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His business which was relegated to secondary importance and was badly neglected, caused a scandal and the bankruptcy of the Société du Crédit Genevois. In order not to incriminate the IKRK, he resigned. At the age of 39, he found himself in



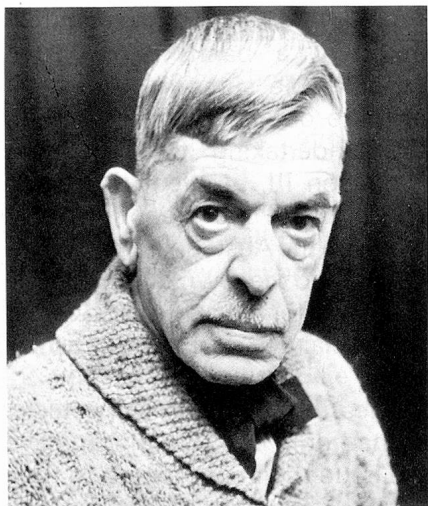
great misery, for his whole fortune was mortgaged, and the many ideas which occupied him, such as a world library and the return of the Jews to Palestine, could no longer be realized. Driven away from Geneva, he travelled throughout Europe and did not return to Switzerland until 1887 when he begged to be admitted to the

hospital at Heiden in the Canton of Appenzell. He was alone and unrecognized by anyone, although his creation, the Red Cross, already counted 23 national committees at that time. In 1895, he was discovered by a St. Gall journalist.

Immediately he was inundated by awards and distinctions, such as a Prize of the Federal Council, the Prize of Moscow and above all, in 1901, the first Nobel Prize for Peace. He never left Heiden any more and died there at the age of 82 on 30th October 1910.

On reading his last will, it was revealed that he had never used the prize moneys for himself, but had distributed them all to philanthropic organizations and had made a considerable legacy in favour of the Commune of Heiden, which enabled it to create a «free bed», always for the poorest patient of the Commune. *Lucien Paillard*

## C. F. Ramuz



One hundred years ago, on 24th September 1878. Charles Ferdinand Ramuz was born, one of the greatest novelists our country has ever known. Through his father he originated from the «Gros de Vaud», mainly an agricultural area,

and through his mother from the wine-growing district of Lavaux, extending above the lake through which the Rhone flows, a typically *Romand* and Southern river which was decisive for Ramuz's aesthetics. The author died at Pully on the shore of Lake Léman on 24th May 1947. There he owned his house «La Muette» which is now the Ramuz Museum.

His death so soon after the war and the beautiful «Pages d'un neutre» had shown why he had chosen the peaceful domain. This left painful feelings with many of his admirers that this independent spirit and fastidious soul, this witness and protector of the highest values had left them as «orphans», as it were. The world events, the confusion of peoples and ideas let us – above all us Swiss – forget this irreparable loss at the time. Times had changed

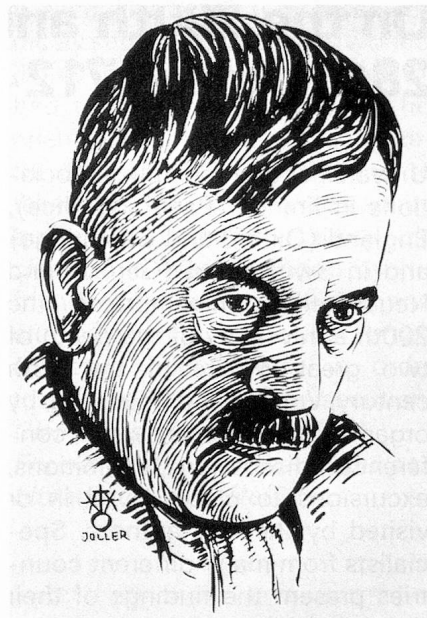
suddenly, so that one rejected Ramuz's work, especially his novels, as witnesses of yesterday's world, before the great catastrophe; one even treated them as legends. It is true that the war-ravaged countries had to look after their immediate needs, and the Swiss were pleased to be able to cross the frontiers again. ... In short, Ramuz's work lost its impressiveness under such circumstances. It was looked upon a little like a beautiful landscape which glides by, reflected in the back-mirror. Undoubtedly, one will one day return there, in fact, one has already returned. Time for reflection, tranquility, introspection will again become a need for every one of us. Reading Ramuz will bring us abstractions and a kind of youth which will no longer reject natural lyric and which will rediscover the

timeless values of Ramuz's themes. It is true, too, that the farmers as depicted by Ramuz, have disappeared, above all their way of life and manner of livelihood. The farmers are no longer as poor as the novelist described them, seemingly – for have there been really such fundamental changes? It is true that one does not think so dramatically any more of his fate, in such a metaphysical, if not religious manner. The basic reflection has disappeared and has been replaced by the pleasure of immediate consumption. Much ado about everything and nothing obliterates tranquility, enlightens solitude, dispels unrest and uneasiness. There is a general pain in one's heart, very much in contrast to the personalities created by Ramuz, presented in the world of difficulties of daily life and the tragic aspect of their existence. The great touristic stream has flooded the country, spoilt men's morals, trivialized the language and scattered local customs into the whole world. Man is disturbed in his very being. In contrast, Ramuz's heroes are people who feel the sense of their own solitude and inability to communicate. They are more worried than joyful. They search for the meaning of life and the meaning of death. One can easily see that this hardly meets the requirements of the present way of life.

Yet, nothing would be more erroneous than the assertion that Ramuz's work is out of date, an expression whose absurdity is hurtful. And it would be stupid not to realize that at no time has a

novelist gone as far in the invention of people as he did, that means in the description of human beings who have nothing to do with *bourgeoisie* or with ambition. This is above all a poor society, which often stands outside any attainment of happiness. It was depicted by the author in freedom and without any other means of expression than speech, with many vagaries in love and endowing them with that degrading feeling of guilt. He well knew how to make it resemble a kind of recognition, including original sin, though Ramuz never mentioned it.

His work comprises novel-like adventure stories and short stories. The literary geography, or if one prefers the term of scenery, though one can hardly talk of scenery in Ramuz's work, for the surroundings are like a person to him, and go no further than the Vaudois, Valais and Savoy Alps. It is true that Paris played a significant part not only in «Aimé Pache, peintre vaudois», but also in the formation of the artist himself. He lived there during 12 years before the war of 1914. As he often liked to confirm: Paris made a Vaudois of me. The whole subsequent development grew from this convincing statement. He considered it, right and proper to return to his place of origin, in order to express in clear language, impressively, slowly and in his own way reality and diversity. Later he understood that something artistic had found its way into his work there, and he asked himself sometimes whether he had been right to behave as he had done.



Nothing of that in the short stories. *Besoin de Grandeur, Taille de l'Homme, Une Main, Découverte du Monde, Questions ... Raison d'Être et Chant de Notre Rhône*, are pure, lyrical prose. Ramuz always rejected abstract notions and distorted expressions, convinced that these disturb the meaning rather than improve it. He dealt with themes which occupied mankind. Very early on, he warned us of all dictators of the Left and the Right, of the seductions which were the decoy in order to paralyse mankind all the more easily. This part of Ramuz's work will always be topical, because it declines to adjust to fashion. Thus the work is of duration and carries in itself its stability. It is to be hoped that free and thinking people will understand to recognize in this once more the immortal truth.

*Georges Borgeaud*



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