

Wagner and Nietzsche— Study in Human Nature

By Elbert Hubbard

Among men of worth, no one of his time was more thoroughly hated, detested and denounced, than Richard Wagner.

Before he became an anarchist of art he was singled out for distinction by royalty and a price was placed upon his head. He escaped, and for ten years lived in exile; his sole offense being that he had lifted up his voice for liberty.

That is the only thing worth lifting up your voice, or pen, or sword for. The men who live in history are the men who have made freedom's fight.

Instead of dying for us, Wagner lived for us, but he had to run away in order to do it.

There, in exile—in Switzerland—he wrote many of his most sublime scores, and these he did not hear played until long years after, for although the man could compose, he could not execute. The music was in his brain and he could not get it out at his finger tips—for him the piano was mute. So now and again Franz Liszt would come and play for him the scores he had never heard, and tears of joy would flow down his fine face.

Then he would stand on his head, walk on his hands and shout for pure gladness.

All this, I will admit, was not very dignified.

Ostracism, exile, hatred and stupid misunderstanding did not suppress Wagner. In his work he was severe, stern and tragic; but the man himself bubbled with good cheer. He made foolish puns, and routed the serious ones of earth by turning their arguments into airy jests. If in those early days he had been caught and carried in the death-tumbler to the Place of the Skull he would have remarked with Mercutio, "This is a grave subject."

Finally public opinion relaxed, and Wagner found his way back to Germany. He settled at the town of Bayreuth, and very slowly it dawned upon the thinking few that at Bayreuth there lived a man.

Among the very first who made this discovery was one Friedrich Nietzsche, an idealist, a dreamer, a thinker, and a revolutionary. Nietzsche was an honest man of marked intellect, whose nerves were worn to the quick by the pretense of the times—the mad race for place and power, the hypocrisy, and phariseism that he saw sitting in high places. He longed to live a life of genuine ness.

He wished to be, not seen. And so he wandered here and there, footsore, weary, searching for peace, scourged forever by the world's displeasure.

The trouble was, of course, that Nietzsche didn't have anything the world wanted.

In Wagner, Nietzsche felt that at last he had found the Moses who would lead the people out of captivity into the promised land of Celestial Art.

Nietzsche came and heard the Wagnerian music and was caught as flotsam in its whirling eddies. He read everything that Wagner had written, and, having come with the gracious sunshine of the great man's presence, he rushed to his garret and in white heat wrote the most appreciative criticism of Wagner and his work that has ever, even yet, been penned.

This booklet, "Wagner at Bayreuth," is a masterpiece of insight and erudition written by a man of imagination, who saw and felt, and knew how to mould his feelings into words—words that burn. It is a rhapsody of appreciation.

The book had a wide circulation, helped on, they do say, by the master himself, who confessed that in the main the work rang true.

The publication of the book sort of linked these two men, Wagner and Nietzsche. The disciple sat at the feet of the older man, and vowed he would be in literature what Wagner was in music. He gazed on him, fed on him, quoted him, waiting in patience for the pearls of

thought. Now, Wagner was a natural man. He had the desires, appetites, and ambitions of a man. If he voiced great thoughts and wrote great scores, he did these things in a mood—and never knew how.

At times he was coarse, perverse, irritable. The awful, serious, sober ways of Nietzsche began to pall on Wagner—he would run away when he saw him coming, for Nietzsche had begun to give advice about how Wagner should regenerate the race, and also conduct himself.

Now Richard Wagner had no intention of setting the world straight, he wanted to express himself, that was all, and to make enough money so he could be free to come and go as he chose.

Once, at a picnic, Wagner climbed a tree and cawed like a crow; then hooted like an owl; he ate tarts out of a tin dish with a knife; a little later he stood on his head and yelled like a Congo chief. When Nietzsche tearfully interposed, Wagner told him to go and get married—marry the first woman who was fool enough to have him; she would relieve him of some of his silliness.

Shortly after this the great Wagner festival came on, and Bayreuth was filled with visitors who had read Nietzsche's book, and bought excursion tickets to Bayreuth.

Wagner was over his ears in work—an orchestra of 300 players to manage, new music to arrange, besides the humdrum, but necessary work of feeding and housing and caring for the throng. Of course, he did not do all the work, but the responsibility was his.

In the rush of work, Nietzsche was dropped out of sight—there was no time now for long conferences on the Over-Soul and Music of the Future. Nietzsche was snubbed. He went off to his garret and wrote a scathing criticism on the work of Richard Wagner. This divine music was not for the intellectual few at all—it was getting popular and it was getting bad. Wagner was insincere—commercial—a charlatan. Nietzsche was no longer interested in Wagner—he was interested only in Nietzsche.

In 1888 Nietzsche issued his little book, "The Fall of Wagner."

Of all the bitter, unkind and malicious things ever uttered against Wagner, none contain more free alkali than the booklet by Nietzsche.

Nietzsche, not being satisfied with an attack on Wagner's art, also made a few flings at his pedigree, and declared that the master's real name was not Wagner, this was his mother's name—he being a natural son of Ludwig Geyer, the poet—the Jew.

What this has to do with "Tannhauser," "Tristan and Isolde," "The Ring," "Lohengrin" and "Parsifal," Nietzsche does not explain.

A man is what he is; and the word "illegitimate" is not in God's vocabulary.

Wagner might have said, "Yes, I am a member of that elect class to which belong William the Conqueror, Leonardo da Vinci, Erasmus, the Empress Josephine, Alexander Hamilton, Abraham Lincoln!" But he didn't; he did better—he said nothing. Wagner had the pride that scorned a defense—he realized his priceless birthright and knew that his mother and father had dowered him with a divine genius. Let those talk who would do nothing else. Silence was his only answer.

In a year later, Nietzsche was taken to an asylum, dead at the top. He lingered on until 1900, when his body, too, died—died there at Weimar, the home of Goethe and the home of Franz Liszt—another of life's little ironies.

The man who does not relax and hoot a few hoots voluntarily now and then is in great danger of hooting hoots and standing on his head for the edification of the pathologist and trained nurse a little later on. The madhouse yawns for the person who always does the proper thing. In propriety, in right proportion, relieves congestion, and thus are the unities preserved.

And so here comes in the great

law of compensation expressed by Ralph Waldo Emerson. The same healthy man, who occasionally strips off his dignity and hoots like an owl, wears his hair long, defies fashion, or rolls naked in the snow, will surely be called insane by the self-nominated elect, but his personal compensation lies in the fact that he knows he isn't.

A Land-Tax City.

Within a few years the city of Vancouver, B. C., has grown from a few thousand people to one of about 80,000 population, and in the past ten years its property valuation has grown from less than \$20,000,000 to over \$75,000,000. In this progressive city, though it is within British territory, the single tax idea is largely carried out. Since 1906 improvements on real estate, including all buildings, have paid only 4 mills on the dollar tax, while land values have paid 16 mills, just four times as much. And hereafter land will pay all, and improvements on land nothing. This year nearly \$25,000,000 worth of property, namely, improvements on land—factories, mills, residences, etc.—was assessed nothing at all. The property tax is all placed on land. Under this policy the city has grown rapidly and prospered exceedingly. It encourages improvement and offers no premium on speculation in idle land. Doubtless Vancouver had people who predicted that this policy would be ruinous, but like most pessimists these croakers were mistaken. With taxes centered on land values, development healthily booms.—Portland Daily Journal.

He Begs Pardon No More.

Jones had just trod on the toe of an old gentleman while getting into the tram car. "I beg your pardon," he said. "Hey? Speak louder. I'm a trifle deaf." "I beg your pardon," repeated Jones. "I'm! Peggy starving? Well, I'm sorry. Who's Peggy?" Jones was red in the face now. "You misunderstand, sir!" he shouted. "Hey?" "You misunderstood!" "Miss Underwood, is she? Peggy, who is starving, is Miss Underwood? Well?" "I didn't say anything about Miss Underwood!" screamed Jones. "I begged your pardon, and you misunderstood." "Oh, now I see!" said the old man sympathetically. "It is your Aunt Peggy who is starving Miss Underwood. Well, why don't you report the case to the police?"—Pearson's.

Not In Her Class.

While delivering an address at a woman's club an actress told the story of a young woman prominent in New York society who desired to achieve histrionic honors.

The manager to whom she confided her desire pointed out the inadvisability of the step she contemplated and added that even were he disposed to give her the chance she coveted he would still be in doubt whether her talents were such as to justify such action on his part.

"What is particularly desired by us at the present time," he said, "is the service of people who know the mechanics of the stage." "Merciful heavens!" exclaimed the young woman, throwing up her hands. "You don't mean to tell me that it is necessary I should be on terms of intimacy with those dreadful stage hands?"—Lippincott's.

Proud of His Prospects.

Louis Piere was one of a number of Canadian immigrants who settled at Fitzgerald, Ga. As he spoke both French and English he rapidly became a man of importance and was successively elected to the offices of city marshal, coroner and justice of the peace. A dispute arose between the French and English settlers as to the superiority of the United States over the Canadian provinces. They finally agreed to leave the decision to Judge Piere, who handed down this decision:

"Yoost tage a loog at me. Ferst dey mage me constabul, den coroner, und now yoostis of de pees. Soon I be ze governor, den senator, den president. I would be ze long time in Canada fore dey mage me queen."—Circle Magazine.

A Diet of Wild Honey.

Wild honey as a change is an agreeable sweetmeat, but after a few days constantly partaking of it the European palate rejects it as nauseous and almost disgusting. Our experience extended over a fortnight, during which period our food consisted solely of it and maize. It has escaped the Biblical commentators that one of the principal hardships that John the Baptist must have undergone was his diet of wild honey.—Geographic Magazine.

A Useful Reminder.

An M. P. who in his magisterial capacity periodically visited a private lunatic asylum told the story of a man of some position in the legal world who went to see a patient who had occasional lapses into sanity. The patient made a great impression on his visitor as a well informed, healthy minded gentleman and was assured that his case should be inquired into.

On leaving, the grateful patient courteously conducted his morning caller to the front door, affectionately pressing his hand at parting. "You won't forget what I've told you," he pleaded, with tears in his voice.

"No," responded the visitor, turning round to descend the rather long flight of steps.

"I don't think you will," said the patient dreamily, "but test you should you know?"

And, lifting up his foot, he gave the unsuspecting, defenseless visitor a kick behind that sent him spinning down the stairway and sprawling on the gravel.—Pearson's Weekly.

A Bird's White Feathers.

The occurrence of white feathers in a bird's plumage is very common. It is, of course, due to lack of coloring matter and is liable to appear in both young and old birds. I have known of several old birds to exhibit this peculiarity (mostly in the wing feathers, however), and it may be due to imperfect nutrition and circulation as the bird ages. I have also noticed it in young birds in a number of instances. The phenomenon thus cannot be said to occur simply as a result of old age, but is rather one of those slight changes in the bird's system the causes of which we do not know. There is this much more to be said, however—when a young bird starts out with a few white feathers they are usually retained throughout life, molting each time in a similar manner. Old birds may exhibit this loss of coloring at any time.—St. Nicholas.

Patrick Henry's Fee.

It is said of Patrick Henry that during his practice of law in the Virginia courts and when he was familiarly addressed as "governor" a man who had been arrested for stealing a hog and who was out on bail went to the governor to have him defend him.

The governor said, "Did you walk away with that shoat?"

"I don't like to say."

"Out with it."

"Yes, sir."

"Have you got the carcass?"

"Yes, sir."

"You go home, you wretch, cut the pig lengthwise in half and hang as much of it in my smokehouse as you keep in yours."

At court the governor said, "Your honor, this man has no more of that stolen shoat than I have."

The man was cleared.—National Monthly.

A Lincoln Story.

When Lincoln, a struggling lawyer, was doing circuit duty in Ohio he once visited a country town where the general storekeeper had the reputation of adulterating, even to the danger point, his cider. In the midst of a general condemnation of this storekeeper Lincoln rose one night from his seat by the hotel stove.

"Come on, boys," he said.

And he led a party of a half dozen lawyers and judges to the general store.

"Let me have a quart of cider," he said to the storekeeper.

"Yes, sir," was the cordial reply.

"And which grade, sir—the ripe, at 3 cents; the mellow, at 2, or the new, at 1?"

"It doesn't matter which grade, mister," Lincoln drawled. "I only want to poison a dog."

The Inventor of the Match.

The first match was the product of the ingenuity of John Frederick Komerer, who early in the nineteenth century was imprisoned in the penitentiary at Hohenasperg, in Germany. He invented the lucifer match while in his gloomy dungeon. The German government forbade the manufacture of matches on the ground of public policy because some children playing with them had caused a fire. Komerer was ruined by Viennese competition when he was released from prison and died a pauper. Up to 1862 the Vienna manufacturers controlled the match business of the entire world.

A Way Out.

"I have six doctors, and they can't agree on what ails me. Three think it's one thing and three think it's another. What would you advise me to do. Discharge them all?"

"No. Hire one more and give him the deciding vote."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Time's Changes.

"In ancient days," said the pedantic person, "the greatest triumph at the Olympian games was won by means of a four horse chariot."

"And now," said the thoroughly indignant athlete, "some of 'em are content to win with a one horse referee."—Washington Star.

Better Than Wealth.

Employ your time by improving yourself by other men's documents; so shall you come easily by what others have labored hard for. Prefer knowledge to wealth, for the one is transitory, the other perpetual.

The Reward.

Poet's Wife—My husband read this poem at a public celebration before thousands of people. Alas, it was the last poem he ever wrote. Publisher—I see. Did they lynch him or shoot him?—Leslie's Weekly.

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