

Louise von Baden and Christoph von Schmid's "Biblische Geschichte"

Born James Paul Ward in Peebles, Scotland on 29 June 1931, for several weeks in early 1945 I was a patient in the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh, Scotland. For part of the day I was free to leave the hospital if I wished. Close to the hospital there was a second-hand bookshop on George IV Bridge, next to the well known memorial to "Greyfriars Bobby". I visited the shop frequently in those weeks, and in later years.

In 1945 I saw a certain book in that shop. Some years later (c. 1950) it was still there, unsold, and so while I was studying in Edinburgh I bought it for two shillings and six pence (2/6), the price which was written on an inner cover (see photograph). The book contained a collection of biblical stories and sermons in German, adapted for children by Christoph von Schmid¹ and authorized for use in the Roman Catholic schools of Baden and the Rhineland. Christoph von Schmid's biblical stories went through numerous editions and they were printed throughout Germany and Austria. This particular edition was published in Mannheim (1817, 1818) in four separate parts which were then bound together. The green binding was somewhat cracked. The length along the spine was approx. 20 cm. The cover had embossed on it in gold letters the name LUISE [sic]. On the fly leaves, inside at the front there was written twice in ink the name "Louise von Baden" and the dates 1821 and 1824, and at the back "Louise" in pencil (see photographs here above).

I believe on circumstantial evidence that the owner of the book was Louise Amalia Stephanie (1811-1854), Princess of Baden, whose father was Karl Ludwig Frederik (1786-1818), Grand Duke of Baden, and whose mother was Grand Duchess Stephanie de Beauharnais (1789-1860), adoptive daughter of Emperor Napoleon I. Louise had a younger sister, Maria Amalia Elisabeth Caroline (1817-1888), Princess of Baden, and she married a Scottish peer, William Hamilton (1811-1863), 11th duke of Hamilton in 1843.² As dowager duchess living in England, Princess Maria was known by her name Elizabeth [sic]. She died 17 Oct. 1888, and there is a notice of her last will and testament in *The Illustrated London News*, 3 Aug. 1889. Her husband William, 11th duke of Hamilton, has been described specifically as a collector of books.³

Comparison of the signature "Louise von Baden", which appeared twice in the book (see photographs), with an authentic signature of Princess Louise von Baden in her marriage contract (1830) failed to establish the identity of the younger writer. However, the two earlier dated signatures were written with Latin letters, the later one with German letters.⁴ Furthermore, it is commonly observed that a person's handwriting may change with passage of the years from childhood to maturity.

¹ Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schmid (1768-1854) was an educator and author of books for children; see e.g. Wikipedia for biographical articles in English and German.

² **Literature:** Rosemarie Stratmann-Döhler (ed.), Catalog of an exhibition *Stephanie Napoleon 1789-1860 Grossherzogin von Baden*, Karlsruhe 1989.

³ <http://thepeerage.com/p10947.htm>

⁴ I thank Prof. Dr. Konrad Krimm, Generallandesarchiv, Karlsruhe, for this information.

Grand Duchess Stephanie visited England and Scotland in 1845, 1848 and 1850.⁵ I believe that it is through the connection with Stephanie and her daughter Maria Amalia Elisabeth Caroline, duchess of Hamilton, that Louise's book came to be in Scotland. At that time the dukes of Hamilton had estates and a famous residence, Hamilton Palace, near the town of Hamilton in Lanarkshire, Scotland.⁶ They still have property at Haddington near Edinburgh. If Grand Duchess Stephanie, or someone in her entourage, described her visits to Scotland and England in diaries or letters then it may be possible to reconstruct her journeys to Scotland, and perhaps to learn whether and how Louise's book of biblical stories arrived there.

Habent sua fata libelli

In 2008 I wished to donate the book as an unsolicited gift to a suitable library. After some correspondence with scholars and library administrators in Karlsruhe, Germany, I sent it by registered post from the Netherlands to the Badische Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe on Monday 21 July 2008. Since then the book has disappeared. On making enquiries, some months later I received information from the postal authorities in the Netherlands, who made enquiries of the German postal authorities, that the package was delivered to the Badische Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe on 28 July 2008.

The book I have described, containing four bound parts, is illustrated here in photographs which I made before posting it. The book itself is not of much monetary value. Antiquarian book sellers on the internet offer editions in better or worse condition for less than 100 Euros. But if an association of this volume can be established with Louise von Baden, Stephanie de Beauharnais, Napoleon Bonaparte and others mentioned that will make it an interesting historical artefact.

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⁵ See Stratmann-Döhler (note 2) and chronology there; pp. 32 and 33.

⁶ For information on the dukes of Hamilton and on Hamilton Palace, etc., the quickest entry is via the internet and Wikipedia.