

Zeitschrift: Der Kreis : eine Monatsschrift = Le Cercle : revue mensuelle
Band: 31 (1963)
Heft: 3

Artikel: Changing sexual morality
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-568798>

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Joe strode from the club smiling at some remarks he had overheard amongst the boys that evening. 'What a grand bunch of lads they are' he thought as he hurried down the steps.

Then the smile disappeared as he thought of the two people waiting for him. «Dinner at eight on Wednesday» had become a habit with him. At first it had been a source of pleasure to him in his loneliness but lately something evil had entered their relationship. The over acting of Mary, the strange smiles of Michael, what was wrong?

It had started last summer, he remembered that wild way Michael had clutched his hand during the thunderstorm. Was it just that he missed the company of his father? Every boy needed the company of his father during those teenage years.

He saw in his mind the two seated at the table, the polite yet strained conversation with a thousand hidden suggestions.

Mary was so sweet, so capable and always a charming hostess but there was something which didn't seem sincere. If only he could nail it down. Somewhere in that house evil hid, watching and waiting.

The wind drove the rain against Joe's upturned collar as he pressed on towards «Lilac House».

'Tonight I must finish my visits there' he thought as he stood in the porch looking at the fading paintwork. The house needed painting badly.

Still a house without a master...

With his finger on the bell button he suddenly felt afraid. It was as if a ghost had walked, passed him entering before him.

A bell rang somewhere in the house and lights appeared. Mary came towards the door, he recognised her shape through the frosted glass of the door.

Now it would begin again, the battle of nerves, the nervous glances. Oh God he thought, I must decide.

The door opened «Mary my dear» he murmured dropping a little kiss to her forehead. «Joe how nice» she whispered but she noticed his eyes were searching the hallway worriedly.

«Where's Mike this evening,» he laughed throwing his hat in the air.

«Waiting here» cried a voice from the dimly lit front room. Joe's heart thumped wildly. Suddenly he knew who meant the most to him.

«Mary my dear» he said, «let's sit by this glorious fire and we'll tell ghost stories before dinner.»

All three laughed together and settled themselves by the fire. Outside the wind howled as the spirits of old screamed their warning. But who heard? Joe knew he would be there for many Wednesdays to come.

Changing sexual morality

Quaker group's plea for tolerance

A report on sexual practice and morale, published today by a group of Quakers, «rejects almost completely the traditional approach of the organised Christian Church to morality, with its supposition that it knows precisely what is right and what is wrong, that this distinction can be made in terms of an

external pattern of behaviour, and that the greatest good will come only through universal adherence to that pattern.»

«Towards a Quaker view of sex,» does not represent the official view of the Society of Friends—although it appears under the imprint of the Friends' Home Service Committee. But its tone is frank, professional, and authoritative.

Homosexual affection, says the group, is not morally worse than heterosexual affection, and should be judged by the same standards. It is the quality of the relationship, rather than the acts that it may involve, that matters. The group traces the history of legislation affecting homosexuals, and observes that although the Victorian legislature did not trouble to define «gross indecency,» lawyers had apparently never allowed their clients to admit the acts as charged but instead denied their indecency. «Lord Curzon thought eating soup before lunch was grossly indecent; it would have startled him if two men doing it together violated the Sexual Offences Act.»

The report surveys the sources of professional help for those with sexual difficulties, and contains appendices on the origins of sexual behaviour, and on sexual deviations.

«Towards a Quaker view of sex,» Friends House, Euston Road, London NW 1: 3s 6d.

NEXT TIME

Tarry not, sweet soul of my former days,
Grieve me, leave me as you have come;
Fast as gossip you came to me,
Soul upon soul as fogs of eternity
Cleared, reared his head from out the haze
Bringing me, singing me songs of wisdom.
Slow as the time of a boring play
You hesitate to tear your soul from mine;
Knowing, showing that we are not playing
With another, smother not love by staying,
I weep when you travel along your way,
Without your soul my soul darkens wisdom's shine.
And yet you leave your other self
To conquer one and yet not warn him;
Of hows and whys that keep not still
Within my fevered brow, how and why until
I wish to leave this body on the shelf
And wait for you the next time 'round the corner.

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