

BENEFICENT SPIRITS IN AMERICA'S MUSICAL LIFE

Their Name Is Legion, But Ugo Ara Cites a Few of the Outstanding Figures—How Mr. Eastman Was Converted to the Cause of Music—Three Names Which Command Special Reverence: Higginson, de Coppet, Mrs. Coolidge—Their Noble and Significant Works for Culture and Musical Lore in America

[The writer of the following article, Ugo Ara, is a prominent Italian violist and litterateur, formerly a member of the Flonzaley Quartet. He played an important part in the negotiations which resulted in the forthcoming visit to the United States of Toscanini. Mr. Ara's associations and experience fit him peculiarly to do complete justice to an article along the lines of the present one, which he has prepared especially for MUSICAL AMERICA.—THE EDITOR.]

By Ugo Ara

WHEN on the heights of the Esquiline Hill, Caius Maecenas opened wide the gates of his palatial residence—and of his heart—to the best spirits and "literati" of Rome, he certainly could not imagine that, 2000 years later, in a country discovered fifteen centuries after his death, men and women of great wealth, and still greater ideals, would follow his example with such a munificence and discrimination as to deserve to be numbered among his best and worthiest disciples.

Still, is it not true that in that country, in that new country, admired for its energy, envied for its resources, and criticized for its commercialism—in other words in rushing, pushing, money-making America—science and arts have found during the last few decades the most ardent paladins and the most beneficial guardian angels?

And among the arts has not music been especially privileged and has it not been cherished and supported as, perhaps, in no other part of the world?

To make an entire list of the patrons of music in this country would be almost an impossible thing; they are legion. But there is a certain number among them whose names should be widely known and works deeply appreciated.

It is due, for example, to Charles M. Schwab, the steel magnate, that Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the quaint little manufacturing town, the center of the Moravian sect, has become equally famous for its iron works and its Bach Festivals.

Harry Harkness Flagler is the generous and modest supporter of that New York Symphony Orchestra which, captained by enterprising Walter Damrosch, lately crossed the ocean and was the very first orchestral body to carry to the old country a message of beauty and friendship from the new.

Without the princely annual subventions of the brothers McCormick, the reaping machine inventors, the Chicago Opera Association could neither have existed nor brilliantly competed with its famous rival of the East, the New York Metropolitan Opera House.

As for this last institution everybody knows what a debt of gratitude it owes to Otto H. Kahn, the banker, who, with the same liberal and chivalric spirit, has largely supported the French-American Association of Musical Art, the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier, and every noble and beautiful movement in this country.

The Norfolk Festivals are instituted and supported entirely by Carl Stoeckel, who, for the purpose, built on his grounds at Norfolk, Connecticut, the "Music Shed" seating 2,000 persons. They have become an important factor of musical American life. Mr. Stoeckel has also established a fund for the annual production of two new orchestral or choral works to be presented at his Festivals.

A. D. Juilliard's love for music was clearly demonstrated some time ago when, a few days after his death, it was found that his entire fortune had been left for the establishment of the "Juilliard Musical Foundation." How large this fortune is, is still unknown, but there seems to be no doubt that it runs—from five to twenty millions.

And what to say about George Eastman, the kodak inventor of Rochester, whose sudden appearance in the musical world constitutes one of the most characteristic episodes of modern American life?

To a gentleman insistently urging him to offer a certain sum of money for some

musical purpose, Mr. Eastman, exasperated at the loss of a few minutes, burst out, as the story goes: "All right, here is the money, but don't take my time, at least."

"No, sir," answered the shrewd gentleman in question, handing back the



Photo by International

Henry Lee Higginson, Founder of the Boston Symphony: "He Gave to His City an Orchestra Which Was Perfect"

check to Mr. Eastman, "I don't want your money—without your interest."

"Is that so!" exclaimed the kodak king, perfectly amazed, "then let us quietly sit down and tell me all you want about music."

The conversation was a fruitful one; after half an hour Mr. Eastman was converted to the cause of music, and his conversion resulted in the foundation of a string quartet, of an orchestra and of a music school, which is just in process of construction and for which he gave the nice little sum of three million and a half!

No matter how important have been the services rendered by all these men to the cause of music there are still three other persons who deserve to be mentioned all by themselves, three names which command a very special reverence, three stars which, in the Olympus of the patrons of music, shine with an individual, bright and glorious light: Higginson, de Coppet, Coolidge.

Each proceeds directly from the other and if the "book of the generation" of the American Musical Maecenas is ever written, it will begin, very likely, in this way: Higginson beget de Coppet; de Coppet beget Coolidge, and so on.

A Noble Triumvirate

The reason why this noble triumvirate emerges above all its "entourage" is not so much on account of the financial support with which it has favored the expansion of musical art, as on account of the love, consistency, and spirit of sacrifice with which it has valiantly championed the cause of Beauty in America.

To all three of this triumvirate can be applied what Daniel Gregory Mason wrote in regard to the late E. J. de Coppet: "He never thought, as do those who aspire to be patrons of art less for the sake of art than for that of patronage, that he could create what he was after by the simple process of signing checks."

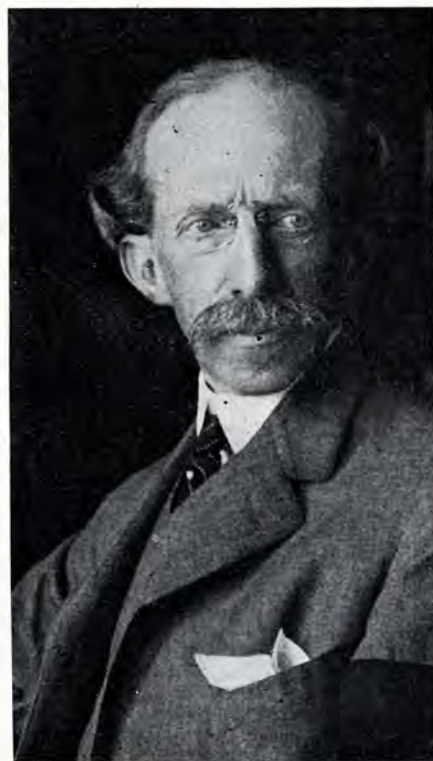
About all three can be said what Dora Melegari said concerning Isabella d'Este, that radiant figure of the Renaissance: "Elle n'aima pas seulement les arts avec passion, elle se fit la collaboratrice des artistes, les encouragea, les comprit."

It is universally known, the courage with which Major Henry Lee Higginson, a Boston banker, laid some thirty years

ago, all by himself, the foundation of an orchestra destined to play, to use his own words, "the best music in the best way"; the patience with which he followed the development of his imposing plan; the bravery with which he overcame difficulties which seemed to be insurmountable, the liberality and simplicity with which he bore the annual considerable deficits; and the discrimination with which, to lead his orchestra, he engaged the best conductors of his time, from George Henschel to Dr. Karl Muck, passing through Gericke, Nikisch, Paur, Fiedler. In 1918, after Dr. Muck's interment, and all the connected troubles, Major Higginson handed over the support of the orchestra to a committee of Boston citizens. It was this committee which engaged successively Henry Raubaud and Pierre Monteux, the present conductor.

It is also known what a wonderful result he was able to obtain, and how he succeeded in giving to his city an orchestra which from every point of view was perfect, an orchestra which, following Philip Hale's expression, "was more than a source of local pride," and the fame of which "spread throughout the land—and crossed the Atlantic."

Major Higginson's example did not remain isolated for long. Little by little new orchestras were founded, the old ones were considerably enlarged, adequate music halls were erected, famous conductors were invited from Europe, so that to-day, besides Boston, Philadelphia, Rochester, Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, Minneapolis, St. Louis, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, and every important town of the country, has its own permanent endowed orchestra, with the exception of Los Angeles—



E. J. de Coppet, Creator of the Flonzaley Quartet: "His Exalted Love for Music Endured Until His Last Breath"

which has two, and of New York—which maintains three principal ones!

The love and generosity (not to mention the legitimate pride) with which every community takes care of its own orchestra is a really remarkable thing. A thing which, again was recently demonstrated in Philadelphia where, under the slogan, "Save the Orchestra," a campaign was started in the hope of raising one million dollars, and was closed a few days later after having considerably exceeded the desired sum.

Another Higginson Achievement

That the interest in orchestral concerts in America is due, in large part, to Major Higginson's noble efforts is a statement which will easily be accepted. But his is also another glory. That of having, for long years, kept under his

protective wing the first American String Quartet of importance. I am, naturally, talking of the "Kneisels," of



Mrs. Frederic Shurtleff Coolidge, Lover and Patron Saint of Great Music: "Her Plan of the Berkshire Festivals Represents One of the Most Striking Events in the Musical Life of Our Time"

those noble missionaries who in the days of darkness and ignorance wandered patiently and courageously from place to place, spreading the gospel of Beethoven, and winning to the new creed legions of pagans (musically speaking) who, in their turn, became valiant sustainers of the faith.

And to continue to use the fascinating and picturesque language of the Scriptures, it may also be added that it was the Kneisel Quartet which "prepared the way and made straight the paths" of the Flonzaley Quartet.

This, the Flonzaley Quartet, was the supreme lifework of that noble figure of musician, philosopher and philanthropist, the late E. J. de Coppet.

Creator of the Flonzaleys

Born in New York as a son of a Swiss banker, a banker himself of unusual ability, educated partly in America, partly in Europe, musically gifted in an exceptional way, E. J. de Coppet dreamed for long years of a string quartet, the members of which, entirely free from any pecuniary care, were to dedicate their entire time and strength to the cultivation of their art so that they might succeed in playing together with the same finesse, perfection and freedom with which the greatest virtuosos play by themselves.

After years of experience, during which, thanks to his zeal and to Mrs. de Coppet's beautiful piano playing, his salon had become New York's most important musical center. Mr. de Coppet, still unsatisfied, decided to go to Europe in search of four artists who, musically, intellectually, and morally would respond to his ideals.

Having found them, or thought to have found them, he started his work and the amount of time, thought, substance and affection that for several years he dedicated to it is an example of artistic devotion which, indeed, cannot be overestimated.

It was with exemplary fortitude and bravery that he stood the inevitable obstacles and trials at the beginning. And when the success finally came he seemed to be neither surprised nor intoxicated, but to see it as the natural, inevitable result of his patient and arduous labor.

Wherever the Flonzaley Quartet has appeared during the last fourteen years, it has come out victorious.

But everybody should know that the credit for those victories belongs largely to the quartet's protector, friend and adviser. It was he who made it possible

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