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'Radio Haller' retires to the Spanish sun

ONCE again the Swiss community in Great Britain is losing a popular couple who have been part of it for 33 years. Theodor Haller has retired from his work as London correspondent of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation and of the "Basler Zeitung", formerly the "Nationalzeitung". He and his wife have moved to Spain in search of sun and warmth.

Theodor Haller came to London in 1947, just to get an idea of what the work of a foreign correspondent would be like. He stayed. Already then he realised how much affinity he had with the British. In 1948, he and his family settled in England for good.

One of his older, well-established colleagues told him it would take about five years until he would really know Britain. "Young and vain as I then was", Theodor Haller said, "I thought it would naturally take much less time in my case."

But he admits that it did take quite some time for, while the British don't make it difficult for a foreign correspondent to get information, "it takes simply years to get really near to them."

He soon realised that social life played an important part in the pursuit of getting the wealth of information necessary to make a good job of reporting. In this his wife was a great help as hostess and even secretary.

Although the stress and strain of a journalist's life often weighed

heavily on both of them, their happy family life – they have a daughter and two sons, all of them back in Switzerland – speaks well for their partnership and not least for their attitude to life.

Theodor Haller's last "performance" was the commentary on Swiss television on the Royal Wedding. While it was considered controversial in certain Swiss circles, it brought him great praise and appreciation from many British friends in Switzerland as well as from the British Embassy in Berne.

He is certainly a champion of the British monarchy, but above all a staunch friend of the British. May be that his sense of humour so close to that of the people in Britain was not always understood in Switzerland.

He has also told his compatriots quite a few home-truths which they didn't always like to hear. He is one of the best-known personalities in Switzerland, and as "Radio Haller" he was known

in every home. His book "This way, please" (in German) was a great help to young people who came to England in great numbers soon after the war.

Theodor Haller is an astute observer and he knows how to impart news and information. He has been able to explain the strength of the British people as well as their weaknesses and idiosyncrasies in a fair and objective manner.

"A journalist who believes he has to fulfil a mission should have studied theology". This saying by the master of modern journalism, the American Henry Louis Mencken, was also Theodor Haller's working tenet.

Objectivity was one of his professional aims and was indeed the hallmark of his successful reporting. If his wit and sarcasm – though the latter has decreased over the years – at times caused resentment, they have in no way impaired his judgement.

Many years ago Mr Haller said in an interview to the Swiss

magazine "Femina" that his idea of Paradise would be the Upper Engadine without hotels and tourists.

He would have liked to own the small peninsula Chaste in the Lake of Sils, with a modest house at the extreme tip. And once he was settled he would blow up the Nietzsche Stone!

Spain is far away from the Engadine, but we hope Martha and Theodor Haller will find the peace they are looking for, and that he can now read "The Times" for pleasure and not as a working paper.

Although the Haller era as such has passed, his wide circle of radio and TV friends hope to hear and see him on occasions in the future. The Swiss community in London are looking forward to hearing him again, perhaps in another talk like the one he gave a year ago as a member of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, "Do Newspapers tell the Truth?"

The many friends of Martha and Theodor Haller will miss them a lot, but they wish them a very happy and sunny retirement.

Mariann Meier

Walter Burren: A pillar of the SMS

THE Swiss Mercantile Society and its college in London have come to a turning-point in their history with the retirement of Walter Burren. Perhaps only those connected with the SMS are aware of just what this means, for Walter Burren has been such a pillar of strength, both to the society and the college, that one cannot imagine how they can carry on without him.

Fortunately he is still on the scene and has had ample time to train his successor, Mr Rolf Kaenzig, who has been in this country since 1970 in charge of the Rodania Watches (Gt. Britain) Ltd. He hails from Grenchen, Solothurn, is married and has two boys. We wish him success and satisfaction in his difficult job.

Four years ago, on the occasion of Mr Burren's 70th birth-

day, a curriculum vitae appeared in the "Swiss Observer". Suffice it, therefore, to mention just a few facts.

He came to London in June, 1927, as a student of the SMS College and a year later, with a certificate in English language of the National Union of Teachers, he became assistant secretary at the SMS in Fitzroy Square.

When the college closed at the beginning of the war he joined Volkart Brothers in the City of London, with whom he stayed until 1958. He then returned to the SMS College as secretary and company secretary of the society, as well as their one and only shorthand teacher.

During the rebuilding of the college it was in no small measure due to Walter Burren that in spite of the school moving quarters several times not one teaching

lesson was lost.

He had joined the Swiss Mercantile Society in Switzerland in 1925 and has been a member of the London section for 54 years. He was its secretary for four years to 1949 and vice president of the society and chairman of the education committee from 1950 to 1957. He was the first captain of the SMS football team, and was no mean player himself, as well as an athlete and tennis player.

The SMS has been his life and the services he has rendered as a loyal and utterly reliable and trustworthy servant cannot be praised too highly. The society conferred honorary membership on him in 1958.

If he was able to devote himself to the SMS so firmly, it was in no small measure due to the support of his wife, Catherine, whom he

married in August, 1930. They have a son and a daughter and three grand-children. He will now have more time to give to them, although he is such an active person that he will no doubt find plenty to do.

He is a member of the NSH and the City Swiss Club, and above all, he is a keen supporter of the Swiss Philatelic Society, of which he was one of the founder members and its president for 11 years.

As Walter Burren retires from the active life he led in Fitzroy Square, his many friends, and not least the thousands of students who have known him, will wish him and his wife a sunny future and many years of contentment, good health and happy togetherness.

Mariann Meier