

Fred Suter †

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FRED SUTER †



From the painting
by J. A. A. BERRIE, F.R.S.A.

It is my sad duty to record the passing away, on 23rd April, at 6.40 a.m., of my friend Albert Friedrich Suter, of "Lueg-is-Land", Lower Kingswood, Surrey. In a way it is perhaps also my privilege to have been asked to write his obituary, as I have enjoyed the friendliest and most cordial relations with him during my 32 years stay in this country. Having called him Fred during practically all those years, I feel sure it will not be taken as lack of respect if from here onwards I shall continue to speak of Fred Suter and omit the more formal and solemn sounding Christian names. The latter would not come naturally.

Fred Suter, in whose lovely house and grounds above Reigate countless members of the Swiss Colony have enjoyed warm hospitality over the years, was born in Thalwil — near Zurich — on 22nd March 1882. He thus reached the high age of just over 84 and attained with it the wisdom, detachment, sagacity and mellowness which go with complete maturity. Having come over to this country in 1902, as a youngster of twenty, he has succeeded in making a brilliant career for himself as founder, owner, and spiritus rector of a well-known shellac factory, which is now jointly run by 3 of his 4 sons. He has also succeeded in living a long, healthy life to the full and enjoying the best part of it.

Of course, there were tragedies too in Fred Suter's life. Those who were here during the second world war will never forget the cruel blow which fell on him when a German bomber pilot, under pursuit by the R.A.F., dropped his load over the Surrey hills and scored a direct hit on Fred Suter's lovely mansion. His first wife, who was of British stock, was killed outright in the débris and Fred escaped alive, but quite badly injured. We visited him then in a military hospital somewhere in Surrey, where he had been taken and where, with that characteristic tenacity of his he successfully resisted the amputation of a badly shattered leg which a doctor insisted on performing.

Fred Suter was not to be done down by this cruel blow. After he had recovered he married again, this time a Swiss lady, the present Mrs. Suter, to whom and to his numerous family our sympathy now go. Together with and supported by her and again with characteristic tenacity he set about rebuilding his house on his own ground. Innumerable were the difficulties he had to overcome and the paper-war formalities he had to fight. But fight and win he did and "Lueg-is-Land" stands today as a proud tribute to him.

Proud as Fred Suter was to have no fewer than 3 sons fighting on the side of liberty, in the British Army, during World War 2, he was, of course, at heart a Swiss and always remained one. A huge Swiss flag would always fly from a mast in his grounds when friends arrived. The atmosphere he created in his house and garden was always a successful mixture of things British and Swiss, both at their best. But apart from being hospitable, Fred Suter has helped no end of people and causes by anonymous donations. His services to the Swiss Colony in Great Britain included nearly twenty years in the office of President of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique as well as membership in the Commission for the Swiss Abroad, whose meetings in Switzerland he attended regularly and conscientiously whenever it was possible. During the war years I was his Vice-President of the N.S.H. and also gave a regular monthly talk on events. It was then that I learnt a great deal from him about how to preside over Committees and Assemblies, which was to stand me in good stead later on in other fields.

Fred Suter was perhaps not what one calls a religious man. Nevertheless he felt a deep gratitude towards fate, which, apart from blows, had also given him the blessing of a big family of 5 children, 17 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. It was out of this feeling of gratitude that after his second marriage he adopted a blind girl, whose mother had died, and gave her his name, a home and a wonderful opportunity for an education in music. Pepita Suter's sense of loss on the one hand, but gratitude on the other must today be immeasurable. It is only right if I mention in this connection that through this adoption Fred Suter began to take a lively interest in the welfare for the Blind, whose organisation he helped materially and otherwise to the end.

He was essentially a kindly, friendly and very cheerful person, in whose company one instinctively felt completely at ease. In spite of his many achievements and membership in important bodies like The Royal Society of Arts, The Rotarians, The Anglo-Swiss Society, and others, there was a total lack of pomposity about him one could not but like. He was, one could say, a simple man in the very best sense of the world. And to many, like to myself, he was a wonderfully steadfast friend whom one will never forget.

GOTTFRIED KELLER

MISS IDA WYSS

We announce with deep regret the death of Miss Ida Wyss, a well-known personality in the Swiss Community for decades. She was born on 9th May 1882 in the Jura Bernois, a citizen of Hubersdorf (Solothurn). When she first came to this country she worked as a Governess in high-class families. She then founded the Anglo-Swiss Employment Bureau which she ran most successfully for many years until she retired in 1959.

It was particularly in the Swiss Church that Miss Wyss left her mark, and for many years she was the sale organiser of the annual "Fête Suisse". The older residents will remember the attractive stalls where Swiss postcards, flags, pictures, real *Alpenrosen* or gentians could be bought. With great skill and energy, Miss Wyss performed that and many other jobs.

In 1961, she went to live in the French Convalescent Home in Brighton, and the last year she spent in a nursing home in Hove. Her death on 4th of May, after three years of being bedridden, came as a great release.