

Roundabout Switzerland

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): **- (1951)**

Heft 1172

PDF erstellt am: **01.05.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-695584>

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ROUNABOUT SWITZERLAND.

By DEREK MEAKIN.

I've discovered a new party game — spotting errors in tourist literature. Each player is given a batch of brochures, pamphlets and folders, and the one who finds the most mistakes in a given time is the winner.

Looking through the latest issue of Swiss tourist propaganda I find that errors fall into three main classes:

1. Punctuation,
2. Bad translation,
3. Typographical mistakes.

Far, far too often do we see words incorrectly running together, such as: "Gratuities to the hotelstaff" (*Interlaken's* official Hotel List), "Wintersports paradise" and "sportscentre" (*MOB Railway* folder), "the frontierstation at Basle" and "the important railwaystation of Olten" (*St. Gotthard* folder).

The *MOB* folder also talks about "innumerable and most famous ski slopes" and calls Schonried a "quiet station very sunny".

Have you ever heard of "Airodromes"? A booklet on the *Grisons* says we can find them at Samedan, near St. Moritz, and at Davos.

A leaflet advertising the *Pilatus Railway* says it "climbs on a daringly built tract", and remarks that the hotel on the top of the mountain offers "up to date accommodations".

Similarly, in a *Lake of Thun* pamphlet, we are advised that "further informations are given by all Tourist Agencies".

A *Locarno* folder tells us we can obtain "through tickets" and also talks about "a celebrated pilgrinage spot".

Meiringen and *Hasliberg* assure us that "there is scarcely another district in the Swiss Alps that offers so many advantages" and that "other famous abjectives are the Gorge of the Aare, Reichenbach Fall and the Glacier Gorge of Rosenlani".

A *Brunnen* folder asks us to "understand the legend of William Tell", and light on another famous historical occasion is shed by a *Fribourg* booklet saying that in 1481 "it becomes a Swiss canton".

An Ideal "Sprot".

Amusing errors are also contained in another *Fribourg* leaflet. The "Union cantonale fribourgeoise

des sociétés de développement" deserves to have its fingers rapped for telling us that Romont has a "boarding school for boys" and that Gruyère is "an ideal sprot for a rest cure". There are also three references to "the County of Gruyère". Surely this is not correct.

And listen to this longwinded sentence about Fribourg itself: "It owes its unusual charm to the landscape of high rocks which are steeped in history and abounding in objects of interest from the past all quite unspoiled, to the magnificent buildings both public and private, to the churches, chapels, convents, castles, city ramparts, towers, town gates, bridges and fountains, which altogether form a striking ensemble".

In a *Flims* folder we are told the resort is "scattered amongst fairy-like snowbound woods". Knowing Flims, I should think this is intended to mean "surrounded by".

Another page reveals a most peculiar sentence that is a prize find among this season's winter sports booklets. Referring to the "long list of wintry events", the writer tells us that "a modern artificial illumination encourages to afterdinner practising and competitions".

And again: "innumerable ploughed paths invite to easy strolls and merry sledging-parties".

If, after ploughing through all these mistakes, you still decide to make Flims your choice the next thing you want to know is how to get there. I wonder how many car-drivers will be able to repress a smile when



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they read that "for private cars the road is always opened and kept in constant practicableness". Well, well, well!

Before leaving Flims there is another point that needs sorting out. "Automobiles postales" is translated in this folder as "Federal Mail Coache-Road". In other publications I have seen the distinctive yellow PTT vehicles called postal cars, post buses, mail-cars and so on. I think it is about time the brochure writers came to a common agreement.

Continuing our search we come across an excellently-illustrated booklet on the *Bernese Oberland*, according to which Adelboden has "an idea ski-ing ground". And, strangest of all, a sentence about Mürren which informs the public that "Ski School and Skating School in the taxes included".

Lucerne's "Unknown Artist"

The *Brünig Line* folder tells us that one of the old wooden bridges across the Reuss at Lucerne is "adorned by an unknown artist, whose brush has traced a fantasy representing the triumph of Death over Man". Whoever wrote that must not have seen Lucerne's official map which says quite plainly: "the bridge . . . is decorated with a series of paintings inside the roof representing a Dance of Death, the work of Kaspar Meglinger at the beginning of the 17th century".

The crowning glory of *Valais* is, undoubtedly, the Matterhorn. Yet in a thick, 32-page brochure about the canton published by the Valais Tourist Union at Sion, the word Matterhorn does not appear once. On no less than six occasions the book refers to the Cervin — but how many English people know that Matterhorn and Cervin are one and the same mountain?

One of the funniest booklets of the lot comes from *Neuchâtel*, which seems strange considering it is intended to praise the town as a university and intellectual centre. Here are some of the gems I found:

Do you "wish to become the happy mistress of a home?" Then go to the Pensionnat Monruzy.

If you want a school that is "situated in a unique position on the lake", the Pensionnat Irena is your choice.

The private schools of Neuchâtel are, incidentally, "reputed" in Switzerland and abroad.

And the Commercial High School tops the lot by its motto which, according to the booklet, is: "The Commercial High School of Neuchâtel forms a good and for the life armed youth".

Funny, perhaps, but these mistakes should be no laughing matter. This Neuchâtel booklet seeks to publicise the town's educational establishments. But I wonder how many English parents, looking for a finishing school for their children abroad, spot these inexcusable errors and come to the conclusion that if a school cannot do a straightforward translation it would be much better to send their offspring elsewhere.

Such a booklet could, in fact, do irreparable harm to Swiss educational institutions as a whole.

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