

Editor's Post-Bag

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EDITOR'S POST-BAG

The Cottage,
Mancroft Towers,
Oulton Broad,
Suffolk.
May 15th, 1950.

The Editor,
Swiss Observer,
London, E.C.2.

Dear Mr. Editor,

You have invited readers to express an opinion upon the matter mentioned under the heading of "Charity begins at Home" in the Swiss Observer of March the 12th.

Speaking from the view point of a Swiss by birth, there is a further aspect of the same general problem, which I feel all lovers of the traditional good name of Switzerland should do their utmost to stamp out.

I am referring to the ever increasing numbers of young Swiss women who are swarming over to Britain, armed with permits to be employed as domestic workers in this country. In the majority of cases, these girls are not entering Britain with the genuine intention of doing a fair day's work for a fair day's pay at all, but are rather leaving Switzerland and coming to Britain with the express intention of avoiding as much work as possible and having a year's holiday at their British employers expense! Apart from the dishonesty of such intentions, these girls also lead their prospective employers to believe that they are capable of carrying out the normal duties of trained domestic workers, when in actual fact many of them are incapable of undertaking even the most elementary household duties, and I am speaking from personal experience of such girls!

As an instance, I will quote a recent example which is typical of several that have been brought to my notice by English friends. And in this case I can vouch for its accuracy, having had personal experience of the girl for 5 weeks in my home.

This girl, whose Mother I know very well, came to England last October with a permit to do domestic work in a private nursing Home. In spite of the fact that she was paid very good wages, and was kindly treated, she told me a pitiful tale of the strenuous nature of the work, and so, feeling it my duty to help the girl, for the sake of her Mother, I found her another job, with a friend of mine who is expecting a baby very soon and is the wife of a doctor. I advised the girl, in fairness to her employers, to give at least one month's notice. However, she disregarded my advice and walked out on them giving only a few day's notice of her intentions. Neither did she report her movements to the Police or the Labour Exchange, so that I had to do a lot of explaining on her behalf! She had assured my friend that she was competent in domestic work, including cooking. Likewise, she gave an assurance that if engaged, she would stay with my friend until the expiration of her permit at the end of September. Since she commenced work with my friend, I have received nothing but unsatisfactory reports of her. She has turned out to be lazy, incapable of assuming any responsibility and so utterly incompetent in the kitchen, that she cannot even make an omelette or a cup of coffee! She spent every moment when my friend's back was turned, and also far into the small hours of the morning, in writing to her boy friend in

Switzerland. For my sake, my friend was very patient with her, and tried to train her, but she showed not the slightest interest in fulfilling her duties, for which she was paid well, and was also being treated as a social equal, and one of the family. She then intimated to me that she had no intention of staying until the expiration of her permit, as she wanted to go sightseeing with her boy friend who is coming to England in July. She would therefore leave my friend in the lurch, just after the birth of her baby, when help was most needed. I pointed out to her the dishonesty of her action and I got a rude reply for my pains, that as she had only made a verbal promise and had put nothing in writing, she could leave my friend whenever it suited her convenience to do to!

When my friend got to hear of it, she not unnaturally came to the conclusion that the girl was only using her as a convenience, and so, she gave her 7 weeks' notice, in order to give her plenty of time to make other arrangements. The girl was furious, and insulting, and had the audacity to say that it was inconsiderate of my friend, because the date on which her services would be terminated was inconvenient to her, as it was a month sooner than the date she had intended to leave anyway, to go joyriding with her boy friend!

Out of spite, she packed her bag and walked straight out of the house leaving my friend ill in bed, expecting her baby very soon, with the result that the neighbours have to bring in her meals. Her parting remark was that she had been exploited and overworked. This was the last straw, when she even told me that there was so little work to do that life was like a holiday! I will add that a charwoman came 3 and lately 5 times a week for the whole morning, do do *all* the rough work in my friend's *small* house.

I feel, Mr. Editor, that such girls do not reflect credit on Switzerland, and the sooner the Swiss Legation or the British Authorities send them packing back to their own country, the better will it be for the good name of Switzerland abroad.

My suggestion is that, if a girl should leave her Employer before the termination of her permit to live in this country, the Swiss Authorities in Britain, in conjunction with the British Authorities, should get a full report on the circumstances of her leaving, in order to assess whether the girl is worthy to remain in this country or not.

Yours faithfully,

(Mrs.) Renée M. BACK.

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EDITOR'S POST-BAG.

London, May 20th, 1950.

The Editor,
Swiss Observer,
London, E.C.2.

Dear Mr. Stauffer,

"Charity Begins at Home."

With your article in the S.O. of May the 12th you certainly hit the nail on the head.

I wonder, however, whether our folks at home are the only ones to be blamed for it. Memories are sometimes short, so let us go back a few years. When the bombs came down over London, when we could not buy a decent bottle of wine under £3.0.0., or anything else for that matter, most of us said "The first time I can go to Switzerland, I shall have a good time." This time came in 1945/6, we received £100.0.0 Basic allowance, £10.0.0 per day for business, for as many days as we liked.

We arrived in Switzerland after years of absence, entered a restaurant and read the menu which made our mouths water and noticed that a bottle of Neuchâtel costs Fr.5.—. We invited a friend or relative to have one with us. The other guests in the Restaurant heard from our conversation that we came from London, they praised us for having endured the bombing and won the war against Hitler. They shouted "Good old Churchill" and this made us a bit swollen headed and we ordered another bottle.

We knew from the olden time that, if a party of Swiss sit together, each one pays his own drink, but being accustomed to the English habit, we were eager to show the Swiss how we "Engländer" behave at home and stood another round. With this we started to spoil our friends and relations and we were considered the "rich uncle from America." Everywhere we were greeted and fêted as if we Swiss in London had won the war ourselves. We liked it (and don't say you did not!) and this spoiled us and when we came to Switzerland again, we did not want to show that we are worse off and the whole process of generosity was repeated.

When our friends from Switzerland come to London they like this "old Spanish custom" or standing "a round" but, having spoiled them in Switzerland, they take it for granted and "stand around!"

As far as the "whip round" amongst the Colony

is concerned for assisting Swiss Societies to come over free of charge, I quite agree that this practice should stop, but having been responsible for the "Basler Jodler" to come to London for the re-birth of the "Schweizerbund" I would like to mention that no member of the Colony has been approached for financial assistance. The loss was paid by 6 friends who in 1946 had a wonderful reception from them and we were anxious to reciprocate. They entertained the Swiss Colony at the 1st of August Festival in the Coliseum free of charge in gratitude for the entertainment we have offered to them.

With the money which has been spent during the last 4 years on our hard-currency-friends, we could almost build a Swiss Centre or at least support the "Swiss Observer" so that it would no be necessary to forecast the closing down of our only official paper because of lack of interest and funds to carry on.

Yours sincerely,

E. SIEGRIST.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will be published on Friday, June 9th, 1950.

We take this opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donations, over and above their subscriptions: J. C. Wetter, O. Wuest, Swiss Benevolent Society, Auckland (New Zealand), Mrs. J. A. Lanz, V. Trottmann, J. Heimerdinger, A. Engelbert, E. Oggier.

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