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### CARLO BERTI †

As the shadows were gathering on neighbouring Hampstead Heath, on Sunday, 26th February, in Whittington Hospital, surrounded by his dear ones, Carlo Berti passed away peacefully, only a few days from his 73rd birthday, and within three months from the death of his eldest brother, Rev. Fr. Pacifico Berti, Parish Priest of Mairengo (Leventina). We were aware that bad health was bothering him lately, and even when he was compelled to enter hospital just two months ago we fervently hoped that his tough, mountain-bred fibre would enable him to pull through, even though we knew that his illness was serious. But it was not to be, and so this interminable, mild, damp winter has robbed the London colony of yet another of its staunchest members.

The deceased was born at Calpiogna, near Faido, in the picturesque Leventina Valley, on 3rd March 1888. On completing his schooling, he followed other members of his numerous family across the Channel. In London he worked at first in various restaurants owned by fellow Ticinesi until he was able to establish himself on his own account with the Archway Restaurant and Café, near the Highgate crossroads, at the foot of Hampstead Heath. Just before the last war he also took over the management of the Swiss Café in Fetter Lane, City, just off Fleet Street. Soon after the tragic death of his second-born son, Ernest, and daughter-in-law, Linda, née Diviani, he retired from business to give himself full-time to the many activities of the Swiss, and in particular Ticinese colony, to which he was greatly dedicated.

He joined the Unione Ticinese soon after his arrival in London, and during his half-century of association he sat on the Committee without a break, being for over 15 years Treasurer, Vice-President for many years, and President for four years. It was during his

period in the chair that the Society celebrated with great solemnity the 75th anniversary of its foundation, on 23rd October 1949, with his "convallerano", then Federal Councillor, Dr. Enrico Celio, and Minister (later Ambassador) Henry de Torrenté, amongst the numerous important guests. If the Unione Ticinese survives to this day as one of the main bodies of the London colony it is chiefly due to Carlo Berti's incessant drive and initiative. He kept the fabulous "Tea Dances" at the Dorchester going. He it was who strained might and main to keep the Corale together, especially during the difficult years of the last War; we all recall the moving "Village Wedding", in which the whole Berti family collaborated, at the 1st of August Celebration of 1946 at the Stoll Theatre. The same year the Society made him a "Socio Benemerito", and last month they elected him an honorary Vice-President.

For over ten years he has been Vice-President of the Fonds de Secours, and in this capacity he visited and kept in touch with the aged and infirm in the Ticinese colony, giving comfort and material help.

He also served for many years on the Fête Suisse and the 1st of August Committees, and the Committee of Swiss Catholics in London.

During his long and active life Fate dealt him some cruel blows. His only daughter, Irene, was killed in a V.2 incident in Chancery Lane in the last days of the War; and, in September 1955, as already mentioned, he lost his son Ernest, following a heart attack, and shortly afterwards his daughter-in-law, Linda, in a traffic accident.

He was greatly attached to his native country, which he liked to visit regularly each year, his last visit being in May last year. Although the illness that was to strike him down was already bothering him, he was not deterred from walking, there and back, the four miles from the railhead to the village of residence of the writer's aged parents — such was his attachment to his friends.

And so, dear Carlo, you have left us, all too soon. The void you leave will, alas, never be filled! We shall keep your memory ever green. "Valet!"

To his grievously bereaved widow, Signora Augusta, to his sons, Virgilio (President, "Schweizerbund" (Swiss Club)), Mario and Charlie (in Zurich), and to all his relatives, both here and in our Homeland, we extend our deepest sympathy.

May we close with the words of his more famous "convallerano", Giuseppe Motta:

"Aveva finita la sua giornata e poteva ormai partire accompagnato dall'amore e dalla venerazione di tutti i ticinesi e di quanti lo avevano conosciuto fuori del Ticino. Oltre l'orizzonte terreno, lo spirito di lui s'era già elevato a contemplare le verità eterne, chè l'angelica farfalla stava ormai per spiccare il volo verso il suo Creatore."

J. E.