

The last farewell at Northolt

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THE LAST FAREWELL AT NORTHOLT.

On Sunday last, 11th April, round about lunch-time a number of Swiss gathered at Northolt Aerodrome to say farewell to Monsieur and Madame Ruegger. It goes without saying that most members of the Swiss Legation were there with their ladies. They were joined by Dr. Linsel, who had recently attended Mme Ruegger, and several other members of the Colony. It was an unbelievably beautiful spring day with hardly a cloud on the sky. On the tarmac were no fewer than three Swissair planes, two Dakotas for Zürich and a large Skymaster for Cointrin, as well as a British-European-Airways Viking, ready to fly to Geneva. What with these planes and practically the whole Legation transferred to Northolt and a fleet of cars with large and small Swiss flags flying, it was definitely a Swiss occasion.

Saying Good-bye to somebody one has learned to know well, to respect and — I hope I am forgiven the word — one has grown very attached to is never easy. It was not easy either when Monsieur and Madame Ruegger appeared about 15 minutes before the plane was due to become airborne. Madame Ruegger, wrapped up in furs and shawls, looked frighteningly pale — and sad. One could not speak to her any more. It was just a matter of shaking her hand once more and getting that warm look we have all come to know so well. It was not very different with Monsieur Ruegger. Obviously the last days had been an enormous strain on him: the farewell all round, the visit of Monsieur le Conseiller Fédéral Max Petitpierre, the illness of his wife, the forthcoming change from his diplomatic mission to a different one of possibly even more importance. Moreover, Monsieur Ruegger had, with characteristic thoroughness and conscientiousness, spent his last few nights in London dictating letter after letter, attending personally to the last detail, until nothing remained to be cleared up. Monsieur Ruegger too was visibly moved when he finally shook hands with all his collaborators of the Legation and those who had joined them.

After they had both disappeared in the building to attend to passports, customs and other formalities, the party walked round to where they had to come out to walk to the waiting Skymaster that was to take them to Cointrin. Madame Ruegger was through in record time and one saw her, tended by her doctors, walking to the plane and disappear — after one last look round — up the gangway. Then came Monsieur Ruegger, accompanied by Monsieur Escher and his personal secretary, Monsieur Alfred Rappard. He, too, walked very slowly to the airplane that was to take him home from his successful — all too short — mission in London. A beautiful, huge Bouquet of lovely flowers for Madame Ruegger was then carried to the aircraft. I do not know who actually sent it to her, but it seemed to me a symbol of the deep affection of Swiss colony in England had for both of them.

Gottfried Keller.

Uncle: "How do you like riding on my knee, Tommy?"

Tommy: "It's all right, but not so nice as a ride on a real donkey."

CARE OF CHILDREN IN SWITZERLAND.

Pestalozzi-Dorf, etc.

One field of activity, about which very little is known as yet in our Colony, where our home-country is excelling is that of the care of children. The formation of man's soul, mind, habits and physique takes place in his childhood. The proper care of children from their earliest age, therefore, is the most important thing to do to help improve the world and the future of mankind. Switzerland, having been spared two wars, was in a particularly favoured position to attend to this problem, not only for the benefit of Swiss children but also for that of children from war devastated countries. She has done much interesting work in this field, culminating in the establishment of the Pestalozzi-Dorf for the rescue of refugee children.

A Swiss woman-doctor, Dr. Charlotte Carey-Trefzer, who two years ago married an Englishman and came to live in this country, had much to do with child-health and child-welfare work in Switzerland, and was actively assisting in the establishment of the Pestalozzi-Dorf. She will tell us a lot about these things next Tuesday night, 7 p.m., at the Vienna Café (see advertisement) at the Open Meeting of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique. This is a proud chapter in the books of Swiss achievements and most fascinating to all who care for the vital basic problems of mankind. This is an occasion when we can bring our British friends with the assurance that we can be proud of what they will hear.

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