

# Simon Gfeller 1868-1869

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**SIMON GFELLER 1868-1869**

The Emmental dialect writer Simon Gfeller was born on 8th April 1868 near Luederalp, the youngest of seven children of a poor farming family. The alpine homestead with its mighty linden tree, the neat garden, the narrow patch of ground and the steep and stony path to the larch trees — those were the familiar things which filled his childhood. Life was not easy, and even the youngest child had to take his share of daily toil. But it was a healthy background, and he acquired a deep and lasting respect for his parents, the happy relationship is often featured in his writings.

From the primary school at Thal-Duerrgraben, he went on to a teachers' training college, and in 1887, he started to teach at Gruenenmatt. After his marriage to Meta Gehrig six years later, the couple took over a school high up on the hills near Luetzflueh.

It was up there in the peace and quiet of the Emmental that he discovered the deep riches of life. His numerous talents developed and thrived. His teaching was more than a means of earning a living — he knew what children needed. *"One must teach them to love their country, their homes, their work and their fellow creatures. One must show them the beauty which is inherent in all things, and in which harmless pleasures are to be found"*.

His writing is best known in the Canton of Berne, but many of his works and ideas left their marks in other parts of the country as well. For the powerful language, and his rare feeling for nature and humanity could not be kept hidden. In 1929, he moved to the valley, having given up teaching. He continued his work as author, lecturer and critic. In 1934, he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Berne University for his valuable contribution to Swiss literature and as interpreter of national characteristics. He appreciated the honour bestowed on him, but his modesty would not let him use the title.

He believed in the good in mankind, and the sorrow and agony which the second world war brought to so many, saddened him greatly. The decline in the fortunes of the dictators shed light and hope on the last months of his life which was filled with great physical suffering. He died on 8th January 1943, and his resting place is in the churchyard of Luetzflueh, next to that of Jeremias Gotthelf and of Emanuel Friedli.

The centenary of his birth was celebrated at the Eggschulhaus at Luetzflueh and at Heimisbach. At the Council Chambers in Berne, a third commemoration took place on 10th April last. The Bernese Authors' Association and the Bernese *Heimatschutztheater* organised the event, both in memory of the centenary of his birth and the 25th anniversary of his death. Federal Councillor Tschudi and *Alt-Bundesrat* Wahlen, as well as a number of prominent personalities were present. The author Erwin Heimann gave the main address from his view point as editor of Simon Gfeller's works. He managed to paint a lively picture of the man and the writer, his roots in country and rural school, but also the width of his spirit, the depth of his mind, both very much those of a man of the present.

Gertrud Demenga-Schwarz read the story "Frauenwille" and Hans Gfeller "Dr Faehblaetz" — both so typical of the inimitable hallmark of the author. Niggli songs and Gfeller poetry completed the commemorative celebration.

*"To be either a mammoth tree or nothing at all — how wrong this is. Mammoth trees are rarities; but the forest needs ordinary trees, too, undergrowth and shrubs."*

*All that matters is: sound undergrowth, sturdy shrubs".*

*"Wer immer mit dem Strome schwimmt, kommt am raschesten vorwärts und — abwärts"*.

(Compiled from material received by courtesy of Agency télégraphique Suisse, and "Emmental" Review.)

**SWISSAIR STARTS NEW SERVICE TO AFRICA**

A new service from Switzerland to Johannesburg, South Africa, via Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam is the main feature of Swissair's summer schedules effective from 1st April. It is operated once weekly in each direction by DC-8 jets and connects at Zurich with flights from and to London. The number of cities on Swissair's network thus rises to 71 in 50 countries.

On the U.K.-Switzerland routes the London-Basle-Zurich afternoon service is being stepped up to daily from five times weekly previously. It will be flown by first and economy class DC-9-32 jets, compared with the earlier operation by smaller, all-economy DC-9-15s. The London-Basle and London Zurich night flights will again operate from and to Gatwick; all day services as well as the London-Geneva v.v. night flights will use Heathrow.

Elsewhere in Europe, Swissair will introduce new daily services from Geneva to Barcelona and Amsterdam, a weekend service from Geneva to Palma, and step up frequencies on the routes Geneva-Paris, Basle-Paris, Zurich-Brussels, Zurich-Vienna, Zurich-Madrid, Geneva-Malaga and Zurich-Palma. The Zurich-Warsaw-Moscow service is being supplemented by a second flight weekly, starting in Geneva. A new Zurich-Belgrade-Bucharest service will now provide both East European cities with two Swissair flights weekly.

Two more Douglas DC-9-32 twin jets will join the fleet during the summer period and the five DC-9-15s operating at present will be replaced by DC-9-32s. Swissair will thus have nine DC-9-32s in service in Europe, permitting more routes to be converted from propeller aircraft to jets. By the end of October all international services from Zurich and Geneva will be flown exclusively by jets, except those of Innsbruck and some flights to Stuttgart.

**Long-haul Services**

From 17th July Swissair will put into service between Zurich, Geneva and New York its fourth ultra long-range Douglas DC-8-62, a combined passenger/cargo DC-8-62F. This aircraft will operate six return services weekly, raising the total of the airline's Switzerland-New York flights to 24 weekly. It also means that after an interval of several years, Swissair will again operate its own cargo service on the North Atlantic.

As an innovation, of the other 18 flights weekly, three Zurich-New York services will go via Frankfurt, thus providing a Swissair link between Germany and the U.S. Twelve services will fly non-stop to New York from Zurich or Geneva and three via Lisbon. In addition, Montreal and Chicago will again be served four times weekly.

The two South America services weekly are now also flown by DC-8-62s; these aircraft replace Convair 990 Coronado jets on this route. Two south-bound and one north-bound flight will serve Sao Paulo, calls at Montevideo having been discontinued.

On the Middle East sector, the flight frequency to Tel Aviv will be stepped up to nine weekly from seven last summer, four by DC-8 and five by Coronado jets. The schedules to the Far East, West and North Africa remain generally unchanged.