

The Tourist Guide

in the South German Town of Neuburg

'Four marks and all I eat and drink.' Those were the terms on which Herr Jogelli Klopter advertised his guided tour of the town of Neuburg on the Danube.

That final stipulation gave me an uneasy feeling. For the paunch of Herr Jogelli Klopter was one of abnormal proportions, even when measured by Bavarian standards of corpulence.

And the normal Bavarian scale does not register a weight lower than ninety kilograms.

The tourist will always find that it pays to haggle with his guide. So I haggled quite bluntly. 'You look like a hearty eater to me,' I said. 'Now if you were thinner . . .'

Herr Jogelli took on a mournful look. 'Even thinner!' he sighed. 'Great God Almighty, you ought to have seen my late father. Not to speak of my late grandfather! He'd eat a whole ham, a dish full of dumplings and a bowlful of salad, just for a snack, as you might say.'

'I'll give you three marks extra,' I said. 'Seven marks for the day.'

'*Herrgott!*' answered Herr Jogelli with characteristic Teutonic elegance. 'Then you're a skinflint and you can go round the town on your own. But don't cross my path. Do you think, Mister, that Jogelli Klopter is out to fleece the visitors? He's happy with the odd litre of beer and the odd snack now and again.'

This was the second time I'd heard the word 'snack' fall from his lips and it sent a chill down my spine but then I remembered that a tourist should try to make as few enemies as he can on his travels, especially when they're as well covered as this one was. So we shook hands on it, he got his four marks and stood me a mug of beer downstairs.

This is a custom observed by all Bavarian guides. A little present to cement the friendship and then they get it back out of you twenty times over in the course of the day.

Not a lot of tourists visit Neuburg. It could be that Herr Jogelli Klopter is to blame for this, but not a lot of tourists visit this part of Germany in any case.

The countryside around Neuburg is not particularly attractive. Every small town and every village in this area has very much the same character. And here and there, wherever there was the ruin of an old castle, they have restored it and turned it into a brewery. The Bavarians are a very enterprising people when it comes to that sort of thing. In Genderkingen, for example, Mertingingen, Dürzlenkingen, Bersheimingen, Irgelsheimingen and all the endless other 'ingens' (the names round here are as monotonous as the newspapers). Social life in all these 'ingens' revolves around the feuds between the individual 'ingens' and the violent punch-ups in the pubs of each separate 'ingen'. It's at its worst in the Neuburg area. In this brutal environment, Herr Jogelli Klopter had spent his formative years.

Neuburg itself is a quaint old town, which is something you could say about each and every Bavarian town. If I were writing a travel-book, I would say that it has two gateways, but as it is, I will just point out that I entered the town one evening through one gateway and left it next morning through the other. And for this last circumstance, Herr Jogelli Klopter definitely is to blame.

Neuburg also possesses the walls of a castle, which are maintained in a miserable condition. Some time or other in centuries past, the Swedes smashed those walls to bits and the Neuburgers have left them in precisely that same state ever since. Another factor that could account for this is that they always vote for conservative candidates.

Like any self-respecting Bavarian town, Neuburg has a *Rathaus* in the Old German style. This *Rathaus* has a long flight of steps leading up to it. This was the sum-total of the information imparted to me by Herr Jogelli on this subject. The Danube branches into two arms at this point. To this, too, Herr Jogelli drew my attention. And as we were crossing the bridge, he announced that this bridge was made of wood.

At the entrance to the bridge stands a sentry wearing a *Pickelhaube*.

Why he was standing there, Herr Jogelli did not know and I'm pretty certain that the soldier himself hasn't the faintest idea either.

When we got to the other side, Herr Jogelli announced that this was the end of the bridge. Perhaps you imagine that apart from the *Rathaus* and the wooden bridge, he did not draw my attention to anything else? Far from it! Between the *Rathaus* and the end of the bridge there are five breweries and eight inns. Beyond the last inn stands the gateway

and it was through that gateway that I left the town, a town that houses the archive of the 'Schwabenland' and surrounding areas, and also Herr Jogelli Klopfer, whom I can recommend most warmly to all tourists.

When we had left the inn where I had spent the night and crossed the bridge, my worthy guide said: 'I will now show you the ancient Ship Inn.' The exterior was not very prepossessing. 'We have to go in,' said Herr Jogelli. 'We've got to wait here for a man.' This was said in such a good-humoured tone that I was in no doubt that the tourist guide wanted to have a drink and get back with interest what he had stood me to seal our agreement, and that 'waiting for a man' was just a formula that enabled him to invoke the supplementary clause of that agreement, namely: 'all I eat and drink.'

I ordered beer. Herr Jogelli took a swig and began to speak: 'I'm waiting for a no-good specimen. A *Schweinkerli* he is, a real *Schweinbübli*.' He came out with a selection of names, formed from various combinations based on the word *Schwein*, took another pull and went on: 'I've got a bone to pick with that fellow, Sir, a very big bone indeed. And when he turns up, there'll be some fun and games. He's from Dürzlenkingen and I'm from Bersheimingen. We Bersheimingers are *roh*, *awer gutmütig* but that Dürzlenkingen lot are just *roh*; not a trace of good nature. Rubbish and *Schweinbüblis*, that's all there is in Dürzlenkingen.'

'*Schweinkerli*,' I remarked, just to be saying something.

'That's right, *Schweinkerli*,' said Herr Jogelli. 'And you won't find a bigger *Schweinkerli* than Johannes Bewign.'

He emptied his mug and ordered himself another. 'We,' he said, becoming excited, 'we Bersheimingers have never got on with that riff-raff from Dürzlenkingen. You see, every village round here talks differently, but they're so bad in Dürzlenkingen that they can't understand us Bersheimingers. My father in Bersheimingen was a "pa-a" but that Johannes has always laughed at me and said that he doesn't know what a "pa-a" is. The *Schweinbübli*!'

'Excuse me, Herr Jogelli, what exactly is a "pa-a"?'

'A pa-a is a pa-a, Sir. How can I put it any better in German?'

(To this day, I do not know what a 'pa-a' is, so according to Herr Jogelli I am a *Schweinbübli*).

'Ha! Do you know, that good-for-nothing Johannes came here to Neuburg to make competition for me and he's putting it about that I'm a drunkard. A fine tourist-guide he is, that Johannes Bewign; as soon as

he gets his hooks into a tourist, he drinks himself and the tourist-gentleman into a stupor. The pig! So we wait for him. And I'll say to him: "There you are, *Schweinbübli*, you can't put one over on me. I can attract a better class of tourist than you can, you miserable Dürzlenkingen creature." And if we don't find him here, he's sure to be at the Burgsheim brewery and if he isn't there, he'll be somewhere in the inns around the *Rathaus*, or a brewery up by the Castle, and if he hasn't shown his face even up there, we'll look for him in the Last Gate Inn.'

'And suppose he isn't there either, Herr Jogelli?'

The tourist guide pounded the table with his fist. 'Then we'll go after him all the way to Dürzlenkingen!'

A very pleasant chap, this Jogelli Klopfer, as you can see.

A pearl beyond price, that tourist-guide of mine! He knew the place down to the minutest detail. He was a mine of information. He held forth at length. When we left the Ship, we went along a narrow street. As we turned the corner, Herr Jogelli stopped in front of an old building. 'They killed a butcher from Weidling here last year,' he said darkly, pointing to the building. 'That's the Burgsheim brewery.'

'And who was it who killed him, Herr Jogelli?'

'People from Dürzlenkingen, Sir. This is where they congregate. Perhaps my rival, Johannes Bewign, will be here. You go first.'

When we were sitting at a table, Herr Jogelli passed an expert eye over a number of gigantic figures who were quarrelling with each other over in a dimly-lit corner.

'He's not among that lot,' he said in a disappointed tone. 'The two on the right live in Regensburgstrasse and those two on the left on the Augsburg road, they'll go on squabbling like that for another hour before they start on each other. Nothing interesting there. A pity there's no-one here from Friedrichsplatz or the Pfalzstrasse. Those boys know a thing or two about fighting. Or somebody from the Lesheim suburb, or Hein.'

He spat. 'This lot,' he said despairingly, 'don't know one end of a knife from the other. We ought to get the Dürzlenkingen mob onto them. They cut that Weidling butcher up a fair treat. They'd never have got me like that. A pity Johannes Bewign isn't here. But we'll find him, Sir, and if he gives us any lip, we'll sort him out.'

As you can see, Herr Jogelli Klopfer never gives his foreign tourists

short measure as do many tourist guides, who conduct their tours at a gallop, to get them over as soon as possible.

Neuburg, then, is an old-world town. It has many an old-world house and among those pretty houses, with their oriel windows and pantiles, is the one that contains the Big Pipe Inn. This hostelry displays a notice which reads: 'Prompt Payment Appreciated.' It's a dark and gloomy place with an old vaulted ceiling which threatens to collapse onto the customers' heads. With this in mind, it has been propped up with two wooden beams. Some Bersheimingen Samson could bury a whole company of Dürzlenkingers by pulling those beams down. Herr Jogelli was subject to biblical impulses of this kind. 'If there were too many of them for me to handle,' he said with narrowed eyes, 'I know what I'd do. I'd do what Samson did.'

Herr Johannes Bewign was not in the Big Pipe. After waiting for him in vain, we proceeded further on our way.

'We'll go to the Monastery Brewery,' my guide informed me. 'The Monastery Brewery is remarkable for the fact that . . .'

'Here we go,' I thought, 'now for a boring lecture along the lines of: "This building dates from the sixteenth century . . ." and so on.'

'Have you tasted the Neuburg leberwurst yet?' said Herr Jogelli, interrupting my train of thought.

'I had some yesterday, in the inn where I stayed the night.'

'In that case, you haven't had real leberwurst. The Monastery Brewery is remarkable for the fact that the Franciscan fathers here make such good leberwurst that apart from the miraculous image of Saint Heliodorus, which attracts visitors from all over the Schwabenland, the pilgrims come here for the leberwurst from as far away as the Upper Palatinate. There are times in the brewery when two processions get into one another's hair and start a punch-up and do you know what the Franciscan fathers do in a case like that? They take their leberwurst away. That soon stops the brawling.'

[The conversation continues in the Monastery Brewery itself.]

'And why do they fight among themselves, Herr Jogelli?'

'On account of the image of Saint Heliodorus, Sir. Every procession wants to be the first to kiss the image, so that they can be the first to go and eat the leberwurst, because there isn't a tastier snack to be found anywhere.'

Herr Jogelli consumed a two-pound snack of this delicacy. This turned out to be a really lucky hostelry for us. We found out that Herr Jogelli's rival, Johannes, had left half an hour ago with a tourist and had set out for one of the breweries up by the Castle, and that he had been asking after Herr Jogelli.

'That scoundrel!' exclaimed Herr Jogelli with a dramatic flourish. 'So he's got hold of some miserable little tourist after all, has he? There's nothing for it; we've got to follow the two of them up to the Castle. It looks as if they are both afraid of us.'

Herr Jogelli was becoming more and more intimate in his manner.

'You,' he said, 'can take care of the tourist.'

He said this in a determined tone which meant: 'He who is not with me is against me.'

There are five breweries attached to the Castle, snuggled up against it like chicks against a mother-hen. The people of Neuburg placed what they held most dear under the protection of the Castle.

During the Thirty Years' War, a band of Swedes had forced their way up to the Castle and after a bitter battle, captured the first brewery. And there, the victors had got themselves thoroughly plastered. When the Castle garrison saw this, they made a sortie, but they had to pass the second brewery on the way. The garrison could not resist the temptation and driven by the anxiety that if they did not drink the beer that was stored there, the Swedish mercenaries would, they attacked the barrels in the second brewery rather than the Swedes in the first. And they overpowered those barrels. They drank them dry. The Swedes, meanwhile, had recovered and mounted an assault on the second brewery. They found it occupied and moved on to Number Three, where they drank at such length that they got themselves into an even more inebriated state than they had been in Number One. They met with no resistance. Meanwhile, however, the garrison in Number Two had come round and moved out to protect Number Three. But they were too late. All they found were sleeping Swedes and empty barrels. Enraged by the sight of the empty barrels, they slaughtered the Swedes. And that was the Victory of Neuburg, as it is known, which is recorded in the inscription under the device on the Castle gate.

'They deserved their fate,' said Herr Jogelli gravely, standing under the device. 'The Swedes did a lot of damage at that time. According to the history books, there were many more breweries in the Schwabenland before the Thirty Years' War than there are today.'

Today, as I have said, there are only five of them by the Castle. In none of these historically significant sites did Herr Jogelli find his rival guide Johannes, or I my rival tourist.

'The main thing is,' Herr Jogelli instructed me when he emerged, disappointed, from the last one, 'not to let anyone get close to you. You grab your mug and throw it, pick up your chair and throw it, pull a leg off the table and throw that. That's the best way.'

'I don't have much hope,' he said, as we made our way along the passageway to the Castle gateway, 'of finding that ruffian in the Last Gate Inn. Suppose they're playing games with us?'

Never give up hope! We did find them in the Last Gate. The competitor-tourist was looking around him with an apprehensive expression, Herr Johannes with an aggressive one.

We sat down opposite them. The other tourist and Herr Johannes were on intimate terms. They clinked mugs. 'Now then, old son,' I heard Herr Johannes advise the apprehensive tourist in a loud voice, 'you go over to that stranger and clock him one and I'll take care of the rest as far as Jogelli is concerned.'

At that very moment, Herr Jogelli pronounced, in a voice like thunder: 'Everyone from Dürzlenkingen is a *Schweinkerli*!'

'And the Bersheimingers are a load of *Schweinbübli*!' shouted Herr Johannes.

And at one and the same moment, Jogelli's mug and Johannes's mug went flying through the air. After which there was a free-for-all, for there were a number of people there from Lesheim suburb and Hein and they took advantage of this opportunity to indulge in a little mutual head-cracking.

Under cover of the rumpus I slipped away, and outside the door I met the other tourist. 'We'd been looking for you in all the breweries and pubs,' said the other tourist. 'Johannes kept saying that he had some bone or other to pick with Jogelli, who was making competition for him.'

We went through the gate and out of Neuburg.

'A nice place,' said the other tourist with enthusiasm. 'Back in Württemberg, where I come from, it's all too tame.'

There you are, then! Now you know what the Germans are like, and what kind of tourist guides they have in the South German town of Neuburg, on the Danube.