

## THE VILLAGE OF OBERAMMERGAU.

MOUNTAINS and valleys and rivers are in league with the sun and summer—and, for that matter, with winter too—to do their best in the Bavarian Highlands. Lofty ranges, ever green at base, ever white at top, are there tied with luminous bands of meadow into knots and loops, and knots and loops again, tightening and loosening, opening and shutting in labyrinths, of which only rivers know the secret, and no man can speak the charm. Villages which find place in lands like these take rank and relation at once with the divine organic architecture already builded; seem to become a part of nature; appear to have existed as long as the hills or the streams, and to have the same surety of continuance. How much this natural correlation may have had to do with the long, unchanging simplicities of peoples born and bred in these mountain haunts it would be worth while to analyze. Certain it is, that in all peasantry of the hill countries in Europe, there are to be seen traits of countenance and demeanor, peculiarities of body, habits, customs, and beliefs, which are indigenous and lasting, like plants and rocks. Mere lapse of time hardly touches them; they have defied many centuries; only now in the mad restlessness of progress of this the nineteenth, do they begin to falter. But they have excuse when Alps have come to be tunneled, and glaciers are melted and measured.

Best known of all the villages that have had the good fortune to be born in the Bavarian Highlands is Oberammergau, the town of the famous Passion Play. But for the Passion Play, the great world had never found Oberammergau out, perhaps; yet it might well be sought for itself. It lies 2,600 feet above the sea, at the head of a long stretch of meadow lands, which the river Ammer keeps green for half the year—at the head of these, and in the gate-way of one of the most beautiful walled valleys of the Alps. The Ammer is at once its friend and foe: in summer a friend, but malicious in spring: rising suddenly after great rains or thaws, and filling the valley with a swift sea, by which everything is in danger of being swept away. In 1769 it tore through the village with a flood like a tidal wave, and left only twelve houses standing.

High up on one of the mountain-sides, north-east of the village, is a tiny spot of greensward, near the course of one of the mountain torrents which swell the Ammer.

This green spot is the Oberammergauers' safety-gauge. So long as that is green and clear the valley will not be flooded; as soon as the water is seen shining over that spot, it is certain that floods will be on in less than an hour; and the whole village is astir to forestall the danger. The high peaks, also, which stand on either side the town, are friend and foe alternately. White with snow till July, they keep stores of a grateful coolness for summer heats; but in winter the sun cannot climb above them till nine o'clock, and is lost in their fastnesses again at one. Terrible hailstorms sometimes whirl down from their summits. On the 10th of May, 1774, there were three of these hailstorms in one day, which killed every green blade and leaf in the fields. One month later, just as vegetation had fairly started again, came another avalanche of hail, and killed everything a second time. On the 13th of June, 1771, snow lay so deep that men drove in sledges through the valley. This was a year never to be forgotten. In 1744 there was a storm of rain, thunder, and lightning, in which the electric fire shot down like javelins into the town, set a score of houses on fire, and destroyed the church. One had need of goodly devotion to keep a composed mind and contented spirit in a dwelling-place surrounded by such dangers. The very elements, however, it seems are becoming tamed by the inroads of civilization, for it is more than fifty years since Oberammergau has seen such hail or such lightning.

The village is, like all Tyrolean villages, built without apparent plan—no two houses on a line, no two streets at right angles, everybody's house slanting across or against somebody else's house, the confusion really attaining the dignity of a fine art. If a child were to set out a toy village on the floor, decide hastily to put it back in its box, sweep it all together between his two hands, then change his mind, and let the houses remain exactly as they had fallen, with no change except to set them right side up, I think it would make a good map of Oberammergau. The houses are low, white-plastered, or else left of the natural color of the wood, which, as it grows old, is of a rich dark brown. The roofs project far over the eaves, and are held down by rows of heavy stones to keep them from blowing off in wind-storms. Tiny open-work balconies are twined in and out capriciously, sometimes filled with gay flow-

ers, sometimes with hay and dried herbs, sometimes with the fire-wood for winter. Oberammergau knows in such matters no law but each man's pleasure. It is at each man's pleasure, also, where he will keep his manure-heap; and usually he elects to keep it close to the street, joining his barn or his house, or his neighbor's barn or house, at convenience. Except that there are many small sluices and rivulets and canals of spring water wandering about the village to carry off the liquidation, this would be intolerable, and surely would create pestilences. As it is, the odors are abominable, and are a perpetual drawback to the delight one would otherwise take in the picturesque little place.

There are many minute gardens and bits of orchard of all possible shapes, as many and as many-sided as the figures in the first pages of Euclid. I saw one, certainly not containing more than eight square feet, which was seven-sided, fenced and joined to two houses. Purple phlox, dahlias, and lilacs are the favorite outdoor flowers. Of these there were clumps and beds which might have been transported from New England. In the balconies and window-sills were scarlet geranium, white alyssum, and pansies.

The most striking natural feature of Oberammergau is the great mountain peak to the south-west called the *Kofel*. This is a bare, rocky peak of singularly bold contour. On its summit is set a large cross, which stands out always against the sky with a clearness almost solemn. The people regard this *Kofel* as the guardian angel of their village, and it is said that the reply was once made to persons who were urging the Passion Play actors to perform their play in England or America:

"We would do so if it were possible; but, to do that, it would be needful to take the entire village and our guardian spirit, the *Kofel*."

I arrived in Oberammergau on a Wednesday, and counted on finding myself much welcomed, three days in advance of the day of the play. Never was a greater mistake. A country cousin, coming uninvited to make a visit in the middle of a busy housewife's spring house-cleaning, would be as welcome. As I drove into the village the expression of things gave me alarm: every fence, post, roof, bush, had sheets, pillow-cases, or towels drying on it. The porches and grass-plots were strewn with pillows and mattresses; a general fumigation and purification of a quarantined town could not have produced a greater look of being turned wrong side out. This is what the cleanly Oberammergau women do every week during the Passion Play season. It

takes all the time intervening between the weekly representations of the play to make ready their bedrooms and beds.

I was destined to greater alarms and surprises, however. The *Frau Rutz*, to whom I had written for lodgings, and to whose house I drove, all confident, had never heard of my name. It became instantaneously apparent to me that I probably represented to her mind, perhaps, the eleven hundred and thirty-seventh person who had stopped at her door with the same expectation. Half of her house was being re-roofed, "to be done by Sunday"; all her bed-linen was damp, in baskets in the kitchen, and she and her sister were even then ironing for dear life to be done in time to begin baking and brewing on the next day. Evidently taking time by the forelock was a good way to come to a dead-lock in Oberammergau. To house after house I drove; to *Frau Zwink's* bird-cage, perched on the brink of a narrow canal, and half over it, it seemed. Just before me stood a post-carriage, at *Frau Zwink's* door, and as I stepped out two English ladies with bags, bundles, and umbrellas disappeared within *Frau Zwink's* door, having secured the only two available perches in the cage. The *Frau* came running with urgent solicitations that I should examine a closet she had, which she thought might answer.

"Oh, is she the lady of the house, and she barefoot?" exclaimed my Danish maid, aghast at the spectacle. Yet I afterwards heard that the *Frau Zwink's* was one of the notably comfortable lodging-places in the town. In another house were shown to us two small, dark rooms, to reach which one must climb a ladder out of the common living-room of the family. From house after house came the response, "No rooms; all promised for Saturday." At intervals I drove back to *Frau Rutz's* for further suggestions; at last she became gradually impressed with a sense of responsibility for our fortunes; and the mystery of her knowing nothing about my letter was cleared up. Her nephew had charge of the correspondence; she never saw the letters; he had not yet had time to answer one-half of the letters he had received. Most probably my letter might be in his pocket now. Friendship grew up between my heart and the heart of the *Frau Rutz* as we talked. Who shall fathom or sound these bonds which create themselves so quickly with one, so slowly with another? She was an Oberammergau peasant, who knew no word of my tongue; I a woman of another race, life, plane, who could not speak one word she could comprehend, and our interpreter was only a servant; but I think I do

not exaggerate when I say that the Frau and I became friends. I know I am hers, and I think if I were in Oberammergau, in need, I should find that she was mine.

By some unexplained accident—if there be such things—the best room in all Oberammergau was still left free: a great sunny room, with a south window and east windows; a white porcelain stove, an old-fashioned spinnet, a glass-doored corner-cupboard full of trinkets, old-fashioned looking-glasses, tables, and two good beds; and of this I took possession in incredulous haste. It was in the house of George Lang, merchant, the richest man in the town. The history of the family of which he is now the leading representative is identified with the fortunes of Oberammergau for a century past. It is an odd thing that this little village should have had its line of merchant princes: a line, dating back a hundred years, marked by the same curious points of heredity as that of the Vanderbilts or Astors in America, and the Rothschilds in Europe; men as shrewd, sharp, foreseeing, fore-planning, and executive in their smaller way, and perhaps as arbitrary in their monopolies, as some of our millionaires.

In 1765 there lived in the service of the monastery at Ettal a man named Joseph Lang. He was a trusted man, a sort of steward and general supervisor. When the monastery was suppressed Joseph Lang's occupation was gone. He was a handy man, both with tools and with colors, and, wandering down to Oberammergau, halted for a little to see if he could work himself in with the industry already established there of toy-making. At first he made simply frames, and of the plainest sort; soon—perhaps from a reverent bias for still ministering to the glory of the church, but probably quite as much from his trader's perception of the value of an assured market—he began to paint wooden figures of saints, apostles, Holy Virgins, and Christs. These figures at first he imported from the Tyrol, painted them, and sent them back there to be sold. Before long he had a large majority of the Oberammergau villagers working under his direction as both carvers and colorers in this business—a great enlargement of their previous trade of mere toy-making.

This man had eleven sons. Ten of them were carvers in wood, one was a painter and gilder. All these sons worked together in the continuing and building up of their father's business. One of them, George Lang, perceiving the advantage of widening business connections, struck out for the world at large, established agencies for his house in many

countries, chiefly in Russia, and came home to die. He had six sons and four or five daughters, it is not certainly known which; for, as the present George Lang said, telling this genealogical history in his delightful English: "The archives went up in fire once, so they did not know exactly." All six of these sons followed the trades of carving, painting, and gilding. One of them, the youngest, Johann, continued the business, succeeding to his father's position in 1824. He was, perhaps, the cleverest man of the line. He went from country to country, all over Europe, and had his agents in America, England, Australia, Russia. He was on terms of acquaintance with people in high position everywhere, and was sometimes called "The King of Oberammergau." Again and again the villagers wished to make him burgomaster or magistrate, but he would not accept the position. Nevertheless, it finally came to pass that all legal writings of the town, leases, conveyances, etc., made, were signed by his name as well as by the names of the recognized officials. First, "the magistracy of Oberammergau," then, "Johann Lang, Agent," as he persisted in calling himself, ran in the records of the parties to transactions in Oberammergau at that time.

In 1847 the village began to be in great trouble. A large part of it was burned; sickness swept it; whole families were homeless, or without father or brother to support them. Now shone out the virtues of this "king of Oberammergau," who would not be its burgomaster. He supported the village: to those who could work he gave work, whether the work had present value to him or not: to those who could not work he gave food, shelter, clothes. He was a rich man in 1847, when the troubles began. In 1849, he was poor, simply from his lavish giving. He had only two sons, to both of whom he gave an education in the law. Thus the spell of the succession of the craft of wood-workers was broken. No doubt ambition had entered into the heart of the King of Oberammergau to place his sons higher in the social scale than any success in mere trade could lift them. One of these sons is now burgomaster of the village; he is better known to the outside world as the Caiaphas of the Passion Play. To one knowing the antecedents of his house, the dramatic power with which he assumes and renders the Jewish High Priest's haughty scorn, impatience of opposition, contempt for the Nazarene, will be seen to have a basis in his own pride of birth, and inherited habit of authority.

The other son having been only moderately successful in making his way in the

world as a lawyer, returned to Oberammergau, succeeded to his father's business in 1856, but lived only a short time, dying in 1859. He left a widow and six children, three sons and three daughters. For a time, the widow and a sister-in-law carried on the business. As the sons grew up, two of them gradually assumed more and more the lead in affairs; and now bid fair to revive and restore the old traditions of the family power and success. One of them is in charge of a branch of the business in England, the other in Oberammergau. The third son is an officer in the Bavarian army. The aunt is still the accountant and manager of the house, and the young people evidently defer both to her advice and authority.

The daughters have been educated in Munich and at convents, and are gentle, pleasing, refined young women. At the time of the Passion Play in 1880 they did the honors of their house to hundreds of strangers, who were at once bewildered and delighted to find, standing behind their chairs at dinner, young women speaking both English and French, and as courteously attentive to their guests' every wish as if they had been extending the hospitality of the "King of Oberammergau," a half-century back.

Their house is in itself a record. It stands fronting an irregular open, where five straggling roadways meet, making common center of a big spring, from which water runs ceaselessly day and night into three large tanks. The house thus commands the village, and it would seem no less than natural that all post and postal service should center in it. It is the largest and far the best house in the place. Its two huge carved doors stand wide open from morning till night, like those of an inn. On the right-hand side of the hall is the post office, combined with which is the usual universal shop of a country village, holding everything conceivable, from a Norway dried herring, down to French sewing-silk. On the left-hand side are the ware-rooms of wood-carvings: the first two rooms for their sale; behind these, rooms for storing and for packing the goods, to send away; there are four of these rooms, and their piled-up cases bear testimony to the extent of the business they represent.

A broad, dark, winding stair-way leads up to the second floor. Here are the living-rooms of the family; spacious, sunny, comfortable; at the farther end of this hall a great iron door leads into the barn; whenever it is opened, a whiff of the odor of hay sweeps through; and to put out your head from your chamber-door of a morning, and, looking down the hall, to see straight

into a big hay-mow, is an odd experience the first time it happens. The house faces south-east, and has a dozen windows, all the time blazing in sunlight, a goodly thing in Oberammergau, where shadow and shade mean reeking damp and chill. On the south side of the house is an old garden, chiefly apple-orchard; under these trees, in sunny weather, the family take their meals, and at the time of the Passion Play more than fifty people often sat down at outdoor tables there. These trees were like one great aviary, so full were they of little sparrow-like birds, with breasts of cinnamon-brown color, and black crests on their heads. They chatted and chattered like magpies, and I hardly ever knew them to be quiet except for a few minutes every morning, when, at half-past five, the village herd of fifty cows went by, each cow with a bell at her neck; and all fifty bells half ringing half tolling a broken drowsy, sleepy, delicious chime, as if some old sacristan, but half awake, was trying to ring a peal. At the first note of this the birds always stopped, half envious, I fancied. As the chime died away, they broke out again as shrill as ever, and even the sunrise did not interrupt them.

The open square in front of the house is a perpetual stage of tableaux. The people come and go, and linger there around the great water-tanks as at a sort of Bethesda, sunk to profaner uses of every-day cleansing. The commonest labors become picturesque performed in open air, with a background of mountains, by men and women with bare heads and bare legs and feet. Whenever I looked out of my windows I saw a picture worth painting. For instance, a woman washing her windows in the tanks, holding each window under the running stream, tipping it and turning it so quickly in the sunshine that the waters gliding off it took millions of prismatic hues, till she seemed to be scrubbing with rainbows. Another, with two tubs full of clothes, which she had brought there to wash, her petticoat tucked up to her knees, her arms bare to the shoulder, a bright red handkerchief knotted round her head, and her eyes flashing as she beat and lifted, wringing and tossing the clothes, and flinging out a sharp or a laughing word to every passer. Another, coming home at night with a big bundle of green grass under one arm, her rake over her shoulder, a free, open glance, and a smile and a bow to a gay postilion watering his horses; another, who had brought, apparently, her whole stock of kitchen utensils there to be made clean—jugs, and crocks, and brass pans. How they glittered as she splashed them in and out! She did not wipe them, only set

them down on the ground to dry, which seemed likely to leave them but half clean after all. Then there came a dashing young fellow from the Tyrol, with three kinds of feathers in his green hat, short brown breeches, bare knees, gray yarn stockings with a pattern of green wreath knit in at the top, a happy-go-lucky look on his face, stooping down to take a mouthful of the swift-running water from the spout, and getting well splashed by missing aim with his mouth, to the uproarious delight of two women just coming in from their hay-making in the meadows, one of them balancing a hay-rake and pitchfork on her shoulder with one hand, and with the other holding her dark-blue petticoat carefully gathered up in front, full of hay; the other drawing behind her (not wheeling it) a low, scoop-shaped wheelbarrow full of green grass and clover—these are a few of any day's pictures. And thither came every day Issa Kattan, from Bethlehem of Judea—a brown-skinned, deer-eyed Syrian, who had come all the way from the Holy Land to offer to the Passion Play pilgrims mother-of-pearl trinkets wrought in Jerusalem; rosaries of pearl, of olive-wood, of seeds, scarlet, yellow, and black, wonderfully smooth, hard, and shining. He wore a brilliant red fez, and told his gentle lies in a voice as soft as the murmuring of wind in pines. He carried his wares in a small tray, hung, like a muff, by a cord round his neck, the rosaries and some strips of bright stuffs hanging down at each side and swinging back and forth in time to his slow tread. Issa paced the streets patiently from morn till night, but took good care to be at this watering-place many times in the course of the day, chiefly at the morning, and when the laborers were coming home at sunset.

Another vender, as industrious as he, but less picturesque, also haunted the spot—a man who, knowing how dusty the Passion Play pilgrims would be, had brought brushes to sell,—brushes big, little, round, square, thick, thin, long, short, cheap, dear, good, bad, and indifferent; no brush ever made that was not to be found hanging on that man's body, if you turned him round times enough. That was the way he carried his wares: in tiers, strings, strata, all tied together and on himself, in some inexplicable way. One would think he must have slipped himself into a dozen "cat's-cradles" of twine to begin with, and then had the brushes netted in and out on this foundation. All that remained to be seen of him was his head above this bristling ball, and his feet shuffling below. To cap the climax of his grotesqueness, he wore on his back a wooden box, shaped like an Indian papoose-frame, and in

this stood three or four lofty long-handled brushes for sweeping, which rose far above his head.

Another peasant woman—a hay-maker—I remember, who came one night; never again, though I watched longingly for her, or one like her. She wore a petticoat of umber-brown, a white blouse, a blue apron, a pink-and-white handkerchief over her head, pinned under her chin; under one arm she carried a big bunch of tall, green grasses, with the tasseled heads hanging loose far behind her. On the other shoulder rested her pitchfork, and in the hand that poised the pitchfork she held a bunch of dahlias, red, white, and yellow.

But the daintiest and most memorable figure of all, that flitted or tarried here, was a little brown-eyed, golden-haired maiden, not more than three years old. She lived near by, and often ran away from home. I saw her sometimes led by the hand, but oftenest without guide or protector; never alone, however, for rain or shine, early or late, she carried always in her arms a huge puppet, with a face bigger than her own. It wore a shawl and a knit hood; the child herself being always bareheaded. It was some time before I could fathom the mystery of this doll, which seemed shapeless yet bulky, and heavier than the child could well lift, though she tugged at it faithfully, and with an expression of care, as we often see poor babies in cities lugging about babies a little younger than themselves. At last I caught the puppet out one day without its shawl, and the mystery was revealed. It was a milliner's bonnet-block, on which a face had been painted. No wonder it seemed heavy and shapeless; below the face was nothing but a rough base of wood. It appeared that as soon as the thing was given to the child, she conceived for it a most inconvenient and unmanageable affection—would go nowhere without it, would not go to sleep without it, could hardly be induced to put it for one moment out of her tired little arms, which could hardly clasp it round. It seemed but a fitting reward to perpetuate some token of such faithfulness, and after a good deal of pleading I induced the child's aunt, in whose charge she lived, to bring her to be photographed with her doll in her arms. It was not an easy thing to compass this, for the only photographer of the town, being one of the singers in the chorus, had small leisure for the practice of his trade in the Passion Play year; but, won over by the novelty of the subject, he found an odd hour for us, and made the picture. The little thing was so frightened at the sight of the strange room and instruments that she

utterly refused to stand alone for a second, which was not so much of a misfortune as I thought at first, for it gave me the aunt's face also, and a very characteristic Oberammergau face it is.

At the same time I also secured a photograph of the good Frau Rutz. It was an illustration of the inborn dramatic sense in the Oberammergau people, that when I explained to Frau Rutz that I wished her to sit for a picture of an Oberammergau woman at her carving, she took the idea instantly, and appeared prompt to the minute, with a vase of her own carving, her glue-pot, and all her tools—to lay on the table by her side. "Do you not think it would be better with these?" she said, simply; then she took up her vase and tool, as if to work, seated herself at the table in a pose which could not be improved, and looked up, with "Is this right?" The photographer nodded his head, and, presto! in five seconds it was done; and Frau Rutz had really been artist of her own picture. The likeness did her less than justice. Her face is even more like an old Memling portrait than is the picture. Weatherbeaten, wrinkled, thin,—as old at forty-five as it should be by rights at sixty,—hers is still a noble and beautiful countenance. Nothing would so surprise Frau Rutz as to be told this. She laughed and shook her head when, on giving her one of the photographs, I said how much I liked it. "If it had another head on it it might be very good," she said. She is one of the few women in Oberammergau who do delicate carving. In the previous winter she had made thirty vases of this pattern, besides doing much other work.

Very well I came to know Frau Rutz's chiseled and expressive old face before I left Oberammergau. The front door of her house stood always open; and in a tiny kitchen opposite it—a sort of closet in the middle of the house, lighted only by one small window opening into the hall, and by its door, which was never shut—she was generally to be seen, stirring or skimming, or scouring her bright saucepans. Whenever she saw us she ran out with a smile, and the inquiry if there was anything she could do for us. On the day before the Passion Play she opened her little shop. It was about the size of a steamboat state-room, built over a bit of the side walk—Oberammergau fashion—and joined at a slant to the house; it was a set of shelves roofed over, and with a door to lock at night, not much more; eight people crowded it tight; but it was packed from sill to roof with carvings, a large part of which had been made by herself, her husband, and sons, or workmen in their employ, and most of which,

I think, were sold by virtue of the Frau's smile, if it proved as potent a lure to other buyers as to me. If I drove or walked past her house without seeing it, I felt as if I had left something behind for which I ought to go back; and when she waved her hand to us, and stood looking after us as our horses dashed round the corner, I felt that good luck was invoked on the drive and the day.

Driving out of Oberammergau, there are two roads to choose from: one up the Ammer, by way of a higher valley, and into closer knots of mountains, and so on into the Tyrol; the other down the Ammer, through meadows, doubling and climbing some of the outpost mountains of the range, and so on out to the plains. On the first road lies Ettal, and on the other Unterammergau, both within so short a distance of Oberammergau that they are to be counted in among its pleasures.

Ettal is one of the twelve beautiful houses which the ecclesiastics formerly owned in this part of Bavaria. These old monks had a quick eye for beauty of landscape, as well as a shrewd one for all other advantages of locality; and in the days of their power and prosperity they so crowded into these South Bavarian Highlands that the region came to be called Pfaffenwinkel, or, The Priest's Corner. Abbeys, priories, and convents—a dozen of them, all rich and powerful—stood within a day's journey of one another. Of these, Ettal was preëminent for beauty and splendor. It was founded early in the fourteenth century by a German emperor, who, being ill, was ready to promise anything to be well again, and being approached at this moment by a crafty Benedictine, promised to found a Benedictine monastery in the valley of the Ammer, if the Holy Virgin would restore him to health. An old tradition says that as the emperor came riding up the steep Ettaler Berg, at the summit of which the monastery stands, his horse fell three times on his knees, and refused to go farther. This was construed to be a sign from Heaven to point out the site of the monastery. But to all unforwarned travelers who have approached Oberammergau by way of Ettal, and been compelled to walk up the Ettaler Berg, there will seem small occasion for any suggestion of a supernatural cause for the emperor's horse's tumbling on his knees. A more unmitigated two miles of severe climb was never built into a road; the marvel is that it should have occurred to mortal man to do it, and that there is as yet but one votive tablet by the roadside in commemoration of death by apoplexy in the attempt to walk up. It was Alois Pfaurler who did thus die in July, 1866,

and before he was half way up, too! Therefore, this tablet on the spot of his death has a depressing effect on people for the latter half of their struggle, and no doubt makes them go slower.

How much the Benedictines of Ettal had to do with the Passion Play which has made Oberammergau so famous, it is now not possible to know. Those who know most about it disagree. In 1634, the year in which the play was first performed, it is certain that the Oberammergau community must have been under the pastoral charge of some one of the great ecclesiastical establishments in that region; and it is more than probable that the monks, who were themselves much in the way of writing and performing in religious plays, first suggested to the villagers this mode of working for the glory and profit of the Church.

Their venerable pastor, Daisenberger, to whom they owe the present version of the Passion Play, was an Ettal monk, and one of the many plays which he has arranged or written for their dramatic training is "The Founding of the Monastery of Ettal." The closing stanzas of this well express the feeling of the Oberammergauer to-day, and no doubt of the Ettal monk centuries ago, in regard to the incomparable Ammer Thal region:

"Let God be praised! He hath this vale created  
To show to man the glory of His name!  
And these wide hills the Lord hath consecrated  
Where He His love incessant may proclaim.

"Ne'er shall decay the valley's greatest treasure,  
Madonna, Thou the pledge of Heaven's grace!  
Her blessings will the Queen of Heaven outmeasure  
To her quiet Ettal and Bavaria's race."

Most travelers who visit Oberammergau know nothing of Unterammergau, except that the white and brown lines of its roofs and spires make a charming dotted picture on the Ammer meadows, as seen from the higher seats in the Passion Play theater. The little hamlet is not talked about, not even in guide-books. It sits, a sort of Cinderella, and meekly does its best to take care of the strangers who come grumbling to sleep there, once in ten years, only because beds are not to be had in its more favored sister village farther up the stream. Yet it is no less picturesque, and a good deal cleaner, than is Oberammergau; gets hours more of sunshine, a freer sweep of wind, and has compassing it about a fine stretch of meadowlands, beautiful to look at, and rich to reap.

Its houses are, like those in Oberammergau, chiefly white stucco over stone, or else dark and painted wood, often the lower story

of white stucco and the upper one of dark wood, with a fringe of balconies, dried herbs, and wood-piles where the two stories join. Many of the stuccoed houses are gay with Scripture frescoes, more than one hundred years old, and not faded yet. There are also many of the curious ancient windows, made of tiny round panes set in lead. When these are broken, square panes have to be set in. Nobody can make the round ones any more. On the inside of the brown wooden shutters are paintings of bright flowers; over the windows, and above the doors, are also Scripture frescoes. One old house is covered with them. One scene is Saint Francis lying on his back, with his cross by his side; and another, the coronation of the Virgin Mary, in which God the Father is represented as a venerable man wrapped in a red-and-yellow robe, with a long white beard, resting his hand on the round globe, while Christ, in a red mantle, is putting the crown on the head of Mary, who is resplendent in bright blue and red. On another wall is St. Joseph, holding the infant Christ on his knee. There must have been a marvelous secret in the coloring of these old frescoes, that they have so long withstood the snows, rains, and winds of the Ammer valley. The greater part of them were painted by one Franz Zwink, in the middle of the last century. The peasants called him the "wind painter," because he worked with such preternatural rapidity. Many legends attest this; among others, a droll one of his finding a woman at her churning one day and asking her for some butter. She refused. "If you'll give me that butter," said Zwink, "I'll paint a Mother of God for you above your door." "Very well; it is a bargain," said the woman, "provided the picture is done as soon as the butter," whereupon Zwink mounted to the wall, and, his brushes flying as fast as her churn-dasher, lo! when the butter was done, there shone out the fresh Madonna over the door, and the butter had been fairly earned. Zwink was an athletic fellow, and walked as swiftly as he painted; gay, moreover, for there is a tradition of his having run all the way to Munich once for a dance. Being too poor to hire a horse, he ran thither in one day, danced all night, and the next day ran back to Oberammergau, fresh and merry. He was originally only a color-rubber in the studio of one of the old rococo painters; but certain it is that he either stole or invented a most triumphant system of coloring, whose secret is unknown to-day. It is said that in 1790 every house in both Ober and Unter Ammergau was painted in this way. But repeated fires have destroyed many of the most valuable frescoes, and many others have been

ruthlessly covered up by whitewash. An old history of the valley says that when the inhabitants saw flames consuming these sacred images they wept aloud in terror and grief, not so much for the loss of their dwellings as for the irreparable loss of the guardian pictures. The effect of these on a race for three generations,—one after another growing up in the habit, from earliest infancy, of gazing on the visible representations of God, and Christ, and the Mother of God, placed as if in token of perpetual presence and protection on the very walls and roofs of their homes,—must be incalculably great. Such a people would be religious by nature, as inherently and organically as they were hardy of frame by reason of the stern necessities of their existence. It is a poor proof of the superiority of enlightened, emancipated, and cultivated intellect, with all its fine analyses of what God is not, if it tends to hold in scorn or dares to hold in pity the ignorance which is yet so full of spirituality that it believes it can even see what God is, and feels safer by night and day with a cross at each gable of the roof.

One of the Unterammergau women, seeing me closely studying the frescoes on her house, asked me to come in, and with half shy hospitality, and a sort of childlike glee at my interest, showed me every room. The house is one of some note, as note is reckoned in Unterammergau: it was built in 1700, is well covered with Zwink's frescoes, and bears an inscription stating that it was the birth-place of one "Max Anrich, canon of St. Zeno." It is the dwelling now of only humble people, but has traces of better days in the square-blocked wooden ceilings and curious old gaily-painted cupboards. Around three sides of the living-room ran a wooden bench, which made chairs a superfluous luxury. In one corner, on a raised stone platform,

stood a square stove, surrounded by a broad bench; two steps led up to this bench, and from the bench, two steps more to the lower round of a ladder-like stair leading to the chamber overhead. The kitchen had a brick floor, worn and sunken in hollows; the stove was raised up on a high stone platform, with a similar bench around it, and the woman explained that to sit on this bench with your back to the fire was a very good thing to do in winter. Every nook, every utensil was shining clean. In one corner stood a great box full of whetstones, scythe-sharpeners; the making of these was the industry by which the brothers earned the most of their money, she said; surely very little money, then, must come into the house. There were four brothers, three sisters, and the old mother, who sat at a window smiling foolishly all the time, aged, imbecile, but very happy. As we drove away, one of the sisters came running with a few little blossoms she had picked from her balcony; she halted, disappointed, and too shy to offer it, but her whole face lighted up with pleasure as I ordered the driver to halt that I might take her gift. She little knew that I was thinking how much the hospitality of her people shamed the cold indifference of so-called finer breeding.

A few rods on, we came to a barn, in whose open door-way stood two women threshing wheat with ringing flails. Red handkerchiefs twisted tight round their heads and down to their eyebrows, bare-footed, bare-legged, bare-armed to the shoulders, swinging their flails lustily, and laughing as they saw me stop my horses to have a better look at them; they made one of the vividest pictures I saw in the Ammer valley. Women often are hired there for this work of threshing, and they are expected to swing flails with that lusty stroke all day long for one mark.

H. H.

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FEBRUARY.

NEWLY wedded, and happy quite,  
 Careless alike of wind and weather,  
 Two wee birds, from a merry flight,  
 Swing in the tree-top, sing together:  
 Love to them, in the wintry hour,  
 Summer and sunshine, bud and flower!

So, beloved, when skies are sad,  
 Love can render their shadow golden;  
 A thought of thee, and the day is glad  
 As a rose in the dewy dawn unfolden;  
 And away, away, on passionate wings,  
 My heart like a bird at thy window sings!

Ina D. Coolbrith.