

on the estate of a Spanish multimillionaire.

This unusual action by the king caused some surprise, but he was quite sure of his ground. His own sympathies are reactionary. He selects his cabinets with a view to his personal interests, rather than to those of the country. He feels that he has much in common with our very wealthy men, and he is bound to them not only by ties of friendship, but also by business connections.

So Spain is being governed just at present by men of ultra-reactionary sympathies, who are working hand in hand with the great capitalist interests. Their reactionary sentiment causes them to persecute organized labor and the Socialist Party. At Madrid, the labor daily, *El Socialista*, is strictly censored. The prisons are filled with the champions of the proletariat, and working-men, guilty of no crime whatever, have been deported under the most cruel circumstances. The premier has just directed the Bank of Spain to go to the assistance of the Bank of Catalonia, which was facing bankruptcy on account of unjustifiable speculations; and he has raised the duties on cotton and woolen fabrics, to enable manufacturers to sell their goods at as high prices as they did during the war. He is preparing to raise railway rates thirty-five per cent, which will add still further to the cost of living.

If any further evidence were necessary to show that Spain was being ruled in the interest of a narrow clique, the following facts would sufficiently tell the tale: more than half the people of Spain cannot read and write; two thirds of its area lies untilled; only nine thousand miles of railway are in operation, and not a mile has been built for several years; hundreds of villages have no public highway; although ship owners, mine owners,

factory owners, and speculators have made fortunes aggregating between six and eight billion pesetas during the war, the government has not imposed a centavo of taxation on their profits, nor attempted to regulate the excessive prices which they charge. Gambling has spread like wildfire in the big cities, and, especially, is ruining our youth. We face fearful unemployment, due largely to avarice and chicanery in the business world. Our money, which was at a premium when the armistice was signed, is to-day at a heavy discount compared with American, English, and Swiss money. Emigration, which continued even during the war, has grown to unprecedented proportions from every section of the kingdom. The production of our farms and factories is not increasing, in spite of the use of improved machinery. Our Morocco campaign, which began eleven years ago, has cost us many millions every year, as well as an annual toll of human lives. Since 1910, army expenditures have risen from two hundred and sixteen million to four hundred and sixteen million pesetas, exclusive of the cost of the Morocco expedition; and our present budget shows a prospective deficit of a billion pesetas.

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MEMORIES OF WAGNER

BY MRS. ALEXANDER SEROFF

[The writer is the widow of a well-known Russian composer.]

WE are at Lucerne. Our skiff glides over the lake's green waters, which are smooth as a mirror. A young Swiss rows us, standing erect and favoring us *en route* with fanciful legends regarding the tenant of Villa Tribtschen. He is quite unaware that the mysterious personage he is describing is a

personal friend of his fares; and that the latter are impatiently waiting for him to reach the little landing in front of the 'Bavarian refugee's' retreat.

Our imaginative informant ran on: 'He keeps savage dogs to guard the place from approach by land, and the precipices on the water's edge make it impossible to reach him from the lake.'

'I insist on landing!' said Seroff.

'Impossible! Strangers, and, particularly, foreigners, are not admitted,' objected the Swiss.

'Take us to his landing!' commanded Seroff.

'You will see that I am right. They will not let you in the Villa.'

We could see a little bay in the distance. Seroff landed, but came back a moment later saying that Wagner worked in the forenoon and received no one. He had sent a servant to ask us to dine with him *en famille* next day.

So, the following morning we again approached the inhospitable cliffs, this time with more assurance. We landed. Wagner's old, gray valet introduced Seroff to the Master. I went to chat with Frau Cosima; and a serving maid took our son to the children. Shortly after that, dinner was announced. The table, evidently prepared for special guests, was in a dining room adjoining a long, narrow apartment, hung with large paintings representing the heroes of Wagner's operas. Wagner, himself, was in excellent humor. He ordered old Johann to bring on Rhine wine of a specially ancient vintage.

'Some of the very oldest, do you hear? -- He is a frightfully stingy old chap in such matters,' said Wagner, turning to us. 'Nothing in the world will induce him to serve the best wine to my guests.'

Johann replied, somewhat abashed, that not all his guests were worth good wine.

'Now, my old Johann, we understand each other, so hurry up with some that has real sparkle and fire in it.'

After dinner, we took a walk. Our little boy rode one of Wagner's immense dogs, and Isolde and Eva ran after him with their dolls. Little Siegfried, still in the arms of his Swiss nurse, chirped and gurgled with joy.

We wound up at a garden house. Wagner suddenly became confidential, and spoke to us of his private troubles.

A few days later, Frau Cosima returned our visit, and asked us to call on them again, in order to meet some French people who had just arrived from Paris. They were a party of three, two men who were Wagner enthusiasts, and a very beautiful French lady who was his equally devoted admirer. One of the gentlemen, who was in fact a real Wagner enthusiast, as his articles indicated, was almost offensively demonstrative in exhibiting his feelings. Even Wagner, himself, seemed embarrassed. He tried to act naturally, but could not conceal that it required an effort. The voluble enthusiasm of the beautiful French lady and the adoration of the Paris critic clearly got on his nerves.

The French guests begged Wagner to play something. He did so, obviously for the purpose of keeping them quiet. He selected the Lohengrin Wedding March. In the very middle of the piece, he was seized with a sudden aversion for it, and growled: 'The devil take what comes next,' struck two or three violent chords on the piano, and left the instrument.

After that little outbreak, Wagner recovered his natural ease: so we did not permit ourselves to be disturbed further by the exaggerated adulation of the Frenchman. As we were leaving, Seroff said he would like to meet

Wagner again, when there were no strangers present, as he had many things to talk over with him. The next day we received the following note:

‘Come to-morrow, and we will be alone, and as meek and humble as God, himself, could wish.’

We went over in the best spirits imaginable. Wagner received us with some good-natured jokes about our appearance. Indeed, we had not dressed up much for the occasion. Frau Cosima told us, with a radiant face, of the surprise she had prepared for Richard on his birthday. Wagner had just drafted the famous scene of Siegfried with the silver horn. She had secretly copied the solo for this instrument from the opera score and sent it to the young musician Richter, at Munich. The latter reached Lucerne early the birthday-morning, stationed himself beneath the window where Wagner slept, and awoke the Master with his horn solo. Wagner could scarcely tell whether he was listening to his own music, which had hardly taken final form in his thought, or was dreaming about it.

During that unforgettable evening, he played for us the scene of the apparition of Erda, which he had just completed. He played very poorly, struck occasional false chords, and declaimed in a shrill voice. It was evident that he could not quite master the complicated piano accompaniment. Nevertheless, his lifelike, nervous presentation gave the act a power which I have never felt when I heard it on the stage. In spite of its defects, the author’s interpretation was stamped for all time on our memory. Wagner stressed, with a touch of genius, every emphatic point, which is so often lost in its characterless interpretation by the feminine voice.

Wagner once permitted us to wit-

ness a rehearsal of *Rheingold*, which was held in his presence at Tribschen. The whole company came up from Munich, and we were present at a magnificent rendition of the work under the direction of the composer. It is often said that Wagner was rough, rude, and impatient toward the artists during rehearsals. That may be. This was not a theatre rehearsal, but in his own home. He was gallant and courteous, and seldom lost his composure. To be sure, he would draw in his lips nervously at each failure, and we can well understand that during an ordinary rehearsal, he might shout at the singers. On this occasion, however, he waited until singers were gone, then sinking down on a sofa, he thundered:

‘God Almighty! How can there be such brainless creatures!’

When he expressed himself in this manner, his glasses would generally fall off his nose, which only accentuated his anger. Thereupon, Frau Cosima would suddenly have some humorous incident to relate. With real feminine tact, she would insinuate her story into the scene so that the raging master would, eventually, roar with laughter. However, he thought that consistency still demanded a more moderate return to the subject, and continued to grumble reminiscently at intervals:

‘But why should there be so many blockheads in the world?’

On one occasion, a waiter rushed into our room at the hotel, fairly beside himself with excitement, and announced:

‘The lady and gentleman from Villa Tribschen.’

Frau Cosima came up the steps in a perfectly stunning street toilet, leaning on Wagner’s arm. He wore a wide gray overcoat, which hung about his slender form like a sack. A great

broad-brim, black hat *à la Wotan*, tipped slightly to one side, lent his face an expression of jovial German solidity and honesty; and his whole appearance stood out in striking contrast with the elegant, slender refinement of Frau Cosima. We took our guests out on the balcony. Seroff was not well and was melancholy. Wagner treated him like a younger brother, and talked to him kindly, almost caressingly. During our conversation, quite a crowd gathered beneath the balcony to get a glimpse of the famous composer. Wagner remarked to us, laughing mischievously: 'I believe they want to peek into the innermost recesses of our souls; for they must, already, know all there is to know about our external appearance.'

Wagner and Frau Cosima soon took their leave, and we accompanied them to the boat landing. On our way, Wagner turned to me saying: 'Why are you so sad? Are you worried over your husband's illness?'

I was in fact very much depressed; for Seroff's illness had taken a threatening turn during the last few days. He had confided in me his fear lest he might not be able to finish an opera he had begun shortly before. It was only seldom that he had these periods of depression. Wagner's visit occurred on one of those unhappy days. Seroff was so obviously suffering that Wagner was disturbed. He exerted himself to manifest his warm sympathy and tender concern. They walked through the town arm in arm. The numerous strangers whom we met stepped respectfully aside, to make way for the famous man. Frau Cosima seized my hand with her trembling hand, and begged me to go faster. She feared some unpleasant meeting or incident.

Finally, came our parting call. Wagner was in a particularly tender

mood. He told us of his own illness, and that he had nearly died in Vienna. He presented Seroff, on parting, with the whole *Ring* and with a picture of himself in a student's cap with the inscription: *Also Tribschen*. He kissed him like a brother and said sadly: 'Now the pleasant Tribschen days are over.'

We were touched to tears. On the ride back, the lake seemed gloomy and the landscape somber. It was, really, as though we had lost a parent. This was our last meeting with Wagner.

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AMONG THE INTERNED BOL-SHEVIKI

I HAVE just completed a tour of the camps where the Russian Bolsheviks, who crossed our border after the defeat of the Red armies before Warsaw, have been interned. The trip has been more instructive in some respects than a visit to Moscow or Petrograd. I would see more evidences of a ruined civilization in those cities, but I might learn less of the Russians as a people. The appearance of Moscow and Petrograd to-day would indicate that Bolshevism was at the end of its rope; but that has been often prophesied before, only to be promptly disproved by some brilliant military victory. Moscow, to-day, rules all the ancient empire of the Tsar, except a little strip of border country. Were we to believe the terrifying descriptions of conditions within those territories, the people would be incapable of successful military efforts. So, we cannot study Russian profitably in its cities, but only in its people. And we have, in our internment camps, a remarkable collection of representatives of the nation from