

THE SIMPLE LIFE.

WORLD FAMOUS BOOK AND ITS AUTHOR, CHARLES WAGNER.

What President Roosevelt Says About the Volume—Interesting Career of the Disciple of Simplicity. How the Book First Made a Hit.

Charles Wagner, author of "The Simple Life," was practically made famous by President Roosevelt, author of "The Strenuous Life." Early in 1902 certain well known New York publishers brought out very quietly a translation of "The Simple Life." At first the book did not attract much attention, except among the literary few, but among the literary few was President Roosevelt. On him the little volume made such an impression that he referred to it in one of his public addresses as follows:

"The other day I picked up a little book called 'The Simple Life,' written by an Alsatian, Charles Wagner, and he preached such wholesome, sound doctrine that I wish it could be used as a tract throughout our country. To him the whole problem of our complex, somewhat feverish modern life can be solved only by getting men and women to lead better lives. He sees that the permanence of liberty and democracy depends upon a majority of the people being steadfast in that good, plain morality which is a national attribute comes only as the result of the slow and painful labor of centuries, and which can be squandered in a generation by the thoughtless and vicious. He preaches the doctrine of the superiority of the moral to the material, but he insists, as we of this nation should always insist, upon the infinite superiority of the moral and the sordid decre-



REV. CHARLES WAGNER.

tion which comes upon either the nation or the individual if it or he becomes absorbed only in the desire to get wealth."

"This public commendation from the president of the United States, who was the author of a book that seemed the very antithesis of 'The Simple Life,' aroused public curiosity, and in a very short time there was a large demand for the volume.

Charles Wagner is a popular evangelist in Paris, and it seems the height of incongruity that such a work should come from such a source. As George King says in her biographical sketch: "From the great metropolis and sovereign seat of modern civilization, from the world's heart of exploitation, from Paris, the complex city, comes this volume of little essays upon the simple life. A limpid, bubbling spring, fresh and cool from its forest source, running down one of the boulevards would hardly appear more miraculous to the eye or more refreshing to the sense."

Wagner is a noted man in Paris, the kind of man whom people stare after in the streets. Among the dapper and undergrown Parisians he bulks large, with his great height and massive chest and shoulders. There are various legends, constituting a sort of little mythology, about his enormous physical strength and the feats supposed to have been achieved by him in his peasant days. For the rest he is described as a man of singular sweetness and straightforwardness of character, with a strong personal charm. He has a wide following, personal as well as ethical.

The early career of this noteworthy man is interesting. He is the son of a Lutheran minister of Alsace, born at Wildeville, in the Vosges, on Sunday morning, Jan. 3, 1852, while his father was preaching in the village church. He was only seven years old when his father died, and yet he was the eldest of five children. The family moved to Phalabourg, and there Charles labored in the fields and studied for the ministry. He was sent to Paris at fourteen and took a degree at the Sorbonne in 1870. He was a student of theology at the University of Strasbourg during the Franco-Prussian war, and there he underwent a sort of spiritual rebirth, losing his religious faith. He read Spinoza and found in that philosopher something to compensate for what he had lost, but two simple incidents led to the restoration of his religious life.

One was the first sight of the Alps. The mountains seemed to him God's witnesses. The other event was something that happened to nearly everybody—namely the sight of his mother on returning home after a long absence. She was there, loyal to her duty, doing her daily work with tranquil energy, never veered and never discouraged, and the very thought of her brought quietude, content, faith.

REJECTED SUITORS.

FAMOUS LOVERS WHO HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF CUPID'S PRANKS.

Byron's Cruel Experience With Miss Chaworth—Shelley's Affairs of the Heart—The Girl Who Was Much Too Good to Marry Abe Lincoln.

It may be of some consolation to the rejected lover to remember that many of the greatest men in history have suffered equal pangs and survived the same ordeal to find married happiness elsewhere.

Even Byron, that most beautiful and gifted of men, had more than his share of refusals, and one of them at least was accompanied by words which left a sting to his last day. He was only a narrow schoolboy of sixteen when he fell madly in love with Miss Chaworth of Annesley, a young heiress of some beauty, who was two years older than himself.

But Miss Chaworth treated all the boy's sly advances with laughter and contempt, and, although he was "suffering the tortures of the loins" for her sake, refused to take him seriously.

When he landed in New York not long ago Rev. Mr. Wagner said:

"I love the American people. I wanted to see them in their own country and to know them personally. To obtain that end I learned their language, and here I am."

He referred to the kind of English he was about to speak, saying he had studied the English language only a short while ago to tell the American people of simplicity, and that if any "accidents" occurred it would not be by inadvertence.

"I know that you are saying in your hearts that it is not possible to live the simple life in this great city of rushing thought and energy, this city of tremendous activities and skyscrapers," he said, "but I tell you that it is."

"It is possible to live the simple life on the twenty-fourth floor of a New York skyscraper in the midst of all the noise and confusion. The simple life is not a thing of the first floor or the fortieth, but of the shoes or the waist-coat, not of the heart."

"Once in Paris, that great city of dust and busy human life, I heard a lark singing in a garden. He was a prisoner, it is true. But when I heard him lifting up his voice to the blue sky and I remembered the freedom of the hills and the fields that had been mine as a boy, the walls and houses of the great city seemed to fade away, to stretch out and expand."

"I speak to you here in the center of one of the most tremendous cities in the world. I sing my song of simplicity like a lark in a cage—but it is a good place to sing it. The more I study your national character here in America, the more I look into the foundations of your government, the more I see of your stupendous energy, the more I realize that at the bottom of it all is the simplicity of your national character."

"I visited the White House at Washington. I found there nothing of the grandeur of the homes of kings and knaves, but the pure simplicity of a great people expressed in the home of a chief executive. I was a guest of your president. I pressed his hand, and I had many long talks with him upon the great questions of the day. And again I felt that a splendid simplicity was at the root of your national character. Stay true to your traditions; be true to your convictions. The human race demands it of you."

Dr. Wagner told how he came to write "The Simple Life." He was called upon while a pastor in Paris to marry a workman and his sweetheart. One of the six witnesses was the daughter of a great politician.

"I talked to them upon the beauty of living simply," he said. "A few days afterward the young lady came to me to ask me to perform her marriage, and she asked me to give her the name that I had to the workman. There were to be 2,000 people present, including the greatest diplomats, the greatest politicians and the leaders in the intellectual and social life of Paris."

"I consented and talked to them simply and straightforwardly upon the simple life. There was a publisher present, as there always is, and the next day he asked me to write 'The Simple Life.' I did, and it has gone through the world everywhere. As for me, I intend to remain a boy, with a boy's heart, till I am an old, old man."

The author-clergyman's chapel in the Boulevard Beaumarchais, Paris, has grown from a quaint little upper room and is now too small to hold the crowds that flock to hear him, and generally more than 1,000 persons are turned away from the doors on Sunday.

SOME BARGAINS.

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