

**REMEMBERING THE OLD SCHMIDT SCHOOL IN FELLIN**  
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published in the Tartu University journal *Akadeemia*, Nr. 8, 2011, pp. 1507-1523,  
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*... Im Sommer 1852 brachte mein Vater – unsere unvergeßliche Mutter war im Jahre vorher verstorben – mich und die beiden jüngeren Brüder Paul und Constantin nach Fellin in Livland, wo sich die mit Pensionat verbundene Schule, ein sogenanntes Internat, von Gustav Schmidt eines ausgezeichneten Rufes erfreute. Ich war damals 11, Paul 10, Constantin 8 Jahre alt. Die beiden älteren Alexander und Woldemar waren dort schon einige Jahre früher untergebracht...*

Viktor Knorre, *Curriculum Vitae*, Berlin-Lichterfelde, April 1912, p. 2.

(In the summer of 1852, my father – our mother had passed away in the previous year – brought me and both my younger brothers Paul and Constantin to Fellin in Livonia where the boarding school of Gustav Schmidt enjoyed a excellent reputation. I was then 11 years old, Paul 10 and Constantin 8. Both our elder brothers Alexander and Woldemar had been placed there a few years before...)

**From Nikolayev to Fellin**

Is there a more sacred obligation for parents than giving their children a proper education ? This concern may turn into an acute headache for a father living in a remote, cut-off, backward and underdeveloped area. If, on top of that, the twice-widowed father is burdened with a numerous offspring, the situation brings him to utter despair. Such was the fate around 1850 in southern Ukraine of Carl Friedrich Knorre (1801-1883), the first director of the Nikolayev naval observatory from 1821 to 1871.

Nikolayev was founded in 1789 on prince G.A. Potemkin's decision. The project was to establish jointly the seat of the Admiralty for the Black Sea Fleet, a well-protected harbour and a dockyard on the most propitious site detected at the confluence of the Bug river and its tributary, the Ingul. A Navy colony soon sprang up in the middle of barren steppes of southern Ukraine. The population consisted mostly of sailors and workers of the naval dockyard. Toward 1840, the only institution of higher education was the Naval College where C.F. Knorre taught practical astronomy to future navy officers. There was no secondary school et only two elementary schools, respectively for boys and girls, received children of Navy personnel.

At the death of his first wife in 1832, C.F. Knorre found himself alone with his one-year old son Fyodor and quickly remarried in 1833. Six years later, four other children were

already born from the new couple. At that time, educated families taught first basics to their children before hiring private tutors for them. But in 1839 C.F. Knorre's second wife, completely absorbed by taking care of her own children, could not properly look after Fyodor's education. It became urgent to send to school the eight-year-old boy. C.F. Knorre, born in Dorpat, Livonia<sup>1</sup> (today Tartu, Estonia) in a family of Saxon immigrants and educated at famous Dorpat University, was not considering any other education for his son than in his Baltic homeland where all his family ties remained. C.F. Knorre's mother and younger brother Theodor who lived then in Pernau (today Pärnu, Estonia) on the Baltic sea, could give board and lodging to Fyodor, as well as look after his studies at the local secondary school where Theodor was precisely teaching science.

The project took definitely shape when C.F. Knorre received an official invitation to go near St Petersburg, all expenses paid, to attend the solemn opening of Russia's Main Observatory at Pulkovo on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 1839. The appointed director of the new observatory was no other than Wilhelm Struve, former master of C.F. Knorre at Dorpat University, who by then had become his close friend. This trip gave to the Nikolayev astronomer the ideal opportunity to take along little Fyodor to the North. After attending the Pulkovo ceremony and settling several matters in St Petersburg, he would leave him with his relatives in Pernau. Everything was done according to plan. However, the moment of separation from his father was a real heartbreak for the child who tried to cling to the wheels of the coach carrying off his father. But thanks to the love and attentive care lavished on him by his grandmother and his uncle who offered him a substitute home, the little boy gradually got accustomed to his new life dedicated to study at the Pernau district secondary school where he spent eight years. The institution was directed by an experienced man called Stebel. Teachings were based on the study of ancient languages, Greek and Latin, and of mathematics. Fyodor developed a special talent for math and drawing. Informed of his son's results, C.F. Knorre showed his insight by advising him after graduation to go to the St Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts to study architecture. Later Fyodor completed his training by entering the Institute of Civil Engineers newly created in St Petersburg and finished it by

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<sup>1</sup> Livonia, a province of the Russian empire since 1721, had a territory corresponding roughly to the south-eastern part of present Estonia and the north-eastern part of present Latvia. In the 1850s the active German community continued to enjoy a wide autonomy, notably in the cultural field. German private schools were flourishing in numerous towns, among them : Reval, Dorpat, Fellin, Pernau, Riga, Mitau (today, respectively : Tallinn, Tartu, Viljandi and Pärnu in Estonia ; Riga and Jelgava in Latvia). Besides, Dorpat University delivered its teachings in German and recruited professors in Germany. Tsar Alexander III put an end to that special status by imposing a Russianization policy from 1885. Dorpat was renamed Yuriev in 1893.

spending two semesters at the Berlin School of Architecture. Then he started a long and rich career as an architect-engineer which took him all over Russia.

Satisfied with the schooling conditions obtained for his eldest son in Pernau, C.F. Knorre decided in 1846 to use the same arrangement for his two other sons Alexander and Woldemar, respectively aged 10 and 8. In view of the numerous trips he would have to undertake to the North, C.F. Knorre ordered a big travel coach to be built for a very reasonable price by a man whom he had helped with the set-up of his workshop. Very sturdy and practical, the vehicle could carry six persons inside and two more on the driver's seat. All seats were removable and the luggage compartment was roomy. Besides, all necessary travel equipment, including tools (axe, saw, hammer, pincers) could be conveniently put into numerous installed bags. In June 1846 the travellers set off: C.F. Knorre with his second wife Dorothea, their two sons Alexander and Woldemar, their daughter Clara and a little boy named Anton who would be dropped somewhere on the road. After stopping at different homes of relatives and friends, the travellers finally arrived in Pernau. There a painful surprise awaited them. C.F. Knorre's younger brother Theodor, hardly aged 40, was at the point of death. Lying on his bed, he found the necessary strength to hold a conversation with his elder brother on the education of his nephews. He first advised him to take them all back to Nikolayev and to hire three competent private tutors to have his children instructed at home. As Carl Friedrich strongly opposed the idea, Theodor suggested another solution, i.e. to place his two sons in the Schmidt private school which opened two years earlier in Fellin (today Viljandi, Estonia). As a science teacher at the Pernau secondary school, Theodor Knorre was well informed on school events in Livonia and therefore had heard of the recent creation of the Fellin institution. He passed away on the same evening, having given a most precious piece of advice for his nephews' future. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1846 the astronomer, accompanied by his wife and three children, arrived in Fellin. C.F. Knorre immediately went to see Director Schmidt in order to introduce his sons to him.

### **Gustav Max Schmidt's beginnings**

Contact between both men was easily established. The shared common roots in villages belonging to the same territory of Saxony<sup>2</sup>: Haldensleben near Magdeburg for the Knorre

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<sup>2</sup> The Estonian word « Saksa » referring to anything German seems to indicate that the major part of German immigrants coming to this Baltic region came from Saxony, an independent kingdom turned into a Prussian province from 1815.

family and Bad Lauchstädt, a health resort near Halle an der Saale, for Gustav Max Schmidt. Besides, both were driven by the same ardent Lutheran faith and the same exacting moral principles. Finally, Schmidt received his higher education at Halle University, the very place where Ernst Christoph Knorre (1759-1810), the founder of the Knorre lineage in Livonia/Estonia, had studied theology before taking a teaching position in a girls' secondary school of Dorpat/Tartu.

During his childhood and youth, Schmidt (1810-1874) suffered many hardships. In 1822 his father, a remarried widow, sent him to Halle to be placed in the primary school of the local orphanage, a part of the famous Francke Institution (*die Francke'schen Stiftungen*), named after its founder August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), a protestant theologian, university professor, philanthropist and social reformer. This institution, created in 1698, was dedicated to educating local orphans and needy pupils and to training them to become future teachers. At the age of 17, left without any means after the death of his father, G.M. Schmidt who was studying at the so-called "Latin school" of the Francke Institution, had to fight fiercely in order to be able to carry on with his studies. He wrote a petition in Latin to Chancellor Niemayer, the director of the Francke Institution, to explain his case and ask for financial support. Young Schmidt's plea must have been convincing enough for, as a result, he obtained an allowance covering all his tuition and subsistence costs, in return for small services. After graduating in 1829, he started studying philology, philosophy and history at Halle University where he was granted a so-called Wittenberg scholarship and continued living at the Francke orphanage. Needy students were allowed to postpone the payment of their tuition fees until they were able to pay for them. Schmidt honoured his commitments punctiliously later from Fellin. While studying, he took a position of assistant teacher at the Francke secondary school where he had studied earlier as a pupil. Thus he acted according to the principles enacted by A.H. Francke who wished to educate children from poor families in order to make teachers out of them. Personally, Schmidt was feeling more attracted by the practice of active pedagogy than by theoretical studies.

### **First teaching assignments**

During a staff meeting at the Francke Institution in 1833, the rector informed the audience that pastor Bergmann from Lasdohn in Livonia (today Lazdonia<sup>3</sup> in Latvia) wanted

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<sup>3</sup> Lazdonia : a remote village in the middle of a forest zone about 100 km south-east of Riga.

two teachers for his school, one specialized in philology, the other in theology. Immediately interested, Schmidt applied for the job. Offered conditions were the following : 50 Thalers for the trip and 200 Roubles as monthly wages with possible raise later. Schmidt and his colleague theologian, escorted by pastor Bergmann's envoy, travelled to Lübeck by coach and embarked aboard a steamship bound for Riga where they arrived after three days at sea. Then they went to Lasdohn where the friendly manners of inhabitants let hope for a pleasant life, in spite of the isolated location of the village which earned it the nickname of "Little Siberia". Schmidt explored the region thoroughly and became interested in local customs still marked by Polish influence<sup>4</sup>. Unfortunately, a dispute soon arose within the school administration, spoiling the collective atmosphere. At Christmas 1834 the conflict resulted into a breach of contract and Schmidt lost his job. He moved to Riga where he started giving private lessons to earn some money, while looking for a new position in a school. After six months, through the help of a fellow countryman, organist and pastor of St James church in Riga, Schmidt was offered a position in the already renowned Birkenruh secondary school, near Wenden (today Cēsis in Latvia), 90 km north-east of Riga.

The school had been founded in 1825 by its present director, Albert Hollander, a native of Riga, graduate of Jena University and a man of strong protestant faith and idealistic views. His objective was to give pupils the sense of duty, effort, righteousness and Christian morals. Among subjects, mathematics and German grammar were predominant, as well as physical activities like gymnastics and swimming. Schmidt was enthralled by Hollander's personality and soon adopted him as mentor. At his side for more than eight years, Schmidt gained a substantial teaching experience. He was in charge of preparing final-year pupils for graduation. At the same time, he discovered the amenities of the charming neighbouring town of Wenden, built by the Livonian Order at the foot of a 13<sup>th</sup> century castle. His daily contacts with inhabitants gave him the opportunity to get better acquainted with the distinctive traits of Livonian youth. He tried his best to apply flexible teaching methods, adapted to local mentality and habits. But the other teachers, coming mostly from the Swab region in south-western Germany, used brutal ways to mould the minds of their pupils on Swab model. Seeing in the long run that Hollander supported the Swabs and would never admit his own views, Schmidt resigned and left the Birkenruh school in 1843. Rich of an already ten-year-old teaching experience and matured by his stay at Birkenruh, he felt from then on able to cope with the task of managing a school by himself.

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<sup>4</sup> Livonia had been under Polish domination from 1561 to 1629.

## **Foundation of the Schmidt School in Fellin**

As a matter of fact, Schmidt had already been approached several times by some Fellin inhabitants who planned to create a private school there. Schmidt arrived in Fellin on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December 1843 with only 200 roubles in his pocket. He was happy to settle down at last in a town offering all required intellectual and material resources for the future institution. Even before obtaining from official scholastic authorities the necessary concession to open a school, Schmidt found five boarders and six day pupils and hired adequate teachers in town. Then he rented part of a house into which he moved with his boarders on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1844. At first, the pupils had to walk to their teachers' homes in order to attend classes, which made them more similar to private lessons. Pastor Valentin Holst who taught religion, offered their lunches to the boarders and their director. Holst became soon for Schmidt a precious friend and adviser, as well as a genuine spiritual guide. At Holst's precisely, Schmidt met the pastor's sister-in-law, Amalie Lenz, born in a German family established in Livonia since 1740. Both young people fell in love with each other and married in June 1845. Amalie was to become not only Schmidt's life companion and the mother of his children, but also his active associate in the management of the school, playing an important part in its daily functioning.

As the number of boarders and day pupils was regularly increasing, Schmidt had to rent another half-house. It clearly became necessary to purchase a building of spacious dimensions allowing further extensions. The choice fell on a house located on the edge of the town. Two local benefactors called Stryck zu Pollenhof and Tignitz provided the means for this purchase, as well as for the extension works necessary to accommodate the new number of pupils reaching 34 boarders and 12 non-boarders. The latter ones occupied less room while substantially contributing to the school budget. Besides, Schmidt saw a definite advantage in mixing boarders and non-boarders, as it brought positive contacts between them. His school was meant for children of educated and well-to-do families and Schmidt intended to make out of it a meeting place for nobility and middle-class.

Schmidt and his young wife moved into the newly purchased house where their children would be born and which they also wanted to turn into a second home for their pupils. With the constant increase of their number, new extensions had to be planned. In 1848, thanks to the financial support given by another benefactor, count Dunten zu Karkus (today Karksi), the neighbouring house was purchased and linked together to the first house by connecting extensions. Local inhabitants were delighted at the sight of the unified façade in which they

found a sort of “American” look. In fact, the system of private donations at the origin of this enterprise corresponded perfectly to American practice.

### **Two Knorre children discover the Schmidt School**

Now, when he met Gustav Max Schmidt on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1848, Carl Friedrich Knorre found in front of himself a completely mature man, promoting an original educational project at the head of an already renowned school in full expansion. Due to the lack of competent craftsmen in Nikolayev, the astronomer had been compelled to set up his own workshop in order to maintain and repair all instruments and pieces of machinery necessary to the good operation of the observatory. There he had started training his sons to some basic techniques. Therefore, he asked Schmidt to get hold of a workbench and a lathe so that they could practice on them during leisure time and on holidays. Schmidt was so enchanted by the idea that he immediately got several workbenches and lathes and organized practical training for all pupils with the help of a master turner.

In this first conversation, it was agreed that the Knorre sons would remain with their parents for the whole length of their stay in Fellin and soon after the parents’ departure, the landlady of their inn would take the two boys to the Schmidt School. On the night before her departure, the mother asked her elder son Alexander to promise solemnly that he would always look after his younger brother Woldemar and always protect him, which he never failed to do later on. But next morning, the landlady completely forgot about the children who were left wandering through the foreign town. They finally sat down on a stone of the market fountain. Toward the evening, the landlady finally discovered there the two wretched creatures in tears. Then she hurried to take them to the institution where they were warmly welcomed and comforted by the Schmidt couple. The children rapidly adjusted to their new life as boarders, helped by the friendliness of their comrades, probably moved by compassion for the two exiles. Woldemar was at that time a charming little boy with fair curly hair, as much pampered by pupils of higher classes as by Schmidts’ guests. He looked so tender and delicate that Mrs Schmidt decided to take care of his education personally in order to save him from the harshness of a class. As to Alexander, his ingeniousness made him quickly popular with his comrades. He made for them curly wood shavings, kites, spinning tops,

whirligigs and protected the weak against the strong. He was soon appointed dormitory supervisor for all boys coming from Russia and took advantage of his function to set mousetraps at night, which delighted him greatly.

Pupils followed a busy schedule. Everyday, except on Saturdays and Sundays, they had to attend classes for six hours. Schmidt came personally to wake them up at 6 o'clock in the morning. Until 7:30 pupils repeated their lessons, then from 7:30 to 8:00 they had breakfast. Classes took place from 8:00 to midday. Lunch was served at 13:00 and followed by a walk till 15:00. The period from 15:00 to 17:00 was dedicated to gymnastics and singing, followed by evening homework from 18:00 to 20:00. After dinner, boarders went to the music room where they could play the piano or another instrument. The young Knorres were often received by the Schmidts. On class days boarders were forbidden from buying white bread, reserved for holidays, or sweets which were allowed only during the annual fair from December 2 to 9. Alexander and Woldemar used to receive each 10 kopecks per week as pocket money, plus 20 kopecks on the occasion of the fair. The school calendar ignored Russian and orthodox feasts and included only four holidays : both birthdays of Mr and Mrs Schmidt, St Martin's day on November 11 and School foundation day. The first three feasts fell during the cold season and were celebrated indoors with plenty of dances and joyful entertainments. Last feast took place in the open air during the warm season.

### **Examples of Director Schmidt's innovative educational methods**

Relationships between teachers and pupils were excellent and most courses very stimulating. Teachers participated in games on the playground and in the garden. Schmidt attached a special importance to trekking, which he himself practiced intensively in his youth by lack of money to travel, but also out of curiosity to discover the world according to the Germanic tradition of "Wandertrieb", the thirst to go to unknown places. An excellent physical exercise, trekking had also the advantage to produce easier and closer contacts between teachers and pupils. Schmidt wished pupils to discover as much as possible the natural and historical treasures of Livonia. Itineraries and stops were carefully planned. Alexander recalls a particularly memorable episode which happened on the estate of Herr Stryck zu Pollendorf (today Polli), one of the benefactors of the Schmidt School. There the children found with delight the presence of a young tame bear. They went swimming in his company and started usual games between boys, splashing one another and simulating to sink their neighbour's head under water. The young bear wanted to imitate their game and sank a



boy's head so deep under water that the child almost drowned. The landlord in a shock decided to have the animal shot, which was done at once.

Another time, the school went to visit the mausoleum of Field marshal Barclay de Tolly<sup>5</sup> at Beckhof (today Jõgeveste), not far from Fellin/Viljandi. The monument, built in 1823 on the Field marshal's estate at the request of his widow, was constructed by St Petersburg architect Apollon Shchedrin on the model of a Roman triumphal arch. Above the entrance portico appear the family's blazon and its motto in Russian "Loyalty and Endurance". The interior, made of granite, marble, bronze and porphyry, is decorated with a 4-meter high obelisk and a bust of Barclay de Tolly. A statue of Athena/Minerva, the goddess of wisdom and warfare, holds a laurel wreath above the bust and on the side a sitting woman symbolizes mourning. Through a rectangular opening the visitor can see down into the crypt two sarcophagi in which Field marshal Barclay de Tolly and his spouse Helene, born von Smitten rest side by side. The visit of this prestigious monument, commented by different teachers, was meant for pupils as a lesson in art, history and heroism from the example of the great warrior's virtues. But there occurred a grotesque scene in which a pupil known for his clumsiness straddled the railing in front of the opening, lost his balance, tumbled headfirst down into the crypt and collapsed on the sarcophagi with a big crash under the group's horrified eyes. Finally the unlucky boy got away with a dislocated jaw.

Another time the same pupil, while waddling near a swinging door, rested on it inadvertently and dived into the cesspit of the Schmidt boarding-school. Drastic measures were used to handle the matter : the boy was sent directly under the water pump of a trough where two vigorous cowgirls started the purifying process. Director Schmidt knew how to face efficiently all kinds of situations without dramatizing them. He also wanted to develop the sense of responsibility and initiative in his pupils. That objective corresponded perfectly to the intentions of the Knorre parents who always tried to encourage their children to stand on their own two feet. Outside their cultural component, yearly summer trips also served that purpose.

One day, after visiting the historical sites of Treiden (Turaida) and Kremon (Krimulda) east of Riga, the school party was led to lake Burtnieki where six boats were waiting for them.

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<sup>5</sup> Field marshal Barclay de Tolly (1761-1818) : Born in a family of Scottish origin established in Livonia since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, he entered the Russian army in 1778 and distinguished himself in cavalry. After fighting the Turks during the 1787-1791 war and the Swedes during the 1788-1890 war, he was appointed in 1808 Governor General of newly conquered Finland and held the function of War minister from 1810 to 1812. He commanded Russian troops at the Battle of Borodino in September 1812 and their march into Paris in March 1814. Still suffering from a serious wound inflicted to him at the Battle of Eylau in February 1807, he retired soon after 1814 to his estate of Beckhof and died during a trip to Bohemia where he was going for treatment.

The mission assigned to them was to reach the opposite side of the lake. They were divided into six rowing teams under the command of a pupil mature enough to be able to fulfil this function. Alexander Knorre was appointed commander of one of the boats. The outing was taking place on a beautiful sunny day and collective mood was most cheerful. Alexander soon noticed on the boat floor a wooden plug sealing a hole. One of the rowers felt an irresistible interest for that plug and started handling it constantly, in spite of repeated rebukes from Alexander condemned to stay at the rudder. This little game continued unchanged until the plug finally popped off and water immediately invaded the boat up to 4 cm under the frightened eyes of the team. As the wooden plug had split, it was impossible to drive it back to where it belonged. At once Alexander instinctively rolled up a handkerchief into a ball which he used as a wad to fill up the hole. The culprit got a brief thrashing and was ordered to seat right on the hole in order to maintain constant pressure on the wad. With his bottom soaking in water he had to bail out with his hat the water still flowing in. But the crossing progressed without problem and the team reached the opposite side of the lake in the midst of exhilarated cries.

At winter time the wonderful Fellin lake turned into a magnificent skating rink. On a foggy day without the slightest breeze, five pupils left their group to have a private smoke. They soon lost their bearings and sense of direction. Nevertheless they decided to move on forward and after a long run they finally came to an inn 4 km away from Fellin. After scolding them, the innkeeper who kept all his head, offered to drive them back to school on his sleigh for a good sum in hard cash. Meanwhile, the absence of the five had been noticed by their comrades. As darkness and fog were thickening, the whole pre-graduation class set off in search of them. Holding on a long rope, the pupils equipped with lanterns and a trumpet moved forward on the lake diagonally. As they arrived at the inn, they were informed that the five were already on their road back. Then they returned light-heartedly through the same way, still holding on the rope.

More or less comical incidents peppered school life. Schmidt always tried to settle them in a spirit of equity, tempered with benevolence and leniency. Alexander tells another episode about a mischievous pupil who had imagined to eavesdrop on teachers' discussions during their monthly meetings. These councils took place in the evening as all pupils were in their dormitories under the supervision of one of their comrades who happened to be Alexander. The prankster simply hid under the pulpit and after the meeting hastened to report to his comrades all fresh news that he just heard. This stratagem lasted for several months. The teachers realized that the pupils were informed of their discussions but could not figure out

through what channel. But all that came to an end on a day when the nosy boy gave himself away by sneezing. To his great shame he was hauled from beneath the pulpit and, as a punishment, had to eat his lunch standing near the stove for two weeks.

At a certain period there was a rumour saying that an elusive thief was haunting the institution. Schmidt noticed that amounts of money regularly vanished from his office. Wanting to catch the culprit red-handed, he secretly resorted to Alexander's talent for doing odd jobs. He asked him to make a bear detector for his office, which ingenious Alexander built without delay. Early on the following day, as the organ of the morning service had hardly sounded, a sharp crack echoed in Schmidt's office. Followed by teachers, the director rushed into his office just on time to see a boy jump out of the window. Being chased, the fugitive ran to a dormitory and took refuge in the narrow space between the wall and wardrobes. He held two pistols in his hands and was threatening to shoot on anybody trying to come near him. After a short discussion, it was decided to block the exits of his hiding place by pushing other wardrobes and to close in on the culprit until surrender. The besiegers were pre-graduates and as it was important to keep them busy, teachers asked them to bring benches to the dormitory so that they could attend classes on the spot. After a long while, the besieged one ended up by surrendering and handed over his pistols. Two teachers took him back immediately to his unfortunate parents and the matter was closed.

### **Last three Knorre sons join the Schmidt School**

Schmidt was managing his institution the same way as he did for his own family. With his wife whom everybody, including pupils, called simply "Malchen", short for Amalie, they were a loving and warm-hearted pair who acted like substitute parents for boarders and particularly for those who, like the Knorre children, could not return home for their summer holidays. Affection given to them by the Schmidts was very precious and helped them to bear separation from their family and homesickness. Alexander and Woldemar never saw again their beloved mother who passed away in November 1851, aged 37, after giving birth to her fourteenth child. But at the end of June 1852, after six years at the Schmidt School in Fellin, they had at last the opportunity to see their father who arrived with their three younger brothers Victor, Paul and Konstantin, respectively aged 11, 10 and 8. No need to say that they were overjoyed at hugging one another after such a long time. In fact, C.F. Knorre came for a double reason : to place three other sons in the Schmidt institution and to contract a third marriage with a person able to bring up the other numerous children from his second wife.

At the death of his second wife, C.F. Knorre had found himself alone with eleven children to take care of, while having to fulfil all the duties pertaining to his function. In despair, he probably turned for help to the pastorate of his hometown Dorpat and probably they put him in touch with pastor Moritz Georg Kauzmann of the Odenpäh (Estonian Otepää) parish. The pastor's sister-in-law Emilie von Gavel, born in Riga and aged 35, displayed all qualities of reliability, maturity and stability required in such a case. No doubt some letters were exchanged between the engaged couple during the first months of 1852. Anyway, they met for the first time at the end of June 1852, a few weeks before their wedding which was celebrated in a cheerful atmosphere by pastor Kauzmann in his Odenpäh church on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1852. The five Knorre sons present in Livonia at that time attended the ceremony which represented the happy highlight of their summer holidays. On that occasion they met pastor Kauzmann's children with whom they soon became like brothers and sisters. From then on, for the Knorre children the Kauzmann home became a second home where the pastor and his wife were always ready to receive them with open arms. As a matter of fact, a dozen years later, both Alexander and Woldemar fetched their life companions from Odenpäh, as they married two Kauzmann daughters.

Therefore, from the second semester of 1852, five Knorre brothers lived and studied together for a few years at the Schmidt School in Fellin, still under the authority and protection of their eldest brother Alexander, according to the rule prescribed in 1846 by their late mother. Alexander was so advanced in mathematics, history and geography that he gave lessons to many of his comrades needing to catch up. Meanwhile, he had difficulties with Greek and Latin. As he had a weak constitution, he looked alarmingly susceptible to consumption. Therefore it was decided to spare him cramming for his final exam and to strengthen his health by sending him to work in the open air. He went to learn agricultural techniques with the manager of count Kankrin's estate at Rewold (today Reola), 11 km from Dorpat. Alexander left the Schmidt School in 1855 after nine years there. His authority over his brothers as the eldest was automatically transferred to Woldemar.

The last three brothers just arrived adjusted rather easily to life at the Schmidt School. Victor especially valued the modern teaching methods used there, more profitable to him than learning texts parrot-fashion, as it had been imposed on him by his Russian tutor in Nikolayev for grammar, literature, history and geography, a practice which he condemned as obsolete and stifling creativity. Studying ancient languages, pupils learned how to translate texts of classical authors by means of good dictionaries, analysed word composition and derived meanings from a common root. The use of reasoning permitted to spare memory efforts and

develop thinking and learning by oneself. In mathematics the teacher took into account individual levels and adapted progress rate to each pupil. Meanwhile, the others had time to deepen their knowledge and improve it by themselves later on.

At the end of the first semester of 1858, Victor was supposed to take his final exam. As he was asked about his future plans, he replied that he wished to become an astronomer to follow the example of his father. As soon as C.F. Knorre was informed of this wish, he wrote a letter to Schmidt saying that he wanted to take back Victor immediately to train him personally in astronomy. Listening to the voice of his conscience as a dedicated teacher, Schmidt jumped on a carriage without losing a minute and imposed on himself a tiresome journey for two continuous days to Nikolayev in order to make C.F. Knorre change his mind. Their conversation lasted one hour but could not shake the astronomer's determination. As Schmidt sensed it, not being a graduate would singularly hamper Victor's life and career in Russia. Heavy-hearted Schmidt returned to Fellin and soon later Victor was back in Nikolayev where he became his father's assistant and received a training in practical astronomy. That experience would turn out later to be very precious for him. Meanwhile, Victor also acted as tutor for his younger brothers and sisters. At the autumn of 1862, C.F. Knorre considered Victor as sufficiently prepared to start formal studies in astronomy and sent him to Berlin University. There Victor became a student of astronomer Wilhelm Foerster who led him to his Ph.D. and later opened up for him a good career at the Berlin Observatory.

So during the summer of 1858, C.F. Knorre came back to Fellin with his third wife not only to fetch Victor, but also to bring two other sons, Anton and Carl, respectively aged 14 and 13, to the Schmidt School. In total seven Knorre sons out of ten studied in that institution. It shows the unique friendly and trusting relationship existing between the astronomer and Director Schmidt. Each of the seven sons followed his own way in professional life. After studying agriculture and management, Alexander ran for several years a paper manufacture in Rappin (today Rāpina) on lake Peipus (Peipsi), then his elder brother Fyodor associated him with construction works of railways, entrusting him with the care of logistics and supply on working sites. Finally he was hired by his younger brother Eugen to manage his estates. For his part, Woldemar studied medicine at Dorpat University and became Navy medical officer first in the Black Sea Fleet, then in the Baltic Sea Fleet. Both remained faithful to their Livonian ties and retired in Riga to spend their last years there. Victor interrupted an unsatisfactory astronomer's career started at Pulkovo Observatory in Russia and gave the full measure of his abilities at the Berlin Observatory. Paul was sent to Zurich for higher education and became a successful forest engineer. Endowed with full powers he managed the estates of

the Hohenlohe-Wittgenstein family in Russian Poland. Konstantin studied chemistry in Zurich but died of consumption at the age of 25. Anton who started studying engineering in Zurich died of the same disease at the age of 21. Finally Carl graduated as engineer from the Zurich Polytechnicum and worked in different places of Russia.

## **Conclusion**

Thus, the Schmidt School in Fellin enabled C.F. Knorre to provide seven of his sons with a high-quality secondary education, which led them to careers corresponding to their own capacities. Director Schmidt's educational objectives were not limited to delivering theoretical and practical knowledge to pupils. He also meant to mould their souls by giving them a solid religious and moral framework, so that they would be able to become responsible adults in view of integrating the complex multi-cultural society of their times. In keeping with the ideal of the Francke Institution of his youth, Gustav Max Schmidt managed to create a genuine School of life and he deserves to be remembered for this achievement.

## **Review**

In this article the author recalls the existence in the 19th century of the renowned Schmidt private school in Fellin (now Viljandi). Her research was based on first-hand sources: the memoirs of Gustav Max Schmidt, founder of the institution bearing his name, and the writings of two of its former pupils, Alexander and Victor Knorre, sons of Nikolayev astronomer Karl Knorre. G.M. Schmidt's background, training and teaching experience are described up to the circumstances having led to the opening in 1844 of his own private school in Fellin in order to meet the educational needs of the local community. Alexander and Victor Knorre's boyhood memories as long time boarders of the Schmidt School give an close approach to daily life inside the institution : detailed schedule, studied subjects, sport, leisure time, holidays, cultural activities, programmes of summer visits to Livonian sites of natural and historical significance. Several vivid and entertaining anecdotes on different incidents involving pupils bear the mark of authentic testimonies and real life. They also reveal G.M. Schmidt's teaching methods and global pedagogic project. His aim was to provide his pupils not only with a sound classical education, but also with useful practical knowledge, healthy physical training and strong moral principles, so that they would become good citizens in their further lives. With the efficient assistance of his wife Amalie, G.M. Schmidt did not manage

his school like a usual headmaster but looked after the boys entrusted to him like an attentive father taking care of his household. It so happened to the great benefit of all pupils and especially of those coming from far away places and separated from their parents. That was the case of seven Knorre sons who received their education at the Schmidt School before pursuing successful careers, each in his own direction. One can say that G.M. Schmidt, inspired by idealistic and humanistic convictions, opened the way to a new form of global pedagogy. Having created a remarkable instrument of education for generations of pupils, he thus brought an important social contribution to the life of his fellow-citizens.

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