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LOUIS CHAPUIS †

With the passing away, in his 83rd year, on Thursday, 12th November, of Louis Chapuis, at the High Barnet Hospital, the Swiss Colony has lost one of its most beloved members, and the writer a friend of many years' standing.

His departure at a ripe age has caused universal regret far beyond his large and intimate circle of friends, because Louis — as he was affectionately called — enjoyed great popularity, a popularity which he, however, did not seek, because he was a modest man, devoid of any wish of self glorification. What endeared him to everyone who came in contact with him was his integrity, simplicity, kindness and generosity.

It was my privilege to have enjoyed his friendship for forty years, a friendship which has never been broken, and it is hard to realise that I shall not see again those eyes which shone so brightly, and the hands that clasped so warmly.

Although Louis Chapuis had spent almost his entire life away from his native land, he had remained loyal to the country of his birth, which he loved so dearly. He was never happier than when he visited the canton of Vaud, from which he originated, and to which he was so deeply attached.

* * *

Louis Chapuis was born at Lausanne in 1877, and together with his brother Carlo — both being orphans — arrived in London in 1891 to join his uncle, who had left Saint-Claude, in the Jura, to open a briar pipe factory in Britain.

At the early age of fourteen he started an apprenticeship, during which he acquainted himself with the many intricacies of briar pipe making. By sheer hard work, honesty and an indomitable will to succeed, he quickly gained the confidence of his principals, and at seventeen became foreman. Promotion came quickly; at the age of twenty-five he was appointed Manager, then Managing Director and later Chairman of the Board of H. Comoy & Co. Ltd., the firm with which he started as a boy 68 years ago, and which to-day enjoys a world-wide reputation. While still in his twenties, he opened the American market to the London-made pipe.

With a view to developing the export trade of the firm he undertook many travels. Altogether he made thirty-five visits to the United States. On one of his trips he was due to sail in the ill-fated liner *Titanic*, but a strike at one of his factories prevented him from taking up his passage. Further voyages took him to — apart from European countries — Australia and New Zealand. Through his initiative and driving power the London factories were modernised and further developed. New factories were built in France and Austria. In 1938, when Hitler entered Austria, he handed over his factory in Vienna to his workpeople, as he did not wish to carry on business there under the Nazi régime. He divided machines and material among the workmen so that they could continue as pipe-makers in their own homes.

Meanwhile Louis Chapuis became a well-known figure in the pipe-making industry. He was co-founder of the Briar Pipe Trade Association, and for several years was its President.

Although his professional duties required his full and constant attention, he nevertheless found time to take an active part in the life and the doings of the Swiss Colony in London. He joined the Swiss Mercantile Society in 1898, and in the same year he founded "La Fraternelle Suisse", of which he was President for five years. This Society, which at one time had a membership of over 300, was wound-up after five years of lively activity — when he resigned from its leadership.

In 1902 he became a member of the "Société de Secours Mutuels", and fourteen years later (1916) joined the City Swiss Club, of which he was President for five years (1938 to 1943) longer than any of the Presidents since the foundation of the Club in 1856. For services rendered to the Club he was elected an Honorary Vice-President.

During the last war the departed was the Chairman of the Swiss Relief Centre, which under his able leadership did such splendid work. Louis Chapuis was a member of the Swiss Benevolent Society (committee), the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, the Swiss Economic Council, Swiss Rifle Association (non-active), and sat on the Advisory Council of the "Swiss Observer". In addition to his many activities he had always taken a keen interest in Masonic affairs; he was a Past-Master of the Helvetica Lodge, and has been honoured with the London Grand Rank.

One fact worth mentioning is, that he had held an almost unique record, the one of having proposed as Chairman of various Societies, both English and Swiss, the toast to six sovereigns of this country, his first one being to H.M. Queen Victoria as far back as 1898. As recently as last month, he attended the "Soirée Romande" of the Confrérie Vaudoise, at the Dorchester Hotel, where he proposed the Toast to "La Patrie Vaudoise".

Louis Chapuis married in 1918, and his marriage was an exceedingly happy one; he found in his wife Adrienne an ideal partner, and if his was a fruitful and successful life this was largely due to the help, support and care she has loyally given him through many years. He leaves also a son and daughter. To the bereaved we tender our sincere sympathy in their great loss.

And now when the shadows of death have fallen on Louis Chapuis, and a life of many sacrifices for others has come to its journey's end, we who remain behind thank him for so much which he has given us. He has been a great patriot, and our country can be proud of her son.

In our memory he will always remain in affectionate remembrance.

Farewell, dear friend!

ST.

* * *

A large congregation attended at the Eglise Suisse, on Tuesday, 17th November, amongst them the Swiss Ambassador and Madame Daeniker. The Rev C. Reverdin officiated.

To LOUIS CHAPUIS.
(† 12th Nov. 1959.)

'Twas but a week ago his birthday fell,
With gifts and messages from far and near,
Bringing the best of wishes and good cheer
As tributes from all those who loved him well.

Hark now, the solemn tolling of the bell
Proclaims the ending of a great career,
Of one whose memory we do revere
For all the ways in which he could excel.

He was an inspiration to us all
With his activity up to the last
In office, home and the Swiss colony.

Then broke the day, which brought his Maker's call
And from afar a heav'ly trumpet blast,
Leading him onward . . . to eternity!

London, in November 1959.

"GALLUS".

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