GERMAN STUDENT DUELS.

A CONSPICUOUS FEATURE OF THE UNIVERSITY LIFE.

FIGHTING CORPS ARE ORGANIZED TO KEEP IT UP, AND COMBATS ARE COMPARATIVELY INFREQUENT FOR CAUSE.

The mensur, or corps duel, which has always been a conspicuous feature in German student life, became unpopular a few years ago when there were indications that the police would cease to wink at a practice which had been pronounced contrary to law. But it soon became known that the anti-duel measures were not serious, that the alarm was a false one, and after a short period of reduced activity the mensur resumed its old position of importance and is as popular now as it ever was, and changed only in so far that the fencing is better, and that more duels of a serious character are fought than ever before. For a long time duels for real cause were often fought with pistols, and in many instances the "American duel" was resorted to. This consisted simply in drawing lots, the man drawing the fatal lot to kill himself with any weapon that he might select. Another "American duel" was fought by placing a loaded and an unloaded pistol under a cloth on a table. The duellists stand at either side of the table, each selects a weapon "blind," and then each man holds his weapon against the breast of the other and fires.

In place of these "American" duels and the regular pistol combats the fighting is now done with crooked swords. In cases where it is agreed that the fight shall be to the death or until one contestant is disabled the duellists wear no protective appliances. Duels of this class are rare, but the "mensur mit binde und bandage" are the next point removed from them, and they are more frequent now than ever before. In these duels the principals wear protective bandages at the wrist, elbow and armpit of the sword arm, a leather belt with a flap to protect the abdomen, and goggles over the eyes. These duels are fought with sharp, crooked swords having no points, because the thrust is never practised in any of these encounters.

THE MOST POPULAR DUEL.

The duel which is the most popular, and the one which is usually referred to when the mensur or Paukerei is spoken of, is fought with rapiers. This is a light weapon, square at the place where one would look for the point, and has one edge sharpened about one-third the length of the blade. Bandages cover the sword arm and neck of the duellist, and he wears heavy goggles and protective pads over the heart and abdomen. His head and chest are unprotected, and the object is to wound the adversary in the face and mark him for life.

"These duels," said Dr. Robert C. Schüpphaus, who bears a number of scars on his face as evidence that he has had more than a passing acquaintance with the custom, "are for our universities what football and other violent sports are for the American colleges. Years ago there was much danger from blood poisoning when a man was wounded in a mensur, but with the antiseptic treatment this danger has been minimized, and except for the scars, which no one cares for, there is no danger."

The "duelling ground" is usually the back room of a saloon or restaurant, and when it is used for that purpose it is well guarded, so that warning may be given in time if by any chance the police did wish to break up the entertainment which has been termed by its enemies a men's kaffe klatsch.

To those who are not familiar with this peculiar institution, it seems strange that a lot of superior young men can find enough causes for combats, and that there should be dissension sufficient to justify duels at the rate of about six a week in the larger universities. The fact is that there are only a few duels for cause. Causes are created so that members of the various student organizations which exist to fight may earn what they term laurels and win high standing in the opinion of their fellows.

The fighting organizations are the corps, of which there are ninety-six in the sixteen universities—the Landsmanschaft, the Burschenschaft and the Freie Schlagende Verbindung. Among the prominent corps are the Saxe-Borussia, of Heidelberg; the Borussia, of Bonn, of which the German Emperor was a member; the Hannovera, of Göttingen, of which Bismarck was an enthusiastic member. The Germania, of Jena, is the best known Burschenschaft, and the Ghibelinia, of Tübingen, is the foremost of the Landsmanschaft.

When a young man becomes a student at a university and wishes to mix pleasure with his work, his first ambition is to become a member of a corps, and he makes his choice in keeping with his purse, and, having been accepted, is retained on the membership list on probation until he has given proof of his worth by fighting two duels. These duels are fought with members of other corps, and are often arranged by the officers of the organization. The fighting time is fifteen minutes. The time which is taken up with rests is recorded, and must be "made up," so that the men do fifteen minutes' actual fighting.

IN A SPIRIT OF SPORT.

"The fighting is done in a spirit of sport," said Dr. Schüpphaus, "and although the instruments are deadly weapons the men use them with no different spirit than the boxer does his fists."

When a man has fought his duels and been accepted as a corps member, with all the rights and privileges pertaining to the high position, he must fight whenever there is cause, and when there is none he does his share toward creating it. The least provocation is sufficient to bring on a mensur, and when matters become dull in the duel line it is nothing unusual for a whole corps to challenge another corps. In such cases the president must fight the president of the opposing side, and so down the list of officers, with an addition for good measure of six or eight high privates. It may happen that the officers of a corps are not its best fencers, but if the corps is to fight as a body and there is time enough before the meeting to do so an election is held and the best men are elected, so that there may be no doubt as to proper representation.

Although the various corps are organized to fight, one with the other, individually or en corps, they are all on friendly footing, and each organization sends its representative to the annual "Senioren Convent," or annual corps convention, at Kösen, in Thuringia, and there the laws and regulations for the government of the corps are agreed upon for the year.

Originally the corps were patriotic organizations, and the names indicated the homes of the members—Pommern, Sachsen, Renanen, Thuringia, Guestphalia, etc.—and the meetings of corps against corps or "P. P. suite" are still designated "pro patria."

The German student looks upon the duel as a sacred institution, but the American student at a German university usually ridicules it, and in many instances has gained the respect of the fencing men by defending himself when called upon to do so in American style—with the weapons given to him by nature.

A GERMAN STUDENT DUEL.
One of the more serious forms of fighting now popular.

HORSES IN BATTLE.

From Pearson's Magazine.

One of the most curious sights to be seen in a cavalry charge is the various riderless horses galloping in the line in perfect order. At the charge of Balaclava the front rank of one regiment was composed to a great extent of riderless animals, their masters having dropped one by one. It would seem that in the excitement of the moment the horses lose all conception of what is happening around them, and probably fail to notice the fall of their riders. The return of riderless horses to camp is an almost certain sign of defeat. When a cavalry charge is successful the horses will, as I have said, all keep up together, even though they have lost their riders; but when a force is routed the first news of ill omen to those in the rear will be the return of the horses with empty saddles and stirrups dangling free. No more sorry sight can be imagined. To illustrate the callous feeling these animals have under fire, a case which happened at Ladysmith during the siege may be cited. A farrier sergeant was engaged in shoeing an officer's horse in the open ground behind the stables of a hotel, and had already put one or two nails into the shoe when a shell came screaming through the air. The next moment the missile burst five or six yards away from where the sergeant and the horse were standing, and the splinters flew around both, but failed to touch either. When the smoke had cleared the horse was to be seen with its foot still in the man's apron, quite undisturbed by the incident.

TERMS NOW DESIRED.

From The Indianapolis Press.

"Are you the man that knows it all?" asked the lean man with the gimlet eyes.

"I am the man that answers questions," replied the meek person addressed.

"Well, I want to know what are the Chinese equivalents for 'veldt' and 'kopje.'"

CONSCRIPTION IN FRANCE.

HOW THE OFFICIALS ALLOW NO YOUNG MAN TO ESCAPE.

Paris correspondence of The Pall Mall Gazette.

The French boy is no sooner born than the military authorities have their eye on him. Within three days after his entry into the world his parents are bound under severe penalties to register his birth at the local "mairie," or Town Hall. This formality accomplished, the youngster at once receives the visit of the doctor attached to the Register Office. The "médecin de l'état civil," as this functionary is termed, verifies the declaration made by the parents, and satisfies himself that the infant is indeed a man in miniature. This precaution is necessary, as the father and mother, were they left entirely to their own devices, might be tempted to palm off their boy as a girl, with a view to enabling him to escape his military service. Until not so very long ago every child had to be taken to the "mairie" shortly after its birth to allow the authorities to convince themselves that no mistake had been made as regards the sex. Even now, however, mistakes do occur, and every now and then a case crops up of a girl who by some unaccountable error has got on to the books of the recruiting department and is summoned to serve with the colors.

The existence of the youngster having thus been duly placed on record, he is allowed to run loose for a score of years. If he chooses to he can shorten this period of liberty by voluntarily enlisting before his time, providing, of course, his physique passes muster. The marine infantry, a corps that sees a good deal of actual fighting in the colonies, recruits a number of adventurous spirits in this way, and not a few of the young men who propose to adopt the army as their career improve their prospects by making an early start. The average conscript, however, is in no hurry, and takes advantage of the full latitude allowed him by the law. He is well aware that he must begin to think seriously of his military obligations the moment he is out of his teens. Even if this necessity had not been drilled into him at school, he could not ignore it, since it is the constant preoccupation of his relatives and comrades. In consequence, as soon as his twentieth birthday is passed he begins to have a keen eye on the official posters displayed on the walls of the Town Hall, the schools, and other public buildings. These posters are white, like all other official posters in France, but they are of exceptional size, while, that there may be no possibility of their escaping notice among their many miscellaneous fellows, they compel attention by a most apparent distinctive sign, consisting of two tricolor flags placed crossways above the reading matter and printed in colors. One of these military posters details the arrangements for the departure of the classe, or annual contingent, and from it the conscript learns the date of his incorporation and other items of information.

In the course of his twentieth year he should give his address to the nearest recruiting office, and see that the Mayor of his district has put down his name among the conscripts of the coming class. The Mayor, however, is bound to see that his name is on the list, whether he concerns himself with his inscription or not. The next step is the tirage au sort, or drawing of a number. Since the introduction of universal military service the operation is practically a mere formality, the abolition of which is contemplated. It takes place in January and February at every town hall throughout the country. Every conscript draws his number in the district in which he was born; it is not imperative that he should attend the ceremony in person, as in his absence the Mayor will draw a number for him. The great majority of the conscripts make the occasion the excuse for a jollification. With a large square of paper, gorgeously colored and bearing the number he has drawn, pinned to his hat, and bedecked with a number of tricolor rosettes, the conscript, accompanied by his friends and fellow conscripts, tours from wine shop to wine shop, singing and finally bawling as he goes along patriotic and regimental songs. It should be said that the conscript draws his number in the January that follows the completion of his twentieth year. In consequence, a conscript born in December has only just turned twenty when the army claims him, whereas a conscript whose birth is in January is twenty-one at the time of the tirage au sort. The only use at present of the drawing of numbers is that when there is a deficiency of men for the Marine Infantry the vacancies are filled up from among the conscripts who have drawn the numbers one, two or three.

For the next six months or so the conscript is left to himself, but toward the middle of the year he makes acquaintance in earnest with the military authorities. The occasion is the sitting of the councils of revision, the bodies that definitely decide the fate of the conscripts. The council of revision is composed of two civil functionaries, of a superior officer and of an army doctor, and it has the assistance of a member of the recruiting staff and of several gendarmes. A council sits in the chief town of every canton. The Mayors of the different localities comprised in the district are allowed to be present at its operations, with a view to safeguarding the interests of the sons of their electors. The conscript is expected to present himself before the council, but should he abstain from putting in an appearance he does not incur a penalty. He loses the right, however, should he remain away, to benefit by certain dispensations which will shortly be explained, and he is purely and simply taken as a soldier without more ado—he is taken d'office, it is technically said. In the case of the conscripts who come up before it—and they are the vast majority—the council decides whether they are physically fit to perform their military service, and pronounces on the admissibility of the claims they may put in to be dispensed from the full term of service, to serve one year instead of three. The question of physical fitness is settled, of course, by a medical examination, an experience that affords the conscript his first taste of the promiscuity of barrack life, for with all his comrades he has to strip to the skin and await his turn, it may be for an hour or more, in a common room in puris naturalibus. If the health of a conscript be doubtful the decision with regard to him may be adjourned, and he is told to come up again in six months' or a year's time. It should be mentioned that the minimum height accepted is 1.54 metres, or about five feet three inches.

The privilege of only serving one year is accorded in the first place to certain classes of young men whose family circumstances are exceptional. Thus the eldest son or only son of a widow, the eldest son of a family of orphans, the eldest son of a family of seven or more children, and the elder of two brothers who happen to be conscripts in the same year are entitled to a dispensation. The dispensation is also granted to young men whose earnings are proved to be indispensable to the support of their family, and to the brothers of soldiers who have died or been definitely invalided while on active service. By far the largest class, however, of single year soldiers is furnished by the learned professions. The young men who are studying to be barristers, doctors, professors and engineers, or for certain other careers, have to serve but one year. This concession is conditional on their passing their examinations; should they fail in them they must return to the army and complete their three years. The number of dispensée from all causes is very considerable, some 70,000 out of the 250,000 or so conscripts who form the annual contingent.

The council of revision takes note of the conscript's trade, occupation or profession, this matter and, so far as his physique allows, his own wishes being taken into consideration in assigning him to this or that branch of the service. The labors of the council over, the results are sifted, and classified at the War Office, and the destination of each conscript settled. He learns his fate by the receipt of his "feuille de route," or marching orders, an official intimation commanding him to join the corps to which he has been attached on a given day. If he is penniless, his third class railway fare is given him by the Mayor of his district; Should he be able to meet this expense, the sum is refunded him on his joining his regiment. Failure to comply with the instructions contained in the "feuille de route" is accounted an act of insubordination, and exposes the "insoumis" to severe penalties. The incorporation of the classe takes place, as a rule, in November. The conscript has become a "bleu," and is entitled to the munificent pay of a halfpenny per day.