

Curbing the QUACK PSYCHOLOGIST



By Hazel Canning

DORIS MOORE was a private secretary, young and rather pretty. She had a good position with one of the leading lawyers of her home town. She was liked by her boss, for she managed his office efficiently. She also dressed in pretty frocks. Most of her time outside the office she spent with other girls.

Doris Moore was wretchedly unhappy. She was troubled and puzzled about herself. With her "girl friends," as she called them, she was natural. But so soon as a young man loomed against the horizon, Doris, blushing, either talked too much or too little.

"Why can't I be natural with men?" she often asked herself, miserably. "Why do I always scare them off? Why am I so self-conscious?"

She got to imitating the enticing mannerisms of her best friend, who had many beaux. She planned, she brooded, she manipulated and then, one day, a new clerk came to work in the law office.

By what miracle she never knew, she watched him grow into enough interest to ask if he might call some evening. She invited him to dinner.

But as the hour drew near, she grew nervous. An hour before Carl Dryson was due, she knew she could never face the strange, frightening, fascinating

young man alone. So she flew to the telephone and invited her old maid aunt to come to dinner also . . .

Young Dryson arrived . . . ate . . . departed at nine-fifteen. The evening had been a flop for him. So he never asked to call again. But that same evening, alone in her apartment, poor Doris Moore wept her heart out . . .

She was awake till the first light filtered through the muslin curtains. Then she knew what she was going to do.

A psychoanalyst had recently lectured to her girls' club. Psychoanalysis was getting more and more the thing. Even great ladies had themselves "psyched." Well, she would, too.

She went. It was a long interview. Stretched out on a couch, she lay in the dark, the curtains drawn, telling her troubles. The psychoanalyst explained that people talked better lying down in the dark. Then finally he took over the interview.

"Your trouble," he said, "is repression. At your age you should have a husband, children. You suffer from denial. But before you get married you should accumulate some ease with men. My dear girl, sow some wild oats, even as your normal brother. That is the cure for you."

BUT at this, poor Doris burst into tears. "I can't," she faltered. "I scare off every man I meet."

"I want to help you get well," mused the psychoanalyst. "So what do you say to giving me some of your spare time for the next few months?"

"Oh," again wept Doris Moore, "I don't know. I am afraid . . . I . . ."

"Surely," he interrupted, "you realize that your psychoanalyst knows what is best for you?" . . .

Six months went by. It was Christmas Eve. A young woman registered at a big hotel in New York. Half an hour before the Christmas bells rang out at midnight, she jumped out of her window. . . . Back home, everybody wondered why Doris Moore had killed herself. Girls generally did desperate things like that, they said, because of heartache over a man. But everybody knew Doris Moore had never had a beau.

Everybody knew except her psychoanalyst, who never came forward to tell how her face had changed to a face of death, when he broke the news to her that he was going to be married. Nor did he tell of the advice he had given about curing her repressions.

Because of happenings similar to this, and because of many other emotional ills following the visits of neurotic patients to unscrupulous practitioners, distrust of mushroom psychoanalysts has increased for the last five years.

This distrust reached its culmination the other day when Dr. Percival M. Symonds, Professor of Education at Teachers' College, Columbia University, presented a bill to the New York legislature for the curbing of fake psychologists.

DR SYMONDS says: "These charlatans are persons of mediocre ability with little or no reputable training, who prey upon unsuspecting persons, making diagnoses of mental conditions on insufficient evidence, and offering advice on the basis of this evidence, or no evidence at all. These persons give lectures and hold clinics and individual consultations, as reputable psychologists. Usually they do not infringe on the laws relating to the practice of medicine, and so cannot be prosecuted.

"But the practice of the psychologist, nevertheless, is a matter of grave importance to public health. The licensing of psychologists is a much needed public health measure."

Dr. Lawson D. Lowry, of National Mental Health, and a lecturer at the School of Social Work, took public notice of this type of advice, in a lecture to his students:

"The doctor who advises patients to try extra-marital adventures to cure repressions," he said, "is guilty of malpractice. He is also piling up misery for most patients, in the guilty feelings

which oppress a sensitive person, after transgressing."

"Go out and express yourself," the inquiry showed, has become almost stock advice given to careerist women turned 30, to anybody troubled in spirit and worried over some phase of his love life—or lack of it. But such advice is the worst possible, according to Lawrence Gould, M. A., D. D., and consulting psychologist of New York.

"We've got to admit that the advice given to the young woman you mention," Mr. Gould said, "has been repeated sadly often by psychological charlatans and quacks. Such advice is shocking bad science, as well as bad morals."

But the malpracticing psychologist and psychoanalyst gives other poor advice besides "go sow wild oats." To be sure he seems to believe all repressions arise from one source. He does not seem to realize that fear, feelings of failure, inadequacy, that thwarted ambition, the pinch of poverty, ill health and fierce competition beget as many repressions as that for which the patient is told to "express" himself.

Professor Symonds, Mr. Gould, and the head of a New York clinic who could not lend her name because of medical ethics, all agree you should beware—

The consultant who advises you to sow wild oats;

Who tells you to get married to cure your emotional repressions;

Who urges you to cheer up, because everything is rosy;

Who gives you lists to test yourself and find your own cure;

Who turns out hypochondriacs running to the doctor for life.

When choosing a psychologist or a psychoanalyst, these say, choose a man or woman whose own problems are solved. Choose somebody with standing in the community, a reputable person. If in doubt, write or apply to the society of psychologists or psychoanalysts in your own home town.

