

Charles Bertschinger †

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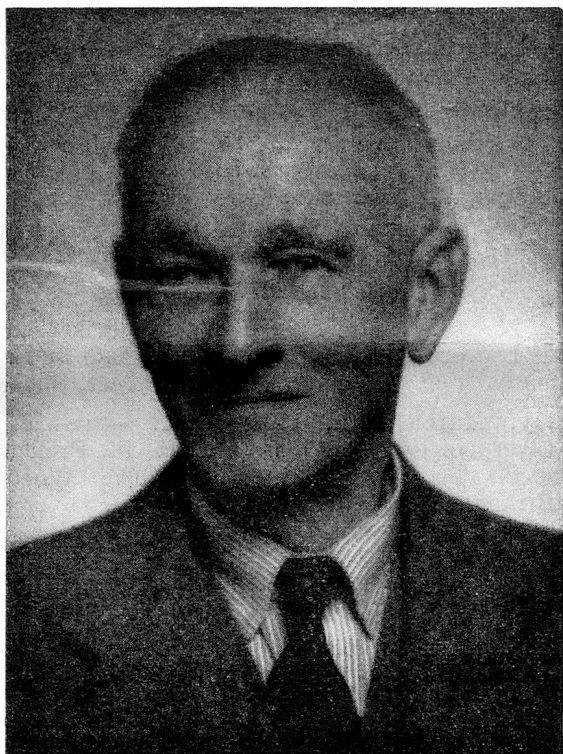
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CHARLES BERTSCHINGER †

As briefly reported in our last issue, Charles Bertschinger, of "Bonnyvale", Sheering, Bishop's Stortford, Herts, peacefully passed away at his home on February 20th. Death came to him with friendly care, and from a life rich in fulfillment, he entered into rest.

The Swiss Colony has, once again, lost one of the "old guard", a man who had for many years rendered great services to his countrymen. A generous heart has ceased to beat and his kindly eyes are closed for ever. We, who are left behind, will always remember him with affection; to many of our younger compatriots he has been a wise counsellor in time of stress and disappointments. No one, who came to him for succour ever left him without gathering new hope and courage to fight the battle of life. Although he had spent the greater part of his earthly pilgrimage in this country, he had remained a faithful son to his native land to which he was so deeply attached.

Charles Bertschinger was born on the 4th of October, 1878 in Zumikon. (Ct. Zurich). At the early age of twenty he came to London where he obtained positions, first with the Textile Manufacturing firms of Robert Schwarzenbach & Co. Ltd., and then with the Soieries Adliswil, both being London branches of Swiss concerns.

In 1920, having behind him twenty-two years of valuable experience, he established his own firm under the name of C. Bertschinger & Co. Ltd. of which he was its Managing-Director until his death.

As a young man he was very active in Church Mission work, particularly in Blackfriars, and he

devoted all his spare time to this work. Later on he played a leading part in the circle of the Swiss Y.M.C.A. then at Finsbury Square and City House. Scores of our young compatriots found an ever warm welcome at his home in North London, where his wife acted as a generous hostess.

During the first world war, when all the German Churches in London were closed, and the German-speaking Swiss had no place in which to worship in their native tongue, the Consistoire of the Eglise Suisse delegated to him the task of taking the services as a lay preacher on Sunday evenings at the Eglise Suisse. The services were conducted in Swiss dialect by request of the Home Office.

At the conclusion of the war, our departed friend, became one of the leading personalities who succeeded in founding the "Schweizerkirche" and it was due to him that services could be held in the lovely church of St. Agnes and St. Anne in Gresham Street, in the City, which unfortunately was destroyed during the London bombardment.

The bishop of London, in granting the permission for these services to be held in a City Church, had told Mr. Bertschinger that he was happy to grant the Swiss Colony the facilities of an English church, as he had so often enjoyed worshipping in English Churches in Switzerland.

Furthermore Ch. Bertschinger was one of the founders of the "Foyer Suisse", and for many years its secretary. Under his devoted guidance the "Foyer Suisse" prospered and enjoyed the reputation of being a social centre for young Swiss, as well as an hotel.

His church work was recognised, when in 1933, he was invited to join the Governing Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society on which he served until his death, being then its senior member.

Mr. Ch. Bertschinger lived in North London until the advent of World War II, when he moved to the village of Sheering near Bishop's Stortford. It was at this time that he put his house at 77, Wood Vale, London, N.10, at the disposal of his son-in-law, Dr. Marcel Pradervand, to serve as the Prespitère of the Eglise Suisse.

Through all the years of his great work, he found in his wife a devoted companion and helper, who loyally stood by him in fair and stormy weather ever ready to bear a part of the burden which lay often heavy on his shoulders. The writer remembers with pleasure a visit to his lovely home at Sheering, and although our friend was then well over three score and ten, he retained his youthful enthusiasm for all that was good and true. He has served his Master and fellow men well and faithfully.

Ch. Bertschinger leaves a widow and five adult children, to whom we express our deepest sympathy in their great loss.

When the good depart, what is it more than this — that Man, who is from God sent forth, doth yet again to God return? Such ebb and flow must ever be, then wherefore should we mourn?

ST.