

Volkart Brothers (1851-1926)

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HOME NEWS

As the electors of St. Gall consistently refuse to pass the finance bills necessary to place the budget on a satisfactory basis, the authorities have conceived the novel idea of arranging a public competition for suggestions as to how the revenue of the local treasury could be increased. No less than 220 different proposals were handed in, most of them ingenious devices for extracting more money from a long-suffering public. Here are some of them: Separation from the remainder of Switzerland, so as to raise a customs barrier; a State lottery; regular flag and flower days; a cantonal mint and postage stamp printing works; conceding female suffrage against payment of a fixed amount; a special tax on bachelors; creating monopolies for fishing, hunting, playing "Jass," etc.

Edouard Huguenin, the former general manager of the Anatolian railways, died in Constantinople at the age of 68. Born in Le Locle, he obtained his first practical experience at the local railway station; as a young man of 22 he emigrated to Asia Minor, where he found employment in the Turkish railway administration. In a comparatively short time he worked his way up to one of the highest commercial positions in Turkey, and thanks to a rare gift of circumspection and tact he was able to maintain that position against all intrigues for nearly twenty years, during which time he was general manager of the Anatolian and Bagdad railways. He was a great friend of the late Sultan, who bestowed upon him the highest decorations ever granted to a foreigner; he was also a commander of the French *Légion d'honneur*.

The Catholic priest of Eiken (Aargau), the Rev. Schmetzler, was attacked and shot at after the evening service by a religious fanatic, Albert Fricker, who had a grudge against the cleric. The transgressor was secured by one of the witnesses and handed over to the local police, who only with difficulty prevented lynching by the infuriated populace. The curate lies in a critical condition in the cantonal hospital, suffering from three revolver wounds.

During a ski excursion on the Piz Sol, Mr. Alfred Brupbacher, a bank manager from Zurich, was overtaken by a snowstorm and separated from his companions; he had evidently met with an accident, as his frozen body was discovered next day.

When crossing the frozen lake of Steinegger last Sunday, a school-teacher, Mr. Alf. Hartmann, from Glarisegg, near Steckborn (Thurgau), broke through the ice and disappeared; a pupil of his, who was accompanying him on the excursion, was able to save himself.

Charged with embezzlement during the time of his employment with the death and burial registry in Geneva, Charles Dubois has committed suicide by drowning himself in the Rhone; in his overcoat pocket, which he hung across the bridge railings, a letter was found admitting misappropriations of about Frs. 6,000.

UN MOT DE CHEZ NOUS.

Hier dans le train de Berne à Lausanne, je me suis trouvé en compagnie de deux bons paysans vaudois qui semblaient avoir réglé des affaires d'or à Berne. Après avoir échangés des banalités, l'un d'eux saisissant subitement au fond de sa poche une "feuille" quelconque de la campagne vaudoise, s'écria soudain avec une intonation qui ne laissait aucun doute sur sa profonde indignation: "Ces sacrés gens de Moscou, quand est ce qu'ils auront bientôt fini de nous embêter avec leurs vilaines prétentions." Et je vous laisse deviner les savoureux accents avec lequel ces paroles furent prononcées. Ce fut alors un chœur de protestations dans le wagon. Je n'oserais pas vous rapporter ici tous les propos échangés sur le compte des maîtres actuels du Kremlin. Mon second voisin ne s'était pas mêlé à la conversation. Il avait observé le mutisme le plus complet. Lorsque ce juste concert de récriminations se fut un peu calmé, lorsque l'attitude du Conseil Fédéral eut été analysée sous toutes ses formes, lorsqu'on eut revêtu les procès Conradi dans ses moindres détails, il eut ces simples paroles: "Cette affaire a un côté de bon. Elle a groupé dans un même sentiment, dans un même élan la quasi-unanimité du peuple suisse et de nos jours ces grandes occasions où nous vibrons d'un commun accord sont plutôt rares. Celle-ci nous a donc permis de nous prouver à nous-mêmes que nous sommes bien encore le peuple un et uni de nos pères."

Personne ne répondit mot à ces paroles, mais elles avaient touché juste et j'ai pu constater leur exactitude plus d'une fois cette dernière semaine. Prenons par exemple la manifestation de Genève à la Salle de la Réformation. Le Comité de la Ligue Civique avait convié la population à une protestation publique contre les agissements du Gouvernement des Soviets envers le Conseil Fédéral Suisse. On vit à cette réunion des gens de toutes les classes, de toutes les conditions, de tous les partis politiques et même de toutes les nationalités (car je dois dire qu'il est nombre d'étrangers qui approuvent entièrement notre point de vue). Toute cette foule vibra d'un commun accord, d'un même sentiment. Il n'y avait plus de rançunes personnelles, de discussions particulières, il y avait—comme l'avait si bien dit bon voisin de compartiment—il y avait "unanimité"! Aussi lorsqu'un perturbateur essaya de troubler la péroraison d'un des discours, les mains qui l'empoignèrent étaient des mains anonymes, les mains de la foule elle-même et si un Monsieur quelconque des parterres avait été le voisin de l'interrupteur, il aurait agi tout comme le véritable voisin a agi. Il n'y avait plus à ce "meeting" qu'une seule âme, qu'une seule pensée; et ce sentiment est beau parcequ'il honore notre pays et parcequ'il prouve d'une façon indiscutable que nous sommes bien restés ce que nos pères étaient. Il est bon à notre époque où l'indifférence est suprêmement à la mode, où le dédain complet des réalités cotidiennes est si bien porté par nombre d'individus, d'affirmer publiquement et aux yeux du monde (peut-être bien un peu étonné) que nous entendons exprimer notre propre avis et régir nos propres affaires sans subir l'influence de qui que ce soit, et en accordant à l'événement toute l'importance auquel il a droit.

A cette occasion il faut noter la splendide unanimité de la presse suisse (pour autant qu'elle n'est pas déjà aux ordres de Moscou) qui a soutenu et l'opinion publique et le Conseil Fédéral durant les pénibles et très ingrates négociations qu'il a dû faire. La presse s'est montrée cette fois ce qu'elle devrait être réellement: le reflet de l'opinion populaire qui tient compte de tous les points de vue, de tous les exposés. Ici il y avait une opinion et l'ensemble de nos journaux a su l'exprimer comme il convenait. Donc une fois de plus "à toute chose malheur fut bon" et je suis nombre de bon Suisses qui se sont sentis vivifier dans leur patriotisme, dans leur amour de la Mère Patrie, et surtout dans la confiance qu'ils doivent avoir envers leurs propres compatriotes, par le même sentiment de solidarité né d'un même sujet, que ce soit aux bords du Rhin de Coire à Bâle, ou aux bords du Rhône de Brigue à Genève.

Il est encore une conséquence indirecte de cette affaire qu'il nous faut relever. On se plaint dans tous les pays d'Europe de l'indifférence politique de la plus grande partie des populations. En Suisse, nous avons dans certains cantons des résultats de votations complètement faussés par les abstentions. D'une façon générale nous souffrons un peu partout de ce désintéressement notoire envers la "chose publique." Cette affaire aura eu cela de bon. Elle aura fait comprendre à bien des gens que leur intervention est nécessaire, obligatoire même, s'ils ne veulent pas que demain les guides de l'Etat ne soient entre les mains d'énergumènes qui préparent l'arrivée des gens de Moscou. Cette affaire a donc permis de secouer la masse amorphe, elle a fait réfléchir, elle a mis les êtres en mouvement et "quelque chose" est maintenant, qui n'était pas auparavant.

Convenons sans malice, que les demandes impossibles des Soviets nous ont peut-être rendu indirectement un remarquable service.

"UN SUISSE QUELCONQUE."

RICORDO!

...era l'ultimo giorno di carnevale; già nelle prime ore del mattino, di un mattino chiaro e affascinato dai raggi di un bel sole nascente, un insolito movimento e lavoro si constatava nelle strade e nelle piazze della mia cittadina; la gente sortì presto di casa; si riversò nelle vie, con un'aria insolita di festa, di gioia nel cuore, cogli occhi lucenti d'aspettativa; e l'aria frizzante e sana metteva un bel colore sulle gote.

Dal balcone di casa potevo abbracciare con un'occhiata tutto quel rimescolio di gente che si addensava nella piazza sottostante.

Il palchettone era eretto; i cuochi si affacciavano intorno alle immense pignatte di rame... il manzo bolliva da una parte onde procurare il buon brodo per fare il "risotto" nell'altro pentolone lì vicino... ed era un accorrere, un'allungare di colli, un affanarsi per arrivare in tempo ed ottenere una buona porzione!

I poveri della città e dei villaggi circovincini

avrebbero gioito di un buon pranzo almeno per quel giorno... e si godeva un mondo nel vedere quei poveretti, beneficiati ogni anno, al martedì grasso, dalla società "Kabadan" gustare il buon, tradizionale risotto; tanti venivano già scortati dal piatto per l'occasione, altri ricevevano la porzione in qualunque improvvisato recipiente; ho persino visto un piccolo spazzacamino riceverlo nel suo rozzo cappello...

Poi verso le due del pomeriggio cominciò la sfilata degli stupendi carri allegorici... la battaglia dei coriandoli, delle arancie e dei gettoni si fece animata tra le due società rivali del "Sud" e del "Nord"! Era una festa brillante per noi; le finestre erano affollate, nelle strade v'era una fiumana di gente; per un giorno almeno l'allegria regnava suprema, la gioia era in ogni cuore....

Alla sera, l'apoteosi del giorno febbrile, era il gran veglione nel teatro sociale; l'ambiente elegante ed illuminato a gala, coi palchetti drappaggiati in rosso e oro, colla platea e palcoscenico sgombrati dalle poltrone e sedie, aspettava la folla festante; e si ballò sino nelle ore piccine del mattino di Quaresima!

Nell'ampia sala fervevano le danze; era l'ultimo "galoppo"... chi si ricorda del "galoppo" ora?...

Di fuori, nella piazzetta, la neve era alta quanto si sorti dal teatro... la neve, caduta adagio, adagio, soffice e bianca, venne a spegnere l'entusiasmo, a rammentarci che l'ultimo giorno di carnevale era passato, ad invitarci a riprendere il corso della vita normale, a rientrare in noi stessi e concentrarci nel gran pensiero di Dio!

...era il giorno delle "Ceneri."

T. LUNGI-REZZONICO.

VOLKART BROTHERS (1851—1926).

A PROUD FLAG.

By "KYBURG."

Born in 1816 at Niederglatt-Zurich, where his ancestors had exercised the calling of millers and builders for many generations, Salomon Volkart, his studies at the "Landknabeninstitut" at Zurich and the "Hueni-Institution" at Horgen ended, his subsequent apprenticeship with the firm of Kaspar Schulthess' Erben at Zurich absolved, wandered abroad, his wander-budget fortified by 50 guilders (some £5 present-day money), given him by his father, and entered the important firm of Andrea Croce, olive-oil merchants at Genoa. There, among Genoa's foreign colony of the time, Volkart soon won a reputation as one of the best horsemen, swimmers and singers, and was soon known as "il grande Svizzero." A few years were spent in India, where his brother, Joh. George, was working, and then he entered the service of the Winterthur firm of Gebrüder Rieter & Greuter, where he also met his future wife, marrying in 1848.

During this time Volkart carried out several missions, one of which merits recording. It was a question of entering Venice, getting through the close lines of the Austrian army then besieging that town. Salomon Volkart succeeded and collected an important debt due to his house. The paper money, which soon afterwards became worthless, he converted straightaway into Venetian bead ware, a commodity of comparatively stable value, and, his mission achieved, he left Venice, not without encountering great difficulties in getting through the cordon of Austrian troops—difficulties accompanied by serious risks, inasmuch as he carried, sewn in the lining of his coat, letters from Manin, President of the hard-pressed Venetian Republic, to whose adherents at Padua Volkart was successful in handing them.

During his short stay in India, the idea of founding a business of his own had already occupied his thoughts, and as soon as he judged the moment opportune, he carried those thoughts into effect, and, on the 1st February, 1851, together with his younger brother Joh. George Volkart, he started the firm of Volkart Brothers at Winterthur and Bombay.

The ruling idea in starting this venture was to establish direct commercial relations between India and the Continent of Europe, an idea which had only become practicable in 1849 through the repeal of the Act of Navigation, a British Act prohibiting transport by sea from British Possessions by any other than British ships, and further enacting that the first European port entered by such vessels should be British.

The effect of this Cromwellian edict was to give the Port of London a virtual monopoly of trade in the products of India, and so the start of Salomon Volkart's new venture, soon after the repeal of this Act, brought about a real economic revolution, being practically the first to establish direct trade relations between India and the Con-

tin of Europe. It was Volkart Brothers who loaded the first sailing vessels and steamers in India for direct shipment to the chief ports of Europe, and through them were consigned the first shipments of European manufactures to Bombay and other European ports.

A small room on the second floor of the house "Zum Wasserfels" in the Oberthorhase in Winterthur contained the first office of the firm, and there Salomon Volkart, with his wife as the only assistant at first, coped with the whole work of the business. The firm still possesses the first press copy book of that time, in which may be seen many letters written by Salomon Volkart and others by his wife. Neither telegraph, telephone, nor typewriters were then in existence, railways were still in their infancy, and the route to India was then by way of Cape of Good Hope; the Suez Canal had not yet come into being.

Such was the beginning of a firm which, by sheer force of work, personality, fair dealing and circumspection and, above all, I think, by its policy of training its young men most carefully for its particular and specialised service and fostering in them a splendid and not often met with *esprit de corps* which turns them into disciplined soldiers rallying round the proud flag of Volkart Brothers, was destined to achieve a leading position in the international trade from and to the Indies, and to maintain that position.

As a great ship, sailing upon the high seas, records all happenings in its log-book, so has this great House of Commerce kept its records of the 75-year-long journey through the manifold seas of commerce, and, believe me, a glance through the log-book of Volkart Brothers is about as interesting and fascinating an adventure as reading a great epic.

Perhaps my readers will allow me to give them a few choice morsels out of that "log," so that they, too, may realise, better perhaps than they did before, what a wonderful, adventurous story Commerce can unfold.

1852—Volkart Brothers are admitted to membership of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce.

1857—Year of outbreak of Indian Mutiny sees the opening of a branch at Colombo for the export of cocoanut oil, coffee, cinnamon, Tinnevely cotton and pearls.

1863—May 29th Joh. George Volkart dies at Bombay. His widow, unaccompanied, makes the return journey of nearly six months by sailing ship round the Cape to Marseilles, and thence by diligence to Switzerland.

1865—First opening of telegraphic communications between Europe and Bombay, revolutionising the system of giving quotations. The first cable to Bombay brought the news of the ending of the American Civil War!

1869—Suez Canal opening, greatly reducing time of transport.

1870—The "log" mentions that the Franco-German war had only unimportant effect on the firm, trade with the belligerent countries not being interrupted.

1873—Amalgamation of three large Indian press companies under the style of "Volkart's United Press Co., Ltd.," Bombay, having at its disposal five cotton presses.

1883—February 1st witnesses the installation of the first public telephone at Winterthur.

1886—Arrival of the ss. "Westergate" at Ghent, carrying a cargo of 9,416 bales of cotton from the firm. A special official testimonial, accorded to the firm by the Town of Ghent, contains the following sentences regarding this event: "Cet événement marque une date dans l'histoire du Port de Gand. Il inaugure ses relations directes avec les Indes."

1893—Salomon Volkart dies, 78 years old.

1894—July 1st. The passing of a new Swiss law, prescribing precision in the style of business houses, compels the firm, in order to avoid altering its own name, to transfer nominally its headquarters to London, where the London Agency is registered as head office under the style of "Volkart Brothers, London," but the control and management of the firm remain, as heretofore, in Winterthur.

1900—For the first time in the firm's history, use is made of a typewriter, a Hammond, at the Winterthur office.

1908—The first motor-car owned by the firm comes into use at Karachi. To-day the firm owns 22 cars, 4 motor-cycles and 1 lorry.

1914—Outbreak of the Great War. The "log" states: "For upwards of a fortnight, owing to censorship, all postal and cable communications between the head office at Winterthur and the branches are interrupted. A considerable portion of the staff is mobilised. All bank credits are suspended; even deposits cannot be withdrawn, while money is withheld from circulation. Although being a neutral firm, with head office in a neutral country, the fact of our establishment on British territory brings us under the provisions of the Royal Proclamation forbidding all relations with the Central Powers. The vast outlet afforded by these countries remains closed for several years."

1915—Sees for the first time the engagement of a lady on the staff of the firm!

1916—Inauguration by the firm of their "Provi-

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dent Fund" to make old-age provision for the non-European employees in India, the administration of this being confided to the Bombay house.

1918—The "Volkart Brothers Employees' Pension Fund" for the firm's European workers is started with a donation of 1 million Swiss francs by the firm. (Since then the firm or some of the partners have given another 1,750,000 Swiss francs for that fund.)

1919—The firm promotes a Limited Company in Japan in which prominent Japanese business men also participate.

1920—"Volkart Brothers' Agency, G.m.b.H." is founded at Bremen. A branch is opened at New York for business in cotton chiefly.

1921—In consequence of serious trouble on the Malabar Coast, the result of conflicts between Moplahs (Mohammedans) and Hindus, official orders were given for the wives and children of our employees at Tellicherry to take shelter in Mangalore for a fortnight.

1922—The firm shares in promoting the "Sicmat Società Italiana Commercio Materie Tessili" at Trieste, its object being dealings in cotton, chiefly in Italy, Poland, and countries formerly under the Austrian crown.

1923—Inauguration of the first air mail between England and Switzerland.

1924—The firm floats the "Fohka Swiss-Chinese Trading Co., Ltd." at Shanghai, three fifths of the capital being subscribed by the partners, and two-fifths by prominent Chinese merchants.

1926—February 1st. The firm celebrates the seventy-fifth anniversary of its foundation!

Thus the log-book. (Commemorative booklet by Geo. Reinhart, Winterthur. 1/2/26.) I have left out the almost innumerable entries recording opening of new branches, acquisitions of cotton presses, ginning plants, etc. I have left out records of fires which devastated factories, floods which made communications difficult, often impracticable.

The organisation of this huge business has developed along quite natural lines. The firm has, since its creation, preserved the legal status of a private company, the liabilities of its partners being unlimited, and this status is to be retained, the partners believing that "in a concern such as theirs the supreme command should be in the hands of those by whom the capital is provided."

As a Winterthur citizen, "Kyburg," of course, feels a deep pride in relating these wonderful facts, these stories of steady achievement, this short narrative of how, from humble beginnings, this firm of Winterthur—the very last place, geographically viewed, one should think—has risen to the leading position in international trade to and from the Indies.

But there is another consideration which moves me. There is the fact that, largely owing to Volkart Brothers, the Swiss name sounds well among the great trading nations of the earth. And by Volkart Brothers I do not mean the three present-day partners only—and I know they would be the very first to wish me to give honour also and especially to their fellow-workers. Those young men, mostly from Winterthur and neighbourhood, who, after their training at the home office and perhaps London and some other near-at-hand branch, go out to the East, there to represent their firm—those fellows, braving as they did when prophylaxis was in its infancy, fevers and other dangers—those Swiss "Ueber-Seer," they are the men to whom we Swiss have a lot to be grateful for. They help to uphold the Swiss name, and they willingly suffer discomforts, dangers and privations—I know of one, a friend of mine, of whom I have not heard directly for many years, who is located somewhere umpteen hundred miles up some river in Siam, where the mail reaches him every three months or so, if he is lucky, and where he supervises the collection of produce, its transport down river to the coast, and from where he emerges every few years for a holiday in Europe, just like a whale coming up now and then for a breather!—they all do this, so that the firm may flourish, that they may testify to having learnt to subordinate private considerations for the benefit of the house, soldiers of which they are all!

The visitor to Winterthur cannot fail to feel the great influence of this House of Commerce. Its partners, from the early times, have occupied quite an especial position in the affection of Winterthurers. Perhaps because ostentation is unknown to them, perhaps because they have always been

QUOTATIONS from the SWISS STOCK EXCHANGES

BONDS.	Feb. 1		Feb. 9	
	Frs.	%	Frs.	%
Confederation 3% 1903 ...	80.82	81.50		
5% 1917, VIII Mob. Ln ...	101.75	101.82		
Federal Railways 3½% A—K ...	83.60	83.65		
" " 1924 IV Elect. Ln ...	102.37	102.37		

SHARES.	Nom.	Feb. 1		Feb. 9	
		Frs.	%	Frs.	%
Swiss Bank Corporation ...	500	727	728		
Crédit Suisse ...	500	790	795		
Union de Banques Suisses ...	500	622	624		
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	1000	1940	1949		
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	1000	3400	3400		
Soc. Ind. pour la Schappe ...	1000	3385	3340		
S. A. Brown Boveri ...	350	400	399		
C. F. Bally ...	1000	1304	1287		
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	200	306	317		
Entreprises Sulzer S.A. ...	1000	982	975		
Comp. de Navig'n sur le Lac Léman	500	550	550		
Linoleum A.G. Giubiasco ...	100	85	85		
Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon ...	500	690	690		

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liberal supporters of the arts, of scientific research, they have, for instance, made possible the erection of the wonderful new Museum. Then, again, Winterthur possesses a Club House such as the Swiss Colony in London will be dreaming of possessing in another century or so—a Club House which fills English visitors with wonder, as I can testify. This, too, has only become possible owing to quiet, unostentatious munificence on the part of the partners of Volkart Brothers. And withal, the present partners, like their predecessors, I presume, are ordinary mortals, very likeable fellows, always ready to help, always conscious of the obligations the position in which Providence put them imposes upon them. And that is far more than can be said of others similarly placed. And that is why Winterthur is proud of this House of Commerce and has a deep, silent, but true affection for its heads.

Perhaps I could not do better than close this article with a quotation from a speech delivered by the late Dr. Theodore Reinhart (partner from 1879—1919) on January 2nd, 1919, two weeks before his death, at a banquet at which all the co-workers of the Winterthur house were present:

"Fellow-workers of the rising generation, who serve under the banner of Volkart Brothers and are looking forward to making your career with the firm, we partners appeal to you never to lose sight of this, whether in the office, in the go-down, or in private life, that you belong to a *corps d'élite* in the business world, and that many eyes are directed on it in every country with which we work—above all, when its members are travelling on business or are on holiday. It ought, therefore, to be a point of honour with each one of you, especially when serving the firm in distant parts out of sight of your chief or your superiors, to have always a clear conscience yourself and to be considered strictly honourable by others."

SWISS INSTITUTE ORCHESTRA.

Last Sunday's Concert at St. Marylebone Hall.
(Communicated.)

The echoes of the success which attended last Sunday's Concert will have gone well beyond the usual boundaries by the time the present lines appear in the *S.O.*, and to report here what that Concert was would be a pleasure were it not for the difficulty the writer experiences of playing his part as well as soloists and orchestra did on that occasion. Everybody appeared to have struck so well the road to success that one may be tempted to start and end quickly with a long word of praise.

First of all it was the very welcome return of that eminent baritone, Mr. Norman Blake, who has established a reputation as a singer which, one may say, few other amateurs can ever hope to attain. Mr. Blake's powerful and extremely beautiful voice is used with ease and art. His rendering of Adam's "Nirvana" and Day's "Arise, O Sun" highly delighted the audience, and he had to satisfy the insistent demands for encores by singing Allitsen's "Youth" and Eric Coates' "Our Little House," two equally pleasing songs.

In Miss Vera Gough (Gold Medallist I.L.A.M., Elocution) we had a very charming newcomer to the Swiss Institute Concerts, and it was not long before the audience realised that she belongs to a superior class of elocutionists. Her vivacious rendering of the dialogue between Sir Peter and Lady Teazle from Sheridan's "School for Scandal" (Act 2, Scene 1) revealed to us her dramatic talent and perfect control of intonation. Further recitations included Jerome's "On looking before one leaps," "He tried to tell his wife," several encores having to be conceded to an enthusiastic audience.

A very unassuming yet quite convincing performance was that of Mr. Giovanni Sandri, who played two violin soli, namely, Wienawski's "Légende" and F. Schubert's "Serenade." Mr. Sandri, who was accompanied by Mr. Dick, is a very skilful violinist, and his valuable contribution to the programme was greatly appreciated by the audience, which applauded this young artist very sympathetically.

Further good practice has given the Orchestra more steadiness; the playing was more polished, and there was a better ensemble altogether. Special credit is due to Mr. Ad. Steiner, who was called upon almost in the last minute to deputise for Mr. Chapuis, who was unable to be present. Kéler Béla's "Ouverture Romantique," Selection from Gounod's "Faust," Suppé's "Pique Dame" Overture, "Roses du Midi," by Joh. Strauss, were all surprisingly well performed. Whatever looseness there was on previous occasions had disappeared, and Mr. Dick, the conductor, is well on the way

to develop amongst his followers the complete *esprit de corps* so much needed in an orchestra. If our musicians continue in their efforts and earnestness, as witnessed lately, they will soon have set up the necessary organism capable of tackling more difficult problems. The day will have come then when they will be in a position to make themselves the interpreters of some of our own composers, and so add to the laurels they have already earned. The news of the success obtained last week by Gustave Doret at Strasbourg, where he conducted his *Poème symphonique* "Suite Tessinoise," has just reached these shores. Here, surely, is an interesting piece of work for Mr. Dick, when he feels his orchestra possesses the necessary strength and variety of instruments, to convene the Swiss Colony to a "Soirée classique suisse." The will is there probably, and there is no reason for not making it a paying proposition when the time comes for us London Swiss to go and hear our Native Composers. In the meantime let us thank Mr. Dick, the Orchestra, Miss Gough, and Messrs. Blake and Sandri for the very enjoyable evening they gave us on Sunday. The concert started at practically the advertised time and ended soon after half-past eight, so that everybody was able to reach his home at a very comfortable hour.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

Once again the members and friends of the S.M.S. were able to enjoy themselves thoroughly at the Annual Banquet and Ball, which took place on Saturday last at the Midland Grand Hotel, St. Pancras.

Monsieur Paravicini, accompanied by Madame Paravicini, favoured the gathering with their presence, the Swiss Minister taking the Chair.

It would be too tantalising to those who were unfortunately unable to attend if any detailed reference were made here to the delights of the menu, because, after all, there is only a limited quantity of "Mousse de foie gras Paravicini!"

The Swiss Minister proposed the toasts to "His Majesty the King" and "Switzerland," which were followed by the National Anthem. The President Mr. A. C. Stahelin, then rose to deliver the toast to "The Swiss Mercantile Society" and afterwards addressed the assembly, saying:—

I feel like David in the presence of Goliath, but I am not going to throw stones.

Again I have the privilege of welcoming you to our Annual Banquet, and I hope that you will enjoy this evening so much that you will come again next year and ever after.

We are proud to have with us to-night our esteemed Minister, Monsieur Paravicini, in the Chair, and Madame Paravicini. (Hear, hear.) As you know, Madame Paravicini has not been able to attend any functions for some time owing to ill-health. We are the more proud and pleased that her first engagement of this kind is her attendance at our banquet. Madame, the Swiss Colony as a whole will be happy to know you restored to good health. (Cheers.) Our Minister is a busy man, but—and that is why we like him so much—when he promises to take the Chair, he does take it. (Cheers.) I often wonder what sort of a constitution a Swiss Minister must have. He must shoot straight when he opens a rifle range, he must take a general interest in sports—our Swiss Sports—and he must eat a good many Swiss dinners which, for all we know, he would rather do without. But what puzzles me most of all is how he manages to keep his "slim line." (More lghtr.)

We have also with us to-night one of our Trustees, the men to whom we are very much indebted for giving us the benefit of their wide experience and their counsel, to prevent us from making mistakes. (Hear, hear.) These gentlemen are our Lords of the Treasury; their salary is nil, and they bear their own expenses. (Laughter.) I hope that there will be many more such willing gentlemen when we have to fill a vacancy.

Then we have also here a good many of our Contributing Members and Guarantors—the taxpayers. It is owing to their unflinching and generous support that we can carry out our aims. (Cheers.) To them, and to the contributing firms, I wish to express our heartfelt thanks.

We are on terms of good friendship with all the Swiss Societies in London, and are glad to have their representatives as our guests to-night, hoping that these pleasant relations will continue.

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am going to tell you in a few words what we have done in the past year, but I had better leave out what we have not done. As you know, our activities are chiefly directed into two channels. First of all, there is our Employment Department, under the management of Mr. Pfandler. (Cheers.) On account of the general depression and the restrictions, this department "feels the draught," if I may use this expression. But Mr. Pfandler—"Jack" to his intimates, and just plain Pfandler to everybody else—(laughter)—has a stout heart—(renewed laughter)—and puts up a great fight. (Cheers.) His name has a good sound all the way from here to Switzerland and back again, and he is considered everybody's friend. (Cheers.) We had an instance of this not so

very long ago. One of our Day School pupils wanted to invest in a motor-cycle. He was asked whether he could offer any guarantee, or a guarantor. His reply was: "Why, yes, Pfandler of the Swiss Mercantile." (Laughter.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, you know that it is practically impossible for any Swiss to come over here to take up employment, and, consequently, that applications from Swiss people are decreasing continually. It speaks highly for Mr. Pfandler's endeavours when I tell you that, in spite of all these obstacles, he has managed to place about 180 Swiss during the year 1925. (Cheers.) But a still better testimonial to our Employment Department and to Mr. Pfandler is the fact that he has applications from Britishers—(Hear, hear)—and Mr. Pfandler has managed to place about 300 of them last year. (Cheers.) We all hope, for the sake of the Employment Department and Mr. Pfandler, that the much-advertised turning of the trade tide will come this year. In the meantime, he does what we all do: he invests a penny every morning in Fleet Street optimism.

In our Education Department a somewhat strange fact is that our Evening Classes have increased during last year by five classes to 50, as compared with 45 classes in 1924. The number of students has also increased from 926 to 331. If you take into consideration that the students in these classes are all individuals who are working all day to earn their living, then it makes one feel proud to be Swiss, for this is a very striking testimonial to the industry of our people. (Cheers.) As I told you just now, the immigration restrictions make it practically impossible for anyone to come over and take up employment in order to learn the language. This may not strike us as hard just now, but if one remembers that our country is dependent upon export trade, I sometimes wonder what will happen 25 years hence, when the present linguistic staffs are dropping out, and when there may not be anybody qualified to replace them. To remedy this as much as possible, we have created a Day School with three-months' or six-months' tuition, where the students may learn as much English as they can—or will. This Day School of ours is undoubtedly the "bright spot"—(hear, hear)—and I may as well add there are some "bright sparks" too. (Laughter.) The attendance during the past year has never been less than 100 a day, and as high as 145. They were packed like sardines, and our next job will be to find bigger premises.

Apart from these doings, we have held our usual meetings—nice and quiet affairs. Those who were there know all about it, and the others I would encourage to attend. I am sorry to say that we have had a nett loss of 110 members during last year, and I am afraid that this is partly my own fault for having taken certain energetic measures.

On the social side we have had our Cinderella Dances. They are very nice gatherings and an unqualified success—from the point of view of entertainment anyway. If any of you have not yet attended such a dance, your chance will come on the first Saturday in March, when we shall hold our last dance of the season.

This is all I have to tell you of what we have done in 1925.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am very sorry I have forgotten to mention a very good friend of ours who is here to-night: Dr. Rezzonico. He represents our brothers-in-arms at the Legation—the Commercial Section. Another good friend of ours, Mr. Martin, is not here to-night. He is in Switzerland and, I believe, is indulging in winter sports. I suppose that, when he read "Kyburg's" articles in *The Swiss Observer*, followed up by Tom Webster's cartoon in the *Daily Mail*, he simply could not "stick it" any longer—and had to go. (Laughter.)

There is further missing to-night a very well-known face, our honorary member Mr. DeBrunner—(cheers)—who is also one of our Trustees and one of the founders of our Day School. Mr. DeBrunner is unavoidably prevented from being here. I believe he is on the Continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen, before I sit down I would like to make an appeal to you. Do not look so anxious—I am not going to touch your pockets. (Laughter.) I request you to use your influence wherever and whenever you can, in whatever sphere you are, to encourage our young people to become members of the S.M.S. and, what is more, to remain members! If you are asked, as it so often happens to me, "What do I get out of the S.M.S.?" do not attempt to answer this question. Retaliate by asking another question, "What did you get out of the S.M.S. when you were apprenticed?" (Hear, hear.) Most of us, when we were a good few years younger, have had excellent lessons at the S.M.S. schools at very little cost. In the modern strife of business life, in the hurry and rush and tear, there is not time to teach apprentices the theoretical side of business. This is what the S.M.S. does—I am not speaking of the London section only, but of the S.M.S. in general—and we are glad to do it. But to do so we must have

CITY SWISS CLUB.

CINDERELLA DANCE

at PAGANI'S RESTAURANT, on
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20th, at 6.30.

Tickets at 10/6 (incl. Supper), may be obtained from
Members of the Committee.