

The rise and progress of sexual hygiene in Sweden

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faire preuve cet automne y une attitude plus raisonnable. Une ballade à travers le port et au musée en plein air nous ont procuré de brefs mais suggestifs aperçus du pays et de sa population. Le spectacle le plus original nous attendait au parc Vigeland qui constitue la glorification du nu humain, encore qu'avec moins on eut obtenu davantage! Le nombre exagéré des statues ne permet pas d'impressions profondes. Certaines pièces sentent le cliché mais d'autres obligent de s'arrêter, telle cette paire d'amis que le lecteur pourra contempler à la dernière page de nos reproductions artistiques. Bien que le plaisir soit dans l'ensemble un peu mélangé, personne ne devrait manquer de s'y rendre à la découverte. Le club d'Oslo étant aussi fermé pendant les vacances, nous avons passé une délicieuse soirée chez le président de l'association norvégienne où nous avons été heureux de nouer de nouvelles amitiés au cours d'entretiens sans contrainte et d'établir les plans d'un avenir meilleur.

Non sans regrets nous avons quitté les pays du soleil de minuit et leur population si hospitalière mais, en disant à nos amis «au revoir», nous n'avons pas prononcé une vaine formule. Une chose nous est devenue absolument évidente: c'est qu'il faudrait apprendre à mieux nous connaître au-delà de toutes les frontières et unir nos efforts, chacun de sa façon, pour combattre tous ensemble des lois qui marquent encore tant de nos camarades d'un sceau d'infériorité. C'est une tâche indispensable si nous ne voulons pas nous renier nous-mêmes.

Rolf, traduit par Tibert.

The Rise and Progress of Sexual Hygiene in Sweden

The outlook on sexual life which officially has been prevalent in Sweden up to the 20th century and which still predominates, originated in a general sex fear. According to the official moral code, sexuality was considered an inferior instinct and sexual relations very sinful or at least shameful. It was only tolerable within marriage and should have procreation as its sole purpose. To enjoy sexual intercourse was indecent especially for women. Sexual deviations, such as homosexuality were considered highly sinful and were treated with severe intolerance. Masturbation — a very wide-spread practice, which is now considered quite normal at certain stages — was looked upon as wicked and sinful and was thought to endanger seriously body and mind. (Nowadays, however, we may read in publications strongly influenced by the Church that masturbation is not as wicked as many other sins.) Knowledge in sexual matters was considered harmful.

It is difficult to enumerate any positive results of this official sex code; negative ones, however, are easily proved. The claim that all sexual relationships should be strictly intermarital has stimulated a double code of morals and prostitution. The theory of sin has accentuated sex fear and has resulted in frigidity, impotence and other neurotic phenomena. The antipathy against sex education and contraceptive propaganda — the «Bill concerning contraceptives» which prohibited such propaganda was only repealed in 1938 — has without doubt been con-

ducive to the large extent of venereal diseases and to many of the dangerous illegal abortions. The secrecy and the false half-knowledge have stimulated coarse pornography.

The moral code just described which is hostile to normal sexual relationships has had its strongest advocate in the Church, but also other forces have had good reason to support it. This official, conservative sex moral has now been compensated for by a sex science which has introduced a new attitude towards sex. This new attitude emphasizes the fact that *sex union by itself has a great value regardless of reproduction, and the sexual needs of men in its form and consequences are strongly determined by social conditions.* Recent research has shown that exhaustive and correct sex education at an early age is imperative in order to eliminate ignorance and prejudice, neuroses and sexual disharmonies.

The above lines are quoted from the pamphlet «Fear or Happiness» published on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the National League for Sex Education. We may continue with a few facts mentioned in the pamphlet to illustrate recent changes in the Swedish attitude towards homosexual relationships and the contribution of the NLSE towards these changes.

«The psychiatrist Frey Svensson maintained already before the turn of the century that there was no good reason to punish homosexual relationships except in such cases where ordinary hetero-sexual relationships are punishable. The epoch-making discoveries in the field of sex science by Freud and others did in Sweden not result in any hasty practical reforms. Up to the Thirties public discussion was dominated by the question of how to fight venereal diseases. In 1933 Professor Vilhelm Lundstedt submitted a proposition asking the Swedish Riksdag (Parliament) to repeal the special law regarding homosexual cases.

Until then the National League for Sex Education was working under the guidance of Elise Ottesen-Jensen who for many years had done a great deal of work on sex education. Her enthusiastic work all through the years has been indispensable to the activities of the League. During the 21 years that have elapsed since the NLSE has consistently presented and developed its radical conceptions in the field of sex education.

The National League has worked in close contact with the trade unions, political organizations and the adult education movement. In 1934 the NLSE adopted the following programme:

1. Sex education in all schools, teachers' colleges and universities throughout the nation.

2. Consultation centres — stationary in the cities, ambulatory in the country — which give guidance and information in all questions relating to sex.

3. A complete repeal of the «Bill concerning contraceptives» (this law prohibited all birth control propaganda).

4. Legalization of abortion and sterilization on eugenic, medical and social grounds.

5. *Revision of all legislation in this field in accordance with a scientific judgement of sexual disharmonies.*

6. A complete change of social and economic conditions in order to utilize research in the field of sex science.

NLSE has in different ways tried to carry out this programme. Through discussion founded on fact it has tried to change public opinion and thereby to gain reforms. Through its consultation centres it has helped thousands of people and proved also in that way the necessity for immediate reforms.

In 1941 the Governmental Committee working on a new legislation concerning homosexuals asked for information and suggestions from the National League.

In 1944 the law penalizing all homosexual intercourse was repealed. The Law takes cognisance of homosexual acts now only:

1) as a protection for juveniles below 18 respectively 21 years. (If a person of 18—21 years offers himself, the older homosexual person will not be punished, so as to prevent blackmailing);

2) as a protection for people interned in different institutions;

3) for the maintainance of order and decency at public places.

The legislation is not completely satisfactory. The National League to which the suggested legislation was remitted issued the following statement: The National League is basically opposed to any criminalization of homosexual relationships as such, but holds the opinion that homosexual persons, who act in an antisocial way should be punished according to the same laws which apply to heterosexual relationships. Special penalties for homosexuality would encourage the intolerant attitude of the general public towards this sexual tendency, which not only brings suffering upon homosexual persons but is also conducive to many of their conflicts.»

In 1944 the «National League» altered five points of its programme. For comparison with the original programme we would like to quote the two most interesting points:

The shift of emphasis from penal measures to curative and preventive ones against aberration of the sexual instinct.

Governmental steps for the promotion of sexual-psychological and other scientific research in the field of sex. Social reforms in order to utilize this research.

The changes in the programme of 1944 were a result of the fact that a number of the desiderata enumerated in the first programme of the League are now realized.

However it is not known well enough, that the increasing understanding of our problems amongst legislators, government departments and the press is to a large extent due to the intensive campaign by the National League. The NLSE has extended its activities also to the other Scandinavian countries.

It is a pleasant duty to express here our admiration and gratitude to the active members of the NLSE and especially to its president, Mrs. Elise Ottesen-Jensen.

Gert Lantman, Stockholm.