

Homosexuals and society

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teous and friendly in reply to the telephone calls which begin, «Is that Mr Wildeblood? You won't know me, but»

The «official» attitude, then, is not any longer the majority attitude. A writer in the American *New Republic* has commented that, after the Wilde trial, Oscar Wilde was spattered with blobs of spittle from the people who watched him driven to prison, but, after the Montagu Trial, it was the informers, Reynolds and McNally, who had to be protected by the police from the crowd of spectators. Wildeblood, who went to prison, has kept the affection and respect of his neighbours and acquaintances.

From: «Truth», London.

Homosexuals and Society

Sir, — From the press reports of the B.M.A. memorandum on homosexuality one would suppose that it was only those men who are unlucky enough, or unwise enough, to fall into the hands of the police upon whom the present state of the law bears hardly. It is remarked that there are practising homosexuals in parliament and other high places as though this were surprising. There is a commonly accepted fallacy that all homosexuals are effeminate and obvious, and that they are especially attracted to certain professions. Both these opinions are contrary to what little evidence is available. It is probable, if not certain, that homosexuality is fairly evenly distributed throughout all levels of society, and has been so in all ages. Its greater or lesser apparent prevalence at different levels and at different times is due solely to the degree of tolerance obtaining, more or less, in those times and places. Thus in certain fields such as e. g., the theatre, where tolerance is greater, it is less necessary for a man to wear a mask. It is true, of course, that some whose effeminacy places them beyond concealment are attracted to work in spheres where concealment is less necessary. An actor, dress designer, writer, or musician is not likely to be ostracised by his colleagues because he is known to be «queer.» Could the same be said of bank managers, civil servants, clergymen or schoolmasters, for example? The fact is that there are thousands of men who look no different from anyone else, who dress quietly, live sober lives, perform their social duties and try to give offence to no one. It is upon these that the law presses so heavily. These are the potential victims of blackmail and assault. Dr. Claxton suggests that religious conversion is the answer to this problem. I maintain that this is a quite unrealistic view. There are few individuals of sufficient quality to be able to direct their total sexual energies into «good works». Most people need to live a life which includes the companionship and understanding of another person, and a fairly regular sexual life. The so-called normal man obtains these benefits through marriage. Does Dr. Claxton suppose that all homosexuals are so much better than the normal that they can pursue the way of sanctity, or so much worse that they must be treated as felons?

It has further been suggested that homosexuals tend to be loyal to one another first and to employer or country second. While this may be true of a few, it is certainly a gross exaggeration. It is said that homosexuals give their own kind preference in office where it is possible for them to do so. This may to some extent be true. Other minority groups such as Freemasons, Rotarians, Roman Catholics, Jews, etc., do the same thing. It is not always undesirable, but becomes so when the minority is a persecuted minority. In this case the group feels that it has a genuine grudge against the persecuting majority; and thus place filling may take an anti-social turn if a member of the minority prefers one of his own group over a man who would be better at the job. In this connection consider the position of a homosexual in one of the «respectable» professions. Forced always to live a lie, is it any wonder that the judgment of such a man might be unduly biased if he were presented with the opportunity of working with someone with whom he could, at least to some extent, relax. The remedy is, surely, to cease the persecution.

The B.M.A. refers to homosexuals in the church, parliament and elsewhere. This has been taken up with the usual salacious gusto by the popular press. It might be added that the medical profession too has its quota of inverts. I myself know a number of them, and thank God that there are such men to whom the harassed can turn for advice, in the knowledge that they will not have a spurious «cure» or the virtues of «sublimation» thrust down their throats but will, instead, be helped to accept themselves and the strictures at present placed upon them by society without resentment. Some people are by this means enabled to lead reasonably normal lives, who might otherwise have been driven to suicide or into the underworld of surreptitious vice. Most homosexuals do not belong to this underworld and loathe it as much as does the rest of society. Corruption and blackmail are, in fact, encouraged by the very measures which seek to root them out. A. B.

From: The New Statesman and Nation, London.

Polemo Disappoints

*If Polemo came safely back, it's true,
I promised, Phoebus you should have a present.
He's back — and yet he's not: his chin is blue,
And he's no longer Polemo, nor pleasant.
Perhaps he prayed to sprout a beard. Then he
Can make your gift. He's disappointed me.*

Statyllius Flaccus.