

VISIT TO OBERAMMERGAU

AND SEEING THE PRESENTATION OF THE PASSION PLAY.

Simple-Minded Folk Bent in Upholding the Tradition of Their Village—The Play Does Not Show Signs of Deterioration.

Of the thousands of visitors who week by week enter the village of Oberammergau this summer, how many have discovered its real charm? Certainly, those who arrive overnight for the next day's performance of the "Passion Play" and leave directly after, know nothing of it. They have seen the Play, but they know nothing of the players, and the secret lies with them. To know Oberammergau, and appreciate it at its full worth, you must know the people. I have stood outside the theatre more than once this summer and watched the people streaming out of the vast auditorium, hurrying to catch train or bus, bent only on flying off somewhere else to do the next thing. They have "done" the "Passion Play", now they proceed to the next item on their programme—castles, it may be, in the near neighborhood, or peaks and passes farther off. And all the time they are leaving behind what might be the most enjoyable item of all—a knowledge of the men, women, and children who produce this wonderful presentation of the Passion of Our Lord. It is true that there are some who act otherwise, and find in the village sufficient entertainment for one holiday, at any rate. Indeed, I have known persons who have found Oberammergau so attractive on their first visit that it has been repeated years after with never-diminishing joy. The place has become to them a perpetual delight. But all such persons are not of those who go to make up the general run of tourists' parties. In holiday-making it is everyone to his own liking. Some like one thing and some another. There are those who discover a pleasant spot, or a quiet nook, and are satisfied; there are others who are ever craving for fresh scenes and pastures new, and, in fact, enjoy travel. The American is fairly typical of the latter, and it is extraordinary not merely what ground he covers and what sights he sees, but what he takes in. The Englishman is less inclined to be the gadabout, and is content with a quieter and more restful holiday, and he probably of all the nationalities represented at Oberammergau in the year of the "Passion Play" is the most appreciative of the people and the Play, for the simple reason that he really makes a point of getting to know them and to probe their motives and their actions to the bottom. I remember, on my first visit to Oberammergau in 1901, when I formed one of a deputation from England to present the professional cross to the village after the Play of the previous year, that Josef Mayr paid this compliment to the English. He said, in the course of his speech at the public presentation, that no people had shown such lasting sympathy towards them and given such proofs of benevolence with so many kind deeds as the English. There is a very strong bond of affection between Oberammergau and the English visitor.

It often asked whether the people are not spoiled by so much public attention, and whether their motives are as genuine as of old. I don't hesitate to answer these questions to the credit of the Oberammergau. Nothing I have seen or heard induces me to think that they are other than their fathers were, simple-minded folk bent on upholding the tradition of their village. No other spot in the world gathers so many people together from all nationalities as does this village of Oberammergau at the time of the "Passion Play" and yet, in spite of the tempting financial offers, they remain true to their traditions, and, from what I hear, never before have the offers to break away from them been so attractive as they were this year. Simplicity is, in fact, their chief characteristic, and what gives to them their great charm. But simplicity does not mean weakness of character. The story of the "Passion Play" for the last fifty years is full of incidents which have brought-out great strength of character: the struggles of the men to face disappointment—the disappointment of a minor part in the event of increasing years. These are things which may seem trivial to outsiders, but to the men of the village the Play is the absorbing thing in their lives, and to lose their position in it is a matter of the greatest grief. All the parts are chosen by the Committee (duly elected for the purpose), and their refusal to allow Josef Mayr to be the Christus of 1900 was indeed a bitter blow, and deeply he felt it. But he had grown too old, and the surrender was inevitable, though he did not think so. But, by way of compensation, a place was made for him as Prologus, and not long after the village showed their trust and affection by electing him Burgemeister. A much sadder case than this was the deposition of Gregor Lechner as Judas. He had represented the betrayer from 1850 to 1880, but in 1880 he was considered too old and given a minor part. It broke the poor old man, and he died from sheer disappointment and vexation.

Those who recall Mayr's majestic presence as Prologus will, perhaps, have been disappointed with his successor this year. But Mayr was a difficult man to follow, either as the Christus or as Prologus. He had an extraordinarily sympathetic voice; he seemed to pour out from the depths of his soul the message of the Cross to each individual present. Who can forget his solemn words of greeting at the very outset of the Play—*Alle seien gegrüßt, welche die Liebe hier. Um den Heiland vereint, trauernd ihm nachzugehen.* Auf dem Wege des Leidens. Bis zur Statue der Grabschrift. Mayr's successor has neither the presence nor the voice that he had; but Anton Lechner, whose ambition it is to play his father's part of Judas some day, quite catches the spirit of the others. This, in fact, is the secret of the Play. Each one on the stage gets the grip of the thing. They all try to realize what they are doing—with more or less success, of course, but the greatness and the seriousness of their message are patent to all. I engaged a man to take me a two days' drive from Oberammergau. We had been a similar excursion together five years ago, when he represented Daniel in the "School of the Cross." This year he had quite another part, one of the four executioners. He is a magnificent man, with a very fine head, and, as we drove into strange districts, he aroused the curiosity of the beholders, who were eager to know what part in the play he took. But so sensitive was he that nothing would move him to disclose it.

and, of course, those of my party were strictly loyal to his feelings.

Does the Play show signs of deterioration? Certainly not. The Play is as strong as ever. True, one may pick out characters which one preferred on a previous occasion, but, taking the Play as a whole, it moves as much as ever it did, and its inspiration is equally great. And the master mind of it all goes about the village almost unnoticed. An elderly man, Herr Ludwig Lang, the head of the carving school, is impervious to public recognition. A genius for management and a true artist, possessing a strong will, he dominates the Play with his height. He directs each performance, and his puppets move to the wave of his hand in astonishing obedience. They are almost too obedient, for the shouting of the crowds in union is not the usual way of crowds. It is strange that such a matter as this has not impressed itself on Herr Lang, because in Germany stage crowds are quite famous. It was, I believe, the visit of the Saxe-Meiningen Company to London that gave our stage-managers a conception of the real possibilities of a crowd; and those who have seen the "Meistersingers" at Bayreuth, or elsewhere in Germany, will not recall the riot scene of the apprentices.

But it is on the artistic side of the "Passion Play" that so much is due to Herr Ludwig Lang. All the groupings and tableaux are his conceptions, and the robes and dresses are planned by him and cut out by the sister. The tableaux seemed more striking than ever this year. In one of them they introduce a donkey—I think it was the scene of Joseph sold by his brethren. I can tell a picture about the dog of past Plays, which, I think, will be new to most, and is rather pretty. The tableau of Tobias and the angel comes down to us from the earliest of the old mystery plays, and Tobias is invariably accompanied by his dog. At Oberammergau this tradition was strictly adhered to. In 1870 a white Pomeranian figured in the scene, having been trained to stand quite still by his master. The Franco-German War broke out, and the play was interrupted. The dog's master was called away to join his regiment. The dog was sold and taken to a distant village. But it was not long before he found his way back to Oberammergau, where he lay down on the threshold of his old home, refusing all food and drink, and so died. Out of regard for his faithfulness, the villagers had the skin stuffed, and in this way the dog appeared in the representations of 1880, 1890, and 1900. In the last decade the dog disappeared, probably owing to the ravages of time, and no one had the heart to replace it. Of Anton Lang, who as a young man was called upon to take up Josef Mayr's part, much has been written. To succeed Mayr in the chief character must have been an unduly great task, but he had been trained to him years before that he might possibly be wanted, though he had not taken a part in the Play. He was a delicate youth with a feeble voice, to strengthen which he would roam over the hills in his spare hours singing lustily, with no one to listen but the cattle. The magnitude of his task almost overwhelmed him, and he went to Josef Mayr. And the old man's advice was excellent. "I can teach you nothing," he said in effect. "Study the Life of Christ, and try to realize the part all you can." It was not, perhaps, the advice that was looked for, but it was the best that could be given. And so the young man set to read not only the Gospel story, but every book that bore on the Life of Christ that he could lay his hands on, and the one that helped him more than any other was the Imitation. Who can wonder? Herr Lang is by no means an ascetic or a recluse. He is a very pleasant companion, a charming host, and enjoys a good joke. He is, in fact, a good example of the happy Christian man. And while he does not wear his religion on his sleeve, he makes his presence so felt that no one would venture a questionable joke in his presence.

The music of the Play is a special attraction. It cannot be heard elsewhere or under any other conditions. I have heard two excerpts from it apart from the Play, but this was on the occasion of the presentation of the cross to which I have alluded, when, as a special compliment to the visitors, the "Hell" Di-chorus and one other were sung in the church. The music is in the "Passion Play" and the "Passion Play" only. It has not been published, and I hope never will be. There is nothing very special about it, but it suits the people and it suits the Play, and I hope will never be changed—not even for Bach, whose Passion music is incomparably finer and altogether on a different plane. The choir is uncommonly good this year, and some unaccompanied singing in the church, and in the open air on the occasion of the Papal Nuncio's visit, when he was serenaded, was quite equal to any of our own Northern choirs. But, apart from the choir, the people themselves sing very little. Those who have been to Oberammergau for Corpus Christi, and witnessed the procession all along the river banks—a very picturesque scene—must have been disappointed at the lack of choral singing. The recitation of long litanies may be the expression of great devotion, but it does not strike one as being so in the same way that our English hymn-singing does.

The "Charm of Oberammergau" is found in all these small items of village life and the Play, which anyone can discover for himself by coming in contact with the people and talking with them over their experiences. There is one dear friend in the village who wears on his watch-chain a couple of bullets, and will relate their history by giving you a vivid narrative of the Battle of Worth in the Franco-German War, and if you get to bed by midnight you will be lucky. But, whatever the hour he lets you off, you will find him at his smithy at five the next morning, or taking his place as leader of the chorus a few hours later. Another of the principal characters has visited England. I asked him what he enjoyed most. Please take a note of his answer. His first great joy was his visit to St. Paul's Cathedral; and his next the sands at Margate!

There are some still left who will talk to you of Daisenberger, the old parish priest to whom the revival of the Play in its present form is mainly due. He was the bon core, and his memory is still held precious by the villagers. Some way up on the hillside there is a little capella surrounded by trees, with a seat or two outside. This was erected as a surprise by the men of the village for their dear old pastor, who loved the spot and was in the habit of taking his daily walk in that direction. Here, in his absence, they erected this but, and here he would occasionally say his Mass. It formerly stood alone, but lately a conspicuous building, used as a convalescent home for some foreign society has been

erected in close proximity and ruined the seclusion of the place.

The village courtships are much affected by the Play. There is an unbroken rule that no married woman is allowed to appear on the stage of Oberammergau. The consequence is that for some years prior to the Play the young swains of the village have a very poor chance of mating if there is the least probability of a part in the Play for the would-be sweethearts. I know of more than one young man who is only waiting for the end of the Play this year to try his luck. Let us hope he will meet with such success as his patience deserves. I have never been able to find out the real reason for this rule, but my honest opinion is that it is a purely domestic one. Someone must look after the housing of the guests, and (will some of our lady friends please note?) it is thought wiser on the whole for the womenfolk to do it. True, it is a man-made law, female suffrage being unknown in the village; but it is accepted by the women without demur, and to be mistress in their own departments is what, after all, they desire. The possibility of obtaining a part in the Play, however, must be very upsetting to the ordinary life of the village.

The choice of Ottilie Zwick as the Blessed Virgin was a very happy one, and received general approval. She was away from the village last year when she was summoned home to take part in one of her minor summer plays, and so successful was she in her role that it was generally realized that she was the ideal Mary for the current Play, and so eager was her father for her to have it that he offered to resign his part of Judas in her favor. But he was not called upon to make this sacrifice, and father and daughter are appearing in these strangely contrasted parts. A gentle-hearted, humble-minded man, bearing the burden of a great sorrow, Herr Zwick is a very attractive personality, and one is never able to realize him as the Judas of history. He has good reason to be proud of his daughter, for her Mary is a very sweet performance, and probably the best they have had for a long time. I have felt the greatest charm of the village in the last—viz. the children of Oberammergau. Where ever such picturesque little mortals? and neither better nor worse than other children. There is a picture at every corner of the village, for there are these long-haired, bare-legged boys and girls, many of them in Tyrolean costume, to be seen at their games. And if you are up early enough you will find them all at Mass, preparatory to their morning school. No educational difficulty here. Their religion is their life—"It seems to suit these people," said a fellow-pennman a little contemptuously, as we watched the people pouring out of church. "Yes," I rejoined, "and they are all of one mind." It is a happy state of things. And so we take farewell to the village, with the memory of its wonderful Play indelibly impressed on us, our last look at us gaze behind showing the view of the Kofel towering high above the village with its cross-crowned summit, speaking to us to the very last of the Sacred Passion and the message of Divine Love.

Handed It Back.

A clergyman in the neighborhood of Nottingham was complimenting a tailor in his parish on repairs which he had done for him. In the course of conversation he, however, incautiously observed: "When I want a good coat I go to London. They make them there." Before leaving the shop he inquired, "By the bye, do you attend my church?" "No," was the reply. "When I want to hear a good sermon I go to London. They make them there."—London Tit-Bits.

Lore of the Wedding-Ring.

In the Isle of Man the wedding-ring was formerly used as an instrument of torture. Cyril Davenport, in his book on "Jewellery," remarks that there once existed a custom in that island "according to which an unmarried girl who had been offended by a man could bring him to trial, and if he were found guilty she would be presented with a sword, a rope, and a ring. With the sword she might cut off his head, with the rope she might hang him, or with the ring she might marry him. It is said that the latter punishment was that invariably inflicted." The wedding-ring was anathema to the early Puritans, who regarded personal adornment as one of the many snares of Satan. In the old English marriage service it was the custom for the bridegroom to put the ring on the thumb of his bride, saying, "In the name of the Father," then on the next finger, saying, "and the Son," and then on the third finger, saying, "and of the Holy Ghost." Finally on the fourth finger, with the words, "Amen." The ring was left there because, as the Sarum rubric says, "a vein proceeds thence to the heart." In the modern marriage service the ring is placed at once upon the third finger, the invocation to the Trinity being understood.

An English Sanctuary.

Beverly minister, 180 miles north of London, is the shrine of St. John of Beverley, who died in the year 721. In 938 Athelstan, King of England, gave several privileges to the monastery, one being the privilege of sanctuary. This was not merely for man slaying; it was open to all wrongdoers except those who had been guilty of treason. For ordinary offences, such as horse stealing, cattle stealing, being backward in accounts or being in receipt of suspected goods, a man came into sanctuary about a mile from the monastery or church. There used to be four crosses on the main roads leading to Beverley marking the limit of the area. In cases of manslaughter and murder it was not sufficient to be within one of these crosses. Before the fugitive could claim sanctuary he must enter the church and seat himself in a stone chair known as the "fired stool" or "fired chair." To this place many fled for refuge from all parts of the country.

Schoolboy's Smart Retort.

The children in a Scottish school were being examined in Scripture knowledge. "Can any boy or girl here tell me?" asked the inspector, "how Noah would be likely to use his time while in the Ark?" "Please, sir, he wad fish," said one boy. "Well, yes, he might," admitted the inspector. Presently another little fellow was seen to wave his hand excitedly, and on being asked to speak said: "Please, he couldn't fish vera lang." "What makes you think so?" asked the inspector. "Because there wad only two worms in the Ark."

OUR LOST ILLUSIONS.

But They Only Indicate Lack of Perception on Our Part.

New World. We are apt to say of one who has gone through some particularly bitter phase of existence that he has now been disillusioned; that the world is now plain to him in its aspect of uncompromising harshness and that he sees life as it really is—grim, inexorable, stern. All this only indicates lack of perception on our own part.

To lose belief in human nature is not, strictly speaking, to lose one's illusions. Goodness, purity, kindness, honesty, sincerity are existing virtues. Because you have been disappointed in one person and found these qualities lacking in his nature is no reason why you should believe that the whole world lacks them. We are far too prone to indulge ourselves in generalities of the most sweeping nature on the slightest premise.

An illusion is a fancy or belief in certain things which do not exist. If we invest the other person with imaginary qualities it is ten chances to one that we will be grieved when we find out our mistake. Naturally, since we are not given supernatural gifts of divination we cannot find out what is in the mind of the other person. It is just as well we do not, for the loss of our illusions concerning him would not be half so startling as that. But if we do imagine in any one person qualities which he does not possess there is no reason, having been assured of our mistake, that we should rail at fate and declare in bitterness, "All men are liars and cowards."

It must be a person of poor nature, one incapable of any great depth of feeling, who will let a disappointment sour and embitter him and turn him against the world. It is selfishness to wrap one's self in one's hurt and refuse to believe in or see the goodness and the truth which really do exist. It is hard to suffer, yes, how hard only those who have gone down into the depths of heart-wrung anguish and cried aloud for help, but it is making the hurt ten times deeper, more hurtful, more miserable, to centre one's life in it and from that viewpoint of resentment and pain look at all the world.

This is a good world, this is a kind world, individual experience to the contrary notwithstanding. Pessimism never helped any one. The most beautiful, the most lovable people we know are those who have come through great trials and have been sweetened and made more loving and gentle by their sorrow. These have lost no "illusions." Perhaps they have made "mistakes in judgment, perhaps they have been deceived and disappointed in those whom they loved, but they do not argue therefrom that they are deceived by all the rest of mankind.

Relief of Massacre Orphans. For the last fourteen years the National Armenia and India Relief Association, says its secretary-treasurer, Miss Emily C. Wheeler, Lansford, O., has been fighting a winning battle for the lives of children in Turkey and India. The work was begun with the idea of saving the orphans left by the massacre of 1895. They were got into a home, taught various industries, clothed and fed for \$25 a year. Those who were interested in cloth were put to tailoring, and boys who whittled well put into carpenter shops. At Corth Miss Shattuck has two carpenter and one machine shop, superintended by a young Scotchman. In Marash they are taught weaving, embroidery and farm work. In Harpoot boys become carpenters, bakers, weavers, farmers and shoemakers, and the boys, as well as girls, have learned to knit the Turkish and Persian rugs which now sell at good prices.

There are many India children waiting for supporters, but the interest has tapered more towards the 5,000 orphans in Turkey who have been left homeless and fatherless by the massacre of 1909 in Cilicia. Many children have been received in the orphanages already established in Marash, Aintab, Hadjin, Kesab and Tarsus, and new orphanages have been opened in Adana. Poor little children have been taken into the homes, but the great problem is to keep the children and their widowed mothers together. It is hoped that Christendom will rise to the necessity of caring somewhat longer for the Armenian children of Turkey. The last massacre was the 57th through which the Armenians have passed. Just now as a result of the massacre thousands are starving and relief is greatly needed.

What Would St. Paul Say? Archbishop Alexander. "If I have eaten my morsel alone," The Patriarch spoke in scorn. What would he think of the Church were he shown

Heathendom huge, forlorn, Goddess, Christless, with soul unied, While the Church's ailment is fulness of bread, Eating her morsel alone.

"I am debtor alike to the Jew and the Greek," The mighty Apostle cried, Traversing continents, souls to seek, For the love of the Crucified. Centuries, centuries, since have sped, Millions are famishing—see how bread— Yet we eat our morsel alone.

Ever from those who have largest dower Will Heaven require the more. Ours is affluence, knowledge, power, Ocean from shore to shore; And East and West in our ears have said, "Give us 'O give us this living Bread'— Yet we eat our morsel alone.

"Freely ye have received, so give." He bade Who hath given to all, How shall the soul in us longer live Deaf to their starving call. For whom the Blood of the Lord was shed, And His Body broken to give them bread, If we eat our morsel alone?

Origin of Etiquette. The French word "etiquette" really means "label" or "ticket." How, then, comes it to denote conventional forms of ceremony. It is said that a certain Scottish gardener in charge of Louis XIV's garden at Versailles was very much put out because the courtiers walked over his beds. To keep off these trespassers he placed labels or "tickets"—"etiquettes"—at various spots, with instructions as to the proper path. At first the naughty courtiers did not deign to notice these placards, but a hint from high quarters that their walks in future must be within the "etiquettes" compelled their obedience. Thus, according to the story, originated our present use of the word "etiquette."

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LIST OF DATES
Of the Agricultural Societies' Fairs, 1910.
Marmora Sept. 19 and 20
Merrieville Sept. 15 and 16
Morrisburg Aug. 31, Sept. 1 and 2
Napone Sept. 15 and 16
Newboro Sept. 3 and 5
Odawa Oct. 7
Oshawa Sept. 13 and 14
Ottawa Sept. 9-17
Parham Sept. 22 and 23
Perth Sept. 14, 15, 16
Peterboro Sept. 15, 16, 17
Pictou Sept. 21 and 22
Port Hope Sept. 21 and 22
Prescott Sept. 6, 7, 8
Renfrew Sept. 21 and 22
Roblin's Mills Oct. 1
Shannonville Sept. 24
Frankville Sept. 27 and 28
Ganong Sept. 20, 21, 22
Harrowsmith Sept. 29 and 30
Stirling Sept. 21 and 22
Tweed Oct. 4 and 5
Wolfe Island Sept. 20 and 21