

Geld oder Gelegenheit

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small shuttered painting in the outer vestibule. It is of a stalwart young man, exposed, standing next to a pair of scales, and resting a part of himself in one of the balances, whilst in the other—outweighed—stands a pot of gold. You cannot but realize that for many hundreds of years a high value has been put upon such things, whether by men or women. You will also realize that such things have been marketable for a long time.

And can anyone in America, by city ordinance or state law, undo a world tradition that is centuries old?

—Donald Bishop

Geld oder Gelegenheit

One hears a great deal nowadays about the increasing commercialism of homosexuality, both in Europe and in America, about how many youths of the freed fraternity are seeking, not romance, but money or opportunity. Your veteran observer of the third sex is not prepared to dispute the contention that there is an increase in hustling, at least in Europe, of over-night or week-end arrangements made strictly on a cash basis in Paris, in Amsterdam, in Copenhagen and other fashionable watering places of male encounter; but he is prepared to dispute the contention that there are many either cold-blooded or warm-blooded young men who wish to make a more permanent association with another man based on the search for gold or the main chance.

The reasons for this reluctance are not entirely idealistic. There are other elements involved. In Helmut Käutner's excellent film version of Thomas Mann's «Felix Krull», the delectable Horst Buchholz in the title part rejected the offer of permanent protection made him by a Scottish nobleman with a line cleverly transposed into English as «I do not wish to deviate from my chosen path.» In this case the nobleman was approaching a youth, then a bellhop, who was some 45 years his junior, and a youth not—as yet—liberated from the octopus clutches of the Eternal Feminine (Das Ewig Weibliche); yet had he made the same offer to a bellhop who did have a glad eye for men only he might equally well have been snubbed, and, for a subtler reason. The Scotch nobleman could indeed have been only 15 or 20 years the boy's senior and still been turned down, and the boy would most likely have told friends of his own age that the reason *was* the discrepancy of ages.

Yet there is another factor which weighs more heavily than an age differential with our young gazelles today, weighs even when there is no age differential. To move from a lower status in the world into an upper one, to rise to a higher, richer, securer level of society may appear to be a desideratum and many youths in Spain may say they are looking for «Un caballo blanco» (a white horse) or in America a Sugar Daddy; yet when they are actually faced with such a proposition, they reject it. Is this *solely* because youth calls to youth more strongly than money and luxury call to youth? One thinks not.

When a decorative young man of no particular background or education or social grace contemplates such a step, he realizes with alarm that a great deal more is ultimately going to be demanded of him than his beautiful body. He is inevitably going to have to pass muster with the mature gentleman's cultivated friends. He is going to find himself in a situation where he cannot loaf

on the job, but must buckle down and acquire at least a smattering of culture, or, once the first infatuation has passed, his protector may find him tiresome and cast him off. The challenge is too great; he runs away from it. His ego, puny though it be, is affronted by the prospect of a situation in which he will remain an inferior unless he strives earnestly to make himself something nearer to an equal. Consequently, he will let his great chance slip through his fingers—especially during the summer tourist season in Europe, when the continent is flooded with good prospects.

In New York City there is a large group of youths slangily known as «the ribbon clerks». They are generally young men who have come to the artistic and literary and theatrical capital of America from the provinces in order to live at least on the fringes of the glittering world of Seven Arts. They do not literally stand behind a counter and sell ribbons. Some are clerks, but others are typists or secretaries or accountants, or even teachers; but they are known as «the ribbon clerks». They will stint themselves on decent food for a week in order to dine once in seven days at a smart restaurant for the giddy such as the Beau Brummel, or have drinks at the Oak Room in the Plaza Hotel.

One might imagine that the temptation to rise for a longer period into this world, to feel regularly what Emma Bovary thought of as «le frottement de la richesse» would be irresistible. Sometimes they do attempt it, but, when they do, they quite often break the new bond themselves and flee back to the stratum on which they feel comfortable.

The Americans say «Water seeks its own level». so it is with «the ribbon clerks». Talk as they may about searching for a Sugar Daddy, they do not actually want one. What they want is to set up housekeeping with another ribbon clerk. Neither Geld nor Gelegenheit is their true goal, merely Gemütlichkeit.

There has persisted a false legend that, at any rate in Europe, young man had dreams of somehow making contact with an «arrived» personality in order to achieve a menage d'amour. In reality, very, very few display any sincere intention of such a move.

There are exceptions. Two youths, not very successful on their own in the theatre, have made such fortunate alliances; but one discovers that, instead of being envied by their poor compatriots dans les coulisses, they are scorned for being so practical. Although in each case the elder partner is still very attractive physically as well as highly placed in the world, the spiteful «kids» of the theatre say, «Who'd want that old thing?» This reference to the age differential proves to be a hypocritical defense, concealing another motive. The real reason is that they wish a personal relationship in which *their* ego is equal to, if not superior to that of the gentleman of means. And below this desire lies a narcissism incapable of a generous affection for any other man, old or young, rich or poor, famous or obscure.

What these denials of opportunity's hand reveal is, alas, not so much romantic idealism about a love match as cowardice to face a task of self-improvement. Insecurity is preferable. Obscurity is preferable. Even dire poverty is preferable.

And yet the younger generation so often *claims* to be eminently realistic, existentially strong in advancing the self. Is there not a manifest dichotomy here?

Another of the odd ironies in this situation is that youths of the people do not always comprehend the difference between capital and income, between *les salaires et les rentes*. They do not perceive that a person who does not *show* wealth ostentatiously may have wealth, but live prudently in order to conserve and increase it. To them only the visible spending proves the monetary value of the person, only the known salary demonstrates the economic status. A man with a large salary who lives up to the hilt with it and leaves nothing behind in his will is still apt to seem richer to them because they can *see* the expenditure.

But money sometimes takes protective coloration. This is a lesson of nature that our bright and clever youths don't seem to have learned yet. They would rather be wooed by a man in a rented limousine than by a man with a solid fortune in securities who uses public transportation because he feels no need to show off his means either to himself or to others. The result is that many opportunity-hungry young men miss the boat because they didn't even know the boat was there.

The notion that European youths are any shrewder in this respect than English or American youths is a fiction. The ribbon clerk remains a ribbon clerk on both sides of the Atlantic. He sells himself short over and over then complains that he has no luck, whereas in reality if he has no luck, it is because he either does not recognize an opportunity when it appears or, if he does, is unwilling to make the effort to live up to it. He would rather, in the end, stay on the streets, hustling for a temporary gain.

It is neither Geld nor Gelegenheit which truly fascinates him, but only a gilded mirage of himself.

by HADRIAN

The Tongue of the Dumb

It was a mistake, Penny realized now, with sinking heart. He should have called the chauffeur and taken the car directly to the Concert Hall. He tried to edge nearer to the buildings, but each time he reached out to touch the wall, he felt someone brush past. This avenue, so familiar, where he had walked so confidently with Trudger by his side, had suddenly become a nightmare world. Never, Penny realized suddenly, had he walked it alone; always as a child, there had been Mother's arm to hold; and after she died, faithful Trudger's strong body at his knee. And now there was no Trudger. His blind eyes flooded at the memory of the dog, and he turned hastily away from the street to hide what he knew must be an unmanly sight.

He collided with a man who swore sharply at him, and as he fell back, a woman behind him snapped, «Why don't you look where you're going?» His tears dried of shame and shock, and he reached out timidly for the store window, only to feel a rough brick wall. Shuffling along, hiding his groping fingers, he came at last to the window of Gamp's, which he knew must be near. He leaned his hot forehead against the glass and drew deep breaths.

The crowd surged past, as he stood, clutching the folded iron grill. Couples loitered to look, girls squealing over the jewelery displays, their boy friends bragging of what they would buy. Suddenly Penny hated them all, the cursing man, the snapping woman, squealing girls, bragging boys. He despised them, for