

Book-Review : they stand apart

Autor(en): **Arlen, Richard**

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denim shorts and a pair of old canvas shoes. He lay, asleep or dozing, with one leg crooked at the knee, an arm flung over his head. Only a little darker than the sand, his body had been tanned to a fine smooth color and his hair bleached and streaked, a tangle of dark and light. Further up on the beach, towered the great cocoanut palms and there seemed to be no other person around. I sprawled out beside him and pretended to read a copy of 'Yank.' In a while, he stretched and stirred himself, like a lazy animal, looking over at me with slightly narrowed eyes. When our eyes met, I don't think there could be any doubt what we were thinking. I slid in the sand, exciting and resistant to the skin, so that our bodies almost touched and I could smell the keen saltiness of his body streaked with sweat but when I reached toward him, he pushed me away. He was more upset than I and I could not understand the rejection. Turning, he began to pull his clothes on in an agonized way. 'Why?' I stammered, not moving. He frowned. All he would say was: 'An airplane might fly low and see us.' Hurriedly he put on his clothes and disappeared down the empty beach.'

'He was afraid,' I said, 'he was afraid of the air, of space.'

From the direction of the lounge floated the strong carrying voice of the bell-boy: 'Paging Mr Halloran . . . paging Mr Halloran . . . paging Mr Halloran'

Steve looked surprised. 'I wonder who that could be? . . . Excuse me.' He disappeared in the direction of the phone booth. When he returned, five minutes later, his face looked dark and worried.

'Vera . . .' he explained briefly. 'I'm sorry but I shall have to go —'.

We shook hands and bade each other goodby under the gold clock in the center of the vestibule. As I watched his slim body disappear through the revolving door, I wondered if I'd ever see him again . . . Was he caught, too, as if in an invisible cage? Oh, where did the cage begin? Where did it end? As I walked into the crowded, indifferent traffic I thought of the little stories we had told each other. But about his life there was a kind of space that could not be about mine.

Book-Review

They stand apart

Edited by His Honour J. Tudor Rees and Harley V. Usill

William Heinemann, Ltd. London.

'They stand apart' — no more appropriate title could have been chosen for a book which deals in five sections with the phenomenon of homosexuality in regard to law, society, Christian morals, the medical aspect and the law in regard thereto in the other European countries. Here seems to be a book many of those 'standing apart' will be keen to read.

On the first page of the introduction by the editors one finds the following statement: 'In any society, in the last resort, the interests of the community as a whole are superior to those of the individual, but where a democratic way of life has been firmly established, the rights of the individual to live his life as he pleases are greater than under other forms of government.' The reader feels hopeful, only to come on the very next pages of the same introduction to wholly unqualified statements like: 'by the very nature of its (homosexuality's) proselytizing tendencies, especially among the young . . .', 'there is no permanency about the association of male with male', 'all the time there is the urge to seek for youth', until on page XI of the introduction the reader is asked to decide whether homosexuality is a 'cancer of the soul', a 'twist in the mind', a 'bodily infliction' or a mixture of them all. The introduction goes on to say, 'Whatever it may be, there can be no question about the potential evil, in varying degrees, resulting from the practices associated with homosexuality.'

However, even in the introduction it is pointed out at the end that some of the views expressed by the contributors appear to be in conflict — and with that little hope the reader gets on to the five sections of the book.

In Part I/1 His Honour J. Tudor Rees gives a case history concerning boys. Page 14 speaks of the urge of the homosexual to involve himself with young persons. Page 15 speaks of the man, setting out on his filthy errand being unable to know whether his partner has reached the prescribed age. Page 20 relates two other cases involving boys.

In Part I/2 The Viscount Hailsham tells us on page 21 without any qualification that active male homosexuals are made and not born, as on page 22 the reader is informed that the precipitating factor in the great majority of cases has been initiation by older homosexuals whilst the personality is still pliable. Page 23 states that interference with the sexual habits of its adult members by society affords 'some' temptation to blackmailers. On page 28 the reader is told that 'no doubt homosexual acts between mature males do take place, but the normal attraction of the adult male homosexual is to the young male adolescent or young male adult to the exclusion of others', to inform us further on page 29 'that the problem of homosexuality is in essence the problem of corruption of youth by itself (?) and by its elders.'

Part I/3 of the book deals with: 'Homosexuality and Christian Morals' by The Revd. D. S. Bailey. I would like to point out that the whole essay is written throughout in a genuine, truly Christian spirit and that the author also rejects by excellent reasoning the Biblical story of Sodom. Here is one quotation from pages 61/62 of this excellent contribution: 'The principle already mentioned — namely, that it is not conceived to be the purpose of the law to safeguard private morality or to shield the mature and presumably responsible citizens from temptation to do wrong — appears to represent the limit beyond which the modern legislator is not prepared to go in taking cognisance of sexual sin, except where there has been assault or violence, corruption of the young, or public indecency or nuisance. The only exception to the general appli-

cation of this principle is in the case of male homosexuality — and several reasons have already been adduced to show that such an exception is unwarranted.’

Part II/1 deals with the medical aspect and everybody concerned with and interested in the phenomenon of homosexuality should read this section very carefully. As is only expected from someone with an apparently thorough knowledge of what he is writing about, this section of the book offers a totally different picture from the one depicted in the first two sections of the same book. The author, Dr. W. Lindesay Neustatter, is sincerely to be congratulated on this first-class contribution.

But coming to Part II/2 ‘Homosexuality and the Law in other Countries’, the reader really begins to ask himself why the first two sections of the book have been included at all. H. A. Hammelmann, M. A., Oxford cites ten European countries (excluding Austria) and their laws in regard to homosexuality. To put it into a nutshell: of these ten countries eight countries (Belgium, Holland, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, France) do not punish acts between two consenting adult males. Of the two remaining ones Norway deals very leniently or not at all with such acts. Western Germany has kept on — as the only exception — the Hitler-version of the famous Paragraph 175 of the German Penal Code. Even more important, however, than these facts and their implications is the showing by Mr. Hammelmann that in *all* these ten countries mentioned *ample* opportunity is provided to punish offences against minors, male or female. The undue stress such crimes receive in the first two sections of the book is therewith reduced to its proper size.

It is a pity that this stress on offences against minors (fully justified though it is) tends to mislead the reader as to the problem of homosexuality as a whole. However, most of the harm which may be done by these first two sections is rectified by sections 4 and 5. And an intelligent reader should be able to see how terribly weak the case for prosecuting consenting male adults in those two remaining European countries (i. e. Western Germany and England) really is. For this realization the book is to be highly recommended to all those seriously interested in and concerned with — not the problem — but the question of prosecuting homosexual acts between two consenting male adults.

Richard Arlen.

Reading the German and French section of THE CIRCLE isn't as difficult as many think, see the following extract from a letter:

Although my German and French is not much above the «Karl und Anna haben die Feder und die Bleistifte» and «La plume de ma tante est sur le table» variety, with the aid of dictionaries I can read most of the contents without too much trouble and the effort involved is well rewarded.

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