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Letter from Heinz Politzer to Hubert Creekmore

Heinz Politzer

Oberlin College. Department of German.

Hubert Creekmore

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OBERLIN COLLEGE
OBERLIN, OHIO

Department of German

Oberlin, March 28, 1953

Dear Mr. Creekmore:

I thought the enclosed might interest you. The Keller poem has never been published in English before.

I contacted the Phoenix Press with regard~~x~~ to the rights on my "Language" poem, and have received a satisfactory explanation.

Sincerely yours,

Heinz Politzer
Heinz Politzer

The public slanderers
By Gottfried Keller

A parasite has slept
In dust and dried^oup mire
As secretly as fire
In ashes sleeps, enwrapped.
A breeze arose, and woke
To life the evil being,
And out of nought are fleeing
Plague, fever, heat, and smoke.

Out of his hiding place
A wretch sets forth to ramble;
He wants to grasp and gamble,
And finds what better pays:
A fight -- and no one gains --
A knowledge, badly scattered,
A banner, torn and tattered,
A people out of brains.

He finds on every way
The void of paltry ages
And, shamelessly, he rages
As prophet of the day.
He plants himself on dust,
His roguish feet on sweepings,
And coarsely hisses greetings
Into a world nonplussed.

As if in clouds of night
Guised in falsification,
A liar to the nation,
He quickly gets to might
With helpers big and small
Who, doing well or badly,
Spied for their luck, and gladly
Obey the master's call.

They spread what he had said,
Augmenting by dividing
(As, on the Savior's guiding,
The Twelve did with the bread).
At first the knave alone,
Now thousand knaves are lying,
Like tempests all defying;
His funds swell on and on.

There thrive the ugly seeds:
The grace of life has faded.
Crowds, willingly degraded,
Sneer at their evil deeds.
Now it came true and clear
What once the rogues pretended:
The bad ones stand up, banded,
The good ones disappear.

Once, all the horrors gone
Like ice of last December,
The people still remember
What by the plague was done.
Straw-puppets will be set
By children on the meadows
To burn light out of shadows,
Joy out of age-old dread.

(trsl. H.P.)

POLITZER
Dept. of German
Oberlin College, Ohio



Mr. Hubert Creekmore
1835 Devine Street
Jackson, Mississippi