

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band: - (1930)
Heft: 430

Artikel: Ticinese architects and sculptors in past centuries [to be continued]
Autor: Janner, A.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-687403>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 23.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Motorists, used to driving in large cities with frightfully congested traffic conditions, probably do have better judgment "thrust upon them" as it were, than Motorists who drive in open country as a rule. At the time, I should like to see a match between an average London amateur driver and an amateur Swiss Motorist driving up some Mountain Passes or along some Swiss Country road, lined with small trees on both sides and having pretty frequent and nasty curves. I think the Swiss would win easily and again, because in that case he would be more used to it. I think therefore, that comparisons are odious.

Gear-box changing in England, and in London too, is very often quite as bad as any I have heard in Switzerland. Besides, our Swiss Motorists mostly use high powered American cars, necessitating far less gear changing than do our Morris and other British cars of lesser horsepower. I know something about gear-changing, running a very highly geared car which necessitates gear changing very often. Gear-changing, of course, ought to be studied, because it is not motorizing, I think, if you simply get into your seat, press a button and then have nothing more to do than to direct the steering wheel. There is much more fun if you help your engine along by intelligent gear manipulations and so try getting the best out of the horses under your unified control. What?

Try as I will, I have to come back to Winter-Sports, simply because there is absolutely nothing else to be read in the British Press just now. I mean, in articles dealing with Switzerland. So I will end up by the following, which may interest some of our younger and some of our older readers!

The Fascination of Night Life at a Winter Sports Resort:

Aberdeen Press and Journal, 3rd Jan.

No one planning to go to Switzerland for a holiday need fear that they will not enjoy themselves socially, whatever they may expect of the world of sport. For it is the custom to-day for each big hotel to appoint a host and hostess to look after the guests and arrange for their entertainment. And young couples and girls travelling together should introduce themselves to these people on the evening of their arrival, when they will soon find themselves taking part in all that is going.

A committee, composed of guests, is usually formed by the host to arrange the weekly programme of entertainments. This will include fancy dress dances, spot dances, favour dances and balloon dances.

There are ballroom gymkhanas. It is no easy task to blow a champagne cork along the floor in and out of a row of bottles, or to bat a balloon round the room with your head, or yet win a tug-of-war in stocking feet!

Ticinese Architects and Sculptors in Past Centuries.

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

How numerous are the Swiss, and even the Ticinesi, who do not know of the great and glorious contribution given by the Ticino to the field of arts! How many who, when fulfilling a long cherished dream, go to Italy and are dumb with admiration at the magnificence of so many majestic churches and so many superb palaces, and do not know—which would make their admiration greater still—that many of those monuments are the work of their compatriots.

And yet it is so. It is the Ticinesi who built in Venice many of the finest monumental structures of the Renaissance and of the Baroque period. It is the Ticinesi who followed Bramante and Michelangelo as architects-in-chief for the building of the Cathedral of St. Peter in Rome and were, therefore, officially acknowledged as the foremost architects in Italy. Ticinesi worked for the Duomo of Milan, the Certosa of Pavia and the Cathedral of Como. It was they who brought to Genoa the first tidings of the Renaissance. In Naples they conceived some of the finest monuments and in Sicily they left a number of the most beautiful statues.

If we look at these artists as a whole we find in them certain characteristics, common to them all, which distinguish them completely from the artists from Tuscany. They are, first of all, less individualistic than the Tuscans—the Ticinesi nearly always come on the scene as whole families, to work in the same town, at the same building. Then the Ticinesi are modest men, who do not pose, who do not seek after easy notoriety with strange and new attitudes, which however was often done by the Tuscans. They are, further, men of rural upbringing, who work more for the sake of the beautiful and difficult task to be overcome than for personal prestige of vane-glory. History has very little to say about them and it is necessary to search the most minute chronicles of the time in order to find their names, which are usually come across only due to some task they

On other nights there will be ice carnivals, fancy dress dances on a rink which is lit by Chinese lanterns and enlivened by the hotel band and a huge bonfire at the side. Displays in figure and stunt skating are usually given during the evening by the professionals.

When the moon is full the committee will ask the railway officials to run a midnight "express" up to the ski-ing grounds, and then you will realise how different the familiar slopes can be in a different light, whether you traverse them on skis or on a luge.

In some places you will go tailing at this hour. And this is a sport in which everyone can join, for little or no skill is required.

A race meeting in the ballroom makes an uproarious evening. Frantic jockeys urging their frantic "horses" (the ladies) to cut three yards of half-inch tape with a pair of curved nail scissors.

Films are shown about once a week. Often they depict ski-ing expeditions, and then the audience becomes talkative. The Swiss conjuror who appears from time to time and talks a mixture of English, French and German, leaves the most incredulous gasping, and finishes the evening telling fortunes at five or ten francs apiece.

These entertainments usually terminate about 10.30, but dancing continues for those who wish it in many places till one or two in the morning.

Prizes are awarded for all competitions. They are supplied by an amusement fund to which the visitors contribute and usually take the form of a cheque on the local shops, a very popular scheme since something useful to one's sport can be bought.

The programmes are arranged so that events at the various hotels do not clash. Thus, if your favourite entertainment is a fancy dress dance, you will be able to attend one almost every evening of the week in places like Murren and Wengen by going the round of the hotels. Some of them charge a few francs entrance fee, others admit free.

As regards dress, ladies will find four evening gowns quite sufficient. It is not necessary to wear a different one each evening. A fancy dress is most useful, but many are made up on the spur of the moment from anything the hotel can provide or one can borrow. The village hairdressers keep a varied stock of costumes and masks for hire. Occasionally there will be an impromptu fancy dress dance when the guests are allowed a quarter of an hour to rush upstairs, don fancy dress and return to the ballroom. On these occasions bought costumes are often barred, so that it is as well to take out with you a few oddments which will serve in this emergency.

had been allotted, or some work which they had done. It is perhaps that the Ticinesi always felt rather mountaineers in the midst of the others, more vivacious, populations of Italy and therefore they shunned the noisy society and the futile exhibitions. They preferred to live in the midst of their own small families, educating their children to their own calling, initiating them when still quite young to the use of the chisel, of the compass and of the square.

The Ticinesi were incomparably good technical men—in designing a palace they saw at a glance all the technical difficulties to overcome, they knew how each stone would have to be set, they knew what mechanical means were necessary. There is no difficulty connected with their calling which frightens them—they know not only art but also the manual work of the builder—before being architects they have themselves been only ordinary stonemasons. Even the most humble but so essential of work is not despised by them, on the contrary they value it as much as their own. If need be they could themselves take up again the hammer and the trowel and perhaps even make up the mortar, to make sure that it will set well. For their art is merely the natural development of a certain manual ability, because even the ordinary work they carry out with the conception of art.

They emigrate at twelve to fifteen years of age and go with their father to work at some building, then their inborn artistic taste and their technical genius make architects-in-chief and sculptors of them. It is in this way that we find already in the 13th century masters from the Lugano countryside as architects-in-chief for the finest buildings of that time. Adamo, from Arogno, reconstructs the cathedral of Trent and creates the very beautiful apsis;—Bono, from Bissone, sculptured the portal of the cathedral of Parma, and we find the masters from the Lugano neighbourhood as architects and contractors for the two greatest buildings of Lombardy, viz. the Duomo of Milan and the Certosa of Pavia. If the records of the building of the Duomo are consulted one only finds names of Ticinesi, and we know them to be our compatriots because the village of origin is always added, like Martino from Arogno, Giorgio from Maroggia, Giovanni from Bissone and in-

MUSIC IN THE COLONY.

It is good news to hear that that old servant of the Colony, the Swiss Institute Orchestra, is shortly to emerge from a retirement which has been all too long.

This band of enthusiasts, it appears, has been steadily engaged since its last public appearance, in strengthening its numbers, improving technique, and indeed generally setting its house in order; and there can be no doubt that the concert which is to be given on February 12th at Conway Hall, will surpass anything it has hitherto achieved.

Only those who have tried to run an amateur orchestra can have any conception of the difficulties that attend the task. Of these, undoubtedly the greatest is that of enlisting and keeping together a sufficient number of players, each having the requisite technical command of his or her instrument. To this must be added the high cost of maintaining a library, suitable accommodation for rehearsals, and innumerable other things without which an orchestra cannot exist.

This being so, it is the more remarkable that the Swiss Orchestra should be in such fine form as it showed when I was a privileged visitor at a recent rehearsal. Under the baton of that genial disciplinarian, Mr. E. P. Dick, the players showed a real and increasing knowledge of their job, and were quite obviously enjoying themselves.

By the way, I wonder why it is that the Swiss do not show more eagerness to join this excellent little band. In and about London there must of course be a great many who play one instrument or another, and Swiss House, where the Orchestra is established, is not difficult to get at. Clearly they do not realise what a chance they are missing.

But to return to the forthcoming concert.

In addition to orchestral work, I am told that choral music will be given by a double quartette of the Swiss Choral Society, and there will be two soloists whose names I am not yet permitted to divulge, but of whom I may at least say that one is a soprano who has already established herself in the hearts of a Swiss audience, while the other is unquestionably one of the greatest English baritone-basses that the present generation has heard.

Further information concerning the programme will be made public in good time.

A word as to the venue—Conway Hall.

The somewhat austere facade, tucked away in a corner of London's oldest square, gives little indication of the beauty within. Here, surely, is a fit home for music; indeed world famous artists constantly draw there crowds larger than the place will hold.

The very latest addition to the concert halls of London, it embodies all that science and art

numerable others. The Certosa of Pavia, also, has been conceived by a Ticinese and Ticinesi, among others Marco from Carona, followed one another in the leadership of the work. At the same time they were working in Siena, Genoa, Venice, Milan, etc.

But let us come to the most marvellous period of the Italian Renaissance and let us see what share the Ticinesi have had. The Solari family, from Carona, goes and establishes itself in Venice towards 1450 and, due to their origin, they are there called the "Lombardi." The older members are ordinary stone-masons and stone-cutters but the sons, who have treasured the teachings of their fathers, and in whom the genius of their stock has, so to say, come to life, become great artists, the foremost architects of Venice. In this way Pietro Lombardo creates the finest churches and the finest palaces of the Renaissance. He erected, among other buildings, the school of St. Mark, the palace Vedramin-Calergi, the palace Gussone, the church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli, the church of San Giobbe. And among his monuments we will mention, very beautiful, that to Dante at Ravenna. "It seems (says Corrado Ricci, an Italian Historian of art), that his artistic genius is fluttering over every square rod of Venice."

The new style of architecture was called "Lombard" style just to indicate who has been the real originator of it. Peter Lombardo was followed by his two sons Antonio and Tullio for the completion of the buildings already begun and they carried on the work with no less genius than their father. By Tullio is the very beautiful dead warrior "Guiderello," which is in the museum of Ravenna. They were extraordinary artists these Lombardi, architects and sculptors at one and the same time, they themselves sculptured the statues and the monuments required to decorate the churches they were building. They could handle the chisel with the same ability with which they were handling the compass—they were self-sufficing in all that was necessary to their calling. And in this sober art are to be found certain somewhat austere characteristics which seem to demonstrate the mountain origin of the family.

(to be continued.)