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VICTIM OF FRAU WAGNER'S "PARSIFAL" CURSE

The Return of Parsifal

Frau Wagner

Marion Weed, Barred from Study at Beyreuth

Miss Weed remembered, probably, when she decided to spend the summer studying in Beyreuth, that Frau Wagner and other adherents of the great composer had protested indignantly against the production of "Parsifal" anywhere else than in the stage-festival playhouse which had been built for such works in the German town; but she had no idea that resentment would be directed against her, or had even survived so long.

One evening shortly after her arrival she entered a hotel dining room, where she was seated at a table with several orchestra leaders and singers. Her reception was anything but cordial, although her fame as a singer was well-known.

The next evening, when she went to the hotel, she found her table deserted and persons entering the dining room later studiously avoided her.

Her appeal to Councillor Von Gros, one of the leading officials of the town, for enlightenment, brought the astounding information of a boycott on the part of all musical people. Because of her participation in the "Parsifal" production no request that she might make in Beyreuth would be granted.

"But," replied the amazed young woman, "I intend to ask no favors. All I wish is an opportunity to study."

"No musical director in Beyreuth will be permitted to teach you," stated Councillor Von Gros, with chilling emphasis.

"Until now," declared Frau Wagner, shortly before the American production, "the whole world has respected the master's wish that 'Parsifal'—in which the Holy Grail, which held the blood of the dying Christ, is unveiled at the sacramental moment—should not be sung anywhere except in the playhouse which he built here."

Not without a memorable struggle did the composer's widow submit to what she called a "sacrilegious and commercial profanation" of the work of Herr Conried. She appealed to the German ambassador in the United States, and resorted to the law.

She implored singers who had taken part in the performances at Beyreuth not to accept proffered engagements in America, and even asked the authorities of Bavaria to prevent the passage of conductors and stage managers to this country.

There was no law to prevent them and they came. There was no law to prevent Mr. Conried from giving the work, and he gave it. But Frau Wagner and her neighbors of Beyreuth have never forgiven him nor any of the artists who had part in the American production.

By European copyright, the production of "Parsifal" has been limited to Beyreuth since 1882, and the copyright limit will not expire until 1913, although by special arrangement, the work will be free in Munich, after 1911.

In order to avoid any charges of irreverence resting against the production, Manager Conried imported from Germany the leading artists who had given "Parsifal" at Beyreuth, so that they might invest it with the same feeling and dignity.

Miss Weed did not take a leading part at first, the Kundry of the production being Milka Ternina; but this fact did not excuse her in the eyes of Frau Wagner and her friends.

"It is shocking," declared the composer's widow, while fighting the proposed American production, "to think that a mere desire to make money should induce any one to produce 'Parsifal' on a New York stage, where 'Carmen,' may be presented the day before and 'Trovatore' the day after.

"'Parsifal' is a purely religious allegory. The benediction of our Lord descends in the communion scene. It is the spirit of Christianity symbolized by His blood that forms the central theme.

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Not For Unbelievers.

"If we are true believers, then it must shock us to see such a spectacle presented on the average stage for the entertainment of a promiscuous public. To those who are not believers, 'Parsifal' has no message, and should not even prove interesting.

"In order to avoid the irreverent, money-making spirit which might cause its production elsewhere, the Wagner stage-festival playhouse was built in this small town, rather than in a great city. 'Parsifal' is no more a subject for an opera house entertainment or a business speculation than a religious service would be. The master chose the quiet of Beyreuth in order to preserve the sacred traditions and elevated spirit of his work from profane influences.

"It is only here, where 'Parsifal' was created; here in its home, where it carries with it the exalted traditions and true conceptions of its creator, that its true spiritual beauty is shown, and here only can it succeed."

The story of "Parsifal" deals with the Knights of the Holy Grail, who, in the castle of Montsalvat, guard the emerald cup in which Joseph of Arimathea is supposed to have caught the blood that dripped from the wounded side of Christ as He was dying upon the cross.

Membership in the band is made dependent upon the purity of the lives of the knights. To assail this purity in every possible way; to tempt the knights to their fall, is the task to which Klingsor, a magician, sets himself. He had been refused admission to membership because of his wickedness.

Klingsor endeavors to encompass their fall through the wiles of beautiful maidens who live in his garden. One of the knights, Amfortas, had, at one time, succumbed to temptation and had lost the spear, to the guardianship of which he had been assigned. This was the weapon that had pierced the Saviour's side. It alone can cure any wound that it makes.

In the first act Amfortas is shown suffering from a wound made with the spear while he was struggling with Klingsor. Attending him is Kundry, the woman who had laughed at Christ on the cross, and had been condemned to wander over the earth for eternity. She is, he turns, a repentant servant of the Grail and the tool of Klingsor.

The wounded Amfortas, however, can only be cured by the arrival of "a sinless fool enlightened by pity." Parisal, arriving, meets this description. He does not know his own name nor any fact concerning his life.

The Life Of Parsifal.

He is taken in by the knights, and witnesses the ceremonies of the Grail, watching with especial interest the scene suggesting the last supper. As he gazes in amazement, Gurnemanz an old knight, takes a dislike to him and drives him forth.

It is only a short distance to the wonderful garden of Klingsor, and there Parsifal is surrounded by the bevy of bewitching flower maidens. There, too, he meets Kundry, who reveals to him his identity, and calls him by his name for the first time.

Enraged at his intrusion, Klingsor hurls his spear at Parsifal; but the weapon unable to penetrate the protection of his purity, stops in midair above his head. Parsifal then catches up the spear, makes the sign of the the cross, and Klingsor's palace crashes down in ruins.

Many years are supposed to pass before the third act opens upon a Good Friday. Parsifal has passed through many experiences in his efforts to relieve Amfortas, who still suffers from his wound. Kundry now thoroughly repentant, encounters the exhausted Parsifal and bathes his blistered feet. The two are baptized by Gurnemanz, and the men pass on to the castle.

Parsifal touches the wound of Amfortas with the holy spear and it is healed. The Grail is then uncovered, and the opera ends with a splendid chorus of boyish voices wafted down from the dome to the temple.

"Accompanied by the beautiful music and the pageantry of scenery and costumes," writes an admirer of the opera, "this succession of scenes makes a profound impression on one who sees and hears the work.

"He cannot fall, if he has the love of music in his heart, to be submitted to the spell that Wagner has wound about the music surging through this drama with such a wondrous eloquence, tenderness, dazzling beauty, and spiritual uplift."

Having even a higher conception of the work, regarding it as a sacred thing, Frau Wagner revolted from the idea of its presentation upon the ordinary stage, and she cannot forgive Miss Weed for having engaged in its American "desecration."

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DANGER IN DRILL.

Managers Fear Military Practices Threaten Empire.

London, Aug. 16.—The managers of the London county council schools at Lewisham have discovered a new danger to the empire. It is military drill.

They noticed that the children enjoyed being drilled, and that they often—the boys at least—played at being soldiers after school hours.

By some method of reasoning which they have not explained, the managers of the schools felt that this was, in their own words, "contrary to the true spirit of patriotism," and they expressed regret to the council that the playgrounds of the schools should be used for drilling the children out of their love for their country.

The council has not yet decided what to do in the matter.

The Athletic Girl's Shirt.

This season the styles trend toward the very coolest things to wear, regardless of conventionality, owing to the fact that more vigorous exercise and sports are engaged in than heretofore. While golfing, boating, tennis and automobiling have been summer amusements for seasons past, still they were never engaged in to such an extent as now, and for this reason the sporting girl looks around for the coolest she can find. The mannish shirt, free from lace, embroidery and trimming, is one of the most favored styles. This model, made of a thin material, has a double box-pleated front, with a cluster of four tucks on either shoulder to give breadth and ample bust fullness, not omitting the convenient little pocket finish. The back is perfectly plain. The full elbow sleeves are finished with wide-stitched, pointed bands. The usual accompaniment is the white linen collar and tie or bow. Nothing could be neater, cooler or more easily made than these simple waists, which are so universally seen, and from present outlook will be seen in the early fall with long shirt sleeves and fashioned from flannel and medium-weight materials.

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