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A Plea for Self-Emancipation!

I.

Struggle against odds, with all the defeats and victories, the changing tides of gains and retrogressions, has been the major feature of the social life of Man since time immemorial. Whenever patterns of life, thought, values or truths become the possession of any association of human beings, they assume in the social consciousness a character of inviolability and are preserved as myth or as sacred lore. Thus we find in history numerous tales, ideas and behavioristic traits which are not easily analyzed and re-checked for their contemporary validity.

Whereas in the formative stages of national or religious groups a variety of opinions compete with each other in free exchange and contest, at the end of that developmental phase one predominates and the others either succumb to it or, as in some historical instances, are isolated and thus preserved. In the latter case the non-conformists, whether ostracized because of their heresy or their abnormality, are too closely watched to become harmful; yet their very existence may be used to fulfill certain negative needs of that social group, such as that of a scapegoat. In still other instances they may be driven entirely underground, thus remaining outside the controlling power of the established order, and it is only in the event of unrest that they again become subject to persecution.

This general and neutral critique may apply to any of the various types of socio-historical tensions. It will be discernable in many cultures, in politics, religion and in the Arts.

II.

Within the framework of such reasoning the homosexual question is one among many. In this context one can justify an alliance of homosexual friends and determine aims and strategy. In Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland, where homosexuals have already formed a nucleus and created an operational basis on their own initiative, and where, through the devoted work of a few indefatigable friends, history has been made on our behalf, the burning question is no longer one of justification. But in America, for instance, where, to the best knowledge of this writer, no comparable group exists, or in those countries in which there are a mere handful of spokesmen for our cause — men who are as isolated from those in whose name they speak as they are from society at large — there is need for just such preliminary scrutiny of basic facts as preceded the formation of our groups elsewhere. It seems infinitely necessary, therefore, that we who live in a part of the world where, for whatever reason, we have no tradition of our own or even a case of precedence, set out to examine the factors which in their sum will eventually constitute the basis for our future affiliation.

III.

The first justification will arise from the recognition of our «different-ness». Before, however, those areas of human life wherein our

apartness from the majority of men operates are clearly defined on a social level, we shall have to do some soul-searching ourselves and apply ourselves individually to the task of making sure that our nature of living and loving is an inseparable part of our being, our «sine qua non», notwithstanding the propositions advanced from the other side of the fence, whether philosophical, theological, socio-scientific, or even psychiatric.

Any particularity, indeed every variation distinguishable within Humanity can be understood and evaluated only on its own merit or virtue. Even more so must a group different from others form its concepts, objectively, even if that entails a contradistinction from things held true, good and right by the heterosexual majority. We cannot very well nurture our self-respect, that is to say our ideas, ethics, modes of life, on that material which is held against us by an opposing force; not even on the toleration accorded us here and there can we thrive exclusively.

Thus the imperative need, in order to face our lives individually as well as collectively, is that we do our own thinking, ascertaining independently what we are — and what we are for! Until we free ourselves from that judgment or evaluation which has been and is still being imposed upon us, we will be paralyzed emotionally and spiritually. We will be persecuted by an anxiety, if not a horrid fear, that inevitably arises within us as long as we follow that school of thought which explains our inclinations on the basis of superstition, of unsubstantiated myths that have been a dormant possession of man throughout the millenia, and of unprincipled reasoning on the part of heterosexual mankind to serve its own ends.

Let it be briefly repeated: we must become aware of our «differentness». Proceeding from that recognition we shall have to look into ourselves and understand the very nature of our existence and apply some thought to the determination of our worth, our destiny; only then will we be capable of speaking up in our defense unafraid and can gather our strength step by step to alleviate the conditions under which we live. We must decline to mirror our ideas in the theory of those to whom we are strange, queer, odd — to put it mildly! It is of no use for us to think of ourselves in terms of an Ahasveric role, or that of the Children of the Cities of the Plain, a story so luridly revived again and again whenever reason fails to explain the miseries of the world. Neither can we content ourselves with the more modern versions of discrimination. The psychiatric ward is as un-fitting a place for us as the prison cell or the stake. The recantations of a by-gone age — or is it by-gone, really? — and the emphatic denials in our courts today — both are equally disgraceful and, too, are forced out of us under duress. «Sinfulness», «Perversion», «Sex deviation», and indeed «the Abominableness before the gods» — all are terms in the same category, and we can not possibly compromise with anyone on that issue. It is absolutely impossible to look for our salvation from the other side of the fence. *H. S. New York.*

(Continued.)