A Journal of an 1800s Farmer Shows the Truth of How Liberal Early Societies Were

A newly found journal from the 1800s contradicts previously thought tolerance towards homosexuality during the 19th century. The writer, Matthew Tomlinson, was a farmer from West Yorkshire in Northern England. In the farmer’s journal, Mr. Tomlinson is very blunt about his emotions towards homosexuality and is more liberal than previously expected for this time period.

Tomlinson writes about how a local naval surgeon was found doing homosexual acts, which for the 19th century was a serious punishment. In this time period, homosexuality was completely outlawed and resulted in capital punishment by the use of a noose. However, Tomlinson argued that homosexuality was something natural and punishing someone for being themselves is cruel. He doesn’t tread lightly either, Tomlinson even mentions the religious side of the argument. Tackling the religious side, Tomlinson mentions how it is innate for people to think the way that they do and if that way is wrong, then something is wrong with the almighty Creator. Tomlinson writes, “It must seem strange indeed that God Almighty should make a being with such a nature, or such a defect in nature; and at the same time make a decree that if that being whom he had formed, should at any time follow the dictates of that Nature, with which he was formed, he should be punished with death.”

This farmer from the 19th century has more liberal views than some countries in the 21st century. Homosexuality it still outlawed in tons of countries throughout the world still which is very odd.

His view on homosexuality opens up a new world for historians. This journal section was found on accident by a historian named Eamonn O’Keeffe. O’Keeffe finds it startling to discover this sort of view on same-sex relationships in Britain during King George III’s era. After finding Tomlinson’s diary, historians like O’Keeffe might begin understanding how far back people really understood same-sex relationships and how tolerant they really were. Maybe the people of countries like Britain or the United States of America were tolerant towards homosexuality, but it was political figures being a bad influence on its tolerance.

Currently, farmer Tomlinson’s diary is being held in Oxford University to be further analyzed and to possibly compare other journals from normal, everyday people of the 1800s in monolithic Britain.