

A SOLDIER OF THE LEGION

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A Soldier of the Legion by Edward Morlae

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EDWARD MORLAE

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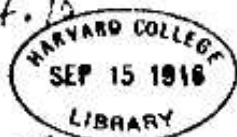
**BY
EDWARD MORLAE**



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PREFACE

WHEN Sergeant Morlae turned up at the *Atlantic* office and, with his head cocked on one side, remarked ingratiatingly, "I'm told this is the highest-toned office in the United States," there was nothing to do but to assure him he was right and to make him quite comfortable while he told his wonderful story. That story, however, was not told consecutively, but in chapters as his crowding recollections responded to the questions of his interlocutor. It was a story, too, which could not be told at a sitting, and it was not until the evening of the second day that Sergeant Morlae recounted the exploit which won the Croix de Guerre pinned to his chest — a cross which he said,

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with the sole touch of personal pride noticed in three days passed largely in his company, had above it not the copper but the silver clasp.

Sergeant Morlae is a Dirk Hatteraick of a man to look at, and the education of that beloved pirate was no more rugged than his own. His father was a Frenchman born who had seen service in '70 and won a captain's commission in the "Terrible Year." After the war, Morlae, senior, settled in this country and his son was born in California. As young Morlae grew up, finding the family business of contracting on a small scale somewhat circumscribed, he sought more hazardous employment in active service in the Philippines and in more than one civilian "scrap" in Mexico. It was good training. August, 1914, found him again in

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Los Angeles. For two days his French blood mounted as he read the newspapers, and on the morning of August 3 he packed his grip and started for Paris to enlist in the Legion. Since he had already seen service, he was soon made a corporal and later a sergeant. Morlae, says a letter from a Harvard graduate who served under him in those days, was "an excellent soldier," "a strong, efficient, ambitious man," though, as the reader of this and letters from other Legionaries may infer, he was neither sentimental in his methods nor supersensitive with his men. Maintaining discipline in so motley a crew as the Legion is rather a rasping process, and Sergeant Morlae was born disqualified for diplomatic service. Future reunions of La Légion are likely to lack the sweet placidity which