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BOOK REVIEWS

The Sex Paradox: An Analytical Survey of Sex and The Law in the United States. By Isabel Drummond, New York: G. B. Putnam's Sons, 1953.

In the language of the author: The "... sole purpose of this book is educational. It is directed to the attention of that sector of the adult reading public, which can materially aid the cause of good government and good citizenship where sexual matters are concerned..." The loftly intent is endowed with an obliging confidence in man's readiness to act wisely if only he knows how. This book aims to help him to know how "...by affording...the opportunity of acquiring—and therefore imparting—some of the information necessary to guide the voting citizens toward needed reforms in matters pertaining to sex legislation and to effective control and rehabilitation of sexual deviants."

The book starts off badly. Chapter I, "Historical and Anthropological Survey," opens with the sentence: "Every human sexual act in and of itself is a crime or a sin." Now, Miss Drummond doesn't mean *that*, and she finally says so. Well who does? "...many Christians believe that it (marriage) does not mitigate its (vaginal heterosexual congress) sinful quality, unless engaged in for the sole purpose of procreation..." And on that apparently hangs the opening "universal," except that it is a "...twentieth century concept..." and Miss Drummond asks, presumably for the purpose of answering: "...How this... concept evolved?"

Thus the opening chapter in an otherwise informative and provocative book gets trapped in the first sentence and never extricates itself. The chapter is not historical; it is not anthropological; and it is not a survey in any reassuring sense. The author in this instance would certainly not be expected to employ the research skills of a trained anthropologist; but it is disappointing to find their most pertinent discoveries and conclusions almost completely neglected. Little or no reference is made to Malinowsky, Boas, Murdock, Mead, and others of similar stature, to say nothing of the classical works of Briffault and Westermarck. There is moreover a wealth of pertinent "cross-culture" material in book form in the university libraries to which I find no reference in this chapter. Instead semi-antidotal materials are strained through "canting" phrases and inept generalities with little reference to the avowed purpose of the book. "... Today as the tomorrow of yesterday plays the role of candle stick maker on the teeter-totter of moral standards." And "... Thus, a glimpse at some of the customs of our ancestors will shed light on some of our own customs and project in turn, a shadow picture of future practice."

Where do these light rays come from? We are told at once: "At an early date...sex was openly worshiped...Figures of Gods and Kings with penis erect...on the walls of temples...performance of sex act...observed with...solemnity...Prostitution...a sacred vocation..."

The reader is shunted from one weird and sadistic orgiastic ancient practice to another including the Babylonian *Bit Shagatha*—prostitution of the innocence—to the masochistic worship of *Sybele* and *Attis* by the masculated priests, 200 B.C.

"Finally "yesterday's tomorrow" lights a melancholy candle: "Whether esthetically appealing or not the fact remains that human sexual conduct parallels that of the lower animal in its basic needs." And "When civilization soars to a higher peak sexual life in marriage consistent with the preservation of the unity and integrity of the family may be relied on... to take care of itself; and if medical writers on sex life are correct in their findings that the reproductory powers of human beings increase with the development of civilization and in their induction that a weak sexual instinct tends to its vigor and continuance [*Sic*] promoting greater idealizations of sex and greater fidelity in love."

The authority? Joseph Richardson Park, *Human Sexuality: A Medico-literary Treatise on the History and Pathology of The Sex Instinct for the Use of Physicians and Jurists* (1909).

If the reader has the heart to go on after this, he will be rewarded. The eight chapters to follow present a wealth of material showing the inconsistencies and conflicts in methods of treatment and laws relating to sex behavior in the various states.

While the study can hardly be called analytical, it is for the most part, objective and comprehensive. Since the book deals with the motivational factors in sex murders, rape, incest and sex perversions, a more critical familiarity with recent psychoanalytical literature would have served a useful purpose. Moreover, the absence of any persuasive use of pertinent case materials is a distinct weakness. In spite of deficiencies of organization, the book is timely and meets an urgent need. It recommends itself because it does point up the significance of some major forces in American life that demand prompt and intelligent attention. In respect to these matters the author reveals a sympathetic and comprehensive understanding. She has, moreover, presented the material, for the most part, with rare skill and an objective mind. In addition to its appeal to the intelligent general reader the book should have a special interest for social scientists, social workers, judges, prosecutors and law-makers.

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