

MAGOG RIVER.

A flood there is that flows and falls,
Where elms their pendant branches lean,
Or high above its rocky walls
The firs are ever green.

From Memphremagog's burnished skein
Of silver, tangled in the hills,
Its downward leaping course is ta'en
Amid the roar of mills.

Not thus, of old, the red man knew
The happy Magog, wild and free,
When flood to flood the waters grew,
Rejoicing to the sea.

The rise of trout, the dip of wing,
Its own glad song to rock and glen,
Or stealthy tread of some wild thing
Alone disturbed it then.

And yet the River seems to feel,
Though bound in traffic's prosy ways,
And harnessed to the creaking wheel,
The joy of Savage days.

And ever more the poet stream,
That chafes like Pegasus in pound,
Renews its old, delightful dream
While all the mills go round.

And laughs from rock to rock along,
Or rests within its little lake,
Fair as the iris of a song
The mists of echo make.

And thence again with eager shout
Takes up its winsome, bonnie way,
As graceful as the bream and trout
That in its waters play.

Till, leaping down from higher lands,
It joins St. Francis' broader tide,
Where Sherbrooke in her beauty stands
The wedded streams beside.

With spindle's hum and shuttle's noise,
The foundries clang, the forges flame;
Here toil is kind and men rejoice
And bless the Magog's name.

"Even thus," I cry, "the humble bard,
Who, fain would only shout and sing,
Must turn, to win the world's regard,
And do some useful thing."

"Nor yet withhold his tuneful voice,
But sweeter labor with a strain,
Whose tones shall linger and rejoice
When he forgets his pain."

Sherbrooke, Dec. 10th, 1883.

BENJ. S. PARKER.

THE SILVER HATCHET.

A TALE OF THE BLACK ART.

On the third of December, 1861, Dr. Otto von Hopstein, Regius Professor of Comparative Anatomy of the University of Buda-Pesth, and Curator of the Academic Museum, was murdered within a stone-throw of the entrance to the college quadrangle.

Besides the eminent position of the victim and his popularity among both students and townfolk, there were other circumstances which excited public interest very strongly, and drew general attention throughout Austria and Hungary to this murder. The Pesther Abendblatt of the following day had an article upon it, which may still be consulted by the curious, and from which I translate a few passages giving a succinct account of the circumstances under which the crime was committed, and the peculiar features in the case which puzzled the Hungarian police.

"It appears," said that very excellent paper, "that Professor von Hopstein left the university about half-past four in the afternoon, in order to meet the train which is due from Vienna at three minutes after five. He was accompanied by his old and dear friend, Herr Wilhelm Schlessinger, sub-curator of the museum and privat-docent of chemistry. The object of these two gentlemen in meeting this particular train was to receive the legacy bequeathed by Graf von Schullings to the University of Buda-Pesth. It is well-known that this unfortunate nobleman, whose tragic fate is still fresh in the recollection of the public, left his unique collection of mediæval weapons, as well as several priceless black-letter editions, to enrich the already celebrated museum of his Alma Mater. The worthy professor was too much of an enthusiast in such matters to intrust the reception or care of this valuable legacy to any subordinate, and, with the assistance of Herr Schlessinger, he succeeded in removing the whole collection from the train, and stowing it away in a light cart which had been lent by the university authorities. Most of the books and more fragile articles were packed in cases of pine wood, but many of the weapons were simply done round with straw, so that considerable labor was involved in moving them all. The professor was so nervous, however, lest any of them should be injured that he refused to allow any of the railway employés (Eisenbahn-diener) to assist. Every article was carried across the platform by Herr Schlessinger, and handed to Professor von Hopstein in the cart, who packed it away. When everything was in, the two gentlemen, still faithful to their charge, drove back to the university, the professor being in excellent spirits, and not a little proud of the physical exertion which he had shown himself capable of. He made some joking allusion to it to Reinmaul, the janitor, who, with his friend Schiffer, a Bohemian Jew, met the cart on its return, and unloaded the contents. Leaving his curiosities safe in the store-room and locking the door, the Professor handed the key to his sub-curator, and, bidding every one good-evening, departed in the direction of his lodgings.

Schlessinger took a last look to reassure himself that all was right, and also went off, leaving Reinmaul and his friend Schiffer smoking in the janitor's lodge.

"At eleven o'clock, about an hour and a half after von Hopstein's departure, a soldier of the Fourteenth Regiment of Jäger, passing the front of the university on his way to barracks, came upon the lifeless body of the professor lying a little way from the side of the road. He had fallen upon his face with both arms stretched out. His head was literally split in two halves by a tremendous blow, which it is conjectured, must have been struck from behind, there remaining a peaceful smile upon the old man's face, as if he had been still dwelling upon his new archaeological acquisition when death had overtaken him. There is no other mark of violence upon the body except a bruise over the left patella, caused probably by the fall. The most mysterious part of the affair is that the professor's purse, containing forty-three gulden, and his valuable watch, have been untouched. Robbery, cannot, therefore have been the incentive to the deed, unless the assassins were disturbed before they could complete their work.

"This idea is negated by the fact that the body must have lain at least an hour before any one discovered it. The whole affair is wrapped in mystery. Dr. Langemann, the eminent medico-jurist, has pronounced that the wound is such as might have been inflicted by a heavy sword-bayonet wielded by a powerful arm. The police are extremely reticent upon the subject, and it is suspected that they are in possession of a clew which may lead to important results."

Thus far the Pesther Abendblatt. The researches of the police failed, however, to throw the least glimmer of light upon the matter. There was absolutely no trace of the murderer, nor could any amount of ingenuity invent any reason which could have induced any one to commit the dreadful deed. The deceased professor was a man so wrapped in his own studies and pursuits that he lived apart from the world, and had certainly never raised the slightest animosity in any human breast. It must have been some fiend, some savage, who loved blood for its own sake, who struck the merciless blow.

Though the officials were unable to come to any conclusions upon the matter, popular suspicion was not long in pitching upon a scapegoat. In the first published accounts of the murder the name of one Schiffer had been mentioned as having remained with the janitor after the professor's departure. This man was a Jew, and Jews have never been popular in Hungary. A cry was at once raised for Schiffer's arrest; but as there was not the slightest grain of evidence against him, the authorities very properly refused to consent to so arbitrary a proceeding. Reinmaul, who was an old and most respected citizen, declared solemnly that Schiffer was with him until the startled cry of the soldier had caused them both to run out to the scene of the tragedy. No one ever dreamed of implicating Reinmaul in such a matter; but still, it was rumored that his ancient and well-known friendship for Schiffer might have induced him to tell a falsehood in order to screen him. Popular feeling ran very high upon the subject, and there seemed a danger of Schiffer's being mobbed in the street, when an incident occurred which threw a very different light upon the matter.

On the morning of the twelfth of December, just nine days after the mysterious murder of the professor, Schiffer, the Bohemian Jew, was found lying in the north-western corner of the Grand Platz, stone dead, and so mutilated that he was hardly recognizable. His head was cloven open in very much the same way as that of Von Hopstein, and his body exhibited numerous deep gashes, as if the murderer had been so carried away and transported with fury that he had continued to hack the lifeless body. Snow had fallen heavily the day before, and was lying at least a foot deep all over the square; some had fallen during the night, too, as was evidenced by a thin layer lying like a winding-sheet over the murdered man. It was hoped at first this circumstance might assist in giving a clew by enabling the footsteps of the assassin to be traced; but the crime had been committed, unfortunately, in a place much frequented during the day, and there were innumerable tracks in every direction. Beside, the newly-fallen snow had blurred the footsteps to such an extent that it would have been impossible to draw trustworthy evidence from them.

In this case there was exactly the same impenetrable mystery and absence of motive which had characterized the murder of Professor von Hopstein. In the dead man's pocket there was found a note-book containing a considerable sum in gold, and several very valuable bills, but no attempt had been made to rifle him. Supposing that any one to whom he had lent money (and this was the first idea which occurred to the police) had taken this means of evading his debt, it was hardly conceivable that he would have left such a valuable spoil untouched. Schiffer lodged with a widow named Gruga, at 49 Marie Theresa strasse, and the evidence of his landlady and her children showed that he had remained shut up in his room the whole of the preceding day in a state of deep dejection, caused by the suspicion which the populace had fastened upon him. She had heard him go out about eleven o'clock at night for his last and fatal walk, and as he had a latch-key she had gone to bed without waiting for him. His object in choosing such a late hour for a ramble obviously was that he did not consider himself safe if recognized in the streets.

The occurrence of this second murder so shortly after the first threw not only the town of Buda-Pesth, but the whole of Hungary into a terrible state of excitement, and even of terror. Vague dangers seemed to hang over the head of every man. The only parallel to this intense feeling was to be found in our own country at the time of the Williams murders described by De Quincy. There were so many resemblances between the cases of Von Hopstein and of Schiffer that no one could doubt that there existed a connection between the two. The absence of object and of robbery, the utter want of any clew to the assassin, and lastly, the ghastly nature of the wounds, evidently inflicted by the same or a similar weapon, all pointed in one direction. Things were in this state when the incidents which I am now about to relate occurred, and in order to make them intelligible I must lead up to them from a fresh point of departure.

Otto von Schlegel was a younger son of the old Silesian family of that name. His father had originally destined him for the army, but at the advice of his teachers, who saw the surprising talent of the youth, had sent him to the University of Buda-Pesth to be educated in medicine. Here young Schlegel carried everything before him, and promised to be one of the most brilliant graduates turned out for many a year. Though a hard reader, he was no book-worm, but an active powerful young fellow, full of animal spirits and vivacity, and extremely popular among his fellow-students.

The New-Year examinations were at hand, and Schlegel was working hard—so hard that even the strange murders in the town, and the general excitement in men's minds, failed to turn his thoughts from his studies. Upon Christmas eve, when every house was illuminated, and the roar of drinking-songs came from the Bierkeller in the Student quarter, he refused the many invitations to roystering suppers which were showered upon him, and went off with his books under his arm to the rooms of Leopold Strauss, to work with him into the small hours of the morning.

Strauss and Schlegel were bosom friends. They were both Silesians, and had known each other from boyhood. Their affection had become proverbial in the University. Strauss was almost as distinguished a student as Schlegel, and there had been many a tough struggle for academic honors between the two fellow-countrymen, which had only served to strengthen their friendship by a bond of mutual respect. Schlegel admired the dogged pluck and never-failing good temper of his old playmate; while the latter considered Schlegel, with his many talents and brilliant versatility, the most accomplished of mortals.

The friends were still working together, the one reading from a volume on anatomy, the other holding a skull and marking off the various parts mentioned in the text, when the deep-toned bell of St. Gregory's church struck the hour of midnight.

"Hark to that!" said Schlegel, snapping up the book and stretching out his long legs toward the cherry fire. "Why it's Christmas morning, old friend! May it not be the last that we spend together?"

"May we have passed all these confounded examinations before another one comes?" answered Strauss. "But, see here, Otto, one bottle of wine will not be amiss. I have laid one up on purpose;" and with a smile on his honest south German face, he pulled out a long-necked bottle of Rhenish from among a pile of books and bones in the corner.

"It is a night to be comfortable indoors," said Otto von Schlegel, looking out at the showy landscape; "for 'tis bleak and bitter enough outside. Good health, Leopold!"

"Lobe hoch!" replied his companion. "It is a comfort indeed to forget sphenoid bones and ethmoid bones, if it be but for a moment. And what is the news of the corps, Otto? Has Graub fought the Swabian?"

"They fight to-morrow," said Von Schlegel. "I fear that our man will lose his beauty, for he is short in the arm. Yet activity and skill may do much for him. They say his hanging guard is perfection."

"And what else is the news among the students?" asked Strauss.

"They talk, I believe, of nothing but the murders. But I have worked hard of late, as you know, and hear little of the gossip."

"Have you had time," inquired Strauss, "to look over the books and the weapons which our dear professor was so concerned about the very day he met his death? They say they are well worth a visit."

"I saw them to-day," said Schlegel, lighting his pipe. "Reinmaul, the janitor, showed me over the store-room and I helped to label many of them from the original catalogue of Graf Schullings's museum. As far as we can see, there is but one article missing of all the collection."

"One missing!" exclaimed Strauss, "that would grieve old Von Hopstein's ghost. Is it anything of value?"

"It is described as an antique hatchet, with a head of steel and a handle of chased silver. We have applied to the railway company, and no doubt it will be found."

"I trust so," echoed Strauss; and the conversation drifted off into other channels. The fire was burning low and the bottle of Rhenish was empty before the two friends rose from their chairs and Von Schlegel prepared to depart.

"Ugh! It's a bitter night!" he said, standing on the doorstep and folding his cloak round him.

"Why, Leopold, you have your cap on. You are not going out, are you?"

"Yes, I am with you," said Strauss, shutting the door behind him. "I feel heavy," he continued, taking his friend's arm and walking down the street with him. "I think a walk as far as your lodgings, in the crisp frosty air, is just the thing to set me right."

The two students went down Stephen strasse together and crossed Julien Platz, talking on a variety of topics. As they passed the corner of the Grand Platz, however, where Schiffer had been found dead, the conversation turned naturally upon the murder.

"That's where they found him," remarked Von Schlegel, pointing to the fatal spot.

"Perhaps the murderer is near us now," said Strauss. "Let us hasten on."

They both turned to go, when Von Schlegel gave a sudden cry of pain and stooped down.

"Something has cut through my boot!" he cried; and feeling about with his hand in the snow, he pulled out a small glistening battle-axe, made apparently entirely of metal. It had been lying with the blade turned slightly upward, so as to cut the foot of the student when he trod upon it.

"The weapon of the murderer!" he ejaculated.

"The silver hatchet from the museum!" cried Strauss in the same breath.

There could be no doubt that it was both the one and the other. There could not be two such curious weapons, and the character of the wounds was just such as would be inflicted by a similar instrument. The murderer had evidently thrown it aside after committing the dreadful deed, and it had lain concealed in the snow some twenty metres from the spot ever since. It was extraordinary that of all the people who had passed and repassed none had discovered it; but the snow was deep and it was a little way off the beaten track.

"What are we to do with it?" said Von Schlegel, holding it in his hand. He shuddered as he noticed by the light of the moon that the head of it was all dabbled with dark-brown stains.

"Take it to the commissary of police," suggested Strauss.

"He'll be in bed, now. Still, I think you are right. But it is nearly four o'clock. I will wait until morning and take it round before breakfast. Meanwhile I must carry it with me to my lodgings."

"That is the best plan," said his friend; and they went on together talking off the remarkable find which they had made. When they came to Schlegel's door, Strauss said good-bye, refusing an invitation to go in and walked briskly down the street in the direction of his own lodgings.

Schlegel was stooping down putting the key into the lock, when a strange change came over him. He trembled violently and dropped the key from his quivering fingers. His right hand closed convulsively round the handle of the silver hatchet and his eye followed the retreating figure of his friend with a vindictive glare. In spite of the coldness of the night the perspiration streamed down his face. For a moment he seemed to struggle with himself, holding his hand up to his throat as if he were suffocating. Then, with crouching body and rapid noiseless steps, he crept after his late companion.

Strauss was plodding sturdily along through the snow, humming snatches of a silent song and little dreaming of the dark figure which pursued him. At the Grand Platz it was about forty yards behind him; at the Julien Platz it was twenty; in Stephen strasse it was ten, and gaining on him with panther-like rapidity. Already it was almost within arm's length of the unsuspecting man and the hatchet glittered coldly in the moonlight, when some slight noise must have reached Strauss's ears, for he faced suddenly round upon his pursuer. He started and uttered an exclamation, as his eye met the white set face, with flashing eyes and clenched teeth, which seemed to be suspended in the air behind him.

"What, Otto!" he exclaimed, recognizing his friend. "Art thou ill? You look pale. Come with me to my—Ah! hold, you madman, hold! Drop that axe! Drop it, I say, or by heaven I'll choke you!"

Von Schlegel had thrown himself upon him with a wild cry and uplifted weapon, but the student was stout-hearted and resolute. He rushed inside the sweep of the hatchet and caught his assailant round the waist, narrowly escaping a blow which would have cloven his head. The two staggered for a moment in deadly wrestle, Schlegel endeavoring to shorten his weapon; but Strauss with a desperate wrench managed to bring him to the ground, and they rolled together in the snow, Strauss clinging to the other's right arm, and shouting frantically for assistance. It was as well that he did so, for Schlegel would certainly have succeeded in freeing his arm had it not been for the arrival of two stalwart gendarmes attracted by the uproar. Even then the three of them found it difficult to overcome the maniacal strength of Schlegel, and they were utterly unable to wrench the silver hatchet from his grasp. One of the gendarmes, however, had a coil of rope round his waist, with which he rapidly secured the student's arms to his sides. In this way, half pushed, half dragged, he was conveyed, in spite of furious cries and frenzied struggles, to the central police station.

Strauss assisted in coercing his former friend, and accompanied the police to the station, protesting loudly at the same time against any unnecessary violence, and giving it as his opinion that a lunatic asylum would be a more fitting