

C H A P. VII.

FÉLCHO-TARKAN—BISHOP OF ERLAU—HUNGARIAN INNS—
UNIVERSITY.

MY first concern on my arrival at Erlau, was to investigate further the volcanic appearances I had observed on entering this city. The common calcareous *Tophus* (*Tophus communis*) is very general. On this the fortress is built, and under this lies the volcanic *Tufa*; for the cellars of a wax-chandler, which are under the fortress, are formed in the volcanic *Tufa*.

I made an excursion to a hill at the back of the town, but I found only lime-stone with petrifications. The hills here are almost to the top covered with vines, and where these fail, the *Rhus Cotinus* grows in abundance; this is used in the preparation of leather, and some of it is sent to Debretzin. About Félcho-Tarkan, which is a few miles further, pretty good Marble is quarried, a black, a breccia, and a grey. The latter, which I saw, is not stratified, and contains no petrifications; it is the compact kind. Further back in the hills, Slate (*Ardesia tegularis*) is found.

Félcho-Tarkan is a pretty, romantic, and retired situation, with
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murmuring streams and mossy banks, and craggy rocks, and gloomy woods, and verdant groves: a select abode for Fauns and Silens, and Fairies, and Druids, and Hermits, and Lovers, and Botanists. Here the late bishop, a man of taste, built an elegant villa, where he often used to retire, more for amusement it is said than for prayer. The gloomy, bigoted *temperament* of the present bishop prevents him from enjoying the beauties of nature, even of the more serious kind. On his coming to the See, like a Visigoth, he attacked this beautiful retirement, and has so completely destroyed it, that the place of its existence is no longer known, and the plough and the harrow, in contemptuous triumph, traverse its site, and now insult this spot, once the residence of taste and elegance.

Near the town there is a fine hot spring, which is used for bathing: the accommodations are very bad, for it belongs to the bishop. The water where I immersed my thermometer was 24 degrees above 0 of Reaumur, the river was then only 13. Frogs, I was told, do not hibernate here during winter. I was shown a *Snailery*, which the proprietor informed me was constructed upon an improved plan. No doubt it would have been called in our island a *Patent* or *Philosophical Snailery*, or *Snail-Sty*. It was nothing more than a large hole dug in the ground, about two or three feet deep, with a wooden house as a cover. The food of these animals is the refuse of the garden, which is thrown into the hole.

From frogs and snails I am *naturally* led back, not to that godlike generous creature—man, but to my—bishop; of whom, should he fall into the hands of the celebrated Cosmus Necrotomus, the same report will certainly be made, which has already appeared of some monks that he dissected; in whom he says he found the “*Vesica biliaria seu folliculus fellis major quam in homine;*” yet the heart, that part to which we attribute all our noble and generous actions, either altogether absent, or small, or distorted, or cartilaginous. This excellent anatomist, whose name and learned writings are, I am assured, known but to a few of my countrymen, expresses himself thus: “*In quodam monachi Latrappii cadavere cor plane nullum deprehendi. E monacho hispano, sacri olim tribunalis, quod in hæreticam pravitatem inquirat, officiali, cor pilosum & hirsutum extraxi, quod in latronibus quibusdam se quoque vidisse testatur Benivenius & Muretus. Cartilagineum cor autem, quale in sceletro quodam observavit Riolanus, in monacho, sacræ inquisitionis apud nos præside, vidi. Cæterum, in omnibus monachis cor minoris est voluminis quam in homine.*”

Why, thinks the reader, so much rancour at the bishop?—When I travel through a country not favoured like Hungary with a warm sun and a rich soil, I can without repining make a shift with *whisky*, or even with water; but not to be able to enjoy what bountiful Nature has spread for the good of mankind with a liberal hand, always galls me much. The wine of Erlau is justly famed, and, when good, it is little inferior to Burgundy. I had long flattered myself with the
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hope of drinking here a bottle of the best; and immediately on my arrival I ordered some. The waiter told me I should have *bischofliche* wine. This raised still higher my expectation, for I thought he meant wine fit for a bishop to drink; and I eagerly tasted what he brought me, but was surprised to find it as bad as that of Bogdon. I scolded the waiter; he looked gloomy, and told me, shrugging up his shoulders, that it was *bischofliche* wine; but the poor man only meant to inform me that it was the bishop's wine, and that he had only the vending of it. I then sent my servant about the town to see if he could not procure me a bottle or two, but it was all in vain; the bishop possessing the exclusive right of retailing wine. So I was, till I had made the acquaintance of Dr. D——, obliged to drink this vile stuff in a country producing the best: it gave me the colic, which I naturally attribute to the bishop, and I must retaliate the injury.

The inns in Hungary, as in some other countries, are on a quite different system from ours. They belong either to the corporations of towns, or to the proprietors of the towns and villages, who draw from them a great revenue by letting them out on the condition of the innkeeper taking their wine and beer; or they give him a fixed salary for his trouble, and receive all the profits. In either of these cases the innkeeper has little merit or demerit arising from the quality of his wine: indeed, where there are two sorts, he may give his customers the inferior kind, and charge the price of the best, and he may lower the quality. This indeed may make bad wine still worse, but

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can never make bad wine good. From these monopolies it arises, that in Hungary, a country famous for its wine, the traveller can never get a glass of good wine but in private houses; and for the vile stuff he drinks in the inns he is charged nearly as high as he is at Vienna for a good wholesome wine, though there it pays a tax. I was always against monopolies, but now more than ever: I had here a striking proof of their bad tendency.

How *bizarre* is the human character! Will it be credited that the man who exacts his rights with so much severity, as to make himself considered by his flock, not as a father and protector, but as a hard, severe and unjust master, and to alienate the friendship and esteem of every one, except of a few churchmen raised by himself, whom he selects from the lower ranks, not out of charity, but that they may be more dependant upon him—that he should have erected a public edifice which would be an honour to a crowned head!

The university, a very fine building, was erected entirely at his expence. It is said * to have cost him, including its furniture, 200,000 pounds. The world must not be so uncharitable as to suppose that he has gained this immense sum solely by the monopoly of wine; nor entertain so high an opinion of his virtues, as to think that Heaven, in answer to his prayers, supplied him by miracles with it. No: he is an Esterhazy,

* Korabinsky's Lexicon, art. Erlau.

and his family estate is about ten thousand a-year; and the see of Erlau was always considered as one of the richest in the kingdom, so that a few centuries ago the sovereigns of Hungary, on account of its immense revenues, ordered that their fourth sons should be maintained from it: and the quota of troops from this bishopric, in an *insurrectio*, is the same as that of the primate, the archbishop of Gran. Its revenue is estimated at twenty thousand sterling a year. Twenty thousand and ten thousand make thirty thousand; and on this a single man, I think, may live; though I believe he only vegetates. His countrymen do not know what to make of him; some consider him as a great bigot, others as a knave, and some as a mixture of both. He is a bitter enemy to the protestants. I would not believe it till I heard it from many, and in different places, that he carries his zeal so far as to buy people over to his own religion. If any of the protestant nobility are poor, and will change their religion, he settles on them a pension according to the influence of their families. These bribes are said to amount to six or seven thousand a year. *Relata refero.*

But to return to the university. Whether this was founded with the benevolent design of serving as a nursery for the mind, where youth might be taught how to attain their own happiness and forward that of society, and where budding genius might be fostered, and directed to objects worthy of its pursuit; or whether with the sinister design of increasing the demand for its founder's monopolized wines, by a greater population, as some think; it is no less a princely building, and has all
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the requisites for a university. The professors are well accommodated, the lecturing-rooms are very good, and the chapel, library, and the hall for the public disputations and for conferring academic honours, very elegant. The painted ceilings of the two last are, in my opinion, very fine. That of the library represents the Council of Trent, where the bishop has shown his uncharitable bigotry by bringing down from heaven lightning to strike the heretical writings. On that of the hall, the Sciences are allegorically represented. They have both an admirable effect, and are far beyond many I have seen of great fame: I think they are superior to any I saw in Italy. The painter was a native of Hungary, and had studied at Vienna: he is since dead. The university is provided with an observatory, and the instruments are from London. A quadrant alone cost fifteen hundred guineas. How common it is for men to be scrupulously exact in the performance of religious trifles, and yet to be negligent in the discharge of important moral obligations! Will it be believed that the man who had nearly been prosecuted by the crown for severities shewn to his peasants, should have had scruples about the propriety of buying these instruments in England, because we are heretics? Yes, I was told that he went so far as to send to Rome to know what he ought to do.—*Relata refert—Si non e vero e ben trovato.*

A museum of natural curiosities was begun to be formed, and many Hungarian birds neatly stuffed were collected; but the negligence of the overseers, and the unremitting diligence of the *Dermestes*

lardarius & *pellio*, with the *Ptini*, &c. have now nearly reduced the whole into ruins. The Emperor Joseph, who could not like such a man, never seconded the views of the bishop, and this establishment is at present little more than a college for the clergy.

I walked through the episcopal palace; it was poorly furnished, and destitute of every mark of social comfort; and chilling gloom and mournful silence reigned throughout.

Though I had letters of introduction to the bishop from some great men, I could not see him; sickness was assigned as an excuse: but he sent me by his physician, Doctor Dosler, to whom I am indebted for many civilities, an invitation to dinner. I accepted of the invitation under the expectation of seeing him, but he dined by himself; and one or two of his canons, and two or three gloomy priests, and my friend the Doctor, were the only company. He had some very fine carriage-horses in his stables. These were the only cheerful beings I saw about the palace: they were from his own stud.

There is nothing in Erlau to detain a stranger, it is in general ill built; almost the only good houses I noticed were those of the canons. Here is a Turkish tower in very good condition. In the town wax is bleached, and not far from it Cordovan leather is prepared: red, yellow and black are made; the two first kinds are chiefly used for women's boots, but their colours do not stand.