One would never expect to find a "Letter to the Editor" by Jernej Kopitar published in a scholarly journal in America. We do find one, however, in Edward Robinson's quarterly, The Biblical Repository, III (Andover, 1833), dated from Vienna, September 3, 1832. The existence of such a letter in an American publication, its content and history certainly deserve to be brought to light and inventoried for a future collected Kopitariana.

1.0 A reference to Kopitar's "Letter to the Editor" of The Biblical Repository appears in a footnote in the very first version of Therese Albertine Louise von Jakob's "Historical View of the Slavic Language in its Various Dialects, with special reference to Theological Literature," published in The Biblical Repository, IV (1834), on page 413. It appears as a footnote reference to the following statement in the text:

The inhabitants of the provincial counties Agram, Kreutz, Varasdin, and the neighbouring districts, called Provincial Croatia, who speak a somewhat different dialect of the Vindish language, but are able to read this translation, have nevertheless several versions of the Bible in their own dialect, "lying in manuscript, which are only waiting for some Mecaenas, or for some favourable conjuncture, in order to make their appearance."94

The footnote 94 under this text then reads: "See Kopitar's Letter to the Editor, Bibl. Repos. III, p. 186."

In The Biblical Repository, III (No. IX, dated January 1833), page 186, we indeed find among "Literary Notices" a passage from Kopitar's correspondence under the title: "Extract from a Letter to the Editor, from M. Kopitar, Custos of the Imperial Library in Vienna," dated "Vienna, Austria, Sept. 3, 1832," with a note: "M. Kopitar is highly distinguished in Germany, for several publications, exhibiting a very extensive and profound acquaintance with the Languages and Literature of the various Slavonic nations."

The correspondence itself, however, reads as follows:
As a notice for your Repository [a]—a work which cannot fail to be of high utility in your country—permit me to offer as the most recent intelligence, that we have at length received from Ofen (Buda) a catholic translation of the Scriptures in the Servian dialect [b], the first satisfactory version in this language of five millions of people of the Slavonic race. The translator is the late Franciscan monk and professor Katancsich [c], but the printing of it was brought about by the deceased primate of Hungary, cardinal Rudnay [d]. In like manner, in consequence of this step, the Slowaki (or Slovenes, the Slavonic portion of the Hungarian people) [e], who have heretofore made shift to help themselves with the Bohemian version, as being the most intelligible to them, have now been induced to undertake the printing of a pure Slovenian version of their own [f], made by the canon Palkowitsch [g]. Consequently, at present, of all the Slavonic tribes, only the provincial Croatians still remain without the Bible in their own dialect. And even they have several versions lying in manuscript; which are only waiting for some Maecenas, or for some favourable conjuncture, in order to make their appearance [h].—The version of Katancsich needs only to be printed in the alphabet of Cyril, in order to come into use among the Greek Servians [i].—The Bulgarians, finally, as well as the Albanians, are still almost without any literature; yet the latter, since 1827, have had in their hands the New Testament, through the aid of the British and Foreign Bible Society [j].

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[b] Sveto pismo staroga zakona, Siksta V. Pape naredbom previđjeno i Klementa VIII. Pape vlastjom izdano, sada u jezik slavno-ilirički izgovora bosanskoga prinešeno, tad sv. otaca i nadučiteljah tomačenjem nakitjeno. Knj. IV. U Budim
troškom i tiskom sveučilišta 1831; and Sveto pismo novoga zakona, Štiksta V. Pape naredbom previjedeno i Klementa VIII. Pape vlastjom izdano... (etc.). Knj. II. U Budim 1831,—both by Matia Petar Katancić. Cf. Kukuljević-Sakcinski 1860, Nos. 759 and 760.

[c] Matija Petar Katancić (1750–1825), a Franciscan, between 1795 and 1800 a teacher of archaeology and numismatics at the University of Buda, earlier a professor of poetics at the Gymnasium of Zagreb and Osijek; a Latin and Croatian poet, author of numerous philological and historical treatises; the translator and publisher of the first complete Bible in the "jezik Slavno-ilirički izgovora bosanskoga," a language defined by Kopitar "Dialecto illyrica, rectius Serbochrovatica, sive Chrovatoserbica" (Kopitar 1836:LIV). Cf. Lencek 1976:47.

[d] Alexander Rudnay (Rudnai)(1760–1831), cardinal and Archbishop of Esztergom (Ostrihom in Slovak), a Slovak by birth, a patron of printing of Slavic books. Rudnay made possible the publication of Katancić's Bible, as well as the publication of the first complete Bible in a Slovak translation. It is with his help that much of Antonin Bernolak's work was published. Cf. Ottův Slovník naučný 22:66.

[e] Kopitar's German equivalents of his English ethnic terminology here, used already in his "Patriotische Phantasien" of 1810 (see Miklosich 1857:61-70), are: Slowaki = die Slovaken, Slavonic = slavisch, Slovenes, Slovenian = die Slovenen, slovenisch. The apparent contradictions in "the Slowaks or Slovenes," and "a pure Slovenian version" in this text twenty years later, should be understood either phylogenetically (cf. Russian Primary Chronicle use of Slověne, slověnskij in reference to Pannonian Slavs in general), or as a translator's interpretation of Kopitar's terms. See below.

[f] Swate Pismo Stareho i Noweho Zákona podla obecného latinskeho, od sw. Rimsko-katolickéh cirkwi potvrdeného... W Ostrihome, 1829-32. 2 vols. [Preface signed: Georgius Palkovics.] For the term Slovenian see our note [e].


[h] Cf. Kopitar's reference to a translation of the Bible into the dialect of Provincial Croatia (= kajkavian) in his
German article in Österreichischer Beobachter, 1832, No. 285, page 1370: "Selbst die Agramer, d. i. Provinzial-Kroaten, könnten sie einer Bibel in ihrer besondern Mundart zum Grunde legen, wenn sie nicht etwa lieber und besser eine ihrer eigenen, dem Vernehmen nach seit lange fertigen, und der eines Verleges entbehrenden Übersetzungen, endlich zum Drucke sollten befördern wollen; was nicht nur ihnen selbst, sondern da dieser kroatische Dialect, wie er sich in Habdelich und Jambressich darstellt, einer der unvermischtsten ist, auch allen andern Slaven zum Ruhm und Nutzen gereichen würde." Quoted from Nahtigal 1945: 290-291. For Kopitar’s general attitude toward Slavic translations of the Bible and his understanding of the significance of such translations for the evolution of Slavic cultures, cf. the following praise of Palkovič’s Slovak Bible in Österreichischer Beobachter 1832: "Willkommen jüngste Bibel im Kreise deiner slawischen Schwestern! Mögest du es nicht lange bleiben, sondern dir bald eine kroatische, bulgarische etc. nachfolgen." Quoted from Nahtigal 1945:291.

[i]"The Greek Servians" = Orthodox Serbs. Cf. Kopitar’s language in his article in the Österreichischer Beobachter, 1832, No. 285, page 1370: "Wollen dann die griechischen Illyrier, nebst der ihnen, wie den Russen anerkanntermassen unverständlichen slawo-russischen Bibel auch eine gemeinverständliche serbische in ihrer Muttersprache haben, so dürfen sie im Ganzem nur diese bosnische mit serbischer Schrift umschreiben." (Quoted from Nahtigal 1945:290.) It is known that the first Serbian vernacular translation of the Bible was prepared by Vuk S. Karadžić (Novi zavjet, 1847), and Djuro Daničić (Sveto pismo, 1869).

[j]In 1827 the four Gospels were printed in Corfu in the Greek original with the Albanian translation on the side, for which the Greek characters were employed. It was the work of a group of translators under the supervision of Grigor Argyrokastriti, an Albanian bishop of the island of Eubea. Cf. S. Skendi, "The History of the Albanian Alphabet; A Case of Complex Cultural and Political Development," Südost-Forschungen, XIX (1960), 263-285.

2.0 Judging by the subject, style, and the culturological concepts reflecting Kopitar’s understanding of the cultural evolution of Slavic nations of the time, the correspondence in The Biblical Repository attributed to Kopitar could not have been written by anybody else but Kopitar himself. His authorship can be proven by comparing its content and tenor with the content and tenor of his signed articles on the same subject in the Österreichischer Beobachter in
October 1832 and in December 1833. What remains to be clarified is the question of how such correspondence found its way to the United States and appeared in a scholarly journal, which was published by a theologian known as a leading American biblical scholar of the time, but about which Jernej Kopitar could not have been cognizant in Vienna.

The answer to this question appears to be simple. We know that Therese Albertine Louise von Jakob (1797-1870), known under the pen name of Talvij, one of Kopitar's scholarly correspondents in Halle, Germany (Kern 1932:504), in August 1828 married Edward Robinson (1794-1863), at that time an Extraordinary Professor of Biblical Literature at the Theological Seminary in Andover, Massachusetts, and that in 1830 she moved with him to the United States. We know that she, now Mrs. Therese Robinson, continued to correspond with Kopitar from the United States, first from Andover, then from Boston, finally from New York, following the stations of her husband's career, and that in her letters to Kopitar which have been preserved, she twice communicated to Kopitar about her husband's Repository of Biblical Literature, a copy of which she probably also sent him in Vienna.

The complication starts when we begin looking for an immediate documentation of our answer in Kopitar's correspondence with Talvij/Mrs. Robinson. It has been known for a long time that none of Kopitar's letters to Talvij/Mrs. Robinson has been inventoried thus far. On the other hand, we know from Kopitar's "Brief-Journal 1829-1844" (Jagić 1897:828-842) that after Robinson's departure from Halle (in August 1828), Kopitar registered eleven letters to Talvij/Mrs. Robinson of which at least one must have been sent to Andover, Massachusetts. One entry in the "Brief-Journal," viz.: "3/7 September 1832--Talvij in Andover" (Jagić 1897:830), leaves no doubt that this must have been the correspondence containing Kopitar's "Letter to the Editor--September 3, 1832" in The Biblical Repository published in January 1833. Mrs. Robinson's subsequent letter to Kopitar from Boston (July 17, 1834) confirms this assumption and conclusively clarifies the question of Kopitar's authorship of the "Letter to the Editor":

"Erfreuen Sie mich, verehrter Freund bald mit einem Brief [wrote Mrs. Robinson in the last paragraph of this letter to Kopitar], ich will auch recht bald wieder schreiben! Mein Mann empfiehlt sich ihnen bestens. Was Sie unter dem Titel "A letter to the Editor" citiert finden, ist eine Übersetzung der Stelle die die Bibelübersetzungen
anbelangt, aus ihrem letzten Brief an mich. Mit
erzlichen Wünschen für Sie und der Bitte um ein
freundliches Andenken Therese Robinson, geb.
v. J." (Milović 1941:94).  

There is an important lesson as well as a warning in this
story of Kopitar's "Letter to the Editor" in The Biblical Re-
pository. The question of the authorship of the "Letter"
could never have been solved if one relied on Franz Miklosich's
publication of Talvij's correspondence with Kopitar. Miklo-
sich's handling of this correspondence was, to say the least,
capricious and arbitrary: he omitted entire passages in
Talvij's published letters, and what is more important, he did
not include in his publication Mrs. Robinson's Boston letter
to Kopitar, which helped us to resolve the riddle.

Rado L. Lencek
Columbia University

NOTES

1 Therese Albertine Louise von Jakob's "Historical View
of the Slavic Language in its Various Dialects, with special
reference to Theological Literature (Original)," appeared
first under this title anonymously, introduced by Edward
Robinson, in The Biblical Repository, IV (Andover and New
York, 1834), 328-413, 417-532. In its reprint the title was
changed to Historical View of the Slavic Language in the
Various Dialects, From the Biblical Repository, conducted by
Edward Robinson (Andover, 1834). An enlarged edition of this
work appeared in 1850 as Historical View of the Language and
Literature of the Slavic Nations, with a Sketch of their
Popular Poetry by Talvij, with a Preface by Edward Robinson
(New York, 1850).

2 The note numbers [a] to [j] are added to the text;
they refer to our annotation of Kopitar's "Letter" below.

3 Cf. Kopitar's notes "Literatur" (Announcement of five
new Slavic publications) in Österreichischer Beobachter,
Donnerstag, den 11. October 1832, № 285, pp. 1369-1370; and
in Österreichischer Beobachter, Sonntag, den 8. December
1833, № 342, p. 1580; now in Nahtigal 1945:288-293.

4 Milović 1941:36-103 has all together 12 of Talvij's
letters to Kopitar from the United States; the following
three letters encompass the period under discussion: the first letter from Andover, dated 17 January 1831; the second from Andover, dated 2 February 1832; and the letter from Boston, dated 17 July 1834. The first of these letters Kopitar received only a few days before October 1, 1832. Cf. Vasmer 1938: 87.

5 Talvj's letters to Kopitar are in the National-Bibliothek in Vienna. They were published twice: once in Miklosich 1883: 462-489; the second time in Milović 1941: 36-103.

6 See above note [a].

7 Cf., e.g., in her first letter to Kopitar from Andover: "Ich würde mir ein grosses Vergnügen daraus machen, Ihnen ein Exemplar davon zu schicken, u. werde mit meinem Mann gemeinschaftlich suchhen, eine passende Gelegenheit dazu zu finden." Or, in her second letter from Andover: "Wie gerne wüsste ich eine Gelegenheit zu finden Ihnen R.'s Repository zu schicken." Cf. Milović 1941: 85 and 90.

8 Cf. the last word on this subject by J. M. Milović: "Meine Bemühungen, die Briefe des grossen slovenischen Philologen und Sprachforschers an Talvj zu ermitteln, sind bisher erfolglos geblieben." (Milović 1941: 111).

9 Stress added.

REFERENCES
Kopitar, J., 1836 Glagolita Clozianus.... Vienna.


Milović, J. M., 1941  TALVjs erste Übertragungen für Goethe und ihre Briefe an Kopitar. Leipzig (Veröffentlichungen des Slavischen Instituts an der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Berlin, 33) [Talvij's Briefe an Kopitar," 36-103]


Ottův Slovník naučný  Ottův Slovník naučný; ilustrovaná encyklopaedie obecných vědovostí (Prague, 1888-1909), 28 vols.