

AMEDEE DIEUDONNE



A TRIBUTE by MAX MOLLER

There are people, who know how to command enormous respect in life, not only through their special achievements in their trade or profession, but also through their really exemplary conduct. And if joy of work, then, remains unimpaired to a ripe old age, even in spite of serious, physical disablement, one can truly say: an exceptional man.

Without any doubt, Amédée Dieudonné was a man like that.

The fact that Mirecourt has kept its great renown as a centre of violin-making from the end of World War I until this day, has certainly for a very great deal been due to him.

As behooves a true citizen of Mirecourt, Dieudonné came from an old, violin-making family, his grandfather Benoit Dieudonné being a carver of violin-heads. He was born in 1890 and was a pupil of Gustave Bazin, who also gave people like Charles Enel their first training.

In many respects, Dieudonné was different from the violin-makers of his days, who had not always had the

education, which one would have expected from them. He was a good violinist and was interested, as well as versed in many kinds of manifestations of culture.

This explains, why he wanted to see more of the world. He sallied forth at an early age and went, among other places, to Brussels, to work with Darche.

The first World War cruelly affected his life. With his enormous devotion to duty and great patriotism, he was an excellent soldier. In spite of his fairly small build, he was extremely courageous and took part in many of the famous, big battles. He was wounded several times, but always ready to continue the fight, until he became the victim of a gas-attack, which was going to deprive him of the use of one of his lungs for the rest of his life. In addition to the Croix de Guerre and the Military Medal, he won nearly every military distinction, which France has to bestow.

Dieudonné's incredible mental strength enabled him to continue to

work until well past the age of 60, in spite of his actual, physical disablement. This was an achievement, which particularly those who have worked with him, can appreciate. To continue to work without the normal use of his lungs, as a chronic asthmatic, in a violin-maker's workshop with the dust of wood and with all the commercial worries and all that goes with that, is something which can be equalled by few.

Yet, Dieudonné stuck it for 35 years and he did much more. He was an exemplary father for his two daughters, who had an excellent education. Marguerite, the younger one, is now married and presented him with two grandsons; the elder daughter, Cecile, is now a secondary school-teacher. (What a pity, that he did not have a son to continue his work.)

Dieudonné has even done more than that. It can be said without exaggeration, that the products from his workshop were by far the best, ever produced in Mirecourt in all the years since the second World War until this day. A "Dieudonné" was a conception, all over the world, and will be, for many years to come. The number of very good instruments is really almost countless; not only violins, violas and celli, but also violas d'amore, gambas etc. that came from his workshop. They were not only good instruments, but Dieudonné, through his unflagging industry, succeeded in keeping the price so low as to bring them within reach of the masses. There is no country in the world, where the violin is played, where his instruments are not known!

Nearly everybody, who in the years after the first World War went to Mirecourt to learn the trade, went to Dieudonné. Not because he was such an easy teacher, but because he was a master of his trade and commanded respect. His pupils came from all over the world: from America (Rembert Wurlitzer and William Moennig), from Italy, a great many of course, from France (e.g. Bernard

Millant, Etienne Vatelot), from Belgium (Robelus) and from Holland (Max Möller). Anybody, who was admitted as a pupil to Dieudonné's workshop, was regarded as a skilled worker. He just had to see that he did the work quite as well as the others. Dieudonné was far from easy with them. Only, they were allowed to take longer over the work than the others, the older ones.

To see the work being done, as it was done in Dieudonné's workshop, was a privilege in itself. Technically, the work was so completely mastered as to appear the greatest virtuosity. Difficulties did not seem to exist. Everybody was happy, even in the blackest years of the crisis, for Dieudonné's violins always found buyers, whilst other violin-makers were left with large stocks.

Dieudonné himself was always the central figure round whom everything turned and who noticed every little movement of the hand of his assistants. He was, indeed, a great superior.

Anybody, who came to Mirecourt and who had something to do with violins, whether he was a violinist or a violin-maker, was always, as a matter of course, the guest of Dieudonné. Together with his wife, he used to take infinite pains to provide a feast, which as regards variety and refinement was entirely in keeping with the great French tradition, also in this field. It was good to stay and have a chat in his family circle, with a glass of "mirabelle", a home-made liqueur, made of plums.

With Dieudonné, a piece of Mirecourt has gone. We all, who have known him well, will cherish his memory and certainly not only when we handle again a beautiful Dieudonné.

It gives us some consolation, that the Légion d'Honneur, so coveted by the French, has come his way in the last years of his life. He fully deserved this distinction in so many respects!