

Old folks Christmas lucheon

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Old Folks Christmas Luncheon.

By a remarkable coincidence, I was within three days the guest, of both the youngest, and the oldest members of the Swiss Colony.

On Saturday, the 19th and on Monday the 21st of December I felt frightfully young amongst the "Old Folks" at the Xmas party, at the "Swiss Home" and at the "Old Folks Xmas Luncheon" at the "Foyer Suisse," whilst on Friday, December 18th, I felt very old indeed when I attended the Swiss Mercantile Society's Students Annual Banquet and Ball at the Prince's Galleries. There, I was surrounded by youth, by an unbounding spirit of optimism, God's wide world lay before them, the future belonged to them; life with its bitter experiences had not yet succeeded in putting a damper on their youthful aspirations, many, if not all, look at the world through rose coloured glasses. —

I could go on for ever, because let me tell you, I still feel very young in spite of nearing, with bewildering speed, the half century mark. But, I must relate here, the very pleasant experiences which I met with at the "Old Folks Christmas Luncheon" which took place, as already mentioned, at the "Foyer Suisse," 15, Upper Bedford Place, W.C.1.

Shortly before the coffee was served, Pasteur R. Hoffmann-de Visme, welcomed the company, amongst them the Swiss Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, who honoured this luncheon party for the 6th time since its innovation, he said he was glad to see so many of our old compatriots and to be present to spend a few hours in perfect companionship.

During a short interval, the old and yet ever young Xmas tunes "Oh Tannenbaum" and "Oh du Fröhliche" were played, and many an eye was moist, thinking back to many years ago when some of those present, used to sing these songs under the Xmas tree in our beloved country.

Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, the Swiss Minister, expressed his pleasure, to be once again amongst the venerable members of the Swiss Colony. "I am glad to see" he said, "so many familiar faces present, and I sincerely hope that we shall meet again next year." The Minister then informed the gathering that the silver medal presented by the House Committee to the oldest member, would go to Mlle. Anna Gerber, from Schangnau (Ct. Berne) who was born in 1854. (The medal depicts on one side an eagle perched on a rock, and bears



OLD FOLKS LUNCHEON, Monsieur C. R. PARAVICINI SWISS MINISTER IN THE CHAIR.

Here was a gathering of some 57 venerable Ladies and Gentlemen, most of them at the eventide of their wordly pilgrimage. They have all experienced life in its fulness and gladness, as well as in its harshness and disappointments. Many of those who sat around those prettily decorated tables could relate tales of bitter experiences, of incessant hard and untiring work, of hardship, but also of success and happiness; some have made careers, some have climbed to the top of the ladder, some have not reached those exalted heights, but have rested half way, but all of them, I am convinced, have struggled to overcome the many adversities of which life is so full, and to all of them I hope a kind providence will sweeten their remaining days amongst us. —

Never in my life have I felt so young as on that conspicuous occasion, to begin with, I must admit, I felt rather out of the picture, I had somehow an idea that I was trespassing, but I was soon put at ease, when one of my table companions, an old Lady of about 70 told me that she knew me very well, as, according to her notion, I had kept for many years a "paper shop" at Old Compton Street, "such is fame," but unfortunately I cannot remember having ever "kept a shop" but according to the old Lady, my double must have been a very nice man, so I shan't worry.

The Luncheon started rather later than announced, and nearly 60 people sat down to an excellently cooked meal.

The Management of the "Foyer Suisse" had excelled themselves, not only was the food most carefully prepared, but also the service was very efficient, and the staff in attendance can claim a big share in the success of this party, they were politeness and efficiency itself.

The Hall was very beautifully decorated, and there was a real Xmas tree, with candles burning which added greatly to the Xmas "Stimmung."

the following biblical quotation: "They shall mount up on wings like eagles" and on the other side the name and birthday of the recipient).

M. Dupraz, President of the "Fonds de Secours," who was amongst the guests brought the greetings of his Society, expressing his appreciation at having been invited to this enjoyable gathering.

M. Ritter, the Secretary of the "Fonds de Secours" also expressed his appreciation.

Pastor C. Th. Hahn, regaled the company with some Swiss songs on the piano, and lo and behold some of the old people heartily joined in the singing.

The company then adjourned to the drawing room, where old friendships were renewed, and on leaving, many expressed the wish to be present again at the next Luncheon party a year hence.

In concluding my report, I wish heartily to congratulate the House Committee of the Foyer Suisse for their great kindness in arranging this splendid party; by this undertaking, they have proved in a most commendable manner, that our old compatriots are not forgotten, and I feel sure that in their memory this day will live for a long time.

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