

# Ticinese architects and sculptors in past centuries [continued]

Autor(en): **Janner, A.**

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## Swiss Mercantile Society. ANNUAL BANQUET.

More numerous than ever was the gathering at this year's great Banquet and Ball of the Swiss Mercantile Society, which was held on Saturday, February 1st, at the Midland Hotel as usual. In a way, much the same people seemed to be there as at the City Swiss Club's Annual function with an additional sprinkling of less stiff shirted and therefore more homely young things. Of the Legation as many as five dignitaries showed their affection and respect for the S.M.S. by their personal presence at the Banquet. Our Minister, Monsieur Paravicini, held the Chair. With him were Mr. R. von Sonnenberg, Councillor of Legation, Mr. W. de Bourg, First Secretary, Mr. Clement Rezzonico, Head of the Commercial Division, and Mr. P. Hilfiker, Chancellor of Legation.

The dinner was served in the semi-circular room where formerly only the dancing took place. The bent top table enabled one to scan and observe the faces of all the august personages seated there which I found very intriguing and very entertaining. The menu was ambitious and quite delightfully composed. And the service was commendably quick. A similar praise cannot be meted out to the band at dinner, which seemed to be in an extremely languorous mood, not at all in keeping with the gay spirit that pervaded the gathering.

After the loyal toasts to the King and Switzerland, proposed by Monsieur Paravicini, had been honoured, Mr. Paschoud, the President of the S.M.S., made the following speech surveying the Society's activities and development:

It is my privilege to welcome you all to our annual banquet, on behalf of our Society, and it is highly pleasing to me to see such a gathering which I consider as a proof of the interest you take in our activities. The support you give, whatever form it takes, is precious to us, and while thanking you for what you have done in the past, I hope that you will continue to support us in future, and thus enable us to carry out our aims, which are chiefly for the benefit of our compatriots.

Monsieur le Ministre, allow me to extend to you a special welcome, and to express our gratification at the pleasure your presence gives us, at the same time regretting that Madame Paravicini was unable to accompany you. To feel that the Legation, and through the Legation, our Federal Authorities at home, are behind us and ready to help if necessary, is most encouraging for the members of the various committees, whose self imposed task is at times very difficult and exacting.

My task to-night is to report on the past 12 months, and I shall endeavour to be as brief as possible. We will take first our Employment Department, so ably managed by our friend and member, Mr. J. Pfändler. The present conditions and restrictions do not make his task at all easy, but nevertheless a good number of our compatriots owe their jobs to his good and untiring offices. It is no use expecting the impossible of him, and we should try to realise his difficulties.

Our evening classes have maintained their progress. For the third year in succession, we held 40 classes. A total of 275 students attended, two more than last year, which is very satisfactory, seeing the restrictions which prevent new arrivals. Once more our students have done very well at the examination of the National Union of Teachers in English for foreigners. Six sat for it, all passing with first-class honours, two of them with distinction, and the highest award, the Silver Medal, was again secured by one of our students, Mr. Albert Kuhn. There were, as usual, several hundred entries throughout the country and our repeated successes at this examination speak well for our students and for their teacher, Mr. Levy, who is now Headmaster of both the day and the evening schools.

I now come to the day school, and seeing the complexity of some of the happenings, allow me to speak metaphorically on this question, but before I begin, I shall give a few figures, to show the development of our institution.

The average attendance for the year was 250 as against 234 for the previous 12 months, the monthly attendance varying from 205 in February to 300 in June. On this basis we reach a total of 2,996 students for the year, which is an increase of 63 per cent. This increase does not seem to be much, but as it is, our accommodation has been taxed to the utmost during the rush months, and the committee hopes that our present premises will be sufficient during the next rush months, thanks to the alterations which have been effected, and the better division of the classes.

Some of you will recollect that our society was compared to a ship on the high seas. The proud ship S.M.S. has continued her service in spite of storm and other stress of weather. The owners for some time were not satisfied with the course followed and they decided to try some other itinerary which would imply calling

at some additional ports on the way. The mate refused to carry on for the new voyage, as well as another officer, so that a new mate had to be found. Strange to say, out of sympathy, some of the passengers also objected to the new course, and some even cancelled their passage, but the great majority stayed on, and they never regretted having done so, though the first voyage was of necessity a difficult one, through the shortage of officers made worse by the sudden illness of one of the senior officers. The pursers neglected their duty, the result being some shortage in the cargo, but fortunately it was discovered in time and the greater part of the missing cargo recovered. Both the officers involved were dismissed their ship. More serious loss to the company was prevented by the prompt measures taken by the owners and commanding officers and the willing help of assistant pursers and the remainder of the crew. During the past few months, the passenger quarters have been redecorated and improved throughout, and the passengers appreciate the greater comfort of the ship and enjoy the new route, which is more varied than the old. The route being more devious, additional officers have had to be signed on to navigate the ship through the difficult and complicated channels, but the capable new mate is there, attending to all the details, so that the captain can map the course according to instructions received from the owners, certain that his orders will be carried out. With a loyal set of officers and a loyal crew, and a much tighter discipline in general, the owners can now watch the progress of the ship S.M.S. with pleasure, seeing her sailing proudly along, fast becoming a model ship, so that the passenger bookings, which slackened off for a while, are again coming in freely and have even come in in record numbers of late. I nearly forgot to mention the men in the background, the lighthouse keepers on the shore, who light the ship on its way, giving the pilot the necessary bearings and guidance. I, as the captain of the good ship S.M.S., wish to thank one and all for the help they have given me.

Having dealt with the school, I now come to the Society itself. In order to give the Society a legal status, a select committee elected a year ago has been busy studying the question, a very complicated one. Their task is progressing favourably, and before long, it is hoped to show the result of the enormous amount of work done chiefly by the Chairman of that Committee, Mr. A. Stahelin, whom I wish to thank on behalf of the Society, also for the great help he has given me on many occasions during the past twelve months.

Through the happenings in the Day School, the Society has had to hold additional meetings. The attendance at the ordinary monthly meetings unfortunately still leaves much to be desired, as with a Membership of over 300, we ought to reckon on a better average attendance than 30-40. Apart from about 20-30 regulars, many of them old members who give a good example, the great majority never puts in an appearance.

Our Society has grown to be an important concern and is doing good and useful work for Switzerland, therefore it is the duty of all members to attend the meetings regularly, the experienced ones to help with advice, the younger

ones to gain experience to prepare themselves for more important work, for instance committee work.

I have often heard the query raised by our members: What do we get for our annual subscription? May I in turn ask: What do the numerous Gentlemen and firms who subscribe to our Educational fund get in return for their generosity? Many of you may have forgotten the benefits you derived, perhaps long ago, from our Society. Try to remember that there are many young ones who wish to enjoy the same advantages in their turn, and which our Swiss Mercantile Society here and in Switzerland provides for them.

Monsieur Paravicini, the Minister, who spoke impromptu in his most humorous vein, frequently interrupted by delighted laughter of the audience, replied somewhat in the following terms:

The Swiss Minister said that it was always a matter of importance to him when he has to address the Swiss Mercantile Society, a matter which he is taking very seriously indeed. He described the act of preparation of his speech in his office the night before, with one of the Secretaries of Legation to whom he recited the address which he had in mind so as to watch the effect, as he said humorously, on a somewhat small but distinguished dress-rehearsal audience.

The first paragraph of his preliminary improvisation was a eulogy of the efficiency of the President of the S.M.S. and here, the Swiss Minister added that, of course, he took it for granted that the presidential speech would be a model of perfection, a premonition which turned out to be quite correct, although, at that moment, he had naturally neither heard nor read it and, besides, was not aware of the great qualities of M. Paschoud as a true Swiss Admiral!

His second point was the excellent work done by the various Committees, the General Committee, the House Committee and the Entertainment Committee, while in the last instance, he paid a tribute to the Employment Department and the well-known merits of Mr. Pfändler. He then proceeded, he said, to speak about the zeal and enthusiasm for the good cause of the S.M.S. of all the Members, old and young, and of the pride of the Swiss Colony in the successful endeavours of the Society to further the educational progress of our young representatives in this country of the Swiss circles of commerce and industry.

He went on to say that, when he had finished, his colleague, after the unavoidable remarks of admiration, suggested that, in order to give his speech a less conventional character, he might perhaps mention that the President and Committees had had a particularly difficult time during the last year, owing to reorganisation in the Education Department, the change in the Headmaster-ship, the alterations connected with the examination question; that these events had caused a good deal of agitation and even opposition; that it wanted a full amount of tact and skill to surmount the difficulties; that this had been done with remarkable ability and that not only is the S.M.S. to-day in as good a position as ever before, but is even on a marked move towards further suc-

## Ticinese Architects and Sculptors in Past Centuries.

By Dr. A. Janner, translated from "Deine Heimat" by one of our readers.  
(Continued. Commenced Jan. 18.)

A relative of Carlo Maderno was Stefano Maderno, a renowned sculptor. Besides the very well known Santa Teresa by Bernini the Santa Cecilia by Maderno is, for composure of line and simplicity of attitude the most beautiful statue of the Baroque period.

Another relative of Maderno was Borromini and he also is one of the most famous architects of Rome of the Baroque period. Borromini was a strange type—his antagonism for Bernini was well known to all Rome. At his time he was greatly admired for his daring architectures and then looked down upon, when the Baroque style went out of fashion. He certainly had some faults, but to-day people are beginning again to understand and admire his genial art, although somewhat over-ornate, and all the modern critics acknowledge the genius and originality of Borromini's work and the importance it has had for the subsequent development of architecture. Among the very fine buildings by Borromini, which are to be found in Rome, we will point out the Barberini palace, the Campanile of St. Andrea delle Fratte, the interior of St. John Lateran, the main front of St. Agnese, St. Ivo, St. Carlo alle quattro Fontane, etc.

Contrary to what was the rule for the other Ticinese artists, who were living a retired and laborious life and very rarely gave cause to speak about them, there are many items of news to be

found in the archives of Rome about Borromini. He lived an eventful life and died a violent death. He asked to be buried in the tomb of his relative Carlo Maderno, which was granted—while dying away from his native soil he desired to feel near his fellow-Ticinesi.

Another Fontana, from Mendrisio, we find again as architect in the 18th century, viz., Carlo Fontana who, in Rome and in Florence, erected notable buildings. In Venice also the Baroque architecture had a Ticinese as its greatest exponent, viz., Baldassarre Longhena from Maroggia. Those who have been to Venice know the admirable church of Santa Maria della Salute—the architecture is stupendous. It is perhaps the most beautiful and most original structure of the Baroque style. The great portals, the wonderful volutes, which unite the central to the outlying portions and the very beautiful dome leave an unforgettable impression. And Longhena, like all the Ticinesi, besides being a genius of architecture had also an excellent engineering mind. Among the innumerable works of art by him, which are to be found in Venice, we would point out also the Rezzonico palace, which adorns the Grand Canal.

During the neoclassical period also, the Ticino gave a substantial contribution of great artists. In this connection should first of all be mentioned the family of the Albertolli (4 of them), from Bedano, all first-class decorative artists, among whom stands out particularly Giacomo Albertolli, for a great many years professor at the Royal Academy of Arts of Milan. To the name of this outstanding architect and decorator should be linked that of Giacomo Mercoli from Mugena.

(To be continued.)