HE SAW THE PASSION PLAY

Mr. A. Mackintosh Writes of The Scene.

GREAT TRAGEDY OF OBER-AMMERGAU

Honolulu Divine's Interesting Letter in the Church Chronicle.

It was quite cheering to get letters from home and to find our sick recovering and our people generally doing well. Then we were shocked to hear of the death of our old friends, Miss Gray and Mr. Bolster, whom we left in good health, and also to learn of the domestic troubles of some others. These calamities seem to fall heavily upon us when we are absent from the scene. This year seems to have been especially marked out for great events to happen while we are in the old world. From the first day of our landing one thing after another has greatly moved the people and us with them. The death of the Duke of Edinburgh, the assassination of the King of Italy, the daily accounts of the wars, with their gains and reverses, the Paris Exposition, the Passion Play at Ober-Ammergau, and lately, the dissolution of Parliament, the general election and the church congress at Newcastle on Tyne.

The speed at which we move forbids any extended or very careful account of these great events, but you shall have some of our general impressions now and more exact renderings anon.

I think I left off my travels in London just after hearing Canon Gore in Westminster Abbey, where I went with John Kaukahale, the secretary of Prince Cupid. His "Pehea oe, o Makinikoke?" in that ancient temple will not soon be forgotten. It was no little proof of the success of Christianity in Hawaii that a young full Hawaiian should of his own accord go to worship the true God in the grandest Christian church in the world, 8,000 miles from his native land, and moreover to express his awe and admiration of all he saw and heard.

The service was indeed awe-inspiring, to be surrounded by a dense crowd in that historic fane, now lifting up their voices and no doubt their hearts, too, in high and sonorous praise to the living God, "for all the wonders that He hath done for the children of men" —then, hanging on the words of a preacher in thrilling silence, while he unfolded the mysteries of the grace of this God and Father of all, one felt the sublimity of the means by which human beings can be brought nearer to their Creator—His church, the evolution of ages, the result of the inspiration of God to men, to develop the intention of the Creator and Redeemer of mankind.

In mixing with the inhabitants of Great Britain one cannot fail to discern the reasons for the great variety and even for the great differences one observes in the interpretation of the church's laws and intentions. While the Latin races are all of one type, with very few exceptions, there are scarcely two Saxons alike. It is just as futile to attempt to make a rigid uniformity in the conduct of church services as it would be to make trees of one genus all grow to the same height. What true religion ought to do is to make men tolerant. The whole combined effort of clergy and laity should be devoted to this sine qua non to the peace and prosperity of the church on earth. When a man truly righteous in heart has devoted himself to the service of his fellow men, especially when that service is the priesthood and that man is of Saxon blood, he is likely to prove as brave or as obstinate as a Roberts, a Buller or a Baden-Powell. So those of the same flesh and blood may just as well learn to tolerate him in his differences from their opinions, and especially to refrain from imputing false or erroneous notions to him, for in spite of prosecutions, persecutions, inhibitions and imprisonment, his spirit will not be conquered and he will conquer in the end if he is in the right. Besides we are sure that toleration can exist together with the greatest diversion of opinion and action. Mr. Kensit and his followers are certainly not right in the way they are pursuing their ends. But he is a plucky, obstinate Saxon and if he is not convinced how utterly misguided he is, by his reception at the church congress, when between three and four thousand church people roared him down, he will very shortly find himself in a very peculiar position, very much like that of the Boers at the present moment.

But the variety in the Sunday services of the churches we have visited is very remarkable. Some rubrics are woefully infringed or neglected. It is well for the parish priests that they are not in one diocese we know of, or there would be much application to bell, book and candle. Still through all there is such manifest devotion, such love for the church, such kindliness between pastor and flock, that one's whole being glows with satisfaction and enjoyment. Of course we know that but for the climate, and perhaps for one other cause, the same enthusiasm would exist and prevail with our own people. And we know also that the wave will reach us some day. Every other wave does. Now to continue our travels.

We commit ourselves to the care of Messrs. Gaze & Sons, who provide us with a book of tickets for Ober-Ammergau and the Paris Exposition. At 8:30 p. m. a very happy party of four, three Hawaiians and one who has visited and who loves the Isles, leave London from the Liverpool street station for Harwich Parkeston Quay, the port of departure for the "Continong." The rapid train dashed through the journey without a stop and we were on board the steamer by 10:15. The "Vienna" was a clever if not a sumptuous vessel and the sea was like a mill-pond, so our voyage to the Hook (Hoekinbutch) of Holland, was uneventful. We landed at 5 a. m. the next morning. The sensation on being on that land so pregnant with history was a singular mixture. We thought of old Van Tromp and his broom and his relatives in South Africa. It was reported that English people were receiving scant courtesy in Holland since the attempted assassination and the lenient treatment of the would-be assassin of the Prince of Wales. But nothing could have exceeded the civility of the officials, customs and railway, with whom we had to do. At 5:45 we started on our journey south. We had to pay two marks extra for our Platz karte. This was to preserve our places on the D or express train. Not that any of us intended to move about, or that any one could turn us out, so we hardly saw the justice of the charge. It might be useful to mention another extra expense which we incurred; the sleeping berth on the steamer had to be telegraphed for or the chances were that you would sit up all night. Fortunately for us, the boat was not overcrowded, so we obtained places. Farther on we had other unforeseen sums to pay not advised of by Gaze & Sons, so it is prudent to go prepared with a considerable amount of the needful more than the estimated expenses. In our innocence we presented our Platz karte in return for the breakfast, which we had greedily demolished, but of course without avail, for our provider in a polite mixture of Dutch, German and English invited us to give him two marks each. At Naburgh on the borders of Germany our luggage was examined again, and now we were free from any more trouble on that score. The officials are as eager to find tobacco in all its forms as our Hawaiians are to find opium. We leave flat Holland with its windmills and green fields and run through beautiful Germany. Hurrying through large towns past castles and over rivers, we come to Cologne. Here we alighted and stayed several hours during which we "did" the city. Before everything we visited the renowned Cathedral which took six hundred years in building and wandered over the majestic pile. Then we hired a cab and drove around the city, viewing its principal attractions. On going to the railway station we met the two brothers, Johannes and Bernard Ehlers, once of Honolulu, which gave us great pleasure. They remained with us until our train left. Their parents, whose name still lives in their Fort street place of business, reside in Munich, or Munchen, as the Germans call that city. We saw them on our arrival there next day and our meeting was a revival of old times in Honolulu. Time has dealt very gently with Mr. and Mrs. Ehlers and they retain very pleasant reminiscences of their residence in Hawaii.

Munich is a lovely city, well and substantially built, very ornamental in appearance, full of means of instruction and recreation, fine museums, art galleries, gardens, parks, fountains, theatres, everything which conduces to the comfort and luxury of life. The Hotel Russe, where we put up, was a place which deserves all praise. Its charges were moderate and the civility of the attendants was highly gratifying. We heard Tannhauser at Munchen. Words fail to express our delight. In the street, on our way to an art gallery, we met Else Renjes, who lifted up her eyes in utter amazement when she saw us. "Where did you come from?" she gasped. Then we met her father and mother, and you may imagine this meeting of old and attached friends so far from home. We spent much of our time together, and they saw us off to our destination, Ober-Ammergau. On the train we had again to pay for Platz-carte. This time to pay for the new railway between Murnau and Ober-Ammergau. Until this year the journey from Murnau had to be made by coach over a rough road at much inconvenience. Now D or fast trains, pour people into the village three or four times a day. The sun was still high when we arrived at Ober-Ammergau. When we had secured our tickets for rooms and meals from our uniformed Gaze man, we engaged a porter to carry our impedimenta to our respective lodgings, for we were separated. Arthur and I were quartered with one of the musicians of the Passion Play, and Murie and Miss Benson with some of the Angels. You know that all guests are disposed among those who take part in the performance. This is part of their recompense. They have to make hay while the sun shines, for he is only bright once in ten years. Rumor has it that an interdict has gone forth from the Pope against further performances of the Passion Play, on account of vice and avarice, engendered by the gains. This we hardly believe, because so many alterations and improvements involving great expenditure have taken place lately, and it would be cruel to do anything suddenly which would involve the ruin of the whole village. To us there seemed an air of prosperity and order, throughout the place, which denoted anything but a vicious life. But the question lies more in the performance itself of the Passon Play and its effect not only on the inhabitants of the village, but on all who go to witness it. The attraction is certainly great. Four thousand persons assemble twice a week and sometimes more, to see it. There were three performances in succession during our stay in the village. The scheme is vast. To think of carrying out the events of the Atonement, personating the very beings who took part in the tragic scenes in the Redemption of mankind, even the crucifixion of the Lord of life, is overwhelming, but to see these things with our living eyes, is truly awful. There was a feeling of relief when the rather strained tones of the woman, who represents the Virgin Mary, removed the emotion, which was causing the tears to flow involuntarily down our checks. If the stupendous sacrifice made by our Blessed Lord is more deeply realized by this representation and the people who witness it feel determined not to be of those "who crucify the Lord of life afresh and put Him to an open shame," then the Passion Play will continue. But if it be only a fashion, or a material form of sensuous pleasure, it will soon come to an end of itself.

My lodgings were situated in a picturesque part of the village. The window looked out upon the mountains towards Switzerland, reminding me of Kaalaea on Oahu, on first seeing them

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