

"50 Jahre Weltenbummler" a New York by August Stern

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"50 JAHRE WELTENBUMMLER" A NEW BOOK BY AUGUST KERN

In 1959 we received a book called "I wanted to see the World". Its author was a friend of ours and well-known by many of our compatriots in Great Britain, Mr. August Kern. It was a collection of stories from his memoirs, dedicated to his family and to his many friends and former colleagues all over the world. The book was in English and illustrated by James Cliffe. It made entertaining reading, and revealed not only many interesting facts about foreign lands or better, people, but many endearing facets of the author's personality. He was then retiring to Switzerland, nearly half a century after he had left his native village, determined to see the world. He ended his reminiscences with the following words: "I hope that following all these experiences I have grown more tolerant, patient and charitable; I am certainly more deeply grateful to the fate which let me see the greater part of the world, in fulfilment of my life's fondest dreams!"

These words were written in Liverpool, at the end of a brilliant career in the world of commerce. Now August Kern is back in Switzerland and has written his memoirs in German. The book "50 Jahre Weltenbummler" is an attractively produced and much larger and more "professional" book than its English predecessor. It is published by Schweizer Spiegel Verlag, Zurich, and again illustrated by James Cliffe.

The author begins with his experiences as a young man in pre-first-world-war Russia. From there his travels took him to Spain and later to America which became his second home — he says that even today he feels a different man in the atmosphere of the New World which had been a revelation and an inspiration to him from the day he landed in Providence, way back in 1920.

Mr. Kern joined the Standard Brands Concern, makers of the famous "Royal" baking powders, with whom he stayed until his retirement. He soon graduated to foreign traveller with a reputation that he did not mind "the damndest places". Ethiopia, Mexico, Panama, South America, Berlin and London. It was from here that he supervised the European business activities of his firm. He had lost his wife and had come to England with his four-year-old daughter in March 1939. At the outbreak of the war, his firm was evacuated to Buckinghamshire, and later, being an American citizen, Mr. Kern was appointed teacher of French and German to the American troops in England who were to use their acquired new languages during the Invasion.

Next, Mr. Kern became food purchasing officer for the American Army of Occupation. In September 1944, he crossed over to the Continent. First he was in Paris and then in Luxemburg. At the end of the war, he went once more to America by a highly complicated, but interesting route which took him to even more new countries.

Tales of the many new places Mr. Kern was yet to see fill the next part of the book — Pakistan, Irak, Somaliland, the mysterious kingdoms of the Arab world, China and many countries of the Far East.

In 1946, he visited Germany for the first time after the war and called it "a country without a future", depressed and devastated. In 1958 he returned to the "world of the economic miracle". In 1959, he retired on his sixty-fifth birthday, and he began to write "50 Jahre Weltenbummler".

No two people agree on what a good travel book should be like. The reader wanting to find the country

rather than the people, may not find full satisfaction from August Kern's book. But I for one, being more interested in the people, find his memoirs fascinating, and through the eyes of this intelligent, highly observant man, I have learnt a lot about the countries he visited. The reviewer of the Swiss Broadcasting Company said he believed the book would please the globe-trotter as well as the stay-at-home. The reader can certainly be assured of many an hour's entertaining reading as one fascinating episode after another is told in Mr. Kern's original way.

The book also contains pertinent comments on the character of the English, their tolerance and their cooking. But in no less objective manner does the author comment on the Swiss, and his experiences on his return to his native land are not exactly a recommendation of Switzerland as a country to retire in for us Swiss abroad. But Mr. Kern has found that if one is willing to rediscover the Swiss soul under the hard outer shell of materialistic complacency and hard-headed efficiency, the result is highly rewarding and certainly worth the effort.


The book may be ordered from the "Swiss Observer" (please see advertisement). It has had an excellent press, and I should like to quote the above mentioned reviewer again who recommends August Kern's memoirs thus: "His book is the book of a much-travelled, able and competent man whose life in foreign parts has made him strong, but also tolerant and generous. One would like to pass the book on to as many young men as possible; the author's rich experiences could be of great use to them".

Mariann.

P.S. August Kern has by no means finished travelling — he has just returned from a visit to Berlin. So we may be looking forward to a second volume!

AUGUST KERN

50 JAHRE WELTEN- BUMMLER



Mit 19 Illustrationen von James Cliffe

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