

**JUDAS ISCARIOT,
PP. 3-37**

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JUDAS ISCARIOT



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READ BEFORE THE WITENAGEMOTE
ON GOOD FRIDAY NIGHT, 1891

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JUDAS ISCARIOT.



IN this anniversary, in the Church calendar, of the Divine Tragedy, it has occurred to me that there may be some propriety in offering to your indulgent consideration a few very brief, imperfect, and rambling remarks about the dramatic representation of the passion and death of the "Man of Sorrows," as given last summer at Oberammergau. The subject has

been so much written about and lectured upon, by both clergymen and sinners, that no startlingly new and original ideas need be expected at this time, but rather a refreshing of your recollections, as painlessly as may be, upon a few points in a matter that has attracted the attention of many thousands of spectators and of many more thousands of readers during the past year. Neither is it any part of the present purpose to discuss the history of the early "Mysteries" or "Moralities" of which the modern Passion-play is a relic, any further than to say that this one at Oberammergau originated more than two centuries and a half ago as a votive offering to heaven in return for the alleged divine interposition in stay-

ing a plague among the people of that neighborhood; and in accordance with the original vow the play has ever since been repeated at intervals of ten years, except when some compelling cause—like war—has prevented. The representation has naturally passed through a course of evolution and improvement, and has been changed and pruned as the taste of successive generations has demanded. For example, the death of *Judas Iscariot* no longer occurs upon the stage; formerly, it was carried out in view of the spectators with much realism, and his dislocated viscera visibly gushed out in the form of a string of sausages, which were eagerly gobbled up by a crowd of appreciative imps and goblins. Again,

at the representation next succeeding the Franco-Prussian war, when German patriotism had been roused to its highest pitch, it is related that the *Christus* rose from the tomb bearing in his hand the German flag. But most of such offenses have been eliminated, and under the supervision of expert theatrical machinists, carpenters, and painters from the Royal Theater at Munich, the play is given with much of studied detail and a high degree of artistic finish in the stage arrangements and equipment.

Let us set out, then, from Munich this mid-June Saturday morning. At the station is a great, pushing, expectant crowd, of all sorts of people, eagerly seeking their railway tickets, or, having procured them, anxiously

elbowing for places in the crowded train. By good luck we find seats in a very comfortable carriage, and soon moving out of the station follow the line that rises slowly through the Bavarian Alps. The skies are lowering, and, remembering the object of our journey, a sensitive creature near us suggests that the heavens are already in sympathy with the victim of the morrow. All such imaginings are promptly banished at the way station, where we gladly throw open the windows to snatch the nutritious sandwich and foaming beer from the amiable and nimble maiden who so thoughtfully brings those comforts alongside. Then on we climb again until we see the snow and shiver into our heavy wraps. We are to leave