

MME. CARREÑO AS A SUSPECTED SPY

Illustrious Pianist, Just Arrived in This Country, Played Unwilling Rôle in Her Concert Travels Through Germany and Austria—International Fame Discounted by Military Examiners—America Now the World's Home of Culture, Declares the Pianist—Reminiscences of Rubinstein and Liszt—Relaxation as Cardinal Principle of Piano-Playing

IN all likelihood Teresa Carreño would prove a dismal failure as a spy for the simple reason that everybody suspects her of being one. The great and glorious "lioness," "tigress," "Valkyrie" or "Brünnhilde" of the keyboard (take your choice, they all fit!) who came back from three years of Germany last week was held up so often by apprehensive officials, both in belligerent and neutral countries, that she will undoubtedly feel a bit out of her element in being allowed free circulation here. Her artistic eminence availed her nothing, nor the ties established by years of European residence and travel. She would be detained on her concert tours, cross-questioned, examined and sometimes, after apparently fulfilling all requirements, held up on general principles until meticulous officials had satisfied their most precious scruples by communicating with the chief of police from somewhere else. In neutral Scandinavia they would pounce upon her at all sorts of unearthly hours for passports, birth certificates, marriage certificates, and when, after long and painful scrutiny, the integrity of these documents could not be called to account, she was very reluctantly suffered to go her way. In Germany, Argus-eyed matrons at railway stations took charge of her with a businesslike determination, conducted her to dressing rooms, disrobed her and, baffled in their search for military secrets in her garments, took down her hair and explored her scalp for such information as spies carry about. And the illustrious artist bore it all meekly, provided they were careful not to tickle her. Her good nature broke the ice of reserve and the matrons grew confidential, deploring the price of commodities and the inflictions of the war.

"But one of the most irritating experiences," related Mme. Carreño a few days after her arrival in New York, "occurred at Salzburg, where I passed on my way to Vienna to appear as soloist with the orchestra the following day. My papers were examined and an officer told me I could not go on; that they would have to consult first with police headquarters in Berlin. I explained the purpose of my trip, argued, proved that the orchestra could not get another soloist on short notice, said that I had a rehearsal next morning and that, consequently, I must reach Vienna before midnight. It was all of no avail and I became seriously worried over my possible inability to keep the date. Finally the official softened, told me he would ask the consent of the Austrian authorities at hand and promised to let me pass if agreeable to the latter since he was not certain that my trip to Vienna need entail direful consequences to the nation. But once in the Austrians' hands I was catechized afresh. Where was I born? In Caracas. Caracas? Who ever heard of the place? Where was it? Why, in Venezuela. And in what corner of the world might Venezuela be? In America, South America. Ah, yes! Of course! One had heard of such a place! But what could Madam's nationality be? Venezuelan, Madam reports. 'Yes, but you don't get my meaning,' repeats the soldier; 'what is your nationality?' 'Why, I tell you Venezuelan.' 'Yes, but you still do not seem to understand; to what nation do you belong? In Venezuela there are English, German, French, Italian and Spanish people. Which of these are you?'

"And as I wish to reach Vienna before midnight I say 'Spanish,' which information he receives with evident contentment. But, oh! shades of my grandfather, Bolivar, who freed Venezuela from the Spanish oppression! Still, I had absolutely to get to Vienna that night!"

"America Now Culture's Home"

To-day Teresa Carreño is as thoroughly the great-souled, aristocratic and irresistibly magnetic *grande dame* of the piano world as ever. The child nature in her reveals itself in an incessant play of mercurial spirits, an ebullition of humor, undiminished animation and a vitality tremendously dynamic. The war, of which she has seen the effects at such close range, has saddened her bitterly, however. "I maintain that America is

now the home of culture," she declares, "and I have freely expressed myself to that effect in Europe. For their culture abroad did not save them from the present horrors. You can form no estimate of their extent, unless you have observed matters on the spot. The mere thought of what mankind is doing to itself, of



Mme. Teresa Carreño, the Great Venezuelan Pianist. From the Photograph Used on Her Passports to Identify Her in Her European Travels

what human beings are inflicting upon each other afflicts one terribly. It is a reversion to the enormities of 500 years ago; indeed, it surpasses them, for in those days men at least fought against men. No bomb has been hurled and no shell exploded but that I have felt and suffered it as if it had been in my own heart."

The talk drifted to piano playing—to the principle of relaxation, to practising, to Liszt and Rubinstein, both of whom Mme. Carreño heard and knew. Rubinstein's glories of tone still linger in her mind. And he played with perfect relaxation without being conscious of the fact, she avers. Liszt she met and heard only once, but the event engraved itself indelibly on her memory even to the slightest detail.

A Meeting with Liszt

"I was but twelve years old at the time," she relates. "Through Mme. Erard, Liszt became sufficiently interested to condescend to hear me when he came up to Paris from Rome, where he had taken up his residence. The actual introduction was effected through the head salesman of the Erard piano house. How vividly I recall the occasion! Accompanied by my father and the salesman, I went to the Erard warehouses, and there presently arrived three other pianists—Messrs. Planté, Jael and Saint-Saëns. What an unforgettably droll picture they made as they came through the door—all three of exactly the same height, but Planté and Saint-Saëns thin and Jael—who walked between them—as fat and broad as he was long; so that, if one had laid him on the floor his size would still have appeared the same. Presently one heard sounds outside. Then the door opened and the master entered. His great height contrasted toweringly with our three other friends. Liszt dismissed the salesman after admonishing him to let nobody enter the room on any consideration.

"And then, to encourage a child who might reasonably enough feel nervous and disinclined to play, he turned to me with a hearty smile, saying: 'Now, I am going to play something for you, and then you can play something for me.' It was heart-warming the way he said this. Seating himself, he played an *adagio*

from a Beethoven sonata—I no longer recollect which—and I have never forgotten the tone with which he did it. But I was not ready to admit in that early day that he could possibly equal my teacher, Gottschalk. Gottschalk was my idol in those times and I resisted the mere idea that any one could presume to play as well. When my turn came to play, I determined that I should make Gottschalk known to Liszt. So I boldly gave him 'The Last Hope.' And I daresay I was wise in doing so. For he knew nothing of this music, and if I had attempted a *rondo* of Mozart or an *adagio* of Beethoven, I might have laid myself open to some unflattering comparisons.

"Let it not seem immodest if I tell that, at the end of my performance, Liszt, who stood in back of me, approached and laid his hands on my head. 'The child will be one of us,' he said, turning to his friends. For me Liszt's action was like a benediction. He appeared to call a blessing down upon me and the idea of that benison has ever been the guiding inspiration of my life. 'Let her come to me at Rome, for I charge myself with her training,' he said further. Alas! We could not afford a sojourn in Rome. And my father, being a minister of finance and characteristically Spanish in pride, would have invented any excuse in the world rather than apprise Liszt of this fact. Not that the excuse would have served with the master—for he was ready and willingly after his own noble fashion to pay out any expense entailed by my education.

"I did not even bid Liszt farewell. He had, as I said, given express orders that no one should enter the room. But while I was playing, a beautiful young girl and a gentleman of distinguished appearance came in quite unnoticed and sat near the door. I believe they did not realize that they were intruding. But Liszt heard a noise. He turned and saw the newcomers. Then rising and walking slowly over to them, he adjusted his pince-nez and surveyed them long and keenly, after which he left the room without a word. The unbidden couple were fearfully embarrassed and at a loss what to do. Nobody spoke for a time. Then Planté, flustered, said, 'Je m'en vais voir, que fait le maître' and went out. He did not return. Next Jael, unable to endure the situation, fled with an apologetic 'Je m'en vais chercher le maître.' But if he found the master, he was no more successful than his colleague in bringing him back. And that was the last I ever saw of the three.

Liszt's Theory of Practise

"But before Liszt vanished he laid down a principle for me to which I have clung all my life. 'My child,' he said,

'never practise more than five hours a day. If you practise five minutes more than that you will have wasted just so much time. At the time, I was overjoyed to hear such advice, for I detested practising in those days. In fact, I was fearfully lazy and my father could do nothing with me. Yes, I would willingly extemporize or play what suited my fancy. But to spend more than two or three hours at an appointed task seemed intolerable drudgery, and I consistently shirked it.

"To-day I impress Liszt's recommendation on every one of my pupils. Indeed, I severely reprimand those who disobey the precept. But experience has shown me that the mind is absolutely incapable of more than about two hours of steady concentration. It will not be driven and mental coercion in practising produces nothing but harm. The artist, in whom nervous sensitiveness is developed to an extraordinary degree, can simply not subject himself with impunity to strain. It leads inevitably to nervous prostration. Furthermore, the five hours of practice should be broken up into suitably short periods, so that enthusiasm and energy remain constant and concentration is never broken.

"The great principle in piano playing, relaxation, is what I seek most indefatigably to inculcate in my pupils. By relaxation I do not mean flabbiness, or the tendency of some students to flop and swim all over the piano. Relaxation signifies control, and it affects the mentality of the pianist no less than his arms, wrists and fingers. I wish to make my pupils feel that piano playing is easy, not difficult; to make them regard practice as a joy, not a burden; to have them go to the piano as a painter, with a beautiful idea to express, goes to his canvas, takes up his palette and brushes and mixes his colors. But the tension under which so many players labor is dreadful. It is seen even in the muscles of the neck and face. Now this physical distress communicates itself to the intellect, so that the interpretation comes to suffer from strain. When I hear such pianists in recital, I instantly feel all the discomfort they are experiencing. My sensations are the same as when I see a cripple hobbling through the street. But too few piano students understand that relaxation is to be achieved by mental process."

On the table of the great pianist's drawing room at the Savoy Hotel lie numerous letters, messages of love and affection from her pupils. Nothing gives her such joy as these, she insists. "That, after all, is the greatest delight in a teacher's life—or should be—this altogether maternal love which she gives her pupils and to which they respond. I have had no happiness comparable to that of beholding mine turn to me as to a mother. That establishes a co-operation through which I can work results otherwise unattainable. For I thus contrive to sound the depths of their personality, and it is by treating the pupil strictly in accordance with his individual proclivities that one obtains the most far-reaching results. To fathom the student's soul is the teacher's highest duty. For only by so doing can he prescribe infallibly for his most vital needs."

H. F. P.

POLACCO CABLE A NEW YORK MYSTERY

Conductor's Message Throws Doubt Over His Expected Return to Metropolitan

A CABLE despatch from Milan, addressed to MUSICAL AMERICA and signed by Giorgio Polacco, the leading Italian conductor of the Metropolitan Opera Company, was received on Monday and read as follows:

"If cannot sail, would conduct Scala. Amities. "POLACCO."

Mr. Polacco had intended to remain in New York this summer at the special request of Director Giulio Gatti-Casazza, who feared that the difficulties of foreign travel, owing to the war, might interfere with the conductor's return in time for the opera opening.

About a month ago Mr. Polacco surprised his friends in New York by announcing that he had determined upon a sudden departure to Europe.

William J. Guard, press representative of the Metropolitan Opera House, just back from Italy, told a MUSICAL AMERICA representative that he met Mr. Polacco in Milan and spent some time with him and Mr. Gatti-Casazza in that city. At that time, said Mr. Guard, there was absolutely no doubt as to Mr. Polacco's plans. He was to sail with Mr. Gatti-

Casazza, Mr. Caruso, Mr. de Luca, Mr. Rossi and several other members of the company on either Sept. 30 or Oct. 7.

"I am certain that there is some mistake about the cablegram," continued Mr. Guard. "Undoubtedly Mr. Gatti knows of Mr. Polacco's plans and if there were any change he would have notified me immediately, as the prospectus for the season is now in the printer's hands and contains Mr. Polacco's name. It looks to me like a case of artistic temperament."

Several versions are offered as the proper interpretation of the Polacco cable. One is that the conductor foresees difficulties in obtaining the necessary passports from Italy and wishes to assure his American friends that, in case he does not join the others in coming to America, there is a possibility of his conducting at La Scala, the principal opera house in Italy.

Mr. Guard said that he had had a talk with Arturo Toscanini just before he left Italy and that the celebrated conductor gave no intimation of a change in plans which would enable him to return to the Metropolitan this season.

It is well known that Polacco would refuse to conduct at the Metropolitan in case Toscanini did return. It has, therefore, been advanced as a theory explaining his cryptic cablegram that Mr. Gatti-Casazza may have recently induced Toscanini to change his mind.