

HOMAGE TO ARTHUR FOOTE

FREDERICK JACOBI

IN Arthur Foote, American music has lost its last Victorian. Though born in 1853, Foote was scarcely influenced by any music later than that of Mendelssohn. Of romanticism we find comparatively few traces; of impressionism and that which has followed, none.

In life, Foote survived our great romantic, MacDowell, and our impressionist, Loeffler. How it would have astonished the latter to think that in this day of ours both his music and that of Foote, who must have seemed to him an almost hopeless traditionalist, had slipped together into the realm of things past and that, indeed, the ratio of recession had been quite the contrary of that which might have been expected! For it is a question whether the impressionism of the one does not today seem more "dated" than the classicism of the other.

Foote cared little for "style" in the sense of "modishness." He did obviously care greatly for "style" in the sense of purity of line, clarity of structure and unity in mode of expression. He avoided everything which was out of his picture, everything which was "trompe-oel" or exaggerated. Because he was a man of culture, intelligence and taste, his music has those qualities. He was refined without being precious; he had wit and charm and his originality was expressed by the turn of a phrase, by the aggregate of his being, rather than by a striking or an arresting exterior. He was tender and his warmth showed itself through an admirable web of New England tradition: a tradition which was the base of his cult of the restrained in art. Overpowering passions were neither felt nor desired, it was an abstract, though friendly, beauty which he sought.

It will be interesting to see how long these qualities (for they are all present in his music) will continue to give pleasure to the

public. It has, in any event, been significant and elucidating to note the success which greeted Dr. Koussevitzky's revival with the Boston Symphony Orchestra this year of his *Suite in E-major* for strings. Here was no mere "tribute to a senescent colleague," no mere archaeological excavation. The public, at its many repetitions (both in the concert hall and over the radio), did not fail to show that they were delighted with the work. It was not Americanism in Music, not Modernism in Music, nor even Archaism in Music. It was just music and (had they stopped to analyze) music which reflected an honest and charming individual, one who knew his craft and who had the strength and ability to express himself in an understandable and rational way.

May the memory of Arthur Foote not die from the face of American music for many years!