

BOOK RECORD

Ritz Isn't Just a Name For Some Famous Hotels

Cesar Ritz, A Peasant's Son, Made Europe Understand Meaning Of Luxury

I FELT very much of a 1939 vintage when I discovered the other day that there really had been a man called Ritz. . . I must confess that I had thought it just a name for anything sophisticated or smart.

But he was Cesar Ritz, the thirteenth child of poor peasants living in the Niederwald in Switzerland. Like many men who have achieved fame, young Ritz was probably more of a trial to his parents than all the other twelve children put together.

He really didn't know what he wanted to do, but he did know that he couldn't tolerate the plainness and ugliness of life in the Niederwald. So, not long before the Franco-Prussian War he became a waiter in Paris. He began first in a humble restaurant, then gradually worked his way up till he was engaged at Voisin's, the place in Paris where famous men dined (but not their ladies, of course—it wasn't done to dine in public in those days!).

He met many people in those early days, people who stood by him when he ventured into business on his own account—Edward Prince of Wales, Clemenceau, Boulanger, Blondeau, Gautier, Labouche, La Paiva, Bernhardt.

And it was one night—on a busman's holiday, as it were—

that he discovered a young chef at the Petit Moulin Rouge who was to become the greatest chef the world has known—Escoffier.

Where Paris Met

Paris was on the verge of a siege. Metz had fallen to the Germans . . . merchants and their money bags were fleeing from the French capital . . . fortifications were being thrown up everywhere . . . the lovely trees in the Champs Elysees and the Place de la Concorde were hewn down for fuel . . . dogs, cats and horses disappeared from the streets to be eaten by the people . . . Voisin's restaurant (with a sadly-curtailed menu) became the meeting-place of Government heads.

But the war finished—the great column in the Place Vendome had disappeared, pulled down by the mob; no longer did the crowds line up to see the Imperial beauties riding in the park. Eugene and Napoleon were living quietly at Chislehurst, remembering lost glories.

On The Riviera

But there were new beauties in Paris—and Worth dressed them. There was the sheen of silks and satins in the Place de l'Opera, and there was a continual coming and going through the doors of the new

Hotel Splendide. And Cesar Ritz, one of the staff of the new hotel, felt that he was no longer the son of a Swiss cowherd, but part of this new, this exciting Paris life.

Now he was not alone. Ritz's services were in demand. He went to the Riviera to manage a hotel there, he moved about from Monte Carlo to Nice, from Mentone to Cannes. He knew the hotels' clients, who liked this and who liked that. More and more people were asking for Ritz.

He Goes To London

London was the most backward capital in Europe on the score of hotel accommodation. Wouldn't Ritz start a hotel there, a hotel worthy of the great capital of a great Empire? But he preferred the gaiety of the continental crowds to the phlegmatic English.

But then a specially tempting offer came. Perhaps he would go to London to manage the huge new Savoy Hotel, rising on the banks of the Thames? He

What Roosevelt Told Dictators

FROM New York the "Record" receives a neat little story about Hitler, Mussolini and Roosevelt.

The three met to divide up the world, Mussolini maintaining that he should have the largest share as he had been dictator longest. Hitler agreed that Mussolini had been dictator longest, but insisted that God had promised that he should have the largest share. "I did nothing of the kind," President Roosevelt snapped.

thought about it—and he went. He made the Savoy the most famous hotel in the world, a position it still occupies to-day.

Now his ambitions were mounting higher. He wanted a hotel of his own in Paris—and he got it; the world-famous Hotel Ritz in the Place Vendome in Paris—a hotel that I remember well as the place where I saw the Duke and Duchess of Windsor dining when I was in Paris last year.

Building The Ritz

Cesar Ritz, a sick man in the early years of this century, now went between London, Paris, Rome and the Riviera like a shuttlecock, supervising this, attending to that, advising, cajoling, demanding. He opened the well-known Carlton Hotel in the Haymarket, London, and then began plans for the building of the London Ritz on an ideal site overlooking St. James's Park. There's an atmosphere about a Ritz hotel that can't be defined. When you walk down that long, carpeted corridor of the Ritz in London, look at the liveried lackeys, notice the dignified staircase, you may begin to realise something of the personality of Cesar Ritz, the man who brought fine living into the hotel business of Europe.

"Cesar Ritz: Host to the World" is a fascinating book, and doubly fascinating if you've travelled in Europe.—T.L.

"Cesar Ritz: Host to the World." Marie Louise Ritz. Harrop. Our copy from the publishers.

Woman Opera Star Who Fought With The Cossacks Ghastly Days Of Russian Revolution

LUL GARGO, enthusiastic woman opera singer, unhappily married to a famous 45-year-old violinist when she had not reached her fifteenth birthday, lived a life of adventure which culminated in the death, by starvation—in a "Red" prison—of her five-year-old daughter.

This famous operatic star, moving in aristocratic Russian circles, soon became involved in the Revolution. "Cossack Fury," her autobiography, gives graphic descriptions of the terrible days when Russian fought Russian with more than the ferocity of animals. Torture, of the most diabolical nature, was practised by both Reds and Whites.

Revolution did not come suddenly to Russia. For years it had been generating, in city and village, behind the brilliance and gaiety. It had been gathering force and momentum, until nothing could bar its way.

Eighty per cent. of the Russians were ignorant peasants, only just emerging from the yoke of serfdom which had crushed them since the time of Katharine the Great.

True, Alexander II had released the Moujik from their slavery, but their untutored brains were slow to grasp the meaning of the act, and for many years they still continued in their old way of life, uneducated, insensitive, a product of the Stone Age; while the rest of the world moved on.

Joining up with Lavr Georgievich Kornilov, commander of the

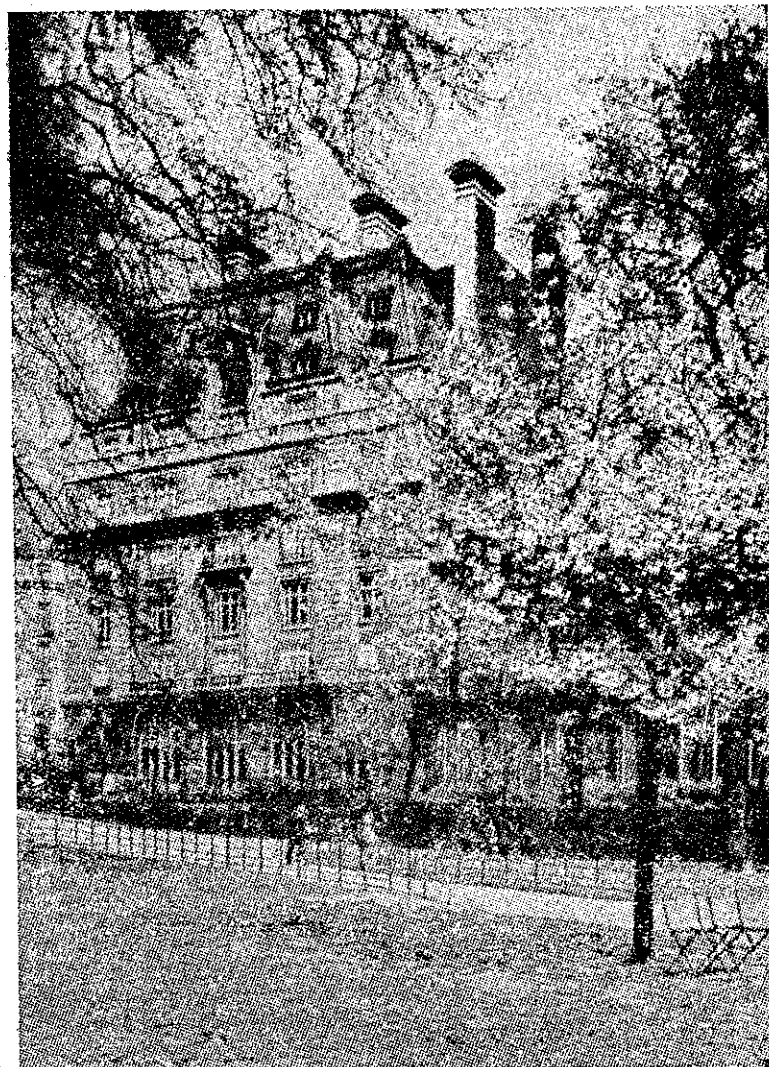
Volunteer Army, the woman Lul Gargo fought, side by side, with the Cossacks in ferocious battles. Russian fought Russian—there was no quarter.

Of the 4000 volunteers who were assembled at Novocherkassk at the end of 1917, there were six women, all members of the aristocracy. Their adventures are told with graphic detail in "Cossack Fury," and as page after page is turned over and the words depict marches over frozen wastes, one is forced to compare the gallant retreat of the Whites with Napoleon's retreat from Moscow.

"All the concentrated hate of the infernal regions seemed to pour forth upon us on that awful night. Guns—I cannot tell you how many of them—thundered around us, sending more and more of our men sprawling, battered and bleeding corpses, into the dust, blowing the wagons sky-high, so that the wounded, blown to smithereens, came raining down upon us like hail. We had no ammunition with which to defend ourselves. Our wounded we had to leave at the enemy's mercy. Yet those of us who lived still hung grimly on."

The volunteers' escape from the trap set by the Bolsheviks must rank as one of the most amazing military exploits in history, and Lul Gargo's gift of description is seen at its best as she paints a word picture of ghastly days and nights. A book full of sensational and amazing revelations.—W.F.I.

"Cossack Fury." Lul Gargo. Hutchinson, London. Our copy from the publishers.



THE FAMOUS RITZ—London's guest-house for Royalty, millionaires and the idle ritz. In the heart of the city, it is framed in the gorgeous pageantry of the trees of St. James's Park. The story of the founder of the Ritz is told on this page to-day.

Modern Robinson Crusoe Who Found Dream Island He Lived There Away From The World

MOST of us have dreamed, at some time or another, of living our lives, peacefully and undisturbed by outside influences, on an island of our own.

We have known "the longing to live in quiet on a plot of land surrounded by the sea, some island which we might learn to know thoroughly, that would be not too large to be explored easily and small enough to be loved dearly."

We Can Share

To few of us has come realisation. Islands are not to be picked up for the choosing, nor do circumstances make it easy for us to put into effect the Robinson Crusoe part of our make-up.

But, thanks to a new book, "I Know An Island" we can at least share in the adventures and the enthusiasms of one modern Robinson Crusoe who did find the island of his dreams.

He is R. M. Lockley's leading English ornithologist and writer on the open-air life, whose love of birds puts him into the class of another island-dweller, Dr. Axel Munthe.

In "I Know An Island," Mr. Lockley tells how, in 1927, he found the island he had been looking for for years. He settled, with his young wife, on Skokholm, a deserted Welsh island, which had lain derelict for at least 20 years.

He began immediately to study the bird and plant life on Skokholm. Later, he made extensive visits to other little-known islands round the British coast, and he describes the haunts and customs of the many rare birds he discovered.

Most interesting section of the

book concerning birds is that in which the author deals at length with the gannetry of Grassholm, "the small green islet some eight miles away, west by north of Skokholm—the only gannetry in England and Wales."

He tells how, with the aid of Professor Julian Huxley and the co-operation of London Film Productions, Ltd., he made the famous Nature film, "The Private Life of the Gannet"; (it followed "The Private Life of Henry VIII").

Mr. Lockley has a delightful flair for easy descriptive writing. For example, thus he describes his first sight of Grassholm and its thousands of gannets: "We struggled to the highest rock of the island. From this point the gannets are spread below you like some rare ballet in blue and silver and gold. . . . It is impossible for me to describe, as it deserves to be described, that sight of ten thousand or so big white birds spaced so closely and evenly over two acres of sloping ground. Each bird, or pair of birds, was guarding a hummock crowned with a nest of seaweed and dead grass, and each bird was as beautiful to look at as the whole colony itself, the white head tinged with golden yellow, the bill plumbeous and bayonet-like, the eye pale as silver, the plumage snow-white except for the black wing-tips, and the legs and the toes of the webbed feet black with unreal, longitudinal stripes of blue-green."

"I Know An Island" is profusely and beautifully illustrated with photographs. It will be read with delight, not only by bird and nature-lovers, but by all who relish well-written stories and descriptions of peoples and things hidden in the by-ways of the world.—A.R.M.

"I Know An Island." R. M. Lockley. Harrop, London. Our copy from the publishers.