

A LEGEND OF INNSPRUCK.

BY HARRY BALDWIN

Tempest and storm were raging with wild fury through the rocky mountain passes and deep gorges surrounding the little village of Innsprucken, nestled in the beautiful valley of the Loire, one chilly September evening in the year 1753, as Gottlieb Gluck, the keeper of the only inn the place afforded, drew the blinds of the bar and seated himself before the glowing fire, with a smile of satisfaction and pleasure upon his ruddy face. If it was dreary and inhospitable without, in the cosy room of the tavern, with the large fire-place emitting cheerfulness and warmth, and the portly, shining bottles of the bar furnished and bright, all was inviting and of a nature calculated to inspire feelings of comfort and contentment. Besides, the season had been a fortunate one for honest old Gottlieb, and his coffers swelled with hard-earned guilders, the result of care and attention to his summer visitors. It was not strange, therefore, that as he took the huge arm-chair before the fire, he cast a satisfied glance at his evening customers, who sat smoking and drinking at a table near by.

Suddenly there was a lull in the storm—a lull following a long, wild shriek of the sweeping wind, with which seemed mingled a scream so unearthly and yet so human that the men at the table dropped their pipes and looked askance at their host, who half rose to his feet at the ghostly whisper of his "help," young Arnold Tegtmeyer:

"What was that?"

Whether the dying echo of the wind was human or not, they never knew; but their expectancy of something uncanny was satisfied a moment later, when there came a loud knock at the outer door, followed by a rude push against the paneled barrier, and as it flew open there entered a man whose strange and sudden appearance brought every person in the room to his feet.

He was a tall, thin man, with cadaverous face and wildly gleaming eyes, apparelled in a long black cloak, which, sweeping back from his form, revealed a glossy velvet suit beneath, and a richly jeweled sword. In his arms he bore a bundle, wrapped in folds of dark crimson cloth, like a silken counterpane, and as he confronted the gaping throng his wet and dripping garments, and pale, wild-eyed features caused them to draw back with mingled consternation and surprise.

"Well!" he said, finally, a fierce sneer on his lip, a sharp rebuke in his tone of voice, "have ye never seen a benighted traveler before, that ye stare at him as though he were the evil demon himself? Who is the landlord here?"

Gottlieb, somewhat reassured at the honest German of his strange guest, advanced a step and intimated his proprietorship of the inn.

"Then prepare your best room at once, if this be an inn; if not, direct me to the nearest tavern. My horse is without, shelter and feed him at once, and lead the way to my apartment."

With a trembling hand and flustered manner the host took a lighted candle from the mantel, and led the way to the open staircase leading to the upper story. The stranger followed him closely, and as they reached the front apartment of the upper floor laid his burden carefully on the bed, and confronted the innkeeper.

"Listen to me," he said impressively, as he took a purse from his pocket; "this purse contains a hundred guilders—leave this room and do not return until I call for you. If any come for me, if any inquiries are made concerning me—"

"But, your worship," began Gottlieb—"a fire, a warm meal or a change of clothing—"

"Nothing, I tell you," briefly replied the stranger. "Go, you are paid. See that I am not disturbed."

As he spoke he grasped the candle and thrust the innkeeper unceremoniously into the outer passage, with the purse in his hand.

"But," persisted Gottlieb, "you spoke of visitors; who are you? What shall I tell—"

"The devil, if you like," interrupted the stranger sharply, and closed the door in his host's face.

"I believe it," muttered Gottlieb as he groped his way down the dark stairs. "Himmel! what was that?"

Less terrifying and far more human than the voice without which had so startled him but a few moments before, there sounded on his ears the low, plaintive wail of an infant. There could be no mistaking the sound, and as the innkeeper entered the public room, curiosity and interest were depicted on every face at the amazement and consternation expressed in his own.

"Business is business," he said as he resumed his seat, and held the netted purse in his hand, with the gold pieces shining between its silken chinks, up to the view of his friends, "and his lordship pays royally; yet it is a question with me if his worship's last words do not refer more accurately to himself than he might wish it to be considered."

"What was it he said?" queried one of the men at the table.

"That he was the devil."

A silence brooded over the little throng for a few moments following the words, and the bar-boy, Arnold Tegtmeyer, after fortifying himself with a large drink of spirits at the bar, walked restlessly to the window and gazed gloomily forth into the darkness and rain.

He might have stood there five minutes or more, when the little company, which had meanwhile drifted into various speculations and comments on the strange visitor, were suddenly startled by a cry of amazement and terror from the lad. Intuitively each man sprang to his feet, and hastened to the spot. Every eye followed the direction indicated by the white-faced lad, and a cold horror overspread each face as they looked and saw—

A sight which curdled their blood with a nameless terror. Running from the house was a large timber, which connected twenty feet away with the stables of the inn below, and pendent from which was the gate of the place. About eight feet above this was a second timber running in the same direction and strengthening the frame-work of the entire structure. There was a peculiar history connected with this second beam, for from it had once hung five malefactors, and the iron rings through which the fatal ropes had been passed were still there; and as each man looked he saw standing on the lower beam, and supporting himself by the upper one, the weird stranger. Whatever his mission, whatever his intent, in the light which shone from the windows of the upper room his Mephistophelian face and ghostly appearance caused him to resemble some

demon. Light as a sprite, quick as an acrobat, he swung from the place and disappeared from their view within the window of his apartment.

The inmates of the house were intensely horrified. To their superstitious minds the man was nothing more nor less than what he had himself claimed to be—the devil. Fear and terror marked every face; silence and awe brooded over the room. As a loud knocking came to the door and an imperious voice demanded admittance, there was not a face that did not pale in expectancy of some new and startling development in the affair of the man-teufel in the upper apartment.

"Gottlieb Gluck!" sonorous and stern sounded a voice through the stilled room. Trembling in every limb, as though a summons from the arch-demon himself had sounded on his startled hearing, the landlord came forward.

"I am here," he quivered, and then, as he recognized in the new-comer the Captain of the guard at the Castle Rubenstein, the principal estate in the canton, his face resumed its wonted hue of health, and he waved his visitors and the four soldiers following him into the bar.

The Captain strode into the apartment and glanced fiercely about him, his manner excited, his bearing military, his face ominous with an expression of concern as though some matter of weighty importance rested upon his mind.

"Gottlieb Gluck," he said, in that tone which the police employ in addressing a suspected criminal, "this visit is an official one."

"An official visit to my house," stammered the landlord, awed by the Captain's commanding presence.

"Yes. The King places the ban of martial law on this place until the house is searched."

"Searched?"

Gottlieb could only rapidly repeat the soldier's words.

"Aye, you are suspected—"

Smuggling, theft—a hidden crime about to be revealed.

The gossips were burning with curiosity; their eager hearts hung on the Captain's next words.

"Suspected of harboring a criminal," was the conclusion of the officer's words.

A smile of excitement and relief broke over the landlord's broad face.

"Ah!" he cried, "I thought it. Our satanic visitor, we might have known."

"A tall, fierce-looking man, with cloak and sword?" asked the Captain, in his eagerness springing to the side of Gottlieb and catching his arm.

"Yes, and face like the tempter of Faust," assented the latter.

"Where is he?" demanded the Captain, excitedly.

Gottlieb pointed up the stairway.

"Remain here!" cried the Captain to the soldiers, eager to cover himself with glory, and speeding up the stairway with drawn sword.

With anxiously beating hearts the little coterie below held their breath, but no sound of clashing arms, of a struggle, or of an alarm sounded on their ears. Instead, they trembled with excitement, as a moment later the Captain came rushing down the stairs, his face pale and disappointed.

"The fiends!" he cried, "the murderer has escaped!"

"The murderer?" cried Gottlieb, aghast.

"Aye, the assassin of our noble master, the Count Ulrich Rubenstein, at the castle."

A somber hush brooded over the little throng. The Count Rubenstein murdered! Surprise alone held them speechless, for no other emotion swayed their hearts save a secret satisfaction that the cruel and rapacious Count, the terror of his maiden peasantry, the oppressor of the poor, who, rumor said, had murdered his own wife, the beautiful Lady Agatha, to wed another, had met a deserved fate.

A cry from the tap-boy, Tegtmeyer, directed attention to the window where he stood.

"See," he cried, "der teufel."

The soldiers sprang to his side as he spoke.

There, crossing the beam toward the stable, the same burden in his arms he had borne when he entered the inn, was the strange visitor. He swayed to and fro on his dizzy perch, as though each fierce gust of wind would sweep him to the icy court below.

"It is he," cried the Captain. "He must not escape. Fire!"

With studied promptness the guns of the four soldiers covered the swaying figure. A deafening crash followed. When the smoke had cleared away the window frame was seen a ruined mass of splintered glass and wood.

They hastened to the yard, but sought in vain for the corpse of the assassin. Only a trail of blood to the stables; the steed gone, the tracks leading to the mountain gorges evidenced that the stranger, though doubtless wounded, had disappeared.

"He was no man—he was the devil," muttered the awe-stricken landlord.

The Captain turned upon him fiercely.

"Fool!" he cried. "He was no demon, except a human one. He entered the castle, stole the jewels ready for the Count's approaching marriage, murdered our master, and then taking the young son and heir of the Count from the cradle, escaped."

"It is retribution for the Count's murder of his wife," boldly spoke up one of the burghers.

"Silence!" commanded the Captain. "It is treason to speak thus. It was an assassin's deed to rob and murder without warning; but he cannot escape, for he is known."

"Aye, as the brother of the dead Lady Agatha, who a month since sent a message to the Count from Tunis, warning him that he would avenge his sister's death."

"But how do you know it is he?" asked Gottlieb, skeptically.

"Because," replied the soldier, impressively, "attached to the hilt of the dagger found buried in the Count's heart was this."

As he spoke he drew from his pocket a blood-soiled piece of paper, and, as he held it up to their view, the dagger-hole piercing it, they read:

This, a bridal present from the brother of the murdered Countess, Lady Agatha.

Twenty years, passing rapidly away, brought strange changes to the little town of Innsprucken, the castle, and the inn.

As serenely as slept the beautiful victim of her husband's cruelty in the grave, so slumbered the mystery of the tragedy which had sent the wicked Count Rubenstein to a dishonored grave, and left the castle without a master.

For, as effectually as had the avenger of his sister's wrongs escaped the quest of justice, so had the stolen heir disappeared, and in his stead, as provisional legatee of the estates, reigned Albert, cousin of the dead Count, a man only awaiting the op-

portunities of undisputed possession of the castle and its revenues to exert the same oppression as had his predecessor.

The most singular and marked change was, however, that which had come over the fortunes of the honest burgher, Herr Gluck. The old inn was no longer the scene of jollity and feasting; the merry, careless song of the citizen no longer sounded through the spacious tap-room. Instead, gloom and silence had settled down over the outcast inn. The gables rotted slowly away without repair; the gaudy sign-board had faded to a mere suggestion of outline and color, and neglect and poverty were evidenced in house, stables, and field.

A curse seemed to have come over the house, and, brooding there, drove, with its dark shadows, the honest but superstitious burghers to careless neglect of their old friend. The tap was dusty and disorderly, the bottles cobwebbed and broken, and the landlord, pale and emaciated, sat from morning till night in the shadow of the large fireplace, either drowning memory in the aqua-vitæ pot or loudly lamenting the change of fortune that had depleted his well-filled coffers and made him a reproach to his neighbors.

The curse, if such it was, had begun with the night of the murder. The story, with Gottlieb Gluck's share in it, seemed to have given an uncanny reputation to the tavern. Man or devil, the assassin had walked on air in escaping the soldiery, and had left the wretched of ill-luck about the place. First neglected, then avoided, the inn of the Five Iron Rings became a resting place for such few transient customers as knew not its story.

Finally an event transpired which made those who were venturesome enough to visit the inn in the daytime avoid it at all hours. Strange sights and noises to be seen and heard at night, so rumor said, drove the superstitious to a wide detour of the demon-haunted place, and the new tragedy, which had still further aided its uncanny reputation, was the theme of speculation and idle comment in Innsprucken for many a day.

It happened just twenty years, to a day, to an hour, after its initial occurrences. Gottlieb Gluck was his own tap-boy now, for customers and servants had alike deserted him. Upon the evening referred to a man habited in a long, dark cloak, mysterious in manner and talk, had entered the place and asked for a night's lodging.

The similarity of his attire to that of the assassin of the Count Ulrich had prejudiced the landlord against him, but he silently showed him to his room, the same apartment occupied by Lady Agatha's brother, nearly a quarter of a century before.

The circumstance revived bitter and sorrowful memories in old Gottlieb's mind, for from that event dated all his evil fortunes.

Midnight had tolled from the castle tower ere he arose, dizzy from unusual potations, to put out the lights. As he glanced from the window, however, every benumbed sense was revived, every energy brought into action. One glance at the beam of the iron rings, one look of frozen horror at the swinging figure he surely saw there, and Gottlieb Gluck fell, an inert mass, to the floor.

An excited, horrified throng found him thus in the morning, eager to question him concerning the body of a man found in the court-yard a few minutes previous. They aided him to reach the yard.

A groan burst from the lips of the unhappy man as he gazed at the crushed, lifeless figure lying on the stone flags under the court-yard beam.

It was his guest of the previous night, and in his outstretched hand, torn from the wood in the upper beam of the framework, was one of the five iron rings.

Gloomier and darker grew the tavern after this event, more unsavory its reputation, more morose and despondent its afflicted landlord. People rarely spoke to him on the street, and all the old superstitions of ancient times, revived by the simple-minded burghers, operated to decree him a being in league with the demon of evil.

"I am accursed," he groaned, one night as he sat alone in the gloomy old inn. "It is the fiend himself come for me," he muttered desperately, a moment later, as a knock sounded at the door.

He confronted the visitor curiously, a man arrayed in the same long black cloak, a man possessing the same mysterious countenance as the victim of the ring tragedy a month previous.

"A night's lodging, mine host," he said cheerily. But Gottlieb guessed his entrance.

"I am not prepared for guests," he said. "But I must find lodgings. I will put up with inconveniences."

Gottlieb sighed as he repaired to his bed that night, after showing the man to a room. He had offered him a small apartment in the haunted chamber. With a light laugh the stranger had taken the latter.

"He is doomed," muttered Gottlieb in vague apprehension.

He was right, with the morning light his body was found lying exactly in the position occupied a month previous by the first victim, and in his hand was clutched tightly in a death grasp, the second of the five iron rings.

This second tragedy thrilled the public with a most somber terror, and drove Gottlieb to desperation. Popular belief accredited the Count's assassin and the two victims with being one and the same person, and that person the evil one.

There was strong talk of burning the inn, and driving Gottlieb from the town, but before this well-meant kindness on the part of the landlord's friends could be put into execution an event occurred which cleared up all the dread mystery and removed the baleful curse from the old inn of Innsprucken.

It was less than a month after the death of the second guest that a gloomy reverie of Gottlieb's, who began to believe that each one of the rings would bring a tragedy to his threshold, was broken in upon by the appearance of a visitor who, without announcing himself, walked into the bar.

"A room for the night," he said imperiously, as he spoke startling the old innkeeper to his feet.

Gottlieb regarded his visitor with undisguised dissatisfaction. He was young and handsome, but he wore the same cloak as the others, and at his belt swung a sword at the sight of the jeweled handle of which the old innkeeper started in superstitious horror.

But he crowded back the tumultuous thoughts which tortured mind and memory, and said:

"I have no rooms ready."

"Nevertheless, I must stay here all night," replied the other determinedly.

"Pardon, mine host," returned Gottlieb, "but you must not."

"And why?" demanded the young cavalier, turning upon him his bright penetrating eyes. "If you are a licensed innkeeper you dare not refuse a guest."

Gottlieb was silent a moment or two. Finally he said:

"Are you a stranger here?"

The other hesitated for a moment, but replied "Yes."

"Do you know the reputation of this place?"

"Aye, I do."

"And still desire to remain under this roof?"

"Not only under this roof," replied the young man, slowly and decidedly, "but in this very same haunted room your superstitious neighbors gossip so much about."

With a gesture of horror and submission Gottlieb closed his lips and conducted his youthful guest to the fateful room.

"I will not permit him to share the fate of the others," he decided, as he returned to the bar. "So brave, so young, so like the warriors of my youth. I will have him watched."

An hour later the burgomaster of the village was startled by a visit from Gottlieb Gluck.

"A guard, mein herr," the landlord said. "For what?" asked the burgomaster, a shade of annoyance in his tone.

"For the tavern."

"To fight the ghosts?"

"No."

"What then?"

"I have another mysterious guest. In the interests of intelligence and justice let him be watched."

The burgomaster did not hesitate after his visitor's explanation, and shortly afterward a guard of four men were dispersed in and about the tavern, to watch the windows and doors, the entrances to and exits from the haunted chamber.

Midnight tolled slowly, and what they had anticipated actually occurred. At the first tap of the bell the window of the haunted room was thrust open. Intensely startled, they observed the young guest step through carefully to the beam, walk its length, steady himself, and reaching up select the outside ring of the three that remained. He tugged at it for some moments, and almost fell over when the rotten wood gave way. Then they observed him reach into the aperture formed by the screw of the ring and take out a small folded piece of paper, and retrace his footsteps to the haunted chamber.

There it was that they surprised him, with flushed and excited face, perusing a time-discolored letter, as they entered the apartment.

"What means this intrusion?" he demanded, arising haughtily, and half drawing his sword from its scabbard.

"It means that we desire you to accompany us to the burgomaster," replied the officer of the guard.

"For what purpose?"

"To explain your mysterious actions here to-night."

The stranger bowed quietly, and took up his plumed hat from the table.

"I am ready to accompany you," he said. The officer approached to conduct him officially from the place as a prisoner.

"Back!" cried the stranger, indignantly. "I will not attempt to escape; I promise it, on the honor of a Rubenstein."

Strange words! They thrilled Gottlieb Gluck as he gazed earnestly upon the handsome stranger's face.

They roused the burgomaster, late as was the hour. Once assembled in his little office, the officer of the guard told his story.

"And now, sir," said the burgomaster, pompously, when he had concluded, "for yours. Your name?"

"Ulrich Rubenstein, Count of the Province of Innsprucken, and soldier of the King."

The magistrate's eyes opened to their widest possible extent.

"What is this farce?" he demanded, sternly.

"It is no farce," replied the young stranger. "I am the Count Ulrich, stolen by my uncle when he avenged my mother's death twenty years ago."

The story he related to substantiate his claim was a strange one. It was, indeed, Lady Agatha's brother who murdered Count Rubenstein. He had stolen the family jewels and the child, had secreted the former and gone to the inn. Here he had hastily written a few lines, and while crossing the beam to find some place to secrete it, fearing capture and death, had found the last of the five iron rings loose.

He had placed the paper in the aperture formed for the staple, replaced the ring, as firmly as possible, and later had escaped with the child.

But he was desperately wounded. Hastening to an old friend who led a band of free lances in the mountains, he had placed the child in his charge, and then had died.

He had first, however, written a letter telling all he had done, and establishing the parentage of the stolen child. This letter he bade his friend give to little Ulrich when he was twenty-one years old.

This letter, the stranger stated, he had received a few months previous to the present time. He had found it to contain the history of his life, and the reason why his uncle wished him to wait until of age before he attained his fortune was that the friends of his cruel father might kill him to secure the estates and title of their wicked relative.

As to the death of the men at the inn, that the young Count easily explained. His uncle in the letter had told him to go or send to the tavern, and that under the last ring a fortune would be found. He had sent two men in succession, but their avarice had evidently overcome their prudence. Believing that there must also be something of value under the other rings, they had begun at the first one, and in removing it had fallen from the beam.

The paper he had found, as described, under the last ring, contained the clue to the hiding-place of the stolen jewels.

These were recovered, the provisional heir ousted, and Castle Rubenstein once more possessed a master.

Gottlieb Gluck was made seneschal of the castle, and, under new influences, regained his old rubicundity and good-humor. But he never forgot the tragedy and mystery of the Five Iron Rings.

In bee communities only one queen is permitted to develop, while the remaining females continue sterile, and become adapted to working duties. Among bees and ants males are never checked at the worker stage, but develop to become a possible burden on the community. Among bees males are suffered to live as long as food is abundant, but are mercilessly stung to death as soon as there is danger of lack of food.

HUMOR.

WHEN a man has poor cousins his relations with them are usually strained.

THE "Three Classes" in English society of which we hear so much are the Nobs, Snobs, and Mobs. The Mobs are the rising class.

O, THOSE French! A Paris sausage-maker displays in his window a placard announcing "Every link carefully inoculated by Dr. Pasteur!"

THE painter and the bootblack each earn a living in the same manner—by a dexterous use of the brush. Both use a good deal of color, and have their subjects sit for them.—*Maverick*.

PROFESSOR SARGENT says that the nutmeg hickory of Arkansas is the strongest wood in the United States. If we remember our schoolboy days we think the birch made that impression.—*Maverick*.

HAPPY AS A KING. From trifles our pleasures in life often spring. The smallest thing happiness renders, And every man feels as proud as a king In a pair of embroidered suspenders. —*Boston Courier*.

SMYTHEKINS is trying to arouse the courage of his better half, who has recently lost her pet parrot and is overcome with grief: "Come, come! What the deuce. Be a man, my dear! Suppose you had lost me!"—*New York Mail*.

CLARA—"What nonsense they do talk about trade and people in trade not being really aristocratic and all that." Mabel—"Yes, I know, dear, and yet I am always glad that papa's store has no retail department. Trade does seem common, after all."—*Chicago Rambler*.

A CLEVELAND (O.) man is before the courts charged with stealing his own sister. There have been cases where some other fellow's sister was stolen, but this is a much rarer happening. The Judge is reported as "puzzled." One would think he might be.—*New Haven Palladium*.

"WHAT is the meaning of the words, 'De mortuis nil nisi bonum'?" asked Johnny Fizzlepot of his father. "It means, my son, that when a man closes both eyes, the public is expected to close one eye at least to whatever wrongs he may have committed while he was alive."—*Texas Siftings*.

"Is THE King of Wurtemberg coming over here to lecture, or sing, or anything?" asked Le Diggs. "Not that I know of," replied De Wiggs. "Why?" "I see that he has just told a newspaper correspondent that he loves Americans, and that is a bad symptom, you know." "So it is."—*Pittsburg Chronicle*.

OFFICE BOY (to country editor)—"A man was in while you were out who said he was the genuine John Wilkes Booth." Editor (hastily)—"He's a fraud. You didn't give him anything, did you?" Office Boy—"No. He left a dollar for six months' subscription." Editor—"Well, well. And so John Wilkes Booth is still alive. It beats all."—*Chicago Rambler*.

"MR. TRIALBALANCE," said Old Hyson to the bookkeeper, "you were away two days last week." "I was Mr. Hyson; I was summoned suddenly to attend the funeral of my grandmother." "Ah, yes," said the merchant—"quite right, quite right. Accept my condolences. Did you bury the old lady?" "Yes, sir." "Ah, yes; buried her. I thought from your breath you had embalmed her." (Loud and long-continued silence.)—*Brooklyn Eagle*.

IMAGINE MY SURPRISE. I saw a maiden with soulful eyes; We met upon the street. She slipped and fell—the treacherous ice—I helped her to her feet. I was in love, way down in love; My heart was all aglow; She was the fairest being that I'd ever seen, you know. She blushed and thought to thank me, but, My Caesar, when she said, "The next time, sir, I'd thank you much To turn your horrid head." —*Louisville Courier-Journal*.

A GERMAN writer says: "Humor is the endemological pessimism which includes within itself the teleological evolutionary optimism which may cause a truly, that is to say, an at once realistic, radical and universal reconciliation to appear as possible." We have often noticed that, but we never permit any of that sort of stuff to paralyze our paragraphs if we can help it.—*Norristown Herald*.

Legal Phraseology.

If a man would, according to law, give to another an orange, instead of saying, "I give you that orange," which one would think would be what is called in legal phraseology "an absolute conveyance of all right and title therein," the phrase would run thus: "I give you all and singular my estate and interest, right, title and claim, and advantage of, and in that orange, with all its rind, skin, juice, pulp and pips, and all right and advantage therein, with full power to bite, cut, suck, and otherwise eat the same, or give the same away as fully and effectually as I, said A B, am now entitled to bite, cut, suck, or otherwise eat the same orange, or give the same away with or without its rind, juice, pulp or pips, anything her