

After Midnight Thoughts

On Leopold Godowsky

etc.

By Paul Howard.

To The Members of The International Godowsky Society.

Instalment 2.

Letter to Members from the Hon Sec.

Letter to Members from the Founder

"I have never written a note that I did not feel.
My music is myself divulged through sound."

LEOPOLD GODOWSKY

(In a letter to Paul Howard, 2/5/33).

LETTER TO MEMBERS.

(By the Hon. Secretary, Edward F. McMahon)

A few days before his death, Nov. 1928, Leopold Godowsky wrote the following in a letter to his great friend Leonard Liebling, Editor of New York's "Musical Courier":

"I am in constant gloom and my despair is growing daily, due to the unprecedented barbaric happenings all over our little wobbly planet, happenings which make the dark ages seem like expressions of transcendental liberalism. And what is the future of our beloved music? Is the source of inspiration completely exhausted? Is all culture going to be with a 'K'? Where is fate driving us? Is this the Dusk of the Earth? Is the annihilation of all human achievement ahead of us? When I allow my thoughts to deepen, life becomes unbearable... Paul Howard, my abidingly admiring disciple and champion in Australia, persists in making me feel more and more conscious of my unworthiness of his adulation. Not because I am so modest, but owing to my theory that no human being can be great. We can only be less insignificant".

MO CAP
But
no dash
CAP?

Since the Master wrote that, the world has suffered six years of agony, six years of chaos and hatred, of bloodshed and destruction; places that the Master knew and loved so well have felt the cruel grip of was; places where his compositions saw the light of day, like Paris, where he wrote the immortal fourth Poem, and much of the Left Hand Suite dedicated to M. Isidor Philipp.

X
SCEPTS
OK

At times the hope of peace seemed but a chance stick tossed to and fro on a raging stream; but now we can begin to pray with more assurance that sanity will return to a darkened and convulsed world; and we know that if it does, when the tide of carnage has rolled back and the names of battles and generals have receded, the beautiful, creative things of life will emerge from their temporary obscurity.

XX

Among these great creative forces will surely be the music of Leopold Godowsky that so many have proclaimed as marking a new era of pianism - not only a new kind of pianism, but its highest perfection. Rachmaninoff (now sadly missing) declared him "the only musician of this age who has given a lasting, a real contribution to the development of piano music." De Pachmann said he was "the greatest composer that ever lived, greater than Bach." Leonard Liebling has written: "The piano and the cause of music are enriched by the presence and the contributions of Godowsky... He has carried the piano to greater heights in its/technical possibilities and musical expansion... He is a creator, a constructor, a developer, a discoverer in pianism... To study all the opera of Godowsky is to commune with the entire spirit, nature, purpose and mechanism of the piano, and to sit at the feet of a towering musical savant, teacher, philosopher." And another says that "as a composer he

X

stands alone on a peak, the glory of the piano". No need to multiply these testimonies, though we could do so almost without stopping to think.

The purpose of this Society is to prevent a wicked time-lag in the appreciation of the works of Godowsky, such as befell those of Bach. Conditions of membership: if pianists, to play at least one of his original works and to encourage their use in the home, especially the Miniatures: if concertising pianists, to include at least one of his original works in each season's recitals; if non-pianists, to ask artists to play a Godowsky original number; and at the very least (and just this is qualification for membership), to mention the name or works of Godowsky in any conversation that permits. We repeat that "what we can do for this cause enriches and ennobles ourselves, improving our thought, view and technique, all that we give returning to us a hundredfold".

We have received many entries since the Society was started; but it is to be feared that the turmoil of war conditions may have put our aims in the background, and there are many members with whom it is impossible to correspond. But now we are in sight of resuming full scale activities, and we look forward with confidence in this new springtime of history to active co-operation of all members.

At the memorial service held as a tribute to Godowsky in Los Angeles, (November 28, 1938) Louis Gruenberg said:

"I should like to see the memory of Leopold Godowsky perpetuated by something more permanent than mere words, for he stood for integrity, humanity, and humility. The last is significant, for all really great artists are inwardly exceedingly modest. They realize, as no one better, the utter impossibility to actually achieve the actuality of their dreams, and that makes them meek. And with all his world fame, his stupendous technic both as a pianist and composer, Leopold Godowsky was a man of humility.

And how his memory is to be perpetuated, I leave to more capable hands. I only know that now, more than ever before, it is the duty of every decent man and artist in this world of tears, to perpetuate the name of a great human being. And Leopold Godowsky was a great and good man."

Members of this Society have a golden opportunity to perpetuate the name and work of Godowsky; they owe it to the memory of the little man with the great heart, for when he went, as Professor Isidor Philipp said, "something of the divine disappeared from this sad world." But it is much more than a question of personality; in a wider sense we owe it to the cause of music itself to float into world-consciousness the work of this second great contrapuntal genius. Even on the lowest level - that of our own reputation, we owe it to ourselves to see that future generations who will understand and reverence his work, will not at the same time marvel at our apathy and indifference; for "fifty years from now", says Louise Robyn, "Godowsky will be the one outstanding teacher."

And as a last thought, a few of the Master's own works:

"Time submerges everything, but it does not submerge the really beautiful. Even though it is a palace of some long forgotten civilization, buried in a jungle, the sheer power of its beauty will make men go to dig it out, as they have done in Thebes, in Ankor, or in the land

of the Mayas.”

Which makes me reflect that we do not have to laboriously dig out the beauty that is Godowsky's offering to humanity. It is there waiting for us.

Sincerely Yours,

Edward F. McMahon

A TRIBUTE TO GODOWSKY

By another outstanding genius of the centuries - Sorabji.

Reprint from article in "The New English Weekly". June 20, 1940.

X CAP

GODOWSKY

An amazing instance of Time bringing in its somethings-or-others is provided by a writer in the current number of "Musical Times" on the topic of Leopold Godowsky and a Godowsky Society founded by a Australian pianist and musician who is - and very properly - an enthusiastic admirer of Godowsky's creative work. A few years since, upon the occasion if I remember rightly, of Godowsky's last visit to this country, the same writer fell upon Godowsky the composer with no small ferocity, and it is odd to say the least of it, to see him now saying that "Godowsky's eminence as a composer has long been recognised by the critics", when as far as I am aware, the only three people in this country to pay Godowsky's work its due tributes have been three people - among the critics, at any rate - who really knew anything at all about it, that is to say, first Mr. Ernest Newman, next Mr. Clinton Gray-Fisk, and thirdly myself (and I am outside the pale!).

Godowsky's creative work includes an immense body of transcendental "transcriptions", transcriptions of such a nature that they assume the aspect of new creations. Pre-eminent among are his works upon (I say 'upon' advisedly) six of those dreary monstrosities, the solo violin and 'cello Suites of Bach. These are a really astounding feat of creative re-interpretation equal to, and even in some respects surpassing, Busoni's own work along the same lines. These grinning, grimacing skeletons of compositions are transformed by Godowsky into magnificent piano works, miraculously endowed with the greatness and grandeur of Bach at his greatest, yet all the time being plainly Godowsky.

Among the fifty odd adaptations, transcriptions and arrangements of the Chopin Studies there are also some remarkable things, works of real beauty, while others are more of interest for purely pianistic, technical reasons. There are a batch of Schubert songs, most beautifully and imaginatively treated, a set of three Symphonic Metamorphosis of Strauss Waltzes, magnificently alike as examples of Godowsky's orchestral pianistic style of writing, and, as independent works, a superb expansion of the Invitation to Dance, arrangements of a Strauss song, an Albeniz piano piece 'Triana' (far finer in Godowsky's transcription than the original), a whole series of brilliant and ingenious treatment of Chopin Waltzes, to mention but some of the most outstanding that occur to the mind.

X Apart from all these are his own entirely original works, such as the brilliant series in waltz tempo, "Walzermasken", covering every kind of style and mood, the later set "Triakontameron", and finally the great Passacaglia upon a theme from the Schubert "Unfinished", one of his very finest works, and the great "Java Suite".

In his last, his rich imagination, his flexible, finely variegated and warmly coloured harmonic utterance, and his magnificent piano-writing reach their highest pitch. This set of pieces I have no hesitation in declaring to be among the masterpieces of modern piano music.

Each is prefaced by a clever little word-picture of the place or event that inspired it, indicating a personality of rare percipience and high sensitivity.

X Of course, he is never played, sharing the fashionable obloquy that is the fate today of any musician who can both perform and create superlatively well. And though his piano-writing is very complex and involved, intricate and with many a contrapuntal pre-occupation, it is not at all "showy" as some nothing-like-as-difficult works of Liszt occasionally are; its appeal from every point of view, musical as well as technical, is not to the groundlings but to the informed and musically alert listener, who can both spot and appreciate musical and technical fine points, and Godowsky bristles with them.

As far as I know, no records exist of any of his works, though I dare-say one or two pianists may have recorded his delicious arrangement of the Albeniz "Tango" - a notable instance of what he can do with a mean, measly little piece, in and of itself utterly devoid of distinction. Godowsky, by delicate contrapuntal embroideries, fine rhythmic devices, subtle changes of harmony, produces a charming - but devilishly difficult - musicianly piece that is ^{as much} a joy to play - if one can - as it is to hear. A fitting companion to it is the urbane transcription of "Le Cygne" of Saint-Saens, (the unhallowed snivelling-ground of every nasal-sob-stuff encoring 'cellist) enlivened and flavoured by all Godowsky's artful and cunning little counter-melodies which he introduces with such artless skill and supremely artistic effect, at once heightening the effect of the main melodic lines and adding spice and point to them.

Brilliantly successful, too, are the set of "Renaissance": arrangements as the composer-adapter calls them; these are rewritings in terms of the modern piano, of pieces by old French Masters of the ^{that} clavecin, in which Godowsky, first of any arranger I know, boldly faces the problem of pianistic substitution for specifically harpsichord effects and technique. These pieces are, however, of a high degree of difficulty, calling for a technique of power and delicacy. To sum up, Godowsky's work, as transcriber, arranger, adapter, and composer, is so multifarious, so diverse and extensive in volume that it constitutes in and of itself a library of the highest musical and technical interest in the literature of the piano, and whether he is purely and simply original composer working upon wholly original matter, or whether he is using the work of other men as the vehicle - transmuted - for his own ideas, he is just as much a composer all the time, and just as remarkable for his creative power.

KAIKHOSRU SHAPURJI SORABJI

A LETTER TO MEMBERS FROM THE FOUNDER

Dear Member,

Perhaps you wonder what I have been doing .

The great upheaval intervened, and meantime I have been wondering what you have been doing.

You, I, and every member, all are on the same footing, to do what we can for the cause and keep on doing it relentlessly.

With no monetary return and heavy financial drain, why do I pursue this campaign when Godowsky is dead? Just to fill the pockets of others?

Mrs. Neehan^{Meehan} of Melbourne, mother of the Very Rev. Prior^{Miscell} of Mt. Carmel over here, - he sings exquisitely all the songs of Schumann and comes to breakfast Sunday mornings after Mass, - wrote to me the other day a letter which can only be referred to, *A la Jane Austen*, as "a letter from a lady". Among the beautiful things she said were the words "And when I sat listening to you" *x a*

I started this Society while Godowsky lived to cheer and give him confidence that his work was not in vain, for I saw he was cruelly bludgeoned by fate, and I see no reason for stopping now that he has passed along. *changing the by order*

I have ample evidence that it gave him much pleasure and comfort, as you will find in subsequent chapters. I and my children played recitals of his Miniatures to the assembled members of the Music Teachers Association and elsewhere. I filled the house with people from six to sixty years of age, Saturday afternoons and Sunday all day, giving them lessons on the Miniatures without charge. With two grand pianos in the music room I would have four sitting all the time, and that would allow primo and secondo at the one piano, then the other two, then across the room several combinations, and in that way during a couple of years many people attained a standard of culture otherwise impossible. The only condition was for each to buy the full set of Miniatures at a music store, and I caused the sale of hundreds of sets. I arranged with the stores, almost had to bludgeon them to keep good stocks, and keep the prices down in Sustralia to the same as New York, 30 shillings. I took no commission or consideration, and even had I wanted to profit, that would only have amounted to chicken feed. *x*

The profit on the sales would mean little to Godowsky, but it gave him the feeling of appreciation in the antipodes.

And to drop the whole thing like a hot potato because he has left us would seem the basest treachery.

The only money I have received is 10 shillings forced upon me by the Honorary Secretary to christen his entry to the Society.

I accepted that because the idea tickled me. He is a man of very wide educational attainments, spent many years as a student in Italy and elsewhere, and contacted personally musicians of the highest calibre throughout Europe. Being myself dubbed 'Mohammed' by someone, I named Edward F. McMahon 'Mountain' as he is certainly a mountain of strength, and for a couple of years has been devoting two nights a week at the office, delving into the archives, arranging and indexing all the correspondence, etc., otherwise I would never have got round to this succession of screeds I am sending you. In the first place it was intended as an annual letter, but threatens to run into a 500 page book which I will get out in sections like this. I am having them milled and holes punched, and I have obtained a small device to attach to the first one which you can open at the back, lift off the removable piece, lift the brass fingers, file the others as they arrive, then replace the removable piece.

X I ask no contributions towards the expenses of the Society, but if you have a dollar or ten dollars to spare at any time, spend it as you think best for the cause, buy some Godowsky original compositions, and either learn something yourself or present them here and there to a friend or relative who will promise to study it. Or buy some gramophone records of the Master's original compositions which I believe David Saperton has made. I would have done that gladly myself, but that the import is absolutely forbidden, though they could be sent as a gift. Someone in London sent me as a gift the records of 24 Preludes of Rachmaninoff made by Moura Lympany, and I was glad indeed to have them, because they are very important works, beautifully played, and Rach. was as ardent an admirer of Godowsky as you and I.

I urge you to constitute yourself a centre of activity to the Godowsky Society and gather Memberships by placing the matter before friends, and send me their names and addresses. They can be your own particular group. And if each member will do that, the Membership will be quadrupled in no time.

For my part I now propose to write to about ten thousand convents in America and elsewhere, the American addresses of which have been kindly supplied to me by Mr. Walter Fischer who has been most encouraging and helpful at all times.

This, I feel, is a course which will take the stream at its source, and bring results in a decade, while by 20 years hence Godowsky should be represented on every concert programme.

Those already on the road, with set ^aides and repertoire, with customers - audiences - all over the world expecting their standardized items, may find it a heavy burden to learn a number of major Godowsky works - most of them would have to restudy pedalling as well, and some would have to be reborn - musically. But the rising generation of today! There we may produce a tidal wave, for the Nuns throughout the world do so much of the foundation work.

We may by this means stem the tendency to teach every child cheap and banal Concertos, the Rigoletto paraphrases, and all the other worn-out meretricious stock in trade, and educate their young minds to higher thoughts.

I would have sent these letters out to convents about three years ago, but the time did not seem propitious, and I was personally inundated with more matters than I could attend to in my

business, too many 14 to 16 hour days in the week.

I have no axe to grind, no idea of ultimate gain in this mission. I have nothing to sell, and do not intend in my early and playful 70's to embark on more recital tours, but I pursue this altruistic crusade, and it is in that spirit that I have asked others to join me, and in which you have joined.

In the letters to the convents I shall stress the value of the 46 Miniatures for four hands, which inculcate a super technique subconsciously, while the child's mind is entirely devoted to producing a beautiful sound, and cultivates ensemble from the commencement.

During the [~] ~~was~~ ⁹ years we have gained many members in England and Scotland and Australia, and here at any rate I have succeeded in making the Master's name and the Miniatures widely known. X

The following copy of my letter to Professor Matthay will show you one wicked ^{trick} way to gain a point:-

29th. August, 1942

"My dear Mr. Matthay, Learned and famous Savant,

Here are copies of my last two letters to you in case their originals went down.

I hope that you have been playing through the Miniatures with your confreres, (Swinstead and Claxton), to whom my greetings and homage. If you have done so, I am sure you are all filled with delight, and I hope to hear from you as to your reactions.

I feel, if you don't mind my suggesting it, that the whole of these works should be taken upon a softer tone range than the generality of concert playing; that they are something especially charming to be spoken softly, as for instance I love to do the Arabian Chant, commencing the secondo part in the softest whisper, reducing the ppp's right to the borderland of silence, (which takes such careful ^{caps} key weighting - escapement hopper, etc., must be in perfect condition) which leaves such wonderful scope for making the accents sparkle, and for playing the little crescendos in the upper voice with fluty mellowness, (yes, dear Mr. Matthay, I do believe the piano to be a living organism, which seems at times to express the tone colour and that its human friend is trying to tell it. I know it ^{is} ~~it~~ ^{THIS} sounds a bit thick, but by my soul, I swear that I believe my piano ^{is} ~~is~~ ^{communes} with me.) ~~This~~ ^{soft-}voiced speech leaves such a wealth of room for the colouring and lighting, the little bits of brass such as in the 1st. and 2nd. measures in the left hand of the line before last, and the little sighs, aspirations, and philosophical reflections. It reminds me of l'Arby, the eternal lover, ever playing his flute, (not the transverse one), squatting among the Geraniums and sand in the desert garden of Count Anteon - Hitchens "Garden of Allah". It was filmed some years ago but they spoiled it by leaving out l'Arby. X

And how ravishingly lovely is the Impromptu (In days of Yore) in the last book. But then aren't they all?

Insert it here
 I inserted it here
 way

Did I tell you of the time when I made three Nuns listen to reason?) With my family, I had a home at a watering place, and my guets for the day, Mr. B. and family, had in the early morning taken three Nuns to the hotel on a sick visit, and were to call later to take them back to the convent.

When they rang for him to come he was out, so I went in my car and took Mrs. B. with me. When the lod Lady Superior saw my car she exclaimed, 'Oh, when I saw this car outside the church this morning, with those pretty sun-blinds, I thought how I would like to have a ride in it and here is my wish come true.' They got in, the three of them sitting in the back seat, and Mrs. B. in the front seat beside me.

Near the convent I said, 'Have you been to the top of that hill?' They said, 'No', so I drove on a couple of miles and admired the scenery, and then a couple more miles and so on, till we were 10 or 12 miles out in the bush. Then I slowed down and said, 'Dear Sister T.' (she is the head teacher of a secondary school, and with no mind for music, and is annoyed when children leave her class to go to another part of the convent for music lessons), "in missing music you are missing the most beautiful thing in life.'

She just snorted. I let that sink in and then said, "Do you know, Rev. Mother, there is more money thrown away on pointless and misdirected pianoforte teaching than there is on drink and gambling.' That brought a snort from Sister M. the pianoforte teacher. I continued, "I want you to promise me now that when you return to Adelaide you will come to my house one day before school resumes and hear some beautiful music.' Sister T. said, 'We are not allowed to make social visits without the express permission of his Grace the Archbishop. We can only make sick calls.' I said, 'if it is only someone sick you want, I will soon make someone sick, but this is not a social visit, it is an educational conference.' Mother superior said, "Oh, we can attend an educational conference." Then I said, "Will you promise me now that you will visit me on your return to Adelaide, otherwise something is going to go wrong with this car, or I am going to find that we are out of petrol, and it is a ten mile walk back to your Convent from here.' Mrs. B. had been developing great merriment, and at that she nearly had convulsions, but nevertheless, the good Nuns made the promise and duly turned up on the appointed Sunday morning.

The children and I played most of the Miniatures to them, to their absolute delight. I had Sister T. sitting in the chair close to the piano, and when we were about to play the "Impromptu' (Days of Yore from the last book) I said, 'Have your handkerchief ready, dear Sister, for you will weep copiously and wish that you had led a better life.' My daughter Mary played it with me, and when finished I said to Sister T. 'Holy Sister, are you converted?' and with a tear quivering on her eyelash she murmured, 'Yes'.

Bang the Tambourine, a convert!

The above, My dear Mr. Matthay, is very confidential to you at your discretion; for goodness sake don't risk getting into print, because names, places and details are all exactly true.

With every kindest wish and admiration,

(Sgd). Paul Howard."

In a previous letter Professor Matthay told me that he had known Godowsky only by his arrangements and transcriptions, but that he would now proceed to remedy his ignorance. It takes a great man to speak so. At 87 he is still playing, teaching, and making records of his own compositions and of Shopin's works. X !! Beauty!

I have, of course, omitted the names and places in sending this abroad although I included them to Professor Matthay confidentially.

I also enclose a copy of what I call the Raftos Saga, only because it shows another attempt to make the Master known, but a very, very long shot you will admit. As names and address are included in this, I ask you to treat it confidentially. X

BRITISH ISLES

We had the great good fortune of securing Clinton Gray-Fisk of 14A Abercorn Place, St. John's Wood, N.S. 8., London, ENGLAND, as representative for the British Isles. He is a distinguished music critic, and the livest wire I have yet encountered, a fiercely enthusiastic supporter of Godowsky, and among the many memberships he secured is Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, probably the greatest living genius, whose works have the unstinted praise of the leading reviewers of the day, including no less than Dr. Eric Chisholm and Delius. Sorabji is an outstanding champion of Godowsky, has written much of him in his London publication, "The New English Weekly", and in his compositions will sometimes direct a passage to be played a la Godowsky.

Sorabji's works are mountainous, the Opus Clavicembalisticum - 252 pages, 3 1/2 hours, from Introit to Coda 12 sections. "The immensity of his time scale is staggering. Astronomical dimensions, counter balanced by the ~~intensity~~ ^{intricity} and complexity of atomic structure."

The copy to me inscribed:-

"To the admirable, redoubtable, indefatigable, and valiant amateur --- in the best French sense, not the insulting English one --- Paul Howard:-
Enthusiast and Virtuoso --- again in an elder and better sense. His very respectful, deeply admiring and obleeged (sic) servant,
Kaikhosru Shapurju Sorabji. (March 15th., 1945)"

The dedication:-

To my two friends (E Duobus Unuon)
Hugh M'Diarmid
and
C.M. Grieve
likewise
to the everlasting glory of those few
MEN

blesed and sanctified in the
 curses and execrations of those
MANY
 whose praise is eternal damnation.

gives you an insight of the character of the man.

*no low
RAT* I will enclose with this a tribute to Godowsky by Sorabji.

Subsequent instalments will include:- *GR*

Discouragements I have received - that will be rather a savage one I fear.

Encouragements I have received.

+ Letters from Godowsky to me, and replies.

Sundry notes I have written on Godowsky works, some of which are entitled "After Midnight Thoughts".

X With this I will say my adieu till I am able to send the next instalment, No.3 and in the meantime *no!*
 hope I may hear from you if only in reply to my *2nd* secong paragraph above.

With very kind regards,

+ *Comprehension from members*

Paul Howard.

I WILL CALL THIS, THE RAFTOS SAGA

One day in Adelaide I bought some bananas at a fruit stall and found scratched on one the words:-
 "Write to me Johnny Raftos Tweed River Dunbible".

The writing was grown into the skin but still readable. I always take a chance, and picturing a husky in a bandana hat, and a face like the Alabama Kid, I wrote the following letter and sent a lot of papers about Leopold Godowsky. With amazing results.

Paul Howard

14th. July, 1941

Dear Mr Raftos,

You sent me a letter on a banana skin requesting some correspondence. I don't know what you would like to hear about, but I am enclosing a lot of papers which at least will be something for you to read, and may also interest you.

You will learn about a very little man - I think he was only 5ft. 3 inches, - who became one of the greatest men in history, and in addition to his great genius, had a great heart, and every who knew him loved him. X

If you read first the two folded ^{uh} papers which open out very large, one of them is written by the film actor Edward G. Robinson, ' you will see what I mean, and then you will be interested in reading the other papers afterwards. X

As soon as you feel like it, it will be your turn to write to me and say whether you are glad I bought your banana. I would also be glad to hear from you about your daily work, and about a banana plantation, - at the time of writing I have not the slightest idea where Tween River is,

With kind regards,

Yours very truly,

(Sgd.) Paul Howard.

And I received this beautiful reply -

Dunbible, (on the border of Qld.)

Murwukkumbah, N.S.W. LL

28th. July, 1941.

Dear Mr. Howard,

I write on behalf of a very little man called Johnny Raftos, who was extremely delighted to receive your letter. He was 4 last April and thinks he is a man almost and your letter I am sure built up his self-respect to a considerable degree. Anyway, after demanding his Mother and Father to read his letter a thousand times he stowed it away in his drawer where he keeps his 'writing paper' etc.

Johnny helps his Dad to pack bananas and although we think he is destined for the Doctor profession, he emphatically insists that he is to be a 'banana man' - and he would be a good one too, seeing that banana work requires strong muscles and he is quite a little Hercules and I am really sorry I have no recent photo of him.

Today is cutting day - one takes the knife and cuts the bunch - the other 'lumps' it to the sending off 'station', from where the bunches are sent down the wires to the packing shed - and there the bananas are 'handed off' and packed and the cases Sharlan Dipped for preservation. The cases then slide down a log-slide on to the waiting truck which takes the cases to the railway station and then off to their destination. Then there is the chipping to do; the manuring, the de-suckering, and sometimes spraying. It is arduous work - but work that builds muscles and strength if the workers eat the right food.

I have been studying 'food' for over 4 years and have practised on Johnny and his Sister Rena (just 2), and I have my reward in their healthy splendid bodies. I shall count my duty done to them if I can through the years, study their diet and give them the health that is their birth-right. For, with those magic words, 'health and beauty' (which is health), the doors to success in life are more easily opened.

Myself, I am ignorant^a of music except that being Russian, I cannot help but love music - Johnny's Dad is Greek and plays by ear the 'La-ooto' - a stringed instrument like a mandoline. Music is certainly to take an important place in their education with languages, of course.

Your correspondence was certainly 'something to read' - I had no papers that night - we are six miles from town - and I read every word and I feel all the better for knowing that such a personality as Godowsky passed through this world and left it the richer. My Curiosity is picqued, and I shall open my ears if I hear any of his works.

I would rather have sent photos of Dumbie Gully which is a very picturesque spot. The running spring water trickles over the rocks and passes by at the bottom of our 'log-cabin' which is built of rough hard-wood logs.

Thanking you for your letter again.

Yours truly,

(Johnny's Mother) (Sgd) Mrs. L. Raftos.

To which I replied:-

14th August, 1941

Dear Mrs. Raftos,

Your letter of the 20th. July is one of the most delightful surprises that I can remember, and one of the most charming, of the many charming letters I receive from our members in every corner of the earth. Its literary flavour^{oo}, is lovely. X

I am sure grateful to you for the folder and pictures; there certainly is much to see in Australia, and there is a lot to support the Tourist Bureau advertisements of "See Australia First". All my family - there are seven, the youngest is 16 - have been equally intrigued with the communication and pictures. I must send you some photographs as soon as I can spare time to go to the dark room and make them.

I am not quite sure what papers I sent you before. I am enclosing one or two others here that may interest you. I am glad to know of your sympathy with the tonal art.

Occasionally I will send you bits of information about this Society and hope to hear from you when you are so disposed. We are all quite thrilled with your news about Johnny and his little sister and your problems.

Kindest regards to you all and to Johnny's dad. I wish I could drop in to hear him play the La-ooto.

Very sincerely,

(Sgd.) Paul Howard

And also wrote Johnny:-

Dear Johnny,

It is now my turn to tell you how glad I am that I got the banana with your meddage⁵⁵ on it, and we were all thrilled with the pictures and your mother's letter and to hear all about you.

The banana business is a fine business, but I should think that a fine little boy like you might aim at a profession on^e/of these days, and perhaps study Medicine for the benefit of your fellow men. If you get the chance to do so, do not miss it. One of my sons named Paul is doing his 3rd year Medicine, and another one lectures Latin at the University, and two more big boys are University graduates. I am going to send you a few pictures as soon as I can get time to print some.

I hope you will keep in touch with me and send me a note sometimes.

With very affectionate regards,

(Sgd.) Paul Howard

Dunbible Gully,
Murwillumbah, N.S.W.
 Monday, 26/1/42

Dear Paul Howard,

X There have been so many reasons and excuses for not writing and each one though important in itself is still not sufficient excuse for such an unpardonable offence. Sometimes, I dare not even hope that you will forgive me. Though I have often started and never finished a letter thanking you for your remembrance of us at Xmas time. It came as a very pleasant surprise especially for John. He is learning ABC now. He will be 5 in April but we shall keep him home for about three years yet. I do not insist that he learns. Anytime he is inclined I consider the right time. Here in the Tweed we are having the really worst drought in history and vegetables are scarce and oranges are now from 2/- a doz. Pineapples are about 3/- a dozen and so I put one through the mincer and separate the juice and pulp and give them juice every day. Even the pines have only a cup full of juice. I dare not speak of the war. I can only think - but how thankful I should feel that at least John and Rena are safe. If only all children could have this safety. The last War I was a baby as my daughter Rena is a baby now. If there is to be another war after this horror then we are lost indeed to all ideals of humanity and civilization.

John's dad is nearly 45 now and has the last War still in his memory. They do not want him yet but if he was in Greece he says he would be in the thick of it. In Greece age scarcely counts, it is the spirit and the patriotic fervour that the Greeks are born with - that is enough.

Today I "did my bit" - it was cutting day and I looked after the wires and took the bunches off and put them in the shed while one man did the 'handing off'. Our wires have wheels and brakes. On some down-hill wires the pulleys become burning hot. Lucky I have been this summer that the bunches have not come down with snakes in them. I remember last summer the tiger snakes used to make homes in the bunches. There is a big black snake near my wash-house near the creek. If I see him again he won't get away.

I have not been to town for several weeks now on account of diphtheria and other complaints. Though John and Rean are immunised fortunately. They were very close to a case too. Our baker's little girl came for a drive and spoke to my children on the very day she was taken ill with diphtheria. She has almost recovered now and I collected from the Gully residents and myself 11/- to buy her a cuddly toy to cheer her up. There are 8 houses in our Gully and everybody works bananas. Luckily one banana man has a dairy too, so the Gully is well supplied with good fresh milk at 2d. pint.

I always find it hard to finish a letter, so I wish you all the best and good health.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) Mrs. L. Raftos.

P.S. In a year or so I know John will be able to write his first letter to his Banana correspondent.

Unfortunately he still insists on being a banana man and nothing else.

17th. June, 1943

Dear Johnny,

When we were first acquainted you were 4 years of age, but now you are over six.

Your birthday is April, what day of the month? Mine is in April on the 8th, you see I escaped April Fool's Day by a week. X

I hope you are growing wonderfully clever.

Do you grow any of those very big bananas that we can only occasionally get in Adelaide?

I have a son named Paul who was doing Medicine in the Adelaide University but now he is in Queensland. His address is:-

SX 18781
Gnr. F.P. Howard,
No.3 Pltn.
D Coy,
A.R.T.C. (J.W.)
CANUNGRA. QLD. X

Is that anywhere near you?

I have told him if he is near to give you a call, but he may not be able to get out. Perhaps you might send him a few bananas just to let him know you are there.

Very kind regards,

(Sgd.) Paul Howard

Wednesday, 20th June, 1943

Dear Mrs Raftos, Since I wrote to Johnny last week it occurred to me that a case of bananas would be a Godsend to the poor boys in camp, and I thought perhaps it might be arranged to send them one.

I enclose £1 which I hope will be enough for carriage. If more, please tell me by return and I will remit.

Paul's address is:-

SX 18781
Gnr. F.P. Howard,
No. 3 Pltn,
D Coy,
A.R.T.C. (J.W.)
CANUNGRA OLD.

Can anything go straight from your place or will it have to go round the world first?

X I hope that you and ^{CAR}johnny and Mr. Raftos are well and prospering.

Very kind regards and hoping the season is being good to you.

Very sincerely,

(Sgd.) Paul Howard

DUNBIBLE POST OFFICE
TWEED RIVER, N.S.W.

July 22nd, 1943

Dear Mr. Paul Howard,

~~I received your letter with your cheque with instructions to forward a case of bananas to your son.~~
As you yourself suggest it may be a 'round-the-world' trip to reach him, it is exactly as you thought. ~~Canungra is only about 80 miles from here and boys from that camp still come to Murwillumbah regularly. Immediately I received your letter my husband asked several of the boys of that camp but unfortunately did not meet anyone who knew him. They told him though that he may have been there and gone again to another camp as the boys are only kept there as a rule for a fortnight or so. He sent a note with the boys inviting your Paul to come down for the week-end and if he had come I intended to give him your cheque as well as some bananas, but so far we have not heard from him. If we hear from him we will give him as many bananas as he can take and your cheque to have a drink with it. But if we do not hear from him soon we will forward the cheque back to you. We are very sorry we have not heard from him but we may hear from him soon. Maybe his next camp may be nearer and easier to locate, so if you hear sooner will you please let us know? Canungra may be only 80 miles away from here but when the question of transport arises for goods, then you can add a few more 'noughts' to the 80, and you are still only half way there.~~

~~Since Johnny wrote to you last, many changes have taken place. Not only is there a new patch of bananas 9 months old, but Johnny and his sister Rena (4 years old) have a 9 months old bouncing baby brother whose name is Jim (Dimitrius). He already has 7 teeth and has taken 10 steps by himself. The latest news of his progress about which John tells everybody who cares to listen or otherwise. Poor John has been ill for over a year now. He developed "gastro-enteritis" and he has~~

not yet got over it completely. Maybe he never will. But he is getting stronger every day now. Last Xmas he spent one week in hospital on account of a severe attack with fever. He weighs 3 stone 12 lbs. now and is getting better though still upsets occur. We wrote to a Greek doctor in Melbourne who sent us a diet, and from then he improved.

John certainly does put his foot in it as far as trouble goes. A while ago he was playing barefooted and a crooked dirty rusty nail stuck in his foot. I pulled it out, washed it and put some Melasol on it and off to the hospital to get a tetanus injection, because this nail was right in mud and manure. Previous to this they had immunisation for whooping cough (the baby too). John's birthday is on 9th April and this is strange; Thursday - Jim; Friday - John; Saturday - Rena. (their birthdays) Tuesday, Wednesday, Sunday.

A great event for John was the christening which took place at the Brisbane Greek Church when Jim was about 5 months. John saw trams and bridges but wasn't impressed. Show him a good bunch of bananas or a vigorous stool and he'll talk about it till the moon comes up. But coming home it rained; the road was slippery, the tires smooth, the speed too fast, and we skidded, and the car spun around in two complete circles. I always think God meant us to carry on or we would not be here now. There was no ombankment but if we had skidded on the wooden bridge just 3 feet ahead of us... It was my first accident in cars. A friend was driving. The same friend who took us to Brisbane to Christen Rena.

Of course John still thinks it's grand to speed along, and he says when he grows up and he has a car, I am to sit in the back seat so he can't hear me when I tell him to go slowly.

When Johnny got your letter, he made me read to him over and over again. It was indeed a very pleasant surprise to hear again and we all hope you and your family are in good health.

And it will be our greatest pleasure to entertain your son and drink to your health and happiness.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) Mrs. Raftos.

As a result of the invitation in the previous letter, my son Paul visited the Raftos family and the following is his letter to me afterwards.

SX 18781

A/Cpl. F.P. Howard,

D. Coy,

1 A.R.T.B. (J.W.)

CANUNGRA, Q.

29th August, 1943

Dear Pop,

Greetings and humble Salaams:

I am back in camp after three days rest at the coast - and a large bag of slowly-ripening bananas under my bunk bears witness to my promised visit to the Raftos. A three day visit to towns with the garnishings of civilisation was as pleasant as the thought of heaven.

I went to Murwellumbah by bus. The road (Pacific Highway as far as Coolangatta) is thru fields of cane, green paddocks and rocky cliffs - you can see sand dune and the sea in the first stretch; and later, miles of the Tweed River with its dozens of sugar cane barges.

Murwellumbah is one of the prettiest and friendliest towns I have been in. The church is by far the best you could expect to see in a country town; and the hospital is as pleasant as any of its size in Melbourne. It has almost a peace-time air. The main street is packed with cars and the streets were crowded with people. As proof of the character of the town in the cafes (which shame any in Adelaide); I ordered steak, well under done; with lashings of potato chips - I got them.

I stayed in the Imperial Hotel. It offered the last touch of perfection in the form of a cup of coffee and biscuits brought to me at seven in the morning.

X I spent a day with the Raftos's and Dunbible. They live at the very end of a long valley whose sides are covered with acres of bananas. I wondered what sort of a place they lived in. All the houses along the track were very poor. When I finally got there I needed an inscrutable Asiatic countenance. The house has three rooms. The outer walls are rather badly hewn thick ligs with as much crack surface as wall. The internal decoration consists of three-ply. The floor is linoleum covered. Everything was perfectly spick and span. Banana growers as a whole live under the same conditions; not because they can't afford better but because it's not worth it for the time they are there. Mr. Raftos has just bought a couple of hundred acres of land nearer the river and a large house with it. He can afford it easily it seems.

Mr. Raftos is about 47. He has greying hair and is getting that way where climbing hills is being a heavy task he'll be glad to give away. He thinks. He knows more about politics than I've thought of. He is rather volatile and extremely kind and courteous. Mrs. Raftos is about 35, speaks perfect English - was educated in a convent and shows signs of it still. She speaks very softly and intently - she wanted to know all there was to know about you. Her two most pronounced characteristics are a rather prominent chin; and extreme anxiety about her children - mostly directed to what they are doing every minute and what they should be when they grow up.

Mr. Raftos at first addressed me as "Mr. Paul", and then thawed. He fed me like a king, showed me all the ins and outs of bananas, showered me with a huge cluster of them, cashed your cheque for me, ran me into town on his microscopic quantities of petrol and introduced me to all his friends.

He made me promise to take my next rest days at Dunbible, when possible, and has so simplified transport et.al. that it's merely a matter of pressing button A to find myself fishing, not crabbing, and what-have-you.

? Friday night and spent Saturday morning shopping (buying everything I needed from sticking-plaster to stripes). I also inspected the hospital outside, was whisked inside by a genial matron to

see 2

see the works; and to see the town and river from the roof.

I spent nearly all my money leaving enough for the period till pay-day; had the best feeds I have yet seen, slept ~~between~~ sheets, had my first hot bath in seven months and generally compensated for life at Canungra.

So that's about all the news of the three days rest and I'll come to the before and after in another letter.

Keep sparking,

Paul:

SEQUEL

FEBRUARY, 1945

My son Peter (of fighter pilot wings); in hospital in Melbourne recently, for the sake of something to talk about related the banana episode to the patient in the next cot, and when he finished the chap turned round and told him something. His name, he said, was Tony King, of Dunbible, and that many years ago his Father provided the capital for Mr. Raftos to start business there:

Raftos, who was a man of sterling qualities, duly repaid the capital and had since become rich...How wonderful is coincidence.

Johnny's birthday being the 9th April I shall send him a telegram of greetings and remind him that as he is now able to write I am expecting a letter from him.

5th April, 1945

My Very D^ear Johnny Raftos,

Yippee, I am timing this to arrive on the 9th, your glorious birthday, and I hope that you will live to be at least as old as Methuselah and as wise as Confucius.

I hope that you will live through a peaceful life in a world in which wars have ceased and everything has become so perfect that bananas grow with zip fasteners.

Please give my most affectionate regards also to your beautiful mother, your ever so clever and handsome father, to my lovely Rena and the seraphic Demetrius. (Are there any more?)

Very affectionately,

(Sgd.) Paul Howard.