

when the generosity of that tragically pathetic monarch, Ludwig II of Bavaria, saved Wagner to the world, for he was contemplating suicide. Ludwig was passionately fond of Wagner's music, and he offered the composer a substantial income and a house in the vicinity of his palace.

Though Wagner was thus relieved of financial strain and was able to finish his greatest music-drama, "The Ring of the Niebelungen," yet storm and stress accompanied him to the end. His great drama, "Tristan and Isolde," described as "the greatest expression of passionate love in all music," was inspired by his love for Madame Wesendonck; and when produced at Munich in 1865 was the first undoubtedly popular success which Wagner had had.

Then followed "The Meistersingers," which, like "Tristan," was produced by the great Von Bulow, whose divorced wife, Cosima, a daughter of Liszt, was presently to become Frau Wagner. What a bitter joke the Fates played on Von Bulow! For him, Wagner had almost been a god!

However, he magnanimously forgave him, and the marriage of Wagner and Cosima took place in 1870. Cosima made Wagner the study of her life, and devoted herself to him with a sublime selflessness. She understood every turn of his mind, and her unobtrusive sympathy, her intelligent advice, criticism and suggestion were unspeakably helpful to such a mind as Wagner's.

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THE HOUR'S PHILOSOPHY

WITH depression hanging o'er us all our spirits we must rally,

We must sacrifice, economise, and help the poor as well.

Though our incomes with the outgo seem impossible to tally.

We'll debar all gloomy faces and expressions such as "H-!"

After retrospecting golden days our present lot we vision,

And sum it up as quite the worst of any that we know; But, my friend, remember hospitals, asylums, slums and prisons!

There are greater Waterloos than ours where'er we chance to go!

Here the pauper's wife confirms me, with her little ones in tatters;

They are hungry and surround her with pale cheeks and wistful eyes.

In a country like New Zealand these are grave, important matters,

We must further schemes of charity. Our duty therein lies.

—S.E.F.-J.

WAGNER could not have been easy to live with. To the outside world he was arrogant and contemptuous. He spared no one's feelings, was vain of his own powers, and had few of those social qualities which go to the making of friends and the conciliation of enemies. For the public, even the applauding public, he had little consideration, and sometimes scant courtesy. He was selfish too, and protested that the world should give him a gratuitous living "without asking anything in return beyond what I am actually doing."

When the world declined the honour he threatened to buy a pistol and put an end to his life. He certainly required plenty of money, for he had the most expensive tastes. He said himself: "By nature I am luxurious and extravagant. I cannot sleep on straw or drink bad whisky. I must be coaxed in one way or another if my mind is to accomplish the terribly difficult task of creating a non-existent world." He employed a high-priced Viennese dressmaker to make the rich garments without which he felt he could not compose.

There is a story about his wanting some flamingo feathers before he could obtain sufficient inspiration to finish the flower-maiden scene in "Parsifal." Any caller who had not seen him before was likely to suffer a mild shock; for, on entering the room where his visitor was seated, Wagner would throw the door wide open before him, and would stand for a moment on the threshold, a curious mediaeval figure framed in the doorway. The mystified visitor, rising from his seat, would be-

hold a man richly clad in a costume of velvet and satin, like those of the early Tudor period, and wearing a bonnet such as is seen in the portraits of Henry VI. Such was his composing costume.

One biographer says: "He made a veritable rainbow of himself, and even wore many-coloured trousers." Alexander Dumas, calling upon him, made some good-humoured remark about his own ignorance of music, but his pleasantries were listened to with such a smileless stolidity that he went home in a huff and wrote a contemptuous protest against what he called Wagnerian din. On the day before this protest was printed, Wagner returned Dumas's visit, and was kept waiting half an hour in an ante-room. Then the author of "The Three Musketeers" marched in, superbly attired in a plumed helmet, a cork lifebelt, and a flowered dressing-gown. "Excuse me for appearing in my working dress," he said majestically. "Half my ideas are lodged in this helmet, and the other half in a pair of jackboots which I put on to compose love scenes!"

However, the individual is a law unto himself in matters of this kind; and if Wagner had not been able to indulge his expensive tastes we should probably have been without some of his greatest music-dramas to-day. Still, we cannot help reflecting how little luxury Beethoven or Schubert could afford themselves.

WHEN Wagner was 69 he composed his last great work, "Parsifal," a kind of sacred opera, considered by many to be the most beautiful of all

his works. For some years it was only allowed to be performed at the Festival Theatre at Bayreuth, which had been specially designed and built for the ideal presentation of Wagner's operas. It was originally planned by Wagner in order that the wonderful cycle "The Ring of the Nibelungen" might be presented in a festival for three days, with one preliminary evening. It was the first theatre designed with the sunken orchestra, invisible to the audience; and the magical effect of such music as the prelude to the "Rhinegold," rising as it were from the infinite, can only be realised by actual experience.

In 1883 Wagner died, quite suddenly, at Venice, where he and his beloved wife Cosima, with their son Siegfried, were spending a holiday. He was buried in the garden of his own house at Bayreuth. His wife cut off her long blonde hair, which he had so much admired, and buried it with him as a final sacrifice.

Topical Notes

(By "Switch.")

THE New Plymouth station, 2YB, has been available at increased volume in Wellington of late, and fading has not been so noticeable. The tone is first-rate, and there is an unusual clarity in both music and speech. Parasitic, or, more aptly, intrusive electrical noises, which infest Wellington, have been increasing around the shorter broadcast wavelengths during the past month, and 2YB, New Plymouth, has this additional drawback to overcome.

AFTER years of research, American radio engineers have evolved a transmitter which is probably without parallel in the radio world. It is to be used by station W2XAF, one of the group of short-wave stations of WGY, for communication with the rest of the world. A single transmitter has been built so that three musical programmes can be simultaneously broadcast without interference. Six independent and non-interfering voice channels are available. In other words, should occasion demand, addresses by six different people could be transmitted by the same equipment, on six different frequencies.

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