

## Hugues Jahier

### Introduction

In 1781, Samuel Ricard quotes a widely accepted opinion concerning the city of Lausanne in his *General Treatise on Trade*: "Lausanne is more famous for the number of gentlemen and of scientists who inhabit it than for its trade, which is particularly obtuse ..." The other small centres of the "Pays de Vaud" were gratified with a more favourable impression from the point of view of trade, as their inhabitants were well-known for the way they could "make manufactures flourish ..."

The British people staying in the region used to establish links between Great-Britain and the "Pays de Vaud". Beyond this window of bilateral contacts, the people of Vaud used to appreciate everything that was "made in England." All the wide range of high quality - and thus very much demanded - articles coming from young industrial Britain could be delivered to the European market from the interior: metallurgic production, textiles, crockery, and an incredible quantity of trinkets which everyone coveted, according to the popularity of England at the time ...

In lesser proportions than for Geneva and the Neuchâtel part of the Jura (the implantation of clock- and watchmaking was more limited in the Canton of Vaud), England was becoming at the end of the century, and through the channel of Yverdon, a kind of raw material and tool provider for the Vallée de Joux (i. e. for Louis RoCHAT & Brothers in Brassus, Meylan & Samuel Le Coultre in Chenit), Vallorbe (Jacob Valloton's manufacture), or Sainte-Croix (Daniel Addor's manufacture).

Was the import trend from England to Switzerland unilateral? If we only consider the sending of souvenirs like bucolic engravings or a few good book editions, the answer to that question might be "yes", but it is noteworthy that Lausanne also used to be famous for the manufacturing of two original articles in which its inhabitants specialized ... and which could be bought in the London boutiques:

- a) The confection of pastel crayons invented at the beginning of the eighteenth century by Stoupan and which, already around 1770, presented a high degree of perfection (vividness of the colours) At the beginning of the 1790s, a man known as Helmod used to export them to Leipzig, Berlin, Saint Petersburg, Moscow, ... and London. During the autumn of 1793, Helmod said that he had been to the British capital during the summer and that he had seen boxes of pastels huddled on a cart led by a cow
- b) The distillation of a "miracle" remedy: the Arquebuse Water These "obscure" productions allow us to speak about importation and exportation in the commercial relationships between the "Pays de Vaud" and Great-Britain, even if the import-export rate was clearly in favour of England.

### ***The Arquebuse Water: Generalities***

The Arquebuse Water, also known as "Arquebusade", a wound healing liquid obtained from the distillation of about twenty fresh aromatic plants in brandy (preferably grape brandy), draws its name from its initial usage as a remedy curing people of wounds made by fire weapons. This liquor used to be applied as a tonic on all kinds of burns, sores and bruises.

"The Arquebuse Water has acquired great fame throughout Europe during the past few years. The foreigners agree to prefer the one which is manufactured in Switzerland, as they are persuaded that the herbs of the Alps used for this distillation give this water a degree of perfection and virtue which remains unmatched by the fluids made in other countries. This is the reason why I send several cases to France, Holland, Germany and in particular England, every year ..."

Those words were written in 1772 by Othon-Guillaume Struve, doctor and practitioner in

Lausanne, who goes on to say that grape brandy is usually used to manufacture Arquebuse Water, "which is now so well-known in England ..." This acknowledged remedy was not specific to Lausanne. We know that, on the other side of the Geneva Lake, Jean-Charles Joly, a master ironmonger, used to ship from time to time by the Morges boat a few cases holding twenty-four bottles of Arquebuse Water wrapped in oilcloth, ... "franco to London" ... Still, this liquor was "mass produced" only in Lausanne.

From the remaining correspondence exchanged between 1790 et 1793 between Fabre & Bouet and its client in Yverdon, Mandrot & Co., a major actor in the trade between England and Switzerland, we learn that Fabre & Bouet had two serious competitors in Lausanne at that time that is, Mrs. Guex and, in particular, Isaac-Gabriel Levade, at first collaborator and then successor to his brother Louis-Cyprien II, who was renowned for his competence as a surgeon, obstetrician and, ... pharmacist. In 1763, Levade the elder had succeeded in obtaining from the authorities in Berne the licence to buy the 400 pots of brandy which were necessary in order to manufacture the Arquebuse Water, while this licence had been formerly denied to him by the House of Wines in Lausanne.

### ***The Fabre & Bouet manufacture***

From a payment made by Mandrot on 18 May 1762 - 531 Swiss pounds - and from the promulgation of a decree in Lausanne forbidding the importation of grape brandy, we hear about the manufacturing of Arquebuse Water by the chemists Fabre & Bouet: their petition for the introduction of 2 carts full of grape brandy was rejected on 8 October 1762. Jacques Fabre had been born in 1699 in Lausanne in the family of a merchant who had emigrated from Languedoc. If we know that Fabre was still alive in 1769, we are only aware of his firm's activities, first known as Fabre & Bouet in 1770, through Antoine Bouet, his son-in-law, who started to lead Fabre & Bouet in 1750, and through Antoine's son, Jean, who is the author of the correspondence written in the 1790s. As a good tradesman, Jean Bouet advertises his firm on 1 April 1791 and announces a reduction in his products' price:

"... Our waters will always be preferred for their advantages: they are easier to preserve and improve with age instead of losing their properties, so that we can assume that their quality is superior ..."

Although the secret of its fabrication is unknown to us, we can trace the various stages of the production and maintenance of the Arquebuse Water: women used to pick up the plants in the mountains but, when they started to reduce their activity, the prices started to go up. In 1793, the herbs' price was five times as high as during the years from 1773 to 1775; it rose from 2-3 pennies to about 10! This rise and the fear that the plants which were necessary to the production of Arquebuse Water would be missing led Fabre & Bouet to make investments around 1790 and to constitute an authentic botanic garden:

"... for the herbs we cultivate in this garden, which are commonly found in the country, and which are the most aromatic (...) the garden was expensive, but at least we are sure than our water is rich of the herbs it needs to keep up to its standards of quality ..."

The process of distillation is marked by the problem of the "incredible rise" in the price of brandy. During the 1770s, the brandy coming from Berne cost 10 to 13 sols, 10 to 12 sols at the beginning of the 1780s; in 1793, the last price was 24 sols!

The costs brought about by the manufacturing of the Arquebuse Water added to this rise in the price of ingredients. On 1 November 1792, Fabre & Bouet wrote to their client in Yverdon, who was responsible for delivering the production to England, in order to ask them to advance their payment so that they can face the double obligation to "renew the boiler, which is too old and too worn for us to use" and to satisfy the demands of the brandy makers, "who are like the printers, always harassing us and, if we don't have enough money to give them a little loan, leave us for others; since the quality of their brandy is good, we wish to continue to buy it from them ..."

The costs for maintenance and wrapping comprised three posts:

- glasses (45 centilitres bottles)
- straw
- cases

After the "catastrophe" which happened on the way from Lausanne to Basel, portion on which "the cases are particularly tossed", and during which several bottles were broken, Fabre & Bouet resolved to have bottles made of thicker glass, which led to a severe rise in the prices, since the price of each bottle rose from 3 deniers to 3 sols. The price of the wrapping straw also increased: from the 1770s, when it cost 6 to 8 or 10 sols to fill five cases with a sheaf of forty pounds of rye straw, the price underwent a two thirds rise due to bad crops in 1790, and reached 20 to 24 sols for a sheaf of wheat straw, which barely filled three cases ...

The cases, which used to contain 50 bottles each, piled up on 7 to 8 ranks in height, also became more and more expensive. The first rise was announced in a letter dated 24 July 1790 by a carpenter who changed the price from 32 to 34 sols a case. The second - and unavoidable - rise was announced during the month of October of this "miserable year 1793", and amounted to 2 sols again. Fabre & Bouet note that "... the carpenter has increased the price of the cases after a considerable rise in the price of wood ..." Moreover, the wrapping turned out to be a nuisance: two persons could not carry out the job together, as the workshop owned by Fabre & Bouet was too exiguous.

Particularly depressed by his obviously shrinking turnover, Jean Bouet was led to express bitter thoughts:

"Our benefit at the very best scarcely allows us to survive. You really mustn't have any other source of profit to accept to manufacture this article, which barely yields enough money to live on. All that is only good for my old self (...) Still, it is true that it remains quite popular thanks to your valuable contribution, which is quite useful, as you spare neither care nor work to maintain the excellent quality of the Arquebuse Water ..."

When the price of the bottle of Arquebuse Water rose from 20 to 21 sols, the pharmacist added:

"... It has to be written in the great book of destiny that, no matter how hard Jean Bouet works, he will die as he came to the world ..."

When Mandrot & Co failed to approve of this rise, Fabre & Bouet reacted energetically:

"... If we did not succeed in selling more bottles than 10, 15 or 20 years ago, we would not earn enough money to live on, unless we could raise the price to 24 sols a bottle. Otherwise, we would have to give up. Twenty years ago, we did not sell as many bottles and still, we used to earn enough and we could even share the benefits ..."

Bouet however realized that the rise in production costs was as prejudicial to Mandrot & Co. as it was to himself, and he therefore consented to grant them a discount of 2 sols per bottle. The Yverdon firm even obtained a discount of 4 sols a bottle on a shipment of 40 cases (2000 bottles), on which occasion Fabre wrote:

"... We are not making any difficulty (sic) concerning the 4 sols per bottle discount. Although this definitely exceeds our possibilities, we have to yield to the circumstances and hope that we will be more fortunate in the future ..."

From the same perspective, Fabre & Bouet did not ask Mandrot & Co. to support the rise in the price of the wrapping material, arguing that they had "other costs to support ..."

Once all the taxes had been paid (14 sols tax for the "cent pesant" or "hundred pounds quintal"), one sol a case for the delivery to the market and 3 sols a case for the carriers, it seemed that Fabre & Bouet were only working for the benefit of Mandrot & Co. Still, the pharmacists agreed to pay all these taxes without passing them on to their client because the Yverdon firm represented a vital client which Fabre & Bouet wished to keep at any cost, as this letter dated 1 April 1791 clearly reveals:

"... Italy orders Arquebuse Water every year but, this year, we have not been able to fulfil their order yet, as we have barely had enough for Great-Britain. Holland is getting interested and orders come from everywhere. We would be very pleased to expand our trade and to deliver our product throughout the world if it were possible (...) You are our major representatives and we rarely send anything to England (this year only six cases) without your help ..."

Half a dozen cases sent to the London clients were nothing compared to the products shipped through the Yverdon channel:

	1790	1791	1792	1793
Dispatch: <sup>a</sup> :	4	3		3
Cases	71	67		120
Bottles	3350	3350		6000
(litres)	(1597)	(1507)		(2700)
Swiss pounds	3550	3550		5600 b
+ Shipment costs	252.12	241		438
Total in Swiss pounds	3802.12	3591		6038
<sup>a</sup> : End of March - beginning of April, and then between October and the end of January				
b: 400 Swiss pounds discount on the 12th April shipment				

All the cases, invariably marked D. & F. (Dubois & Sons), were loaded at the market and sent by cart to the first commission agent, Abraham Fröh, "rue Franche", in Basle.

### ***Transit of the Arquebuse Water***

Until the autumn of 1792, there was only one way to send the cases of Arquebuse Water: Fröh used to check and sign the Lausanne shipments, pay the transport costs until Basle, and send all the goods to Bruxelles-Ostende, addressing them to Frédéric Romberg & Co., through the usual Nancy channel (probably the Louis Antoine company) who, in turn, paid the costs from Basle to Ostende and organized the shipment to London. On 29 december 1790, Fröh informed his trustee Mandrot & Co. that, as no boundaries had been established between France and Alsace yet, the goods in transit could pass free of charge, and that it was important to profit from this advantage, as it might not last ... 1793 was the year of an incredible chaos on commercial roads: people used to travel whatever way they could, according to the movements on the war front. Although Fabre & Bouet were paid appropriately for their goods, they used to follow the evolution of the situation with particular attention, because they knew that their trade would be stopped the moment Mandrot & Co. failed to find their way towards the Northern Sea. On 26 March 1793, the pharmacist in Lausanne wrote to Yverdon with a certain candour that "... since it appears that the French will soon have to clear all the places in which they used to hamper trade, they (the Arquebuse Water cases) will travel freely on the former roads ..." The situation was not as ideal

as that ... On 23 January 1793, Früh tried to convince Mandrot & Co. to ship the goods through Hamburg, which was safer at that time:

"... If Great-Britain declares war to France, which will probably happen, it is natural that the goods travel from Basle to Calais through Hamburg ... It is your task to evaluate the risks you are taking ..."

Mandrot & Co. evaluated the risks and finally chose to "play" on several itineraries, without abandoning the traditional road, which still remained preferable when the circumstances would allow it. The way through Lorraine was cut, and it was impossible for Früh to direct the Ostende shipments through Nancy. He chose Rastadt, where the Johann-Friedrich Müller firm had to evaluate the possibility to send the Arquebuse Water cases by water (according to the navigation possibilities on the river Rhine), or by cart towards Köln. On 30 December 1792, the firm Nicolas de Tongre in Köln shipped about 30 cases of Arquebuse Water on the "Veuve Evers", by care of Hering & Maurenbrecker, through Rotterdam, to reach London. Tongre justified their choice by informing Mandrot & Co. that:

"... the road through Brussels and Ostende has been blocked since the Austrian and French armies covered all our countries. No company dares to leave for Brabant, and all trading communication has been blocked between our town and the Netherlands. (...) The Rotterdam way is quicker at the present time ..."

Five days later - 4 January 1793 - a new letter from Köln cancelled that choice:

"... As it is possible to avoid the Austrian army by crossing Brussels, I had the cases removed from the boat and given to the cart driver, for the address of Romberg & Sons in Brussels. He left today ..."

Still, the deliveries straight from Rastadt to Köln were unusual; it was more common to make a halt at Heinrich Akermann's in Mainz or at Preye & Jordis' in Frankfurt am Main. The way through Hamburg, which had been recommended by Früh in 1793, was rapidly tested by Mandrot & Co. On 7 March, Van der Smissen & Sons in Altona informed Yverdon that 40 cases of Arquebuse Water were going to be shipped on two British vessels - the Thetis, led by Captain Capon, and the Argus, led by Captain Norfor - which would have arrived in London "for a few days" on 9 April. During the spring of 1793, shipments could be organized from Basle through the Flanders. Romberg sent 40 cases of Arquebuse Water from Brussels to Ostende. Still, the situation in the Netherlands remained precarious. Impens & Hermann of Louvain, to which the commission agent in Basle occasionally resorted, wrote in a letter dated 16 July:

"... We have all reasons to anticipate serious problems in the harbour of Ostende. The British and the Hanovrians, who were camping in front of Dunkerque, were completely beaten for the second time in eight days. (...) Things don't look out too well for us ..."

Still, the status quo prevailed, and the Louvain firm informed their trustee that they were expecting at any time 40 cases of Arquebuse Water shipped from Köln. This shipment must have been unusual for Impens & Hermann, who insisted on the fact that this article was subject to the "excise" (entry tax particular to Great-Britain and the United States) in England, and expressed their surprise that such a highly taxed article should still be sent.

### ***The London Addressees***

Whether they had been shipped through Ostende or, less frequently, via Hamburg-Altona and Rotterdam, the cases of Arquebuse Water marked D. & F. all landed at Dubois & Sons', in the city of London, at 7, New Basinghall Street - Moorfields, near the Guildhall. This London firm was Mandrot & Co.'s official agent, since most of the goods exported from Yverdon crossed the Channel to end up in their office. Unlike their commission agents, Dubois & Sons had to face different expenses: they had to pay for the maritime insurance and for the "excise" that

is, the entry tax particular to Great-Britain.

- **Insurance**

At the end of the eighteenth century, the custom of contracting insurance in case goods in transit got lost or damaged started to spread. Punctual shipments, or certain fragments of shipments, used to be insured, while the rest was being sent at the recipient's charge. The reason why people did not systematically resort to this practice was that it was particularly expensive.

If, for common goods, such as the crockery exported to Switzerland, the insurance rate did not exceed 0,75 % of its declared value in 1791, it could reach 8 % for clock and watch-making material.

The Arquebuse Water followed the habitual pattern: it was not insured on the way from Ostende to London, until the roads became insecure: it was then insured for one and a half guinea. The cases shipped through Hamburg were insured for 2,9 % of their declared value (about 3 shillings and 6 deniers or £ 7,5 case, for a usual shipment of 40 cases).

- **The "excise"**

The entry tax on the Arquebuse Water reaching England was extremely expensive. In 1790, Dubois & Sons used to pay 9 shillings a gallon (£ 44,12 for twenty cases), which amounted to 35 % of the goods' declared value when they arrived in London. The "excise" thus represented between 19,5 and 23 % of the selling price which had to be paid by the retailers.

The price of a (non insured) shipment of twenty cases reaching the docks of London was about £ 125 (£ 6,5 per case). Since the expenses supported by Dubois & Sons amounted to £ 53 to 55 (the 4/5 for the "excise"), the price of a shipment was about £ 180 net (£ 9 per case) at the last stage of the dispatching process.

The expected commission amounted to about 3,8 % of the expenses supported by Dubois & Sons. The rate for exports towards Switzerland was comprised between 2 1/4 and 2 1/2 %, but this very high percentage can be explained by the fact that this quite unusual import article required much work. Dubois & Sons kept some of the cases for themselves and sent the others to the retailers.

Amick & Huguenin, perfumers and owners of the shop sign "3 Arquebusade Bottles" at 32, Haymarket, with half to two thirds of the bottles which arrived at Dubois & Sons', had acquired a warrant giving them privilege to mention that they were the official suppliers of the Court. Thus, they were clearly different from the other retailers:

- Burgess, at 107, Strand
- Delavaux
- Dessoulavy Father (Henry) and Son (Jean-Georges), owners of the shop sign "The Canister" (tea house), at 4, Albemarle Street, Picadilly
- Johnson, at Haymarket
- Smith & Neveu
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Those were the London shopkeepers who usually held the Fabre & Bouet Arquebuse Water at the beginning of the 1790s. Unlike the new or occasional clients, the regular costumers benefited from preferential prices. They used to pay between £ 9 and 10 per case while a person known as Barker, "who was not such a good customer", had to pay £ 11,1.

It would be interesting to know the retail selling price of the Arquebuse Water to get an exhaustive point of view on the distribution circuit. Unfortunately, the documents are lacking

for this last phase, which implied neither the manufacturer, nor the buyer and exporter in Yverdon.

Still, it is possible to compare the price of the Arquebuse Water in the pharmacist's shop in Lausanne and in a London boutique.

50 (1790)			bottles				case
Selling price in Lausanne			Price the in brut net		at arrival London	Selling price for the retailers	Profit made by Mandrot & Co.
Swiss	Pounds	53,12	Equiv. 106,5	Equiv. 153	Equiv. 166,12	Equiv. 195,10	Equiv. 13,12
			6,5	9	916	10	0,16
							1
							25,4 à 31,8 %par rapport au prix d'achat à Farbre&Bouet

This figure shows us that, in the most common example of a £ 10 per case sale to the retailer, the cost price was composed of the following elements:

- About 31,5 to 32 %: *manufacturer's share*
- 10% : *exporter's share*
- 58% : *Total dispatch costs*

The initial cost of the Arquebuse Water thus used to be multiplied by about 3.

### Conclusion

Apart from the fact that the Arquebuse Water constituted the starring export product of the Canton of Vaud, it has to be noted that pharmacopoeia in general was the object of an interesting trend of exchange. Although the commercial branch represented by the trade of remedies was quite insignificant compared to the most important export articles of the century, it lasted for quite a long time and was quite prosperous.

Fabre & Bouet also used Mandrot & Co. to export liverwort (hepatica) to London. It was sent in July and August, as it had to be picked up in humid and warm weather. Liverwort was sold 14 Swiss pounds a pound to Mandrot & Co.

England exported all kinds of remedies towards Switzerland: span>

- "Grana Angelica", or authentic "Scottish pills", created by Dr. Patrick Anderson of Edimburgh, a physician of the James English house who used to attend Charles I. 600

boxes were sent to Yverdon from 1790 to 1792 for £ 30 (without the taxes). This remedy, which was known for its efficiency in case of "digestive obstruction", was - by far - the most popular in the Pays de Vaud and in Geneva. Two firms in Lausanne (Jean Masméjan and Pierre Verney, goldsmiths), used to buy these boxes by dozens.

- Anti convulsive "white drops of Dickenson" which, according to Mrs. Cerjat of Lausanne, were "very useful during the smallpox epidemy" (October 1793).
- The "Sloughton elixir" of the J. Hargrave firm, which used to be sold 8 shillings a dozen boxes in 1790 in London.
- "Cavice pills", found at Mackay & Sons' at 176, Picadilly, could also be found as a "kind of elixir", paid £ 1 for 40 pounds (1790): Mackay & Son were the Prince of Wales' suppliers.

This list should be completed with a series of articles which also aimed at improving health and hygiene: peppermint, salts of vinegar and ammoniac, essence of amber, deer horn essence, tincture and toothpicks, brushes used against rheumatism, taffeta cloth used to dress wounds, and ... a mysterious powder against rabies. The people of that time were quite concerned with their physical condition. The trade of remedies between England and the Pays de Vaud had all the characteristics of a luxury market: products of unquestionable quality bought at any price! It is obvious that the coming and going of weird mannered, but extravagant and fashionable Lords between England and the Pays de Vaud encouraged the trade of remedies coming from and addressed to a region which enjoyed a solid therapeutic reputation abroad. The virtues of the thermal waters and the prestigious fame of Dr. Tissot, whose reputation attracted and sometimes kept on the banks of the Geneva Lake a smart clientele which enlivened the Lausanne society, did much for the image of the Pays de Vaud. The "pre pharmaceutical" trade was thus an important aspect of the privileged relationship between England and that Swiss region. From that point of view, it is quite remarkable that the prohibitive price of the Arquebuse Water, which is due to the blade of the British customs, but also to the repetitive perception of taxes at each level by intermediary commission agents, did nothing to hamper the market for the product.