

Farewell to A. Stauffer

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FAREWELL TO A. STAUFFER

BY GOTTFRIED KELLER

It has, for one reason or another, fallen to me to say FAREWELL, in the "Swiss Observer", to quite a number of distinguished Swiss who have endeared themselves, over the years, to all and sundry in our Colony: Walter de Bourg, Egbert de Graffenried, Victor Umbricht, Guido Lepori, to recall only a few. And now it devolves on me to say FAREWELL to the paper's Editor himself.

Alfred Stauffer is really leaving us now, as he has been anxious to do for some time. As one of the members of the Advisory Council I would like publicly to thank him now for all the devoted work he has done in the service of the paper. I think it is appropriate to say that Alfred Stauffer has done his work with a singular devotion to duty to the best of his ability and to the limit of his strength. It is also right to say that he saw it, during all those years, as his duty to minimise frictions and always to underline those factors which tended to make for unity in the Colony. These, I think, were his main aims and he has remained faithful to them to the very end of his term of office. For an Editor of a small, yet important, paper, which forms the link between the Swiss abroad and their homeland, this is a noble principle, and Alfred Stauffer can have the moral satisfaction, on looking back, to have upheld it always.

The services Alfred Stauffer has rendered the Swiss Colony are as numerous as those he has rendered the paper itself. An Editor of the "Swiss Observer" does, as Alfred Stauffer's successor will soon discover, not lead an easy life. Not for him are the many facilities usually attributed to life in an editorial chair: assistants, helpmates, reporters and beautiful girl secretaries galore, modern equipment with dictaphones and tape-recorders, paid journeys in luxury liners and jet aircraft, and, to crown it all, an expense account which can be made to cover all sorts of things. The facts of life at 23 Leonard Street just are not like that at all!

While it is true that we have a generous publisher who is willing to carry, as part of his business, all sorts of expenses which the paper itself ought really to be able to carry — for which we all should be grateful — it is also true that an Editor of the "Swiss Observer" has in many ways to swallow his pride and do things which in a larger newspaper office are done by others. He is really a kind of One-Man-Band; he has to edit and to write, to gather news and to render it digestible, to conduct a considerable correspondence, to deal with the typographers, and on top of it all he has to go out and beg for advertisements, without which the paper cannot be kept going.

Alfred Stauffer has done all this — and more —

untiringly, willingly, without complaint, year after year. He has done it for the sake of the cause, certainly not for material gain, or for the glory of having his name published amongst those "who were also present". Alfred Stauffer has been blessed by having a wife as a companion in life who has shown him and the peculiarities of his work the greatest possible understanding. Has anybody ever heard Mrs. Stauffer grumble about the many nights out, or about those duties which may have taken Alfred away from her when it would have been so cosy to sit together by the fire? It is only right and fair if Mrs. Stauffer is included in this expression of gratitude, which, so far, I have felt authorised to pen together as a member of the Advisory Council.

If I am to add a few lines on a purely personal level, as coming from a friend and colleague, I have to admit that words won't come so easily now. Alfred Stauffer has, both in a little farewell speech at our last Council meeting and in a letter, thanked me most generously for whatever little help and assistance I may have been able to render him over the years. Retirement, however much he may have wanted it of late, will not be easy for him. The life in that chair in Leonard Street, and going from the Dorchester to the Montana and from the Schweizerbund to the Swiss Hostel for Girls, has been his for so long that he will, no doubt, miss it. But he will, of course, keep up many of the personal friendships he has made over the years and I would like to think that the one with me is one of them.

In a message which I published in Switzerland recently, I referred to Alfred Stauffer as an institution. And, of course, one always dislikes it if and when an institution comes to an end. Something to which one has got accustomed over the span of years and which one has tended to take for granted, is suddenly not there any more. So it will be with Alfred Stauffer. "Partir", says a French proverb, "c'est toujours mourir un peu".

It is not so very long ago that I saw the Stauffers at Crans, in Switzerland, where they and we were holidaying. I recall a delicious open-air raclette we had together and I also recall how Alfred told me then of his desire to retire and how I attempted to talk him out of it. Now it has come to pass.

I believe it is customary to end a Farewell message like this with the words: "Ad multos annos!" Well, Fred, this is it: "Ad multos annos!" And may you, when you sit back now and take it easy, have the profound satisfaction of one who can say to himself: "Whatever I may have done, I have certainly done my best".