

## THE BRUNSWICK GHOST.

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IN Brunswick is a college—the Carolinum—about which a curious ghost story was told in 1748, which created a good deal of stir, not only in the little capital itself, but throughout Germany. In 1746 there died in the college one of the masters, Dorien by name, a worthy man, who had always conducted himself well, and had discharged his duties conscientiously. He was a quiet, amiable man, who gave no offence to any one; a man generally respected, alike by the masters and the pupils, and also by those few who knew him in the town.

On the night that he died he sent word to another master, named Hofer, that he particularly desired to speak to him. Hofer was roused from sleep, jumped from bed, hastily dressed, but arrived too late in the sick man's room to receive his communication. Dorien was at his last gasp. He recognised his friend, clasped his hand, and tried to speak; but his words failed. He died without having been able to give his parting communication to his friend.

Shortly after the death of Dorien, the rumour spread that the dead man had been seen in the passages. But as those who pretended to have seen him were only pupils of the college, no importance was attached to the matter. Their testimony was regarded, and justly, on such a matter as this, to be undeserving of notice by the masters and professors. Nevertheless, the rumour continually broke out again, after short subsidence. The masters were vexed, and wished that the innocent and blameless memory of Dorien should be left untrifled with, and also undisturbed by idle tongues. If any man deserved to rest in his grave that man was Dorien.

However, in October, 1748, something occurred which roused attention seriously, and made the masters of the college suspect there was something real at the bottom of the strange reports that had reached them.

Mr. Hofer was walking, between eleven and twelve, through the dormitory corridor, to see that all the pupils were in bed in their several cubicles, and that all was quiet, when, as he approached the door of a room occupied by Mr. Lampadius, one of the professors, he saw the dead man sitting there on a chair, in his old dressing-gown, with a white night-cap on his head, the lappets of which he held together under his chin with his right hand, and so pulled the cap down as only to show the eyes and nose, mouth and chin. Mr. Hofer was so astonished that he stood still and looked attentively at the apparition, unable to trust his eyes, or realise that he saw old Dorien in spirit. He was somewhat frightened, and had to struggle with himself before he could resolve to pass; but he did this, and went into the room of Mr. Lampadius, and shut the door behind him. He did

not rouse the sleeper, but paused within a minute, and then opened the door and went out again. Then he saw the apparition seated as he had seen it before. He raised his lantern, and threw the light full on the face of the spectre; but at the same moment such a sense of horror and faintness came over him, that he was for a moment unable to draw back his hand. After this event for several months the hand remained swollen and painful, and he had difficulty in using it.

Next day Hofer related what had happened to Mr. Oedern, professor of mathematics. Oedern, as a philosopher, and a man of plain common sense, laughed at it, and insisted that Hofer was either the dupe of a practical joke, played by one of the scholars, or that he had dreamt the whole concern. When, however, he was unable to persuade Hofer that this was the case, he offered to accompany him on his round next night, and either discover the author of the deception or convince his fellow-master that he had seen nothing.

Next night, between eleven and twelve, the two men made the circuit of the college dormitories together. As they approached the door of Lampadius' room, the professor of mathematics started, and exclaimed—

“Hallo! that's Dorien!” Hofer said nothing, but opened the door, and went into the room. As he came out again, he saw the same apparition in the same position as the night before, and Oedern stood with his hand to his brow, looking at it open-eyed and with an expression of utter bewilderment. They both studied the figure for some time. The face was deadly pale, making the black beard look blacker than it was in life. Neither had the courage to address the spectre, and, without a word to each other or to it, they retreated along the corridor to Hofer's room.

Both spoke of the apparition next day, and several of the professors sat up the next and following nights in hopes of seeing Dorien's ghost; but their expectations were disappointed; they saw nothing. Oedern himself revisited the passage at midnight, but he saw the guest no more there, and he said impatiently to the others—

“Come, I've done my best to see the spirit; if he wants me now, he must come for me. I will go after him no more.”

A fortnight later, he was roused in his bed at an early hour, but at what hour he was uncertain, except that it was between three a.m. and six a.m. He felt himself shaken as if taken by the shoulder. When he opened his eyes he saw the same figure of Dorien, in his white night-cap and dressing-gown, standing between his bed and a cupboard which was about two paces off, against the wall. We are not told how Mr. Oedern saw it, whether by its own phosphorescent light, or by the light of the moon shining into his room. There are many small particulars in the story which are not detailed, and which might help us to

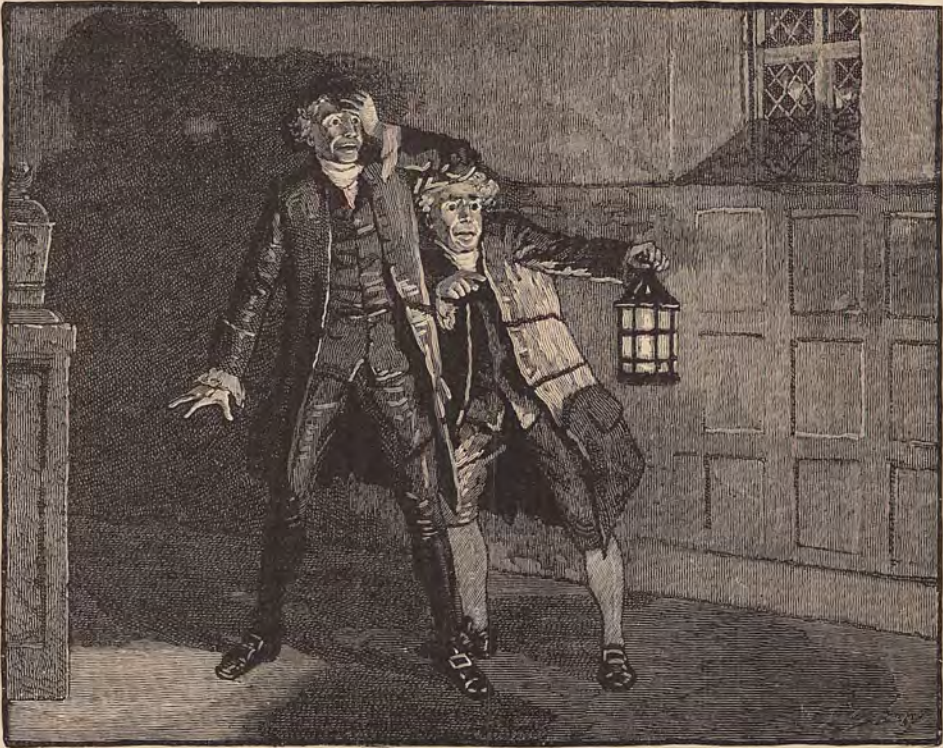


explain it. He raised himself in bed and fixed his eyes steadfastly on the apparition, which remained visible for about eight minutes and then faded. On the following night, at about the same hour, he was again aroused; but there was this fact, he observed, which had escaped him previously, and which, to our mind, is significant. He heard the doors of the cupboard creak, and sound exactly as if some heavy person were leaning against them. The figure he

true German—*had his pipe in his mouth*. The figure did not make any threatening signs, but nodded its head, and appeared to be friendly disposed.

Then Oedern, plucking up courage, asked—  
“Have you left any debts unpaid?”

It was well known that poor Dorien had died owing small sums, and this caused the professor to ask the question. At these words the phantom drew back, raised itself aloft, and made signs as if it wanted to



“THEY BOTH STUDIED THE FIGURE FOR SOME TIME” (p. 365).

saw as before. This time he addressed it with the words—

“Go forth, thou evil spirit! Wherefore comest thou here to disturb me?”

When he said this the figure made signs of distress, shaking its head, wringing its hands, and moving its feet. Then Oedern began to repeat some of the hymns in the Lutheran psalm-book. The ghost disappeared whilst he was thus occupied. After that, Professor Oedern was left undisturbed for a full week; but again, at the end of that time, he was roused about three o'clock in the morning by a feeling of cold horror, and he saw the ghost apparently issue from the cupboard, and come to him, and lean over his bed. This was more than he could bear; the professor jumped out of bed, striking as he did so at the figure, which recoiled before him towards the cupboard, and then came on again. Oedern now observed that the spirit—like a

draw special attention to what it was about to say or do, or as if it wanted to give particular attention to what was being asked it. Oedern repeated his question, and then the spectre passed a thin white hand over its mouth forward and backward. The black beard, which was very prominently seen against the deathly-pale face, caused Oedern to ask further—

“Had you not paid your barber?” Then the figure slowly shook its head.

Oedern further inquired, “Were you in debt for the pipe, or for tobacco?” Then the ghost, without a reply, went back towards the cupboard, and disappeared.

Next day Professor Oedern related his interview to Councillor Erath, who was one of the four curators of the Collegium Carolinum, and in whose house lodged the sister of the deceased Dorien. He at once said that he would inquire into the matter, and if he found



that there were small debts of this nature he would pay them.

The matter now became much talked about among the masters of the college, who, however, were careful to say nothing about it to the pupils. Professor Seidler, who had known and respected the deceased, and was a friend of Oedern, then volunteered to sit up the night with the latter. Seidler was a man of some note, who was chosen tutor of the Dukes Charles Augustus and Frederick Ferdinand of Saxe-Weimar. He died as consistorial councillor at Weimar, about 1778.

About five o'clock in the morning Oedern woke suddenly, and saw his unbidden guest standing, not as before, by the cupboard, but against the whitewashed wall. He did not remain long stationary, but walked up and down the room—if that can be called walking when his legs did not apparently move, nor was there any sound of a footfall. Presently he drew near the bed, when Oedern cried out, "Voyez ! voyez !" Seidler, who was awake, looked intently in the direction indicated, but though he saw something vaporous and white, could distinguish nothing clearly. Then Oeder exclaimed, "He is vanished !"

The friends then talked together about what had happened, and Oedern asked Seidler if he might refer to him as an eye-witness ; but this Seidler would not allow. He had seen nothing sufficiently to justify his being quoted as having beheld the ghost. Then Oedern said no more, but laid himself down again ; and Seidler did not talk, because he supposed his friend wanted to go to sleep again. Indeed, he did doze off, but almost immediately was roused, started up in bed, began to beat about him with his fists, and cried—

"Go away ! You have tormented me long enough ! If you want anything of me, tell me so at once, and leave me at rest."

When Oedern was somewhat pacified, Seidler asked him to explain his conduct. The professor of mathematics replied that he had seen the spectre again, which had approached the bed, leaned over it, and then thrown itself across his body, so that he felt the weight oppress him. From this night forward Oedern always had some one in the room with him. He was afraid to sleep alone. Moreover, he now had a light always burning, which he had not been accustomed to have before.

This so far answered that he saw the ghost no more ; nevertheless, every morning about the same early hour at which it had been wont to appear to him, he was conscious of a peculiar sensation over his whole body, exactly as if a feather-brush were passed over him. He felt no pain, but a tickling sensation. Also, occasionally he heard a creaking and brushing against the cupboard doors, or a tapping at his door ; but these manifestations became less frequent, and at last ceased so completely that the professor thought he was entirely freed from his troublesome and uncanny visitor, and that he could dispense with an attendant and a night-light.

Two nights had passed without disturbance after he had given up these precautions, when on the third night he saw the spectre again, which roused him at

the usual hour. It was not so distinct as before ; it held in its hand something like a picture with a hole in it, and thrust its hand several times through this hole. Oedern plucked up courage to address it, and said that he was unable to comprehend its meaning.

Again some of the masters of the Carolinum sat up through the night with Oedern, and the spirit again appeared two or three times, but never so as to be more distinctly seen. Unfortunately, we are not informed whether they saw it, or whether the vision was confined to Oedern. After some discussion among the masters and professors, and inquiries made of his sister and others, it was ascertained that shortly before his death Dorien had had several magic-lantern slides sent him on approval from an optician, and that these had neither been paid for nor returned.

The slides were sought out, and sent to the maker. After this Professor Oedern was no more troubled.

Professor Oedern told his story, and, indeed, it was well thrashed out by the learned of Brunswick. It was talked of in the Court, and Oedern was questioned by the Duke about it. His account was taken down by the Provost Jerusalem, by Professor Gebauer, of the University of Göttingen, and by Professor Segner. It was published, discussed, and was disputed by Professor Hennings, of Jena, who asserted that the ghost was no other than one of the scholars of the college in disguise. He pointed out the suspicious fact of the supposed ghost holding his night-cap about his face so as to conceal a considerable part of it, and keeping his hand in such a position as to retain a sham beard from falling off, when he first appeared to Hofer, and afterwards to Oedern and Hofer. Then again, the pretended ghost seemed to have a suspicious attachment for the cupboard, and the professor of mathematics had admitted that he heard the cupboard creak and stir when the ghost went back to it, also he allowed that he had on one occasion seen it come out of it.

It is possible enough that the first starting of the ghost was due to a practical joke ; but clearly afterwards the mathematical professor laboured under indigestion and nightmare, and the nightmare took the form of the spectre he supposed he had seen, and which oppressed his mind. His sudden starts from sleep, the time at which he was roused, his beating about him with his arms, his notion that a heavy body lay across the bed and on his body, all clearly indicate nightmare. Oedern was himself so worthy and upright a man, so lacking in imagination, that no one supposed he was fabricating a story to frighten his fellows. Moreover, it was to the interest of the masters not to allow the college to fall under suspicion of being haunted—a suspicion which might affect its prosperity and their incomes. It was so clearly against his own good that Oedern admitted the story, that all who heard him believed in his veracity, though they might doubt whether he had been visited by a ghost.

It is remarkable how very few ghost stories will bear to be closely examined, and how often, in well-authenticated stories, just those special particulars are not detailed which ought to be told, so as to enable us properly to judge of the story.