


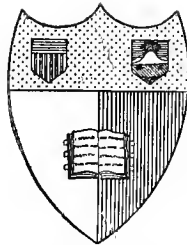
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THE
OBER-AMMERGAU
PASSION PLAY.

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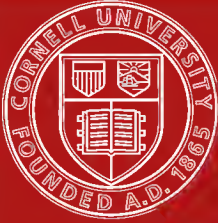
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Ober-Ammergau passion play of 1880.



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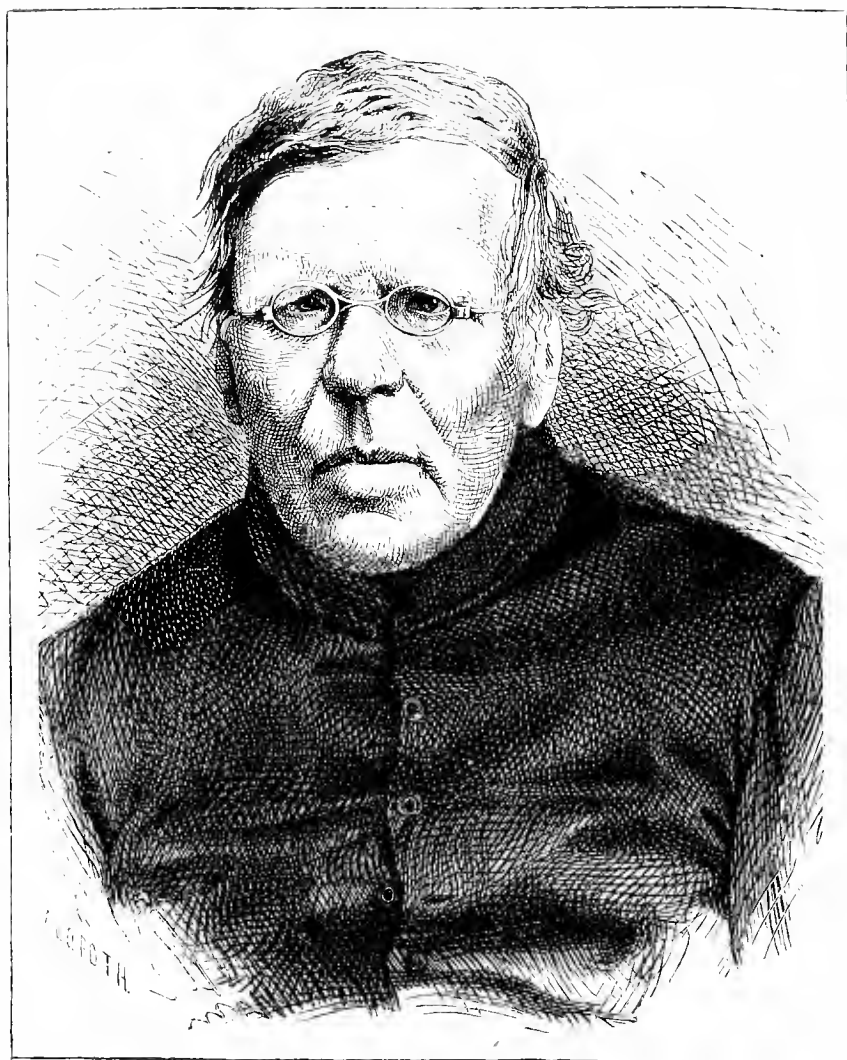


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PASTOR DAISENBERGER,
AUTHOR OF THE MODERN VERSION OF THE PASSION PLAY.

THE
OBER-AMMERGAU

PASSION PLAY

OF

1880.

BY THE

REV. WM. A. SNIVELY, S.T.D.,

Rector of Grace Church, Brooklyn Heights, N. Y.

JAMES POTT
12 ASTOR PLACE
N. Y.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1881, by E. Wells Sackett & Rankin,
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"We leave the theatre as we would a church, after hearing a heart-stirring sermon, or the liturgy during Passion Week."

—*Hermine Von Patruban* (Vienna, 1871).

"I have never seen so affecting a spectacle, or one more calculated to draw out the best and purest feelings of the heart."

—*Rev. Malcom McColl* (London, 1880).

PREFACE.

The substance of this volume was originally prepared and read as a "Paper" before the Long Island Historical Society. It is now presented to the public in more permanent form, and in somewhat fuller statement, in response to the request of many who heard it on the occasion of its first delivery. Its preparation for the press has been a labor of love, recalling the most unique and delightful episode of a summer vacation in Europe; and if it may succeed in giving a truer and more accurate idea of this singular anachronism of the Nineteenth Century, "the sole and solemn relic of the Religious Drama of the Middle Ages"—the Passion Play at Ober-Ammergau—its object will have been fully accomplished.

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JOSEPH MAIER (CHRISTUS).

CHAPTER I.

THE HISTORY OF THE PLAY.

IN the highlands of southern Bavaria and on the borders of the Tyrol, surrounded by the grandeur of its mountain scenery and cherishing the simplicity of its traditional community life, nestles the quaint and primitive village of Ober-Ammergau. It is the home of the Passion Play, the one remaining relic of the Religious Drama of the Middle Ages.

It is reached from Innsbrück, in the Tyrol, by a day's journey through the mountains, in carriage or diligence; more easily from Munich, the capital of Bavaria, by rail to Murnau, and a drive of seventeen miles from that point. It is situated on the river Ammer, a diminutive stream, just where the meadow which lines its banks expands from the narrowness of a mountain gorge into a fair field carpeted with green. There are two carriage roads from Murnau. One is by way of Kohlgrub, a straggling hamlet, where the pestilence broke out in 1633, whose spread to Ober-Ammergau led to the community vow in obedience to which the Passion Play is represented there every ten years. Going by that route, the traveler will first reach Unter-Ammergau—or the village on this side of the meadow—and a drive of

two miles further, with the meadow on one side and the mountain on the other, will bring him to Ober-Ammergau—or the village beyond the meadow. The other carriage road is by way of Ettal, following first the course of the Loisach, and then climbing through mountain scenery that is Alpine in its grandeur, and involving at one point a pedestrian ascent of the mountain side, where the road is so steep that the horses are barely able to draw the empty carriage to the summit. Going by either route, the traveler finds himself part of an immense concourse of pilgrims, the most varied possible in social condition and nationality, but all bent upon the same purpose, and directing their footsteps toward the same shrine. A more heterogeneous company in its make-up is rarely, if ever, seen. Bavarian peasants in the most primitive and astonishing garb mingle with tourists and sight-seers from England and America; noblemen and princes journey side by side with hunters from the Tyrol, clad in their many-buttoned coats of green and crowned with the cone-shaped hat decorated with the inevitable feather; Roman clergy of every grade walk in strange contrast with students on their vacation tour; bare-headed monks, with cowls and sandaled feet, glide silently past American school-girls on their first European tour; travelers from every part of the Continent, and devout penitents performing a very real and sincere pilgrimage—some in carriages,

some in farm-wagons temporarily transformed into rude vehicles for passenger traffic; and many more on foot, to whom the journey of seventeen miles is nothing, when compared either with the cost of the ride or the reward which awaits them at the journey's end.

The one attraction which operates upon the varied minds of the throng, and doubtless with motives equally varied—with some it may be pious reverence, with others mere curiosity, historical or archæological, as the case may be—is that singular anachronism of the Nineteenth Century, the Passion Play of Ober-Ammergau—"the sole and solemn relic of the Religious Drama of the Middle Ages."

It would be more accurate to say, the only remaining relic of the Religious Drama of the Past. For the representation of sacred themes for popular instruction began long before the period which we call the Middle Ages, and it continued to flourish long after the midnight had passed, even into the early morn of the revival of learning, and almost into the full dawn of what is known as the Reformation Period.

It is a familiar fact that the early Christian Church opposed the Theatre as a worldly and sinful thing. There may have been a reason for this in the strong mythological element which entered into the classic drama, and that fact may possibly account for the success of the Church in its vigorous crusade against the pagan Theatre. But it can hardly explain the

singular inconsistency, that the triumph of the Church was scarcely complete when the sacred facts of Christianity began to be represented in dramatic form, and religious plays, composed by the Fathers of the Church, took the place of the plays of the Greek dramatists, and became the incidental accompaniment of the high festivals and holidays of the ecclesiastical year. From this beginning, in the course of the centuries the Mystery and Miracle Plays of the Middle Ages were developed, as well as the Moralities which followed them.

The whole system of the Religious Drama found a congenial home in the monastic life of the times, and the monks were at once its most fertile composers and its most accomplished actors. Originating in the East, there are nevertheless accounts of Mystery Plays which were performed in the convents of Western Europe in the Tenth Century; and in the Eleventh they began to be represented in the vernacular. There was a certain likeness and a certain harmony of subject common to them all. The Miracle and Mystery Plays were the dramatic representation of the Historical Narratives of the Holy Scriptures or of the legends of the saints. They dealt with such themes as the Creation of the World, the Deluge, the History of Daniel, the Wise and Foolish Virgins, the Passion of Christ and the Judgment Day. And there was a striking similarity in the performance also, whether by monastic actor or strolling player. The stage usually was three stories high: The upper one for celestial beings,

angels and glorified saints, and for the Persons of the Divine Trinity ; the middle one for Earth, and its struggle between the powers of good and evil ; while the lower one was for Purgatory and the Infernal Regions. And it is a sad commentary upon the levity of the performance, that the occupants of the Infernal Regions, and especially the chief of them, were the low comedians of the play and furnished the amusement for the audience.

In England the Mystery Plays were as common as in Germany or France. As early as the Thirteenth Century the celebrated Chester Mysteries, consisting of twenty-four dramas and occupying the whole of Christmas week in their presentation, were acted by guilds of tradesmen and mechanics, and they continued to be so until near the close of the Sixteenth Century. At Coventry the series was even more elaborate, and had the encouragement not only of immense multitudes to witness them, but also the patronage of Royalty itself. At York similar festivities were celebrated on Corpus-Christi day, and even as late as 1415 a series of pageants was represented in that ancient town. In France the Mystery Plays prevailed in the provinces, and at Paris the Passion of Christ was represented by a special order of men, called the Brethren of the Passion ; and this was not suppressed until 1547. In Germany, as we may easily understand, the Miracle and Mystery Play became a popular and almost sacred institution. It suited the Teutonic mind. It appealed

at once to its superstitious dread, to its simple and child-like faith, and to its weird and awful imagination. Even the celebrated drama of Faust, familiar to us all because immortalized by genius, both in Music and Poetry, was originally a Mystery Play delineating the perdition of a life deliberately sold to Satan.

The representation of the Passion of our Lord was the dramatic crown and consummation of the Mystery and Miracle Plays. It was a grander theme and demanded a more reverent treatment. The times appropriate for its representation were the sacred seasons of the ecclesiastical year, the Holy Week which preceded Easter, or the great Festival Days of the Church. But at the same time it was part of a drama which included the boisterous mirth of the popular fair and the solemn buffoonery of the monastic Theatre, and whose stage was erected alike in the convent chapel or on the village green. It belonged normally to an age before printing was invented; when manuscripts were scarce and costly, and the exclusive property of the learned or the rich; and when the sermon was a childish homily, if, perchance, priest or friar could preach at all. And it served precisely the purpose of the pictures in the spelling-books of children, to help them remember the lesson they painfully spell out on the page below—a kind of rude but sacred hieroglyph, for a time in which letters, even if they were invented, were not available in popular use.

From the unnumbered and unrecorded dramas of

the middle and later centuries, whether performed in convent chapel or on the village green, whether by monastic player or itinerant showman, but one has survived. And this sole specimen of the Mediæval Religious Drama exists to-day, not so much by reason of the nursing care of the neighboring Monastery of Ettal, in which it was born and where its infancy was watched with tender and loving devotion, as by the force of an intense local enthusiasm, in which the most devoted loyalty and the deepest reverence are combined. That enthusiasm, rooting itself in an ancestral vow of long ago, may have possibly become a superstitious power; but whatever its characteristic, it has resisted alike the advance of modern civilization and the edicts of kings, and it is cherished to-day as their most sacred legacy by these simple Bavarian peasants in their mountain home.

To the Christian-mind of our day, even if it be allowed that an excess of reverence is not one of its characteristics, there is something inexpressibly repugnant in the idea of representing the most sacred facts of Christianity in any dramatic form. To act a rôle which includes the Agony of Gethsemane and the Divine Tragedy of the Cross seems to be inevitably a sacrilege. And such undoubtedly it would be in any other conceivable place and under any other possible circumstances. For there is, and there can be, but one Ober-Ammergau Passion Play; and it is the product of more than two centuries of zeal and devotion;

fostered in a secluded home, far removed from the world's highways of travel or traffic; and preserved and perpetuated to-day, not for purposes of gain nor from motives of personal ambition, but simply as an obligatory tribute to the memory of departed ancestors and as a religious duty to God. And the first impression of its character is greatly modified, when one learns by actual observation how deep the reverence is of those who take part in it; how sacred a duty it is, in their estimation, to fulfill the vow of their forefathers; and how really patriotic devotion and religious fervor enter into its performance. So high is the estimate of that duty, that no amount of study or care, no preparation either of thought in the cottage or of devotion in the village church, can be too exacting and severe to fit the actors for so sacred a task. We can only reach correct conclusions in regard to it, by studying it in its appropriate surroundings, clad in the village traditions which have handed it down from one generation to another, enfolded in its mountain scenery, and carefully guarded and sacredly cherished by the simple community life of which it is the flower and fruit. Until recent years it has been shut out from the world, and the notoriety it has achieved has come to it, not as the result of any wish or effort on the part of the villagers themselves, but as the tribute of the world's curiosity to witness a scene which belongs to other centuries, or to study an exceptional relic of Mediæval times in the clear, prac-

tical light of our own day. And studying it thus, in its local traditions and surroundings, in the inspiration of the motive which prompts it and the religious devotion with which it is performed, we shall inevitably reach a conclusion which will be at once a defense of the Passion Play at Ober-Ammergau, in the sincerity and reverence of its production there, and an indignant protest against its sacrilegious travesty upon any mercenary and irreverent stage.

The proposition to bring the Passion Play to England or America involves an absurd impossibility. No scenery of any modern stage could equal the rude structure in the Bavarian village, no background take the place of the mountain and the meadow. It would rob it of its most attractive charm, and reduce it from an act of patriotic and religious devotion to a level with the ordinary drama of the modern stage. It is no wonder that a proposition made to the villagers to produce the Passion Play at Vienna during the world's fair in that city was indignantly spurned. Its traditional associations, the simple life of the village actors and the variegated costume of the peasant audience are all part of the total effect. Its impressiveness to the Bavarian mind may be inferred from the fact that there is a shrine at every cross-road, the corner house in every street has its niche for the effigy of Virgin, or Saint, or Martyr, and the rude crucifix stands at every country wayside, before which the peasantry kneel as they pass to repeat a prayer.

In such a country and to such a people the periodical representation of the Passion is an event of the deepest religious interest. It is to the decade what Easter-day is to the year; and it serves to refresh the memory of the scenes of sacred story most intimately connected with the great drama of Rødemption. It is as real a lesson from the Bible as the frescoes of St. Mark's were in the palmy days of Venetian glory, and to a large proportion of the peasantry it is the only copy of the Bible they read.

To transport such a product of their community life to a distant city or a foreign land would inevitably be fatal to all that makes it tolerable in the estimation of the Christian world; and to substitute for the motives which now inspire its production the lower motive of financial gain, would be a degradation of its history and a desecration of its sacred theme.



JOHANN DIEMER (CHORAGUS).

CHAPTER II.

THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PLAY.

THE history of this particular Play and its origin in the simple religious faith of the people is almost a familiar story. Belonging to a past age, when Art, both in Painting and Music, dignified its work by the selection of themes from the historical facts of the Incarnation, and a relic of the once popular Religious Drama which presented to the eye of an unlettered people the truths of religion as at once a lesson from the Bible and a sermon from the Pulpit, it is nevertheless a relic of the Past, improved by the culture and study of two hundred and fifty years, and by the modern appliances of stage machinery and scenic effect. Recent years have added much to its dramatic power, though they could add nothing to the traditional reverence with which it is performed. That was always an intense and controlling motive. Its improvement began more than a generation since, when Dr. Ottman Weis, Head of the Monastery at Ettal, recast the dialogue of the Play, substituting good prose for poor rhyme, and providing for it an appropriate musical accompaniment to be performed by the orchestra. It happened that among the younger priests of the monastery there was one whose devotion to the Re-

ligious Drama had always been a ruling passion, and he was a native of Ober-Ammergau. He took up the work of improvement where his Master and Teacher had left it, and it was the ambition of his early life to be some day the Parish Priest of his native village. That ambition was gratified years ago, and the pupil of Dr. Weis is now the venerable Pastor Daisenberger, the "*Geistlicher Rath*" of the village, who has already passed his eightieth year, and to whom, more than to any other man, the Passion Play owes the completeness of its representation. Upon his assignment to the parochial cure of the village, he brought to the production of the Passion Play a scholarship, an enthusiasm and a dramatic talent which at once lifted it above the simple representations of the past, and made it, even as a dramatic performance, the admiration of the most fastidious critics.

The origin of the Play, in its present form and its decennial representation, as accounted for by local tradition, is that in 1633 the villages of the neighborhood were visited by a pestilence which threatened to carry off the whole population. In the adjoining hamlet of Kohlgrub, only two hours distant, its ravages were so severe that but two married couples were left. Notwithstanding the strict quarantine established at Ober-Ammergau, the pestilence was introduced by a laborer who returned home, by a mountain path, to visit his wife and children. The disease was already in his system and on the day after his return home he was a

corpse. The infection spread so rapidly that in a month eighty-four persons belonging to the village died. The villagers, in their bereavement and alarm, met together, and solemnly vowed that if God would stay the pestilence they would perform the Passion Play every tenth year afterward as a grateful recognition of their deliverance.

It may seem to us a strange way to acknowledge the blessings of Divine Providence, but it is their way of holding a Thanksgiving service or of rendering a *Te Deum*; and the same motive inspired them but a few years ago to repeat the representation out of its regular date, as a public Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the success which had attended the German arms in the war with France.

Whatever our impressions may be of the tradition, it certainly establishes the fact, that the Passion Play was already an existing institution of the village, in which they had a special pride. And it is no mere tradition, but historical fact, that the vow has been faithfully performed. It was first played in 1634 in obedience to the vow; and in 1680 the decennial period was changed to the commencement of the decade, and it has been represented every tenth year since, except when interrupted by war. Up to 1830 the play was performed in the village churchyard in the open air. The cosmopolitan interest which has been awakened in it, has compelled the erection of better accommodations, which, however

rude, are yet characteristic and convenient. The Theatre which has been built for this purpose is simply an enclosure surrounded by a high board fence, open to the sky, and having an appropriate stage at one end. It is capable of seating six thousand persons, and the rude seats, most of them simple pine benches, without back or cushion, are divided into three classes. First, and nearest the stage, in the wide space in front of it, and under the open sky, is the great assembly of peasants and pilgrims; second, at the extreme rear, and under a shed roof, the seats are elevated one tier above another and are furnished with rude chairs; and third, at each side of this elevation, and under the cover of the roof, is another class of seats, ranging in comfort and in price between the other two.

The stage is unique, and peculiarly adapted to its purpose. It contains five distinct compartments. First, the broad platform across the entire stage for the use of the Chorus and for processions; second, a large central stage for the tableaux and the usual scenes of the drama. On each side of this central stage are the flies for the changing of the scenery; and the front of the space thus occupied is utilized by a balcony across the front on each side, which is reached by a stairway from within, and which respectively represent the Palace of Pilate, and the Palace of Annas, the High Priest. Outside of these still is an open space on each side of the stage, and

these serve as the streets of Jerusalem. The scenery (which is used only in the central apartment of the stage) is capable of representing any local surroundings necessary to the dialogue of the play. It includes the interior of the Temple and the Village of Bethany; the Chamber of the Sanhedrim and the desert scenes of the Exodus; the Garden of Eden and the summit of Calvary; the Throne and Court of Herod, and the Passage of the Red Sea; the Rocks of Gibeon and the Garden of Gethsemane; the fall of Manna, and the House of Simon, the Pharisee; Jonah's Whale and the Sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathæa; indeed, every particular act or tableau in the elaborate drama is set in its appropriate surroundings; and it is changed with a rapidity which would do credit to the most accomplished scene-shifters in the world. There is no noise of pulleys nor creaking of hinges; no tangling of ropes and no appearance of lackeys upon the stage. The curtain falls noiselessly upon one scene and rises silently upon another; and in one instance a tableau which contained three hundred and fifty persons grouped in every imaginable posture was changed into an entirely different one with three persons in it, and the transformation occupied but one minute and a quarter.

The Play itself consists of Eighteen Acts, each representing a prominent scene in the Life of our Lord, from the Entry into Jerusalem to the Crucifixion. These, however, constitute but the historical

frame-work of the Play; for each act consists of several scenes consecutively presented, and is preceded by one or more preludes, which are always represented by silent tableaux. The preludes are usually typical and prophetic scenes taken from the Old Testament, which foreshadow the historical event about to be produced. They are first announced by the Chorus, and then, when the curtain rises, are interpreted in the same way as applied to the incident of which they are symbolical.

There are three classes of actors, beside the musicians of the orchestra. The first class includes those who take the leading parts in the dialogue of the drama. The principal ones are the Christus, Peter, John, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, Herod, Pilate, Judas, Caiaphas, Annas, Nathanael, Joseph of Arimathæa, Nicodemus, Barabbas, and the members of the Sanhedrim. The second class includes the subordinate players—men, women and children who make up the tableaux and processions, in some of which there are three persons, and in some five hundred; and who constitute the attentive multitude or the fickle mob in the streets of Jerusalem, as the exigencies of the play may require. The third class is the Chorus, of which a more detailed account is necessary, as its function is unique and peculiar. There is nothing corresponding to it on the modern stage. Its action takes the place of a printed programme in explaining what is to come next, and it

is at the same time an explanation of the various scenes as they are presented to view. It is supposed to consist of Guardian Angels or Spirit-singers, who hover as an attendant guard over the Incarnate Christ, and who interpret to mortals the deeper and diviner meaning of the historical scenes of the Passion. It consists of eighteen persons, nine men and nine women. They enter from opposite sides of the stage and form a line across its entire width, the tallest of them occupying the centre. Either in a brief recitative or in rhythmic chorus they announce the prelude which is about to appear, and then fall back from the middle to the sides of the central stage. The singers on the extreme right and left retain their position at the front of the proscenium, so that when the members in the centre have reached the front of the central stage they form an elliptical margin for the scene presented, a frame-work for the picture which conceals the sides of the stage and directs the eye naturally toward the centre. The curtain rises and the prelude appears in tableau; and again, when the curtain falls, they resume their place across the front of the stage, and sing the interpretation of the scene just witnessed and its relation to the Passion of Christ. Their part is rendered in a recitative by the Choragus, or leader, in a solo melody by a female voice, or in full chorus, as the sentiment of the scene may require. It always corresponds with what is to follow or with what has

just preceded—now the plaintive wail of a minor dirge, and again the triumphant hosanna of victory. It thus performs precisely the function of the Chorus in the Greek Tragedy, from which it doubtless originated. It is a musical announcement of the scene about to appear, and a comment upon it when it has been seen. Its members are dressed in robes which are similar in form but varied in color; with one or two exceptions, they have long flowing hair, smooth faces and sandaled feet. Their costume consists of a white tunic trimmed with lace and reaching to the knee, over which is worn a long cloak or mantle of classic design, open in front and reaching to the ground. Each member also wears a light and graceful crown, which serves as a fitting head-dress to complete the costume. The mantles are of different colors, purple, crimson and blue, and the effect of these when ranged in line and gracefully draped is exceedingly harmonious and artistic. Indeed, this may be said of the entire Play. It was a marvel of harmonious coloring. The varied shades of the dresses blended together as softly as the hues of a rainbow, and in drapery, as well as color and style, they were modeled constantly upon the world's most admired masterpieces of art.

The Actors for the various parts of the Play are selected with great care by a committee of forty-five householders of the village and the Parish Priest. The election occurs in the last week of the December

before the decennial representation, and is preceded by a solemn service in the village church. In the estimation of the villagers, the highest honor possible is an election to the part of the Christus. The chief characters, numbering about fifteen, are usually assigned to the principal men of the village, the choice being decided by personal appearance, ability and intelligence; and the sacredness of the Play is so guarded, that the villains of the drama are always assigned to persons of the highest respectability and integrity, the object being to bring their personality into the strongest possible contrast with the characters which, for the occasion, they assume. Including the minor characters, there are about five hundred in all, and after the assignment of the parts the preparation immediately begins. The direction and arrangement of the dramatic representations are under the care of the Parish Priest; the arrangement of the tableaux is assigned to the church warden; and the conduct of the orchestra to the village schoolmaster, who is always a musician.

The preparation of the actors is very thorough and conscientious. They meet in small numbers, at first, at the house of the Pastor, and are required, as the first step of their training, to read their parts aloud. The next step is to recite them from memory; and when this is done, they rehearse them altogether. The result is what might be expected from such a training. In the actual representation of the Play,

lasting about eight hours and a half, there was no need of a prompter in any instance. Dialogues, which were almost tedious on account of their length, were recited without hesitation ; and as the elaborate and complicated plot unfolded itself, among the thousand possibilities of blunder or forgetfulness involved in the representation of more than forty different scenes, by over five hundred performers, there was not, in a single instance, a mistake of movement nor a moment's hesitation for a word. In addition to this thorough preparation of memory, the spectator is impressed with the correctness of the acting, in voice, attitude and gesture. The elocution was superior, especially that of the men, and the acting as natural as if they were engaged in a real tragedy, not in representing one upon the stage. Every gesture was appropriate and every attitude graceful. One could not help wondering how these simple villagers had attained such perfection in their various parts. The wonder will not seem so great, if we remember that the acting of to-day is the result of two hundred years of continuous training and study. Each successive generation has begun where its predecessor left off ; and so by a gradual and almost unconscious elevation of the standard it has reached its present completeness. In addition to this, each actor identifies himself thoroughly with his part and becomes absorbed in it. From the hour of his selection, it is the theme of his meditation by day and of his dreams by night. The

result is, that the acting is not an artificial and temporary mimicry of a character, but a presentation of it so real in effect that it loses all appearance of imitation. Judas is Judas, and Pilate is Pilate; and the thought goes with them to their daily work and to their Sunday worship. And the honor of the village, the reputation of the individual actor and the sacredness of their community vow, all require the highest and best which each one, in his respective part, can achieve.

Besides this, three permanent and influential elements enter into the preparation of the actors. They are the village church, the village school, and the occupation of wood-carving, in which most of the villagers are engaged. The village church contributes its influence because the representation of the Passion is as truly a religious act with these people as any service they ever attend. And the Play itself is but the condensed statement of all the great truths which they learn in the services and instructions of the Church. And this gives a motive of earnestness and sincerity to their acting which it could not otherwise possess. The village school enters as an influence not merely because the schoolmaster is conductor of the orchestra, and the hymns of the drama are the musical portion of school duties, but also and more still by the patient industry and the proverbial accuracy and thoroughness of German teaching and study. But the influence which gives grace to every gesture, and ease and pro-

priety to every attitude, is undoubtedly the profession of wood-carving in which most of them are engaged. These simple villagers are artists, every one of them. They can carve a crucifix or a Madonna, an apostle or a saint, with an accuracy of outline which leaves nothing to be desired. Their work is modeled constantly upon the best conceptions of the great Masters. And while not one of them could delineate on paper or canvas, with pencil or brush, a single figure or scene, give him his wood and his carving tools, and he will produce a thoroughly artistic result. And what he does in the carving shop with the wood, that he does upon the stage with his own person.

The principal character, of course, is the Christus, in the representation of which there is demanded rather a dignified and passive power of submission than a delineation energetic and active. For two successive decades this part has been assigned to Joseph Maier, a pale, slightly built and unintellectual man, who, since his first selection, has brooded upon the part he represents until his mind has become almost morbid upon the subject. In person and feature he is strikingly like the conventional and ideal portraits of our Lord. With an entire absence of anything Oriental or Jewish in his countenance, the general outline of his face, the waving black hair falling over his shoulders, the beard, a perfect representation of the conventional beard as seen on canvas, and the loose and flowing garb, make up, at a little distance, a

striking resemblance to the ideal Christ as represented by the old Masters. The finest character, so far as dramatic power is concerned, is Judas. It has fallen to the lot of Gregor-Lechner, as it did to his father before him; and his delineation of craftiness, avaricious cupidity and remorse is so intense and impressive, that it is said the rural peasants have a positive dislike to the man himself, in their prejudice identifying him with the character he assumes; and this notwithstanding the fact that his character as a man is unimpeachable. The rôle required a treatment more delicate and skillful in the portraiture of conflicting emotions, in the wider range of motive and feeling, and in the more subtle expression of mental conditions, than any other in the entire Play. And these indefinable shades of meaning and expression were frequently given without a single spoken word; a look, an attitude or a movement had to do it all. Pilate was more than a Mark Antony in the harangue from his balcony, and his expostulation with the populace and the priests. His clear voice rang out upon the mountain air, distinctly audible to the most distant spectator, and his performance was a masterly delineation of the conflict which was going on in his mind between the stern sense of Roman justice, which could not condemn an innocent party, and the desire to placate a subdued and restless people, who were constantly chafing under the Roman yoke, and whose religion was even more precious to them than political

freedom could be. Caiaphas was the embodiment and realization of the arrogant and bigoted ecclesiastic, passionate and imperious, impatient of contradiction, and unscrupulous as to the methods by which his ends were to be accomplished, and whose hatred found ingenious plans to wreak itself upon his victim. The character of Annas, the other High Priest, was in striking contrast with this. He was the silent and thoughtful plotter, the man who kept himself serene while instigating others to accomplish his designs. The contrast between the two was an artistic and effective thought. Of the other characters, the most impressive and natural were St. Peter and St. John, each of whom was a striking likeness of his prototype as represented by Art, though of course their parts were subordinate ones. Next to the four principal characters undoubtedly was the Choragus, or leader of the chorus, whose part was the most constant and laborious, both for voice and memory, in the whole Play. The female characters had but little to say or do, though their presence and acting were of course essential to the completeness of the representation. The immense space to be filled put a severe strain upon their voices, but in making up the tableaux they were of the highest importance in the general effect.

The representation is always preceded by the Mass at the village church, and each actor receives the Holy Communion as the final preparation for what is, to him, so sacred a duty. When the public repre-

sentation is about to begin, and before the curtain rises upon the first prelude, there is another prelude behind the scenes, which the audience in the theatre neither see nor hear; it is the pastor and the assembled actors engaged in silent prayer. As the Passion Play is to the villagers an act of religious worship, it is always performed on Sunday or some high festival of the ecclesiastical calendar, and it is announced the evening before in the same way that the great holy days of the Church are announced—by the village band marching through the streets and wakening the echo of the mountains with their strains.

The scene in Ober-Ammergau on the evening preceding the Play is one never to be forgotten. The mingled throng of peasants and clergy, of tourists and pilgrims, thread their way through the streets or gather in groups for mutual greeting. Many of them have come on foot and have made no provision for lodging; but they will find food at the refreshment booths which line the streets and which do a thriving business for the time; and for lodging, the seat of a carriage or the loft of a stable will be gladly welcomed. If they fail to find either of these, crowds of them will walk the streets all night. There is but little sleeping for any one at such a time, no matter how well he may be housed. The endless tramp of the sleepless procession will be going on under his window, and sleep will be simply out of

the question. Indeed, the village does not begin to assume anything like an air of repose until near midnight, and as the services in the church begin at two o'clock in the morning, the night is a short one in any case. From two o'clock until six on Sunday morning there are Masses every half hour, and there are five altars in the parish church, at each of which a service is going on. The church is crowded from first to last by a congregation changing every half hour. The earlier services are without music; the six o'clock Mass has the choir and the crowd is then the greatest. At seven o'clock the band marches through the village, announcing in musical strains that the Passion Play is about to begin, and at once the streets are filled with crowds of people wending their way toward the theatre, which is at the opposite end of the village from the church. Admission is by ticket to the various parts of the auditorium, and these must always be secured in advance. When the number of visitors is so great that they cannot be accommodated, an additional representation on Monday is sometimes given. The play was performed this year twenty-three times in regular course, with additional performances when required.

CHAPTER III.

THE OUTLINE OF THE PLAY.

PART FIRST.

LET us suppose ourselves seated in the rude theatre on a Sunday morning in July, at a few minutes before eight o'clock. It matters little whether the day be fair or rainy, the performance will commence at the appointed hour and continue until it is finished. The Chorus and most of the actors, as well as two-thirds of the audience, are under the open sky; but neither the heat of a noonday sun nor the flood of an Alpine thunder-storm will make the slightest difference in the promptness with which the actors appear, the patience and fidelity with which they perform their parts.

The vast audience is hushed in expectation, and the demeanor is more like the gathering of a worshipping congregation than the assembling of an audience to witness a spectacle. The quiet landscape of the valley stretches away to Unter-Ammergau; the steep mountain slope, dotted with fir trees, constitutes the background on the right, while on the left rises the Kofel, adorned with its monumental crucifix, the gift of the King of Bavaria, and the pride of the village. At precisely eight o'clock the

report of a cannon is heard; and its echoes have scarcely ceased to reverberate among the hills, when the orchestra begins its part in a solemn and tender overture, which at once subdues the mind and fixes the attention. The Chorus appear simultaneously from both sides of the stage, and marching toward the centre until they meet, form a line across the entire proscenium. They stand for a moment with hands folded across the breast in the attitude of prayer. Then the Choragus, in a plaintive recitative, opens the play by explaining the object of the whole performance—namely, how mankind, in its fallen condition, became reconciled to God through the death of His Son.

The entire scope of the Play is first represented by two symbolical tableaux, which constitute the preludes to the first act. In the first tableau, after the Choragus has finished his recitative, the members of the Chorus separate at the centre, and fall back until the middle members reach the extremities of the central stage. The curtain rises and the first Typical Picture is revealed. It is the expulsion of our first parents from the Garden of Eden, typical of the Fall. Adam and Eve, overwhelmed with grief and despair, are driven from the garden by an angel with a flaming sword. The surroundings of the scene are very complete. The Tree of Life, the Tempter and the beauty of Paradise are well delineated, and during the brief

time that the picture remains exposed to view, the Choragus explains its meaning as related to what is to follow. At the close of a stanza the curtain falls, and the Chorus resume their place across the front of the stage, and the message of Redemption is announced. Dividing and falling back as before, the curtain rises again, and the second tableau is revealed. It is the Adoration of the Cross. Before a large cross fixed upon a rock in the centre of the stage, a group of angels, represented by the children of the village in glittering costume, kneel in the attitude of reverent devotion. The stillness of the scene is a marvel of dramatic representation. There is not the slightest movement perceptible. No group of statuary ever seemed more perfectly motionless, and the effect is heightened when the singers of the Chorus fall upon their knees and chant a solemn prayer. The curtain falls, and the Chorus rise, and resuming their accustomed place across the front of the stage, retire with almost military precision to the rooms on either side. Scarcely has the Chorus disappeared, when the first dramatic act of the Passion Play begins. Away in the distance is heard the voice of a multitude, and the air is filled with the echoes of shoutings and rejoicings and glad hosannas. As the procession approaches in the open space on the stage representing a street in Jerusalem, the people of the city and the pilgrims of the Passover are seen welcoming the Christ. As

it advances, bands of Hebrew children bearing palm branches come from the side streets and join the throng, which keeps moving on slowly until the central figure of it, mounted upon an ass, reaches the middle of the stage, which represents the Temple at Jerusalem. Fully five hundred persons are on the stage at this moment. Boys and girls wave palm branches and sing hosannas; men and women join in the acclamation; and the voice of the Christus is lost in the hymn of the multitude, whose surging melody and rhythm are sustained and guided by the orchestra. As the hymn is ended, a number of Priests and Pharisees, attracted by the noise and tumult, come from the other side of the stage, representing another street in Jerusalem, when suddenly a calm spreads over the multitude and the representative of the Christus dismounts. Meantime the curtain has risen in the central stage, revealing the money-changers engaged in their traffic, and the sellers of pigeons and doves at their tables. With a silent majesty of demeanor, which is well preserved throughout the Play, the Christus goes among them and bids them depart. Taking a number of the cords used to bind the lambs brought for sacrifice, he plaits them into a scourge, advances to where the traffic is most active and boisterous, overthrows the tables of the money-changers and commands the sellers of doves to begone. The scene of confusion which follows can scarcely be

described. The jars which contain the money are broken and the coins are scattered over the pavement; the tables are overturned, and the doves, released from their cages, soar away over the heads of the audience to their homes in the village; while the avaricious traders hastily gather up what may most easily be seized and begin to depart. In the midst of it all the Christus maintains a bearing of dignified composure, and of stern but silent rebuke. The traders of the Temple have scarcely begun to depart, when the Pharisees and Scribes appear, led by Caiaphas and Annas. In tones of excited anger they inquire by what authority these things are done. Immediately the cry of treason to Moses is raised, and the multitude is swayed and almost controlled by the unbounded rage and fierce invective of the High Priest. As the multitude gradually disappears from the stage, the Christus and his disciples retire to Bethany, and the last scene of the act closes with them there. The village is represented at the extreme rear of the stage, and the living group in front of it, with every attitude perfect, and with the slanting sunlight falling upon the richly colored robes they wear, make up a picture of Oriental life and scenery more vivid and real than is to be found upon any canvas in the world.

The scene of driving the money-changers from the Temple furnishes the germ of the conspiracy, which is now rapidly developed by the progress of the drama

and whose end is to be the tragedy of the Cross. The second act represents the High Priests in council, conspiring to take the life of the Nazarene. It is preceded by a typical tableau, in which the sons of Jacob are conspiring against their brother Joseph. The whole scene is represented as it took place upon the plains of Dothan. Joseph, in his coat of many colors, is among his brethren as they watch their flocks, and the pit into which he is to be cast is in the foreground. The whisperings of his brethren and their cautious movements indicate their dark design; and the chorus meanwhile explains the connecting link between the prophetic type and its historical fulfillment which is about to follow. The curtain rises again and the act begins. The Sanhedrim is in session. Annas and Caiaphas preside and occupy chairs above the rest. At their side, but lower down, sit two Scribes—Rabbis who act as Clerks to the Council—and the rest of the members form a semicircle around the stage. Annas is dressed in white, Caiaphas in red; both wear high tiaras embroidered in gold, and in addition Caiaphas wears the breastplate of the High Priest. Annas is calm and crafty; Caiaphas passionate and boisterous. The proceedings begin with an invective against Jesus, as the destroyer of their ecclesiastical polity and their nation. Caiaphas, the irritable, violent and despotic priest, opens the discussion. The rest of the Sanhedrim follow. One by one they declare that he must be put to death.

But how to compass that object is the problem before them. Money and promises of reward seem to be the most likely method; and two of the members retire and bring before the Council a number of the buyers and sellers, a throng of greedy and avaricious Jews, who promise, for a consideration, to deliver Jesus into their hands. Their power to do so is doubted by the Council, when a member of it declares that he knows one of the disciples who may be induced to betray him. The aged Annas rises and swears by his gray hairs not to rest until their religion is made secure by his death; and as the plan proceeds toward its execution he adds, "Notwithstanding my old age, I could leap for joy." At this point, before the curtain falls, the portraiture of the scene is intensely artistic and real. A European critic has said that he "could not better describe it than by saying that it was to him as if pictures of the old Masters had suddenly become endued with life." And this is precisely the impression made throughout the entire Play.

If there is a disadvantage in not understanding the Bavarian dialect in which the drama is rendered, it is compensated for by the fact that the acts and scenes and tableaux must interpret themselves by action and attitude. The general course of the drama is sufficiently designated by the Book of the Play with which every one usually provides himself in advance; and with this simple guide it is not difficult to take in the argument alike of the chorus and the actors; to inter-

pret the progress of the drama, or the quiet and unmoving attitude of the tableaux.

The third act represents the final departure from Bethany and the tender farewells that were spoken there. It is preceded by two tableaux which impress an observer as rather fanciful, but which, at the same time, seem in perfect keeping with the simple literalness of the entire Play. The first is the Apocryphal story of young Tobias starting from home on an unknown journey, and finding the Angel Raphael for his companion and guide. The second is the disconsolate Bride, in the Canticles, lamenting the absence of her Beloved. The scene is laid in a garden of tropical luxuriance, and the sorrowing Bride, magnificently attired, is surrounded by her attendant bridesmaids. The symbolism is based upon the familiar figure of the Church as the Bride of Christ. These prepare us for the act itself, as types of our Lord's departure from his friends at Bethany, the tender farewell to Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus, and the final adieu to his Virgin Mother is also represented as taking place at the same time. There are several scenes in the entire act, and the dialogue is pathetic and complete. The first scene is his appearance upon the streets of Bethany, where he tells his followers that his hour is come, at which Peter utters his expostulation and the disciples are sorrowful. Then the scene changes to a banqueting room in the house of Simon, and Martha is waiting

upon the guests. The anointing of his feet by Mary Magdalene is carried out even to the detail of wiping his feet with the hairs of her head. And after a dialogue which reproduces every incident of the historical scene, the final farewells are spoken with great dramatic impressiveness and reality of effect.

The fourth act is the Last Journey to Jerusalem. The prelude represents King Ahasuerus repudiating Vashti and elevating Esther to be his queen, and the Chorus explains its signification in the rejection of the Jews and the admission of the Gentiles to the promises of redemption. The first scene of the act represents Christ and his Apostles passing over the brow of Olivet, on the way to Jerusalem. In the near distance are seen the walls of the city, and the dome of the Temple, gilded with the rays of the sun, crowning its height. The sight of it moves the heart of the rejected Christ, and the lament over Jerusalem is rendered with a pathos that is exceedingly touching, and is made even more impressive by the song which introduces it, and whose constant refrain, in plaintive minor, "Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" keeps ringing in the ears like a note of anguish or a wail of despair.

The temptation of Judas forms a striking part of this act, as he first conceives, and then tampers with, the idea of betraying his Master. In the midst of this mental conflict the messengers of the Sanhedrim come to bargain with him, and in the tumult of his soul his avarice gets the upper hand, and he consents

to go to the Council to close the compact for the betrayal. Meantime the Apostles John and Peter are seen going to Jerusalem to prepare a room in which to celebrate the Passover, and this leads naturally to the next act, which represents the Last Supper. Two symbolical tableaux precede it. The first is the shower of manna in the wilderness, one of the finest scenes in the entire Play. Nearly four hundred persons are employed in it and the grouping is artistically perfect. Moses stands in the midst with his rod uplifted, and the assembled Israelites, men, women and children, are gathered about him. Infants in their mothers' arms, maidens and youths in expectant groups, and strong men, all stand motionless, with eyes directed heavenward. The manna descends as gently as a fall of snow, and it is caught in aprons and baskets which are held out to receive it. Not the slightest tremor is visible in any one of the figures. Motionless as figures upon a canvas, there is at the same time an effect of light and shade, of coloring and foreshortening, of grouping and attitude, which is the very perfection of art. The curtain falls and the Chorus sing a stanza, when it rises again. Two spies are seen returning from the promised land, bearing between them the immense cluster of grapes which they have brought from Eschol. The two tableaux are emblematic of the Bread and the Wine which were about to be consecrated to their sacred use as the elements of the Christian Passover.

The scene of the Last Supper is at first an exact reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's celebrated picture. The relative positions change as one detail after another is brought out, but the general outline is maintained throughout. The first part of the act represents the Passover, eaten standing and in silence, the feet shod with sandals and staff in hand; then the dispute among the disciples as to who shall be greatest, and its symbolical answer in the washing of the disciples' feet by their Master. The Institution then takes place; and while the Chorus, out of sight, are singing a solemn hymn, the curtain begins to fall, and the disciples and their Master are seen wending their way toward the Mount of Olives.

In the sixth act the compact for the betrayal is portrayed with every detail of historical incident. Its prelude represents Joseph sold to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. The scene is a continuation of the tableau in the second act, and the design to make away with Joseph is consummated.

The scene in the Sanhedrim is boisterous and excited. Judas, who but a short time before was with his Master at the Supper, is now among his Master's foes. He hesitates to close the bargain, but, at last, partly by pecuniary inducement, and partly by threats of exposure, they compel him to enter into the compact. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa are the only members of the Council who raise their voices against the proceeding; but they are hooted at

and overborne by the impetuous anger of the High Priest.

The seventh act, representing the Agony in Gethsemane, is preceded by two tableaux. The first is Adam condemned to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. The scene is a desert wilderness, in which Adam and his children, poorly clad, are tilling the ground, which produces only an abundant crop of thistles. Eve, the disconsolate mother, sits upon a rock, with her youngest child in her lap. Adam pauses a moment in his toil to wipe the perspiration from his brow, and the Chorus explain that this is typical of the Bloody Sweat of the Saviour in Gethsemane. The second tableau represents the treachery of Joab in his meeting with Amasa among the rocks of Gibeon, when, under the pretense of giving him a kiss, he plunges a dagger into his side. The soldiers of the two chieftains are resting under the shadow of the rocks when the two leaders meet and the act of treachery takes place. The Chorus explain that this is typical of the treacherous kiss given by Judas to his Master, and the effect is heightened by an antiphonal chorus in the rear of the stage, whose alternate stanzas sound as if the very rocks of Gibeon were protesting against the outrage.

The Agony in Gethsemane, with all its details, is acted with exceeding naturalness and reverence. It is preceded by the passage of the Traitor and the soldiers across the front of the stage, and then, as

the curtain rises, the Mount of Olives is seen. The sleeping disciples are there, the tender rebuke of the Master is spoken, the thrice-repeated prayer is uttered, and the angel appears with a chalice to strengthen him. Then the approach of the soldiers with their lanterns and staves, the treacherous kiss, the gentle and dignified expostulation of the Victim, the maiming of Malchus by the impetuous Peter, are all portrayed with a vividness that is deeply impressive, and a reverence which prevents the natural shock which one would expect to experience in witnessing the representation of such a scene.

At this point a recess of an hour is taken, and it is a grateful relief both to mind and body. The long strain of four hours upon the absorbed attention, and the rude accommodations for the comfort of the audience, as well as the constant work of the orchestra, the Chorus and the actors, make the brief respite very acceptable. Many of the audience return to their temporary homes in the village for lunch, while the booths which line the streets of the village do a thriving business with the multitude, in the frugal but wholesome repast which they furnish of German sausage and rye bread, Sweitzer cheese and Bavarian beer.



GREGOR-LECHNER (JUDAS).

CHAPTER IV.

THE OUTLINE OF THE PLAY.

PART SECOND.

By one o'clock all are seated again, and the booming of a cannon in the meadow under the Kofel announces that the second part of the Passion Play is about to begin. The music of the orchestra falls into a minor key, and its sweet and melancholy strains are a fitting preparation for the deepening tragedy before us.

The first act of the Second Part (the eighth of the series) represents Jesus before Annas, the High Priest. Its prelude is the scene from Jewish history in which Zedekiah, the false prophet, smites Micaiah on the cheek. In the tableau two thrones are set, occupied respectively by Ahab, King of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, King of Judah. As the true prophet of the Lord, a venerable and dignified personage, delivers his message of rebuke, the prophet of Baal, a diminutive and repulsive creature, smites him on the cheek. And the Chorus explain that this is typical of the smiting of Christ.

The prelude finished, Annas appears upon the balcony of his house, awaiting the arrival of the captive Nazarene. Presently he appears, under the

escort of a military guard, and the dialogue ensues, substantially the same as that which is recorded in the history of the event. The self-possessed and crafty ecclesiastic fails to disturb the calm dignity of the Captive, and he orders him away to Caiaphas; while Peter and John, following afar off the fortunes of their Master, are effectively introduced at the close of the scene.

The ninth act, the Arraignment before Caiaphas, is preceded by two Old Testament types. The first is Naboth stoned to death, on false accusation, through the stratagem of Jezebel, in order that Ahab might obtain possession of his vineyard; the second, Job in his affliction, derided by his wife and his friends. The aged patriarch, in the midst of his affliction, is the central figure, while his three friends argue the question of his visitation, and his wife scornfully bids him "Curse God and die;" and the Chorus, whose constant refrain is "Behold the man," develop the analogy between the suffering and scorn which Job endures and that which is about to be inflicted upon Jesus. The first scene in the act, which takes place in the presence of Caiaphas, is an elaborate and complicated one. It begins with the laughing and shouting of the soldiers as they hurry the Captive to the Court of Caiaphas, which is now an apartment in the centre of the stage. As the curtain rises, the place is filled with Scribes and Pharisees, and the boisterous High Priest listens to the perjured testi-

mony which is intended to convict his prisoner, and then refers the case to a meeting of the Sanhedrim, which is to be held early next morning. The curtain falls for a moment, but rises again upon the ante-room of the Sanhedrim, which is filled with soldiers awaiting the assembling of the Council. At this point Judas appears again, and the sting of conscience and the agony of remorse are impressively manifest in his bearing, when another scene presents itself. It is that of Peter denying his Lord; and all the incidents of the history—the questioning of the soldiers and the maid-servant, and the crowing of the cock, with the thrice-repeated denial—are detailed with the utmost accuracy.

Meantime, the tenth act recalls the despair of Judas, and it is preceded by the tableau of Cain starting forth, a wanderer and a vagabond upon the earth. The whole scene of Abel's sacrifice and murder is represented—the two altars, the murdered brother lying bleeding upon the ground, and the murderer crushed by the sentence of his doom. In the act itself, Judas is the conspicuous character, and his mental conflict is portrayed with wonderful dramatic power. But when the curtain rises upon the Sanhedrim in session, in the early morning, as they confirm the sentence of Caiaphas, he rushes wildly into their midst, as if to seek refuge from his guilt and despair, hurls the pieces of silver upon the floor, and again rushes from the hall. Another change in

the scenery, and the Potter's Field is represented, a wild and desolate spot, and in it Judas ends his life by suicide. The girdle of his robe answers the purpose of the fatal noose, and the fall of the curtain, at the precise moment, saves us from witnessing the consummation of his purpose. An English critic, in reference to the naturalness and subtle rendering of the character, says: "The acting of Judas would be considered splendid on any stage in Europe."

The eleventh act is the first appearance of Christ before Pilate. Its prelude is Daniel accused, before King Darius, of blasphemy against the gods and of treason to the king. It is a Persian scene of Oriental magnificence, and the explanation of the Chorus has barely ended, when Pilate appears upon his balcony and the captive is led before him. The whole scene before Pilate's judgment-seat is a faithful rendering of the Gospel history. It includes the unwillingness of Pilate to condemn the accused Nazarene; the message of his wife to have nothing to do with that just man; and the demand of the High Priest and Sanhedrim to ratify the sentence of death by the sanction of Roman law. The discussion is long and tedious, as it delineates the conflict between Pilate's sense of justice, as a Roman, and his desire to conciliate the favor and gratify the whim of a subjugated and restless people. Incidentally, he learns that the accused is a Galilean, and this fact suggests a way out of his perplexity. He remembers that Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee, is in

Jerusalem, and the case is therefore referred to him. Immediately the captive is hurried to the presence of Herod, who receives him with a kind of courtesy, in the hope of seeing a miracle performed by him. The scene transpires upon the central stage, and is one of unusual magnificence in its scenic splendor and of painful intensity to the spectator. The Tetrarch of Galilee sits upon a golden throne, with a crimson robe upon him, and surrounded by his court, to the inner circle of which the multitude is not admitted. The scene is preceded by the tableau of Samson the sport of the Philistines. Very soon it becomes evident that the curiosity of the Tetrarch is not to be gratified. The calm and dignified silence of the Accused is the evidence of that. Herod ceases to be interested in the prisoner, and the case is remanded again to the jurisdiction of Pilate. Between the decision of Herod, however, and the second appearance before Pilate, there is an intermediate scene, which delineates with painful accuracy of detail the scourging and the crown of thorns. It is preceded by two typical tableaux. The first is Joseph's bloody coat brought home to Jacob, his sorrowing father, by his perjured brethren. The aged patriarch receives with heart-broken anguish the apparent evidence of the death of his son, and the tableau is a touching completion of the two previous scenes in the life of Joseph, which have been represented in the Play. The other prelude represents Abraham in the act of offering up his son Isaac as a

sacrifice. Beside a rude altar the patriarch stands with his hand upraised, holding the sacrificial knife, while Isaac kneels before the altar, with his hands tied behind him, and ready to be offered. An angel arrests the knife as it is about to descend, and a ram is discovered in the thicket near by, entangled by his horns in the bushes. The chorus explain that Isaac's willingness to die on Mt. Moriah is a type of Christ, and the scene proceeds to the delineation of its historical details. The scourging and torture of the victim begin, and there is not an incident of brutal coarseness and cruelty which is not reproduced here with a vividness and intensity that are simply harrowing and horrible to the feelings of a modern audience. The scourging was bad enough: how any artificial protection could shield a human frame from acute agony under stripes so severely and repeatedly laid on, was a problem; but the crown of thorns was almost intolerable, as, seated upon a pedestal from which he was presently to be hurled headlong to the floor by the buffeting of the soldiers, and helpless with his hands tied behind him, the fangs of the thorns were pressed into the temples by iron rods bent at right angles over the sufferer's head by four brutal soldiers, whose malicious enjoyment of their part was complete when the blood trickled in streams down the victim's face. It is a relief to the feelings when the scene closes; and the next act, which completes the sentence of death, is introduced by its appropriate

preludes. These are the elevation of Joseph to the throne of Egypt, in which Joseph appears in a triumphant chariot of gold, surrounded by his attendants, messengers and slaves, with the pyramids in the background; and the choosing of the scape-goat at the door of the tabernacle, a prophetic hint of the choice about to be made between Jesus and Barabbas. Even before the chorus of the spirit-singers depart from the stage, the fierce tumult of the people, stirred up by the emissaries of Caiaphas, is heard in the streets of Jerusalem. Headed by the priests and members of the Sanhedrim, they take their place before the balcony which represents Pilate's house. Presently the Roman governor appears, surrounded by his retinue, and, in response to the clamor of the mob, insists that he finds no fault in this man. Even Barabbas, the robber, is introduced, to change, if possible, the demand for his blood. But the effort is unavailing, and he calls for a basin of water and washes his hands, in connection with the declaration of his innocence in the transaction. The sentence of death is then read by the secretary; the two thieves in the prison are included in the same condemnation, and the soldiers proceed to the duty assigned them.

There is a significant contrast between the treatment which the condemned receives at the hands of the soldiers of Pilate and that meted out to him by the minions of the Sanhedrim. The fierce and passionate hate which inspired the Jewish police gives

way to the business-like, yet not inhuman, treatment of their prisoner by the regulars of the Imperial Army. And the incident is an illustration of the scrupulous fidelity with which these village dramatists develop the shades and tones of an idea.

The completion of the tragedy is necessarily preceded by the bearing of the cross, and this is foreshadowed by two significant tableaux: Isaac ascending the heights of Mt. Moriah, bearing the wood for the altar-sacrifice; and the plague of the scorpions in the wilderness, and the healing of the Israelites by looking upon the brazen serpent as it is lifted up by Moses. Both preludes are exquisitely rendered in grouping and color; and the spirit-singers have scarcely interpreted their meaning, when the sound of many voices is heard and the procession moves into view, headed by a Roman horseman in full armor and bearing aloft the ensign of the S. P. Q. R.; then a centurion, with a company of soldiers as an escort or guard, and then the condemned, staggering under the weight of a cross which he is scarcely able to bear. During the advance, Simon of Cyrene is introduced, and the burden of the cross is laid upon his shoulders. And this affords also the opportunity to introduce the only legendary incident of the play, namely, the tender ministry of St. Veronica, who, it is said, lent her handkerchief to the sufferer that he might wipe his brow, and found his portrait indelibly impressed upon its texture where he had pressed it to his face.

The procession passes through the gate of the city toward Golgotha, and the climax of the drama approaches. The central curtain is still down when the chorus appear for the closing scene. Hitherto they have been clothed in their brilliantly colored vestments, but now they are robed in solemn black. The music of the orchestra falls into the plaintive minor of a funeral dirge, and the heavy sounds of a hammer are heard upon the central stage as if some work of death were going on. The curtain rises, and the most intense portraiture of the entire drama is revealed. The two thieves are already suspended upon their crosses, which stand erect upon either side of the stage; but in the centre the process of crucifixion is still going on, as the instrument of torture and death lies on the floor with its head to the background. The superscription is attached to it, followed, of course, by the parley of the High Priests, and the cross, with its victim securely fastened to it, is lifted slowly from the ground. As it reaches the perpendicular, its base enters with an audible thud the mortised socket prepared for it in the floor of the stage; and as the actors adjust themselves to their respective positions, and the artistic grouping is brought out by the sunlight and the shadow, there is a picture of the Crucifixion such as no master has ever painted. It was simply perfect in every detail, and the effect was deeply impressive and solemn. The vast audience was hushed into the utmost silence, while every

eye strained its gaze upon the scene. There was a fascination in its realistic effect that could not be resisted and cannot be described. To all appearance, the body was suspended by the nails in the hands and feet; no mechanical contrivance for its support could be discovered by the most careful scrutiny; and when the soldier's spear pierced the side and the blood gushed out, the effect was so real that there was a start and a shudder throughout the audience.

Every historical incident of the Gospel narrative, however minute, was reproduced during the eighteen minutes the scene was exposed to view. The casting of lots for the garments; the mockery of the High Priests and the soldiers; the seven words from the cross; the proffer of vinegar to dull the agony of the sufferer; the Virgin Mother, standing by the cross and weeping—a living picture of the old Latin hymn :

“*Stabat Mater dolorosa*
Juxta crucem lachrymosa
Dum pendebat filius”—

and Mary Magdalene kneeling at its foot; Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus, and the Apostle John standing afar off; the earthquake and the thunder, and the words of the Roman centurion, were all strictly adhered to in the representation.

The descent from the cross is almost an exact reproduction of Rubens' celebrated picture, though there are some differences in detail rendered necessary by the actual lowering of the body from the cross. It is

conducted mainly by Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus, with two assistants, in the most tender and reverent manner; and it is really a triumph of dramatic ingenuity. The body is carefully wrapped in a linen cloth and tenderly borne to the sepulchre in the garden at the rear of the stage; and as the stone is rolled to the door of the sepulchre, one could almost wish that the drama ended here.

There are two subsequent acts, however, given not so much for dramatic effect as for theological completeness. The first is the Resurrection, preceded by two tableaux, namely, Jonah delivered from the belly of the whale, an authorized type of the Burial and Resurrection of Christ; and the deliverance of the Israelites from the Red Sea, while the host of the Egyptians were drowned. The second is the Ascension, which is the closing scene, a dramatic apotheosis, in which Paganism and Judaism acknowledge the power and dominion of the cross, the disciples and the faithful women watch the ascending form, and the angels deliver their message to the men of Galilee, who stand gazing up into the heavens; and as the curtain falls upon the scene the Chorus sing their triumphant doxology—a kind of hallelujah chorus—and the long task of the day is done.



JOHANN LANG (CAIAPHAS).

CHAPTER V.

CONCLUSION.

AND so the Passion Play ended. Long as the time had been which was required for its presentation, its closing scene almost inspired a regret that its varied spectacle was over. As the curtain fell for the last time, and the vast assembly of six thousand people began to disperse, their demeanor was as subdued and reverent as that of a worshipping congregation departing from church after a service in Passion Week. Such was the fascination of the scenes witnessed, that even the return to the village was like passing at a single step from the Thirteenth Century back to the Nineteenth again; but the impression which the spectacle makes upon the mind is indelible. Once seen, it can never be forgotten. The memory of it lingers with you like that of some elaborate panorama you have seen or some grand picture gallery you have visited, with the addition of motion and life to the pictures, and the accompaniment of music and song. It was a strange and child-like interweaving of Old Testament prophecy and New Testament fact, and as we sat there, in the quiet calm of that summer Sunday evening, under the shadow of the Bavarian Alps, with the blue vault of heaven for our ceiling and the moun-

tains for our background, it seemed as if the whole story of the Bible had passed before us, from the simple record of the Fall in the Book of Genesis, to the recital of the Crucifixion by the Evangelists of our Lord. And this was the case, whatever interpretation may be given to the crowning fact—whether it is remembered as the noblest instance of heroic and unselfish martyrdom which history records, or as the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God. As the mind was carried along by the unfolding lesson of the drama, it seemed as if all preceding lines of history and of revelation converged into one spot and one scene; and the long march of the centuries, the changes of dynasties, the overthrow of governments, the decay and disappearance of races and civilizations, dwindled into transient and incidental circumstances in the history of man, when compared with the great catastrophe of the Fall, the sublime drama of Redemption, or the Immortal Destiny made possible by the Cross of Christ.

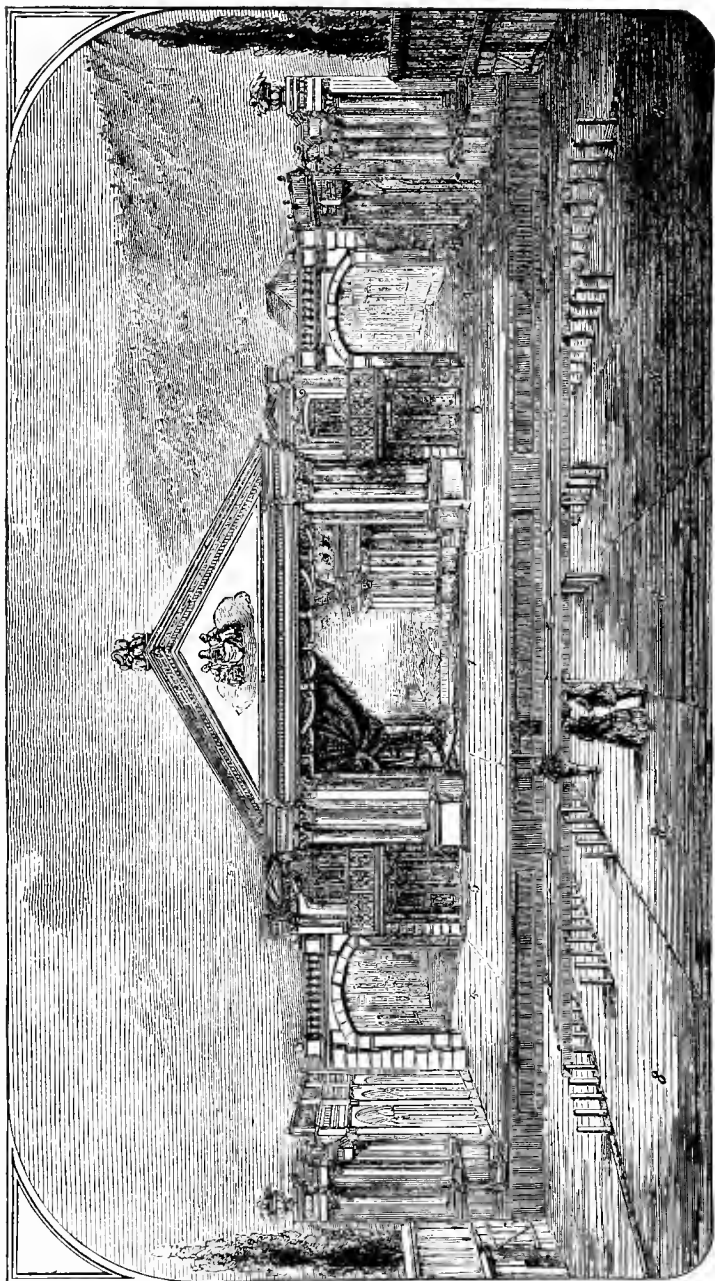
In the intenser acts of the drama, where we would naturally expect our reverence to be shocked, the individual actors disappeared from thought. They were no more than the threads which constitute the warp and woof of the canvas upon which a picture is painted by a master hand; and face and form and costume were like the pigments which portray upon that canvas in light and shade and varying hue some great thought which genius has conceived, or some

great fact of history which is precious to the heart of man.

And as the masterpieces of every great gallery have sacred themes, and the thoughts of genius in other centuries which have survived connect themselves with the Madonna or the Christ, so the central thought which lives in the mind when the Play is over is the thought of Christ and the suffering He endured. It was at once a manifold lesson from the Bible and a many-voiced sermon from the pulpit. And in its teaching it emphasized, as no abstract statement possibly can, the organic unity of the Old Testament and the New. Prophecy and type, and psalm and history, were all welded together in the unity of a common purpose and thought by the constant re-appearance in varied forms and at widely distant periods of the One mysterious Personage who is the centre of them all.

We can only guess at the impression made upon these Bavarian peasants and the pilgrims of the Tyrol; but it seemed to us as if between the sunrise and sunset of that day we had read the whole story of the Bible, engrossed in some ancient or mediæval manuscript, whose illuminated borders were brilliant with their tracery of vermilion and gold; interwoven with the portraits of patriarch and prophet, of seer and type and symbol; but whose page, in homely Saxon black-letter, contained for human study and faith the epitome of all Scripture lessons—the sum and substance and climax of all Christian truth.

NOTES.



THE STAGE OF THE PASSION-THEATRE AT OBER-AMMERGAU.

NOTES.

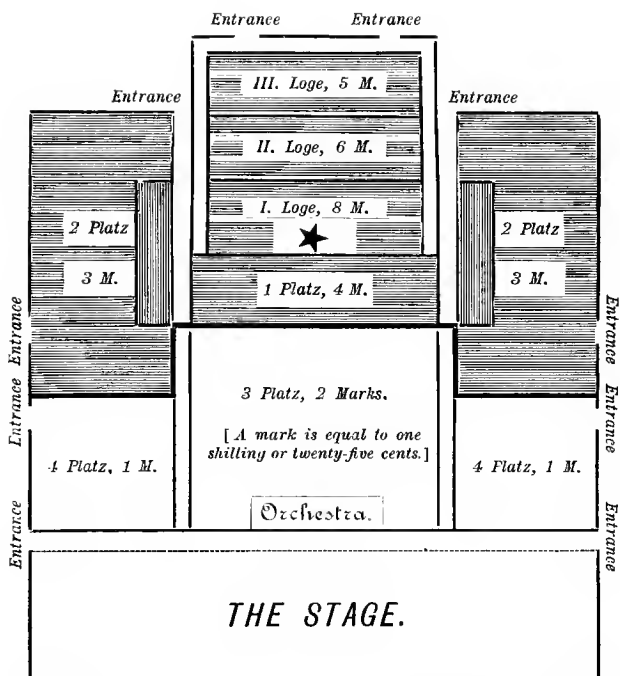
1. The character of the Christus has for two decades been performed by Joseph Maier, a pale and unintellectual man, whose personal appearance bears a strong resemblance to the conventional pictures of our Lord in art. In 1870, when the representation of the Play was suspended on account of the war between Germany and France, several of the prominent characters were drafted for military service. Joseph Maier was one of them; but by special petition to the King of Bavaria he was assigned to duty as clerk in one of the military bureaus at Munich, thus obviating the necessity of cutting his hair or shaving his beard. He appeared in the play the following year, when it was acted as a Thanksgiving service for the success of the German armies.

2. The character of Judas Iscariot is represented by Gregor Lechner, as it was by his father before him. Although he is one of the most upright and estimable of the householders of the village, there is a deep-seated prejudice in the minds of the peasantry against him, as in their simplicity they associate him with the character he represents, and feel a repugnance toward him, as if he were really the Judas who betrayed his Master. The prejudice, while it is a disagreeable one to himself personally and to his family, is at the same

time a testimony to his superb acting in the rendition of the part.

3. The proceeds of the play are divided into three parts. 1st. The expense of its production, the structure of the edifice, and the costumes, which alone are reported to have cost \$40,000 for the present year. 2d. The charity fund of the village for the care of the poor and for the repair of the cottages, which is attended to by the Burgomaster. 3d. The remuneration of the players, which is very insignificant, scarcely amounting to what they would earn at their occupation of wood carving in the same length of time. The entire pay of the principal character amounted to \$150, and the others were in proportion.

4. Different impressions are of course made on different persons. The writer saw no instance of irreverence within the theatre during the play, though there were parties of students on their vacation tour who were present simply because it added a new sensation to their summer rest, and who were disposed to be boisterous and jolly upon all possible occasions. But the great mass of the audience, peasants, pilgrims and tourists, were quite as reverent in their demeanor as an ordinary congregation in church.



The Seats of the I., II, and III. "Loge," as well as those of the I. and II. "Platz," are covered.

PLAN OF THE PASSION-THEATRE.

