

# "Old folks" luncheon

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# The Swiss Observer

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## A Merry Christmas to all our Readers

### CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS.

This week we have entered upon the festival of Xmas — the happiest and most precious time of the year.

All over the globe there will arise glad tidings of praise. Let us then, dear readers, lay aside for a few hours, at least, the burden of our work and forget our troubles and worries. Let us be reunited once again in that happy state of companionship and mutual good-will! Let us turn away from our daily toil, and routine, with its restless struggles of life, to welcome the peace of Christmas.

Although the world is still in a turmoil, and the cares and sorrows lay heavily on many shoulders, the spirit of Christmas is the same to-day as yesterday and will be for ever. May this blessed time of goodwill towards mankind remain a daily companion of unfailing help, and an inspirer of all that is good and kind.

Generations come and go, ideas and customs may change, but the spirit of Christmas will remain for ever a vital force. Its message will never grow old nor can it be exhausted.

No matter how fast and feverish the pace of life, Christmas will give us a decided reminder of all that is real in this world and worth while living for. It will remind us more than ever, that we are all God's children, united in one big family, here on this earth, for but a little time, requiring the warmth of human kindness and friendship. Let the Christmas spirit, which is the spirit of active usefulness, perseverance, cheerful discharge of duty, kindness and forbearance come nearer and closer to our hearts. —

Happy Christmas that can win us back to the delusion of our childhood days, that can transport our thoughts, hundreds of miles away, back to our dear ones, back to the land of our birth.

God grants, that the coming year will be for all of us a year of striving to lessen the hardships under which a tired world is labouring; may it once again bring back peace amongst all nations. May the silver lining for which we so often have gazed heavenwards, appear and shed its light over the darkness in which we have tumbled during the last few months.

Far away in the cities, villages and hamlets of our homeland, the bells will ring in the glorious Christmas Day, their sounds will spread the glad message of goodwill amongst the children of this universe, they will pierce the Alps and ride on the ocean waves and will bring to everyone of us the greetings of that dear land of ours. Let us then, dear readers, spread this inspired message, compiled with our sincerest wishes for the land, which has accorded us a generous hospitality, and to many of us a second home.

ST.



### HOME NEWS

(Compiled by courtesy of the following contemporaries: National Zeitung, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, St. Galler Tagblatt, Vaterland, Tribune de Genève and Schweizerische Verkehrszentrale.)

#### FEDERAL.

##### NEW PRESIDENT OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION.

The two Chambers of the Swiss Parliament elected on Thursday, December 15th, M. Philipp Etter, President of the Swiss Confederation for the year 1939.

Federal Councillor Etter was born on the 21st of December, 1891, at Menzingen (Ct. Zug). He received his first education at the "Gymnasium" in Zug and at the "Stiftsschule" in Einsiedeln, afterwards he studied law at the University in Zurich.

In 1917, he was appointed examination judge at Zug, he entered the "Kantonsrat" a year later, and in 1922 he became a member of the cantonal government, over which he presided in 1927/28. Two years later, he was sent to Parliament to represent the canton of Zug in the States Council. (Ständerat), where he soon made a great reputation for himself. He was also Editor of the "Zuger Nachrichten," and in the army he reached the rank of a major. (Infantry). M. Etter is married and the father of ten children, five boys and five girls.

##### NEW VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION.

M. Marcel Pilet-Golaz was last Thursday elected Vice-President of the Swiss Confederation for the coming year.

M. Pilet-Golaz, who has already occupied the post of President of the Swiss Confederation in the year 1934, entered the Government in December 1928 in succession to M. Chuard, he then took over the Home Office Dept., until a vacancy occurred at the Federal Post and Railways Dept., through the departure of Federal Councillor Dr. Haab, when he took over this Department.

M. Pilet-Golaz hails from the canton of Vaud, he entered the Grand Council of his canton in 1921, where his brilliant qualities made him at once one of the most influential members of this body.

Four years later he was sent to Parliament. (National Council).

##### FEDERAL COUNCILLOR, DR. ERNST WETTER.

After a week of feverish excitement and endless conferences amongst the various Parliamentary groups, Dr. E. Wetter, National Councillor and President of the "Vorortes des Schweiz. Handels und Industrievereins" Zurich has been elected a member of the Federal Government in succession to Dr. A. Meyer who has resigned his office as Finance Minister. Dr. E. Wetter (Liberal) received 117 votes, whilst, States Councillor, Dr. Klöti, Mayor of Zurich (Socialist) registered 98 votes.

The new Federal-Councillor is in the real sense of the word a self-made man; born in humble circumstances, he started as a teacher at the secondary schools in Uster and Winterthur, after having saved enough money, he studied National Economy at the Universities of Zurich, Paris and London, and for a number of years he was a teacher at the Cantonal Commercial University in Zurich.

From that post he was called, by the former Federal Councillor, Dr. Schulthess to the "Volkswirtschaftsdepartement" where he occupied the office of general secretary, and later on he became Director of the Federal Commercial Dept. In 1924, he left the Civil Service to enter the administration of the "Vorortes des Schweiz. Handels und Industrie Vereins" of which he became ultimately its President.

Dr. Wetter started his political career in the year 1924 when he was elected a member of the "Kantonsrat," five years later (1929) he was sent to Parliament (National Council) where he at once became one of its most influential members.

##### NEW PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL TRIBUNAL.

M. Robert Fazy, formerly Vice-President of the Federal Supreme Court in Lausanne, has been elected President of the Court.

Born in 1872, M. Fazy was for many years a Judge in his native town of Geneva. He entered the Federal Tribunal in the year 1921 as successor to Federal Judge Dr. Picot.

##### NEW VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL TRIBUNAL.

M. Léon Robert, a member of the Federal Tribunal, has been appointed Vice-President of the Supreme Court.

M. Robert was born in 1873 at La Chaux-de-Fonds, for a large number of years he acted as a Judge at the Cantonal Court of Neuchâtel. He entered the Federal Tribunal in 1921.

##### FRIEDRICH GLAUSER +.

M. Friedrich Glauser, the Swiss novelist, has died in Nervi, near Genoa, at the age of 42.

The two best-known works of the deceased are the criminal-novels "Die Fieberkurve" and "Wachtmeister Studer."

##### AMALGAMATION OF SWISS BANKING CONCERN.

The Swiss Bank Corporation is taking over at the end of this year the Banking House of Eckel, Naber & Cie., in Basle. The entire staff will be taken over as well.

##### INTERNATIONAL ICE-HOCKEY MATCH.

The second International Ice-Hockey Match between Switzerland and Czecho-Slovakia was played in Prague. The Swiss team won with one goal to nil.

#### LOCAL.

##### ZURICH.

M. Oskar, August Gattiker, from Richterswil, is entering Parliament (National Council) in succession to Dr. E. Wetter, the newly elected Federal Councillor.

M. Gattiker, who is a well-known personality in commercial circles of the canton of Zurich, sat in Parliament previously (1934-1935). (The newly elected Member of Parliament is the brother of our friend W. G. Gattiker, of Boreham Wood, Elstree. Ed.)

##### BASLE.

The death is reported from Basle of M. Emile Zachmann, General Manager and Vice-President of the Board of the "Schweiz. Treuhandgesellschaft" at the age of 64. The deceased was connected with the institution for thirty years, on several occasions he was entrusted by the Federal Council with important missions abroad.

##### ST. GALL.

Dr. Thomas Holenstein, late National Councillor, has celebrated his 80th birthday; he played for a great number of years an important part in the political sphere of the canton of St. Gall.

Dr. Holenstein was a member of the Grand Council of the canton of St. Gall for forty years, and he sat for twenty-six years in Parliament. (1902-1928).

##### "OLD FOLKS" LUNCHEON.

At the Foyer Suisse, on  
Saturday, December 17th, 1938.

"What makes old age so sad is, not that our joys, but that our hopes then cease."

Hardly had I left a few hours previously, the youngest members of the Colony, than I had the pleasure to be in the company of the oldest members of the Colony.

As in previous years, the Management of the Foyer Suisse had invited the older generation of our compatriots to a Luncheon at their Headquarters at 12, Bedford Way, Russell Square, W.C.2.

To this Luncheon all Swiss living in or near London, who have attained their 65th year are invited, and I am glad to say, that nearly 60 of our countrymen and countrywomen accepted the invitation so kindly extended to them by the organisers.

I must admit, this function was not quite as lively as the one which ended at 2 a.m. on the very same day, but when I looked round, I saw the same happy expression on the faces of these old people.

They were just as happy as our "youngsters," many of them I have met now for some years at these hospitable quarters; some, alas, have departed from us, never to return, some were unable to be present owing to illness; whilst a good many looked to me a little whiter, a little more bent, I am getting fatter and more "ungainly" every year, and I am afraid, that if the committee is still eager to have my company at this function, they will have to look out for larger premises. —

I am sure that the Committee of Management of the Foyer Suisse, does not require any special thanks for this really "beau geste," but I cannot help but congratulate them most sincerely on their thoughtfulness to gather once a year our "old folks" together, and to show them, that although they are getting on in years, they are not forgotten, and that their company is welcome to all of us. —

Much sorrow, many disappointments, but also much joy they must have witnessed during the many years of their pilgrimage through this valley of sorrow. There may be differences of age which differentiates us younger ones from each other, but one thing we have in common, and that is, that we all belong to the same country, and we share with them the love for this little earthly paradise. —

Further thanks should be extended to the Management of the Hotel Foyer Suisse, for the really splendid Fare which was served. There was soup, fish, turkey, sweets, fruit, nuts, etc., which could be washed down with "Champagne de Kiesen" called Apple Gold. There were cigarettes and real "Schweizer Stuppen." All these good things were served by the kind and smiling waiting staff of the Hotel, these young ladies contributed a large share to the success of this function.

During the Luncheon, Mesdemoiselles E. Dutler, J. Staehli and Besson, sang and played various of our Swiss songs and Xmas hymns, this attention was greatly appreciated by our old friends, and also by the younger ones.

In the absence of the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Ch. de Jenner, Chargé d'Affaires de Suisse, was in the Chair.

Towards the end of the Luncheon, Pasteur M. Pradervand of the Eglise Suisse, welcomed on behalf of the Committee of Management the numerous guests, wishing them an enjoyable time and a happy Xmas and New Year, he also voiced regrets for the absence of Pastor C. Th. Hahn of the "Schweizerkirche" who has left London, and introduced his successor, Pastor E. Bommeli. M. Pradervand paid a warm tribute to Mr. Ritter, the untiring secretary of the Swiss Benevolent Society.

Monsieur de Jenner, then addressed the company, as follows:

I am here to-day to bring you the best greetings of the Swiss Minister. M. Paravicini told you last year that at the next Old Folks Lunch he would be one of you. I should like to make it clear that this is not the reason why he is not here to-day. He is one of those men whose heart will always be young and who is not afraid to stick to the number of his years. But he happens to be in Switzerland for a well deserved rest after a strenuous year and to gather some strength for another strenuous year to come.

The first time I assisted this function, i.e., seven years ago, I felt shy but to-day having advanced in years, I nearly feel at home. So, perhaps, it would be more appropriate for me to sit at the bottom of this table and listen to you instead of sitting in this chair and talking to you because I am afraid there is not much you could learn from me.

But there is perhaps one thing which my own age entitles me to speak of, being between Youth and Old Age.

It has always been the case that old people are of the opinion that the young ones are messing up all the beautiful things they have achieved and young people pretend to be busy to clear up the mess, the old ones have made. As a matter of fact neither the old ones nor the young have at any times achieved anything of their own. The world is in a constant development and manhood can neither speed it

up nor check it. We are guided step by step along a way to an ultimate and unknown aim and all we can do is to play our part in this phase of development into which we are born and to keep time with it. And to play this part young and old must work together. Very happily people now-a-days refuse to grow old and the young people are more and more willing to play their part in public affairs. They have the enthusiasm and you have the knowledge and experience. They are the "Commons" and you are the "Lords." It is their privilege to conquer new positions and yours to defend the old ones which have proved to be of eternal value.

Lately the Swiss Government have raised the age limit in the Army to 60 years. This proves that old age is still reckoned with. Quite a number of our best known statesmen would be entitled to take part at this Lunch.

So do not think that you are generally considered as being out of date. There is a French proverb saying: —

"Si jeunesse savait et vieillesse pouvait" but I should like to alter it and say "Si jeunesse savait et vieillesse voulait" than everything would be alright.

It is the spirit of mutual understanding which will bring about collaboration between Young and Old Age and as I speak to-day to Old Age I ask you try to understand the young generation their ways and their aims and you will find that they will appreciate you and your experiences and you will find yourselves quite at home in a world which perhaps you think a crazy one.

But I think I better stop now. After all you have not come here to take good advice from me but to meet old friends and be merry with them.

I wish you from all my heart a very happy Xmas and all the best in the New Year.

Mr. Ritter thanked on behalf of the invited guests the Committee of Management for their generous invitation, and voiced the regrets that Mlle. Bucher, an ardent worker of the Swiss Benevolent Society, was unable to attend, having met on the same day with an accident.

Pastor Bommeli greeted with a few words his old compatriots, expressing to them the appreciation a younger generation has for them.

Every year a silver medal, appropriately engraved, is presented to the oldest member present, this year Mme. Lina Cloux was thus honoured, having passed her 84th year.

Even this function did not pass without kissing, true enough there was no mistletoe displayed, but this did not deter my good friend Mr. R. Dupraz, of the Fonds de Secours, giving the accolade to Madame Cloux, who, would you believe it, violently blushed in spite of her 84 years.

This somehow wetted my appetite, and I was nearly tempted to follow his example, but I am afraid, I had my eye on somebody a little younger, with two black eyes, but then I remembered, there was no mistletoe. Would she have blushed too, I wonder?

As nobody else wished to give proofs of their oratory gifts, Swiss patriotic songs were played on the piano and all the old people lustily sang those tunes which most of them must have sung many, many years ago, back home in that land which we call our country.

A lovely afternoon thus passed, spent amongst lovable people, it has made me happy and less afraid of old age, as I know I shall still be remembered by my countrymen, in spite of all I have written in former years in this paper.

And now, I too wish the "Old Folks" a merry Xmas and a happy New Year and may

God bless them all!

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