

# Our Ticinese in the wide world

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## TOURIST TRAVEL TO SWITZERLAND.

Statement issued by H.M. Treasury  
on 29th September, 1949.

Detailed arrangements regulating Tourist Travel to Switzerland in the period November 1st, 1949, to February 28th, 1950, have been worked out by the competent British and Swiss authorities.

A limited amount will be available for this period, of which a quota of 45% has been reserved for independent travellers and 55% for travel agencies. The Authorisation Office, 11c. Lower Regent Street, London, S.W.1, will accept applications and issue authorisations as from September 30th, 1949, from which date the full amounts available will be released.

It will be necessary for an application, preferably in writing, to be made to the Authorisation Office by, or on behalf of each traveller. The amount authorised will be based on the duration of stay in Switzerland and on the scale of hotel charges in each case within the basic allowance of £50 for adults and £35 for children per annum. Banks and travel agencies in the United Kingdom will provide credit documents and Swiss franc notes in accordance with the amounts stated on the authorisation issued by the Authorisation Office. The fee payable at the Authorisation Office is 3/- for each authorisation.

In general, payments will be made in Switzerland in two instalments, namely by means of an initial payment not exceeding the equivalent of £15 on arrival in Switzerland, the balance being paid not earlier than four days after the initial payment.

## OUR TICINESE IN THE WIDE WORLD.

(From the special number of the "SCHWEIZ. WIRTE-ZEITUNG" published on the occasion of the delegates meeting of the Swiss Caterers Association, which was held at Lugano on the 21st to the 23rd June last, we take, with the kind permission of the editor and author the following article by Sig. Camillo Valsangiacomo, who visited London earlier this year. The page is embellished with snapshots of Veglio's and Monico's, taken by Sig. Valsangiacomo.)

This essay should really have dealt with Ticinese caterers in London, New York, Cairo and San Francisco, that numerous band of my compatriots who during the 19th century left their isolated villages in the valleys of Leventina and Blenio mainly to go to roast chestnuts or make ice cream or chocolate but stayed on at their destinations to become some of the most renowned restaurant proprietors in the Old and New worlds. I would only mention here by way of example the Delmonicos of Mairengo, in Leventina, whose restaurant in New York acquired world fame, and up to this day the name Delmonico is the epitome of Restaurant as Ritz is of Hotel.

A happy coincidence took me early this year, on one of the newest Convair liners of Swissair to London. It was a descendant of a dynasty of London Ticinese restaurateurs who with real southern enthusiasm took me from one end to the other of the enormous city in search of our compatriots become famous in the catering trade. It was an experience so rich in discovery and impressions that this time I can confidently limit myself to the Ticinese mine-hosts in London without any need to extend my enquiries to the far-flung shores of the Pacific and Mediterranean.

As already hinted at my friendly host is himself descended from a family of restaurant proprietors, namely the Eusebios from Fontana in the Valle Bedretto. He has gone over to banking and lives in the country in his own house, which was rebuilt anew after the bombing, and which is nostalgically named "Tessin". His father has now retired to his native village after having for many years conducted the well-known Diviani's Restaurant, founded by the Diviani brothers from Faido. "Divis" — so is this place called by Londoners, and as the saying goes: "when in the City of London visit Diviani's restaurant." The Eusebios are closely related to the families Odone, Gianella, and Lunghi, who all owned successful restaurants in London.

But as we are on the subject of "Success" let us deal with the families which in the Ticino are now always spoken of as being "from London" (e.g. "I Gatti di Londra"), because they have now become established in the British Metropolis, as in their country of origin, and enjoy there high esteem. We refer here to the Gattis and Monicos from Dongio, and the Paganis from Torre, both localities in the Blenio valley. From the biography of Carlo Gatti, the head of this restaurateur-dynasty, which as such has now ceased to exist, we will take just one example of the initiative and drive which elevated a few Ticinesi from chestnut roasting to well-to-do aristocracy, and even high places in politics and statesmanship. At 12 years of age the boy Carlo Gatti, in the year 1817, first went to Paris to roast chestnuts in the streets, which he did for 18 years, adding to his trade the sale of waffles



Nescafé is a soluble coffee product composed of coffee solids, combined and powdered with dextrins, maltose and dextrose added to protect the flavour.

ANOTHER OF NESTLÉ'S GOOD THINGS

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of his own making. He later transferred to London where he opened a small shop in which he set up a steam-driven machine he had brought over from France, for the making of ice-cream and chocolate. Very soon near this shop a "café" with music was also opened. But this was not enough for our untiring compatriot. He was the first in England to hit upon the idea of importing ice from Norway. He himself supervised the transportation, and was able to secure a monopolistic position for this trade. He later found the "Café de la Confédération Suisse." To his renown throughout the Kingdom bears witness the publication "Chimney Corner," which appeared in 1870 with a biography. Upon his return to his native Ticino Carlo Gatti took a keen interest in politics attaining the office of President of the Grand Council.

The Monicos from Dongio gave their name to the luxury restaurant which still exists in one of the busiest London thoroughfares. And although this fashionable meeting place has of late years passed into other hands, it was nevertheless a great pleasure for me to pick out the familiar name in the medley of the nightly neon-lights display at Piccadilly Circus.

In St. Giles High Street is to be found the homely, small "Maison Suisse" of the Veglio family from Corzoneso. Behind a well-appointed counter a whole bevy is to be seen consisting of mother and three daughters; a son is the chef, while another son appears from time to time from the underground kitchen with all sorts of tit-bits, and when business is a little quieter there comes into the room also the 80-year-old papà Veglio to greet some of his patrons with a friendly nod. Since when are the Veglios in London? They themselves are not sure of the date. About 1855 the first of the family came over from Paris to roast chestnuts. He let his brother come over also. At first they worked in an Italian café making ice cream, coffee and pastries. Later on they bought various establishments in the West End, mainly in the Oxford Street neighbourhood. There were good and bad times. Today they are happy and proud of their little "Maison Suisse" at which Swiss students and visitors call daily.

At the "Swiss Café" in Fetter Lane near Holborn Circus we enter the empire of the Carlo Berti family who hail from the Leventina valley; a small establishment where customers, chiefly office workers and merchants contend for the restricted accommodation. Here also a whole family may be seen at work. Alert, ever mindful of his patrons' wishes, the nearly 70-year-

old father Berti goes from table to table. He has a great deal to tell of his London experiences, and also of the Ticinese colony, which he leads as President. He came to London at 14 years and began his career as kitchen boy. At 22 he opened his own café. Four brothers followed him abroad and bought one after the other their own shops.

But not only in London have the Ticinesi distinguished themselves in the catering business. In Portsmouth there are still the Albertollis, in Hastings the Ferraris, in Margate the Torrianis, and in Glasgow more Ferraris, to mention but a few. One evening we paid a surprise call to the Jacomellis at Richmond, who conduct a well-appointed restaurant, and on the following evening we were the guests of the "Café Royal" at Croydon, a luxurious establishment where the best society meets. This business was founded in the year 1884 by the brothers Massimo and Pietro Pazzi from Semione, who opened a small chinaware shop when they came to Croydon. At present it is still run by two brothers Pazzi who, with their sister Sylvia, full of charm and cordiality, carry on the best tradition. Their mother, now aged 80 years is a Genucchi from Semione and she is also in attendance on occasions. Her children have but a smattering of Italian, but with the acquired Anglo-Saxon kindness they still combine the noble art of hospitality which betrays their Southern origin. They still hold a warm attachment for the Ticino, which I had no difficulty in detecting, and I was gratified to find this also in other Ticinesi who have settled in England.

The London catering trade is going through difficult times. Meat is still rationed and it is even difficult to obtain. Official regulations which we in Switzerland would hardly tolerate, complicate enormously the task of preparing long menus such as we are accustomed to; these regulations make it hard for a restaurateur to give his own establishment a distinctive note. But in spite of all difficulties our compatriots in London (I include here also our German-speaking and French-speaking Hotel-keepers and Restaurant-proprietors) enjoy the favour of an exacting public. They owe this to their devotion to the high principles of the art of hospitality as are practised in their homeland. This honours a prosperous profession both at home and abroad, which is at all times ready to adapt itself to changing conditions. In this respect also was my London visit well worth while.

(Trans. J.E.)

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