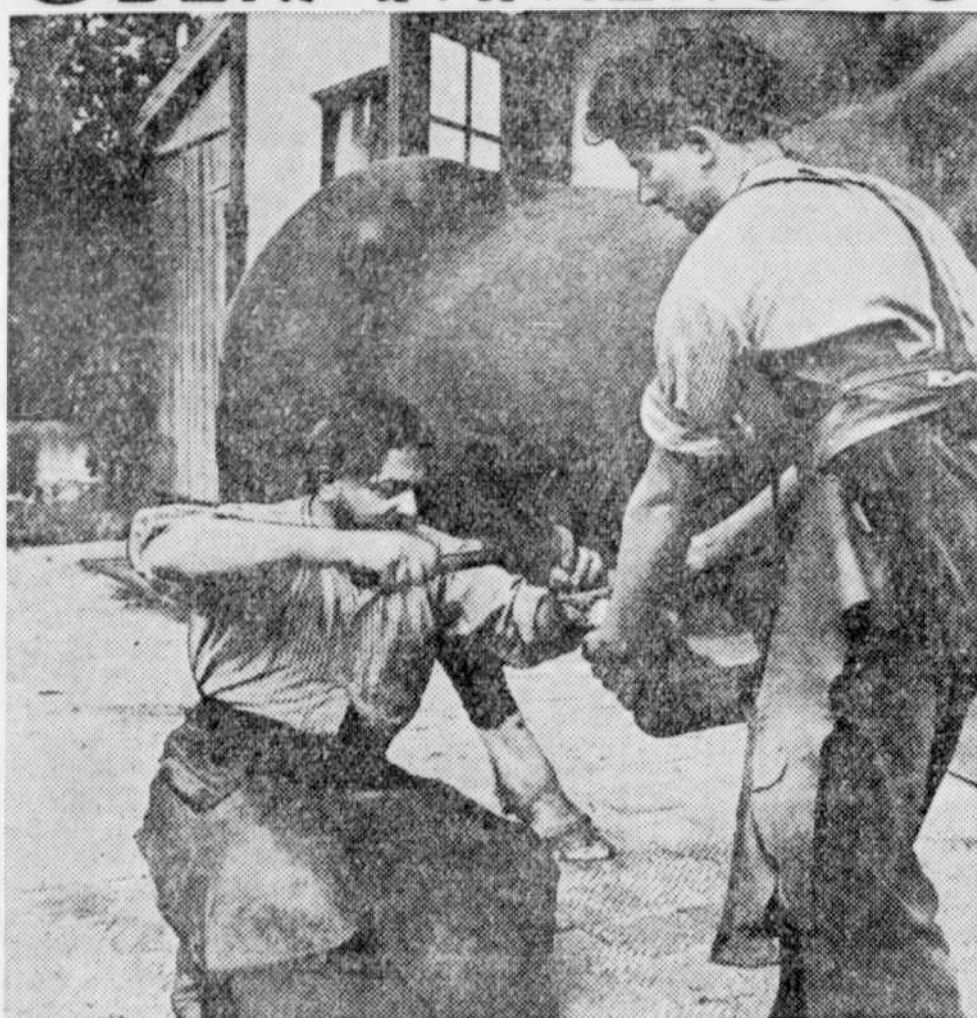


OBERAMMERGAU



"Caiaphas" of Oberammergau Is a Blacksmith.

Prepared by National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.—WNU Service.

IT IS always with joy that the traveler, wandering south through Germany, views the white flag atop the gothic city hall of Bavaria's capital, Munich (München), for the signal tells him the day is exceptionally clear and the peaks of the Alps are beckoning, in plain view some sixty miles away.

"St. Peter, the weathermaker, must be in a good mood to send so fine a day," say thousands in the city of Munich itself, and they head straight for the mountains.

A swift electric train, or a bus whirling over smooth roads, takes the traveler past the inviting Lake of Starnberg (Wurm - See), the banks of which are studded with villas and manors. White sailboats greet him from the green waters, and their background is the hazy blue mountains that loom in the distance, some 45 miles farther south.

The first approach to these gigantic monuments of Nature has the emotional impact of the immigrant's first glimpse of New York's colossal skyline. Shortly the upward journey begins, through rolling, verdant hills which make the transition gradual. Half a mile above sea level, the wanderer finds himself surrounded by the gray peaks, partly wooded mountains, and high green hills which cradle Oberammergau.

As he nears the village, the towering crag of the Kofel bids him welcome, with its huge wooden cross on top. This rocky cone must have been a weird sight one night in 1809 after lightning had struck it, setting its trees ablaze and turning it into an immense torch.

Panorama of the Ammer Valley.

If the wayfarer's ambition holds out, his feet will soon follow his eyes to the lofty height, and before him will unfold a panorama of the Ammer river valley. In its midst, peacefully resting, is the village which takes its name from the meandering, ice-cold stream.

"District on the upper part of the Ammer river" is the meaning of Oberammergau, a word apparently formed with no consideration for alien tongues.

Three miles down the river lies Unterammergau, and on the opposite side a place called Oberau, giving rise to a local tongue-twisting pun, akin to "picking a peck of pickled peppers":

"Ob er uber Oberau, oder ob er uber Unterammergau, nach Oberammergau kommt, weiss ich nicht," it goes, which means, somewhat ineffectively, in English, "Whether he is going to come to Oberammergau by way of Unterammergau, or whether he is going to come to

Oberammergau by way of Oberau, I don't know."

Standing in the brisk breeze blowing over the Kofel, one scans the irregularly scattered town with its red roofs amid green crowns of trees. Four bridges cut the silver band of the Ammer, in whose mirror are reflected the town's tallest buildings—the church and the Passion Play theater.

Little more than two years have passed since the curtain once more went down on that stage, not to rise again until 1940. The hush that settled over the hall also pervaded the streets of the village which only a short while before had been resounding with the voices of thousands of people gathered there from near and far.

In this sequestered Bavarian town some 400,000 people, representing practically all the nations and creeds of the earth, rubbed elbows in the special jubilee year of 1934, when 73 performances of the play were given.

The memorable series marked the three hundredth anniversary of a tradition unbelievably dear to the village whose people for generations have been living in intimate daily contact with it.

Origin of the Passion Play.

The history of the Passion Play may be comparatively young, considering that, even before the Roman legions, Celts populated the valley. The Davarian tribe preceded the age of knighthood, whose members, as early as the Twelfth century, saw a church being built in Oberammergau.

Traveling merchants kept that little hamlet in intimate touch with the outside world, making it a thriving community. But then the Thirty Years' war came, and the specter of a disastrous pestilence began to lay its grip on the settlements surrounding the village at the foot of the Kofel.

Wherever fires were seen blazing at the entrance of towns, the wanderer fled in horror, lest he also be seized by the Black Death and thrown into the raging pyre.

The guards on the outskirts of Oberammergau must have missed that lone man who, after years of absence from home, yearned to be with his family again. Nothing could keep him away any longer. Sick, he staggered over the mountains at night through dark forests, and, unseen by others, joined his dear ones.

Next morning the excited beating of drums broke the news to the inhabitants that it had come, the dread disease, and Kaspar Schissler, bringer of death, lay dead.

The all-powerful Reaper began his work, and 84 persons within a short time fell a prey to him. But their doom incited in the village a spiritual awakening.

From death and despair rose the

Passion Play, a memorial to those who assembled in the little parish church in 1633, making a solemn vow to produce the drama of the suffering and death of Jesus every ten years if the plague should disappear.

The old village chronicle tells us that it did, and that the year after, under the guidance of the monks of the Benedictine monastery of nearby Ettal, the villagers for the first time fulfilled their promise.

In Time of War and Inflation.

From 1670 on, every decade beheld the same religious spectacle, the same fervor and devotion. Only the faces changed. Ever the Passion Play kept growing, through times of interdictions, wars, and hardships of all kinds.

Was the mighty weight of a World war that took 70 men permanently from the ranks of this population of 2,600 souls to do away with the sublime legacy handed down by their ancestors for almost three centuries? True it is, 1920 remained silent and bleak. There were not enough players, no provisions.

But 1922 looked down on a busy summer, saw the play start in May and end in September. Once again Oberammergau was proving faithful to its vow.

No German will forget those heartbreaking days of inflation and currency collapse, 13 years ago, when one had to carry one's money in a satchel for the simplest shopping.

The principal character then received for more than three score trying performances the sum of 20,000 marks—an amount which enabled him to buy only a pair of shoes and a few cakes of soap!

The 15,000 marks given a member of the orchestra would, he thought, carry him a long way, particularly if he tucked the money away in the savings bank. In a few days it had depreciated to zero—and that was that.

Refused a Cinema Offer.

But the players carried on, and even the unheard-of sum of one million dollars was staunchly refused by the villagers when they rejected a proposal to have their play reproduced in the movies, and elected to have it continue to be what it had been from the very outset, a local drama with a great tradition, executed by amateurs. Only thus was it possible for the village in the shadow of the sheltering Kofel to preserve its quaint character.

The visitor to Oberammergau immediately notes a cleanliness and refreshing atmosphere. Each home attracts him with its tidy appearance and the hospitable spirit of the people.

In spite of the macadamized "Hauptstrasse," Main street, the rural character has not suffered. Traffic jams are caused by cows or goats rambling through the street, rather than by automobiles.

Barisal Guns Puzzling;

Firing Seems Continuous

Sometimes one hears queer noises, like cannon being fired, when in the country or by the sea. These are atmospheric discharges, and are known as Barisal Guns, the name being taken from Barisal, a little town in Bengal, India, where the firing of cannon in the distance seems continuous, says a writer in the London Tit-Bits Magazine. A queer thing about these noises is that although a group of people may hear them at the same time, each may be certain that the reports came from a different direction.

Similar sounds may sometimes be heard on Dartmoor and on the shores of Lough Neagh, while on the Belgian coast noises like sharp pistol shots are located. At Hillsprings, Carnarvon, Australia, visitors occasionally hear three sudden high explosions, like escaping steam, for which there seems to be no satisfactory cause. Scientists offer many explanations for these phenomena; bamboos bursting in jungle fires, thunderclaps, the collapsing of banks, globular lightning, landslips, submarine eruptions, and air pockets being suddenly filled. This last seems to be the most likely theory of all.

Through A WOMAN'S EYES

by
JEAN NEWTON

BOUGHT ADMIRATION IS RIDICULE

WE ARE told the occupation of gigolo is on the increase in this country. In Paris, where the idea of idle young men selling their time to women who can pay for it does not meet our prejudices, escort-hire has long been a common thing.

Why, it is argued, should not a bored, lonesome and wealthy middle-aged woman take a leaf out of the masculine book and buy the charm of the other sex, or—what may be more important to her—buy herself some admiration?

More and more men have entered the ranks of the idle in this country, and of the country's wealth forty-one per cent is in the hands of women. Is it not natural then that men should adopt the occupation of pleasing women, as it has been for centuries the occupation of women to please men? Then why shouldn't the gigolo flourish?

I'll tell you why, my friends. And that entirely apart from the question of masculine inclination or disinclination for that particular way of earning a living.

The reason is simply this: that women are not so much addicted as men to fooling themselves! And people who can get pleasure from a social or sex relationship for which they have to pay must be willing to fool themselves.

The middle-aged man whose mirror tells him plainly that his good points lie neither in his looks nor a devastating charm, may really enjoy having a blond baby doll tell him—for a price—that he's "just gorgeous" and "I'm crazy about you." But to enjoy that he must be able to fool himself. And many of him are eminently able to; they have had generations and generations of practice at fooling themselves in that way.

But not so with women. A woman of whatever years and dimensions undoubtedly enjoys dancing with a young Apollo with the winged feet of Mercury. And she would enjoy more his appearing to enjoy dancing with her—and telling her that she is "gorgeous" or "ravishing" (I believe the gigolo is more subtle than the baby doll)—if way back in her own mind there were not that insistent voice telling her that bought admiration is ridicule, and that bought gallantry is an ugly thing. In other words, she cannot fool herself.

Here and there one or two of her may fool themselves, just as always, here and there, some men could not be fooled. But the number of exceptions in the case of women are hardly enough to foster the growth of such a masculine occupation, even if our men were willing.

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Bedtime Story by Thornton W. Burgess

THE FARMER AND HIS WIFE ARE IN DESPAIR

THE farmer who owned the big barn where the rats had lived was puzzled. After a few days he became sure that there wasn't a rat left in the big barn. He knew that they had all moved to the farmhouse. They had been bad enough when they had lived in the big barn, but they were ever so much worse living in his house. He knew that rats did not move like this without a cause. This meant that they must have been driven out of the big barn, and who or what could have driven them out was more than the farmer could guess. For years he had tried to get rid of the rats there and hadn't been able to. Now suddenly they had deserted the big barn and taken possession of his house.

"I wish," said the farmer, "I could find out what drove those rats over here. Then perhaps I could use the same means to drive them out of the house."

"I wish you could," replied his wife. "I don't know what we're going to do. Those rats are getting so bold that they don't pay any attention to me at all. They run across the pantry floor in broad daylight. The only way I can keep food safe from them is in tin cans or earthen jars with covers and they have managed even to get the covers off some of these. They get in the flour barrel. They have spoiled the milk; they have stolen the eggs; in fact, there isn't anything they haven't got into. They keep me awake nights by their squealing and racing about through the walls. They're getting so bold that I'm actually afraid of them."

So the farmer set all his traps. He set traps in the attic and in the pantry and in the woodshed. He put poisoned food where he was sure the rats would find it. But it was all in vain. Those rats had learned all about traps, and the gray old leader of them had

learned to be suspicious of food left where it was easy to get. He warned the other rats not to touch this food. The farmer blocked up the holes in the pantry walls, but as fast as he blocked them up the rats gnawed new ones.

So it was that the farmer and his wife were in despair. Do what they would, they couldn't get rid of those rats. The rats got into the cellar and stole vegetables. It got so that the farmer's wife didn't dare go down to the cellar. She was afraid of being bitten by a rat, and you know the bite of a rat is often poisonous.

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HAILE IN BRONZE



Mr. Jacob Epstein with his half-length bust of Haile Selassie, former emperor of Ethiopia, which he will include in his private exhibition in London. The bust is in bronze.