

Swiss Hotel dynasties

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SWISS HOTEL DYNASTIES

In 1966 Switzerland made 2.9 billion francs out of tourism: 485 francs per inhabitant and two-thirds of the trade deficit. Seven thousand, seven hundred hotels with 245,000 beds catered for 10 million foreign tourists. A further estimated 10 million slept in pensions and camping sites. All this tremendous industry began at the instigation of a handful of entrepreneurs, the hotel kings which brought wealth to the Alps and built the renown of the Swiss hotel trade, whose story we are now going to relate.

The Swiss hotel industry came to life at a time when the economic geography of the country was more or less established. The north and the east lived on textiles. The requirements of this industry gave rise to the machine and subsequently to the chemical industries of these regions. Geneva and Neuchâtel lived off watch-making and the cantons of Vaud and Berne found their lifeline in chocolates and food-stuffs. There remained the Alps, which covered an overwhelming part of the country.

When the hotel trade was not yet in existence and at a time when the notion of tourism was not yet born, the travellers that there were made use of frugal and functional inns furnished with the barest amenities and set out the following day on the next lap of their journey. When the village was either too small or remote, the traveller found a haven at the local doctor's, minister or post officer.

The prefiguration of Switzerland as a tourist centre was the opening of the Baden conference to end the Wars of Spanish Succession. The envoys of the Pope, the King of France and the Austrian Emperor met on neutral soil in the small thermal resort. But the proper beginning of tourism in Switzerland was inspired by the romantic movement and the works of such writers as Rousseau, Goethe, Von Haller and others. All men who were exalted by the grandeur and the wilderness of nature and who found a realisation of their poetic dreams in the sceneries of the Alps. Imbued with Byronic ideals and filled with both courage and money, the first English-

men set out for Switzerland and ventured to visit the surroundings of Geneva, the Four-Cantons Lake and the nearer reaches of the Bernese Oberland. It was at first quite an expedition to go as far as Interlaken.

It was in this uniquely situated village that the first guest houses for the new wave of rich English tourists were built. The English voyaged all the long way to Interlaken to see the Jungfrau, the Stanbach falls and the grandiose spectacle of a real glacier. The peasants of the regions acted as their hosts. This enabled them to earn a welcome side income, but the idea to cash in on the new tourist phenomenon in Interlaken first came to the mind of a quarry worker, Johanne Seiler, who bought a shop standing on the present site of the Jungfrau Hotel and rented the two upper floors to the visitors from England.

During the three decades that followed, railways were built linking Basle and Geneva directly to England and the rest of the world. Switzerland then followed suit and built her own trunk routes in the 1880's. There followed a spree of construction of mountain railways. The Berne-Thun railway, the railway on the Brunig Pass leading to Lucerne, the Lauterbrunnen and Grindelwald railways were only a few instances of a series of vital railway links criss-crossing the Oberland and paving the way for the fortunes of Murren, Adelboden, Saanemöser and Gstaad. They culminated in the Jungfrau-bahn, Europe's highest railway and an engineering feat. Johannes Seiler's modest innovation was followed many years later by the building of the "Schweizerhof" in 1859, Interlaken's first "grand hotel", and by the "Hotel Victoria", beloved by the subjects of Queen Victoria, in 1864.

The Seilers

However, it was not in Interlaken but in Zermatt that the Seiler hotel dynasty was to make its name. Johannes' son, Alexander Seiler I, was born in 1820 at Goms, in the upper Valais. He worked in Sion as a soap and candle maker with moderate success. The Valais was a rather backward can-

ton ruled by the Catholic clergy and a leisurely class of landowners. His brother chose the ministry and became chaplain in Zermatt. There he saw the insufficiencies of the accommodation that his neighbour, Dr. Luaber, was offering the English mountaineers who were beginning to frequent Zermatt, and realised the potentialities that lay in opening a suitable pension. He wrote to his brother in Sion and invited him to abandon his business and come up to Zermatt. There was a wonderful

THE "SWISS OBSERVER" AND ITS FUTURE

In an article about the "Swiss Observer" and its future, published on November 27th, 1970, and signed by the Advisory Council's Chairman it was explained that Mr. Oscar F. Boehringier who has hitherto financially guaranteed the papers existence, could not see his way to continue doing so after June 30th, 1971.

This article resulted in a number of very welcome cash donations, for which the Council wishes to put its gratitude on record.

It also resulted in a spontaneous and generous offer on the part of the Chairman and Managing Director of Acrow (Engineers) Ltd., William A. de Vigier, Esq., to take over this financial responsibility as from 1st July, 1971 until further notice, as he is anxious to secure the "Swiss Observer's" continued existence.

This offer is one without any strings attached to it. It has been considered by the Advisory Council on February 26th and gratefully accepted.

The Advisory Council also wishes to express its gratitude to Mr. Oscar F. Boehringier for having guaranteed the publication for so many years and for being willing to continue serving the "Swiss Observer" as Publisher and the Advisory Council's Hon. Secretary and, in addition, to act as its Liaison Officer to the new guarantor.

On behalf of the Advisory Council
Gottfried Keller, Chairman.

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site, he wrote, on the foot of Monte Rosa, two hours walk from the village, where he and Dr. Lauber planned to build a hotel. A few years later in 1852, Alexander folded up his affairs in Sion and undertook to materialise the ideas of his brother. He leased Dr. Lauber's "Cerie Hotel" and transformed it into the "Gasthaus zum Monte Rosa", which had the stately number of six beds. He leased an inn that had been built on the Riffelalp above Zermatt and bought a plot of land in his native Goms.

He and his wife settled in their new job of hoteliers and developed the art of pleasing English guests. 1865 was a highlight as an English party led by Claude Whymper and his Swiss guides succeeded in ascending the Matterhorn for the first time. The expedition ended in tragedy and Whymper and his Swiss companion were the only ones to come back. This accident made Zermatt famous and fired the imagination of the holidaying world. Everyone wanted to witness the awesome mountain which was the scene of the first great mountaineering tragedy.

Seiler's business grew rapidly. He bought the small "Mont Cervin" Hotel and enlarged it. He leased the "Schwarzee", "Riffelberg" and "Zermatterhof" hotels from the commune and built an inn in Gletsch, near to the source of the Rhone. He enlarged his original hotel on the Riffelalp and ran an agricultural concern in Brig to supply his hotels. Soon he was the master of a staff of 600 catering for over 1,000 guests.

Seiler was the man who made Zermatt. However, the elder citizens of this mountain commune were not prepared to accept him as one of theirs and Seiler spent the last years of his life in a vain struggle to become a citizen of Zermatt. He died in 1891, the year of the opening of the Vitznau-

Visp-Zermatt railway.

He had an estimated 14 to 18 children. They nearly all died in infancy as those were the days when powdered milk invented by Nestlé which had already reached the rich children of America and England, was not yet available to the poor children of the upper Alpine valleys. Three sons remained to outlive him and run his enterprise. Joseph settled in Gletsch and confined himself to the management of the inn founded there by his father. Hermann was a law student and not interested in keeping hotels. He eventually became national councillor, a promoter of the national "Verkehrszentral", a champion of the hotel industry and of the thousands living on it before the First World War. But it was Alexander II who was to keep the empire going. He was a man of great charm, a "grand seigneur", a champion of liberalism who spent his life in a struggle against the forces of reaction in his native Valais. He modernised and improved his legacy, but did not expand it. He died in 1920, six years after Sarajevo and at the outset of a world crisis which was to hit the traditional hotellery which his kith and kin had so much contributed to establish.

The Badrutts

Switzerland suffered two serious crises in the early 19th century. The invasion of English machine-made yarn at the end of the Napoleonic wars spelt the death of hundreds of Swiss artisans and widespread hardship. Then a disastrous harvest in 1816 produced a near-famine throughout the country and some communes had to resort for their own survival to the banishment by a draw of the supernumerary which it could not afford to feed. This was the unfortunate lot of a certain Hans Badrutt in Pagig near Chur. Unlike many others who suffered the same fate, he did not emigrate to America but moved further up the Engadine's valleys and worked as a building foreman in Samedan, where he finally built and held a

small inn for travellers. His son Johannes rented the "Pension Faller" in the neighbouring village of St. Moritz in 1855. A few years later he bought it with the financial help of a local land-ammann and turned it into the "Engadiner Kulm Hotel".

St. Moritz was already known as a thermal resort. Besides the merchants from Trieste or Glarus transiting through the Engadines, St. Moritz was also visited by a handful of enterprising Englishmen. But they stayed only in the summer and the "Kulm" was vacant for two thirds of the year. The wealthy English clientele went to milder parts of the world during the winter, preferably to the Riviera or Egypt. One evening in 1864, as the season was coming to a close, Johannes Badrutt prodded one of his English customers to a wager. He told him that it was sunny at St. Moritz during the winter, and to back his assertion, offered him to pay all his travel expenses if he came to the "Kulm" in the following winter without finding the sun. The Englishman effectively left for Switzerland that winter, to the amazement of London's high society, and this was the creation of the winter season, soon to be followed by the birth of winter sports.

In this, Johannes Badrutt and his son Casper played an eminent role. In order to offer the best quality of life to their guests, they introduced the forgotten sport of curling, they developed figure-skating and "bandy", or the precursor of ice-hockey. It was in St. Moritz that alpine ski-ing made its hesitant debuts. Bob-sleigh also found the day at St. Moritz. The first ski ascension was made in 1898 to the summit of the Corvatsch, and a Ski Club was founded in 1903. The era of cable railways began in the Engadine with the building of the Muota Muralez railway in 1907, which was soon followed by the Chantarella railway in St. Moritz. It was prolonged up to Corviglia after the first world war.

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But the second Badrutt generation had already been active for a long time by then. Hans Caspar Badrutt was born in 1848. He wanted to study medicine, but with the success of the "Kulm" and of the winter seasons Father Johannes needed the help of all the available children. Hans Caspar Badrutt was already thirty when he got the chance to start on his own. He bought the "Bernet" Hotel, which he changed into the "Caspar Badrutt Hotel" and acquired the "Beau Rivage".

His father died in 1890. Three years later Badrutt began to build the "Palace". It was a pseudo-castle with towers and battlements, vast halls, pompous chambers, 6-course meals, an army of chamber-maids and ceremonious waiters and was the sensation of its time. For all its grandeur and luxury the rooms of the "Palace" were without a bathroom and even running water. The first hotel to be furnished with private bathrooms was the Ritz Hotel in Rome, opened in 1893. Crown princes, kings, film stars, gold, oil and diamant magnates, successful artists like Caruso and golden writers like Bernard Shaw were the regular guests of the "Palace", which glittered like a gilt façade in the twilight of the pre-war European moneyed aristocracy.

Hans Caspar Badrutt died in 1904 already, and the management of his hotels was taken over by his son Hans. He had been schooled into a first class hotelier at the "Savoy" in London, under the care of Cesar Ritz. The fourth Badrutt generation took over in 1953 and the two sons of Hans Badrutt now cater for a clientele with perhaps smaller retinues, but with as much money as before, and feeling at home in an elegant bar rather than a gleaming Table d'Hôte.

Bucher-Durrer

Franz Joseph Bucher-Durrer, the son of a peasant in Obwald, built the greatest hotel empire of them all. Unlike the Badrutts, the Seilers, the Bons and Ritz he wasn't a hotelier but a pure businessman. He was the richest hotel millionaire of his time and knew how to make the best financial profit of the tourist bonanza. Born in 1834, he lost his father at the age of 15 and took charge of the family property. He was a wrestler and a brawler. At the age of thirty he decided to go into more exciting ventures and started a sawmill with the son of a sawmill owner, Joseph Durrer, and later made floor tilings as well. Bucher concerned himself with the running of the enterprise while his partner Durrer took charge of its technical aspects. Their business was rapidly successful and Bucher had both the ambition and the dynamism proper to the early capitalism of his day. He noticed the steadily growing trickle of English, German and even American tourists in the region around Lucerne. The mountain hut built in 1816 on the Rigi had great success. It was the great fashion to climb up the mountain and

admire the rising sun. Bucher and Durrer built the "Sonnenberg" Hotel in Engelberg with the timber and tilings prepared in their own factory. They sold it a year later, in 1871, with a handsome profit, as they were then solely interested in their timber business and in building. But in 1871 a toothed railway was built from Vitznau up to the Rigi Kulm and this was a sensational event. Right opposite to the Rigi there was a view vantage point, the Trittalp on the summit of the Bürgenberg, which was totally unfrequented by tourists. Bucher and Durrer bought the whole of Trittalp, known today as the "Bürgenstock". They built a road leading up to it, they evened out the soil for a hotel and blew its foundations out of the rock. Sparing themselves the luxury of an architect, they built their hotel with material produced in their own works, and in 1873 the uniquely situated "Grand Hotel Bürgenstock" was opened. This was one year after the inauguration of the "Grand Hotel National" in Lucerne, one of Europe's most luxurious hotels. At the same time Adolf Hauser, owner of the "Schweizerhof" in Lucerne, had also opened the "Lucernehof". The times were just ripe for a flowering of hotels and Lake Lucerne became a European fashion spot so that the rich of the time were irresistably attracted to landmarks like the Bürgenstock, whose new hotel benefitted particularly from a rising post-1870 German clientele.

This time Bucher and Durrer did not sell their hotel. While Durrer continued to take care of the wood business, Bucher took interest in architecture and developed the nucleus of his future empire. He campaigned for the construction of an electric power station in Engelberg only a year after Charles E. L. Brown II had laid his first 8 km power transmission line in Solothurn. This enabled Bucher to install electric lighting in the Bürgenstock Hotel and also powered the electric cable railway which he had built, the Bürgenstock Railway. He supplemented this railway with a "Bahnhof Restaurant". He built a companion to the original hotel, the "Parkhotel", and then the "Palace Hotel". He had a path hewn out of the rock and built the longest and fastest lift in Europe. He diverged into other fields. With Durrer, he founded sawmills and furniture factories in Rumania, Waachia and Moldavia. He built a cable railway between the centre of Lugano and the Station and the steepest cable railway in the world joining Lugano to San Salvatore. He furthermore built the Stanstad to Stans tramway, tramways in Genoa, a cable railway to Mont Pélerin near Vevey and the Reichenbach Railway in the Bernese Oberland.

He parted from Durrer in 1894 and his companion left him to continue with his timber business and later built the "Hotel Braunwald" in Glarus.

Bucher, who had changed his name to "Bucher-Durrer" after marrying a relative of his partner, stuck to hotels.

Before their separation Bucher had already leased the "Hotel Euler" in Basle and the "Hotel de l'Europe" in Lucerne. He transformed a monastery in Lugano and turned it into a "Palace Hotel". He participated in the creation of the "Grand Hotel" at Pegli, near Genoa. He sold the tramway concession of Genoa for a cool million gold francs and had himself photographed with the money piled on his lap for his children. He founded a "Palace Hotel" in Milan, the "Quirinal Hotel" in Rome and finally the "Palace Hotel" of Lucerne. His plans to build hotels in South America never materialised, but Egypt was within his reach. He took the lease of the "Continental" in Cairo and later bought it for a lump million francs. He built the "Semiramis", but died shortly before its opening on 6th October 1906. He left a fortune estimated at 14 million francs, or 70 million of today's francs.

Of the 15 children begotten from two marriages, none was capable of keeping his empire together. The first world war and the oncoming hotel crisis soon forced its many sectors into bankruptcy. The whole of the Bürgenstock complex, which had stood empty for years, was sold at a depressed 600,000 francs to Fritz Frey-Fürst, a successful engineer turned hotel magnate. He modernised the "Park", the "Palace" and the "Grand Hotel" at great cost and kept them going until his death in 1953, when they were taken over by his son, Fritz Frey II.

Another personality with a marking influence on the development of Swiss Hotellery was Colonel Maximilian-Alphons Pfyffer von Altshofen. He came from a patrician family in Lu-

cerne and served under the King of Naples. He fought against Garibaldi as commander of the Swiss Regiment. When the Kingdom of Naples disappeared he returned to Lucerne, where he decided to invest his considerable capital sensibly. He got together with the brothers Segesser from Brunegg and built the "Grand Hotel National". This imposing establishment was opened in 1873 but very soon turned out to be a resounding failure. The brothers Segesser pulled out but Colonel Pfyffer stood firm. In the course of a visit at the "Rigi Kulm" he met its young head waiter, Cesar Ritz, and took due note of his name. He soon firmly decided to hire him. Within a very short time, the mixture of genuine aristocracy and hotelier genius in Cesar Ritz helped to turn the "National" into the most famous hotel of Europe. Pfyffer authorised his young manager to undertake the wildest high life fancies and extravagance. The galas and fêtes staged by Ritz for his ducal guests at the "National" were the scream of the well-heeled world.

Colonel Pfyffer never became a hotelier himself. He rose in the military career to end up as head of the General Staff. At his death in 1890 his son Hans took over the management of the "National". Hans Pfyffer became president of the Ritz in Paris, president of the "Groupe des Hotels Ritz-Carlton" and co-founder of the Lucerne Music Festival. His younger brother, Alphonsus Pfyffer, followed Cesar Ritz to Rome in 1893 and became manager of the "Grand Hotel", a Ritz creation, and later of the "Excelsior".

Thousands of Swiss entrepreneurs banked on tourists and a growing hotel industry during the early years of this century. The legends in this field are usually attached to glamorous names

like the Badrutts, the Seilers, Ritz and the like. But the list could easily be extended. One typical example of a "second line" successful hotelier would be Alexandre Emery from Yverdon. He became manager of three great Paris hotels, the "Edouard VIII", the "Grand Hotel", and the "Maurice". He was the founder of the "Montreux Palace", the "Hotel Caux" and the promoter of the Montreux-Oberland railway which opened Gstaad to the international touristic plutocracy. Another name deserving mention would be that of Michel Zufferey. Having served as diplomatic courier to Napoleon III in Russia, Egypt and North Africa and been antiquarian in London for two years, he had amassed sufficient money and contracts to open a series of hotels in Montana, Vermala and Sierre. Charles Bähler, from Thun, probably had the most exotic career. Having set out from his native Thun to seek adventure in the East at the age of 21, he found a job as accountant at Cairo's "Shepherd's Hotel". A few years later he became manager of this luxury hotel and hit the jackpot with the "Irish Sweepstakes" lottery, winning half a million gold francs in one go. As the First World War had depressed the shares of the "Egyptian Hotel Company", Bähler used his godsent fortune to acquire this majority and before long found himself in control of four-fifths of the leading hotels in Egypt, from Luxor to Cairo and Alexandria. A few years later he commissioned a Swiss architect to build the "King David" in Jerusalem. He sold his empire to a Belgian group in 1932. Another name, Bernhard Simon, will remain associated with a glittering row of private hotels built for the 19th century first families and one of the largest fortunes ever made out of architecture. After a

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life of activities in the capitals of the world, Bernhardt Simon came back to the homeland and founded the "Quellenhof" in Bad Ragaz, besides other ventures in railways and reconstruction.

The Bons

The site of the "Quellenhof" belonged to the communal president of Bad Ragaz, Anton Bon. He died shortly after the appearance of Bernhardt Simon at Bad Ragaz and left a son, Anton, whom Bernhardt Simon took in charge and educated in the hotel trade, sending him to Italy, France and England. This was between 1873 and 1879. Anton Bon married Marie Nigg, the sister-in-law of Joseph Giger, the founder of the "Waldhaus" in Sils Maria, and leased the "Bodenhaus and Post" hotel on the San Bernardino Pass in 1879. But two years later, in 1882, the Gothard Tunnel was opened and traffic on the San Bernardino dwindled rapidly. Bon and his wife left it to lease the "Rigi First" in 1892 and then the "Pension Pfyffer" in Vitznau. It was at the turn of the century, when he was already 50, that Anton Bon made the steps that were to bring him into the limelight of the hotel world.

He made a journey to Germany and England with an architect and studied the tastes of the gentility of these countries and returned with the working ideas to transform his "Pension Pfyffer" into the "Parkhotel". It was pompous and showy. But An-

ton Bon had rebuilt his hotel for a specific clientele and knew what he was doing. Success was immediate and the international set soon flocked to the "Parkhotel". It attracted among other prominences the great diamond baron Sydney Goldmann. He had money to invest in hotels and bought the "Villa Suvretta" in St. Moritz from an Englishman and the surrounding land from local estate developers. He offered Anton Bon the job of building and managing a new grand hotel in St. Moritz. After failed attempts to take over the "Kulm" in St. Moritz from the Badrutt family in 1912, Bon founded the majestic but silent "Suvretta House". It found immediate success, but the war was, alas, to come and it was to be a very short-lived success. In the summer of 1914 all the hotels suddenly became empty—to remain so for many years until the beginning of a new era. Anton Bon died in 1915 and left three sons, all of whom were highly trained hoteliers. The eldest, Anton Bon II, managed the "Suvretta" until 1918 and then left for Germany, where he reorganised a chain of hotels. He became Nestlé's director in England and then managed the "Dorchester" from 1936 to 1951, magnificent in a period of crises and war. The second son, Hans, took over the care of the "Suvretta" and managed it up to 1950. The youngest son, Primus Bon, was manager of the Bahnhof Buffet in Zurich for 32 years.

Cesar Ritz, the most lavish host of all

Cesar Ritz was the thirteenth child of a peasant family in Niederwald, near Goms, in the Upper Valais. He followed school for three years and stole away from home at fifteen to serve an apprenticeship in a small inn and then at a boarding school. Having been dismissed on both occasions for incapacity he left for Paris to seek his luck. He had heard that there were vacancies for hotel personnel because of the World Exhibition (1867). He was engaged in the small, lowly "Hotel de la Fidélité" where he cleaned shoes, swept floors and carried luggage. He soon was promoted to waiter but moved from hotel to hotel until he had acquired sufficient proficiency to be engaged as second waiter at the classy "Voisin" restaurant. This is where he made his first encounter with the world elite to whose service he was to dedicate his life. At the "Voisin" he attended to leading politicians and diplomatists, to George Sand, Sarah Bernhardt, and the Prince of Wales.

Cesar Ritz lived through the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, the fall of the Empire, the siege of Paris, the famine and the Commune while catering for the exclusive guests of the "Voisin" with the little that remained to eat. The next lap of his career brought him to the post of head waiter

at the "Splendide", Place de l'Opéra. The war was over and Paris recovered. The upper class emerged again from its retreat and a new style of clientele, with the Vanderbilts, the Morgans and other new tycoons, came to enjoy Ritz's calculated attentions. Ritz's career was a long succession of prestigious posts at the head of Europe's top hotels. Although he had soon earned enough money and over to start his own hotels, his interest lay primarily in the new and distinguished art of the hotelier. He bought the "Hotel de Provence" in Cannes and a restaurant in Baden-Baden, where he also had the lease on the "Hotel Minerva", fairly early on in his career. But he eventually gave up these sidelines and concentrated on his management of the best hotels of Europe. In the event he earned more fame than he ever could have dreamt of as a localised hotel-owner. His name remains associated with an exclusive and perhaps short-lived tradition of lavish and individual attention. Ritz used to know every one of his illustrious guests personally. He kept files on the tastes, likes and dislikes of all his regular customers so that the Prince of Wales could leave him with the choice of his menu, telling Ritz that he knew better than he did himself what he liked best. Ritz could speak on equal footing with the great of the world. He was at their service, but also one of theirs. He was a revered and demanded "pillar" of the beau monde and was invited to all the ducal weddings and aristocratic celebrations of Europe. Ritz loved high society and the life of glamour. But the toil of managing an impressive series of hotels and restaurants in the top resorts of Europe, the strain of maintaining his personal status in the world and of being the prized friend of the whole aristocracy proved too much for him, and Ritz collapsed irrevocably and suddenly at the age of 52.

But back to his rising career. In 1873, he was head waiter of the "Trois Frères Provençaux" in Vienna. This luxury establishment was opposite to the World Exhibition of 1873 and afforded him once again the opportunity of mixing with emperors and kings. The Czar of Russia, the Emperor of Prussia, the Prince of Wales, Bismark, all came to the "Trois Frères Provençaux".

The same year, at the age of 23, Ritz went to be manager of the restaurant of the "Grand Hotel" in Nice, a resort frequented in winter by the international upper crust. There he met the head waiter of the "Rigi Kulm", and accepted his offer to assist him. The "Rigi Kulm" was already accessible by a small toothed railway and had just been uniquely fitted with central heating. At the end of one season in September this central heating broke down and the whole staff was bewildered. Ritz took control and ordered dinner to be served not at the "table

d'hotel" in the vast dining hall but in the lounge. He had forty heavy baking bricks warmed up in the kitchen so that when his forty American guests came in from the freezing cold outside for dinner, they enjoyed the feet-warming comfort of these stones while they relished a simple meal in which hors d'oeuvre had been replaced by bouillon and ice-cream by blazed pancakes. They found this improvisation both delightful and exciting.

Colonel Pfyffer heard of this story and before long Ritz was asked to be director of the "National". During the winter seasons he left for the Italian Riviera and Menton, where he met his future wife, an Alsatian woman from a small hotel-keeping family. He became the manager of the "Grand Hotel" in Monte Carlo and discovered during a trip to Paris an expert chef, Auguste Escoffier, who was to follow him during the rest of his starring career.

Ritz left the "Grand Hotel" at Monte Carlo in 1887. There had been an earthquake and its owners had decided to sell it. His next lap was at the "Savoy" in London. This opulent hotel had been founded by the Irishman d'Oyle Carte in 1889 but had soon emerged as an outstanding failure. Even a hotel like the "Savoy" could not succeed unless it was properly managed and, as the hotel's shares were taking a plunge, d'Oyle Carte was besieged by cries to call on the services of Cesar Ritz. Ritz very soon took the "Savoy" under his care, bringing the situation under his control and lending a reputation to the "Savoy" which it has never lost.

In 1889 Ritz sold his hotel in Cannes and his interests in Baden-Baden. He had become Chairman of the "Ritz Hotel Development Company", a growth company in which the diamond millionaire Sydney Goldmann had important stakes and which controlled an expanding chain of hotels and restaurants in England, France, Germany and Italy. In London the group founded and controlled "Claridges", the "Savoy", the "Hyde Park" and the "Carlton". Ritz was troubled at the "Savoy" by various intrigues and left for Wiesbaden with Escoffier and a few faithfuls to manage the "Kaiserhof" and the "Auguste-Viktoria-Bader". He later came back to London, and managed the "Carlton" and finally the "Ritz" in Paris.

Ritz had the ambition that all "his" hotels should bear the mark of his perfectionism. But he eventually had to pay a terrible price for the energy and incredible enthusiasm expended in keeping a firm hold on such a decentralised empire. In 1902, as his friend the 60-year-old Prince of Wales was crowned Edward VIII, Ritz broke down mentally and physically. He lost his memory for long periods, he be-

came melancholic and was plagued by prolonged fits of depression which were a burden for his wife and his surroundings. He received psychiatric treatment in Switzerland, but he had to abandon all his managerial responsibilities and never recovered. He died

sixteen years later at the age of 68, when the Great War was nearing to an end, and with it his own epoch.

(Adapted by the Editor from "Das Heimliche Imperium", a history of Swiss prosperity, by Lorenz Stucki, published by Scherz Verlag, Berne)

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COMMENT

THE "THREE PILLARS"

The "Three Pillars" is a new term often articulated in the Swiss Press describing the three ways in which people can sustain themselves in their old age. The first and most universal "pillar" is Old Age Pension. The second is private pension schemes and the third is personal savings. No less than three popular initiatives have been started off in the last eighteen months to introduce legislation securing the welfare of old people. These initiatives are rather technical and are in the course of debate in Parliament. We shall wait for the outcome of these debates and the ensuing referenda to examine them, but it can be said that they aim at making the livelihood of old people less dependant on the first pillar, and benefit more from private pension schemes.

So far, the main source of income for retired working people has been Old Age Pension. Ever since its creation it has been periodically revised. The most recent revision set the annual income of a bachelor at around £500 a year. To this must be added cantonal and sometimes communal subsidies, which vary slightly from town to town. Old Age Pension has usually been considered dimly insufficient in Switzerland. Although it can withstand most comparisons with the Old Age Pension schemes of other industrial countries, it seems small when the exceptionally high standard of living of the Swiss is taken into account, and when one considers that every employed person must give away a not insignificant part of his or her income to secure it. If the money given away to Old Age Pension in a lifetime were invested say, in an endowment policy with profit, there could be no question

that its beneficiary would be far better off during his old days. However, Old Age Pension has the advantage of security, and, like every thing which offers security, it cannot bring in silver-plated dividends. One can't have it both ways.

There is an inherent injustice in the present state of the "Second Pillar", in that private pension schemes enjoyed by working people vary with their employers. Furthermore, they are not transferable. This means that an employee is tied to his firm and may not leave it when he is past a certain age, less he loses the benefit of its pension scheme. There is therefore, considerable scope in Switzerland and elsewhere for improving the system of private pensions and for instituting a greater responsibility in the field of welfare on the part of employers.

The "third pillar" would be the ideal solution. Personal savings, this pillar of Swiss wisdom, cannot however guarantee a decent living to the majority of wage earners. Even in our days of affluence it is only the businessmen and those employed in the liberal professions who can rest safely on a snug capital during the ten to twenty years of professional inactivity which usually terminate human existence. Who can really afford to dispense with a pension thanks to personal savings? Even the well-to-do, the successful engineer or the rising lawyer will find it hard to save. Their salaries will increase fast during the first fifteen years of their professional life. These will, however, be the years when they will be the most taxed financially with such burdens as a mortgage, high material demands, children and education. They can start saving by the time all this is behind them!

By campaigning for sturdier first and second "pillars" the various social

(continued on page 28)