

By BRUNO D.

The Reviewer Feels Pity

A father took his little son to the picture gallery.

Eventually they halted also before a painting depicting the well-known mythological scene: Prometheus chained to a rock, the eagle devouring his liver, which, as the parent explained, the angry gods of Greece caused to grow anew every night by way of more thorough punishment.

The little boy showed particular interest. He sighed and lingered longer than usual, and he sighed again.

The father asked him why he seemed so depressed.

"Poor eagle," was the sad-toned reply.

Naturally astonished at the answer, the father pressed for an explanation.

"Poor eagle, poor eagle," the youngster brought forth, "every day liver."

Which true anecdote came to the reviewer's mind as he heard Sergel Rachmaninoff again play the piano last evening, the program including again Schumann and Chopin.

Quite needless to go on record and say that the Slavic composer and pianist is one of the great performers of the day. That is a fact, historic in a way, which leads capacity audiences to the Philharmonic Auditorium. Yesterday's would not depart even after sundry encores, until the lights were dimmed.

Mr. Rachmaninoff presented also a Liszt group, which, variously strengthened the impression gained from the Schumann "Davidsbündler" and the Chopin items, that the artist was in an unwonted mood. These romantics—of which his interpretations have indeed become historic owing to poetic fidelity—he treated now with inordinate speed, with a phrasing and general poetic expression often so distant, that this reviewer for one pitied him as the little boy of above story pitied the eagle.

What came between Rachmaninoff and Chopin and Schumann cannot even be guessed, because no authentic answer is likely, if one at all. The profession of concert artists imposes many sufferings, physical, and worse, spiritual. Modern galley slaves of Rome, chained to the oars, rowing from coast to coast, as they are "sold" in the markets of music.

Why or how the pianist was pleased to be an intimate Schubertian poet during the Schubert "Andantino and Variations," only to stand aside often during the Schumann, and to produce then somewhat horribly pyrotechnical feats by way of Chopin, can only be stated, with gratitude for the one phenomenon, with mingled regret, surprise and aversion for the other.

In his own G-major Prelude and the G-minor Etude "Tableau," Rachmaninoff sounded as of yore, a creator in sound also when merely taking the role of key-board executant.

He may not have felt in the mood for Schumann and Chopin or for some of the Liszt. (Why choose at all so empty a bravura piece as the "Carnival de Pesti"? If so, the public would not have minded, had the Russian eagle changed the fare and announced the altered choice. Under the circumstances it will be doubly interesting to hear him in a different program Saturday afternoon, because he is still a master among masters.

ITURBI TONIGHT