

William Le Queux †

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JOHANN FROBEN.

On the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Froben's death the Frobenius A.G. in Basle has issued a commemorative booklet, the cover of which reproduces a portrait of the famous printer by Hans Holbein the younger. The following article appeared in a recent number of the "Linotype and Printing Machinery Record"; it describes a fascinating period in the history of Basle when the latter town was the centre of the German printing and book trade, like Leipzig to-day.

"Froben was a Bavarian who became a citizen of Basle in 1490. With the founding of the University in 1460 Basle became a seat of learning, and the gateway by which the new learning entered Germany from Italy. The opportunity thus offered to a printer was seized by Johann Froben. The fact that for one short period the books printed at Basle rivalled those of Venice or Paris both in number and quality was due in the main to the energy of this printer. Basle was at that time a free city of the Holy Roman Empire and had not yet joined the Swiss Federation. Froben's first book was a Latin Bible in octavo printed in a minute gothic fount and issued in 1491. He was employed originally in the printing house of Johann Amerbach and many of his earlier books were issued in partnership with this printer, who was already issuing Latin works in roman type. Thus from the first Froben was connected with the new school of learning and the renaissance types of Italy. Down to the death of Amerbach in 1513 Froben's name appears on comparatively few books. The important part of his work belongs to the period from 1513 to his death in 1527. In those years his activity was greatly increased. He printed the first Greek books to appear in Germany, introduced italic founts and the smaller and cheaper book after the manner of Aldus, and made Basle the centre of the German trade for books in Latin. He, too, was chiefly responsible for the style of book decoration which distinguished Basle books of his age, a style which was copied not only by German printers but throughout Europe.

In 1513 Froben printed an edition of the *Adagia* of Erasmus, a folio in roman type and with one of his new woodcut title-pages. In the title Erasmus is described as "Germaniae decus." Erasmus was already known as one of the first men of letters in Europe. By this time he had completed his translation and recension of the New Testament and the works of St. Jerome and was considering where these works were to be printed. Hitherto his books had been printed in the Netherlands, at Paris, and by Aldus at Venice. But he now decided on Basle, influenced perhaps by the edition of the *Adagia* and the compliment paid to him. In a letter of September, 1514, to Jacob Wimpfeling of Strassburg, Erasmus describes his arrival at Froben's shop and his manner of introducing himself as a friend of Erasmus. The result was important to Froben, for Erasmus not only remained in Basle for the printing of his two great works, but returned again and made his home there for several years. He became an intimate friend of all the members of the family and of the learned correctors of the press who worked for Froben, and was godfather to Froben's youngest son, born in 1517. From this date almost all Erasmus' books were first printed by Froben and many editions of his more popular works were sold out. At one time the printer complained that nothing but Luther tracts had a good sale; it may have been the influence of Erasmus that checked Froben from taking part in that lucrative trade, but at least he had the compensation of being the printer of one of the best sellers in Europe.

From this connection with Erasmus Froben became in the main a printer of Latin works and consequently a user of roman types and the new italic. He issued very few books in German, and seldom employed gothic founts. Amerbach had used roman types as early as 1486, and Froben's romans were at first those of Amerbach or founts closely akin to them. Indeed he never departed far from Amerbach's models and made no history as a typographer. One of the earliest German type specimens is that issued by Johann Petri of Nuremberg, in 1525. The roman founts in this specimen closely resemble those used by Froben and most other printers of South Germany. We have said that Froben printed the earliest Greek books to appear in Germany, although several printers had already used Greek for occasional passages.

As a typographer, Froben followed the prevailing fashion in roman founts and merely led the way among German printers in copying the Aldine Greek and italic. But what specially characterises his books is their decoration. The woodcut and metal-cut borders and initials which were designed for him by the two Holbeins and Urs Graf had great popularity in their day and are now the chief matter of interest in his books. Urs Graf, a soldier of fortune and an artist, whose spirited drawings of Landsknechts are well known, was employed by Froben before Holbein's arrival in Basle. On the title-page of Erasmus' *Adagia* of 1513 is a woodcut border by Urs Graf known as

the "Humanitas" border from one of the figures represented. It is an architectural border in the renaissance style and Froben's earliest decorated piece in this manner. In the same book are some of Graf's woodcut figure initials. Hans Holbein came to Basle at the end of 1514 or early in 1515, and by the following year he had designed two title-borders for Froben. One is the "Lars Porrena" border, depicting a story taken from Livy, and the second is a fairly close copy of a border used by Johann Weyssburger of Nuremberg. In 1517 appeared the "John the Baptist" border and several others. From 1517 to 1519 Holbein was in Lucerne, and during those years we find Froben employing the younger Holbein, Ambrosius, for example, to illustrate his edition of Sir Thomas More's "Utopia." To Hans Holbein's second stay in Basle, from 1519 to 1526, when he departed for England, belongs the mass of the work which he designed for Froben and the other printers of Basle. As far as Froben is concerned this work consists mainly of title-borders, head-pieces and initials. The Bible illustrations were done for other printers. Decorative motives derived from Italy are common in this work of Holbein's and sometimes he directly copies Italian initials. But it is very definitely German work, is crowded with detail, and tends to be illustrative rather than decorative. On the whole Holbein's work as an illustrator of books is not of his best. The idea of decoration is too often neglected; in the figure initials the attention is attracted to the spirited drawing at the expense of the initial; among the title-borders are some which are little more than collections of separate compartments, as for instance in the "Kebes" border and the "Crowning of Homer." It is typical of the age that most of Holbein's borders represent scenes from classical antiquity, several from Livy and several based on stories from Lucian. Erasmus had translated some Lucian, and the edition printed by Froben was the source of a number of Basle borders. Many of Holbein's designs were cut on metal and not on wood. With a clear impression given by good presswork from these metal blocks the effect is brilliant. The sharp contrast of black and white is in harmony with Froben's somewhat black and heavy romans.

Froben had a sound reputation as a careful printer among the scholars of Europe, thanks chiefly to his connection with Erasmus. "I work neither for riches nor fame, but truth. My labour is spared not night nor day. I deem it an adequate reward if a good author comes into the hands of the public with dignity"; thus he himself described his aim. But what seems to have attracted his fellow printers was his style of book decoration. From 1520 to 1530 and later, Basle borders and initials were being freely copied in many other towns. The Basle influence was particularly strong in Lyons—we find copies of Holbein initials even in the books of Jean de Tournes. Venice, the Rhineland cities, Antwerp and London all produced copies of Froben's work. When the Reformation was finally established in Basle and decorated books went out of fashion or were forbidden, the actual blocks of the Basle printers were in many cases sold abroad. In Paris at one period it almost seemed that the influence of Graf and Holbein might predominate in book decoration. The books of several of the busiest Paris printers, for instance, Pierre Vidoue, Chrestien Wechel and Michel Vascosan, in their early days, are frequently decorated in the manner of Froben's books. In typography we find that a number of Greek founts used at Paris during this period had their origin in Basle. When Erasmus complained to Badius of his want of Greek type, Badius supplied the defect by procuring a fount from Froben. In the end, however, the influence of Geoffroy Tory drove out the Basle decorative blocks, and the best French style of book illustration owed nothing to the German artists. Interesting as Froben's books are they have only to be compared with French books of the following generation for their defects to be realised."

WILLIAM LE QUEUX. †

The death last week of Mr. William Le Queux, the well-known novelist, recalls to my mind the somewhat peculiar way in which I made his acquaintance a little more than a year ago.

I was on my way to Switzerland and the train had just left Boulogne when the dining-car attendant came along the corridor shouting his familiar "premier service, le diner est servi" to which, feeling rather hungry, I responded with alacrity. On arriving in the dining-car I noticed in the seat opposite to mine an elderly gentleman of rubicund countenance and a merry twinkle in his eyes, to whom I wished a good evening, the greeting being courteously returned to me. Just then the car gave a violent jerk and a part of the claret I was in the act of pouring out was spilt on the table-cloth, which drew from me an audible and very emphatic d— that prompted my *vis-à-vis* to comment upon the aggravating

habit of the French railways to put the dining-car in the very front of the train. The conversation having thus been opened we gradually drifted from one subject to another until we came to talk at some length about the moral rectitude or otherwise of certain people whose environments are chiefly to be found in the city, when I casually quoted a passage from one of Le Queux's stories in which the author stated that "they"—meaning the hardfaced—prayed on Sunday for their fellow-men, while preying upon them during the week." Rather to my surprise, my *vis-à-vis*, who had up to this moment remained unknown to me, gave a hearty laugh at this and on my enquiring of him the reason for his hilarity he told me, with a certain reluctance, that he was the author of the words just quoted. I expressed my keen pleasure at making his acquaintance and we continued to talk together to the end of the meal, when we adjourned the meeting to a later hour when the dining-car should be empty and we could have some whiskies and soda *tete-à-tete*. We finally separated long after eleven o'clock and arranged to meet each other at the Bahnhof Buffet at Basle for breakfast the next morning. By the time this was finished Mr. Le Queux and I had become quite good friends and we parted with mutual good wishes for each other's welfare and an early "au revoir," my newly-found friend going to Interlaken while I went on to Lucerne. From then onwards we regularly corresponded and met several times at different places, the erstwhile chance acquaintance having by then ripened into a sincere friendship which, alas, has now been abruptly ended by death.

Mr. Le Queux was a great friend and admirer of our country and spent every year a number of months at such places as Interlaken, Montreux, Mürren, Wengen, the Gurnigel and lately at Engelberg, whose scenic beauties and social attractions he extolled in several brochures, of which the one on Engelberg was printed by our friend the Editor of the *Swiss Observer*.

The deceased was a genial, kindly man, ever ready to do others a good turn, and I, with many others who knew him personally, sincerely mourn his sudden and somewhat unexpected death. R.I.P. A.E.D.

J. H. S. Weekly Letter to his Friends and Compatriots.

This week I have to apologise to my readers in general and to two compatriots in particular. The reason is that a fortnight ago J.J.S. and Dr. Egli were kind enough to take the trouble to write to the *Swiss Observer* in answer to a proposal I made some weeks ago, and, that I did not already last week take an opportunity to answer those two letters.

I intended to do so, but as I also had to redeem an old promise I found last week's letter to have passed beyond the length of what one would call a short article, before I came to take public notice of the two communications.

I think J.J.S. has not quite understood what I was driving at. My experience is commercial, and other spheres of work tell me that there are comparatively few people who ever take to writing to an Embassy or Legation, or even to a higher Official Bureau at home. They seem to believe that those offices are for the Governments and the big business organisations only. But even apart from this fact the truth is, that there are quite a number of items of information which cannot be given so easily by an accredited official as they can by private informants.

In addition to this, as has been very clearly pointed out by Dr. Egli in his letter, there is lots of information wanting which would be appreciated at home. To find and to transmit this kind of information can only be the duty of private citizens or an organisation of private citizens.

I did think on the lines you indicate, Dr. Egli, though I had drawn the circle somewhat wider and indeed, I should be pleased if some members of the Colony would follow your advice and give their names to the Editor of the *Swiss Observer* so that an informal meeting could be called and things talked over.

Now I am going to tell you an open secret. As you know I am very fond of Song and Music, though—but please keep this to yourselves—I don't actually understand very much of either. But to hear our Swiss Choral Society and the Orchestra of the Swiss Institute must be a pleasure at any time even to a dilettante like me, and I am sure most of the members of the Swiss Colony are above that standard. So I hope to see everybody at Wigmore Hall next Saturday, the more so as the concert has been arranged in aid of the "Georges Dimier Fund." Just imagine Father Dimier going to Wigmore Hall to help in some good work and to join in and create happiness, as he always did up to the very last, and then "go thou and do likewise."

To-morrow (Sunday) afternoon the Swiss Gymnastic Society gives its first Display this season. All those who ever have taken part, either as active or passive members, in the organisation and direction of gymnastic training know what a tremendous amount of work lies behind a gymnastic display of two hours' duration. The Swiss Gymnastic Society works under greater difficulties than any "Turnverein" at home and yet they have courage enough to venture a second time a participation in the Federal Festival which will take place at Lucerne next summer. Surely such determination and industry warrant the help and sympathy of the outsiders. Therefore, I hope, the Union Helvetia will be full all day on Sunday. "Frisch auf!"

Yours sincerely, JOHN HENRY.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

In connection with the scholastic programme the following lectures were given by the students during last week:—

Miss Elsy Zeller, Basle: "My Trip to Nice." Mr. Rud. Schönenberger, Zurich: "Queen Elizabeth and her intimate friends." Mr. Walter Sieber, Münsingen: "Anglo-Swiss Political Relations." Mr. Paul E. Schazmann, Geneva: "Life and Circumstances." Mr. Magnus Wehrli, Lausanne: "Africa (Belgian Congo)." Mr. Ad. Kappeli, Lucerne: "Professional Sport." Mr. Fritz Meier, Winterthur: "The Formation of National Wealth." Mr. N. Bernhard, Chur: "Some Remarks Concerning the Fourth Swiss Language." Mr. Max Michel, Basle: "My Impressions of Autumn." Mr. W. H. Buerki, Berne: "Some Impressions of Dear Old London." Mr. Hans Peterhans, Fischbach/Aarg.: "Dictatorship and Democracy."

The debating classes dealt with the following subjects:—

"Should women have careers of their own?" Proposer, Miss Margrit Stoeri, Bilen; Opposer, Miss M. Lany, Zurich/Lausanne.

"Can you praise or condemn the ideas of our modern girls?" Proposer, Mr. M. Renaud, Olten; Opposer, Mr. W. Sieber, Berne."

GEORGES DIMIER FUND CONCERT AT WIGMORE HALL.

SATURDAY, 29th Oct., 1927, 8.15 p.m.

In this charming colony of ours where every day reveals abundance of suggestions, goodwill and enthusiasm to serve this or that cause, is it not very fitting that our social season should open with a charity concert for the benefit of the Georges Dimier Fund? And to add interest to this announcement there is the happy news that two Swiss societies—the Swiss Choral Society and the Swiss Institute Orchestra—are working hand in hand to serve this most deserving cause of our aged countrymen! This in itself is surely a pleasing feature, especially to those members of the Colony who believe in the motto "L'Union fait la Force" and would like to see it applied more often. Those amongst us who are entrusted with the organisation of charity concerts, fêtes, balls, etc., should attempt to keep this before their minds, for undoubtedly the combining of forces helps considerably towards success. It is encouraging to find that the leaders of some of our younger societies are showing such foresight and comprehension of this by co-operating with one another, and their effort is sure to be appreciated. The Wigmore Hall can accommodate many, but an early application for tickets is advisable both in the interests of the organisers and the public. The programme promises well and is sure to provide a very enjoyable evening; its artistic side will not fail to satisfy the most critical.

PUBLICATIONS

of the "Verein für Verbreitung Guter Schriften" and "Lectures Populaires."

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| 137. Erinnerungen einer Grossmutter, von E. B. | 5d. |
| 138. Die Verlobung in St. Domingo, von Heinrich von Kleist | 5d. |
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| 139. Der Schuss von der Kanzel, von C. F. Meyer | 5d. |
| 140. Die Brücke von Rüegsau, von Walter Laedrach | 5d. |
| 140 (Z). Balmberg-Friedli, von Josef Reinhardt | 5d. |
| 141. Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag, von Eduard Mörike | 4d. |
| 141 (Z). Das verlorene Lachen, von Gottfried Keller | 5d. |
| 142. Gabriels Spitz, von Grethe Auer ... | 5d. |
| 142 (BE). Der Fabrikbrand, von J. U. Flutsch | 5d. |
| 143. Der Lauf, von Emil Strauss | 4d. |
| 143 (BE). Der Wildheuer, von Peter Bratschi | 3d. |
| 144. Die Quelle, von Ernst Eschmann | 4d. |
| 144 (Z). Pestalozzi, eine Selbstschau, von Walter Guyer | 1/1 |
| 145. Don Correa, von Gottfried Keller | 4d. |
| 145 (A). Von Frauen, fünf Erzählungen, von Anna Burg | 5d. |
| 146. Porzellanpeter, von Anders Heyster ... | 5d. |

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| 139. (B). Die Frühglocke—Das Ehe-Examen, von Adolf Schmitthenner | 5d. |
| 146. (B). Tante Fritzchen, von Hans Hoffmann | 4d. |
| 146 (C). Hol über! Die weisse Pelzkappe. Der Nachbar, von Meinrad Lienert* | 3d. |
| 147. Joseph—Stephan, von Johannes Jegerlehner | 5d. |
| 147 (C). Meine Kindheit, von Jakob Stutz ... | 6d. |
| 148. Basil der Bucklige, von Wilhelm Sommer | 4d. |
| 149. Geschichten aus der Provence, von Alphonse Daudet | 4d. |
| 150. } Wie Joggeli eine Frau sucht, } Elsi, die seltsame Magd | |
| von Jeremias Gotthelf | 4d. |
| 151. Die Hand der Mutter, von Alfred Fankhauser | 5d. |
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| 153. Martin Birnmann Lebenserinnerungen ... | 5d. |
| 154. Benjamin Franklin, von J. Strebel | 4d. |
| 155. Aus Indien, von Paul Burckhardt** | 6d. |
| 1/1. Sous la Terre, par A. de Vigny | 1/- |
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| 1/3. L'Incendie, par Edouard Rod | 1/- |
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| 2/8. La Fontaine d'amour, par Charles Foley | 6d. |
| 2/9. La Batelière de Postunen, par Eugène Rambert | 6d. |

*Der Berner Verein für Verbreitung guter Schriften bringt in seiner Nr. 146 (Septemberheft 1927) drei Erzählungen des beliebten schweizerischen Dichters Meinrad Lienert von Einsiedeln.

"Hol über!" spielt sich auf der Insel Schwanau im Lowerzersee ab, dem teilweise Schauplatz von Th. Bornhausers Volksschauspiel "Gemma von Arth." Eva, die Tochter des Pächters der Insel, liebt den Flüchtlingsjüngling. Dieser bringt durch eine List den eigensinnigen Alten zur Einwilligung in ihre Vermählung.

"Die weisse Pelzkappe" schildert den Schmerz eines Mädchens, das durch seinen trunksüchtigen Vater um die Weihnachtsfreude betrogen wird. Dieser macht den Fehler wieder gut, indem er seiner Tochter an einem späteren Weihnachtsabend einen erlegten Schneehasen schenkt: daraus wird dann dem "Meireddli," dem Knaben ihrer Meistersleute, eine weisse Pelzkappe verfertigt.

"Der Nachbar" ist eine lustige Buben-geschichte. Ein alter Herr, der "Geschichtschreiber," wird durch allerlei Geräusche aus dem benachbarten Hause einer alten Jungfer gestört. Er veranlasst die Knaben des Ortes zu allerlei Schabernack, der zur Entfernung der Störungen führt. Zuletzt versöhnt der schalkhafte Junggeselle die Nachbarin durch das Geschenk einer Glasglocke mit Goldfischen.

Wir wünschen den durch köstlichen Humor ausgezeichneten Erzählungen Meinrad Lienerts eine freundliche Aufnahme.

**In das ferne Wunderland Indien führt das Oktoberheft des Vereins für Verbreitung guter Schriften. In die Farbensucht des Südens getaucht, erst steht vor uns die üppige Tropenlandschaft mit ihren Palmen und heiligen Wassern und mit dem Gewoge des fremden Volkes. Wir lernen kennen die Herrlichkeit der alten Kaiserpaläste, die Phantastik der heutigen Tempelstätten, den Märchenglanz der Residenz eines indischen Fürsten, und wir begleiten den immer fesseln den Erzähler, dessen Malerauge besonders scharf beobachtet, durch mancherlei lustige Erlebnisse nicht nur, sondern auch zu den fremdartigen Begehungen einer abergläubischen Religion.

Prices include postage; in ordering, simply state number or series, remitting respective amount (preferably in 1/2 stamps) to Publishers, *The Swiss Observer*, 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2.

RESERVE Saturday, 29th October
for the

CONCERT

in aid of the

SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

"GEORGES DIMIER FUND"

at WIGMORE HALL, 36, Wigmore Street, W.1.
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Pour faciliter les arrangements, le Comité recommande aux participants de s'annoncer au plus tôt à M. P. F. Boehringer, 23, Leonard St. E.C.2. (Téléphone: Clerkenwell 9595).

Ordre du Jour:

Procès-verbal.	Démotions.
Admissions.	Banquet Annuel.
	Divers.

SWISS RIFLE ASSOCIATION

THE
Final Shoot "Endschiessen"

will take place at the **HENDON RANGE** on
Saturdays-Sundays, 15-16, 22-23, 29-30 October.

SKILL and HANDICAP COMPETITIONS

on the 100 yards and 300 metre Targets.
ALL MEMBERS AND FRIENDS CORDIALLY INVITED.

The **ANNUAL DINNER and BALL** combined with
Prize Distribution, will be held on **THURSDAY,**
NOVEMBER 17th, at the Union Helvetia.

THE COMMITTEE.

Divine Services.

EGLISE SUISSE (1762), 79, Endell St., W.C.2
(Langue française.)

Dimanche, 23 Octobre, 11h.—M. W. M. Leinhardt
(par échange).
6.30.—M. R. Hoffmann-de Visme.
7.30.—Chœur.

Dimanche, 30 Octobre, 6.30.—Culte liturgique et musical.

SCHWEIZERKIRCHE

(Deutschschweizerische Gemeinde)

St. Anne's Church, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.

Sonntag, den 23. Oktober, 11 Uhr vorm.: Predigt.
7 Uhr abends: Predigt. 8 Uhr: Probe des Kirchenchors.

We should like to draw our members' and friends' attention to the fact that the **Rev. Bishop A. Bury, D.D.,** Rector of our Church and until recently Bishop for Northern and Central Europe, has kindly offered to preach to our Congregation to-morrow, **Sunday,** at 11 a.m. It is hoped that our members will attend in large numbers and that they will bring along their English friends.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Sunday, Oct. 23rd, at 3 p.m. and 8.30 p.m.—SWISS GYMNASIUM SOCIETY: Display, followed by a Dance, at the Union Helvetia Club, 1, Gerrard Place, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.1.

Wednesday, Oct. 26th, at 8 p.m. sharp.—SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY: Whist Drive, admission 1/6.

Saturday, Oct. 29th, at 8.15 p.m.—SWISS CHORAL SOC. and SWISS INSTITUTE ORCHESTRA: Concert at Wigmore Hall in aid of the "George Dimier Fund."

Tuesday, Nov. 1st, at 7 p.m.—CITY SWISS CLUB: Monthly Meeting at Pagan's (see Advert.).

Saturday, Nov. 5th, at 6.45 p.m.—SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY: Cinderella Dance at Midland Grand Hotel, St. Pancras, N.W.

Thursday, Nov. 17th at 8 p.m.—SWISS RIFLE ASSOC.: Annual Dinner and Ball combined with Prize Distribution at the Union Helvetia, 1, Gerrard Place, W.1.

Friday, Nov. 25th, at 7 p.m.—CITY SWISS CLUB: Annual Banquet and Ball at the Victoria Hotel, Northumberland Avenue, W.C.

Wednesday, Dec. 28th.—A.O.F.B. SWISS VAT: Xmas Dinner and Ball at the Café Monaco, Piccadilly Circus, W.1, under the patronage of Sir Alfred and Lady Frigg (tickets 12/6 each).

SWISS CHORAL SOCIETY.—Rehearsals every Friday evening. Every Swiss heartily invited to attend. Particulars from the Hon. Secretary, Swiss Choral Society, 74, Charlotte Street, W.1.

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