

May 1963

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the LADDER





purpose of the

Daughters of **BILITIS**

A WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROMOTING
THE INTEGRATION OF THE HOMOSEXUAL INTO SOCIETY BY:

- ① Education of the variant, with particular emphasis on the psychological, physiological and sociological aspects, to enable her to understand herself and make her adjustment to society in all its social, civic and economic implications--this to be accomplished by establishing and maintaining as complete a library as possible of both fiction and non-fiction literature on the sex deviant theme; by sponsoring public discussions on pertinent subjects to be conducted by leading members of the legal, psychiatric, religious and other professions; by advocating a mode of behavior and dress acceptable to society.
- ② Education of the public at large through acceptance first of the individual, leading to an eventual breakdown of erroneous taboos and prejudices; through public discussion meetings aforementioned; through dissemination of educational literature on the homosexual theme.
- ③ Participation in research projects by duly authorized and responsible psychologists, sociologists and other such experts directed towards further knowledge of the homosexual.
- ④ Investigation of the penal code as it pertains to the homosexual, proposal of changes to provide an equitable handling of cases involving this minority group, and promotion of these changes through due process of law in the state legislatures.

the Ladder

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COVER BY PIERRE

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The Ladies of Llangollen

by Marian Evans

Ireland is noted, among other things, for her emigrants. Some - like James Joyce in Paris during the twenties and thirties - thought of themselves as exiles, while others settled comfortably into their adopted countries and set about raising dynasties - a practice that has so enriched the population of our own capital.

Less well known, but at least as interesting, were the two determined young women who left Ireland in 1779 for Llangollen, Wales. Eleanor Butler, who was at that time in her thirties, and Sarah Ponsonby, sixteen years younger, never returned to Ireland. They lived happily in the small Welsh village, if we are to believe it, ever after.

That they could even think of such an undertaking is remarkable in itself. They were, to begin with, both of good family; Miss Butler eventually became Lady Eleanor, and Miss Ponsonby had a distinguished name to uphold, too. The Eighteenth Century had rather strict notions of how young women in such circumstances should conduct themselves - notions which did not include leaving the country and setting up housekeeping with another woman. The accepted conduct of such a young lady was for her to behave with unflagging graciousness while her father, or whatever male was responsible for her, tried by whatever means possible to acquire rank, prestige, property and whatever he could manage in return for her hand - the rest of her not being accounted of much worth. If the lady objected to being bartered, traded for, or bought, there was nothing much she could do about it. She had no right to hold property in her own name; she could not work for a living and maintain her position in society; she was dependent, so it seemed, for her life upon her father, and, subsequently, her husband.

Eleanor was the despair of her parents. They had sent her to France for an education, they had provided her

with everything she needed to attract a suitable husband, and they had been gratified to see the suitors arrive. Needless to say, they were much less than pleased when Eleanor would have nothing to do with them. Nothing.

Sarah had problems of her own. Her mother had died soon after she (Sarah) was born; her father married again. Her father died. Her stepmother married again. Somewhere in this shuffle Sarah was growing up, and before she turned twenty the stepfather had noticed it. So for the next year or so she struggled valiantly to elude him while leaving her stepmother, of whom she was fond, in ignorance.

Eventually, of course, our two heroines met and evolved what their relatives were pleased to call a "romantic friendship." I have yet to find a definition of this term, so you may interpret it as you will. The various relatives were not displeased with the friendship; the young ladies of that century were given to elaborate protestations of undying affection. But enough, of course, was enough, and when Eleanor and Sarah eloped one night the relatives began to think more seriously about the matter.

The elopement was a fiasco. It got as far as a nearby fence where Sarah somehow managed to strain her ankle climbing over. They returned, ignominiously. But the alarm had been sounded to their relatives. They called every argument to their aid; they even called a friend home from France, thinking that the two would listen to her.

They did listen. And then they left again. This time they got far enough to have to spend a cold, damp night in a barn. Sarah responded to this with a bad cold, or influenza, or la grippe, or whatever it was that young ladies got in those days from spending the night in a barn. They couldn't go on, and once again were taken home. Home, by this time, was Sarah's house; Eleanor's family wanted nothing more to do with her.

Eventually they did the simplest thing; they waited until their exhausted relatives tired of arguing, and took the next boat. In Llangollen they settled in a small cottage,

from which, it was their boast, they never spent a night away. They had brought with them one servant, Mary Caryll, affectionately known as Molly the Bruiser, who stayed with them until their death. That they were able to do any of this was due to the hard-won generosity of their families, who supported them adequately, though not to the ladies' real satisfaction.

Sarah and Eleanor set about making the cottage more habitable, which involved, according to their taste, searching throughout the countryside for carved wood. Panels, furniture, anything; a photograph of their living room shows every available space decorated with carving. They were both enthusiastic gardeners and their cottage soon became a showplace, although they made it a practice not to let anyone into the garden who had not first sent in his name.

Those gardens provide some amusement to the reader of Lady Eleanor's journal, which was kept during a good part of the fifty years the ladies spent together. Occasionally a word, as well as the style of that journal, will be noticeably dated, as, for example, in the frequent references made to the "shrubbery" - e. g., "My beloved and I spent a delightful evening in the shrubbery."

The ladies carried on a correspondence of really astounding volume, as was the fashion at that time. They followed, through the course of their letters, the progress of the French Revolution, as well as the progress of society's gossip. Among their most faithful correspondents was the sister of Thomas Bowdler, the gentleman who edited Shakespeare so that he would be fit to read in the family circle without offending the ladies and children. Another was Mrs. Thrale, the famous friend of Dr. Johnson.

As they grew older, the ladies' fame spread more and more. Everyone wanted to know how two women had managed to live together for so long and preserve such steadfast good will towards each other. Sir Walter Scott came to visit, as did Wordsworth, who wrote a sonnet for them. The people of the village were evidently fond of them, as were they of the people. The ladies always did what they could to help the villagers, in one case even managing to save a native son from the gallows.

Ironically enough, their financial worries were completely relieved when they received a government pension - the year after Lady Eleanor died. Sarah buried her beside Mary Caryll, and followed her there two years later, in 1831.

The Victorians seem to have been interested in the ladies. A search through the 19th Century "Readers' Guide" will reveal at least half a dozen articles in some of the last century's magazines about the "two eccentric ladies of Llangollen." In one of these - "The Leisure Hour" - this priceless passage occurs: "That they never quarrelled and separated is wonderful, and probably owing to the fact that Lady Eleanor kept the purse."

In 1930 Macmillan published The Hamwood Papers, which include the journal Lady Eleanor kept - along with the purse, presumably. It comes as a pleasant surprise. While there is much eighteenth-century sentiment throughout the pages, there are some point-blank flashes of personality. For example, one of the days spent "in sweet and delicious retirement with my beloved" was the very same day on which Miss Butler fired "that odious gardener."

Several years later a rabid feminist, Mary Louisa Gordon, wrote a novel based on their lives called Chase of the Wild Goose, which was published, not surprisingly, by Virginia and Leonard Woolf's Hogarth Press. Dr. Gordon's interpretation is that the two women's motivating impulse was the burning desire to strike a blow for women's rights. This, as well as the other material, is not too easy to find, but well worth it. The last chapter of the book, in which Dr. Gordon revisits the ladies' cottage after dark in order to bring Eleanor and Sarah up to date with the current status of women, and ends by leaping out the window at daybreak, really should not be missed.

BLANCHE M. BAKER

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ENLIGHTENMENT ON THE CAMPUS

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE FROM A WESTERN COLLEGE NEWSPAPER REPRESENTS IN OUR ESTIMATION A LANDMARK IN COLLEGE JOURNALISM. THOUGH THE WRITER'S VIEW IS SURPRISINGLY LIBERAL, THE ASTONISHING FACT IS THAT IT GOT INTO PRINT AT ALL IN A STUDENT NEWSPAPER. WE QUOTE IN FULL:

HARASSMENT BY SOCIETY FORCES THE NON-CONFORMIST TO TAKE COVER FROM BRUTAL ATTACKS INFLICTED UPON HIS BODY AND SOUL.

SUCH IS THE CASE OF THE HOMOSEXUAL, AS WAS BROUGHT TO LIGHT RECENTLY BY THE BAY AREA PRESS.

THE HOMOSEXUAL IN OUR SOCIETY IS REGARDED AS BEING SUB-HUMAN, A DISEASE-RIDDEN ANIMAL THAT MUST BE SAVED FROM HIS MISERY FOR HIS OWN GOOD AND FOR THE GOOD OF SOCIETY.

GERALD TRENTON, 22, SELF-ACKNOWLEDGED HOMOSEXUAL, WAS ARRESTED BY THE OAKLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT BECAUSE HE DRESSED AND ACTED AS A WOMAN.

THE CHARGE OF IMMORAL DRESS CARRIES A JAIL TERM UP TO SIX MONTHS. TRENTON WORKED AS A WAITRESS IN SAN FRANCISCO, AS A FEMALE IMPERSONATOR AND AS A SECRETARY. HE QUIT HIS LAST JOB AS A SECRETARY BECAUSE HIS BOSS MADE ADVANCES, NOT KNOWING SHE WAS A HE.

ALL TRENTON WANTED WAS TO BE FREE - FREE TO FOLLOW THE LIFE THAT HE HAD CHOSEN AS AN ACT OF FREE WILL, BUT GUIDED BY CERTAIN CAUSES THAT ARE OF NO CONCERN IN THIS ARTICLE.

WHY SHOULD SOCIETY INTERFERE IN THE LIFE OF THIS PERSON WHO WAS LIVING WITHOUT DOING ANY HARM TO SOCIETY OR HIMSELF?

WE HAVE MADE A PRETENSE TOWARD LIBERALIZATION OF SOCIETY AND OF OURSELVES, BUT WE REMAIN GUIDED BY THE RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL INTERPRETATION OF SIN FROM THE VICTORIAN AGE.

CONFORMITY IN SEX - THIS IS AN ASPECT OF SOCIETY THAT HAS LED MAN ON A ROAD TO CONTEMPORARY SUPPRESSION, ESPECIALLY REGARDING SUPPRESSION OF THE HOMOSEXUAL.

THE SIN OF NON-CONFORMITY IS THE MAJOR SIN OF SOCIETY; IN FACT, IT MAY BE THE ONLY TRUE SIN OF OUR SOCIETY.

IT IS EASY FOR SOCIETY TO PASS OFF THE SIN OF NON-CONFORMITY AS A SICKNESS THAT CAN BE CURED BY SIMPLY SUBMITTING AS AN OBEDIENT MEMBER OF SOCIETY; BUT THE SICKNESS LIES NOT WITH THE INDIVIDUAL BUT WITH SOCIETY ITSELF.

WESTERN CULTURE CLAIMS A HIGH DEGREE OF TOLERANCE AND OPEN-MINDEDNESS. BUT EVEN WITH THE USE OF FOUR-LETTER WORDS IN NOVELS AND THE BIKINI, WESTERN SOCIETY STILL REMAINS A SOCIETY WHERE CONFORMITY IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS AND HAPPINESS.

WITHOUT SEXUAL CONFORMITY AN INDIVIDUAL IS LAID BARE TO THE RIDICULE OF HIS PEERS. HE IS THE OBJECT OF CONTEMPT; HE BECOMES AN OUTCAST PAYING THE PRICE FOR REBELLION AGAINST SOCIETY AND ITS SELF-VIRTUOUS MANNER.

LITTLE LOVE

Oh, little love, my little love,
Oh do not weep my eyes away
With gathering handfuls of your heart
To give to me on Boxing Day...
Be sure the sands of life shall run
As dry as dusty silicon,
And know your hours shall pass away,
In smiles, or tears, or some such way --
For bears will dance in every park,
And cheerfully their chains will ring,
And lilacs bloom at Kew, each spring --
You'll hear them growing in the dark.
For what are little girls made of,
If not sharp spice, and little love?

- N. F. K.

LESBIANA

BY GENE D. MON

218. THE GOLDEN HAMMER BY SONYA BRCONE. ATHENEUM, 1962, 1963.

ANOTHER IN THE CURRENT DROP OF BUSINESS NOVELS, WITH THE ACCENT HERE ON THE FAMILY OF THE BUSINESSMAN AND THE "OTHER WOMAN" IN HIS LIFE. HIS TEENAGE DAUGHTER, BARBARA, ATTRACTIVE AND GIFTED, SURROUNDED WITH LOVE, MONEY AND PROTECTION, IS STILL SEARCHING, STILL UNHAPPY. SHE FALLS IN LOVE WITH HER TEACHER, GRACE, BUT THE DISCOVERY THAT GRACE HAS A BOY-FRIEND (AND HER UNSPOKEN FEAR OF PHYSICAL EXPRESSION) DRIVES HER AWAY. SHE ENDS UP IN A DISSOLUTE MENAGE WITH TWO PART-TIME PROSTITUTES AND FINALLY DEATH IN HER "WHITE BIRD" CADILLAC. DESPITE THE SOMBER ENDING, THIS IS COMPETENTLY WRITTEN AND VERY SYMPATHETIC AND UNDERSTANDING. DEFINITELY NOT A CONDEMNATORY NOVEL IN ANY SENSE.

219. A MARTINI ON THE OTHER TABLE BY JOYCE ELBERT. BANTAM (FBO), 1963.

CONSIDERING THE TRASH THAT SOMETIMES GETS HARDCOVER PUBLICATION, IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT THIS EXCELLENT PICTURE OF A WOMAN SEARCHING FOR HER IDENTITY IN A CONFUSED AND CONFUSING WORLD, DID NOT REACH THE BETTER PUBLISHERS. ELBERT WRITES WELL AND HER HEROINE'S LOVE AFFAIRS WITH SEVERAL MEN AND ONE WOMAN ARE WELL HANDLED. IN SPITE OF THE SEXUAL EMPHASIS OF THE NOVEL, IT IS NOT SENSATIONAL AND IT CLEARLY PRESENTS THE DILEMMA OF UNRESOLVED AND TORMENTING BI-SEXUALITY.

COPY, O & A M!

- BY M. L.

PFGA AMYRPX KT PBT EPCMTA. CMTJ AMYRPX KT OFXT CY
QBC CMT HTYHPT CMTJ FDT OTFIC CY ATDZT.
- EPFDTIET XFDDYG

A SUNDAY KIND OF LOVE

by E. Mancini

His finger snicked at the knocker, tipping the brass fawn on its ears, letting it drop a single time with the clear, thin rap of a jeweler's hammer.

It's Reese, Eva thought, and went to the door, the warped, mud-colored door with paint hide-thick on the panels. As she turned the knob, the taste of a tarnished penny filled her mouth, the moldy, acid taste of dread. She cracked the door, letting a blade of light from the room carve him half in two; she said "Hello," stepping back and shutting the door behind him, quickly, from habit, to keep out the grease and garlic smells of the hall.

"You're wet," she added, touching his shirt through his open coat, as if she cared. "Why don't you button up in the snow?"

"Snow?" He gazed at the stubble of drops on his hand. "Why, it is snowing! Look!" Pointing to the window, his finger trembled. He coughed and, slipping a hand to his chest, squeezed down the pain he had forced up, hiding it elaborately, begging her to notice it by begging her not to.

"Of course it's snowing," she said, tasting the penny stronger than ever. "You knew it!"

"No." He dropped his hand to her shoulder, letting it quiver there for a moment. "The only snow I feel is in my soul."

Dear God, stop him! she thought, saying aloud, "Give me your coat, I'll hang it for you."

"Eva, you're so good to me, so kind!" he breathed, thanking her excessively as if her mere politeness were a gift. "I don't deserve it!" But shrugging off the coat, he

passed it to her with an air of fumbling tenderness, half apologetic, as though it too were a gift--not much, perhaps, yet part of him.

And taking it, Eva went to the closet, glad for even this excuse to turn away; and when she had hung it, stayed to button the buttons, feeling all the while a creeping nausea.

But just in time, the buttons done and having to face him starkly, she heard the knocker thump, brass on brass, demandingly, sounding this time, for all the world, like nothing more or less than a knocker. And gratefully, not looking at Reese, yet feeling, almost hearing him wince, she went to the door.

"Murray! There you are! Come in!"

"Hello, Eva," he said, tossing his hat--the one with a corded band--on the couch and kissing her, his moustache grazing her lips for a brief, possessive moment. And she, in gratitude, submitted, wishing she deserved him, wishing she wanted him even, knowing she could have him if she would.

Then pulling away, withdrawing her mind to a more compelling need, she turned to Reese and introduced him. "Three's a crowd," she added slyly. "Now the party can start!" But seeing his poor, hurt smile, she repented, saying, "Just as soon as Jessie comes."

"In the meantime," Murray said, "I'll fix a drink," looking to her for approval, wanting her to need him in even such a small way.

"Murray," she reminded him, "your coat. Let me hang it," thinking as she took it--not as a gift but for what it was, as the knocker had been--how well this symbolized her life: a closet hung with dripping garments. Then, nodding at Murray and saying, "Yes, do fix a drink! The liquor's in the cabinet, the ice--" But any fool could find the ice.

And as if to say "Don't make a stranger of me!" but of

course not saying it, just reproaching her with his eyes, he stepped into the kitchen.

"Well, let's sit down!" she said to Reese, her voice sounding, even to her, too falsely gay.

He glanced at the couch, transforming it in his tragic way to--what? she wondered drearily--the nuptial bed of Helen? But even that was not enough, or was it too much, now? He sighed, "If I relax, I crumble!" and stooping, touched a pillow--yearningly, with reverence, as though it were stuffed with the Golden Fleece.

Ignoring him, shutting her mind to the pity of him, Eva sat down forcefully. He flinched as if the creaking springs were his own nerves giving way; but since she had spoiled his fantasy and turned the couch to a couch again with the sacrilege of sitting, he shrugged to mean "Oh, what's the use!" and dropped to the very pillow he had revered.

For the third time now, someone rapped at the door. A gloved and gentle rap, this one, heedless of the knocker. It did not plead admittance or demand it, but merely said, in the muted manner of flesh on wood, "I am here."

"I'll go," Reese said. "Oh, let me!" as if she might protest it; as if, in fact, she should. And straining up from the couch, feeling his tie, patting the bungled knot with an air of martyred gallantry, he went.

"Good evening, Jessie." He bowed so low it humbled him, and shrinking back, pressed the door against his chest uncomfortably.

"Hi Reese, Eva!" She winked at Eva. "Lord! I'm as wet as a baby!"

"At your age!" Eva taunted. "Shame!" And hearing Jessie laugh, the closet of her life seemed, for the moment, not too bad a place--for all its coats.

But that reminded her and, starting from the couch, she said, "Oh, let me hang--" but Jessie waved her down in that

efficient way she had, and told her, "I can hang it, Eva," adding as a second thought, "Or Reese can."

And Eva, arching her neck in protest and surprise, wanted to cry at Jessie, "Reese? No, no! Ask anyone but Reese!" Yet feeling at the moment too helpless, too confused, she only watched.

"Why, yes," Reese said, shutting the door, easing it shut with humility. "I'll hang your coat." And he stood at servile attention while Jessie slipped it off, as if he were too unworthy to help.

"Thanks." She tossed the coat on his arm. No pardons, no excuse; and turning away, she opened her purse for a cigarette as though, after all, she had done what was only natural!

Seeking to distract her mind--to focus it, at least--Eva stared at the pattern of drops on the floor, the three distinct patterns. But oh, how obvious they were: those bold, assertive, scattered drops from Murray's coat, the clustered, inconspicuous ones from Reese's, and the moderate ones that neither denied nor demanded attention, Jessie's.

The analysis disturbed her and, lifting her head, searching for some new object of relief, some dull and unsymbolic thing to clasp her thoughts upon, she fixed her gaze on an ashtray. True, it was one of those phallic ceramic ones--but at least no cigarettes smoldered there for her to identify.

Then, just as she was collecting herself, Jessie flipped a match in the tray, nimbly, inoffensively, but somehow with the gesture forcing her to look up, and saying when she did so, "We can share it, can't we?"

"What? Oh--yes!" She nodded, startled but, for once, not embarrassed, more amused, in fact, that anyone should understand her so. And with it, the strain and press of the evening dropped away and she felt again, for a moment, uncloseted and free.

But of course this too must end in the beginning, for

Murray came with the drinks and Reese was close behind him--though not so close as to be obscured, just visibly in the background.

"Jessie--" Eva spoke the name as clearly as a password, adding indistinctly, "this is Murray."

"Hi, Jessie." Murray offered her the first glass, bending just enough for her to reach it, not enough, as Reese would do, to make the gesture fawning.

Eva lifted a drink from the tray and, settling on the couch, adjusted her face to the brittle mask of a hostess. She watched Reese taking his highball--pausing in debate (Should he? Was he worthy?) but finally raising the glass, his hand vibrating slightly, enough for the ice to tinkle--and bearing it off to the hard, straight chair in the corner.

Murray sat protectively by Eva on the couch, and Jessie in an armchair. "What shall we drink to?" Eva asked, not caring, thinking, on the whole, that toasts were silly but hoping, by the process, to unite them.

"To Thirst?" Jessie offered, tilting her glass, saying visually to Eva, "Isn't that a safe one?"

"Let's drink to Love," Murray said, "That's trite enough!" adding the cynicism, transparent as it was, as if somehow that redeemed him from the maudlin.

But Reese, slouched in his chair, posing in helpless discomfort cried, "Here's to the Quickly Dead!" And alone, tipping the glass to his mouth, drank it to the bottom, as if, at any moment, the hemlock would transform again to whiskey.

"Damn you!" Murray snapped, "You've spoiled the toast!" hating him, Eva knew, as men hate all pathetic things.

"Oh well," she said, "we'll catch him on the next round," trying to sound as casual as she could, loathing herself for trying. He wants to be a fool! she thought. Who am I to stop him? Yet seeing Reese, so weak and sick and

rotten, the way he pretended to be and really was, she could no more deny her sympathy than Murray could his lack of it.

Meanwhile, Jessie was saying, "The Thirsty are always with us!" and tasting her drink, approved it with a nod. And how does she feel, Eva wondered. Surely she despises him! But seeing her now, as unperturbed as ever, as easily at ease, she thought: Jessie has no need to hate or pity.

Then, dismissing her--not wholly, yet knowing she was free to do so, knowing it was best--Eva turned to Murray. He was drinking with loud, angry swallows, glaring at Reese, cursing with his eyes; and Eva, wanting only to stop him, willing to suffer for it in the end, reached up and took his arm, possessively as a lover would, and pulled it gently down. He resisted her for a moment, forcing her to coax him, but slowly giving in, letting his glass come even with hers and smiling when the rims touched.

"To Love?" he asked, though the words were hardly a question; and she, in mortgage, nodded.

Afterwards, sipping her drink, loathing it as she always did the first one, her eyes strayed back to Jessie, for now--with the ashtray full--she, this placid woman, seemed the only neutral point in the room.

But suddenly, Reese stirred in his chair, stirred painfully and said, affecting a strained normalcy, "Someone play the piano," and then, relapsing hopelessly, he added, "One note is worth a thousand words."

And Murray, his anger apparently spent, or rather bought by Eva, agreed and said, "Yes, someone play. Let Jessie!" meaning, with a glance at Eva, "I don't want to share you."

"Beg me!" Jessie laughed, mocking them in her gentle way but draining her glass and rising.

"I'll fix the drinks," Reese said, and gathered up the glasses, clutching them against him and saying when he had them all, "Aren't there any more of us?"

And Eva, treating it as a joke, said "One more round and there will be!"

But as he slouched to the kitchen, for all the world like a galley slave, Murray groaned derisively and, facing her, trapping her eyes with his, demanded, "Eva, what do you see in him?"

"The last of the Beat Young Men," she whispered, hating her evasion yet pleased, at that with escaping him.

He might have still recaptured her, but Jessie began to play. Her fingers spidered across the keys in a loose, experimental way, relaxed and wholly casual. And Eva, withdrawing from Murray, took refuge in the music from her own discordant thoughts.

"I want a Sunday kind of love.
I'm hoping to discover
A certain kind of lover
Who will show me the way..."

But of course with Murray near her, so near, and yet--if he only knew!--so far, she could only pretend to listen, distracted as she was by the medley of her own confusion.

Then Reese appeared, with the drinks bunched in his hands, and set them down in the four wet rings on the tray. His servile air had vanished. Indeed, as he passed the tray, pausing briefly and moving on like some mechanical dispenser, he seemed by contrast almost condescending.

Dear God, Eva thought, what role is this? She took her drink and tasted it, heaving on the swallow but coughing realistically to hide the fact. Then, with her eyes still watering, she held her breath and gulped the highball down past the middle ice cube.

"Eva! What the devil!" She felt Murray's hand on hers, forcing the glass from her mouth, and, pulling away, strangled with nausea but managing still to disguise it, she heard him snarl at Reese, "You slugged the drinks! You've made her choke!"

And Reese, ignoring Murray, tottered at once to Eva and

stooping at her feet, began, "Oh, Eva, can you forgive me? I've hurt you! I've betrayed you! Oh God! it's all my fault!" ranting on and on, apologizing himself into a martyr until, in the end, it was he they must lift from the cross.

And Eva, her stomach shakily at rest, replied, "No, Reese. The highball's fine. I only drank it wrong." But hearing her voice from a distance in automatic defense, she felt a mental queasiness that made her want to retch again; and desperately, seizing the one sane thought in her head, she blurted, "Really, let's forget it. We're missing all the music!" But how insane, after all, that was, for even with the rushing in her ears she could tell that the music had stopped.

Then, hazily pulling her eyes into focus, she saw that Jessie had turned on the stool and was watching her, but more than that, much more. She was somehow feeding her with the stare, not feeding on her, as Reese would do, or Murray exacting his pound of flesh, but rather, in reverse, transfusing to her! And Eva, drawing greedily, refueling, so to speak, her own depleted poise, was able, when Jessie released her, to pacify them all with her composure.

Jessie, pausing to sip her drink, turned again to the piano and took up nonchalantly in the middle of the tune. Sullenly, as if he resented his own redemption, coming as it had so quickly, Reese, with a stifled sigh, retreated to his chair--though, of course, it wasn't a chair at all but a bed of nails. And Murray, dropping his hand from Eva's, as if to say "You're free now. You belong only to me," lit cigarettes for both of them. Eva, reverting to panic, bolted the final swallow of her drink, as if somehow, God helping, it would make these unrealities less real.

Then, suddenly, of its own accord, the party ended. Jessie, tired of playing, turned her back to the keys and, leaning on them, rested there in undemanding silence. Reese, exhausted from all of his acts--or had he merely exhausted them?--began to fidget; and Murray wanting to be alone with Eva, yet knowing too that Reese would only

linger on, said at last, reluctantly, assuming for them all, "It's time to go."

"Oh!" Eva roused in quaint surprise, "Is it late?" and fumbled disbelievingly for her watch. "Why, so it is!" She frowned in dutiful regret.

"I'll get the coats," Reese sighed, and heaved from his chair with a last, grim effort at martyrdom.

"Leave mine," Jessie said, glancing serenely at Eva. "I'll help you with the clutter."

"Thank you," Eva murmured, not needing, for a change, to sound effusive.

At the door, Murray squeezed her arm. "I'll phone you soon. Tomorrow."

Mechanically, she nodded.

And not to be outdone, if pity counted, Reese turned his harrowed face to her and rasped, "Eva, forgive me! I've been such a boor! Next time--next time--" He broke and convulsively stumbled from the room.

And Eva, easing shut the door, noticed the brass fawn knocker and thought, How similar we are! How everyone, tonight, has used us! Everyone but Jessie.

And turning away, dropping her hand from the knob, she knew at last what she had known all along. Jessie had simply waited. She was waiting still, thank God!

And now, with the whiskey flaming in her stomach, Eva walked as surely across the floor as if she were alone, and sober. Jessie had moved from the piano stool to the couch and was sitting, contentedly smoking--or rather, watching her cigarette burn in the ashtray. Looking up, she calmly asked, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing!" Eva said, telling the truth for once in her life and exulting in it. "Nothing's wrong any more!" And clutching Jessie's shoulders, she roughly tugged her over till she lay flat.

"Careful, my confused one!" Jessie said, and held her off with both hands.

And then, with Jessie holding her--so close, so far away --it came, the hollow, throatless cry that rose, instead of nausea, and ended in a laugh; and with it, she was lost and found in the same breath, laughing now, and crying with the same tears, pleading and commanding in the same tone, "Oh, Jessie, take me, take me! I know what I am now! I know what I want! Don't make me wait any longer!"

"My woman," Jessie said, and pulled her down.

Cross - Currents

EDITOR'S NOTE: THIS MONTH'S NEWS COLUMN WAS WRITTEN ESPECIALLY FOR THE LADDER BY BETTY JONLAND OF SWEDEN.

* * * *

RE: FINLAND

THE HOMOSEXUAL MINORITY IN FINLAND IS STILL LIVING UNDER A HARD PRESSURE. THE LAW IS BRANDING ALL HOMOSEXUAL ACTIONS AS CRIMES, AS IT EARLIER HAS DONE IN SWEDEN AND DENMARK. IF A HOMOSEXUAL ACTION BETWEEN TWO GROWN-UP MEN IS LEARNED TO THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY, IT IS HIS DUTY TO PROSECUTE; HE HAS NOT THE RIGHT, AS A NORWEGIAN ATTORNEY, NOT TO PROSECUTE UNLESS THE GENERAL OPINION CLAIMS SO. CONSEQUENTLY, THE HOMOSEXUALS IN FINLAND MUST BEHAVE VERY CAREFULLY. THEY HAVE NOT THE POSSIBILITY - AS WE IN THE OTHER SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES - TO ORGANIZE AND HAVE TAKEN CARE OF THEIR INTERESTS AS WELL AS OBTAIN CONTACTS WITH FRIENDS AND KINDRED SPIRITS. TO A CERTAIN EXTENT THE SWEDISH ORGANIZATION (RFSL) HAS TRIED TO COMPENSATE THEM; FINNISH CITIZENS - OF COURSE MOSTLY THE SWEDISH-SPEAKING - HAVE BECOME MEMBERS OF RFSL. A WIDER MEMBER-STOCK MAKES BETTER MEANS AND ALSO BETTER KNOWLEDGE ABOUT FINNISH CONDITIONS THAT IS NECESSARY FOR A SUCCESSFUL WORK.

HOLLAND

CULTUUR- EN ONTSPANNINGS-CENTRUM (COC), THE GREATEST AND OLDEST ORGANIZATION (AS YOU SURELY KNOW), HAS IN OCTOBER CELEBRATED ITS 15 YEARS JUBILEE IN AMSTERDAM. THE DUTCH NEWSPAPERS WROTE VERY POSITIVELY ABOUT COC'S HUMAN AND SOCIAL ACTIVITY.

CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

HAS AT FIRST EAST-STATE ACCEPTED FREEDOM OF PUNISH FOR HOMOSEXUAL ACTIONS, WHEN THE INVOLVED PARTIES HAVE PASSED THE AGE OF 18. THUS IN MAIN, SAME AS SWEDEN.

IN DENMARK

IT SEEMS THAT THE PRESSURE HAS STRENGTHENED ON THE HOMOSEXUALS. THUS THE DANISH GOVERNMENT HAS RAISED THE AGE OF LIABILITY TO PENALTY FOR HOMOSEXUAL ACTIONS TO THE AGE OF 21. THIS PROCEDURE IS EXPLAINED THAT THEY WANT TO MAKE AN END TO THE YOUTH PROSTITUTION. HOWEVER, IN HOMOPHILE CIRCLES THEY FEAR THAT THIS WILL CREATE AN EVEN GREATER INSECURITY OF RIGHTS THAN BEFORE. EVERYTHING IS NOW DEPENDING OF TEMPORARY SENTIMENTS FROM THE EASY-INFLUENCED GENERAL OPINION.

AND NOW, A SMALL STORY FROM DENMARK, ABOUT BRAIN WASH:

LAST APRIL 1 (1962) A DAILY IN COPENHAGEN WAS REFERRING A REAL HORSE CURE WHICH WAS DONE TO A HOMOPHILE MAN. HE WAS PLACED IN A DARK ROOM WITHOUT FOOD AND ELSE TO DRINK BUT GREAT QUANTITIES OF LIQUOR EVERY OTHER HOUR, COMPLETED WITH NARCOTIC MEANS. EVERY OTHER HOUR DURING NIGHT HE WAS AWAKENED FROM A PLAYER WITH CONGRATULATIONS THAT THE HOMOPHILE INTERESTS WERE GONE. AFTERWARDS HE GOT MORE NARCOTIC, MALE HORMONES, AND HETEROSEXUAL SUGGESTIONS THROUGH PICTURES OF PIN-UPS AND SEXY FEMALE VOICES FROM A RECORD PLAYER. THE CURE WENT ON IN 30-HOURS STAGES WITH A FEW DAYS REST IN BETWEEN AND IS SAID TO HAVE HAD THE DESIRED RESULT. IT IS ALSO SAID THAT THE FELLOW HAD RATHER LONG TIME WISHED TO CHANGE ATTITUDE, WHICH MUST BE THE GROUND FOR SUCCESS. HOWEVER, SUCH A RESULT IS REALLY UNBELIEVABLE AS TO REAL HOMOSEXUAL PERSONS, AND THE EXPLANATION OF THE STORY MUST BE FOUND IN THE DATE OF THE ARTICLE. APRIL FIRST, I DO HOPE HAS THE SAME MEANING TO YOU AMERICANS???

FULFILLMENT

Fulfillment comes surely,
slowly
Root, leaf, bud, flower -
fruit in tempting bower
exotic or lowly.

Fulfillment finds seekers
waiters
hoppers for the best,
not quitters of the quest
or piqued haters.

Cored in fulfillment is rest,
peace.
Time is the tool,
Ripeness the rule
for waiting's surcease.

- Blanche Small

AMITY

Forgive!
The solace for your longing is not there.
And blame -
Neither one, but rather let us share
What we have.

Which is -
A gift, quite rare and beautiful to behold.
But not
To be reshaped in different mould
And this is ours.

Look around -
The body runs its fevered race.
For us,
The intellect has found its meeting place.
It is enough.

- J. H.

WAITING

Waiting is a pasture
Held by fools
Who spin their life-lines
Out on empty spools,
Counting their days
Along a chain of tears,
Linking the hurts
And wounds on beads of years.
What merit is the
Dreadful price they pay?
They'd trade it for
One foolish love-crowned day!

- Jo Allyn

Impressions.....

The sweet things called dreams - bitter sweet
while I am alone.

An ache inside me when I walk under trees covered
in the warm spring night.

Loneliness surrounds
sounds of a piano - love theme - Tristan and Isolde.
Light perfume,
and I remember just last week.....

- A car seat, empty beside me -
The phone that rings and
the little thrill of anticipation is gone,
It won't be you.
Your scarf, soft colored and feminine
to the touch.

My workday, vaguely empty -
These arms betray me and long to hold you.
Time laughingly eases by
and snaps merry fingers at me
from across the expanse.

Impressions.....

I miss you.

- Alisan

READERS RESPOND

"WELCOME AS FLOWERS IN SPRING WAS THE HARPER'S ARTICLE (MARCH 1963) BY WILLIAM J. HELMER ENTITLED 'NEW YORK'S "MIDDLE-CLASS" HOMOSEXUALS.' THOUGH IT CONTAINED A GOOD STRONG SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO GAY LIFE IN THE CITY, IT LEFT UNTOUCHED ONE OF MY FAVORITE TOPICS.

"I CAN'T UNDERSTAND THOSE HOMOSEXUALS WHO WANT TO BLEND INTO THE LANDSCAPE. I MEAN THOSE WHO LIVE IN SUBURBIA, MOVE IN ITS MILIEUS, AND STRONGLY DESIRE TO REMAIN A PART OF IT. AS IF THERE WERE ANY BASIC COMFORT IN THE ALIEN CLIMATE OF OPINION THERE.

"I KNOW OF SEVERAL HOMOSEXUAL COUPLES WHO ARE WEARING OUT THEIR LIVES LOOKING AS BLAND AND TASTELESS AS THEIR SUBURBAN NEIGHBORS, CONSORTING WITH THOSE WHO MUST ALWAYS BE ONLY ACQUAINTANCES, AND ATTENDING THE CHURCH THAT REJECTS THEIR KIND. AND WHAT'S MORE, THESE HOMOSEXUALS TAKE PRIDE IN THE DECEPTION AND ITS CORRELATIVE ACHIEVEMENT--ACCEPTANCE IN A POTENTIALLY HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT.

"BY CONTRAST, THE HOMOSEXUAL WHO LIVES IN THE BIG CITY CAN AT LEAST DROP THE MASK WHEN MOVING AMONG HIS FELLOWS. HE HAS THE ANONYMITY OF THE BIG CITY AND THE COMFORT OF A LARGE GAY COMMUNITY THEREIN. FOR A GOOD PORTION OF HIS TIME HE CAN BE HONEST AND RELAXED.

"LET'S GO BACK TO THOSE WEARING THE MASK (AND DAMN PROUD OF IT) IN SUBURBIA. WHY DON'T THEY LEAVE IT ALL BEHIND FOR THE COMFORT OF FELLOWSHIP IN THE CITY? AREN'T THEY SIMPLY PLAYING OUT THE IDEALS THAT MOTHER SET UP FOR THEM? AREN'T THEY CONFUSING MIDDLE-CLASS MORALITY WITH MORALITY? SPLIT-LEVEL HOMES WITH HIGH-LEVEL LIVING? CONFORMITY WITH COMMENDABILITY? THEY MUST OR THEY WOULDN'T CONTINUE THE CHAMELEON ACT. IN SHORT, ALL THIS IS THE BEST THEY CAN ASPIRE TO. SO WE SEE THAT BEYOND NEW YORK'S DANDIFIED HOMOSEXUALS DESCRIBED IN HARPER'S, LIES THAT VAST SEA OF DRAB HOMOSEXUALS HIDING OUT IN MIDDLE-BROW SUBURBIA."

- J. P., NEW YORK

"IT HAS JUST BEEN BROUGHT TO MY ATTENTION THAT IN MY ARTICLE ON MALE IMPERSONATION ON THE STAGE, WHICH APPEARED RECENTLY IN YOUR MAGAZINE, I HAVE MADE THE GLARING ERROR OF CALLING THE ROLE OF GONERIL IN SHAKESPEARE'S 'KING LEAR' ONE OF THE BREECHES PARTS IN WHICH THE FINE AMERICAN ACTRESS CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN APPEARED.

"WHILE THEATER RECORDS DO SHOW MISS CUSHMAN IN THE ROLE, THE FACT MUST BE STATED HERE THAT GONERIL IS A DAUGHTER OF KING LEAR (HER TWO SISTERS BEING REGAN AND CORDELIA) AND IS IN NOWISE A BREECHES PART. MISS CUSHMAN DID NOT HESITATE TO LEAP THE BOUNDS BY PLAYING BOTH MALE AND FEMALE ROLES THROUGHOUT HER BRILLIANT CAREER; IN THIS INSTANCE SHE WAS PLAYING IN A WOMAN'S PART.

"MY THANKS TO THE ALERT EYE OF THE READER IN DISCOVERING THIS ERROR AND FOR HIS CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE TEXT IN THIS INTERESTING YET SOMETIMES COMPLEX TOPIC. I WOULD WELCOME ANY OTHER COMMUNICATIONS IN THIS REGARD OR IN COMMENT UPON THE SUBJECT."

- ROBERT LIECHTI

* * * *

"HOW CAN YOU EXPECT TO FAVORABLY IMPRESS PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE AND NEWSSTAND DEALERS WHEN THE MAGAZINE LOOKS LIKE A HIGH SCHOOL 'LITERARY' ANNUAL? PLEASE CONFINE THE ART WORK TO INSIDE PAGES, PRINT THE TABLE OF CONTENTS ON THE FRONT COVER, WHAT IS TO COME NEXT MONTH ON THE BACK COVER, YOUR EDITORIAL INSIDE THE FRONT COVER, AND MAKE USE OF THE INSIDE BACK COVER. TRY TO HAVE THE MAGAZINE TYPESET, IN THE SMALLEST EASILY-READ TYPE ON REASONABLY WELL-FILLED PAGES. A PROFESSIONAL-LOOKING JOB SHOULD INCREASE GENERAL CIRCULATION. THE LADDER IS GOOD NOW, BUT NOT GOOD ENOUGH. THE FACT THAT IT EXISTS AT ALL IS MARVELOUS. BUT IT MUST GROW OR WITHER."

- W. M., NEW ENGLAND

* * * *

"MY LIFE HASN'T BEEN THE SAME SINCE I STARTED THE LADDER AND I CERTAINLY CAN SAY I AM IN ACCORD WITH YOUR PRINCIPLES AND GOALS. I AM SURE THERE MUST BE MANY LIKE MYSELF, WHO OWE FAR MORE TO THE STAFF OF THE LADDER THAN WE COULD EVER REPAY.

"I HAVEN'T RECEIVED ONE ISSUE OF THE MAGAZINE WHICH I FELT HAD FAILED TO BE A REAL INSPIRATION. I AM MARRIED AND THE MOTHER OF FOUR. THE ONE PERSON WHO CAN GIVE MY LIFE ANY REAL MEANING IS A THOUSAND MILES AWAY. IF I AM ABLE TO SEE MY RESPONSIBILITIES CARRIED THROUGH TO A SUCCESSFUL FINISH, I WILL OWE A GREAT DEAL TO THE INSPIRATION AND COMPANIONSHIP WHICH I HAVE RECEIVED THROUGH YOUR PUBLICATION. I AM SURE THERE MUST BE MANY IN THE SAME POSITION AS I AM WHO DETEST THE FACT THAT CIRCUMSTANCES FORCE US TO HIDE OUT. DEL MARTIN IN HER FINE EDITORIAL IN JANUARY MENTIONED THAT WE SHOULD 'STAND UP AND BE COUNTED.' HOW DO YOU SUGGEST THAT THIS BE DONE? HOW CAN I HELP WITH THE GOALS THAT YOU ARE REACHING FOR IN '63? AND WHAT SEEMS FAR MORE IMPORTANT THAN ALL ELSE, HOW CAN I, A MOTHER WITH SO MUCH RESPONSIBILITY TO MY CHILDREN, STILL COME OUT OF HIDING, SO TO SPEAK, AND BE OF SOME GOOD TO SOMEONE? THERE MUST BE OTHERS SUCH AS I, WHO FEEL GUILTY IN OUR DAMNED SECURITY, WHO FEEL THAT THEY ARE BEING UNTRUE TO THEMSELVES IN THE WAY WE HAVE TO LIVE. YOU SEE THAT THE TIME SPENT IN P.T.A., SCOUTS AND WHAT-HAVE-YOU, ALTHOUGH IT IS GOOD, IS NOT HELPING IN THE FIELD WHERE MY MOST SINCERE INTEREST LIES? I HOPE AND PRAY THAT SOME WAY WILL BE FOUND WHEREBY THOSE IN MY POSITION CAN BE OF SOME HELP IN SOME WAY IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE. UNTIL THEN, I PERSONALLY FEEL I AM WASTING PRECIOUS TIME AND MANY ARE FAILING TO FIND THE HELP THAT PERHAPS I MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE IN SOME SMALL MEASURE. I AM RESPECTED--AND SUSPECTED TOO, I AM QUITE SURE. BUT SURELY THIS COULD BE OF SOME HELP IN THE GOALS THAT A GOOD MANY LESBIANS DESIRE.

"I WAS A NAZARENE PREACHER'S DAUGHTER WHO WAS THROWN OUT OF THE CHURCH IN DISGRACE 15 YEARS AGO BEFORE I HARDLY KNEW WHAT THE HECK IT WAS ALL ABOUT. REVEREND WOOD'S BOOK, CHRIST AND THE HOMO-SEXUAL, HAS BEEN WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN GOLD. IT HAS HELPED ME FIND ONCE AGAIN MY FAITH IN GOD AND TO SLOWLY FIND PEACE WITHIN MYSELF AND ALSO MORE UNDERSTANDING OF THOSE WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND. IF EVER A MAN WAS INSPIRED TO WRITE A BOOK, HE SURELY MUST HAVE BEEN.

"HAVE WISHED TO LET YOU ALL KNOW THAT YOUR EFFORTS HAVE HELPED ME SHAKE OFF THE BOTTLE, FACE UP TO DAILY RESPONSIBILITIES AND LOOK FORWARD HOPEFULLY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY, MANY YEARS. MAY GOD BLESS YOU AND REWARD YOU EACH ONE."

- A SUBSCRIBER, WEST COAST



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