

A few "Ticinesi" worth talking about [to be continued]

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A FEW "TICINESI" WORTH TALKING ABOUT.

Text of a short talk with special reference to architects and sculptors, delivered before the "Nouvelle Société Helvétique" (London Group)

on November 19th, 1937, by J. EUSEBIO.

We "Ticinesi" are not a modest lot. We like to brag. This evening it will be my endeavour to find a reason for this bragging. I hope you will excuse me if, in order to do so I shall take you back a few hundred years.

Some of you may already feel disappointed for although I have set myself the task to talk to you of art I lack the flowing mane, the huge cravat and — what is more important — an adequate knowledge of my subject matter. I had hoped to back my remarks by lantern slides, but it appears that a suitable collection is not available.

The Canton Ticino as you know, is a small territory and numbers within its borders barely 160,000 inhabitants. But like Switzerland, of which it is proud to be part, it has since times immemorial sent forth into the wide world a steady stream of men and women to work, and build a home, where Nature is less niggard in her gifts.

It is thus that the Canton Ticino has given Italy, Russia, Austria, Spain, Hungary, Poland and other countries masters in the art of sculpture, architecture, painting, decorating, porcelain sculpture. Of a number of these, and of what they have done, I shall tell you more presently. But not only in the fine arts did "Ticinesi" excel.

Artillery and the technique of gunnery was by no means beyond them. For instance, a Giovanni Antonio Verda of Gandria built the fortifications of the City of Graz in 1557. Another Verda, Dr. Giovanni Battista by name, was Chancellor of the Holy Roman Empire; it was only recently that his "Ticinese" origin was discovered since he had let himself be called Verdenberg. Diplomats we had too. A "Luganese," Pier Antonio Neuroni was sent in the year 1631 by the Doge of Venice as Ambassador to the Grand Duke of Tuscany.

The Church also had its "Ticinesi": a Giuseppe Luvini was preacher to the Pontifical Court from 1773 to 1797; a Carlo Castelli of Carona became Cardinal in 1802, and a Giovanni Fraschina of Bosco Luganese also was Pontifical Court Preacher and Titular Bishop of Corinth.

According to the Italian historian Francesco Guicciardini, the Swiss soldiery at the battle of Novara, 6th June, 1513, was led by the "Leventinese" Giacomo Mottino; who, the historian relates, had a pickaxe driven through his throat whilst he was fighting "ferociously" — nowadays one would perhaps say "valourously."

However, it was really in the art of building houses and shaping stones that the "Ticinesi" have attained great heights. This may be due to what we may designate as "local influence." The Ticino being a mountainous region jutting forth into the Plain of Lombardy was since early times the natural source of building stones for the Cities on the Plain. Therefore, a good many of its people were adepts at cutting and at any rate at handling stones. Many, having worked in the quarries, went South with the transports to take part in the erecting of buildings. This would explain to a certain extent why, as you will see presently, all our famous architects and sculptors came from the "Sottoceneri," that is, that part of the Canton lying South, cut off from the Northern part by the Mount Ceneri and the Lake Maggiore.

Thus you will see how "Ticinesi," in the course of the years developed from stone-cutters to builders, from builders to architects, and from architects to sculptors, painters and decorators. Of course, simultaneously art was developing from its mediæval crudity to its various periods of brilliance, which we now know as Romanic, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Neo-Classicism and Modern.

As in the short time at our disposal this evening we cannot review the life and works of all the "Ticinesi" who enjoyed renown, perhaps only for a fleeting moment, I propose to give you a survey of the principal periods and deal with a few names amongst the best.

In the Middle Ages as we all know the monasteries and the Guilds furthered and practised the arts and crafts. In Northern Italy (we may at this juncture consider the Ticino as a part of the wider region) there existed at this time the Corporation of the "Comacini" Masters. Historical data are lacking to show whether it was a proper guild or merely an association of builders and stonemasons. It is known, however, that members had to learn, and abide by, certain rules. Members who worked outside Lombardy were called simply Lombards, instead of by their proper names, and this rather suggests a strong collective spirit. Some are inclined to think that the association of the

"Comacini" Masters originated from the builders and masons who worked for the Benedictine Monasteries at Bissone and Campione on the Lake of Lugano, at the hands of which the technique of church construction was considerably improved. This fact would explain why a good number of builders and architects working in all parts of Italy during this period added the appellation "da Bissone" or "da Campione" after their names (surnames were probably not yet used.)

In those days furthermore time was not money. The building of Cathedrals and Palaces which we so much admire nowadays took centuries rather than years. The actual building was done by the architect himself — who really was only a builder and never thought of calling himself an architect — with the assistance of the other members of his family. At his death the work was carried on by his sons and their descendants. The contract agreed with the City fathers would, amongst other things, stipulate that the City undertook to keep in good health the builder and his descendants in return for their building the City Cathedral.

The Duomo at Modena is one of the best achievements of "Romanic" architecture. I wish I could describe to you in detail this imposing construction. Characteristic features are the appearance, for the first time, of a higher central nave; the "rosone" (a large, round, elaborately ornate, window in the centre of the façade); the cloister effect across the façade, and an imposing steeple. This building was started in the year 1099 by a Master Lanfranco, probably of Como. Later he was superseded by *Anselmo da Campione*, and for two centuries Anselmo da Campione and his descendants worked at this wonderful structure which was completed in 1319 by *Enrico da Campione*.

Traces of work done by "Ticinesi" in Italy during the same period are to be found at Lucca, the Cathedral façade has sculptures by *Guido da Arogno*; at Parma, the fine entrance to the Cathedral being by *Giorgio Bono* of Bissone.

Although Gothic art undoubtedly sprung from Romanic concepts, it did not itself originate in Italy; its home was on the Rhine as the fine Cathedrals of Noyon, Châlons, Reims, Marburg and Cologne, to mention but a few, amply testify. In Italy the teachings of the Gothic school were accepted and modified to suit local tastes. We still find the religious orders, the Carthusians and Benedictines, in the forefront. This period, the XIII and XIV centuries, is the forerunner of the Renaissance. Dante pens his immortal poem. Francis of Assisi permeates the whole Peninsula with his great love of nature, thus exercising an indirect influence over the arts.

Giotto renovates painting, and Nicola Pisano reforms sculpture.

Again we find "Ticinesi" amongst the leaders of the period. The Cathedral at Trento, a compromise between Romanic and Gothic styles, was built from 1212 onwards by *Adamo da Arogno*, his sons and grandsons. The Cathedral at Monza, for the construction of which *Matteo da Campione* was responsible, though Gothic, adheres to an orthodox (the "hangar") outline. Matteo da Campione also worked at the Milan Cathedral, which is the greatest achievement of Gothic architecture in Italy. The construction of this monumental building was begun in 1386, and went through any number of vicissitudes before completion several centuries later. "Ticinesi" hailing from the shores of the Ceresio (Lake of Lugano), such as *Marco da Carona*, and *Giacomo da Campione* also tried their hand in directing this construction, as well as that of the Carthusian Abbey ("Certosa") at Pavia which was being built simultaneously.

The re-awakening experienced during the Gothic period ripened to real brilliance during the Renaissance period, which spans approximately the XV and XVI centuries and marks an attempt to return to Classicism. Renaissance Italy has been described as a place "where, if ten palaces were burned, forty as lovely as the flames that destroyed their predecessors tower in laced beauty to heaven. Is not Raffaello Sanzi at hand and Michelangelo Buonarroti? Men dream, paint, build, fight, live splendidly, love immortally, and die with the perfection of the last line of a great sonnet."

The choice now of "Ticinesi" worthy of mention becomes difficult, but I hope you will like these I have picked out.

Giorgio Solari was, in the year 1428, supervising the construction of the Certosa at Pavia. Later he was appointed chief architect of the Milan Cathedral. His son, *Guiniforte Solari*, succeeded him in this office; he constructed besides the large Hospital and undertook the restoration of the Ducal Palace. In turn, a son of Guiniforte, *Pietro Solari*, also served in the Cathedral works until he was summoned to Russia by the Grand Duke John III; the only traces of his work there are the Constantin and Helen Towers of the Kremlin.

Another *Solari*, *Cristoforo* (nicknamed the "Hunchback") attained the dignity of Ducal sculptor under Lodovico Sforza. His chief work is without doubt the sepulchral statues of Lodovico himself and his consort, Beatrice d'Este. The two marble figures lying side by side convey to the casual onlooker, by the serenity of their features, as well as by the perfect execution of the minutest details of dress, the illusion of two live persons resting peacefully. He too in 1506 was put in charge of the Cathedral for which he executed a number of fine statues. His architectural achievements are, however, the Church of Maria delle Grazie, at Milan, and that of the "Annunciata" at Lodi. A plan submitted by him for the Cathedral at Como caused a controversy to spring up between him and his compatriot *Tommaso Rodari*. In the end his plan was accepted and Tommaso Rodari entrusted with the execution.

The Rodari Brothers, *Giacomo* and *Tommaso*, hail from Maroggia on the Lake of Lugano. They are known chiefly for their masterly execution of the Como Cathedral, and the statues and decorations with which they adorned it. The *Pedonis*, from Lugano, left valuable sculptorial work in the Churches and Public Buildings of Brescia. *Annibale Fontana* from Novazzano was sculptor, engraver and medallist; his perfection and vigour of form is reminiscent of Michelangelo.

Few are our painters in this period. Only one may be said to stand out, *Andrea Solari*, a brother of the sculptor Cristoforo just mentioned. Specimens of his work are to be found at Milan, Venice and in France. A superb "Madonna suckling the infant Christ" by him hangs in the Louvre. In saying that he was the only "Ticinese" painter of note during the Renaissance I purposely omitted the Old Master *Paolo Veronese*, who is seems now established as the grandson of a stonecutter from Bissone.

Elsewhere in Renaissance Italy one can point out "Ticinesi" artists. At Genoa the *Gagini*, the *Apriles*, the *Della Scalas*, the *Solaris*, and the *Della Portas* all came from the shores of the Lake of Lugano. *Domenico* the chief exponent of the Gagini family worked at the interior decoration of the Genoa Cathedral between 1448 and 1465 with the collaboration of his nephews, *Elia* and *Giovanni*. In 1467 he went on to Naples, where he worked in the D'Anjou castle and later, in 1473 he emigrated further South to Palermo. He was an adept not only at sacred but also at profane art, and much sought after for sculptures and relief work in private residences. An unconventional artist this *Domenico Gagini*. In his spare time he dealt in sugar and lollipops and died leaving a small fortune. Perhaps some of you may have seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum a relief sculpture, representing "St. George and the Dragon," by Giovanni Gagini, which at one time was part of an entrance to a Genoese palace. *Antonio Maria Aprile* from Carona went from Italy to Spain where at Seville in company with *Bernardino* and *Pace Gagini* he shaped some fine monuments. Pace Gagini himself is famous for the ornamentation of the façade and interiors of the Certosa at Pavia. In Genoa you may still admire the monumental Neptune fountain and the fine portal of the Palazzo Lercari, both the work of *Taddeo Carlone* from Rovio. Palermo, Trapani and other Sicilian Cities boast a number of finely executed statues by a branch of the Gagini Family. Turning North again, to Venice, we find works by *Pietro Solari* from Carona, whose nickname "Lombardo" was later adopted by his descendants as their surname. His is the Church of S. Maria dei Miracoli, rather poor architecturally, but finely decorated. Other Venetian Churches and the Ducal Palace bear witness to the work of this "Ticinese." At Ravenna he sculptured the bas-relief on Dante's tomb, and worked at the Treviso Cathedral with his sons *Tullio* and *Antonio*. Tullio was rather the better sculptor of the two, but prone to a certain coldness of style. His reclining statue of the Knight Guido Guidarelli, in armour, at Ravenna, has been finely executed. *Antonio da Ponte*, from Ponte Capriasca near Lugano, was made chief architect of the Venetian Republic. The famous Rialto Bridge, and the Prisons are his work. Also the equally famous Bridge of Sighs is by a "Ticinese," *Antonio Contino*, member of the Contino family of architects and sculptors. Finally we may mention *Tommaso da Lugano* whose fine statues still adorn several Venetian Churches and Palaces.

In Europe at large during the Renaissance period, we find "Ticinesi," such as, in Austria, the *Allios* and the *Aostallis*, all architects; *Giorgio Maria Nossari*, born at Lugano 1544, a clever architect, sculptor and decorator, who first worked at Venice, then at Florence under Sansovino, and later at Dresden, Freiberg in Saxony. A woman, *Lavinia Fontana*, whose father had been Court painter at Fontainebleau, gained fame as an able portraitist. She had as her first mentor her father who had settled down at Bologna, and she was invited by Pope Gregory

XIII to Rome. Portraits by her are to be found in numerous Italian collections.

Towards the XVII century art, particularly architecture, sculpture and painting assumes a marked tendency to the grandiose and picturesque, sometimes descending to the grotesque and absurd. This period has become known as the "Baroque." Whereas in the Renaissance period buildings still observed a certain calm, harmonious style, they now considerably increase in size, especially horizontally, and assume an opulent appearance. Villas strive for picturesque, scenic effect. Fountains, as separate constructions, acquire an added importance and are characteristic of the period. Churches become luxurious to the point of exuberance. Leaders of the new movement are *Francesco Borromini* of Bissone (1599-1667), so far the greatest artist the Ticino has given the world, and *Lorenzo Bernini* of Naples (1598-1680). At this time it was Rome that made the pace in art. Many were the architects from the "ticinese" regions who worked at Rome at this time, but this evening we have to overlook most of them in order to deal with the three towering above them all: *Domenico Fontana*, *Carlo Maderno* and *Francesco Borromini* just mentioned.

Domenico Fontana, born at Melide on the Lake of Lugano in 1543, went to Rome when he was barely 20 years old. He commenced with stucco, but soon gave it up for architecture and found a protector in the Cardinal Felice Peretti di Montalto, who was later to become Pope Sixtus V. For him Fontana built the Montalto Villa and in the church of S. Maria Maggiore designed a chapel now known as the Sixtine Chapel. Upon Sixtus V. ascending the pontifical throne, Fontana became the papal architect. During this very short pontificate Domenico went through a prodigious amount of work. He revised the plan of the Eternal City and laid down a number of long, straight and wide thoroughfares that remain to this day. The transportation and the erection in St. Peter's Square of the Egyptian obelisk was a particularly difficult task which earned him world renown. Other obelisks he erected before the churches of S. Maria Maggiore, S. Giovanni in Laterano, and in the Piazza del Popolo, this last task with the collaboration of his nephew, Carlo Maderno, of whom more presently. Helped by his brother, *Giovanni Fontana*, our Domenico constructed the aqueduct of the "merry water (Acqua Felice)" which at its terminal has a monumental fountain with a huge statue of Moses. The Papal Library and the Vatican were also designed by him. He supervised the construction of the Cupola of St. Peter's, thereby altering slightly Michelangelo's design. Shortly after the death of Sixtus V. Fontana fell in disgrace and repaired Naples. Here he built the Royal Palace, which has since undergone extensive alterations. His son *Giulio Cesare Fontana* supervised the completion of his father's unfinished works, on the latter's death in 1607.

Carlo Maderno, a nephew of Domenico Fontana, was born at Capolago at the Southern end of the Lake of Lugano, in the year 1556, and he too started life as a stuccoist, later joining his two uncles at Rome. He assisted Domenico in the latter's first big undertakings. He is considered in many quarters as the prototype of the Baroque architects, and his activity was intense. His best known work is the Church of S. Susanna, constructed between 1597 and 1603. His most difficult task was the extension of the central nave of St. Peter's, and the re-making of the façade. His design was picked from amongst those of all the best known architects of his day. The first stone was laid in 1608, and the work had already been completed in 1612. The fine stucco work in the interior of St. Peter's, though designed by Maderno, was executed by *Martino Ferabosco* who hailed from the same village and who was himself an architect. The Romans also owe to Maderno the princely Palazzo Matteri, a majestic structure, the portal and a chapel of the Quirinale (the present Royal Residence). Carlo Maderno was the first architect of the historic Barberini Palace, to which also contributed Borromini and Bernini. Maderno died 1629.

(To be continued.)

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AN APPEAL.

The *Swiss Benevolent Society*, the *Eglise Suisse* and the *Schweizerkirche* in London appeal once again to their compatriots for their kind contributions, in cash or kind, in order to provide a little extra cheer for Christmas to our Swiss in need. Wearing apparel, underclothing and footwear are much appreciated and such gifts will be gratefully received.

Parcels should be addressed not later than December 11th to: 34, Fitzroy Square, W.1, or to 79, Endell Street, W.C.2, and cash remittances to: Swiss Benevolent Society, 34, Fitzroy Square, W.1, or Miss J. Matthey, 102, Hornsey Lane, N.6, or Rev. C. Th. Hahn, 43, Priory Road, Bedford Park, W.4.

RESULTS OF THE 4th INTERNATIONAL AVIATION MEETING IN ZURICH.

At the recently held closing meeting of the Organizing Committee of the 4th International Aviation Meeting, Zurich, 1937, it was decided that this event should again take place every five years. The uniformly positive judgment of foreign expert circles on this years meeting contributed considerably to the taking of this decision. The organizers of the meeting, under the conduct of the Divisionary-Colonel Bandi, chief of the flying and flying defence forces, regard it as their duty to international aviation to carry through this meeting with the same aims and objects as before. The next international aviation meeting will be held in Zurich in 1942.

A committee of experts has been appointed for the preparations of this meeting and to itemize the various experiences already gathered

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Wednesday, December 8th — Swiss Mercantile Society — Monthly Meeting — followed by a Film "Wintersport in the Alps," at 34/35, Fitzroy Square, London, W.

Friday, December 10th, at 7.15 p.m. sharp — "Dinner d'Escalade" at Paganì's Restaurant, Great Portland Street, W.1. (Avis aux Genevois et anciens résidents.)

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Baptême le 21 nov. : Jacqueline Marthe Worpe, née le 30 juillet 1937, fille de William et de Martha, née Schatzmann de Sonceboz (Berne)

Mariage le 23 nov. : László Urményi de Budapest et Alide Kuyper de Amerfoort (Hollande).

Le Pasteur Emery reçoit le Mercredi de 11 heures à midi 30, à l'église, 79, Endell Street, W.C.2. S'adresser à lui pour tous les actes pastoraux. (téléphone: Museum 3100, domicile: Foyer Suisse, 12, Upper Bedford Place, W.C.1.)

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11 Uhr morgens, Gottesdienst und Sonntagsschule.

7 Uhr abends, Gottesdienst.

8 Uhr, Chorprobe.

Dienstag, den 30. November 1937.

3 Uhr nachm. Nähverein im "Foyer Suisse."

TAUFEN.

Am 7. November wurde getauft :

Elvira Rosemary Ritzmann, geb. am 28. 5. 1937; Tochter des Emil von Osterfingen (Schaffhausen) und der Dorothy geb. Clark von London.

Am 21. November: Richard Edward Marc Manfred Bruggisser, geb. am 7.7.1936; Sohn des Anton Martin Ludwig Silvio von Wollen (Aargau) und der Wally Melanie geb. Pfister.

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