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DOMENICO FONTANA.*

Architect and Engineer, 1543-1607.

In the year 1585 there ascended the pontifical throne, the Cardinal di Montalto under the name of Sixtus V. Though of stern character, and according to some historians, far more addicted to using the gallows than did secular monarchs; he favoured building operations upon a large scale, in doing which he was ably seconded by a distinguished artist from the then Province of Como, nowadays part of the Swiss Canton of Tessin.

Domenico Fontana was born near Melide on the Lake of Lugano and at the age of twenty he went to Rome to join his brother Gian who was an architect and engineer of no mean ability himself, having to his credit such works as the building of the Palazzo Giustiniani, the Pauline Fountains, and later the Sixtine Bridge at Rome; the Palazzo Gori, façade of the Church of St. Martin at Siena, the rebuilding of the Aqueduct of Augustus; the building of the Aqueduct of Frascati and the dikes of Tivoli, Ravenna and Ferrara.

Under the tutorship of the elder brother young Domenico soon gave promise of excelling him, for he had an inborn genius for architecture and mathematics, and Cardinal di Montalto gave him a first commission to build a chapel in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore as well as a small palace in the garden of that basilica. The Pope Gregory XIII., jealous of these efforts on the part of the Cardinal to perpetuate his name as a restorer of the beauty of ancient Rome, deprived Montalto of his Cardinal's stipend upon the pretext that a man of such vast wealth as the Cardinal must be, needed no money from the Church to which he planned making such magnificent gifts. Montalto, who was not a man of large means, found himself greatly embarrassed; but Fontana, grateful for his patronage, advanced more than a thousand Roman écus (5000 francs) from his own savings in order to complete the work.

This proof of loyalty and affection was not forgotten and when Montalto became Pope, Domenico Fontana was elected papal architect.

For many centuries there had lain neglected in Nero's circus, a gigantic obelisk of red granite from the mountains near Thebes, said to have been dedicated by Sesostrius, King of Egypt, to the sun.

It was originally brought to Rome by Caligula and raised in honour of Augustus and Tiberius; but afterward overthrown by the Barbarian hordes when they laid waste the beautiful Imperial city.

It was deeply imbedded in the earth and its estimated weight was over a million pounds.

Sixtus V., reviving imposing plans in his mind, conceived the idea of having it lifted and erected in the great Square in front of St. Peter's.

Domenico Fontana, summoned with other distinguished architects and mathematicians to a council at the Vatican, presented an ingenious working model in which an obelisk of lead, by means of an arrangement of pulleys and windlass, rose and was lowered again. None of the other architects would undertake the task upon his own responsibility, and when the Pope appointed two of them to assist Fontana in the experiment, he proudly refused to share the risk or the glory, since the only feasible project had originated with him.

Sixtus V. ordered him to begin first with a smaller obelisk formerly part of the Mausoleum of Augustus.

We are not given definite details of Fontana's process by Angelo Baroffio in his "Memorie storiche dei Paesi e delle Terre costituenti il Cantone del Ticino," from which source we draw most of these facts.

The historian contents himself with stating that this clever feat of engineering began by trussing the great obelisk in matting, jute, wood and iron stays, so that it finally exceeded the weight of a million and a half pounds.

Naturally such unheard of proceedings drew vast crowds of people to the neighbourhood of the circus to see the work carried out; but Sixtus V. had forbidden all ingress to the enclosure and had prohibited all noise under penalty of death, and to this end had placed a sinister warning nearby; a gibbet ready for the immediate hanging of any offenders.

Before setting to work, the good Fontana asked Sixtus V. for his blessing, which the Pope gladly accorded; but he warned the daring engineer, that if the undertaking failed, his life would be forfeit.

Thus the gallows was a threat and incentive to the architect, as well as a check to the populace.

Fontana, thus forewarned, prepared swift saddle-horses at every gate of Rome in order to fly from the Pope's wrath, if need arose.

It was the 30th day of April, 1586, when he began his herculean task.

At the blast of a trumpet 900 workmen and 140 horses began pulling, and at the sound of a bell, placed in a wooden tower which rose above the mechanism, all pulling ceased. In three tremendous pulls the obelisk rose three hand's breadths from the ground, where it had lain for so many centuries; the earth shook, the wooden tower creaked, but the work was not disturbed, and to celebrate the happy course of the enterprise, the cannon from the Castle of Sant' Angelo fired salvos of joy.

*This is another delightful article reprinted from the September issue of the "Swiss Monthly." (Published at Lausanne, 10/- per annum).

On the 13th of June the obelisk glided upon its rollers, and on the 10th of September it was raised in place upon the pedestal prepared for its reception in the centre of the great square facing St. Peter's.

The rejoicing was general; the artillery boomed anew, the workmen, intoxicated with delight, lifted Fontana in their arms, and carried him in triumph through the various quarters of Rome to the sound of trumpets and cymbals.

As a recompense Pope Sixtus made this excellent artist a Knight of the Golden Spur, gave him 5000 golden scudi as a gift, and an annual pension of 2000 more; while upon the base of the obelisk he caused to be chiselled; "Domenicus Fontana ex pago novocomensis transtulit et erexit."

Furthermore the Pope had a bronze medal coined, 37 millimetres in diameter, upon one side of which was the effigy of the celebrated architect, and around it the inscription: "Domenicus Fontana a Melino novocomen. agri." and on the other a great obelisk with this epigraph: "Caesaris obeliscum mire magnit. asportavit atque an. D. MDLXXXVI."

To further demonstrate his engineer's ability, Sixtus V. had him place the original experimental obelisk from Augustus' mausoleum in the centre of the Square of Santa Maria Maggiore; and two others unearthed elsewhere were placed one in the Square of San Giovanni Laterano, and the other in the Piazza del Popolo. To celebrate this another medal was struck.

In the years 1588-1590 Fontana finished the great dome of St. Peter's with Jacopo della Porta's assistance. Another of his works was the façade of San Giovanni Laterano facing Santa Maria Maggiore, the loggia of the Benedictine, the Vatican Library intersecting the court of Bramante, and the building of the Palace called Monte Cavallo on the Quirinal.

The excavation of the side of Monte Quirinal toward the Forum and the Strada Pia, already begun during the pontificate of Gregory XIII., and the Forum itself from the Baths of Constantine leading to the great colossi of Castor and Pollux were also the work of Fontana, as well as the restoration of Trajan's column and the great Fountain of Acqua Felice for which he sought springs in the Alban hills and brought the waters 23 miles in aqueducts for the Quirinal and the fountain at the Piazza delle Terme.

The Strada Pia was re-named Via Sistina in honor of Sixtus, during whose pontificate "The Eternal City forthwith doubled itself" as one chronicler avers.

The two celebrated colossal groups of two heroes or demi-gods breaking horses called "The Horse Tamers," Fontana brought from the entrance to the Baths of Diocletian and placed in the Square of the Quirinal, for centuries called "Monte Cavallo" from them.

Here Fontana continued the work upon the pontifical palace begun in 1574 under Gregory XIII., as a summer palace for the Popes on account of its elevation and the freshness of its air.

To it frequent additions were made by subsequent popes and it is to-day the Royal Palace.

There is a story that Sixtus V. desirous of opening a wider vista with a broad street leading directly to St. Peter's, found that it would be necessary to demolish a quantity of buildings—palaces, houses, pavilions, gardens, etc.

He therefore sent to Fontana and showing him a plan, asked him point blank how many men he would need to clear the place thoroughly? "I should ask your Holiness for one month's time and one hundred men."

"Good," said the Pope, "but if you took two hundred men you would be content with fifteen days, would you not?"

"Yes, Holy Father."

"In consequence in eight days with four hundred men you could do it also."

"Without doubt."

"Let us put eight hundred men."

"Then, four days would suffice," said Fontana who knew the Pope.

"But if you were to take fifteen or sixteen hundred you could finish the work in two days?"

At a nod of assent from the architect, the Pope added: "Well, then take three thousand men, four thousand if needful, and have everything done in twenty-four hours!"

Imagine the surprise of the people living there when they saw their gardens and property invaded by an army of workmen, who commenced by knocking down all the boundary walls without so much as 'by your leave', and left the owners barely time to carry away their portable belongings and furniture.

The greater part of these buildings belonged to the Roman aristocracy, to relatives of cardinals and even to the cardinals themselves. Sixtus V. shrewdly estimated that if he delayed he would be so overwhelmed with pleas that the street would never have been opened.

Many other works of construction were planned, when the death of Sixtus V. cut them short. Two popes followed in quick succession that same year, and the third, Clement VIII., unfortunately listening to envious rivals of the great architect, suddenly accused him of malversation of funds demanding an accounting of his administration.

These accusations were the more astounding, directed as they were against an artist of such eminence, who had given proof of such disinterestedness in the time of Cardinal di Montalto.

But machinations of jealous rivals failed to tarnish Fontana's fame and good name. The viceroy of Naples hastened to secure his services and he was appointed Royal architect and engineer-in-chief to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

He went to Naples in 1592 and married there, Canals which preserved the province, called the Land of Labor, from floods, and a road along the sea-coast and other works, occupied him until he began building the royal palace and the Medina Fountain. He was working on plans for building the port of Naples, afterward carried out under Pierre d'Aragon by Francesco Picchiati, when he died in the year 1607, aged 64 years.

His only written work was an in-folio volume entitled: "Del modo tenuto nel trasportare l'obelisco Vaticano, e delle fabbriche di nostro Signore Sisto V. fatto del Cavalier Domenico Fontana."

It was printed at Rome in 1590 with 19 engravings by Boniface da Sebenico; it is curious as indicating the methods which Fontana was forced in a way to create, since the ancients left us no documents upon this subject.

SCHWEIZER BUNDESLIED

von Robert Faesi.

Dank Gott und guten Mächten,
Die uns auf diesen Grund gestellt!
Hier wollen wir uns flechten—
Ein Volk von freien Rechten—
Zum engen Bund in weiter Welt.

Du hegst uns, Muttererde,
Du ziehst hinan uns, Vaterland,
Dass jung auf altem Herde
Des Lebens Flamme werde.—
Heut liegt dein Los in unsrer Hand!

Mit unsrer Hand erbaun wir
Und türmen hoch dich, Schweizerhaus!
Treu deinen Pfeilern traun wir,
Froh von den Zinnen schaun wir
Und ruhn in deinen Gräften aus!

A free rendering of Robert Faesi's Bundeslied.

Now God be thanked, and all good Powers, who
placed us on this Land!

Here let us weld this folk of ours into one little Band.

That o'er the world, though wide it be, for Freedom's
rights may stand.

O Fatherland! Thou bidst us raise in Thee, Dear
Mother-Earth!

A Switzer's House, that Thou mayest praise, when we
have proved our worth,

By keeping bright the Flame of Life, on each re-
curring Hearth.

Leave now thy Fate in our sure Hand! with confidence
we place

Each well driven Pile (as Thou hast planned); then
soaring into Space,

We crown with Joy the topmost Stone: — So rest in
Thine Embrace.

The original (German) text, written by the well-known author, Prof. Dr. Robert Faesi, appeared in the 1st of August number of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" which paper has kindly placed at our disposal for publication an English version rendered by Mr. D. B. McLaren.

THE "PROMENADES."

By Sophie Wyss, the Swiss Soprano.

In their "Promenade Concerts" at the Queen's Hall, Londoners have something unique in music making. I once told some friends in Geneva about this enterprise, and they would not believe me. A concert where one could walk about during the performance? Ridiculous! A concert given by the same Director and Orchestra every night of the week except Sundays, for about half the year on end? Impossible! And an entrance fee of two shillings? *Epatant!*

"To us in Switzerland the affair would indeed seem fantastic. Fancy asking Ensermet or Andrae to give Wagner on Mondays, Haydn and Handel on Tuesdays, Mozart on Wednesdays, Verdi and Rossini on Thursdays, Moderns on Fridays and a mixture of all on Saturdays! And to keep that up for months on end! They would reply that it was impossible—and so it is, from their point of view. They are only occupied with the cream of productions; in London we have to think also of the milk. There are no State subsidies here, no Municipal aids. Music has to stand on its own feet, unaided. It is left alone to compete with the Cinema and the Cabaret in the race for the people's luxury money. And in this very fierce struggle, the Promenades are the vanguard and bear the brunt of the first attack.

It is extremely important that they should continue to flourish, for they are the recruiting ground for the music lovers of next year. This greatest City in the World's history is backward in the art of music, and recruiting is necessary indeed. The work is carried on by the repetition of the best known and best loved classics. These in themselves are the best possible recruiting agents. They are the best foundation, and on the whole they suffer least from technical errors of erring humanity. Indeed, when the history of the Renaissance in Music

in England comes to be written in about a century's time, this effort of Sir Henry Wood and his Orchestra will probably be regarded as one of the chief agents.

But in spite of the great output of music, and the reasonable charges, the enterprise would not succeed without a head—someone spectacular, indefatigable, and soundly *musicien*. In Sir Henry Wood the "Promenades" have all this, and more besides. I have known him for some months, but have never heard him utter a single word that was connected with music. He seems to me to be always concentrated upon his work, the professional, *par exemple*. He has also what the Americans call "an old-world air" which fits the position finely. Last week I saw Sir Henry lead upon the platform a British Ballad Singer, and he did it with such an air and a grace that one would have thought it was Patti herself. Personally, I rather like the old-fashioned habit of leading a lady on to the Concert Platform which still obtains in London. On my first visit here, being engaged to sing in one of London's enormous theatres, I had to take the arm of a fine great Bandmaster. His uniform, his figure and his medals were a source of great comfort to me in that nervous moment, so much so that I almost forgave him for the "Death-March-from-Saul" kind of tempo to which the stern and conscientious man pinned my poor trills and tried desperately to be gay!

To return to the Promenades. All kinds of artists are engaged. Some good, others—not so good. The persistent patron of the "Proms." must have heard all the artists resident in the country. And there are so many that it is difficult for newcomers, whoever they may be, to be heard. Indeed, I know a Swiss singer who has been unsuccessfully trying for nine whole months to obtain the favour of an audition from the august bodies who control the engagements. It would be invidious to mention a few names of Promenade artists, where so many are excellent, but I cannot finish this article without recalling that of the pianist, Orloff. His clarity, his light, quick touch, and the breath of humour and glory in his musical outlook, combine to make him an ideal exponent of a Mozart concerto. Then there is Hislop, with the shadows of great Opera Houses so obviously and delightfully mixed in his personality; and Austral, the soprano of the lovely notes, singing in no recognisable language.

But it is not the Artists who make the Promenades. It is, as I have said, that fierce spirit of organization and commerce that impels the English business man to work and work until he can produce something cheaper than anyone else. This is at the back of the success. And at the front of it, there is of course Sir Henry Wood. Sir Henry, who rehearses and conducts more concerts than any other man in his position; and who yet has time to bring his creative ability in music to re-score various classics for modern purposes; who has a heart big enough to help and encourage new-comers; and who, for his holidays, goes and conducts more concerts in California! Indeed, when one says "Promenade," the word is in itself a toast to Sir Henry!

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

A special General Meeting was held on Wednesday, August 25th, at 1, Gerrard Place, W., with a view to discussing and reaching a decision regarding the purchase of an 8½ years' lease of Swiss House, Fitzroy Square, W., offered to the Society on very favourable conditions by its Trustees.

The President, Mr. A. C. Stahelin, opened the Meeting at 9 p.m. by laying before the Members all the facts which recommended to the Committee the advisability of giving this proposition their serious consideration. The chief one was, that owing to the popularity of the Day School, which is now in its 4th year, having continually increased, i.e. the daily attendance amounting now to over 150, the accommodation at 1 & 2, Henrietta Street has become too small, and therefore, larger premises have to be found, as the Society do not wish to limit the number of students. For several months past the Committee have endeavoured to find better accommodation, and this offer was, in every way, the most favourable they had received.

The Swiss House consists of numerous and spacious rooms. After placing sufficient of them at the disposal of the School, there still remains others which can be used as Offices, Club and Reading Rooms for the benefit of the whole Society, whilst also all Meetings can be held there.

After a lengthy debate which, however, was throughout in favour of the idea, the Meeting unanimously decided to authorise the Committee to effect the purchase, firstly, for the purpose of furthering the S.M.S.'s Educational Activities, and secondly, to make use of the said premises for the business and social purposes of the Society. O.A.J.

There is an old saying that "All the world loves a wedding," and no exception was proved to this rule when, on Friday the 3rd inst., the Committee and students of the S.M.S.'s School, together with their friends, enjoyed a Soirée at No. 1, Gerrard Place, W., to celebrate the marriage of Miss Mann and Mr. Masterman Smith, teachers at the Day School, which happy event took place some little time ago.

After the supper Mr. A. C. Stahelin, the President, addressed a few very appropriate words to the gathering and presented to the happy bridal couple a Silver Tray from the Educational Committee, intended to express the appreciation felt for their valuable services in the Day School and the warm wishes and congratulations of the whole Society for their future happy life together. Then both Mr. and Mrs. Smith were toasted in true matrimonial fashion.

Mr. Masterman Smith, in his reply, intimated his thanks and incidentally his happiness, and dwelt on his work and interest in the school. Space was then quickly cleared for those who were eager to give vent to their feelings by dancing on this happy occasion. For all the music and singing entertainment those present were indebted to the kind endeavours of the Students, who contributed in a true hearty Swiss manner, and their musical efforts were very much appreciated.

Well, it would be a good thing if the bonds of matrimony appealed to a few more in the Swiss Colony, and each time such jolly evenings were to be shared and enjoyed. A.J.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

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

Mr. Wilhelm Lanz, Berne: "Bookkeeping in a Factory." Miss Martha Schoch, Zurich: "Welcome for Mr. Masterman." Mr. Max Roessler, Rorschach: "A few reflections on the possibility of a new European war." Mr. Robert Eibel, Zurich: "Siteraria, A.G., U.S.A." Miss Bertha Meyer, Lotzwil: "A simple Fairy Tale." Mr. Heinrich Zublin, Glarus: "Travelling." Mr. Emil Fais, Bern: "Market, Exchange, Fairs-Exhibition." Mr. Gottlieb Mosimann, Blankenburg: "Alsace-Lorraine." Mr. Robert Eibel, Zurich: "Salt." Mr. Fernand Boss, Bienne: "Aviation." Miss Anny Aeberhard: "Why I like to be a girl." Miss Frieda Rihs: "Swiss National Costumes."

The debating classes dealt with the following subjects:—

"Has the League of Nations justified its existence?" Proposer, Mr. Paul Haeny, Koelliken; Opposer, Mr. W. Lanz, Berne.

"Which is preferable: Mixed or separated Education?" Proposer, Mr. R. R. Riethmann, Zollikon; Opposer, Mr. Willy Kern, Berne.

"Is Cinema an art?" Proposer, Mr. Olivero; Opposer, Mr. Eibel.

SWISS GYMNASIUM SOCIETY.

JUNIOR SECTION.

There is nothing better for cultivating a healthy body and mind in our youngsters, than an hour's physical drill and exercises under expert tuition and personal supervision. This is offered by the newly formed junior section of the Swiss Gymnasium Society, which meets every Sunday morning at 10.30 in the gymnasium at 74, Charlotte Street, W. 1. Any boy from 11 upwards may join; there are no fees, the only conditions being punctual attendance and submission to the necessary discipline.

Swiss Girls and the July Examination.

We notice with pleasure in the list just issued by the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board the name of Dorothea Pfirter who obtained a higher certificate with distinction in French. We extend our congratulations to the proud father, Mr. H. Pfirter, all the more as his younger daughter, Hilda, also successfully passed the matriculation examination last July.

The Swiss Yodlers

(Treble Quartette) are coming!

Please reserve the
22nd October, Union Helvetia Club,
1, Gerrard Place, W.1.

23rd October, Wigmore Hall,
36, Wigmore Street, W.1.

24th October, Swiss Club, 'Schweizerbund',
74, Charlotte Street, W.1.

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Swiss Volksongs

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Dimanche, 12 Septembre 11h.—M. R. Hoffmann-de Visme.
"Venez, car tout est prêt."—Luc 14-17.

Dimanche, 19 Septembre—Jeûne Fédéral. Services spéciaux matin et soir, suivis de Ste. Cène.

N.B.—Les cultes du soir reprendront régulièrement à partir du 19 ct.

BAPTEME

Evelyn Marguerite SCHAEFFELBAUM, née le 25 Mai, 1926, fille de Henri et de Clara née Baerlocher, de St. Gall—le 8 Août, 1926.

MARIAGE.

Adolphe BAECHLER, de Kreuzlingen (Thurgovie) et Lilian Rose COOCH, de Burnham—le 21 Août, 1926.

Pour tous renseignements concernant actes pastoraux, etc., prière de s'adresser à M. R. Hoffmann-de Visme, 102, Hornsey Lane, N.6 (Téléphone: Mountview 1798). Heure de réception à l'Eglise: Mercredi 10.30 à 12h.

SCHWEIZERKIRCHE

(Deutschschweizerische Gemeinde)

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

Sonntag, den 12. September.—Gottesdienst.

Sprechstunden: Dienstag 12-1 in der Kirche.
Mittwoch 3-5 im 'Foyer Suisse.'

Anfragen wegen Amtshandlungen etc. an Pfr. C. Th. Hahn, 8, Chiswick Lane, W.4.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Sunday, September 19th, at 3.30.—SWISS Y.M.C.A.: Celebration of the Eidg. Dank-, Buss & Bettag, at the Foyer Suisse, 15, Upper Bedford Place, W.C.1.

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.

SWISS RIFLE ASSOCIATION.—Every Saturday and Sunday (weather permitting) Shooting Practice at the Range, Hendon (opposite Old Welsh Harp). Lunch provided on Sundays.