

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

STUDENT LIFE AT HEIDELBERG.

It was towards the close of the summer term of 1862, that the student world of this celebrated university town was pleasantly excited by the unexpected intelligence of an eccentric old bachelor having left them a rich legacy. The will expressly stated that the money was first to be applied in liquidation of the debts in connection with the Prussian corps, of which the donor had once been a member, and the remainder devoted to purposes of amusement.

It was the year for celebrating the *Stiftungs Commers*, a festival commemorating the founding of their corps—usually held every three or five years—and this opportune gift enabled them to make preparations on a scale of unusual magnificence. The following announcement was hailed with every evidence of satisfaction.

"HEIDELBERG am Dienstag den 5 August, werden abends bei Gelegenheit des Stiftungs-festes des Corps Saxo-Borussia, die Schloss-raume bengalisch beleuchtet werden."

"At Heidelberg, on Tuesday, August 5, the students of the Saxo-Borussian corps will celebrate their Stiftungs festival by illuminating the castle with Bengal fire."

Of all the Rhineland castles, none are better adapted for the purposes of such a display than this far-famed Schloss, which still retains evidences of wonderful architectural beauty, although, in the tide of war which swept through Germany, every worst fate had overtaken it: but sacking, pillaging, burning, and finally its destruction by lightning in 1718—since which time it has never been rebuilt or tenanted—have still left to this ancient stately residence of the Electors Palatine enough of preservation to give the visitor a concise idea of its primal splendours. As it proudly crowns the hill overlooking the town, the slender weather-stained towers, heightened in effect by the sweeping forest line of brown and olive green that forms a background, one feels that through all Rhenish Germany a more romantic picture than this royal ruin could not be found, for the yawning apertures which left unheeded, have slowly levelled with the ground the grandest seigniorial châteaux of that vine-clad land, are here but partially visible. From the town it is reached by a carriage-road skirting the suburbs, and leading to the court-yard entrance in the rear, and also by a broad pathway that winds up the hill-side in front beneath an arched avenue of trees, where, at intervals, benches are placed in such close proximity to the pretty, tempting fruit stalls, that the weary loiterer is easily beguiled into eating unlimited bunches of their delicious grapes—an amount, to English ideas, altogether out of proportion to the insignificant number of little kreutzers tendered in return. Following steadily up their toilsome, but well-worn track, through a narrow vine-covered court, with numerous turnings to the right and left, the visitor eventually emerges on a broad terrace stretching along the entire front façade of the castle. Leaning over the stone parapet, and looking down in that fair scene far below, one ceases to be astonished at the pleasure-seeking portion—and they seemed to be the majority—of the townfolk for preferring this elevated plateau for their summer evening lounge. And picturesque enough they make it on such occasions, for the place is fairly alive with them as they crowd along in their bright-coloured costumes; student's conspicuous in their corps colours; rosy-cheeked German girls looking all the enjoyment they were getting; languid English ladies; officers in bright uniforms; laughing squads of merry-hearted peasants; children and foreigners of every hue and clime. They mingle and stream up and down the broad terrace, all good-natured and happy in their own way, while above the pleasant hum of their voices floats the strains of a German band concealed in a distant part of the ruin. Standing alone and far above every other building it looks grandly and serenely down in the far stretching valley lying at its base, where the silver reaches of the Neckar gleam under those antique looking bridges for a moment and then slip silently away over the plain between sloping vineyards, and beside dreamy little dories with red-tiled roofs and brown bellies, until the purple distance enfolds it.

In addition to the Founder's Festival, which is the great event of the year, the students, who average 800 in number, keep four minor Commers. The *Antritt*, or entrance, is their first assembling after the spring and autumn holidays; and the *Abchied*, or Farewell, at the closing of each term. On such occasions a *Fackelzug*, or torch-light procession, through the town and the evening spent carousing at their *Kneipe*, is the usual programme. At some of their ceremonies the corps unite in full force to the number of several hundreds, dressed in costumes of the last century. Accompanied by military bands, and waving aloft torches and banners, they march through the town with the Red Fisherman at their head.

This individual is of the greatest importance among them, being the *Stiefel-fuchs* (servant) of each corps, and, as such, wearing a cap composed of their different colours—green, Westphalian; white, Prussian; blue, Rhenanian, and so on through the whole. The principal management of their duels, besides every description of merry-making devolves on this important personage, who is as indispensable as the main actors themselves. The first who bore the title was the son of a fisherman with red hair. His death was deeply lamented by the students, but they immediately selected a member of the same family, also remarkable for vigor and strength, to fill the position. The name and style of his predecessor was enjoined upon him, and since then each successor has borne the title of "Red Fisherman." The first time the present writer was favoured with a glimpse of this Heidelberg celebrity, was under somewhat peculiar circumstances. The students have an amusement called *Kneipe*, which consists in profuse beer-drinking, singing, and loud merry-making generally. The *Gast Haus zum Reisenstein* was the favourite resort of the Prussian corps for this purpose. On fine summer evenings, however, they frequently held their *Kneipe* on the hill above, which is beautifully wooded and commands a lovely and extensive view of mountain and valley as far as Mannheim, with glimpses of the Rhine winding through the plain, and in the extreme distance the forest of the Odenwald. We were invited on one of these occasions to join a party who had determined to be unseen witnesses of this summer *Kneipe*. After passing a garden in the Anlager and mounting many flights of steps, leading from terrace to terrace, we came to a steep narrow path winding through the wood, and at last found ourselves in a small open spot about two hundred yards from the students' encampment, and separated only from it by a wooden railing and some tall trees. We could have fancied the scene before us a representation in the Mannheim opera, from some forest robber piece. About fifty or sixty students were assembled, some seated at long deal tables, drinking beer, others standing around in groups or lying in the grass. A lurid glare from numberless torches lit the scene. At a short distance was stationed a band. Most of the students wore their embroidered *Kneipe* dresses, others were in their shirt sleeves, but whatever the costume there was no mistaking their thorough enjoyment of the performance. Sky rockets and Roman candles, interspersed with red and green Bengal fire from time to time, lit up the crowd of faces with a vivid brilliancy. At intervals, when the band struck up some popular student ballad, the entire company swelled the chorus. Many of the airs were plaintive, some monotonous, but whatever their characteristic the effect in the still night was pleasant. In the intervals between the music there was a constant clinking of glasses, while healths were being drunk—one student challenging another to drink the contents of the horn—three schoppen—off at once, which he did amid loud applause, turning the horn upside down as a proof of none remaining. The Red Fisherman, with open shirt front and rolled-up sleeves, was meanwhile trimming torches and keeping in order the dogs who shared in the general excitement. As all the corps were represented the fisherman's duties were correspondingly arduous. As the bells in the church towers were ringing out eleven we were making the best of our way down to the town, the distant sounds of revelry accompanying us for some time. By midnight the hill was once more silent and in gloom. Many curious customs attending these ceremonies have of late years fallen into disuse. A singular usage formerly prevailed previous to the Farewell Commers. On these occasions a few students from each corps went about the town with peacock's feathers in their caps, soliciting donations from the inhabitants to aid them in celebrating their festivals with greater display. In the year 1862, to which I have already alluded, the scene was one of universal magnificence. The Commers, which usually lasts two or three days, began on Monday, the procession—a magnificent one too—starting from the Reisenstein. All the students wore new cloth costumes in the style of the eighteenth century, and seemed to enjoy the effect of their appearance wonderfully. It certainly was a brilliant spectacle, and one they might well be excused feeling pride in. The procession in all the dignity of banners and insignia frequently came to a stand in the midst of a rush of admiring spectators composed of people in every grade of society and from nearly every country under the sun. Dashing equipages whose fair occupants excitedly waved white handkerchiefs, jostled unbecomingly against cabs full of night-seers as eager as themselves; mounted students with gleaming schlagers tried in vain to move back the motley mob of foot-passengers; English flunkeys in elaborate liveries gesticulated in a frantic way at the obstructions before their vehicles; and the rattle of drums, the bursts of military music, and the laughter and shouts of the students, filled up a scene scarcely to be surpassed for animation and effect. The crowd gradually fell off as the procession neared the town limits, and when it reached the bend of the pretty country road leading to the romantic

village of Neckar-Steinach, where the Heidelberg students usually celebrate their Commers, they went off at a rapid pace and were speedily out of sight. At this picturesque village they passed that day and the following one in festivity. The return on Tuesday was the triumph. The inhabitants had had due notice, and by nine o'clock the Heidelberg world had stationed itself on the Neckar awaiting the return of the Prussians. It was moonlight, and beautiful as the Queen of night looked, rising slowly over the castle in a sky of cloudless blue, we could on that night contentedly have dispensed with her brilliancy. Suddenly the firing of guns announced that the illuminated steamer carrying our entertainers had left Neckar-Steinach, and in a moment more was visible in the distance. Rockets flashed up into the still air from different stations, and a red Bengal fire lighted the Molkenkur. The private gardens and terrace of Dr. C— across the river were in the next moment all ablaze with Chinese lanterns. Expectation was now at its height as a gleam of light flashed nearer and nearer along the unruffled surface of the river. Hundreds of coloured lamps decorated every part of the tiny vessel, and as she drew up opposite the castle, a rocket shot up from the deck—a signal for the grand finale. Instantly, as though by magic, the entire front of the grand old Schloss was in a glow of red light. It was a sight to which words do but poor justice. Every portion of its minutest tracery was distinctly visible in this wonderful crimson light. It was like the cloud castles one sees sometimes in the sky on a summer evening, only in this case the castle was perfectly defined. For the first moments a breathless silence wrapped the people—it seemed altogether such a miracle—but presently a low murmur of admiration ran from mouth to mouth, which in another instant had burst into a tremendous shout of applause, and the students' triumph was complete. Music and song waved louder and clearer as the fairy bark swept under the illuminated bridge and was lost to sight while the night wind carried back their refrain.

"Fuchs, hei ras sa sa
Die Preussen sind da,
Die Preussen sind lustig
Sie rufen Hurrah!"

G. H. M.

Montreal, March, 1871.

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HUGH DAMER'S LAST LEGER.

BY MISS M. E. BRADDON.

CHAPTER II.

"What's to be thought of him? Does the rumour hold for true that he's so full of gold?"

The weather was lovely, the country looking very fair in the subdued glory of early autumn, as the express rattled me down to Doncaster. Here a dog-cart and fast-trotting roan waited to convey me to Churleigh, where I arrived just in time to hear the dressing-bell ring out cheerily from an open bell-tower, after an hour and a half's spin through a rich pastoral country.

The house was an old one, a sombre, red-brick pile of masonry, of the Tudor period, with a wide moat, where carp and dace flashed through the deep, dusky water, under the shadow of great yews; a rare, old-fashioned place, with noble gardens set in a wide expanse of level meadow land, that might have been fairly called a park. Within, the dark oak panelling and ponderous furniture, quaint old cabinets and bureaus, buffets and chests of carved ebony and chestnut wood, oak, and walnut, had a delightful old-world aspect. There were rare old tapestries, too, silk-embroidered hangings, chairs and sofas in ancient worsted work, which testified to the industry of past generations of feminine Damers. Everything bore the fashion of an age that was gone, and there was a sombre charm about the place which was, to my mind, perfect in its way. I told Hugh how much I liked his birthplace, and praised the taste which had preserved its original character. He sighed heavily as he answered me—"Yes," he said moodily, "it's a dear old place, and I am weak enough to love it. I can remember sitting at my mother's feet in some of these old rooms, or on her knees, with her arms round me, many a quiet twilight when my father was away in London. There was a great love between us two, and nothing that she cared for has been touched since she died. Her favourite flowers still grow in the garden—homely, old-fashioned flowers, that my gardeners would like to do away with—though it is fifteen years since her hand gathered one of them. Yes, I have need to love Churleigh, Fred, God forgive me!"

His tone alarmed me. There was such a depth of bitterness and self-reproach in his utterance of those last words.

"Hugh," I said eagerly, "there is something wrong with you. I am sure of it. I saw the change in your face that night we met at the club? Why won't you trust me, dear boy?"

You call me your friend. Tell me the worst, Hugh. What is it that has gone wrong?"

"Everything," he answered, with a groan. "It's the old story, Fred; the old story of the rake's progress. Only a modern version, you know, with a little less vice than there is in Hogarth's renowned panorama, but every whit as much folly. Yes, Fred, congratulate me upon my fair old home—the roof-tree that has sheltered my race for a dozen generations, the house my mother loved. Give me joy of a birthplace which an English gentleman may be fairly proud to call his own. The man who sweeps the crossing at the corner of Pall-mall has about as much right to call himself master of Churleigh as I have. It is all a miserable *simulacrum*, Fred; a mockery and a delusion. I don't say that the footmen and grooms are bailiffs in disguise, but they might just as well be that. It would make the case no worse."

"Then you are ruined, Hugh?"

"Irretrievably."

"In Heaven's name, how has it all gone—your fortune? It was a large one, wasn't it?"

"A very fair inheritance, though my father was somewhat wild in his day, and spent a good deal. How has it gone, Fred? Who knows? I, the least of all mortal men. It has gone—*somehow*. I have lived much too fast to count the cost of life. I don't think there has been much wasted on actual vice, unless you call gambling vicious; but it has all gone. I drove a four-in-hand for two or three seasons, and that kind of thing leads to a good deal of outlay in the way of Richmond dinners and diamond bracelets—there are some people you can hardly ask to dinner without introducing a diamond bracelet as an element of the dessert—and I have had a weakness for steam yachts, but those are minor details. I have enjoyed a curious sequence of ill-luck upon the Turf for the last two years. That may have something to do with it."

"I should think it rather likely," I answered, hopelessly. "But is there no chance of redemption, Hugh? A rich marriage, for instance?"

"No, Fred, I am not base enough for that. I couldn't offer my ruined fortunes to a rich woman. I couldn't sink to the position of a dependent on my wife. If I were in love with a penniless girl I wouldn't mind asking her to share my poverty. There is always something that a man can do. I might emigrate, and devote my energies to cattle-breeding far away in the bush. Unhappily, the only woman I care for is burdened with a large fortune—a fortune that must needs make an impassable barrier between herself and me."

"But, my dear boy, this is Quixotic folly. If the lady cares for you, why should you not redeem your fortunes by means of her wealth? It is a woman's proudest privilege to make that kind of sacrifice."

"And a man's deepest degradation to accept it. No, Fred, it can't be done. Beyond which, even were I sordid enough to desire such a thing, the lady is not her own mistress. She has a father, who would never forgive her for an imprudent marriage. No, Fred, I am done for—bar one remote contingency."

"And what is that?" I asked anxiously.

"The success of my book for the Leger week. I stand to win something enormous—something that would set me on my legs again—give me a fresh start in life, in short. With that sum at my command I could pay off my most pressing engagements, clear this place of its mortgages, and, with a few years of retirement and economy, drift back into a very comfortable income. In that case I should not fear to ask Laura Dashwood to be my wife."

"Laura Dashwood! A very charming name."

"Yes, and a still more charming girl. However, you will see her to-morrow. She is only a manufacturer's daughter, I must tell you. George Dashwood is a self-made man—one of the richest men in Yorkshire, and a trifle pompous on the score of his money, or his success. But he is not a bad fellow by any means. And Laura is the dearest girl in England, to my mind."

"Of course. An only daughter, I presume?"

"An only child. I wish with all my heart she had half a score of brothers and sisters. But I suppose we'd better get back to the others now, old fellow."

It was late on the evening of my arrival. Lights were shining from a score of open windows, and the mingled sounds of music and laughter rang out upon the tranquil September night. Damer and I had wandered away from the house when the men left the dining-room, and had enjoyed this confidential talk as we strolled with our cigars on the broad gravel walk by the side of the moat."

The house was almost full already. There was a Belgravian matron, with two pretty stylish-looking daughters, a stately husband, who was a baronet and a member of Parliament, devoted to the Conservative interests, and seldom opening his mouth in a conversational way except to talk politics. There were a good many young men, all more or less of the turf, turlly; and there was a county mat-