

**WONDER TALES FROM  
WAGNER, TOLD  
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

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Wonder tales from Wagner, told for young people by Anna Alice Chapin

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"SENIA'S EYES SOUGHT THE PORTRAIT"

# WONDER TALES FROM WAGNER

Told for Young People

BY

ANNA ALICE CHAPIN

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF THE RHINEGOLD"

ILLUSTRATED



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"Hark! Gay fanfares from halls of old Romance  
Strike through the clouds of clamor: who be these  
That, paired in rich procession, advance  
From darkness . . . ?  
Bright ladies and brave knights of Fatherland,  
Sad mariners no harbor e'er may hold,  
A swan soft floating towards a magic strand;  
Dim ghosts of earth, air, water, fire, steel, gold,  
Wind, grief, and love; a low and lurking band  
Of Powers—dark Conspiracy, Cunning cold,  
Gray Sorcery . . . .  
O Wagner, westward bring thy kœrvenly art,  
No trisler thou . . . .  
Thine ears hear deeper than thine eyes can see."

SIDNEY LANIER.





## PREFACE

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RICHARD WAGNER, in constructing his music dramas, found his materials in the legends of all lands. The source, or more correctly the sources, of "The Flying Dutchman"—essentially a sea-myth—are to be traced to many countries. "Tannhäuser," the mediæval tale of which has been recorded in poetry, and thus handed down to us from the past, is distinctly German. So, too, is "Lohengrin," though the story of Cupid and Psyche, from which Wagner obtained part of the plot of this opera, is Greek. "Tristan and Isolde" is Celtic; and "The Mastersingers" has an historical foundation, and is peopled with real, not legendary, personages. It is my purpose to show, as simply as I can, the origin of the stories incorporated in the Master's works.

The legend of "The Flying Dutchman" is the most widely known sea-story in existence. It is common to all lands, and sailors to this day tell tales of the strange ship which passes a certain latitude

on a certain night of the year. The captain who commands her bears many names, though it is generally believed that the varying tales told in different tongues are but versions of one original legend, which, probably, was diffused over many lands by repetitions among the sailors. In the world of literature we often find the unfortunate captain. Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, though from a different cause, is obliged to

"Pass like night from land to land;"

and in the description of his vessel, given by the Hermit in the same poem, we find a strange semblance to the ship of the *Flying Dutchman*:

" 'Strange, by my faith,' the Hermit said—  
 'And they answered not our cheer!  
 The planks look warped! and see those sails,  
 How thin they are and sore!  
 I never saw aught like to them,  
 Unless perchance it were  
 Brown skeletons of leaves' " . . .

We are reminded of Wagner's "*Traft ihr das Schiff im Meere an?*" in the following:

"But why drives on that ship so fast,  
 Without nor wave nor wind?"

It is said that Wagner was influenced in the writing of this opera by the story contained in Heine's

*Memoiren des Herrn von Schnabelewopski*, and by other writers, Wilhelm Hauff among them. The latter has told his weird tale of the phantom ship *Carmilhan* most effectively, having introduced, instead of a demoniacal chorus, a sad and slow song, sung by the doomed seafarers. The following description of the marching of the uncanny procession down the rocks to their ship, after a short sojourn on land, is to be found in Edward Stowell's translation of Hauff's story: "The whole procession marched away in the same order in which it had come, and with the same solemn song, which grew ever fainter and fainter in the distance, until finally it was lost in the roar of the breakers." The tall and gloomy captain, Alfred Frank von Schwelder, of Amsterdam, is easily identified with Vanderdecken.

Wagner conceived his plan for the construction of "Der Fliegende Holländer" while on his voyage from Pillau to London. He declared afterwards that he had been greatly interested in the tales of the sailors, and their confirmation of that particular legend, and it is probable that in this way a deeper impression was made upon him than by the works already written on the subject. On that voyage, too, he undoubtedly felt and assimilated that wonderful and indescribable soul of the sea which subsequently gave so distinct a coloring to "Der Fliegende Holländer."