

# Melomanes

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## SWISS TEXTILE INDUSTRY.

The situation in the Swiss silk, cotton and embroidery industries grows more and more disquieting every day. A number of important firms in the silk-weaving, as well as in the cotton-spinning and weaving branches, have been obliged either to close down entirely for some months, or to forgo work on Saturdays and to work short hours during the rest of the week. Although the crisis is not regarded as unduly alarming, there is considerable anxiety. Mill owners are doing their utmost to prevent unemployment by consenting to personal sacrifices and by keeping their full staffs employed on short time.

Part of the trouble experienced by Swiss silk-weavers is ascribed to the heavy charges made in the auxiliary industries, *i.e.*, in the dyeing and finishing branches, and there is a keen fight now in progress, which it is thought may develop into a species of strike on the part of the silk-weavers, who are holding back their fabrics or else sending them abroad for dyeing and finishing purposes.

In the cotton industry, the prospects are worse. The rapid changes in fashions render the production during the slack season of so-called staple articles quite impossible, and thus prevent the manufacture of goods for stock purposes. Work has to be practically limited to the execution of orders. It is anticipated that the next few weeks will witness the closing down of more mills. Cotton spinners are compelled to reduce their output by 10 to 60 per cent. Twisters are in the same position, orders being very scarce. As for the weavers of coarse and medium cotton fabrics, these, although also affected by the crisis, are less hard hit than the manufacturers of fine woven goods. The latter, without exception, have been obliged to reduce their output or cut down their staff.

The embroidery industry, which has fared badly the last decade, continues its tragic decline, sinking deeper every day into the morass of economic depression. Export figures for the first six months of 1930 show a decrease of some 20 per cent. in both weight and value. Even forced exports of embroidered handkerchiefs, which took place a short time ago to the United States, proved ineffective in stemming the rapid decline in figures. Those firms which have hitherto been able to withstand the difficulties of the situation are now confronted with the necessity of reducing their output, their *personnel* or wages.

The statistics of Swiss textile exports for the first six months of 1930, 1929 and 1927 show a decline in respect of every item, except rayon products.

While in 1882 the proportion of Swiss workers engaged in the textile industry amounted to as much as 63 per cent. of the total working population of the country, the percentage has now dropped to 25.—*The Times*.

## Arnold Dolmetsch HIS LIFE AND WORK.

To many of the visitors to this year's Fête Suisse it was a great treat to listen to the lovely music of a by-gone age presented by our compatriot, Arnold Dolmetsch and his family, on instruments of his own make. For some decades Arnold Dolmetsch has enjoyed great fame in the English and international world of art, not so much as a performer, perhaps, but as a re-discoverer of old forgotten music and as an ingenious maker of the musical instruments. Dolmetsch's fame—which was recently confirmed by the public formation of a "Dolmetsch Foundation" for the perpetuation of his invaluable work—has only one parallel amongst Swiss émigrés in England—Füssli or "Fuseli" the great engraver and painter of the 18th century. Our thanks are due to the organisers of the fête Suisse for presenting Mr. Dolmetsch to his compatriots, although it is regrettable that the Colony should not have long ago made this pleasant acquaintance. Following is Mr. Dolmetsch's own account of his life and work.

\* \* \*

If heredity and early impressions are of any value, I was born fortunate. A family more completely devoted to Music and Instruments than mine could hardly be found. For generations, almost every one of its members has been either a musician, a maker of instruments, or both.

My father, *Rudolf Arnold*, born in Zürich in 1827, was a pianoforte maker; but, like his elder brother and sisters—all professional musicians—he had been taught by his father to play Bach's *Fugues on the clavierchord*. The latter, *Friedrich Dolmetsch I*, my grandfather, was born in Stuttgart in 1782. His family was of Bohemian origin. He settled in Zürich in 1808. Under his influence, his friend Nägeli the publisher printed from the "Zürich MS." his famous edition of *Das wohltemperirte Klavier*.

My uncle and guardian, *Frédéric Dolmetsch II* (who simplified the original spelling of our name) was director of the orchestra of Nantes

## GOING BY POST.

### A NOVEL WAY OF TOURING SWITZERLAND.

Occasionally we hear of children in this country being labelled and stamped and sent long distances by train. But in Switzerland there is a highly developed system of sending travellers by post. It is one of the most amusing methods of seeing the country.

It is possible to travel by post all over Switzerland. From Osieres you can be carried over the trail of the armies of Hannibal and Napoleon with precision and dispatch on a luxurious postal motor; across the long zig-zag mountain road with its ever changing views of snow-capped peaks and deep ravines; through the famous St. Bernard Pass and arrived at the historic Hospice in a few hours of delightful travel.

The postal service connects with the Swiss Federal Railways which have sponsored some of the world's greatest engineering achievements—the Simplon Tunnel, the Lotschberg Tunnel, and the rack and pinion railway to the summit of the Jungfrau over 14,000 feet.

Travellers are now taken as parcels over the Simplon with its marvellous views of the Bietschorn, the Rhone Valley and the Fletschorn; across the Furka Pass below glaciers and towering peaks from Fletsch to Andermatt and on those other roads, hitherto inaccessible except to the mountaineer, across the St. Gotthard Pass, the Lukmanier, San Bernardino, the Klausen Road and the Julier over the Septimer Pass in the Upper Engadine.

"Going by Post" is one of the best ways of seeing Switzerland, and as a parcel, the traveller may trust the Swiss postman to deliver him comfortably and to time at his destination.

## MELOMANES.

X... a été à Bayreuth entendre le *Crépuscule des Dieux*. Il raconte ses impressions :

"Cela dure de six heures du soir à minuit. C'est un bel opéra, oui, c'est une chose magnifique. Mais la fin, voyez-vous, la fin me semble amenée un peu trop rapidement..."

Un pianiste célèbre donnait un concert à Varsovie. La salle était pleine à craquer de sorte que les auditeurs entrés les derniers étaient debout et tellement serrés qu'ils ne voyaient que le dos de leur voisin immédiat et ne pouvaient apercevoir le pianiste.

Tout à coup, au milieu d'un andante, on entend, au dernier rang, une voix qui s'élève.

"Dis, Joseph, tu peux voir? Est ce qu'il joue du violon ou est-ce qu'il fait cela avec sa bouche?"

(France), a brilliant pianist, good violinist, teacher, and composer. His works comprise a mass of chamber music, sonatas, symphonies, and, under an assumed name, many "pot boilers" which paid him much better than his serious works. Being an ardent admirer of Bach and Beethoven, and a bold man, he was one of the first to introduce their music to French audiences.

*Karl Dolmetsch*, his eldest son, a violincellist and distinguished engineer, became an artillery officer during the Franco-German war and never recovered from the fatigues and privations of the siege of Paris.

*Cécile Dolmetsch*, my cousin, singer, pianist, and a beautiful woman, often delighted the court of Napoleon III at the Tuileries with her singing and playing. After a meteoric appearance as prima donna at "La Scala" in Milan, she married the manager of Ricordi, the music publishers of that town, and no more appeared in public.

*Victor Dolmetsch*, the youngest son of Frédéric Dolmetsch II, piano player and teacher, like his father wrote serious music now fallen into oblivion. Some of his piano pieces are still popular in France.

*Amand Guillovard*, my grandfather on my mother's side, was an organ builder. His remarkable skill as a draughtsman, knowledge of styles and fine taste had been acquired during his apprenticeship under his father, a craftsman who specialized in the design and construction of organ cases and other fine church woodwork.

*Marie-Zélie Dolmetsch*, née Guillovard, my mother, achieved some local fame as a pianist. She worked with her father, making organs until her marriage. Henceforth, having like her mother great capacity for business, she took the direction of the affairs of the family.

*Fritz Dolmetsch*, the youngest of her four sons, who died recently, was an excellent organist, composer, pianist, and teacher. He had, besides, an inventive brain and made valuable discoveries in electricity and wireless.

*Edgard Dolmetsch*, the third son, was an organ and piano maker, a violoncello player, and an amazingly clever drummer.

*Albert Dolmetsch*, once a clarinet player, is without a rival in the regulation and tuning of pianos. Paderewsky discovered this many years

## WEDDING CUSTOMS.

In the Grisons, a picturesque part of Switzerland, many old traditions are kept up. The most peculiar ones are the wedding customs, formed by the so-called boys' guild which was formerly an important body in the political and intellectual life of the Grisons. Now they have lost their power but are still in charge of various duties.

At the age of 16 years the boys become members of this corporation, a ceremony which generally takes place on a festival day. Only boys of blameless reputation are admitted. In some districts they have to choose a godfather. Conditions of admittance exist, one of them is the jumping over a broom, which has to be done six times. Once a member of the guild the boys have their special seats in church on the galleries. Everywhere they are looked upon as upkeepers of the national Grisonnois customs.

When the "boy" marries he retires from the guild and the wedding is at the same time a farewell party. Early in the morning cannonshots announce this happy event. The best man and master of ceremony fetches the bride in the house of her parents, where he delivers a short address. Then he takes her to the house of the bridegroom and from there the wedding procession proceeds to church. In front the best man with the bride, then bridegroom and bridesmaids followed by all the other members of the wedding party. At the close of the marriage service again three cannonshots are fired.

The way to the bridegroom's house is blocked by all the boys of the guild. Their leader addresses the party and explains that the barricading of the street is an old right of theirs, but that passage will be granted to them, if they agree to pay for it. This speech, delivered in a most elaborate style and generally composed by the clergy, is answered by the bridegroom in very beautiful language. When the money, generally used for public charity, is paid, the procession is allowed to move on.

Bride and bridegroom go to the home of their best man, where another speech is delivered. Upon this they all sit down to the wedding dinner to which the leader and three deputies of the guild are invited. In the evening all the members of the guild assemble and bring a serenade to the newly married couple. It is a caterwauling music, which in spite of its ugliness is looked upon as a great honour. That custom goes back to olden times, when people wanted to drive the demons away by this noisy and horrid performance.

MISS E. DACHSELT, Berne.

## AN ANNIVERSARY.

On the 19th of August, 1929, a Farman aeroplane left the aviation field of Alverca in Portugal at 7 o'clock in the morning, to attempt a crossing

ago. My brother is the only man who can satisfy the delicate requirements of this master; he has travelled with him all over the world.

*Fernand Boblin*, my cousin, a famous flautist, was professor at the Paris Conservatoire. He died prematurely, but not before he had transmitted his skill to some of the best flautists of the present time.

It was Fernand Boblin's father who gave me my first violin lessons. I had been taking piano lessons from a picturesque old man who had been Bandmaster of a French regiment at Waterloo. His long, pointed, waxed monstache frightened me not a little. A stern disciplinarian, he rapped my fingers with a thin pear wand whenever I did not pass my thumb correctly in the scales. I did not like the piano, nor his teaching. He concluded that I should never become a musician. Meanwhile, having got hold of a small Violin and a Double Bass bow, I taught myself to play "La Marseillaise" in such a way that the dear uncle Boblin, who was a good violinist, and a pupil of Delphin Alard, gave me violin lessons and soon formed a good opinion of my future prospects.

Having thus anticipated some of my own history, I must proceed with it and resist the temptation of further family reminiscences.

I was born at Le Mans, in Western France, on 24th February 1858. I received a good scientific education at the Lycée of that town where I studied drawing, mathematics, physics, and chemistry with enthusiasm. On leaving school I entered my father's workshop, where I learned wood working and pianoforte making. I also studied organ making with my grandfather, whose workshop was next to ours. I served as his assistant when he went to the churches, tuning organs. He delighted me with his explanations of the various styles and beautiful things we met in these churches, thus forming my taste.

After his and my father's death, a strong desire to develop my musical tendencies took me to the Brussels Conservatoire. There, under Vieuxtemps and others I studied the usual violin technique. The mysteries of Musical Counterpoint were revealed to me by Ferdinand Kufferath, a great master whose memory I shall ever cherish.

TO BE CONTINUED.