

Geneva University Club

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THE SPIRIT OF PROGRESS

The
House
of *Kunzle*
The
Quality
House

"Where there's a will there's a way."

This well-known proverb might very aptly be applied to the house of Kunzle—a house that has gained fame for the tastiness and excellence of its chocolates and cakes in a far wider sphere than the Midlands.

In spite of the industrial depression; in spite of the fact that increased taxation and foreign dumping are causing many business firms to economise and reorganise, the house of Kunzle continues to progress and expand its business.

What is the secret of its success?

It is the story of grit and determination and enterprise which, even now that a successful business employing 1,000 people has been built up from a baker's shop, has to be exercised to meet the fierce competition of modern times.

There was a time not many months ago when those at the head of Kunzle's thought it would be necessary to fall into line with other firms who were embarking on a policy of "retrenchment and reform."

But on mature reflection it was decided that the bad times were not half as bad as they were painted; in fact that, if opportunities were seized at the right moment, they might be turned into good times by the dint of a little effort.

NEW MARKETS OPENED.

And so new machinery was ordered, factory extensions were planned, new cafés were opened, and the products of the firm were advertised.

The net result is that to-day Kunzle's factory cannot supply all the goods ordered, in spite of the overtime being worked in the factory at Broad-street, Birmingham.

Not only that, but new markets have been opened up, and an export trade commenced.

Talk about carrying coals to Newcastle; Kunzle is now exporting chocolate to Switzerland, of all places. A contract has also been signed to supply agents in America.

Instead of cutting down staff and working short time a bold policy has enabled the firm to go ahead, and there is every indication that it will continue to go ahead and defy the adverse conditions, of which so many complain.

Kunzle's is a firm which is certainly carrying on the Birmingham tradition of enterprise as embodied in the city's motto—"Forward."

It is a firm which was conceived in Birmingham, and which grew rapidly under the enthusiasm and energy of its proprietor, until it stretched out tentacles to other cities.

Just think of it! In the early days a merchant who supplied the proprietor with certain goods refused to take a cheque. He demanded cash on account of the youthful appearance of Mr. Christian Kunzle.

Those were the days when young men holding responsible positions were regarded with suspicion, and when it was adjudged that experience and success could only be allied to a mature age.

But when Mr. Kunzle set up in business on his own he had already considerable experience, for he was first connected with the confectionery trade in 1897.

In that year, while still in his 'teens, he came to England from Switzerland, mainly for the purpose of learning the language.

He went direct to Oxford to stay with an uncle who kept a confectioner's shop in the centre of the city, and he very soon took to the trade.

Although not apprenticed he gained a very good knowledge of baking and the business side of his uncle's shop, and within 12 months he left Oxford to take up his first job.

This was in London—at no less a place than the Houses of Parliament, where he was employed as an assistant confectioner at the munificent salary of nine shillings a week!

It was a struggle to make both ends meet, but the recognition of those skilled in the culinary art was not so universal as it is to-day.

Mr. Kunzle cooked for well-known Peers and Members of Parliament, with whose successors he is now in contact in connection with the League of Nations, and the experienced served him in good stead.

But at the end of the Spring Session, 1898, he obtained a position at the Grand Hotel in London, and subsequently took up service in an English family in order to improve his knowledge of the English language.

A few brief months in his native country saw him again in England. This time he travelled north to Glasgow and founded a catering business with a cousin, who is still successfully carrying it on.

Another trip to Switzerland, where he stayed for a few months, finally decided Mr. Kunzle to return once again to this country with the intention of setting up in business.

And that is how he came to Birmingham. But it might have been some other city, for he travelled up and down the country in search of a town where he thought his efforts would reward him with success.

START OF THE BUSINESS.

He reached Birmingham in November, 1901, and after walking up and down Corporation Street made up his mind that this was the city in which he would settle down.

With the small capital he possessed he set up in business with a bakery in Snow Hill and a small bun shop in the Midland Arcade.

And when people wished to do business with the Kunzle firm of those days and Mr. Christian Kunzle appeared they asked to see his father and made him pay cash for the goods he wanted.

What actually put Mr. Kunzle on the road to success was his patent for chocolate creams, which is now the basis of all the cream centres, though it has been naturally enough improved upon since then.

The Americans and Germans copied the cream centre idea, and it was also taken up considerably in this country. But it is pleasing to know that it was conceived in the mind of a Birmingham business man.

There are still with Mr. Kunzle some of the employees who assisted him in those early years of the 20th century. Indeed the business has grown largely through the goodwill of its workers.

It was not long before he sought new premises, and in 1905 he obtained a lease of 156, Broad Street, where are now the present commodious headquarters and factory.

Two years later a branch was opened at Leicester, and shortly afterwards another shop was opened in the North-Western Arcade in Birmingham.

The position was consolidated for some years, and the next progress of any importance was subsequent to the war, when the Union Street shop and café was built, and considerably expanded in 1924.

In 1925 the Paradise Street shop and café was opened, and the following year saw a fine London shop inaugurated in Regent Street.

UP-TO-DATE FACTORY.

The same year Mr. Edward Kunzle joined in partnership with his father, after learning every branch of the business over a period of some years.

The Leicester branch was also accommodated on larger premises, and, of course, the headquarters were being constantly enlarged.

In fact few people who travel up and down Broad Street daily realise there is a large factory behind the imposing new Kunzle shop and office front near Five Ways.

Actually there are over 700 employees in an up-to-date factory which is working at full pressure to supply the increasing demand for Kunzle cakes and chocolates.

And what a factory! Tiled walls and mosaic floors are prominent features of the more modern portion of a works which has been built with a particular eye on the hygienic side.

Everything is spotlessly clean, as indeed, it should be, for the manufacture of high-class confectionery which has raised the standard of such commodities in this country.

A tour of the factory reveals the latest machinery for wrapping boxes of chocolates with transparent paper, and ovens of the most modern design for baking the cakes for which the house is famous.

But the striking feature, perhaps, is the cheerful enthusiasm with which the hundreds of girl employees tackle their work. It is a sign of the family spirit which pervades the firm.

For many years now Mr. Kunzle has realised that to get the best out of workers, the proprietor must take a definite interest in them and try and help them in every possible way.

To that end a Benevolent Fund was started some years ago, and now if any employee falls sick there is always somebody to visit him or her and to render financial assistance in necessitous cases.

Not only that, but Mr. Kunzle takes a personal interest in each of his workers whom he regards more in the light of a member of a large family than anything else.

In his frequent tours round every department of the factory Mr. Kunzle has come to know each of the employees by name and if any newcomer arrives he quickly notices him and has a chat.

In fact, the foundation of the firm's success is the co-operative working together of master, management and employees, which is only made possible by the friendly atmosphere.

EMPLOYEES' WELFARE STUDIED.

Recognition of long service with the firm is another interesting point, and during the past three years some 200 employees, who have served over ten years have been taken to Davos in Switzerland for their summer holiday.

Mr. Kunzle naturally still retains intimate connections with his native country, and at Davos he possesses a chateau where he entertains his

employees, who enjoy the holiday among the beautiful mountain scenery free of cost.

The air of Davos is also of great benefit to those suffering from certain ailments, and employees are also offered facilities in this direction through the working of the Benevolent Fund.

The whole firm takes the greatest interest in the League of Nations, incidentally, the harmonious relations which exist in the business being an incentive to help any efforts made to promote friendship in the international field.

It is an education to watch the girls at work in the various departments. Cake and chocolate making is evidently an art which takes considerable time to acquire.

Thousands of business men and women in Birmingham readily appreciate another art of the confectionery trade, namely that of window dressing, for which the Kunzle shops are equally famous.

The display of boxes of chocolates attracts the attention of the most fastidious person, and many a permanent customer has been gained by the appeal of good taste made in this direction.

"Meet me at Kunzle's" for lunch, tea or morning coffee is the parting injunction of many a discriminating woman when her husband leaves home for business.

And it is scarcely necessary to say that the man readily accedes to his wife's request, for the Kunzle cafés provide an unrivalled service and excellently cooked food. They are, indeed, the resort of the fashionable element of Birmingham.

A glance at the Christmas catalogues of Kunzle products is enough to make anybody's mouth water. What better gift for a relative or friend than a box of delicious Kunzle chocolates.

Not only are the chocolates guaranteed to be made of the finest and purest ingredients, but the artistic boxes in which they are packed make the present particularly handsome. Here again the artistic covers are designed by the firm.

Among the novelties which will most please children are many different chocolate figures, from an emulation of father's pipe and cigarette case to racing motor-cars and airships.

The window of the Union Street Café was broken the other night, but what the burglar thought were luscious cakes turned out to be wooden copies equally pleasing to look at.

Finally, for a symbol of Kunzle service to the public, one need point no further than the new shop front, showroom and artistically decorated café at Five Ways.

Birmingham Gazette.

GENEVA UNIVERSITY CLUB.

The newly founded Geneva University Club held its first "Annual Dinner" on December 16, 1931. His Excellency the Swiss Minister honoured us by his presence, and the President, Dr. Treves Barber, presided. The company included one Hon. Member, nine Ordinary Members, three Associate Members and one Guest. For our first effort we aimed at being "en famille" hence the solitary guest. Our youngest ordinary member present was just 20—the age of the oldest member is lost in oblivion.—The Rembrandt Hotel served us an excellent dinner. The omelette au surprises was surrounded by the Geneva flag, and the table was decorated with red and yellow flowers and crackers. The President, after giving the loyal toast, proposed Geneva University coupled with the name of the Swiss Minister. Dr. Treves Barber took us back in imagination to the *Gare de Cornavin* thence over the Pont de Mont Blanc through the Coraterie to the Bastion Gardens. He reminded us of the many great names entwined in Geneva University and did not forget that of Landolt, where he often remembered seeing Professor Graebe sitting with his book. He thanked Monsieur Paravicini for his encouragement of the Club by his presence that evening, and charged us to drink to the memory of the University that we all held in honour.

Dr. Charles Ferrière proposed the Geneva University Club and reminded us that it had its origin in a visit of Professor Askanaz to England last summer, owing to the lack of such an organisation it was not possible to gather together at short notice many of his old students who would have liked to greet him.

Dr. Lina Potter then proposed "absent friends" and his Excellency the Swiss Minister spoke in English a few words of encouragement and goodwill.

After the dinner, Dr. Donald Norris (associate member) showed on his portable projector, some moving photographs of Swiss mountains followed by another film showing some adventures of "Felix" in the snow. Both films were greatly appreciated, and our informal party broke up after a cordial evening during which several old Geneva students made one another's acquaintance for the first time. All old Geneva students if they don't already belong to the Geneva University Club are heartily invited to join and are reminded that the subscription is only 5/- a year, that a summer social is in contemplation and that the secretary's address is 31, Highbury Place, N.5.