

THE DUEL

BY ALICE POSENER.

We were stationed at the small city of Kichinev. Every one knows the life of an officer of the line. Theory and drill in the morning; dinner at the quarters of the commandant or at a Jewish inn; punch and cards in the evening. Not a house in Kichinev was open to us. We held our social gatherings at one another's quarters, where we saw nothing except uniforms.

There was one civilian among us. He was but 35 years old and we all accorded him the respect due to his age. His experience gave him a great advantage over us; moreover, his stern, gloomy disposition and his caustic mode of expression made a lively impression on our young minds. A mystery enveloped his life; he seemed to be a Russian, but his name was foreign. He had formerly served in the Hussars, but without honor; no one knew what had induced him to resign and come to reside in this little city where he led a life which was at the same time frugal and extravagant. He always went about on foot, wearing a threadbare black coat, but his table was open to all the officers of our regiment. The dinners consisted of a few dishes prepared by a retired soldier, but champagne flowed like a river. No one knew the amount of his income and no one dared ask him.

His chief exercise was shooting; the walls of his room were fairly honeycombed with bullet holes. A valuable collection of pistols constituted the sole luxury of the shabby masanka in which he lived. He had acquired marvelous skill: if he proposed to shoot the pompon from any of our kepis, not one of us would have hesitated to offer his head.

Our conversation frequently turned on the subject of duelling. Sylvie (the name by which I shall call him) never took part in it on these occasions. When asked whether he had ever engaged in a duel, he replied that he had, without entering into any details; it was evident that such questions were disagreeable to him. We all fancied that he had on his conscience the remembrance of his deadly skill.

One day about a dozen officers of our regiment dined with Sylvie. We drank heavily, as usual. After dinner we asked our host to be our banker at play. At first he refused, having never gambled. Finally, he took the cards, threw down fifty ducats on the table and sat down to hold the stakes.

We gathered around him, and soon the sport became animated. During the game Sylvie preserved an absolute silence, not making the slightest observation. We at once noticed this and allowed him to proceed in his own fashion. Among us was an officer who had recently been transferred to Kichinev. In the course of the game he carelessly folded over one corner more than he had intended. Sylvie took the chalk, and, as usual, marked down a sum indicated by the number of corners bent over. Thinking the banker was mistaken, the officer began making explanations. Sylvie made no reply. Losing his temper, the man took the brush and effaced the figure he considered wrong. Sylvie at once replaced it. Excited by wine, play and the smiles of his comrades the officer saw in this a deadly insult. Seizing a copper candlestick which stood on the table, he threw it at Sylvie, who barely succeeded in dodging it.

We were all dumb with amazement. Sylvie rose, pale with fury, his eyes shining, and said to the offender: "Leave at once, sir, and thank heaven that this has happened in my house."

We had not the least doubt as to what the consequence of the affair would be; we all considered our new comrade a dead man. The officer left, declaring his readiness to give satisfaction to the banker. The game continued for a time; but we felt that our host had lost his interest. We soon took our leave and separated after exchanging a few remarks.

The next day at drill, we were wondering whether the lieutenant was still alive when he appeared in our midst. We all asked him the same question: he replied that he had heard nothing from Sylvie.

We said to one another in astonishment: "Can it be possible that Sylvie does not intend to fight?"

He did not fight; he contented himself with a brief explanation instead. This affair lowered him greatly in our estimation. A lack of courage is the last thing young men care to consider; as things are to considering bravery the chief quality a man can possess, one that excuses him for all other faults. By degrees, however, everything was forgotten, and Sylvie regained his former prestige.

But after that unfortunate evening, the idea that his honor had been stained and had not been cleansed haunted me and prevented me from treating him with my former cordiality. He was too shrewd and experienced not to notice this and divine its cause. He seemed pained, and I noticed that on several occasions he tried to converse with me; I always went away, and thus avoided any explanation.

Inhabitants of large towns have no idea of many sensations which are familiar to those who live in villages, such as waiting for the mail, for instance. Tuesday and Friday,

the office of the regiment was filled with men; some were waiting for money, others for letters and papers. Generally these were opened at once and their contents communicated to the rest. Sylvie had his letters addressed to our regiment and came regularly for his mail. One day he was handed a letter, whose seal he broke with marked indifference. I was watching him, and, as he ran through the contents, his eyes fairly blazed. After he had finished, he turned to us and said: "Gentlemen, I am compelled by circumstances to take a long journey. I must leave to-night, and I hope you will not refuse to dine with me for the last time. I shall expect you, too," he said, turning to me, "do not fail to come."

I reached the house that evening at the appointed hour and found all the other officers already present. His trunks were all packed; and nothing was to be seen on the bare walls except bullet holes. We sat down at the table. Our host was in the gayest of humors, and soon every one was in mirthful mood. I was about to take my leave after the others, Sylvie seized my hand and said gently: "I want to speak with you alone."

I remained. We sat down and silently lighted our pipes. He was in a serious mood, no trace of his former gaiety being visible. His pale face and blazing eyes, seen through the dense smoke, made him appear like a veritable demon.

After a few moments had passed he broke the silence.

"It is quite possible that we shall never see each other again," he said; "before leaving you I should like to explain some things to you. You have doubtless noticed how little I care for the opinions of others; with me it is different. I like you, and it would be painful to me to leave unjust prejudices in your mind."

He paused and occupied himself with pipe. I sat looking down on the floor.

"You thought it strange that I did not demand satisfaction of that drunken officer. You know that, having the choice of arms, I should hold his life in my hands, while mine would not be endangered. I might claim honor for my moderation and my magnanimity, but I do not wish to lie. If I could have punished him without exposing my own life, I should have forgiven him."

I looked at him in amazement; such a confession overwhelmed me. He continued:

"To tell the truth, I have not the right to expose myself to death. Six years ago I was struck in the face and my enemy is still alive."

My curiosity was now keenly excited. "So you did not fight. Circumstances doubtless separated you."

"We fought, and here is the souvenir of the duel."

He rose, and opening a box took from it a red hat with glittering trimmings. He put it on and I could see that it was pierced with a hole just above the rim.

"You know I once served in a Hussar regiment. My disposition is also well known to you. I am accustomed to leading; in my younger days, my folded over one corner more than he had intended. Sylvie took the chalk, and, as usual, marked down a sum indicated by the number of corners bent over. Thinking the banker was mistaken, the officer began making explanations. Sylvie made no reply. Losing his temper, the man took the brush and effaced the figure he considered wrong. Sylvie at once replaced it. Excited by wine, play and the smiles of his comrades the officer saw in this a deadly insult. Seizing a copper candlestick which stood on the table, he threw it at Sylvie, who barely succeeded in dodging it."

"I was peacefully enjoying my fame, when a young man of rich and noble family entered our regiment. Never in my life had I seen such aggressive happiness. My supremacy was in great danger. Dazzled by his splendor, he tried to win my friendship; I received him coldly and he left me in anger. I now began to hate him. His success in the regiment and among women planged me in despair. I tried to quarrel with him; he met my epigrams with more cutting ones in the style of jests, refusing to take me seriously. One night at a ball given by a Polish farmer, beside myself at seeing him the object of the attention of the ladies, especially of the mistress of the house, whom I fancied, I whispered a coarse remark in his ear. He turned around and slapped me on the cheek. We drew our swords; the women fainting, we were separated, but that very night we met in a duel."

"It was barely daylight; I was on the spot designated early with my three seconds, waiting for my adversary with an impetuous impatience."

"Finally I saw him approaching, accompanied by a single man. He came forward slowly, holding his hat, which was full of wild cherries. The seconds measured off twelve feet. I was to fire first; I trembled so in my anger that I doubted the steadiness of my hand; to gain time to collect myself, I offered him my turn. He refused to take it, and we finally decided to settle it by lot. Fate was on the side of this favorite of happiness. He fired, and the bullet passed through my hat."

"It was now my turn. His life was at last in my hands. I looked at him searchingly, trying to discover a trace of fear in his countenance. But he stood there at the very mouth of my revolver, selecting ripe cherries and spitting out the pits, which flew up to my very feet."

"What is the use," I thought, "of taking his life, when he values it so lightly?"

"An evil thought passed through my brain. I lowered my revolver."

"This is not the time to kill you," I said. "You seem anxious to eat your breakfast and I do not care to prevent you from doing so."

"You are not preventing me from eating," he replied, "but do not leave me at your service at any time."

I told my seconds that I did not intend to fire that day, and the affair ended. I resigned soon after and came here to live. Since then no day has passed without thinking of my vengeance. To-day, my time has come."

He took a letter from his pocket and handed it to me to read. Some one, his business agent, doubtless, wrote to him from Moscow that the person in question was about to marry a beautiful young woman.

"You can guess," said Sylvie, "who the person in question is. I am going to Moscow. We will see whether the eye of his marriage will fall before, with his cherries."

At these words Sylvie threw the hat down on the floor and began packing up and down the room like a caged tiger. I sat motionless. Strange and contradictory emotions filled my breast.

A servant soon appeared and announced that the horses were ready. Sylvie pressed my hand and we said each other farewell.

II.

Several years passed away. Family affairs compelled me to settle down in the small hamlet of the district of N—. Here I constantly regretted my former life, which had been so exciting and so easy. The long evenings of winter and spring weighed upon me especially. I did not know what to do with myself. The few books found in the closets and the garret were soon learned by heart. All the stories my housekeeper could remember had been told over and over.

Four miles from my habitation was a valuable estate, belonging to the Countess B—. Her overlord lived on it alone; she had been there but once for a month, soon after her marriage. The second year of my hermit life the rumor spread that the countess was coming with her husband to spend the summer. They arrived in June.

The advent of important neighbors is quite an event in the rural neighborhood. It is talked of for months before and for years afterwards. As for myself, I will confess that the coming of a young and beautiful woman interested me greatly; I was anxious to see her; the first Sunday after their arrival, I went to call on their highnesses at their nearest neighbor and most humble servant.

A lackey ushered me into the countess's study, then went to announce me. The spacious apartment was luxuriously furnished; unaccustomed as I had been for a long time to the sight of anything like luxury, I lost my courage and tremblingly awaited the countess's coming.

The door at last opened, and a good-looking man of about thirty entered. It was the count; he greeted me in a cordial, affable manner. We sat down and his easy conversation soon reassured me. I had nearly regained my composure when the entrance of the countess plunged me into fresh confusion. She was a very beautiful woman; the count presented me; I tried to affect ease, but the greater my effort, the greater did my embarrassment become. To give me time to collect myself, they addressed their remarks to each other, while I walked about looking at the books and pictures. As I know little about painting, one picture only attracted my attention. It represented some views of Switzerland. It was not the picture which struck me, but the fact that the canvas was pierced by two bullet holes in almost the identical spot.

"That was a good shot," I remarked to the count.

"Yes," he replied; "it was a very remarkable shot. Do you shoot?"

"Passably," I replied, delighted at feeling the conversation turn on a subject with which I was familiar.

"At thirty paces, I should not expect to miss a card."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the countess with an air of marked attention. "Do you think you could do as well?" she inquired, turning to her husband.

"I am sure I could not," replied the count. "I was not a bad shot once; but I have not touched a pistol for four years."

"In that case, I would wager that you would miss at even twenty paces; it requires daily practice to be able to shoot well. The best shot I ever knew practiced every day regularly."

"How well could he shoot?" asked the count.

"This was how well. When he saw a fly on the wall—you are smiling, countess, but I am telling the truth—he would exclaim: 'My pistol, Kouzeka! Kouzeka would bring the pistol and he would bury the fly in the wall.'"

"That was indeed marvellous. What was the man's name?"

"Sylvie."

"Sylvie!" exclaimed the count, rising abruptly. "Did you know him?"

"We were the best of friends. In my regiment we considered him a comrade, a brother almost. I have not heard of him for five years. Did you know him, too?"

"Yes, I knew him too well. Did he never tell you of a certain singular affair?"

"About a blow he received at a ball from an impudent fellow?"

"Did he mention any names?"

"He did not. Ah, I suspect the truth—I beg your pardon—was it?"

"It was," replied the count, greatly agitated; "that picture bears witness of our old meeting."

"Do not tell that dreadful story," he said, "and the countess."

"I must," replied the countess. "Our guest knows how I fancied his friend. He ought to know how Sylvie avenged himself."

He motioned me to an easy chair and, greatly affected, he began his story.

"I was married five years ago. We passed the first months of the honeymoon here in the country. One evening we went out for a ride on horseback. My wife's horse rearing, she became frightened and returned home on foot. I led her horse back and reached the house ahead of her. On coming up, I saw a traveling carriage in the court; I was told that some one was waiting for me in the study; the visitor had not given his name, merely saying that he wished to see me. I entered the room and in the twilight saw a man covered with dust, standing near the mantel."

"Do you recognize me?" he asked in a trembling tone.

"Sylvie!" I exclaimed, feeling my hair rise on my head.

"It is I," he replied. "I have come to take my turn. Are you ready?"

"He took a pistol out of his pocket as he spoke. I measured out a dozen paces and took my place in that corner, begging him to fire before my wife should come in. He proceeded leisurely and asked for candles. They were brought, and I closed the door, forbidding any one to enter; again I asked him to hasten."

"He took aim; I counted the seconds and thought of my wife. A frightful moment followed; Sylvie dropped his arm and said: 'I regret that this pistol is not loaded with cherry stones. The ball is heavy. I am not accustomed to firing at an unarmed adversary; it seems more like murder than a duel. Let us begin all over again. We will decide by lot who is to fire first.'"

"My head ached; I believe I refused. Finally, we loaded another pistol and put two bullets in a hat. Again I drew number one."

"The luck—'—is on your side, count," said Sylvie, with a smile which I shall never forget.

"I do not know how I was finally persuaded, but I tried first and hit that picture. Then Sylvie was terrible to look upon; he aimed at me. Suddenly the door opened; Macha rushed in and threw herself on my neck with a scream. The sight of her took away my courage."

"My darling," I exclaimed, "don't you see that we are only losing? How frightened you are? Go and get a glass of water, then come back and I will present my old friend and comrade to you."

"She did not believe me. 'Is what my husband says true?' she said, addressing Sylvie."

"Your husband always tells the truth. Once he slapped me in jest; just now, he missed his aim at me; still in jest. Now, I should like a little pleasure in my turn."

He then aimed at me—before he had time to fire, she threw herself at his feet.

"Rise at once, Macha," I cried, entirely beside myself; "and you, Mr. count, cease torturing a poor woman. Will you fire or not?"

"I will not," replied the strange man; "I have seen your anxiety, your fear, and I have forced you to fire at me; that is enough; I am satisfied; I will leave you with your conscience."

"He went at once to the door, pausing on the threshold, he looked at the picture my bullet had pierced, then fired at the hole almost without taking aim; my wife had fainted. My domestics had not dared to stop him; he called his coachman and was driven rapidly away."

"The count ceased speaking; I had just heard the end of a story whose beginning had made such an impression upon me."

I never again saw the hero of this strange tale.

Arnold, Burr and Hamilton.

Arnold, Burr and Hamilton, the traitor, is an engaging hero, but it has been found that Arnold was a good neighbor in the days before the Revolution; and no man suffered more than he in behalf of the patriot's cause for several years. That he went over to the British is true, but we hear altogether too little concerning the spiteful meanness that dogged this brave man's steps until his proud spirit was goaded to desperation. Aaron Burr killed Alexander Hamilton in a duel. But let us suppose that Hamilton had killed Burr, what then? Would Burr have been the saint and Hamilton the sinner? Burr was no monster. Those who knew him best were the ones who loved him most. There was no lawyer of his time who commanded such large fees, and his purse was always at the command of the poor and unfortunate. —Denver Republican.

Our Trade Abroad.

Netherlands and Belgium, although among the smallest of the European countries, rank next to the United Kingdom, Germany, and France in their importance as markets for products of the United States. The United Kingdom is the largest European purchaser of American commodities. Germany next in rank; then France, then Netherlands, and then Belgium.

The total exports from the United States to Netherlands amounted in the year 1905 to \$73,000,000, and our imports from Netherlands to practically \$22,000,000; our exports to Belgium in the same year were \$38,500,000, and our total imports therefrom practically \$16,000,000, giving us a total of \$120,000,000 of trade with these two small countries, whose combined area is less than that of the State of Ohio and whose population is less than that of New York.

ED. PINAUD

EAU DE COLOGNE

HAIR

HAIR

HAIR

HAIR

HAIR

Hot Water Without Cost

Not a cent for fuel, plenty of hot water, and no coal range to take care of. Installation for less than one-half actual cost.

Our Plan

Is to have the furnace supply the hot water, heat your kitchen and do away with the bother of carrying coal and emptying ashes. This will give you the advantage of using the gas range, for cooking, entirely, reduce your expenses, save room, and at the same time lighten the duties in the kitchen.

How It Is Done

We run a pipe over the fire pot of the furnace, from there to a radiator in kitchen, and from radiator to boiler, thus giving you heat and hot water at all times, but one fire to watch—the furnace.

The Price

Including radiator and piping, \$8.50 complete.

Without radiator, \$5.00.

\$2.00 extra if kitchen is on second floor. It is a money maker for you and worth investigating. Our representatives in your service—Call, phone or write.

Commercial Department

Rochester Railway & Light Company

34-40 Clinton Avenue, North



Clearance Sale on Clothing

Ladies' Jackets, Coats, Dresses, Suits, Trunks, etc. Ladies' Footwear, etc. Ladies' Handbags, etc. Ladies' Corsets, etc. Ladies' Hosiery, etc. Ladies' Underwear, etc. Ladies' Accessories, etc. Come Early and Save!

The Rochester Trust & Safe Deposit Company

The Largest Trust Company in the State, with a capital of \$1,000,000.00. Located in their new building, 100 South Street, offer the best service, consistent with good management. Interest on deposits at the rate of

FOUR PER CENT

Per Annum, Compounded Monthly. We have unexcelled facilities for the safekeeping of your Business and respectfully solicit your account.

Special Department for Women. Safe to rent in our Safe Deposit Building, 100 South Street, at the rate of

CAPITAL SURPLUS (earned) RESOURCES

ED. PINAUD

EAU DE COLOGNE

HAIR

HAIR

HAIR

HAIR