

that the work did not get a hearing. But concession and compromise were foreign to Wagner's nature, and though he had, as he said himself, "a feeling of complete isolation," he worked steadily on along his chosen path.

HIS early life is of interest. Richard Wagner was the youngest of a family of nine children. His father, a man of good education, occupied some minor official post in connection with the police. He spent much of his leisure in the study of poetry and showed great interest in amateur theatricals. However, he died a few months after Richard's birth. Frau Wagner left thus with a large family and with little means, could hardly do better than marry again, which she did after two years.

Her second husband, Ludwig Geyer, was a writer of plays and an actor at the Dresden theatre, and to Dresden, therefore, the Wagners removed. Geyer proved an excellent stepfather; and though he, too, died when Richard was only ten, it is probable that the early association with him added strength to the already strong theatrical tendencies which were present in the Wagner family. He made a great pet of little Richard, who loved to attend rehearsals with him, and afterwards to imitate the acting and to make up plays of his own.

Richard first went to school in Dresden, and evinced a great liking for Greek. He had also some piano lessons, and he worshipped as a hero the musician Weber, whom he often saw. We read that he tried to play "with fearful fingering" the overture to Weber's "Der Freischütz," but he was never more than an indifferent pianist. Someone has said "Wagner could never fondle a piano without making it howl." Music to him was thus a secondary consideration, but he was passionately fond of plays and poetry, and used to write both.

WHEN he was eleven his poem on the death of a schoolfellow was published as being the best the school could produce. Fired with this success, he promptly determined to become a poet—a characteristic instance of his impetuous nature—and was so much impressed by Shakespeare's dramas that he spent nearly two years writing a tragedy which was a mixture, more or less, of "Hamlet," "King Lear," and "Romeo and Juliet." This production was a curious affair. Forty-two persons were killed, one after the other, long before the end, that when he came to the last act he was obliged to bring back some of the characters as ghosts, in order to finish off the play and have anybody on the stage at all!

When Richard was 15 the Wagners moved back to Leipzig, and he used to frequent the Gewandhaus concerts. Here he heard for the first time a Beethoven symphony, and, with his customary impulsiveness, he at once determined to become a musician. He set about studying Beethoven's works in dead earnest, and knew them all familiarly before he was 20. Early in his teens he heard Beethoven's music to Goethe's poem "Egmont." This inspired him to write incidental music for his own tremendous tragedy, mentioned above. This was actually performed, much to the bewilderment of the audience, who were amused at the persistent thumping of the big bass drum.

The Life Story of Richard Wagner

(Continued from page 3.)

Wagner now entered the University, and here he worked chiefly at literature, specialising in the old folk-stories and legends. Upon these he afterwards founded the stories of his operas. These are most interesting, and remind one somewhat of our own "Tales of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table." Afterwards he studied music with an excellent musician, and soon after he obtained an engagement as conductor at Konigsberg. The attraction here was one of the actresses, Minna Planer, with whom he had fallen in love some time before. She is described variously as "of pleasing appearance" and "as pretty as a picture, but with a sober, unimaginative soul."

THE wedding followed, but their life together was not happy. Wagner was struggling with poverty, and beaten down by disappointed hopes, and later on, as his genius developed and expanded, he found he could not live in agreement with Minna, and a separation was the ultimate result. Biographers have nothing worse to say of her than that she failed to recognise her husband's genius; but she was certainly not alone in this respect; and it must be remembered to her credit that she suffered bravely and uncomplainingly the hardships which beset her husband during the first years of their marriage. It is recorded that she

even pawned her jewels under some domestic distress.

Wagner himself used to recount stories of his wife's self-denial, and of the cheerfulness with which she, the pretty actress of former days, "cooked what meals there were to cook and scrubbed what clothes there were to scrub." One cannot help sympathising with Minna Wagner, thrown out at last upon a cold world, to live isolated, and to die with a shadow upon her name as a wife.

But to return to the year of his marriage, when he was 23. The young couple went to Riga, on the Baltic Sea, where he had a poorly-paid post at the theatre. He had, however, made up his mind to get to Paris as soon as possible. He was composing his opera "Rienzi," based upon Bulwer Lytton's novel, and he felt that it was the very thing for the Parisian temperament. So, after three years, he and his wife started for Paris on a sailing vessel, by way of London.

The voyage lasted nearly a month, and they passed through three heavy storms. These recalled to his mind from among his studies of ancient legends the weird story of the "Flying Dutchman," who for his sins was condemned to sail the seas for ever, only coming ashore once in every seven years in the hope of finding a woman whose true love should save him: The sailors affirmed this legend to be true, and looked fearfully for the phantom

ship, for to see this meant shipwreck. He afterwards wrote his opera "The Flying Dutchman" as a result of this stormy voyage.

FOR three weary years Wagner and his wife lived in Paris, on the verge of starvation. No one would produce his operas, and in despair they went to Dresden in 1842. It was here that his opera "Rienzi" was produced. It was very much in the popular style, and delighted the audience, and Wagner became musical director.

His next opera, "The Flying Dutchman," did not please so much, for it was not so showy and the people thought the music strange. Still, some musicians praised it. "Tannhauser," which followed, pleased neither his audiences nor the musicians. They said the play was too sad and the music ugly; and were annoyed because the hero and heroine did not marry and live happily ever afterward. Though almost despairing of ever inducing the public to understand him, Wagner worked on, and by 1848 had completed "Lohengrin."

Meanwhile the political troubles of the country were occupying the attention of the people. The poor were crying out against the oppressions of the rich, and revolutionary clubs were being formed everywhere. Wagner hotly espoused the cause of the revolutionaries, made red-hot republican speeches, and even, it is said, fought at the barricades. A warrant for his arrest was issued, but he managed to escape, mainly by the help of Liszt, ever his most loyal friend.

He got safely away to Paris, and for the next ten years lived in Switzerland, writing many little books about music and politics, and working hard at the greatest of all his musical works, "The Ring." This comprises the four music dramas—"The Rheingold," "The Valkyrie," "Siegfried," and "The Dusk of the Gods." Meanwhile Liszt was producing, in the best style, Wagner's other operas, and the German people gradually came to understand and to like them. "Lohengrin" was one of these works, and is to-day one of the most popular. Of course Wagner himself, being an exile, could not hear this beautiful work performed. In fact he did not do so for eleven years, till 1861, when his sentence of banishment was withdrawn and he returned to Germany.

AFTER his return from exile Wagner became almost desperate with the struggle against opposition and financial difficulties. In fact he was at the end of his courage and endurance

ARE YOUR HANDS TIED?

Are you bound down because you have never learned to do any one thing well? To thousands of men like you—hands tied, but eager to break free—I.C.S. training has brought success. No matter where you live, the I.C.S. will come to you. No matter what your handicaps, or how small your means, we have a plan to meet your circumstances. Without cost or obligation let us prove that we can help you to get a better job and a bigger salary. Write or call.

ELECTRICAL WIREMAN,
MECHANICAL DRAUGHTSMAN,
WINDOW DRESSING,
CARPENTRY,
RADIO OPERATOR,
Hundreds of Courses to choose from.

The International Correspondence
Schools (N.Z.) Ltd.

1832 WAKEFIELD ST., WELLINGTON

To an Old Set

Friend, when I dwell upon your faded beauty,
Your mottled panel and your splintered door,
I think of one who nobly did his duty
And helped to cheer me, back in '24.
I do not join with those who so defame you
For clumsiness and ugliness combined,
Nay, friend o' mine, I neither chide nor blame you—
I am not so unkind.

A time there was when envious old stagers
Beholding in amaze your polish high
Indulged among themselves in private wagers,
Deciding who might have you should I die.
I recollect one relative displaying
An envious glance, a stealthy sidelong look,
What time he wondered how much I'd been paying—
A mental note he took!

And now, old friend, good-bye—those days are ended.
For you and I must part, sad to relate;
A lot of things have lately been invented
And put you very sadly out of date.
No more will your emitters glow with glory,
No more your worn-out batteries be tapped,
For soon you'll reach the finish to your story—
In short, you're to be scrapped!

—C.P.P. (in "Wireless Magazine.")