

Egbert de Graffenried

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EGBERT DE GRAFFENRIED.

It is always with regret that one takes leave of someone who has not only been universally respected, but personally liked both by his English acquaintances and friends and by the entire Swiss community in this country.

In the case of *Mr. Egbert de Graffenried*, however, and his charming wife, there will hardly be anybody among the thousands of Swiss in England who will not feel sad and sorry at the departure of a personal friend.

When Mr. de Graffenried came to London in 1943, in the midst of the war, he soon impressed everybody by his immense assiduity, by the attention he invariably paid to the smallest detail, by his eagerness to study any given problem "*à fond*" and particularly by his complete and utter personal sincerity and integrity. Here was a diplomatist, one felt, who immediately inspired confidence. Here was somebody who, though genuinely busy, was never too busy to eke out another quarter of an hour of his time to see one, listen to one and give advice. There was, with Mr. de Graffenried, always that total absence of "*chichi*" and affectation, which has made the type of old-school diplomatist a well-known figure of fun in films and novels alike. De Graffenried, who has already gone far in the service of our country, and who, no doubt, will go farther yet, has always remained true to his own personality: simple, straightforward, utterly sincere, honest, modest, likeable — very likeable.

Inside the Colony de Graffenried has always and invariably played the part of the mediator, not so much, probably, because that was in the best interest of the Legation, but simply because he believes in mediation, in smoothing things out to the satisfaction of all concerned. It just would not be in de Graffenried's nature to add fuel to any flame or to accentuate any argument. He was, and is, in that sense — as in every other sense — the ideal potential Chef de Colonie anywhere where Swiss foregather.

In his calling de Graffenried has, I believe, always tended towards the economic, commercial and financial side. The services he has rendered, during his altogether too short stay in London of 7 years, to the Swiss Economic Council, the Swiss Mercantile Society, as well as to other organisations and countless individuals alike, will, no doubt have been acknowledged

much more handsomely than could ever be done in print, by able speakers on occasion of the farewell dinner which took place on March 8th. Nonetheless it is fitting to say that Mr. de Graffenried has, in his capacity of Commercial Counsellor, contributed most powerfully to the solution of many a problem which at first seemed insoluble and has rendered the Confederation great service.

By the time this short appreciation appears in the "*Swiss Observer*," Mr. and Mrs. de Graffenried and their family will have left these shores. They are leaving behind a host of friends, both British and Swiss, who wish them luck on their path and who hope that one day, in the not too dim future, they will come to London again. It is typical of the man de Graffenried, that he did not want anything to appear in the *Swiss Observer* — or in the Swiss papers for that matter — as long as he was here. He felt it would be too embarrassing for him to receive, what he called, any personal publicity.

The fact of the matter is, of course, that the above few lines are not personal publicity at all, but simply a statement of a few facts, which even Mr. de Graffenried in all his self-effacing modesty cannot undo any more and which stand ever to his credit.

If ever anything can be said on behalf of the whole Swiss Colony in the United Kingdom, then it is this: "Thank you, Mr. de Graffenried, Good Luck, and "Au Revoir."

Gottfried Keller.

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