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The Abbey Church of St. Gallen, a magnificent example of baroque art, was built in the mid-XVIIIth century.

EASTERN SWITZERLAND



That St. Gall is « different » strikes even the casual visitor to that town. It is a truly urban centre and, doubtless, has always been. Perhaps this statement needs explanation ! It means that, although St. Gall is not a large town and although it is situated in the heart of an agricultural district, there are here no nooks or corners which have escaped the attention of engineers and architects : it is a « built-in » area in every sense of the term. However, and most surprisingly, despite its essentially industrial character, there are no factory or working class sections, no slums. An ancient city of noble lineage, which has known periods of extraordinary brilliancy, St. Gall to-day possesses no remarkable architectural creations... some others are in the worst XIXth century taste. Geographically, its situation is strange : it is neither a river, lake nor strategic centre, nor does it stand at the crossing of important routes. It has grown up in the bottom of a valley lying between the Lake of Constance and the Appenzell foothills, in a spot strangely insignificant. The enquiring layman may ask why ! The answer is : merely because in A. D. 613, the Irish monk and missionary whom we know as Gallus, interrupted his journey here, built a hermit's cell and founded a monastery. The Abbey of St. Gall cast a remarkable lustre over the township which gradually grew up around its walls, a town whose inhabitants very early enjoyed special prerogatives and liberties. The Abbey won fame as a cultural centre already in the XIth century ; its library, even to-day, remains one of the richest repositories of medieval culture in Europe and its church is an architectural jewel of the baroque period. The town itself is also worthy of tribute. During the

Renaissance it was a centre of the Humanist movement. The repute of Vadian, a burgomaster of St. Gall, ranked high among the learned men of his day. To him we owe the foundation of the famous Library in St. Gall which bears his name. The medieval merchants' guild of St. Gall has survived the centuries and is to-day a Chamber of Commerce ; the guild was once a powerful trading organization controlling centres as far afield as Cracow and Saragossa. The town of St. Gall owes its growth and prosperity to the textile industry which has flourished here since the XIIIth century ; town and industry have shared the same vicissitudes. It is rare indeed to find in one spot so remarkable a concentration centering around a single industry. The actual manufacture of textiles is nevertheless decentralized ; it is carried on by a number of small firms and the town itself has been preserved from the invasion of industrialism. It has retained its very particular charm, the solid comfort and quiet atmosphere of clean, neat streets, lined with small middle-class houses. The oldest quarters are attractive, with none of that sombre aspect so often associated with more or less well preserved antiquities. The visitor to St. Gall is immediately aware of a very unique atmosphere which pervades the town and the friendly kindness of its inhabitants. It is this which holds the secret of St. Gall's charm, from which even hurrying businessmen cannot escape. There are, of course, many objects of interest to the sightseer and the first is the Abbey Church which alone would suffice to make St. Gall a point of attraction. There is also the remarkable Iklé Collection of laces and embroideries, known to connoisseurs all over the world. Less « high-brow » perhaps is the Agricultural Fair held every autumn : a picturesque scene, despite the modernity of its setting, for it attracts the farming population from far and near. Every two or three years, St. Gall is the stage of a Youth Festival which boasts of a school-children's procession



A view of the Monastery Library of St. Gallen, one of the most famous in Europe.



The Youth Festival in St. Gallen. The High School girls wear their first long gowns made of beautiful embroidered fabrics.

unique of its kind : all the small girls and their older sisters wear dresses made of lovely St. Gall fabrics. A most gracious sight it is, to see this blooming girlhood clad in snowy laces, organdies, vaporous lawns and cottons, printed or embroidered.

The people of Appenzell are rightly proud of the cleanliness of their lovely, small State. Scattered across the lush meadows rise their wooden houses, all painted in half-tones — grey, beige, yellow, green, blue — all built in the same style, dolls houses straight from the toyshop. The landscape too seems to have acquired the same air : it is like a nursery picture with neat, flowing lines, small electric trains which glide in and out along the roadside and across country, with the small town of Appenzell and clustering villages, all incredibly clean. The people are famed for their good humour and keen sense of fun. They are easy to get on with, kind and always ready to help. Naturally, when one spends three weeks or more embroidering a lawn handkerchief no bigger than your hand... one does tend to have a very personal conception of the relativity of time ! Because, indeed, embroidery is the major craft of Appenzell — especially in the district known as Inner Rhodes — and modern, mechanized industry has never gained a foothold here. Through the windows of each little house, behind the crisp, white curtains, the passer-by catches glimpses of women bending over the embroidery frame or cushion. Small girls are taught to embroider by their mothers and trained in special schools organized by merchants. Later in life,

they work in their own homes for exporters, perfecting their skill and technique — without, for all that, neglecting their housework ! An Appenzell lass is always ready to lend a hand when her menfolk need help on the land. So it goes on, until the day when, after years of hard work, the embroideress can create masterpieces of feather-stitching, drawn-thread work, tapestry stitching, specimens of which are on view in the fine collection housed in the St. Antoine College at Appenzell.

Along the roads hurry men, women and children, laden with haversacks, carrying piece work manufacturers have ordered, or work already done : handkerchiefs, bed and table linen, adorned with hand-embroidered designs, monograms, drawn-thread, and so on.

The men of Appenzell are cattle-breeders. Very little cultivation is carried on ; few fruit trees are seen ; almost all land is reserved for



The Trogen « Landsgemeinde » or Open-Air Parliament : Outer Rhodes (Appenzell).



The town of Appenzell in its lovely hillside setting.

grazing. The men travel around on their high, old-fashioned bicycles, their heads coifed with round, black hats or quaint night cap like headgear ; each sucks a lidded pipe. They all look alike, these Appenzell farmers : arched nose, keen eyes under wrinkled lids, a whimsical air — and always they wear a small, gold ring in one ear.

Appenzell is composed of two « half » Cantons, Inner and Outer Rhodes, and it is of all Swiss republics, one of the last to have preserved the age-old democratic institution called the « Landsgemeinde » or Open-Air Parliament. This is a legislative assembly of all enfranchised citizens who meet together to elect their executive and legal representatives and to vote the passing of laws. To be admitted to the Landsgemeinde, the voter must wear a sword — but this does not prevent him from also carrying an umbrella, if the goodwife thinks it is going to rain !

In the Canton of Appenzell, near Trogen, is a settlement unique in its kind : the Pestalozzi Children's Village. This admirable enterprise, a tribute to the great educator whose name it bears, is a centre which receives children who have lost both parents in the war. These orphans are brought up and educated in national groups, all instruction being given in their mother tongue ; they live in homes where the home atmosphere is carefully fostered. They remain here until, equipped with sufficient knowledge to become independent citizens, they are sent back to their own country. The Pestalozzi Village has sheltered children of many nationalities : Polish, French, Hungarian, Austrian, German, Italian, Finnish.



Embroideresses at work outside a typical Appenzell farm.

To-day the « Pestalozzi Children's Village » near Trogen (Appenzell) shelters about 180 children in 11 home-like buildings. Five new houses are to be built this year and then the centre will be equipped to welcome more than 250 war orphans.

Photos Gross, St-Gall, and Klausen, Zurich

