

A famous architect

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A Famous Architect.

Some time back, we published in the "Swiss Observer," a series of articles about long-established Swiss houses in Great Britain, as well as biographies of some of our compatriots who, through their achievements, have made not only a name for themselves, but have enhanced the reputation of our country.

Unfortunately for the "Swiss Observer," but few of our compatriots have taken advantage of our offer, and have given us particulars of their achievements; most likely for the reason that they have but little time to accede to our request, or perhaps not finding it worth while to trouble about a request which might, in their opinion, be of little benefit to themselves. There might have been a third reason, due to the inborn and creditable modesty of our countrymen; they were too shy to have their achievements broadcasted.

In this respect we humbly venture to say that they are wrong. The "Swiss Observer," which is widely read and distributed everywhere, might do more than they realise at first sight, and if it were only to pass in review the successful efforts of some of our countrymen abroad, to fire the imagination of our younger readers, and evoke in them the ardent desire to do likewise, then we should have achieved a good deal, and we could be satisfied that our time and printer's ink had not been wasted.

We have had for some time a suspicion that we have discovered one of these compatriots of ours, who has worked here for many years successfully, but who has kept it all to himself; in other words, he was wrapt up in his own modesty and endeavoured to pass his time in total obscurity.

He might have succeeded, but for a lecture which our excellent friend, C. Chapuis, gave some time ago at the Swiss Mercantile Society, after his return from a business trip to South Africa, when he acquainted us with the eminent achievements and successes with which that gentleman had met in that far-away continent south of the equator.

Some of our readers have, no doubt, guessed by now what we are driving at, and that the subject of to-day's article is our friend and supporter, Mr. Theophile Schaerer, the architect who has so successfully carried out the work at the Swiss Legation, and which we described to you last year in a special supplement. We have now discovered, quite accidentally, that one of our contemporaries, "The Industrial World of Great Britain," of 103, Kingsway, W.C.2, in its May number, gives an excellent article and description of some of Mr. Schaerer's work in various parts of the world.

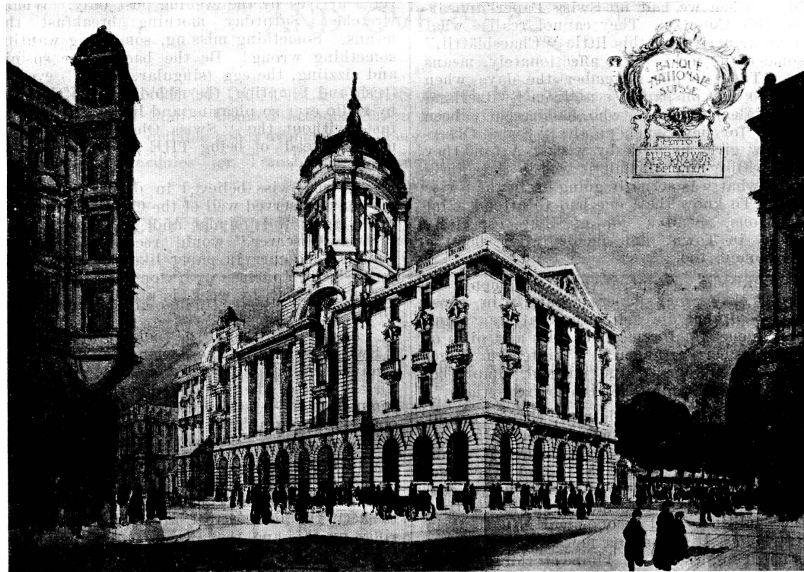
From the said article, which is illustrated by many examples, and of which we publish herewith a few, we learn that he established himself in London in 1920, but long before that time Mr. Schaerer had already won recognition both on the Continent and in South Africa.

Fourteen years ago he began to collaborate with a well-known architect in the City, and for four years was engaged jointly with him in the erection of many buildings. The experience gained of City requirements in this period was wide and valuable, and when, in 1924, Mr. Schaerer began to practise on his own account, his services were in considerable demand.

He carried out a great deal of work in the City on behalf of the Selection Trust, Ltd. (now Selection Secretariat, Ltd.), of Mason's Avenue, E.C.2, and his services have been called for in connection with schemes at various places outside London. From 1927 until 1931 he acted as architect to the Aerated Bread Co., Ltd., carrying out during this period about £150,000 of work for them, including large additions to the

In London, then, Mr. Theophile Schaerer has left his mark; dignity and suitability to function characterise his work. He accepts the inevitable limitations which modern conditions so often necessarily entail; but within these limits he creates beauty. That is a high service, not only to the establishments served, but also to the community. The architect who seizes his opportunity to apply, within the limitations, financial and otherwise, which are imposed, art in the common life, serves both to-day and to-morrow.

But, important as has been Mr. Schaerer's work in London, he had attained fame prior to coming here. He was born in Zurich on the 17th November, 1874, and was educated in Switzerland. Then, in 1890, he began a period of four years at the Technical School, Winterthur, tak-



MR. THEOPHILE SCHAERER'S DESIGN FOR THE BANQUE NATIONALE SUISSE. (Submitted for Competition.)

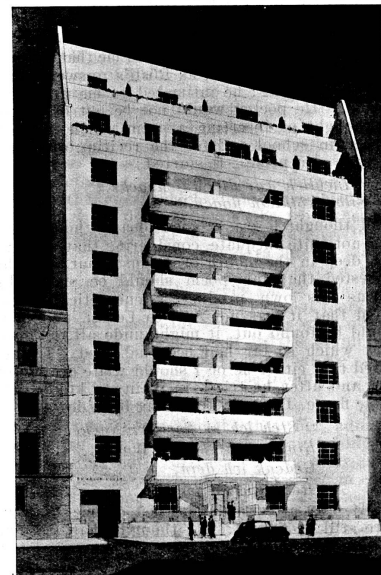
head office at the company at Camden Town. Various work was also undertaken for Messrs. W. Hill and Son, and for J.P. Restaurants. Among other works of note may be mentioned the reconstruction of Tunstall Hall, near Shrewsbury; alterations and additions to Kingsgate Castle, near Broadstairs; a large private residence, called Emmetts, at Ide Hill, near Sevenoaks; also Parris' restaurant and tea-rooms at Sevenoaks; work at Leeds Castle, Kent, and alterations to the Swiss Bank Corporation's branch in Regent Street.

Impressive private residences at Banstead and Epsom Downs, designed by him and erected by the Downs Estates, Limited, have also recently attracted interest.

ing his diploma in 1894. The following year was spent at the Polytechnical High School in Stuttgart, Germany; then followed two years at the Academy of Fine Arts, Milan, Italy. From 1897 until 1903 Mr. Schaerer was in Paris with Mr. Pascal at his atelier at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and for part of that period he was inspector of works to Mr. Rey, architect, during the construction of the New Usines Sauter Harlé, Avenue de Suffren, the whole in reinforced concrete, which at that time (1899-1900) was the most up-to-date construction of the period.



MR. THEOPHILE SCHAERER'S DESIGN FOR THE TOWN HALL AT JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA. (Submitted for Competition.)



A BLOCK OF FLATS IN THURLOE SQUARE, LONDON, S.W.1.

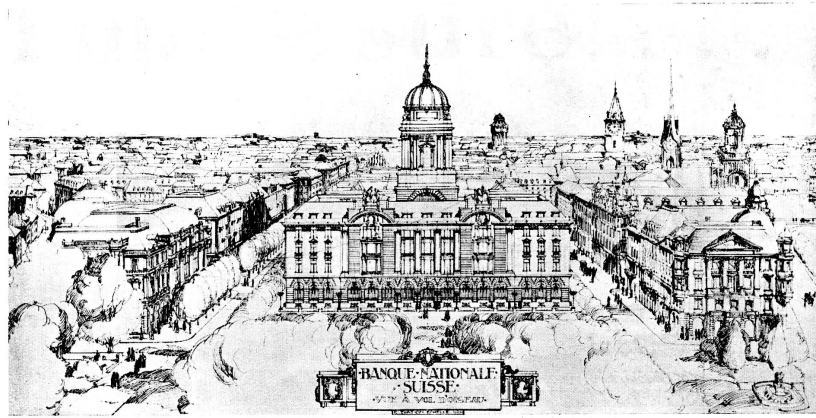
This early knowledge of reinforced concrete construction enabled him to adopt this method of supporting the large dome of the Johannesburg Synagogue. The R.I. concrete beams carrying this dome have a span of sixty feet, which at that time, twenty years ago, was a very daring thing to do, especially for a young man, as Mr. Schaerer then was.

He therefore can be considered as the real pioneer of reinforced concrete construction in South Africa, which method of construction has lately considerably increased in that part of the world.

He was also assistant and inspector of works to Mr. George Chedanne, Grand Prix de Rome and architect-in-chief to the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères and the Compagnie des Grands Hôtels, during the construction of the following notable works: Elysée Palace Hotel, in Paris; Riviera Palace Hotel, Monte Carlo, and the Royal Palace Hotel, Ostend.

He was sent by Mr. Chedanne, in 1901-1902, to study and execute very important works at St. Petersburg, Moscow and Warsaw, for the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits, and to Vienna for the French Embassy. Then, from 1903 until 1915, he was at Johannesburg, in the Transvaal, where he carried out a great variety of important works.

As consulting architect to the Allgemeine Electricitaets Gesellschaft, Berlin, he erected all



MR. THEOPHILE SCHAERER'S DESIGN FOR THE BANQUE NATIONALE SUISSE. (Submitted for Competition.)

Most of the public buildings resulted from public competitions, in which Mr. Schaerer, either alone or with others, met with striking success. These included the Transvaalse Bank, with the first prize; German Club, Johannesburg, first and second prizes; University of Bloemfontein, third prize; Residence of the Governor-General in Cape Town, second prize, and others. Mention must be made, too, of the

Mr. Theophile Schaerer holds the bronze medal of the Academy of Fine Arts, Milan. He is an associate member of the Institute of Structural Engineers, and he passed the examination for the Fellowship of the Royal Institute of British Architects. He secured honourable mention at the Exposition Universelle in Paris, 1900 (Arts Section for Switzerland), and has been nominated Officier d'Académie by the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts in Paris.

And so one might go on, mentioning honours attained and important works executed by an architect whose work has covered a very wide area, and which, in recent years, has enriched London and various other of our English towns and cities.

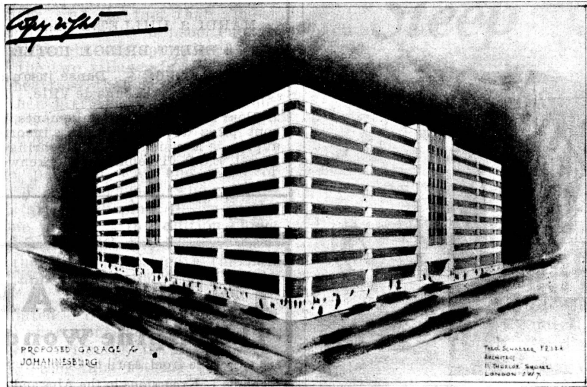
Mr. Schaerer considers that one of the most important qualifications to make a successful architect to-day is to have travelled widely, and to be able to adapt the great number of new materials and finished articles to the requirements of to-day. A great asset for a professional man also is the knowledge of different languages, and Mr. Schaerer is fortunate enough to speak fluently English, French, German, Italian and Africaansch.

With regard to the modern architecture, examples of which are to be seen all over the Continent, particularly in Germany, Holland and France, and of which specimens have recently been imported into England and erected here almost as complete replicas, with hardly any change whatsoever, Mr. Schaerer feels that it would be a great mistake for this tendency to become general. He thinks that English architecture and architects have at all times left their mark and have been able to express the English individuality in their own monumental, and particularly domestic work, even if the general lines of some of the architectural styles have been inspired from abroad.

A magnificent article of this preservation of personal interpretation and individual expression is the work of Sir Christopher Wren, in his Renaissance churches and other monuments here in England.

Mr. Schaerer thinks it entirely wrong to transplant architecture and building construction, so to speak, from one country to another without careful study of adaptation to the climate and to the individuality of the people who have lived there for centuries. It is to be hoped that what has recently in the Press been called "Alien Architecture" will be duly blended with common sense, local requirements as to climatic conditions, and adapted to the feelings of the English tradition, before it is generally and indiscriminately spread all over the country.

Let the people who wish to erect glass houses in Russia do so, just as well as those who wish to transplant southern style to northern shores.



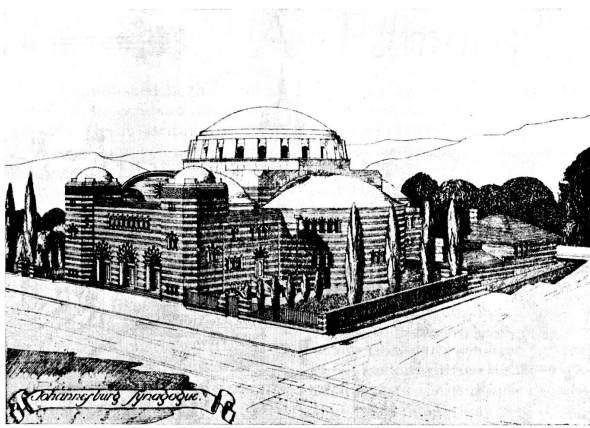
A PROPOSED GARAGE IN JOHANNESBURG.

the large power stations for the Victoria Fall and Transvaal Power Co., Ltd., on the Witwatersrand, and as consulting architect to the V.F.T.P. Co. and the Rand Mines Power Co., he designed and erected the married quarters, single quarters, stores, recreation halls, boarding houses, managers' houses, workshops and other structures required for the staff connected with these large power stations. He also designed staff quarters, large stores and surface buildings, such as switch houses, for various mines on the Witwatersrand, as well as industrial establishments for different other concerns.

"Daily Mail" competition, in 1927, when Mr. Schaerer was awarded first prize for small dwelling houses for £850, a competition which attracted an entry of 350. In the Wimbledon Town Hall competition he submitted the design which secured third prize, but as the competition at that time was limited to architects of British nationality only, he had to submit his scheme in the name of two of his draughtsmen; hence his name did not appear and remained obscure, which was a pity, as he was a resident of Wimbledon for over ten years and his two boys are both at King's College even to-day.



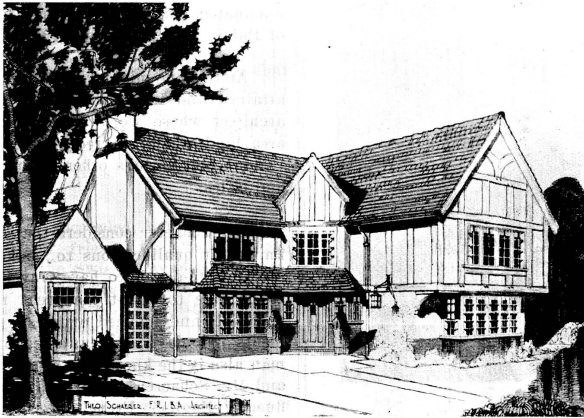
MR. THEOPHILE SCHAERER'S DESIGN FOR THE S.F.R. STATION AT GENEVA. (Submitted for Competition.)



MR. THEOPHILE SCHAERER'S DESIGN FOR THE SYNAGOGUE, JOHANNESBURG, S.A., (erected in 1913).

An architect has often to do such things to comply with his client's wishes and in order to secure his daily bread, but all the same, let every one who is able to do so, use his common sense and artistic feelings, if any; but common sense well applied is the scarcest thing in this world, and fortunate be the individual or the nation that commands a good supply of it.

Apart from his great achievements in the professional sphere, Mr. Schaeerer is a well-known personality in the Swiss Colony, belonging to several Swiss Societies, such as the City Swiss Club, Swiss Mercantile Society, and the N.S.H., and we sincerely hope that his activities, which so favourably reflect on the good name which our compatriots enjoy in this country, will add new lustre to his already famous name.



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Marcelle Valerie Creates New Dances.

Marcelle Valerie, the well-known Swiss exponent of rhythmic dancing, who is giving a special dance recital in London on the 3rd July, is the daughter of the famous Swiss specialist, Alcide Jentzer, of Geneva, and the sister of Albert Jentzer, who is also an eminent Swiss doctor. For artistic and patriotic reasons, no Swiss should miss this remarkable dance recital.

Madame Valerie has been studying music and dancing for many years, and is a former pupil of the noted Cecchitti school of ballet. One of the new dances which Madame Valerie has created herself to be given at her recital is entitled, "Ahrimana — the Spirit of Evil." In this dance she wears several weird and devilish

masks, each suggestive of a different kind of evil influence. Other striking dances include a "Priere," to the music of Bach; "Punch," and "Amazon Dance."

Madame Valerie's valuable and original dresses have been recently heavily insured against possible loss or damage. This gifted dancer speaks three languages fluently, and is an accomplished musician. She thinks all women should learn dancing to develop their figures and increase health and grace.

Madame Valerie is a firm believer in open-air dancing, and has often practised amid the lovely Swiss mountains.

M. DEVEREUX.

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