

Agricultural section of the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain.

A circular letter from Dr. Carl Alexander Mirbt.

February 10th 1929.

Dear

I hope that this letter may help to form link between the English Anthroposophical farmers and our gardening friends. I must devote the first few pages to what I fear, can only be very inadequate account of what the work of the late Count Keyserlingk has been for our movement. This will be followed by a review of two articles from the "Mitteilungen", the monthly paper published in Germany for the experimental circle. In the future I propose to add a page for questions and answers and shall be glad to receive from members any article from the newspapers or magazines which may be of interest to our agricultural work.

With many greetings,

yours

Carl Alexander Mirbt.

Count Carl von Keyserlingk.

The death of Count Keyserlingk whose name is for us indissolubly linked with the Anthroposophical Agricultural Movement, at the beginning of this new year of our work in England is indeed a very great loss to us, and calls us at its very outset to unite our work with the spiritual world. Count Keyserlingk was on his way to Dornach when he was very suddenly seized by a fatal heart attack and called to work from the spiritual world.

As one of the most experienced farmers in East Germany and well-known far beyond the borders of Silesia, he had long had charge of twenty-five estates connected with a large sugar beet factory near Breslau. In his wonderful organisation of these Estates, in his bringing of them into a ripe state of cultivation in all directions, and in the excellent arrangements and cooperation between all his members, he accomplished a very great work; for led by Count Keyserlingk, both men of practical experience and men of true knowledge could work together.

During the great German agricultural show (similar to the Royal Agricultural show in England) in 1926 at Breslau a great number of visitors, including high officials of the German and Prussian Government, visited these farms.

Count Keyserlingk ever devoted himself to the welfare and social conditions of his people. Few

estates in East Germany could show such excellent houses for the workers, or such a good understanding between them and their employers. Rudolf Steiner was for this reason much pleased when Count Keyserlingk undertook the supervision of the estates of "der Kommende tag" in South Germany on the lines of the threefold State. The reasons for their failure cannot however, be discussed here. Rudolf Steiner, who had previously been asked to lecture on Agriculture, did not at first feel able to accede to this request, but some years later, on the invitation of Count Keyserlingk, he gave at Whitsuntide 1924, in the Castle of Koberwitz, near Breslau, the wonderful "Agricultural Course", and thus laid the foundations for our Anthroposophical Agriculture work. In the Introductory words of this course, and in the "Letters to members" we can read what importance Rudolf Steiner attached to these lectures, and the significance of giving them in such surroundings.

Count Keyserlingk was then appointed Leader of the Experimental Circle, a leadership he retained until owing to certain circumstances, he felt obliged to resign this position and was succeeded by a German, Herr Stegemann. Other difficulties then arose in the Count's private affairs, making it impossible for him to work really fundamentally on the farms of his estate at Koberwitz, and early in 1928 he became the owner of the two new estates of Saasterhausen and Raaben. A new epoch now began which lead us all to hope that new years of activity were before him, a hope that can no longer be fulfilled in the same way.

Count Keyserlingk interested himself from the first day in the great question of how the new biological methods of cultivations indicated by Rudolf Steiner, could be spread abroad; he had promised to take a leading part in the opportunity offered for this by the World Conference held in London last year, at which a day was set apart for Agriculture. Unfortunately, other Important work connected with the development of the movement in Prussia, prevented him at the last moment from coming to England. But after receiving the report of the lectures and discussions on the subject at the World Conference, he wrote a letter to me of wise and practical advice for the carrying on of the work in England, and had promised to visit us in the spring of this year.

He wrote also some very important letters dealing with forestry, poultry diseases and other subjects. Thus giving all the help possible for the Anthroposophical Agricultural work in this country. The last time I was at Saasterhausen, his writing table was covered with English books to which he devoted an hour or two every day in order to learn our language.

His loss to a great one, for in him we had a man of wide knowledge and a true friend. I feel that we can be sure that the sense of a close relationship between the work in England and Count Keyserlingk will never cease as long as we strive together in a way worthy of his memory.