

THE MOTHER'S PRAYER.

Dedicated to Miss Agnes Knox.

Within a hushed and darkened room
 A baby lay a-sleeping;
 And o'er his little fevered bed
 A mother knelt a-weeping.
 God only knows what mothers bear;
 He sees their hearts with anguish tear;
 He hears them gasp "the mother's" prayer,—
 "God save my baby boy."

God answers prayer; the babe got well;
 He had much better died.
 He grew a reckless, lustful man,
 And left the fireside.
 He wandered homeless far away;
 His father only hoped he'd stay,
 But mother still knelt down to pray,—
 "God save my baby boy."

Within a hushed and darkened room
 A mother lay a-sleeping,
 And o'er her tear-stained, fevered bed
 Her "baby" knelt a-weeping.
 He kissed her forehead, smoothed her hair,
 But she, unconscious he was there,
 Kept breathing deep her dying prayer,—
 "God save my baby boy." JAY KOBBS.

PARSIFAL AT BAYREUTH.



AYREUTH, on the morning after my arrival, presented an exceptionally gay and animated appearance; as the month of Wagnerian opera was about to begin, and representatives of every nation had come to honor the achievements of that great genius, Richard Wagner. The town, which has about thirty thousand inhabitants, is the capital of Upper Franconia, and was, until 1769, the residence of the Margraves of Brandenburg-Culmbach. On the extinction of the Bayreuth line it became the property of the Ansbach family, was afterwards ceded to Prussia, and finally became the property of the King of Bavaria, in whose possession it still remains. It is a quiet, unpretending Bavarian town, with its Old Palace, its New Palace and its unimposing Gothic church, and if Wagner had not made it his home would, in all probability, have remained, comparatively speaking, unknown.

Wagner first took up his abode in Bayreuth in 1872. His house, *Wahnfried*, a square modern German building, stands in a large garden, while a beautiful shady avenue leads from the gate to the door, above which is the inscription, *Hier wo mein Wännen Frieden fand, Wahnfried sei dieses Haus von mir benannt*, and above this is a drawing of Wotan as a wanderer. His grave, which is covered by a large marble slab, lies at the back of the house, and a bust of his patron, the mad but art-loving King Ludwig of Bavaria, stands at the head of the avenue.

In August, 1876, the first *Festspiel* was given at Bayreuth, when the *Ring des Nibelungen* was presented with great *éclat*. *Parsifal*, which was first presented in July, 1882, also met with great success, and since that time has been given nearly every year, usually with only one of his other works, but last year *Tristan and Isolde* and *Tännhäuser* were both given, and this I believe another has been added.

At Bayreuth one hears the best Wagnerian opera singers on the continent, and though *Parsifal* itself, which may not be given anywhere else, is of course a great attraction, yet the perfection of the whole representation is a source of infinite pleasure to all. The singers all sing by request of Frau Wagner, who is a most energetic *intendante*, and to sing at Bayreuth is, on the continent, to

reach the apex of a musical career, though of course Wagnerian music needs a peculiar style of singing. The list of singers, directors, leaders, etc., is announced usually in April or May, and seats must be secured as early as February or March.

The performances, which are given for one month each year, usually from the middle of July until the middle of August, begin at four o'clock in the afternoon and last until about ten, though a pause of one hour is given between each act for refreshment and rest.

The opera-house, built in 1873 from designs by Wagner himself, is situated on rising ground to the north of the town. It is approached by a pretty drive bordered with shade trees, and this, when the festival is in progress, reminds one somewhat of the *Bois de Bologne* or the *Prater* in Vienna. The building itself is not remarkable for its architectural beauty, but its acoustic properties are excellent.

A blare of trumpets loudly announces to us that the performance is about to begin; a novel method, but one to be sure in keeping with the surroundings. The building is quite as plain within as it is without, and the stage breaks boldly before one, unrelieved by any gradual narrowing by boxes. The seats rise in tiers, and the *Logen* for the princes are at the back; the orchestra is hidden

Wolfram von Eschelbach's Franco-German epic, one of the most glorious of mediæval times, gave Wagner the subject for his greatest musical drama. He himself, greatly grieved at the depth to which dramatic art in Germany had fallen, and, convinced that writings and exhortations were of no avail, decided that a new model must be given by which German dramatic art might be purged of its frivolity and emptiness. His *Ring des Nibelungen*, which is taken from the ancient *Nibelungenlied*, shows us that stage of heroic writings just before the appearance of Christianity. *Parsifal*, on the other hand, taken from Wolfram von Eschelbach's greatest heroic, presents to us Christianity just making her appearance in epic verse. In the *Ring des Nibelungen* the great deeds of the Scandinavian heroes are brought vividly before us in an all-powerful and impressive brilliant musical representation: In *Parsifal*, however, we see Christianity personified as pity, exerting, with her sisters, faith, hope and charity, their softening and refining influences, and presenting to us a picture hallowed by its symbolic relation to a greater event. Heine has well said that early Christianity was a concordat between church and state, by which the intellect was the *de jure* master, but the senses were to be master *de facto*: but in *Parsifal* we see the intellect master both *de jure* and *de facto*. A tale in which pity and charity played such prominent parts appealed strongly to Wagner, who had too often suffered from the coldness and unfriendliness of the world. The Knights of the Holy Grail, pure and unstained, guarding with their lives the chalice from which our Saviour had taken the last communion, and in which Joseph of Aramathæa had caught the precious life-blood, presented a picture strong and capable of a great purifying influence, and qualified, if anything was, to effect that cleansing and purification of which German drama stood at that time so much in need.

A death-like silence is observed throughout the whole performance, and the effect is awe-inspiring in the extreme. The music built up by that skilled hand treats in a masterly way the various themes of sadness, faith, inspiration, etc., and its effect combined with that of the grand scenic display strongly impresses one with a feeling of veneration and respectful awe.

Trista und Isolde and *Tännhäuser* do not inspire us with that feeling of reference which clings about a drama like *Parsifal*: in them love plays an important part, but it is earthly love and religious inspiration is wanting. Thus *Parsifal* is the great charm of Bayreuth, and those who see it depart elevated in thought, more loyal in their devotion to music and high art, but above all deeply impressed by the mighty talent, ability and genius of Richard Wagner.

H. P. BIGGAR, '94.