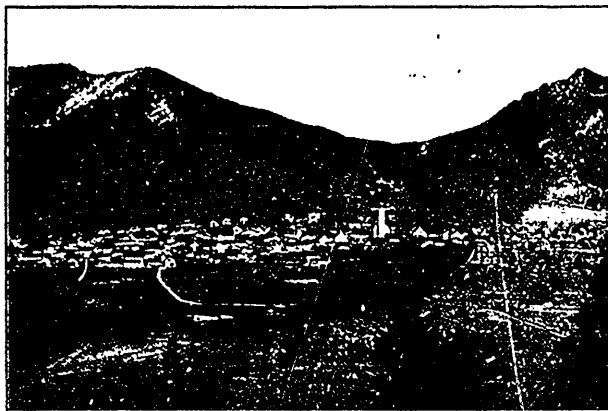


THE PASSION PLAY.



OBERAMMERGAU.

Many thousands of persons have gone to Oberammergau during the last summer to witness the Passion Play. They expected to find a survival of the devout and reverent performance with which the Bavarian peasants long celebrated their deliverance from a deadly pestilence. The play has been advertised as a special attraction in every city in Europe, and has been converted into a vulgar money-making show. Yet it has been exploited by the press, and even by some sections of the religious press, as a pious performance.

Nevertheless there has been a good deal of adverse criticism. The *Christliche Welt*, of Leipsic, says: "The play has degenerated into a theatrical exhibition, which tends to make the most sacred things in history the means for nervous excitement and for the gratification of a low type of desire for pleasure. The participants, notably he who plays the rôle of Christ, are made the object of hysterical adulation after the manner in which the heroes of the stage are adored by their worshippers. The time has come when this kind of an exhibition of sacred things should cease."

It has been condemned as mercenary and the villagers as very extortionate. The season brings in for the peasant community over \$1,600,000. While the villagers are described as pious, simple-minded people, yet we are told that their chief vice is drunkenness. Even into this idyllic region the jealousies of the outside world have found their way. Rosa Lang, the person who enacted the mother of

our Lord in the play ten years ago, was superseded by a younger and fairer performer of only nineteen years of age. It broke the discarded player's heart, and she took refuge in a convent near Vienna. Her father, Burgo-master Lang, who had thrice delineated the character of Caiaphas, was crushed by disappointment and sorrow, and three weeks after the opening of the play, was carried to his grave with great lamentation, not unmingled with deep

feelings of remorse and self-upbraiding on the part of the villagers.

The stage management was almost absolutely perfect, even to stage thunder at the Crucifixion, under the direction of professionals from Vienna. "Every anguished detail of the tragedy, from the falling of Jesus under the weight of the cross to the taking down of his body, is shown in the greatest perfection of stage realism. To the observer in the audience nothing but the nails support the body on the cross."

A writer in *Zion's Herald* says: "When you hear constant discussions as to the merits of Christus as an actor, or some one remarks, as I heard a woman, 'Judas is a rank actor;' when you see the crown of thorns pressed on the head of Christus by men whose every motion indicates their fear lest he be hurt; when the legs of the malefactors are broken with a stuffed club, and the gash in the side of Christus is made by some mechanical device on the point of the spear, you will perhaps shrink as I did from it all, and hope that this year may witness the final presentation."

"I asked many people what they thought of the representation, and almost without exception the reply was the voice of my own feelings. They had been impressed, but not moved; astonished at the marvellous presentation of such a finished drama by village folks—I heard a well-known actress say that there wasn't a company of actors in existence who could do it as well—but not touched: