

# **THE LEGENDS PARSIFAL**

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The Legends Parsifal by Mary Hanford Ford

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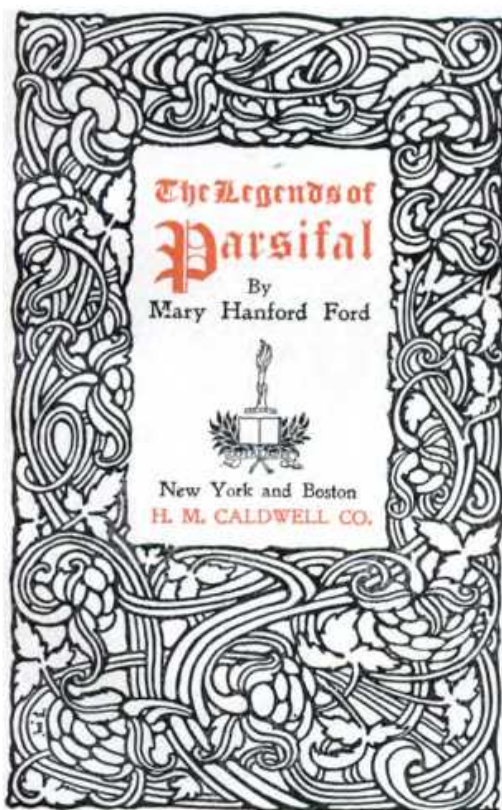
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**MARY HANFORD FORD**

# **THE LEGENDS PARSIFAL**







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## The Legends of Parsifal



**P**ARSIFAL has become a part of the daily life of the world, a mystery of holy living enacted before all eyes, and played upon a stage erected in each heart. Many will not be able to witness the performance of Wagner's great drama, or listen to its wonderful music, but all wish to become familiar with its story and meaning, to understand the genesis of its rich harmonies. To such waiting auditors this little book flies forth, hoping that it may have treasured and enshrined some portion of that mystic spell which for many ages has lent charm and glory to the name of Parsifal.



## »The Legends

It may be as well to recall in the beginning the scenes and incidents of Wagner's masterpiece, so that the connection may be more closely drawn between its achievement and the legends and poems which have preceded it in an earlier day.

When the curtain rises upon the three acts of the music-drama, the senses of the spectators have been prepared for the pictured story by the wonderfully intermingled *motifs* and harmonies of a *Vorspiel* which precedes each portion of the opera. The first of these lovely preludes ends with the exquisite strains of the Grail music, and the curtain rises upon the peaceful environment of the castle of Monsalvat, where Gurnemanz, the leader of the Grail guardians, is at morning prayer with his followers, while the trumpets sound, and the cortège of Amfortas, the wounded king, approaches. He is about to bathe in the lake, the waters of which are blessed by the beautiful swans which live

## **of Parsifal**

and rest upon its bosom, and by their ministration assuage the suffering of the stricken monarch.

The procession halts while the king may rest, and then Kundry enters the scene, breathless from a journey upon her flying horse to far Arabia, to obtain a balsam which she hopes may bring healing to the king. She is the slave of mighty Klingsor, the magician. Long ago, in the days when Christ taught the lesson of love to mankind, she was that beautiful Herodias who laughed at the Saviour as he was bearing his cross to Calvary. As a punishment for her sin, she must wander for years, until she finds a saviour who will love her with a selfless love, and thus lift the curse from her.

She has known many sad lives since the period of her sin, and at the opening of the drama she is pathetically awakened to the horror of her slavery, and, though compelled by Klingsor to ensnare good knights, and especially the knights

## **» The Legends**

of the Grail, she snatches every free moment for deeds of mercy and kindness.

Klingsor has always been the enemy of the Grail. Years before, when it was first entrusted to King Titurël, the father of Amfortas, the magician swore to become its possessor. The sacred lance or spear with which Christ had been wounded on the cross was also given to Titurël. Klingsor established his palace near Monsalvat, and surrounded it with magic gardens, filled with all that can enchant the senses. Kundry fell into the power of the wizard, and by her fascination was able to ensnare Amfortas, in spite of the fact that he was hereditary guardian of the sacred treasure.

In a contest with Klingsor, the king was overpowered; the magician seized the spear, and with it gave the king the wound from which he had suffered for so many years. He could not be relieved until "the sinless fool," "der reine Thor," should come to the Grail castle,