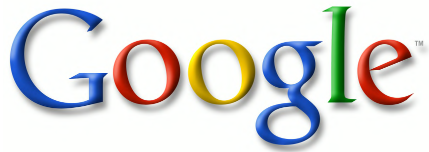

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The pertinent Wagnerite

Benjamin Morris Steigman

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Stanford University Memorial Fund

In tribute to

Paul Emerson
Arts Editor and Critic
Palo Alto Times

from a gift by

Mr. Ronald D. Goben

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THE
PERTINENT WAGNERITE

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THE PERTINENT WAGNERITE

BY
B. M. STEIGMAN

NEW YORK
THOMAS SELTZER
1921

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To Otto H. Kahn, Esq.:

An address to you here may seem a reversion to the prefatory type of two hundred years ago, that prudently made obeisance to its noble lord with full many a scraping superlative. Your benefactions in behalf of American art, in truth, have been such as to make the courtly tribute seem hardly an anachronism. It is the more gladly rendered since there is no real occasion at the same time for preclusive protest against an eighteenth century interpretation of the motive. For one thing, even those who do not know the extent of your patronage of artistic enterprise, are aware of your insistence upon anonymity. And those who by chance have had a glimpse of the range of this patronage, realize how slight must be the possible tribute to it — were such attempted — of an occasional dedication like mine. This every one knows: that the democratic principles you have expressed are certainly two hundred years beyond the age of Halifax and Chesterfield; and that any attempted restoration, be it merely literary, of the encumbrance of ruffle and silken stocking, would meet with a doubtful reception.

The more cause have I to hope that the impersonal protest of these essays will be given such consideration by you as the theme merits. For the in-

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debtedness of music and drama in America to you — here, properly, might be doffed the plumed hat and bent the silver-buckled leg — is not only for the extension of their scope, but, even more, for their elevation to sometimes proud æsthetic levels. It seems unlikely that an appeal against the recent degradation of these two arts, united in the music drama, will be disregarded by you.

It is possible to attribute to our singleness of purpose during the war our unreasonable aversion for German opera. The result was a great artistic wrong committed by way of retaliation against no matter how infinitely greater an international wrong. The attack upon Wagner was certainly an unevenhanded attempt at justice for the attack upon Belgium. It seemed more an unflattering revelation of our real regard for the master. The post-war acceptance of the music dramas *in English* is a corroboration: for the banishment of Wagner's original text can hardly be considered a Versailles visitation; and must be wholly attributed to our blurred understanding.

Surely there is nothing really extenuating in our patriotic protestations that it was not that we loved Wagner less, but that we loved America more. The inevitable conclusion must then be that our love blinded us to the beauty of one and to the ideals of the other.

The sedative years are happily restoring our vision. The concession made is now general that the best music drama ever written belongs not to the Germans alone, but is the heritage of all man-

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kind. It is by no means the least of the distinctions of the Metropolitan Opera House under your guidance that it was the first to recognize this.

In addressing this little book, therefore, to the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the world's greatest opera house (who by virtue of this office is the chief administrator of Wagner's bequest to humanity) I am confident that its plea for a complete restoration of our heritage — the original poetry of it no less than the music — will be heard. And in addressing you personally, Mr. Kahn, I venture to secure as advocate for this plea one of the foremost of America's connoisseurs.

Yours truly,

B. M. STEIGMAN.

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Thanks are due to the editor of *The Musical Quarterly* for permission to republish part of the essay "Nicht Mehr Tristan."

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I

THE PERTINENT WAGNERITE

A GUIDE FOR SENSITIVE AMERICANS, WHO MAY HERE-
AFTER ENJOY THE DRAMAS WITHOUT PATRIOTIC
UNEASINESS, WHEN THEY DISCOVER THAT
THE RING CYCLE IS WAGNER'S PRO-
PHETIC ACCOUNT OF THE WORLD
WAR AND INTERNATIONAL
POLITICS TO-DAY

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THE PERTINENT WAGNERITE

IN the spring of 1917 the call for a marshaling of all our forces — including the artistic — against the enemy, brought forth a response so overwhelming in its enthusiasm as to sweep all activities Teutonic before it. In the main, of course, the military, but including, also, the artistic.

As a result two opera seasons — in a sense perhaps three — were conducted without the performance of a single Wagnerian music drama. In spite of the protests from many leading music critics, who in scornful newspaper and magazine columns pointed out the absurdity of debarring from the stage the work of one of the most anti-Prussian of men, the policy of depriving our enemy of a decidedly cool comfort was carried out. Had Wagner when he made his escape from Dresden in 1849 come to America, as did so many other rebels against political autocracy that year, his spirit's choice as to the righteous side of the barbed wire entanglements in Europe would not have caused us the slightest uneasiness.

But man or spirit may be dismissed as of lesser importance. To the censor certainly the play should have been the thing. Yet it is evident that he entirely overlooked the patriotic service he could have

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performed in urging the production of the *Ring of the Nibelungs* during the period of the war. His forbearance, it might be objected, would have been strained by the hateful language itself. But even the use of the enemy's tongue might really be considered an advantage: for, the dramas being a remarkable arraignment against the former German empire, the sport would have been all the greater for having the engineering kaiserliche hoist with their own festspiel petar.

And the remarkable arraignment? It would soon be apparent to the novice who has no established Shavian theories based on the political revolution of 1848 to contend with. The perfect Wagnerite, too, after a reconsideration of the dramas in the new light, might be induced to modify and enlarge his interpretation. For Wagner's prophetic presentation of the international affairs of to-day is of uncanny accuracy.

Let the skeptical wag be dismissed before the curtain rises on the patriotic spectacle. His references, tongue in cheek, to the Hun's atrocities as exemplified by the spurlos disappearance of Lohengrin's swan or by Parsifal's initial anti-aircraft performance or by the abduction of Isolde after her kind Red-Cross nursing of the enemy, are not at all conducive to the proper seriousness of the subject. An attitude not too remote from the hushed veneration of the true disciple at the mention of the Ring must be insisted upon.

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DAS RHEINGOLD

Three mermaids glide nimbly through deep, flowing waters, the very personifications of the absolute freedom of the seas. In their care has been entrusted a golden treasure, whose glow enriches the whole world. But the mermaids seem not in the least impressed with their enormous responsibility, to judge by their joyous pranks and songs. One of them does indeed remind the others of a warning from somebody that they be prepared for possible attacks. But they pay little heed to the warning; for who would care to rob them of their freedom of the seas and the world of its peaceful prosperity, knowing the frightful penalty imposed on the criminal, viz., that he must renounce all human love and be willing to barter his divine image for the beast's maw? None such exists in the twentieth century, their tra-la-la means to imply.

But up from the depths of the waters climbs a swarthy, lame-limbed fellow. There is no mistaking his mustachios and his manly Prussian growls to have the mermaids minister to his wants: it is evidently Wilhelm Alberich himself. "Oh, indeed," he cries, blinking at the gold and attentive to the mermaids' chatter, "getting possession of that and thereby ruling the whole world requires nothing but a renunciation, nothing but the breaking of a paltry agreement among men! Very well." And before the startled mermaids realize what he is up to, he has launched an under-sea attack upon their treas-

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ure. In despair, the maids can only send out agonized calls for help.— This is the opening scene of *Das Rheingold.*

The second scene presents characters rather different from this monster. Lord Wotan, a dignified old gentleman (probably a descendant of some ancient member of the Witenagemot), and Lady Fricka, his consort, are introduced on a not unusual occasion of domestic infelicity. The Lord, it appears, is so absorbed in all sorts of business matters (Verträge) that he has altogether slighted the women folks at home. Wherefore the lady expresses her mind rather frankly, and insists upon his attention to domestic reforms. Wagner shows here admirable artistic restraint: for, though not a word is actually said about suffrage, the implication is unmistakable.

Lady Fricka's violence in presenting her demands is limited for the sake of the decorum essential to the operatic stage to mere contralto outbursts and tragically clenched fists. But her words are cutting: she even goes so far as to accuse the Lord of setting his ambition and greed above the raptures of love. Now, that is entirely wrong of her, for the Lord is in this respect the very opposite of the monster Wilhelm Alberich. To Wotan the renunciation of love is an impossibility. Wagner's serious purpose must make quite acceptable the otherwise dubious propriety of the Lord's promiscuous attentions to women wherever he went: it was, first, to indicate the importance of love in the man's life; and, sec-

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ondly, to represent figuratively his fertility in colonization throughout the world.

As the scene progresses another striking attribute of Lord Wotan's becomes apparent. The spear he carries is evidently not meant for warlike purposes only. On the haft are carved laws and treaties; and these he most respectfully carries out. When, for example, the two lumbering giants from the neighboring island come in and demand their rights, Lord Wotan, for reasons best known to him presumably, is disposed to ignore them. But the two petitioners know that the Lord has no autocratic powers, that his whole existence is founded upon law and order as determined by an invisible constitutional force. "Hör' und hüte dich," they cry in a thick brogue, "Verträgen halte treu'!" If the burly fellows (whose names are something like Fasouth and Fafnorth) could only agree upon precisely what they really want, there is no doubt that the Lord would have to yield. But Fafnorth is evidently at one with Lord Wotan himself in the desire for material possessions, whereas Fasouth, the fair-haired and blue-eyed, seems afflicted with a Celtic temperament to judge by his rhapsodical devotion to Freia. He stamps an ardent, if somewhat ungainly foot, and insists: "Kein andrer: Freia allein!" His persistence arouses in the Lord's immense bodyguard an eager desire to take to arms. But here the Lord's inexorably binding law interposes: "Nichts durch Gewalt!"

Recent activities of the bodyguard point to Wag-

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ner's exposition of Lord Wotan's restraint as somewhat idealized. The actual British stage has been rather more turbulent than the operatic.— The cause may be the musical medium of the presentation, which could not do away with harmony altogether. Or, it may simply mean that Wagner was pro-Ally.

But why are not the respective demands of the Irish petitioners granted? To answer the question all of Lord Wotan's secret runes must be deciphered. The spectator at the next performance of the Ring here in America will no doubt understand much more of them than he did at the last. Something of an answer is given later in the fourth scene. For the present the question is unsettled. Wotan will not hear of an absolute possession of Freia. "Think of something else instead," he tells them; and "The fair goddess of freedom, was taugt euch Tölpeln ihr Reiz?" You see, he is hopelessly insular: he has only one eye.—Finally when the two begin to grow unruly, the Lord looks helplessly for a being he calls his Chancelloge, who enters theatrically opportune.

Study (whenever he affords you the occasion, which is not often) this agile and elusive arrival. He seems continually shifting, turning, twisting — so that you really cannot tell what his form or position is. In fact, it is doubtful whether this Chancelloge has any distinct personality: he changes with each new situation and musical phrase; is now decorously shocked at the suggestion of extreme measures, now agitating for the most radical solutions

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to Lord Wotan's endless entanglements; now he flares up bravely, irradiating the Lord's perplexities, and now he is a meek and lambent menial. The frequency of these changes is owing in part to the exigencies of the office, but no less to the fickleness of those he serves. There is certainly cause enough for his lament: "Immer ist Undank Chancelloge's Lohn." See, for example, how Lord Wotan's whole establishment turns in rage against him as soon as he appears, because of the Irish situation, although he has spent all his energies in trying to find a substitute for the Freia that stubborn Fasouth demands. He frankly declares, however, that none exists. Besides, he tells Wotan, he has promised the Irish what they ask. But the Lord says he has his own interests to look after; whereupon a gleaming Gladstone Chancelloge at once shifts into a Disraeli concern regarding foreign affairs, and he leads Wotan toward Nibelheim.

In spite of his continual changes of front, 'Loge (as he is named for short) is undoubtedly sincere about one measure dear to him. He has heard of Wilhelm Alberich's cruel attack upon the freeborn sea dwellers, and he implores Lord Wotan to go to their aid. Now the history of August, 1914, records the immediate response of the Lord in behalf of the sufferers. Wagner's presentation, therefore, of the old gentleman as not only indifferent to this plea, but actually himself covetous of the supremacy the sea-gold can give, will be seriously objected to by the censor. It is to be hoped that due extenuation will

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be accorded the dramatist, for here he evidently must have sketched from life. His portrait of the noble Lord is one familiar to us since the days of our grammar school history lessons on the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. For all his prophetic insight Wagner could not conceive of Wotan's abandoning those ambitious hopes of his so soon. The censor's pardon, therefore, just now! Full amends will be made later in the Cycle, when our ally will be presented in an entirely different light. In the meantime may the offense be somewhat condoned by the sympathy expressed by 'Loge, that assemblage of a number of vastly different attitudes of mind, upon hearing the plaintive cries from over the waters.

When the scene closes, the Irish question remains unanswered. The two giants seem more than ever bent on victory; and the curtain goes down upon Lord Wotan's realm with the never-setting sunlight he is wont to boast considerably dimmed.

The third scene of *Das Rheingold* is the interior of a Krupp munition factory in Nibelheim. It is not particularly realistic, for of course Wagner was not permitted to disclose any secrets that were to be kept until Der Tag. Hence he has us believe that the busy factory hands are mining gold and forging ornaments, whereas they are really making machine guns and howitzers. Much of the scene consists of practical tests of a newly invented camouflage device — or is it only a gas mask?— patented under the trade name of "Tarnhelm." The head

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of this institution, as would be expected, is none other than the Kriegsherr, Kaiser Wilhelm Alberich.

The spectator is at once impressed with the efficiency of the system, for immense stores of ammunition are continually being turned out. But at the same time his highly developed twentieth century regard for personal liberty is outraged by the inhuman treatment of the poor Nibelungs in the name of discipline. The miserable fellows cower under the aller-hoch-Kaiserlichste eye, and before a sign of His Majesty they dart about in panic haste. So "disciplined" are they that there is no need for any Imperial revelation: the Presence is felt everywhere even when not seen. Witness the howls of that little fellow at the beginning of the scene under the invisible Prussian whip! How profoundly Wagner understood this aspect of the political situation, we Americans came to realize fully when we read of the discoveries even here of Nibelung meddling and peddling and small beer plotting. "Zittre und zage, gezähmtes Heer!" he cries; and though generations and thousands of miles intervene, "Unterthan seid ihr ihm immer!"

Such an organization Lord Wotan and 'Loge must overthrow. They realize the seriousness of the situation. "Gesteh," says 'Loge, "nicht leicht gelingt der Fang." It must be done, however, no matter at what cost; for the Hun's purpose in organizing his efficient army is openly proclaimed: "Die ganze Welt gewinn ich mit ihm mir zu eigen."

Here some spectators of *Das Rheingold* will

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perhaps sit up in the hope of seeing enacted details of the great field of war. Wagner will not disappoint them. But the composer is not a warrior-lecturer telling of the latest secrets of trench warfare; nor does he endeavor to give any personally conducted tour through northern France. An intelligent audience will hardly expect him to concern himself much with campaign and battlefields or any such seesaw mutabilities. The philosophical historian sees through the smoky cannonade into fixed truths. Besides, the actual conflict, to judge by the scene before us, seems absurdly trifling. Is it possible that in the eyes of centuries to come it really will be so insignificant in comparison with the momentous upheavals and changes of which it was incidental? Kaiser Wilhelm Alberich's power becomes reduced to that of a toad shut up in " die engste Klinze "— a clever reference to the Kiel canal. Whereupon he finds himself a wretched prisoner in Wotan's power.

So much, perhaps for the naval situation; but how about the fearful conflict in France? the spectator wonders.— Wagner has by no means ignored it: he will show us in a later drama trenches and tanks and poison gas, and enough fighting at close range to thrill the deadest soul.

The last scene of *Das Rheingold* in the meantime opens with a rather turbulent wrangle about peace terms. Lord Wotan insists upon enormous indemnities. Wilhelm Alberich, after some miserable protests, agrees, muttering that if he is only

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permitted to retain his power over the unfortunate Nibelungs, the paltry sums are none too large to pay for the valuable lessons he has learned against his next attempt to conquer the world. ("Zu theuer nicht zahl' ich die Zucht, lass' ich für die Lehre den Tand.") But Wotan understands his intentions only too well; and Wilhelm Alberich has to surrender his whole power before he is released.

Now, when the treaty of peace was signed one of the most important considerations was the restoring to the Rhine-maidens of their former treasure. Yet in this scene the antiquated Lord Wotan is still unable to take his one eye from the immense hoard over which the downfall of Wilhelm Alberich has given him power. (Censor, forbear! This is not the scene of redemption promised above.) The only reason the Lord refrains from attempting to realize his ambition is that he knows that his whole realm would be lost if he disregarded the acts and treatises on his spear for selfish ends. What such an individual's attitude toward the Irish would be is self-evident: Fasouth and Fafnorth appear again with their complaint, but Wotan shows the same harsh attitude: he fears lest the two conspire against him and undermine his jealously guarded power. His 'Loge shows again a brilliant Gladstone flame, but this time it is quenched into a Salisbury cold glow, a mere ornament to enhance imperial Wotan. The Lord throws the Irish some gold, and is rather indignant to find that they clamor as loudly as ever for their rights.—The 1921 spectator naturally

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shakes his head over such foreign and domestic policies.

In presenting the outcome of the Irish upheaval, Wagner surely is acting as propagandist rather than prophet. It hardly seems possible that Fasouth and Fafnorth will have to settle their differences by taking to arms. In the play when the Celtic Fasouth appeals to Wotan to intercede, the Lord turns his back upon them; whereupon they go at each other with upraised clubs, and presently one of them lies dead. Wagner's terrible warning, it is hoped, will preclude the catastrophe in which the momentum of seven centuries of insurrection might otherwise result.

The ancient treaty-ridden Lord is in this scene warned of another contingency, should the old order prevail. He evidently still affects divine rights, although he knows at heart that it is now "aus mit den ewigen Göttern." But when his mood has become particularly arrogant, the veiled figure of Erda, the earth, the source and continent of all nations, rises and warns him to yield: "Weiche, Wotan, weiche," lest "dunklem Verderben" overtake him. This contralto solo of Erda's has been drowned almost beyond hearing these days by the tumultuous accompaniment. Of course, even so great a musician as Wagner may miscalculate an effect. Looking at the score it would seem that Erda's command to the Lord to yield to the Irish ought to be quite effective. Perhaps in the future her rôle will be assigned to one with a voice of

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greater carrying power, thereby realizing the noble intentions of the master. Just now there are in England several promising understudies; and here in America, too, there are many enthusiastic aspirants to the part.

But for the present the Lord remains decidedly insular: the play ends with Donner's thundering eloquence in Lord Wotan's honor, and a state procession of solemn imperial splendor.

And is that all? Is that all the European conflict meant? The war is over evidently, but what has it really brought about? And — zounds! What about us — us Americans! Do we count for nothing to that quack prophet, we who were the deciding power? We are asked to see that humbug performance, and, for all the war's having pressed upon us everywhere, are to believe our part in it to be deserving not even the mention! Our sacrifices, our suffering, our best men on the battlefield ——

The indignant spectator must have forgotten: *Das Rheingold is only the prologue to the whole business.*

DIE WALKÜRE

Lord Wotan's head has been shown to rest uneasily indeed under his imperial crown. He will not renounce his lofty position and accept the lot of an everyday mortal; and he can not assume an absolute despotism and thereby make himself free from all

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obligations: for his power, as already stated, depends entirely on his carrying out the treaties and ordinances theatrically represented by his spear. After ages of humiliating compromise and barter to preserve his dignity, he has come to hate his own mockery of a kingship. So false a position as he and his family must maintain cannot naturally be enduring. Even in *Das Rheingold* through the pomp and circumstance of the closing court scene rings 'Loge's mockery of the helpless puppets: "Ihrem Ende eilen sie zu, die so stark im Bestehen sich wähnen. Fast schäm ich mich mit ihnen zu schaffen"; and he has half a mind to destroy them altogether. This, indeed, the spectator knows to be no mere Hyde Park cinders: he has read strange letters of late even in the *London Times;* and, anyway, 'Loge really gave up having anything "mit ihnen zu schaffen" long ago, even if they are allowed to exist to-day.

It is no wonder, therefore, that Wotan, as he himself shortly will confess, secretly yearns to be liberated from his legal bondage. But who can help him without entangling him further in compromising diplomatic snares? Only one, is the answer, who is absolutely free from the alliances and treaties and corrupt ties of the old world. And so Wotan conceives of the idea of bringing into existence a new being in a new world, who will owe him no allegiance, who in fact will antagonize him and thereby aid him in abolishing his absurdly pretentious existence.—*Die Walküre* is the story of the

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birth of this free man and his development. Time: from the Colonial period onward.

No lesser being than Wotan himself is to father the race of the deliverer. (His stiff Lordship may be pardoned the vanity because of the nobleness of the intention.) But he must nowise act the protecting parent and thereby make the chosen ones, the Wälsungs, members of the old régime. Accordingly, they were sent far away into a land where dangers and hardships would make them brave and strong. They were compelled to find a meager subsistence in a wilderness where, according to our reports, savage men and beasts waged incessant warfare upon them. ("Die Feinde wuchsen uns viel.") The barbarous tribes wellnigh exterminated them. ("Uns schuf die herbe Noth der Neidinge harte Schar.") Their women were cruelly murdered ("Erschlagen der Mutter muthiger Leib") or met with an even more horrible fate ("Verschwunden in Gluthen der Schwester Spur.") But they fought valiantly, until their foes were scattered ("Wie Spreu zerstob' uns der Feind") and their land secure.— Thus our history.

Of such a race only can spring the great deliverer of the old world from the secret treaties and compromises such as bind Wotan to the outworn order. But one last eugenic test is necessary before parentage of the champion can be granted to these chosen offspring of Wotan. The maiden Sieglinde (triumph through gentleness and mercy) is forcibly separated from her beloved Siegmund (proclaimer

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of victory). The curtain rises upon the unhappy plight of the two. Sieglinde, whose very reason for existence is that she bring to birth the apotheosis of freedom, is the mate of the dark tyrant Hunding, whose voice and grim visage are unmistakable attributes of the Southern slave owner. Siegmund, the "backwoods" proclaimer of victory for the downtrodden, has barely escaped alive after a fearful battle off the stage with the slave owner's kin, and now staggers into the home of the wretched Sieglinde, to the accompaniment of a violent thunderstorm. Wotan could hardly wish for a more terrible ordeal to test the heroic proportions of the two. If they can endure and triumph over their present misfortunes, then indeed are they worthy of bringing forth the great freer of mankind.

It is hardly necessary to comment on the significant events that ensue. It follows as the night the day that the hero will rescue the distressed one from her degradation. If the decorous spectator at times is seized with apprehension as to the perfect propriety of the volcanic raptures incidental to this liberation even on the operatic stage, let him ignore his doubtful senses and perceive the union of the perfect pair to be a historical fact, one of the proudest in our annals. The proclaimer of victory to the oppressed is redeeming from slavery the mother country of him who in a later age is destined to liberate the entire world from another kind of bondage. The historical account is accurate enough: Siegmund's unpreparedness, Hunding's ultimatum,

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the high resolve to free Sieglinde, the drawing of Nothung, the sword of liberation (possible only to him whose cause is the noblest) and the final triumphant determination to subdue the fierce slave-owner — all this the spectator recognizes at once, at the same time as he may enjoy the most passionate love scene ever written for the stage, without the uncomfortable feeling that it's unsuitable for these trying times and, besides, not quite right.

The second act brings Lord Wotan again before us. But now he is not with his staid wife, Fricka: that daring, willful, caroling girl beside him is his daughter Brünnhilde, born of his soul's yearning for the new order. She is the very spirit of ideal democracy as she dashes up the mountainside, deriding the formalities of the Lord's household. Evidently she is not a member of the family. Lady Fricka's contemptuous looks and words when in her presence signify that she should really be regarded as merely another illegitimate offspring of the inconstant Lord. Again the spectator's indulgence is craved: his Lordship's two conflicting tendencies have to be represented dramatically somehow; and since Fricka, as becomes her wifely nature, enjoins her Lord to devotion to law and precedent, the conservative lady's bitterness toward the upstart, shameless "thing" drawing his Lordship away into newfangled political worlds, is quite natural.

In Wotan's interview with Brünnhilde he discloses his heart's desire for salvation through his race of freemen in the distant land. ("Was keinem in

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Worten ich künde, unausgesprochen bleib' es ewig: Mit mir nur rath' ich, red' ich zu dir.") Unspoken, indeed, were his real hopes as Siegmund confronted the slave owner in battle. History has recorded Alabama cases and treacherous help given Hunding; and the abuse heaped upon Lord Wotan by our press found echoes until rather recent years. But the Lord has been sadly misjudged, because his real feelings remained unausgesprochen, except in this second act of *Die Walküre*. He not only expresses his wish that Siegmund triumph, but he gives Brünnhilde instructions to see to it that he does triumph. It is only when his wife Fricka appears (who in Lord Wotan's household is evidently a majority) that he finds himself compelled to follow his rigid laws and defend Hunding, because his case pertains to certain property rights. When he is again alone with Brünnhilde he not unnaturally rages against his impotence: "Was ich liebe muss ich verlassen, morden wen je ich minne, trugend verrathen wer mir traut." Brünnhilde, his better self, actually tries to rebel, but, as both drama and history record, Fricka's power prevails. The drama, in fact, parallels history in the vanquishing of the slave owner, the liberation of Sieglinde, and the infliction of a martyr's death on the proclaimer of victory. And the seed of liberty and strength here also will be found to grow and bear fruit.

The rest of the drama is more spectacular than historic. Lord Wotan, jealous of his prestige, fears the too, too solid strength of ideal-democratic

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Brünnhilde, and she must, if not die, at least be put fast asleep. He is altogether too deeply fixed in the past to let her have free sway. But how is she to be kept lying dormant indefinitely? Again Wotan calls upon his trusty aid, the many-tongued, brilliant if evanescent chain of fiery 'Loge, who surrounds her with a blaze of political artifice, so that it is impossible to detect her presence. And the Lord leaves her there, confident that even if a rash intruder should appear, it will hardly be possible for him to penetrate a barrier so imposing and so unassailable in its continuous elusive shifting. Only he who has sufficient strength and vision to ignore it all and to challenge the Lord's time-worn imperial compacts can ever hope to get through. ("Wer meines Speres Spitze fürchtet, durchschreite das Feuer nie!")

SIEGFRIED

The young hero who rushes upon the stage is clearly of an altogether different world. He seems possessed with a wild spirit of joy and freedom that breaks asunder all restraint and tramples into dust venerated laws and usages. Not that he is lawless (though his readiness to lynch Mime for his dastardly lies is grave enough charge against him): he simply cannot recognize impositions merely because they come from his elders. He knows of no father or mother; his life has been spent in grap-

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pling with the terrible realities of nature at her wildest; and his indomitable will and vitality have triumphed with such ease and such rapidity (he is still hardly more than a boy) that life seems to him a splendid game. How different from the sordid, unscrupulous Wilhelm Alberich; how hardly less different from the aged Fricka-and-spear-bound Lord Wotan!

His name? Siegfried, which means "peace with victory." The spectator recognizes at once the name and the lofty outlook upon the world. But the boisterous actions seem somewhat out of place. Is it possible that Wagner for once erred, expecting a physically more suitable actor to play the part of Siegfried than the unfortunate invalid who actually performed it? Everybody knows that only one rough-riding actor here could have shown that fierce contempt for the pacifist coward Mime, and that exultant welcome of danger. Why, Wagner is quite specific: the robust fellow comes dashing home from an exploration (or hunt is it?) in the forest, bringing with him a wild bear! He much prefers savage beasts to Mimes. ("Alle Thiere sind mir theurer als du!") He has a mania for excellent weapons and for traveling all over the world. ("In die Welt zieh'n.") And if all this does not identify him as the beloved leader who died three years ago, he is certainly betrayed by his frequent violent explosions which are accompanied by the orchestra's Rrreckless-knuckled-big-stick-tempo, his characteristic let-motif on such occasions.

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But Wagner may have made the substitution of this character for our real Siegfried for obvious theatrical advantages. To proceed with the story: Mime, the skulking pacifist, is endeavoring as the curtain rises to go on with his tinkering business as usual in spite of the existence in the world of Wilhelm Alberich and a fierce military dragon. Siegfried evidently does not know that Mime is really Wilhelm Alberich's brother, and that the intriguing creature after having left the Kaiser's realm to escape an unbearable tyrannical rule, is now plotting dire ruin. He first makes an attempt to obtain respect and obedience by insisting that he is Siegfried's only parent. But Siegfried knows better: he is the direct descendant of the great Siegmund, the proclaimer of victory to the oppressed, and he intends to be worthy of so noble an ancestor. And as for Mime (who in a way really did support him and help him to his great office, however basely selfish the purpose), Siegfried can ignore the miserable wretch and proceed with his high purpose.

All the details of this position of ours before entering upon the Great War are here shrewdly suggested. As Siegfried begins to prepare himself, Mime sets about to instruct him in the art of fearing, by telling him of the monstrous acts of the military dragon, of its enormous size ("Unmassen grimmig ist er und gross"), of mangled bodies ("dem brechen die Glieder wie Glas"), of poisonous gas ("Giftig giesst sich ein Geifer ihm aus"). But these details make Siegfried only the more eager

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to put an end to this terrible war, although the shivering wretch can't for the miserable life of him understand why it would not be better to remain safe within the cave and not bother about dragons without. In fact, when he is conscripted to do his work he is disposed to hide his quaking body behind his anvil, hoping thereby to escape.

It is in the first act of the drama that Siegfried accomplishes the first great task in connection with the war. Hitherto Mime has been forging a great number of little swords, all of which proved upon trial to be hopelessly ineffective. He is too pig-headed evidently to study questions pertaining to standardization, new mechanical devices, raw materials, etc. He is visited by a noble Wanderer from Wotan's realm (Northcliffe? Asquith? Reading?), but he fails to take the obvious advantage to obtain the information he needs. In short, hardly any real preparation is made, and the military dragon is allowed to lord it over his treasure practically unmolested. But now Siegfried takes the matter into his own hands. First he smashes all the petty swords of the Mimes of the world and casts them aside: the dragon must be killed with one great sword instead of a number of ineffective little ones. Moreover, it must be the sword of righteousness, made of the same steel as that with which his father liberated the enslaved Sieglinde from Hunding: the greedy and paltrily ambitious Mime-weapons can accomplish nothing.

Siegfried's first step in forging his new sword hor-

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rifies poor Mime: the young hero sets to work upon the blade of his ancestor, and presently it lies reduced to nothing but a heap of filings. In vain the wretched pacifist protests about tradition and new entanglements and Monroe documents torn to shreds. Here is a desperate affliction requiring desperate remedies. The country round now begins to resound with mighty hammering and forging and lusty shouts of command. Mime sees at once how more effective are Siegfried's methods. ("Mit dem Schwert gelingt's, das lern ich wohl: furchtlos fegt er's zu ganz.") What then can the scoundrel do to bring the hero to harm? When he finds himself unobserved by the eager champion he sets to work upon a brew of his own formula. It consists chiefly, he says, of "würz'gen Saften die ich gesammelt," but the spectator knows that into it go, besides poison, vicious microbes and emery dust.

Siegfried in his exuberance ignores the villain. He has completed his preparation. His sword is ready. The command is given: "Schlage den Falschen, fälle den Schelm!" Over the top!

The second act presents a forest scene, perhaps the Argonne. Within an elaborate dugout lies the military dragon that has hitherto been considered unconquerable. Nearby stands a mustachioed individual of strangely humble aspect. The spectator can hardly believe that it is Alberich himself. Can that miserable fellow be the great Kriegsherr? Or is it possible that the real power is swayed by the military dragon himself, and that the great war lord

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is only a war servant? — The spectator will probably shake a doubtful head over this notion of Wagner's.

Before the arrival of Siegfried some attempts are made by Lord Wotan (and, strangely, by Wilhelm Alberich, too,) to enter upon negotiations with the dragon. But the monster is evidently bent upon annexations, for he declares his peace terms to be: "Ich lieg' und besitze." The war therefore must be fought to a finish.

Siegfried appears, and now follows a splendidly staged battle. The great German tank[1] of a dragon, scorning his untrained youthful opponent, caterpillars his lumbering body out of the trench, supported by heavy artillery fire. Siegfried skillfully flanks the dragon, makes an effective charge, and succeeds in inflicting considerable damage. The enemy, now thoroughly roused, calls upon all his reserves; whereupon deadly gases and liquid fires are shot at Siegfried. At the same time the monster conducts his forces in accordance with the most advanced theories of military tactics. Siegfried relies upon his coolness and Yankee wit to extricate himself from his dangerous positions. He abides a favorable moment, and just as the dragon rears to crush him by sheer weight, the plucky fellow after a dexterous leap succeeds in piercing the heart of the monster.

[1] Wagner may be pardoned this one false prophecy: it was natural for him to believe that those who would make such efficient use of u-boats were also destined to bring tanks into action.

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Once subdued, the dragon undergoes a remarkable change: he becomes rather friendly, and, far from resenting his defeat, appears satisfied that his accursed existence is drawing to a close. — Again the spectator wonders.

But now Siegfried must attend to other matters. First of all, what is to be done with the sea-treasure? The hero solves the problem more effectively than a conclave of diplomats could after months of conferences: Let nobody own it. His great achievement evidently has given him understanding. The treacherous Mime soon discovers this, as he meets with his just doom. And now that the enemies both without and within have been overcome, the great consummation the world has sought may be realized. The world is safe for democracy: let her be awakened!

The great event occurs in the third and last act. Lord Wotan, his way of life fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf, summons Erda to communicate to her his resolve. Erda not unnaturally wonders why he has punished Brünnhilde, his noblest offspring, with banishment and eternal sleep; for wasn't it he himself who had taught her to defy oppression and be true to his ideals? ("Der den Trotz lehrte straft den Trotz? Der die That entzündet zürnt um die That? Der das Recht wahrt, der die Eide hütet — wehret dem Recht?") But Wotan needs no reminders of this, for he has learnt that the primeval science of statecraft is now obsolete. ("Urmütter-Weisheit geht zu Ende.") He longs for redemp-

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tion through the new order, when Brünnhilde will bestow her blessings upon mankind unhampered by him. ("Wachend wirkt dein wissendes Kind erlösende Weltenthat.") And since he knows that his runes and intrigues are now intolerable, and that the longed-for redeemer will soon appear, he bids Erda rest, never again to be disturbed.

Siegfried appears shortly, bent upon his high purpose. Now Lord Wotan is fully aware of the fate that will befall him upon the awakening of Brünnhilde: "Wer sie erweckte, wer sie gewänne, machtlos macht' er mich ewig!" His cordial reception of Siegfried is therefore no mean tribute to his innate nobility. Nothing, it will be said, in his career became him like the leaving of it. Hardly any conflict really takes place: the sword of liberation hews the rotted spear into pieces as a matter of course. Hereafter there can be no secret treaties and alliances, no wretched compromises and stealthy bargains to cause new world wars. Siegfried steps boldly through the 'Loge tactics, and Brünnhilde is awakened.

Here the Ring story really ends. As for *Götterdämmerung,* no judicious Wagnerite, perfect or imperfect, past or present, can find in it anything but more or less stereotyped operatic medley, much of it sound and fury, most of it signifying nothing.

Hardly anything, it would seem, ought here be said about the music itself. But incredible as it is, no few denunciations of the Wagnerian scores have been made by the stout defenders against possible

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invasion of Teutonic clefs and quavers. It might of course be pointed out that the music tells the same story as the poem: that the Loge music, for example, darts in and out of every key as if seeking ways and means; or that the Wilhelm Alberich music is orchestrated for instruments that blare the gutturals of German speech; or that the music for Lord Wotan's home is set to unmistakable beef and ale harmony. Or, more significantly, that with the awakening of Brünnhilde's pure democracy the Wagnerian dramatic music changes into popular opera. But the best way of confuting him who believes the "Waldweben" and the "Ride of the Valkyries" to be sinister Teutonic propaganda, is to let him examine at close range (whatever protection he desires to be assured him) the real nature of the Wagnerian music drama. He will quickly discover that it is based entirely upon two familiar principles, freedom and equality: freedom from fixed operatic and autocratic forms into which the words are sent willy-nilly; and equality for all parts, in fact, for every word of the dramas. There are no "grand" tenor or soprano aria settings for specially favored passages, while others have to be content with humble raiment to set off the splendors of their betters. Every phrase is entitled to all the self-expression and self-development and self-realization the most ardent individualist could ask for. What can be more truly American than this permission of the "little" parts to decide for themselves to what tempo or key or instruments they wish to belong; or, peradven-

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ture, to remain altogether independent of any dictating orchestration?

Such are the music dramas barred to the public since the outbreak of the war. They glorify the triumph of righteousness in 1918; yet they were silenced as inappropriate — even irreverent. And so we have been allowed as far more appropriate entertainment the thumpings and acrobatic soprano-wrigglings of Lucias and Traviatas.

When will Brünnhilde really awaken? — And will there follow only that saccharine operatic gush?

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2

"TRADUTTORE, TRADITORE"

IN WHICH IS PRESENTED THE BOMBARDMENT OF THE DRAMAS BY STOUT DEFENDERS AGAINST AN INVASION OF TEUTONIC CLEFS AND STAVES. THE SHELL TORN RUINS ARE EXHIBITED.

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"TRADUTTORE, TRADITORE"

LES monuments Français Détruits par L'Allemagne, an inquiry published in 1918 under the direction of the Etat des Beaux-Arts, endeavors, according to its editor, "to conserve and to transmit comme une arme défensive against oblivion the memory and the proof of deeds which later will grieve and amaze humanity perhaps even more than they do these days of misery and confusion." In peculiar contrast to this is the editor's quotation from Professor Clement of the University of Bonn, deprecating "the cult of monuments which, in view of the military necessities and in consideration of the precious lives it was a question of saving, appears as a strange sentimentality and anachronism." The Professor's introduction of the human element as a shield behind which any criminal onslaught might safely be perpetrated, is rather cowardly. His comparative contempt for the razed structures does not, as he evidently intended, convey any respect for human life; it merely emphasizes the barbarous attitude toward things of beauty. The "cult of monuments" is the cult of the former splendors of Reims and Louvain and Ypres, the cult of art; to call it an anachronism is to abjure all embodiment of noble thoughts and emotions, to drop again to the earth upon four clawing paws; and to

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regard it as a strange sentimentality (a term which no nation still afflicted with the sorrows of Werther is advised to use), is further indication of how far remote from every day necessities like the military, the Teuton can keep that nebulous haze wherein his spirit is said to be. The antithesis of "precious lives" with monuments of art is characteristic of the German plumb line method of investigation. Professor Clement in an open letter to Albert Bartholmé refers to the silly hypothesis of a Raphael masterpiece and a human being in a burning room and the dilemma of the rescuer. Bartholmé, the professor adds, had the common sense ("Milden Menschlichkeit" is the German) not to find an answer.

To suppose the destruction of human life comparable with the shattering of a cathedral shows a clod-like limitation of man's existence to the finite actuality of his handiwork. A demolished work of art, existing only in time and space, its form one with its spirit, is reduced to a rubbish heap of smirched canvas and brick and timber. And in that heap lies irrevocable the best scoring we really have of mankind's steady rise. Nobility and charity and humanity and such like comforting abstract attainment is lamentably insecure. The tangible creations we can hold on to. And they persuade us to believe in man's strength of soul.— The Frenchman's belief that the destruction of art works will grieve and amaze humanity even more in the future than in the turbulent present is indicative, there-

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fore, of a fine apprehension. It could safely be maintained that the images evoked by the name of Louvain and of Reims were as disastrous to the German cause as two lost battles. For the monumental losses were felt to be both unnatural and irretrievable; the battles were logical episodes of the tragedy of war and may have a retrospective reason for existence — if curiously regarded, not remote from that of effecting through pity and fear a purgation of these emotions. To the coming generations this completed tragedy will reproduce its great message; while the shattered architecture and sculpture, in the manner of Duncan's virtues, will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against the deep damnation of their taking-off. The crumbled fragments of stone defy nature's cicatrisive ways. In spite of the elasticity of man's wrath it will never be possible to condone the barbarous destruction of the Cathedral of Reims.

That the Germans realized this may be inferred from their voluble explanatory protestations, even while their guns bombarded the city. Ingenious and, it must be admitted, rather convincing as some of their arguments appear, they are not in the least extenuating, for they are based entirely upon military considerations. If these could be accepted as a new categorical imperative, the German attitude was perfectly logical. According to the infernal order of things it was right that Reims should fall.

But let the Hun be given his due. There were no attempts to explain the bombardment as necessi-

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tated by considerations other than of their merely physical existence. We have read nowhere of the Cathedral's doom because of its spiritual significance. Perhaps the Germans, for all that excrescence they call sentiment, found it beyond them to say that Notre Dame de Reims was an embodiment of French patriotic ideals and that its existence was fraught with sinister French propaganda. Public feeling in Germany did not clamor for the destruction of anything French Gothic as a barbarous and fearful relic. The magnificent windows of the Cathedral were shattered by a calculating monster seeing in them only a material obstruction to his plans; but the beast pretended to no such human construing of the gorgeous glass as to have it reflect its opponents' hateful culture. It reduced to dead cinder the marvelous carved wood, and it demolished, as if they had been earthen breastworks, the devoutly statued Gothic glories. But of the grotesqueness of civilized concern over the baleful effect of those arches and traceries upon patriotic devotion, it seems to have felt nothing.

Now as a human and civilized nation we of course did not disregard in this way everything but our physical strength. The contest had to us spiritual significance. It was not only an invading army against which we battled, but also a Kultur. And since military and geographic exigencies made it impossible for all of us to charge against the former, many drew their redoubtable weapons against the latter; for that adversary was conveniently at hand

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and could be dealt any number of death blows. After all, such mutilation was no doubt an excellent assuagement of the bitterness we felt; and so it served to make not so much our nation as some of our more corroding or explosive citizens safe for democracy.

That is how we shall dismiss outbreaks such as those that were reported to have taken place against statues of Goethe and Schiller in Chicago and Baltimore. Local eruptions — say prickly heat. It happens in the best regulated nations.— But what will people — European people — say? Now that we are more intimate with them (on visiting terms and all that) they will have their opinions. Shall we be regarded by these old folks as was inexperienced David Copperfield by the considerate Yarmouth waiter, who contrived to eat up the lad's chops and potatoes and batter-pudding, and to extract from him one of his bright shillings, and then surveyed him with an uplifted eyebrow that announced the clear and cold fact: " You are young, sir, young, very young "?

But then we should no doubt welcome the Yarmouth waiter's judgment. We are rather fond of proclaiming our astonishment over the achievements of so young a nation as we are. Why have we assumed this air of inveterate youth? Is it that we like to apply to ourselves the direct proportion according to nature, of the length of infancy to the complexity of the eventual development? Or, are they correct in their estimation, those overseas con-

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sumers of our chops and potatoes and batter-pudding, and extractors of our bright shillings? Perhaps they will point out by way of proof our obstreperous distinctions between meum and tuum, exemplified politically by the Senatorial attitude toward the League of Nations, artistically by the openly proclaimed plea that the Wagnerian dramas be banished to give greater opportunity to native talent. We may look back, then, upon such incidental matter as the shattering of the statues and effigies and the brave show of tongues fiercely stuck out against the foe as signs of youthful high spirits. Young nations will be young nations. As long as their hearts are in the right place. . . .

And that they were. Witness the lofty indignation recently expressed against the Teutonic morals of the Nibelungen Ring, "absolutely incomprehensible to our modern standards." Precisely what is referred to is somewhat doubtful. The Ring men are not disinclined to drink — sometimes even get their heads quite befuddled. And the Ring women, far from taking them to task, are at times their aiders and abettors. But that is hardly as yet "absolutely incomprehensible" to us moderns. Most of the domestic Ring tale — unscrupulous landlords clamoring for an exorbitant rental on your Walhalla apartment; the drudges down in the Nibelheim kitchen below becoming insolent and swearing at you openly; your wife nagging at you when you don't stay at home or when you show the slightest civility to some other lady; your children unfeelingly set-

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ting themselves against you — is the familiar stuff of our everyday decent homes. The moral atmosphere,[1] in fact, must be of a very high order: for does not Mrs. Wotan triumph completely over her recalcitrant husband? — However, the objections raised against the Wagnerian morals may be owing merely to the recent general outbreak of righteousness, that continues these days with unabated fury.

Of a different nature was the belief that Wagner was responsible for much of the world's unrest. This resulted from the way a youthful heart has of pumping the brain sophomoric and dizzy. It beat indignation over the Wagnerian dramas when the barbarians named their lines of resistance against freedom and light after their monstrous pagan gods. And ha! The Rhine flows through that Cycle! — Whereupon reason is inundated by a wildly pulsing horror. The distance from the battle fields made hearts keener and minds blunter. British vision was clearer. Londoners could witness the performance of *Tristan und Isolde* comfortably with the likelihood of bombs from a zeppelin dropping down any minute.

[1] To disarm criticism against the one doubtful scene containing the "Braut und Schwester" goings on in *Die Walküre,* it is only necessary to compare the conception of Siegfried, whose fiery nature presupposes unusual parentage, with that of Milton's "divinest Melancholy" whom Vesta, the bright haired,

> To solitary Saturn bore;
> His daughter she; in Saturn's reign
> Such mixture was not held a stain.

He would be a bold modern who declared the Puritan's lines incomprehensible. Beside them Wagner's defection, if any, in view of Siegfried's extraordinary physique, is eugenic rather than moral.

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No less immature certainly was the discovery of Prussian ideals in the music itself. Unfortunately, no particular passages have been indicated on that score. It would have been interesting to note precisely what keys, or tempi, or what harmonic progression or orchestral effects had been singled out as especially inimical. At present, music as an exposition of national aspirations is rather vague. The strains of "Heil dir im Siegerkranz," for example, through mere geographic transposition can be made to expound the glories of Teutonic imperialism, constitutional British monarchy, and pure American democracy.

But these considerations of youthful shortcomings are relatively unimportant, for with the reproduction of the Wagnerian dramas they may be forgotten. It is the possibility that our impetuous patriotism may ruin some of the world's greatest art permanently that gives rise to grave apprehension. For, only if they be sung in English are the dramas to be tolerated. And we refuse to be startled by the uncanny transformation. We will not be aware of how the English versions provoke no less amazement than did the appearance of the metamorphosed Bottom: "Bless thee, Wagner! Bless thee! thou art translated." If the asinine "translation" were merely a passing jest and the normal version meant to be restored, the strange comedy would be amusing. But already we have heard enraptured Titanian welcomings of the proposed transformation. Is

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it possible that there will be no awakening from this nightmare?

The now general acceptance of Wagner in English must be attributed to one of those queer atavistic lapses by youth, even under generous impulses, into predatory cruelty. Perhaps it is a revelation of a system of primitive spoliage, of the adorning of the capture with the tribal totems. Or, it is possible that the effect of the translated monstrosities upon our foes was considered: for it cannot be but these must have shuddered at the military onslaught of a people who in the merest of sports, the opera, marshaled such terrifying native prosody by way of guard against alien contamination. However noble the motive, the banishment of the original words for which Wagner wrote his music is in effect viciously and irreparably destructive. The future, heedless of our present resentment against the German language, will condemn us for having perpetrated — twentieth century enlightened though we are — a palimpsestic crime.

The original text must, in truth, first be obliterated. The judicious who will grieve include not only the singers, but all truly appreciative auditors of the drama. After so many decades of abundant exposition of the Wagnerian musical and dramatic principles, the impossibility of dissociating the poetic phrase from the corresponding musical, or even the particular word from its corresponding note or chord, is surely quite understood. And how un-

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likely it is that any present or future text, superscribed as more consonant with our own age and our own land, can assume this musical association, becomes evident when the wellnigh impossible restrictions are considered.

The translator's ordinary problems are of lesser concern here. The limitations imposed upon him give him rare occasion indeed to consider which of the two general purposes, according to Arnold, he must choose. The first of these, to lull the reader into the illusion that he is confronting an original work, to affect our countrymen, that is, as the original affected its natural hearers, would be deprecated with a horrified pointing to the way the Huns were smitten by it. (In a sense, though, the existing English versions of Wagner appear, save the mark! original enough when placed beside Wagner's poems.) The translator must aim, then, to give the other possible effect, namely, entire faithfulness to the German original. To secure such faithfulness he must overcome the usual lack of verbal correspondence, which De Quincey has made vivid by an image from the language of eclipses: "The correspondence between the disk of the original word and its translated representative is, in thousands of instances, not *annular*: the centers do not coincide; the words overlap; and this arises from the varying modes in which different nations *combine* ideas. The French word shall combine the elements, *l, m, n, o,*— the nearest English word, perhaps,

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m, n, o, p,— by one element richer, by one element poorer."

Then the German language, raucous of sound though we feel it to be and unwieldy of structure, is, because of its metaphysical and psychological connotative power, the perfect medium for the Wagnerian conceptions, and because of " its capacity of composition — of forming compound words "— the perfect vehicle for the Wagnerian music. It is not impossible to accept this assertion without encroachment upon the fearful battleground of style and content. The English abstract equivalent may at times express the Wagnerian: the English phrasal substitution for the German compound, hardly ever.

To such verbal limitations must be added the metrical.— Shades of Raleigh and Colin Clout — still, peradventure, debating through the western gale upon the Irish coast, heedless of the roars of the Spanish eighteen-pounders from Fort del Oro, the propriety of imitating the classic meters — how fine a wrath would not be theirs if they beheld the butchered imitations of the (musically) even more impossible Wagnerian! The disaster that the preposterous Elizabethan fashion might have brought upon English poetry was happily averted. Consider the desperate hexameters that, as it was, were perpetrated in the endeavor to shatter our accentual vernacular and then remold it nearer to the heart's desire for classical quantity. Can the attempt to substitute English words for the German original,

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with the inevitable mutilation of either rhythm or reason, be more enduring? To be sure, in a translation from a modern language there ought to be no occasion for any reckless metrical chiropody. But the problem here is even more vexatious: for instead of having to find the equivalence for merely the classical quantities of longs and shorts, the translator must evaluate his syllables for musical quantities from breves to hemidemisemiquavers.

These are only the technical difficulties. It is conceivable, however unlikely, that an English text may painfully be evolved that will render Wagner with sufficient accuracy, and that at the same time will comply with the musical and prosodic exigencies (including even such secondary considerations as alliteration and assonance and rhyme). But then Wagner wrote poetry; and beyond all other considerations the English substitute must be poetic. A marvelously precise mechanical reproduction once attained, the translator, presumably of imagination all compact, is expected to breathe into it the breath of life. Unless he succeeds in doing this his product is insufferable nonsense. If it is meant to be poetry it must under all circumstances soar. The awkward flapper is really a distressing sight. It pleads dumbly for a merciful delivering shot.

The translator's eye, it appears, while in a fine frenzy rolling, is to be scrupulously observant of the agreement of his every word with the original text, of his every metrical bar with the prescribed musical. Such consideration differs not only in de-

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gree but in kind from that of conforming with the rhythmic and stanzaic framework of true poetry. The support or means or mold has become elaborate, embellished, sometimes an almost finished product. The translator occasionally has to produce inspired tracing.

No English poet perhaps exemplifies as does Swinburne the qualifications requisite to the rewriting in English of a Wagnerian poem. How easily such a one might have been harnessed to any of the imposed restrictions is apparent from the mad pace in *Tristram of Lyonesse.* There is a driving in and out of the medieval legend, a scattering about of brilliant verbiage in lavish if misty luminance. It is apparent to even the casual reader that if the profusion be impeded by multitudinous directions it must turn cold and dark.

But allow for miracles. Granted that a Swinburne can fly, precisely fine-wire guided, granted that a camel can go through a needle's eye. The animal when it emerges must be rapped upon its patient crown anyway. It must be whacked into the dust senseless, dead. There must be no such animal for there can be no such animal.— That is excellent logic, excellently applied. That can be no begging of a question of taste.— Say the miracle does occur. Say the crooked, dry, and wooden lines that are to replace Wagner's were to shoot living English blossoms. They would be out of their proper setting, their fragrance alien, their color absurd. They could not replace the indigenous. At best they

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might amaze as prestidigital transplanting. There could not possibly be any recognition of the inevitable, requisite to true appreciation. The altogether unexpected in art has been found often enough almost as disastrous as the altogether expected.

The proposal to translate the music dramas into French or Italian, although obviously fraught with the same impossibilities,[1] has at least the merit of acknowledging the superiority of a foreign over an English version. To be obliged to hear our daily speech from the lips of Kundry or Brünnhilde would be too hard a strain upon our credulity. Disbelief is willingly suspended when it confronts the impossible; but it bristles violently before the improbable. Even the most inane of operas that, for all the sense the libretto has, might as well be sol-faed all the way through, is generally expected to be sung in a foreign language. That is not only a negative shrinking from hearing the pitiful stuff stark naked; it is a positive demand for artistic consistency.

It need hardly be interposed that English romantic poetry,

> The same that oft-times hath
> Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn,

[1] When Mr. Ferrari-Fontana appeared as Tristan for the first time in 1913, singing nearly two acts in German and then continuing from the words "Wohin nun Tristan scheidet," until the end in his native language, the press contrasted the clumsiness of the German words with the sensuous beauty of the Italian. The relief felt by the audience immediately upon the discarding of the laborious German was of course a revelation of Mr. Ferrari-Fontana and not of Wagner.

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is just as remotely removed from our daily speech as is Wagner's, and offers similar resistance to translation into any vernacular.

The distance from reality of all music drama, its invariable origin " in fremdes Land, unnahbar eurem Schritten," renders it in truth inviolable to attempts at foreign aggression. Our own poetic drama in a similar manner, though in a lesser degree because of lesser technical difficulties, shares this natural protection. Our, that is the English, coast of Bohemia is one of the last places where a hostile power might effect a landing.— But then only an esthetically militant nation with lust for world dominion would seriously consider such enterprise. All great powers, it is to be hoped, especially after the fever contracted in 1914 has completely abated, will calmly abjure the idea. It will be realized that a reckless seizure of foreign poetic expression is a good deal more serious than a mere documentary act of annexation of a strip of African territory, which thereby changes neither its outward physical characteristics nor, it is pretty safe to hazard, many of its dusky interior activities. It is really not false or visionary to say that the matter should have been fully discussed at the peace conference. Applying the perspective test — whereby we estimate the ancient civilizations so largely in terms of artistic achievement, studied with a minuteness which we should think folly to apply to their territorial shiftings — applying the test to our own age, as we may expect of the future, the urgency of such a discussion

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is obvious. As for ourselves, our attitude surely ought to be guided by Wilson's lofty pre-Versailles proclamation of "No annexations, no indemnities . . ."

The proposed acquisitions are perhaps meant to be only temporary. Eventually the original words are expected to be restored to the music. The English translation is merely a precautionary exposure of the Teutonic subject matter, found advisable by us, the mandatory of a possibly insurgent group of music dramas.— That is all very well indeed. But the English text once established, it will probably remain, unless sufficient provocation will again make a change necessary. It is not likely that the general public will be roused sufficiently by the artistic shortcomings to insist upon a restoration. On the contrary, the change will be felt superficially as contributing to the general understanding of the dramas, making the performance of them endurable. We have inherited a good deal of the English insistence upon sensibleness and their confidence in English as its inevitable medium. And with the prevalent belief that the words don't count anyway, there will hardly be sufficient protest against the thousand little defects that will have to be accepted and endured until — as is the way of pain and ugliness — they gradually become unperceived.

And so the war will have mutilated Wagner's work, even as it mutilated the great cathedrals on the Western front. After the patriotic shot and shell that have been directed against the dramas

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as *spiritual* obstacles (the distinction must again be insisted upon as our due tribute) to the successful termination of the war, they will again be tolerated, provided they be kept in a translator-torn state. The implication must be that in their fringed and ragged condition they cannot possibly have any seductive power, and will leave the American listener at the end of the performance loyal to his native institutions. Certainly in years to come when the cracked and crooked language will have become dissociated from the frantic cause of its existence, there will be little occasion for Wagner worship. Consider the added prestige this will give our native art. For all judgment of art is comparative, and ignorance of the greater is blissful enjoyment of the lesser. And so the war will have produced — or rather brought out of its ecliptic state into light — great American music dramas. And so it will have been a tremendous stimulus and inspiration to American music drama. Q. E. D.

But the music remains in a sense whole in spite of the translated infliction. Age cannot wither that nor custom stale its infinite variety. It is proof against bomb and densest chauvinistic gas. It will of course be sadly racked and torn. Wagner's poetry is rooted in it. Magnificent individual passages will be empty, hollow, tottering, crumbling. But what is symphonic will stand erect. . . .

Dr. Van Dyke in describing Notre Dame de Reims of to-day says that " when seen from a distance, the mass of it is so impressive that one is not

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conscious of the damage that has been wrought in the glorious structure." It is only upon clearer view that the completely shattered state of the delicate ornamental details becomes deplorably clear. The cathedral is seen then to be a bare and gaping ruin.

The operatic tourist is, alas! interested as a rule in only general perspective. The outline is unbroken; it is familiar. The same story is enacted, the same music performed; those are the unchanged towering heights.— He returns home broadened and quickened.

And he either can not or will not perceive the depressing mockery of the battered temple.

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3

" NICHT MEHR TRISTAN "

IN WHICH ARE SHOWN THE CHARRED REMAINS OF THIRTEEN TRANSLATORS OF "*TRISTAN UND ISOLDE*, AS WARNING TO FUTURE PERPETRATORS

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"NICHT MEHR TRISTAN"

PHONOGRAPHED music is an eminently suitable objective for the smiter of Philistines and the slayer of them with great slaughter. For one thing, its devotees are so many that the warrior has sufficient cause to appeal for Jehovah's thunder against them. Then it proceeds from a mechanical contraption, hateful, accordingly, in the ears of the true believer. More than that, it has become commercialized, with amazing success too. It is therefore unmistakably a contrivance of the Children of Darkness. It is an institution, an automaton, banal, crude, lifeless, soulless!

It is or it isn't art. Buzz, buzz. . . . Its present significance only the deaf could deny. To the speculative historian it will not appear fantastic that it may have far-reaching effects upon future music. The proverbial relation between necessity and invention (including artistic) does not take into account their reciprocal parentage. The urgent demand for phonograph records can hardly fail to affect musical composition. It is not safe these democratic days to deprecate such lowliness as beneath the highest. Perhaps it never was safe. It could hardly have been profitable. The Bard's regard for the groundling was to their mutual advantage. The king looked at the cat in turn, and for all we know may have been impressed.

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The phonograph record, then, indicates something of the recipro-genetic nature of cause and effect; it is the producer as well as the product of operatic appreciation. Its influence upon the composer may in time be significant. Opera may become less of a social function and more of a musical; and so progress to a further remove from the old Italian aria-recitative successions, whereby a lady was to be entertained by the singer on the stage and the gallant beside her in sufficiently rapid alternations to keep her diverted. Nor is it likely that the operatic music drama will glide onward of its own sweet will, with an audience now floating supine with it, now sitting up to recognize a familiar part. Such a passive state can bring little appreciation. Pleasure cannot come that way. To furnish enjoyment, any clever hostess or lover or theatrical producer will testify, you must furnish occasion for successful self-activity. The entertained listener, like the entertained reader, is confronted with the artist's feelings and thoughts, and renders them to his own satisfaction in the medium created for him. Every real hearer of music stands baton in hand before the orchestra and conducts the music, and if the performers have given magnificent response, he feels that high elation that is granted only to one who has found complete expression. If the music is incomprehensible and he is tired or indifferent, he may drift on a tide of sound; but if normally active he will use the instrumental material in a manner he understands best. He knows that he is expected to

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find superior pleasure in it, and so he proceeds to turn it into an expression of whatever has given him superior pleasure, be it no matter how alien. The less compatible, in fact, the musical substance is with his imaginings, the greater is the activity imposed upon him, and the greater, accordingly, his pleasure. By dint of hard effort and often amazing ingenuity he discovers in a structure of sound dancing nymphs and dying poets, sea-kissing moonbeams, whole landscapes. It would apparently be simpler to limit the interpretation of music to auditory phenomena, the swish of waves, the rumble of Manhattan traffic, bird song, crashing crockery. But no, the performance is best visualized, perhaps because of the more varied and definite activities of the eye, perhaps because the translated product is sufficiently remote from the original to make any unpleasant comparison possible. So the altogether pestiferous idea of the program parallel, the running texual gloss, came into existence; whereby, carefully holding on to the explanatory banisters, the musically weak and wobbly were to have no difficulty in mounting pinnacles ever so high. The embodiment of music in the concrete is really a natural attempt to seize upon it, examine it and understand it. Music more than any other of the dynamic arts is actually of that point of time we mean by the present. Its identity with something static is meant to fix it for further observation. The choice of grass and brooks and stars to serve as interpreters, Laputan as it is, has at any rate something of preclusive merit. For, a

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vacuum being a naturally impossible alternative, their place in the observant mind at concert or opera would otherwise be occupied with the visually — judging by the newspaper accounts the morning after — most deserving attractions: the distinguished gowns and jewels that were present, here silver gray silk trimmed with pearl embroidered lace, there white satin combined with mother-of-pearl spangles, the nacre paillettes draping the bodice. . . . Now, then, the phonograph (to return from the excursion a page or two back), however imperfectly, does fix performed music for further observation. This leads to understanding, which presently becomes critical. This opera record gives a relentless exposition of what might otherwise have escaped unnoticed.

Beyond the obvious consequences of such exposition, that the orchestral guitar accompaniment will be permanently discarded as wearisome, that hazardous circus tricks in high vocal altitudes will pall, that a surfeit of bel canto confectionery will sicken, that long distance sostenuto will tend to be impressive more of the lungs' fullness than of the soul's hunger — beyond natural reactions regarding details such as these, it would be hard to prophesy as to the music. But the effect upon the text can hardly admit of any doubt. The words will have to make sense.— Of all the wonders about the opera the strangest is the complacent acceptance of the unbelievable drivel that is the general text. The sharpest theatergoer, who if the same crude and absurdly

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colored bait were laid for him in a play would utterly contemn it, swallows the whole affair at the opera house and even believes he has partaken of a rare feast.— Bah! What matters the story or the language? Who insists upon such extraneous matter cannot possibly care for opera. The passionate lover of music should be blind and deaf to the impenetrable stupidity, the wizened and painted gaudiness, the idiotic prancing and sputtering and fuming, of his beloved.— The closer view and hearing of what it really is may bring him to his senses. The phonograph record may help to dispel the enchantment that the distant stage has lent.

The foreign language is something of a refuge. For nonsense is quite blatantly exposed only when it stands in the vernacular. The alien tongue is more merciful, for to most of us it is not altogether transparent. The fonder the lover of grand opera, the more reluctant, it would seem, should he be to have it translated. In English, to be sure, it is all arrant rot; but, look you, such may be the thoughts and feelings far away where there are Cannibals that each other eat, the Anthropophagi, and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders. They perhaps do express themselves in just such bombast and are naturally given to the maudlin and tawdry.

Such considerations may have had little to do with it and it may have been only the natural inertia of the opera companies that until the outbreak of the war preserved most opera and music drama in the original. The force that overcame all doubt

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and inertia was the force that in 1918 preserved civilization on the fields of France. Yet it was not at all spent in the performance. It carried on where there could not possibly be any need for it. It struck with particular violence — of all things — the music drama; the state than which there is none at a farther remove from the daily traffic. As well have sent an expeditionary force into Arimaspia or Xanadu. It must be admitted that it was the simplest way of showing resentment against the German language. It required merely a negative insistence, preferable certainly to a positive abolition of the German press or to the carting forth and burning of a hundred thousand German books. Beside this the banishment of Wagner was much easier to effect; much easier, peradventure, to endure.

And then after a decent interval of time he may be restored. But he must first turn English.— Considering it all, it may be an unconscious tribute to the poet. We have with charity aforethought forborne from insisting upon translations of French and Italian operas. We recognize in Wagner's dramas truly noble poetry such as may well grace our tongue. We find them staged sensibly in Monsalvat, in Nibelheim, at the bottom of the Rhine-maiden's Rhine, at the top of the Valkyries' mountains, where poetic rapture is more likely than, say, in Violetta's drawing-room in Paris or in the real home for boys in the Golden West. We find them, moreover, set to music that is of acknowledged greatness. The combination, we feel, may bear the

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closest scrutiny. Fix it for the ear by phonographing it and it will remain music and poetry.— Well, that ought certainly to stand translation.

But the tribute which the general demand for Wagner in English implies turns into grotesque insult when this is carried into effect. The sound and sense and spirit of the new words will no longer fit. They bulge here and strain there and are warped and awry all over. The general form, fixed by the music, remains the same. The poetry it is meant to grace is a dead and senseless weight.

Unfortunately the common disregard which experience has taught only too well for operatic libretto is felt largely for the Wagnerian text also. When selections from the music dramas were sung in English, critical opinion was expressed upon technical aspects such as the phrasing and the pronunciation. The words were taken for granted. It was as if nothing but the choice of colors on a canvas were worth considering, and the wielding of the brush. The trappings and the suits of musical performances presumably must always command foremost attention. The news of the day is of the performer, not of the dead and buried composer. Still, a resurrection so fearfully and wonderfully absurd as that of Wagner might interest even the sensation seeker; provided always he consider the ante-mortem text. Otherwise he would hardly find the language of the English libretto unusual.

If it were only possible to submit proof — phonographic proof that could be considered leisurely —

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of what it really is like, there might be less enthusiastic subscribing to the ugly perpetration. Only a partial representation, the graphic, the black and white, is possible. It is at least indicative. As it is the more so, the greater the beauty of the original, the proof here submitted is of *Tristan und Isolde.*

That of all the incredible nonsense that is called translation of this music drama the Corders' is the generally used English libretto, is evidence of how operatic is the accepted regard for the text. The libretto is usually anonymous, a saving indication of sense by the authors. Here is a sample from the opening scene:

BRANGAENE:
Extolled by ev'ry nation,
his happy country's pride,
the hero of creation,—
whose fame so high and wide?

ISOLDE:
In shrinking trepidation
his shame he seeks to hide,
while to the king, his relation,
he brings the corpse-like bride! —
Seems it so senseless
what I say?

Well, let the reader judge.

Tolerable poetry is perhaps the hardest to stomach. We spew the lukewarm concoction out of our mouths. The Corders are noteworthy at least in that their banality holds the reader's attention. There is nothing mediocre about it. At times it is

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so pronounced as to be quite impressive. The interpretation of the meeting of the lovers is an example. Possibly the pace of the English text is set by the customary antics on the stage of Tristan and Isolde immediately after drinking the love potion. The two score bars or so that it takes to get the lovers started is used by the singers according to tradition for muscular activity familiar on the baseball field as incidental to the pitchers' warming up. When at last they do go to it their speed and control is relentless:

> Endless pleasure!
> Boundless treasure!
> Ne'er to sever!
> Never! Never!

As the poetic rapture of the second act rises, the Corder translation begins to froth and rave. The reader will hardly believe that the following, for example, is the accepted version of part of the duet, reprinted from the standard libretto:

> Hid our hearts away
> sunlight's streaming,
> bliss would bloom
> from stars' tender beaming.
> To thy enchantment
> we surrender
> beneath thy gaze
> so wondrous tender;
> heart to heart
> and lip to lip,
> each the other's
> breath we sip. . . . Etc.

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Further quotation might be spared. But it is not only from the fury of the existing translations that the good Lord is to deliver us, but from threatened further barbarous invasions. Which to prevent, the terrifying record of those who in the past have sought to effect anything like a landing, is herewith dutifully exposed.

To the natural difficulties which the unfortunate translator encountered in the German sentence structure, transposed as it is beyond the limits of our widest poetic license, must be added such cramping requirements as rhyme, which produced distortions such as " When in the sick man's keen blade she perceived a notch had been made "; and alliteration, responsible for monstrosities like " Blood-guilt gets between us," " Blissful beams our eyes are binding." Then there are many abstract terms, especially those that have distinct Wagnerian connotation, that cannot possibly be translated. " Wahn " is not " folly " (the Corders turned " Welcher Wahn " into " What a whim! ") nor is " Lust " the same as " Bliss." " In (Isolden) selig nicht ganz verging " is supposed to mean " not sink at once into bondage blest."

The greatest obstacle is of course the fixed melody, not of the larger, simpler and more obvious " dance-form," as Wagner names it, into which a stanza or whole verse paragraph may be made to fit, regardless of the position of individual words or even lines, but melody that is an intense and beautiful reading of the poem. Precise textual equivalence

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is hardly ever possible. And even slight transpositions result in utterly meaningless singing. Thus, "er sah mir in die Augen," the last word of which is linked with the corresponding motif, becomes "his eyes on mine were fastened," to which the music is quite unrelated. "Das Schwert — ich liess es fallen" is turned into "The sword — dropped from my fingers," in which the fine repression and suspense of the pause after "ich" and after "liess" are lost by the anteposition of "dropped," and the following words made merely redundant. "Mit dem Blick mich nicht mehr beschwere!" where the significance of text and music depends on the word "Blick," is in Corder English "my emotion then might be ended," with its equivalent of the inane syllable "mo." Isolde's unspeakable contempt "für Kornwalls *müden* König" is absurdly made a geographic aversion "for Mark, the *Cornish* monarch."

The page from which these examples have been taken is representative of the whole work. There is hardly a passage but has its shortcomings. And every now and then these wax into truly monumental lapses, like Isolde's puzzling

> "How his heart
> with lion zest
> calmly happy
> beats in his breast"

and Marke's shocking

> "Why in hell must I bide" . . .

Why, indeed! —

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In the preface to his translation Jackson attempts to indicate the climactic effectiveness of the drama by quotations such as: "The waves of melody rise higher and higher, as if the distant portals of heaven opened to the vibrations of two hearts."— The most curious of literary illusions certainly must be his who imitates a high winged flight by flapping his blunt feathers and believes the windy disturbance he makes to be indicative of altitude and speed. The prefatory dizziness is felt throughout the work:

"O branded blindness!
Heart's ensnaring,
Daunted daring's
Silence despairing!

Jackson's diction is noteworthy: Tristan considers the potion "heart enmaddening"; Isolde calls him her "faithless enfolder"; and while Brangaene is "blooming and wailing to heaven," the two lovers are in chewing gum rapture over their "luscious delights." The translator throughout shows vast range, now gushing forth that

"The purling fount's
Rippling current
Murmurs so merrily on,"

now in a business-like manner begging to state that

"Thy fate had truly
Been settled duly."

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The Earl of Roscommon's rule for translators is never forgotten: "Though gross innumerable faults abound, In spite of nonsense never fail of sound."

Of regard for the music there is probably less here than in any other translation meant to be sung. Even outstanding conformity is ignored. Brangaene's "was dich quält," with its implication both by voice and orchestra of the key motif of the play, is made meaningless by "to me confess." "Der wunde, die ihn plagte," with its continuous suffering in chromatic descents, is in fine musical and dramatic contrast to the following line, "getreulich pflag sie da"; and the effect is destroyed by singing both ideas in the first line: "She healed the wounds that pained him," and then adding, as Jackson seems to have a mania for doing, trite and irrelevant details: "And watched him night and day." Similar ruinous treatment is accorded the admirable setting of "das Schwert — ich liess es fallen!": "It fell — for thee alone meant!" The absurdity to which this indifference to the music led him is well exemplified by his disregard of the four bars that separate Brangaene's reply to Isolde's request for the casket — a passage necessary dramatically for Brangaene to cross the stage to fetch the casket, and musically to develop the phrase associated with it — from her exposition of its contents. Jackson's sentence is left dangling, broken in two by the passage.

With a parting mention of the Beckmesser versification (Be′fore the sun shall set"; "whatever

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Y'solde com'mand," etc.) and the distortions that they produce, such as " No insult such would twice to give they desire to " and " In custom search " (" Fragt die Sitte ") — this chamber of " Tristan " horrors has received sufficient notice. We pass to Exhibit C, the Chapman version.

The inevitable crippled and club-footed lines are here too in abundance. Especially cruel is the constant dismemberment of the text, sentences and phrases being ruthlessly lopped off where the music and the drama call for a pause. Specimen: " dem Eigenholde " (rest): " forthwith be told, he "; " nun höre " (rest): " now hear what "; " Und warb er Marke " (rest): " and if to Mark he." The exigencies of rhyme make it necessary for Isolde to " mend " Tristan, of alliteration, to " waken the deep and the growl of its greed "; of stanzaic conformity, " from this wonder, sun to sunder."

The text in general has the usual defects. There is such senseless translation as that of " Welcher Wahn " into " This is false," " Hart am Ziel " into " Right at land," " Liebeswonne " into " Love and passion." " Diess wondervolle Weib " becomes " This wondrous fair, a wife "; " Sehnsucht Noth " is " wistful pain "; " Isolde lebt und wacht " means " Isolde lives aright." The significance of " Urvergessen " is " out of thinking." The music becomes often meaningless, as when Isolde's scornful reference to the king, " Stehen wir vor König Marke," is turned into " We shall ere long be standing "; or, when orchestra and voice suggest " Laubes

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säuselnd Getön," the words are: "(by) branches art thou misled." Nor are there lacking such special features as Tristan's suspicious account of how he obtained that powerful drink. Somebody "slipped it" to him, he says, and he goes on to relate how "filled with rapture" he "sipped it." Isolde, as befits a lady, takes it of course only for her health: "This draught will do me good," she says.

The Jameson translation clutches fearfully to the original. It aims at perfect word and even phrase equivalence and does succeed better than any other. But it follows that much of it is utterly unidiomatic, and some of it even absurd. The disregard for rhyme and alliteration is conducive to exactness; but the removal of such restraint makes the poetic rapture of the drama fly outward into apparently irrelevant directions. Unrhymed lyric expression that can give the engraved effect of the rhymed (as Tennyson's "Tears, idle tears" does) is rare. The ordinary attempts sprawl.— Jameson at best writes prose. At worst his accurate following of the German leads to such constructions as "No day nor morrow" ("Nicht heut' noch morgen") or "True be to me?" ("Bist du mir treu?"); or to such felicities as "this peerless first of heroes" and "he looked beneath my eyelids."

Forman's translation is certainly not prose. If eight pages of appendixed press notices (quoting among others Swinburne and Watts-Dunton) can establish anything, it ought to be magnificent poetry. It is presumably the best that has been done by way

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of *Tristan* translation, and is therefore the most illuminating. It permits of judgment of a product finished in conformance with the Wagnerian requirements. It follows carefully, as the title page promises, the mixed alliterative and rhyming meters of the original. It is not intended, however, says the author, " to be taken is strict and continuous company with the music," and he has " not considered it necessary to print the numerous alternative readings which would be requisite for such a purpose."—Whereby is implied that the alternative lines are more singable than readable. It would be rather interesting, considering the " readable " text, to see those alternative lines which have been kept prudently out of print. They baffle speculation of possibilities in grotesque.

For the printed version is as fantastically puffed up a piece of writing as the affliction of " style " has ever produced. It is really astonishing that any one of our own age should care to accept the tinsel legacies that were Euphues'. But here they are, jacked up on impossible stilts, those mechanical contrivances of elaborate indirectness and far-fetched phraseology, that dreary parade of senseless sound. And it has not even the occasional glib cleverness and fancy that some of the anatomists of wit attained. It is altogether ridiculous. " Let laughter," says Isolde when she extinguishes the torch, " let laughter as I slake it be the sound! " And surely no audience will disappoint her when the next thing heard is

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ISOLDE: Faithlessly fondest.
TRISTAN: Deathlessly dearest . . .
BOTH: Seas in our hearts
to billows are shaken!
My mind in a tempest
of madness is taken!
Lifts me the surge
of a sense beyond name!
Fills me a goading
gladdening flame!
My bosom the bliss
can bear not of this!

Provided the audience hears it. Typographically it is certainly no more preposterous than phonographically. Whether they be read or sung such phenomena must be encountered as "Hope of hap," "unshuddering ship," "for baneful draught its backward bane." Tristan is here a "bride-beseecher," "in truth the most unturning." The alliterative orgy makes the lines stagger ("From him back you will hear"; "me thou wouldst linger not nigh to"), and hiccup ("He prated at lip," "The sword — I downward sank it"), and go off into besotted gibberish ("A scorn that scarred her land," "who Isold' could see and in Isold' not madden to melt his soul").— Which suggests the literal subject matter of Tristan's reference — irreverent and unconstitutional though it be — to that accursed drink "whose foam with bliss I sipped and swallowed."

If a final demonstration were needed of what Wagner is like in English it is furnished by Le Gal-

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lienne. His *Tristan* is unrestrained by any consideration for the music or the original meter, rhyme, and alliteration. The freedom thereby gained should be promising. Yet the product is very tame indeed. It is sometimes incorrect as translation, often slipshod, rather wearisome throughout. Illustrative passages might be taken almost at random; but Wagner translations probably the reader's bosom more can bear not of this. An interesting sidelight upon the subject is cast by Oliver Huckel's effort to translate into narrative blank verse both the words and the action of the music drama. For though his muse, certainly unlike Le Gallienne's, is one of raven hair and ruby lips, his version is the more readable. But only when Wagner is lost sight of altogether, as in *Tristram of Lyonesse,* is English poetry evidently possible.

Mention should be made of a new translation of the "Liebestod," which has been sung at several orchestral concerts. It is a faithful enough version, but there is nothing about it to modify the conclusions already drawn. It is better than the Corders' cabaret finale of "sinking, be drinking, in a kiss, highest bliss." And yet, more than such damning praise can hardly be given "immerse me, disperse me, wittingless find sweet bliss." "Immerse" and "disperse" have none of the connection and sequence that "ertrinken" and "versinken" have, except the rhyme. And "wittingless" is a brainless

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bauble intrusion of the kin of Wamba, serf of Cedric the Saxon.

Reference has already been made to the suggestion that the drama be translated into French. The difficulties, however, would be similar. Besides which, the spirit of French, its genius, or whatever it is that gives any language atmosphere, is more alien even than that of English. The theme of *Tristan und Isolde* as conceived by Wagner is especially beyond French expression. The translation becomes sharp, polished, pretty, at times even flippant. Such impression has not merely a surface origin in yellow paper covered books. It goes deeper. In considering a language the style is the people. The emotions of Wagner's *Tristan* are not of the French. Taine is enlightening: "The bent of the French character makes of love not a passion but a gay banquet, tastefully arranged, in which the service is elegant, the food exquisite, the silver brilliant, the two guests in full dress, in good humor, quick to anticipate and please each other, knowing how to keep up the gayety, and when to part."

Of the five French versions, that of Le Comte de Chambrun is admittedly unsingable, and that of Wilder has been discarded as impossibly crude and inaccurate. D'Offoël insists that his is for singing only. His excuse accuses: when the words are sung, he says, their imperfections, only too apparent when read, will disappear or at least seem slighter. The

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implied license enables him to conform fairly well with the music. Lyon's is a linear prose translation, too literal to be idiomatic, poetic, or musically sensible. That of Ernst is the least unsatisfactory. But though his work is sufficiently careful, it is quite impossible to consider it as anything more than a correct French gloss. How disillusioning seems Isolde's Liebestod, how matter of fact, when she can give so precise an account of it as: " Dans la Vie souffle immense du Tout, me perdre, m'éteindre, sans pensée, toute Joie! " That's all. (Lyon's is: " Me nouer, Disparaître, Inconsciente, Suprême volupté! " D'Offoël's: " se perdre, se fondre, sans pensée, — ô bonheur! ") The dramatic concepts lose their connotation. " Wahn " becomes either " L'erreur " or " Aveugle "; " göttlich ew'ges Ur-Vergessen " in Lyon's translation is " Du divin, éternel, primitif oubli "; in D'Offoël's: " l'oubli divin, total, suprême." Ernst's is " que l'oubli divin sans bornes "; and of " Ich war wo ich von je gewesen ": " J'étais aux sources de mon être." Good enough perhaps as science, but hardly as poetry.

More detailed consideration can profit little. Whether in English or in French a translation can give merely the lifeless substance of what in the original is the greatest of music dramas. The characters are mechanical contrivances singing mechanically contrived words. They are not the characters Wagner conceived, " nicht mehr Isolde, nicht mehr Tristan." None of the translations is really deserving of any serious criticism. And their exposition

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here is in part to indicate to such as may want to venture again upon so arid and waste an undertaking the unhappy fate of those who perished before them. The main concern is of course the suffering that may be inflicted upon the audience. It is sincerely to be hoped that any proposed text will be submitted at least on the typograph for general inspection before it is made into the great and inflexible, almost permanently fixed, record that is an opera company's performance. What the verdict would be it is fairly safe to foretell. And if the musical setting could be added and we could try out the " record " at close range, there could be no doubt about it.

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4

PARSIFOLLIES

INCLUDING SOME RECENTLY COMMITTED PARSIFALLACIES

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PARSIFOLLIES

AFTER leaping in vain for distant clusters it is natural enough for the lowbrow to grimace and say the rare fruit is sour. The comedy is good. Better still, though, is the spectacle of the highbrow, the scorner of the common garden varieties, trying, when his judgment has led him far afield, to keep from making faces while vowing ecstatically that the sour fruit is rare.

It is the more instructive, too. For it is a distinctly human performance, an achievement in repression. It is another victory over the eager insistence of the senses; another triumph of mind over matter.— It is suggestive of how civilization will swallow much that tastes bad and at the same time beam in a superior sort of way. It points to man's development as the attainment of muscular control. Behind, let there be whatever nausea or ennui or lust you please. Suppress it, conceal it, delay it. Just now

> "Guizot receives Montalembert!
> Eh? Down the court three lampions flare:
> Put forward your best foot!"

Education in large measure apparently aims to control childhood's reactive tendencies to make wry faces over unsweetened fruit. All but the most

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flagrantly matter of fact learn the trick with surprising willingness. And presently they are disposed to praise the superior flavor, implying of course a tribute to their own superior judgment. Such often heard lament as is sounded, for example, over popular disgust for literary classics because they are made compulsory reading at school, is surely more dolorous than there is cause for. While surrounded by his suffering peers no doubt every social instinct prompts the student to traditional disaffection. But away from them he soon finds the mark of culture to which mere straight faced endurance entitles him, a rather coveted attainment; and he accordingly accepts it as his. And as relish is just as much the result as the cause of glad smacking of the lips, he is much more often a polite admirer of high art than is generally admitted.

The wrong done by our expositors of classics is more likely, in fact, to be the fostering of a priggish veneration of every Master. They carry on the Prussian ideals of their post-graduate courses. Everything done by The Master must command your respect. As a test of your scholarship you must become prop and pillar for some work of his. And since every great work of The Master by this time is amply supported — many a massive doctorial crown for want of more substantial load proudly thrusting itself under fragments of the structure such as The Master probably never suspected of existence: his fondness, say, for amphibrach equivalence in his prose rhythm, or his aversion to the preterite

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tense in adverbial clauses of concession — you must needs unearth whatever mercifully dustladen work bears the great Name, reek though it may of mortality.

In the foreword we are perhaps warned to hold our nostrils. But then we have the satisfaction of having before us The Complete Works Of The Master. The title gives both intellectual and material assurance: it promises omniscience and maximum value received. What the effect is of the already rotting material upon the fresh and vigorous, is of lesser concern. And, besides, our grubbing excavators assure us that we must go through all of a man's works to get the correct estimate of him. Which correct estimate, we must believe, gives greater joy than the really alive productions themselves possibly can.

Thus Complete Works multiply and become accredited additions to the storehouse of culture. The embalmed and resurrected things in them are certainly shrewd nemesic visitations upon us for our frequent neglect of The Master's fine works when they appeared. There is the case of our finding ourselves finding intellectual delight in Browning's Red Cotton Nightcap Country, when a few decades before, *Bells and Pomegranates* seemed unimportant. There is the case of our following as upon an esoteric pilgrimage George Meredith's Victor Radnor in his endeavor to shoulder his way through the social and psychological mists on London Bridge, after we had ignored the magic carpet wonders that

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we could mount with Shibli Bagarag, the Shaver of Shagpat.

There is the case of *Parsifal* —

For one thing, that was a famous masterpiece before it had been produced. You were to witness Wagner's latest, naturally his greatest. If you were at all enlightened you believed in Wagner by that time. So that you knew beforehand you had to be thrilled and exalted. Thrilled and exalted you accordingly were.

Then the play had not been easy to procure. It was a legally hard won treasure. It had been snatched from a secluded little town in Bavaria. It had been plucked from Frau Cosima's tender bosom. It had been ravished from a holy nunnery and brought to Broadway. Naturally you felt it was something precious, something lofty, something your gross senses were unworthy to perceive and should ardently aspire to comprehend.

There is another curse upon it, even greater: the incidents — regard them though we should as mere medieval legend, ingenious fabric spun by Malory, Wolfram, Chretien, and the rest — do give the effect of a religious performance. Now the presentation of Parsifal the Savior may be regarded in two ways. It may be denounced as sacrilegious, than which contingency the producers could desire nothing better, to judge by the consequent astonishing interest in the first performance of the music drama in America. For interdiction can lend mighty seductive

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charm to a good deal of homeliness of wit or feature. Or, the performance may be proclaimed sacred; and then who can possibly admit any consideration of whether it is stupid or ugly? Religion remains prudently beyond such merciless interrogation. In either case Parsifal is quite acceptable as minister to the hosts that visit him: for, if he runs short of forbidden fruit, he can always dispense sacramental bread and wine.

It is an unfair advantage, of course. It is the same advantage as preserves so many irreverently ugly hymns, and allows prints to be made of Godheads that are blasphemous of line and color. Even modern criticism, on guard with sharp beak and talon, stands uneasily aside to let the supposedly pious matter pass. There is an endless procession of amazingly bad religious writing and playing and painting. And connivance is the sop the critic throws to St. Peter.

When the hot controversy over *Parsifal* in 1903 did set in, it was based on doubts as to its religious propriety. As a story, it was contended, Wagner's play was satisfactory enough: but was it good theology? The spectator to-day is disposed to accept it as orthodox enough: but, he asks, is it good drama? The cry of sacrilege! is a not unprecedented objection by the church to a rival performance of its rites, attended as this one has been at the Metropolitan with so much greater occasional beauty. The bitterness of mother church over the frivolity of that daughter of hers that is the modern

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stage, or perhaps rather over the enviable popularity of the hussy, has been felt since the days of miracle and mystery performances, when the young upstart boldly left the too, too rigidly worshipful maternal home, and — followed even then by the delighted crowd — set up her own establishment. The first clerical outbreak against *Parsifal* was most natural; so also was the gradual relenting and reconciliation, whereby, as through so many other tolerations, the distance from the secular is meant to be bridged, and the laity expected to come across.

Thus the *Parsifal* ritual has become quite acceptable. But the thrill of witnessing, if not a diabolical spectacle, at least a revelation of heavily veiled Bayreuth esotery, having dissipated, more eyes and ears became keener. Critical voices grew louder. Devotees protested overwhelmingly: the setting ought to be considered, the lofty purpose; it is a Bühnenweihfestspiel, a stage-consecrating-festival-play; it is a mystic and symbolic performance; it is the Master's Masterpiece. Still criticism persisted. The dullness of church service was a different thing altogether: you knew that that was for your soul's good; it was not a question, therefore, of interest or boredom. Here you had come to be entertained; you had paid a high price for admission; you were at the opera.

The devotees, however, are well organized. All such cults are. They challenge the doubtful onlooker: he must be with them or against them. They give abundant evidence of requiring superior

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mental qualifications for admission. They make it understood that the confirmed outsider is lacking. They stamp his brow as decidedly high or low.

The *Parsifal* cult is especially formidable. It foregathers in masonic solemnity. It will have the newcomer understand that the occasion is not for mere entertainment. It insists that he glare and hiss if he hear anyone applaud. It is proudly conscious of the long session, the slow proceedings. It looks about with assurance at the distinguished audience, absorbed, impressed, elated. If the exoteric is bored, he has failed to grasp the inner significance, the symbolic values. Accordingly he plunges for inner significance. He leaps for fruits of symbolic wisdom. He keeps from making faces, while vowing ecstatically that the sour fruit is rare.

To little avail, therefore, has sensible criticism repeatedly told in the frankest way of how comparatively unpalatable the Festspiel really is, as drama, as music, as religion. The meagerness of action matters little. There is even less stage business in *Tristan*. What is lacking is the dramatic and musical intensity with which nothing happens on the stage in the really great music dramas. The first and the third acts are at times simply wearisome. (The third act is the more often admittedly so, possibly because the spectator has had to remain exalted for three or four hours and finds his wings failing him; possibly because its only impressive part, the Sacrament of the Last Supper,— witnessed by the audience with a reverence that has nothing to do

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with the merit of the play — is a repetition of the first act; possibly, too, because it follows the only really splendid scene in the play.) The few episodes there are seem trivial or insincere. The swan scene is pathetic only in its revelation of Wagner's warped judgment. "The dead fowl," Mr. Huneker once said, "is borne away on its litter of twigs to impressive music like a feathered Siegfried.— Surely Wagner was without a sense of humor, or was he parodying his own Death of Siegfried as Ibsen parodied Ibsen in *Wild Duck?*" The basis for the change of scene in the first act is thick metaphysical smoke: "Du siehst mein Sohn," says Gurnemanz to Parsifal, "zum Raum wird hier die Zeit" ("You see, my son, how here time changes with space.") Parsifal was a pure fool to listen to stuff like that. Then his expulsion from the temple is quite inconsequential, and is rather to the discredit of the Order of the Grail. The Klingsor evocations are musical and histrionic rubbish. One cannot help remembering the consummate art with which Loge is called forth in *Die Walküre,* and Erda in *Siegfried.* The baptismal transactions in the third act, the laving and anointment and Magdalene rubbing down of Parsifal's feet, is unconvincing and dramatically illogical. The best and the worst of it is that Kundry has a heaven of hair and that Mme. Fremstad knows how to sway it with disturbing grace. Amfortas' exhibition of his naked wound is really not decent; and rather superfluous after his lengthy groans and lamentations. Titurel's rising in his

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coffin seems at first a silly attempt at tribute to the Grail; and thinking more precisely on the event turns it into a repulsive Lazarus occasion.

The characters are as unattractive as the story. The villain is emasculated physically, the hero spiritually. There is the wailing invalid brought on a litter from one wing, and from another that living corpse in his coffin. One more of the same sex completes their tale: an insufferably long-winded individual, an unpunctured Polonius creature, endlessly descanting notes, notes, notes. These five, with a number of utterly wooden figures that march in and out, are all we see by way of male beings in the drama. The absence among them of all but one woman, and she denatured, in hardly surprising.

If these men by their monomania and lock step discipline were at least beyond ordinary human frailties, they might be tolerated as beyond ordinary human criteria. But they are a decidedly every day lot; much of what they say is mean and stupid. The day begins with Gurnemanz's awakening two youths and upbraiding them with dull sarcasm for their sleepiness. He irritates by at first ignoring the questions the youths ask him regarding Klingsor, and then he exasperates by letting forth the wordy inflictions that are his answers. The young men are apt pupils: they proceed to mock the exhausted and unsightly Kundry who has cast herself on the ground. Whereupon their mentor, with characteristic obtuseness, takes them to task (though later on he himself calls her, according to the present version

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of the play, "You crackbrain'd drudge!") Then when Parsifal appears bow in hand, it is again their inning. "Strafe den Frevler!" they cry with a vehemence not altogether worthy of guardians of the Grail. And the King too for that matter, conscious though his agony makes him every moment of his frailty, flares up when he hears that Gawan left to seek another balsam: "Ohn' Urlaub? — Möge das er sühnen!" ("Without permission? — He'll get his for that!") And so to the end of the act when poor Parsifal, who hasn't said a word, is seized by Gurnemanz (who is again in an ugly mood and again perpetrates a feeble attempt at sarcasm) and thrust out of doors.— Whereupon the temple resounds with the magnificent tripartite choric response:

Knaben: Selig im Glauben!
Junglinge: Selig in Liebe!
Alle Ritter: Selig im Glauben und Liebe!

There obtrudes then through this cold cloistral atmosphere the more interesting disharmony heard when Alberich confronts his brother, or Siegfried his guardian, or Wotan his wife, or — the more hard hitting the puppets the merrier the showman — the good burghers of Nürnberg one another. A devoutly loving brotherhood would have been desperately dreary. "All is love, yet all's law," settles the matter as far as we are concerned. We reach for our hat and coat. Even Wagner's pious knights evidently find the sanctity oppressive.

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Wagner's failure to make the tyranny of goodness convincing is no worse than Milton's. The Bavarian rebel is as little at home in it as is the Commonwealth Puritan. In both *Parsifal* and *Paradise Lost* there is much hailing of holy light. In both works God is light. And in both, the "Bright effluence of bright essence increate" seems to stupefy those within its reach. What makes *Paradise Lost* so immeasurably superior in interest, is that Milton finds expression for the mighty wrath that was his against the presumption of the Jovian Jehovah, in his Prometheus-Satan. Wagner, his judgment heavily overcast by the doctrine of Will to Impotence, repressed as far as he could his artistic convictions, and believed he thereby created a sacred drama. Fortunately he still had something of Milton's abandon. He permitted Klingsor to create the one beautiful scene in the play. "Die Wüste schuf er sich zum Wonnegarten." And the crowded loveliness of girls and music and setting shows where Wagner's sympathies were. His other scenes are by contrast bare. Occasionally his inhibition even there fails, as when the orchestra revels in Amfortas' notice of "Waldes-Morgenpracht," or when it reflects the swan circling over the lake, "sein Weibchen zu suchen." At such moments we hear echoes of *Siegfried* music. There are wistful recollections of the other dramas, of Rhine maidens and galloping Valkyries and all the marvelous things that happened when the more indulgent god Wotan ruled. But in the main the

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words and actions of the Grail knights are set to a somber or barren score. Wagner could hardly hope to be more successful than Milton in trying to avoid making holiness a negative quality, an absence of everything that gives delight. The creation of the magic garden as the place of sin became accordingly a most grateful duty, zealously performed. The artist in Milton revolted against his dull theme and found refuge in Hell's temple, "where pilasters round Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid With golden architrave." The artist in Wagner found it, if only momentarily, in the Zaubergarten.

But then Klingsor is no Satan. He might at least have been a conventionally heroic figure, a champion of freedom against church and kingship, of nature against monastic seclusion, of beauty against asceticism. But he is not even a man. He is a ridiculous operatic contrivance, without even its wire pulled logic. Perhaps Wagner did not dare make him otherwise: for Parsifal had sufficient difficulties to contend with, as it was, for his feeble head.

And yet against dullness we know the gods themselves are powerless. Wagner must have felt that he could safely do his best in trying to tempt the untemptable. Let Kundry ever so subtly draw him towards her by her introductory maternal appeal, let her voice plead with no matter how golden an opulence, let her blandish ever so much loveliness — and Kundry has a heaven of hair and Mme. Fremstad knows how to sway it with unspeakable

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grace — Parsifal is as safe as if she were Potiphar's wife. And so all that the rules of the Templars forbade him to write elsewhere in the play, Wagner here eagerly lets forth.

The destruction of all this beauty, that Monsalvat might continue in safety to intone the Dresden Amen, is scant poetic justice. To make Parsifal by the sign of the cross bring about its transformation into a dusty heap of ruins is downright sacrilege. How keen by contrast is Ibsen's understanding of the issues here bungled, when he exhibits the Emperor Julian sacrificing a goose to the dung-covered statue of Cybele and expecting thereby to restore Hellenism. Parsifal, also, sacrifices a fowl, but Wagner in all seriousness will have us believe that he was thereby made the instrument for restoring mediæval Christianity. Had Kundry's kiss brought him any real enlightenment he would have sought a third empire, neither Klingsor's nor Amfortas', founded neither on the tree of knowledge nor on the tree of the cross. He would have exclaimed at the end of the second act when he saw the flower girls lying withered in the dust: " Your God is a prodigal God, Galileans! He uses up many souls! " Had he persisted in his Quixotic attempt to restore a dead order, as Julian did astride his scrawny treatises, he should have been cut down, as was Julian, by the Roman's spear from Golgotha, instead of being allowed to brandish it with that devastating effect. And then he would have been, like Julian, " a rod of chastisement,— not unto death, but unto resurrection." As

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it was, he lived to be the instrument for preserving the deadness of the dogma of Atonement from decomposing and yielding new life.

What makes the case even more hopeless is that there is here no prescribed necessity, no a priori formula that to will is to have to will. Parsifal is supposed to be as free an agent as is Siegfried. Considering the similarity of their experiences it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that one is nothing but a burlesque of the other. Both Siegfried and Parsifal were brought up in ignorance of fear: the former that he might boldly encounter his adversaries, the latter that he might shun them. Both wander away from their homes: Siegfried from an ugly and malicious dwarf, Parsifal from his mother, lovely — take it from the orchestra — and tender hearted; Siegfried that he might meet with adventures and find a better companion, Parsifal from who knows what sudden notion in his silly head. Thereupon each makes a weapon and goes to battle: Siegfried forges a marvelous sword and kills a fearful dragon; Parsifal makes a bow of a twig and shoots a swan. Then comes to each of them woman and submits them to her crucible test. There is a good deal of windy suspiration and then the love fires flare up. Siegfried behaves himself nicely. At first he trembles like a leaf; then when he does venture to awaken his lady with a kiss, his endurance is admirable, his subsequent contrapuntal duet work flawless, his "Erwache Brünnhilde! Sei

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mein!" is generously directed to the family circle and reaches the topmost row. He knows his business as grand opera tenor. Parsifal has the advantage of a much more satisfactory setting. His lady, moreover, is prepared for him. But he is so unresponsive that actually it is she who has to arouse him with a kiss. And then instead of making amends for his remissment when he is awake, he abuses her and tears down the scenery and breaks up the show.— Further travesty can be found in his spear-worship: Siegfried strikes down this symbol of interdiction, thereby destroying the old order; Parsifal uses it as a palliative to make that dismal state endurable. Siegfried, again, is quite undaunted by the red glow sent by his god to keep him from Brünnhilde; Parsifal stands over-awed before the incandescent Grail, though Kundry is only an arm's length away and the orchestra told him in ascending *Tristan* chromatics when she anointed his feet, how much she loves him. And the crowning jest of the solemn parody will have Parsifal assume a kingly throne, while Siegfried is brought home on his shield dead.

The *Parsifal* enthusiast, of Wagnerites the most lofty of forehead, plucks fruits of wisdom from the served-up spectacle. And throughout it he vows with ungrimacing countenance that the dish is rare.

But the interruption of his feast by the war may have made him more truly critical. He must have found the taste of holiness, at any rate, in the *Par-*

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sifal repast somewhat thin after the discovered unholiness of its Teutonic chef. Art dishes have that elusive kind of flavor as a rule, and so it is best not to trust your own taste. You have to know who concocted them before you can really judge. Better make sure, too, that he comes from the right sort of country. There are national ingredients in everything, even in the most innocent seeming refreshment.—No, the more truly critical verdict must have been that *Parsifal* is acidulous stuff.

Still, it has been found more tolerable than such downright corrosive matter as fills the *Ring*, *Tristan*, and *Meistersinger*, for it has been the the first of the music dramas to be served us after the war. It has had all foreign tang taken out of it, though, and instead has been given sound native flavor. There is nothing outlandish about it now: you are satisfied that it is wholesome fare. The finicky and fastidious may grumble over it, but sensible folk are always satisfied to sit down to a good enough boiled New England performance. Now that the other dramas are properly done they may be dished up too.

Parsifal must be the most tolerable —

It has been the choice of a people at play; therefore in many ways illuminating. It shows how intense has been the general longing for peace. It is one fulfillment of the anti-war vows made on the fields of France. It is adequate demonstration of how, during the tumult and the shouting, the highest joy conceivable was rest and quiet.

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"When the war is over and the Kaiser's out of print,
I'm going to buy some tortoises and watch the beggars sprint;
When the war is over and sword at last we sheathe,
I'm going to keep a jellyfish and listen to it breathe."

When the war is over, Milne might have added, he will delight to hearken unto Gurnemanz ruminating over the past, he will be overwhelmed when Parsifal shoots down a stuffed swan, he will be enraptured when after several hours of persistent piety the hero finally responds to Kundry's love with such abandon that he "kisses her gently on the forehead."

It may be, then, that *Parsifal* was selected as the first of Wagner's dramas to be restored because it is good neurotic post-war treatment. It is a safe play for no matter how upset nerves. The therapeutic practice of Parsifal upon Amfortas, resulting as it does in a complete cure, must produce a general salutary effect. The fluttering dove at the end of the play is a pertinent peace time assurance. Throughout there is a wholesome absence of strife. The one encounter that does occur before the walls of Klingsor's garden is considerately kept off the stage. The play as a whole upholds the comforting doctrine that purity of heart is better than strength of arm or keenness of mind, and that stupidity and well meaning are the noblest virtues. Neurologists will welcome *Parsifal* as an excellent sedative against the fever and the fret that could

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hardly have been avoided even in the most business-like pursuit of a war.

The choice of *Parsifal* may also be a concession to censor and vice agent. The practice of deletion that developed as a necessary wartime measure, became something of a habit. It is not an easy thing to reform a people once it has become addicted to the virtues based on denial. The immunity from doubt and care which negation brings is in itself seductive; coupled with the incidental feeling of righteousness that interdiction has trailed from Sinai, it becomes truly demoralizing. *Parsifal* is a welcome flattery just now. It is a tribute to the suppression of tendencies that unchecked would lead to universal depravity. At the same time part of the drama can really be enjoyed, for Wagner knew that temptation to be worth overcoming must be made tempting, that repression ought to have something really alluring to repress. And it may safely be given public performance, for it is clearly demonstrated as vile and pernicious. In its present English version especially we are not for a moment in doubt. It seems that when the senseless gloom that persists for two hours has at last been dispelled by the warmth and beauty of the girls in the garden, Parsifal, clod though he be, is sufficiently roused to try to say something pleasant to them: "Nenn' ich euch schön, dünkt euch das recht?" Not so shocking a declaration, we used to feel, but that it might pass even in a sacred drama. Now, however, the line is turned into better account than the sinful

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flattery it expressed. It has been translated to: "Can it be wrong to call you fair?" To which our conscience, which Parsifal presumably addresses, gives the inevitable positive reply, and forbids us to regard the scene as other than very, very bad.

Parsifal has been the choice of a people at play; illuminating, therefore, is the part ascribed in it to woman. Just what reactions Kundry, who assumes all the feminine rôles of the drama, produces upon those of her sex it would be curious to record. (Outwardly, of course, there is no indication whatever of anything unusual, for those who go to hear *Parsifal* have, as a rule, achieved the utmost in muscular control.) Unless they disregard her as fantastic figment or else label her as all sorts of abstract odds and ends, post-war women must writhe at the successive insults her appearance on the stage offers. Or, in a modern and scientific spirit, they might consider her three acts as historic representations of so many steps in their own development: the first act showing the beast leaping, groveling — "wie ein wildes Thier," to quote one of the promising youths of Monsalvat; the second act representing the perfected female creature, conscious of her sex power, inflicting it with zest and cunning; the third act portraying the humble beginnings of the premodern era, the state of man's servingwoman who had no other aspiration than the domestic's "Dienen! Dienen!"

The heights from which these pitiful proceedings now can be viewed by emancipated woman, should

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make their effect most gratifying. What is offensive in the Kundry expositions would then be mere emanation from musty treatises on sociology, the swampy fog that would set in radiant relief the rising sun of to-day.

Interpretation like this may explain why this one of all Wagner's heroines was the first to return here. Obviously the true spectator does not find interest in her for what she appears to be on the stage. He sees and hears more than the anomaly of dienstmädchen-fille de joie of his eyes and ears. Kundry was the last of the wonderful Wagnerian women: he *must* find other aspects than his senses perceive.

And so the serious Wagnerite reaches for ulterior meanings. He will have nothing to do with what is obvious and close at hand. Instead he plucks mystic and symbolic conceptions; and with highly civilized muscular control he vows that they are rare.

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5

THE MONSTER SINGERS OF NEW YORK

IN WHICH THE MAYOR OF NEW YORK, AS BEFITS THE CHIEF MAGISTRATE OF THE MOST MUSICAL OF CITIES, CONDUCTS AN INQUIRY INTO THE POPULAR OUTBREAK AGAINST AN OPERA COMPANY'S CRIMINAL ABUSE OF *TEMPO RUBATO* IN *DIE MEISTERSINGER*

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THE MONSTER SINGERS OF NEW YORK

Excerpts from the New York Press of Oct. 21, 1919.

New York Times:

Opera in German — Several Injured in Fights.

. . . The first organized demonstration against the opera was led by about 200 ex-service men. . . . After the charge a marine . . . lay injured in the street. He was taken in an ambulance to Flower Hospital. . . . A score of men, including soldiers and sailors were treated in drug stores. . . . A woman, who called herself " Carrie Nation," got through the police lines and delivered an inflammatory speech to the police, asking them to show their Americanism by stopping the opera. . . . A huge piece of masonry, thrown from a building across the way . . . crashed into the street in front of the theater. . . . In a free-for-all fight . . . the crowd threw milk bottles and stones at the police. . . .

A dramatic two-hour debate was held before the Mayor in the Board of Estimate rooms at City Hall. Max D. Steuer appeared . . . for the German opera lovers. . . .

The opera company gave a shocking performance of the prelude to *Die Meistersinger* . . . Sheer incapacity on the part of the orchestra alone would account for what Mr. Spiering, an excellent musician, fought in vain to prevent.

The World:

Mounted Police Charge Crowds in Front of Theater — Shots Fired — Scalps Cut — Mayor at Hearing.

Riots, fights, pistol shots and other acts of violence re-

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sulted from the first performance of German opera since the war. The performance was given by the Star Opera Company in the Lexington Theater. The accompanying novelties were staged in the streets around the auditorium.

The Tribune:

German Opera Is Sung as Police Battle with Mob.

Hundreds of policemen repelled charging masses of soldiers, sailors, marines and civilians, some of whom attacked from behind the American flag. . . . "Let's go," shouted some one, and the crowd took it up in a deep-throated bellow. . . . Roaring incoherent threats, the mob surged forward. . . . There was a clatter of hoofs up the avenue. . . . Mounted police charged down, their nightsticks swinging high . . . clove through the midst, the foot policemen following hard on the heels of the horses. . . . Throughout the evening the thrilling tattoo of the nightstick resounded. . . . The rioters became animated with a more vicious spirit. . . . They took to throwing milk bottles, dropping stones from the roofs. . . .

For three hours in the afternoon the Mayor conducted a public hearing on a petition . . . that the opera be stopped.

The Evening Post:

Mayor Orders Police to Stop Singing of German Opera.

Action by the city officials to-day, following a night of riots at the production of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* at the Lexington Avenue Theater. . . .

The performance began with the *Meistersinger* overture, rough, heavy and rigid as a crowbar.

The Globe:

The orchestra immediately proved itself both one of the most inadequate and one of the most obstreperous ever gath-

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ered together. Perhaps the worst performance of the prelude to *Die Meistersinger* as yet achieved. . . .

THE militant crowds that arrived from all directions gave promise of as spirited a performance outside the New Opera House as the most ardent Wagnerian could have desired within. There was every indication of exemplary concerted action, of utmost individual self-sacrifice to attain a common glorious purpose. The warlike atmosphere, in fact, was of that inevitable kind which only the harshest reality can produce, and beside which the most artistic breathes of hothouse culture. There might be here and there an occasional lapse in pitch or tempo; and a certain colossal formlessness of structure; but that was because the conflict, unlike the miniature imitation (in the Aristotelian sense) before the footlights, could not possibly be seen clearly nor seen whole.

In its general nature the performance without the New Opera House might well have borne comparison with at least one scene intended upon the stage within. It began with taunts and deprecations, crescendo poco a poco into rich unharmonic reverberations of anger, drove into a furious acclaim of defiance with staccato accompaniment of thumping bricks and cymbal effects of crashing bottles, and rumbled louder with a thunder dreadful as that heard of yore when the Manhattan Opera House produced *The Damnation of Faust. Die Meistersinger* was to be given its second performance

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by the New Opera Company that night. If the action on the stage would surpass these preliminaries taking place without, the management would be deserving of congratulations upon a most brilliant second act finale.

There would, however, in all likelihood be no occasion for such comparison. For it was to restrain the management from continuing the production of music drama that the furious crowd had gathered there. The opening performance the night before had been a disgrace, an insult to the city. It made them ashamed to be New Yorkers. Their civic pride cried out against it. They must take arms against such a menace to their fair name. They must prevent a recurrence of such hideous musical exhibition. With Verdun tenacity they would resist the opening of the doors of the Opera House. Ils ne chanterons pas!

Grim determination was writ on every countenance. You noticed the fiery eye, the set teeth, the drawn lips, and, invisible but to the mind, the prancing steed and the couched lance. It really is a subject meant for the noblest poetic treatment. It meets in every way Matthew Arnold's test of high seriousness of absolute sincerity. It is truly epic both as to spirit and form. For here as before the walls of Troy

> . . . Darts and shields oppos'd
> To darts and shields; strength answered strength; then swords and targets clos'd

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With swords and targets; both with pikes; and then did
tumult rise
Up to her height; then conqueror's boast mix'd with the
conquer'd's cries:
Earth flowed with blood.

And just as the war in the *Iliad* is saved from being a colossal brawl (in that case over a matter that should have been transacted privately in a court for domestic relations) by Helen's divinely good looks, glorifying the contending powers as battling in the cause of eternal beauty; so this encounter between the police and the populace is exalted from, apparently, a degrading row and riot to a sublime pilgrimage in the cause of art, by la femme qu'il faut chercher — " Eva, das schönste Weib: Eva in Paradies!"

Further comparison might be attempted of this tumultuous New York crusade to stop the performance of *Die Meistersinger* from being given, with the Nürnberg uprisings in the second act, especially as to the relative effectiveness of the police departments of the two cities. But more austere criticism would perhaps regard the disturbance as symphonic rather than operatic. It would point out the turbulent announcement of the angry protesters, ruvidamente, followed by a tromba da lontano of a bawling, bustling top-sergeant; whereupon the performers proceed al rigore del tempo (alla Tedesca, ma non troppo). The contrasting second subject, orderly, Walhalla-like, is sounded timidly, but is

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drowned out by the steady rhythm of the first, crescendo con fuoco. Then the orderly theme is again heard, to a vigorous accompaniment of nightsticks rapping upon asphalt pavement; it develops rinforzamento, shuts out repeated renewals of the turmoil, and rises to a triumphal close of the first movement.— The andante opens peacefully, the nightsticks performing their metronomic accompaniment, much as in the Allegretto of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony. An untimely cadenza (life is lamentably indifferent to the laws of composition) appears in the form of a "Carrie Nation" harangue. Short fugue-like episodes are then brought in of rebellious individuals fleeing into areas with patrolmen in hot pursuit. The peaceful air continues until without intermission there sets in a scherzo hubbub of lively altercations and flying missiles, clubbing, drumming, bushwhacking, al piacere, all rather diverting, though perhaps troppo caricato.— The finale starts with the kettledrum crash of a marble cornice upon the street below, toppled down by an enthusiast. The orderly police theme comes galloping apace through the ensuing din. There is much repetition here of former material — the prolixity and endless padding that life so deplorably has to have recourse to. The performance dwindles rallentando, and ends, not as a good work of art upon the happily-ever-after dominant, but through a steady lessening of energy, in the manner of a lugubrious Tschaikowsky symphony. That, of course, would signify that this esthetic crusade, like the religious ones a

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thousand years ago, came to naught. To be sure, like those it did not accomplish its immediate aim. *Die Meistersinger* was performed again that night. But the religious expeditions, though they did not liberate Palestine, had far-reaching effects upon Christianity. And though the Opera House could not be brought to immediate capitulation, the services rendered by the besiegers unto the cause of art was not, as will be shown, without results.

Here a digression in behalf of the incredulous and matter of fact reader may be necessary. The newspapers the next morning, he will remember, announced in scare heads something about patriotic demonstrations against Teutonic activities; how there had been bitter denunciations of enemy propaganda and pathetic appeals to keep the Huns from our opera gates and vitriolic resolutions to do away with the use of the German language. Yes, and a breaking of hyphenated heads, and ugly slashing and trampling and stabbing. But an imposition upon his intelligence of such febrile matter the reader will surely resent. He knows that the newspaper by nature can give but the instantaneous and merely surface aspects of events, reflecting in print just as little of truth as does the photography on the moving picture screen: a presentation really of shadows, of unsubstantial things, of inarticulate jabber and gesticulation. There is a distressing haste about such recording, a scurry, an apparent besetment with constant pursuit. The eleven o'clock edition goes to press in so many minutes; only so

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many feet of film remain to complete the reel: reporter and photographer are to " cover " within that time and space, say the elephant investigated by the six blind men of Indostan. Equipped with note book and camera respectively they rush up, catch sight of the ivory gleam of a ferocious tusk, and rush back; and the news column and the screen are prepared to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature.

Before the reader accepts the next-morning version of the proceedings, he might well stop and consider whether it is possible that the product of the rattle and whir of the linotyper and moving picture operator can be truth. Is such the loom in which it is woven, those threads of flimsy glimpses its woof and texture? To place any belief in the newspaper accounts of riots against *German* singers and *German* productions is to display utter credulity, blind and un-Platonic, accepting as the real the merely accidental and apparent, and not the divine purpose behind it.

Upon more deliberate judgment it becomes of course apparent that the cause of the uprising was the natural resentment against an attempt to foist upon the public a production from an artistic standpoint deplorably wanting. The first performance had enraged our good citizens by its sheer Beckmesser schrecklichkeit in musical rendition. They had been driven into frenzy by discordant shatterings of the dignity of New York art. And accordingly they had marched to the Opera House bent on belaboring the collective back of Herr Merker.

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Too much importance cannot be attached to so singular a disturbance. Its immediate effects of turbulence, crashing glass, and fractured skulls, are trivial. But as an indication of a latent tendency of the people of New York it is of the greatest significance. Beneath the froth and jazz and dazzle there are certainly suppressed desires — if that well-worn handle of an idea may be used to open up considerations other than those of an acrobat drawing forth fantastic hares from an incorporeal silk hat and saying that it all has paphian implication — desires to realize high artistic aspirations. Those yearnings are naturally deep beneath the city's cold and crusty surface. But at times their fiery substance can break forth into volcanic fury.— That initial performance of *Die Meistersinger* must have outraged all standards of musical production.

There can be no doubt about this. For it certainly cannot be denied that New York is musically a most tolerant city. It listens to very wretched recitals and concerts and operas with admirable endurance. It has hardly ever been known to vent its anger upon the hapless player whose technique is muddy or whose expression is banal. Really, almost anybody who is desirous of exhibiting his musical attainment, no matter how feeble, is fairly safe from the wrath of his victims. It is possible that this may be owing in part to the etiquette of silence, restraining us as it does when we confront a person of crooked countenance or business habits. Pity, too, may be a deterrent. Occasionally it is just

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dumfounded amazement over the brazenness of the impostor. Whatever the cause, the city's indulgent acceptance of performances, less musical than melancholy, ought logically to have checked that fury against the wretched *Meistersinger* production.

That it did not, should be taken as a warning of future recurrences. The solemn demeanor of concert and opera audiences is evidently a mask, their restraint a delusion, their perfunctory applause a snare. Let the presumption of the player overtax their musical forbearance and the storm may again break forth with its incidental hail of bricks and bottles and torrents of abuse.— The psychoanalyst shrugs: what can you expect? Suppressed desires! The only ones whose offended ears are relieved by expression are the music critics. Judge by the occasional virulence of their accounts the constant indignities endured by the patrons of music. Consider the pressure resulting from habitual silence, and multiply to estimate the cumulative effect of long and numerous seasons. The product is appalling. The pressure must be relieved. The silence at bad performances must be broken. There must be a safety valve: the overcharged resentment ought certainly to escape as fiercely vociferous hisses.

What action the Mayor will take to prevent further esthetic rebellion has not yet been announced. It is earnestly to be hoped that he will appoint an appropriate committee. The serious post-war unrest might become a menace indeed, if widespread dissatisfaction began to be felt with present artistic

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activities. The former easy-going tolerance of whatever and however an orchestra chose to play exists no longer. The war — witness the New York uprising — is making itself felt in the sancta of musical esotery. Investigation of corrupt practices and of gross incompetence should proceed at once. The sensitive ears of our public will brook no further delay.

Fortunately the Mayor has shown singular understanding of the issues involved. He arranged for an immediate public hearing, at which the grievances against the New Opera Company were exposed at length. The business manager of the Company sought to extenuate the offensiveness of the performance by emphasizing the members' arduous war activities, implying, probably, that disastrous effects upon their musicianship was inevitable. The Mayor, whose enthusiasm for art is generally recognized[1] and would be greatly admired but for his incidental prolix disquisitions, delivered himself of the following:

"The old order again changeth, yielding place to

[1] Nothing in the accounts of the hearing published the following day is so clearly indicative of newspaper purblindness and deafness as the Mayor's alleged reply when asked if he had attended the opening performance of the New Opera Company: "I never go to the opera unless I am dragged there. My mind is too much taken up with the budget and such things."— If the Mayor used these words at all, it should be added that he was carefully distinguishing opera from music drama, and employed hyperbolic language to show his artistic appreciation of the immeasurable superiority of the latter.— "The budget and such things," of inconsequence and mutation, can hardly take up the mind of New York's chief magistrate, who needs must be constant as the northern star.

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new. In the dark ages a man's way of worshiping his Creator was deemed of the greatest import to society. Curious that so misty a matter should have lifted man so high and sunk him so deep; should have inspired Sistine Madonnas and Spanish inquisitions. In more enlightened days, hardly less incredible have been the glory and the horror of centuries of bloodshed for the conquest or defence of mere territory — for a plot of ground which was not tomb enough and continent to hide the slain."

The Mayor paused a moment. The audience shifted uneasily: one of his customary Hamlet soliloquies seemed imminent. But he evidently overcame the temptation, for he continued:

"No, ladies and gentlemen,"— he took for granted that they bridged the leap of his thought — "no, this age is not like those transitory. We have reached the ultimate, now that we have established art as the criterion of mankind's existence. We are invincible, for we are no longer to be estimated by such standards as the power of our body or the strength of our belief. For our mighty structures in granite and iron crumble, our bodies decay, our belief turns with weathervane sensitiveness to every passing gust, right about and left about. Er — pardon that expression — an anachronism — a barbaric remain of an age of military command, now happily bygone.

"The disturbance last night at the New Opera House is really a gratifying proof of how well pre-

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pared is our community for the great era of art, how eager to carry on henceforth its lofty purpose. You cannot "— he turned to the wretched singers — " you cannot with impunity offend ears that are well trained, vigilant, merciless toward wrong practices. They are more powerful than armies of policemen I might send to preserve order. For they admit of no division as did creeds and races, when the fallibility of each led in the past to such grotesque alternations of enmity and alliance. And their power will not depend upon mere individuals or groups. They are not of an age but for all time. The strength of religious martyrs had an element of mystical fanaticism, too rarified or else too hectic for most people. The strength of soldiers in battle could draw upon wider sources, perhaps because their motives were more commensurable, perhaps because they were chained with thousands and millions by the wrought usages of an actual and comprehensible world. There came, however, a day of calling a plague on all the contending houses. An unwonted calm fell upon agonizing bodies and spirits. Mankind found itself upon the easy evenness of an eternal plane of circumstance. But the joy this gave was of bridal transience. The prospect became tamely level of color, level of tone, level of form. And as a result of the ensuing ennui, art was prescribed as a highly spoken of specific — a refuge from the endless petty ticking of a clock-directed world."

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The Mayor drew his watch out. He remembered that Bodanzky was to conduct Brahms that evening. He hastened to bring the hearing to a close.

"I need not take up all the accusations made against the New Opera Company. According to the plaintiffs, the people of New York, there is hardly a bar of *Die Meistersinger* but has been violated. The initial grievance is representative. The conductor, I find here, is charged with wrongful and cruel misconducting of the overture. Specifically I see that he is accused of criminal ignorance of tempo rubato, of wantonly and maliciously beating a relentless gymnastic four quarter time throughout, thereby causing the plaintiffs great auditory annoyance, sensuous discomfort, and acute artistic suffering.— Now that is certainly unpardonable," the Mayor frowned at the offenders, "for the law concerning that overture is most clearly formulated, and by none other than by Wagner himself."

His Honor turned to the bookcases beside him and drew out Wagner's slender volume *On Conducting*. "Let me read to you," he said indignantly, "what the master himself has written: 'The main tempo of this piece is . . . allegro maestoso. Now, when this kind of tempo continues through a long piece, particularly if the themes are treated episodically, it demands modification as much as, or even more than any other kind of tempo.'— And here, where he talks of the introduction of the second theme in diminution: 'It here exhibits a passionate, almost hasty character (something like a whispered

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declaration of love). Not to disturb the main characteristic, delicacy, it is therefore necessary slightly to hold back the tempo.'— And finally this: 'Let anyone imagine so animated, yet so sensitive a thing as the tempo which governs this overture, let this delicately constructed thing suddenly be forced into the Procrustus-bed of a classical time beater, what will become of it? The doom is: Herein shalt thou lie, whatsoever is too long with thee shall be chopped off, and whatsoever is too short shall be stretched! — Whereupon the band strikes up and overpowers the cries of the victim.'

"And what's more," the Mayor went on, "the overcoming of the hapless victim I find was abominably noisy. The severest charges have been made against your instrumentation. Mr. Krehbiel, the Commissioner of Music, has suggested to me as a precautionary measure the issuing of an injunction against an orchestra, 'whose brass contingent,' he said, 'seemed to be trying to blow blood out of its eyes, and certainly spread more terror in the prelude to *Die Meistersinger* among the lovers of Wagner's music than did the shells of Big Berthas among the citizens of Paris a year and a half ago.' — Ah, gentlemen!"— the Mayor's indignation flared up —"the age of Big Berthas is one with Nineveh and Tyre. We shall not, no, we decidedly shall not need to seek sandbag protection against such brassy assaults as those performed that night. In the name of Apollo, my good man,"— His Honor strove to check his rage —"can't you understand

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how that overture must sound? That opening should have been broad, pompous, yes, but posato — so —" And His Honor proceeded to demonstrate by whistling and humming and ta-ta-taing, at the same time energetically conducting his orchestral self with his gavel.

It is hardly necessary to record in detail the Mayor's rendition of the whole overture, nor of the illuminating though at times plethoric comments he interspersed. They were, on the whole, worthy of the chief magistrate of the most musical of cities. There are naturally many who will disagree with his interpretation in a number of respects. That is to be expected in a democracy. There de gustibus est disputandum. Whether the Mayor's musical policy is acceptable to the majority will of course be made known at the next mayoral election.

When His Honor had gone through the entire overture (his heels making the floor reverberate at the close as with the steps of Titan meisters), the lawyer for the New Opera Company arose. A hush fell upon the assembly, for everyone recognized the brilliant defender of many notorious criminal cases. His presence there was conclusive proof of the Company's plight. He was recognized as the established alternative to a plea of guilty, a sort of barrister Life-in-Death on a legal specter ship. That the game of chance he played turned out a losing one and left the pitiful opera crew with the grim mate of the shroud and scythe, cast no discredit upon the effectiveness of his plea. In that penetrating

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way of his he deprecated the directions His Honor had read as to the tempo, calling them a trumpery dodge in which Wagner, utterly unscrupulous in his vanity, had tried to account for an audience's unfavorable reception of the overture by blaming Capellmeister Reinecke of "beating the stiffest square time from beginning to end," instead of following his post facto suggestions. The famous attorney then proceeded to defend what Wagner had sneered at as "classical" time beating. He cited the case of Mahler, whose reading of Beethoven a decade ago here in New York had caused a riot, necessitating a calling out of the reserves. He referred to lesser men who had sought to pit their preciosity against the Olympian tenor of the works of the masters, and had been swept into oblivion. And, finally, he analyzed the performance of each of the accused singers, referring to their ineptitude as modest reluctance to give their parts added effects, proclaiming their tick-tack tempo artistic scrupulousness, and their wooden timbre the noblest of vocal immolation. The solemnity with which such stuff was received is no mean tribute to the lawyer's power, and explains in a way how so many criminals, guilty of music-slaughter in the first degree, have escaped capital penalty. By the time he had reached his peroration and was holding forth on "How impossible it is, gentlemen, for the interpreter to soar beyond the vision of the creator! He is the instrument only, whose perfection is accurate and complete response to the composer. In-

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terpretation has in the past been added to interpretation, Pelion on Ossa, in futile quest to attain heights celestial. The structures are flung down by the true artist, and lo! there stands Parnassus!" etc.—by that time some of them were prepared to embrace a newer art, and to regard every one of the offending singers as a musical Rossetti or Paul Cézanne.

Yes, some of them, apostates by nature. But the large majority, representative of the metropolitan millions, showed stronger esthetic faith. They remained firm pillars of the great temple of beauty that is their city. They were not to be shaken by opinions merely because these came from some spectacular person. They were not to be imposed upon by bad art or giddy fashions that change with the seasons . . .

Thus (with frequent glances at his watch and mutterings of "Bodanzky—and the E Minor Symphony at that") thus the Mayor to the Opera Company in concluding the hearing: "And, finally, you cannot, I am proud to say, impose upon a people guided by the highest laws of beauty, mere will-o'-the-wisp and tinsel glitter. Neither can you by naming a production exotic make it acceptable. The throne of our art, like that which Milton conjured up, far outshines the wealth of Ormus and of Ind, and so we refuse to kneel elsewhere. You cannot with a smear on canvas or keyboard make us clap hands and stand back at the right distance and cry 'How original!' And so your attorney's plea of your having

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done nothing worse than transcend musical tradition cannot be accepted. What you have done is to repudiate that tradition. Your performance, therefore, was utterly lawless. It was a demolishing of the world of art and a return to the waste and void of nature before the spirit of the artist moved upon the face of it; and it is in our eyes as heinous as would be a demolishing of the world of nature and a return to the primal darkness that was upon the face of the deep. That may not be. Our people, fostered in the noble tradition of their art, are prepared to defend their heritage to the last. Their attack upon you last night bears ardent testimony to this. They will under no circumstances tolerate your discord and disruption; they have set themselves heart and soul against your attempted anarchy. And as their chief magistrate I am proud to voice their verdict:

"They find you guilty!"

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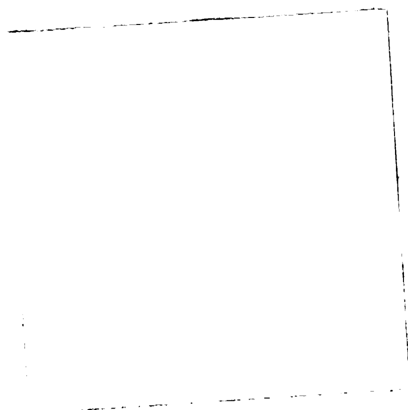

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