

A MUSICAL COSMOPOLITE AS PRISONER OF WAR

Paul Reimers, German Tenor of Many-Sided Affiliations, Describes Humors of His Sojourn in French Concentration Camp—Genial "Lieder" Singer Among "Barbarians" Inspected by Pyrenees Natives

If it were really necessary to demonstrate that war is subversive to the fundamental principles of common sense, Paul Reimers would point the moral most effectually. For the German tenor, whose artistic *lieder* singing has caused him to be regarded as a sort of masculine counterpart of Julia Culp, adorns a tale of these troublous times that probably few if any musicians caught abroad in the current of events last Summer could duplicate.

Briefly, Mr. Reimers was a prisoner for more than three months and the irony of the matter lay largely in the fact that, far from being a fire-eyed patriot, he is the firmest advocate of cosmopolitanism, a true citizen of the world, as it were. He set foot in America a very short time ago and even then only after a trip on a very uninviting vessel that sailed from Spain and required fully half the time of Columbus's voyage. Had it not been for the intercession of the Prince of Battenberg the tenor might still be among those corralled in a Southern France concentration camp.

Those who know Mr. Reimers even slightly cannot fail to be amused over the manner of his incarceration and the circumstances that led to it. He is a short, jovial person who fairly radiates kindness and good nature and suggests anything under the moon rather than a person given to political machinations, treasonable intentions or Machiavellian propensities of one sort or another. Yet when at the outbreak of hostilities he was innocently cruising the French side of the Pyrenees in an automobile he was set upon at once and placed under lock and key, not merely as a German, but as a particularly black-hearted and malefic villain. He was sure they considered him a person of more than ordinary wickedness because they sent a full quintet of gendarmes to take him into custody—and Mr. Reimers is by no means formidable.

Breaking Stones as Pastime

One in prison they set him to work breaking stones. He broke them for more than two months and had resigned himself to undergo the same toil for some time to come when in a happy moment

friends among the nobility interfered in his behalf and achieved his liberation.

"My first impulse," related Mr. Reimers recently, "was to worry over the numerous European engagements that I thus became obliged to break. Eventually I reflected that the war would put a stop to all musical activities anyway. However, I have learned since then that many of the concerts at which I was scheduled to appear took place. The thought of missing my American dates also grieved me, but I was quite helpless.

"I felt positively aggrieved over my detention merely on the grounds that I was a German, for, after all, I have lived, worked and made numberless close ties of friendship among the French and the English, while my parents were Danish and I was born in Schleswig-Holstein, formerly a Danish province. But all appeals were, for the time being, futile.

Slept on the Ground

"We were obliged to sleep on straw spread on the ground. Fortunately I had sufficient money to buy myself some covers and something more to eat than the fare allowed us. Occasionally we received newspapers which told, of course, only about the French victories and the barbarities committed by the Germans. I daresay that in Germany the process was merely reversed in the case of the French prisoners. The most comical aspect of the whole affair, however, was the attitude of the crowd of peasants who came on Sundays all dressed up in their best and accompanied by their children to have a look at the imprisoned 'barbarians.'

"It appears that they confidently expected to see a thousand wild men who wore nothing but fig leaves and danced war dances. Some, indeed, carried sticks and umbrellas wherewith to prod the 'savages' and make them dance if they did not perform their aboriginal ceremonies of their own accord. The sight of the prisoners brought a real shock of disappointment to them. 'Mais ils sont comme nous,' I heard one woman exclaim in an accent of genuine disappointment.

Luckless French Women

"Another amusing element of the matter lay in the reproaches some of the imprisoned French women addressed themselves over having married Germans and thus brought the misfortunes of aliens down on their own heads. Strange to say, no one attempted to escape, though they might easily have done so, for there were few guards and we were very close to the Spanish frontier."

Back in America Mr. Reimers is supremely contented. Despite the lateness of his return and the engagements which he consequently missed, he is now preparing enthusiastically for a concert tour which will carry him far West and to localities which he has not yet visited. The present will be his third year in New York. After each of his recitals here amazement has been expressed that he has not been more active in the concert field. The truth of the matter lies in the fact that he has devoted so large a percentage of his time to private musicales.

In Europe, though, he has been heard in practically every music center of importance from Constantinople to Helsingfors and from Madrid to Petrograd. He has lived and studied long in England and France—George Henschel was one of his teachers—which goes far to account for his perfect acquaintance with styles other than specifically that of the German *lied*. He delivers French songs with the finesse and charm of a born Frenchman.

"I have, indeed, won approval for my singing of French songs even in France. Apparently my French is quite satisfactory, for after my appearances in Paris there was not one derogatory notice touching my accent—and had there been



Above: Paul Reimers (marked with cross) and Companions in French Concentration Camp. Below: Mr. Reimers, on Right, with M. Garceau, Head of Bechstein Branch in Paris, Also a Prisoner

occasion for such I should not have been spared, being a German.

Lure of Opera Reputation

"What has particularly surprised me here is the importance which so many

people attach to the operatic affiliations of singers. 'Have you sung at the Metropolitan?' I am frequently asked. And I am sure that if I answered yes it would be taken as a point necessarily in my favor. There seems to prevail an opinion that an opera singer is, in the very nature, a better singer; and if I say that I have not appeared at the Metropolitan it will be thought that I was not considered fit to be there. Strange as it may seem, I have sung in opera. It was in Hamburg, a long while ago to be sure, and only for a very short time.

Intelligence of Our Audience

"I do not share the view so extensively and unfortunately prevalent that a German audience is inevitably far more musically receptive and appreciative than an American one. Careful observation has satisfied me that the proportion of musically ignorant is just as large in the one case as in the other. The Berlin musical public, sated with an enormous number of concerts, sits through such entertainments in cynicism and boredom. There are so many complimentary tickets available that you will find them given even to cab drivers. And what happens? The cab driver may go—but he will growl for his sandwich and beer instead of enjoying the music. On the other hand, I was noticing the demeanor of the audience at my friend Julia Culp's recital a week ago. Nowhere in Europe could you have found more thoroughly intelligent appreciation of what was best."

H. F. P.

BALTIMORE SCHOOL MUSIC

Articles by J. Norris Herring Point Out Deficiencies of System

BALTIMORE, Md., Jan. 17.—A series of articles with the purpose of stimulating Baltimore's realization of the deficiencies of its public school music was recently published in the *Baltimore Star*. The articles were written by J. Norris Herring, prominent as a concert organist and music critic.

Mr. Herring quoted freely from the bulletin on "Music in the Public Schools" compiled by Will Earhart, director of music in the Pittsburgh schools. This report showed that the music education in the schools of Maryland and Baltimore was inferior even to that of Hawaii and the Philippines. There was also citation of recommendations for improvements needed in the Baltimore system as made by Henrietta G. Baker, former supervisor of music, to the board of school commissioners. "Lack of musical interest" in Baltimore was blamed for these deficiencies. The many advantages of music study in the schools were then pointed out.

Richard Arnold a Septuagenarian

Richard Arnold, the veteran New York violinist, for many years concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic Society and also its vice-president, celebrated his seventieth birthday on Sunday, January 10. Mr. Arnold was serenaded the evening before at his club, the *Liederkrantz*, by a section of the male chorus of the society after one of the club entertainments.

With the arrival on Monday, January 4, of Beatrice Harrison, the noted English 'cellist, the Wolfsohn Musical Bureau's roster of distinguished artists touring this country under its auspices was completed for this season. No one of the Wolfsohn artists postponed coming to America because of the war.

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