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PAUL WALSER †

As briefly reported in our last issue the death occurred on 5th September of Mr. Paul Walser, of "Careno", Hendon Avenue, Finchley, N.3, at the age of 89.

By his passing away the Swiss community has lost one of its doyens, who for many years played a conspicuous role in the life of the Colony.

Members of the older generation will, no doubt, remember with what zeal and intensity the deceased worked untiringly, together with Dr. A. Lätt, the late Jean Baer and E. Wüthrich, during the first world war to explain to the English public and the Press the reason for Switzerland's neutrality.

When the Nouvelle Société Helvétique (London Group) was founded, in 1916, he at once took a leading part in its deliberations and backed the Society with generous financial support.

During his long life he supported many ventures and many Swiss Societies with great liberality, amongst them the official organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain.

The writer, who knew Paul Walser for nearly 40 years, received from him both moral and financial help for the "Swiss Observer" over a long period of years for which he will always remember him with gratitude.

Although the departed was one of the leading men in the commercial world he hated any publicity, and whatever service he rendered to the Swiss

Colony (and his services have been innumerable) he neither wished nor expected to be made, what is commonly called, "a fuss of."

He knew his responsibility towards his compatriots, and in a larger sense also to our own and this country, and in doing his duty he required no extra acknowledgment or cheap glorification.

Some of his utterances at meetings might have sounded strange at times, and often invited opposition; he "called a spade a spade" and had no patience with those who were "beating about the bush". He was a grand patriot and in his inner self he remained a simple and unassuming man, who stuck with an admirable tenacity to his democratic principles. There was tragedy as well as triumph in his life.

* * *

Paul Walser attended the school in his native Wohlen, and later on went to the Commercial School at Neuchâtel. At the early age of 18 he took over the business of his father (straw goods manufacturer) in Wohlen, which he carried on with his brother, under the name of Paul Walser & Co. Within a short time of this association he opened branches in all the more important cities abroad.

With a keen eye for business he extended his connection with the country for which from the earlier days of his business career he had had a "sneaking regard". Shortly before the year 1906, he packed his bag and came over to London, where he founded the firm Paul Walser & Co. Ltd.; apart from straw goods plaits, he started manufacturing ladies' hats.

This latter undertaking met at once with a keen opposition from old-established English houses, which had formerly supplied him with plaits, and being a foreigner in addition, untold difficulties were put in his way. Undaunted by these obstacles, and with great perseverance, coupled with remarkable business ability, he succeeded in establishing a large concern, and to-day the "Reslaw" hats enjoy a splendid reputation not only in this country but all over the world.

The firm of Paul Walser & Co. Ltd. at present occupy their own premises consisting of nine floors in one of the great fashion centres of London, with additional work-rooms nearby; they own a large factory at Luton (Bedfordshire) employing altogether several hundred workhands. In all the various branches of this large undertaking there has always existed a friendly spirit, which, no doubt, was inspired by the head of the firm, and the writer was told on more than one occasion that both management and staff enjoy the friendly name of "Reslaw family".

* * *

And now this great heart has ceased to beat, the fight is over, but Paul Walser will always be remembered by all those who came in contact with him for his uprightness, kindness and generosity.

He leaves three daughters and a son, to whom we extend our sincere sympathy in their bereavement.

ST.