

LES CHEVALIERS D'ANTAN.

TWENTY YEARS AGO, Ronnie Challoner, the then British Consul of the Riviera, was mentioning among friends he had located the grave in Menton of a great English artist—Aubrey Beardsley by name. Ronnie's words did not fall on deaf ears: two Monte Carlo fellow-artists—John and Zoe—got a most brilliant idea, and set to work.

That is how one beautifully sunny spring morning a bunch of connoisseurs gathered by the side of a worn-out stone grave on the stroke of noon on the heights of Menton graveyard, in close proximity to the so many army men buried there.

Ever since, on the very day, at the very hour, the very same people get together around the very same grave. In manus tuas Domine commendo spiritum meum. A short prayer is said by Richard The Scholar (the Consul's son), and then the inevitable moment of silence follows, ended, on the stroke of the clock, only by the handful of kind, mild words of John Pelling, of The Royal Academy of Arts. An agape, midday or evening as the case may be, completes the ceremony.

This ritual has been going on unchanged for now close to a quarter century. With mostly the same people. There is also a Maid Marion M. H. to discipline the twelve or so disciples and their corresponding convives.

During those few hundred minutes we all enter another world—un monde de recueillement bon-viveur, with the only items missing being the mediaeval armours and the other romantic paraphernalia. A day when absolutely nothing is committed to paper: even our own signatures in the book of honour are becoming works of art, in black and white...all in black and white...

The precise day? Un secret de Polichinelle.
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