

THE OLD HOME OF WAGNER.

EDGAR L. WAKEMAN IN BAYREUTH.

A Spot For Idyllic Retirement—The Musical Mecca of the City—Wagner's Origin—Who Made Him Immortal—His Influence on Music.

BAYREUTH, Bavaria, Oct. 21.—(Copyrighted.)—If Richard Wagner really desired to seek a deep seclusion as possible, and to retire almost absolutely from all that had flavor of the modern about it, his judgment was not amiss when he selected Bayreuth. The place is one of the oldest of Bavarian towns. Indeed, if one consider the irregularity of the streets and the general straggling, zig-zag haphazard arrangement, or rather want of arrangement, about everything, the place must have originally grown up along some old Roman road-way, and that one a most eccentric, cow-path besides. Somebody has given Darmstadt the reputation of being the dearest town in Europe. That person had not seen Bayreuth. It is told that, at any time between the Wagnerian revivals, when a party of strangers arrives at Bayreuth, it is such an event that the church bells are rung and the visitors are drawn in their flocks to an inn by the populace. However this may be, there is a listlessness and a silence here that are ever painful. Twice a week the old market-place brightens up a bit. If there is any other business done here there are no evidences of it. The Rathaus is a rat-house indeed; the churches are sullen and ruinous; the hotels are wearisome old places with their "offices" in a chair in a moldy court, or on an oaken table no larger than your hat; the residences—except those which were built during the present century—are gray old towns, about which even wild thorns in green have apparently ceased growing; the people themselves seem as wraiths, to dream between the Wagnerian revivals, only revived for a little time to gather the pennies and marks that those remarkable events bring here; and as soon as the strangers are gone the sleep of the years again immediately descends for another dreary cycle.

But a long time ago before Wagner was born, it seemed that others chose the place for a spot for idyllic retirement. The husband of the illustrious Margravine de Bayreuth, sister of Frederick the Great, here built many of the deserted palaces and stately houses which are now either used as barracks or are entirely deserted. The Ermitage is one and is located about three miles from the city. It was built by the Margravine in 1780, and is related, the lady named wrote her famous "Memoirs." Also at this period Frederick II built the fine old theater here, decorated in the rococo style, which seats a thousand people, and in which, during his time, operas and plays were given at great cost. Upon one, it is said, 30,000 florins were expended. So it will be seen that Wagner merely revived and surpassed what once existed here. Besides the ancient glory of the Margravine, the most interesting attachment to Bayreuth as the home of Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, whose writings are known to all lovers of literature. He lived here, from 1801 until the date of his death, in 1826, and is buried in the little grave-yard just beyond the Erlangen gate. King Ludwig I erected his monument, the work of Swabian, in one of the principal squares of Bayreuth. At the little hostelry called the Kottwenzel, near the Ermitage, a room is shown, where Richter loved to come and rest and write.

But above all else, the pilgrim here is attracted to the Richard Wagner theater, the musical mecca of Bayreuth. It is built fully a mile from the center of the town, half-way up the side of a little mountain, whose top is crowned by the soldier's memorial of 1872-73, and with the exception of a few modern residences at either side, upon a broad, tree-bordered slope leading to it, is quite isolated and alone in its glory. It is most untidy and even repulsive in exterior appearance, and no style of architecture could be named in describing it unless, indeed, it might be called "Wagnerian," which is, architecturally frightful. The material is a composite of stone and brick and concrete, with here and there the cross-beams of oak, so common in inferior German buildings, with rafters and plaster in the interiors. As you approach the level platz or space, set aside from the theater and grounds, there are to the right a gigantic detached wine cafe and dance hall, and to the left an isolated beer hall and a monumental structure, the most important of the theater from a distance, without knowing for what purpose it had been built, one would be tempted to say that a German wealthy farmer had built a large barn, or, at the least, a stable, and after a little while he had a shed for his cattle and horses erected at either side. Finally, after several years of affluence and determined to outdo any farmer in the principality, he had put another barn on the high and as large, behind and against the first one constructed.

But when alive, wise, old Wagner could give American theater builders points upon interior construction. The stage and accessories have been given the most attention, and this portion of the theater (representing the last barn built by the farmer) is twice as large as the auditorium itself. The width of the stage is ninety feet; the depth, as measured from the front edge, to which is an extension forty feet deep, and thirty-nine feet wide; giving on occasions like the presentation of "Parsifal" a total stage depth of 118 feet. The height of the stage from the floor to the attachment of flies is ninety feet. The open space below the stage, the stage cellar, has a depth of thirty-four feet, and the open space above the flies is twenty-six feet, giving a total distance from the highest available point for use in stage mechanism to the floor of the stage cellar of 150 feet. The auditorium to American eyes first seems as painfully ugly and plain as is possible for the monkish mind of a German man to create. But one gradually discovers system and arrangement of wondrous real worth. There is not a proscenium box or parquet or dress-circle box in the theater. There is no parterre or dress-circle. The seats circle to the right and left from the cavernous space in front of the stage, where the orchestra is shut out from view, to the rear, at an angle of elevation of about 30°. Following the orchestra, with lessening projection, are lateral walkways to the ceiling, the ends of which are treated with detached Corinthian columns with long, square bases. These diminishing columns terminate the rear at the end of the prime gallery, set immediately behind the last and most elevated circle of seats. This gallery comprises simply six stalls or boxes, the whole capable of comfortably seating one hundred persons, from which extend to the rear large foyers or promenades. Above this gallery is another small gallery, accommodating 250 people, so that, as the main floor contains 1,345 chairs, there is seating capacity for only 1,650 persons. These chairs are of cherry, square-framed, with square backs and cane seats, and are roomy and comfortable. The ceiling, which, in gray vandyke and white, represents a canopy gathered at the top of the proscenium and extended down above the upper gallery snugly, has not a line of gilt or bright color. The somber columns at

either side simply represent brown stone and gray and white. There is absolutely no decoration in the Richard Wagner theater unless the grouping of gas jets, gracefully hung from the caps of the columns and like sprays along the mid-height of the columns, the former series of which are continued around the cornice of the prince's gallery, may be called decorative. By an ingenious arrangement ingress and egress are provided, each two rows of seats having a separate entrance. During the performance the lights in the auditorium are lowered as much as possible, and to such an extent that reference to score or libretto is next to impossible. There, then, being no distracting visible, and no fancy decoration to distract the attention, the stage effect, be it of sight or sound, is wondrously heightened and intensified. Indeed, looking from the center of the auditorium upon a stage setting at Wagner's theater is like looking from the gloaming of some rustic cavern out upon the great glory of the rising sun. One cannot but think of Rembrandt effects. The very mind and sight and all faculties of mental and spiritual perception are focused upon the one spot which is given a positive radiance by contrast. The cost of the theater was in the neighborhood of \$225,000, and considering the difference in labor and value of material in Germany and America, that would equal an outlay of \$500,000 in our country was expended. This fund was raised by direct taxation by Wagner upon 1,000 *patrons*, or members of the Wagnerian society, who were commanded to each contribute \$225. Only \$125,000 came this way. Then Wagner attempted to secure the remainder by giving performances of his higher works, but only \$20,000 was thus secured. Finally the king of King Ludwig I. contributed \$80,000. I had the good fortune to witness the first performance of Wagner's last and greatest work, "Parsifal," in 1882, as well as to become personally acquainted with the composer, who was here at that time. This gave me an opportunity to know how large a number of persons were necessary in the production of the wonderful music-drama. It clearly shows the immense popularity of Wagner's strange creations. There were: General managers, Feustel, Munke, Gross and Heckel; conductors, Levy and Fischer; choral directors and orchestra leaders, Schuster, Brink, Porjes, Knieke, Frank, Stich, Thome, Merz, Eichel and Hansberg; scenic artists and costumers, Carl Brandt (who died in December, 1881), his son Fritz Brandt, Bruckner, Rieck, Jostkowski, Messer, Plattner, and others; and, among the artists, including the heads of corps: solo artists, Parsifal, Winklemann, Gudehus and Jaker; Kundry, Materna, Brandt and Materna; Gurnemanz, Scaria and Siehr; Alten, Kundry, Materna, Brandt and Materna; Fuchs, Tietel, Kindermann; the Knight, Stumpf; the four Squires (female voices), Keil, Gally, Mikory and Von Hubbenet; flower girl soloists: Andre, Beile, Pringle, and others; and, among the chorus, twenty-four voices: the male chorus, met-zo-sopranos, twelve; twelve basses, twenty; baritones, eighteen; twelve separate choruses of boys' voices for cathedral and distant effects; number of the orchestra, which had 104 performers, up to 280 persons. With those engaged in various other essential capacities, the number of persons actually employed was fully 600.

Everybody knows the history of Wagner's obscure origin; his trifling studies; his surpassing impudence while yet unlearned in proclaiming a new, and to him, a new, art; his early composition in lyric drama, his revolutionary attitude, his exile to Switzerland; his ill-fated success in England; his rebuffs at Paris, despite Meyerbeer's noble aid, repaid by the subsequent cruellest satires by Wagner; his literary and dramatic career; his association with the great composers of his time, including even so great predecessors as Mozart and Beethoven; and his general stupendous egotism self-consciousness, assertiveness, impudence, aggressiveness, and his final winning the heart and treasure of the erratic King Ludwig of Bavaria through the presentation of "Der Fliegende Holländer," and his later triumphantly kingly career at Bayreuth, giving the world, rather than thousands of his disciples, representations of his colossal music-dramas, from the "Ring of the Nibelung" in 1876, to "Parsifal" in 1882, as were never elsewhere accorded any art before. Wagner's chief source of his success; not much of his personality; and few, it seems to me from my own opportunities for observation and analysis, have had the calmness and patience to give both the dramatic and the extraordinary product their just estimate.

Just two people really made Richard Wagner immortal. One of these was the woman whose hand I grasped at "Wahnung," the same I saw in 1882 at the premiere of the theater from a distance, without knowing for what purpose it had been built, one would be tempted to say that a German wealthy farmer had built a large barn, or, at the least, a stable, and after a little while he had a shed for his cattle and horses erected at either side. Finally, after several years of affluence and determined to outdo any farmer in the principality, he had put another barn on the high and as large, behind and against the first one constructed.

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Then with great spirit this remarkable creation: "It is the real and primitive that the male shall create; that the female shall nurture. Few women ever created. They were 'derelicts' wandering forces, when so striving. Had these known the master-power of mated genius in mass, their contribution to the world's good would have been infinitely greater!"

Cosima Wagner not only gave her own magnificent powers to Wagner, but she gave him the power of kings and princes, the adored of all women, the greatest pianist the world ever knew, who never uttered word, made motion or struck note, without presenting a living idea—his endless and all-powerful slave. These two tremendous forces, with access to a king's treasury, gave him power to realize his ideas fully; a fortune no composer before him ever possessed. As to his influence upon music, I believe it to have been not because of the great accomplishment, but because there remain only two classes to contemplate his work. One believes with Wagner that the ultimate was reached in his methods, and imitates himself and his deity. The other absolutely rejects everything Wagnerian. Neither disciples nor enemies are true critics. Time is the only inexorable determiner of what is best in art. And I believe time will give Richard Wagner his place: A transcendent poet and musician who twin genius created a new form of expressing simultaneously majestic ideas in blended sound and thought. Wagner made music a poetry, and poetry a music. He did not reveal melody. His divinest forms were before him. He disturbed these for a little. They will again appear. He created immortally for the supreme application of the art of music. Finally, he will ever cherish that music which appeals to the supreme appreciation of the heart.

EDGAR L. WAKEMAN.

THE UGLIEST PEOPLE KNOWN.

The Bataks of Sumatra—The Doom of Their Old People.

The population of Serapi turned out to see us. The women were a strange contrast to the men in appearance. While the latter were as lean as whipping-posts and uglier than most monkeys, the former—at least those who were not so—were plump, solidly built, full-bodied creatures, and there were at least half a dozen in the crowd before us who might fairly be termed good looking.

That the members of the community, the women especially, almost surpass my powers of description to give an idea of their weird ugliness. K. tersely summed them up as "baked monkey," but a monkey could at least have had a face and a covering, whereas these dreadful persons had nothing but their very scanty clothing to conceal any part of the leathery integument that was so tightly shrunk over their skeleton.

And here is the appropriate place to speak of the strange and unnatural practice, universally ascribed to the Bataks, and confirmed by Dutch traveling tales. I do not understand that any European has actually witnessed the ceremony. When the elder members of a family have reached the stage of decrepitude and uselessness, they are put to death. The old must be a burden to the community, a general meeting of relations is held, and the senile one is invited to ascend a small tree, which the affectionate relatives then shake with all their might, until the old man or woman hangs by his heels. If he can succeed in holding on until the shakers are tired out, he is relieved; but if, as is most likely, he tumbles off, he is promptly dispatched. A Dutch author, Jungbunnus, I think, has written of this custom, and he takes place at the time of the year when times are ripe, this fruit being very plentiful, and forming a large ingredient in the cuisine of both Malays and Bataks. But if the natives of the interior resemble those whom I saw at the Batak village, they must be a mere form. I had forgotten to state that the Bataks file or grind all their incisor teeth down to the level of the gums, and only the jaws of a hyena could have disposed of their canines. I did not see any of their cannibal dishes.

THE POSTAGE STAMP MYTH.

Origin of an Idea That Has Bothered Many Hundreds of Good People.

Now and then some one announces himself as the victim of the one-million postage stamp hoax. It is firmly believed that if 1,000,000 stamps are collected and forwarded to some one, a bed will be provided for an invalid boy in some hospital, or a home for the aged, or the poor, or churches have been the special victims, and there is hardly one in England, the United States, Australia, India, or in any other country, that has not had several members beguiled, tortured and even stealing postage stamps in order to make up the million that will go to clothe and feed some orphan.

This swindle originated in the fertile brain of a postage-stamp collector at Stettin, Germany. He decided to make collections to sort out and sell again, and hit upon a plan to get the whole civilized world to go to work for him free of charge. He preyed on the sympathies of people by promising to devote the proceeds of his collection to the "Syrian orphan home" for every 1,000,000 stamps sent to him. This worked well; and the next dodge was the starting of a mythical mission in India, the hundreds of which agreed, for every 1,000,000 stamps sent to them, to save from the jaws of the crocodiles of the Yellow river at least one Chinese baby, and then educate and christianize it. The stamps were to be sent, not to Germany or China, but to Munich or Stettin. The last claim on the sympathy of the world that has been made by this German is that for 1,000,000 stamps a home for an old lady or a young girl was to be provided in one of three homes—one in London, another in New York and the third in Cincinnati. For 500,000 stamps a bed will be endowed in a hospital, and for 100,000 a home will be formed for an orphan for one year. There are agencies in various cities to forward stamps to Stettin. It is estimated that this swindle has collected over 100,000,000 stamps in the United States alone, and that these were worth from \$500,000 to three times that amount.

At the Authors' Club.

Brown—"Who is that seedy looking individual with the long hair?"

Jones—"That's Starving, the renowned poet. His great masterpiece is 'The Last Days of Pompeii'."

Brown—"And who is that well-dressed gentleman who just snubbed him so unmercifully?"

Jones—"He is also a poet. He writes the advertisements for Plum's soap."

WHERE TO FIND COMFORT.

REV. DR. TALMAGE'S LATEST SERMON.

From the Text, "God Shall Wipe Their Tears Away"—Kinder Than an Earthly Parent, But Not Always Called Upon—Love and Mercy.

The Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage, D. D., preached to an overflowing congregation at the Academy of music, Brooklyn, last Sunday. The text was, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev., vii, 17. He said:

Riding across a western prairie, wild flowers up to the hub of the carriage wheel, and while a long distance from any shelter, there came a sudden shower, and while the rain was falling in torrents the sun was shining as brightly as I ever saw it shine; and I thought what a beautiful spectacle this is! So the tears of the bible are not midnight storm, but rain on pansied prairies in God's sweet and golden sunlight. You remember that bottle which David labeled as containing tears, and Mary's tears, and Paul's tears, and Christ's tears, and the harvest of joy that is to spring from the sowing of tears. God mixes them. God rounds them. God shows them where to fall. God exhales them. A census is taken of them, and there is a record as to the moment when they are born and as to the place of their grave. Tears of bad men are not kept. Alexander, in his sorrow, had the hair clipped from his horses and mules and made a great adobe about his grief, but in all the vases of heaven there is not one of Alexander's tears. I speak of the tears of the good. Alas! they are falling all the time. In summer you sometimes hear the groans of the poor, and you know that a storm miles away, but you know from the drift of the clouds that it will not come anywhere near you. So, though it may be all bright around about us, there is a shower of trouble somewhere all the time.

What is the use of them, anyhow? Why not make this a world where all the people are well and eternal strangers to pain and aches? What is the use of an eastern breeze that blows from the east, but only now and then? Why, when a family is put together, not have them all stay, or if they must be transplanted to make other homes, then have them all live? The family record book is a record of the tears of the good. Why not have the harvests chase each other without fatiguing toil? Why the hard pillow, the hard crust, the hard struggle? It is easy enough to explain a smile, or a success, or a congratulatory word, but it is not so easy to explain a dictionary, and all your philosophies, and all your religions, and help me explain a tear. A chemist will tell you that it is made up of salt and lime and other compounds, and that it is the acid of a sour life, the vinegar sting of a bitter memory, the fragrance of a broken heart. I will tell you what a tear is, it is agony in solution.

Dear me, it is agony I discourse to you of the use of the tear. First, it is the design of trouble to keep this world from being too attractive. Something must be done to make us willing to quit this existence. If it were not for the tears of the world, we would be enough heaven for me. You and I would be willing to take a lease of this life for a hundred million years if there were no trouble. The earth cushioned, and upholstered with flowers, and with such expense, no story of other worlds could enchant us. We should say: "Let me have your body disintegrated in the next moment, and I will go on a celestial adventure, then I can go to the world which is good enough for me." You might as well go to a man who has just entered the Louvre at Paris, and tell him to hasten off to the picture galleries of the Louvre, and say: "What is the use of my going there? There are Rembrandts, and Rubens, and Raphaels here that I haven't looked at yet."

No man wants to go out of this world or out of any house until he has a better house. To cure this wish to stay here God must somehow create a disgust for our surroundings. How shall He do it? He cannot afford to deface His horizon, or blot out His sun, or blot out His stars, or to subtract an author from the water-lily, or to banish the pungent aroma from the magnolia, or to drag the robes of morning in mire. You cannot expect a catastrophe to strike to make us go. St. Paul's cathedral, or St. Michael's, or a Handel to discord his "Israel in Egypt," and you cannot expect God to spoil the architecture and music of the world, and blot out the sun, and blot out the stars, and blot out the water-lily, or to banish the pungent aroma from the magnolia, or to drag the robes of morning in mire. You cannot expect a catastrophe to strike to make us go. 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