

Memorial sevice to Monsieur le Pasteur René Hoffmann-de Visme

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MEMORIAL SERVICE

To Monsieur le Pasteur René Hoffmann-de Visme,

September 13th, 1937, at the Eglise Suisse, Endell Street, W.C.

Almost exactly three years ago not only the Swiss Church in London, nay, the whole Colony, united in celebrating the Silver Jubilee of their well-beloved senior Pastor, René Hoffmann-de Visme.

A great and distinguished gathering assembled at Endell Street, on Sunday, October 28th, 1934, to return thanks to the Almighty for the many blessings upon our Pastor and his congregation during his memorable ministry extending over 25 years.

Who amongst those present would have thought it possible that only another short span of life should lie in front of our leader? But three brief years! Is it surprising then that we can barely realise that he should be no more in our midst, that we shall no longer hear his sonorous voice and gaze upon his kindly face?

A week ago he was called before his Master and to-day the little church at Endell Street was filled once more — to overflowing — by all his faithful, who came to do him homage and to pay him a last, fervent, farewell. From 11.30 onwards a steady stream of followers passed through the portals, young and old, rich and poor, all deeply conscious of the great and irreparable loss sustained. They felt the loss to the community, but they also knew — each one of them — to have lost a very dear personal friend.

The service, which began at 12 noon, was moving in its very simplicity and enhanced by the beautiful floral decorations, all in white.

After an Organ prelude, Pastor U. Emery opened the service with a beautiful prayer and an appropriate passage from Holy Scripture. His voice betrayed the deep emotion he must have felt on this solemn, sad, occasion, for had he not worked over a long number of years in close collaboration with the dear departed? And now, it fell to his lot, to open the Memorial Service for one so much younger in years and still in the prime of his manhood when God recalled him.

The principal address to the mourners was delivered by M. F. Christol, Pasteur of the French Protestant Church of London (Soho Square, W.1.)

It was an oration which will be unforgettable to all those who were present and real justice to it could only be rendered by giving it in extenso. We are not, unfortunately, in a position to put it before our readers to-day, but hope that it may appear in print, as a wonderfully fitting tribute to an earnest Christian and a great man. We would wish that the Consistoire might seek permission to have it published in leaflet form, for distribution among the parishioners of both the Swiss Churches in London, as a lasting souvenir.

M. Christol's text was: — Hebreux 11, 5.

« On ne le trouva plus, parce que Dieu l'avait enlevé. »

He, too, gave expression to the seeming unreality of the sad facts; he, too, said that he could not realise — no one could — the dread loss we had sustained and were called upon to bear. He went on in most beautiful and touching language, enlarging on what this loss meant: to the dear children of the departed, the five daughters and only son, to his self-sacrificing helper over so many years, Mlle. Matthey; to his relatives and nearest friends; to his Parish — so very dear to him — and to the Swiss Colony in London as a whole, not to speak of his countless admirers and friends in Switzerland and elsewhere.

M. Christol next spoke of M. Hoffmann in connection with his great and fervent patriotism; his work and the love and enthusiasm he brought to bear on all his undertakings. Of his oratorical powers and his ability to deliver great and powerful sermons in various languages; of his great organising abilities and how he managed to infuse some of his own zeal and enthusiasm into those who were ever ready to help him.

Tribute was paid to M. Hoffmann's great and lasting social work and to the magnitude of the field he covered, but, above everything, M. Christol said, our leader had been a true Christian, faithful unto the end and, during his lifetime, ever ready to help all those who needed assistance, advice and ministration. He was, too, a great believer and therefore able to assist all those who came to him in doubt or trouble.

Was it surprising, then, that this tremendous worker in the vineyard of the Lord should have overtaxed his strength, shaken as he had been, by the sad loss of his dear wife, five years ago, whose great love, whose constant help and devotion, had meant everything to him throughout the years? And finally, M. Christol spoke of the last few months, during which our Pastor hoped to regain his health and strength in his dear native land, but it was God's will to call him to higher things.

And though he is now no longer among the living, he will remain with us in spirit, his work will live on and his memory will ever be deeply enshrined in the hearts of all who knew and loved him.

When M. Christol had finished his beautiful and moving oration, there were, indeed, no eyes undimmed and the soft strains of the organ floated like balm on our sad and troubled hearts.

The Rev. C. T. Hahn then followed with a loving and generous tribute to his dear departed colleague, whose untimely loss he deeply deplored. From his own experience he is better able than any one to appreciate the wonderful task achieved by his late spiritual fellow-worker. He pointed out that, without strength and inspiration from above, no one could possibly have carried on his shoulders the work and burden M. Hoffmann did, year after year, through the best part of his lifetime. He expressed deep sympathy with the family and in his peroration exhorted the parishioners to bear their great loss with Christian fortitude.

M. Chas. de Jenner spoke in the absence of the Swiss Minister and expressed his sense of the great loss to M. Paravicini and to himself personally, as well as to the Swiss Legation, to whom M. Hoffmann had ever proved himself a tower of strength in all matters spiritual and social. He pointed out that, by this sad loss, a gap had been left in our ranks which it would be almost impossible to fill again, seeing what a unique position M. Hoffmann had occupied and how very greatly he had endeared himself to every one.

Pastor Emery concluded the service by prayer and the benediction and asked the congregation to sing the last verse of Cantique 236: "Vers le ciel," the first two verses of which had reverberated through the little church after the reading of the Scripture. And how bravely they sang, repressing the rising tears,

Quel bonheur, quel bonheur.
Ineffable pour mon cœur.
D'entrer dans la cité sainte,
Affranchi de toute crainte!...
Tu nous l'as promis, Seigneur.

So the service came to its close and, amidst the strains of the organ, the bereaved family filed out, followed by the relatives and the many distinguished representatives, who, apart from the vast congregation, had come to pay their last respects to one, who will never be forgotten and who will ever remain beloved by all who had the good fortune to come into touch with him.

The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh, blessed be His name!

Gallus.

On nous écrit de Paris:

Une cérémonie digne par sa simplicité s'est déroulée à la Chapelle du Cimetière du Père-Lachaise, mercredi le huit septembre.

Les circonstances tant pénibles de sa mort subite à Paris, empêchèrent nombre de parents et amis d'assister au Service funèbre et à l'incinération de M. le pasteur René Hoffmann-de Visme.

Sa dépouille mortelle fut pourtant entourée de deux de ses enfants, de plusieurs membres proches des familles Hoffmann et de Visme, ainsi que de quelques amis dont un représentant du Consistoire de l'Eglise Suisse de Londres.

M. le pasteur Boury rappela dans son oraison funèbre les débuts que le défunt fit à Paris comme vicaire de la paroisse de St. Jean et le regret qui fut déjà exprimé alors, quand l'appel de Londres lui parvint.

M. Roger de Visme, pasteur à Houilles s/Seine, (et frère de feu Madame Suzanne Hoffmann-de Visme) resserra davantage l'intimité qui régnait parmi les personnes présentes. Il retraça de façon simple et pourtant émouvante l'activité du défunt durant son long ministère à Londres et souligna surtout l'exemple frappant qu'il était toujours pour les siens et tous ceux qui avaient eu le privilège le connaître.

Après l'incinération, l'urne qui contient les cendres du défunt fut déposée dans un caveau temporaire en attendant qu'elle puisse être transportée en Suisse et placée au Cimetière de Chardonne, où reposent déjà les cendres de feu Madame Suzanne Hoffmann-de Visme.

IN MEMORIAM.

(Le Pasteur R. Hoffmann-de Visme.)

We cannot fathom yet that you have passed
From life and work to everlasting rest,
The while we prayed you might be spared — And
bless'd
We would have been once more, as in the past.

Alas! 't was not to be. — Who can forecast
The length of years upon our earthly quest?
This human life — when on its highest crest —
Droops like a flower, touch'd by wintry blast.

Your ashes now rest on Lac Léman's shore,
As you'd have wished, beside your faithful mate;
Eternally united, peaceful, still...

And yet, with us in spirit evermore,
Your noble life-work shall illuminate
The path we are to tread, to do God's will.

Sept. 13th, 1937.

GALLUS.

Die Funker haben während des Streckenfluges ein reichliches Mass an Arbeit zu leisten. Neben der ständigen Überwachung der Motoren während des Fluges, haben sie stets Wettermeldungen aufzufangen, die für den Piloten von Wichtigkeit sind, den Bodenstationen Meldungen über den Fortschritt des Fluges durchzugeben, genaue Standortbestimmungen der Maschine bei ihrem Fluge hoch über den Wolken vorzunehmen und durch fortwährende Eigenpeilungen den Flugkurs dauernd zu kontrollieren. Alle diese Meldungen werden in einem Code durchgegeben, der aus drei Buchstaben besteht und der absolut beherrscht werden muss. Eine grosse Verantwortung ruht auf diesen Männern,

durch deren Arbeit eine Verkehrsmaschine drei Stunden lang von Zürich nach London ohne Bodensicht über den Wolken fliegt, um sicher und genau wieder über dem Flugplatz Croydon durch die Wolken niederzugesenken und mit der Regelmässigkeit einer Präzisionsuhr den Flugplan einzuhalten. Bis zur letzten Phase des Landemanövers, dem Herauspressen der Fahrgeleits und dem Herauslassen der Landeklappen, sind diese Funker an der Arbeit im Bewusstsein ihrer schweren Aufgabe.

Mit der Beendigung des Fluges ist die Arbeit eines Bordfunkers aber nicht abgeschlossen. Ueber seine Wahrnehmungen während der Reise hat er einen kurzen Bericht für den technischen

Dienst herzustellen und allfällige Mängel zu melden, damit sofort für deren Behebung gesorgt werden kann. Von Zeit zu Zeit sieht man auch die Funker im heimatischen Hangar als Mechaniker an der Arbeit. Damit sie die Vertrautheit mit den Maschinen, insbesondere den Motoren nicht verlieren, kommen sie nämlich eine Zeit lang nicht auf die Strecke, sondern werden in der Werkstätte beschäftigt.

Wenn Sie also das nächste Mal fliegen, denken Sie daran, dass vorne zwei sitzen: ein Pilot und ein Funker, die beide in unzähligen Flugstunden die Meisterschaft in ihrem Fach erreicht haben und damit die Grundlage unseres regelmässigen Luftverkehrs schufen.

STZ.