

The Left-hand Glove; or, Circumstantial Evidence

On the summit of a hill near Muhlbach, a small town of Rhenish Prussia, there is a chapel dedicated to St. Joseph. Being a place of pilgrimage, this chapel is on festival days visited by many of the inhabitants of the surrounding country; but on other days of the year it seldom happens that the sound of a human footstep disturbs the sacred solitude.

Very early on the morning of the 19th July, 1818, a peasant proceeding to work, was wending his way along a narrow path at the foot of the hill. His dog was running before him. Suddenly the animal stopped short, and in another moment darted off rapidly in the direction of the chapel. The dog soon returned to his master, howling piteously, and betraying unequivocal signs of terror. The peasant quickened his pace, and turned directly into the path leading to the chapel. On coming within sight of the portal of the little edifice, he was horror-struck to behold, stretched on the steps, the lifeless body of a young man.

The terrified peasant hurried to the neighboring village with the tidings of what he had seen. The news spread with the swiftness of lightning, and in a very short space of time the magistrate of the district, accompanied by the village doctor and schoolmaster, and followed by a crowd of country people, was ascending the hill in the direction of the chapel.

The body was found on the spot and in the position described by the peasant. It was the corpse of a very handsome young man; part of the clothing, viz. the coat and waistcoat, had been taken off, and beneath the shirt there was found a piece of cloth of a bright red color, apparently the fragment of a shawl. The piece of cloth was laid in several folds over the region of the heart. It was fastened by a band of fine lawn or cambric which was rolled round the body, and the whole was firmly fixed by a mass of congealed blood. On the careful removal of these bandages, there was discovered a deep wound, which had divided the carotid artery. The deceased wore light-colored pantaloons, boots with spurs, and on one of his fingers was a massive gold signet ring. The ground round the spot where the body lay exhibited no trace of any struggle; but the prints of footsteps, partially obliterated, were perceptible. These marks were traced to a neighboring wood, and in the direction of an eminence which towered above the trees, and whose summit was crowned by the ruins of the old castle of Ottenberg—a place which the neighboring country people believed was haunted.

Whilst the doctor and others were engaged in examining the body, some of the rustic crowd mustered courage to trace the footprints, which apparently led to the ruined castle—their superstitious fears being doubtless lulled by the conviction that ghosts are not prone to wander in the bright sunshine of a July morning. One of the party was soon seen running back to the chapel in breathless haste, announcing that the scene of the crime was discovered. The magistrate proceeded to the ruins of the castle, and what he saw left no room to doubt that the murder had actually been committed there. The floor of the spacious area (once the banqueting hall of the castle) was stained with blood. The walls, the table, and the seats, also presented similar stains. On the table were the remains of a repast, which had evidently been partaken of at no very distant date, for there were fragments of bread and fruit, and a broken bottle in which some wine still remained.

On further examination, deep prints of footsteps were perceived leading from the ruins of Ottenberg to the high road of Beking, in a direction quite opposite to that of the chapel. A little further on in the same track, was found a piece of red cloth; and on comparison it was ascertained to belong to the same shawl, a fragment of which had been used to staunch the wound of the victim. At the foot of a tree lay a lady's glove, nearly new, but stained with blood. Nothing more was discovered, and in the evening the body was interred in the village churchyard, after being throughout the day exposed to the public gaze.

On the following day, an innkeeper presented himself to the magistrate of the district. He had recognised in the murdered man a traveller who slept in his house on the night of the 15th of July, and who left early on the following morning. He knew neither the name nor the condition of the stranger; nor had he heard from whence he came, or whither he was going. The innkeeper observed that he had a gold watch and chain, a red morocco pocketbook, and a green silk purse; moreover, that he wore two rings, one of which he had recognised on the dead body.

An active inquiry was set on foot; but no circumstance of importance was brought to light, until about six weeks afterwards. The police then ascertained that a gentleman named Von Bergfeldt, who had been residing for some time at Coblenz, had suddenly disappeared. He came from Frankfort, and to all appearance possessed plenty of money. He had made several excursions to various parts of the adjacent country, and his journeys had extended as far as the mountains of the Vosges. An old soldier, who had been his servant for a number of years, and also the proprietor of a house which he had hired, came to Muhlbach; both had a perfect recollection of the watch and the two rings remarked by the innkeeper; the servant positively affirmed that the boots found on the dead body belonged to his master.

Several months elapsed, and public interest, which had been powerfully excited by this mysterious event, was gradually subsiding, when a gentleman of rank, travelling to the waters of Podewil, happened to pass through Muhlbach. Hearing of the murder, he was struck by the name of the victim—Bergfeldt being the name of one of the most ancient and noble families in Silesia. He knew their armorial bearings, and he expressed a wish to see the signet ring which had been found upon the body. The engraved coat-of-arms was identified with that of the Silesian Bergfeldts: viz., quarterly Sable and Azure, on a Chief Or, a Serpent between Two Bees.

The *Ober-Procurator* of Muhlbach lost no time in addressing a letter to the authorities of Breslau. An answer was speedily returned inclosing a letter signed Ferdinand von Bergfeldt, the writer of which described himself as being the second son of the old Baron Franz von Bergfeldt. He stated that his elder brother had, about two years previously, left home to make a tour in various parts of Europe, and that the family had received no intelligence of him for a very considerable time.

“Every circumstance,” pursued the writer of the letter, “leads to the supposition, that the victim of the recent murder is no other than my unfortunate brother. Our family has the greatest interest in elucidating this mystery, inasmuch as our patrimonial estates are entailed on heirs male. My brother was married, but he had separated from his wife, by whom he had a daughter, who died in infancy. I shall set out forthwith for Muhlbach.”

Ferdinand von Bergfeldt arrived at Muhlbach in December; he examined the effects of the

deceased, and the documents relative to the examination of witnesses. It appeared evident, beyond doubt, that his brother had perished by the hand of a murderer; but, nevertheless, it was requisite he should be provided with an attested certificate of his death, before he could take possession of the inheritance which would devolve on him as next heir, at the decease of his then very aged father.

He engaged the assistance of the advocate Schelnitz, a lawyer of justly reputed intelligence and activity; and with him he proceeded to Coblenz. The mystery of the case, the important interests involved in it, and the rank of the family, all contributed to stimulate the zeal of Schelnitz, and he speedily brought to light certain facts which promised to lead to the detection of the criminal.

Ferdinand and the lawyer visited the house which had been occupied by Edward von Bergfeldt at Coblenz. Seals had been affixed to all the drawers, trunks, &c., and, on a careful examination of the effects, there was found in the pocket of a coat a note written in French. The address had been torn off, but the note was as follows:—

“I grant the interview on condition of its being the last. Your threats can never intimidate me. I defend myself with the arms of virtue and honor. This is my last communication. Secret correspondence must not continue.”

C—

—.

“July 18th.”

As soon as Ferdinand von Bergfeldt perused this note, he felt convinced that he was on the right track for the discovery of the murderer.

“It has been conjectured,” observed he, “that robbery was the motive for taking my brother’s life—no such thing! I feel assured that the fatal blow was struck by a female hand—the same hand to which the glove belongs, and the same hand which traced this note. Every one of our family are aware that my brother did not behave well to his wife; and that his conduct caused them to separate shortly after their marriage.”

The active inquiry now set on foot brought to the knowledge of the magistrates various circumstances worthy of attention.

A country girl deposed that, whilst she was engaged in cutting wood in the neighborhood of the castle of Ottenberg, on the morning of the 16th of July, she had seen a gentleman in a hunting dress walking with a lady. She described the lady to have worn a straw bonnet, a bright-colored dress, and to have carried a parasol.

The keeper of the baths at Podewil, near Muhlbach, furnished testimony somewhat more important. He stated that, about noon on the 16th of July, a lady elegantly attired, but pale and evidently suffering from fatigue, came to the door of the bathing establishment, and wanted some person to tie a bandage round her right hand, which she said she had accidentally cut. The wife of the bath keeper washed and bandaged the wound. The cut was long, but not very deep, and appeared to have been inflicted with a knife. The lady requested to have a clean white

handkerchief, which was furnished to her; she left a ducat in payment, and went away hurriedly. An old man, dressed like a woodcutter, had been observed waiting for her at some distance, and, the lady having joined him, they went away together. From the evidence of a person living near the baths, it appeared that, being at work behind a hedge, he had heard a short colloquy between the lady and her guide. The former was weeping and appeared greatly distressed. The old man said to her:—

“In the name of Heaven, madam, be calm! Tears cannot recall the dead to life—from me you have nothing to fear—I will be silent—silent as the grave!”

These witnesses described the lady to have had a light-colored parasol, a straw bonnet trimmed with flowers, and a green silk dress.

Ferdinand von Bergfeldt now entertained no doubt that the investigation would speedily lead to a satisfactory result. In a letter, which he addressed to the magistrate of Muhlbach, he said:—

“We shall soon unravel the truth. We have the glove, and it will not be long ere we have the hand. It is a right-hand glove, and, on turning it inside out, I have made a discovery which has heretofore escaped observation. In the inside is written a name, part of which is obliterated, the letters *Henr*—*F*—*ke*, being all that are legible.” But was this the name of the wearer or the maker? With the view of solving this question, the glove was transmitted to an experienced agent, who had orders to spare no exertions for the elucidation of the fact.

At this juncture an unexpected circumstance intervened. A festival day was at hand, and in preparation for it the chapel of St. Joseph was swept and cleaned. The box destined for receiving donations for the poor was opened; within it was found a green silk purse, containing a considerable sum in gold and silver, together with a slip of paper, on which were written the following words.—“Give the dead man Christian burial, and Heaven will reward you!” It will be recollected that the innkeeper had seen a green silk purse in the hands of the stranger who had slept a night in his house. He was shown the purse found in the poor box, and he identified it as the same.

Meanwhile, Ferdinand von Bergfeldt received letters from Silesia, acquainting him with his father’s sudden death. He hurried home without delay. He was aware that, in the event of his brother Edward’s death being proved, it would be necessary that he should go immediately to Berlin to obtain the requisite authority for entering into possession of his inheritance. In this matter he counted on the support of his sister-in-law; as the widow would be entitled to an annuity much more considerable than the sum she had received as alimony since her separation from her husband.

Ferdinand von Bergfeldt was not on friendly terms with the family of his brother’s wife. Some overtures for effecting reconciliation between the husband and wife had been obstinately opposed by the father of the lady, General Count Hildenrath. This circumstance in no slight degree wounded the pride of the Bergfeldts.

On the 28th of June, 1819, Ferdinand arrived in Berlin, and he lost no time in visiting General Hildenrath, by whom he was not received in a very cordial manner. Edward's widow, Charlotte von Bergfeldt, was from home. Whilst Ferdinand was relating to the general all that he had learned respecting his brother's death, a carriage stopped at the door, and in a few moments Charlotte entered the drawing room. At sight of Ferdinand, who advanced to meet her with respectful interest, she turned deadly pale, staggered, and seemed on the point of falling, but as if by a sudden effort recovering her self-possession, she curtsied and withdrew. Ferdinand was vexed at this behavior, which he regarded as an unequivocal sign of animosity, and after a little further conversation with the general, he took his leave.

He subsequently saw Charlotte several times, and though she did not seek to avoid him, yet she behaved with coolness and reserve. Though she had just ground of complaint against her husband, yet she rendered the due tribute of regret for his sudden and unfortunate death. About the end of August, Ferdinand received a letter from Schelnitz, which was in substance as follows:

“I have some particulars to communicate, which appear to me to be of the utmost importance, and to which I beg your earnest attention. In the first place, I have to inform you that we have found *the left-hand glove*. The name Heinrich Finacke is legibly written in the inside. It is supposed to be the name of the manufacturer, and we have taken measures for ascertaining this fact. The glove was discovered in the following manner:—In the course of his investigations, the police agent, who had possession of the right-hand glove, showed it to a milliner of Muhlbach named Mademoiselle Enkel. A lady named Raumer, who was a customer of the milliner, happened to see the glove, and examined it attentively. This lady knew that I was engaged in investigating the affair of the murder at Ottenberg. Three days afterwards, Mademoiselle Raumer called on me and presented to me *the left-hand glove*. This lady is an intimate friend of the family of the Protestant Pastor Gaeben. She related to me that, one day whilst she was visiting the daughters of that clergyman, a discussion arose on some point of dress, and one of the young ladies having opened a drawer to search for something, accidentally drew out a glove, which fell at the feet of Madame Raumer. On picking it up, she perceived something written in the inside, and she mechanically read the name *Heinrich Finacke*.

“Where did you get this glove, my dear Caroline?” inquired Madame Raumer.

“From the *femme de chambre* of a lady who was here last summer from Berlin,” was the reply.

“I lost no time,” added Schelnitz, “in writing the Pastor Gaeben, and he called on me this morning, accompanied by his daughter Caroline. They were very uneasy lest the discovery of the glove, a circumstance in itself so trivial, should place them in an unpleasant position. I tried to dispel their apprehensions, and begged the young lady would tell me candidly how the glove came into her possession.

“She informed me that a young widow lady, Madame Weltheim, a resident of Berlin, had some time ago been on a visit to Baron Schonwald, at his castle near Muhlbach. Caroline, who was a good musician, frequently went to the castle to sing and accompany the lady on the pianoforte. When Madame Weltheim was about to leave the castle, Caroline assisted the *femme de*

chambre to pack up. In a small box filled with ribbons, flowers, and other trifles, the glove was found. Being an odd one, the lady's maid threw it on the ground as useless. Caroline, admiring the small size and elegant form of the glove, picked it up and said she would keep it as a memorial of Madame Weltheim. I am fully convinced," pursued Schelnitz, "that all the young lady has stated is true."

"You remember the letter written in French which was found among your brother's effects. Its signature was the letter C. Now I am informed that Madame Weltheim's *femme de chambre* was a French girl, and that her name was Cecile. You will, no doubt, be struck with this coincidence. Cecile is described as tall and slender; Caroline Gaeben is, on the contrary, of short stature. All that I can learn of Madame Weltheim is, that she is a lady of good family, and moves in the best society of Berlin."

It is strange, thought Ferdinand, when he had finished reading the letter, that Schelnitz should attach so much importance to coincidences which seem to me the mere result of chance. He went out to call on Count Hildenrath, with the intention of communicating to him what he had learned. The count was from home, but the countess, who had just arrived from the country, received him with great kindness. She was full of curiosity respecting the murder, and pressed Ferdinand to inform her of all the particulars.

"Your brother was buried near the spot where his body was found, I believe," said the lady.

"Yes, madame, his ashes repose in the little village churchyard, not far from Muhlbach."

"Muhlbach!" exclaimed the countess. "Oh! what would have been poor Charlotte's feelings had she known that. She was not far from Muhlbach at the time."

"How, madame! Was my sister-in-law near Muhlbach?"

"She was passing some time at the castle of Baron Schonwald, which is only a few leagues from Muhlbach. Don't you know Baron Schonwald? He is a very pleasant man, only so exceedingly fond of hunting. And the baroness—she is quite an oddity! In her youth she was one of the maids of honor to the Electress! There was no King of Saxony in those days. But everything is changed now; and, as I was observing a day or two ago to my friend Madame Schlichtegroll, I don't know what we have gained by all these changes!"

In this way the loquacious old lady gossiped for some time, unheeded by Ferdinand, who was absorbed in profound reflection.

"How!" thought he to himself; "Charlotte so near the scene of the crime, and *we* not know it! She and her father have been silent on a fact of which they ought to have apprised me the very first moment I was in their company!"

He took leave of the countess, and returned in a very pensive mood to his hotel. He once more read the letter of Schelnitz, and pondered on every line of it. Another initial C. had now come to light. Was it the one they were in quest of? Could the accusatory glove belong to Charlotte? Had

she assumed the character of a widow under the false name of Madame Weltheim? These and a thousand other perplexing thoughts and suspicions haunted the mind of Ferdinand throughout the night.

Next morning he again repaired to the hotel of Count Hildenrath. He found the countess and her daughter together in the drawing room. The conversation naturally turned on the legal inquiries which were going on for the verification of his brother's death. Charlotte at first betrayed no sign of embarrassment or uneasiness.

"I believe, madam," said Ferdinand, "you are acquainted with the family of Baron Schonwald, who reside near Muhlbach?"

"I have some slight acquaintance with them," replied Madame von Bergfeldt.

"Do you happen to know the daughter of the Pastor Gaeben, who lives in the neighborhood of the castle?"

"He has several daughters."

"I mean the second daughter; Caroline, I think, is her name."

"Yes, I know her. She is a charming girl, and a great favorite of mine."

"I have just learned that she is implicated, in a very serious way, in the horrible affair which we are investigating. The police has discovered—"

"What? What has been discovered?" exclaimed Charlotte, her eyes staring wildly, and her cheeks turning pale. "Can it be possible? Poor Caroline! She is innocent—quite innocent! I will go immediately to Muhlbach—I must save her!"

She sank on the sofa, apparently in a state of unconsciousness. The countess rang the bell violently, and, the servants having come to her assistance, Ferdinand hurriedly rushed downstairs, and left the house.

"The mystery is revealed," thought he. "Charlotte undertakes to prove the innocence of Caroline! This is equivalent to admitting that she knows the author of the crime! Discovery is now at hand. I need not stay longer in Berlin."

He was about to order post-horses for the purpose of starting, but in the course of the afternoon a note was delivered to him. It was from Charlotte, who wished to have a private conversation with him.

Madame Von Bergfeldt received her brother-in-law with the most perfect composure, though she had not entirely recovered from the emotion which had so suddenly overcome her in the morning. She was very desirous to know what was the charge against Caroline Gaeben, and what discovery had implicated her.

Ferdinand evaded these questions by observing that the letter he had received from Schelnitz was very vaguely expressed; and that, though he stated that serious suspicions hung over the pastor's daughter, he had not stated the circumstances on which they were grounded. Charlotte informed him that it was her intention immediately to set out for Muhlbach, where she could produce testimony to prove the innocence of her young friend. Her mother was to accompany her; the count, who was suffering from severe illness, being unable to undertake so long a journey. This plan entirely coincided with Ferdinand's wishes. Resorting to a pardonable dissimulation, he pretended that it was his purpose to return home to Silesia immediately. That same night, however, he left Berlin, and took the road to Muhlbach, with the view of reaching that place before the arrival of his sister-in-law.

On reaching his destination, the first thing he did was to call on Schelnitz, to whom he communicated all that had transpired at Berlin.

"I have a few additional particulars to relate to you," observed the lawyer; "I have collected them from a domestic who recently quitted the service of Baron Schonwald. The 16th of July was a Saturday; it was a festival day, and the Schonwald family went to Muhlbach. Madame Weltheim did not go with them, but she went thither in company with a lady (Madame Rosen) and her two daughters. The party reached Muhlbach in the morning, and about eleven o'clock in the forenoon Madame Weltheim left her friends, and did not rejoin them again till evening. Now," observed Schelnitz, "it would be very important to ascertain where she went and how she was employed during this interval of absence. The Schonwalds and the Rosens might possibly furnish information on that point, I therefore advise you to see them. Madame Rosen wishes to dispose of her estate. You may present yourself as a purchaser. By that means you may be sure of a favorable reception. Draw the ladies into conversation, and try to learn from them all that took place on the 16th of July."

Ferdinand followed this advice. He learned from Madame Rosen that, whilst the ladies were breakfasting at Muhlbach, a country girl brought a letter for Madame Weltheim. She stated it to be from a very old friend, a Madame Treskoff, who resided in Muhlbach, and who wished particularly to see her. Madame Weltheim hastily put on her bonnet, and departed, followed by the girl. It was night, and candles were lighted when she returned. She seemed agitated, and the redness of her eyes denoted that she had been weeping. The ladies anxiously inquired the cause of her trouble, and she replied that her feelings had been deeply moved by finding her friend, Madame Treskoff, in great distress.

Continuing his interrogatories, Ferdinand was further informed, that though Madame Weltheim frequently wore a green silk dress, yet it was not positively remembered whether she wore it on the 16th of July.

"She was much agitated on her return," observed one of the ladies, "and she had *only one glove on*. (These words made Ferdinand almost leap from his chair.) This struck me as very remarkable, as she was always most precise in the details of her dress. I remarked to her that she had only one glove, to which she replied, 'Ah! I was not aware of it. I suppose I must have dropped it at my friend's!'"

Ferdinand had thus learned more than he expected. Taking a hurried leave of Madame Rosen and her daughters, he went immediately to Schelnitz. The latter was of opinion that nothing now remained to be done but to denounce Charlotte von Bergfeldt as the murderess of her husband. He inquired in Muhlbach and its neighborhood whether a lady named Treskoff had lived there in the month of July. Her name was unknown to anyone.

“There can be no doubt,” said Schelnitz, “that Charlotte von Bergfeldt struck the fatal blow. It is useless to endeavor to sound the motives for a crime which Providence has miraculously disclosed by an unparalleled chain of concurring circumstances. She may have been prompted by jealousy—by hatred of a husband whose conduct it would appear was not free from blame—or by cupidity; for, on the death of Edward von Bergfeldt, his widow, by the terms of the marriage settlement, is to possess a considerable portion of the revenues derived from the estates. But, whatever may have been the motive for the crime, Charlotte von Bergfeldt is certainly guilty.”

The minutes of the evidence for the prosecution were drawn up in due form, and laid before the *Ober-Procurator* of Coblenz. Meanwhile Madame von Bergfeldt, accompanied by her mother, arrived there. Full of anxiety to know what proceedings had been taken against Caroline Gaeben, she called on Schelnitz, whose name and address she had learned from Ferdinand. Schelnitz referred her for information to the *Ober-Procurator*, to whom he immediately conducted her.

“Madam,” said the magistrate, addressing her, “your brother-in-law has charged Caroline Gaeben with being implicated in the murder of your husband. He assures me that he can produce satisfactory proofs of her guilt; but he has not stated to me what those proofs are. I understand that you have come here for the purpose of removing the suspicions which hang over that young lady.”

“I have, sir; but I cannot conceive how suspicion can possibly attach to Mademoiselle Gaeben. She did not know my husband. She never even saw him.”

“How can you be certain of that, madam? You cannot know whom your husband may have seen during your separation from him. How long is it since you yourself saw him?”

Charlotte felt that she was approaching dangerous ground.

“The will of my parents,” said she, “prohibited all communication between me and the Baron von Bergfeldt after our separation; I do not consider it necessary to enter upon any further explanation on that painful subject.”

Resolved, if possible, to elicit something decided, the magistrate, fixing his eyes sternly on her, inquired whether she had not visited Muhlbach on the 16th of July in the preceding year.

“Yes, sir,” she replied, “I think I was there on that day.”

“How did you employ your time during the morning?”

Charlotte was silent, and a livid paleness overspread her countenance.

“Madame Rosen and her daughters,” pursued the magistrate, “have declared that you parted from them at an early hour, and that you did not rejoin them until evening.”

“I cannot understand,” said Charlotte, in a faltering tone of voice, “why those ladies have been examined; nor can I guess to what all these inquiries tend.”

“Permit me to observe, madam, that you have not answered the question I just now put to you, and that an answer is necessary for your justification.”

“For my justification! Then it appears I am accused! I now understand the meaning of this captious interrogatory. I will not condescend to enter upon explanation. That would be beneath me. I will remain silent. Henceforth my lips are sealed on this subject. No power on earth shall draw a word from me. Now, sir, do whatever your duty may dictate! You know my determination.”

The magistrate found himself obliged to sign an order for the imprisonment of Madame von Bergfeldt. Next day she was confronted with the keeper of the baths at Podewil and his wife. Both unhesitatingly recognised her to be the lady who, on the 16th of July, had presented herself at the door of their establishment. Her right hand was examined, and across the palm there was a mark which might have been caused by a cut; but the scar was so slight as to render this circumstance a matter of doubt.

An order was forwarded to Berlin for putting under seal all the papers and effects belonging to Madame von Bergfeldt. They were previously examined in the presence of a magistrate. Among the papers nothing of importance was found, but in a jewel casket there was discovered a gold watch, which the accused lady had presented to her husband on his marriage, and a ring which Edward had been in the habit of wearing. How did these objects come into Charlotte’s possession? Had her husband returned them to her at the time of their separation? These questions could be answered only by conjecture.

All this mass of evidence having been submitted to the consideration of the judges, the officers of police were directed to seek out three persons whose testimony appeared to be important. These were the old woodcutter, who accompanied the lady when she called at the baths of Podewil, Cecile, the French *femme de chambre*, and the country girl who had conveyed the letter to Madame von Bergfeldt (under the name of Madame Weltheim) at Muhlbach. The woodcutter was nowhere to be found. As to Cecile, she had quitted her mistress’s service on her return to Berlin, and was now married. In countenance and figure she was totally different from her mistress. No suspicion attached to her, and she could furnish no information calculated to throw light on the subject of inquiry. The girl who brought the letter to Madame von Bergfeldt was traced out, and she stated that, in 1818, she was in the service of Madame Wunderlich at Muhlbach. She recollected that some time in the month of July a gentleman called on her mistress, who then desired her to take a letter to a lady, whose name she had forgotten. After reading the letter, the lady went with her to Madame Wunderlich’s. The girl described the gentleman to be tall and thin, with dark moustaches. He wore a green hunting coat, light-colored

pantaloon, and boots with spurs. This description corresponded with the appearance and dress of Edward von Bergfeldt.

These examinations being terminated, the case was deemed to be sufficiently established to warrant an order for the trial of the accused before the criminal court of Coblenz.

On the day fixed for the trial, an immense crowd thronged every avenue leading to the court. Madame von Bergfeldt was conducted into the presence of the judges. She was dressed in deep mourning, looked very pale, and, though evidently deeply affected, she was still struggling to repress her emotion.

The witnesses, forty-three in number, were examined. Their testimony confirmed all the particulars already narrated, and though no new facts were disclosed, yet the interest excited by the trial continued to increase. At the close of the examinations the advocate for the accused entered upon her defence. He delivered a long and eloquent address, in the course of which he ingeniously set forth every argument that could turn to the advantage of the prisoner. He dwelt earnestly on the fact of there being no positive proof that the body found on the steps of St. Joseph's Chapel was the body of Edward von Bergfeldt. Referring to the annals of criminal jurisprudence, he adduced the cases of several persons who had on circumstantial evidence been condemned and executed for murder, and whose presumed victims were subsequently discovered to be living. He concluded by expressing regret that the accused had determined to remain silent under the charge brought against her, and to withhold all explanation respecting the events of the fatal day; but, unaccountable as that determination was, he observed, that it ought not to be regarded as an evidence of guilt.

The advocate had just closed his address, when a messenger hastily entered the court, and presented a billet to the president, which the latter read aloud. It contained the following words:

"I entreat to be heard immediately. I can prove the innocence of the accused!"

"Let the person be brought into court," said the president.

The utmost curiosity and agitation now prevailed, and several voices were heard to exclaim, "Doubtless it is Edward von Bergfeldt!"

The unexpected witness presently appeared. He was a man of tall stature and of military bearing. As soon as Charlotte beheld him she uttered a piercing shriek. Having, not without some difficulty, made his way through the crowd, the stranger at length stood before the judges.

"My name," said he, "is George von Rothkirch, and I am an officer in the 3d Dragoons. That lady, whose innocence I am enabled to prove, is bound by an oath which compels her to remain silent. I beg permission to address a few words to her, and afterwards I will satisfactorily explain the mysterious event which occupies the attention of this assembly."

The president consulted the court, and the stranger was permitted to speak to the prisoner.

“Madam,” said he, “death has broken the bond by which you believed yourself to be bound. Your father is no more. He died invoking blessings on you, and in ignorance of the dreadful position in which you are placed. Permit me now to reveal the truth.”

Charlotte replied by a look of gratitude and a flood of tears, and George von Rothkirch spoke as follows:

“Being in garrison at Coblenz in 1818, I met Edward von Bergfeldt, with whom I had formerly been acquainted. He then appeared ill and low-spirited, weary of life, and dissatisfied with himself. He spoke to me unreservedly of the differences between himself and his wife, acknowledged that he had not behaved well, but wished for reconciliation. I visited the family of Baron Schonwald, at whose house I met a lady, who was introduced to me as Madame Weltheim. I was charmed with her beauty and intelligence, and frequently spoke of her to Edward. He wished to see the lady whom I so highly extolled; but I could not prevail on him to accompany me to Baron Schonwald’s. At length I had an opportunity of pointing out Madame Weltheim to him on a public promenade.

“‘My dear Rothkirch,’ he exclaimed, ‘she is my wife!’

“He insisted on my conveying to her a proposal for reconciliation. Madame von Bergfeldt at first refused to listen to it, alleging that her parents would never forgive her if she saw or corresponded with her husband; at length, however, I succeeded in shaking her determination, and she consented to grant him an interview.

“It was arranged that, on a certain day, when she was to go to Muhlbach with some friends, an imaginary person, to whom we gave the name of Madame Treskoff, should send a message requesting to see her. She was then to join me at the residence of a lady in Muhlbach, and I was to conduct her to the castle of Ottenberg, where her husband had promised to be in waiting for her.

“On meeting her husband, Madame Bergfeldt was evidently agitated by painful emotions, which she vainly struggled to repress. Edward, on his part, was exceedingly gay and animated; he had brought with him a woodcutter, who carried a hamper furnished with a *dejeuner*. The husband broached the subject of reconciliation, which the wife endeavored to evade on the ground of the objections of her parents. The dialogue became warm, and reproaches were mutually interchanged. Edward complained of the heat, which was indeed excessive, and he frequently had recourse to the wine, of which he drank very freely. I observed that he was becoming greatly excited, and even went so far as to utter threats of vengeance, if his wife did not accede to his offers of reconciliation. Madame von Bergfeldt wished to depart, but he seized her by the arm and detained her.

“‘Ah!’ he exclaimed, ‘would you doom me again to the miserable life I have suffered for some years past; sooner will I end my days—’ and seizing a knife from the table, he made a motion as if intending to stab himself.

“‘Edward,’ said I, ‘why terrify your wife by acting this farce?’

“‘Farce!’ resumed he, in a tone of furious anger, ‘do you suppose I fear death?’

“By a movement more rapid than thought, he plunged the knife into his heart. He fell at my feet deluged in blood, and Charlotte fainted.

“The woodcutter, who had been sitting at some distance off, now ran to us. Edward was a lifeless corpse. With some difficulty we recovered Madame von Bergfeldt, who in this terrible crisis evinced great energy and feeling. It was long before we could prevail on her to abandon the lifeless remains of her husband, for whom she was most anxious to secure a fitting burial. The woodcutter suggested the idea of placing the body on the steps of the chapel, where, he said, it was sure to be speedily discovered. We removed some of the clothing, being desirous of creating the suspicion of murder rather than of suicide. Charlotte wished to have her husband’s watch and ring which he wore; he had a second ring, but we found we could not remove it without mutilating the finger. We bandaged the wound, in order to stop the effusion of blood, and then withdrew. Madame von Bergfeldt cut her hand slightly in her endeavor to snatch the knife from Edward; she was dreadfully agitated by the horrible scene, and reproached herself for having caused the catastrophe by violating her father’s injunctions.

“‘But,’ said she, ‘he shall never know what has happened—it would break his heart. Whatever may be the result—even though I should die on the scaffold—so long as my father lives, I will bury the knowledge of this sad event in inviolable silence!’

“She made me and the woodcutter take a solemn oath never to divulge what we had witnessed.

“Shortly after this event, my regiment was removed from Coblenz to a distant garrison. I heard nothing of Madame von Bergfeldt, and I dared not write to her. A short time ago, I retired from the army, with the intention of proceeding to the United States, where my brother has long resided. Passing through the Rhenish Provinces, on my way to the port at which I proposed to embark, I heard of this trial—the whole truth instantly flashed across my mind, and I at once understood the chain of mysterious circumstances which had fixed suspicion on Charlotte von Bergfeldt. I hastened to Baron Schonwald, who related to me all he knew of the case, and showed me a letter which he had received only a day or two ago, announcing the death of Count Hildenrath. There was not a moment to be lost, and I hurried hither. Death has released me from my oath, and will, I trust, induce Madame von Bergfeldt to break the silence she imposed on herself.”

He gave the name and dwelling place of the woodcutter, who, being found, confirmed the accuracy of his statement. The court then immediately pronounced the acquittal of Charlotte von Bergfeldt.

* * * * *

A gentleman who happened to be present at this extraordinary trial above described, was, in the month of August, 1820, a temporary resident at the Hotel d’Angleterre at Havre. One day, as he was passing down the staircase of the hotel, he met a lady whom he immediately recognised to be Charlotte von Bergfeldt.

“Who is that lady?” inquired he of one of the waiters, whom he saw in the hall.

“She is a German lady,” was the answer; “her name is Madame von Rothkirch: she and her husband arrived the day before yesterday, and they are to sail tomorrow for New York.”

Stories for the Home Circle. New York: G.P. Putnam, 1857