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LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

By Gottfried Keller

I have recently been asked why I keep up the effort of writing "Letters from Switzerland" for the *Swiss Observer* — given the fact that its circulation is so small, that it only appears once a month and that it cannot afford to remunerate its contributors. So — why do I do it? Why indeed?

There are several reasons: the main one probably being the nostalgic one that the *Swiss Observer* is my last link with active journalism. Looking back over the years, I have, after all, been connected — in one capacity or another — with the Colony's paper ever since my first arrival in London in 1934.

I well remember the times when Mr. Boehringer — Oscar Boehringer's late father — was running the Frederick Printing Company and when he and the unforgettable Fred Stauffer were in charge of the *S.O.*

A while after the Second World War had ended, the then Swiss Minister, Mr. Henry de Torrenté, told me one day at one of his sumptuous receptions that it had been decided to set up an Advisory Council to try and assist Mr. Boehringer junior. "And you, Keller — et vous, Keller — will be one of its members." A wish expressed by Mr. de Torrenté was like a Royal Command which one obeys without further ado. The late Raoul de Cintra — Omega's representative in the U.K. — was elected as its first Chairman and on his passing away he was succeeded by the late Robert J. Keller, who, on leaving for Switzerland for good, was succeeded by yet another Keller — myself.

As a member of the Advisory Council I was nominally in charge of editorial policy — but this was a fictitious function, since being a journalist myself, it would have been repugnant to me to try and impose a kind of censorship on the *S.O.*'s editors. Nor would this have worked. But I always had to write those explanatory articles whenever the subscription had to be raised and the text of those slips — used at one time — to remind readers that voluntary contributions over and above the subscriptions would be extremely welcome.

With Mr. Boehringer I also took part in those deliberations and negotiations which led to Mr. William de Vigier's magnificent gesture of

underwriting the *S.O.* financially and thus giving it a new lease of life.

While active in London I also contributed a fair number of articles of all kinds. One I remember was about my taking part in a proving flight with one of the first Comet jet aeroplanes to Rome and back, another one about a shake-down cruise in Cunard White Star's first postwar luxury liner, the *Caronia*. And at one period I wrote a number of true short stories under the pseudonym of "Willy."

One of these was about a visit I received one day from a neat and dapper CID Officer — he came in one of those black Wolseleys, bowler hatted and with a magnificent moustache. He had to check up on the alibis of some 10,000 car owners, whose number plates started with certain letters.

A lady of easy virtue had been murdered in a lonely Hertfordshire lane and two boys had seen a car in the vicinity with number plates with similar letters. It was easy for me to prove my alibi by showing the officer my passport — because at the time of the murder I had just started my holiday in Switzerland. The stamped date of my re-entry into the United Kingdom convinced the CID man at once of my innocence. "Besides", he said to me on leaving, "I did not really think that you were in the habit of murdering prostitutes in lonely Hertfordshire lanes."

This, I thought, was very flattering indeed and described the whole incident at length in the *S.O.* There were four more such stories, which at the time I thought were well written and which, anyway, gave me pleasure to write.

Well, since writing still gives me pleasure and because I have reason to believe that some of the *Swiss Observer's* readers like to read my contributions, I intend to continue writing them.

And to follow that delightful bit of historical narrative, I am delighted to be able to let you know that Gottfried Keller has more than fulfilled the promise in the last paragraph of his letter. Some real treats from this much respected correspondent are in store for our readers in forthcoming issues. We thank him most warmly.

WGS.

Birthdays and Anniversaries

The following readers will be celebrating birthdays within the next few weeks. On 8th May, Mr. A. C. Boller (Saint-Prex) will be 79. On 11th May, Mrs. Lienhardt, the oldest Swiss in Dunfermline, will be 98. Mrs. A. Sommer will have her birthday on 15th May, the same day as Mr. E. Huber (63). Mr. J. F. Lüthi (Biglen, BE) will be 67 on 22nd May, and Mr. W. Schedler will have his 74th birthday on 24th of the month. Mr. W. Flory will be celebrating his birthday on 25th, and Ambassador A. Weitnauer (Berne) will be 62 on 30th May. Mr. A. Zullig will be 71 on the same day.

Mr. and Mrs. F. Burri will have their 32nd wedding anniversary on 2nd, and Mr. and Mrs. R. Senn on 18th May.

To all these and any other readers who will be celebrating birthdays and anniversaries in May, we send congratulations and best wishes.

RIFLE CLUB DATES ISSUED

*7th May; *21st May; *11th June; 25th June: Match with Marylebone Rifle & Pistol Club; 10th September: Match with Surrey Rifle Association; 24th September: Postal Match with S.S.V. Vienna; 1st October.

* Obligatorische and Feldschieszen Programmes.

An August Date for Swiss Abroad

The Swiss abroad will hold their next assembly in August at Einsiedeln. The venue was decided during the last meeting of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad which also elected National Councillor Alfred Weber as its new President in succession to Mr. Louis Guisan, who has retired from the post.

This election will have to be ratified by the Central Committee of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique.



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