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Frater Achad's Magical Interpretation of

P A R Z I V A L

In THE CHALICE OF ECSTASY

POINT III.

The Redemption of the Redeemer

"Höchsten Heiles Wunder!
Erlösung dem Erlöser!"

Before passing on to the final scenes of this Drama, it is necessary that we should know something of the Great Ceremony of Initiation into the Grade of Master of the Temple which Parzival was undergoing. This knowledge may best be obtained from the Records of the Great Brotherhood itself, and from the actual examples of those Who have undergone the Ordeals leading thereto.

The serious Student will be greatly interested in observing how closely some of the passages we have already quoted, and those we are about to quote, parallel the events in the Drama as compiled by Richard Wagner. But it must be remembered that Wagner himself received Instructions in the great Principles of the Holy Order from certain of the Secret Chiefs and this accounts for the great harmony between his Work and that of other members of the Great Brotherhood.

We find in Liber IV these words: "The Master of the Temple has crossed the Abyss, has entered the Palace of the King's Daughter; he has only to utter one word, and all is dissolved. But, instead of that, he is found hidden in the earth, tending a garden. This mystery is all too complex to be elucidated in these fragments of impure thought; it is a suitable subject for meditation."

Parzival enters the Abyss when, casting aside every personal consideration and actuated by Pure Will delivered from the lust of result, he destroys Klingsor's Garden and Keep.

All that structure, built upon Reason, is shattered, and nothing but a rubbish-heap remains. For *Parzival* had discovered the Power of the Word whereby the Universe vanishes in Fire and Flame. This may therefore be looked upon as the supreme Bannishing Ritual.

But the process of Creation, Preservation and Destruction is continuous; things must be destroyed on order that they may be renewed. It is from the rubbish-heap of Chronozon (Klingsor) that one selects the materials for a god, or for a New Aeon. Understanding is the structuralization of knowledge, and implies coordination.

But, in the meanwhile *Parzival* must tend a Garden of his own, for, having looked upon the "Face of the Father" he has become NEMO—No-man. (It is interesting to note that Klingsor termed Kundry "Nameless woman", for she, too, must attain to Understanding in the end.)

A study of Liber CCCXVIII, 13th Aethyr, will give us a fuller comprehension of this Mystery. Therein we read:

"No man hath beheld the face of my Father. Therefore he that hath beheld it is called NEMO. And know thou that every man that is called NEMO hath a garden that he tendeth. And every garden that is and flourisheth hath been prepared from the desert by NEMO, watered with the waters that were called death.

And I say unto him: To what end is the garden prepared?

And he saith: First for the beauty and delight thereof; and next because it is written "And Tetragrammaton Elohim planted a garden eastward in Eden." And lastly, because though every flower bringeth forth a maiden, yet there is one flower that shall bring forth a man-child. And his name shall be called NEMO, when he beholdeth the face of my Father. And he that tendeth the garden seeketh not to single out the flower that shall be NEMO. He doeth naught but tend the garden.

And I said: Pleasant indeed is the garden, and light is the toil of tending it, and great is the reward.

And he said: Bethink thee that NEMO hath beheld the face of my Father. In his is only Peace.

And I said: Are all gardens like unto this garden?

And he waved his hand, and in the Aire across the valley appeared an island of coral, rosy, with green palms and fruit trees, in the midst of the bluest of the seas.

And he waved his hand again, and there appeared a valley shut in by mighty snow mountains, and in it were pleasant streams of water, rushing through, and broad rivers, and lakes

covered with lilies. And he waved his hand again, and there was a vision, as it were an oasis in the desert.

And again he waved his hand, and there was a dim country with grey rocks, and heather, and gorse, and bracken. * * *

And he seems to read my thought, which is, that I should love to stay in this garden forever: for he sayeth to me: Come with me, and behold how NEMO tendeth his garden.

So we enter the earth, and there is a veiled figure, in absolute darkness. Yet it is perfectly possible to see in it, so that the minutest details do not escape us. And upon the root of one flower he pours acid so that root writhes as if in a torture. And another he cuts, and the shriek is like the shriek of a mandrake, torn up by the roots. And another he chars with fire, and yet another he anoints with oil.

And I said: Heavy is the labour, but great is the reward.

And the young man answered me: He shall not see the reward; he tendeth the garden.

And I said: What shall come unto him?

And he said: This thou canst not know, nor is it revealed by the letters that are the totems of the stars, but only by the stars."

We find in the above an exact parallel to the case of *Parzival*, for he finds that "The Beatific Vision is no more, and the glory of the Most High is no more. There is no more knowledge. There is no more beauty. For this is the Palace of Understanding; and he is one with the Primeval things."

He must wander about in the earth, tending the ROOTS of the flowers; unconscious of the results of his labours, until the time is ripe for another to take his place.

The Third Act opens in the Grail's Domain. We perceive a pleasant spring landscape and flowery meadows towards the back. In the foreground is a wood which extends away towards the right, and a spring of clear water. Opposite, and higher up, is a narrow hermitage built against a rock. It is Daybreak.

All this brilliant spring scenery symbolises some of the work of Parzival who has laboured in darkness for many years. But the Night is nearly passed.

Gurnemanz, now old and in the garment of a simple hermit, yet still protected by the Mantle of the Grail, is now discovered. He hears a low moaning which he recognizes as that of *Kundry*, who—half dead, but now faithful in service—has found her way back to the Mountain of Salvation. Intuitively she had been led to keep her tryst with Parzival whose last words to her had been: Thou knowest, where only we shall meet again. She is

discovered by *Gurnemanz* concealed in a small thicket near the stream. How long she has waited there, who can tell, but the thicket is now overgrown with thorns.

Upon spying her, *Gurnemanz* cries:

Up!—Kundry—Up!

The winter's fled, and Spring is here!

Awake, awake to the Spring!

The results of the unseen work of *Parzival* upon the "roots" of her being soon become apparent to *Gurnemanz*. Her first cry, on being aroused from her deadly stupor, is: Service!

But *Gurnemanz*—shaking his head—replies:

Now will thy work be light!

We send no errands out long since:

Simples and herbs

Must ev'ry one find for himself:

'Tis learnt in the woods from the beasts.

But *Kundry*, having in the meanwhile looked about her, perceives the hermit's hut, and goes in. *Gurnemanz*, in surprise, remarks how different is her step, and thanks Heaven that he has been the means of reviving this "flower" that had formerly seemed so poisonous.

Kundry quietly returns with a water-pot which she takes to the spring, and while waiting for it to fill, she looks toward the wood and perceives a strange Knight approaching in the distance. She turns to *Gurnemanz*, who seeing the same figure, remarks:

Who comes toward the sanctified stream?

In gloomy war apparel.

None of our brethren is he.

For in his shroud of darkness *Parzival*—for it is he—is not recognized even by *Gurnemanz*, a Companion of the Grail. It is not surprising that during his wanderings those less enlightened should have failed to perceive his identity.

He slowly enters, clad from head to foot in pure black armour; carrying, upright, the Sacred Spear, equipped with sword and shield. He seems dreamy and vacillating, but seats himself on the little knoll beside the stream.

Gurnemanz, after observing him for some time, finding him silent, approaches somewhat, and remarks:

Greet thee, my friend!

Art thou astray, and shall I direct thee?

In reply to which *Parzival* gently shakes his head, but remains silent. Further questioning only elicits from him the same silent response, for is it not written that UNDERSTANDING is pure Silence and Pure Darkness.

But the end of this period of silence and darkness is approaching. The NEMO stage of the "City of the Pyramids" soon gives place to another.

Parzival rises and thrusts his Spear upright in the ground, thus, as it were, linking Heaven and Earth. He then slowly divests himself of the black armour. First he lays down his Sword (The power of Reason and of analysis), and his Shield (The heavy Karma of the World—his Pantacle). Opening his Helmet (which, being but a symbol of the Cup, has kept him in a darkness) he removes it; thus allowing the Wine of Sunlight to descend upon his head.

He then kneels in silent prayer before the Spear, seeking conscious and enlightened union with the Will of the Universe. Hitherto he has been guided by that Will, but has remained the while unconscious of Its direction, he now seeks to participate more fully in the Great Purpose.

While thus engaged in holy meditation, he is recognised by both *Gurnemanz* and *Kundry*. They also realize that he has obtained possession of the Sacred Spear, so long lost to the Knights of the Grail. *Kundry* turns away her face, while *Gurnemanz*, in great emotion, cries:

Oh! - holiest day.

To which my happy soul awakes!

Then, having arisen, *Parzival* recognises them in turn and greetings are exchanged. He can hardly believe that at last his path through error and suffering has led him once again to that holy spot. For all seems changed.

His one desire is to find *Amfortas*, whose wound had so long aroused his Compassion and Pity, and which he feels it to be his mission to heal. This may be accomplished by one means alone, the Sacred Spear by which the wound was made.

And all that while that *Parzival*—even with this high purpose in view—had *consciously* sought to return to The Mountain of Salvation, the path thereto had been denied him and he had wandered at random, as if:

Driven ever by a curse:

Countless distresses

Battles and conflicts

Drove me far from the pathway;

Well though I knew it, methought.

For the Road to Ecstasy is one above thought, and when Ecstasy returns it is as a Grace rather than as the result of our conscious efforts. Yet it is the reward of our "wanderings" if our Aspiration has been kept perfectly pure meanwhile.

The Sacred Spear—The True Will—must not be used save for the highest ends; and those ends do not become apparent to the conscious mind, till many a day after it has first been grasped and wielded to destroy illusion.

Parzival

Then hopeless despair overtook me,
To hold the holy Thing safely.
In its behalf, in its safe warding
I won from ev'ry weapon a wound;
For 'twas forbidden
That in battle I bore it:
Undefined E'er at my side I wore it,
And now I home restore it.
'Tis this that gleaming hails thee here,—
The Grail's most holy spear.

And then *Parzival* learns from *Gurnemanz* that he at last nears the end of his Quest, for he is already within the Grail's Domain. He learns, too, of the anguish that has been suffered by *Amfortas* during his absence, and how the Knights had been disbanded because *Amfortas* no longer dared to unveil the Holy Cup. How *Titirel*, Father and Founder of the Order, had died—as other men—when he no longer received the Grail's enlivening beams.

So *Parzival*, in intense grief, bemoans his foolish wanderings that seem to have caused such disastrous results through his delay in returning to *Monsalvat* on his mission of mercy.

But things could have not been otherwise. We should remember how *NEMO* tended his garden and how some of the roots writhed in anguish under the acid or the knife, while others flourished by means of the oil.

Had his *Understanding* not been *Pure Darkness*, his conscious mind would never have allowed him to complete his Work. But such is the Mystery of Redemption that these things must be in order that the final outcome may be perfect.

Sorrow and suffering are great teachers, and the Masters, having no personal ends to accomplish, are often the Instruments whereby our Karma comes upon us. As pointed out in *Liber IV.*:

"The contemplation of the Universe must be at first almost pure anguish. It is this fact which is responsible for most of the speculation of philosophy. Medieval philosophers went hopelessly astray because of their theology necessitated the reference of all things to the standard of man's welfare. * * *

The Ego-Idea must be ruthlessly rooted out before Understanding can be attained.

There is an apparent contradiction between this attitude and that of the Master of the Temple. What can possibly be more selfish than this interpretation of everything as a dealing of God with the soul?

But it is God who is all and not any part; and every "dealing" must thus be an expansion of the soul, a destruction of its separateness.

Every ray of the sun expands the flower.

The surface of the water in the Magick Cup is infinite; there is no point different from any other point.

Thus, ultimately, as the wand (spear) is a binding and a limitation, so is the Cup an expansion—into the Infinite.

And this is the danger of the Cup; it must necessarily be open to all, and yet if anything is put into it which is out of proportion, unbalanced, or impure, it takes hurt."

But—"Ultimately the Magical Will so identifies itself with the man's whole being that it becomes unconscious, and is as constant a force as gravitation."

Thus had the Spear—The Magical Will—led *Parzival* back to the Grail.

But, after his long Quest, *Parzival* is weak and fainting, and this final temptation—the idea that after all he has FAILED in the Quest—causes him to sink down helplessly upon the grassy knoll.

Kundry has brought a basin of Water with which to sprinkle *Parzival*, but *Gurnemanz*, waving her off, says:

Not so!

The holy fount itself

Befitteth more our pilgrim's bath.

And so, by the side of the Holy Spring (The Waters of the Great Sea—AKSHARA) they remove the greaves from his legs (giving him further freedom of action) and bathe his feet (Symbol of Understanding). They then remove his corslet (thus disclosing his Heart) and sprinkle him with the holy water.

For there are Three that bear witness on Earth - The Water, the Blood and the Holy Ghost (the Dove) and he that overcometh shall partake of the Waters of Life freely.

Upon the contemplation of *Kundry's* self-imposed task of bathing the feet of *Parzival*, he asks gently but wearily: "Shall I straight be guided unto Amfortas?" To which question *Gurnemanz*, whilst busying himself, replies:

Most surely; there the Court our coming waits.

He explains further that even he has been summoned to this Reception since, upon the death of Titurel, the long neglected office of the uncovering of the Grail is, by the will of *Amfortas*, once more to be performed.

We should notice how, apparently by chance—for so seems the Design of the Universal Initiation of Humanity—all things have been prepared and are seen to lead up to the Crowning point of the Ceremony.

Meanwhile, *Parzival* sits wondering at the marked change in *Kundry*, at her now humble attitude, so different from her former perversity; while Gurnemanz performs a further office in the ceremony of Purification by sprinkling the head of *Parzival* with the water from the Holy Spring.

Purification being complete, is followed by Consecration, the second step towards Initiation. *Kundry* is seen to take a golden flask from her *bosom* and to pour some of its contents upon *Parzival's* feet. Taking the flask from her, *Parzival* then invites *Gurnemanz* to anoint his head with the same Holy Oil; his now clear vision causing him to remark:

"For I today as king shall be appointed."

He makes this statement, which is no less than a prophecy of his complete attainment, as simply and naturally as a child.

A few remarks should now be made on the nature of this Holy Oil and in regard to the source from whence it came. Liber IV will again supply the key, for therein we read: "The Holy Oil is the Aspiration of the Magician, it is that which consecrates him to the performance of the Great Work. * * * It is not the will of the magician, the desire of the lower to reach the higher; but is that spark of the higher in the Magician which wishes to unite the lower with itself."

The Oil, in this instance performs a double purpose, for it represents both the awakening of the True Self of *Kundry*, and the desire for redemption. This Higher Self is represented by *Parzival*, and *Kundry's* Consecration of *Parzival* is the act which makes her redemption, by him, possible.

Again: "This oil is compounded of four substances. The basis of all is the oil of the olive, The Olive is, traditionally, the gift of Minerva, the wisdom of God, the Logos. It is dissolved in three other oils; oil of myrrh, oil of cinnamon, oil of galangal. The Myrrh is attributed to Binah, the Great Mother, who is both the understanding of the Magician and that sorrow and compassion that results from the contemplation of the Universe. The Cinnamon represents Tiphareth, the Sun—the Son, in

whom Glory and Suffering are identical. The Galangal represents both Kether and Malkuth, the First and the Last, the One and the Many, since in this Oil they are One." "These oils taken together represent the whole Tree of Life. The ten Sephiroth are blended into the perfect gold." This will become clearer when the whole Drama has been treated from the Qabalistic viewpoint in the next Chapter. Again: "This perfect Oil is most penetrating and subtle. Gradually it will spread itself, a glistening film, over every object in the Temple."

In regard to this latter point we should observe what actually happens a little further on in the Drama, but first notice one further quotation which has a very direct bearing on the subject in hand. "The phial which contains the Oil should be of clear rock crystal (Rock Crystal is attributed to Malkuth—the Fallen Daughter, but in this case the flask is of Gold which represents the Breast, Sun or Tiphareth Sphere of the Son or Higher Self whose influence has been felt by Kundry) and some magicians have fashioned it in the shape of the female breast, for that is the true nourishment of all that lives. For this reason also it has been made of mother-of-pearl and stoppered with a ruby." In this connection we should note that Kundry produced the golden flask from her bosom, for every detail of this Drama is symbolical.

Next, *Parzival* very quietly scoops up some of the Holy Water from the Spring and sprinkles it upon *Kundry's* head while she kneels at his feet—saying:

I first fulfil my duty thus:—

Be thou baptized,

And trust in the Redeemer!

At which *Kundry* bows her head and appears to weep bitterly.

This is the first time that *Kundry* has been truly willing to receive the higher help. She has done much, according to her own notions of service, but now she is about to be led to Understand how best she may Serve; for true Mastery implies true Service.

We should notice, too, the effects of the Holy Oil on *Parzival*. He turns round and gazes with gentle rapture on the woods and meadows; which represent his Garden, as we explained before. Gradually, he realizes the results of the Work he had carried on in silence and darkness. His memory awakens and he murmurs:

How fair the fields and meadows seem today!

Many a magic flower I've seen,

Which sought to clasp me in its baneful twinings;
But none I've seen so sweet as here,
These tendrils bursting with blossom,
Whose scent recalls my childhood's days,
And speaks of loving trust to me.