

Literary page

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1923)**

Heft 116

PDF erstellt am: **11.07.2024**

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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."

DAS KOEHLERWEIB IST TRUNKEN.

Von Gottfried Keller.

Das Köhlerweib ist trunken
Und singt im Wald,
Hört, wie die Stimme gellend
Im Grünen hallt!

Sie war die schönste Blume,
Berühmt im Land;
Es warben Reich' und Arme
Um ihre Hand.

Sie trat in Gürtelketten
So stolz einher;
Den Bräutigam zu wählen
Fiel ihr zu schwer.

Da hat sie überlistet
Der rote Wein —
Wie müssen alle Dinge
Vergänglich sein!

Das Köhlerweib ist trunken
Und singt im Wald;
Wie durch die Dämm'ung gellend
Ihr Lied erschallt!

KELLER AND LEUTHOLD.

A coincidence brings two booklets on Keller and one on Leuthold together on my desk. The two Zurich poets will not grumble for once if they find themselves in one article. During their lifetime, too, they esteemed each other. Keller liked Leuthold certainly better than he did C. F. Meyer. And when Leuthold became insane, he did what he could to alleviate his condition. When the unfortunate man died, he walked behind his hearse.

Harry Maync, the Bernese Professor of Literature, gives in volume 20 of the fine series "Die Schweiz im deutschen Geistesleben" (H. Haessel, Leipzig) a short *precis* of Keller's life and career. It is naturally based on the already considerable special literature in existence. It is not written in a peculiarly original way, but neither does it contain any violent over-statements of facts. As the question of the "Seldwylertum" is again in discussion, it is perhaps worth while to mention that Maync also holds that "nur darum vermochte der Dichter diese Welt von einer höheren Wahrheit so sicher zu erfassen und glaubhaft darzustellen, weil er selbst ein Stück Seldwylertum in sich trug." One may, of course, go on discussing how much this "Stück" exactly comprises. An appendix to the booklet contains a list of the more important Kelleriana which adds to its value.

Professor Emil Salger-Gebing edits as volume 19 of the same series a number of Keller's poems. In the introduction he emphasises the virile character of Keller's lyricism and describes his *Naturlyrik* and his *Gedankenlyrik*. Neither the introduction nor the selection is overwhelming. In the selection we do not like the too great prominence given to poems which express Keller's sympathy with Germany, although this is, of course, comprehensible from the standpoint of the German editor. As Swiss we would have preferred for once instead of the much-quoted "Gegenüber": (Wohl mir, dass ich dich endlich fand—Du stiller Ort am alten Rhein—Wo ungestört und ungekannt—Ich Schweizer darf und Deutscher sein!) the at least

UNE PAGE D'ALBERT RHEINWALD.

Voici la fin de l'essai "Le mouvement littéraire à Genève" que nous reproduisons de son livre "Equilibres" (Delachaux & Niestlé, Neuchâtel). L'essai est symptomatique pour les tendances littéraires qui se dégagent nettement de l'oeuvre du jeune écrivain.

...N'ai-je pas toujours reconnu la perfection d'une oeuvre d'art quand ses parties s'accordent toutes entre elles, s'accordaient pour finir à des fins encore plus hautes, qui sont les forces de la nature? Dans cette apparente confusion, quel ordre secret? Ça et là, des maisons alignées en travers des pentes de la colline, opposent à ses abandonnements la fermeté d'une résistance, et partout quelque rue étroite laisse voir qu'elle s'insinue jusqu'à la plaine bleue séduisante comme une invitation au voyage. Hélas! ce trou régulier, cet abîme prochain au bord duquel vos regards glissent sur des toits en saillie, où ils plongent sans en voir le fond, cette cour silencieuse, vous la prendriez pour un vieux cloître hostile aux enchantements d'alentour. Et ces maisons sans fenêtres, et couleur de muraille, qu'un ressaut de terrain élève au-dessus des autres, elles évoquent les remparts qui jadis resserraient la cité pour la défendre. Du même passé dogmatique et violent surgissent, voulant avec l'apreté d'une règle inflexible commander à tous les horizons, imposer tous les âges, surgissent, tour du Nord et tour du Midi, les tours de la cathédrale, gardiennes moroses d'une flèche noire qui vise les étoiles et ne les atteint pas.

Mais de la ville sonnante montent à présent dans l'air sonore les sonneries de quelque tramway,

equally fine Vaudois Shield. The usual patriotic poems are represented, and the selection also gives a fairly good idea of the character of Keller's ballads.

The same editor has been responsible for a selection of lyric poems by Heinrich Leuthold (Vol. 12). Leuthold was born in 1827 and died in 1879 in the Burghölzli. His life was a tempestuous one and responded in many ways to what the *bourgeois* generally conceive by the word "Bohemian." He was truly a poet who loved women and wine, and in marked contrast to Keller and Meyer was unable to manage his affairs in a proper way at any time of his life. He was a free-lance journalist for some time, during which he lived in different German towns. He knew Munich best and made many friends there. But one country he loved more than any other: Italy. He belonged to that set of romantic Teutons who long and crave for the clarity of the South, through which they hope to find deliverance from the chaos in their inner constitution. They usually identify classicism with the country which has produced it.

Leuthold's merit lies in some of his lyrical poems. He has written next to nothing of another kind. His lyrics have one quality, if they lack many others. They are essentially musical. He was the first Swiss poet really to sing and not only to see, and it is not without reason or foundation that only now has he come into his own. It was no earlier than 1914 that Professor Bohnenblust published a reliable edition of his works. With the now ever-increasing music of Swiss verse, Leuthold will very probably find more appreciation in the future than he did of yore, if only as an interesting forerunner. It would not be fair to put him on the same level as the other two Zurich writers. He was a second-rate author who had many epigonistic touches about him. His impressionability had the dangerous bent of absorbing pictures and locutions formed by other poets. Very often he did not put down a vision as he saw it, but rather made a clever blend out of what other people had expressed before him on similar subjects. Even in this small collection, which is extracted from several hundred poems, there are some quite horrible lines, the triviality of which entirely destroys the charm of the poem in which they are to be found. Yet there are some "Naturstimmungen," often of a melancholy character, which appeal by their mellow flow. One will always like his odes and some of the sonnets in which he has attained mastery of form. One may very likely find the greater part of the love poems and drinking songs, which are to be read in this selection, to be of a rather superficial and noisy kind. I do not like his ballads either, and can see no great originality or density of atmosphere in them. But I do like some of his simple and unpretentious "Lieder" for their easy movement. It is likely that these will make his name live in the literature of our country.

PLAUDEREIEN AUS BASEL.

There is hardly an inhabitant of the university town which borders the Rhine and has its symbol in the two mighty red towers of its cathedral who has not at one time in his life—if not throughout it—been delighted with the talk of the "Plauderer" of the *National Zeitung*. Fritz Amstein, the chief editor of this paper for forty-four consecutive years, used to have a friendly chat with his readers every Saturday, in which all and sundry topics of likely interest to the average man and

woman about town were touched upon. Last year this veteran journalist died. He passed away as the natural attributes of old-age had eaten up his vitality. But right up to the last moment he was still able to hold his pen and insisted on contributing to his beloved paper. One of the charms of Fritz Amstein's chats, a selection of which the *National Zeitung* has now edited in a handsome booklet, was his unshakable optimism. Amstein was a kind of popular philosopher who had early seen through the vanity of big events and doings. His humour was born out of a deep understanding; that is why it was distinguished by certain qualities which the products of his gossiping colleagues do not always show. The topics on which he wrote were always well within the average daily experience of his compatriots. He wrote about the coming and the passing of the seasons, of the theatre and political scandals, on the Carnival, Easter and Whitsun. A speciality of his were little tales in dialect in which he related some funny adventure of Herr Glucksi or Herr Dampferli, local cranks of his own imagination. If the idyllic vein in him ran stronger, he used to go back to his early recollections and conjure up a piece of Old Basle, when people were even more secluded and self-satisfied than they are now. Of course, he would not admit that. It was one of his fundamental beliefs that human nature was eternally the same, a funny thing at which you could not help laughing, though in your innermost heart you might pity it.

As regards the form, there is not much to be said for Amstein's productions. He was a careless writer, who never troubled as to how he expressed himself. All his articles were written straight off from beginning to end. His "Plaudereien" will nevertheless remain precious documents of Basle's recent history and culture to all those who for one reason or another care for the *genius loci* of that town. Readers of this collection will at the same time become acquainted with one of the wisest men who has ever lived between St. Margaretha and St. Krischona.

WALDEINSAMKEIT.

Von Heinrich Leuthold.

Deinen süssen, süssen Schauer,
O Waldesruh!
In meine Seele hauche
Und träufle du!
Lass mich träumen die Träume
Der Jugendzeit;
O Frieden, o Ruhe! komm über mich;
Wie lieb' ich dich, lieb' ich dich,
Waldeinsamkeit!

Märzveilchen blühen, es treibt in den Bäumen
Der junge Saft,
Es zwitschern die Vögel, die Wipfel rauschen
Märchenhaft, sagenhaft;
O Geist der Natur, der die Brust mir
Bezaubert und feilt,
O Frieden, o Ruhe! komm über mich;
Wie lieb' ich dich, lieb' ich dich,
Waldeinsamkeit!

Feierlich sonnigliche Stille
Und Frühlingszeit,
Kein Mensch, keine Seele
Weit und breit,
Nur ein leiser, leiser Kummer
Ist mein Geleit;
O Frieden, o Ruhe! komm über mich;
Wie lieb' ich dich, lieb' ich dich,
Waldeinsamkeit!

des bouffées de voix humaines, des roulements de voiture, des coups de timbre, des coups de sifflet et des coups de trompe, et le bruit d'un marteau sur l'enclume ou de tapis qui l'on bat sur les toits, parmi le gazoillis des hirondelles tournoyantes. Et, par moments, tous ces bruits réunis, et d'autres indistincts, composent une rumeur semblable au silence, quand, soudain, jaillit le cri d'une sirène, bateau qui s'en va vers les rumeurs d'un plus vaste silence.

Cette ville qui, s'épanchant du haut de sa colline vers un lac étendu aux collines expansives, en couvre les rivages jusqu'aux verdure moutonnantes de la campagne, cette illustre cité avide de grand air et d'horizons larges et qui, soucieuse également de ses extensions invisibles, réclame aujourd'hui, je le sais, de nouvelles franchises, cette Genève épiscopale devenue la Rome protestante, elle aspire aux libertés innombrables de la pensée qui court le monde avec la vie. Aujourd'hui, cette ville que baigne un lac entouré de collines onduleuses, environné de montagnes fuyantes je l'écoute, c'est un cri longtemps étouffé et qui éclate: elle la jette à l'univers qui tressaille du même désir. Et, quand de la rade se détache par un beau jour une barque aux voiles triangulaires, un vapeur, avec sa bannière de fumée, on dirait que rompant ses amarres, la ville appareille pour tenter l'inconnu ou suivre à travers l'espace les douces beautés de son paysage fait de quelques lignes toutes simples et toutes pures. La chaîne du Jura qui s'étend, parallèle au lac, là bas où s'incurve la rive, ferme, semble-t-il l'étendue. L'autre rive s'allonge, s'infléchit, semée de maisons, avance en pointes, se creuse en golfes, et porte le coteau si gracieux de Cologne. Il part

de la ville, ce coteau, tout couvert d'épais feuillages, et, à mesure qu'il s'en éloigne, s'élève, et montre un village de peu de maisons, des pentes de vignes et de prairies, où monte un sentier, des villas blanches isolées parmi des arbres, ça et là le mur d'une terrasse et, là-haut, les pelouses et les solitudes de quelques parcs. Puis, lentement, il s'abaisse et, au long de la mouvante plaine bleue du lac, s'étire jusqu'au bout d'une lointaine pointe de rivage. Il s'allonge ainsi, avec une douceur tendre et fière, et le royal amant des eaux, des arbres et des collines, le soleil, lorsqu'il l'embrasse, évoque ces minutes où l'amour assouvit un double désir. Car les lignes souples et caressantes des deux rives qui semblent se fuir, s'attirer et, dans l'éloignement, se rejoindre, c'est une contrée où la grâce appelle la volupté. Que parlais-je tout à l'heure d'un amphithéâtre et d'une arène inondée? Sous mes yeux se dénoue un drame prodigieux qui renverse les murs du cirque et, nous entraînant à sa suite, court l'espace illimité. O ravissement! Deux puissances rivales qui se disputaient notre âme, en nous et autour de nous font la paix. La civilisation rejoint ici la nature qu'elle a sauvée en la combattant. Mais, ô volupté, l'amour qui nous permet d'entrer dans les vies de la nature, n'est pas votre forme unique. Toutes les fois que la pensée accorde notre petit geste de vivre au geste éternel de la vie qui aspire, comme un poème ou comme un paysage, aux perfections de l'ordre, de l'enchaînement et de l'harmonie, n'êtes-vous pas là, ô volupté, génératrice de toutes les formes d'art, n'êtes-vous pas là, dans le vieil univers qui s'offre à nos tendresses?