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Book-Review

PRIVATE VIEW by Jocelyn Brooke
London, James Barrie, 10/6 sh

This is a book to be highly recommended. Of the four literary portraits which the volume contains, the longest, covering about a hundred pages, presents 'Gerald Brockhurst', a man who realizes too late in life that he is essentially homosexual. Though his life-story has a tragic ending, — for Brockhurst, when about to face a court-martial, commits suicide — the author, nevertheless, enumerates a chain of events which lead logically and naturally to Brockhurst's self-destruction.

This portrait of a homosexual is told in the first person by the narrator, who befriended Gerald Brockhurst when they were both in their first year at Oxford during the 'Roaring Twenties' and shows the development of their friendship over a period of more than twenty years, if such a relationship can be called real friendship. At the beginning Gerald does not realize the homosexual urge in his own nature. Nevertheless driven by it he attempts twice to gaze on his friend naked while swimming, only to be frustrated each time. On another occasion, under the influence of drink he tries without success to share his friend's bed one night.

The subtle irony of the story lies in the fact, firstly, that when Gerald does see his friend naked twenty years later, it is too late, and, secondly, when he had in fact, previously to this, an opportunity to share his friend's bed, he preferred a 'one night stand' with a willing soldier to his friend's company. Had his feelings for his friend during their University years found an outlet, probably the disasters of his ensuing years might all have been avoided.

The author shows in this 'portrait' an extremely perceptive insight into human character, at the same time gives disagreeable though brilliant side-lights on some aspects of London's homosexual underworld, and its pursuit after The Guards, both Officers and 'Other Ranks'. But essentially this 'Life' is a tragic story, told with all the restraint and under-statement so typical of good English writers. R. Y.

THE LABYRINTH

*Boys are a labyrinth with no escape;
Where'er you cast your eye you meet your doom.
First Theodorus charms you here, flesh ripe
And plump, whose limbs are in their flawless bloom.
Then here the golden face of Philocles,
Not tall, but by a heavenly grace surrounded.
But if you turn to look on Leptines,
You have no strength to move, your feet grounded;
The flames from this boy's eyes can well ignite
From head to toe, nor can you move away.
Hail, lovely boys! May you all reach the height
Of youth, and live until your heads are grey.*

Rhianus (circa 200 B. C.)