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LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

by Gottfried Keller

In my erstwhile capacity as London Correspondent of the Swiss News Agency and a Basle Daily — my bread the one and my jam on the other — I have recently had a visit from a young Swiss of University age and good family. He is trying to map out his future and wanted to know how one becomes a press correspondent in an important centre like London and which are the necessary requirements. I told him that the first step was also the most difficult: namely to become known and appointed (and later accredited abroad) by a Press Organ with sufficient material background to maintain Representatives abroad. In addition, I told him, that ideally a London Correspondent should be able to dispose freely of the following equipment:

- a) Good eyesight to enable him to deal easily with the enormous quota of printed articles one has to read daily;
- b) If married, a good-natured consort who does not mind if programmes are suddenly thrown over and altered;
- c) A robust constitution which

can stand late and disturbed nights undamaged;

d) As large as possible a circle of acquaintances and friends in the guest country, especially in high places and in the various political parties;

e) As thorough as possible a knowledge of the history, laws, customs and habits of the guest country, coupled with thorough knowledge of the guest country's language, orally and in writing;

f) Good relations with the guest country's authorities to which one is accredited;

g) A good, retentive memory;

h) Quick perception which enables one to judge information quickly regarding its value or worthlessness;

i) Financial freedom and a considerable expense account, since so much information begins to flow after a good meal when the stage of coffee, liqueurs and cigars has been reached;

k) A well stocked library with lexica, history books, atlases both of

the guest country and — in Britain's case — of the Commonwealth of Nations;

l) A motor car in top condition which ensures mobility by day and night;

m) A stock of clothes for every occasion: evening parties, dock workers' strikes, visits to coal mines, Buckingham Palace Garden Parties, funerals, dances, etc. In other words, the following garments should be available: lounge suits, evening wear, a morning coat, overalls, blue jeans;

n) A reliable secretary who takes the "paper war" off one's shoulders;

o) Last, but not least, dedication to the job and belief in a kind of mission towards one's readers which prevents a correspondent from deliberately or knowingly misleading them, or from indulging in sensation-mongering.

This list, it goes without saying, is neither concluding nor final. Nor, should I add, was I in my time the happy possessor of all the enumerated benefits.



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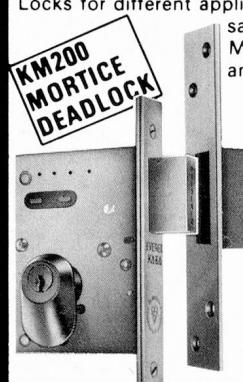
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