

Reminiscences*

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Ladies and Gentlemen:

In my practice of geriatrics, it has been customary for me to advise my aging and old patients not to dwell too much on the past, but rather to cultivate the present and make plans for the future. On the other hand, I am by no means blind to the fact that memory can indeed be a precious and blessed gift of nature.

Therefore, I shall disobey my own prescription today and indulge in a few reminiscences, particularly those that have to do with personal contacts I have had with some famous sexologists of the past.

The first one I remember so readily, because he was a great influence in my life, and is probably more responsible than anyone else for my interest in sexology, was *August Forel*, neurologist and psychiatrist in Zurich, Switzerland.

During the first years of this century, he wrote "The Sexual Question," a fairly large volume, in which he treated subjects like premarital intercourse, homosexuality, prostitution, venereal disease, etc., with unaccustomed objectivity and refreshing common sense. At that time, it was a revolutionary book, although now, Forel's attitude would undoubtedly be considered a rather conventional and certainly a conservative one. But in 1906, the year of its first publication, it had a great impact, not only on me, but on my generation as well.

I made it a point to meet Forel when he gave one of his occasional lectures in Berlin, dealing with the life of the ant, a subject of particular interest to him. I had just finished school and introduced myself as a medical student. Forel gave me ten minutes of his time; however, he spoke with me less on the sexual question, but more on the necessity to abstain from alcoholic drinks. He was a convinced teetotaler.

There are probably few if any here in my age bracket, and therefore familiar with Forel's work. But I like to believe that even the younger ones may remember Forel's name with respect.

Soon afterward, while I was a young student at the Berlin Univer-

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sity in about 1906 or 1907, I met *Magnus Hirschfeld*. He needs no introduction as a sexologist and spokesman for the homosexual community.

I was introduced to Hirschfeld by a mutual friend, the then well-known Kriminal-Kommissar (chief inspector), Dr. Kopp, who was in charge of the section for sex offenses in the Berlin Police Department. Hirschfeld, as is well-known, was a homosexual himself. Kopp was not, but was a sympathetic and serious student of the homosexual and other sex problems. A couple of times, I was invited to accompany Hirschfeld and Kopp, who were good friends, on tours through a few gay bars in Berlin. The most famous was the Eldorado where mainly transvestites gathered, and female impersonators performed. Hirschfeld was well-known there and was referred to as "Tante Magnesia" (Aunt Magnesia).

Many years passed before I met Hirschfeld again. Fate had brought me to America in 1913. I came back to Berlin in 1921 as a visiting doctor from abroad and was well received at the Institute for Sex Research in Berlin, where I met several of Hirschfeld's assistants and collaborators, for instance Kronfeld, Abraham, Schapiro and others.

Every year during the 1920's, I went to Berlin and spent many hours at Hirschfeld's lectures at his Institute, and more than once did I take part in the guided tours through the Institute and its unique museum.

Hirschfeld was not a very attractive man. With his bushy walrus mustache, sloppy clothing and his immense stinginess, his personality detracted much from the admiration that his great accomplishments for the new science of sexology deserved. His courageous reform efforts, his frequent court appearances to testify for homosexuals and his many popular-scientific publications, books, and pamphlets, made him the outstanding sexologist of his day.

When Hirschfeld visited America in the fall of 1930, for which my wife and I were largely responsible, he spent many hours at our home. He tried to give a seminar at my New York office. It was a failure, largely because he insisted on speaking English. Once I told him: "Dr. Magnus, please speak German. At least some people will then understand you. If you speak English, nobody will." It did no good.

Before he left New York for his trip around the world, which he later described in a book, *"Men and Women. The World Journey*

of a Sexologist." I discovered his diabetes during a routine examination. It did not deter him from his travels. The last time I saw him was in Chicago where Dr. Max Thorek, the famous surgeon and founder of the International College of Surgeons, gave a most impressive dinner party in his honor.

Hirschfeld never returned to Germany after his world tour. The Nazis had come to power. Some of the prominent ones had been patients of Hirschfeld. That is why his records and books and his Institute were destroyed so promptly. Hirschfeld settled in the South of France where he died in 1935.

During the pre-Hitler period, Hirschfeld organized several Annual Sexological Congresses in Europe, every year in a different city. I myself spoke at two of them, in Berlin and in Vienna. At the latter city, I met the aged author of the famous *Anthropophytia*, a huge collection of sexological folklore, including graffiti, Dr. Friedrich Krauss, who had attended my lecture and briefly complimented me afterwards. I forgot what the lecture was about, but remember Krauss as a kind, old, somewhat bent man with a white beard.

Other sexological congresses were arranged in those years by one of Hirschfeld's bitter opponents, the well-known Berlin psychiatrist, Professor *Albert Moll*, author of several books, among them one on homosexuality. Another opponent and critic of Hirschfeld was the sexologist Dr. Siegfried Plazek who wrote several scholarly but highly conservative books and articles on sex-related topics. I met him years later, when he had emigrated to the United States and I remember some spirited arguments I had with him, dealing with homosexuality which he definitely condemned in its overt form.

Albert Moll was more of an academic scientist than Hirschfeld, somewhat of a stuffed shirt, the "German Professor" type, curt and rather opinionated. The "Moll Congresses" were considered the more scientific and the more conservative ones. I also spoke at two of them, in Berlin and in London, on geriatric and on potency problems. That was in the late 1920's.

On these occasions, I naturally met many sexological workers, for instance, the biologist Oscar Riddle, who later became my friend and patient; F. A. E. Crew, sex research scientist of Edinburgh University; Herbert Lewandowski, now in Switzerland, who wrote such fine books on the sex habits of ancient, foreign and far-away people. (I am still corresponding with him.) I also met some early psychoana-

lysts, for instance, *Alfred Adler*, whom I saw repeatedly later on in Vienna and also in New York. I remember Adler and his kindness toward me with gratitude and affection.

Highly important for my own medical career and practice was my contact with *Eugen Steinach*, Professor of Physiology and research biologist at the University of Vienna. I visited him the first time in 1921, became fascinated with his sex-changing experiments in guinea pigs through castration and gland transplantations, and especially his so-called rejuvenation attempts through vasoligation. I studied with him in Vienna nearly every summer until the late 1930's. My extensive correspondence with Steinach through many years was just described in an article by Dr. Ernest Harms, in the Bulletin of the N.Y. Academy of Medicine.

Steinach was a short man with an impressive head and an abundant reddish-gray beard. He was a brilliant scientist, but often a disagreeable person. He could be arrogant, touchy, mildly paranoid, but at other times, a wonderful friend, host and teacher, always full of ingenious ideas for research in sexology.

When the Nazis took over Austria in 1938, Steinach, who was half Jewish, and his wife, who was non-Jewish, happened to be in Switzerland. They never returned to their home in Vienna. His wife, later committed suicide. Steinach himself nourished the hope of continuing research in the U.S. Many efforts to bring him here failed. He died a somewhat disillusioned man in 1944 at the age of 84. I myself never saw him in this latest period of his life, but my wife visited him in Zurich in 1939. He impressed her as frustrated, but reconciled, a gracious host and loyal friend.

Although Steinach was strictly a biologist and critical of the new psychoanalytic area in medicine, he was on good enough terms with *Sigmund Freud* to make an appointment for me to meet Freud.

It was an unforgettable hour that I spent with him at his home and office in the Berggasse in Vienna.

After waiting a few minutes in his private consultation room, studying the many small symbolic figures on his desk, Freud suddenly appeared from a hidden side door, a bearded, serious-looking, middle-aged man. The reception was friendly but not overly cordial. There was a polite reserve. We soon discussed the body-mind relationship. Freud rarely smiled, but did give a somewhat abbreviated laugh, when the wisecrack occurred to me that the disharmony of the emo-

tions may well be caused by a *disharmony* of the endocrines. He agreed and then asked me whether I myself had ever been analyzed. I told him that only a very short attempt had been made by Kronfeld in Berlin. "But that man," Freud said angrily, "has a very bad character."

Later on, Freud spoke again of Steinach, fully recognizing the great value of his biological experiments. He told me that he himself had undergone a so-called "Steinach operation," a vasoligation (for the purpose of reactivation), performed by Professor Blum, the chief-urologist at the University, and that he was very satisfied with the result. His general health and vitality had improved and he also thought that the malignant growth of his jaw had been favorably influenced. "Don't talk about it as long as I am alive," he said to me on parting. I told him I would not and I kept my promise.

At one of the aforementioned Annual Congresses, I met the brilliant and courageous London sexologist and gynecologist, *Norman Haire*, founder and editor of the *Journal of Sex Education*. We became personal friends and met repeatedly in London and in New York. On his 60th birthday, Haire happened to be in New York, in 1952, and a gathering in his honor took place at my office. Among the guests was the late Hugo Gernsback, founder and editor of *Sexology Magazine*, and also the recognized "father of science fiction."

Present among others were many people well known to you: Albert Ellis, Vivien and Henry Guze, Ruth Doorbar, Robert Sherwin, Ed Sagarin, Eilhard von Domarus, Abraham Wolbarst, the New York urologist, and many more.

Haire, a tall, heavy man, suffered from a chronic heart ailment. While still in New York, he had to be hospitalized. At that time, *Alfred Kinsey* came to New York. They were anxious to meet one another and one afternoon, I took Kinsey up to the Fifth Avenue hospital where we spent a stimulating half hour *a trois*. A longer visit was not allowed. Haire left the U.S. shortly afterward. My wife and I saw him off on the boat to England. He died a few months later in London.

One of the greatest and most cherished experiences in my life was the afternoon I spent with *Havelock Ellis* in his home near London in 1937.

We had had correspondence on various subjects before and, although Ellis was beginning to fail in health, he invited me to come

and see him when I was in London for one of the aforementioned Congresses.

There was something saint-like about Ellis. A rather beautiful-looking, slender man who reminded me somewhat of Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian Poet (whom, by the way, I had met the previous year in Steinach's office in Vienna, when he was a patient there). The most striking feature I recall about Ellis was his high-pitched voice, and his engaging, cordial, typically British manner.

We talked on many sexological subjects. At one point, he showed me some newspaper clippings that someone had just sent him from New York. They reported the police raids on burlesque houses and their closing by Mayor LaGuardia. "How stupid can they get," Ellis exclaimed, "to close up a perfectly good safety valve. Unbelievable!"

After an hour or so of a charming visit, with the serving of tea that Ellis himself prepared, I said, "Well, Dr. Ellis, I guess I'd better be going now." "No," he said, "please stay a while; we may not meet again." He died a couple of years later, and the last mental picture I have of him is his standing at the garden door of his house waving goodbye to me, as I walked down the street, toward the underground station.

Among those I have met, there have been some whom I might call "peripheral sexologists," with professions other than medicine or psychology, but to whom, nevertheless, sexology owes a debt of gratitude. Thus I recall Eduard Fuchs, who wrote those many incomparable sets of books on the history of mores, art and literature in "Erotik", etc. Fuchs was a tall, distinguished-looking man. I visited him in his home in a suburb of Berlin. That was truly a museum and the majority of the illustrations in his books came from his own collections.

Then I recall my talk with *Margaret Sanger*. She needs no identification, I assume. She wanted to know whether endocrinology had anything to offer with regard to the prevention of pregnancy. She visualized something like the "Pill."

A dear personal friend was Judge *Ben Lindsey*. Together with Wainwright Evans, he wrote the "Companionate Marriage," just forty years ago, quite a daring book at that time.

The Judge was a short-, round-headed man with astonishing courage and an obstinate fighter for his convictions. One Saturday night in 1929, I had dinner with him at the Algonquin Hotel, here in New

York. Bishop Manning of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine had announced that he would take issue with Lindsey's book in his next Sunday's sermon. "I am going there tomorrow," said the Judge to me, "and if the Bishop criticizes only my book, I won't say a word; but if he attacks me personally, I shall answer right back."

My warning that such a step might be risky fell on deaf ears. I was not at the Cathedral that Sunday morning, but the papers next day were full of what had happened.

In his attack on Lindsey's book, Bishop Manning was somewhat careless with his facts; he referred to the Judge as "that divorced man." Actually, Lindsey was happily married and was never divorced. When Lindsey heard that, he jumped up from a front seat and, with outstretched hand pointing toward the pulpit, shouted: "Even if you are a bishop, you cannot lie about me!" Pandemonium followed and Lindsey was, as he later said, "rescued from the wrath of Christian worshippers to the safety of a New York police station."

I was with the Judge at a trial a few days later in a police court, and the presiding magistrate had to find Lindsey guilty of disturbing a church service, but suspended sentence. While serving as a Superior Court Judge in California, Lindsey died in Los Angeles in 1943.

I trust I have indulged myself enough in reminiscences and in name-dropping. My apologies to those other sexologists, living or dead, whom I met here and abroad, and whom I had no chance to speak of on this occasion, or mention only briefly. This goes especially for Alfred Kinsey, whom I counted among my close friends, and whom I had originally met through Dr. Robert L. Dickinson. Dickinson brought him to my office one day and said "I think you two ought to meet." Others are certainly more competent to speak of Kinsey and his accomplishments than I am. Kinsey and his co-workers left a mark for the science of sexology easily as decisive as Hirschfeld or Havelock Ellis, or Krafft-Ebing. A Kinsey biography is overdue. This is supposed to be a kind of "commercial." Let me close with it as a suggestion for a prospective biographer and a publisher.