

WAR

THE SEXUAL HISTORY OF THE WORLD WAR

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HOMOSEXUALITY AND TRANSVESTITISM

general it appears that the notions concerning the extent of homosexuality and pseudo-homosexuality (intercourse between men otherwise heterosexual and utilized simply as a substitute for normal sex intercourse) in the army and in the navy, were not a little exaggerated. At any rate the military authorities in those lands where the legal code recognized the concept of unnatural intercourse were considerably exercised by this problem. This was especially true among the Central Powers, whereas for the majority of the Allied nations the legal prosecution of homoerotic intercourse was unknown. The dark side of this picture as far as the Austrian army was concerned was shown to the world when the espionage activities of the Austrian commandant, Redl, were revealed. This Redl, who was constitutionally homosexual, was at the head of the secret service of the Danube monarchy; and he fell a victim to his homosexual love for the Russian military attaché at Vienna who utilized this fact by employing the infamous device of blackmail known to have been used against many homosexuals. In this way he compelled Redl to sell to the Russians the plan of the Austrian general staff. All this became known later and was held to be responsible—which was probably not true—for the defeat of the Austrian forces during the first months of their Russian campaign. When the Redl affair became a theme for public discussion, one portion of the press brought reports concerning the large dissemination of homosexuality in the K.u.K. army whose corps of officers felt it necessary to protest against what they regarded as an unjust generalization.

The corresponding conditions in the German army were treated by K. F. v. Leexow in his work on *Army and Homosexuality*. In the reports of the Committee referred to above there appears the following interesting statement of a lieutenant with homosexual tendencies:

"It is untrue that homosexuality is very widely spread in the army and navy. Just as in civil life, it constitutes a very small fraction but is sufficiently important not to be overlooked. Anyone who is blind to these facts in ordinary life will also be unable to see them in the military service. The situation is different, however, for the informed person. He will see urnings in every department of the service, among U-boat crews, fliers, the most feudal cavalry squadrons, the lowliest food transports, etc. I once saw a vigorous artillery man who didn't look to me at all like an urning, but after a short time I got two pictures of him, one dressed as a chauffeur in

THE SEXUAL HISTORY OF THE WORLD WAR

a military costume and beneath that a little inset showing him dressed in female garb. Whosoever lacks the capacity or knowledge for detecting what is typical to urnings will not see a homosexual even when he is sitting right next to him. That many people have gotten the impression that there were more homosexual officers than urning soldiers is simply due to the fact that as a result of his superior position the officer was more frequently involved in this type of affair than the common soldier. For my part I have seen as many homosexuals among the soldiers as among the officers. Among the noncommissioned officers there were fewer homosexuals and this class did not attract the urnings at all. The few homosexuals that I did meet in this group were former officers who, after having been discharged, had enlisted as common soldiers and gradually won promotion. I knew only one active homosexual sergeant."

Another soldier has asserted that on the basis of his experience in the garrison and elsewhere the extremely common notion that there were two homosexuals to every hundred men was an exaggeration. Of the one hundred and fifty men in his garrison there was not a single soldier who could be suspected of homosexuality—and these men were recruited from all walks of life. However, this man was ready to admit that his few observations were insignificant by the side of the thousands which Dr. Hirschfeld had investigated. What was more, this man was well aware how difficult it was to designate someone as a homosexual without having that person's own confirmation of his state.

At all events, the outbreak of the war produced the remarkable phenomenon that an unusual number of homosexuals streamed into the army and voluntarily joined the ranks. In this group there were a large number whom public opinion on the subject of homoerotic love in Germany and the fear of Paragraph 175 had driven from their fatherland before the war. Of the homosexuals who were members of the committee more than fifty per cent, constituting many hundreds of men, volunteered their services to the army; and of course there were thousands of homosexuals not members of the committee, who were also in this group. They lay in the trenches on the Western front, they fought under the triumphant ensign of Hindenburg and they risked their lives in the navy in the wars against the British empire. From every land they returned to Germany to take up the cause of their fatherland which had not understood their situation and had forced them to leave their native