E M M E R I C H K A L M A N
910 North Bedford Drive
Beverly Hills, Calif.

July 28, 1941

Dr. Paul Kneppler,
17, Besize Square,
London.

My dear friend.

I received your card of July 10th on July 26th and am very glad that you and your children are well; I wish the very best for you and your family for the future. I have not yet heard from Richard Tauber and am naturally awaiting his answer impatiently.

With regard to our moving to New York, I would like to tell you the following: by September 1st, I will have spent 15 months here, during these 15 months I achieved absolutely nothing, and considering the fact that people here are divided into two categories, in occupied and unoccupied ones, I do not want to carry the unpleasant burden of unoccupied composer any longer and prefer to go to a large city, where it is not written on one's nose and neck, that one has no occupation. My return to New York is therefore planned to be a steady one; I am going there at the beginning of September, as I want to take the children to school and don't want to burden them with having to start the school year too late. It is already a burden for them to have to go to a different school, and to various different schools every year.

During the last months I have seen a lot of Oscar Strauss, who is at present living in an extremely bad material situation. They came to Hollywood because the "Chocolate Soldier" was performed for one week in a festival production and because, at the same time, a picture with the title, "Chocolate Soldier" was being made, in which various numbers of "Chocolate Soldier" are being used. He hoped to find an occupation with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, which is the company that is producing the picture; his hopes did, however, not come true and a discreet collection had to be made, to enable them at least to take a house. His manager Robinson arrived in New York now and I expect from him that the situation of the Strausses betters itself.

I want to answer your question about GRUNWALD as briefly as possible: thank heaven he is well now, he just got over a serious operation, bladder stones were taken from him, which was not easy in itself; but this operation destroyed a great fear, as the physicians had previously presumed a much more serious illness. Upon my inducement new Xrays were made and it was proven that the diagnosis had luckily been a mistaken one. By now he is already on the way of complete recovery.

As to my situation, it is just like the situation of all European composers; Stolz, Benatsky, Abraham, Strauss, Granichstaetten, Ascher and many others are in America and have not achieved anything yet. Normal, musical plays and operettas are completely out of fashion and one can only have a succes with something quite unusual. I will give you an example: there is a play running in New York with the title "Lady In The Dark", music by Kurt Weill, book by the famous American Playwrite firm, lyrics by Ira Gershwin.

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This play is mainly concerned with psychoanalasis; a talented woman, an American newspaperwoman goes to a psychoanalasist, who cures her illness on the way of psychoanalasis and her various dreams, which she tells, bild the play, which is entirely underlined with music. This play is the greatest New York success, the motion picture rights of it were sold for $250.000. The usual operettas, normal operettas, ones like we were used to write them have no chance whatever. First of all, one fan't find a producer who would spend money for a normal operetta, and the same difficulties exists for motion pictures. One does not want to have European plays, the American plays are written by American authors, and the music is not written by one composer, but put together by the music departement of the motion picture companies. Due to these bad prospects, I don't want to waste my time here; possibly I shall find some unusal book in New York, or some unusual possibilities, in any case in New York I am still the composer Kalman, while as here I remain an unoccupied musician. It is true that life and the climate here are more agreable than in New York (also not without dangers) but the eternal green and the eternally blue sky also make one sick, if one has nothing to do.

This, dear friend is all I can tell you. If I strike the balance of the last three years, I realize that it would have been best for us to remain in Switzerland and to have an opening there every year. We would have had work and an interest in life and might have earned about as much as we needed to live half a year.

Of my houses in Vienna, I can inform you that a military hospital has moved into the Hasenauerstrasse. The people even pay rent, but in a very peculiar way: the rent is always spent for changes and repairs in the house, so that the money is actually being confiscated. KANTOROWITZ writes me very often, ALBERTI and I correspond rather rarely. Day before yesterday, Mrs. Konstantin was at our house, as you will know her son, who had been inprisoned for many years without guilt, was killed in London in an airraid, three days before he was supposed to take the CanadaCClipper and to come to Amerika. You can imagine how she feels against Herczeg now. Among other things, she told me that Herczeg had conceded to her his royalties of Josephine, before leaving. It is terrible what I went through with "Josephine" here. First Geza brought me together with some people in New York, who had a platonic interest for it and then in Hollywood I had to realize that Napoleon has become an utterly unusable character for stage purposes. It was a bitter disappointment for me; I had written you much about it and then I had to realize that the entire material was unusable. Thus I could tell you of various other plays that are unusable, all songs on the same tune.

I send you my kindest regards and impatiently await the hour in which we shall see each other again and pray God that he grant us to meet again.

Very sincerely yours

E Kálmán