

Ticinese architects and sculptors in past centuries [continued]

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Doings in Our Colony.

SWISS CULINARY SOCIETY.

The First Annual Banquet and Ball held by the Swiss Culinary Society on Friday, January 24th, at the First Avenue Hotel, was a complete success. Nearly 200 people took part, members, friends and specially invited guests. Personally speaking, I had the best dinner of my life that night and I am sure I was not the only one present who felt like that. There was an almost reverential expression on the faces of those lucky ones who partook of the meal.

The cooks treating themselves and their friends to a dinner! Naturally one expected something out of the ordinary. Mr. Indermaur, the chef at the First Avenue Hotel, saw to it that nobody was disappointed. He was duly honoured for his artistic efforts after the repast by a present from the Culinary Society—a pretty coffee service. Every item on the menu was a complete joy to taste, to let it pass the palate slowly and reverentially so as to prolong the pleasure. And the menu as a whole was so wonderfully composed as to leave no feeling of heaviness however much one ate. I would feel it a sin not to perpetuate the menu by telling our readers exactly of what it was composed. It began with a grape fruit cocktail, followed by a "Potage Parfait," the secret of which I yet hope to find out from Mr. Indermaur. Then came Dover Soles à la Meunière, caught the same morning, followed by lamb cutlets with French beans, potatoes, etc. Then pleasant with toast soaked with the bird's juice and green salad. A perfect ice-cream "Palais-Fédéral," a basket with sweet delicacies and the Mokka concluded the regal treat.

The official part of the evening was short and the speeches were entertaining. Monsieur de Bourg, First Secretary of Legation, representing our Minister, was in the chair. After proposing the customary loyal toasts he made an amusing speech expressing his pleasure at being able to be present at the first public dinner marking the definite establishment of the Culinary Society, which represents such a worthy and important professional fraternity gaining honour for Switzerland in the hotels and restaurants at home as well as all over the world.

Mr. De Brunner, the Honorary President of the Culinary Society, in proposing the toast to

the new association, formally welcomed the assembly. He spoke in high praise of the Society's efforts, of the splendid distinction just gained at the Food and Cookery Exhibition at Olympia, of the distinguished work performed by the members of the Society. He addressed a special vote of thanks to those who so generously have supported the Society's displays at Olympia with financial contributions. The collection made by Mr. Brun of Birmingham has yielded the sum of £103.

Mr. A. C. Juriens, the active and indefatigable President of the Culinare responded on behalf of his organisation in the following words:

I rise to return on behalf of the Swiss Culinary Society, as well as in my own name, very hearty thanks for the words of appreciation and encouragement just addressed to me by our Honorary President, and for the cordial way in which you have received and endorsed the toast proposed to our Association.

Whatever my merits may be as a chef and leader of our Society, I feel that speaking at Public Functions is not in my line. I trust, therefore, you will forgive me if I cut it short, but I would not care to sit down without paying a high tribute to the loyal support I have received in my arduous duty at the hands of my colleagues whenever mutual support, concentration and co-operation was needed.

May I express the hope that our aims and efforts will find sympathetic consideration and tangible support in the milieu which matter, so that we may look forward with confidence to a successful future.

The President of the French Soc. Culinare, M. Herbodeau, addressed a few graceful compliments to his Swiss colleagues. He said it was a great pleasure to him and his countrymen to share the first honours at the Olympia Exhibition with the Swiss team. The Swiss are the founders of modern hotels, he declared, and the cooking fraternity was distinguished by one common religion—hard work.

Mr. R. Dupraz, in a humorous speech, proposed the toast to the guests, of whom the following may be specially mentioned:

Lady Honeywood, Mr. R. C. Vaughan, Mr. and Mrs. Hoyt, General Secretary of the Cookery and Food Assoc., Mr. & Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Cantalupi, President of the Italian Culinary Society, Mr. Neuschwander, Mr. Nicodet, of Montreux, judge at the Exhibition, Mr. F.

But the height of his glory Domenico Fontana achieved when he solved the very difficult mechanical problem of the transport and erection in the Square of St. Peter of an extremely heavy Egyptian obelisk, which had been lying for centuries in the ruins of the Circus of Nero. This problem had been declared by all technical men of the time to be incapable of solution, but the clever and daring Ticinese by risking his position (the Pope had intimated a grave penalty if by falling the obelisk should have been broken) attempted the task and succeeded.

To such an outstanding event, of which exist illustrative incisions, commemorative medals and even latin carmens, had been invited all the dignitaries of the Church and around, held back by soldiers was all the population of Rome, excited at the prospect of the great deed. The Pope had had it proclaimed that whoever should shout in the course of the operations would be immediately beheaded, and to show that this was no empty threat he placed the headsman ready with block and axe on a special platform, in sight of the multitude, so that no one should disturb the precise command of the chief with shouts of any sort. The workmen—they were over 900—had attended Mass and partaken holy communion the morning of the great day and when they entered the enclosure they knelt in prayer.

The obelisk, held by stout ropes, had to be lifted up to the top of the base and then set erect. Thirty-five capstans, each operated by ten workmen and two horses, had to be set in motion at the same moment, at the command of the architect, who was the only man who had the right to say anything. One can well imagine the enormous impression which all this staging was to have on the populace gathered in the square. Domenico, for whom also perhaps everything was play, gives the order and the immense obelisk slowly begins to rise into the air, amid the screeching of the capstans, of the ropes and of the scaffolding. A few moments of intense emotion pass: only the sight of the headsman, ready with the axe prevents the population from shouting in astonishment at seeing the tremendously heavy mass lifted into the air, but at the very last moment, when but a few centimetres were needed to complete the lifting operation, the obelisk suddenly remains stationary in the air. The capstans, perhaps due to slipping of the ropes, do not act any more. With the speed of lightning Fontana understands the unforeseen difficulty and feels a shiver of horror, but he realises at once the value of the counsel of a sailor who, at the risk of his life shouted "Water the ropes" and the architect

Dolder, organising secretary of the forthcoming International Cookery Exhibition at Zürich, Mr. Nägeli, German delegate, Mr. and Mrs. Schmid, Rifle Association.

Mr. J. B. Morrow, chairman of the Universal Cookery and Food Association, replied on behalf of the guests in the following words:

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have been called upon to reply to the toast of our Guests, and without more ado I shall fulfil that duty and pleasure by expressing to our Hosts our appreciation of the hospitality which we are enjoying here to-night: such hospitality and entertainment as are in keeping with the traditions of a Country which from the earliest times has held a prominent place in the social and domestic progress of the human race.

In the various official positions which I have held in the Universal Cookery and Food Association I have been impressed with the power and ability of the Swiss Culinary Society, the broadminded and generous spirit of its officials and the unselfish work of its members. All of which can spring only from a high ideal—the love of their art.

The cook was the pioneer of Civilisation, and that is so because he saw in fire the escape from brutality and the uplifting of his crude home to something better than a den. From that first plunge into the unknown has grown the luxurious and complex civilisation of today.

From the Relic-beds of the submerged lake dwellings of Switzerland we get our earliest Knives, Forks and Spoons—you are familiar with the three early historical periods—Stone, Bronze and Iron: The story of these ages is to be found in the relics of the lake-dwellings in which pre-historic Switzerland abounded—on Lake Geneva, Zurich and Neuchatel, and they bring to us the picture of men who were tilling their fields—storing nuts and apples—baking cakes of wheat and barley—hunting the wild boar, the stag and the elk—breeding domestic animals—harpooning the large fish—catching the smaller fry in their well-made nets of flax.

Is it any wonder then that after 4,000 years of practice the exponents of the Culinary art, and Swiss at that, should put before us such a superb repast and entertain us with an ease and grace which springs from tradition and second nature.

During the dance M. Juriens presented the Society's mascot: a little girl of nine, Daphne

repeated the same words, so that every workman understood. The wet ropes grip again and the obelisk is lifted by those few centimetres required to give it a position of stability.

On the base of the obelisk, when erected, were chiselled the words: "Domenico Fontana di Milli, trasportò ed eresse" (Domenico Fontana from Melide, transported and erected) and that Milli (Melide) though unknown to the citizens of Rome, added and perpetuated with the name of the great architect shows that Fontana, along with his name desired to immortalise also that of his beloved little native hamlet.

When Fontana died, his nephew Carlo Maderno, from Bissone, followed him as architect-in-chief for the cathedral of St. Peter and, therefore, also as the foremost architect of Italy. Maderno proved himself an even finer architectural genius than his uncle. Before being chosen as leader for the work which the pope was having carried out he had already designed and built the church of St. Susanna, which is one of the finest churches of that time, and which served later as standard for nearly all the churches of the Baroque architecture. His lasting title to glory is however that to have completed the building of the cathedral of St. Peter. Contrary to the original design by Michelangelo, Maderno decided to give to the cathedral a predominating longitudinal aisle although, according to Michelangelo, it should have been of more central shape. Maderno had to solve all the problems which were linked up with such a change and he did so with great foresight and an unerring artistic sense.

All the main front of the cathedral is his work, but according to the original conception it should have had also two lateral towers. The two towers were, however, not built because Maderno feared that the ground under the cathedral was not solid enough to bear that weight also. That this assumption of the clever Ticinese technical man was right was proved when Bernini succeeded him. He attempted to build two frontal towers of his own design, but when one was finished it had to be taken down again because the ground was giving way. The portals in front of the cathedral are also the work of Maderno and he is the creator of several of the finest palaces of Rome, among which we would mention the Mattei palace, Chigi palace and Santa Maria della Vittoria. The art of Maderno, the first great architect of the so-called Baroque period has been appreciated by all for the richness of content, for the exquisite sense of proportion and for the geniality of certain combinations.

(To be continued.)

Ticinese Architects and Sculptors in Past Centuries.

By Dr. A. Janner, translated from "Deine Heimat" by one of our readers.

(Continued. Commenced Jan. 18.)

We begin with an exquisite sculptor: Andrea da Breno, who sculptured in Rome marvellous sepulchral monuments in which there is still to-day all the freshness, measure and admirable sobriety of line of the first Renaissance. We come then to speak of the family of the Fontana from Melide and of the Maderno from Capolago who, at their time, for their intelligence, ability and artistic genius were among the best honoured and most popular men of Italy. The Fontana were two brothers: Giovanni and Domenico. They lived during the second half of the 16th century and both left Melide when still quite young in order to go to Rome where, in the buildings which the popes were having erected they felt sure of finding work and of having an opportunity of fulfilling their dreams of art, glory and wealth. Giovanni, the elder, built various palaces among which we could mention the Giustiniani and the de' Gori palaces and the church of San Martino, at Siena. But he has been principally what to-day would be called an engineer, an incomparably fine technical mind, builder of roads and aqueducts.

His younger brother, Domenico, proved an even finer genius and to the technical ability of his elder brother he added a greater and more delicate artistic sense. Assisted by cardinal Montalto, who had allotted him various work to carry out, when the cardinal became Pope, Domenico was at once chosen as architect-in-chief for the building of the cathedral of St. Peter, which was far from nearing completion. By varying somewhat the original design by Michelangelo, Domenico erected the majestic dome of the cathedral in only 22 months, although his adversaries had declared that it was impossible to carry out such a piece of work in less than ten years. As the cathedral of St. Peter was the pride of every citizen of Rome one can well imagine the popularity of the daring and unerring Ticinese. He was created by the Pope a Knight of the Order of Christ and has been the first man to bear the title of Knight-Architect, a special distinction granted by the Popes only to their very finest architects.

Domenico Fontana erected great and very beautiful buildings, like the Palace and Loggia of Lateran and the Fontana of Asqua Paola. Moreover the two most famous palaces of Rome, viz. the Quirinal and the Vatican bear his Hall-mark.