LITERARY AND ART ITEMS.

BISMARCK AT HOME.

A Dinner with the Prussian Richelieu.

(Translated for the Cincinnati Commercial.)

In the fall of 1866 I was enjoying the hospitality of the Prince of Putbus on the island of Rügen, one of the most delightful spots near the shores of the Baltic, and far-famed throughout Eastern and Northern Europe for its beautiful and romantic scenery.

On the last Sunday in October, late in the fall, I was waiting in the sumptuous reception room of the palace at Putbus, when suddenly the door opened behind me. I turned everywhere—with and without uniform—but my speaker is unknown to me.

"There was a Russian lady here last evening, of course a countess, for the Russians won't do it for less. As a matter of course, the Russian countess had a pretty daughter, and she, again of course, was desperately enamored of a poor officer of the Russian guard—and, of course, her mother was utterly opposed to the *liaison*. The daughter said to the lover—'I will give you a dollar for every letter from St. Petersburg, which you will deliver directly to me.' The lover said to the letter-carrier—'I will give you two dollars for every letter directed to my daughter, which you will deliver to me.' The letter-carrier is a kind-hearted man, and tells the daughter what an offer the lover made him—and the daughter offers three dollars for every letter he brought to her.'

"How little sense lovers have got! Sober persons simply have family letters registered. It is a good thing to have a lovers' letter-carrier, though, that he has such a good, speculative heart, and that he did not concern himself with the two dollars of the mother—otherwise, my colleague Rempitz (the Prussian Minister, at the head of the foreign department), I am afraid would give him a blowing up."

In the meantime, the ladies have entered the *salon*. By the side of the beautiful and accomplished young lady of the house is seen an older lady in a plain, gray silk dress. Her full black hair is simply parted, and she wears no head-dress, her dark eyes are clear, calm and grave; a winning expression of benevolence and motherly kindness lies in her modest, pleasant face; which, however, in its no account delicate of spirit, character, and intellectuality. The whole bearing of the lady breathes energy of thought and self-reliance.

This lady is the Countess Bismarck. Her daughter Anna is a young lady, scarcely eighteen years old, with mild features, and deep dark eyes.

Dinner is announced. The small company enter the dining-room, which is wainscoted with porcelain, and the table board is adorned with all sorts of old-fashioned, costly decanters. All take their seats quietly and unceremoniously.

The dinner is opened with oysters in the shell. It is a pleasure to witness the practised elegance and ease with which Count Bismarck sips his oysters. The Countess does not partake of the oysters.

"We did not fare as sumptuously in Bohemia, gentlemen," said the Count, gayly, to some officers at the table. "We often lacked there a bit of bread or meat, or even both!"

"Well, your Excellency, we were at war, and in the enemy's country. One wonders, of course, for the best, I shall never forget it. It was after the battle of Munchengratz, and we had fought until we were dreadfully tired and hungry, and what did we get? Not even Dry potatoes, without salt, and—champagne!"

"Ta Ring, himself, underwent all these privations," said the Count, gravely, "and that was what caused all privations and fatigues to appear to the soldiers in a light so insignificant. I was at the battle of Koniggratz, in the King's suite, and very frequently I was obliged to remain in the rear of the fight. At noon there was a momentary lull in the terrible battle, and the Prussian Crown Prince was awaited on the battlefield with feverish anxiety. During this anxious pause, the King sighed and said if they had something to eat for him, he was very hungry. I ordered a cart, drove up in his flask, an officer drew timidly a small piece of sausage from his leathern punch, and a soldier, unobserved, slipped a piece of cheese and a piece of brown bread in his hand. 'My son, have you your pocket-knife?' I asked the lad. 'No, your Majesty!' Well then we will honestly divide.' And the King broke the slice of bread in two pieces, and handed him one of them. 'There, just take it; your King thanks you for it!' And the Crown Prince appeared with his army right in the nick of time! Our North German soldiers called him honorably only *Fritz der tuchtige kerl*, (Prince in time). The battle began to rage anew. The King sat down on his suite on a small knoll, had fixed his whole attention on the progress of the furious struggle, and did not mind in the heat of the bomb-shells whizzing all around him. To my astonishment I noticed that his Majesty did not thus recklessly expose himself to the murderous fire. I received the royal reply—'The Commander-in-chief only knows the place that is due to him.' Only at a later hour, when the King on the village of Chlum had personally ordered the cavalry to advance and when the bomb-shells were falling again fast around him, I ventured to say, 'Pardon, Your Majesty, as you do not care for your own safety, have pity at least on your Prime Minister, of whom your loyal Prussian people will demand their King in the name of the people! I pray you to leave the dangerous spot.' The King then held out his hand to me. 'Well, Bismarck, let us ride on!' The King really turned his black mare, 'Sadowa,' to whom he himself gave this name after the battle of Sadowa and set her at a slow gallop, just as though he were cantering down the Linden to the Tiergarten, and I, with a stiff, a quiet air in my hands and feet. At—well, I succeeded in making Sadowa, all accustomed with hot-blooded old Bismarck, I rode my chestnut horse close up to Sadowa, the King's mare, and gave her a sound whip. She darted forward, and the 'King looked astonished behind him. I believed he had noticed it, but he did not say a word.

"Did you Excellency carry a revolver during the war?

"No, I did not, and missed it only once with grievous regret. It was the morning after the battle of Koniggratz. I rode all alone across the battle-field, with its pile of corpses—it was a sight which I hope I may never, in my veins; terrible, bloody, never-to-be forgotten. I had left my saddle in front of me upon the horse, both of whose hind-legs had been torn away by a bomb-shell. Dreadfully and mighty lamentably, hesitated Prussia out-lay before me, and I stood at my with his large, moist eyes, as if imploring me to assist him. Ah, then I wished for a bullet in my revolver! I wished to put the poor creature out of its misery! But there were no bullets in my revolver—to pale and the-looking as though he were asleep—leaning against a garden fence. He was dead! In the garden grew very plenty of beautiful roses in full bloom. A soldier was just gathering a handful of them, he then climbed over the fence and laid the roses on the young hero's breast where there was soon a small, round hole in the uniform. Do you know the officer, I asked, 'No Major,' he replied, 'but I saw him fight like a lion and fall like a lamb. I wished to prevent him at least from being stomped upon by horses, and carried him up to the fence. We put, likewise, roses into the grave of my dear mother.' So saying, he pulled out his handkerchief and rushed again into the thickest of the fight."

"Dear Count, you spoke of having seen ludicrous things on the battle-field?"

"Yes, Princess, notwithstanding the gravity of the situation. I never in my whole life saw anything more laughable than the gigantic he-goat which the Berlin Guard Artillery had brought up and had taken into the field, and which was now furiously galloping to the side of the leader toward the Austrian ranks. The Austrians are said to have really believed that old Nick had assumed the garb of a he-goat, and fulfilling thus the agreement with the Prussian Minister, had with him for the destruction of the Iron Brigade."

"Dear Otto," said the Countess, tenderly, "you ought not partake of this dish; it would be injurious to the feeble nerves of your stomach."

"Ladies, did you ever see so splendid a battle-horse of an obedient husband?" says Count Bismarck, pushing back the dish.

"Then, my dear Countess, you are, besides the King, the only person to whom our iron Count bows, says the Prince of Putbus.

"Oh, no," laughs the Countess, "there is another one else to whom Otto bows—if he cannot help it.

"And who is this powerful person?"

"Guess—but as you cannot guess it. My iron husband obeys his—cook."

"Ah, what will we do to have peace and tranquillity at our own homes, after having thoroughly tasted the sweets of warfare," said the Countess, with an anxious gravity. "Well, we had yesterday taken a somewhat late but very substantial breakfast at our villa—cold mutton-chops and sauerkraut. You know that this satiates us for a long time; and when dinner was ready none of us had any appetite. Moreover, I wished to finish before the occasionless dinner a paper which I had commenced drawing up. The cook sent us word that dinner was ready. I replied we would be there in a few days. The cook sent word, 'I should not have cared for dinner,' said the Prince, laughing, 'if I had not been still a boy.' Her name was Tries (Catharine) Neumann, and she came from my father's estate of Schonhausen, in Brandenburg. When I and my brother were sent to the gymnasium, Trine Neumann had to accompany us as overseer of our household kitchen, and we boys lived in the pleasant villa near the Prince's kitchen-garden.

Count Bismarck is still alive, but he is no longer the same gay fellow, the sociable companion, such as we have seen him at dinner. In the dead of night he is again Prime Minister.

He who has come to Rugen to repose from his toils, sits at a desk covered with papers, his right hand is closed; his face looks almost old! Time scalding from afar. *Dauerwetter, Fungens, u! Fish wat in'n Leben nix Verwirftiges det Kanken und alt wedder Aufbach!* Thunder and lightning boys, you will never be anything but good-for-nothings seen the pancakes are ready! Well, and the theme was spun out in all possible variations, until it had become as long as Cicero's Philippics; but Trine's anger disappeared immediately when she saw how well we liked her spoiled pancakes."

"And what became of Trine Neumann?"

"When we outgrew her nursing, she married a farmer in Schonhausen, and there she has been for many years past under the green sod. Dear Trine Neumann, how glad you would have been if you had lived to see the day when your Otto, after all, became something else than a 'good-for-nothing.'"

"Hush, my dear Countess, you spoke of having seen ludicrous things on the battle-field?"

"Yes, Princess, notwithstanding the gravity of the situation. I never in my whole life saw anything more laughable than the gigantic he-goat which the Berlin Guard Artillery had brought up and had taken into the field, and which was now furiously galloping to the side of the leader toward the Austrian ranks. The Austrians are said to have really believed that old Nick had assumed the garb of a he-goat, and fulfilling thus the agreement with the Prussian Minister, had with him for the destruction of the Iron Brigade."

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