

LETTERS FROM A FELLOW SPOHR ENTHUSIAST

by Philip Scowcroft

During the 1970s I received two letters from the distinguished violinist Horace Fellowes, then around a hundred years old and living in quiet retirement in Peebles. Prior to the first letter (21 November 1972) I had written to Mr. Fellowes at the suggestion of a mutual friend - the Arthur Hallam mentioned - telling him of the existence of our Society; the second letter (31 May 1974) was in reply to one of my own offering congratulations on his 100th birthday. I hope his references to Spohr may be of at least passing interest; the letters are reproduced below. Some details of his long career emerge from them. This career began when he was a youthful prodigy (he appeared in Doncaster on 2 March 1891 when he was billed as the Boy Paganini). Later on he led the Beecham Symphony Orchestra, the first of the four orchestras created by Sir Thomas. His memoirs (1958), mentioned in the correspondence, are warm-hearted as well as informative, a genuine pleasure to read. He died in 1975, in his 101st year.

Now for the letters, which I have edited slightly.

1.

Dear Mr. Scowcroft,

Many thanks for your letter of the 11th inst. Yes, I am deeply interested in all (Spohr's) music. It may interest you to know that I am indirectly a pupil of the great violinist and composer. The father of my professor in Cologne, Willy Hess, studied in Frankfurt with Spohr and it was with Hess that I went through most of his nine concertos; my special favourite was No. 8, well known as the "Dramatic". I shall never forget the

beautiful rendering of this work by Lady Halle in Buxton Spa in the year 1898. I was at that time leader of the Spa Orchestra under the great flautist Edward de Jong and in 1929 I returned there as Conductor and there I met Arthur Hallam.

It was pleasant news to know that a Spohr Society existed in this country and were I a younger man (now nearly 99) it would give me great joy to mingle with Spohr enthusiasts; I love his Nonet ... I hope (Arthur Hallam) has secured a copy of my Autobiography "Music in my Heart". It can be had at libraries. I will write to Mr. Powell in due course.

With best greetings,

Yours sincerely,

Horace Fellowes.

2.

Dear Mr. Scowcroft,

My apologies for delayed reply to your letter of April 29th. Many thanks for same, also for your warm birthday wishes. How glad I am to know you found my book friendly. My friend Arthur Hallam also sent me a programme of your Elgar Festival (in Doncaster, May 1974). I knew Sir Edward well and I am a devoted admirer of his works, having played many of his small pieces too. I have led the orchestra under his baton on several occasions. Re the Spohr Society I hope they will keep his music alive. I was taught several of his Concertos by my master Prof. Willy Hess in Cologne, whose father was a pupil of Spohr.

.... My one and only appearance in Doncaster as a soloist was in the year 1891 as a prodigy, mention of same in my book. In the meantime may I wish you good health and happiness.

Yours sincerely,

Horace Fellowes.

P.S. Among the telegrams on the 26th was one from James Loughran and the Halle Orchestra.