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LITERARY PAGE

Edited by Dr. PAUL LANG.

All letters containing criticisms, suggestions, questions, &c., with regard to this page should be addressed to the "Literary Editor."

AUSLANDSCHWEIZER IM GESPRÄCH.

VON HUGO MARTI.

"Mich rief die Weite, die mir Wunder bot.
Wind musst' ich fühlen, fremden, im Gesicht!"
"Mich zwang die Not. Ich griff nach jenem Brot,
Das leichter war. Doch besser war es nicht."

"Mein Wanderschuh, verstaubt und nagelschwer,
War mir viel treuer als der treueste Schatz;
War hinter einem blanken Wegrand her
Lieber als hinter Zopf und Miederlatz!"

"Zu Hause träumt' ich, wie mit leichter Fracht
Die Wolken ziehn, bewimpelt Bug und Baum,
Und in der Fremde singt mir Nacht um Nacht
Ein Vogel Heimatlieder in den Traum!"

"Der weiten Welt gehört mein Leben an.
Doch wenn ich mir die letzte Ruhstatt such',
Solls dort sein, wo dem Wind ich lauschen kann,
Der knitternd strafft ein rotweiss Bannertuch!"

(Aus der Auslandschweizernummer des "Bund"
vom 16. April, 1923.)

* * *

HUMOUR, IRONY AND SATIRE.

Alfred Huggenberger of Thurgau is known generally as a writer of very genuine peasant stories, which ring true to anyone who reads them. His verses of a countryman, "Hinterm Pflug," have aroused interest, too. Of late he has developed his humorous vein especially. Those who may have witnessed one of his dialect plays, which the amateur Swiss Societies of Eastern Switzerland are always eager to produce, know what we mean. He now publishes a booklet, "Oeppis um em Gwunderchratte" (A. Sauerländer, Aarau, paper covers, Frs. 3.—; cloth covers, Frs. 3.50). It is a collection of remarkable chapters in dialect verse about home and foreign politics, and some even more eternal subjects of controversy, as, for instance, the situation of old bachelors and the complaints of patients against their doctors. A chapter full of common sense about the vote for women is also included. Huggenberger's humour is dry, and he jumps at you very often with his funny association of ideas. In reading these entertaining verses one almost sees the twinkle in his eyes. The booklet has had an enormous success in Switzerland and is sure to have the same in every community where the somewhat drastic humour of a wistful philosopher in country garb is valued.

There is more subtle irony in *Dominik Müller's* new verses. His comic epic in eleven cantos, "Herrn und Frau Bims Romeise" (Verlag von Benno Schwabe & Co., Basel) was written, as he says in the preamble, partly in 1910, but was finished last year with the endeavour to maintain its idyllic pre-war character. The epic tells in smooth, pseudo-classic six-lined stanzas the story of a lawyer and his wife from Basle, who pass their holidays in Rome and happen to meet a choir from their native town which gives a concert in the Coliseum. They also meet other acquaintances,

HEIMATZWISCHENSPIEL.

In einer Sommermondnacht, aber solo
Möcht man im Kosmos einmal sein,
Der Eindruck wär erhabener als wohl, o,
Mit Vielen und selbst schöner als zu zwein.
's ist so gering, der Fremden Plattbetrieb —
Doch da's nicht anders ist, nimmt man vorlieb. — —

Heut nun füllt harmlos Leben die Ruine!
Vom Lenzazur gewaltig überspannt
Am Nachmittag, als Bimens froher Miene
Mit Roms Elite kamen hergerannt —
Nicht Fremdenführer waren heut zu sehen,
Noch lästige Verkäufer von Kameen.

Denn heut fand statt, an diesem Nachmittage
Des Sängerbundes Kolossalkonzert,
Für Roma ein Ereignis ohne Frage,
Das selten sonst dem Süden wird bescheert.
Bims wiesen an der Kasse ihre Karte
Der König war schon da und alles bahrte.

Wo Gladiatoren roh mit Löwen kämpften
Sah man beschlips- und -frackte Sänger nun,
Die ihre Stimmen schwellten oder dämpften,
Entflammt zu harmonie-reichem Tun —
Fürwahr, untrüglich Zeichen einer Zeit
Zunehmender Gemüt- und Friedlichkeit!

Wie brauste es aus hundert Sängerkehlen
Das "N ene geit's so..." und "Ihr Berg' lebt wohl,"
Entfesselnd in dem Meer von Römerseelen
Begeisterungsflut von Klatschen und Gejohl.
Die Sänger sangen fort aus vollen Backen,
Dem Dirigenten floss der Schweiß vom Nacken.

Wie hallt das Forte mächtig durch die Quadern,
Wie säuselt das Piano himmlisch rein:

an attaché, Camembert, and an artist who lives with his model. Their sensations are of no great magnitude. They admire where one is supposed to admire and see what must be seen. And yet, they are quite nice and in a way not unsympathetic people. Dominik Müller knows how to depict in a mildly ironical way their fears and their enthusiasms, if we do not blush in applying this word to the still minute maximum of their inner emotions. One certainly gets the impression that pre-war Basle was an idyllic town and that pre-war humanity enjoyed heaven on earth. Dominik Müller's irony is no longer so biting as it was. He has lost his bitterness to a great extent since he has sat in the Great Council of Basle as a member of the Middle Class Party. In fact, he confesses more than once that Herr and Frau Bims are rather sympathetic to him. The satirist of yore has, with old age approaching, developed into the idyllist of his town. His whipping is by now almost caressing. In a small way he has become a gentle, little Homer of the solid middle class population, which determines the character of the town with the red cathedral.

Georges Ultramaré of Geneva has as yet no such aspirations. But we must not forget that youth is generally harsher than old age. "Les Mystères de Genève" (Editions A. Ciana, Geneva) is a series of portraits and some more general sketches which are written with a virulent pen and not without elegance. These Genevese mysteries have agitated in no small measure the old, austere city of Calvin, rumour says. And one must admit that the one or the other personality, seen through his eyes, become irresistibly funny. Whereas Dominik Müller in his prim days attacked the bourgeois, which he has himself by now become, with preference, Ultramaré seeks his prey chiefly amongst the inhabitants of the university and newspaper offices, not neglecting, of course, high finance. Is this an index as to his future career? His sketches certainly are real, full-blooded satires. There was thus no danger that they should lack readers. Short as we are of satires in Switzerland, where everybody is afraid of everybody, our towns being so small that the writer usually falls upon the man about whom he has just written as soon as he leaves his house, we cannot but be glad if from time to time a super courageous youngster dares so greatly as to lift the curtain of veneration and admiration. It is just as well, I say, that this should happen now and then, even if we are aware that in order to write satire you must over-emphasize certain weaknesses and close your eyes to the really important things. It is just as well, I say, that our little Popes should now and then feel their sedate seats shaking. We want them not to forget that there is no absolute truth in this world. Unfortunately, one is apt to forget that on many chairs. That is why we think that the good of the "Mystères de Genève" outweighs its harm, the more so as Mr. Ultramaré is certainly the first and foremost to suffer from its publication.

* * *

HODLER'S ART IN ENGLAND.

The following is an interesting review on the first part of a very recommendable biography on Hodler. It appeared in the "Literary Supplement of The Times" of April 19th, 1923. Its writer is obviously rather prejudiced in Hodler's favour. We can only hope that his words will induce some of his compatriots to make

Ein Jubel war's — doch möcht ich nicht salbadern,
Ich will mit Bim nur still begeistert sein,
Sonst müsst' ich, Eindruck und Gefühl zu schildern,
Im Dicherbilderwalde endlos wildern.

O Glück, jetzt lud der kleine Ré die Spitzen
Des Sängerbunds zu sich ans Baldachin,
Die weite Runde sprang von ihren Sitzen,
Weil weltgeschichtlich die Minute schien.
Den Sängern tat der Bürgerament stocken,
In ihren Blicken zitterte Frohlocken.

Sie fühlten alle: ihres höchsten Strebens
Erhabnes Ziel, es war hiemit erreicht,
Sie standen im Zenithe ihres Lebens
Lorbeer gekrönt und ewig ruhmgeliebt. —
Inzwischen sprach der Ré zum Dirigenten:
"Ik maken Ihnen meine Komplimenten!"

Herr Lehrer Schneuzli schrieb des Königs Worte
Hernach mit roter Tint' in Rundschrift auf
Und überreicht, umrahmt mit goldner Borte,
Sie als Geschenk dem Sängerbund darauf:
Dort hängen sie noch heut an der Tapete
Als huldvoll Zeichen seiner Majestete.

Nach seinem unvergleichlichen Triumpfe
Vor dem antiken und modernen Rom
War unser Sängerbund famos im Strumpfe.
Links liegen liess man Tempel, Dom und Strom
Nach solchem Siegestage noch so gerne
Und streifte von Taverne zu Taverne.

Der Zipfel führte seine Kameraden
Nach einem etwas dusteren Quartier,
Wo's seltene Tänze gab und plastische Waden
Und heimatlich vertrautes Flaschenbier.
Auch Hürlimann wär gerne mit — zum Glück
Hielt Schneuzli ihn am Rockschock noch zurück,

themselves acquainted with the greatest Swiss artist of the last century. As the final sentence of the review reveals, there is hardly a single of Hodler's pictures to be seen in England. All the more should we welcome the attempts which the Art Committee of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique is making to organise a Swiss Art Exhibition in London. It is high time that this scheme should materialise and that England should at last have an opportunity of having a glimpse of some representative works of this painter.

"Die Kunst Ferdinand Hodlers." Volume I. By Ewald Bender. (Zürich: Rascher und Cie. The second volume will be published in a few months.) Few books on contemporary art have matured more thoroughly during the course of completion than this study on the Swiss painter Ferdinand Hodler. It differs, in fact, as radically as can be from the ephemeral type of monograph, which leaves the workshop after, say, a twelvemonth and is forgotten as quickly as it is produced. Bender laid the foundation of his work nearly a decade ago under the supervision of Hodler himself; but, after undergoing extensive alterations, it finally went to press as a study on a no longer living artist, its judgment more objective and outspoken, no doubt, on that account. Hodler has given rise, on the Continent, to much clamorous adulation, and, of course, also to not a little dull-witted detraction, and the need of a volume of sound and sober appreciation must have been felt by many. Bender's qualifications for fulfilling this task are excellent. His knowledge even of the more obscure periods of Hodler's work is very extensive, his eye is always respondent to genuine artistic merit, while his pen eschews hyperbole to a laudable degree. Thus his monograph promises for the best. The first volume cannot be expected to stand alone with commanding interest; it is only in Hodler's later works that we see a creative spirit of outstanding power, and in his artistic evolution, taken as a whole—that phenomenon of peculiar interest to the student of post-impressionism. His work of the eighties and nineties must be considered more as a prelude than as a self-contained accomplishment, a prelude to his later and much greater style, as reflected in such works as "Marignano," "Day," "The Students of Jena," and "The Oath of Unanimity." The book is well produced and profusely illustrated, and it is to be hoped that it may help this striking artistic personality to come into his own in this country. For Hodler's present-day reputation, or rather lack of reputation, in England rests surely not on the premonitory judgment of a contemporary posterity, but rather on a state of insular neglect. We do not know of a single picture of Hodler's in an English collection, either private or public.

* * *

Haussprüche.

Ich gange us oder in
So ist der Tod und wartet min.

(An einem Haus bei Adelboden. 1663.)
Im Jar des Herrn 1663 haben Gwerb
Egger und sin Wib Barbara lagge diesers
Hus gewuuen uf Got stat sin vertruwen.

Wir buwen hie unser Best
Und sind nur frumde Gest
Aber wo wir ewig solen sin
Da buwen wir gar wenig hein.

(An einer Scheune bei Adelboden. 1766.)

Der Fauter allen Veich bescheret
Und der die jungen Raben neret,
Der wolle diese Scheur bewahren
Zunützt der Menschen lang Jahren.

Beschwörend ihn, zu wahren seine Würde!
Und siehe, der erkannte seine Pflicht
Und nahm aufs ich der Tugend edle Bürde
Und lief Herrn Pfarrer nach, der just Gericht
Hielt, sowohl über Papst als Petersdom,
In seinem würzigen Heimatdiom....

Am Abend dann, zum festlichen Bankette
Der Schweizerklub die Sieger all beschied,
Hei, da ging's hoch her, und wie um die Wette
Reiht Rede sich an Red' und Lied an Lied,
Der Glanzpunkt war's, als unser Herr Minister
Zog vaterländisch-rührende Register.

Die Feier dehnt' sich weit bis hinter zwölf hin,
Giovanni Knöpfli klopfte an das Glas
Und übergab in Bronze die römische Wölfin
Dem Sängerbund und sprach noch dies und das.
Hinwiederum dieser liess sich auch nicht lumpen
Und wehte Knöpfli einen Silberhumpen.

Ein andrer rühmt' die schlichte und doch schicke
Veranstaltung und schloss mit feurigem Prost,
Dann auf die Ewige Roma und Antike
Bracht' Bim noch einen zunggewandten Toast,
Dazwischen gab es Mandolingefummel,
Zum Schluss beschloss man einen Katerbummel.

So war denn über jegliches Erwarten
Gelungen unser Säng' Römerreise,
Sie brachten einen ganzen Lorbeergrarten
Nach Haus und kamen kaum mehr ins Geleis. —
Doch Bims nach diesem Heimatzwischenspiele
Verfolgten wieder ihre eigenen Ziele.

[Aus Dominik Müller: Herrn und Frau Bims Romeise.
(Benno Schwabe & Co., Basel. 1922.)]