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LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

By Gottfried Keller



Paul F. Boehringer (1879–1948)

It is with great pleasure that I have recently learnt that the *Swiss Observer* now has a paid circulation of over 2,500. As far as I know, having been connected with the Swiss colony's organ for so many years, this is an all time record. According to an old journalistic rule it is presumed that each paid copy of any paper or periodical is read by an average of three people. This would, in the case of the *Swiss Observer*, mean that it would seem to have a readership of about 7,500 — a remarkable figure indeed. Most of its subscribers and readers live, of course, in the United Kingdom, but some also live in other countries — quite a few of them in Switzerland.

The *Swiss Observer* was founded in 1919 — fairly soon after the end of the first world war — by the present publisher's late father. It can thus look back on 60 years' existence and such a birthday would be an interesting moment to delve somewhat more deeply into the paper's history. Alas, this cannot be done from the Swiss end, since the paper's archives and back numbers are not available here.

One of the most outstanding of the various editors the *Swiss Observer* has had was, no doubt, the unforgettable Fred Stauffer. He was a sturdy Bernese and quite a character who loved to go to Ascot and Epsom, all dressed up in style with a grey top hat and all. He used to lovingly describe the many Swiss functions and dinners, never forgetting to mention "the lovely ladies in their finery", but tactfully omitting to mention the more boring of the speeches made. At one time during World War II there was a Swiss Minister in London — the status of

the Swiss envoys was only raised to Ambassador in 1958 — who thought he could lay down the law not only in his little kingdom in Bryanston Square, but also concerning press matters. To put it bluntly: the said Swiss Chef de Mission thought that he could dictate to members of the Swiss press, including the *Swiss Observer*, what should and what should not be written. I well remember Fred Stauffer coming out of a meeting with the said Swiss diplomat, red in the face, and saying in broad Bernese English — while firmly plonking his bowler hat on his head — "I will not be dictated to by the Legation." With his firm attitude he rendered a definite service to the freedom of the press and, indirectly to the Swiss colony and if I mention all this today, I do it in order to pay my tribute and respects to his memory. The *Swiss Observer* owes him a debt of gratitude.



O. F. Boehringer

There are, of course, others, too, to whom the *Swiss Observer* is indebted. If, on this occasion of its 60th birthday, I were allowed to mention only one more, it would be its present publisher, Mr. Oscar Boehringer. As one of its contributors I am pleased to put these few facts on record and would like to wish the *Swiss Observer* many more years of untroubled existence.

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