

## ONE RELIGIO-SEXUAL MANIAC

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In a fragment of autobiography before me, "Ida" begins: "My idea that sex is pure must, I think, have begun in my mother's womb. My mother and father did not create me by accident but by reverent intention. They prepared their souls and their bodies before they lay down to create me; and all during the nine months that my mother carried me, she strove to think *good pure* thoughts so as to influence the coming child." In the moral training from her pious mother, and in its mystical implications, we get some indication of the mother's emotional instability. "She [the mother] wished to make me an author and with that end in view, she read books with prayerful thought; she wrote much, but was a woman of very little education, having been obliged to leave school to earn her living."

Of "Ida's" precocity, one of her mother's letters reveals this: "She read any part of the Bible at two and a half years; wrote at five—spent her whole life in studying and writing." Evidently the mother encouraged this precocity as an overcompensation for having herself been deprived of an education, and to relieve an excessive feeling of inferiority. The mother talked to "Ida" about the beginnings of life, so that the girl acquired some general knowledge of embryology before she was out of her teens. As a mere girl, Ida is said to have been largely responsible for the agitation which opened the University of Pennsylvania to women. She was also one of its first women students. At the age of eighteen "Ida" wrote a textbook which was used in some business schools.

Her mother had brought her up with exceeding care in social matters. "She instructed me ['Ida'] carefully that I must never allow a man to kiss me or put his arm around me, or even hold my hand—until the right man of all should come. But, for the matter of that," so she continues, "*all men were to me like shadows, as I was head over heels in love with my teacher . . . whom I adored.* One day we had a lesson in botany which dealt with the fertilization of plants. From what I already knew of animal embryology, I saw that this was an analogous case. I came into

the class all afire with my discovery, intellectually keen and eager for asking questions. As Miss Annie took her seat and smoothed out the folds of her Quaker dress she remarked, quietly and with dignity, picking up the lesson book, 'Girls, whenever I take up this subject, *I feel as though I were entering a holy temple.*' A hush settled upon the entire class and my eager questionings died on my lips. We went through the whole lesson with reverent quietness. It was a new idea to me—this, that sex was not only a curious and interesting scientific fact, but also something whose contemplation should fill one with holy awe. From that hour dates the birth of my idealizing of sex." The pious suggestion of the Quaker teacher initiated Ida's *conscious* sexual overvaluation and her erotomania. The homosexual drive in all its intensity, determined Ida's emotional valuation of the theory expounded by the teacher. The disastrous consequences we will see later. Evidently the mother's morbid valuation of sex as "sacred," had furnished some subconscious preparedness for the more *conscious* effects of the teacher's remarks about sex. Probably the mother's exaggerated emotionalism and pride in "Ida's" precocity also produced some unconscious homosexual fixation in Ida. If the teacher and mother had both been more healthy-minded, this precocious child would not have had her sexual curiosity diverted and disguised in "holy and spiritual" interest. Her valuation of sex might then have been minimized, instead of being stimulated to a delusional exaltation, physical intensification, and to her later insanity.

That the school teacher understood something of the homosexual nature of "Ida's" interest in her, is apparent from the fact that she forbade "Ida's" attentions. However, until she was nearly thirty years of age, "Ida" continued to send her flowers on St. Valentine's Day. The attachment was then broken up by the attentions of a bachelor of whom more will be said presently. In after life "Ida" wrote with clear appreciation of the homosexual essence of this attachment to the teacher. Also, Ida had many homosexual dreams in her later years.

If Ida had been encouraged to associate with boys and been kissed by them, without intimidation or the resultant fear or shame, it would probably have changed the whole course of her after life. Then she would have earlier achieved some practical experience for sanely managing her own sexual nature, and without its puritanic coloring and morbid overvaluation, either as guilty or sacred. Thus she might have gotten married and avoided both insanity and sui-

cide. The mother's version of how "Ida" was begotten, also prepared the way for Ida's later "spiritual" connubiality. In her, ignorant overvaluation of sexual sacredness and the great homosexual devotion to the teacher combined unduly to inhibit "Ida" against a normal heterosexual interest, and early marriage. Under the circumstances, exaggerated guilt over masturbation was unavoidable. A resulting exaggerated rebellion against the mother necessitated a separation. Then came some heterosexual experience, more excessive guilt, increasing introversion, followed by cessation of normal sexual intercourse. Ordinary erotic fancies that were affectively overladen, evolved to insane hallucination, and finally brought on conditions which made suicide necessary. We will now proceed to elaborate that evolution from fantasy to insane hallucination.

In the autobiographic notes about her childhood, "Ida" continues thus: "As the years went on I pondered *with ever increasing reverence* upon the mystery of sex life as shown in plants. I read *with eagerness* all I could find about it. Once I wrote an article for *The Christian* . . . [magazine] on 'Our Cousins, the Plants,' in which I dealt with this. Several times I used the subject as the thin wedge for a talk with women and girls upon the *holiness* of sex in human beings." Her papers also contain a lot of clippings on the emotions and on the veiled sexual habits of animals. If only she had been taught to think of sex in a matter of fact, common sense, relatively objective fashion, with the holiness and sacredness thrown to the dogs, she might have become a very useful woman.

Ida's acquaintance with the bachelor began during a western pleasure trip. She was in her twenties, was intelligent and handsome. We may therefore ascribe her unmarried condition to the psychologic influence of the mother's way of bringing her up; the excessive guilt and sacredness of sex, together with the homosexual fixation, and consequent inhibition against heterosexuality. The train had stopped in the Royal Gorge of the Arkansas, and "Ida" had climbed to venturesome heights up the rocky steep. On returning to her car she overheard some women discussing her. One said of her: "With all her intellect she lacks femininity." Could this impression also be due to the unconscious results of her homosexual fixation? In her later homosexual dreams she practically always took the male position. I continue the narrative in "Ida's" words: "I went on through the car with my head well up and a calm smile upon my face, but in my heart the wound rankled. Then I asked

myself: 'What was it about me that dubbed me unfeminine? In what was I different from these two young society women? Ah,' I said to myself at last, 'it must be because I do not flirt.' Then I pondered further: 'How on earth do people go about it to flirt?' I then concluded after mature reflection that it must consist in going dangerously near to the verge of allowing a man to take liberties in the way of caresses, and yet never overstepping that verge by criminal act. This being the case, if I wanted to be feminine I must surely flirt, and the next thing was to find my man. It so happened, while I sat pondering over this with the wound of that taunt still rankling within me, that man after man passed through our car on the way to his seat; and almost every one that passed stopped to say a word to the young woman who was always merry and full of fun and who had just climbed to such a venturesome height up that hill. Mentally I passed them in review and none of them found favor in my eyes as a desirable person to whom I could condescend in flirtation, until the cut and dried bachelor came. He was a gentleman, he suited me, and forthwith I decided to try. It resulted toward the end of the journey in his becoming markedly devoted to me, and later, after our return to . . . alas, also I became devotedly attached to him. Yet we were never meant by nature for each other. We quarreled over almost every question of the day. Yet he was exceedingly intellectual and a perfect gentleman. I used to ask myself if it were really love that I felt in my attraction of sex. I am thankful that he was so decided a gentleman, and so prim. . . . I am glad, too, that he did not ask me to marry him. If he had, I think I would have jumped at the chance. But I really knew nothing of what lies beyond the marriage altar for a wife, except in the vaguest possible way. I am thankful, too, that he refrained honorably from taking advantage of my very evident disposition to fling myself at him. I think that towards the last, if he had been anything else than the honorable man and the gentleman that he was, I might have gone down into my grave as his mistress, so infatuated was I with him." In this blind madness of her devotion, we see another effect of having been taught the sacredness and holiness of love, instead of having just a dispassionate scientific understanding of the behavior and management of her passions. She adds: "Yet I knew somewhere within me that he was not my true mate." Because of this inner conflict, in after life she reverted to the false "sublimation" of her religious training, and through giving to sex a sacredness and spiritualization, she came to grief and suicide. These occasional hints are given so

that the reader will be helped to coördinate the psychology of her youth with the final tragedy.

"Ida" complained that her mother was a woman of "very irritable temper," and in this regard matters at home "had been growing daily more unbearable." During "Ida's" twenty-eighth year the mother gave her the last physical punishment. It was a violent assault, and by no means the first of its kind. Friends of the family affirm that "Ida" also was difficult to get along with. In the mother, as in the daughter, this sensitive temper was doubtless the product of an emotional conflict over sex. This is shown by her intense puritanism as manifested in a guilty fear of sex, and the sacred valuation of it, showing its extravagant lure. These are the symptoms of a more or less morbidly shameful and guilty, yet joyous lewdness. Through her own unbalanced condition, the mother promoted a similar conflict over sex in the emotions of her daughter.

Home troubles, and probably the sexual desires which must be there suppressed, evidently stimulated the wanderlust. Ida decided to go to California as soon as the necessary money was available. She says that her decision was reinforced by the conviction that she must dissociate herself from the bachelor friend, because this attachment seemed fraught with sexual danger. She writes: "But the greatest factor was my mother's being so hard to get along with, so that life was one long hell to me in her house, varied by glimpses of the heaven of her motherliness." In this statement we see again the extravagant ambivalent attitude of both mother and daughter toward each other, illustrating the inner unity of love and hate. This explanation of the mother's hellish heavenliness as the only source of her trouble is one of those by which psychoneurotics deceive themselves. So they exclude from consciousness the important subjective contribution to their troubles, namely, an unbearable conflict between sexual desire and its fearful suppression, and repression. The dynamics of a strong sex urge helps to explain Ida's willingness to resign a four-year-old position as a college teacher. "But stronger than all was the desire to go out and 'seek my fortune.'" This was doubtless the half-conscious admission of the unsatisfied adolescent wanderlust and quest for sexual experience.

In spite of her mother's objection, she left home when thirty years of age. Before leaving, a family friend decided to send a young son to San Francisco, in "Ida's" care. He was going to attend a university. The two were good friends "in a brotherly and sisterly way," so "Ida" said.

In one place she writes of this boy as being "as good and high-minded a boy as ever walked the earth. . . . He was a source of much comfort to me. *There was never the slightest exchange of caresses between us, yet he was like a dear SISTER.* He confided in me entirely and I feel now on looking back that *my companionship saved him from the snares that tempt young men in San Francisco.*" (Italics mine.) Thus she wrote later in the story of her life. Such a belief in her Platonic association is what she then needed to force upon others, when claiming to have had only "spiritual" experiences with sex, as the basis of her instruction in the technique of copulation which she was then imparting.

In a letter dated soon after her arrival in California, "Ida" tells a friend how she and the young man occupy a modest cottage together, keeping house with the aid of a servant. At this time Ida was a bank clerk. As to her mode of living she says this: "I am leading a quiet life. I have no social life whatever and no companions," except, of course, this young man. She is able to add this: "There is more happiness, more real sunshine and jollity in daily life than I can appropriate. The whole world seems alive with beauty and joy. And, I don't know why, I am sure, I never was so happy in my life as I am now." This reads much like the honeymoon ecstasy of a newly married woman of thirty years. The fact as to whether or not she lived in sex relation with this young man is doubtless a most important factor for her future psychologic development. The psychoanalyst will find significant material in another sentence from the same letter. After telling about a scare by a neighborhood burglary, she continues thus: "When [the young man] goes away I shall move heaven and earth to get another man to take that front room, for I do not intend to risk my life or my peace of mind *by sleeping there alone.*" (The italics are mine.) Such unconsciously made admissions cannot be wholly false. Those were her words while her mind was centered only on the events of her narrative. Upon rereading this letter, when her attention became focused on the effect of that statement upon her correspondent, she drew a lead pencil through the word "there," referring to the front room, and wrote above it, "in the house." The young man graduated from medical school and married another woman. Then San Francisco lost its charm and "Ida" returned to her home town, on the request of her mother. "Meanwhile," she writes, "I had been living a joyously materialistic business life in San Francisco, making money." At home she soon became unhappy again and returned to California for another eight

months. In her diary of that time she wrote: "I think I could manage to hold my head up if God and other folks denounced me as not being good enough for their society. But to see that there were times when I hadn't been good enough for the society of my own best self, well, it is simply awful to contemplate the prospect of having to read [in heaven] that pictorial record of my earth life." There is the guilty inferiority feeling working overtime. Here she expressed a reversion to her childhood puritanic ideals. Hence this horror. Such is the conflict between the lure and shame of sex.

During this second stay in California, Ida suffered great privation through inability to get work. After a short engagement as a chorus girl and then as a book agent, she seriously considered prostitution as the only way of solving her economic problem. Her puritanic conflict about the "holiness" and "spiritual" importance of sex produced no more intelligent solution for her problems. However, she decided upon house service instead. By this experience her attention was turned to economic problems and her letters announce her determination to work for the coöperative commonwealth as portrayed by Bellamy.

Her mother begged her to return home. In the meantime an old friend also encouraged her to come back. He thought that he could arrange to have himself made president and "Ida" the secretary of a large organization of religious liberals. This was achieved and she returned to assume the duties of her office, which she held for two years. The elderly man with whom she was now associated was an ex-clergyman, who had become much devoted to unorthodox mysticism, especially that of the Far East. Through him came a powerful reinforcement of "Ida's" tendency to surround sex with supernatural glamor. It is probable that here "Ida" obtained much of her later metaphysical theories to accompany the technique of sex which she then taught. This man was her constant support when later she got into much trouble with the police and the post office censorship. It seems highly probable, therefore, that he was also her instructor in a new sexual technique, over which she became so morbidly obsessed, and which was the foundation of her conflict with the law.

During her first stay in California she became attracted to idealist-monism and was identified with a Unitarian church. This church probably served as a convenient compromise between the tradition of her father's infidelity and her mother's extremely conservative orthodoxy. She also came in contact with some spiritualists, but gives no

sign of being then seriously impressed by the latter. On her return home she became a member of a liberal church choir. At this period she reports that the singing of hymns induced sexual excitement in her. In her secretarial occupation she found it necessary to read half a dozen liberal and radical weeklies, and in consequence she says she became "moleculatized with Atheism and Materialism." I doubt if this can be taken as a very literal truth. It was probably the mere surface adjustment, of an uncertain mental attitude, to such professions as seemed desirable for the secretary of a liberal propagandist society. In other words, she merely adopted her father's formula for rationalizing her own emotional conflict over religion.

About this time the issue of freedom of the mails for sex discussion was threatening to disrupt several liberal organizations, including the one of which "Ida" was secretary. Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll led those who favored some censorial power against "obscene" literature, and Professor Thaddeus B. Wakeman led the friends of larger intellectual freedom. "Ida's" organization was also divided by this issue. It seemed that about this time in "Ida's" career the same issue was threatening to bring about another wreck. "Ida" was now about thirty-four years old, and later, looking back on these events, she writes thus: "At the close of two years the president and I concluded to resign, as the free-lovers and other ultra members wished to force us to take up the defense of [sex] radicals who were persecuted for sending so called 'obscene literature' through the mails, and we would not, neither would we encourage free-love. *In those days I drew my dress very carefully aside from all such questions and was exceedingly prim in all my public expressions, and careful not to give the slightest encouragement to the left wing of [sex] radicalism.*" (Italics are mine.) Here is practically the admission that she had really believed in sex freedom, but dared not avow it. The fear may have been due to its secret practice at that time, or in California. More of this later. Here also we see her confronted with facts that evidently tended to make her conscious of the conflict between a quite normal sex life, although unmarried, and her desire for public approval. Having terminated her business relations with her late employer, the opportunities for sexual relations with him practically ceased. What is then more natural than that in these circumstances she should be driven to seek for relief, and the solution of her sex problem through some idealized fantasmal substitute, to replace the physical love of the mystical ex-clergyman? It seems probable that he had already prepared the way out, by teaching



her the sexual technique and theology of the *Tantras*. At any rate, abundant other studies have shown me that in such internal conflicts there arise the strongest urges for the acceptance of some form of mystical religion. Only the transcendent importance of the sex urge can justify such persons in ignoring conventional codes. The feeling of grandeur, which many derive from unusual delusional intimacy with mystical or superhuman powers, commonly furnishes a compensation for existing feelings of guilty inferiority which have arisen from sexual irregularity.

Just before the close of her two years' service as a liberal secretary, "Ida" became interested in a ouija board as a means of thought transference, but not as yet "taking spirits seriously." Here is a reversion to the earlier habits of her mother. Such is the road of many who are impelled to evade objective realities by reason of a guilty conscience, partly based upon an "unconscious" homosexual fixation. At least, she was not more willing to admit that she took spirits seriously than she was willing to admit her interest in sexual freedom. But these suppressions intensified the urge toward a life in the world of sexual fantasy. Little by little, as she experimented with ouija, she came to feel that an unseen intelligence outside herself (rather than her subconscious mentation) was working the ouija board. Later she graduated to the use of Daestu, a writing machine, and to the use of a pencil; then with her finger tracing on her knee part of the sentence and receiving the balance by "impression." She adds: "I was told by these unseen intelligences to listen for 'the spoken voice.' This at length, to my surprise, came by what I have since read that St. Teresa was wont to term 'the interior voice.' As nearly as I can describe it, this 'interior voice' appears to arise in the solar plexus and to ascend to a point in the back of the throat at the base of the brain, or thereabouts; from which point it may ramify, either to the ear interiorly or to the vocal chords. If to the latter, the chords may be moved silently, or they may be moved to speech, so that the psychic answers his question, as it were, himself. But in any of the three cases it is not his own subjective self which sets the impulse going; the impulse is started by an outside intelligence." So they always claim and must believe, when they do not seek or wish to understand its psychogenetics, or do not know or wish to trace the determinants for their unconscious mentation. "St. Teresa says that although at first one's own subjective self may be mistaken for the outside intelligence which speaks through the 'interior voice,' yet after one has had a little experience it is easy not to confound the two." So the split personality must view it.

It has already been hinted that there are circumstances which indicate that just before this "Ida" had been enjoying illicit sexual relations with a mystical and married ex-clergyman, who evidently had a very enticing technique. When this relationship ended Ida was naturally impelled toward its continuation in her fantasy life. She was so strongly obsessed that to instruct others in this entrancing technique now became her dominant passion, for which she ultimately went to jail and to her death. When the sexual fantasy is vivid enough, and is involved with enough of affect-value to achieve the obsessing quality of a morbid hallucination, then it can no longer be traced by its victim to the personal psychologic past. Consequently "Ida" must, thereafter, believe her erotic fantasies to be due to superphysical objectives. This belief was easily acceptable for her, because in our moron civilization any claim of supernaturalism lends distinction to its victim, and serves to neutralize the feeling of guilty inferiority, which is due to the subjective moral conflict over the personal sex impulses and sexual life.

After a while, and according to the usual psychologic development in such matters, these "unseen intelligences" announced themselves to "Ida" as coming from the world beyond the grave. The voices claimed to come from her father, who had died when Ida was two years old; and her sister, who had died as an infant before Ida's birth. This latter "spirit" reported that: "She had now grown to womanhood and become a wife and mother; and her husband, a Brahmin, Iases by name (pronounced Yah-sayz), who had passed over some six hundred years previously. (The name Iases was given to him after his entrance into that world.) This Brahmin has always since then, and he says that for years previously, been my ["Ida's"] chief trainer. Whoever or whatever he may be, I certainly recognize in him a powerful and intelligent being, intellectually far in advance of myself." It does not require much of a psychologist to see in that fantasy the very direct yet unconscious influence of suggestions from the mystical ex-clergyman. By thus seeing his control over her, we get a measure of his importance in her emotional life. Of course, "Ida" cannot explain herself in terms of this ex-clergyman and his devotion to Tantra, or to any sexual experience with him, if there had been such. Obviously, a spiritual and supernatural explanation is more innocent, and more acceptable to others who are similarly afflicted.

A few other invisible people also announced themselves to "Ida" by the "interior voice." Among these was a young man whom she had known at the end of her teens and who was several years her

elder. In writing of these mysterious experiences "Ida" claims that this boy had fallen in love with her and wanted to marry her, but that she turned a cold shoulder to him as a lover, although she liked him as a friend and companion. Soon after that he died.

"These unseen intelligences after a while told me that only when a would-be psychic lives correctly and thinks clearly will the lines of thought transference hold clear and strong from their world to ours. Also, the communicating spirit must likewise live correctly and think clearly. A cross word, a neglected duty, a selfish act, impurity of life, failure to aspire to the highest, any of these are sufficient to make the lines of thought transference waver, and finally relax and loosen entirely. Sometimes, indeed, there will come a mighty rush of messages from the unseen, even over such a tottering, swaying bridge; but it is just as likely as not to be lost, partly or wholly, in the abyss before it can be hurried across from the other side. In many cases the psychic, totally unaware of the accident, remains quiet, in a receptive frame of mind, whereupon the subjective consciousness, the mentality, untrained and uncontrolled as it is, and with its innate tendency dominating it of working out conclusions from a premise already given, attempts to finish the half delivered message. The result, of course, is a mass of absurdities, often of total misleadings." Thus the very fact that "Ida" claimed to receive such spiritual messages is offered by her as evidence of her sexual "purity." The need for such evidence must have been impelling.

"My dear people (as I have now learned to call them) gave me five simple little rules. They are: 1. Do your daily earthly duty, undeterred by calls to mediumship, from whatever source. 2. Be self-controlled and strive to be more amiable and loving every day. 3. Wait and watch for the highest. 4. Avoid *selfish* seeking or self-ease. 5. Abide in purity. When I kept these rules, communications with the borderland were quite satisfactory; when I broke them, I was often terribly misled. And it was a long time before I fully realized some of the ramifications of these rules."

The young man in the spirit world "had there acquired the name of 'Soph' in recognition of his shrewdness." Continuing, Ida writes: "He now became my daily borderland companion, rebuking me when I failed to keep any of the five rules; encouraging me when I did right, and finally becoming quite near and dear to me, though still unseen. One of my most intimate friends [the ex-clergyman] about this time remarked to me when I was telling him and his wife of some of my borderland experiences, and of

the rigid way in which these unseen intelligences were training me, that evidently something was changing me for the better, as I had become ever so much easier to get along with." Perhaps, by the cessation of illicit sexual indulgence, her inner conflict had become less intense.

After a while the "spirit Soph" told "Ida" that he still loved her. Obviously this is the carrying over of a wish-fulfilling fantasy, and the normal fantasy was becoming an insane hallucination. "Ida's" narrative continues: "But all this while his companionship, all unaware to me, was daily growing dearer and more helpful. After a while he got me to admit that I really had begun to care for him. Then he got me to admit that I loved him. Then he got me to agree to give him the first chance to win me when I came over to his land. Then he went a step further -why not be his wife right here and now, on the borderland?" Suppressed sexual craving of abnormal intensity was driving to fantasmal satisfaction, through wish-fulfilling fantasy. Such fantasies are common enough. What distinguished "Ida's" fantasies was the greater affect-value which was attached to them. In consequence, she found it necessary to deal with them as if they presented objective realities.

"This struck me as quite a joke," says "Ida," because then she was not yet obce-ingly persuaded that "spirits" were anything more than "immaterial shades." \* \* \* "I have since grown to believe," she writes, "that they must be fully as substantial as we, although as they are in another plane of matter [fourth dimension], we are rarely able to focus them with our earthly vision, or hear them with our earthly ears. *What we hear and see with, are the eyes and ears we use in our dream life.* After all, the thought-world is the *real, abiding world*, and matter is but a passing illusion of the sense, as many modern thinkers are now teaching. (I confess that matter still seems real to me, however, and I believe that it is real, though not the abiding reality.)" So the growing intensity, of her introversion of interest, is wearing her away from her former materialistic philosophy.

Although "amusing" to her, this dream of a marriage proposal from an unseen "spirit-lover" expressed her unsatisfied feminine love of romance and sex. She explains by saying: "Then, too, I was quite sentimentally inclined toward this unseen being who was daily with me, rebuking me when I did wrong and encouraging me on the onward path, counselling me, always a tender, gentle, uplifting, spiritualizing influence. So I said finally that I would

be his wife on the borderland of the two worlds." Elsewhere she says she married this "spirit husband" October, 1892. Another manuscript fixed the date as "Saturday, Nov. 12, 1892."

"Then night after night, he lay down beside me (so he said, for all this time I neither felt nor saw him), and made love to me more ardently and tenderly than ever. . . . Once and once only have I seen him. It was shortly after I consented to become his wife. One morning a little before daybreak, I awakened up and Iases [the spiritual brother-in-law] talked with me, and told me I should presently be allowed to see my husband. Suddenly, as I lay on my side looking upward, I saw my husband standing beside the bed. He was visible only to above the waist and was dressed as I never saw him on earth—in an evening suit of exquisitely fine black broadcloth. He was leaning forward and looking at me and held in his hand a black silk handkerchief, something which I had noticed and admired in the hands of a young man of my acquaintance, who had always been a favorite with the ladies because of his elegant ways. Soph had the same face as on earth, but there was a clearness and purity in it which showed that he had risen to even higher levels of intellectual activity and high-mindedness than when on earth. His face was permeated with a wonderful spiritual light. Also, he was standing in a strange light which seemed quite as material as sunshine; yet it was different; it possessed a singular quality of seeming to permeate him, in a way which I have never seen any earthly light do."

As secretary of the society of religious liberals, "Ida" had published about forty letters, many of which I have read. The secretary was frequently defending herself against criticisms from the sex radicals, and all her letters are models of good temper and diplomacy. Once she justified herself in not wishing to be called an "infidel." Among other reasons assigned was this, that the dictionary definition was wrong. For her the word seemed to impute that one is a "retrograder to looseness." Such strained reasoning suggests a morbid fear of being suspected of having parted with her virginity, that being her "unbearable idea."

It is worth while to note here the synchronism between the interest in spiritualism and a changing attitude toward sex. The cessation of ordinary sexual expression is accompanied by a greater internal urge for sexual fantasies and the expression of sex ideas. When her physical relations ceased, that naturally increased her emotional and intellectual interest in sex. With growing morbidity, the intel-

lectual interest becomes ever more persistently a matter of fantasy, and then hallucination. The first change noticed is in a published letter in which "Ida" advocates sexual instruction for the young. With physical relations discontinued and her guilt accordingly lessened, she found a new courage to express her unconventional theoretic concepts. At that time sexual instruction for the young was still taboo. I see in it a change in her point of emphasis, which was soon followed by her taking on a "spiritual" husband. Next come a couple of letters published in newspapers in which she favors easy divorce and suggests that greater sex intelligence would remove much of the desire for divorce. In both of these instances her newly acquired technique for copulation must have been in the background of her consciousness. Of this, more will appear later. A magazine essay on Alaskan Myths shows a considerable knowledge of phallic worship and some ingenuity in finding phallic explanations for what she found during a prior visit to Alaska. The editor has told me that he cut out much of her discussion of phallic worship as being "too sexy."

During the World's Fair in Chicago the purists, among whom she always wished to be counted, were attacking a public exhibition, the "*Danse du Ventre*," for its "immorality." She wrote in its defense for "its value as an educator in marital duties." This "dance of the abdomen" was much like the most active physical contortions of a woman during coitus, but with an imaginary partner. Later in life "Ida" used this exercise as a method of psychologic masturbation. After expurgation by the editor, "Ida's" article was published in a metropolitan daily paper. In her later revision of that article I find this thought expressed and elaborated: "We have traveled fast and far since those old *uplifting days of Phallic or Sex-Worship*." Already she identifies her own mental states with those of the more primitive phallic worshipers. In the *Danse du Ventre* she saw the "apotheosis of feminine passion," her own passion idealized. She had now become familiar with the miscalled free-love literature of the Rev. John H. Noyes of the Bible Communists of Oneida, N. Y. This familiarity included his doctrine and method of "male continence." (Republished in *Medical Review of Reviews*, 1934.) Ida thus learned still more of the "spiritual" import of the sexual union of men and women. She saw in her conception of correct sex relation the "possibility of the twain becoming one flesh by being wedded through their sexual relations into a spiritual union, which lifts husband and wife above the merely physical relations

which obtain among animals." In the climax of an erotic ecstasy one seems impelled to a more complete and perfect delusion about being one flesh with the partner. When the orgasm becomes so intense as to be obsessive it may inhibit the consciousness of our separate physical personalities. So, then, delusionally, the twain are one. Common sense for a long time makes us doubt the complete physical oneness, so we call the union "spiritual," or only psychologic harmony.

From the following fall Ida returned to her old position as a college teacher. In the next spring the college authorities discontinued her services because she had indulged too freely in giving sexual instructions to her pupils. Such teaching was wholly irrelevant to the work of her employment.

During the next November she delivered a lecture before a radical club on "Survival of Sex-Worship in Christianity and Paganism; What Christianity Has Done for the Marital Relation." In the same month she wrote to a friend thus: "I have been writing a book on the 'Origin of the Devil,' from the folklore standpoint. I have also been investigating the subject of occultism in an experimental way and feel that I have discovered certain basic cosmic laws which are necessary to accurate mediumship. But my great hobby for years past has been the subject of sex on its emotional and ethical side—a subject to which my researches in occultism and phallic worship have contributed much. For a long time to come, perhaps for the rest of my earthly life—it is probable that my public work will be in the direction of sex-reform."

From now on the focus of her obsession appears to be definitely changed. Her last manuscript on marriage differs from other literature of her time in three particulars: (1) All aversion to normal copulation and sex freedom is dropped and early trial marriages for young people are urged as necessary to good health. (2) The psychologic technique of copulation, with religious accompaniments, now constitutes a large and important chapter. Here precision and refinements of detail were discussed to the fullest extent and in the frankest possible manner. I know much about literature on sexual subjects but know of nothing more full in its details than this. (3) The third peculiarity of her unpublished book is the chapter on "The Metaphysics of Marriage," where her religio-sexual mania explains itself and furnishes her a "spiritual" justification for teaching the technique of coitus. By this time "Ida" was advertising herself as "Lecturer and Correspondent in Social Purity." Here we see the

usual mask behind which all may conceal their guilty feelings and indulge extravagantly in psychic lasciviousness without apparent guilty admissions. In the closing years of the last century she wrote some letters to an imaginary prospective bride and similar advice to an imaginary bridegroom. These booklets dealt frankly, but in "chaste" style, with the technique of painless and shockless defloration. Unfortunately, at this point "Ida's" autobiography was discontinued. Later a "spiritual diary" furnishes much information that will be used in another essay. This deals frankly with her psychosexual or "spiritual" experiences and development.

Before passing on, a few observations should be made. About this time "Ida" was discharged from a public employment, apparently because too much working time was spent in writing about sex. The manuscripts then prepared by Ida show a very wide reading which must have extended over many years. The subjects are phallic worship, folklore, witchcraft, occultism, and Christian polemics, as connecting many theories or dialectics of spiritism and sexuality. The virgin birth of Jesus and other "virgin born" gods of the ancients became realities to her, because they seemed to justify the "spiritual" import and valuation of her own mystical copulations with her "spiritual husband." Much of this erudition is woven into a lengthy manuscript designed as an objective justification for her erotic hallucinations.<sup>1</sup> I have had that published, and the editor pronounced it the most remarkable product of an insane mind that wide knowledge had disclosed to him.

"Ida" then entered definitely upon the career of a teacher in the technique of copulation. Her pupils were largely clergymen and their wives. Her methods were bold. She spent a little time in each of two institutions for nervous and mental disease. While out on parole, in the custody of her mother, she made her escape to England. Here she remained for nearly two years, doing research work to justify her divine mania. For this research work she was financed by a mystic of international fame who believed in many of "Ida's" theories, and did much toward giving her intellectual help. The essay on "Heavenly Bridegrooms," above referred to, incorporates that research material. Upon returning to America, she began as an active teacher for her "spiritualized" method of coitus. There came several arrests in as many western cities. After one of these arrests she wrote to a former radical opponent as follows: "I would lay

<sup>1</sup> Heavenly Bridegrooms. *Alienist and Neurologist*, Nov., 1915, to Aug., 1917. Also a reprint.



down my life for the cause of sex reform," meaning, of course, her concept of a religious or "spiritualized" sexual technique. Now she came to New York city, with the title, "Pastor of the Church of Yoga." Again her mania brought her into conflict with the law. There was a short term in jail on conviction under a state law against "obscenity." She was also convicted in the Federal Court, with the prospect of a long jail sentence, as an old offender. To escape that sentence "Ida" committed suicide.

Having indicated the external factors of Ida's growth to her morbid condition, we must come to a closer view of some of the ways in which "Ida" contributes to our knowledge of the relationship of sex and mysticism. This matter of technique, over which she lost her sense of objective values, consisted of a physical and "spiritual" component. On its physical side it was a discipline which she claimed would enable men to prolong copulating activity for from one to three hours, and pass the orgasm without seminal emission. On its "spiritual" side, "Ida's" technique involved taking God into partnership in the sexual union. During coitus there must be prayers to Him and an unselfish devotion to giving God the maximum joy from the sexual union. These are the means to God's grace, as well as to a maximum of human erotic ecstasy.

"Ida" has left a description of such a glorified ecstasy as can be secured "only" out of such a triune sexual relationship between a man, a woman, and God. One interesting thing about this description is the use that I made of it. First it was edited by eliminating those words which made obvious the physical factors of sex, and substituting therefor metaphysical words. Then it was entitled "Spiritual Joys," and sent to the editor of a mystical magazine. He pronounced it the finest description of the indescribable that he had ever read, and he published it in his magazine.<sup>2</sup> This editor, having failed to recognize the wholly sexual basis of that description, thereby encouraged me to make further experimentation. This edited document was now reprinted and sent to all *religious* (and some other) psychologists, with a questionnaire. This was a way of discovering if those who so heartily disagree with my opinion of the sexual nature of all transcendental experiences could tell the difference between a sexual ecstasy and a "transcendental divine" ecstasy. Of that another essay will be made.

"Ida's" description of a divine-sexual ecstasy, as she wrote it, follows:

<sup>2</sup> Azoth (N. Y. City), Vol. 2 (No. 3), 140-142, March, 1918.

## A DIVINE-SEXUAL ECSTASY DESCRIBED

"The experience of sex union in which the controlled orgasm and sustained thrill by both husband and wife are passed through *with the Central Force of the Universe, the Impulsive Power of Primordial Matter, as the third partner*, is an experience never to be forgotten; an experience which, once had, will be longed for again."

"O to realize space!

The plenteousness of all, that there are no bounds,

To emerge and be of the sky, of the sun and moon and flying  
clouds, as one with them!"

"So panted Walt Whitman. What he yearned for in these lines may at times be realized by the husband and wife who have learned how to enter into the self-controlled and ecstatic triune sex partnership with the Impulsive Force of Primordial Matter. I say 'at times,' for, as I have already stated, no two such unions with the Infinite Force are existly alike; and the sexual thrills of delight which permeate one's entire being during such a union, physically, mentally and spiritually, how all at the same moment, and again alternating with one another in successive vibrations of rapture, are never satiating. It does not get to be an old story, there is a new delight at each union, and a wider apprehension of the pervasiveness of God's presence. Sometime, indeed, it is as though 'space' and 'the plenteousness of all, that there are no bounds,' for whose realization Walt Whitman so passionately longed, had begun to be understood. Again—and now I must speak rather in the figurative terms of the mystic, for it is well-nigh impossible to express subjective experiences accurately in spoken language—it is as though the Great Power of All There Is held one by a firm, tender hand, detained in a secret retreat of exquisite beauty, where vivid colors and softly rounded forms are seen, and where, for some organizations, fragments of soul-stirring melodies rise and fall upon the inner ear, and where, for some other organizations, rhythmical waves of poetic measure may pulsate to and fro until, in ever wider and wider area, fragments of these, also, sweep up through the subliminal consciousness to the very threshold of the intellectual consciousness itself, and part of a poem is thus projected from the Infinite Heart of the Universe into the heart of the individual. And again it may be as though one were privileged to see into chaos, as the formative period of the world began. Strange blendings of color surge to and fro, without order or place; or purposeless vibrations of sound are heard; or vague shapes flit about

one, now separate, now blending like storm-clouds. Then suddenly, as the individual exerts his or her spiritual self-control, these indistinct and purposeless shapes and colors and sounds begin to crystallize into that which is definite; and the trained mystic gets a glimpse in a way not to be expressed in words, of how the Purposive Centre of All Thought-Force in the universe originally worked a Cosmos out of Chaos. Or, again, the onrush of sex passion in this triune partnership appears to the inner senses as the rapids of Niagara, into which no untrained neophyte may dare to enter, for he will be swept onward to destruction. But the husband and wife who have known the bliss of the controlled orgasm and sustained thrill in partnership with the Most High, tremble on the verge of these mystic rapids but for a moment, and then enter, to find themselves, as it were, at the very heart of these forces which first sent the nebulous, unformed mass of our solar universe whirling into space. They are in Chaos, but a Chaos which is being evolved into a Cosmos. They struggle in the foaming rapids of sexual creative passion, they and God all one together, the impetuous current seems momentarily about to sweep them from their feet, and they breast the waves in a delicious, thrilling agony; yet all the while they know themselves to be so firmly God-centered that sway to and fro in the whirl of sex passion as they may, to be swept to destruction will not happen. Suddenly, as an especially high and impetuous wave of passion is met and surmounted with the most intensely voluptuous thrill yet experienced in this triune partnership, they feel firm ground beneath their feet; they brace themselves for a final dash through the lesser rapids, and emerge on the farther bank, triumphant, serene, mutually uplifted; they climb with steady and tranquilized nerves the heights of affection and spirituality; and on that high plateau they talk in the love-light of the Divine, blended soul and body in a wedded union whose happiness can never be expressed in words."

"Sometimes during such a triune partnership, or at its close, God is sensed as we were wont, when very, very small children to sense our mother—a powerful, mysterious being of loftier stature than ourselves, in trailing robe, to whom we looked up with awe and to whom we clung as our protector; a being whose presence radiated a comforting soul's warmth, whose voice vibrated firmly, yet was tender with love; and nevertheless a vaguely understood and somewhat feared personality after all."

"The closer one gets to God in a triune sex union, the more awful

and glorious and majestic appears the Divine Impulsive Force of the Universe, and yet the more unspeakably tender."

"At times it is as though one stood beside the Engineer who, with hand on throttle, guides the rushing, mighty train of Universal Nature, and one feels an inexpressible thrill of delight at being so close to the Heart Of All There Is."

"And forever through and through these strange mystic experiences, be it remembered, bodily sexual desire and bodily sexual bliss rise and fall like the surging waves of the ocean."

The difficult task of describing the mystic ecstasy has never before been so well done. When the more orthodox mystics usually dispense with the sex partner, even excluding the physical facts of sex from consciousness, "Ida" frankly accepts both. You may call it all plain sex, spiritualized sex, divine mania, self-apotheosis, or the supernatural experience of God. Whatever you call it, or however you value it, that name and valuation will only evidence your degree of healthy-mindedness and understanding. Whether you like "Ida's" psychology or not, it is a natural and undesigned product of Puritan training, and shows that puritanism and mysticism are really problems of mental hygiene.