

# Stein Collectors International



## A Song From the Upper Rhine rompeter von Säckingen

by J. Viktor von Scheffel - 1855

Engravings by C. Schweninger - 1888

Translated and Summarized by  
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Young Werner Kirchhof, dressed in a long gray coat, blond hair flowing from under his feathered hat, rides through the Black Forest in the month of March. It is cold, since spring has not completely arrived. A trumpet hangs from his shoulder. He meets an old priest from a nearby village, who invites him to spend the night in his house. After a meal, they sit around the warm tiled oven and his host asks Werner why he is riding alone through the countryside. Werner explains that he is from Heidelberg in the Palatinate. He learned to play the trumpet as a youth and was led by his guardian to study law at Heidelberg University. Like most university students, he spends his time doing things other than studying, including playing the trumpet and drinking wine with Perkeo, the famous court jester, at the big wine barrel near the Heidelberg Castle. When he serenaded the wife of the *Pfalzgraf* (Count of the Palatine) one evening, he was thrown out of the university.



The old priest tells him he was lucky to get away without any harsher punishment and suggests he spend some time in the nearby town of Säckingen where Fridolinus, the patron saint of young people, will be celebrated the next day.

Werner goes to watch the procession of many kinds of townspeople. There he sees a young girl with whom he instantly falls in love. He visits the river Rhine that tells him that his love's name is Margareta, the daughter of the baron whose castle is located above the river. That evening he goes to where he can see the castle lights and plays a song on his trumpet.

The baron, who is troubled by old age and the gout, sits in his castle reminiscing about his days fighting the Swedes in the Thirty Years' War, drinking wine and smoking his pipe, a habit for which his daughter chastises him. A black tomcat named Hiddigeigei sits with him. The cat came from Hungary with the baron's late wife, and it feels rather superior to other cats in the area because it has hunted mice in Paris. As the baron and his daughter sit together that night, they hear the lovely song played on the trumpet. They



try to see the musician, but he is hidden by trees bordering the Rhine River. The next day the baron sends a servant to find the trumpeter player and bring him to the castle.

The baron tells Werner how much his music reminds him of the trumpeter he used to have and asks him to stay at the castle to play in his orchestra, write letters for him, and help him with necessary mathematical calculations.



One day, Werner leaves his trumpet in the garden in a leaf-covered pergola where Margareta finds it and attempts to play it with little success. Werner hears the sound, gets angry that someone dared touch the trumpet and when he rushes back, finds Margareta.

He shows her how to play the instrument; she learns quickly and the baron is pleased about her having learned this art.

Farmers in the area start a revolt against the baron and the townspeople who demand services and money from them. The baron rushes into town to lead the fight. Werner and a few others remain at the castle. When the castle is attacked, he fights bravely, killing an attacker, but is seriously wounded. In fear, Margareta blows the trumpet to call for help and her father and troops return to repel the attackers.



Werner is nursed back to health in the castle, closely watched by Margareta. He is happy to find himself alive; he and Margareta declare their love for each other and finally embrace and kiss.

They promise themselves to each other. Hiddigeigei, quite a philosopher and student of human behavior, watches this development and tries to figure out why humans kiss: "It can't be hate, they don't bite each other; it can't be hunger, they don't eat each other; it can't be just stupidity, they are usually clever and know what they are doing. Why, therefore, do they kiss? Why mostly the younger ones? Why mostly in the spring?" He decides he has to meditate more on this strange behavior and other human actions that puzzle him.

After spending a sleepless night, Werner decides to ask the baron for the hand of his daughter.

Before he can ask, however, the baron receives a letter from a knight, an old army comrade, who proposes that his 24-year-old son come courting Margareta. The baron asks Werner to write a letter for him, inviting the knight's son to come to Säckingen. Werner refuses and tells him that he himself has come to ask for his daughter's hand. Although the baron likes him, he explains that their difference in social standing makes it impossible for the two to consider marriage.

Werner resigns sadly and says he will return when he has acquired the necessary standing or not return at all. He says farewell and rides away, stopping at the edge of the Rhine River. He leans on a tree, looks back up to the castle, and sadly plays a farewell song on his trumpet. (This poignant scene is easily the most familiar part of this story to stein collectors, appearing on numerous steins.)



Werner rides out into the world, and Margareta remains sorrowfully behind.



A number of years pass and Werner and Margareta lose touch with each other. Finally we are taken to Rome at the time of Pope Innocentius, in the year 1679. Margareta and the abbess from the cloister in Säckingen are spending time in Rome; the abbess wishes to complain to the pope about a bishop in Switzerland who wants to take away some of her cloister's property. Margareta has been very unhappy during all the years since Werner's departure, and the trip abroad is hoped to cheer her up.

While watching a papal procession in St. Peter's cathedral, she recognizes the sound of the trumpet and Werner as the trumpet player among the pope's musicians, promptly fainting. The reason for her fainting is relayed to the pope, who grants an audience to the abbess and Margareta. He also asks Werner to come. Both Werner and Margareta realize that the love between them has not changed in all that time. Werner's musical proficiency and personal conduct is held in high esteem by the pope and attempts by Werner at leaving his service

have in the past been denied. Now, as reward for Werner's services in fighting with the Maltese Order against the Turks, and for so ably leading the papal band of musicians, the pope decides to help the young lovers.

He elevates Werner to the rank of knight at the court of Rome and allows him to leave his service. The pope blesses the young couple and with his newly acquired knighthood, Werner and Margareta can now be married. They travel back to Säckingen and surprise the baron with the good news. Love and playing the trumpet finally bring the two lovers together, and they marry.



There are many other stories told in this 75-page poem, written in old German, which I did not mention because they do not advance the basic story of Werner and Margareta.

There are several chapters with songs by Werner, Margareta and the cat Hiddigeigei, lines from which frequently appear on steins.

Other chapters describe Werner going underground to meet gnomes; he speaks at great length with the river Rhine; there is a history of Saint Fridolinus and his life on an island in the river Rhine; Werner participates in a fishing expedition to a lake with the townspeople and Margareta, where they drink Maiwine and Margareta places a handmade wreath on his head as a reward for playing the trumpet so beautifully.



Selected steins displaying Trumpeter themes:



