

## A Thrilling Story.

Here is something I heard related this week in a Montmartre tavern. To repeat it to you with proper effect I ought to have the Faubourg vocabulary of Maitre Belisaire, his huge ebullient apron and two or three glasses of that excellent Montmartre white wine, capable of giving the Paris accent even to a native of Marseilles. I should then be certain to send through your veins the shiver I felt on hearing Belisaire relate at a table surrounded by his comrades this lugubrious and truthful story:

"It was the day after the amnesty (Belisaire meant to say the armistice). My wife had sent us both, myself and child, to take a turn in the direction of Villeneuve-la-Garenne to see what had become of a little barrack we owned down there at the water's edge and concerning which we had heard nothing since the siege. It vexed me to take the boy along. I knew that we were going to find ourselves among the Prussians and as I had never yet seen any of them face to face I was afraid I might have words with them. But the lad's mother stuck to her notion. 'Get along with you! Get along with you!' said she. 'It will give the child a chance to take the air.'"

"The fact is that he needed the air, the poor little fellow, after his six months' experience of the siege of dampness."

"Well, we both started out across the fields. I don't know whether the boy was pleased to see that there were still trees and birds or whether he played among the cultivated lands. As for me, I did not go there with such good will: there were too many pointed helmets upon the roads. From the canal to the isle helmets only were met with. It was as much as a man could do to keep from striking them! But when I felt most enraged was as I entered Villeneuve, where I saw our poor gardens all in confusion, the houses opened, sacked, and all those Prussians installed in our homes, calling to each other from window to window and drying their knit woolen jackets upon our Venetian blinds, upon our arbores. Fortunately it was that the child was walking beside me, for every time my hand itched to give a blow I thought to myself as I glanced at him: 'Go slow there, Belisaire! Take care that no harm comes to the youngster!' That alone prevented me from making a fool of myself. Then I understood why it was that my wife had insisted on my bringing him with me."

"The barrack was at the end of the village, the last house at the right-hand side upon the quay. I found it emptied from top to bottom like the rest. Not an article of furniture, not a pane of glass, nothing but a few bundles of straw and the last remaining foot of my great arm-chair, that was smoldering in the fire-place. Everything everywhere suggested the Prussians, but not one of them could I see anywhere. However, it seemed to me that something was moving down in the cellar. I had a little work-bench there at which I amused myself with making gimcracks on Sunday. I told the child to wait for me and went down to see what was going on."

"No sooner had I opened the door than a tall drunkard of a soldier of William arose from a pile of shavings and came toward me, his eyes bulging out of his head, with a storm of words I could not understand. He must have awakened very wicked, for at the first word I strove to speak to him he began to draw his sabre."

"Instantly my blood was up. All the anger I had been gathering for an hour past leaped into my face. I tore the holdfast from the work-bench and struck. You know, comrades, whether Belisaire had a strong wrist at ordinary times; but that day it appeared that I had God's thunder at the end of my arm. At the first blow my Prussian dropped and displayed his full length. I believed him merely stunned. Ah! well, yes! Sweep away the useless rubbish! Clean up the place with potash!"

"To me, who had never killed anything in my life, not even a lark, it brought an exceedingly strange sensation to see this great body lying before me. A handsome, flaxen-haired fellow, ma foi, with a little downy beard that curled like ash-shavings. I made my legs tremble beneath me to look at him. During this time the lad grew tired of waiting and I heard him shouting with all his might at the top of the stairs, 'Papa! Papa!'"

"Some Prussians were passing along the road. I saw their sabres and their long legs through the cellar window. Suddenly this idea occurred to me: 'If they enter the child is lost. They will kill us both.' That put an end to my agitation. I trembled no longer. I quickly thrust the Prussian under the work-bench. I piled on him

on all the boards, shavings and sawdust I could find. Then I hastened up the stairs to the impatient lad."

"Here I am," I said.  
"What's the matter, papa? How pale you look!" cried he.

"Come away! come away!" said I.

"And I assure you that the Uhlaans might have overthrown me or eyed me with contempt and I would not have protested. It constantly seemed to me that they were running and shouting behind us. Once I heard a horse approaching at a rapid gallop; I thought that I would sink to the ground from sheer fright. However, after passing the bridges I began to feel like myself again. St. Denis was full of people. There was no danger of our being caught among the crowd. Then only I thought of our poor barrack. The Prussians, to obtain their revenge, would be equal to setting it on fire when they found their comrade's corpse, without counting that my neighbor, Jacquot, the fishery guard, was the only Frenchman in the vicinity, and that the killing of the soldier so near his house might get him into trouble. Really, it was not very plucky to run away in this manner!"

"I should, at least, have so arranged it as to have caused the disappearance of the body. The nearer we got to Paris the more this idea tormented me. I could not help it—it worried me to leave that Prussian in my cellar. At the ramparts I could contain myself no longer."

"Go on ahead," I said to the lad. 'I have a customer to see at Saint-Denis.'"

"Thereupon I kissed him and turned about. My heart thumped a little, you may well believe; but that didn't matter—I felt greatly relieved at no longer having the child with me."

"When I re-entered Villeneuve night was beginning to set in. I kept my eyes wide open, you may be sure, and stealthily advanced step by step. However, the village appeared quiet enough. I saw the barrack still in its place, down there by the water, in the mist. At the edge of the quay stood a long palisade—the Prussians going through roll-call. Good occasion to find the house empty. As I glided along the fences I caught sight of Pere Jacquot spreading his sweep-nets in his court-yard. Decidedly nothing had yet been discovered. I entered our barrack. I went down into the cellar and felt around. The Prussian was still under his shavings; there were even two huge rats in the act of gnawing his helmet, and it gave me a sudden, terrible fright to feel the chin-cloth move beneath my hand. For a moment I thought the dead man was about to revive. But, no! His head was heavy and cold. I squatted down in a corner and waited: my idea was to throw the corpse into the Seine when the other Prussians had gone to bed."

"I don't know whether being so near death had anything to do with it, but the tattoo of the Prussians seemed fearfully sad to me that evening. Great trumpet blasts sounded three by three. Ta! ta! ta! It was like the croaking of frogs. Our soldiers would not like to go to bed to such music."

"For five minutes I heard sabres dragging along the ground and the sound of knocking at doors; then some soldiers entered my courtyard and began to call out: 'Hoffmann! Hoffmann!'"

"Poor Hoffmann was lying very tranquilly under my shavings. But I felt as if my hair would turn gray. Every instant I expected to see them come down into the cellar. I had picked up the dead man's sabre, and I sat there motionless, saying within myself: 'If you get out of this with a whole skin, old man, you will owe a famous wax-candle to Saint Jean-Baptiste de Belleville.'"

"Well, when they had called Hoffmann until they were tired my tenants decided to go up-stairs to bed. I heard their heavy boots on the stairway, and, at the expiration of a moment the whole barrack was snoring like a country clock. That was the departure signal I had been waiting for."

"The shore was deserted and all the houses were shrouded in darkness. Just the thing. I hurriedly returned to the cellar. I pulled Hoffmann from under the work-bench: I stood him on his feet and hoisted him upon my back like a porter's package. How heavy he was! Add to that my fear and that I had been fasting since morning. I thought I never would have the strength to get to the river. Then, in the middle of the quay, I imagined somebody was walking behind me. I turned round. Nobody. It was the moon that was rising. I said to myself: 'Look out; at any moment the sentinels may fire!'"

"To make matters worse the Seine was low. If I threw the Prussian in the river near the shore he would remain there as if in

a shallow ditch. I entered the stream: I advanced. Still too little water. I could go no further; my joints were weakening. At last, when I believed myself far enough in I dropped my load. "Off with you!" I cried. The Prussian stuck in the mud. No way of making him budge. I pushed. 'Get along now!' By good luck there came a puff of wind from the east. The Seine swelled and I felt the dead man drift slowly away 'A safe journey to you!' I cried. I swallowed a potful of water and hastily got back to the shore."

"As I was crossing the bridge of Villeneuve on my return I saw something black in the middle of the Seine. From a distance it looked like a wherry. It was the Prussian who was floating down the river in the direction of Argenteuil drawn along by the current."

## Betrayed His Best Friend.

The recent murder of M. Balitschiff, the Bulgarian Finance minister, cannot be charged to the Nihilist, although the Czar's Government sent a note to Sofia lately complaining that Muscovite Nihilists were harbored in Bulgaria. The names of thirteen Nihilists were given in the note and their extradition was requested. The Cabinet of Prince Ferdinand answered that the alleged Nihilists were pursuing peaceful avocations, while well-known Bulgarian conspirators were living in Russia under the patronage of the St. Petersburg Government. If it proves true as already reported, that the murder of Balitschiff was committed by Bendereff, an exiled Bulgarian conspirator against Prince Battenberg, that fact would more than support the diplomatic answer of the Sofia Cabinet. At any rate the Balitschiff murder has recalled to mind another dispatch, which stated about twelve years ago that the most famous of Nihilists, Degaieff, had been finally discovered and arrested at Kostroma, Russia. Later on it was stated that there was no foundation for the report. Many European papers have published sketches of the career of the celebrated Nihilist, the most complete and correct one appearing in the Paris "Figaro," from the pen of M. Victor Yoza, who was residing at St. Petersburg in 1883 at the time of the assassination of Colonel Soudeikine, the chief of the secret police.

About 1850, according to, "Figaro," young Degaieff was a captain in the Russian Imperial Guard. He associated with the Nihilists, and one day he found himself at the head of a plot. The conspiracy was detected and Degaieff was sentenced to death. Feeling that he was lost and entertaining not the least hope he waited patiently for death in his cell, reading books and smoking cigarettes. One night the cell door was suddenly opened. "Those are the executioners," thought the sentenced man. But it was the chief of the secret police of St. Petersburg, the colonel of the gendarmes, Soudeikine, a former mate of Degaieff in the Guards.

"Good morning, Degaieff," said Soudeikine.

"What do you want from me? It is the last interrogatory, is it not?" replied Degaieff.

"No, Degaieff," answered Soudeikine. "You are mistaken. It is the Emperor's pardon that I bring you."

These simple words produced a magical effect upon the young prisoner. Shaken by his sudden emotion he could hardly pronounce the words: "What do you ask from me in exchange?"

"Nothing, absolutely nothing—at least for the moment. You are free. Let us go out; we'll have a talk at my house."

When once in his library Soudeikine said to Degaieff: "Do you remember our friendship? It is that which has saved you. I personally asked the Emperor for your pardon. I swore to him that you would not begin again. You know that the Czar honors me with his friendship; he could not refuse to me the head of a friend which the law claimed for the gallows."

Degaieff was overcome. He fell upon the neck of Soudeikine and kissed him. He became Soudeikine's secretary and in a short time was the terror of his former brethren. Through him some twenty Nihilists were sent to the scaffold and hundreds into Siberian exile. One day, however, Degaieff was bitten by remorse. Knowing the address of a celebrated Nihilist whom he had not yet delivered up to the police, he called on him, threw himself at his feet and asked him what he could do in order to obtain the forgiveness of the Nihilists and re-enter their ranks. "Kill Soudeikine," was the answer. Degaieff asked to be given one day to think the matter over. He returned on the next day and swore that Soudeikine would be removed in a month. The Nihilists were anxious to have Soudeikine out of the way. Enjoying

all the confidence of the Emperor, he belonged nominally only to the Third Section. He had his own personal police, which had nothing in common with the official police. He paid his men out of funds left at his disposal in the Bank of the Empire. He spent for the service tens of thousands of roubles every month, but he lived with his family in a very modest manner in one of the poor wards of the capital. Never wearing his uniform, but always in disguise, he had in town several lodgings where he had conferences with his agents. These agents belonged to every class in society and few knew each other. The lodging in which he daily met Degaieff was situated in a popular quarter on the third floor of an old house, mainly inhabited by small bourgeois and trade employees. The tenants of the house, and even the janitor did not suspect that the gentleman on the third floor was Colonel Soudeikine. It was in this house that Degaieff murdered him. Two Nihilists, appointed by the committee, rented an apartment on the third floor of the adjoining house. They pierced a hole almost through the wall wide enough for the passage of a man's body, and at a signal from Degaieff they broke through with one blow and entered Soudeikine's lodging. They found him, struck with a poniard from behind, and lying on the floor in a pool of blood. As he was still breathing: they finished him with their hammers. Then with Degaieff, they returned to their rooms. Half an hour later the murderer was in the street, so well disguised that he was not recognized even by the three police agents who kept pacing up and down until morning, waiting for any order that might be sent by their chief, Soudeikine. These agents did not dare to knock at the door during the night, but they at last reported to the police Commissary, and when an investigation was made the awful deed was discovered. Meanwhile Degaieff had proceeded to the Nihilist Committee which secured his easy escape. In the two following months Degaieff, photographs were sent broadcast, and 10,000 roubles were vainly promised for his capture alive, and 5,000 for his dead body.

The favourable reports of the quality of Tonkin coal appear to be fully confirmed. It is now stated that the product of the last mine developed in Haiphong proves to be excellent. A well-known firm employing twenty-two steamers are taking the whole supply from it, which, although surface coal only, is so good that it is being used in their vessels unmixed, and is considered almost as satisfactory as that coming from the best Japanese mines which have been worked for years. The Tonkin fuel is said to have one very valuable advantage over that from Japan, in that it burns without smoke, thereby showing that the combustion is all that can be desired. It seems likely that its cheapness will lead to its being extensively used in Hong Kong, which has now extensive industries, and as many as twelve million tons of shipping calling annually at the port.

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