

Letters from Spain published by the Daily Picayune.
(Elements which were not deciphered are placed between brackets)

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An American Artist at the Court of Madrid

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All Louisianans must be proud of the triumphant career of their young fellow-citizen. Maurice Gottschalk (sic.), in Europe, as a pianist of the most original genius and finished talent. The following are extracts from letters written by him in November last, from Madrid, to his father and mother, and which we have been permitted to translate :

Madrid, November 17.

The Queen has not yet decided to allow me to play before her. The nobility show themselves somewhat reserved towards me. It is said that the Queen, on hearing that I am an american, exclaimed that she would never patronize an artist of that nation. Whether this be true or not, the rumor of it had spend abroad, and the courties dislike to show me too marked a degree of courtesy, for fear of irritating her Majesty. I cannot, however, complain now ; they are all excessively amiable towards me, and for this reason : his Excellency the Duke of Riansares, husband of the Queen Dowager Christina, receives me frequently, and treats me in the kindest manner possible. The Queen Dowager has also sent me an invitation to the ball and supper which she is to give in her palace on the 19th inst. To celebrate the anniversary of the birthday of her daughter. Queen Isabella, The King, Queen, royal children, and all the court will be present.

Madrid, November 19

Hardly had I returned from putting my last letter in the post office, when the private secretary of his Excellency the Duke of Riansares came in all haste to anounce that her Majesty the Queen wished to hear me play in her apartments that very evening, before a select audience, and without the ceremony of a public ordeal. The audience were to be the King, the Queen, the Queen Dowager and the Duke. This is the greatest mark of honor that could possibly be conferred on me in this court, as I shall be the first artist ever admitted so freely to the private apartments of the palace. My secretary immediatly donned his best cost, white kid gloves, etc., and escorted my two pianos to the parlor of her Majesty. At 9 o'clock in the evening the king's pianist came for me, and in a quarter of an hour we were at the foot of the grand staircase of the palace.

At the top of the staircase two sentinels stopped us. An officer asked our names, and then allowed us to pass on, through a long gallery splendidly ornamented, where at every twenty feet was stationed a halberdier enveloped in his mantle. At the end of the gallery an officer received us and introduced us into a grand saloon, decorated in a wonderfully brillant style. Our cloaks were here taken from us. Two tall, fine looking men, whom I ascertained to be servants, stood before the fireplace warming themselves, and attracting my eye by the richness of their dress of blue cloth embroidered with gold, knee breeches, white silk stockings, and court swords. A young nobleman on service, dressed in the richest court costume, covered with orders and ribbons, marshaled us into the antechamber, and

requested us to wait. He went to inquire of the chamberlain on duty if we could be presented to her Majesty. A moment after we entered the « *Salle des Gentilshommes*, » where five or six great officers of the state in court costume were on duty awaiting her Majesty's orders. We passed through still another grand saloon, and came at least to a square shaped apartment, at one of which was a door, hidden by tapestry, and opening into the room where her Majesty was to receive us. The young nobleman who accompanied us made some private signal at this door ; he was answered, and we were ushered in.

At first I was completely dazzled by the flood of light which filled the saloon. A young man of a strikingly elegant exterior stood before me and said to me in good French, with a most pleasant smile and tone of voice, « Ah, Monsieur Gottschalk, how happy I am to receive a man of your talent. It is a fortune for Spain to possess a pianist whose wide spread reputation is based on such sure grounds ! » This amiable and graceful young man was the King. A lady, of large size and a certain age, but very dignified and courteous, rose at my entrance and saluted me with the utmost affability. The Queen Dowager ! Behind her chair stood the Duke, her husband, whom I already knew. The King, with true delicacy of feeling, in order not to oblige me to remain on my feet, all alone, before the Royal presence – as required by etiquette – stood up near me the whole evening. I have never met with a more amiable, polished or courteous gentlemant, having more happily the art of uttering words which go to the heart of an artist. A rustling of silk announced her Majesty's approach. The King came near me and said. « Monsieur Gottschalk, it is the Queen ! » The tapestry over the door was raised and Queen Isabella entered. She received my salutation with a most gracious smile.

The Queen is very tall and stout. She has fine blue eyes, hair of a chestnut color, and his lips inclined to thickness. After a moment's silence, her Majesty said to me in Spanish, « Whenever you are perfectly ready to play, Monsieur, I shall be happy to hear you. » I first played my duo for two pianos, assisted by the King's pianist. At the *finale*, which is à *grand effet*, I heard her Majesty rise, leave her seat, and place herself behind my chair. The King was to my right, leaning on the piano, the Queen Dowager a little farther off. Several times I could hear the Queen exclaim in Spanish, « I never heard anything so beautiful ! » After the piece was over, the King came and complimented me ; and the Queen said to me. « Very good, Monsieur Gottschalk ; that was very good ! » The King requested the « *Bananier*, » one of my own compositions on a Creole air, that you in New Orleans must have heard often. « I play it. » said the King ; « it is a great favorite of mine. » I played the piece : and the Queen and her mother appeared to be charmed with it. The King asked me for another of my pieces. I played the « *Danse Asiatique*, » which produced equally as flattening an effect as its predecessors. The Queen came to me and addressed me a compliment conceived in the most gracious terms : she then asked me for another performance. I played the « *Moissonneuse* » The King said « That is good music, Monsieur Gottschalk ; that is poetry itself. It will not be appreciated in Spain : the only pianist we admire here are those who perform acrobatic feats on their instrument. »

A conversation of a half hour followed, when the Queen said something, that I did not hear, to the King. He turned to me and told me that her Majesty insisted on hearing the piece I had dedicated to her, the « *Bamboula*. » another beautiful and Creole air. « We are so much pleased with it, » said the King, « that I frequently either play it myself, or have it played for me. » I begged their Majesties to have a little indulgence for me in case I did not please them so well in this as in the other pieces, for I had not played it for a very long time. « Say you so ! » replied the King, laughing : « then you must play it for us, for I wish now to see in what manner you will be able to play badly. » I played the

« Bamboula, » and the King and Queen appeared to be much astonished at it. Queen Christina walked up and down the room, humming the air and exclaiming, now and then, « how beautiful ! » The Queen paid me another very flattering compliment, and the King chatted with me for another half hour. Queen Christina said to him : « Sire, this evening's entertainment should strengthen your taste for the pianos. » « Ah, madame, » replied the King. « my piano will remain closed all day tomorrow ; I shall not have the courage to touch it for some time yet, I fear. »

I then advanced to her Majesty and returned my thanks for the very flattering manner in which I had been so happy to be received. « It is I, sir. » said the Queen, graciously. « who should thank you for the charming *soirée* we have passed. » It being then time to retire, the King accompanied us to the door of the saloon and remained there, watching our departure, until we had passed the third or fourth saloon, waving his hand to me and smiling pleasantly. This is considered to be the most polite compliment the King can pay to a visitor, but it is rather troublesome, as it obliges one to « advance backwards » -that is, to make one's exit by walking backwards.

Yesterday evening I went to the Queen Dowager's ball. I had the honor of dancing several polkas before her Majesty with the young and charming Countess of Casa Valencia, the daughter of one of her Majesty's grooms of the Chamber. The Queen, and the Queen Dowager, were seated on a divan or throne ; the King occupied an arm-chair to the Queen's left ; his father, sisters and brother were seated to the right of the Queen Dowager. Around this royal groupe was an immense circle of lords and ladies of the court, all standing. The King rose and walked slowly around the great saloon, addressing a smile to one, a kind remark to another. On perceiving me, he advanced immediately towards me, and after making a few courteous inquiries as to my health after the fatigues of the previous night, repeated the compliments he was then pleased to address me. All eyes were fixed upon me, and my triumph-a legitimate one-over those who had before treated me so coldly, was complete. The Queen Dowager's chief physician came up to me and said : »Permit me, sir, to be among the first to felicitate you upon your original success last evening. Her Majesty, the Queen Dowager, told me that you had pleased her infinitely, and that she preferred your style of playing even to that of Liszt, the pianist who had heretofore been her greatest favorite. »

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It may be thought that we entertain our readers too frequently with the incidents of the young Louisiana and New Orleans pianist's career in Europe. But it is a higher feeling than that of mere pleasure at the success of a countryman which induces us to gather the details of each of his artistic campaigns in the foreigner's land. America has so long been reproached for her utter inaptitude for the fine arts, that it is with a national pride that we point to the triumphant career of Power, Weet, Sully, Greenough and Gottschalk in the highest circles of European refinement and classic taste, for a refutation of this sweeping charge.

We are induced to believe that our New Orleans artist will pay his native country a visit ere long, and it is to prepare the way for a brilliant and well merited « welcome home » that we lay before our readers the chronicle of his astonishing success abroad.

Here is a letter written by him to his mother in Paris, and transmitted to his father in this city. We see, by the by, that the Paris musical journals devote large portions of their columns to accounts of young Gottschalk's tour in Spain. He is a great favorite in Paris. We prefer translating the letter to giving an abstract of its contents.

Madrid, June 14th 1852, Calle de las Tres Cruces

Another triumph, my dear mother. I am still today half crazy about it. My second concert took place last night at the *Teatro del Principe*. The house was filled with people in full dress costume. The Queen's Ministera in court uniforme occupied their box, the Queen's alone being empty as the Royal family is at Aranguez.

The success of the concert was actually unprecedented. The « Bananier » was encored and I was called out « Souvenirs de Bellini » encored, « La Danse Ossianique, ditto, the « Carnaval de Venise, » ditto. At last came the moment for the first performance of a piece I had composed for ten pianos, and called the « Siege of Saragossa ». I came upon the stage at the head of my ten young aides de camp all dressed alike. Applause burst out on all sides.

You must be aware that the siege of Saragossa is one the [...] of national heroism most cherished the Spaniard's heart.

The first part of the piece was frequently interrupted by enthusiastic applause. The second part was not finished when it was encored on all sides and, at length, at the third part, when all the pianos gave forth a loud and brilliant trumpet and drum march of triumph, there took place in the crowded audience what seemed to me an electric commotion. All rose spontaneously to their feet man and woman with an enthusiasm impossible to describe, the ministera applauding more vehemently than any one else. At last the Minister of Agriculture, unable to restrain his emotion, cried out in a loud voice, Viva la Reina ! The Universal shout that followed almost deafened us. Hardly had we finished the piece when we were all called out three times in succession, and cries of « Bis ! bis ! » from all quarters forced us to play the *concerto* over again. It was almost impossible to perform, so frequent were the interruptions of applause. As the last notes were played, a splendid wreath of laurel and oak leaves and

flowers, bound with ribands was thrown to me with this inscription in gold « To Gottschalk, the people of Madrid at the concert of the 13th June, 1852»

But now I have to tell you of even more extraordinary things. When I left the theatre I found a procession of more than 300 persons drawn up. They accompanied me home. There I found a great number of the most aristocratic ladies of Madrid, who were introduced to us, and paid me the prettiest and most flattering compliments.

Suddenly I heard under my windows the first strains of my « Danse Ossianique ». I looked out the windows and balconies of all the houses as far as I could see were filled with spectators- men, women and children. I went out on the balcony, and an immense « *hourra !* » welcomed me.

The street was illuminated, and the two military bands of the Queen's Regiment and that of the Princess drawn up [...] circle before my dwelling, played the « *Danse Ossianique* », *J'étais fou !* I was crazy. The effect was over powering. Imagine two admirably drilled military bands playing my own favorite composition ; add to that the hour, a Spanish night and sky, the illumination, the enthusiastic crowd of spectators, the brilliantly dressed ladies who surrounded me, my friends who entered every minute to congratulate me.

It was speedily known throughtou the city, it appears, that a grand serenade was being given to me, for all the streets in the neighborhood became filled and crowded with lookers on. I despatched G... to the nearest restaurant, [...], who sent us any quantity of cakes and bowls of punch. Then followed a series of toasts. My apartments were soon too small to accomodate all who wished to enter, and numbers adjourned to the balcony.

It was a veritable [rout], in every sense of the word. Toasts flew about in quick succession and were received with a thousand *vivats !* by the crows in the street. They presently began calling for me. I had again to appear on the balcony, and, as I presently discovered to my confusion with the laurel wreath on my head. Some one had placed it there without my knowing it, so much was I excited. My good friends, it is true, were still more overcome than myself. G.. actually wept for joy. Perhaps, too, the punch had its effect. I finally took courage and made a little speech in Spanish, which was not so bad for a first effort ending with the following toast : «A mis [valientes] ayudantes de campo en el sito de Zaragoza ! » (To my valiant aides de camp in the siege of Sarragossa) Thus cumulated the general enthusiasm, which was already at fever heat, and I was seized and carried around to be embraced by the warm hearted audience, who passed me from one to another as if I were a petted child. I did not escape being treated by the ladies as affectionately as by the men but that counts for nothing in this country, where there are no prudes. I will close by stating the agreeable fact that the pecuniary returns of this concert were as satisfactory as the applause.