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Is there an American Homosexual and a European Homosexual?

by

Howard Griffin

(Conclusion.)

To satisfy his tastes, Wilde had resorted not to the working classes but — more dangerously — the non-working classes, roustabouts and young experienced men with no visible means of support. During the trial Wilde stated, rather disingenuously: «I delight in the society of people much younger than myself. I like those who may be called idle and careless. I recognize no social distinctions of any kind and to me the mere fact of youth is wonderful.» But in «De Profundis», more frankly, he says: «People thought it dreadful of me to have entertained at dinner the evil things of life, and to have found pleasure in their company. But then, from the point of view through which I, as an artist in life, approach them they were delightfully suggestive and stimulating. It was like feasting with panthers; the danger was half the excitement . . . I don't feel at all ashamed at having known them, they were intensely interesting; what I do feel ashamed of is the horrible atmosphere into which I was brought . . . Clibborn and Atkins were wonderful in their infamous war against life. To entertain them was an astounding adventure; Dumas *père*, Cellini, Goya, Edgar Allan Poe, or Baudelaire would have done the same.»

It is true that men of Wilde's type may have a *penchant* for danger, but probably the real reason for the attraction was the fact that among the lower classes in England one finds fewer anal fears.

Of course the inter-class relationship becomes a personal connection and, when this happens, the fact of guilt and the sense of responsibility come into play. Some such complex of emotions must have caused Wilde to write *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* and the letters on prison conditions. But it is only in the case of genius (or, at least, great talent and sympathy) that what is essentially a special taste can be enlarged into a social concern.

In America the psyche and the sexual element have become divided, and it is this split which causes the coldness of the emotional life. What does the average American homosexual want? Someone to go to bed with once. The general infantilism of this country expresses itself in such phenomena as the gay bar and the exclusively gay party. As Juvenal said a long time ago: «Homosexuals suffer because they cannot bear children to the men they love.»

American homosexuals act, all the time, like G Is on a weekend. One can readily see that this is a masculine attitude carried to an extreme. Men react that way toward women, ogling and selecting the points to admire, commenting on the lips, the wonderful behind, etc., dismantling

the human person. In due time the heterosexual man usually gets married and compromises, by accepting the physical attributes of his wife. Taken out of the framework of this relationship and put in the army, he quickly reverts to the former state. Homosexuals, however, are nearly always in this «free» state. American homosexuals, for the most part, lack the will power to place upon their life any check similar to marriage and hence there is a great deal of compulsive behavior. Americans will have sex with someone *in order to* call someone else up and tell him about it. Often in America a man's sexual life is more important than what he does, his art or profession.

In England and France, this type of split between the psyche and the sexual element does not exist. A Frenchman is more apt to regard his sexual partner, not as a thing or number, but a human being, in whose future he will take an interest. If he meets someone he likes, he anticipates really knowing and developing him in a general way, and somewhere en route constructing a sexual relationship. The French homosexual naturally thinks in terms of a long continuous relationship (a fact, incidentally, brought out by certain unpublished letters of Proust.)

For the most part, the modern American only impresses the European with his rootlessness and his romanticism. The American bohemian in Europe, by the very fierceness with which he disowns American attitudes, reveals one of the most American of attitudes: *«the inability to believe that time is real.»* Europeans themselves would prefer Americans to be more firmly American than they are; it would give both nationalities a cadre, a positive and agreeable ground on which to approach each other.

On the Road to Rockport

by

Evergreen

From time to time the woman puts her foot on the floor to keep the rocking chair moving. Forwards and backwards, forwards and backwards. Her head keeps time with the chair. In her lap lies a pair of rough canvas trousers which she is mending with coarse stitches. Now and then her eyes search the room, expressionlessly, the room tilts to and fro like a ship's cabin. Then she goes on sewing, stitch after stitch. Forwards and backwards, forwards and back.

Humid air hangs thickly under the rafters. There is not much furniture in the room. A blackened copper kettle hangs on a chain, the embers under the ashes are glowing. There are geraniums on the outside sills of the dim windows. The door is open. She lifts her head, looks dully at the few stunted blossoms in the stony earth of the flower-beds.

A highway passes nearby, following the rugged sea-coast. Half a mile farther on the road coils upward, round a promontory of bare rock. Then the huge rock hides the curve of the road leading landward again. The