

# Enquiry into homosexual offences in England

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white fruitfulness of his form. As I watched him, he stood in white relief against the mass of green. He polished his arm, holding it out straight and solid; he rubbed his hair into curls, while I watched the deep muscles of his shoulders, and the bands stand out in his neck as he held it firm.

He saw I had forgotten to continue my rubbing, and laughing he took hold of me and began to rub me briskly, as if I were a child, or rather, a woman he loved and did not fear. I left myself quite limply in his hands, and, to get a better grip of me, he put his arm round me and pressed me against him, and the sweetness of the touch of our naked bodies one against the other was superb. It satisfied in some measure the vague, indecipherable yearning of my soul; and it was the same with him. When he had rubbed me all warm, he let me go, and we looked at each other with eyes of still laughter, and our love was perfect for a moment, more perfect than any love I have known since, either for man or woman (p. 340).

*«Well, that is a quotation from a novel, so must not be taken too literally as personal experience; yet nobody acquainted with Lawrence's methods will doubt that it was a personal experience any more than he would think it written by a man with no homosexual tendency.»*

*« . . . the publishing project ( a new private edition of The Rainbow ) was dropped, including that of Lawrence's strangely-titled essay on homosexuality, «The Goat and Compasses». which Heseltine unpardonably destroyed.»*

*From Richard Aldington: PORTRAIT OF A GENIUS, BUT . . . (The Life of D. H. Lawrence 1885—1930) (Pages 51 and 177/78).*

## Enquiry into Homosexual Offences in England

The names of the persons who have accepted invitations to serve on the committee of enquiry into homosexual offences have at last been announced, after a delay which suggests that there must have been many refusals. Responsible public opinion will mark the names of Mr. J. F. Wolfenden and others who have agreed to serve with him; they are men and women with a high sense of public duty. It is not their fault if the list contains no single name of a great influence in public life; collectively they are a good team, and they have it in their own power to be a strong one. Indeed they will need to be strong, for they are entering a field of enquiry in which prejudice is bitter; which is riddled with feelings—conscious and unconscious—of fear, hate and lust; and which abounds in all the obstacles of deceit and self-deceit. Accounts of the lives of homosexuals suggest that they are at best unhappy, and many people now question whether the law, in making them more miserable still, serves its basic purpose of protecting the young. If the committee can recommend changes which will, first, increase this protection—and so decrease the number of persons who in their turn instigate further

homosexual offences—and secondly decrease the humiliating misery of otherwise decent citizens whose condition drives them into the furtiveness of the streets and the publicity of the police courts, then it will do a good job. (From «The Spectator», London.)

## Retrospective

I sent in my own observations on the problem of homosexuality to some English newspapers. They did not print them because, as Lowes Dickinson said, 'it is an obstinate and familiar habit of the English to get rid of facts they don't like by pretending that they don't exist. The question of homosexuality has lately become so frequent a topic of conversation that I will try to recollect my points.

1. Here we have a constant and well-marked variety of our species — a variety which has existed from time immemorial among all races of men in every walk of life — a variety which has given to mankind, *ceteris paribus*, as much of beauty and of use as has any other section of the community — a variety which, in typical specimens, is as persistent as the blue-winged teal, though not so rare.

2. It has been proposed to «cure» this variety. To attain this end, their co-operation is required. Do they wish to cooperate? I have questioned some fifteen or twenty of them: Would they like to be cured? They derided the suggestion. These were society folk, adults of both sexes, non-neurotic and non-convicted. Convicted persons will clamour for treatment in order to conciliate their *entourage*, these are no longer representative examples. Neurotics will run to an expert during one of their recurrent fits of despondency; these are equally suspect, statistics might clarify the issue, if they took account of age and condition. I should imagine, for instance, that the undergraduate class might yield a fairly high percentage of individuals eager for treatment, always supposing such treatment to be (1) possible, and (2) permanent. Impermanent treatment would be worse than none.

3. Meanwhile, how does it come that the often decorative counterpart of the male homosexual is not included in the ban? Is there any difference in the degree of delinquency involved? None whatever. This looks like a legal anomaly. Sauce for the gander should be sauce for the goose.

4. The heterosexual and the blissfully contented *monosexual* may take care of themselves; in prescribing for the homosexual a little sanity would not be out of place. And the first step towards sanity is to take over the more reasonable provisions of the Napoleonic Code. If English divorce laws are a disreputable tangle, our enactments on this head are a sinister joke, the source of multiple and unmerited suffering (other correspondents also emphasised this fact). What calls for treatment is not so much homosexuality as the diseased attitude adopted towards it in non-Latin countries. This attitude is the outcome of Judaeo-Christian teaching, as interpreted by Puritanism. X