

A BATTLE-FIELD RELIC.

Last year, when I was military attaché to the French legation at Berlin, I received one day the following invitation:

Baron von Mendorf, major commandant of the 4th squadron of the Prussian Uhlans, together with his officers, requests the company of the captain of staff, military attaché of the ambassador of France, at their dinner on Monday, April 15, 3 p. m., Avenue Prince Charles.

Since my arrival in Berlin I had met Mendorf several times at the chancellery parties. At the card-table we had exchanged a few glances, at the buffet a few polite words, we had shaken hands in the vestibule, and left our cards at each other's residence. Consequently I was not surprised to receive the above invitation. On the day and hour mentioned I ascended the handsomely decorated staircase which leads to the club room of the guard. In the reception hall I met the officers according to their rank—the captains with their con- quering moustaches, the lieutenants with their feathered caps, and the cadets with their beaming, boyish faces. After I had been presented I bowed to and shook hands with every one, observing strictly the regulations concerning rank.

The oldest captain remarked that it was a very hot day, the oldest lieutenant expressed the hope that it would be less warm the next day, and the oldest cadet remarked that both opinions were perfectly correct. Then the chief waiter announced that the dinner was ready, and the guests entering the dining-room a certain anxiety seemed to seize the major, but he quickly pressed it, and led me around the table, drawing my attention to a magnificent ornamental piece of silver standing in the centre of it.

"You see," he said quickly, almost volubly, "this is a present from his Apostolic Majesty the emperor of Austria and king of Hungary, who is the honorary commander-in-chief of the Uhlans of the Prussian guard. The finish of those fat-headed cupids and the richness of the garlands certainly ought to attract the attention of such an amateur as you are."

I followed the advice of my courteous and examined closely the details of the masterpiece, being a little astonished to discover in the major the facilities of an art critic.

When we had reached the chair of the presiding officer the major seemed to breathe more easily.

"Please take this seat to my right," he said to me. According to our rules of etiquette you are to be seated opposite me; but there you would be exposed to a continual disagreeable draft, and I think you will feel more comfortable here. I thought him for his courteous attention, contemplating the while a painting which smiled in its frame above the officers' heads. It represented a Silesian girl preparing dinner.

Every man emptied silently his glass of sherry, and attacked his course of entree with his vulgar foam and the sparkling champagne, e were superseded by the ruby-colored, velvety, generous Chateau Margaux. The major, who had been the magic power of dispelling the icy reserve which generally reigns at the beginning of all ceremonial dinners. And so the Uhlans soon began to tell their stories of love and victory.

Every man pretended that he had conquered the heart of a Danish maiden during the war in Schleswig; everyone felt assured that he had accomplished some prodigious feat while fighting in Bohemia. An over- excited cadet affirmed solemnly that the dulcinea of his neighbor at the table was just as pretty as his own lady friend. Also the major pretended to be seated opposite me, but he was really seated next to me.

"The major," Oh, he is far from here! He has been reprimanded. The officers say that he has taken something from their dining-room—a picture, I believe. But I can swear to it, captain, that no picture whatever has entered the major's house. They accuse him falsely. Ah, no, sir! The major is the most honest man in the world."

Two months later I was in France on leave of absence. I hastened home to see my dear old mother. She was awaiting me, standing the balcony and with her arms crossed, could see that her venerable head was snowing, and she was yet in mourning, though her face was calm. I had not seen her since my brother's death. As soon as we met she fell in my arms and said several times, with tears in her eyes:

"Thank you, my poor boy, for your brother's sake."

I was on the point of asking her what she meant, when she took my arm and led me into the village cemetery. There, upon the tomb of my brother Louis, I saw, to my amazement, the bullet-pierced guide-board I had seen in Berlin, with the momentous name "Bazilles." A more eloquent epitaph could surely not have been found.

With heavy heart I read the inscription. Von Mendorf, but my letter remained unanswered. After my return to Berlin I hurried to his residence, but I found there only his servant, busily packing his master's trunks. In answer to my question as to where the major was, he said:

"The major," Oh, he is far from here! He has been reprimanded. The officers say that he has taken something from their dining-room—a picture, I believe. But I can swear to it, captain, that no picture whatever has entered the major's house. They accuse him falsely. Ah, no, sir! The major is the most honest man in the world."

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