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AN IMPORTANT ANNIVERSARY.

Generous tributes have been paid at home in the past weeks to the memory of that most distinguished compatriot of ours, the late Giuseppe Motta, on the 10th anniversary of his death.

Although his passing took place at Berne on the 23rd January 1940 it is no exaggeration to say that every Swiss remembers Federal Councillor Motta to this day. We London Swiss recall the visit he paid us in February 1930 when the colony entertained him at the May Fair Hotel. (In the Chair: Mr. E. Werner, then President of the City Swiss Club.)

Giuseppe Motta was then at the height of a brilliant career. At 24, a promising "avvocato e notaio", he was elected a member of the Gran Consiglio. Four years later he entered the National Council at Berne, of which he continued a member until at 40 he was elected by the Federal Chambers to a seat on the Federal Council, in the year 1911. Motta was first in charge of the Federal Finance Department when, the first World War supervening, the Confederation had to find monies to pay off what were then large debts incurred in order to assert her armed neutrality during four anxious years. In the year 1920 he took over the Federal Political Department, our Foreign Office, a post which he held for two decades, the period between the two World Wars.

During this time Fed. Councillor Motta experienced his greatest triumph when he carried the Country with him, his beloved Ticino foremost, into membership of the League of Nations. At Geneva Motta, the head of the Swiss Delegation, established a high reputation for political integrity and firm belief in co-operation in world affairs; he was elected an honorary President of the League General Assembly. Imbued as he was then with the high ideals of universal peace and of international collaboration, which prevailed after the 1914-18 conflict, great must have been Motta's disappointment when the high promise of the League of Nations went unfulfilled. In 1934 Motta, in a memorable speech, recorded Switzerland's No to the entry of the U.S.S.R. into the League. And when European politics further deteriorated, our Foreign Minister obtained Switzerland's release from her obligations under art. 16 of the Geneva Pact, and this on the very eve of the Munich crisis. Motta's end came when Switzerland once again stood armed to defend her freedom. Indeed the last picture of the Ticinese Federal Councillor which we London Swiss were to see was the one taken on the steps of the Federal Parliament building of Henri Guisan with the members of the Federal Council, after his nomination as General.

But Giuseppe Motta was not only a great Ticinese, a great Swiss and a great European; he was a man who deserved our admiration for his high principles, his erudition, his warm love of country, and unexampled modesty.

Concluding his moving broadcast address com-

memorating Motta, the Swiss President and present Foreign Minister, Monsieur Max Petitpierre, said:—

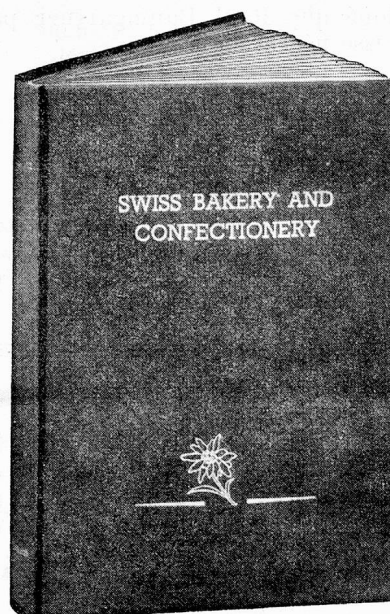
"But in spite of the terrible war, which he had the good fortune not to see unfold, the ideals which were his were not lost. He had sown in fertile soil and once the storm had blown over, the principles for which he stood have reappeared. He had endeavoured to blaze a trail for all men of good will to follow and the best tribute which can be paid to his memory is that of following the high example he has left us."

And Federal Councillor Celio, who attended the ceremony of the unveiling of a bust of his predecessor in the Grand Council Chamber at Bellinzona, ended his brilliant speech as follows (we quote in Italian):—

Giuseppe Motta fu, il bardo e lo statista che conveniva alla Svizzera moderna in un periodo delle sue grandi prove. Mai, infatti più che in quest'ultimo trentennio, mai certo, comme alla vigilia dell'ultima guerra mondiale il nostro popolo diede l'esempio agli altri che la libertà pratica nell'ordine e la democrazia operante entro i limiti di tale libertà sono la guarentigia perchè anche un piccolo stato viva sicuro, prospero e onorato nel consorzio civile. Ed ora dal piedestallo su cui l'han posto il vostro affetto e la vostra gratitudine, sembrami che a ciascuno di noi dica Giuseppe Motta: "... d'ora innanzi udiro intorno a me le voci più intime della mia gente, ascoltero i richiami degli avi, tendero l'orecchio allo scroscio del fiume che conferisce il nome alla mia terra, o Ticino paese umile e dolche, o tu che ardi e risplendi nella Confederazione come un altare dello spirito."

And so we are pleased to remember a Swiss who deserved well of his country. J.E.

An English Translation of a Great Swiss Work



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