

INTRODUCTION

THIS book is the record of a leisurely lecturing tour round the world by the famous expert, Magnus Hirschfeld, who, next to our own Havelock Ellis, ranks as the greatest pioneer in the scientific elucidation of the problems of sex.

He started the tour in 1930 because in his old age his country had become unsafe for men of his race owing to the Nazi terror. Originally he had intended only to go as far as New York to lecture. But whilst there, another wave of Anti-Semitism broke over Germany; and he was advised, therefore, to prolong the tour indefinitely. Hence these records and impressions of Japan, the Philippines, China, the Dutch East Indies, India, Egypt and Palestine.

Wherever he went in the Far East he found the might of England dominant; and it is part of the pathos of these memories that, although his own country had repudiated him, yet as a loyal German he felt irked by this dominance. We can forgive him, therefore, some of his unfair inferences, and possibly profit by seeing our mistakes through alien eyes—especially as the India Act of 1935 attempts to remedy some of these mistakes.

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MAGNUS HIRSCHFELD was born at Kolberg, on the Baltic, on May 14th, 1868. His father, Hermann Hirschfeld, was a doctor, and the boy Magnus was the seventh of eight children. "It was fortunate for me," he writes, in the preface to his *Sex in Human Relationship* (John Lane, 1935), "that people had not yet begun to think about birth control, otherwise I should not at this moment be enjoying the pleasure of telling you about my life and work."

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After qualifying in medicine at Strasburg, he travelled round the world before settling down to general practice at Magdeburg in 1894. Two years later, however, he moved to Charlottenberg, outside Berlin.

Already his interest in sex problems had been aroused, and his first book on the subject appeared pseudonymously in 1895. It was entitled *Socrates and Sappho*, and was built round the story of a young officer, a patient of his, who shot himself on his wedding night. This work appeared at the time when Oscar Wilde was standing his trial in London, and the book caused a sensation in Germany, for Hirschfeld claimed that people with sexual aberrations were not criminals but patients whose sex balance had gone wrong. In this work he hazarded the opinion that each sex partook of the characteristics of the other, and that it was only the preponderance of one set of characteristics that fixed the sex. If then, for any cause, a man deviated away from masculinity it was because he had too much of the female in his constitution, and so could not help feeling and behaving as a female in spite of his apparent sex. The same, reversed, also applied to a woman, turning her into a mental male.

This was a new and startling theory, utterly opposed to the stern ethics of the Prussian and English Penal Codes. No one at that time, of course, knew anything definite about the glands of internal secretion, or that sex was determined by the balance of the hormones. Now the researches of Steinach and others have shown that sex can be altered experimentally, and it is possible to state categorically that a male invert is an invert because he has too much female hormone-producing substances in his make-up.

All scientifically minded people now accept this view, but at the time it was without experimental proof, and startlingly unorthodox. Hirschfeld accordingly soon found himself busily engaged in treating these unfortunate inverts, and doing his best to defend them in the criminal courts.

In 1910, therefore, he moved to Berlin and started practising as a sex expert, dedicating the rest of his life to this speciality—collecting, tabulating, examining data relating to the subject, acquiring objects of art, drawings, carvings, fetishes, photographic records and life histories bearing on the biology, sociology, pathology and ethnology of sex.

Gradually his materials accumulated, until after twenty-five years he had to find a home more convenient for them than his own apartments. For this purpose in 1918 he bought the palace

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of Prince Hatzfeld in Berlin, and in this great building he founded "The Institute of Sexual Science." Here he was able to house his special library of 20,000 books, his 35,000 photographs, his ethnological collections, and the private records of many thousand cases. In 1919 he endowed the Institute, and handed it over to the Prussian Government as the "Magnus Hirschfeld Foundation."

It was the crowning glory of his life, and if he had died then he would have been happy, for as a centre "of instruction and research it was used by thousands of doctors and scientists from every quarter of the globe."

Jew-baiting was not then the sport it later became in Germany, but two years afterwards, in 1921, he was attacked by Anti-Semites in the streets of Munich, his skull was fractured, and he was left for dead. Fortunately he recovered.

Previously, in 1913, associated with Iwan Bloch, he had founded "The Medical Society for Sexual Science." Later, in conjunction with Havelock Ellis and Auguste Forel, he formed the "World League for Sexual Reform"; and he attended the last International Congress of this League at Brünn in 1932, after his return from the world tour, described in this book, *Women East and West*.

It was obvious then that as a sick old man suffering from recurrent attacks of malaria it would have been madness to go back to Germany under the Nazi *régime*; so he wrote the last pages of the book in Vienna and Switzerland.

Then came the final blow.

On May 6th, 1933, the Nazis broke into his beloved Institute in Berlin, sacked the place, tore up drawings, pictures and photographs, piled more than half of the library and the case records into lorries, and publicly burnt them in one great funeral pyre in the Opera Square.

That must have broken his heart. All his life work was scattered; and so an exile, he crossed into France on his sixty-sixth birthday, May 14th, 1933. Paris, however, proved too bleak for his enfeebled constitution, and eventually he went to live at Nice. Here he again began to collect, with indomitable spirit, for a new and greater Institute.

But it was too late. He died on his birthday, May 14th, 1935, attended at the last by his faithful Chinese disciple, Li Shiu Tong.