

The swimming pool

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«You know I can't come on to Dublin with you, don't you? Don't you, Brian . . . We'd have to say goodbye there just the same as here. And people would suspect us . . . When you get to London, I'll be coming to you, and we'll live together for always . . . Now Brian — now Brian . . . Well, say something!»

The boy without moving his body sighed and said quietly, «You'll forget me — there's others you like.»

«No one — no one in the world but you, Brian.»

«How about Jimmy . . . you went away with him once . . .»

«That was different. He's not like us.»

«And there was that woman. Joe . . . Joe . . . please don't ever fall in love with anyone else will you?»

«Don't be silly — how could I? Now come on, let's get dressed.»

They began dressing. The boy looked quite happy as he combed his hair, and he even began to hum a tune to himself. Then, at the last moment he took the older man in his arms and began to cry. The older man told him to be quiet, he would waken me up . . . Then, just before they left the room they stood close together. I knew they were kissing but I didn't watch them. From the street below came the sound of the cattle, the calves were lowing, and I kept my eyes closed to forget the cruelty of the world — but I couldn't for it was there in my own mind too.

That night when I went up to bed, I touched the sheets on the double bed, I touched the pillow and I stood by the window glad that I had the room to myself. But I was mistaken. I had been asleep when the light was switched on and in came the older man.

«I'm staying an extra night» he said, «I missed the bus home.» He began to undress. He offered me a cigarette, and as he struck a match, he touched my hand, and looked into my eyes. I avoided his look.

The light was out, and I heard him moving around in the double bed. He called out to me, «It's terrible cold isn't it?»

«Yes,» I answered.

«I'm freezing in here. Why don't you come over, we'd be warmer together.»

I didn't answer at once. I thought of the boy, on the way to England, and already — already he was being deceived.

«I'd rather sleep alone», I said. And as I said it, I thought of the boy. Had it been him alone in the double bed, maybe I'd not mind the deception. Yes, I wasn't being good or kind — just selfish.

The Swimming Pool

by O. F. Simpson.

Our invitations to the official luncheon had been put in vague terms: «The Mayor and Chamber of Commerce of Overby request the pleasure of the company of Mr and Mrs James Montfort to luncheon on September 15th 1957. Mr Derek Ironside O.B.E., M.C. will speak on a project of

importance to the town.» So when we reached the hall and a few enquiries made it clear that the function was being held to raise funds for a new municipal swimming pool, and that Derek was to be chief speaker on this subject, the coincidence almost overwhelmed me.

I had better explain that I had only just returned with my wife and children a week or so earlier from Canada, where I had lived most of my life, having been taken there as a boy when my parents decided to emigrate. But Overby men — more so than other Yorkshiremen, we like to think — are fond and proud of their native town; and I had long since determined to return and spend my old age here as soon as I had «made my pile» in Canada and could afford to do so. I am 50, and rather «well covered» as people say when they are too polite to use the word «fat». But I'm one of the fat and cheerful ones; I like good living, as do my wife, two sons and two daughters, and we have all been keen to make the return to my native Yorkshire which has now taken place.

My link with Derek Ironside it is the purpose of this story to describe. He runs a very prosperous light alloy engineering business in Overby, has been Mayor many times and is now the leading figure in the town. Tall, hawk-like and handsome as a Red Indian, he still has the unruly shock of hair over his forehead which I remembered of him from his schooldays — only now the hair is grey where it was then a dark lustrous brown. It is indeed of our time at the local grammar school that I want to speak — in particular of one hot summer afternoon in July 1921 when we were both about fourteen and he had invited me to come for a swim with him up to Brown Tarn.

In those days there was not only no swimming pool in the town, but no one had even dreamt of such a thing. The river was polluted by factory effluents, the sea was too far away, and if you wanted a swim, the lake high up in the hills known as Brown Tarn was the nearest place to get it, and that was six miles away and very inaccessible. We weren't surprised that day, hot as it was, to be the only people there when at last we reached it, by bicycle and the last stage on foot.

Derek, I should add, occupied a curious position at school, more or less the uncrowned king among us boys. Though no older than the rest of us, he had an air of purposefulness and command about him which made him a natural leader. Always seeming to be two moves ahead of the rest of us, he was always the one to get his own way, usually by gently persuading us and jollyng us along, but when necessary by being absolutely ruthless and tyrannical. Looking along the table today as he rose to start his speech, I decided he was going to try gentle persuasion first . . . And then my thoughts began to wander . . .

A few trees grow at the edge of Brown Tarn, but it is otherwise rather bare, and even in the hottest summer its water, which comes straight off the surrounding hills, is always cold. So that afternoon we didn't swim for long; it was pleasanter to stretch out naked on the grassy bank and let the sun beat down on us, and that is what we did. I was on my back, tilting my head backwards over the edge of the bank so that just my forehead and the top of my hair dangled in the water.

I was at peace with the whole world, when there was suddenly a scuffle close by me and a shadow in my eyes, and without a word of warning Derek had thrown himself at me and kissed me hard, full on my mouth.

I was so flabbergasted I had no way of putting my fury and indignation into words. «You oughn't to have done that,» I began lamely, sitting up and wiping my mouth vigorously with the back of my hand.

«Well, I *have* done it, silly, see? It's the first time I've ever kissed anyone — outside my family of course. And I liked it.»

«Well, I didn't!»

«You did.»

«I didn't.»

«Of course you did, Jimmy.» Derek cut sharply across the pointless slanging match that boys so often start up together. Sitting back on his haunches, hands on his knees, he looked at me with his usual maddening air of superiority and mischief combined. «You liked it, and I liked it, because I like you.» He began to speak more warmly and urgently. «Won't anything get it into your thick head, boy, how fond we all are of you? — me and all our lot? Don't you know what we call you behind your back — «Sunny Jim» — because you're so kind and good, and never lose your temper, and never take advantage of a chap when he's down, and let us come and tell you our troubles, and lend us money, and always say the nice thing when it needs saying, and I don't know what all?»

My mind moved rather slowly, then as now. «Well, I don't lend much money, because I never have any.»

«That's the whole point. We all know that, but you're the one who always helps out with the last penny you have got, because you're generous and easy-going — and that's just what I like and admire in you.» Derek was getting excited by his own talk, as he often did. «That's what we all like in you, what *I* like in you — indeed I now know I *love* you for it, and that's why I kissed you just now. And what's more, old cock, that's why I'm now going to kiss you again — so look out!»

He uncoiled himself like a snake and once more took me by surprise; but this time, whether I was softened up by his flattery, or for some deeper reason, I held him close and would not let him go. And so for a minute or more we lay together, lips to lips, chest to chest, thigh to thigh — two ordinary English boys laying their first shy offering on the altar of Love. As I write today I can still seem to feel under my hands the wonder and glory of his hard young boy's body. I fondled the muscles crinkling up and down his back, his narrow waist, the small, tight buttocks and the long graceful pillars of his legs. He was strong and beautiful, our Derek, and that was the real secret of his authority over us all; and as he rubbed his cheek on mine and it was slowly borne in on me that he'd chosen me for his special friend in preference to all the others, I was in a perfect agony of happiness. But boys are changeable creatures, and it wasn't long before I'd tweaked his ear and we were laughing and shouting and scrapping together all over the

grass. When I'm roused, I can get quite tough — fat people are much stronger than you think, but don't bother to exert themselves usually — and I think Derek was much astonished to find himself suddenly pinned face down in the mud with me sitting on his calves and twisting his arms up behind his back. A voice kept whispering to me «Go on, hurt him, take him down a peg», and I knew from his grunts and groans I was hurting him; but he never demeaned himself to call out for mercy, and finally I let him go.

Anyway we had a lovely time, swam once again in the icy water to wash off the grass and mud stains, and then, as the sun went down, dressed and strode off down the hill together arm in arm in our delicious new-found intimacy. Derek as usual did all the talking and I fell silent, still marvelling that he should have picked me out of all our set. There was his cousin Andrew who always seemed to be very thick with him; Nils, the Norwegian boy with his straight fair and sky-blue eyes, by far the handsomest of us all, but a bit cold and dull perhaps; little Denis, who was always joking and could swim like an otter, corkscrewing through the water; a redheaded boy from Ireland with whom Derek was always fighting but whom I think he liked very much; John, who took himself very seriously, thought of nothing but games, and had already played cricket for the school; the cleverest of us all, Benjamin, who wore thick tortoiseshell spectacles but redeemed himself in our eyes by his wonderful collection of tropical fish; and several others of our gang. Why me? — the thought went hammering on my brain — when Derek could have had any of these others. All of us would have followed him to the world's end, whenever he crooked his little finger at us.

A week or two later the summer term came to an end, and the next month my parents completed their arrangements to emigrate to Canada, where I have lived ever since up till now. My next school, in the outskirts of Winnipeg, was a very different affair. No Derek there, and no one remotely like him . . .

I was recalled to my surroundings by the applause at the end of Derek's speech. I clapped loudly and dutifully, though I'd hardly heard a word of it. Later, when the luncheon was breaking up, I took my wife up and introduced her to Derek and Mrs Ironside. It was the first time we had met since 1921, and I think he hardly even knew me, so busy had his life been. I thought I'd test him.

«What you promise us in your speech, Derek, certainly sounds like an improvement on Brown Tarn», I said. «Do you remember that day?»

Derek fixed me with his most penetrating look — little changed across forty years, I thought, though success and selfimportance had removed most of the mischief which used to light up his face as a boy; but it was clear to me at once that he had no special memory of that summer afternoon in 1921, or if he had, he wasn't going to admit to it. «Yes, Brown Tarn was pretty cold always, from what I remember,

wasn't it?» he replied. «We're going to have the new bath heated all the year round, you know.»

All the same, when I got to the door, and the subscription list for the new swimming pool was presented to me «for action», I got out my cheque book and wrote them a really whacking sum, far more than I could really afford. Derek had got his way once more.

Three Recent Cuttings from: THE TIMES, London

Homosexual Acts

Sir, — The Provost of King's College, Cambridge, and other humane and eminent men having written with restraint and good will on the subject of homosexuality, it is curious and instructive to see the manner of Sir Charles Taylor's reply, which you print in to-day's issue of The Times.

This consists solely of a quotation of two verses from the Old Testament which describe the legendary destruction of the Cities of the Plain in language that is a pleasure to read but scarcely indicates a sane approach to a soluble problem of law and ethics. It is as though a biologist had sought serious support from Herodotus. But just as we are not sixth-century Greeks, neither are we nomadic Hebrews. We are Englishmen in the year 1958 who never cease to congratulate ourselves on our tolerance and good sense. Let us then have civilized and logical argument about this matter or let us drop it altogether.

Call to Reform Law

Sir, — We, the undersigned, would like to express our general agreement with the recommendation of the Wolfenden Report that homosexual acts committed in private between consenting adults should no longer be a criminal offence.

The present law is clearly no longer representative of either Christian or liberal opinion in this country, and now that there are widespread doubts about both its justice and its efficacy, we believe that its continued enforcement will do more harm than good to the health of the community as a whole.

The case for reform has already been accepted by most of the responsible papers and journals, by the two Archbishops, the Church Assembly, a Roman Catholic committee, a number of non-conformist spokesmen, and many other organs of informed public opinion.

In view of this, and of the conclusions which the Wolfenden Committee itself agreed upon after a prolonged study of the evidence, we should like to see the Government introduce legislation to give effect to the proposed reform at an early date; and are confident that if it does so it will deserve the widest support from humane men of all parties.

Yours, &c., N. G. Annan; Attlee; A. J. Ayer; Isaiah Berlin; † Leonard Birmingham; Robert Boothby; C. M. Bowra; C. D. Broad; David Cecil; L. John Collins; Alex Comfort; A. E. Dyson; † Robert Exon; Geoffrey

Faber; Jacquetta Hawkes; Trevor Huddleston; C. R.; Julian Huxley; C. Day Lewis; W. R. Niblett; J. B. Priestley; Russell; Donald O. Soper; Stephen Spender; Mary Stocks; A. J. P. Taylor; E. M. W. Tillyard; Alec R. Vidler; Kenneth Walker; Leslie D. Weatherhead; C. V. Wedgwood; Angus Wilson; John Wisdom; Barbara Wootton.

Homosexuals in the Courts

Though the numbers involved are small, all the statistics relating to homosexual offences have been rising for many years. From year to year there has been an uninterrupted increase in offences «known to the police,» in prosecutions and convictions, in the number (though not the proportion) of offenders imprisoned, and, latterly, in the number of long prison sentences. The criminal statistics might thus appear to justify the fears of those who would resist the appeal published in last Friday's issue of *The Times*, over the signatures of many eminent persons, for stopping the punishment of private consented homosexual relations between adult men. In fact, these statistics refer very largely not to conduct of this sort but to behaviour which must be punished—assault, interference with children, and public indecency. They include only a trifling fraction of the private adult behaviour which the Wolfenden committee would remove from the ambit of the criminal law.

As regards consenting adults, law enforcement is so haphazard that the statistics mainly reflect trends in police activity. The number of complaints the police receive is influenced by fluctuations in public sentiment. The number of prosecutions depends not only on whether the police decide to act but also on how persistently they pursue individual cases. For in England and Wales 94 per cent. of men convicted of private consented relations with other men are convicted on their own confessions, and these may often be elicited by the police only after prolonged and laborious inquiries. In Scotland, where there has been no startling rise in prosecutions, it is perhaps significant that only 11 per cent. are convicted in this way. The Wolfenden committee were quite unable to say whether the rising statistical curves indicate any increase at all in homosexual behaviour or merely an increase in police activity.

The recently issued criminal statistics for 1956 suggest they were right. Instead of continuing upward in 1956, the curves took a sharp and unprecedented drop. The police heard of 17 per cent. fewer offences than in 1955. Prosecutions dropped by 12 per cent., convictions by 11 per cent. (for the graver offences by 15 per cent.), and numbers imprisoned by 28 per cent. Significantly, the whole of the fall in prosecutions and convictions occurred among adults.

Among boys and youths there was no change at all. Exactly what this sudden reversal of a long-established trend may mean is not wholly clear. Prosecutions of men for private and consented homosexual relations have certainly not ceased, though they may have dwindled. Yet it looks as if the outburst of public discussion following the Wolfenden committee's appointment must have led police and courts to reflect on what they were doing. This view will be strengthened if a further drop is recorded for 1957, the year of the Wolfenden report.

„der neue ring“

deutschsprachige Monatszeitschrift. Beilage «Aphrodite» (für die Frau) und Anzeigenteil erscheint monatlich im Verlag Gerhard Prescha, Hamburg 13, Alsterchaussee 3, Telephon 45 74 23.

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Kameradschaftliche Vereinigungen und Zeitschriften des Auslandes:

angeschlossen an die «Stiftung Internationales Komitee für sexuelle Gleichberechtigung», ICSE; Sekretariat: Damrak 57, Tel. 34596, Postbus 1564, Amsterdam. — Organ: Newsletter.

Deutschland: Gesellschaft für Reform des Sexualrechts e. V., Grunewaldstrasse 78/1, Berlin-Schöneberg.

Int. Freundschaftsloge (IFLO) Postfach 1399, Bremen.

Deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft für 1957/58: IFLO

Gemeinsames Organ: ICSE-Kurier/IFLO-Bundesbrief.

Verein für humanitäre Lebensgestaltung (VhL), Kettenhofweg 46, Frankfurt a. M.

Dänemark: Forbundet af 1948, Postbox 1023, Kopenhagen K. Organ: PAN.

Holland: Cultuur- en Ontspanningscentrum (COC), Postbus 542.

Amsterdam C. Central-Büro: Damrak 57, Tel. 34596. Organ: Vriendschap.

Clublokal: «De Schakel», Korte Leidsewarstraat 49, Tel. 64511.

Norwegen: Det Norske Forbundet av 1948, Postboks 1305, Oslo.

Schweden: Riksförbundet för sexuellt likaberättigande, Postbox 850, Stockholm I.

USA: One Inc., 232, South Hill Street, Los Angeles 12, Calif.

Mattachine Society, 693 Mission Street, San Francisco 5, Calif.

Belgien: Centre de Culture et de Loisirs, boîte postale 1, Forest 3, Bruxelles.

Tous les réunions: 29, rue Jules Van Praet, Ier étage. (Près de la Bourse).

Frankreich: Le Vêrseau, Paris (Anschrift über ICSE).

Sonstige Zeitschriften und Vereinigungen, dem ICSE noch nicht angeschlossen:

Deutschland: Der Weg, Verlag Rolf Putziger, Uhlandstrasse 149, Berlin W 15.

«der neue ring», Monatsschrift. Verlag Gerhard Prescha, Alsterchaussee 3, Hamburg 13. Telephon 45 74 23.

Frankreich: Arcadie, 162, rue Jeanne d'Arc, Paris 13.

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