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Strong antimilitaristic feelings manifested themselves in Max Ophuls' delightful *LIEBELEI*, a Viennese film drawn from the famous Schnitzler play of that title, which had been several times transferred to the screen. This last version was released in Berlin as late as March 16, 1933. It contrasts in a very touching way the tenderness of a love story with the severity of the military code of honor. A young lieutenant in love with a sweet Viennese girl is called to account by a baron who believes him to be the lover of the baroness. In reality, the lieutenant has broken off this liaison some time before. Nevertheless the code requires a duel. The lieutenant is killed in it and his girl throws herself out of the window in a fit of despair.

In rendering this terrible triumph of conventional prejudices, the film persistently points at their obsolescence and moral inadequacy. When the lieutenant's friend, himself an officer, refuses to second in a duel provoked by a dead affair, his colonel tells him bluntly that he will have to leave the army; whereupon the officer expresses his readiness to start a new life on a Brazilian coffee plantation. The significance of this showdown is enhanced by the splendor of the love episodes proper. They glow with genuine emotion. In the middle of the film, the lieutenant and the girl drive in a horse-drawn sled through snowy woods, each assuring the other: "I swear that I love you." At the end, after the girl has committed suicide, their love survives in an epilogue formed by two shots: the first pans through the girl's familiar room, while her voice whispers: "I swear . . ."; the second, evoking the image of the snowy woods, is accompanied by the words: ". . . that I love you." The code of honor appears the more odious as it is instrumental in destroying a love of such intensity.

Considering the implications of *LIEBELEI*, its release at the hour of Hitler's ultimate triumph may seem to have been ill-timed. But the public enjoyed the film solely as a love story bathed in the enchanting atmosphere of Imperial Vienna, which would have been unimaginable without its lieutenants. From this angle, the duel was nothing but a remote event designed to add the touch of tragedy which many Germans consider an infallible sign of emotional depth.

⁹ Cf. p. 211.