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Stefano had become very dear to him. Stefano had begun to occupy his mind more and more of late and when he was away from him it seemed as if a vital part of his being was missing. And his mind went back to that wonderful night when Stefano had left his pallet in the alcove and had slipped in beside him in his own bed and how they had lain in each other's arms the night through.

Now he mounted the stairs to the studio loft with great haste, and flung open the door. Stefano, who was in the midst of undressing for the night looked up in startled surprise.

«Stefano, my dear Stefano, it was a complete triumph.» Michelangelo said excitedly. «The entire assembly roared their approval of the boy God.»

«I knew they had but to see the work to know that it was fine,» the boy replied.

«And I have delicacies for you from the table of Mssr Gallo,» added Michelangelo, at the same time opening the packet of food he had thoughtfully prepared before leaving the Galli palazzo.

The two sat at the wooden table, and the young artist watched with satisfaction as Stefano quickly began to taste of the roast fowl and meats, and to sample the variety of cheeses and other foodstuffs that now lay before him. A bottle of wine was brought forth and a toast was made.

«I drink to you, caro Stefano,» said Michelangelo, «to my inspiration for the beauty of my work.»

«And I, in turn, drink to Michelangelo Buonarotti, the supreme stone cutter of all Italy, and my friend.»

This last was said with such a tone of affection that Michelangelo could only grasp the youth in his arms and hold him against his chest.

«Caro Stefano, caro ragazzo,» he murmured, and their lips met in a warm embrace. The artist then began to push off the remaining garments that Stefano wore that he might better caress the warm flesh beneath. The youth was now naked before him and the look in his eyes bespoke of love and affection. As he came forward again into the waiting arms of Michelangelo, the artist spoke.

«Mssr Gallo has the cold marble figure for himself, but I, the living god himself, my Bacchus, my Stefano, my love.»

The two figures became as one and for Michelangelo Buonarotti the whole world of creation was fused into the ecstasy of this hour.

LETTERS

To: The Daily Telegraph, London, July 30th 1964

BLACKMAIL DANGERS TO HOMOSEXUALS, Legislation no answer

Once again the notion is being hawked around that the legalising of homosexual practices between adults would strike the weapon from the blackmailer's hand.

Is this true, or anything more than marginally true? I doubt it. It was not fear of the law that forced Harrow's most famous headmaster to resign or drove Castlereagh to suicide. Cory, author of the «Eton Boating Song» was in no danger of arrest when he was given 24 hours to pack his bags and clear out of Eton.

The situation is not substantially different to-day. A homosexual may survive exposure if he is engaged in some occupations, entertainment, fashion and interior decoration, to name three. But for nearly all professional men exposure means total professional ruin. For most others it means social ruin. Among nearly all the working class the known homosexual is regarded as a moral leper and suffers the crushing weight of public condemnation.

The homosexual will remain open to blackmail till the day when his deviation is universally accepted as being no more morally blameworthy than any other minority taste. This, indeed, is the day that many of the Wolfenden evangelists are looking forward to, but they look in vain. The acquittal of a young man who killed a would-be homosexual seducer is proof enough of that.

There are tenable arguments in favour of the Wolfenden recommendations, but I cannot think that the argument from blackmail is one of them.

To: The Observer, London, March 15th, 1964

PENALTIES ON HOMOSEXUALS ARE HARSHER

The treatment of homosexual offenders last year appeared to show a marked trend towards increased severity in the sentences imposed by some courts, says a report by the Homosexual Law Reform Society.

The report expresses concern at the «haphazard discrepancies» that persist between the sentences passed in different courts for similar behaviour; and at the «intolerance, indignation and disgust» evidently operating at the judicial level in some cases. Suicide, blackmail and robbery continue to result, it says, from the existing laws.

The report illustrates the variety of the punishment meted out to homosexuals from a case at Manchester in which 10 men pleaded guilty to offences committed in private. Three charges involved single acts committed up to six years before. One man was jailed for 18 months, the remainder fined.

In another case in South Wales a man was charged with an indecency offence committed nine years before when he was 16. This resulted in the breaking of his engagement. In another case a young physicist lost his job, a salary of £5,000 a year, and his fiancée, after pleading guilty to an act of indecency committed in private.

The report says there is evidence that police sometimes go to considerable lengths to trap potential offenders, instead of concentrating on prevention by closing down inadequately-lit urinals and patrolling trouble spots in uniform. In Manchester the report notes that prosecutions for importuning increased from two in 1958 to 216 in 1962.

The report urges that legislation is needed to protect from prosecution those homosexuals who report attempts at blackmail to the police. The society has evidence to suggest that «there are young criminals in London who specialise in robbing men whom they believe to be homosexuals.»

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