

Emmy Destinn, Patriot, Tells of Life as Political Prisoner

Singer Was Held Prisoner on her Estate by Austrian Government — Describes Life During Period of Imprisonment

By MAY STANLEY

EMMY Destinn is back! When the French liner Lorraine sailed into New York harbor last week it carried a passenger who has been a war prisoner for nearly three years—Emmy Destinn, prima donna and patriot. Perhaps it were more fitting to say patriot and prima donna, for the patriotic side of her life has been uppermost recently. Mme. Emmy Destinn returns to America with the experience of nearly three years' imprisonment on her estates near Prague, in what is now Czecho-Slovakia.

We are so accustomed to hearing that musicians are a selfish lot, that they are self-centered and egotistical, that we have begun to believe it. This is one of the reasons that make a talk with Emmy Destinn a rare pleasure today. Here is a famous musician, a singer whose name is known throughout the world, who is proud to have been a political prisoner, radiantly happy that the opportunity to serve her country came, unmindful of the fact that it has taken three precious years from her musical activities. Emmy Destinn served as truly as the men who took up arms for the cause in which they believed, and she is glad that the chance to serve was given her.

It was in the interest of Czecho-Slovakian independence that Mme. Destinn sailed for Europe in the summer of 1916, carrying with her as a secret service agent valuable information for the forces of freedom in her native land. Her operations became known to the Austrian Government and Mme. Destinn was interned at her castle near Prague. For the first year and a half she was cut off from the outside world almost entirely, as political prisoners were under the most rigid surveillance.

"But I had plenty to do," Mme. Destinn tells, her eyes sparkling as she recounts the incidents of daily living in her prison-home. "I had thirty people on the estate and there is no time for idleness when one has thirty lives dependent on one in war time. Is it not so? First, there was the farm. It was necessary that we cultivate every bit of ground for food, and this we did. And the cows and chickens, of course, came in for their share of attention. Then there was splendid fishing on the estate, and this meant sport as well as a chance to add to our precious food supply. And occasionally there was an old-fashioned hunting party in the woods."

Mme. Destinn had no opportunities to sing or appear in public during that first year and a half, but she kept up her daily



—Photo by Wide World
Emmy Destinnova, On the French Ship Which Brought Her To America

practice with the most rigid exactitude. A certain portion of time each day was allotted to work on concert songs and operatic repertoire—for would she not be free some day? Her castle stood on the border between Bohemia and Austria and each evening great watch fires were lighted so that Austrians sneaking into the country could be detected and stopped.

Finally came the armistice, and with it the opportunity to help her people. Twelve great concerts were arranged, the first in Prague, and the proceeds used to alleviate the suffering of those of her countrymen

Declares She Will Sing No More German Songs Till She "Learns to Love the German"—Plans for her Coming Concert Tour

made destitute in the war. Mme. Destinn was the soloist chosen for the great festival given in honor of Mr. Masaryk, president of Czecho-Slovakia, when he returned from

Going to London after the concert series in her own land, Mme. Destinn gave another great benefit concert for her people in Queen's Hall.

"I did not sing in Paris," she says, "for the French people could not get it out of their mind that I was not a boche—and you may be sure that the French are not welcoming German singers. But I love them," she added with a laugh, "those nice French people, and do not mind if they make the mistake about me—not at all."

"Will you sing any German music, Mme. Destinn?" was the natural query.

"No, not any," came the quick reply, "I do not wish to sing German. It is very beautiful," she added quickly, "very beautiful, but to sing well you must love what you are singing, and I do not love the German—yet."

Mme. Destinn has had some busy days since landing in America. A concert tour that will take her to all the larger cities of America is being planned, and there will be operatic engagements also during the season. The Destinn following is a large one, and it has not been diminished through the gallant services and sacrifices that the singer has made for her native land.

She was going over some new songs when I talked with her, examining, commenting, accepting and rejecting with the characteristic directness that is a part of the Emmy Destinn we know.

"I shall sing a number of English songs this season," she said, "they are very lovely, many of them. And I have some Bohemian songs and songs of Czecho-Slovakia that have not been heard in this country. And, of course, French songs and Italian, both old and new."

In spite of her love for the land where she was born, Mme. Destinn calls America "home." Her first papers as an American citizen were taken out before she sailed for Europe in 1916, and now when the necessary legal formula is complied with Mme. Destinn will take out her second papers and become full-fledged American. And there is a royal greeting here for the kind of patriot that Emmy Destinnova—she doesn't like the German spelling of her name—has proven herself to be. She is the sort of material that assays one hundred per cent American.

Victor Herbert Berates Officialdom and the Wealthy for Apathy to Music

Philadelphia, Sept. 22, 1919.

IT would have been far better for this young American composer and dozens of others like him—native Americans who have shown their possession of first class talents in composition and other forms of musical activity despite gruelling struggle—if they had been born abroad. Then their abilities might have some chance of recognition in this, their natal land!

This is not a disgruntled American bewailing the lack of appreciation at home. It happens to be Victor Herbert who is discussing with that blend of Irish irony and American good sense, and just cosmopolitan tolerant good humor, all of which are his traits, the subject of a Ministry of Fine Arts in the cabinet of the President, a subject which has found one of its most able, diligent and logical advocates in the distinguished editor of MUSICAL AMERICA.

Victor Herbert is very decidedly for the institution of a Fine Arts portfolio at Washington, which will systematically and thoroughly safeguard the interests of America in music, and the others of the seven arts. There are numerous ways in which such a ministry could function, such as propaganda for fostering national interest in the various arts, practical co-operation in bringing together American opportunities and American musicians, elevating of the public taste, etc. These were some of the points brought out by Mr. Herbert in his stimulating talk.

Mr. Herbert, who, as is well known, is the

grandson of Samuel Lover, the Irish poet, is of course an American citizen of many years standing, imbued throughout with 100 per cent Americanism, and by the very token of his Milesian derivation all the more American. Who has ever seen an "exile from Erin" who has come to our shores who considered himself or herself anything less than an American even before hastening from the dock to the Federal building to get first papers.

He is not disgruntled personally, either. "It is needless to say that I am not speaking for myself in this talk," commented Mr. Herbert. "America has been very fine to me. Fortunately I have reached a position where I can afford to be independent. I am talking for the young composer who still has his way to make."

Mr. Herbert then mentioned the name of the young American composer who had miscalculated the place of his birth and found himself an American citizen, and therefore a foreigner in the community of American music.

"This young man ought to have a fine place in his own country, where his living would be assured and he would have time to do the composition of which we all know he is capable. But no; all these fine places go to foreigners who come here fully equipped, worthy musicians, of course, but who have had the inestimable handicap in their favor of training in lands where music had state recognition. No move is made by our gov-

ernment or wealthy people to change the situation."

SAYS RICH NEGLECT ARTS

Questioned as to the support of American composers by wealthy Americans who in some cases at least, notable though infrequent, sponsor executive musicians and musical organizations, Mr. Herbert said: "Over here when people get rich they immediately set out to secure social prominence, and they go a broad to get presented at all the courts they can, and few of them do anything to advance the fine arts in their own country. And when the opportunity comes to give out a really fine American position they give it to a foreigner. It isn't the people themselves. They are fine and will stand by their own."

Then Mr. Herbert made his epigram about the desirability of composers selecting a nationality other than American as a prerequisite to artistic and commercial success, and advocated official government aid for music as well as the other fine arts.

"They ought to establish a Ministry of Fine Arts," Mr. Herbert emphasized. Down in Washington they talk of "civilization," etc., every five minutes, but they are glad to see almost anybody come to the capital more than an artist or musician. They talk a lot but they don't do anything.

"Foreign governments do something for their artists and musicians. The French government practically put Pierre Montéux

at the head of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He is a good musician. Of course, did you ever hear of the United States government putting anyone in a fine position in Europe or anywhere else? It's ghastly.

"Then again there is the case of Andre Messager, who was sent over here during the war at the head of a fine orchestra to tour our country in the interest of France and French music. I met Messager and he is a charming man and fine gentleman. Over in his own country his business is just what mine is here—he writes comic operas for a living. But what chance have I, for instance, of being sent abroad by the American government to create sentiment in favor of our really fine American music? About as much chance as I have of flying without an aeroplane.

"We are accustomed to regard the South Americans as a couple of laps behind us in civilization, but they are not anything of the sort. They realize better than we do the part fine arts play in the development of a country. My son, just back from France, is now with a banking house, and the other day he brought home from a business lecture he had attended a picture of Buenos Aires, and right in the middle of the city is the Municipal Theater and Opera House, one of the finest in the world. They realize better than we do the importance of the arts to a nation."

Mr. Herbert expressed whole hearted admiration for the young composers of this country for writing works for which they knew there was little or no chance of immediate performance or publication, and possibly not much more chance of ultimate presentation. He praised highly their devotion to their art.

"The reason they can't get such works published," he said, "is because there is no market for this kind of music. People often say: 'Herbert can get anything published,' but this is not so. I have a lot of orchestral suites, symphonic poems, and music of that class which no one will publish because there is 'no market.'"

W. R. M.

Howard E. Pratt to Head Whitman Conservatory at Walla Walla

WALLA WALLA, Wash., Sept. 17.—Howard E. Pratt, director of the Whitman Conservatory, has been discharged from the service and has recently come to Walla Walla from Oakland, Calif., to take charge of Whitman Conservatory. After fifteen years of private teaching, Mr. Pratt was selected by the National War Work Council to become song leader of Camp Fremont and later to take charge of the army camp singing in the Western Department. He has studied at the University School of Music, Ann Arbor, Mich., and has studied with Frederick Pease, William H. Howland, Frederick Bristol, Isadore Luckstone and Ward Stephens. He will also be head of the vocal department.

Florence Kleppe Heard in New York Recital

Florence Kleppe, contralto, gave a delightful recital in the studio of her teacher Mrs. J. Harrison-Irvine in Carnegie Hall, New York on Sept. 30. Opening with classics by Handel, Martini, Benvenuti and Scarlatti she sang French songs by Tremisot, Widor, Maas and Fauré, following with American and English songs by Van derpool, Buzzi-Peccia, Novello, Mana-Zucca, Mary Helen Brown and Elliott. She was received with much applause, her admirable voice and interpretative ability being keenly enjoyed by her hearers. Mrs. Kleppe in excellent style.

French Soprano Marries American

Yvonne Lynska, a French soprano, has just announced her marriage to Capt. James Allen Ryan of the Coast Artillery Reserve Corps. The couple were married in Washington a few weeks ago. Mrs. Ryan is the daughter of Ferdinand Le Grand, Royal Serbian Consul to Lille, France, and for four years with her father was held as hostage in Lille by the Germans. Escaping from Lille she went to Paris, where she studied singing, winning the scholarship for soprano at the Paris Conservatory in 1917. She was immediately engaged at the Opera Comique, with which organization she sang. She also toured France, singing for the French and American soldiers. Mrs. Ryan will give a series of concerts in Washington for the benefit of the Serbian war orphans.

Theater Patron Raises Disturbance

A man was arrested on Sept. 23 for creating a disturbance in the Loew Theater on Delancey Street, New York, in the heart of the Jewish section of the East Side. An imitation of Paderewski was being given by Ernest Lamberti, a pianist, when the man arose and shouted, "Don't applaud that man, he is against the Jews." In the ensuing turmoil the disturber was arrested and the performance finally resumed.