

Studying sex offences

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possible. So many times, though, pleasures on the beach are just dead sea fruit, and it is often with a real feeling of relief that they get back to the ship and under way again, trying to make themselves believe they've had a wonderful time. As a rule, it is only the younger members of the crew who mess about with prostitutes; those who have been at sea for a few years generally do not bother.

No, sailors are funny people. They have a mentality all of their own and only a sailor can understand how the mind of another sailor works. They are happiest among their own kind. Life on shore is too restricted to satisfy the demands of a man used to the freedom, disciplined though it may be, of sea-going life.

To those of you who live within solid walls of brick and stone, in streets that rarely change, in towns that grow ever larger and drearier, if you should meet a sailor sometime, and spend with him a day, or a night, or a week, and you enjoy each other's friendship for just that long, and he goes away and you never see him or hear of him or from him again, do not think that he has not appreciated your kindness, if you have been kind, or your sincerity if you have been sincere. He'll not forget you, if he has liked you.

«Swift like a sea gull flying
In the night he goes alone . . .»

STORNOWAY.

Studying Sex Offences

By The Rt. Hon. KENNETH YOUNGER, M.P.

Efforts to make our penal system both humane and effective have always been handicapped by lack of exact knowledge upon which to base reform. The Cambridge Department of Criminal Science, directed by Dr. Radzinowicz, therefore decided to make a start towards meeting this need by investigating a broad sample of sexual offences known to the police during one year, 1947: and the results are now published in a 500 page volume: *Sexual Offences*. Edited by Dr. L. Radzinowicz. (Macmillan. 40s.)

Of the two contentious topics shortly to be reported on by the Wolfenden Committee on Homosexuality and Prostitution, prostitution was outside the scope of the group's inquiry; while on homosexuality no very radical suggestions are made. The most interesting fact revealed about homosexual offences committed between consenting adults in private is the rarity even now of prosecutions for this kind of offence. Only two were found in the sample taken, and there may have been no more than a dozen or so in the whole country in 1947.

While this fact by itself may be open to a number of constructions, it lends some support to the criticism, often made of the existing law, that effective enforcement is, in the nature of the offence, impossible, and that what offenders have to fear is not so much public prosecution as private blackmail.

The experience of Scandinavian countries and of Belgium, on which there are interesting chapters, suggests that in the last thirty years all these countries have, after careful inquiry, narrowed the scope of their traditional laws on homosexuality so as to impose sanctions only where the victims are young people, or

others specially in need of protection, or where the public interest is in some way specially involved.

If this should also be the conclusion of the Wolfenden Committee, the way will be opened to bring the British law more into line with the practice followed under other democratic systems.

This impressive volume contains a minimum of speculation, and only such comment as is required to make intelligible the mass of facts and statistics which it has been the group's main purpose to assemble. Partly for this reason it is hard to do the book justice after a first reading. It will yield its full value only to study by experts, who will find in it not so much ready-made conclusions as an invitation to follow further the numerous lines of inquiry to which it points the way.

From «The Observer», London.



Drawing by Hans Erni