

Impressions from a Journey to "Little Switzreland"

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IMPRESSIONS FROM A JOURNEY TO "LITTLE SWITZERLAND"

During my many years stay in this country I have, so far, always believed that if one wants to spend a really comfortable holiday in a first class hotel with equivalent cuisine and cellar and service of the highest order, one has to go abroad. Great Britain has always been a country of undoubted beauty and attraction for me, but nevertheless not one in which I cared to spend my holidays.

A recent journey to the English Lakeland, not far from the Scottish border — which I feel tempted to call "Little Switzerland" — has altered my views considerably. On Lake Derwentwater, about three miles outside Keswick in Cumberland, there stands a hotel, which proudly flies the Union Jack and the Swiss flag and which equally proudly calls itself "The Swiss Lodore Hotel".

Its proprietors are a happy and charming Anglo-Swiss couple: Mr. and Mrs. England. Monsieur hails from Yorkshire and his wife from St. Gallen. The combination of the two has succeeded in producing an atmosphere in the house which is as enchanting as it is homely. Guests — at least Swiss ones — find lovely deep-blue gentians in their room. The son of the house has been through the Swiss Hotel School at Lausanne and apart from being an efficient young hotelier gladly helps to make up a foursome on the tennis court. The *Chef-de-Cuisine*, Herr Gasser, hails from Basle, the *Chef Pâtissier* is Swiss — his *pâtisserie* is such, that one stands in danger of adding pounds and pounds — and so is the *Maitre d'Hôtel*, who comes from the Rheintal. They are all most efficient and courteous.

The hotel has all the amenities one can possibly wish for. There is a spacious lounge with comfortable easy chairs and a fabulous view on the lake. There is a lovely garden with a heated swimming pool and a tennis court. There is a special television room, a well-stocked bar, a children's nursery. There is also a special ballroom where once a week young and not so young can exercise their skill in ballroom dancing and again, once a week, a film show takes place. There are lock-up garages for those with cars. But there are also frequent bus and motor-boat connections to Keswick for those without.

The scenic beauty of the Lakeland is, I found, something quite unique. The lakes, surrounded by quite respectable hills — respectfully called mountains up there — are very beautiful indeed, both in the morning and in the evening light. If I were asked which of the many lakes I saw — Derwentwater, Ullswater, Windermere, Thirlmere,

Buttermere, Coniston, Crummock, Bassenthwaite — I liked best, I would find it difficult to reply. In good weather, which I was lucky to enjoy, they are all most attractive.

On this journey — which took me up through the tulip fields of Lincolnshire, with a night spent in Lincoln and a visit to the ancient Cathedral, and down in six and a half hours on the new motorways M6 and M1 — three things have impressed me most forcibly. Number one was the fact that London is not England. Once away from the rush, hurry, bustle and feverish activity of the Capital, I found people in general extremely friendly and courteous. Number two was the fact that as soon as one mentions one's Swiss nationality one is welcomed everywhere with open arms. In Lincoln there was a very old, extremely dignified clergyman shepherding visitors round the Cathedral. He wanted to know from everyone where one came from. On being told we were Swiss, he started to regale us with memories of happy holidays spent in the Swiss mountains. And to crown it all, with a grandiose, all embracing gesture he said: "Since you come from Switzerland, please consider this Cathedral as yours." That was most charming. The fact that Swiss credit stands high wherever one goes, is probably due to many such happy holiday memories, but no doubt also to the fact that the vast majority of Swiss who reside in England have, through their behaviour, succeeded in keeping up this goodwill towards our country. This is, of course, a very precious inheritance, which to cultivate some of the younger generation might from time to time usefully be reminded.

A third impression I got was of the shortness of human memory. Mr. England of the "Lodore Swiss Hotel" several times addressed me — in his extremely friendly and jovial way — as "Mr. Keeler". Several times I pointed out that my name was Keller. One morning, when I came down to breakfast, it was "Good morning, Mr. Keeler" again. Thereupon I threatened that if this happened again, I would say to him, in front of all the guests, "Good morning, Mr. Profumo". It was only then that the reason for my objecting dawned on him. I presume that in the Conservative Party they would be glad to know that a matter, which a year ago threatened to bring down a government, can be so completely forgotten in so short a time.

In conclusion I would like to say to all those readers who, like myself, have so far always gone abroad for their holidays: Try the Lakeland for once and try the "Lodore Swiss Hotel". Like myself, you will, I feel certain — given good weather — not regret one moment of it.

GOTTFRIED KELLER.

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