

**A PROBLEM IN MODERN
ETHICS: BEING AN INQUIRY
INTO THE PHENOMENON
OF SEXUAL INVERSION**

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A Problem in Modern Ethics: Being an Inquiry into the Phenomenon of Sexual Inversion by
John Addington Symonds

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JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

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OF SEXUAL INVERSION**

A PROBLEM IN MODERN ETHICS

A
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BRING

*AN INQUIRY INTO THE PHENOMENON
OF SEXUAL INVERSION*

ADDRESSED ESPECIALLY TO MEDICAL PSYCHOLOGISTS
AND JURISTS

BY

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

LONDON

1896

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INTRODUCTION.

THERE is a passion, or a perversion of appetite, which, like all human passions, has played a considerable part in the world's history for good or evil; but which has hardly yet received the philosophical attention and the scientific investigation it deserves. The reason of this may be that in all Christian societies the passion under consideration has been condemned to pariahdom; consequently, philosophy and science have not deigned to make it the subject of special enquiry. Only one great race in past ages, the Greek race, to whom we owe the inheritance of our ideas, succeeded in raising it to the level of chivalrous enthusiasm. Nevertheless, we find it present everywhere and in all periods of history. We cannot take up the religious books, the legal codes, the annals, the descriptions of the manners of any nation, whether large or small, powerful or feeble, civilised or savage, without meeting with this passion in one form or other. Sometimes it assumes the calm and dignified attitude of conscious merit, as in Sparta, Athens, Thebes. Sometimes it skulks in holes and corners, hiding an abashed head and shrinking from the light of day, as in the capitals of modern Europe. It

confronts us on the steppes of Asia, where hordes of nomads drink the milk of mares; in the bivouac of Keltish warriors, lying wrapped in wolves' skins round their camp-fires; upon the sands of Arabia, where the Bedaween raise desert dust in flying squadrons. We discern it among the palm-groves of the South Sea Islands, in the card-houses and temple-gardens of Japan, under Esquimaux snow-huts, beneath the sultry vegetation of Peru, beside the streams of Shiraz and the waters of the Ganges, in the cold clear air of Scandinavian winters. It throbs in our huge cities. The pulse of it can be felt in London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, no less than in Constantinople, Naples, Teheran, and Moscow. It finds a home in Alpine valleys, Albanian ravines, Californian canyons, and gorges of Caucasian mountains. It once sat, clothed in Imperial purple, on the throne of the Roman Cæsars, crowned with the tiara on the chair of St. Peter. It has flaunted, emblazoned with the heraldries of France and England, in coronation ceremonies at Rheims and Westminster. The royal palaces of Madrid and Aranjuez tell their tales of it. So do the ruined courtyards of Granada and the castle-keep of Avignon. It shone with clear radiance in the gymnasium of Hellas, and nerved the dying heroes of Greek freedom for their last forlorn hope upon the plains of Chæronea. Endowed with inextinguishable life, in spite of all that has been done to suppress it, this passion survives at large in modern states and towns, penetrates society, makes itself felt in every quarter of the globe where men are brought into communion with men.

Yet no one dares to speak of it; or if they do, they