here. Will someone please tell me when I can stop this?

The art of soliloquy is so very broad that any of the thoughts that come into your mind is a good topic for you to discuss with yourself. Why there's Hamlet as he thinks about it all — "To be or not to be, that is the question." — You can talk it over with yourself and decide whether it is better to exist or to stop existing by ending it all, as I will pro-

bably do after I receive a grade from a sane teacher. So what, insanity is a sure sign of genius. Or you can be like the egotistical husband in MY LAST DUCHESS who shows his authority and received results. If you would like to be as he is pictured in this psychological monologue, talk it over with yourself and decide if you've got what it takes. Or still if you are of a philosophical and intellectual nature why digress at great length with yourself about THE AUTOCRAT AT THE BREAKFAST-TABLE. Perchance you are like my literary friend Oliver Wendell who feels free to talk to himself while sitting at a breakfast-table munching his toast and drinking his coffee. To be sure he's a model gentleman full of common sense and wit. The only thing I would like to hear is what he would say if he came to the breakfast table with a white suit and spilled coffee on it. Or to top it all off you might like to rehearse the events of a good mystery story to your ever ready mind and feel free to hear Macbeth soliloquize — "Is this a dagger which I see before me, the handle toward my hand?" — Grasping your imagination you might hear the doomed figure shout and mourn his loss — Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow." — All of these are wonderful scenes to stir your imagination and make you enjoy talking to your own self.

There are only two regulations that a soliloquacious person must observe: never be caught talking to yourself for the person who might witness this strange mannerism of yours could be a dean of a REST HOME. The other regulation is that the soliloquy allows an individual his complete and unbound imagination to rove the wide earth and come back seeking more.

NOTE: *Ibid, ditto, op. cit.,* or what you will.

I had spent twenty-minutes in walking nine blocks and what had I accomplished by all of it? Enough ideas of hear-

ing myself talk to pen this essay concerning light, trivial things. Wearily, I wrote the essay and turned in.

## Conception Of Existence

ROBERT W. MCKEAN

The sudden realization that life is cheap and is used to accomplish an end serves as an awakening force within us and causes us to change our entire conception of man's existence. The world lives in a fantasy of material enjoyment until its delusion explodes in bitter experience.

It was just such an experience that the world went through some four years ago. A peaceful Sunday morning in a land of tranquillity, leisure, and contentment was a typical example of the smug life we lived. It was unreasonable for anyone to believe that an end would come to our way of life so suddenly, so disastrously. Yet, as we all know today, it was such a morning, so short-lived, that a calamitous attack by the ruthless planes of a barbarous government changed into a morning of hell, a hell more realistic than any of us had ever dreamed of, a hell in which there was nothing to do but suffer until the end of endurance, and then suffer more with no chance of fighting back. Dive bombers sent our air fields into a chaos of helplessness, destruction, and death. Planes with a ball of fire emblazoned on each wing soared across those once quiet waters to loose their death-bearing fish at mighty battleship row. They pounded into the heart of the *Oklahoma*, and with each onslaught she shuddered, belched flame, and listed more. Four — five — six — would they never stop? A freak shell went down

the stack of the *Arizona*, and she burned for hours in the thick rolling flames of an oil fire, as she rested in her grave. It was the same with the others. Some settled or sank where they lay; others were stopped as they attempted to escape, but they all gave in.

And the men, the men who a moment before were full of being, confident of today, not worrying about tomorrow, what did they die for? The lucky ones—the men whose lives were snuffed out without their even knowing what happened—did they die for America? Can a man die for a cause which he is unaware of fighting for? And the unlucky ones—those who struggled with their last gasp to swim under the burning oil to safety, but who perished in the ever consuming fire—did they forfeit their lives so that democracy might live? We can not find an answer, not one that will satisfy man's set of values which covets life as the most precious of all things.

To see men only physically, as lifeless, desecrated victims of the material world is to see life as an existence which has no meaning within itself, for life in a physical sense is merely the life of our bodies. And can anything so complicated, intricate, technically complete as the human body, yet so easily destroyed, be the only meaning of our whole life? If the body is such a beautiful example of God's creation, then how much more beautiful, more perfect