

Swiss Mercantile School

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SWISS MERCANTILE SCHOOL. INTRODUCTION OF NEW HEADMASTER

On Saturday last at 10 a.m. an impressive, though unpretentious, ceremony was held at Swiss House for the formal introduction of the new headmaster of the Swiss Mercantile School, Mr. Levy, as successor to Mr. Masterman, who has taken up another teaching position in Germany. In the presence of the students at the School, the officials of the S.M.S. and a few invited friends, the president, Mr. M. Paschoud, made the first speech, welcoming the new headmaster and inviting the students to help him with their cordial goodwill to make a success of his appointment. Our Minister, Mr. Paravicini, who was accompanied by Dr. Rezzonico of the Legation, both of whom have always taken a specially deep interest in the School, followed with a few well-chosen words of friendly encouragement to Mr. Levy and the School Authorities, who have had a rather anxious time finding a suitable successor to Mr. Masterman and deciding on some desirable alterations in the scholastic programme and rules. Mr. Levy, visibly heartened by the kindly reception and the faith and hopes placed in him, replied in a very appreciative spirit, affirming that he was proud of his new dignity at such an important Swiss school. Every speech was liberally applauded and the new headmaster was greeted with three roaring cheers of the students.

After the ceremony an informal reception was given to the friends and guests of the school who were present. Mr. Boos, the secretary of the House Committee, had seen to it that the refreshments provided were in keeping with the pleasant occasion, where Mr. Levy was heartily toasted to an excellent drop of Neuchâtel. Before leaving I was shown over the house by Mr. Boos to see the several rooms which have just been newly converted and decorated as classrooms, common-rooms and cloak rooms, having previously been inhabited by the headmaster and his family. I was pleased to observe that the faithful caretaker, Mr. Bosshard, has now been given a most delightful suite of rooms on the top floor. The school has now six class-rooms and the accommodation, for the ever increasing number of students, but especially for the ladies, has been very much improved.

Following we reproduce the most telling passages of the speeches delivered at the ceremony:

The president of the S.M.S., Mr. Paschoud, said:

Monsieur le Ministre, Ladies and Gentlemen,

When the Education Committee was faced with the difficult task of appointing a new headmaster, they immediately thought of an old friend of our Society, who for years past had been working assiduously, chiefly for members of the Society, teaching them English in the evening classes. This friend is Mr. A. Levy, who, when I approached him, consented to give up his official career with the London County Council, in order to accept the headmastership of our school. Mr. Levy, whom I have now very much pleasure in introducing to you all, especially to the students who will be under his charge, will be bringing into this institution the fruits of a long experience of teaching. It is quite wonderful to see the almost monotonous regularity with which the evening students whom he has coached, secure year after year the highest awards given in the examination in English for foreigners organized by the National Union of Teachers. This examination is a really difficult one, and to find Mr. Levy's pupils successful against the hundreds who sit for it is the best possible proof of his capacity as a teacher. If he succeeds so well with the evening students, tired after a whole day's hard work in business, what may we not expect when he teaches day students!

Mr. Levy is English, but his close association for years with Swiss pupils, and also the fact that Mrs. Levy is French, have no doubt by now knocked off all the corners which might have been too insular for our liking, and this institution will have a headmaster likely to understand his students, and to be understood by them.

Monsieur le Ministre,

I would ask you, to kindly accept on this occasion the renewed thanks of the Swiss Mercantile Society and its members for all you have done for them in the past, and in thanking you, I wish to thank also the Federal authorities, who as well follow keenly and closely our progress. The work the Swiss Mercantile Society does in London is the best proof that the Swiss abroad are still true Swiss and love their Country, and may our work be useful and result in establishing this school on a firm basis so as to become a really National institution.

Dear Masters of this school: In the few weeks since you first met Mr. Levy, you have been able to form an opinion of him as a man, and I am confident that you will help him faithfully and willingly in the work of this school. If there is perhaps more work, I think that there will be also more collaboration producing a greater satisfaction, and if there is satisfaction, work is lighter.

Dear students: From now onwards, we shall again begin serious work, after the short period due to circumstances which made it impossible to carry out our full programme. We must try to regain the ground lost during these last few weeks, and the only way to do so is that we all set to work with a will, as a friendly mutual understanding cannot fail to produce good results. I therefore ask of you to show your new headmaster a real goodwill, and you will very soon find that he fully deserves it, and by doing so, you will first of all prove your loyalty to this school, but through this school to our country, our beloved Switzerland.

Dear Mr. Levy: When you accepted my offer of this Headmastership, you took a big load off my heart, as I spent many a sleepless night weighing up the position created by the recent happenings here. From the moment we started working together, I have appreciated the spirit in which you have considered the suggestions and proposals of the Education Committee and I look confidently into the future, as I see ahead pleasant collaboration and fruitful results of our work together.

The Minister said:

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

My present duty is to bid welcome to our new Headmaster. Mr. Levy is well known personally not only to you but to me too, as I have had the pleasure of meeting him at this Institution before to-day. If I am well informed, Mr. Levy was one of the first masters who ever taught at the Swiss Mercantile School. His activity goes back to the time before there were Day-Classes and it was, I think, due to his idea that this type of educational work was introduced. That was at a time when there was not yet a formal building for the Swiss Mercantile Academy in London. I am certain that the choice of the Committee could not have been a better one. I think they have had a lucky hand and a lucky inspiration in securing the co-operation, collaboration and direction of Mr. Levy and I can only congratulate the Committee upon their choice. Your President has just explained to you that certain changes are to take place in the programme and in the manner in which the educational work will be done in future. Changes as you all know have no sense and no justification unless they mean improvement. Whether the changes which are going to be introduced are improvements or whether they are not, this may be a question for experience. It is certain that when the Committee in collaboration with the masters decided on these changes they were of opinion that there would be an improvement. It is certain, furthermore, that the Committee and the masters had only one idea and one wish, to be useful to the Institution and to be useful to you to do the best they possibly can for both.

We all know that nobody in this world is infallible. There may be points where a difference of opinion can be justified and there may also be differences of opinion as to the way in which the work will show improvement and progress. The difficulty is when the differences of opinion are not settled in the right spirit.

I am perfectly certain that in this Institution the right spirit has always been the ruling element. I sincerely hope that this will be so in future. I have given my personal attention in collaboration with my colleagues of the Legation to the problems of this School. I have also had a special interest in its welfare and in its progress and after careful consideration we have come to the conclusion that the proposals of the Committee and the masters are the right plans to be put into operation.

I hope that we are right and that you will help us to bring the whole scheme to a very successful issue to the good of yourselves and of the Institution. That is why I had the greatest pleasure in taking the opportunity of coming here to see you and to say a few words to you.

Mr. Levy replied in the following terms:

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Permit me to thank you and the Education Committee for the great honour you have bestowed upon me by having chosen me to become Headmaster of this Institution and I must also thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for the kindly manner in which you have received me.

Although you do not know me, I am not at all a stranger to the Classes of the Swiss Mercantile Society for I have been teaching Swiss Students at the Evening Classes of this Society for many years, years before the Day School was founded.

These classes met in a small back room in Mr. Pfändler's suite of offices. Gradually the number of Classes grew to about 40 with over 200 Students in attendance and the classes had to be held, due to lack of accommodation, in various parts of the City and the West End.

NOTA BENE!

On December 14th, another Special Issue of the *Swiss Observer* will be broadcast so as to reach the whole Swiss Colony in Great Britain. This will be a unique opportunity for advertisers to secure the Christmas trade. Please communicate in good time if you wish to secure space, which can be booked at the ordinary rates for serial advertisements.

Thanks to the efforts of a number of your compatriots, a campaign was started with the aid of the Swiss Legation in London to provide for Day Classes. These gentlemen were able to collect a sum of over £1,000 and the Swiss Mercantile Society undertook the great responsibility of opening a Day School. In 1922 the Swiss Mercantile Society took the lease of a floor in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden. The school met with success and then in 1926 these premises were bought. I have always felt proud of my relations with the Swiss Mercantile Society. Besides Switzerland there is no other country in the world that puts into practice the educational theories that one hears in modern civilised countries. No other nation has the equivalent to the Swiss Mercantile Society which with the assistance of a subsidy from the Swiss Federal Government arranges for the education of its members. All this is done modestly for outside the Swiss community very few have ever heard of this educational work. Referring to the London Section of the Swiss Mercantile Society, I fear no contradiction in saying that it is one of the strongest and most go-ahead sections of the parent Society in Switzerland.

With my taking up the reins of office as Headmaster some new suggestions of the Committee will be put into force. They are introduced because they are solely for the benefit of the Students. The hours of the lessons will be from 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. with an hour's interval for lunch (from 12.30 to 1.30). Each lesson, with the exception of debates and similar subjects, will be of one hour's duration. The Students will be divided into different grades according to their knowledge of English. This grading will not be rigid and as far as possible the wishes of the individual students will be met.

The same kind of lessons as heretofore will be given although some of them will be known by different names. My policy as your Headmaster can be put into few words. Anything I do will be with the intention of assisting you in the purpose for which you have come here.

I have been a Schoolmaster for over 27 years and although my own methods of teaching may not be exactly the same as those to which you have been accustomed, I can only faithfully and sincerely promise that I shall do my best for you. My past experience of teaching and my contact with Swiss Students over a period of a number of years will no doubt enable me to understand and appreciate the high standard of education of our students and that our methods here must follow the university rather than the elementary school. To make these classes successful I must naturally rely on your sympathy and help.

As soon as I have settled down to my new work and have become accustomed to the routine of this institution, I shall lay certain proposals before you. Each grade of students will choose one or more representatives to form what can be called a "Students' Committee." This Committee will meet me and the masters at certain stated intervals when matters of importance for the advance of studies and the general welfare of the students will be discussed.

If the future examinations for the Certificate seem to increase in difficulty it simply means that the Certificate will be regarded as one of great value, worthy to be possessed. A student will have to qualify as a candidate for the examination by showing reasonable attendances at classes. In order to meet certain cases where for various reasons students are unable to take the Examination for the Certificate, a "Certificate of Attendance" (similar to those issued on the Continent) will be granted.

The letters S.M.S., what do they imply? "*Study means Success.*" "*Success means Satisfaction.*" "*Satisfaction Mène à Santé.*" Hence the Swiss Mercantile Society give you the best of what you require in life—Success, Satisfaction, Health."

The Ed.

A SOPHIE WYSS CONCERT.

As previously announced Mme. Sophie Wyss, who hails from Neuveville in the Jura, is giving a song recital on Wednesday, October 30th, at the Grotrian Hall. We feel it our duty to specially draw our readers' attention to this event both because it is bound to give great pleasure to those of us who can manage to go there and because we think it is up to our Colony to support this extremely able exponent in this country of the Swiss musical genius. Sophie Wyss has already interpreted here many Swiss song compositions which had never been heard in England before. With her great talent and devotion to her art our compatriot has succeeded in building up quite a reputation amongst discerning English lovers of music. She has repeatedly sung under Sir Henry Wood's direction, for the B.B.C., at the Old Vic—and quite a few times at Swiss functions in London. As is known, only the very famous singers, with the help of expensive press-agents, generally manage to get a full audience at recitals, while the others have to sing to half empty halls. As a foreigner and singing mainly in French and German Sophie Wyss has to contend against additional odds. Do not let us risk that in later years it will be said of her own countrymen that they only began to appreciate her art when all the world acclaimed it.—The Ed.