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Abraham Lincoln



# RICHARD WAGNER

A SKETCH  
OF HIS LIFE AND WORKS

BY  
FRANZ MUNCKER

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY D. LANDMAN

REVISED BY THE AUTHOR

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## PREFACE.

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THE biography of Richard Wagner has already been repeatedly, and in some cases very well written. As long as in the Meister's autobiography and letters not entirely new sources are opened to us, the work of Karl Friedrich Glasenapp, containing two volumes, may, for the present at least, be regarded as an exhausting book, which offers all that the modern reading world might care to know of Wagner's outer life. Like Wagner's other biographers however, Glasenapp treated the inner life of the artist and of his works, with more brevity. For later investigators here much has been left to be done. Friends of Wagner have, for some part, filled the gaps, by carefully investigating the artistic significance and, in general, the rich intellectual merits of his aspirations and creations. In a similar and again dissimilar manner, this my little book shall help to lessen these wants. As namely these studies on Wagner's art have, for the most part, been of a purely aesthetic nature, I have sought to examine

the being and growth of this art principally from an historical stand-point, and to regard the literary works and dramas of the artist in connection with his life, as well as with the earlier and contemporary development of european and especially german intellectual life.

Historical valuation alone, reveals to us the innermost being and the entire greatness of a world-historical appearance. It alone lastingly preserves us from narrow-minded partiality, as its aim can only be the truth proved by incontestible facts. What from its futile earthly existence has been swept away by death, it reawakens to new, eternal life.

If any of the late departed illustrious spirits of the german people can lay claim to a strict historical valuation, it is Wagner. His importance extends far beyond the narrow boundaries of a single art; it was therefore necessary to depict his development not alone in the dominion of music, but principally in that of literature, and to determine his relations to the thinkers and poets of the german people and of other nations, who have had any traceable or important influence upon him. Amongst the numerous works treating of Wagner, only a few aim at an historical judgement in this sense, so different essays and pamphlets by A. Ettlinger, Wolfgang Golther, Karl Heckel, Emerich Kastner, Max Koch, Richard Pohl, Adolf Sandberger, Wilhelm Tappert, Hans Paul von Wolzogen, the »Katalog einer Richard-Wagner-Bibliothek« by Nicolaus Oesterlein, and above all, the »Richard-

Wagner-Jahrbuch«, edited by Joseph Kürschner, which, unfortunately, never extended beyond the first volume. Thankfully I have made use of what I found in these and other previous works, but have at all points endeavored to increase, by own investigations, the knowledge transmitted to me by others. Of the entire independence of my work, I do not deem it necessary to assure readers possessed of judgement and knowledge of the subject; just these readers however, I would beg for their indulgence, if in this little sketch I, for the present, have only alluded to what I have reserved for a later, more extensive statement, to prove and detail more precisely.

Thanks to the zealous efforts of my publisher, my little book has appeared rich in artistic embellishments. Several portraits of Wagner, after the best photographs and original paintings, as well as pictures of the exterior and interior of the Festspielhouse in Bayreuth, and other buildings remarkable in Wagner's history, adorn the small volume. A farther, great and valuable enrichment it received through the photographic copy of a large paragraph from a manuscript of Wagner and of two pages from the original score of the »Walküre«, and finally through the faithful facsimiles of almost all the original sketches of the scenery to the »Nibelungen« and »Parsifal«, which were designed, according to the wishes of the Meister, for the Bühnenfestspiele in Bayreuth of 1876 and 1882. For the friendly readiness with which the trustees of the property be-

longing to His Majesty King Otto of Bavaria, placed at my disposal the original scores found in the posthumous papers of King Ludwig II., as well as for the kindness with which the Brückner brothers in Coburg disinterestedly lent their numerous sketches of the scenery, I here allow myself to express my sincere and respectful thanks.

Munich, the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1891.

**Franz Muncker.**





I.

Amongst the aims, pursued by the founders of modern german literature, one arises above all others, the drama, the highest form of the poetic art, that form, which acts most perceptibly and most directly not only upon the ear but upon the eye of the people, that form, which no longer is purely poetical, but can only with the assistance of the sister arts, awaken its production to full life. Since Lessing's time, all great german authors have striven with the most impassioned eagerness, to fulfill this aim. All, even those like Klopstock and Wieland, who little understood the nature and the requirements of the real drama, had at one time entertained the idea of creating a national german drama. It inspired Goethe, when he wrote his

»Götz«, »Iphigenia« and »Faust«; it filled Lessing and Schiller with enthusiasm, and animated them to their greatest literary productions; it moved Heinrich von Kleist's heart with the most ardent longing, which in the end, unstilled in its highest desires, turned into despair. Glorious poetical productions were the results of these endeavors, productions, filled with national spirit, which will redound to the eternal honour of german authors, people and literature. But the new in form and contents entirely and peculiarly german drama, these poets and those who strove with them, could not yet create. This was prevented by the cosmopolitan spirit of the time, apparent in the entire german literary life of the last century, in concert with the manner of the dramatists of leaning to foreign models, principally to Shakespeare and the antique tragedians. This new, perfect german drama, Richard Wagner gave us, a drama essentially german, in contents as well as in form, founded on old national legends and poetry, entirely inspired with german spirit, and in its complete artistic character of a peculiarity, such as only the german people could bring forth. Herein lies Wagner's great historical merit, not in his eminent musical production, nor in his, in themselves powerful literary works. He is, above all, dramatist, and music as well as poetry are for him but means to the achievement of the one great purpose of the drama.

For the drama in its perfection, as Wagner conceives it, is at once music and poetry, it shall only reproduce in the german spirit, and with richer, fuller artistic means, that united work of art of the Greeks, which bound the single arts (besides poetry and music the plastic and mimical arts) to one organic whole, the attic tragedy. The masters of german literature looked upon the ancients as the highest models in every art; following their example, Wagner likewise chose the ancients for his patterns. What he strove to achieve, was, in the idea itself, nothing absolutely new. Since

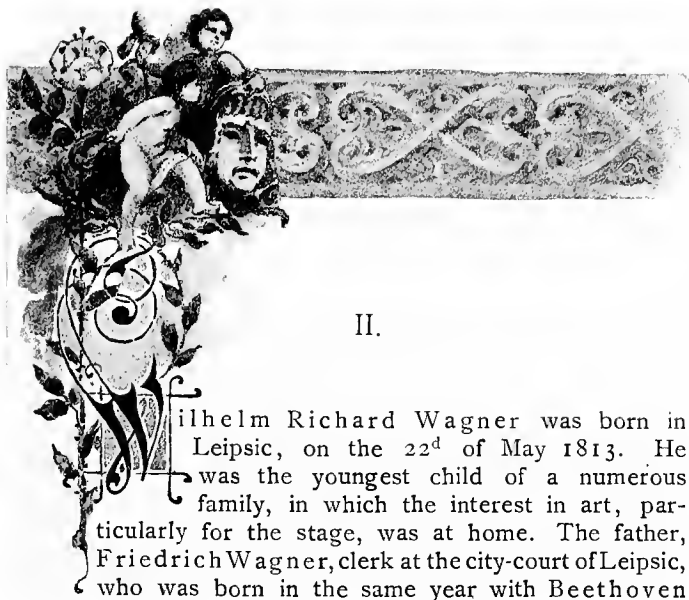


the commencement of the newer aesthetics, since the beginning of the last century, great and influential thinkers and poets, such as Batteux, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot in France, Sulzer, Wieland, Lessing, Herder, Schiller, Goethe, Schelling, Schleiermacher, E. T. A. Hoffmann and others in Germany had arisen, repeatedly and always more impressively demanded a similar united work of art, and for the fulfillment of this purpose pointed to the opera, for which Gluck and Mozart were finding new paths. Through its ennoblement and the greater dramatic depth of its poetic contents, it was to arise to the ideal of art. What, however, these men had partly only touched and had only theoretically expressed, Wagner had first, with the strictest consistency, allowed to ripen and then developed into artistic reality. At once poet and composer, he brought his works directly in contact with all that classical and romantic german authors had given, in poetry as well as in music, independently improved their ideas, their subjects and forms, and led both poetry and music to the last crowning state of that development, through which, for more than hundred years, the german spirit had slowly neared the ideal of the drama.

Wagner's lifetime fell into a period in which the german nation, through inward and outward conflicts, was slowly gaining its present position. In these conflicts, Wagner took but a slight and passing part. But not only personally did he, during long years, suffer under the distress, which the inward conflicts brought to the german people; his mental struggles, in seeking new victories for the german art, went hand in hand with the endeavors and achievements, which led his nation to political liberty and greatness. It is no accident, that directly after the events of the years 1848 and 1849, Wagner's revolutionary essays on art appeared, in which he, for the first time, expressed and theoretically expounded his ideal of the drama, that, at the same epoch, the plan of

that work was created, which, for the first time, was to give this ideal a reality. It was no less chance, that this work, as a perfected artistic creation, only then was given to the public, when, out of the years of uncertain endeavors and sorrow-bringing strifes, which had seen it ripen, the united Germany and the new empire had arisen. The »Bühnenfestspielhouse« in Bayreuth, and the performances which took place in it, during the summers of 1876 and 1882, were the highest achievement of Richard Wagner's life and work, not less, however, the direct artistic result of Germany's political triumphs in 1870 and 1871.





## II.

Wilhelm Richard Wagner was born in Leipsic, on the 22<sup>d</sup> of May 1813. He was the youngest child of a numerous family, in which the interest in art, particularly for the stage, was at home. The father, Friedrich Wagner, clerk at the city-court of Leipsic, who was born in the same year with Beethoven (1770), cultivated this taste. Exactly half a year after Richard's birth, on the 22<sup>d</sup> of November 1813, he died of typhoid fever. The widow, Johanna, whose maiden name was Bertz (born 1778 in Weissenfels, died 1848), found a faithful counsellor in a younger friend of the deceased, Ludwig Geyer, born 1780 in Eisleben, educated in the legal profession, active as portrait-painter and comedy-writer, particularly however as a successful actor, and, at that time already, member of the court-theatre in Dresden. In the year 1814, he married Richard's mother, and soon after, the family took up their abode in Dresden. With loving eyes Geyer watched over the boy's development, whom he hoped to make a distinguished man. But the boy's manifold talents and inclinations made him uncertain as to which art, in particular, he should educate him. In the mean while, Richard made good progress at the school in Dresden, showed himself, however, by no means to be a phenomenon, moreover played and

romped merrily, like a true and healthy child. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 1821, he also lost his good step-father. To lighten his mother's household-cares, a brother of Geyer took Richard, for a year, to Eis-leben. Here also, the boy visited a private school. Then, in December 1822, he became a member of the Kreuz-school in Dresden. Greek legends and history interested him principally, and influenced his first poetical efforts. He translated a part of the »Odyssey«, and sketched tragedies after the pattern of the alderman Johann August Apel in Leipsic (1771—1816), a weak imitator of the ancients. With the same zeal however, he gave himself up to the study of Shakespeare. Mightily moved by the works of the english dramatist, he, during two years, carried the plan of a tragedy in his mind, in which, as it seems, Shakespearean ideas were to be romantically and adventurously heightened. His musical instincts were as yet slumbering. Only the »Freischütz« and its composer, who, since 1817, was court-conductor of the orchestra in Dresden, the lad admired enthusiastically.

With the return of the family to Leipsic (end of 1827), some changes in the outward as well as mental life of young Richard took place. It is true, that his uncle, Adolf Wagner, scientifically and artistically equally educated, a thorough philologist and student of literature, an industrious and versatile translator, who also had often essayed original poetry, gained great influence over him; nevertheless, the zeal with which Richard had distinguished himself in his school-studies, abated. Instead, the Gewandhouse concerts, in which besides Mozart he, above all, heard Beethoven, awakened his love for music. At the same time, the works of the romantic authors, who in their poetry often strove to achieve purely musical harmony, led him to the study of this art. These authors Richard now perused with a readily susceptible spirit. His favorites were the ghostly, adventurous tales of the genial Ernst Theo-

dor Amadeus Hoffmann, poet, musician and painter combined, who, as poetical prophet, proclaimed the innermost nature and secret problems of music, and

chose to consider it the representative and very highest revelation of art. Several of Hoffmann's subjects, particularly those of the middle ages, impressed themselves, already at that period, deeply in the mind of his youthful admirer; the epigrammatical, in spite of its outward calmness violently exciting, and with humor, satire and irony richly impregnated style of the romantic narrator,

strongly influenced, even after the space of ten years and later, the author Wagner. Upon the youth, who had just passed the boundaries of boyhood, the excentric, fantastic imagination of Hoffmann, the manner in which he gave life to abstract ideas, the way in



Wagner's homestead in Leipzig.

which he inextricably mingled the fabulously wonderful with reality, were particularly influential. Hoffmann's excentricity pictures itself, outwardly as well as inwardly, in Richard's first attempts at musical composition. He had thought to imitate Beethoven's daring grandeur and profundity, when, after several attempts at chamber-music, he turned to larger orchestra-compositions, and, in particular, composed several concert-ouvertures which were once or twice performed, principally in Leipsic. This model was so inspiring, that already his first overture, which greatly puzzled his listeners and abounded in confused peculiarities, was able to express, what demanded respect of earnest musicians. The tuition which Theodor Weinlig, a learned musician (cantor at the Thomas-school), gave him in counterpoint, freed him of his exaggeratedly bombastic style. He now learned to more appreciate Mozart and Haydn. Under the latter's influence, he composed a sonata for piano, the first composition which was brought to print. Other compositions for the piano followed, partly as little original as the first. A symphony in C-sharp was more interesting. It revealed, next to his admiration for Beethoven, the industrious study of Mozart and, besides several original ideas, a remarkable skill in counterpoint.

The symphony was, for the first time, performed in the summer of 1832 by Dionys Weber, the director of the conservatory at Prague, whom Wagner visited on his return from a trip to Vienna. The young composer had finished the gymnasium in Leipsic and, for several terms, had heard philosophy and aesthetics at the university, without exchanging music, which he now recognized as his calling, for any professional study. What, in the year 1832, he saw of viennese music-life, disappointed him bitterly; but in Prague, and during the following winter in Leipsic, he began the composition of his first opera, »Die Hochzeit« (»The wedding«). Already he had gained the conviction, that he must only set a text-book, which he himself had written, to

music; by these means alone, the dramatic effect, in his eye of the greatest importance, was to be attained. Immermann's »Cardenio und Celinde« (1826) gave him his subject; he considerably shortened the action of this tragedy, and greatly simplified different motives. The conclusion of his tragedy he formed in correspondence to the catastrophe in the »Braut von Messina« and in connection with the general fundamental ideas of the fatalistic tragedy. However, the excentric text-book found disfavour in the eyes of the poet's sister, who, as a talented actress, was certainly capable of forming a correct judgement in such matters. In consequence, Wagner never completed his composition, which had principally followed the trodden path of the german opera, though Weinlig had given a glad approbation to a septetto in the commencement of the work. His text-book he completely destroyed.

Another opera however, begun soon after »Die Hochzeit«, was led to its conclusion, but only in Würzburg, whither Wagner had, in February 1833, followed his brother Albert, who was actor, singer and manager there. In the german translation of count Carlo Gozzi's theatrical books, which had already 1777 appeared in Bern, the youth found the tragi-comical fairy drama »The woman a serpent« (»La donna serpente«). Some time ago already, the piece had been used as an opera-text »Die Sylphen«; of this opera however, Wagner could have known but little. Gozzi's fairy drama he now transformed into an opera, which he entitled »Die Feen« (»The fairies«). For the most part he altered the names of the persons and omitted some of the unimportant characters entirely; but in general, he preserved the course of the action, the division into three acts and the most important personages of the original. Only several traits, which appeared too rudely farcical, and had served Gozzi for personal satirical purposes, he banished, and omitted or at least mildened all that, which, through the exaggeration of the marvellous, re-

mindcd too much of the fairy tale. Instead, he ennobled and deepened the earnest, humanly touching scenes of his model. The contents, in spite of many abridgements, he changed but little; in the individual expression however, he showed himself entirely as original poet, who, although often in conflict with language and versification, was, now and again, able to fill his words with truly poetical splendour. Into the exposition, he knew better than the Italian to bring clearness and harmony; the events occurring in the second act of his work, he arranged so, that a fuller dramatic life unfolded itself upon the stage, and consequently a stronger theatrical effect was attained. To other changes he was led by the regard to the musical composition, by the desire to add here an aria, there a duet, trio or quartet, to bring in a chorus, and, above all, to close every act with a grand ensemble.

Musical considerations, above all, decided him, to completely change the end of the opera. In Gozzi's work, the fairy, who, for an earthborn man's sake, is willing to resign immortality, becomes transformed into a serpent, because her husband cannot bear the trials, through which he is to prove himself worthy of his happiness. But now the guilty man rises to almost superhuman action, conquers in combats, that might terrify the most valiant, kisses the horrible serpent and thereby breaks the spell, regaining for himself the beloved wife, and for her the longed for mortality. Wagner transforms the fairy Ada into a stone, and lets her become released by the conjuring song of her husband. Not however does she now become a mortal; he, whom the divine power of love has lifted far above common humanity, is fit to follow the beloved, to gain with her immortality, and to accompany her into the realms of fairy-land. The poem, which, in its praise of the might of song, reminds, one of the legend of Orpheus and Eurydike, slightly also of the end of Shakespeare's ›Winter's-tale‹, has, through the changes effected by Wagner, not only



paid more justice to the demands of the musician, but has been brought to more fully correspond to the requirements of poetical justice. The german poet, since he let his hero finally become endowed with immortality, returned, perhaps unwittingly, to the oldest legendary version of the union of an immortal woman and a mortal man, to Kalidasa's drama »Urvashi«, which, already in the year 1828, had appeared in a german translation (by O. L. B. Wolff). At the same time, he gave utterance to an idea which, at that epoch only generally expressed, was in his later works often repeated, the idea of the elevation from mortality to everlasting joys, through the power of an all-redeeming love. Other fundamental ideas of the later Wagnerian theories are already contained in the »Feen«, in particular the »Lohengrin« idea: only so long may a human being be united in love to one from another sphere, and partake of the eternal happiness, as he does not doubtingly seek to discover the secret of the beloved one's descent.

In the composition as well, we now and again find passages which remind us of the later Wagner; but only here and there, where the young composer sought either to characterize dramatic situations of particular importance by the magic of tones, or musically to awaken half lyrical, idyllic, but principally elegiac impressions. In the *ouverture*, we find themes which we rediscover almost unchanged in later compositions, such as the »Faust-ouverture«, »Rienzi« and »Fliegende Holländer«. Admirable is the manner in which he controls the technicalities, the treatment of the chorus, of single instruments and the general employment of the orchestra for dramatic purposes. Too great lengths, the gravest fault of the composition, most betray the beginner. In the recitative, the beginner again becomes apparent: in it above all, the uncertain search of the composer after free and original melody is felt, and in later years Wagner himself often complained

of this want. A far greater and, in part, riper musical endowment was to be found in the arias, the concerted pieces, the grand ensembles and in the *ouverture*. In spite of a pronounced tendency to original compositions and forms, the youth was yet still, in many cases, an imitator of foreign example. That his musical style in the »Feen«, was dependent on Beethoven, Weber and Marschner, Wagner himself in later years confessed. But not alone these, reminiscences from Mozart's operas, Schubert's songs and the influence of many less important contemporary composers are apparent in the »Feen«; one even believes sometimes to find resemblance with Rossini's and the younger Italians' style, with whose works Wagner had, just at that time, become acquainted. But the fundamental character of his music was still essentially german, and the example of Weber in particular, more than of any other however alluring models, influenced him mightily.

Immediately after the completion of his opera (January 1834), the youth returned to Leipsic. Besides his just accomplished work, he had by no means wasted his time in the musically very active city of Würzburg, and had, in particular, as chorus- and solo-repetitor at the theatre, acquired the first routine, which was so necessary for the later incomparably genial leader. In Leipsic, he was to find disappointments — he was not able to bring about a performance of the »Feen« — and new impressions. For the first time in his life, he heard Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient in Bellini's operas, an artist, whose extraordinary personality positively electrified him, and whose picture appeared before his mind's eye, whenever he felt the impulse to new artistic endeavor. Sung by this artist, he found the modern italian music, whose weaknesses he fully comprehended, still to possess many traits worthy of imitation: he found it to contain a happy, joyous spirit, which even if frivolous, was here immeasurably better expressed, than in the conscientiously ponderous german composi-

tions. And joy in living he now chose for his motto. It was preached by those authors to whom, at the time, he felt himself principally drawn: Wilhelm Heinse, the apostle of the highest artistic and lowest sensual pleasures, amongst all the authors of the last century the one endowed with the warmest enthusiasm and finest comprehension for music; the authors of the ›Young Germany‹, Heinrich Laube, with whom, years ago already, Wagner had become acquainted, Ludwig Börne, Karl Gutzkow, Gustav König, and that poet, who, for some time in the future, was to most strongly influence the young, rising artist, Heinrich Heine. Full life in the present, to grasp and enjoy the moment, freedom in politics, morals and literature, even to the most regardless emancipation of the flesh, were taught by these authors, whose eyes turned longingly to France, where the revolutionary war, for some time already, was raging against all, that until now in state and society, in religion, art and science had appeared as law. In concert with them, Wagner now turned to french literature and music. Here Auber's ›Muette de Portici‹, an entirely revolutionary work, met his eyes, a composition which powerfully and lastingly excited him, an opera of a remarkable dramatic unity, at the same time ›burningly hot and fascinatingly entertaining‹, as Wagner, as late as the year 1871, expressed himself.

The deep impression which all these artistic appearances had made upon him, manifested itself in an essay on the german opera (1834), in which he warmly declaimed against the german narrow-mindedness and the semblance it gave itself of musical erudition, and particularly in the large composition of the opera ›Das Liebesverbot oder die Novize von Palermo‹ (›The interdiction of love or the novice of Palermo‹), whose plan was laid down during a summer-trip 1834 in Teplitz. Shakespeare's ›Measure for measure‹ gave him his subject. Again, as he had already done in the ›Feen‹,

Wagner diminished the number of active characters, bereft the action of different episodes, and altered the end, until it offered thankful motives to the musician. At the same time, the new conclusion practically demonstrated the revolutionary spirit of the young composer. Into the centre of the action, Shakespeare puts his duke, who, by his subjects, is believed to be absent, but in monk's disguise is dwelling amongst them. Critically he observes the confusion arising partly from the unnaturally cruel strictness with which his substitute punishes all sensual offences, partly from this substitute's own sensual passions; at first, unrecognized, he interferes, essays to milder and pacify, and finally seeks in open court the justice, which, measure for measure, is dealt out. To dramatically illustrate this morally legal principle was, above all, Shakespeare's aim; the representation of the sensual transgressions of free love served but as means to the accomplishment of his purpose. Wagner, on the contrary, influenced by the teachings of »Young Germany«, painted the free and open sensuality for its own sake. In doing away with the earnest, judicial conclusion, he let this sensuality triumph, through its own force, over the strict puritanical hypocrisy: the unnaturally cruel censorship of the governor turns itself, in the end, against him; not alone his sovereign, his own heart punishes the hypocritical fool, who had thought to prove himself master of love and nature. The people, however, free themselves from his tyranny without awaiting the duke's return, and the revolt breaks out in the midst of the wildest carnival sport.

The action of Shakespeare's play hardly lost any of its dramatic effects through this simplification of its motives; by these means, the theatrical effect was rather heightened. In the minutiae of the characteristic and the poetical execution of the details, Wagner, as is readily understood, could not, although he had endeavored with great zeal (and not in vain), compete with his predecessor. But the entire problem he was,

in a modern manner, better able to solve, and, in some instances, even succeeded in deepening the spiritual motives. To make the development of the drama more probable, he chose, instead of Vienna, where Shakespeare laid his plot, Palermo, a city in a more southern clime, whose inhabitants are filled with greater sensuality. The remembrance of Auber's »Muettes«, in which opera a similar revolt in southern Italy takes place, perhaps also of the Sicilian Vesper, may have further decided him in choosing the local colouring for the old tale, which, besides, Shakespeare had found in Italian novels. The puritanical governor, Wagner changed into a German; the irony with which, in the essay on the German opera (written at the same time), he treated the ponderous dignity of his compatriots, who would not acknowledge the right of existence of a light sensuality, reappeared, in this work, in a new form.

The young musician sought to keep his composition free from the learned heaviness which characterized the German masters. The French and Italians, particularly Auber and Bellini, so entirely different from the models he had taken for the »Feen«, now influenced him. This manner of composition with all its trivialities and search for purely superficial effect, its vocal style rich in cadenzas and runs, its often crude and noisy instrumentation, Wagner unreflectingly imitated. Even themes, directly similar to those of the Italians, he did not avoid. However, even if, in this composition of so pronounced a Romanic type, he seemed to deviate entirely from the German masters, still now and again an isolated melody led to the suspicion, that, in time, he would return to the paths, which, as follower of Beethoven and Weber, he had formerly pursued. Amidst the French and Italian melodies of the »Liebesverbot«, there appeared from time to time themes which we find in his later works, one even, which returns in Tannhäuser's narration of his pilgrimage to Rome.

With the individual compositions of the new school,

which Wagner had joined, he found occasion to become practically well acquainted in his capacity as musical director of the Bethmann theatre-company in Magdeburg (fall of the year 1834). Zealously he gave himself up to his new duties, by which he profited a great deal, led not only the opera-performances, but also now and again a concert, composed, besides the »Liebesverbot«, several smaller works, particularly a cantata for the New-year of 1835, and occasionally expressed, in newspaper-articles, opinions, similar to those he had laid down in his former essay on the german opera. A journey, undertaken in summer 1835 on theatrical business, led him to Nuremberg, where he renewed his acquaintance with Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient, and where his admiration for the extraordinary songstress received new impetus. In Kösen he met his old friend Laube, who did not withhold his praises of the opera »Das Liebesverbot«. At last, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 1836, Wagner was able to bring his opera on the stage. It was performed immediately, before he forever left Magdeburg. The indifference of the public to the theatre, which counted many able members, caused the dissolution of the Bethmann-company in easter 1836; only one overhurried and, on this account, ineffective performance of the »Liebesverbot« was possible; none of the composer's efforts, in Berlin as well as Leipsic, to bring about the performance of his opera, were crowned with success. In the hope of finding a new position, he went in summer to Königsberg; but only in January 1837, did he succeed in obtaining employment as musical director in that city.

Some time before, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November 1836, he had married the actress Minna Planer, who together with him had been in Magdeburg, and had there become engaged to him. For long years, Minna, simple and good at heart, has, with the most devoted love, borne trouble and privations with the husband, whose artistic genius she was not able to appreciate.



Richard Wagner after a drawing by E. B. Kietz (1850).





And Wagner was with the same fondness attached to his »poor wife«, whose misery only accentuated the bitterness of his own sufferings. Only, when the mental contrasts of the two appeared more and more sharply, they, after long inward conflicts, separated in August 1861. During several years Minna resided in Dresden, and died in the same city, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 1866.

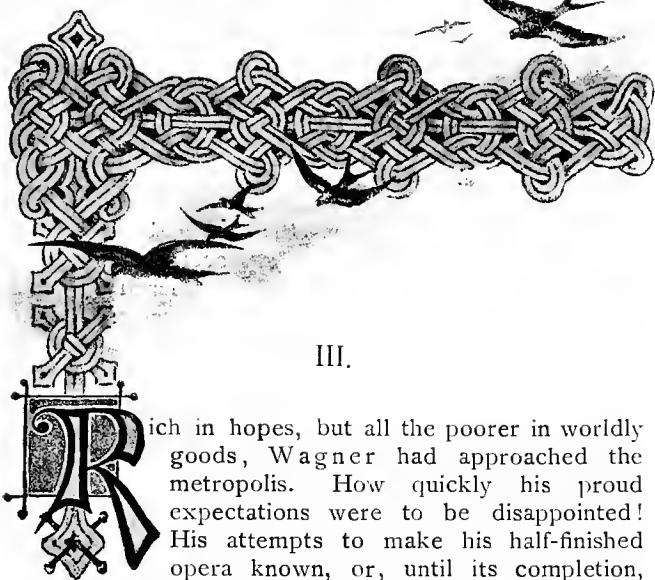
Poor and narrow circumstances encompassed the young couple in Königsberg. Under these auspices, Wagner never could arise to real artistic creation. Only one escape out of all this misery seemed possible; he must compose an opera, which, from Paris, should make its triumphant entry on the german stage. But how should he penetrate to Paris? He would persuade Scribe to write him the text-book to this all-important composition. Novel upon novel he read to find a fitting subject. Finally he altered the principal scenes of a long-winded novel by Heinrich König »Die hohe Braut«, whose poetical execution he offered to Scribe. In vain however; five years later, he himself wrote, employing the plan of 1837, a theatrically effective text-book, containing four acts, in light verses, which his friend Johann Heinrich Kittl, under the title »Bianca and Giuseppe, or the French before Nice«, set to music. In the meanwhile, he lost, after the Königsberg theatre had ended in bankruptcy, his modest position, and only after several months of care and privations, a new and better prospect opened before him. In autumn 1837, he received a call as first musical director to the theatre in Riga, which Holtei had but just newly founded.

Here, Wagner found better means and really artistic endeavor, and with the most joyful energy at once took active part. He composed supplementary arias to be sung by the artists in the most popular operas, wrote, after a very much modernized tale from the »Arabian nights«, a comic opera »Die glückliche Bärenfamilie« (»The happy bear-family«), but rejected it again, as soon as he noticed, that he was

too closely following the very frivolously trivial manner of the modern French and Italians, performed in concerts, which he had occasion to lead, two ouvertures, which within the last years he had composed, and whose style betrayed a peculiar position, intermediary between Beethoven and Bellini. Hardly however, had a year passed, but matters assumed an entirely different aspect; the triviality of the artists, the uneducated audiences, the hackneyed uniformity of the operas which he was again and again forced to repeat, filled him with aversion. With conscientious rigor he fulfilled his duties as leader, but for the rest kept away from the music-life in Riga, devoting his spare time to that composition, which, as he ardently hoped, would, immediately on its appearance, deliver him from his present stagnant and straightened circumstances, the composition of his »Rienzi«.

So neared the spring of 1839. Wagner's contract with the theatre in Riga expired. At the same time, Höltei gave up his position as director. Now, the young composer was no longer to be held. The text-book and the score of the first two acts of his »Rienzi« were just finished; in the metropolis of european art, he wished to complete and send his opera into the world. In Pillau, he and his wife embarked for London. For a few days he rested in that city, and then journeyed to France, where he spent several weeks in Boulogne-sur-mer before going to Paris, in which city he arrived in the summer of 1839.





### III.

**R**ich in hopes, but all the poorer in worldly goods, Wagner had approached the metropolis. How quickly his proud expectations were to be disappointed! His attempts to make his half-finished opera known, or, until its completion, at least to bring his »Liebesverbot« on the Paris stages, failed entirely. He had yet no renowned name and neither the wealth nor the patrons which, in spite of this want, might have helped him to reach the goal of his desires. Certainly Meyerbeer, with whom he had become acquainted in Boulogne, did all in his power to recommend him. But Meyerbeer was just at that period far too often absent from Paris, as to be personally able to successfully aid another. Wagner also met Heinrich Laube in the french capital, and this friend made him acquainted with Heinrich Heine. But neither of these men could be of assistance to the musician whose goal was the grand opera.

Under theses circumstances, which often brought him to the brink of the bitterest want, the composition of »Rienzi« could, only with many interruptions, be continued. He was often obliged to gain his daily bread with his pen, and with inferior musical works. He made piano-scores, arrangements from popular

operas for different instruments, and even accepted the order of a Boulevard-theatre for the composition of an ordinary vaudeville. Besides, he set several romances and poems of Ronsard, Victor Hugo, Heine and Scheurlin to music, hoping, by these means to slowly introduce himself to the parisians. Again, his efforts found no reward; the public was accustomed to extremely light italian compositions, compared to which Wagner's songs were too heavy, and besides, in spite of their resemblance to french music, were still too full of Schubert, too full, generally, of a german spirit. In this always more prospectless battle after success, the composer, who, in the entire french music-life, found only true artistic pleasure in the conservatoire-concerts, where Beethoven's symphonies were earnestly cultivated, felt the desire to compose a symphonic work (1840), of which but the first movement was written, and which only, after (in the year 1855) it had been greatly changed, was given to the public, the so-called »Faust-ouverture«. Wagner intended nothing less than to compose a regular ouverture to Goethe's Faust-tragedy; he rather sought musically to depict the faustical sufferings of a hero, who, weary of life, still in the consciousness of his own genial power, again and again takes up the battle. The foundation of his composition was the first movement of the ninth symphony; Beethoven's Coriolan-ouverture was also of decisive influence upon him.

The same despairing battle with the existing state of art, which, insufficient and untenable as it was, threatened to stifle the higher talent of the reformer in its birth, made an author of Wagner. Since 1840, he wrote, for the »Revue et gazette musicale«, and through Laube's recommendation for several german periodicals, critical reports on Paris musical and dramatic life, several theoretical essays on the relations of the productive to the reproductive artist, the artist to the virtuoso, the genius to the public, on the manner of

german music, on the *ouverture*, on different symphonies of Beethoven and Mozart, and finally two tales ›*Eine Pilgerfahrt zu Beethoven*‹ (›A pilgrimage to Beethoven‹) and ›*Ein Ende in Paris*‹ (›An end in Paris‹). In the same manner, thirty years ago, E. T. A. Hoffmann, with the publication of articles on music and of tales, had begun his career. A resemblance of Wagner to Hoffmann becomes apparent in more than one trait of these productions, most particularly in his two tales. Before the young poet's eye, appeared the form of the genial and, for this reason, unworldly and misunderstood conductor Kreisler, when he related the story of the german musician, of his opinions about art and his plans, of his pilgrimage to Vienna to his adored ideal Beethoven, of his ineffectual struggles and of his sad end in Paris. Different scenes of these tales, capitably told, replete with wit, humour, irony and satire, as well as with the most touching pathos, remind one directly of Hoffmann's whimsical geniality. But beside the old romantic narrator, the younger leaders of the newest literature, amongst them principally Heinrich Heine, had begun to influence Wagner, particularly in the style of his critical essays. The author Wagner, as well as Heine, found it to be his imperative duty to deride with biting scorn (what in later years he alone found praiseworthy in Heine) the falseness of the entire culture and art. In all his works, he sent up a cry of indignation against the modern state of art, against the chase after enjoyment, the superficiality of the public, which preferred to kill the time, that hung heavily on its hands, with the sensual gratification of eye and ear instead of seeking spiritual elevation, against the authors' and composers' shallow search for effect, whom not the impulse of the heart, but a fashionable mania or the desire for gain drove to art, against the virtuosity, through which singers and actors destroyed the work of art, and degraded art itself. As once in Strassburg, which, on the boundary

of Germany, was more and more estranging itself from german manners, Goethe was forever won for german literature, so Richard Wagner in Paris, the centre of the romanic art, to which he had in latter years adhered, returned forever to german music. For some time, he was still under the delusion that also Meyerbeer, to whom the ties of thankfulness held him, and whose operas fascinated him by their theatrical effectiveness and sometimes veritably dramatic construction, was a true, and by nature essentially german artist. His own artistic nature, however, had already soared far beyond Meyerbeer's. He still loudly praised the composer of »Robert« and the »Huguenots«, but, at the same time, returned with warm admiration and sacred enthusiasm to his old german masters, to Bach, Gluck, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Marschner, Spohr, and sought theoretically as well as practically to approach his future aim, a german dramatic opera after his own mind, a musical drama in the true sense of the word. Two great steps in this direction were taken in Paris; in the month of November 1840 he completed »Rienzi«, and in the following spring the »Fliegende Holländer«.

More than three years had passed, since Bulwer's novel »Rienzi, the last of the tribunes«, in the german translation of Georg Nicolaus Bärmann, had fallen into his hands. Just at that period, the thought of dramatically depicting a hero like Rienzi, a man full of great projects, who perishes through the baseness of his surroundings, might have greatly attracted him; he himself may perhaps have felt a like impending doom. For an opera, the subject with the entirely lyrical element encompassing the hero, the lays, songs and hymns with which Bulwer had interwoven his work, seemed peculiarly fitting. On strictly dramatic principles, Wagner created, for his own use, a text for his »Rienzi«, but involuntarily accomodated his work to the form of the five-act grand opera, the

completest and only form which, at that time, he could conceive for the musical drama. The historical subject most conveniently transmitted by Gibbon, Bulwer had already lifted into the realm of poetry, and, by these means, had brought it nearer to the hearts and eyes of his contemporaries. Before him, Miss Mary Russell Mitford had written a tragedy »Rienzi«, which had been performed 1837, in London. Several of its best motives, Bulwer had taken for his novel, and in its preface, had spoken with the highest respect of Miss Mitford's work. After him, and directly before Wagner, Julius Mosen 1837 wrote a drama »Cola Rienzi«, which, however, was of no influence upon Wagner. Bulwer's novel alone was the source from which Wagner, however independently, drew; in the details — wittingly or unwittingly — he coincided with his english predecessor, Miss Russell Mitford. What Bulwer, at that time already on the highest pinnacle of his fame, related with epic broadness, Wagner, still a beginner in literature, was obliged to concentrate to dramatic shortness and, at the same time, to heighten its immediate effect. An exceedingly difficult task, only to be accomplished, if the poet sacrificed the single beauties of the work to his dramatic purposes. Wagner succeeded in this. He greatly diminished the number of personages, concentrated, as much as possible, the scene, the time and the action of his model, and in the dramatic exposition of his work, excelled Bulwer by far. Herein, the entire firmness and greatness, which in so high a measure characterized his most perfect creations, already became apparent. On the other hand, in his desire for brevity, explanations of the motives sometimes suffered, and not at all times was he able to endow his characters with individuality. The execution often did not pay full justice to the grandeur of the idea. The national element, although laid in an ideal distance, into the Rome of the fourteenth century, appeared in a significant light. Very naturally

resemblances in the principal ideas of »Rienzi« and of the »Muette« arose. Externally, in words and in the treatment of the scene, his opera now and then reminded of the »Huguenots«.

More dependent than the poet was the composer of »Rienzi« upon Meyerbeer and Auber; but he never sank to the level of a mere reproducer of these masters. He learned from them, as he had learned from Gluck, Méhul and Spontini. Direct resemblance to single parts of these masters' creations, he sought to avoid; their style alone, he wished to imitate. He strove always to be interesting, to avoid in every bar what might seem trivial, and sought to make his music correspond to the grandeur of his subject, and the dramatic power of his poem. The influence, which the modern grand opera still had upon him, only permitted of his partially carrying out this idea. The composer of »Rienzi« was not yet able to entirely free himself from all conventionality or triviality; but the poetical advantages of his text-book, particularly the strong dramatic spirit that permeated the entire poem, served to elevate his music: in contrast to Meyerbeer, Wagner's instrumentation uniformly moved and expressive, shows him to be the scholar of German masters, who paid more attention to rich polyphonic development, than to virtuos vocal niceties after the Italian manner, or exaggerated orchestral subtleties. In musical invention or melodic beauties, he could not as yet compete with Meyerbeer or Auber; in the earnestness and care which he devoted to his entire composition, he already far exceeded both composers, particularly Meyerbeer. In this spirit, and in truly artistic manner, he especially treated the recitative; in peculiarly individual manner, he continued to develop, what Gluck's followers had taught him. From the old fault of »Die Feen«, too great length in the musical composition, unnecessary extensions or frequent repetitions of the same themes, »Rienzi« was not yet free.



In later years, Wagner himself regretted the vigorous and noisy composition of the third act, which, coming after the second, equally richly and energetically composed, could not make the desired effect, but was absolutely indispensable to the dramatic development of the whole. The two last acts, completed in Paris, give evidence of the great artistic progress of the composer; the characteristic repetition of certain musical motives already points to Wagner's future treatment of his operas. The most important piece of the score is the *ouverture*. Composed after the completion of the entire opera in Paris, it depicts, in a harmonious, dramatically animated tone-painting, the contents of the first three acts, from the roman people's struggle for liberty, to the decisive victories of Rienzi, which are celebrated by the joyful songs of the delivered. Here again, Weber and Beethoven, and the german masters in general, were Wagner's models. What, under this influence, he had, in his contemporary essay on the *ouverture*, theoretically demanded, he now practically fulfilled; the *ouverture* to »Rienzi« and those of his two following operas, may be considered as perfected illustrations to this essay.

Several months after the completion of »Rienzi«, in the spring of 1841, Wagner retired to the secluded village of Meudon, in the vicinity of Paris. Here, in an unspeakably short time, the »*Fliegende Holländer*« (»The flying Dutchman«), both musically and dramatically, was created. Again, Wagner chose a subject, which, for years already, had impressed itself upon him. In Riga, he became acquainted with the legend of the flying Dutchman. The fundamental elements of the myths of Ulysses and the wandering jew, combined with motives from the century of the great explorers, were interwoven into a new mythical legend, which Wagner found in Heine's »*Memoiren des Herrn von Schnabelewopski*«. During the stormy sea-voyage from Riga to London, the personages of Heine's tale gained

individual life in his imagination, and so, although he had, for some time, still to work at his ›Rienzi‹, he drew the plan for the new opera. The character of the hero, the general course of the action, even some of the principal scenes, Heine had already given; it was therefore absolutely unnecessary for Wagner to seek any further in older treatments of the same subject, such as Captain Marryat's adventurous novel ›The phantom ship‹. Instead, he borrowed from Wilhelm Hauff's similar legendary tale of the phantom ship, some traits, which served to characterize the ghastly life on board of the condemned vessel. For the most part he was obliged to newly create the character of Senta, the woman, whose faithful love releases the seaman from his eternal wanderings. Only by these means, was he able to change the epical tale, which Heine related, into a real drama with tragical conflicts. For this reason, he brought Erik, Senta's former lover, into direct opposition to the Dutchman. This act reminded somewhat of the relation of Clärchen to Brackenburg and Egmont; but with the introduction of the rejected lover into his piece, Goethe had hardly, as Wagner has done, connected such important dramatic intentions. As Senta's rejection of Erik gives the outward impulse to the catastrophe, and lays the foundation to her tragical guilt, so, on the other hand, this withdrawal from sensual love, which, together with the object of its choice, seeks for the pleasures of life, leads to the pity free of all sensuality, which irresistibly compells Senta to a sacrificial death for the beloved. In many of his later works as well, Wagner, similar to Beethoven in his ›Fidelio‹, glorified the deeds of a woman, whose true love releases an unfortunate or guilty man.

It was, for the most part, this idea that attracted Wagner personally to the legend of the ›Fliegende Holländer‹. After his conception, the spirit of the music was to be the expression of love. The deepest sentiments of the human heart were to be lovingly and warmly

expressed by this art, and by these means Wagner intended to free the conventional grand opera of all the cold artificiality and the formalities, only speculating on outward effect, which characterized it. He himself experienced an artistic redemption of his genius, comparable to that, of which the poet let his Dutchman partake. And in another sense, the longing of the Dutchman after release from his everlasting wanderings in the wide desolate world, found an echo in Wagner's breast: he too longed for his fatherland; for it alone, he created his new work.

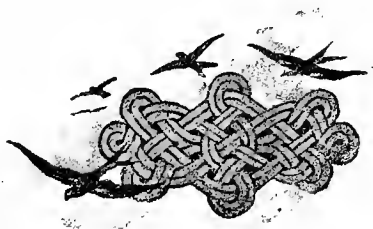
As poet as well as composer, he commenced with Senta's ballad. Before turning to anything else, he completed it. The dramatic and musical motives that the ballad contained, only remained to be detached and further developed. The entire opera received, by these means, a ballad-like character; it appeared to be a ballad soluted into dramatic action. Only a small number of principal characters occupy our interest; the masterly development of the action is distinguished by the strictest unity; in one flow, in one day, without the least outward interruption of the continuity of the action, it unfolds itself; a harmonious spirit pervades the whole. The want of individual character in some speeches, particularly in those of the chorus, is a fault of which Wagner accused himself, but which, in comparison to the many good qualities of the work, can hardly be considered.

Not less harmonious than the poem, is the musical composition. In the opera, the different musical themes of the ballad reappear again and again, at all points where single sentiments, physical or spiritual occurrences, already intimated in the ballad, are to be dramatically developed. They serve to characterize situations, persons and moods, and at the same time express, like the principal themes of a sonata or symphony, the artistic unity of the opera, which otherwise threatens to dissolve into a number of single music-pieces. Already

Wagner's predecessors, Beethoven, Mozart and other masters, particularly Weber, had, in the reoccurrence of the same expression of feeling in an opera, repeated the same theme, and similar to them, Wagner had proceeded in his former operas. He now much oftener made use of these regularly returning so-called »Leit-motive« (leading themes) and employed them — as he only once before had done in his »Liebesverbot« — to characterize the personages of his drama. From that time, the development and perfection of these »Leitmotive«, their aesthetic connection with one another, were, above all, the musical foundation of his compositions. Far from all pedantic schematism or mechanical calculation, he always preserved his full artistic liberty and the freedom of creation, arising from an excited imagination and a warm power of perception. In his »Holländer«, he did not yet dare to break with the old opera form with its arias, duets, trios and ensembles; in this composition, even the »Leitmotive« were much more sparingly used than in his later works. The transition from the grand french-italian opera to a peculiarly german musical drama, was often yet noticeable. The romanic influence manifested itself principally in the concerted vocal pieces, from the duet to the grand ensemble, in whose melody, as well as harmony, much was yet conventional and even trivial. On the other hand, the monologues and recitative, in particular, gave evidence of independence of composition, and, like the german folksong, sought to attain the greatest rhythmical precision in the melodies. As Wagner had, in the german folklore, found the poetical subject for his »Holländer«, so, in his composition, it was the german folksong which, above all, he strove to imitate in his »Leitmotive«. From that time dates his resolve never to lose feeling with the songs and the legends of his own people. Like before in his »Rienzi«, his ouverture, which bore the marks of greater ability, encompassed the contents of the opera in a manner, which clearly and harmoni-

ously expressed the action of the whole, an *ouverture* which in none of its parts denied the influence of Beethoven and other german masters.

During the time in which Wagner had but conceived the project of his ›Holländer‹, he vainly exerted all his powers to bring about a performance of this opera and of ›Rienzi‹ in Paris. After the completion of his work, he only offered it to german stages. At first with but small success, until finally, at Meyerbeer's recommendation, ›Rienzi‹ was accepted at Dresden and the ›Fliegende Holländer‹ at Berlin. The artist could now no longer endure to remain in a foreign country. Various dramatic plans arose in his mind during the last months he spent in Paris. Once again, he planned an historical opera ›Die Saracenin‹ (›The saracenic virgin‹): in which an episode from the life of Manfred of Hohenstaufen, with many reminiscences of Schiller's ›Jungfrau von Orleans‹ and Immermann's drama ›Kaiser Friedrich II.‹, was to be glorified. But the old legends of Tannhäuser, of the contest of poets on the Wartburg, of Lohengrin, with which he now became acquainted, at once took entire possession of his imagination, and forever banished the forms of Manfred and his saracenic half-sister. In his german home, he intended to give these legends new dramatic life. In April 1842, he left Paris and travelled through Thuringia, passed the Wartburg to Dresden, there to hasten the performance of his ›Rienzi‹.





#### IV.

**M**ainly with a new artistic creation Wagner took up his work at home: during a summer-trip to Bohemia, he completed, in Teplitz, the entire scenic plan of his »Tannhäuser«. Then in Dresden, the rehearsals for »Rienzi« commenced. They were the source of the greatest joy to the poet-composer: musicians and singers, amongst them Tichatschek, Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient and chorus-director Wilhelm Fischer, from that time Wagner's faithful friend, did all that energy and artistic power could do, to effect a worthy representation of the new opera. With the most decided success, the work was produced on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1842; already on the 2<sup>d</sup> of January 1843, the »Fliegende Holländer« followed, which, at first, was received with a like approbation. More and more, the attention of the public was drawn to the young composer; Laube, at that time editor of the »Zeitung für die elegante Welt«, begged his friend for a short sketch of his life. In December 1842 Wagner sent him his witty, fresh and very warmly written »Autobiographical sketch«. Several weeks later, he was appointed court-conductor of the orchestra in Dresden. In this position, it was his duty to perform numerous operas of the most dissimilar qualities; however,

he always took occasion to reproduce, with the greatest care and earnestness, and in the spirit in which they had been conceived, the works of the older german masters, such as Gluck, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Spohr and Marschner. In concerts, he principally cultivated Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Cherubini and Beethoven, for whose symphonies, particularly, he succeeded in arousing the interest of his hearers. It is his merit to have awakened in Germany the appreciation of the, until that time, calumniated ninth symphony; through a programme especially written for this purpose, he sought to make the mighty composition more comprehensible. He also undertook the leadership of the »Liedertafel« in Dresden, and for this society composed his »Liebesmahl der Apostel« (»The love-feast of the apostles«, 1843). In the course of time, other compositions for particular occasions appeared, above all the funeral march consisting of different themes from »Euryanthe«, which Wagner composed, when Weber's body was transported from England to Dresden (1844), a transport, which Wagner's untiring efforts had chiefly been instrumental in bringing about. But these small compositions for especial occasions, disappear in their significance besides the two dramatic works, which, during the years spent in Dresden, the artist completed.

† In the summer of 1843, he concluded the poetic execution of his »Tannhäuser« in Teplitz, the same place in which, a year before, he had made the plan; in the following months, until the spring of 1845, he, with many interruptions and finally in nervous haste, set his new work to music. Hitherto, Wagner had always taken the subjects of his operas almost accurately from an older drama or tale; now, like a true poet, he, for the first time, created the contents of his drama, employing various traits from different legends, which he originally, freely and boldly, but always artistically combined to a new whole. The first incitement to his

»Tannhäuser«, he doubtlessly received from Heine's like-named legend (1836), whose conclusion dissolved, unpoetically enough, into a political, literary satire upon Germany. All the more, was the first canto of Heine's poem able to give him a picture of the scene, in which in the Venusberg the reveling knight, full of longing for the hardships and tears of this world, and fearing for the greatly imperilled salvation of his soul, tears himself away from the goddess of love. A story of Tieck's, about the trusty Eckart and Tannhäuser, which, years ago, Wagner had read, suddenly returned to his mind. He looked it up, but felt himself more repelled than attracted by its »mystically coquettish, catholicly frivolous tendency«; nevertheless, several of its details remained in his mind. Entirely different was the impression which the original, sixteenth century Tannhäuser-ballad made upon him. Latterly, it had several times been printed, particularly in Arnim's and Brentano's collection »Des Knaben Wunderhorn«; the Grimm brothers in their »Deutsche Sagen« had also related the contents of the ballad. Most probably, Wagner found it in the book, published 1835 by Ludwig Bechstein, »Sagenschatz und Sagenkreise des Thüringer Landes«. In it he, at the same time, found the information, that Tannhäuser had intended to journey to the landgrave Hermann of Thuringia, as the contest of poets on the Wartburg was about to begin; but on the way had been lured into the Hörselberg by Venus. This directed Wagner to another tale related by both Grimms, and with which, in a different version, he had in earlier years become acquainted, in E. T. A. Hoffmann's tale »Der Kampf der Sängers«. Wagner now read the real mediaeval poem of the »Wartburgkrieg«, and in close connection a paper on the same subject by C. T. L. Lucas, a professor at Königsberg, who, amongst other things, expressed the scientifically untenable conjecture, that Heinrich von Ofterdingen, the opponent of Wolfram von Eschenbach and



the other poets in the legendary contest, and Tannhäuser are mythically identical. Wagner made use of this idea and combined both legends to an organic whole, which the title of his work »Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg« (»Tannhäuser and the contest of poets on the Wartburg«) indicated. For the dramatist, this could only be of advantage. By these means, he gained, on the one hand, the necessary satisfactory conclusion of the »Wartburgkrieg«, which in the mediaeval poem is wanting, and, on the other hand, for the exposition and catastrophe of the legend of Tannhäuser, given by the old folksong, the dramatically indispensable peripety. To be able still more significantly and artistically to interweave the threads of the poetic tissue, Wagner very happily adopted several motives from Hoffmann's tale. Like this author, he let Wolfram's adversary sing of the transcendent joys of the Venusberg, and described Wolfram and Heinrich, opponents in this contest, to otherwise be the warmest of friends and at the same time rivals in their love for the same lady. This lady he gave the name, the holy purity and the unselfish meekness of St. Elizabeth, whose history was already lightly connected with the contest of poets, in the mediaeval poem, and, by these means, gained for his drama a second female character which, in its popular significance, is not inferior to that of Venus, and whose poetical truth can never be doubted upon, when we see Tannhäuser redeemed, by her morally-religious spirit, from the power of hell. The drama demanded a conclusion different from that of the antipapistical ballad. In the former, the wonder, revealing the mercy of God, must not come too late for the redeemed to receive; Tannhäuser's death was at the same time to be his salvation from the curse of sin. This may already have been the idea of the original, from all tendencies unmarred folklegend. By this alteration of the conclusion of the old ballad, Wagner gained for the last scene of his drama a new

and important climax, which greatly served to heighten the throughout masterly, and rich as well as life-like development of the action. At the conclusion of the piece, the battle of the heavenly and satanic powers for Tannhäuser's soul, gives the principal characters of the drama occasion to reappear together in a characteristically effective manner.

Again, as already in his former creations, Wagner stood in an intimate personal relation to his poem. He also bore the most fervent longing after the highest spiritual-sensual enjoyment, which, however, the modern world impossibly could offer him. Artistically he construed this mood as the longing after a love redeeming from sensuality, a love, not unearthly in its being, but which, in its conflict with this world, arises to spiritual sublimity. A fundamental idea, often to be repeated in his later works, arose for the first time in his poesy. He himself was, by this longing, transmitted into a state of consuming sensual excitement, which kept his blood and nerves in feverish agitation.

The musical composition, more than the words of »Tannhäuser«, gives evidence of this excitement. With this composition, Wagner did not enter on new paths, but continued more surely and independently to pursue those he had taken in his »Holländer«. Sparingly still, but already more richly and significantly than there, he made use of the so-called »Leitmotive«. Now and again, he introduced the old opera melody; but not alone that it reappeared much more rarely than in the »Holländer«, he now understood to greatly ennoble it. Of the old opera form he retained but little. On the other hand, the harmonious dramatic flow became more than ever apparent in the music, and, together with it, Wagner's peculiar manner of composition, which never denied its association with the true folksong, and with a noble and significant declamation. The instrumentation was richer and more expressive than in any of his other operas. Already in a much higher degree than in his

»Holländer«, Wagner made his orchestra, together with the vocal parts, the carrier of the melody.

After the completion of »Tannhäuser«, Wagner went to Marienbad to spend the summer; filled with productive power, he here wrote the complete plans of two new creations, the »Meistersinger« and »Lohengrin«. Returned to Dresden, he performed »Tannhäuser« for the first time on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October 1845. The two first acts were very successful; but after the over-long introduction to the third act and, in particular, after the conclusion of the whole, the applause grew fainter. Wagner recognized, that here much was only indicated, which alone through the dramatic and theatrical elaboration could produce an effect. For this reason, he not only shortened the introduction, which too lengthily and broadly had represented Tannhäuser's pilgrimage to Rome, but also made the battle between heaven and hell for Tannhäuser's soul more life-like and more convincing, by bringing Venus and the body of Elizabeth, who formerly had both not appeared in the last scene, again upon the stage. Still more importantly he remodeled his work for its representation at Paris, in March 1861. To enliven the dramatic progress, he somewhat shortened the contest of poets in the second act, and, in particular, almost entirely newly composed the Venusberg-scene in the first act. The overture, formerly, after the manner of his older overtures, an entirely independent tone-painting, he changed into a simple introduction to the first act. To make amends, he represented, in the Venusberg, the character of the goddess of love and Tannhäuser and their entire parting scene dramatically and musically much more completely. The poetical and moral contents of this scene he greatly deepened, by demonstrating in it, with the highest artistic power, Schopenhauer's idea of the negation of the will. Musically, especially by the incomparably richer means of his later manner of composition, he understood to reproduce the atmosphere of

sultry sensuality, which lies over the Venusberg, in a masterly manner. Through the alterations and additions of 1860 and 1861, the unity of style in his work necessarily suffered somewhat; however, through cleverly contrived transitions, and through his ability to characterize, Wagner prevented the contrast of the two different styles from becoming disturbing. —

Of the two plans, which, in the summer of 1845, had been created in Marienbad, the one, »Lohengrin«, Wagner carried out poetically the following winter, and musically the year after. In Paris, together with the legend of the contest on the Wartburg, he had become acquainted with the mediaeval poem of a bavarian author, in which the history of Lohengrin, son of Parzival, king of the Grail, and of his journey to Elsa of Brabant is told, which Wolfram von Eschenbach at the close of his greatest poem already related. At that time however, it had not incited Wagner to artistic creation. Only later, when, through all the artificialities and exaggerations of the poem, he recognized the simple popular legend of Lohengrin,\* as perhaps the Grimm brothers had related it in their »Deutsche Sagen«, he felt himself more and more strongly attracted to the subject. He now discovered, partly in the preface with which Görres had introduced his bavarian »Lohengrin«, partly in other mediaeval sources, reminiscences from like legends, which readily could be combined with the most important moments of the old poem, to add to the full dramatic development of the whole. In this manner, he made use of some parts of Konrad von Würzburg's »Schwanritter«, of the so-called »Younger Titarel«, of the legend of Gottfried of Bouillon's ancestors, and of the old germanic belief, that, through magic, human beings can be transformed into swans. From the Euryanthe legend, with which he had become familiar through Weber's opera, he borrowed the principal traits for the character of his Ortrud and her intriguing machinations against Elsa. To give the

inner antagonism of the women occasion to visibly break out in an important moment, he dramatically imitated the conflict of the two queens before the cathedral which occurs in the »Nibelungenlied«. Amongst the newer poets it was Immermann, who, in his profound work »Merlin«, had introduced the figure of Lohengrin. His characterization of the knight of the Grail, however, could in no manner have influenced Wagner. Instead, the tragically terminating love-scene between Merlin and Niniane in Immermann's drama, may have served as model for the bridal-night-scene in the third act of »Lohengrin«; a supposition which certainly is more probable, than that Wagner should have used the celebrated duet in the fourth act of the »Huguenots«, with which his love-scene has nothing whatever in common. The resemblance between Elsa's pantomimic play, when in the first act she appears before King Henry, and that of Fenella in Auber's revolutionary opera, is only very slight. The entire ordeal, particularly Elsa's behaviour directly before it, reminds one of the last scene in Marschner's »Templer und Jüdin«.

Even if, however, in Wagner's work reminiscences may be found, of what portent is this fact, when we consider the completely original development of the action, whose dramatic advantages the most ardent opponents of the artist could not withhold from praising; and the peculiar as well as artistic and profound characteristic of the active personages? In creating his Ortrud a defender of suppressed heathenism, Wagner, besides, gave his work an universally historic background, which, through bringing the Lohengrin legend in combination with the battles of Henry the Fowler against the Hungarians, the mediaeval epic poet was by no means able to reproduce in so significant a manner. Particularly his conception of the symbolic contents of the legend, whose eldest form he recognized in the myth of Jupiter and Semele, was of the greatest depth. In it he found

the nature of human longing expressed, which, may it raise itself far above everything earthly, in the end can only desire what is purely human, and, at the same time, found in it the explanation of the true being of love, which necessarily must desire entire sensible reality. To gain love, entire full love, which in its truest form is unalloyed by adoring admiration, the god-like being descends unrecognized to an earthly woman. But the splendour of his higher nature betrays him; the confession of his divine origin is wrung from him, and, unsatisfied in his craving for love, he returns to his celestial solitude. With the same necessity however, with which he, to gain love, must infold himself in a veil of secrecy, the woman, for her love's sake, must seek to raise this veil. The unknown she can but admire; only to him, whose entire being is laid open before her, can she give her love. Not as a curious daughter of Eve, does Elsa ask Lohengrin after his name and race, but as the woman who seeks to gain the highest love, even if its attainment must be paid with her own destruction. For this reason, she becomes the tragical heroine, the principal acting character of the drama; what she does, becomes a tragic fault, as her action is justified by its moral nature, but, at the same time, violates an external law.

The new style, which in his last operas he had employed, Wagner in his ›Lohengrin‹, as poet as well as composer, led to a comparative perfection. He had now entirely shaken off the old opera form; not a trace of the detached vocal pieces was to be found, which only had interrupted and detained the dramatic development. The old opera melody was forever banished; even where the recitative seemed to turn into an arioso, its melodies were principally, if not entirely, guided by the consideration for the dramatic enhancement of the declamation. Reminiscences, however faint, were nowhere to be found. All the more clearly and decidedly, the peculiar thematic tissue of the ›Leit-



Sketch of scenery to the «Ring des Nibelungen» (Rheingold, scene I).





motive« spread itself out over the entire composition. Entirely new appeared the treatment of the orchestra. As in »Tannhäuser«, the reproduction of independent melodies was often alone intrusted to it. To gain particular orchestral tone-effects, Wagner not only employed, after an as yet unusual principle, the single groups of the string-, wood- and brass-instruments disconnectedly or in part connectedly, but more often, than had hitherto been done in his orchestra, applied such instruments which before had been but seldomly used for particular purposes.

A performance in Dresden of this work, Wagner for the present could not bring about. In Weimar under Franz Liszt's direction, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 1850, »Lohengrin« was produced for the first time. Only from afar, could the poet-composer enjoy the artistic success of his drama; for years already, his fatherland had closed its doors against him.

Before Wagner had completed the composition of »Lohengrin«, he felt himself attracted by two new dramatic subjects: the forms of Siegfried and of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa arose before his creative mind. When he contemplated the momentary political position of Germany, he found the latter drama to be the fitter selection; for this reason, he wrote the entire plan, which he intended to execute dramatically, but not musically in the manner of the historical opera. Soon however, he recognized, that the historical events were too confining. To be able to entirely express his poetic intentions, he would have been obliged either to freely change the historical events, or to treat them as a legend. What, by these means, was only to be indirectly reached, could, through the artistic transformation of the myth, be much more readily attained. Therefore Wagner gave up his historical drama, and in a treatise »Die Wibelungen, Weltgeschichte aus der Sage« (»The Wibelungs, universal history out of the myth«, 1848) laid down the studies, which by this occasion he

had made. In conformation with two articles of the philologist and historian Karl Wilhelm Göttling, he sought to demonstrate, that the Wibelungs, or Ghibelines, were one in name, race, nature and aspirations with the Nibelungs, and that therefore Frederick Barbarossa in history, was identical with Siegfried in the myth. To the hero of this myth, Wagner now exclusively turned his creative power, and had soon executed the general, in some of its parts already detailed plan to a drama of the Nibelungs. The last part, »Siegfrieds Tod« (»Siegfried's death«), he at once wrote in the fall of 1848, as an independent tragedy. For the time being, he tarried with the musical composition; the idea of another drama had taken possession of him: at the same time, in fall 1848, he made the plan for a »Jesus von Nazareth« in five acts.

Principally as artist, did he approach the holy history, whose scenic representation had, since the early middle ages, again and again occupied the pious souls of all nations. What they had never been able to succeed in, he, with superior poetical insight and power, made possible, and pointed the way to: he sketched a genuine, after all the rules of art constructed drama of Christ's death, which should produce the highest moral and poetically dramatic effect. To accomplish this, Wagner divested the biblical subject from all the supernaturally wonderful, which clothed it, conceived Jesus to be the noblest of all human beings, who, in a world of heartless power, founds the religion of love, which, misunderstood by his people, he seals with his death; but at the same time, like a true dramatist, he made use, in a masterly manner, of all historical persons, which tradition has transmitted to us, above all Barrabas, the circumstances of the jewish people in Jesus' time, their rebellious spirit against the Romans who suppressed them, and the sect- and party-spirit amongst them. Poetically he newly and effectively disposed the incidents in Jesus' life, and with great art



Sketch of scenery to the »Ring des Nibelungen« (Walküre, act I).



deepened the spiritual characters of Christ's opponents and followers. The religious dogma, the bold dramatist certainly did not leave untouched; but all the more grandly did he glorify the moral idea of christianity, whose victory arises from the physical sacrifice of its founder. The instructive-philosophical element, whose expansion it would have been difficult to confine, would, even in a spoken drama — for, of a musical composition it was impossible for Wagner to think — greatly have threatened to check the course of the action. Before, however, the poet could try his skill in evading these perils, he entirely gave up his plan. He recognized that, with this transformation of a dogmatic, strictly limited subject, he could at present, by no means, gain entry upon the stages. But only so long as the revolutionary spirit, which had also incited him to this work, permeated the people, could the production of his drama have any value for him.

Into the sphere of art Wagner principally wished to conduct this spirit, to awaken the new and to do away with old, unnecessary customs. Far from the narrow extreme party-strifes, he executed, for the saxon minister of public worship, the plan for the organization of a german national-theatre for the kingdom of Saxony. He wished to elevate the cultivation of art and, through it again, the morals of the people. For this purpose, he desired to change the theatre, hitherto dependent on the court, into a national institute, which in purely artistic questions was to be advised by all its productive and reproductive artists, and finally provided with a school to educate a younger generation for the theatre, opera and orchestra. Before the saxon ministry had found time to sufficiently examine this plan, the life of its author had taken an entirely new course. In the revolutionary disturbance, which, particularly since the spring of 1848, had, in the other parts of Germany and also in Saxony, steadily increased, Wagner had taken part, not as an ultra, not

even as a decided or consistent republican, but still enough, to fear severe punishment after the overhurred may-insurrection in Dresden 1849 had been forcibly quelled by the prussian troops. Before the judicial prosecution could be opened against him, he had forever fled from Dresden, passingly happy in the sensation of his newly regained complete artistic liberty, in spite of the bitter experiences which the latter days had brought him.





## V.

**N**ext many trials and perplexities, Wagner was yet to experience a great and unexpected joy before leaving Germany for many years, a joy which gave him courage and strength to bear all the misery, which yet might assail the man as well as the artist. During a short visit to Weimar, he gained the friendship of Franz Liszt. In former years, but always transiently, he had met the celebrated artist, who, but lately, had renounced his career as virtuoso and had retired as court-conductor of the orchestra to the thuringian capital. In latter years he had, more than any other living musician, evinced the highest interest in Wagner's artistic creation: for »Tannhäuser« he gained new ground in Weimar. To him the exiled man first fled. In him, he found an artist who understood him, a highminded man, who, in undimmed nobility of feeling, trusted and loved him with a faithful heart. His scores, his most precious possessions, Wagner entrusted to him. From now on, he sought from him advice and help in all perplexities, and never sought in vain. Both artists were well aware of the great dissimilarity of their natures, as well as of the disparity of their lives, their education and their intellectual development. In a letter to Liszt, Wagner once emphasized his particular artistic aversion to the french language and remarked explanatorily: »You will not be able to understand that; but you are a european man of the world, whereas I was born quite especially germanic.« However, as soon as it was

necessary to do one another acts of friendship, these disparities vanished. Firstly for Liszt, and then for the few friends whom Liszt principally had gained for him, Wagner now wrote and composed; Liszt however, made it a point of honour and a new object of his life, to produce these creations in a manner which worthily fulfilled the intentions of their author, and by these means, to work in a true artistic spirit for their propagation and comprehension.

From Weimar, Wagner at first turned his steps to Paris, but the entire life in that city thoroughly filled him with repugnance, and he therefore, in July 1849, went to Zurich. Here, after his wife had joined him, he settled down. Exiled from Germany, pursued with a warrant of arrest by the saxon magistrate, he lived fully nine years in Zurich. Once again, the wish to bring one of his works on the Paris stage, drove him, in 1850, back to the french capital, and three years later, during a recreation-trip, which he had undertaken with Liszt, he again came to that city. But from Paris, as well as from different swiss watering-places, which he had visited during the summer months, he always gladly returned home to Zurich.

Amongst his new fellow-citizens he gained many a friend; besides him, other Germans of intellectual importance and artistic aspirations had in Zurich found a refuge. With the germanist Ludwig Ettmüller and with Georg Herwegh, later with Gottfried Semper and Gottfried Keller, he often associated. In the theatrical and musical life of Zurich he took active part. The comprehension of Beethoven's symphonies and ouvertures he sought to awaken, by carefully prepared performances and explanatory programmes. With the exception of the »Fliegende Holländer«, he could bring none of his works upon the Zurich stage; but in May 1853, with the assistance of friends, musicians, who had hastened from all parts of Switzerland and from Germany at his call, he was permitted the joy





Sketch of scenery to the „Ring des Nibelungen“ (Walküre, act III)



of performing, in three successive concerts, selections from »Rienzi«, the »Holländer«, »Tannhäuser« and »Lohengrin«, before an enthusiastic audience. Younger followers, old friends and other guests assembled in Zurich for this festival. Visitors from home, the exiled man was not wanting in, either before or afterwards. But how little could this add to the amelioration of his grief in being excluded from his fatherland, from Liszt, the friend who alone understood him, and in being irrevocably forced to shun Weimar, the only place in which his creations really artistically lived! Always more and more violently he was seized by the longing, at least to see his »Lohengrin« only once, upon the stage. The idea that this wish was for so long a time denied him, together with the bitterness with which he felt his artistic isolation, wasted his health like a slow poison, and sometimes even paralyzed the zeal and energy, with which he had begun new artistic creations.

When he had first come to Zurich in 1849, he had felt the desire to theoretically express, as thoroughly and clearly as possible, what, in opposition to the ruling so-called art of those days, he strove to attain for his people. Before all, he wished to protest against the assertion, that the subduers of the revolution were the protectors of art. Still greatly excited by the recent experiences, he wrote, in a manner which throughout gives evidence of the passionate enthusiasm of its author, his first reformatory article »Die Kunst und die Revolution« (»Art and revolution«, 1849). In the germ, it already for the most part contained, what his later art-essays more accurately developed. Very decidedly Wagner denied, that the revolution had been detrimental to the true art, similar to that, which the ancient Greeks, as handsome, strong and free men, had cultivated in their highest work of art, in the attic tragedy. With the fall of free greekdom this art had degenerated and had, in the service of

the Church, the sovereigns and finally of industry, more and more become a mere artistic trade, which no longer served for the intellectual elevation of the entire people, but was dedicated to the sensual gratification of some few, just as it no longer owed its existence to a necessity of the people, but to a fashion, a caprice of luxury. The true drama, which combines music, poetry and the sister arts, is, without the least common artistic support or aim, dissolved into plays and operas, into decorations, ballets, declamation, vocal music and orchestra. Only when, through the revolution, the entire people have risen to perfect liberty, and, in the true comprehension of the teachings of Jesus, have shaken off, and completely and in every form eradicated the slavery, which was chiefly instrumental in bringing about the fall of the old greek world, only then, can real art and, with it, its most perfect creation, the true drama, be regenerated, as the highest intellectual production of the common national life, for whose merited cultivation and general accessibility the state must care.

What Wagner here had given, predominatingly in the spirit of negative criticism, he demonstrated in a more detailed manner in the books written in the following two years »Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft« (»The work of art of the future«, 1850), »Kunst und Klima«, (»Art and climate«, 1850), and »Oper und Drama« (»Opera and drama«, 1851), and supplemented it with positive propositions as to the manner in which the true dramatic art could, from its decay, be awakened to a new and higher life. Systematically he examined, in what manner all the arts, plastic, mimic, phonetic and oral, had in the antique tragedy combined to the highest mutual purposes, and how thereafter, released from this close and life-like union, the single arts had in their individual development either stagnated or degenerated. He refused to acknowledge the objections; that only the mild atmosphere of Greece had been able to ripen the artistic power of intuition and for-

mation, out of which the attic tragedy had grown. Only the historical man, the man independent of nature, has awakened art to life; and only he, noble and strong, who through the highest power of love has attained true liberty, can newly create the vanished dramatic work of art, just as he alone, his life and death, is its subject; for this reason, there can only be one principal consideration for art, and that is the true nature of the human race. Strictly Wagner weighed the unsuccessful attempts of the last century, to externally combine the sister arts (without any of them giving up their egotistic purposes) in the oratorium and, particularly, in the opera, the trysting place of their most selfish endeavors. He contrasted, with these inorganic species, the loving union of the single arts in the work of art of the future, in the true drama, that, like the attic tragedy, employed the same artistic means, only on a greater scale and with a higher technical perfection, in the same manner and for the same purposes. Like the attic tragedy, it is to be represented by the people, or rather, the totality of different artists is to represent it for the people; just however, as the single arts can here for the first time freely and naturally unfold their innermost nature, so the individuality of the single artist can, just in that community with the whole, significantly develop itself.

To Hegel's philosophy and, particularly, to the works of Hegel's follower, Ludwig Feuerbach, Wagner owed, besides several speculative views, the stylistic schooling, which, in the strictly logical construction of his work of art of the future, he had preserved. The idea itself was solely his, the intellectual inheritance transmitted to him by the greatest thinkers and poets of Germany and of the neighboring countries, for more than a century, an idea which had been latterly reawakened by the glorification of the greek drama as the festive reunion of all arts, in Anselm Feuerbach's book on the Apollo of the Vatican.

With the unavoidable partiality of the reformer, Wagner set up his ideal of the drama. By no means did he wish, in demanding a combined work of art, to dispute the right of existence and the merits of the individual arts; he only denied the possibility of attaining, through them singly, the true drama, which was comparable to the antique tragedy. In his universal artistic talents, the poetical and musical endowment predominated; the separate development of the poetical and musical arts, and the parts which both arts were to play in the drama of the future, he therefore examined with the most care and with the most correct judgement. Against some particulars in the historical appraisal, objections may now and again be raised; examined as to its aesthetic contents, we find the statement of the whole unapproachable. Whoever, with unprejudiced eyes, reads Wagner's art-essays, with the simple and honest desire for instruction, will find in them an astonishing fill of new information, and sharp, striking remarks on the nature of music, the language and poetic art, the myth, novels and the drama, on the historical development of the opera and the play and the most prominent masters in both arts, on the manifold attempts to widen the musical modes of expression in general, and to fill them with contents of greater value, on the tasks of the chorus and orchestra, on poetical speech, versification and the formation of the rhyme, on the relation of the drama to politics and religion, to the purely human individual and to the people. In spite of all the philosophic-aesthetic and historical knowledge, which in these works of Wagner reveals itself with imposing grandeur, in spite of the, sometimes pedantically scrupulous, logical construction of single thoughts, which often tends to make his reading difficult, it was still only possible for an artist, who solely as artist investigated and thought, to write these essays. Principally for the artist and only in the second place for the scientific thinker, had they been



Sketch of scenery to the «Ring des Nibelungen» (Siegfried, act I).





written. To the latter also they had much to offer; but even more than the artists, did the men of science ignore the suggestions which Wagner gave — to their own detriment. Many a goal, which the newer aesthetics, independently of him, had with double labour and only indirectly neared, he had, at that time already, completely and by the straightest route attained, and had smoothed the paths for those who chose to follow him.

A number of smaller treatises and essays, 1849—1851, follow Wagner's fundamental theoretical works, so a letter to Liszt about the »Goethestiftung«, »Erinnerungen an Spontini« (»Reminiscences of Spontini«), propositions for a theatre in Zurich, hints and counsels for the performance of »Tannhäuser« and the »Holländer«, thoughts about the duties of musical criticism in the true sense of the word, a report of his composition of a new conclusion to the overture of Gluck's »Iphigenia in Aulis«, and many others. Often again, he trod the paths, which his large reformatory works had taken; occasionally, he sought the courses which he already had pursued in his plan for a german national-theatre in Saxony. Amongst these articles, a larger essay created the greatest sensation, which appeared, in September 1850, in Franz Brendel's »Neue Zeitschrift für Musik«, under the title »Das Judentum in der Musik« (»Judaism in music«), and was republished, in 1869, and sharpened by acrid additions. What, in this article, was said about jewish poets and composers, especially about Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and Meyerbeer, might, at that time, have often seemed severe, but, in the present day, can hardly be earnestly gainsaid by impartial judges of the newer development of our music. Contestable is only the general fundamental idea of the essay, that the jew, through his nature, is necessarily incapable of artistic creation. Wagner's mistake, which, in some details, gave rise to several incorrect remarks, is historically explainable by the national spirit, which, since the time of the

romanticists, in contrast to the cosmopolitical endeavor of the last century, permeated the entire german literature. By right, his judgement only is applicable to the jew of the transition period, who wished to enjoy the privileges of emancipation, and still could not become accustomed to entirely consider himself a member of the nation, to which he now nominally belonged. When he wrote his essay, Wagner was far from the intention of giving great offence; with the foolish, as well as immoral agitations against the jews by the agitators of our days, he had nothing in common. In its contents of much greater importance than the, by Wagner's opponents unmeritedly exaggerated essay on the jews, was an article, which, for a long time, had been hardly noticed, and which, in 1851, had accompanied the edition of his last three dramas, under the title »Eine Mitteilung an meine Freunde« (»A communication to my friends«). It contained, above all, the deeply impressive history of the artistic course of development which he himself had hitherto taken, and for this reason served as an excellent explanatory supplement to his »Oper und Drama«, as well as an aesthetic preface to the large composition »Der Ring des Nibelungen« (»The ring of the Nibelung«), whose appearance Wagner announced at the conclusion of his essay.

In latter years, the formerly so actively creative artist had almost exclusively devoted himself to writing essays on art. Not a philosophical, but an artistic impulse led him. To prepare the ground for the future drama, whose plan he carried in his mind, he was obliged to first theoretically explain what his intentions were with this drama. Now, that this was accomplished, he felt himself again mightily impelled to musical and poetical production. Since, in the year 1848, he had written the tragedy »Siegfrieds Tod«, the picture of this greatest of germanic heroes stood visibly and temptingly before his eyes. Only transitorily;

was the lustre of this apparition darkened by another similar mythical figure; with the intention (which was soon abandoned) of setting his work to music, Wagner, at the close of the year 1849 and beginning of 1850, wrote a drama in three acts »Wieland der Schmied« (»Wieland the smith«). Already in 1835, Karl Simrock, founding on the old northern tradition, transmitted to us by the »Edda« and by the »Wilkinasaga«, celebrated, in a long-drawn heroic poem of strong archaistic coloring, the deeds of the germanic Daedalos, who, in the utmost extremity, forges himself a pair of wings, to take revenge upon his enemies. This poem and the northern sources gave Wagner his subject, but not only was he obliged to concentrate the epically loosely woven incidents, but also to morally ennoble different traits of the legend, to be able to form a drama which would serve to express all his artistic ideas. The myth of Wieland, Wagner conceived principally as the symbolical representation of true art, which, enslaved by the rudest power, and forced to serve inartistic purposes, in deepest suffering rises to the greatest height of its miraculous strength, and regains freedom and splendour with the destruction of the suppressing powers.

Notwithstanding the success, with which Wagner understood to dramatically form and poetically deepen the epic subject, the new sketch soon gave way before the old plan. The same sources which had given him his Wieland legend, pointed the way back to his Siegfried tragedy. When, however, in the spring 1851, he commenced setting his tragedy to music, he recognized that, in his work, he had in epic form intimated numerous, indispensable allusions to Siegfried's and Brünhilde's former history, which only then could be really artistically effective, if they themselves were dramatized. This emergency he met in a quickly written three-act drama »Der junge Siegfried« (»Young Siegfried«). Here however, he made the same experience, and so, in the

course of the year 1851, decided to let his »Junge Siegfried« be preceded by two other dramas, an extensive preliminary piece, which was to represent the rob of the Rheingold, with the immediate consequences following the theft, and a further tragedy in three acts, which was to be devoted to the destiny of Siegfried's parents, and to the separation of the Walküre Brünhilde from Wotan, which is closely interwoven with it. The latter drama was completed on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1852, the former in November of the same year. The connection of the four dramas was not merely outward; together they formed a single great tragedy, in which, through common guilt and common expiation, the destinies of gods and men are closely linked. Siegfried's destiny symbolized the fate of humanity; with his death, perishes the race of the gods. In conformation to this idea, Wagner combined the legends of the Nibelungenhort and its most splendid possessor Siegfried, with that of the »Götterdämmerung«, of the fall of the gods, who, in battle with the giants and dwarfs, have committed themselves by wrong doing, and through their association with Loge, the spirit of negation, have undermined their own existence. This, and the circumstance, that single motives of »Siegfrieds Tod« had been anticipated in the preceding pieces, necessitated a thorough reformation of the concluding drama. The last weeks of the year 1852, Wagner devoted to this purpose, and at once had the whole printed, at first solely for friends, in 1863 for the entire reading world, under the title: »Der Ring des Nibelungen«, a »Bühnenfestspiel«, consisting of the dramas »Das Rheingold«, »Die Walküre«, »Siegfried« and »Götterdämmerung«.

With the commencement of the composition, Wagner tarried no longer. Already during the period of poetical creation, directly after its completion, and whilst Wagner was on a journey to upper Italy in the summer 1853, single musical themes of the new work had been com-



Sketch of scenery to the „Ring des Nibelungen“ (Siegfried, act II).



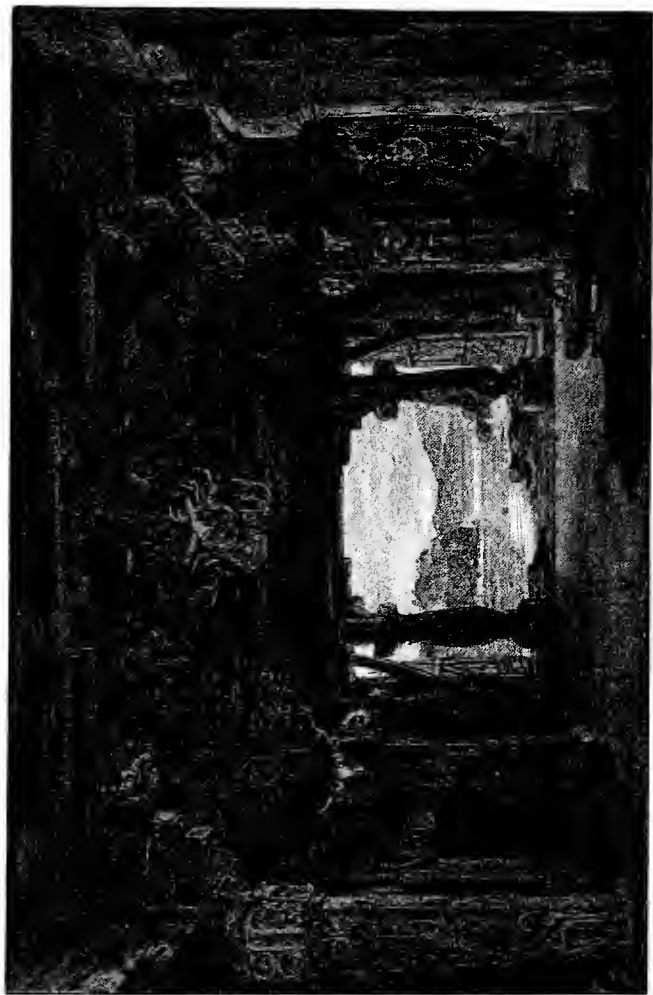
posed. The following winter, Wagner went about the systematic composition of the »Rheingold«; already in May 1854, it was completed. Until the commencement of the year 1856, the music to the »Walküre« was executed with a like vigorous energy. Much more difficult after this permanent exertion, seemed the work for »Siegfried«. About one and a half acts were composed until June 1857; then the entire hopelessness of his endeavors, decided him to lay aside for a while the work, for which he could not even hope to find a publisher. Only eight years later, he could again take up its composition and, with many interruptions, bring it to a conclusion. At the beginning of the year 1869 he completed the composition of »Siegfried«, in November 1874 that of the »Götterdämmerung«. It had required more than a quarter of a century for the artistic idea, to gain its perfect poetical-musical form.

The poetical merit of Wagner's »Nibelungen« consists, above all, in the fact, that here, for the first and only time in our entire literature, an artist, endowed with the highest dramatic qualities, treated the grandest subject of germanic folklegend after the oldest traditions, which alone have preserved, in unsullied purity, the tragical contents and the moral significance of this myth, which originally depicted the events of nature. Instead of using, like Geibel, Hebbel and all the other authors, who, in a dramatically unsatisfying manner, treated the Siegfried myth, the middle-high-german »Nibelungenlied«, of which Friedrich Theodor Vischer in his suggestions for a Nibelungen-opera 1844 had at first thought, Wagner drew from the old northern sources, from the songs of the »Edda«, which he found in Ettmüller's translation, and particularly from the »Völsungasaga«, which, already in 1815, Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen in the fourth volume of his »Altnordische Heldenromane«, had rendered into german. In the same collection, the »Wilkinasaga« and »Nóragestssaga« had been trans-

lated, which, with some deviations in the details from the other accounts, also related the adventures of Siegfried. Particularly from the ›Wilkinasaga‹, of which Simrock already had taken several deeds of Siegfried for his ›Wieland‹, Wagner appropriated different ideas. Simrock himself, and amongst the newer poets at the most Fouqué, who, in his ›Sigurd der Schlangentöter‹, had also drawn from the northern legends, were able now and again to give him unimportant suggestions. Several inferior traits he took from german popular tales and other national traditions. Above all, he sought to free the different northern versions of the legend from all later additions, as well as from all ingredients, which might artistically prove to be impediments, and to evolve the simple, original form of the myth, which was most fit for poetical revivification. For this purpose, he read, partly advised by Ettmüller, several scientific essays, which Wilhelm Grimm, Lachmann and other germanists had written about the Nibelungs. Amongst them, besides Ettmüller's preface to his ›Edda‹ translation (1837),<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm Müller's ›Versuch einer mythologischen Erklärung der Nibelungensage‹ (1841) seems to have made the deepest impression upon him.

Through these studies, he acquired Lachmann's opinion, that the original myth of the Nibelungs ended with Siegfried's death. His attention was particularly led to the double form in which the same legendary motives sometimes appeared, and which, as dramatist, he must simplify. What, after this cleansing process, remained as the germ of the old legend and foundation for the new drama, he sought more closely to combine in the individual parts, to poetically substantiate more significantly, and to enrich with modern philosophical ideas. By these means, as in the acception of the original myth, Wagner identified his Siegfried with Baldur, the god of spring, whose death brings about the end of the world. He greatly deepened the contrast





Sketch of scenery to the *Ring des Nibelungen* (Götterdämmerung, act I).



between the desire for power and gain, which is the source of all guilt and therefore the principal instrument in bringing about the world's end, and the unselfish, sacrificial love, which alone can redeem the world from sin to salvation. As principal dramatic idea, he developed the battles of the luminous god of heaven, Wotan, with the gloomy Nibelung Alberich, and by these means, organically combined the legend of the Wölsungs (reduced to its principal events) with the legend of Wotan. To save the world from Alberich's ignominious sway, Wotan begets a son Siegmund, who is to combat with the foe, whom the god, bound by treaties, may not battle against. But he must recognize, that his son cannot act independently from him, that, through Siegmund, he himself would fell the forbidden blow, and so, with Siegmund, he gives up his desire for dominion, for life and for action. No longer active, only observant, he roves as wanderer through the world, harassed by the one care, that the end of the gods, which he now desires, shall not serve to make Alberich ruler. Quite independently, outwardly even in direct opposition to Wotan, Siegfried, Siegmund's son, is the first to act. In combat, he obtains the ring of the Nibelung, to which the rule of the world is attached. A new stage in the strife of the light and dark powers now arises, the battle between Siegfried and Alberich's son. Unknowingly, Siegfried is ensnared by the latter into the commitment of a wrong, and the curse of the ring attains him; with him falls Brünhilde, who selfishly values her own love-happiness more than the gods or the world. With death alone all errors cease; dying, and together with her death confirming the downfall of the gods, she accomplishes the redeeming act of love, which forever breaks the curse.

To an outward symbol, to the ring which Alberich forges from the Rheingold, Wagner knit the entire tragic conflict of the powers of the upper and lower world. But how well did he understand to deepen

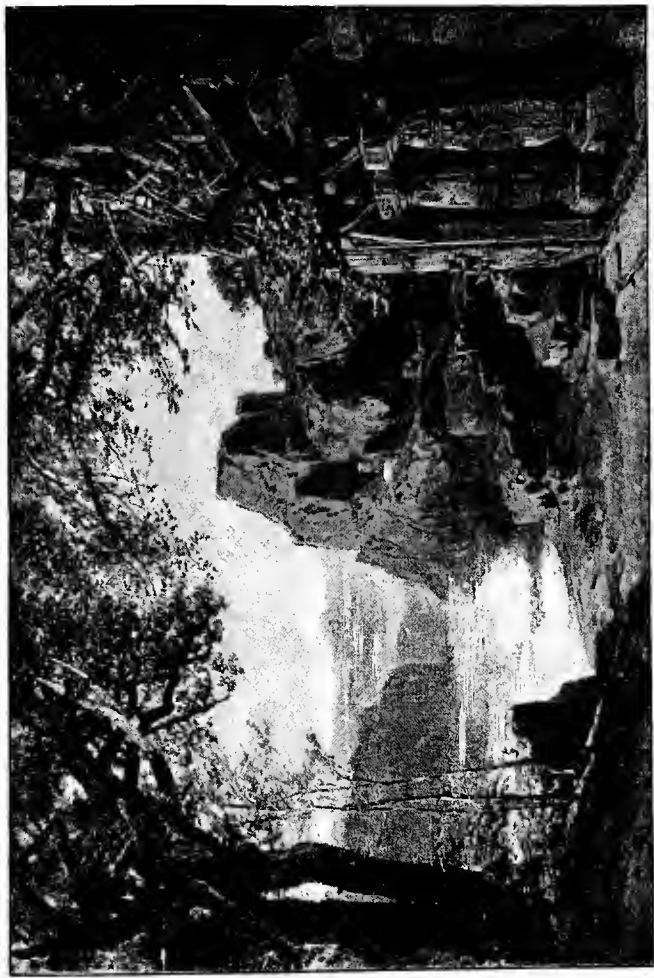
the significance of this symbol, to heighten its terrors through the double curse, with which it is made and stolen from its first possessor, and through its being the constant object of general desire, to make it, in reality, the centre-point of the entire work! How readily did he understand to artistically make use of the ring's fatalistic power, without for a moment turning his steps into the unpoetic paths of the fatalistic tragedy! With what care did he, above all, seek to evolve the dramatic action out of the characters! At all points, his psychological development displayed the highest degree of art, in those parts of the tetralogy, where the gods are the bearers of the action, not less than in those, where the dramatic development is solely effectuated by human beings. For the gods, the limits of space, time and natural strength, set to human beings, do not exist. But the same moral idea of right and wrong, of guilt and expiation is given to them; they experience the like emotions of the soul; they are therefore exposed to the same tragic fate. The tragical culmination-point is reached in Brünhilde, the principal dramatic character of the »Götterdämmerung«, who belongs equally to gods and men. The highest tragical conflict known to life and art agitates her soul; her love for the adored man forces her, with entire and clear forethought to kill him, that their mutual love may remain pure and unsullied. Not alone is the highest point of the tragical development in the »Nibelungen« denoted by the »Götterdämmerung«, it is at the same time masterly in its dramatic exposition, and faultless in its unity. A similar unity, it was not possible to give to the preceding pieces. In them, everything points to the future; at the conclusion of each of them, questions necessarily must be left open, and new threads be spun to the action. An outward unity of action, in the conventional acceptation of the term, it was not possible to attain. These first parts of the tetralogy are also rich in tragic contents, and are carried out with great dra-

matic art. But the epical and lyrical elements required a large scope in these dramas, and in consideration for truly artistic effect, it was necessary, that the cheerful idyll »Siegfried«, entirely bare of tragical conflicts, this simple woodland piece, with its youthfully dauntless solitude, as Wagner himself called it, be inserted between the excitingly touching tragedies »Die Walküre« and »Götterdämmerung«.

Not less than in the disposition of the whole, did the dramatic superiority of the poet prove itself in the execution of the details. Everywhere, even when only narratives were to be brought in, or lyrical sentiments to be depicted, he understood, at least to awaken a dramatic impression, which helped to pass over the artistically doubtful but unavoidable scenes, in which the outward action comes to a standstill. The inner development progresses unceasingly. The dramatic continuation of the whole is visibly promoted by the strictly limited unity of time in the single pieces, each of which comprises only one, or few successive days. Combined with this is the dialogue, which indefatigably presses onward, and which sometimes unites the most concise brevity, with the highest vigor of expression. With the same boldness as, at former epochs of our literature, Klopstock, Wieland, Goethe and single romantic authors, Wagner awakened the forms and words of our old poetical expression to new life. The »Nibelungen« exceed, in poetic splendour and wealth, by far all that Wagner, until that time, had written. From germanic antiquity he also derived the alliterative form, which he renewed (without regard for the supposed rules of old-german metric, which are still the object of discussion) freely and originally, and therefore with the greatest artistic success.

In the musical composition of his »Nibelungen«, Wagner took the last decisive step on the path, which had led him from the »Holländer« to »Lohengrin«. An entirely dramatic music, the goal which, from creation

to creation, he had neared, was now reached. Every resemblance to the old opera form, be it ever so slight, had vanished; consideration for the drama alone existed. Ceaselessly, the richest vocal-melodies flowed through the entire composition, which, in a higher degree, combined the advantages of the former recitative and aria. Throughout, the melodies were inspired by the natural, popular rhythm; in general, there resounded from the vocal parts a declamation of the poetic word, greatly ennobled by the highest means of art. Like in the real drama, speech and response alternated regularly; concerted pieces or, above all, choruses were very seldomly inserted, only when the dramatic situation naturally admitted of them. Then however, they did not, like in the conventional opera, serve merely for the quantitative augmentation of the tones, so that, instead of one artist, several break into the same words and syllables in exactly the same division of the bar; Wagner's ensembles and choruses were divided into single parts, which, although unitedly sung, still were each of them independently treated. The place of the former concerted vocal pieces the orchestra now filled, which unfolded a hitherto unknown polyphonistic wealth, and which, in melodic as well as harmonic respect, was carried out with equal prodigality and boldness. It was its task, to explain and interpret the dramatic action, occasionally to prepare for it, and to unite for our perception, what time and place had separated, or what seemed too disconnected for logical comprehension. Here again, Wagner threw off all conventionality. He replaced, for example, the former overture, in itself an independent whole, by a proportionately short instrumental introduction, which prepared for the impressions of the first scene, and he allowed himself occasionally the liberty of employing entirely realistic tone-effects, which, certainly, never violated the rules of the beautiful and of art. Over the vocal and instrumental whole, the web of the so-called »Leitmotive« spread itself, now no



Sketch of scenery to the »Ring des Nibelungen« (Götterdämmerung, act II).





longer (as in »Lohengrin«) only in the principal themes, but carried out, as fully as artistically, even in the minutest and slightest detail. From the grand fundamental themes, which all four dramas had in common, he derived numerous secondary themes, so that the principal motives, extremely simple in themselves, but capable of further development, returned again and again in ever new and skillful transfigurations, which still were similar in tone.

The musical composition, as well as the poetic execution of the »Nibelungen«, corresponded fully with the theory, which Wagner had developed in his reformatory articles. At the time, in which he wrote them, he already carried the ideal in his mind, which as productive artist he had now accomplished, and for this reason could, at that time, only teach what harmonized with his, for the present only mentally conceived ideal.

Whilst Wagner was vigorously working at his »Nibelungen«, his older compositions had, from Weimar, conquered admittance on all german stages. After long years, he at last could again hear his »Tannhäuser«, which, in February 1855, made its triumphant entry in Zurich. Immediately after this performance, Wagner followed a call of the older philharmonic society in London, to lead eight of its concerts. During four months, rich in excitement and sorrow, he slowly, and in constant battle with an illnatured and short-sighted critic and inartistic but carefully fostered habits, gained the love of the musicians amongst whom his duties lay, and the approbation of the public. At the same time, he acquired a friendly appreciation for Hector Berlioz, who was stopping, for similar purposes as he, in London. Illness and mental troubles, which, however, did not suppress his creative impulses, embittered the following winter.

Of musical creations, which had newly arisen beside his, the symphonic compositions of Liszt alone

could awaken his entire sympathy. Particularly, after his friend had, during his visit in the autumn of 1856, himself produced them before him, Wagner felt the necessity of making his opinion of them publicly known. In a witty, with humor and irony impregnated letter, (which was printed several times) he, without entering into the particulars of the musical contents, the strength of the thematic inventions, the harmonic execution, above all declaimed against the objections which were raised against the new artistic form of those compositions.

In the mean time, new artistic ideas, in connection with new philosophical studies, had arisen in Wagner's soul. As soon as, under the bitter compulsion of his outward position, he was forced, for a time to hopelessly lay aside the task of his life, the »Nibelungen«, he turned to those new ideas, which impelled him to immediate, poetically musical creation.





## VI.

**S**ince the year 1854, Wagner, with steadily increasing zeal, devoted himself to the study of Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophical works. The bitter experiences of the latter years had made him, who once had admired the happy and energetic philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach, directly susceptible to the renunciation-theory of the Frankfurt thinker, whose profound words on the reason of artistic enjoyment, the nature of the genius, the advantages of music over the other arts, were after his own heart. Schopenhauer's aesthetics and ethics, his doctrines of the denial of the will to live, as the only means to be released from the sufferings of this world, attracted him all the more strongly, as he had, before he had theoretically come to know this doctrine, already poetically represented it in his »Nibelungen«, in the character of Wotan. He now systematically followed the philosopher on all the by-paths and cross-ways of his thoughts, now explaining and continuing, and again making artistic use of them. The first valuable fruit of this study was a new dramatic creation, whose earliest plan dates back to the year 1854, »Tristan und Isolde«.

In Wilhelm Müllers »Versuch einer mythologischen Erklärung der Nibelungensage«, Wagner had found a reference to the original connection of the Siegfried and Tristan legend. The latter, he himself

believed to be, for the poetic perception, a manner of supplement to the former. Tristan, like Siegfried, sues for another, the woman who is appointed for him. Whilst in the Nibelungs legend, the principal stress is laid upon the death of the hero, which results from this error, the Tristan legend depicts the love-pangs of the pair, which sees itself, through the like error, separated by law and by morality. As such a supplement of his »Nibelungen«, Wagner was fond of considering »Tristan«, when, in 1857, he was, for the time being, forced to lay aside the tetralogy. With great haste he, at that time, executed the older plan; after few weeks the text of the new drama was completed, and already in the fall of the same year, he could begin with the musical composition. Changes in Wagner's outward life frequently interrupted the progression of his work. Allured by new prospects which seemed opening to his creations in Paris, he again visited the metropolis, in January 1858, for a short space of time. The following August he forever left Zurich, and for the coming fall and winter settled down in Venice. Here, the second act of »Tristan« was completed; after years had passed, Wagner still spoke of, and praised the agreeable sensation, which the entire freedom and unrestraint of creation, the oblivion of all and every theory, had given him. Only in April he returned to Switzerland, to Lucerne, in which city, in 1859, the composition of the entire work was completed.

Wagner's source was the mediaeval poem of Gottfried von Strassburg, which in a new-high-german translation by Hermann Kurz, had already appeared. But here the legend of Tristan and Isolde was entirely epically treated, as a master-piece of narrating poetry, which, however, lacked the least dramatic nerve. Epically even, Gottfried's poem was wanting an artistic conclusion which his mediaeval continuators, and later his translator Kurz, had more or less independently supplemented. Wagner could only



Sketch of scenery to the »Ring des Nibelungen« (Götterdämmerung, act III).



then attain a dramatically serviceable subject, if, like in the »Nibelungen«, he freed the simplest original form of the myth from the abundance of arbitrary adventures and later additions. But also the scientific works, in which he sought for advice, offered him nothing that could be of use to the dramatist. Alone and independently, he must create this original form for himself. This he accomplished by taking the relation of the Tristan to the Siegfried legend as starting point. In this manner, he invented the fundamental tragical idea, from which, necessarily, the different conflicts, filled with the highest tragic, and the entire and in itself completed dramatic development resulted: Tristan also already loves the woman whom he woos, under the spell of the most terrible error, for Marke. The dissension of his soul, the germ to his tragical guilt, arises from his delusion, that, in the possession of his country's crown, Isolde, whom he loves without hoping to see his passion returned, will be happy. Isolde's hatred, who misunderstands the motive of his suit, and believes herself to be despised by the beloved, arises against him; like Brünhilde she also plots her own and the traitor's common destruction. In this mood, both drink of the supposed poisonous potion; before death enters, whose certain sacrifices they already believe themselves to be, the barriers of false reserve give way, and they make the overflowing confession of their love. The magic love-potion, which in the epic poem was reality, becomes symbolic in the drama.

In connection with this artistic perfection of a transmitted motive is another: Wagner sought morally to transform what was frivolous in the mediaeval poem. For this reason, he implanted in his lovers, instead of the continually returning desire for earthly enjoyment, an ever increasing longing after death, the releaser from all earthly troubles; so, after a painful separation, in which Tristan recognizes his own sufferings as emanating from the universal sufferings of the world, he

reunites them not in life, but in death. In the same manner, particularly by deepening the character of the king, morally as well as poetically, he robbed the relation of the lovers to Marke of the disagreeable impression, which the older version awakens: Isolde does not exactly commit adultery, but, like Tristan, only betrays Marke's sacrificing friendship. Through preserving his heroine from the shame of appearing as the wife of two men, Wagner saved Marke's character from the curse of the ridiculous and kept the deeply tragic tone of his creation pure and unbroken.

Here again, like in single parts of his »Nibelungen«, Wagner limited himself to the smallest possible number of personages. All the characters however, particularly the attendants Kurwenal and Brangäne, the noblest representatives of the most inviolable fidelity, the practical mediators between their masters, who live entirely in their ideal love-world, and sober reality, take active part in the simple, but with perfected mastership organized action, which, particularly in the first act, rises to the highest dramatic effect. It lay already in the character of this action, in which Wagner wished to erect a monument to love, that the overflowing feeling of Tristan and Isolde must unfold itself with lyric freedom. Again, in the mutual perfection of the dramatic and lyric elements, the master became apparent, who, amongst other things, introduced into the full dramatic life of the second act of his work, with entire preservation of its lyrical elements, the aubade, the highest form of mediaeval love-poetry. The language of »Tristan« also bears a lyrical stamp. In wealth of pictural imagination and symbolical allusions, as well as musical sonorousness, the poetical language of this tragedy is unequalled by any other of Wagner's dramatic creations. Besides, there never again appear in the artist's sensibly beautiful manner of expression such philosophical-abstract contents as in »Tristan«. Not alone the general fundamental idea of his work





Sketch of scenery to the »Ring des Nibelungen« (Götterdämmerung, last scene).



stood in close connection with Schopenhauer's doctrines; the development of individual ideas which Tristan expresses in communion which he holds with Isolde or with himself, was often only a poetical circumscription and, at the same time, an artistic glorification of the Frankfort philosopher's fundamental views. But the hereby threatening danger, the poet, whose task it was to represent the most dauntless love-passion, understood to pass untouched: what from the work of the scientific thinker he had taken as dry reflection, he changed into warm, living, intensely touching feeling.

With redoubled power this passion streams through the music of ›Tristan«. Its artistic character is the same as that of the ›Nibelungen«, but also in the tone-language, the lyrical element unfolds itself with much greater freedom than in the essentially dramatic music of the tetralogy. In the vocal parts, as well as in the exceedingly rich orchestration, fluctuates a sea of the most exquisite melodies, which, after common themes, separate, reunite and dissolve one into another. As a kind of study for this grand composition, Wagner, at that time, wrote, in the same style as his ›Tristan«, partly even with the same melodies, five poems, which, in thoughts and expressions, often remind of his drama, and which are filled with the deepest feeling and philosophical reflections.

Almost simultaneously with his tragedy, several other dramatic ideas, also in connection with his study of Schopenhauer, arose in the artist's mind. In spring 1856, he drew, after the mythical legends of Buddha, the short plan of a more morally than dramatically important piece, ›Die Sieger« (›The victors«), and at about the same time, the figure of Parsifal floated before his mind. Transiently, he even thought of bringing his mortally wounded Tristan in direct, if ever so slight contact with the conqueror of sinful earthly pleasure, who strives to attain the sanctuary of the Grail.

During the time in which Wagner composed

»Tristan«, he considered different possibilities of bringing his work, to his artistic satisfaction, upon the stage; for this purpose, various theatres had already made him positive offers. Only too quickly, many of these prospects vanished. At last, it was principally Carlsruhe to which he turned his eyes, where a short time ago, Grandduke Friedrich, a sovereign who admired his art and was kindly disposed toward him, had ascended the throne. Through his intervention, Wagner above all hoped to gain, what, in spite of Liszt's friendship, and the favor in which he stood at the court at Weimar, had always been denied him, and what, for fully ten years, he had yearned for, the permission to return to his fatherland, which should again give him the long deprived of artistic incitement. However, his ardent wish could not yet be fulfilled. To be able at least regularly to hear music, Wagner, whose essentially german nature rose up in arms against everything french, in September 1859, settled down anew in Paris.

From Germany evil tidings followed him. Chorus-director Wilhelm Fischer in Dresden, one of his oldest and truest friends, died in November 1859. To his memory, to whose untiring help he, as leader, often had been indebted for a part of his success, Wagner dedicated a touchingly warm obituary. Almost at the same time, a second misfortune reached him; the plan for the production of »Tristan« in Carlsruhe was shattered. In Paris he now hoped to make a performance of his composition possible. But in spite of the great sensation which, with three preparatory concerts, he made in the music-world and in the press of the metropolis, he met with too slight artistic sympathy, as to be able, at his own risk to venture upon so hazardous a theatrical enterprise. The command of the emperor to prepare a performance of »Tannhäuser« on the stage of the grand opera at Paris, freed him from the difficult situation, into which this impossibility brought him.



Sketch of scenery to „Parsifal“ (act I, scene 1).



The careful preparations took nearly a whole year. They began with the entire alteration of the first and of parts of the second act and with the translation of the text into the french language by two young admirers of the german artist, who subsequently had his »Holländer«, »Lohengrin« and »Tristan« rendered into the same language. These »Quatres poèmes d'opéras« he prefaced with a letter addressed to Frédéric Villot, the conservator of the imperial museums, which, a year later, also appeared in german under the title »Zukunftsmusik« (»The music of the future«). In general, Wagner only repeated, with concise shortness, the fundamental ideas of his earlier reformatory articles, particularly of his book on opera and drama and his »Mitteilung an meine Freunde«. More strongly than in these works, he emphasized the decided sympathy which the younger generation brought to music more than to any other art, and the wider development which, in harmony with this fact, might be allotted to music over poetry. His own endeavors to found a musical-dramatic work of art, he represented as the consistent continuation of that, what older, by him highly honoured masters, had already anticipated and begun. Of the coming performance of »Tannhäuser« in particular, he only made mention with a few unobtrusive words. In March 1861, this performance took place, and was made, by a systematically working opposition-party, bare of all artistic taste or decency, the occasion for the most scandalous demonstrations, which deeply degraded the french audiences and decided the german composer, after the third performance, to withdraw his work from the stage of the grand opera.

After these last experiences, his stay in Paris was thoroughly spoiled. Happily however, Germany was again open to him. In summer 1860, after he had made renewed petitions, the return to the fatherland had been granted him; only the kingdom of Saxony was closed to him, until March 1862. The firsts results

of the longed for permission, were short visits, in 1860, to Frankfort on the Main, Darmstadt and Baden-Baden. After the »Tannhäuser« performance, Wagner returned definitely to Germany, and in the course of the following years, visited Paris only several times for the space of a few weeks. Respectfully and heartily he was everywhere met by the German audiences; but his immediate aim, an artistically satisfying performance of »Tristan«, which he pursued with ardent longing and untiring energy, he was, in the course of the following years, not able to attain. In Vienna particularly, the tragedy, under Wagner's direction, was studied with the greatest care and enthusiasm; but again and again the rehearsals were interrupted by the illness of the artist who had undertaken the title-rôle, until finally, after almost two years of labour, the production of the composition was indefinitely postponed. Only in concerts, which led him through entire Germany and far beyond its boundaries, to St. Petersburg, Moscow and Pesth, Wagner was enabled to produce fragments of »Tristan« and the »Nibelungen«, certainly before enthusiastically animated audiences, but always in a disconnected manner, whose artistic want must have filled him with the deepest pain. Nevertheless, in spite of these exciting and finally always disappointing hopes and, in the highest sense of the word, unsuccessful endeavors, he preserved, year after year, the desire and courage to new creation: in those first restless months of his return from exile, he wrote »Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg« (»The master-singers of Nuremberg«).

In a happy mood, he had once in Marienbad, 1845, made the first plan to a comic opera, which, in cheerfully moved action, was to represent the contrast between the narrow-minded master-singers in the Nuremberg of the sixteenth century, and the artistically productive national spirit, as well as the individually peculiar and significant development of the old art of





Sketch of scenery to «Parsifal» (act I, transformation-scenery).



the minne-singers. The majority of the principal ideas contained in the drama, were here already effectively interlaced. Only the most important female figure of the comedy, Eva, yet disappeared, as it seems, too much behind her masculine partners; the character of Hans Sachs as well may have lacked the humor springing from painful renunciation. The rôle of the apprentice David seems to have been treated much more incidentally, and the drubbing-scene with all its comical ingredients seems to have been entirely wanting. These and other secondary ideas, which not alone broadened the action and substantiated it more artistically, but also served to deepen the characters, were combined with the old plan, which Wagner, after the space of sixteen years, in Paris, in the winter of 1861/62, again took up and quickly completed. In Biebrich near Mainz, where he spent the spring and summer of 1862, he began with the musical composition, and, in the following year, continued it, particularly in Penzing near Vienna. Then the outward occurrences of his life, and the recommencement of the composition of »Siegfried«, interrupted for the space of a year and a half his work at »Die Meistersinger«. All the more energetically it progressed in 1866 and 1867 in Tribschen near Lucerne, where the score was completed in October 1867.

Already in his youth, Wagner had received a lively impression of the master-singers' life in Nuremberg, through his perusal of E. T. A. Hoffmann's tale »Meister Martin der Küfer und seine Gesellen«. It led him, at the same time, to the source from which Hoffmann principally drew his knowledge of the old city and the vocal art which was there cultivated, to Johann Christoph Wagenseil's chronicle of Nuremberg of 1697. Other inferior traits he may have taken from August Hagen's »Norica« (1829) and other works on the history of culture. A chief source of poetical incitement became his loving study of the greatest master-

singer of whom Nuremberg can boast, of Hans Sachs. Through his works at once simple and clear, life-like and ingenuously mild, Wagner became acquainted with the popular, fresh and humorous tone, the characteristic language, excellently equipped with old dialectic and familiar words and forms, and the old German lightly rhymed verse, which, in the metrical licence given it by young Goethe and ingeniously augmented by Wagner, served the dramatist as the fittest form, to poetically, vigorously and, at the same time, popularly express the mentally highest and spiritually deepest sentiments, as well as all, that seemed drastic and common place. The contents also of this or that verse, and several favorite turns of expressions, the old master transmitted directly to the younger. Besides Hans Sachs' own works, Wagner had read others, in which the person of the Nuremberg poet figured as the dramatic centre. Already Johann Ludwig Deinhardstein had written a drama, founding on which, Gustav Albert Lortzing, together with the actor Philipp Reger, had written a comic opera »Hans Sachs«, which, in 1840, first appeared in Leipsic and later on was performed on other stages. In both pieces, particularly in the latter, Wagner found several important motives of the love-story, which he further developed in his piece, as well as cleverly delineated traits for the master-singers' school. In deviating from his predecessors, and letting, in place of Hans Sachs, a young knight enter into contest for the lovely bride with the unpoetical master-singer, who bungles after prescribed rules, Wagner raised the entire subject of his drama into an artistically much higher sphere. Now, for the first time, with the historical contrast between »Minnesang« and »Meistersang«, the eternal contrast between true, free art and pedantic professional rhymstering became apparent. Together with this fact, there appeared, unsought for, numerous ironical and satirical allusions, mostly only very delicately indicated

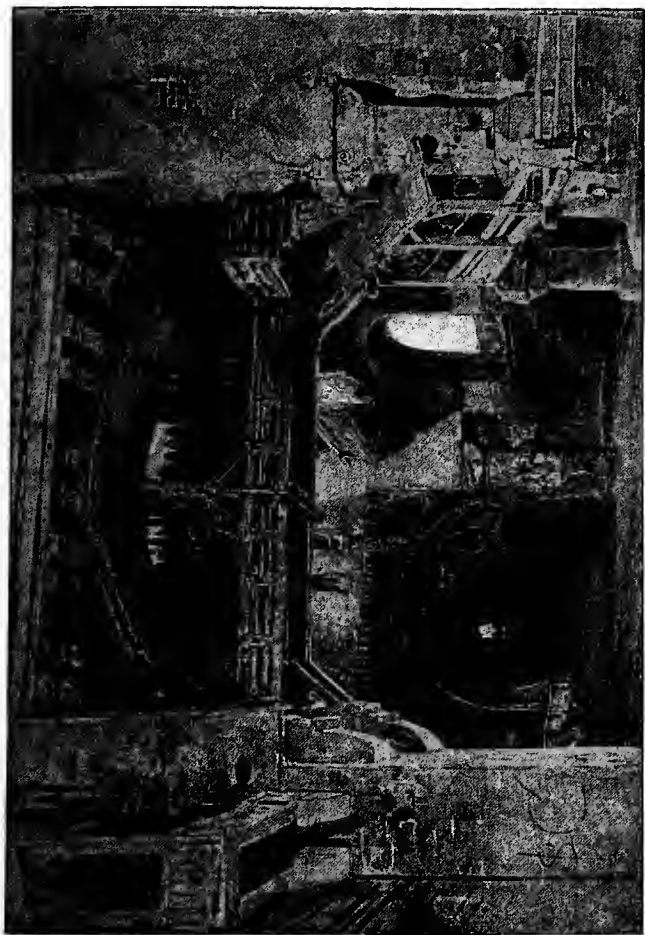
between the lines, to Wagner's own artistic endeavors and the enmity which, for this reason, his colleagues bore him.

The »Meistersinger« are not alone a comprehensive, faithful picture, filled with a true patriotic spirit, of german civilization of the past, but, at the same time, a typically authentic representation of the, at all times, uniform battle between genius and philistinism, in the form of a comedy, which, in the entire german literature, is unequalled in the preeminence of its dramatic exposition, in the continuity and surety of the development, in the care, delicacy and truth with which the characters are delineated, in the vastness and wealth of ideas and metaphors, and finally in the clearness and humorous freshness of expression. Here, as in »Tannhäuser«, the vocal art is the subject of the drama. This subject in itself demanded musical composition. And no manner of composition seemed fitter for the peculiar character of the steadily continuous action, than just that, which Wagner, since his »Rheingold«, had entirely made his own. Externally, the music of the »Meistersinger« certainly differs from that of the »Nibelungen« or »Tristan« by the disproportionately greater number of choruses and of fuller ensemble-scenes. But never, also in this piece, is the dramatic truth violated by the mere unfettering of the masses, after the manner of the conventional opera. The choruses and the ensembles in the »Meistersinger« are only uniform whenever they shall represent already existing vocal choruses; are they, however, to indicate the ideas and feelings of a varied multitude, they become dissolved into different parts, each of which receives not only an individual text, but also an independent rhythmical movement.

Directly after Wagner had, in 1862, published the text-book of his »Meistersinger«, he decided to make his »Nibelungen«, which, hitherto, had been accessible to only a small number of friends, known to the gene-

ral public. This he did in the spring of 1863, and accompanied his work with a preface, in which he demonstrated his already completely developed plan for a future performance of the tetralogy. Already he had thought of the possibility of erecting, in one of the smaller german cities, which possessed no theatre, after a plan, which, together with Semper, he had carefully considered, a simple provisional theatre, with seats amphitheatrically arranged for the public, besides an invisible orchestra; here, after rehearsing for several months, he intended to give, on four successive summer-evenings, three times performances of his »Nibelungen«, in the highest possible perfection of art, before an audience, assembled from near and far for this festival. To be able to cover the expenses of the undertaking, he needed the assistance either of a society of rich men and women, who were admirers of art, or of a german sovereign, who was willing to devote to a higher artistic purpose the annual sums of money, which, until then, had been lavished for the opera at his court-theatre. But without the least prospect that either of these wishes might be fulfilled, Wagner closed his preface with the renouncing confession: »I no longer cherish the hope of living to see the performance of my Bühnenfestspiel.«

In the following years, this conviction, that, in his purest and completest endeavors, he must forego a truly artistic success, gained still more ground. Momentary triumphs in concerts could just as little shake this conviction, as the applause with which his propositions for a reform of the Vienna court-theatre (in the Vienna »Botschafter« 1863) were for the present received. Far from utopian wishes, Wagner, always practical, demanded that the number of theatre-evenings should be reduced and, as indemnification, good, that is to say, intelligible and comprehensible performances should be given; to make this more readily possible, he wished to have several regulations of the parisian



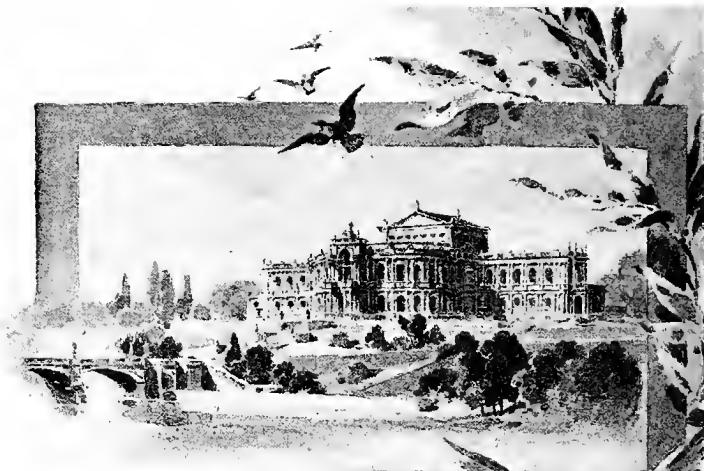
Sketch of scenery to 'Parsifal' (act II, scene 1).





grand opera introduced in the viennese court-theatre. As Wagner, although his opinions, in the first moment, had been approved of, did not dare hope that the competent authorities would really accept his proposals, so, in general, he was gradually forced to notice, that the favor, which the direction of the viennese opera had at first shown him, was of no duration. At least it was plainly given him to understand, that for a performance of his »Meistersinger« he must no more, than on any other, count on the viennese stage. This perception undermined his creative energy completely. From mankind he had nothing more to hope, not even from his people, that certainly received him with acclamations, but lacked the energy or power to assist him in the realization of his ideal; therefore, from now on, his desire was to live far from all men, and particularly in complete retirement from all german art-life. A friend had invited him to his estate in Switzerland; for the present, Wagner intended to accept this offer. In April 1864, he left Penzing. In Stuttgart, where he had tarried on his journey, the unexpected news reached him, that the way to the fulfillment of his highest desires was, at last, smoothed for him. What had seemed incredible, had now come to pass; the german sovereign had arisen who, in a truly royal sense and in loving comprehension of the greatest artist of his time, was willing to become his and his aspirations protector.





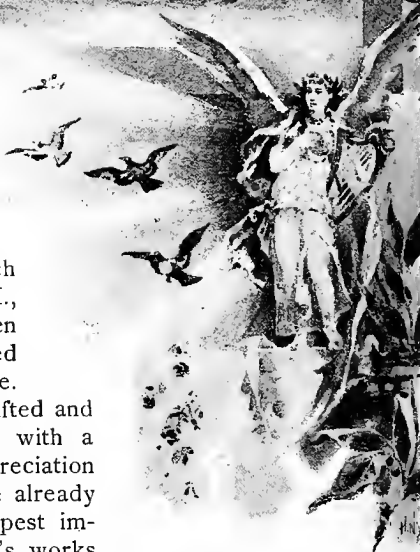
## VII.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1864, King Ludwig II., at the age of eighteen years, had ascended the bavarian throne.

Intellectually highly gifted and particularly endowed with a warm enthusiastic appreciation for artistic beauty, he already had received the deepest impression of Wagner's works

when he, for the first time, attended their performance in Munich. His admiration for the poet and composer grew, the more he became acquainted with his essays and plans, and this admiration was now accompanied by the energetic desire to help him with his royal power, who by all had been deserted.

Plan for a Festspielhouse in Munich.



Immediately after his accession to the throne, he called Wagner to him. In May the artist, for the first time, stood face to face with the splendid youth, and from that time, both were united by a friendship founded on the noblest sentiments of the human heart, as well as the highest aspirations of the soul, whose fervent fidelity and genial charm no stroke of fate was ever more to break.

In frequent and direct association with King Ludwig, Wagner spent the summer in the country, in Starnberg; in autumn, he took up his abode in Munich. Friends of his genius soon received calls to the bavarian capital, at first Hans von Bülow, soon after Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld, the first and, since his time, unexcelled creator of Tristan, who, unfortunately, died suddenly (in July 1865), before he could be lastingly won for the Munich stage, Peter Cornelius, composer and poet, and others. Liszt and Semper also came. The latter received the royal order to sketch plans for the theatre which Wagner was in need of, for the performance of his »Nibelungen«. For it was, above all, the completion of his tetralogy, which the favor of Ludwig II. sought to make possible for the artist.

But the recommencement of the »Siegfried« composition, did not hinder Wagner from other activity as musician and as author. He prepared and partly led performances of the »Fliegende Holländer« and »Tannhäuser«, particularly the four first representations of »Tristan« in June and July of 1865, which, in every respect, rose far above the daily theatre-routine, and attracted numerous and enthusiastic guests to Munich. To the gratitude and love which he bore his noble protector, he gave, yet in the year 1864, artistic expression in his »Huldigungsmarsch« (»March of homage«), whose musical development, similar to that of Wagner's larger orchestral works, shows the dramatic peculiarity of his manner of composition; the

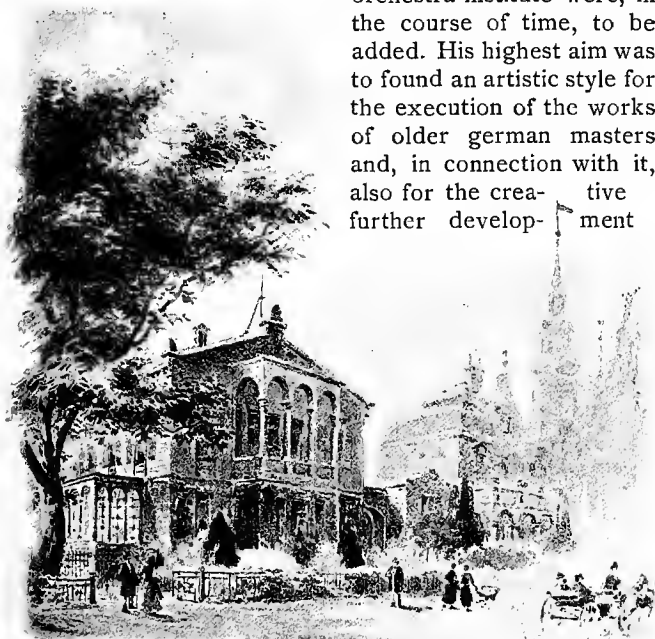
simple, principal theme of the march seems vigorously to break its way through the figured, intermediate movements.

For his royal friend and by his especial desire, Wagner wrote, at the same time, an essay on state and religion. In the light of Schopenhauer's philosophy, he now undoubtedly saw single circumstances in state and christianity with different eyes than fifteen years ago, when, under the influence of Feuerbach and Hegel, he had repeatedly expressed his opinions on these subjects. In his apprehension of royalty in particular, Wagner went further than Schopenhauer. The ideal of the state he saw represented in the person of the king, whose almost superhuman position urges him more than others, to take life from its most deeply earnest side, and whose fate becomes tragic through his endeavor after the, in this world, unattainable ideal of justice and humanity. For this reason, he more than anyone else requires the true, in the innermost feeling of humanity existing religion, which is free from all dogma and disputation; it alone can assist him in accomplishing his ideal. Through bright illusions, it is the duty of art, to carry him, now and again, away from the earnestness of life. Art, the beginning and end of all Wagner's theoretical investigations, again easily formed the conclusion of this essay, which, in an ingeniously instructive and admonishing manner, seemed to pursue entirely different aims.

Likewise at the desire of the king, Wagner wrote an extensive report over a german music-school, which was to be founded in Munich. For the time being putting aside all that was purely theoretical, such as the study of composition and lectures on aesthetics or history of music, he all the more thoroughly cared for the practical education of the scholars, not alone in an elementary technical manner, but also in the highest musical sense. He demanded, above all, the most careful guidance for the acquirement of a correct

excution. Most important appeared to him a singing-school combined with artistic (not virtuos) instruction on the piano; to these a theatre-school and a complete

orchestra-institute were, in the course of time, to be added. His highest aim was to found an artistic style for the execution of the works of older german masters and, in connection with it, also for the creative further develop-ment



of the german music in the future. It was not possible to call Wagner's plan with all its details, exactly as he wished them, into life. However, in the place of the conservatory, which in 1865 had been closed, a new music-



Wagner's dwelling-house in Munich.

school was in Munich, in 1867, called to life, which in general founded on his report, and whose direction was at first laid into Bülow's hands.

But long before this plan was executed, all manner of jealous people, whose instruments were scandal-mongering local papers, had, through an intricate web of low intrigues, forced the king to part with his »favorite«. Powerless against such foes, the king and the artist, whose friendship had remained untouched, decided to mutually bring the called for sacrifice; in December 1865, Wagner left Munich, travelled to Geneva, from which place he went on to the south of France, and from there to Tribschen, near Lucerne. From this place, he did not return to Munich until 1867, when he several times, for a short stay, travelled to that city, to personally superintend particularly important performances of his works. So in June 1867 »Lohengrin« was perfectly performed; on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June 1869 the »Meistersinger«, on the 22<sup>d</sup> of September 1869 »Rheingold«, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June 1870 the »Walküre« were, for the first time, brought upon the stage. In Tribschen, the artist devoted himself almost wholly to vigorous work, now however animated and cheered by the always more confiding hope, that the favor of his royal friend was a warrant for full success. For a length of time, Bülow and his wife Cosima, a daughter of Liszt, and the young musically highly talented Hans Richter lived in his immediate vicinity; more transiently other guests visited the artist; already in May 1866 King Ludwig came to his friend.

After the completion of the score for the »Meistersinger«, Wagner, seemingly as a recreation from his artistic work, again gave expression to different literary ideas. An external incident gave him encouragement: the »Süddeutsche Presse«, a paper of good repute and praiseworthy political tendencies, at whose edition an old Dresden friend of Wagner's took part, moved from Stuttgart to Munich. For this paper, he wrote, besides

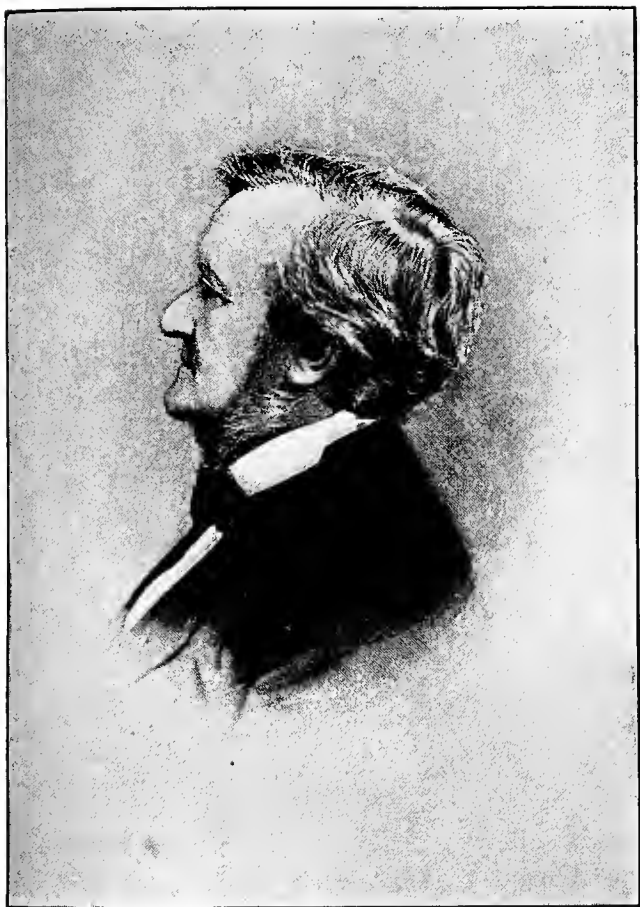
several reviews on new books, spiced with satire, noticeably the extensive treatise »Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik« (»German art and german politics«, 1868), which was also singly published. As hitherto in all his theoretical works, Wagner's ultimate desire again was, to artistically reform the german theatre (whose present state was the sharpest illustration of the neglect into which german artistic spirit had fallen) in a truly national sense, and by these means, to elevate the taste for art. In detail, he now repeatedly expressed thoughts, which formerly he had already often demonstrated. Now however, incited by the political thinker Constantin Frantz, he conceived the foundation of a genuine art, in so far as it struggles vehemently against french civilization, which for centuries mightily governed us, as an act of veritable german politics, which should most surely deliver us from the ascendancy of the french state. Significantly touching the range of the political-national ground in his, in reality, aesthetic investigations, he alluded to the most varied questions of public life, which, just at that time, were much talked of, to the claims of church and state for the dominion over the schools, to the general obligation to serve in the army, and to the sovereign's right of pardoning. He showed the pernicious influence of french spirit on german art, the universal and merited disdain which was shown the modern theatre in Germany, examined the relation of the actor to the author and, in connection, the general contrast of idealism and realism in art, illustrated the position of the german theatre to the author, the musician, the painter and sculptor, but also to the school, to society, to the state and kingdom, considered the gracious care with which Bavaria's sovereigns fostered arts and sciences, and recognized it to be Bavaria's especial vocation in Germany, to promote the german spirit, which strives to reach beyond purely practical usefulness, and consequently principally

to develop a german style in the realm of the drama, a vocation through which alone Bavaria could lastingly maintain an independent position beside Prussia. Under this style he understood »the perfectly acquired and legalized harmony, which must exist between the theatrical representation and the represented truly german poetical composition«. With vigorous emphasis, but without the least partial narrowness or passion, Wagner expressed his convictions on all these subjects. Logically he founded what he said, with the greatest care; outwardly, he loosely connected the single ideas, without in the least giving any attention to a systematic, uniform development of his essay.

With his essay on leading, written in the last months of the year 1869, he again returned to the exclusive range of music. In numerous examples which he took from his own experience, he showed, how little the majority of modern german conductors, particularly the elegant, superficial leaders from Mendelssohn's school, understood to bring the beauties of musical masterpieces, in theatre or concert, to an artistically satisfying expression. The reason for this want, he saw in these musicians' slight comprehension for the vocal art; only through it, was the correct measure of time to be ascertained, and only a correct tempo could teach the right musical delivery. A characteristic, significant delivery, that seemed to be of most importance to the greatest leader of the nineteenth century. Of all theoretical rules, he held himself completely aloof; a good practical example he deemed the only method of teaching a correct manner of delivery, and also the only means of checking the influence which this characterless, shallow manner of leading had upon the modern german art of composition.

New and great prospects were opened, at the important year of 1870, to the man as well as to the artist Wagner. In Cosima von Bülow he wedded a woman after whom he had, for years, painfully





Richard Wagner after a photograph by Elliot and Fry  
(London 1877).



longed, and who, besides the devoted and passionate love she bore him, entirely understood his artistic aspirations, as well as his whole spiritual being. She was the first to let him feel all the joy of an own, comfortable home, and all the bliss of an unclouded heart- and soul-union; she was intermediary between the artist and the outer world, which, so often until now, had, to the sensitive, to all the indignities of life helplessly exposed artist, been a source of misery. For her, after the birth of his son Siegfried, Wagner composed, by combining anew in artistic and fine manner the sweetest themes of his like-named drama, the »Siegfried-idyll«, a delicately conceived orchestrapiece, which gracefully depicted his home-happiness in the midst of a charming landscape. With the most joyful enthusiasm, he greeted, at the same epoch, the rise of entire Germany against the archenemy. In the victories of the german nation over the french army, he believed to see a warrant, that now also german art would celebrate the victory for which he had so long and vainly wrung. Enlivened by this hope, he exerted his strength to new, extended and successful activity.

In September 1870, he completed his philosophically profound essay on Beethoven, which is replete with the highest enthusiasm for the celebrated genius and for music in general. What Schopenhauer, as layman in music, had only pronounced as a deep paradox, that, in contrast to the other arts (whose objects are the ideas, the appearances of things) music is the direct image of the will itself, which is the inner being of the world, Wagner, as musician by profession, developed with the assistance of other philosophical matter, which he found in the works of the Frankfort thinker, to a theoretically exhausting explanation of the being of music and of the nature of the musician, and elucidated it by the example of Beethoven, by the development of his genius and by his relation to the world

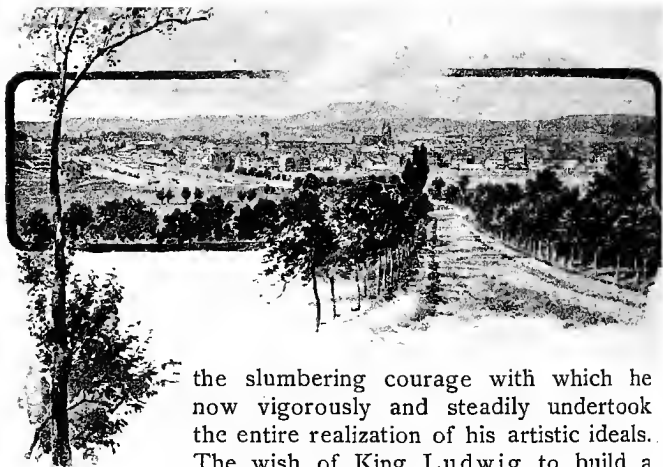
and to his art. Through some of the master's principal creations, he illuminated his particular historical merits, the reconduction of the melody to the highest natural simplicity, and the extension and enhanced effect of the symphonic structure, by the manner in which he independently combined purely instrumental music with instrumentally treated singing voices. In considering the relationship of Beethoven's and Shakespeare's artistic nature, Wagner, at the same time, lifted his eyes to the ideal of the true drama, which always floated before them. After this ideal, after a noble reinspiration of german art and civilization, which, in Beethoven's spirit, he wished to see freed from the dominion of french taste, and released from audacious fashion, he called to his valiant german people to strive in a reformatory, not in a revolutionary spirit, as benefactors of the world; for to these belongs precedence even before the conquerors.

Several months later, the earnest battle against french taste was followed by a burlesque after-play, a sprightly satire on the besieged Parisians, their government and warfare, their patriotically declaiming poet Victor Hugo, their pleasure in the opera and ballet, and, at the same time, on Offenbach and the german theatre ruled by parisian fashions, the whole quickly perfected and, under the title »Eine Capitulation« (»A capitulation«), as a comedy after the manner of Aristophanes, given to a younger friend for the composition of the necessary music. Carried by patriotic enthusiasm, Wagner's art swung itself to higher spheres, when, after the victory of his people, the german empire was founded; he composed the »Kaisermarsch« (»March in honour of the emperor«). As once in his »Huldigungsmarsch«, so in this composition he employed the same form, which was divided after the same plan, and was rhythmically throughout similar. Into it he poured a melody which was yet richer in its conquering power and electrifying fire, and which,

for this reason, also needed, besides a larger festival orchestra, a numerous mixed chorus.

At about the same time, the plan ripened in him to collect his scientific works and poetical compositions, which were greatly dispersed in pamphlets, text-books and news-papers, and already in summer 1870, the first volume was completed, which, in the two following years, was succeeded by eight others, and after Wagner's death, by a tenth. Many of the artist's literary and poetical productions, particularly those of earlier years, were here omitted, others had been more or less revised. The majority of his works were chronologically ordered, an arrangement which outwardly already showed, that their author did not wish them to be regarded as an organically connected scientific system, but that he principally sought to give in them, an historically faithful portrait of the course of his own intellectual development. In what close, harmonious connection the literary opinions of the most different periods of his life stood, were, just at that time, illustrated by two smaller works of Wagner, his reminiscences of Auber (who had died in May 1871), with its excellent characteristic of the cheerful music of this true french composer and his principal composition »*La muette de Portici*«, and the still earlier written essay on the purpose of the opera, which, in April 1871, Wagner read in the Berlin academy of arts. Single principal points of what, in »*Oper und Drama*«, had been exhaustingly said, he here concisely drew together, but emphasized more strongly the relation of opera and play to the mimical performances of the german theatre, the influence of theatrical effect upon the development of these two species of art, and the necessary part which the actors and singers take in their ennoblement to the true drama.

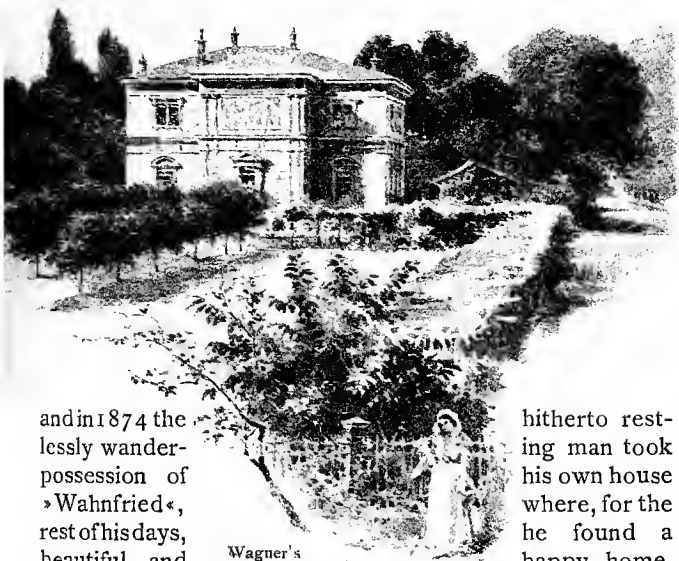
Another and more important purpose, Wagner pursued on this trip to Berlin in the spring of 1871. The political elevation of Germany awakened in him



Bayreuth.

the slumbering courage with which he now vigorously and steadily undertook the entire realization of his artistic ideals. The wish of King Ludwig to build a theatre in Munich worthy of the performance of the artist's »Nibelungen«, had been frustrated by the agitations of unintelligent and ill-natured opponents. Now however, confiding in the help of his royal friend, and, besides, assisted by a society of admirers of his art, Wagner, who had, by this time, for the greater part completed the composition of his tetralogy, grasped the idea of himself building a theatre for the representation of his »Nibelungen«, and of there having his work performed by chosen artists. For the site of his »Bühnenfestspielhouse«, he chose the bavarian city Bayreuth, which was entirely apart from all artistic life. In his youth, he once had travelled through it, and it had made him a friendly impression; upon a visit in April and later on in December 1871, he found not alone the purely personal impression confirmed, but the city, in general, entirely suitable for his purposes, and its official representatives willing to meet his wishes and to assist him in their promotion. Soon the ties of warmest friendship bound him to the directors of the municipal administration, who, before they had learned to admire his art, faithfully loved his benevolence, his depth of feeling, truth and amiable cheerfulness in social intercourse, and sincerely admired his

staunchness of character and his earnest manner of work, which never lost its aims from view. Joyfully Wagner recognized, that the little franconian city might, in reality, become his second home; in April 1872, he forever took up his abode in Bayreuth. During the first summer, he lived in the small hotel belonging to the castle Fantaisie, in the village of Donndorf, a good hour's distance from the city; he then moved into hired appartements in the city of Bayreuth,



and in 1874 the lessly wander-  
possession of  
»Wahnfried«,  
rest of his days,  
beautiful and

Wagner's  
dwelling-house  
in Bayreuth.

hitherto rest-  
ing man took  
his own house  
where, for the  
he found a  
happy home.  
undertaking

His artistic  
was treated with derision by his opponents and a great  
part of the german press, but by his friends was every-  
where greeted with heartfelt joy. For the obtainment  
of the necessary sum of money, the young pianist

Karl Tausig, a personal friend of Wagner's, labored with the most energetic zeal, and after his unexpectedly early death (July 1871) the wife of the prussian minister of the interior, baroness Marie von Schleinitz. For the propagation of the Bayreuth idea, Emil Heckel, proprietor of a music-store in Mannheim, founded in 1871 the first »Richard-Wagner-Verein«, which was soon followed by the foundation of similar societies in many german and foreign cities. Wagner himself interrupted his work at the »Götterdämmerung«, to confer minutely with architects, scene-shifters and decoration-painters, to take trips for the purpose of visiting the different societies, and particularly to give concerts for the benefit of his undertaking, which, in the course of the following years, took place in different large cities, such as Berlin, Mannheim, Hamburg, Cologne, Vienna and Pesth, everywhere accompanied by the most magnificent success. In a similar manner, his friends, in particular Bülow, sought with the utmost devotion, to promote his undertaking. On the 22<sup>d</sup> of May 1872, the solemn act of laying the corner-stone for the new theatre, was accomplished in Bayreuth. Combined with it was the perfect performance of the ninth symphony and of the »Kaisermarsch«, which at once were the first trial of what Richard Wagner, with qualified singers and musicians, who unquestioningly obeyed him, could artistically render. Different observations, which, at this occasion, claimed his notice, particularly on certain passages of the ninth symphony, where, to distinctly set off the melody, alterations in the instrumentation were necessary, he gave utterance to in an essay, which appeared 1873, in the »Musikalische Wochenblatt«.

The summer and fall after the laying of the foundation-stone, were especially rich in literary work. To this period belongs, besides several smaller essays and missives, the significant and instructive treatise, devoted to the memory of the »great« Wilhelmine



Schröder-Devrient, »Ueber Schauspieler und Sänger« (»On actors and singers«). Supported by his own artistic experience and by the historical study of the development of the german theatre, as well as of the histrionic art in general, Wagner, who here could allude to what in his earlier essays he had already said, sought to fathom the nature of mimical performance. Its fundamental trait he found to be the truthfulness of the representation, which is directly opposed to all self-conscious, no matter how virtuos, comedy-playing, and which transmits the actor into a state of self-forgetfulness and entrancement, with which he again is able to imbue the spectator. Entirely convinced of the high artistic vocation of the actor, and not less of the complete degeneration of the present german theatre, with its false pathos and conventionally senseless manners, he, above all, called upon actors and singers to return to simplicity, as the only means of regaining the art, which is indispensable for the worthy reproduction of the works of Shakespeare, Goethe, Schiller and Kleist, as well as of german composers.

During a trip which, in November and December 1872, Wagner undertook to different german operastages, extending southward to Basel and northward to Bremen, he gained a sometimes alarmingly clear insight into this degeneration of the german theatre. Immediately on his return, he reported, in the »Muskalische Wochenblatt«, with unrelenting but necessary frankness, the impressions which he had received on this trip; in the details, the essay offered, particularly for leaders, an abundance of instruction.

Besides these essays, which entered directly into the nature and being of art, Wagner, during the same year, published several smaller pamphlets, explanatory statements and reports, which were to give his friends and patrons an account of the progress of the building and of the other preparations for the Bayreuth Bühnenfestspiele. Perceptibly the undertaking advanced, in spite

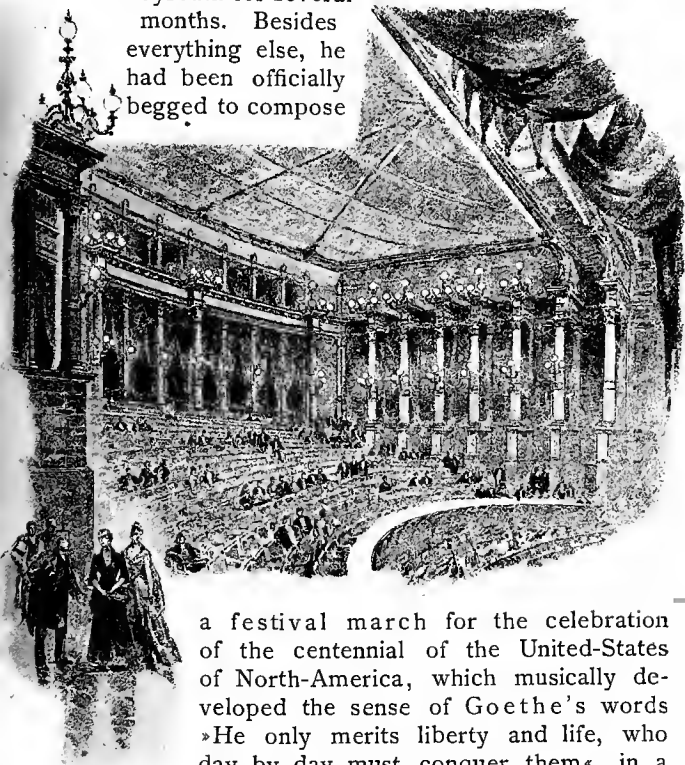


The Bühnenfestspielhouse  
in Bayreuth.

of some unexpected, and not before to be computed obstacles: in August 1873, the theatre-building could be brought under roof, and already the following summer piano-rehearsals with the single singers could be begun. More rigorous and complete piano- and orchestra-rehearsals followed in July and August 1875 in the Festspiel-house itself, whose acoustics proved to be of the very best; numerous friends of Wagner had assembled from far and near, to participate in these preliminary rehearsals. Ceaselessly the work was continued during

the winter and spring, Wagner allowing himself the least time for rest, although, besides other things, the performances of »Tannhäuser« and »Lohengrin« in Vienna and »Tristan« in Berlin necessitated his absence from

Bayreuth for several months. Besides everything else, he had been officially begged to compose



a festival march for the celebration of the centennial of the United-States of North-America, which musically developed the sense of Goethe's words »He only merits liberty and life, who day by day must conquer them«, in a similar dramatic gradation as his two former marches. In June, the rehearsals recommenced in the Festspielhouse, in regular uninterrupted succession, for the singers as well as for the orchestra under Hans Richter's leadership, first apart and then together. Soon already, such a masterly

The auditorium of the  
Bühnenfestspielhouse

perfection became apparent, that the last principal rehearsals and, in particular, the grand rehearsals, at which King Ludwig was present, resembled finished performances.

They were directly followed, from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 1876, by the first Bayreuth Bühnenfestspiele. Three times, always on four successive evenings, the »Ring des Nibelungen« was given in a memorable manner, which completely fulfilled the ideal of the Meister, before an enthusiastic audience, which had streamed together from all parts of the world. Celebrated statesmen, men of learning and particularly artists, did homage, together with the acclamating multitude of spectators, to the genius who had awakened his creation to life, whilst foreign and german potentates loudly applauded the once prosecuted man. Together with the Granddukes Karl Alexander of Saxe-Weimar and Friedrich of Baden, patrons of Wagner in his years of calamity, Emperor Wilhelm and numerous other german sovereigns attended the first performances; for the third cycle of the Festspiele, King Ludwig of Bavaria, the noblest friend of the Meister and of his art, appeared. Until the last moments, Wagner's opponents had, in hostilely led papers, disseminated doubt, insult and calumny; the entire success they only met with rancorous censure and derision. Nevertheless, true german art had, in August 1876, gained a victory, which, in national significance, equalled the political triumphs of 1870 and 1871. The guests of artistic perception, who had assembled in Bayreuth from all parts of the globe, bowed admiringly before the german genius; the work of art of the future, which for so long a time had been incredulously ridiculed, he seemed lastingly to have implanted into the german soil of the present.

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## VIII.

**D**id but the german people now faithfully hold to its greatest living artist and follow his example, then Wagner's Festspiele could lead to the direct establishment and universal national fostering of a true dramatic art of specifically german spirit. But the active assistance of the majority of Wagner's friends had only aimed to bring about the first success; now it was accomplished, their zeal abated. The german people, as such, did not understand to value the national gift offered them by the artist, and neglected the duties which sprung from it. In what Wagner now strove to reach, and what, as a necessary consequence of the endeavors he had hitherto made, he must continue to aspire to, he saw himself, in the main, again thrown back upon himself and a few friends. Those who had, until now, been promoters of the undertaking, paid not even the slightest concern to the pecuniary deficit, with which the Festspiele of 1876, in spite of their brilliant artistic success, had closed. To cover it, Wagner after his return, in December, from a pleasure-trip to Italy, tried different means and even went, in May 1877, to London, where, in several large concerts, he performed fragments from all his works — an experiment which artistically was crowned with perfect success, brought the Meister high honours and won many friends

for his music, which, however, was attended by such immense expenses, that nothing less than a surplus of money was gained for Bayreuth. Finally, Wagner himself paid the debt, which, for his private means, was a not inconsiderable expenditure: he took the money from the revenues, which the »Nibelungen« performances in Munich yielded him. At the same time, he decided to abandon his tetralogy — against his original intention — to the general stages. Founding on what had been accomplished in the summer of 1876, he wished to call to life an energetic and stately society of patrons for the fostering and conservation of the Bühnenfestspiele in Bayreuth, and with its help, a manner of musical and dramatical high-school, or rather to train young singers and musicians for the production of the greatest compositions principally of german masters, which he himself would guide and, in the summer, crown through regular representations of these works and especially of his own dramas from the »Holländer« on; but this plan was also unsuccessful. What still appeared before his eyes as the last task of his life, was the foundation of a german style for the delivery of musical and dramatic works, which he could only teach through continually setting the practical example, a task which, however, could not sufficiently rouse the sympathy of his people. The new society of patrons counted too few members; the aid which Wagner hoped to receive from the german empire, never came; and so, instead of a practically active school, only a theoretically preparatory monthly was called to life in January 1878, the »Bayreuther Blätter«, to which Wagner contributed, and which was edited by his younger friend, Hans von Wolzogen.

To this monthly, the Meister gave everything that he now yet wrote for the public, a considerable number of larger and smaller essays on the most dissimilar subjects. In them, he reported of the artistic gain

which he could ascribe to the Festspiele of 1876, of the intentions which he had joined to the school-plan which had failed, of the conditions under which new Festspiele should take place in Bayreuth. In connection with earlier works, particularly with the essay »Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik«, he examined the nature of the german intellect, the misuse of the term »modern«, the relation of our present audiences, which are educated by newspapers, theatres and universities, to the works of art, the tragic fate of the creative spirit, in so far, as its production is subject to the limits of time and space, the conception of the terms author, prophet, singer, narrator, poet, artist, musician, composer, the significance of the poetical text for the musical melody, and the inextinguishable difference between dramatic and symphonic composition. As these essays were, for the first, only intended for a smaller circle of friends, Wagner allowed himself greater liberty of form. To thoughts full of significant earnestness, which, with strict logic, he founded one upon another, he strung merry fancies, such as often arise during an unconstrained, easy conversation; sport and wit he largely intermingled in these essays; at all times, his delivery was impregnated with satire, irony and humor. The key-note to all his utterances was a deep sadness, which could easily be accounted for by his recent experiences. Wagner felt himself and his aspirations to be in the sharpest contrast to the modern world and its entire culture. With the same sharpness, he now fought against the modern practices in state, society and art, against the manner in which art and science were cultivated in the new empire, against the german theatre, the german universities, the present state of religion, against the newest attempts at composition in Germany, against the unintelligent, superficial imitators of his own music, and finally against the misuses of the german press. With pain and disgust, he everywhere saw the incessant decay of true german nature, and again believed to

find the principal reason of this decay in the rapidly increasing power of judaism. Therefore he persecuted it, with unmerciful and ever new mockery, as the most dangerous foe of the german spirit. These pessimistically dark reflections were only interrupted by heartfelt warmth and hallowed, as well as cheerful enthusiasm, when he contemplated the true, primeval qualities of the Germans, and the sublime glory of their grand music. As in the period in which it was entirely subject to romanic influence, the german spirit through Sebastian Bach again showed itself capable of life, so Wagner saw in music alone the preserver of german art, which modern culture has almost stifled.

Fundamental ideas of Schopenhauer's philosophy were, already in these essays, further developed. What Wagner, since the fall of 1879, wrote for the »Bayreuther Blätter«, founded still more on the doctrines of Schopenhauer, and on the braminal-buddhistic religion, of whose praise he was full. Added to these were the similar endeavors of Ernst von Weber and his agitations against vivisection, which Wagner shared with the most passionate energy, and those of Count Arthur von Gobineau, whose deep poems he was fond of reading, whose chief scientific work on the dissimilarity of human races had made him the deepest impression, and whose personal friendship (since 1880) he felt to be a rich acquisition for heart and mind. The profound essay on »Religion und Kunst« (»Religion and art«) with its supplements and additions, is particularly based on these foundations. Wagner started from the essential conformity of the indian and christian religions, and from the enlivening influence of the latter upon all true art, which lost its nobility, as soon as it became secularized. Both these sublimest of religions already teach the abandonment of the world and of its passions, and are therefore based on the knowledge of the sinfulness of historical humanity, on which and for which they were



founded. This sinfulness, which shows itself, in its most terrifying form, in the relentless mutual antagonism and laceration of single individuals as well as of different races and nations, Wagner declares as rising from the degeneration of the blood, which has taken place, since humanity has turned, from the natural and original vegetarian food, to the enjoyment of animal flesh. This sealed its physical and moral decay, which was necessarily followed by the degeneration of christianity from the pure teachings of the Saviour, as well as by the corruption of our entire modern civilization, with its delusive art and science. A true regeneration of the human race, Wagner only hoped for in the connection of the endeavors of the vegetarians, the societies for temperance and prevention of cruelty to animals, with those of christian socialism. Such a regeneration must be the aim of all true religion and, for this reason, must only contain the pure germ of christian and indian teachings, free from the allegorical additions of the different worships. Then art will become a holy, purifying and religious act, »for divine ecstasy cheerfully ascending lamentations«. Pity, from which spring the three all-comprehensive virtues, charity, faith and hope, Wagner, in unison with Schopenhauer, recognized to be the highest precept of true religion. Together with Gobineau, he found the aryan race and particularly the german people to be distinguished by the national peculiarities of pride and veracity, and for this reason more capable, than any other race, of producing heroic natures. Against any intermixture of the nobler races or nations with lower ones, Wagner, together with the french scientist, laid eager protest; in opposition to the latter however, he glorified christianity, the religion of the poor in spirit, of whose salvation all men may equally participate, far above the braminical religion, which, as the narrow belief of one race, can effectuate true morality only in the minority of its adherents.

These essays of Wagner could, only in a small circle of readers, find full comprehension, and entire approbation by still less. Their satirically polemical, fundamental character already repelled many of those, who otherwise were admirers of his art; his aversion to the »shallow« optimism, to the belief of the steady improvement of the human race, they could understand, but not unconditionally share. The other essays in the »Bayreuther Blätter«, which, for the most part, were held in the same strain, found still less notice or approbation. What in Wagner's contributions was not approved of, was still less permitted to his followers, even in those cases where it was quite apparent, that they uttered his ideas at his commands. Besides all this, the corypheus of the german literary world held themselves aloof from the Bayreuth monthly, and its contributors mostly employed a heavy, and sometimes even unwieldy language. These stylistic deficiencies, besides a certain narrowness of the tendencies, often prevented the positively excellent contents of some essays in the »Bayreuther Blätter« from making a due impression; in spite of its undeniably good qualities, the monthly has but little promoted its creator's intention of gaining new, intelligent friends for his views of art and of the world. All the more directly and deeply, everyone was touched by the artistic creation which, together with the last essays of Wagner for his Bayreuth monthly, had reached entire perfection, and which originated from the same chain of ideas, the Bühnenweihfestspiel »Parsifal«.

The plan of forming the greatest franco-german mediaeval poem into a musical drama, dates back to the years in Zurich. It is not probable, however, that before the completion of his »Nibelungen«, Wagner earnestly thought of working it out. In the spring of 1877, the poetical composition of »Parsifal« was completed; the musical composition, protracted through the space of several years, by the literary work with



Richard Wagner after a photograph by J. Albert  
(Munich 1880).



which Wagner often interrupted himself, advanced continually, and its plan was completed in April 1879. The instrumentation of fragments of his work was, at that time, already completed, so the prelude, which, at the christmas-festival 1878, the Meister had performed in his house, before numerous guests, by the Meiningen court-orchestra. The instrumentation of the entire work only reached completion in January 1882. Repeated attacks of erysipelas obliged Wagner, since the fall of 1879, to often interrupt his rigorous activity. As a complete change of air seemed alone to promise recuperation, he departed with his entire family, in December 1879, for Naples. Here he remained until mid-summer; then he spent several months in Siena and Venice, received in Munich the promise of King Ludwig, that henceforth he would formally and officially accept the protectorate of the Bühnenfestspiele in Bayreuth, and only returned in November 1880 to Wahnfried. Here, in the following August, the piano-rehearsals for »Parsifal« began, whose first performance was, after several postponements, positively to take place in the summer of 1882. Soon after the first rehearsals however, Wagner hastened back to Italy. Almost the entire winter he spent with his family in Palermo; in spring, he returned home to Bayreuth by slow stages. In July, the rehearsals for the Bühnenweihfestspiel began, for which King Ludwig had placed orchestra and chorus of the Munich theatre, under the leadership of Hermann Levi and Franz Fischer, at Wagner's disposal. Again, as six years before, artists from different german opera-stages had received calls to Bayreuth, to sing the principal solo-rôles. As, this time, but one work was to be performed, the rehearsals occupied but a few weeks, and already on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July 1882, the first performance of »Parsifal« could take place, which, until the 29<sup>th</sup> of August, was followed by fifteen more. In artistic perfection, the production of this work even excelled the Festspiele

of 1876; but this time, the outward success also was undoubted, in spite of the disparaging or mocking reports of certain german newspapers. Even several obdurate opponents of Wagnerian art, slowly capitulated, before the Bühnenweihfestspiel; the Meister, however, supported by the present revenues of the performances, already announced a repetition for the coming year. Convinced that, by this means, his Festspiele would gain the noblest attractiveness, and to his last drama the worthiest representation would be secured, he determined, that henceforth his »Parsifal« was to be publicly performed exclusively at Bayreuth.

The religious character with which Wagner had impressed his Bühnenweihfestspiel, already necessitated its being kept off the daily stages. The profoundest of all mediaeval christian legends, of which the germanic and romanian epic poetry had taken possession, gave him the subject for his drama, the legend of the holy Grail, the precious dish or chalice from which Jesus took the last communion, in which Joseph von Arimathaea caught the life-blood of the Saviour, which later, in world-secluded solitude, was faithfully guarded by a chosen race of pure and pious knights, and of Parzival, who, by the grace of God, was called upon, to heal Amfortas, king of the Grail, from the disease with which he was blighted for his sin, and to gain for himself, after many wanderings and trials, the kingdom of the Grail. The religious, mystical meaning of mediaeval legend, however, Wagner deepened at all points. In conformation with the philosophy of Schopenhauer, and in correspondence to the original teachings of the brahminic-buddhistic and christian religions, as he had conceived them in his last essays in the »Bayreuther Blätter«, Wagner took, for the fundamental idea of his work, the negation of the will to live, the mortifying of all sensually sinful desires, the practice of unselfish charity, the redeeming pity for all creatures, and, at the same time, more strongly emphasized,



Sketch of scenery to «Parsifal» (act II, scene 2).





by the dramatic representation, the symbolical references to single episodes in the history of Christ.

Wolfram von Eschenbach's powerful epos gave him the outline and principal characters for his action. What here, however, was broadly spun out in many traits, motives, episodes and personages, Wagner was obliged to reduce to dramatic conciseness. For this reason, he not only omitted numberless unimportant characters occurring in the mediaeval legend, but often concentrated different personages of the middle-high-german poem into one form. Wolfram's Kundry, the messenger of the Grail, and the demon-like, alluring Orgeluse, he united into one being, which, besides, he identified with Herodias, and endowed with significant traits from the legend of the wandering jew, and from the story of the penitent Magdalen. For his Gurnemanz, the faithful companion in arms of Titurel, the first king of the Grail, and of his son Amfortas, Wagner borrowed only the name of the lord of the castle, who, in Wolfram's poem, instructs the unworldly Parzival in chivalry; instead, he endowed him with the qualities and actions of the old knight who, on Good Friday, undertakes a pilgrimage, and particularly with those of the hermit Trevrizent in the mediaeval legend. Single traits he borrowed from other versions of the legend of the Grail, which he perhaps had come to know through occasional reports of french investigators, so, in particular, the fruitful idea taken from french sources, that the bleeding lance, which is exhibited in the castle of the Grail, and with which, according to Wolfram, Amfortas was wounded, is the same, with which Longinus once pierced the side of the Saviour, as well as the supposition, that also the kings of the Grail must abstain from woman's love, and that the devil, through all manner of seductive delusions, sought the undoing of the pure youth Parzival. With the same purpose, Wagner's Klingsor, as the master of devilish magic, fights against the chosen hero.

For the character of his wizard, not only the form of Wolfram's Klingsor of Capua floated before the eyes of the dramatist, but besides it, that of the hungarian sorcerer allied to infernal demons, who occurs in the poem of the Wartburgkrieg, as well as in E. T. A. Hoffmann's novel treating of the same contest of minstrels, and that of the magician in Immermann's myth »Merlin«, which, besides, was otherwise drawn from. In place of the perils, however, which await Wolfram's Gawan in Klingsor's magic castle, Wagner put the charming episode of the flower-girls, which he took, with but slight alterations, which were necessitated by the dramatic treatment, from the old poem by the priest Lamprecht on Alexander the great. Finally, in german folklegends, he found several traits for inferior situations.

In a masterly manner, Wagner combined these motives, drawn from the most varied sources into a living, organic whole, and developed from them the dramatic action, which is simple, but in all its parts firmly organized and drawn on a large scale. Of such an action, the mediaeval poems of the Grail were one and all bare; they were moved by an entirely epical spirit and style. The dramatic, fundamental idea for his work, Wagner received through a philological error. Joseph Görres, in the preface to the old-german »Lohengrin«, to which Wagner again was much indebted, had written the name of the hero of the Grail Parsifal, and had quite incorrectly sought to explain it from the arabian: »the pure or poor fool«. As »guileless fool«, Wagner also introduced his hero. To be able to heal Amfortas, this fool must become »by pity enlightened«, without losing his purity; he himself must experience the sufferings of those he would redeem, without participating in their guilt. This alone he can accomplish, by entirely and victoriously withstanding the sensual temptation which assails him. In him also, exists the tragical conflict between the



Sketch of scenery to «Parsifal» (act III, scene 1).



egotistic will and moral duty, but it does not, as otherwise in tragedy, come to the customary issue. Parsifal bows before the divine will, without first seeking to rebel against it. He too commits a tragic wrong, for which he suffers heavily: in pitiless folly he, at first, does not understand the sufferings of Amfortas. This guilt, however, of an entirely passive nature, cannot be brought under the head of the conventional rules of tragedy. In ›Parsifal‹ generally, Wagner kept himself more than ever free from these rules, and still remained truly dramatic in the character of his representation, in spite of the epical and lyrical elements with which he lightly intermixed his action. Not merely through his masterly treatment of the dialogue, did he cover these seemingly undramatic elements, but demonstrated rather, by the effect of his closely interwoven poetry and music, that to a musical drama, particularly to a religiously sanctified subject, the same rules are not applicable as to a spoken play of worldly contents.

As in its poetical treatment ›Parsifal‹ reminded, in fundamental ideas, in principal traits and even in some details, of Wagner's earlier dramas, so the musical composition rested on the same foundations as all that, since his ›Rheingold‹, the Meister had created. As well however, as on one side, the religious sacredness of the subject often determined the more exalted character of the music, so, on the other side, the action necessitated numerous choruses, and even for the most part, choruses in the older conception, whose effect rested on letting a number of voices sing the single vocal parts. Such choruses Wagner had avoided since the composition of his ›Nibelungen‹. By returning to them, he did not become faithless to any artistic principle, as the truth of the representation, for whose sake he had formerly rejected the concerted singing, now required it; just as it corresponded to the greater simplicity of the religiously tinted action, that, together with the versification and language of the drama, the

harmonic and melodic composition of single chorus- and instrumental movements should become simpler and occasionally even accord with the older church-music. In vigorous freshness and powerful passion, the composition of Wagner's »Parsifal« could not compare with his earlier works: that lay in the solemnity of the religious drama; the wealth of the melodic invention, however, as well as the splendor and importance of the varied and skillful artistic execution, showed the musical genius of the aging Meister to be unimpaired in its entire abundance and strength.

The enthusiasm, with which »Parsifal«, during the Festspiele of the summer 1882, was received, was the grandest triumph for Wagner and his art. For the second time, in much greater numbers than in 1876, guests from all parts of the world assembled in Bayreuth for the sole purpose of hearing his work, this time only one composition, whose performance occupied the space of but few hours. In this sympathy, he might in truth see a warrant, that, in the future, the Festspiele would continue and, through their enlivening example, would gradually be the school for a new german dramatic style, which, above all, he sought to found in them. Personally, Wagner was often troubled with illness during the time of the Festspiele; nevertheless, he knew no fatigue, when it was necessary to work for his art. Soon after the conclusion of the Festspiele, he hurried with his family to Venice, in the hope of there finding recreation. However, he could not long endure entire inactivity. He wrote essays for the »Bayreuther Blätter«, amongst them an account of the artistic representation of »Parsifal« in the preceding summer, performed at christmas, for a small circle of friends, his symphony in C-sharp, which, fifty years before, he had composed, and now and again thought of the possibility of dramatically executing the plan of the »Sieger«, which dated from about the same time and chain of ideas, as the first plan of »Parsifal«.



Palazzo Vendramin in Venice.

Preparations for the Festspiele of the coming summer, earnestly occupied his attention. A sudden death tore him away in the midst of his creative zeal. In the Palazzo Vendramin, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 1883, he succumbed to a violent attack of heart-disease. His body was brought to Bayreuth, and there, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February, was buried, according to his own desire,

in the garden of his house. At all the large stations on the route from Venice to Bayreuth, his friends solemnly received his coffin; in his home, thousands from all german provinces, representatives of sovereigns, who called themselves friends of the deceased, german artists, friends of his art, and the citizens of Bayreuth, paid him the last honours. Besides Klopstock and Grillparzer, no german poet had received similar obsequies. If at their grave, however, mourning was soon softened into a mild melancholy, there resounded, at Wagner's coffin, the loud and violent lament of a sad, inconsolable grief. They had been ready for death, and weary of work had passed away; their departure had left no perceptible vacancy, either in the life of those they had left behind or in the further development of their art. He however, who as artist exceeded both by far, had but just reached the pinnacle of his career. There was still so much for him to do, what no other than he could accomplish; his genius was for so long a time yet necessary for german dramatic art. And with passionate warmth he was beloved by numerous friends, who, for a lengthy space of time, could not grasp the idea of his death.

In a full measure, he deserved this love. He was a man as good as he was great. In his nature, height of mind, depth of feeling and child-like amiability were blended. The energetic strength of his will was paired with heartfelt mildness, the susceptibility of his mood, accountable from his many adversities and from his heart-trouble, with a sincere desire for reconciliation, the seriousness of his mind, which in social intercourse involuntarily mastered all, with an inexhaustible love for jest and humor. He loved and was mindful of every creature, man or animal, that needed help or sympathy. Courageous truthfulness was the foundation of his character. Therefore, he was simple and natural in his demeanor, and an outspoken enemy of all bombast. He was proud, but modest in spite of his con-



sciousness of what he desired, knew and accomplished. As his memory retained alive what long already was passed, so he thankfully never forgot the good that others had done him, and faithfully clung to his friends, even if time and space separated him from them. Himself clear in his thoughts and intentions, he demanded the same clearness in those, who wished to associate with him. He did not ask of his friends that they should understand his art, and still less that they should agree with his opinions and judgements. But he justly demanded of everyone, that he, without allowing himself to be deluded by strange prejudices, should, before criticising, honestly seek to become acquainted with his artistic aspirations, and not condemn with animosity, or untruthfully deform, what he, with the noblest love for art and his people, had created.

Wagner's works have now gained a home on all german stages, and on many in foreign lands. Though they sometimes are given in a mutilated form or are unsatisfactorily produced, they are and remain the delight of the enthusiastic spectator. Even the narrow-minded censure of unintelligent and ill-natured critics, has, for the most part, been obliged to yield to the universal approbation. No impartial judge of our present music-life can deny the great and partly very beneficial influence of Wagner on the composition and execution of our modern music in particular. Until now, the german dramatists have learned less from him; but also to them, as well as to painters and sculptors, he gave many fruitful incitements. Most purely his spirit is preserved in his last great creation, the *Bühnenfestspiele* in Bayreuth. They are the sacredly to be kept legacy which he bequeathed his people. The noble mind of his widow, supported by true friends of his house and art, administers this heritage, with an unselfish devotion and an artistic discernment, which are above the censure of envious fault-finders. Nothing human is absolutely perfect, not even the *Festspiele* in

Bayreuth, which are dependent upon so many casualties; the ideal perfection of dramatic representation however, which Wagner himself strove to acquire, has, to this hour, been alone reached on the stage of Bayreuth, and can only there and through those be attained, who recognize it to be their sublimest vocation, to faithfully fulfill the last will of the Meister.



[illegible]

Facsimile of Richard Wagner's handwriting.

(Extract of a speech held on May 22<sup>d</sup> 1872, at the laying of the cornerstone of the Festspielhouse in Bayreuth.)





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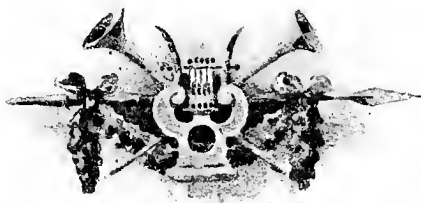
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59th

60th

61st

62nd

63rd

64th

65th

66th

67th

68th

69th







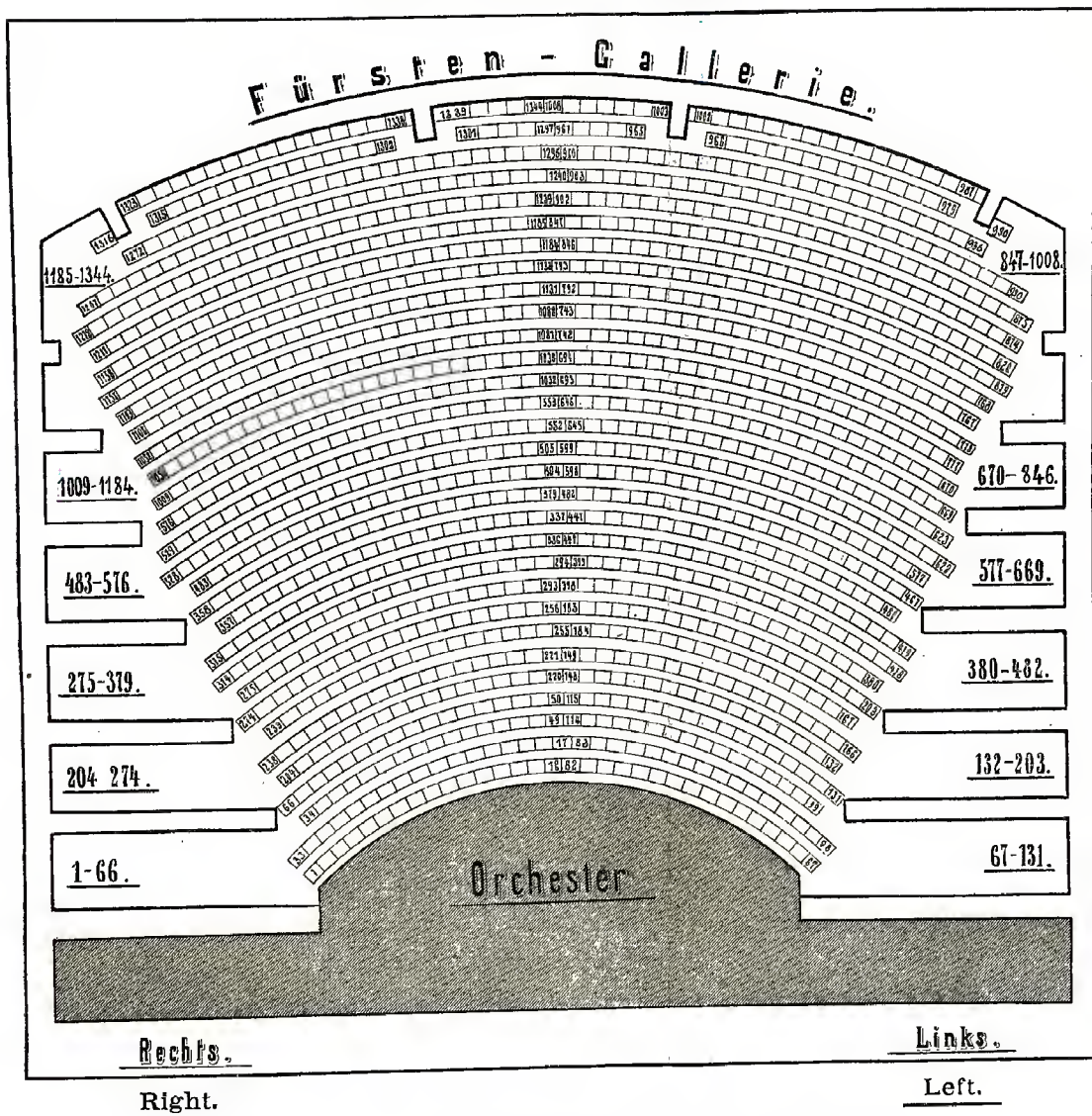
This is a handwritten musical score for a 10-part ensemble. The staves are arranged in two columns of five. The notation is dense and includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The parts are labeled at the bottom of the page: Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fag.), Trumpet (Tromp.), Horn (Horn), Violin (Viol.), Viola (Viola), Cello (Cell.), and Double Bass (Kontrabaß). The score is written in a cursive, handwritten style, typical of 19th-century musical manuscripts. The paper shows signs of age, with some staining and wear visible.







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The Bühnenfestspielhouse in Bayreuth. Diagram of the Amphitheater.



# Publications of the Publishing firm of C. C. Buchner

Buchner Bros. royal bavarian court publishers.

Bamberg.

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Just appeared in our publishing firm:

## King Ludwig I. of Bavaria

in letters to his son

King Otto of Greece.

By Dr. Ludwig Trost, privy counsellor of the legation,  
r. b. court and state archivist.

Containing more than 200 pages. 8°. Handsomely bound.

Paper binding 6 Mk.; in brocade half binding 9 Mk.

The book forms not alone a valuable contribution to the characterization of King Ludwig I. of Bavaria and of King Otto of Greece, but also contains a fill of new and interesting dates concerning Queen Therese, King Ludwig II., Princeregent Luitpold and the other members of the royal bavarian family; the political conditions of Bavaria and Germany, the occurrences of the year 1848, the artistic creations of Ludwig I. and the artistic life in his time are glanced upon, finally, the history of Greece during the reign of King Otto is in political, as well as diplomatic respect, significantly illuminated, in a manner which is readily explainable by the royal author's intimate knowledge of all circumstances. Everything founds on the views of King Ludwig I., in all important points the King's words are even cited, after a peculiarly clear method employed by the author, which, also from the standpoint of scientific technic, secures the work an eminent position in our modern literature. Supplement II deserves especial notice, as it is composed of a large number of hitherto unknown letters from King Ludwig I. to Queen Amalie of Greece.

In many respects, the book may be regarded as an actually political-diplomatic novelty on the book-market, and enjoys the advantage of being, not alone for the student and friend of history, but also for cultivated men and women, solid, fascinating and attractive reading matter, no doubt it will, beyond the boundaries of Bavaria, meet with a like interest. The book is dedicated to Dr. von Müller, minister of public worship and instruction.

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**Heigel, Dr. K. Th. and Dr. Grauert.**  
**Treatises from the historical Seminary of the**  
**University in Munich.**

Solely treatises which are taken directly from the sources themselves and offer important, new points, are accepted in this collection, whose aim is to prevent, that scientifically valuable works should disappear in the flood of treatises which are brought to light by the graduation system. The history of persons or events, which claim the public interest, as well as important additions to the criticism of sources, are the contents of the single volumes, each of which forms a complete whole and is singly sold.

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Subscription price 1 Mk. 25 Pf.

Price of single Volume 1 Mk. 40 Pf.

**Bavarian Library**, founded and published by Karl von Reinhardstoettner and Karl Trautmann. Vol. 1—26. Bamberg, Buchner's publishing company.

Since 1889 there appear under this title a series of monographs on the history of culture and the ethnology of Bavaria, which, in the choice of the subjects, as well as in the diction and outer fittings, are worthy of the highest praise. Each volume forms in itself a complete whole, and can, with a slight addition of the price, be singly purchased.

The single landscapes, which compose the present Bavaria, shall be equally considered: particular attention is given to the history of bavarian art collections; to it belong vol. 6: The royal Cabinet of Coins (in Munich) by Hans Riggauer, vol. 9: The Germanic Museum in Nuremberg by Friedr. Leitschuh, vol. 11: The bavarian National Museum by J. von Hefner-Alteneck. In the territory of the history of men of learning and artists we find: vol. 1: Martinus Balticus by K. von Reinhardstoettner, vol. 3: Franz, Count of Pocci by Hyacinth Holland, vol. 5: Peter Candid by P. J. Rée, vol. 7: Elias Holl by Wilh. Vogt, vol. 10: Aventin by Franz X. von Wegele, vol. 12: Lorenz von Westenrieder by A. Kluckhohn, vol. 13: Martin Behaim by Sigmund Günther, vol. 14: Friedrich Rückert by Franz Muncker, vol. 19: Hans Sachs by Edmund Götze, vol. 20: Theodor Horschelt by Hyacinth Holland, vol. 23: Karl Stieler by Karl von Heigel. Vol. 8: Schleissheim by Johann Mayerhofer, vol. 16: The St. Michael's Church in Munich by Leopold Gmelin, and vol. 25: Nymphenburg by Dr. Heigel, treat of single prominent monuments of art, and finally, vol. 2 of the St. George Court order of knights by Ernst v. Des-touches. To ethnology and the description of countries are dedicated vols. 4 and 22: Types of Workingmen from the bavarian Alps, and alpine Landscape and alpine Legend by Max Haushofer, vol. 15: Oberammergau by Karl Trautmann and vol. 17: Land and People in the bavarian Forest by Karl von Reinhardstoettner, vol. 18: Dialect and Booklanguage in Bavaria by Oscar Brenner, vol. 22: Old Nuremberg by Ernst Mummenhoff.

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As peculiarly fitted for so-called travelling companions, that is, for most reliable guides, we, in particular, call attention to the volume contained in the

„Bavarian Library“

## Alpine Landscape and alpine Legend in the bavarian Mountains.

The time is approaching in which happy people, from all parts of Germany, stream together, in the grand natural surroundings of the high-lands. What delightful travelling reading does this little book afford, whose celebrated author has so well done his best, to fascinatingly depict the, in itself, beautiful subject, that every reader will recall the book with the utmost satisfaction. The nature of the book requires, that it be more than rich in illustrations, which have been drawn by the masterly hand of K. Th. Meyer in Basel.

Extremely rich in illustrations, particularly in exquisite architectural pictures, is the small volume

## Nymphenburg

by P. Th. Heigel.

Nymphenburg may not be able to compete with the proud grandeur of Versailles, but the celebrated castle of the bavarian princes, is in so rich a measure endowed with beauty and splendor, that it fascinates the most fastidious visitor, and delightfully attracts the friend and connoisseur of history. No visitor of Munich should miss a visit to the renowned castle, and this little book will be a pleasant remembrance.

## Karl Stieler

by Karl von Heigel.

As heretofore, so in the present time and far into the distant future, the tender-hearted, noble-minded poet, who drew from the full fountain of his true love and rich knowledge of land and people, to send forth into the world, in word and letter, the poetry of the german highlands, will remain one of the most popular authors. The number of his admirers is legion, and to them, Heigel has given the biography, which he has drawn with a loving hand. This volume of the »Bavarian Library«, will gain many friends. To Heigel's judicious representation, which shows the most tender love and admiration of the poet, is given as a valuable addition, twelve hitherto unpublished poems, written in his youth, and fifteen letters to his mother. The little book is profusely illustrated, and also contains a portrait of the poet.

The display in the show-window alone, is a guarantee  
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# Types of Workingmen from the bavarian Alps

by Max Haushofer

is decidedly one of the most fascinating volumes. In a masterly manner, the renowned author enrolls an ethnographical picture of convincing power and life; through him, we live and feel with the sturdily strong sons of the mountains, participate in their joys and sorrows, envy the huntsman on his grandly beautiful paths, breathe the fragrant air of the dense forests, and hear the rush and roar of the wildly foaming Achen, of the rockrending mountain passes, with the taciturn, lonely people of wood-fellers and raftsmen.

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Price 1 Mk. 40 Pf.

## OLD NUREMBERG

BY FRANZ MUMMENHOFF.

An excellent side-piece to the just mentioned book. As in the former, the power, the abundance of nature, the wild battle between man and the elements attract us, so in this book, it is the grandeur of mind, the art, the honorable character of the citizens of this city, which is called the pearl in the heart of Germany, which exert an irresistable fascination. Old Nuremberg's grand buildings, old Nuremberg's imperishable splendor, old Nuremberg's valiant people are revealed to the reader in a manner, that he will forever keep this little volume in thankful remembrance.

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Price 1 Mk. 40 Pf.

**Annals of the History of Munich**, founded and published by Karl von Reinhardstoettner and Karl Trautmann. Annual publication 1—3. Munich, J. Lindauer and Bamberg, Buchner 1887—1889.

The same men of letters, who joined in the publication of the just criticised »Bavarian Library«, have called these annals into life. This enterprise can lay fully justified claim to the approbation of all contemporaries, as it, above all, is dedicated to the history of culture of the beautiful bavarian capital. The intellectual significance of Munich, dates by no means, as is commonly supposed, only from the times of King Ludwig I. It is true, that he, very properly may be regarded, as the real creator of modern Munich, particularly in so far, as its architectural character is concerned: this city however, was already during the latter part of the middle-ages, especially in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the centre and radiation point of action of many men, distinguished in art and science, and

the seat of a rich and artistically inclined court. The editors of the annals, therefore very correctly accentuate the fertility of their field of labor. Until now, in the want of an own local society for history, Munich's history of culture has always been only casually treated. The three first volumes of the new periodical in question, are a sure warrant, that from now on, the history of culture of this, for the entire fatherland so important and influential metropolis, will receive the attention it deserves. That the annals do not exclusively bind themselves to the history of the city of Munich, but also shall include the history of the closer and more distant surroundings of Munich into its limits, can only be approved of; where, indeed, is in such a centre of civilization the exact line of the local and outward occurrences to be drawn?

The list of those who have hitherto been contributors, shows only names of best repute. Two of them, have departed from this life, after having devoted to this enterprise also, a part of their activity: Nussbaum, whose noblest merit may have been, that, whenever he could, he never scorned to make the fruits of his eminent knowledge and skill, in a popular and beautiful form, accessible to the widest circles, and Franz Trautmann, the amiable and large-souled narrator, whose name will ever remain interwoven with his native city, Munich, whose historical peculiarities he so warmly and attractively knew to describe.

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**Leipziger Illustrierte Zeitung.** 14<sup>th</sup> of February 1891.

Casati's work *differs in the reading entirely from other travelling descriptions*. Not alone the important geographical discoveries, in a land which is coveted by many, are described and explained by maps, not alone the excellent social and ethnographical descriptions are made clear to us by numerous illustrations, not alone the intricate circumstances which brought about the fall of Emin and with him Aquatoria, are here clearly depicted, the whole is permeated with a breath of *truthfulness and openness*, which does not for a moment leave the reader in doubt, that in the fascinating descriptions of the modest author, he hears the truth *and nothing but the truth*.

**Allgemeine Zeitung München.**

Supplement 21<sup>st</sup> of February 1891.

Casati's best characterization is his book. It is, as Manfred Camperio remarks, the old Bersagliere who speaks from it. The occurrences and impressions are, with the assistance of an immense memory — the greater part of his diaries and memoranda were lost in Unjoro — so represented, as though it had but just happened, and with unequalled freshness and vigor. *To be able so to observe and think like a man of Casati's nature, one needs at least two things: a sharp eye and a warm heart.*

**Münchner Neueste Nachrichten.** 11<sup>th</sup> of February 1891.

In consideration of the immense literature on Africa, which floods the bookmarket in our days, and renders it almost impossible, even for the professional, to see his way, every new work has a difficult position, and only through particular advantages can become known in wider circles. *Casati's travelling memoirs, which have just appeared in german garb, and besides, in a beautiful one, belong to these favored books; the adventures of the bold man, who, under the most difficult circumstances for nearly a full decennary braved the treacheries of the dark quarter of the globe, as well as its scientific contents, may secure it such an exceptional position.*

**Börsen-Zeitung Berlin.** 19<sup>th</sup> of February 1891.

We have within the last years seen many travelling descriptions of Africa appear, *this work however, peculiarly moves us; for we have, meantime, discovered, how much this enthusiastic traveller has suffered in the service of science and for the exploration of Africa, and how modestly and nobly he has issued from all dangers.* Emin Pascha and Casati have in hot Africa, under dangerous circumstances become true friends, and their names will for all times remain linked as those of truly unselfish, great men.

The **Kreuzzeitung** writes:

**Gaetano Casati »10 years in Aequatoria and return with Emin Pascha«.** C. C. Buchner's publishing firm (Buchner Bros. royal bavarian court publishers) Bamberg. Price, 2 volumes paperbound, each 10 Mk. Handsomely bound, each 11 Mk. or 40 subscriptions, each for 50 Pf.

Amongst the newest publications in the field of Africa explorations, the work in question by Major Casati, takes a first rank. The preface of his friend, Captain Manfred Camperio, acquaints us with the person of the hero, for so the bold traveller may rightly be called. He describes him, very justly, as a man of great energy and of modest, upright character, which becomes convincingly apparent in the entire manner in which he depicts his experiences. In no part of his work does he deem himself wiser than others, therefore he also shows in a clear light the merits of other men, such as Dr. Junker, Schweinfurth, and Major von Wissmann. A close friendship binds him to Emin Pascha, to whom he showed himself devoted in joy and sorrow. After the latter's unfortunate fall from the window in Sansibar, Casati not only remained with him for his sake during months, in which he carefully nursed him, but also did all in his power in Kairo to assist his friend in obtaining from the egyptian government the salary, which was long already due to him.

True to his principles only to write the truth, Casati treats the character of Emin, his actions in the aequatorial regions in peace and war, Emin's pretended rescue by Stanley, which actually turned out to be the rescue of Stanley by Emin. At the same time, he ignores the faults of Emin as little as he, on the other side, openly expresses his opinion of the english explorer: »Stanley (as Casati says) is a man, distinguished by the power of his nature, the decisiveness of his heart, the vigor of his spirit and an iron will. Jealously mindful of his own authority, he keeps off all outer influences, and asks no advice. Difficulties do not discourage him, misfortune does not frighten him; with extraordinary rapidity of mind, he quickly finds expedients, and extricates himself from all embarrassments. Absolute and hard in the fulfillment of his duty, not always guardful against too hurried or mistaken judgements, he can become so embittered by indecision and hesitation, that he loses his generally preserved dignity and his bearing, which tends to gravity. Careful and sparing in speech, little devoted to society, he arouses no feeling of sympathy; after frequent association, however, he seems more agreeable through the frankness of his conduct, the precision of his speech and the refinement of the gentleman.« The objectivity of his judgement, makes Casati's work particularly valuable; yes, it would, even if it touched less closely upon the Emin-Stanley question, by no means lose its significance, for it offers in itself a grand history of the dark quarter of the globe,



Sample of illustrations to „Casati, Aequatoria“.

Sample of illustrations to "Casati, Aequatoria".



of the highest geographical and ethnographical value. At the same time, the book is exceedingly fascinatingly and logically written, a fact, that deserves all the more admiration, when we consider, that Casati was obliged to write a great part of his diary from memory, as the majority of his papers had been robbed at the instigation of the intriguing King Tschua. This is also the reason, why Casati was not able to publish his book sooner. Eminently interesting is the description of the agitation of Mahdi Mahomed or shortly Mahdi, the false prophet, who played so important a rôle in Emin's destiny; highly touching is the description of Casati's sufferings during the time of his imprisonment by King Tschua, and of his flight. Often in danger of death, he warded off his foes through personal courage, and won the negroes by speaking kindly to them. The fact, that he was able to converse with the strange nations in their own tongue, gave him a deep insight into the national life of numerous african tribes, which again led to results in the history of culture. For this reason, not only the student of geography can draw with success from Casati's book, but also the students of philology and of the history of culture find rich gain, not less than the students of psychology and anthropology. Interesting are the fables, which were related to the traveller, as they are preserved in the traditions of the different tribes, so the fables of the »leopard and the dog«, of the »elephant and the shrew-mouse«, of the »dead man and the moon« etc. Most wonderful are the accounts he gives us of the many dangers which he encountered, how he escaped from the dagger of murderous bands, how he was no less threatened by dangerous illness than by wild animals, how he was forced to stand starvation, exhausting marches in bogs, imprisonment, sentence to death, and again isolation almost for years, in short, every manner of misfortune. So the book offers a plenty of what is interesting; it simply speaks for itself, and would not even have necessitated the loud advertisement of the publisher at once to gain the already large sale. Numerous excellent, artistically executed illustrations (technic of Dr. E. Albert and Co. in Munich), effectively elucidate the throughout fascinating work.

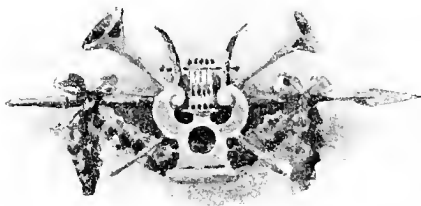
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## **Second Voyage of Investigation to Palestine besides hours of religion at the Cradle of Christendom by Prof. Dr. J. N. Sepp.**

Whilst all eyes are turned to eastern Africa, Russians and Frenchmen are gaining more and more ground in the holy land. Happily, Prussia has laid hand on the ruins of the hospital of the order of Malta in Jerusalem, for which act the religious fraternity lately expressed their thanks to the author of the new book, as he occasioned the acquisition. Within the last fifty years, Palestine has been rediscovered, as Dr. Robinson of New York topographically decided the places of the old testament, Dr. Sepp those of the new, a work which required unusual studies in languages and other branches belonging to this subject. Both have twice, with all learned preparations, made the voyage, and remained there for a considerable length of time. In this book, the author, who has already travelled so far, laid down the results of the second journey.

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**The »small Gallery studies«** by Dr. Th. Frimmel, assistant at the royal austrian collections of art, seek, on the one hand, to deepen the comprehension of old paintings in the large circle of picture lovers and particularly of collectors, and, on the other hand, to draw the notice of art scholars to pictures, which hitherto, have been little or not at all, studied. Above all, he calls attention, in an entirely comprehensible fashion, to several hidden difficulties of connoisseurship,\* warns against superficiality in determining and buying pictures, and lastly, gives a number of reliable new discoveries of the painters of different pictures and of well founded conjectures, so that the small gallery studies are, by no means, extracts from large existing catalogues, but are to be regarded as entirely independent investigations, based on extensive, comparing studies. The book contains numerous illustrations, and appears in irregular deliveries, encompassing 3 sheets, each for the price of 1 Mk. The publishing firm retains the right of issuing double and triple deliveries.









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**Richard Wagner; a sketch of his life and**



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