

## Duelling in German Universities.

BY AN ENGLISH STUDENT.

“**M**EIN LIEBER PAPA,” once wrote a German student. “My honour has at last been satisfied. A week ago a ‘dummer jung’ named Schwartz stepped on my dog’s tail, and I challenged him. The fight

and hasten the moment when they can enter a combat and get a scar. It is also remarkable that, although civil duelling is forbidden by law, the custom flourishes like a green bay tree. Bismarck favours it, and the German Emperor appreciates it. The Kaiser himself is said to have once fought a duel at Bonn, and what is good enough for the Kaiser is excellent for the average German student. In this may lie the reason for the laxity in enforcing the law.

At first sight, the system of duelling now in vogue in Germany is a little confusing; but, generally speaking, there are two kinds of duels. The first kind is that alluded to in the boy’s epistle to his father—a duel in which honour has to be satisfied. The second kind is best described as a duel “by agreement.” For the sake of avoiding confusion, we delay speaking of the second kind until we have shown the nature of the first.

The *modus operandi* of the honour duel is as follows. A good duellist who knows no fear simply goes about seeking whom he may affront. He seats himself, for instance, in a restaurant, with his great Dane—the fashionable pet dog—at his feet. By-and-by another student wanders in, and if he, too, is looking for a “scrap,” he casually plants his foot on the big dog’s tail. This is all that is necessary. Hot words ensue, cards are exchanged with a great deal of politeness, and the meeting takes place in a secluded spot in the woods at an early hour. It lasts but a few minutes, and the least cut upon the head or cheek satisfies outraged honour. The combatants shake hands, become good friends, and after the wounds are healed, they sport their cuts with pride. Then, if



HIS FIRST DUEL, OR BANDAGED HONOUR.  
From a Photo. by Wilh. Risse, Marburg, A/L, Germany.

took place yesterday. Schwartz got a bad slash on his left cheek, and I got two cuts, one just under my eye, and the other on my head. The cuts are very painful, but they will make beautiful scars. As soon as the bandages were on, I got photographed, and with this letter I send you the result. You will be proud.” And when the father got this letter, he fell over himself with joy. For his son, the pride of his heart, had at last fought a duel, and had received his first scar.

This letter would appear an exaggeration if it were not for the fact that many funny things go on in the world that some people don’t know about. One of these things is the German University duel. Travellers in Germany often notice the slashed faces of the men on the street, and soon learn that the scars are the results of duels, but it is not generally known that, amongst the students, duelling is a custom regularly observed, and that instead of avoiding encounters with the sword, they welcome



RESULTS OF A SUCCESSFUL DUEL—SCARS ON HEAD AND CHEEK.  
From a Photo. by Wilh. Risse, Marburg A/L, Germany.

they want more cuts, they go off and step on more dogs' tails.

As for the "agreement duel," it may be said that nearly every German student belongs to a "club," as a member of which he is bound to fight. This rule accounts for many of the honour duels, as a student, if he has been in the club a reasonable length of time without having a quarrel thrust upon him, is finally informed by the leader of the club that he must have a duel within a certain period. The student is then obliged to secure a quarrel with someone, and, if he fails in that, he sometimes selects his best



"CHARGISTER," OR OFFICERS OF A VERBINDUNG, OR STUDENTS' CLUB.  
From a Photo. by With. Risse, Marburg A/L, Germany.

friend. But it is when the club as a whole challenges another club to fight that the true meaning of the word "agreement" applies. The contests are, in reality, mere exhibitions of skill, and upon this basis they may be heartily commended. One club of students merely says to another, "We will fight with you now," and a list of fixtures is arranged. The duels take place every Saturday, commencing at seven o'clock in winter, and half-past six in summer. The different clubs go by different names. There are "Corps," "Burschenschafts" ("students' associations"), and "Verbin-



From a) JUNIOR MEMBERS OF A VERBINDUNG IN THE "KNEIPE," OR BEER-ROOM, WITH THEIR MAJOR. [Photograph.]

dungs" ("leagues"), and each club usually fights with a club of its own class and rules. A "Corps" will not fight with a "Verbindung," and rarely fights with a "Burschenschaft," because the last-named club plays a waiting game, and can draw back its head when a blow is coming. For this reason, the Burschenschaft is usually despised by the Corps, and, it may be added, usually wins the match. Each club, moreover, has its own set of officers; and to show the gay costumes in which the officers and members array themselves, we give two pictures—one photograph showing three "Chargister," or officers, of a Verbindung, and the other showing a number of Verbindung juniors—cantly called "Füchse," or "Foxes," at their beery revels in the "Kneipe."

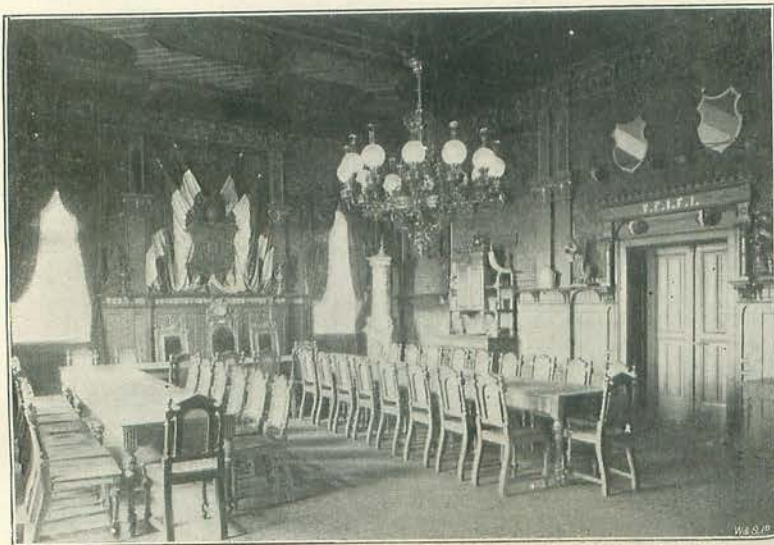
But these little details may be left, for a moment, to take care of themselves. It is the "mensur," or match, that shows German University duelling in its most interesting, and, I may say, silliest, form. Often on Saturday mornings, from my study window, I have watched the cart-load of duelling accoutrements passing up the road to a suburb of the town, and curiosity at last drew me into the stream of students following. I entered an hotel with the others, and immediately found myself in a large hall filled with students—some seventy or eighty—in caps of all colours. It was a gaily dressed throng. Some of the students were drinking, and others, upon entering the "Kneipe-room" (where the drinking goes on), introduced themselves to a sort of master of

ceremonies, by bowing and at the same time mentioning their names.

On the other side of the hall was a door, labelled "Billiards," and into this I walked. The place reeked of iodoform and beer. In the centre of the room two chairs, about three yards apart, with their backs to each other, stood on a square of carpet, old and discoloured, with here and there a splotch of faded blood. A duel was just over, and the sprinkled sawdust was dotted with little ruddy pools. Two students were sitting on the chairs as if for a shampoo, their heads bent over basins, while young medicals in long white aprons, with upturned shirt-sleeves, were stitching the nasty wounds. No anæsthetic was used, for no duellist would be thought "weak."

While the stitching was proceeding preparations for another duel were going on, and two students were being strapped up in their uniform. This encounter, "with seconds," was to last for twenty-five minutes. I may add that when duellists have no quarrel with each other, and are simply exhibiting their skill, they fight with seconds, and a halt can be called as soon as five blows have been struck on each side, a momentary rest being thereby allowed. In the duel "without seconds" no halt can be called for twenty-five minutes, or until blood has been drawn and a combatant is disabled. When the seconds are engaged, they stand at the left of the combatants, each wearing a cap with a heavy visor, a pad with the club colours over their stomachs, and carrying a basket-hilted sword. The uni-

form or armour for a duel "with" or "without" is essentially the same, and the dressing operation was very interesting. One of the duellists first drew off his coat, waist-coat, and shirt, and put on his "pauckhund," or fighting-shirt, made of coarse material, to save the finer linen below, which otherwise would be stained with blood. Then on the right arm



INTERIOR OF A KNEIPE-ROOM, WHERE THE STUDENT DRINKING-BOUTS TAKE PLACE.  
From a Photo. by Wilh. Risse, Marburg A.H., Germany.



From a

A DUEL WITH SECONDS: THE DUELLISTS FACING EACH OTHER WITH CAPS ON.

[Photograph.]

he drew a sleeve of wadded silk, running from wrist to shoulder. He then put a heavy leather pad on his right armpit, and a like pad over his heart. Now came a heavy fencing glove that completely covered the hand, and after that, the arm, from wrist to shoulder, was wrapped with strips of silk, until the limb was quite as large as a man's thigh. Silk is used because it protects the arm best from cuts. After the silk was on, the student placed a wadded silk cravat on his throat, and a pair of heavy iron goggles on

his eyes. Next came the "pauckhosen," or fighting-breeches, of thick padded leather. Often, I may add, in explanation of the costume in the duel "with seconds," the padded trousers are not worn, not being deemed necessary in a simple trial of skill. Finally the student takes up the big "schläger," or rapier, about forty inches long, with a blunt point and sharpened edges. The sword is protected at the hilt by a rounded tin-plate about ten inches in diameter, which has been jokingly dubbed the "soup-plate of honour."



From a

SECOND STAGE OF A DUEL WITH SECONDS: CAPS OFF AND SWORDS CROSSED.

[Photograph.]



From a]

A DUEL IN PROGRESS AT BONN: TRYING TO GET THE FIRST CUT.

[Photograph.

When the dressing was done, there was a delay of a few moments, during which each duellist rested his padded arm on a comrade's shoulder, to prevent it getting tired. Suddenly there was a movement amongst the onlookers, and the Master of Ceremonies entered, and made a little speech. The fighting students then took their places three feet from each other, each still wearing his cap, and standing on a cross marked on the floor. They were compelled to stand on this cross, and, upon pain of expulsion from the corps, were not allowed to bend back to avoid a blow. The umpire stood a few feet to the side, and prepared himself

to mark the time of the duel, to give word for the various halts, and to declare the number of blows which drew blood. A second now called out, "Umpire, please command silence for a fifteen minutes' 'mensur' between Von Briesen and Boos with seconds!" The umpire gave the command and the caps came off. The second then cried, "Auf der mensur! Bindet die klingen!" ("On with the match. Touch blades!") The swords were now crossed, and the seconds, who were standing at the left of each principal, touched the crossed blades with their own swords, one of the seconds calling out, "Gebunden sind!" ("They are joined!") The duellists now



From a]

PATCHING UP THE FIRST CUT.

[Photograph.

raised their right arms over their heads so that the arm protected the top of the head, the sword hanging parallel to the left side of the face, guarding the left cheek. As soon as both were on guard, one of the seconds cried, "Los!" ("Apart!") and the fight began. Clash followed clash, and each tried to strike the first blow. The fighting is all done from the wrist, and the arm must be kept above the head. Each man tries to touch his adversary by reaching over the protecting arm and striking the scalp or left cheek, when the latter is unguarded. The fight continued for some moments, when one of the men began to bleed. "Umpire!" called one of the seconds, "please declare a 'blutigen' on the head!" The umpire declared it, and a doctor ran forward to examine the cut, which, he said, was insignificant. Then the fight went on.

In fifteen minutes it was over, and the hospital work began. Two tired students, streaming with blood, were bending exhausted over the chairs. The rapiers, which had been bent in the fight, were straightened, and cleaned with carbolic acid, and the sponges, water, and crooked needles, filled with coloured silk, lying on a table near by, were brought into use. One of the doctors was entering up in a little book the number of cuts received, and the number of stitches required to sew them up. The doctor is the judge of a cut sufficiently dangerous to stop a duel, and his little book is the official record of the contest.

According to the rules of some Universities,

the nature of the offence in a contest of honour requires a certain number of cuts. If one man, for example, calls another a "dummer junge," which really has a dreadful sound, although it simply means "silly youth," the injured honour may be satisfied with twenty-four cuts with the sword. The same amount is prescribed for the injury done by the word "infamous," which certainly does not seem a fair penalty. Sometimes one student kills another. In that event he is advised to quit the seat of learning. He can, however, enter another University, but if he kills a second time, his reputation is gone, and no University will allow him within its doors. Often, again, it happens that a duel brings on serious consequences not dreamt of in the German philosophy. In 1882, for example, at the University of Jena, twenty-three duels took place among the students in a single day, and all those who had been wounded suddenly found themselves down with blood-poisoning. Three of the students died, and forty-three were laid up in the hospital. It was quickly discovered that the swords, which had been used in the previous duels, had not been properly cleaned.

But with all its dangers, from dirty swords or other causes, the custom goes gaily on, even in defiance of the law. If a local "bobby" happens to catch wind of the duel, he may break into the Kneipe, but without success. The signal has been given, and when the "arm of the law" enters, he finds nothing but a lot of peaceful and phlegmatic students, dozing, carousing, and drinking the inevitable beer. In nine cases out of ten, "bobby" does not try to interrupt the bloody ceremonies, for he, in common with his Kaiser and the powers that be, believes that duelling promotes bravery, and puts the young in training for the sight and smell of blood. But it is very, very bad for the physiognomy of man.



From a

TYPICAL GERMAN STUDENTS.

[Photograph.