

Minister Carlin : (August 19th, 1859 - June 13th, 1922)

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MINISTER CARLIN.

(August 19th, 1859 — June 13th, 1922).

The tragically sudden death of our former Minister, on the threshold of his new, arduous and responsible sphere of action, came as a great shock to all. It is an additional regret that it was not vouchsafed to him to vindicate the high hopes placed in him by the Federal Council when they appointed him to the very important post of Swiss Minister at Berlin.

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Minister Gaston Carlin was born at Delémont, in the Canton of Berne, on August 19th, 1859. His father was Prof. Edouard Carlin, a member of the National Council. He studied law at the Universities of Berne, Leipzig and Paris, terminating with an able dissertation which brought him the title of Doctor juris. He practised for a short while in his native Jura, but in 1883 he entered the diplomatic service as Attaché to the Swiss Legation in Rome. The following year he was sent to Vienna, where he became Secretary and later Counsellor of Legation. In 1891 the Government recalled him to entrust him with the delicate duties of Chief of the Section for Foreign Affairs of the Political Department. He remained at Berne until 1895, when the Federal Council appointed him Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Switzerland at Rome, although he was but 36 years old. In 1902 he was transferred to London, and in 1904 appointed to represent his country not only at the Court of St. James's, as hitherto, but also in the Netherlands. At the end of 1919 he left London to take up his residence at the Hague, where he remained until the spring of this year, when he was called upon to accept the difficult post of Swiss Minister at Berlin.

During his long career Monsieur Carlin has also represented our country on many occasions on special missions at important International Conferences. Since 1917 he was also a member of the Permanent International Court of Arbitration at the Hague.

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Most of us must have known our former Minister at least by sight, as he was so tall that at any gathering he could easily be seen above the heads of everybody present. Thus naturally singling him out, one was next struck with the strongly marked and pronounced individuality of his features. The impression of aristocratic aloofness he gave made some people wrongly believe he was somewhat unapproachable; but upon closer acquaintance they would be met with a warmth and cordiality of manner which dispelled the earlier idea.

His chief characteristic was a remarkable sense of duty. He was severe with himself and rightly expected application to duty from his subordinates. New members of the Legation did not always find it easy at first to work for a chief who was himself very painstaking and meticulous, but he was fair and just and always willing to give his co-workers the benefit of his vast experience. He was of scholarly disposition, learned in most subjects; his logical mind had a trend towards legislation and application of law. In legal matters he was an expert whose advice was often sought by the Federal Council.

During the War his devotion to duty led to overwork and undermined his health. It would often happen that long code telegrams arrived from Berne at 10 p.m. Monsieur Carlin would get them decoded at once (his eldest daughter was particularly quick at this laborious task), and as matters were usually urgent, he would personally write

a weighty note to the Foreign Office and have it delivered there the same night.

As an accomplished linguist he wrote a masterly style and spoke our three national languages, including dialects, without an accent.

In his hobby of collecting art treasures, of which he was a connoisseur, he showed himself a true Swiss. Besides paintings and engravings he collected Swiss stained glass, china and silver. He, who was the personal friend of Hodler and other great artists, showed his understanding of art and ideals in many tangible ways. He would encourage a young Swiss artist or sculptor by purchasing his work, or he would help a struggling inventor and invest *à fond perdu* in some venture in order to enable a countryman to carry out his idea.

His great aim in life was to serve loyally our country which he loved so well and to do what he could for his compatriots.

At his hospitable house in Portland Place you could meet many distinguished and titled persons, as well as artists, writers and inventors. No doubt, many members of our Colony have still pleasant memories of the dinner parties they attended.

With public funds he was very careful, realising only too well the financial limitations of our country and never forgetting the responsibility of his position. Privately, however, he was always ready to further a good cause. Besides subscribing to many other institutions, he gave the Swiss Benevolent Society during the war about £1,000. He was the honorary president of this society and he had a specially warm corner in his heart for the work it does. He took a lively interest in all our Swiss Societies and institutions here; the "Swiss House," for instance, owes its present home chiefly to his efforts. — Before leaving London, 2½ years ago, Monsieur Carlin, as a farewell gift, presented the "Fonds de Secours pour les Suisses pauvres" with a further £200, thus laying the foundation stone of the "Fondation Carlin," a fund the interest of which goes to assist aged and infirm Swiss in England.

The Colony owes the warmest gratitude to Minister Carlin, and our deep sympathy goes out to Madame Carlin and her three daughters, who were so devoted to their father. We have lost a sincere friend, Switzerland has lost one of her ablest and greatest men of the day and can ill spare him.

TH. R.

ANNUAL DINNER AND BALL

of the Société de Secours Mutuels des Suisses à Londres,
held at the "Schweizerbund," 74, Charlotte Street, W.1.
Saturday, June 10th, 1922.

When one enters a banquetting hall for the purpose of being present, through kind invitation, at an Annual Dinner and Ball, and is greeted by a beautiful standard which recalls to one's mind that the foundation of the Society dates back over 200 years (to be precise, the year of foundation was 1703) one cannot but fall into temporary reverent pensiveness.

A Society that can boast of such antiquity, and whose purport and mission is "Pour assister ses malades et pour supporter ses vieillards" has indeed a noble record.

Sixty-four members sat down and enjoyed — there's no reason why they should not have done so — a tempting menu. They must also have enjoyed the speeches that followed after, for it is now a tradition that at the "Schweizerbund" after-dinner speeches are "traditionally" short and therefore sweet, a fact which is greatly appreciated by the audience and no less by the reporter.

The Swiss Minister, Mr. C. R. Paravicini, occupied the honorary presidential chair, rising first to invite the gathering to join him in paying homage to the King, which tribute was duly paid.