

From the Editor's Workshop

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FROM THE EDITOR'S WORKSHOP

I wonder how many of our readers know that the "Swiss Observer" has been produced in an old church. The building on the corner of Leonard Street/Tabernacle Street is easily recognisable as a church, though inside it has been altered and adapted to the requirements of a modern printing works. The story of this church is a fascinating one and deserves to be told in an article on its own one day.

The Frederick Printing Company was founded on 21st June 1910 by the father of the present head, Mr. P. F. Boehringer. It was he who also founded the "Swiss Observer" in 1919. He was a genial man and one of the outstanding personalities in the Swiss community of that time. His son Oscar has carried on not only his father's business but also the "Swiss Observer".

It is the Frederick Printing Company with Mr. Oscar Boehringer at its head, which generously put an office and some services at the disposal of the "Swiss Observer".

On the first floor of the old church building the "Swiss Observer" has had an office for many years. When I first started my work as Editor nearly two years ago I was proud that I had what is probably the largest desk in the country; it is built in and at least eight feet wide and eight feet deep. The fact that the depth of the drawers is barely one foot because the rest of the surface covers the staircase going down, did not matter to me. The office was rather dark and somewhat of a dust trap, but I loved it. My door was always open and there was constant coming and going, and I was only a few steps away from the general office where the "Swiss Observer" book-keeping is done, the dispatch room where the paper is wrapped, the compositors' room where "copy" is set, the readers' room where proofs are corrected. Any queries were settled personally, and the house telephone was hardly used.

I frankly admit I was not entirely pleased when Mr. Boehringer told me that internal re-organisation made a change of offices necessary, and would I agree to a move. Naturally, I said yes, and so last week my papers and files and books were moved to a newer building of the company at the end of the road. Again I am on the first floor. Where I had the printing presses on the ground floor before, I have now some lithograph machines below me.

Next to my new office is the Frederick Studio where artists are at work, and on the other side a number of small offices, like my own partitioned by glass walls. As I gradually settled down I began to like it. After all, the work is still the same. There are the old steel shelves with bound volumes of the "Swiss Observer" over forty-five years and piles of back numbers. There are the dictionaries, the stationery boxes, the Swiss posters and calendars, there is the sinister-looking filing cabinet and the typewriting desk with the old "Hermes" and there are the friendly index boxes where the records of all my faithful readers are kept. Two telephones stand importantly on a special shelf at my side. Behind me is the large guillotine window and the radiator below it, in front of me the reddish-brown expanse of my new, contemporary desk.

Yes, it is a comfortable and pleasing office, and I have already grown attached to it. I am now very much a self-contained unit, on friendly terms with the people who work near me but whose activities are not connected with mine. The "intercom" is in constant use, for now

I have to reach all my collaborators on the house line, and any queries are settled on the phone.

I don't spend all that much time at the office, as all my writing is done at home. But when I am there, I feel terribly efficient, being in a real office with an "executive's" desk. But nevertheless I am glad that I had twenty-one months in my old office where I was right in the middle of the paper's production. I got the "feel" of it and I had the privilege of getting to know the men and women who are concerned in the fortnightly rhythm of producing our Colony's periodical, the compositors, readers, printers; the women who address and wrap the paper, the men who do the book-keeping and send invoices for adverts. All this is a very important part of the whole (besides being the most expensive item in the accounts). I still have more work than I can adequately cope with, for as many of my readers will remember, I have to read, sift and select, to write and translate, to stick together an issue and give it the final shape, to deal with the subscriptions, the reminders, the changes of addresses, most of the correspondence and advertising orders. And I nurse the contact with the Societies and attend numerous social and business functions. It is essential, therefore, to have a happy workshop, and that I have got, both at home and with the Frederick Printing Company. If I fail in any way it may possibly be due to lack of time, but certainly not to any shortcomings in my workshop — I shall feel very happy to show it to any of my readers who feel inclined to travel up to Shoreditch and Finsbury.

Mariann.

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