

CENTERED.

To each man's life there comes a time... One day, one night, one morning, one afternoon...

"THE PARISIAN."

In the regiment he was certainly not a favorite with the officers, but he always managed to get along very well with his fellow soldiers...

Then, too, he could sing fairly well. He recited like a born actor, and he was always up to the most irresistible nonsense...

On the other hand, he kept his uniform and his arms in the most immaculate state of cleanliness...

Then, when he was off duty, he would install himself comfortably in the forecabin, and, while smoking cigarettes...

He was wonderfully clever, too, at imitating people and animals, and he had baptized everything and every one on board with the drollest of names...

For six months the Parisian had been incorporated in one of the companies of a marching regiment, and there had been some hard fighting several times...

His superiors appreciated his bravery and sang froid when under fire and the happy way he had of making the best of all kinds of privations and fatigue...

A little later on a detachment of the regiment was told off to occupy an isolated point of observation near the banks of the Song-Cau...

In order that their inaction should not have a demoralizing effect on the men, the officer in command saw fit to occupy them in various ways...

The Parisian had never been able to reconcile himself to handling the pickaxe, and generally he passed his time in looking on while his comrades did the work...

On seeing the Parisian, therefore, seated on the ground making a cigarette, he called out to him roughly to take his place and work as the others were doing...

"Enough of your foolery, and you can take a day's prison for a change." With one bound the Parisian was on his feet and had shaken himself free from the sergeant...

joking about him now. He stepped up close to the subofficer, and looking him straight in the face said simply, but in a hoarse voice: "Never lay your finger on me again, or—look out for yourself!"

The sergeant, exasperated, laid hold of him again, shouting: "To prison with you, and we'll see!" He did not finish his sentence, for the Parisian raised his hand and dealt him a blow on the cheek...

He made the best of his situation, and when he answered the questions which were put to him by the officer who had been appointed to make the preliminary inquiries about the affair...

One night toward 10 o'clock firing was heard in the distance, and almost at the same moment the sentinels gave the alarm to the little troop...

In a few seconds every man of the little company was on foot, and with his gun placed in the gap of the bamboo palings, was firing recklessly on the enemy, who had surrounded the fort...

His lieutenant in passing by recognized him and said: "That's right, my good fellow. Get wounded, and I'll answer for your other affair."

"I'm sure to, lieutenant," answered the trooper, smiling bitterly, and then, without troubling himself about the balls which fell around him thick and fast, the Parisian continued shooting...

After an hour's desperate firing the assailants, numerous though they were, gave up their attempt to take the post and beat a retreat in all directions...

Then, on seeing that he was himself some 500 yards outside the fort and fearing to have his retreat cut off, he gave the order to return. On arriving within their own fortifications and after having the gate closed securely, he kept his men in their ranks...

The sergeant did not appear in answer to his chief's command, and a shudder of horror ran through the little troop. If he were still out on the plain! ... The enemy never had mercy, and prisoners and wounded would have to endure a long and cruel martyrdom before death released them...

It was all in vain. Sergeant Butin had not returned with the others, and at soldiers and officers all hoped that, at any rate, he had been killed outright—shot through the heart by a ball...

"Poor fellow," they said to each other as they were moving toward their quarters for the night. Just at this moment a loud shout was heard outside...

The sergeant raised his gun and called out, "Qui vive?" "Open the gate!" replied the voice of some one gasping for breath. "Quick! Quick! It is Sergeant Butin!"

The soldiers rushed to the gate and flung it wide open, and then, dark though the night was, they could distinguish the form of a man almost bent double, carrying on his back a soldier on whose sleeves the gold glittered...

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