

Old inn-signs in Switzerland

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OLD INN-SIGNS IN SWITZERLAND

What makes a country a land fit for travellers? If we were asked this, we would put the hospitality of its folk before magnificent scenery, good accommodation and travel facilities. For without hospitality travel is a mere matter of mechanism, of locomotion. With all the modern gadgets at our disposal we would easily travel through a country without so much as talking to a fellow being. We could obtain our food and drink from slot machines; they could also dispense motel keys, air and rail tickets, air travel insurance policies and small change. But is that what we really want? We could certainly get about, but would we care to if that one warm word "hospitality" were missing from the vocabulary?

For it is hospitality that makes the traveller's world go round. And, in spite of catchwords like "public relations" and "human relations", tourism today is going even further towards cutting out these contacts altogether. The Greeks had a word for it: the same word meaning both "stranger" and "guest". It is a far cry from those classical times to the idea of a tourist industry in which the word hospitality is becoming old-fashioned.

Fortunately, some symbols of this good old hospitality are still to be found in Switzerland: the beautiful old inn-signs. As long as these fine old emblems hang outside our country inns in villages and small towns Switzerland may still call herself an hospitable nation and not merely a tourist country.

Most of these inn-signs are genuine and original. They show Swiss hospitality in all its rich variety, and range from the resplendent "cavalier" at St. George, representing refined, elegant hospitality, to the homely "Hôtel du Tilleul", which refers to the historic linden tree at Murten. The many "kings" who hang outside our inns may quite well be a reminder of royal meetings, but for us they will always be a sign that, republican though Switzerland is, the guest should and does get royal treatment in her inns. The coming of the railway age in no way took the romance out of inn-signs. The many "Isebähnli" and "chemins de fer" recall the romance of the iron horse and bear out Paul Budry's definition of the railway as the shortest distance between two station buffets. The face of Swiss hospitality, as reflected in its inn-signs, has many aspects, sometimes pacific and pious — exemplified by "angels" — sometimes close to nature, as shown by a variety of signs ranging from flowers to firs, and finally, the truly patriotic note. [S.N.T.O.]

SWISS CHEESE RECIPES

There are about a hundred regional types of cheese made in Switzerland. The three best known are: the Emmentaler, easily recognised by its large holes and unmistakable fragrant aroma; the Gruyère which is light and spicy, and the Sbrinz, the hardest Swiss cheese, which is usually cut into thin shavings with a special cheese-plane. The Swiss Cheese Union have published a very attractively illustrated coloured booklet containing many cheese recipes and useful tips. Copies may be obtained, free of charge, from the Swiss National Tourist Office, 458 Strand, London W.C.2.

OUR NEXT ISSUE

Our next issue will be published on 13th September. We shall be glad to receive manuscripts and reports not later than 4th September and short news items by 6th September. The Editor will be away until early in September.

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