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FAREWELL DINNER TO MR. ANTON BON.

Nearly one hundred members of the Swiss Colony, representing almost every Society and Organisation, attended the Farewell Dinner given to Mr. Anton Bon by the London Swiss Colony under the auspices of the City Swiss Club, on Monday, November 5th, at the Grosvenor House, Park Lane, W.1.

It was in the real sense of the word a happy family party. As I said, in a previous Farewell message in this paper, taking leave of someone who has endeared himself to the community at large, is always accompanied with genuine regret. Yet, the knowledge, that within a short space of time, we should be deprived of the pleasure of seeing Anton Bon in our midst any more, did not cast a gloom over this joyful evening, because we all shared the feeling that it was not a leave taking for ever and that, God willing, we might yet see him from time to time again attending some of the Colony's functions.

The first speaker of the evening was the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, who said that it was his sad duty to take official leave of Colonel Bon and to express to him not only the feelings of regret for his departure but also the gratitude for the many services he had rendered to the Colony.

The Minister mentioned, that he met Colonel Bon for the first time in 1924, when he was entrusted with the reorganisation of the Nestlé concern, and that he was at once struck by the great authority which he yielded and my the ready help offered to him when charged with an enquiry concerning British Social Institutions by M. Schulthess, the then head of the Federal Economic Department in Berne.

He continued by saying:

Je m'en remets à d'autres orateurs, plus qualifiés que moi, de parler de la belle carrière militaire du Colonel Bon, de ses succès dans le monde des affaires, en particulier dans cette branche essentielle de l'économie suisse: l'industrie hôtelière, qui a inscrit dans son livre d'or, parmi d'autres noms illustres, celui de la famille Bon.

En m'adressant à lui ce soir, je parle non seulement en mon nom personnel, non seulement au nom de vous tous, membres de la colonie de Londres, non seulement en ma qualité de représentant du

Gouvernement suisse, mais au nom du Conseil fédéral lui-même.

En effet, voici le message dont m'a chargé à l'occasion de la réunion de ce soir Monsieur Max Petitpierre, chef du Département politique fédéral.

"Vous charge exprimer Colonel Anton Bon à l'occasion soirée d'adieux organisée par Colonie suisse, 5 novembre, la gratitude des autorités fédérales pour le dévouement et la compétence avec lesquels il a pendant plus d'un quart de siècle contribué à la prospérité de la colonie suisse en Grande-Bretagne."

Il est entendu que les républiques son ingrates et il n'est guère de raison de croire que la nôtre fasse exception à la règle. Mais dans tout autre pays, le Colonel Bon aurait pu s'attendre à quelque brillante récompense. Et cependant, je reste persuadé, connaissant le Colonel Bon, sa noblesse de caractère, son esprit civique, ses traditions démocratiques, qu'aucun geste ne saurait l'émouvoir autant que ce simple et sincère témoignage d'estime et de gratitude émanant de la plus haute autorité du pays et sanctionné d'une voix unanime par ses compatriotes.

C'est l'un des privilèges de notre pays d'inspirer à tous ses enfants, alors même qu'ils vivent au loin sur une terre étrangère, cet attachement profond et vivace, source de tous les dévouements.

Le Colonel est arrivé parmi nous précédé d'une haute réputation, paré d'un nom et d'un grand prestige personnel. En toute simplicité, il a mis ses précieuses qualités au service des ses com-

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patriotes, mu par cet esprit de solidarité et de responsabilité qui, dans une démocratie, doit animer ceux que les dons naturels, le sort ou simplement les circonstances ont favorisés.

Monsieur de Torrenté then said he would leave it to other speakers to refer to the activities of Colonel Bon in the circle of the City Swiss Club. He mentioned that it was not an uncommon thing that men who met with success in life would at a certain age retire from activities resting on their laurels, but that was not the case with Colonel Bon, whose heart had remained young and his spirit of enterprise in the sphere of benevolence be it with the "Swiss Benevolent Society" or the "Secrétariat Sociale" had received no check.

The Minister terminated his oration with the following words:

"Mon Colonel, je vous ai exprimé la reconnaissance de la colonie et des autorités, mais l'expression de ma gratitude ne serait pas complète si elle ne s'adressait également à Madame Bon, qui, issue d'une famille qui a tant de titres à la reconnaissance du pays, vous a admirablement secondé dans toutes vos entreprises et soutenu dans les épreuves auxquelles, malheureusement, nous sommes tous sujets.

Nos vœux vous accompagnent tous deux dans votre nouvelle demeure au bord du lac de Zurich, où nous vous souhaitons de nombreuses années de paix et de bonheur — je ne dis pas de repos, car je sais que vous ne sauriez vous accommoder d'une vie inactive. Bien plus nos regrets s'édulcorent de l'espoir de vous revoir souvent parmi nous. Car j'ai retenu votre promesse de maintenir, dans la mesure du possible les liens qui vous attachent à la colonie suisse de Londres et même de garder un certain temps encore, pour notre plus grand bien, la Présidence de la Société de bienfaisance.

C'est cet espoir que je voudrais exprimer en opposant au vers du "Rondel de l'adieu" que rappelait à votre propos la chronique du "Swiss Observer": "Partir c'est mourir un peu" ce vers de Musset qui chante en ma mémoire: "Le revoir fait aimer l'adieu".

The sincere and eloquent words of the Minister were loudly cheered.

The task of saying "Hail and Farewell" was entrusted to my good friend L. Chapuis, who so often in the past has been called upon at similar functions to speak on behalf of the members of the Colony.

He acquitted himself nobly and in simple language gave vent to the deep feelings he felt in saying farewell not only to a man who has served the Colony well and faithfully, but also to a personal friend. He said "Your departure will leave a great gap, and we shall miss you."

Mr. Chapuis then referred to the many activities of Mr. Bon in the London Colony, such as Treasurer of the Swiss Relief Centre during the last war, for which he collected considerable amounts, as President of the Swiss Benevolent Society to which Society he devoted special attention, saying "many will bless both Mr. and Mrs. Bon for the help and sympathy shown to our countrymen in need", as Member of the 1st of August Committee where he was instrumental in collecting enough funds to enable the Committee to hire some of the large London theatres and Halls for holding this annual function, and lastly as President of the City Swiss Club, of which Club he became one of its most successful Presidents, saying "if the Club became almost a magnet, it was due to Mr. Bon, because he was the personal friend of all people who mattered". Mr. Chapuis concluded his address by thanking him for many years of sincere friendship, wishing him and Mrs. Bon many years of good health in the old country. (*Applause.*)

Before resuming his seat he read and handed over to Mr. Bon a Sonnet written by "Gallus" (Mr. Willy Deutsch) which will be found at the end of this report.

Mr. Ch. Seinet, President of the City Swiss Club, read out a number of telegrams and letters which had arrived and assured Mr. Bon, that he will endeavour to keep the *renommé* of the Club of which he was one of his most successful predecessors.

The moment then arrived for Mr. Bon to address the gathering, he was vociferously cheered by the entire company on rising from his chair.

He said that he was deeply touched by the speeches of the Minister and Mr. L. Chapuis and that he experienced somewhat difficulty in finding adequate words to reply to them. Amidst laughter he said "I never

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realised that I was such a marvellous fellow, and I am not sure whether my wife is aware of it either.

He expressed his great pleasure at seeing so many friendly faces who had shared all the difficulties with him during the fateful years of the last war. Mr. Bon related many experiences encountered at the Dorchester Hotel during air raids.

Not without emotion he declared that he was deeply touched by the telegram of Monsieur M. Petitpierre, the Swiss Foreign Minister. He said "when I leave the Swiss Colony I shall always be grateful to leave behind so many faithful and loyal friends."

Mr. Bon mentioned that he considers the City Swiss Club a most important institution and a valuable link between the two countries.

Regarding the political situation in Switzerland, he said that one often hears disparaging remarks about our neutrality, which should not deter us from defending it with all our might, because our neutrality is an honest one. To keep it we must be prepared to make heavy sacrifices.

The speaker said that he greatly enjoyed his years of office as President of the Swiss Benevolent Society which principally cared for the old people, but he mentioned that we should also extend a helping hand to our younger generation, and that it was most important that our young people could once again come to this country to gain experience. Mr. Bon said that he would, when back home, do his best to induce Swiss business men to place Swiss nationals in their foreign branches.

In conclusion Mr. Bon thanked the company for

all the friendship and sympathy he had always received. "I shall," he said, "keep a wonderful souvenir and say to you a hearty 'Vergelts Gott!'"

Long and sincere applause greeted Mr. Bon, when he resumed his seat, and thus this intimate Farewell Party came to an end, and I feel sure, that all those who were privileged to attend will keep this few hours spent with one of the best friends the Swiss Colony ever had in affectionate remembrance.

ST.

* * *

To Col. ANTON BON.

(On his departure from London.)

In bidding you farewell, could we forget
The part you played over the span of years
Within our midst and in so many spheres?
We do indeed owe you a lasting debt.

Mindful of days when we were all beset
By anxious times of blood and sweat and tears,
When, aye, the bravest heart was filled with fears,
Your lead and courage taught the course to set.

The old and poor amongst us, too, should know
How you have striven hard to ease their lot
And how your gen'rous heart went out to them.

As man of discipline and stratagem
We greet in you a fervent patriot;
May your life's eve with blessings overflow!

GALLUS.

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