



MARION EINBECK

JOURNEY IN GERMANY

COLLECTION OF STORIES

TRANSLATED BY MARJOLIJN DE JAGER

2005

TIME FOR PEACE



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FOREWORD

Journey in Germany

The collection of stories, *Journey in Germany*, by Marion Einbeck will be the travel companion to help you discover an undreamed of Germany that will surprise you with the beauty of its magical places. Enjoy reading these delicious pages that will relax you and help you spend a pleasant time. You will follow the author into the labyrinth of charming and mouth-watering stories that will make you dream or travel and give you the urge to get to know these places. Text and illustrations are intertwined to inspire you more and make this *Journey in Germany* into a useful object that reveals unique places of well-being, epicurean pleasure, and relaxation.

Marion Einbeck, the author, has just published a book devoted to thirty-five French chefs with Assouline Publishers in France, entitled *Notebook on Tables*. Her talent as a writer bestows a great deal of life and emotion on these accounts.

This tourist supplement is a literary work and thereby is placed on the fringe of other tourist publications that frequently resemble one another in their descriptions. It is a kind of travel journal in which the stories, written with artfulness and sensitivity, are a visual, olfactory, tactile, and gustatory testimony as well as an effective account.

For five months, Marion Einbeck and her husband traveled more than 20,000 km by car. The author collected more than 300 pages of notes in her travel journal and on these she based her stories about the restaurants, hotels, craftsmen, and places visited. The itinerary led from one place to another.

Thanks to the support of and participation in this present issue by the Swatch Company—one of the great manufacturers of watches and certainly the most innovative one—dozens of establishments give Swatch time by introducing a few new models, in concordance with the arrival of the author in each of the places. Early in 2006 and in view of the wealth and number of gathered information, the *Journey in Germany* will have its first collection of stories enlarged and completed. There will be new pages dedicated to restaurants and hotels that the author will have experienced, unpublished recipes, and articles by figures in the hotel and restaurant business. Among the places to appear will be the *Königshof* or *Tantris* restaurants in Munich; the *Park Hotel Bremen* in Bremen; the *Bülow Residenz* in Dresden; the *Hotel Schloss Hugenpoet* in Essen-Kettwig; the *Hotel Louis C. Jacob* in Hamburg; the *Hardenberg Burghotel* in Nörten-Hardenberg; the *Pflaums Posthotel Pegnitz* in Peignitz; the *Bayrisches Haus* in Potsdam; the *Romantik Hotel Am Brühl* in Quedlinburg; the *Gutshaus Stolpe* in Stolpe Bei Anklam; the *Benen-Dicken-Hof* in Sylt; the *Orteil Archa*; the *Hotel Burg Wernberg* in Wernberg-Köblitz; the *Nassauer Hof* in Wiesbaden. This complete edition will be linked to the issue devoted to four different German writers.

As we wait for the new complete publication on Germany to appear in early 2006, we wish you an excellent and relaxing journey in this beautiful country.



ROBERT AND MARION EINBECK WITH THE ALPENHOF MÜNCHEN TEAM
GUARINO TUGNOLI (MAITRE D'), ALEXANDRA FANSTIEL (ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTION), PATRICK
HAUER (CHEF), THOMAS HEILIG (VICE-DIRECTOR) AND ANDREA DAISENBERGER (RESTAURANT MANAGER)

FRANKFURT AIRPORT

Frankfurt - 10:45 am



When we arrive we are asleep and tense from the flight. A sleepless night is always a nuisance and when the fatigue of a time difference is added to the arrival on foreign territory, I try to will myself into having pleasant

thoughts, but that's not always enough. Every time that we fly from New York to Europe it seems to me that I will view the plane trip—of which I'm always apprehensive—as positive once we arrive in Frankfurt.

I always have a very clear memory of the moment that I finally put my feet on solid ground again, after several hours confined to a cabin. Whether I'm coming from America or Asia, and even when our destination is The Netherlands, Italy, or France, **I maintain that, given the choice, I prefer the Frankfurt Airport to any other and I always have.** The fact that the place may play an essential role in aerial transportation and offer every possible connection—whether international or domestic—is in itself not enough to make me visit the immense area of Fraport as a site conceived entirely for travel. To me, the first and foremost quality of a large airport is to offer hospitality.

Some people will go and watch the planes take off; others—like myself—take pleasure in getting lost and roaming around extensively through the hallways and lobbies that never stop being new and are always multiplying. It has become a habit with me now to let myself come back to life inside this airport without wanting to rush out. I enjoy observing other people chatting and laughing about going off on vacation; watching the serious ones who don't wander around but are coming to Frankfurt strictly on business, for the stock exchange. Businessmen all resemble each other and there are so many of them! They will abruptly leave what only just before was their seat, sentencing the

present moment to boredom and to the brevity of a work trip without any further prospect. They rush through a door somewhere, get onto a moving sidewalk after having checked the clear and exact schedule of departures, and found the one they want. In no time at all they're able to find their way and finally seem happy then.

What captures me, on the other hand, is very different. I like to be happily settled down together with my companion, and to take my time inside the communal life of this airport, open to conversing with the entire world. We always come up with the idea of having some coffee at one of the many coffee bars and sometimes we even have lunch or dinner in one of the bistros along one of the hallways. Then we feel that our stay is beginning under the most favorable auspices.

Fraport is one of the most important airports in the world and it's hard to imagine the massive crowd of individuals that come through it on a daily basis. It is difficult for me to realize how very personal the welcome is each time we arrive here, and how **the wait for our luggage never seems long.** As soon as we have our feet on the ground in the Fraport Terminal, we immediately feel comfortable and safe.

When we disembark we feel at peace and we always take off with the same inner sense of calm.



SCHLOSS KRONBERG

Frankfurt - 2:57 pm

Our decision to go to the Kronberg Castle—Schloss Kronberg—was made as a result of some recommendations received here and there from friends who had presented the place as a perfect romantic spot laden with history. As soon as we landed and without wasting any time, we found the car that would take us to our destination.

The huge city of New York where we had been living for a few years had, for our daily walks, forced us to make do with its big parks and their well-kept, even fields. Perhaps the air was less polluted than in other great metropolises and chlorophyll was still present there, but only in tiny amounts.

As I thought of seeing the landscapes of my childhood again I was impatient to discover those in Germany about which we had heard so much. I was starving for virgin spaces and rustic landscapes.

The car nibbled away at the road like a squirrel at a nut. The sky that showed not an inch of blue looked like a large cake just covered with frangipani. It was the end of the summer, when the days still hesitate between the heat swollen with the humidity of summer and the first, still imperceptible, rifts of nature heading toward death, toward the cold days that cannot possibly be avoided.

We were rolling along, resolutely turning our back on Frankfurt and its skyscrapers, which had seemed modest to us in comparison to those in Manhattan, where they always seem to be praying to heaven no matter what the weather. But now our attention was completely focused on the present time of another world. Moreover, Kronberg is only some fifteen kilometers from the airport and before we even realized it we had arrived.

One couldn't have wished for a more lovely welcome than the one we were given that day. **The place was magical and the house lordly.** As soon as we came into the front entrance, we discovered the main room of a resplendent central building inside a sumptuous park. The Kronberg Castle most certainly was the place to go if one wanted to escape from anything resembling the commonplace.

The Empress Victoria, Queen of Prussia, royal princess of Great Britain and Ireland, and widow of Emperor

Frederic III of Germany had not gone wrong with the architect. Before construction began in 1880, she commissioned him to go to England to gain knowledge and inspiration. The final result took shape in a highly successful union of Gothic and Renaissance styles. Stone from the Taunus were used for the façades and others from Franconia were utilized to sculpt the main entrance and windows.

We didn't linger very long in the courtyard of honor because we were too impatient to see the inside of the house and now found ourselves in a grandiose hall in front of an imposing fireplace.

The interior decoration had been carefully thought through to become an integral part of the whole. It seemed to us that every detail had been designed to show off the splendid collections of art objects and furniture that, in their time, used to belong to the emperor and empress. **Our first impression of the place was one of being inside the most unbelievable museum.** The collection of marvels included, among other things, a clock of gilded wood such as we had never seen before. At a preset time, it would come alive with bells but also with scenery and characters that turned it into a true performance. Paintings by Rubens, Titian, and Gainsborough, Limoges porcelain, Venetian mirrors, ivories and bronzes, vases, fireplaces with sculpted hearths, and chairs paraded before our incredulous eyes. Adjoining the reception hall, we found the Venetian style library with works of German literature and, to our surprise, the writings of Karl Marx, which would have been quite unusual for a woman to have read at the time, or so it seemed to us. But the empress had a brilliant mind, open to and curious about everything. She was equally interested in art and in politics. In her universe of thought and writing we found many books of literature such as first editions of Thackeray, Shakespeare's Aldis Wright, or Dante's Dean plumptre.

When we went upstairs, the staircase seemed to be pierced by the light from stained-glass windows, presenting arms. On the second floor, the door to our suite, opened gracefully by a young woman, showed an interior that was also of another era. **Large shuttered windows were divided into dozens of ancient small panes with wire mesh that resembled those in birdcages. They looked out over large trees with foliage so dense that it provided only a hint of light.** The sofas were covered in red velvet.

A desk with bronze trim, a wide fire-



SCHLOSS KRONBERG

place, Chinese objects of blue faience, a bronze clock, and many lamps were only part of the décor. Large paintings framed in heavy wood and gold contained dark, dramatic landscapes. They didn't quite hide the walls, which were covered with a funny little wallpaper. To my astonished eyes, the wallpaper had an old-fashioned charm that reminded me in its



simplicity of that in my childhood room at my grandparents' house, paper I so often used to contemplate before I'd fall asleep. The bed, on the other hand, played in a totally different register. It was huge and wreathed in a canopy made of the finest fabrics. On a table stood the prettiest basket of fruit one could imagine. It had a large handle, like a hoop, around which pairs of red cherries were looped, which looked so tempting that one felt like biting into

them right away. Inside the basket lay a collection of every imaginable fruit, like a terrestrial paradise. It was a miracle to view all the colors and shapes of these familiar and not so familiar fruits. The sun was there, inside the fruit basket, right in front of us. A bottle of perfectly chilled vintage champagne was waiting to be opened an invitation that didn't need to be extended twice. With the first sip we decided that we would stay in that evening to enjoy our extraordinary suite.

That was how our life in the castle began. Room service, which we had requested, was flawless in every way. After having made our choice from the menu, the meal was not long in coming and was delivered on a table, nicely laid by a well-trained and charming staff. In spite of the trip and the time difference, we were in good shape. The headwaiter himself had taken the trouble to come and take our order with great kindness. He even supervised the complete meal. Arnaud Juillot placed the first course before us. A few thin slices of salmon with the accompanying bits of bread just barely toasted. The veal escalope was waiting underneath its silver dome, keeping warm, as we had wanted. Accompanied by a cucumber salad, it was perfect and just as we liked it. We were completely satisfied and had agreed with Arnaud that we would eat in the restaurant from the next day on.

I had never seen such an extraordinary dining room in my life. As soon as one entered it seemed even more impressive. The diners came in softly as if their passage might upset the arrangement of the place. We did the same and could have passed unnoticed, had that not gone against protocol, which wanted that each arrival be discretely greeted as behooves such an elegant spot. When the newcomer would pass the table of another diner, he would greet him the way it once used to be done in fine society. We noticed that the men who were there were wearing a tuxedo, while we admired the women present who in their formal evening dress were even more beautiful. As a token of respect, a gentleman surreptitiously rose from his chair as we passed. How could one possibly think of anything other than the presence of these people and their ballet of courtesy. Fortunately, I hadn't quite lost my appetite.

Arnaud Juillot chose an excellent wine for us from the vineyards of the Prince von Hessen, one of the hotel's favorites. I then gave my full concentration to the meal that began with a mousse of foie gras, followed by a second course of a filet of Bavarian beef with potatoes. My companion chose the same dishes and we were quite happy with a dessert of apple tart and vanilla ice cream. We were intrigued by this so atypical and exceptional hotel, and therefore were delighted when a charming young director suggested the next morning that he take us on a tour of the property. It was he who told us that President Eisenhower had occupied the suite adjoining ours for a rather long period of time. He took us into the park, showed us the rose garden, the golf course, and even suggested that we ride one of the owner's horses. But that is a different story, which I would like to save for another time.

WEINGUT PRINZ VON HESSEN

The German wines we had tasted at the Hotel Kronberg had made us eager to learn more. Thus, ready to prolong the originally planned trip, we decided to make a detour to Johannisberg im Rheingau.

In the region of the pretty village of Johannisberg, the vineyards of the Prinz Von Hessen lie on the other bank of the Rhine, nobly facing Rudesheim, the capital city of Riesling. The domain had managed to bring together some fifty hectares. The vineyards were flourishing abundantly; very happy with their southern exposure that allowed them to get the full benefit of the sun's warm rays. Thus, the grapes turned a marvelous gold and the Riesling was all the better for it.

Just a few steps from the cultivated plants, the house—where the caves and the good bottles of the winegrowing Prince could be found—was comfortably situated in one of the tiny streets of the picturesque town. Life here was connected to seasons, planting, and harvests. The only topics of conversation were colors, juice, grape varieties, and fermentation.

For the Prince von Hessen and Markus Sieben, a fantastic winegrower working on the property, the harvest season was both feared and eagerly awaited every year, for they were always afraid that bad weather would compromise the men's hard work. The delicate art of gathering the grapes required a lengthy apprenticeship and a skillful hand motion that wouldn't crush the fruit. Each bunch was harvested by hand with infinite care.

The modern winepress continued the work of the harvest by making sure that the carefully picked bunches would be gently poured into its belly and would there be pressed according to immutable rules. When the time for fermentation in the wooden casks and metal basins arrived, the ideal temperature had been studied to the last degree and would be controlled by expert personnel throughout the period. Because of the care provided, the grapes would then reach perfect ripeness and become a great Riesling. After one year in the bottle, the Prinz von Hessen wine would reach its dazzling apogee of maturity. It would be a feast for

the mouth, which would swallow its sap, perfectly balanced between acidity and sweetness.

We loved the 2002 Eiswein Riesling as much as the 2003 Beernauslese Riesling and, not knowing which of the two to choose, we went on our way in the company of both precious drinks without having taken the trouble to decide in which direction our preference was heading.

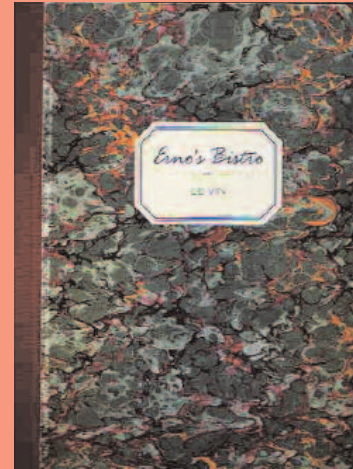


ERNO'S BISTRO

We couldn't go to Frankfurt without at least

having one lunch or dinner at Eric Huber and Valéry Mathis' place. There was more than one reason that we chose to go there each time we were in the area. The first was incontestably the delicious cuisine of Monsieur Mathis. The second point that seemed important to us was the charming reception we were given by the well-trained staff, always careful to seat us at our favorite table. As for the décor, both simple and warm, its effect relaxed us and, without putting up any resistance, we would be

lured by one of the wines suggested to us by the wine waiter's very fine list. When the good weather arrived, the tables were so attractively set up on the small terrace that they were immediately filled up with customers who'd literally mob them. It was therefore important to make reservations, which we'd always do. Winter and cold weather were never a disadvantage here even if the cold season would limit the space available. The room of the restaurant wasn't large but one did feel comfortable there. Whatever the season, it was rare that the restaurant wasn't completely filled. The place called itself a bistro but reminded us more of an inn like those in France. We were always certain to enjoy coming to this little gastronomic corner and its pleasant company. The chef's art would be revealed in a cold soup of mint-flavored green peas, a filet of young rabbit with Parma ham. A head-cheese of pot-au-feu and a foie gras with miniature vegetables, a port aspic and a mousse of asparagus would melt in your mouth and offer a whole gamut of riches and delight. The goose foie gras of the house, to be eaten with a spoon and its tiny brioche were perfectly balanced. We also loved the medallions of monkfish on their bed of mangos, tomatoes, and coriander. We'd swoon with pleasure in front of a tender and juicy pigeon de Bresse. We'd find the turbot very delicate. Some of the rich desserts were totally irresistible, such as a piece of shortbread, roasted apricots, a white chocolate mousse, or a lemon granita. Each time we would thoroughly and emphatically enjoy ourselves. The gourmand moment never lasted long enough and we always knew that what we needed to do now was wait for the next occasion.



WEINGUT KELLER

florsheim-dalsheim - 4 30 pm

To reach the region of Wonnegau in Flörsheim-Dalsheim, we had to travel a few dozen kilometers from Frankfurt on a road that seemed fairly prosaic to us before the twists and turns and whispers of a pretty country road seduced us. We were praising the whimsies of the route that had made us crisscross the rural landscape and wander a bit too far out of our way into the countryside. We were feeling happy taking our time but arrived late for our appointment. Klaus-Peter, who was well-mannered man, did nothing to make us aware of that. He, too, loved his land and its diversity. He was young, married, and had two children, named Felix and Maximilien. The young winegrower was like the sun whose smile warmed anyone who came near him. There was not an ounce of arrogance in Klaus-Peter and in his presence the visitor felt instantly at ease. Keller Senior, the father, was absent that day, a very rare occurrence, for there wasn't much opportunity for the family to travel. They were at work here all through the year, four generations in perfect harmony under the same roof.

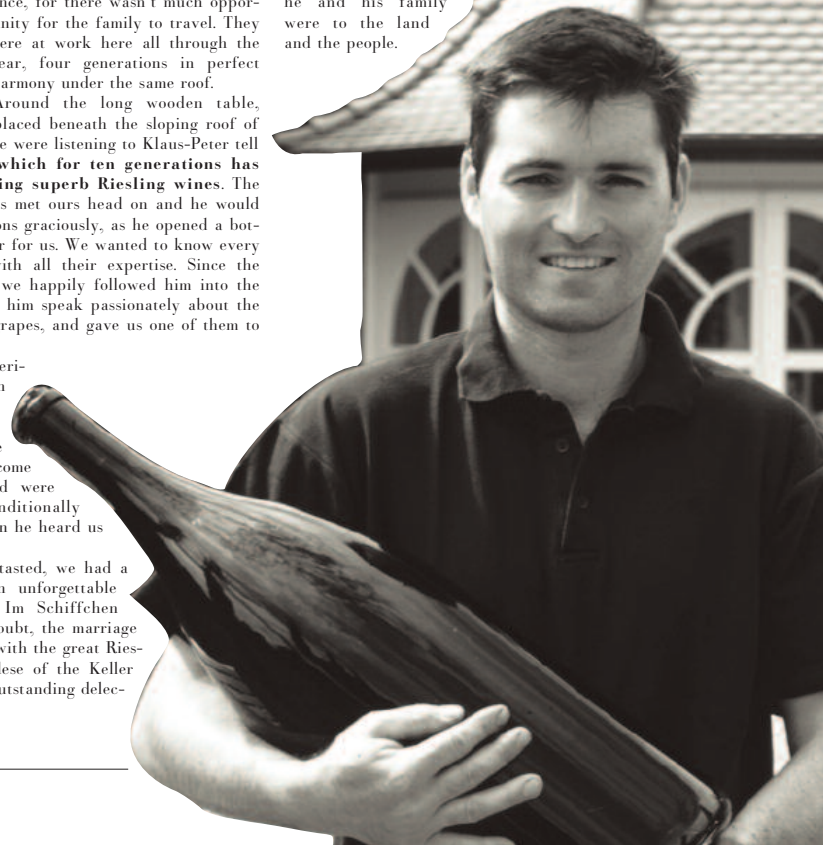
Around the long wooden table, placed beneath the sloping roof of the prosperous building, we were listening to Klaus-Peter tell us the family history, which for ten generations has flawlessly been perfecting superb Riesling wines. The young man's fine blue eyes met ours head on and he would answer each of our questions graciously, as he opened a bottle of noble sweet Rieslaner for us. We wanted to know every detail, become familiar with all their expertise. Since the weather was cooperating, we happily followed him into the vineyard as we listened to him speak passionately about the soil, show us a bunch of grapes, and gave us one of them to taste.

We told him about our experience with wine waiters in fine German establishments who had insisted that we try the wines of the Keller family. We had become great lovers of these and were definitively and unconditionally seduced. Klaus smiled when he heard us say this.

Of all the fine wines we tasted, we had a true revelation during an unforgettable meal at the Düsseldorf Im Schiffchen restaurant. Without any doubt, the marriage of the extraordinary food with the great Riesling Auslese 97 and Spätlese of the Keller house were a part of our outstanding delectable

memories. With great regularity the Keller wines were one of the appointed partners in the most appreciated kitchens. This fine winemaker knew how to create a delicate and subtle elaboration, a diversity of expression that his nobly aromatic wines provided. His impressive performance made him one of the world's reference points where Riesling is concerned. We could imagine how much constant work, expertise, and patience were necessary to achieve the high-class result that had led him to produce the most sophisticated wines in existence.

Time was flying by and the afternoon came to an end. We had to leave the vineyard and get back to the Keller home. Still listening to us, Klaus-Peter was already walking us to the car. As we were leaving, we thanked him for his warm welcome and, congratulating him on the prodigious work accomplished in his vineyards, we told him again how immensely precious he and his family were to the land and the people.



KRONEN SCHLÖSSCHEN

Eltville-Hattenheim - 8 15 pm

We had spent the day exploring the Rheingau, letting our expert gaze glide across the bright landscape. The result was that we had forgotten the time. We arrived at the Kronen Schösschen quite late in the afternoon but, fortunately, the hotel staff was awaiting us. Situated on the banks of the Rhine with its rustling water, the Hotel Kronen Schösschen radiated a happy feeling from the first moment we saw it, with its inner courtyard like that of a friendly inn where you could sense that on fine days one would be drinking a glass of cool wine in the open air. The establishment didn't seem perturbed by the road that ran right beside it in complete indifference. It had been smart enough to take advantage of it, by presenting itself in its best light to the passerby, with flowers growing along the driveway, the wings, and the windows. The hotel was truly welcoming and charming, and was impossible to ignore because it exuded such sweetness. It was one of the lovely better houses in the small town of

Eltville.

The hotel seemed to enjoy being next to the Rhine and kept a cheerful complicity going with its peaceful current. The only problem it needed to resolve was incontestably its small size, which made it hard to get a room there. The rooms were so attractively prepared that the patronage would vie for them well in advance.

In the beige and white hall with its sofas covered in a marvelous gray-and-fuchsia pink striped fabric, the reception desk was courting a pretty site office, which was a kind of box made of what could have been marble and which had a window. This little refuge seemed to be playing hide-and-seek with the whole reception room and its role was that of providing space for a smiling female concierge whose first responsibility was hospitality.

After having announced our arrival to the receptionist and holding on to the open-worked banister, we clambered up the steep staircase ascending directly from the entrance. We took advantage of two young boys helpfully escorting us to carry our bags up.

The next morning the weather was cool and sunny and well matched to the warm atmosphere of the gentle house, which had the fragrance of youth. While the sun was casting its red-dish rays and displaying itself to every shrub and tree in the garden, the owner had come to introduce himself to us.

He was a tall gentleman, elegant and slender. He confided to us that he was not a member of either the

hotel or the restaurant business and was actually a lawyer in Frankfurt. Since the two places where he led his life—an attorney in one and the proprietor of an inn in the other—were separated by quite a few kilometers, he was compelled to go endlessly back and forth. He liked to make sure that everything was going well and because he trusted them, he relied fully on the staff he had chosen to make the inn prosper.

The team consisted of a happy band of young women and men, all more or less the same age, who performed their tasks with devotion. Naturally, there might be a few infringements on the protocol in the service they rendered, but it was not badly intended and these little flaws could be attributed to confusion due to lack of experience and training. On the whole, the group was sufficiently competent and solid in its performance to make the business run well.

The owner had the additional quality of being a man of good taste. The rooms and suites of the Kronen Schösschen, which each had a different interior, emanated a feeling of sophisticated calm. Delicate and beautiful, they pleased us very much. On that occasion, we were in a magnificent two-floor apartment. Bright and cheerful, the rooms were serene and luxuriously comfortable. The television offered a choice of foreign channels, which was worth noting, for in Germany that is relatively rare.

The bedroom, which was upstairs, had a transom whose angles were transformed into rounded corners and pleasant curves. In this private apartment there were multiple sofas, embellished by nuances of fabrics shimmering like satin. Some fabrics in lively colors of light green and yellow displayed a refined Scottish plaid. The bed's headboard followed the coquettish warm style, covered in the same rich fabric. The bed was soft and wide, the furniture white and fresh, the bathroom's two windows opened out onto the sky, the trees, and the river. The place was blessed with light and we were marvelously comfortable and happy there.

On the ground floor was the entrance with at the end of a hallway the dining room, which was a beauty. Its hues were water-green and decorated with delicate paintings that seemed to fly off into the heights of the ceiling. A magnificent chandelier from a previous century spread its light above the prettily set tables. The room was astonishingly elegant. We dined there on tiny delicate bits the chef had prepared, fine vegetables, fish, and excellent meats. We had some exquisite wines.

In the adjoining room one could have simple dishes until an ungodly hour. The place was always animated and convivial and could also be used as a bar. Thus, each day brought new delights and we were never bored there. We would even laze around like wealthy bourgeois in their own beautiful home.



JOHANN LAFER'S STROMBURG

Stromberg - 6 44pm

When we arrived in Stromberg the lady of the house took very good care of us. Silvia Lafer's welcome was astonishingly and delightfully natural. The benefits that nature had bestowed upon her—blue, almond-shaped eyes, a marvelous nose, a round mouth—had not caused her to lose sight of her task. Mrs. Lafer was before anything else a great professional hotel manager and she was hospitable. As we came to our room, we learned very quickly that the dream of the hotel had been hers and she had decorated it in a luxurious, elegant style. Each day, she was the one who made the flower arrangements and

did the accounts. It was she who booked the guests as well. The establishment is not far from Frankfurt and has the double advantage of having a great chef as its second proprietor, Silvia's husband, Johann Lafer.

Not long before, we had settled down on our couch when Mr. Lafer appeared before our very eyes. **The hero of the kitchen proved to have great presence on the television screen, where he regularly and brilliantly ran a cooking show.** Although we weren't particularly fond of lessons in anything, we were captivated and our eyes were drawn to the charismatic, extraordinary master chef, to his clear explanations, and the play of his hands as they precisely and rapidly cut the food. There was an attractive energy that emanated from the smiling, amiable chef. At the same time, we realized that it would also be possible to meet the man in person, in his own surroundings, a well-known hotel-restaurant. Thus we decided to take the road to Stromberg.

Outside of the widely seen televised programs, Mr. Lafer also gives cooking courses on a smaller scale for his admirers and motivated clients, at a short distance by car from his hotel. Although the lessons were not the reason for our stay in Stromberg, on this food lovers' trip we let ourselves be taken there like obedient children. Naturally, we didn't expect to participate as presenters or apprentices, but we definitely placed ourselves in the group of admirers and gourmet observers.

The chef always starts his lesson at nine o'clock. On this day, he was assisted by Thomas Kahl and the teaching continues, as it does for every culinary session, for several hours. **At 11:30 fine smells begin to rise, invading the kitchens, and the pots are singing.**

The students' questions burst loose and Johann answers them graciously. The table is set well before the meal is ready because it had been decided that what had been prepared in the morning would be eaten for lunch.

What mattered more to us than the cooking class, however, was the restaurant. We went there in the evening. The elegant room of Le Val d'or, refined, warm, and cheerful, had curtains with large, playful polka dots in many colors; royal blue carpeting recalling cruises and the sea; tables covered with cloths of soft beige over heavy, longer yellow ones. The subdued light, flowers, candles, and the barely audible music were all invitations to pleasure and good eating.

The room breathed a convivial atmosphere, like a first snack entering the mouth. The maitre d', Thomas Shreiber, received his guests elegantly, knew the art of presenting the menu, offering a pre-dinner wine before the pleasant sommelier, Gean Luca, arrived to guide the connoisseurs down the wine list. Having seen it on the menu, we already knew that we wanted to begin our meal under the savory auspices of a Bretagne lobster. A little while later, to our satisfaction, it arrived at our table with fine-looking, festive little vegetables in tow. Clearly, the whole course was precisely designed. We were equally happy with the next course we had ordered before the meal began, which was a firm-fleshed Saint Pierre, glorified with a batter covering that ornaments the fish exquisitely. **It was surrounded with citrus fruit that added roundness and character to the culinary creation.** A serving of tender beef followed as the third course in a gourmet celebration. It, too, was a wonderful surprise, as were the asparagus that melted in the mouth.

We ended this feast with a royal soufflé and the tartness of marinated rhubarb. Thinking about the marvelous dinner we had just enjoyed, we were feeling very good. Mr. Lafer's cuisine supersedes what is fashionable. We gave in to a mood of daydreaming. The time had come to leave the table and let the night take over unreservedly.

We climbed the main staircase of the hotel

to the pretty light-colored tower that was reserved for us, where three elegant little rooms on three separate levels awaited us in an atmosphere of radiant colors. The private stairs were much steeper than the one that serves the rest of the house, and continue in vivid, happy colors inside the apartment to divide the space agreeably. A currant-pink rug, curtains like fringed shawls, a fireplace, a double bed, and handsome armchairs all invited a sense of well-being and relaxation. **On the lower level, horses were running around in a painting, and a playful couple of marionettes dressed in harlequin costumes were enjoying themselves inside a frame.** In the pretty bathroom adjoining the bedroom, wall lamps were topped by a cowl; a little farther on, a dove rested on the horizon of a wall and when, all the way in the top of the tower, the curtains were opened to a sky bathed in the golden light of the sunset, the silhouette of the mountains and trees appeared.

We knew the next day would be beautiful and we'd awaken in joyful impatience to begin life in the hotel of Stromberg all over again.

WEINGUT HEYMANN-LOWENSTEIN

Winningen An Der Mosel - 7 25 pm

I don't think that I have ever been taken to walk on the steep and abrupt edges of hillside vineyards in bad weather. But for Reinhard Lowenstein every day is beautiful and every morning is harvest season—those past and those to come—when the fine treasure coming from the earth is hanging on the vine, barely hidden by the foliage, waiting only to be picked by solicitous hands. On this particular day, the wind was playing on the heights of Winningen, which was unusual, for the place was well protected. Reinhard's vineyards, straight and sinuous, stretched out to the horizon, to be caressed by the breeze like a green sea, at once human and divine. I was frightened by the very gray sky but the man reassured me that this would only be of short duration. He was right, the sun returned to warm everything again, people, nature, as well as the bunches of grapes.

We had left with our leader on a wine tour that we wouldn't easily forget. In the amphitheater of his vines that were attached to the sheer slopes overlooking the Moselle River, I was not equipped to perform such an escapade in my high-heeled

Here dwelled the incomparable "apollo winningensis", on a wall of dry stone. The terraces of the vineyard benefited from a microclimate and had hidden alcoves between the rocks of fossilized stone, possible hiding places for reptiles. But this day, in view of the rather cool weather, I was sure I wouldn't encounter such creatures and felt much relieved.

While Reinhard and my companion were discussing the benefits of wine, I was wondering how the winegrower could keep his balance to work the vineyard. But the Heymann-Löwenteins, a husband and wife team, were perfectly capable of it. Flanked by seasonal laborers—very hard work—



*Schieferterrassen 2003
Heymann-Löwentein*

shoes. I certainly couldn't let my heels mistreat the precious soil by planting their steel stem into it. What would the harvesters say of the little holes punched into the earth? Would they think these were breathing spaces of a mole that had dug a subterranean gallery?

Reinhard was a powerful winegrower. He was also an intrepid conqueror who was afraid of nothing, a storyteller, and a poet. The conversation took flight on wings that I lacked wings of a butterfly.

ers themselves—and a few village harvesters, the harvest came in well each year. Furthermore, in his winegrowing business everything was perfectly orchestrated since their marriage. We were sorry we didn't meet his wife, but we found Reinhard to be a charismatic and charming person. We liked him immensely and had followed him in the wind, from the foot of the hill to the top and back down again, sharing his love for wine and the vineyard. We never thought of turning around when it began to drizzle, for the man was much too inspiring. With his own hands he had created exceptional vintages. With great discipline he had alone, and then together with his wife, cultivated the most beautiful Moselle vineyards. He had produced an unforgettable dry wine and some glorious sweet ones. Reinhard Löwentein was truly a great winegrower.

STEINHEUERS RESTAURANT

Bad Neuenahr-Heppingen - 6:10 pm

Around six in the afternoon, while I was immersed in a book by Karen Duve, the telephone rang. I picked up and grudgingly answered, not wanting to do so at all, because the novel I was reading was very exciting. Our luxuriously furnished suite had vases with beautiful autumn flowers that disseminated a delicious scent. In the hollow of the wide armchair that enveloped me like a shell, I allowed my thoughts, which had suddenly turned to good food, to move in the direction of what they were suggesting to us for that evening. Hearing the unfamiliar voice speaking to me about the good things that awaited me, a warm and gentle feeling circulated through my body. Now I was delighted to have had my reading interrupted and to be

looking forward to a dinner that I already knew would be memorable. Before leaving the room, I decided to take a bath, tempted by the large tub in the marvelous bathroom, and then dressed for the evening. A very simple village road separated—in an irreproachable straight line—the modern and spacious hotel from the restaurant with its old-world, warm and rustic charm. The two very different buildings faced each other, thereby advocating their taste for difference and complementarity. We crossed the road, opened the door to the restaurant and entered the place filled with nothing but food lovers' temptations.

We were immediately won over by the energetic and gentle look of the chef who was clearly very much at ease in his noble house. Hans had a just receding hairline, which looked good on him and even gave him a certain elegance. Furthermore, his light brown hair could still be spoken of and framed his face, the curls going nicely down to his neck in barely discernible order. He had an open and present look, and a body that fit well in his white jacket and dark pants. At the height of his maturity, he was a serious and distinguished man, who could be described as the very image of a German gentleman. He was a bit round here and there, which went well with his profession as chef.

Hans Stefan Steinheuer was not just any chef. He was a great cook, undoubtedly one of the finest in Germany. In the Steinheuer house we felt safe and comfortable, ready to slip into all sorts of delicious temptations. The chef turned our dreams into reality.

We were sitting in the attractive dining room with its red carpeting, dark wooden chairs, and light tablecloths. Elegant and

well-bred, in a black suit, the mistress of the house welcomed us as she came to offer us the menu. Gabriele Steinheuer was a pretty woman. Her delicate face still had its youthfulness, her thick dark hair played in soft coils that heightened her femininity and sweetness.

We had looked the menu over and, since we were hungry, we made our choices quickly, not needing to be begged to order. Mr. Ritter, the blond and stylish sommelier knew our inclination toward the Maison Bercher and thus had us taste a few extraordinary Pinots. We began the meal with a small very round tomato, whose flesh was tender and sweet, stuffed like a soft shoe with the firm and smooth body of sumptuous scallops. Joy, silent emotion, sensual contentment set our hearts beating faster. This dish turned out to

be a masterpiece of gourmandise of which we would have liked to keep appreciating every flavor. But

already we were presented with a raw and cooked foie gras that evolved into voluptuous ranges, which the mouth greedily penetrated in all the intimacy of its flesh. The salmon that came next was quite simply delicious with its flowers of zucchini and its wild garlic. It was a fresh and tender, perfect dish. That evening we also tasted pink-fleshed venison, as tender as a fine fruit, and laden with warm gravy, which flowed into the belly like a small lively and flavorful stream. How happy we were in that divine moment when the body feasts on the excellence of marvelous and delicious things, chosen, prepared, and cooked with passion by an exceptional chef. Nothing in the world can bring greater pleasure and it is worth any and every journey. For dessert, we ordered a Napoleon that was served with caramelized sweetmeat. The pastry was delicate, precise, and rich in successive layers of dangerously appetizing whipped cream and white chocolate, which we couldn't resist. We were most appreciative of the very charming and discreet service by the room's staff that turned out to be perfectly skillful and not too slow.

Unfortunately for us, the meal had come to an end as all good things must come to an end. Hans Steinheuer was passing through to greet his guests in the dining room and had come to join us. He was just slightly concerned, as only the great chefs know how to be, and asked us with a gentle smile if everything had been all right for us. We congratulated him, thanked him for his warm welcome, and promised to return soon again.

That evening, in our charming room, I already knew that I wouldn't open any book but, before falling asleep, I'd think again of each of the courses the great chef had prepared and would carry them with me into my dreams.



WEINGUT VAN VOLXEM

HELMUT THIELTGES WALHOTEL SONNORA

Dreis Bei Wittlich - 5:11 pm

In our search for excellence we had heard about him. A friend, a great restaurateur and exceptional chef in Dreis, with whom we were staying, knew both the winegrower and his wines. From the first evening on after our arrival, our host had filled our glasses with a wine that made us tremble with happiness in the fire of its flame. In the heart of the Sarre Valley, Roman Niewodniczanski was the artisan of this beautiful work, which he raised with love and devotion as if it were his child.

Thus, we had set out on a beautiful late summer morning to meet "Niewo" as those close to him liked to call him, thereby making the pronunciation of his very long and beautiful name easier.

The vigor of the wine's body we had tasted the evening before had made us very enthusiastic. Its lovely pure flavor had contributed a great deal to touching us deeply. The wine bloomed in the mouth and never stopped being born anew in floral notes and slightly salty fragrances. Roman was waiting for us. He looked exactly like the way he had been described to us, lanky and as blond as a Nordic hero.

A handsome six-foot tall Viking, with the most unbelievable drakkar imaginable, whose specialty was not traveling but being sedentary. Its sail was a vineyard; its sea the proud land of the Sarre. Roman had made it his own by purchasing the old Van Volxem domain. The young owner had reinstated it, both vineyard and buildings, and with perseverance, discipline, and intelligence had begun producing vintages of exceptional purity and of a diversity unequaled in its expression. Although we had only just arrived, he took us to see his vines, nestled away on the heights overlooking the crystalline massifs. The view was superb. The turn in the river moved like a torrent and then curled around clasp the valley, turned back again in unperturbed meandering, finding its path through natural, narrow, and sunken passageways. In the sun and wind, Roman, the winegrower of

Wiltigen, was immersed in his work in the vineyards. We listened to him talk about the unconditional love he had for the grapes and the wine. He was speaking of the future and yet, because of what we had tasted with some of our fine meals, we knew that thanks to his great and admirable dry wines, which were sharp without being aggressive, and a few others that were sweeter and smoother, Roman Niewodniczanski had already met his challenge and become a reference point in the knowledgeable and difficult world of great gastronomy, oenology, and home distillers.



The chef is the proprietor, even if the young woman—who leads us to a small terrace overhanging the garden, for an aperitif—plays an important role in running the house properly.

A little farther on, the green palette of the woods stretches out. The warm air smells good from the grass recently cut. On the side beneath the balustrade, are narrow flowerbeds with red vermillion, white, yellow, and pink flowers showing off their lively colors. The sun-filled garden and the small blooming path seem to be watching us. Other guests have just arrived. We nod at each other in hello as we continue chatting, a glass of wine in our hands. We are very comfortable, a ray of warm hazy sunshine caressing a shoulder, while a bee is getting drunk on my champagne, having had a taste. It collapses in my glass before I have time to save it.

When the door opens the chef joins us silently. Motionless for a moment, he looks us calmly in the eye, then, one after the other, takes our hand into his. He turns to his wife once more so she will help him with the introductions.

The deep blue sky is littered with delicate little clouds, a slight wind disperses the scent of roses. My eyes follow the golden disk of the sun between the tops of the pine trees. Evening is falling. "Well then, let's have dinner!" With great simplicity and delicacy the chef has vanished to let us savor his cuisine at our leisure. Before leaving us, he said: "You seem to be hungry. I'll make sure that all is well. I hope to see you tomorrow."

Our table is set up in the very handsome, blond and gold-colored dining room. Gilles Dufflot, the maitre d', has held a lovely spot for us in reserve, beneath the rotunda. He is young and very charming. He asked if we were happy with the location and showed us great kindness. At the best table, he made us feel special. The group around us was cheerful and garrulous. It was a delight to hear Gilles explain every dish. Together with his assistant, Thomas Hübl, they formed a warm, elegant tandem, passionate about their profession.

We gladly let ourselves be taken in by the appetizers that, in and of themselves, were already elaborate dishes. We couldn't keep quiet about the sweet and spicy gazpacho, the flavorful salmon tartare, or the gratin of fleshy and rich lobster, without being unfair to the feast's perfection. And there was no doubt that we were only at the beginning of a wedding banquet in which each element was essential. From the hors-d'oeuvre on, we were shamelessly launched into the experience of tasting a Périgord foie gras. It was, without any doubt, an act of love that filled the mouth, blossomed on the palate, before dying in infinite tenderness, flavors, and subtlety. Exquisitely refined, too, was his jelly of Hungarian Tokay, dispersed in a hail of aromatic, sweet, and delectable droplets. It made us forget our warm brioche on the plate. Diaphanous prawns with a necklace of caviar came

HELMUT THIELTGES



WALHOTEL SONNORA

to life, undressing indecently as we bit into them, moist, nude, tepid, in the ceremony of a carpaccio that was as light as a feather. The guineafowl had the qualities of being both plump and golden-brown; Gilles carved it in front of us before presenting us breast and supreme, which we instantly wanted to bite into. It was ecstasy for the taste buds, sensitive, as tender as one could wish, as juicy as fruit. The little animal with its divine flesh on a bed of round and imperintently delicious leeks, had an astonishing topping of macaroni stuffed with truffled foie gras from the Perigord, which brought utter bliss to whoever tasted it. Then came the poultry legs to share in the feast. They were presented with other delectable gifts of the earth: fruit-flavored with orange and nectarine with a touch of childhood grenadine.

We cannot forget the sweet and irresistible petits fours. The chef was equally talented with savory and sweets and revealed himself to be an extraordinary pastry chef. We couldn't resist his minuscule sweetmeats shaped like large ones, with tiny bits of perfect and melting butter cream inside. The grand pastries were jealously kept at bay for the grand finale. The Opera had been



abducted, neatly, tenderly, sublimely; the savarin of yogurt and strawberries accompanied by rhubarb ice cream was a paradox of the sweet and bitter combined. Its aromas were amplified by a fluid, smooth cream. The time had come to retire and enjoy our comfortable room.

In the morning a brightness came shimmering through the crack in the curtains into the room and awakened us. Behind the door a voice was asking whether they might come in. Breakfast arrived right on time.

An hour later we joined the masters of the house who were waiting for us below at the entrance to their lovely place. "Please, sit down here." The chef's eyes were amused and wrinkled when he began to tell us about his life.

When he was a child, he liked putting his finger in the batter his mother would be preparing. He'd flip a few small carrots on a dish before they had time to make their way to the table and be eaten there. It made him quiver with pleasure.

Madame Thielges, his mother, was an excellent cook who also loved to make cakes. She inculcated the first culinary rudiments in her son.

Then the time had come for Helmut to go and do an apprenticeship. He remembered his first one in Düsseldorf, then a second one in Switzerland. The kitchen of the restaurant where he was working in St. Moritz was in the cellar. One of the young apprentice's functions was to bring the dishes up. He calculated that with each trip he was climbing 145 steps, which he would then have to go down again, the advantage of which was, he said, that it strengthened his calf muscles.

He remembered thoroughly disliking the fact that the boss made him fish the trout in the pond that, each time and to the great displeasure of the apprentice, would jump on top of the counter right under the eyes of a fat cat. Among all his memories, Helmut Thielges felt a great nostalgia for his time in the eastern part of France. The place was rustic, but he enjoyed both the military discipline of the kitchen, to which he graciously submitted, and the fine produce one could find in the Jura. He went back to Cologne, Germany, where for several years he tried his hand at positions as a sauce maker and fish merchant. He worked on entremets

and in the pantry. Throughout these years, Helmut obeyed the orders of his masters. He also managed to collect ideas. He learned the alchemy of the bases for sauces, but also what the possible marriages between foods can be. The young man's parents bought a piece of land on which to build a hotel-restaurant for their son. With the help of contractors, the family cut down the trees. The foundation was laid and the walls began to rise, the roof was put down under the dubious looks of the locals who couldn't get over it. It was time for Helmut to get married and his lovely wife would later bear him a son. That was how everything had begun for the incredible chef.

We weren't the only ones who appreciated Helmut's cuisine; a certain Madame de Bourgogne, a patron of the hotel, had told us before she left that her dearest wish, too, was to return very soon because whatever the chef prepared was so divine.

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WEINGUT KARTHAUSERHOF

After the rapid and somewhat impersonal road that had taken us from Trier to Karthäuserhof, we were now following a charming, small, and peaceable path. The sky was blue above the narrow valley and while the landscape passed by our eyes we let our thoughts gently wander. We had just crossed the village of Eitelsbach, bright as a summer's day, before we finally found the right direction to the property.

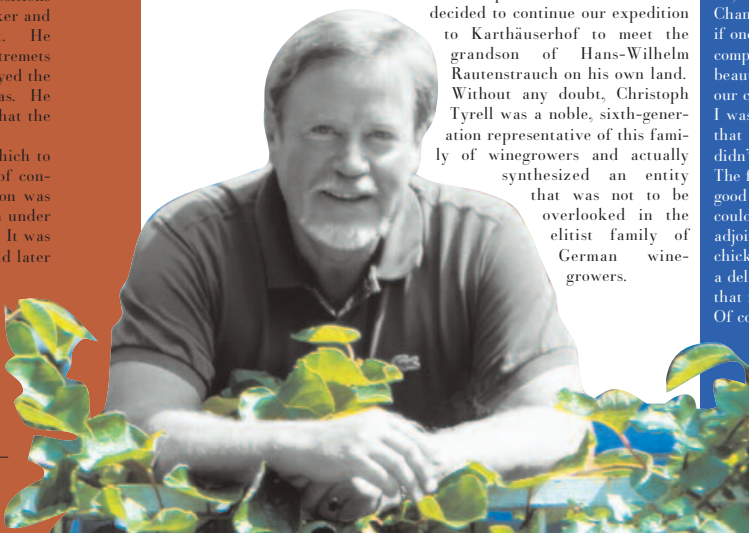
We met Cristoph Tyrell in front of the door of the fine-looking house, which consisted of several buildings. It occurred to us then that this man, at the peak of his years, could have a title of nobility not only because of the magnitude of the house he owned but because he had true class. From the first moment on, his attitude toward us was courteous and kind.

The place where he lived was isolated, magnificent, and tucked away in an enchanting region of the Moselle, known for its wines. The vineyard property, not far from the banks of the river, had the appearance of something halfway between an agricultural domain, a manor house, and a monastery. Moreover, as I come to think of it, the owner's face did not only resemble that of a gentleman farmer but might make one think of a monk who loved earthly nourishment. His consummate love for all things good and beautiful was contagious. In the warm sun the three of us were sitting at a table facing the vineyards with a fine bottle of excellent Riesling before us that our new friend certainly knew how to create.

We had already had the pleasure of tasting his exquisite wines, which belonged to the best Moselles. We had fallen in love with his elegant, harmonious, clear, delicate, and complex Rieslings. There were the 2002 Auslese Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg whose extremely subtle aromas would end in the mouth on notes reminiscent of rhubarb, flavors of apricot, pineapple, and lime. A pure, mineral, and spicy Eitelsbacher Spätlese had real character. We hadn't

wanted to stop there and had therefore decided to continue our expedition to Karthäuserhof to meet the grandson of Hans-Wilhelm Rautenstrauch on his own land.

Without any doubt, Christoph Tyrell was a noble, sixth-generation representative of this family of vinegrowers and actually synthesized an entity that was not to be overlooked in the elitist family of German winegrowers.



HOTEL EURENER HOF

Leaning straight against the back of her chair, the lovely Manuela was laughing at the pleasantries of her husband. Together with him, she directed the hotel that Simon's parents had themselves managed in their time. For four generations, the family business had thus changed its vocation as it evolved from a simple potato business that the ancestors ran to an inn and then the establishment of a hotel. There was plenty to rejoice over in a development such as this, which, thanks to Anneliese and Heinz Haag, had ended in its present magnitude. It was a simple and comfortable place, whose prices were carefully set so as not to supersede the budget a client had in mind.

Manuela had a ravishing smile and an almost childlike grace that added true enchantment to the meal we shared together. Simon was a man with a fine figure, who was very protective of his pretty wife. He liked to make her laugh. He was an extremely courteous and hospitable young man, to whom it would have been a sacrilege not to satisfy the wishes of his guests. To please was his watchword and he had spontaneously served the ritual glass of welcome when we first met. Simon was also a man of taste and very generous. Everything he did was abundant without any preconceived notions or calculations.

For the occasion, he had not stopped at serving a modest wine, but wanted to mark the moment and our memories by opening a great bottle of St. Julien 1985 in our honor, a Chateau Saint Pierre from the Henri Martin vineyards. Nothing was ever too good for the guests he received under his roof and for whom he felt responsible as long as they were with him. We had enjoyed a wonderfully copious meal with the young couple in the welcoming dining room of the restaurant that was very animated that particular evening, with broad tables of diners celebrating possible reunions.

What bothered me a little was that I was unable to finish a fine duck, which came after an excellent foie gras. But it didn't seem to disturb our hotel manager friends who suggested, in spite of it all, that we have dessert. The apple tart with a large pot of Chantilly cream beside it was delicious and was easy to eat even if one wasn't hungry. It was a pleasure to be in such wonderful company. It was as if the sun's warm rays had penetrated the beautiful large room. After this hearty meal, we went back to our comfortable suite where a bottle of Vittel awaited me, which I was happy to drink. It is in delicate attentions such as these that a true hotelkeeper can be recognized. Manuela certainly didn't fail to live up to the rule of this expertise in fine reception. The following morning, we had the nice surprise of having a very good breakfast with real butter croissants, which we thought we could only find in France, on the small private terrace that adjoined our room. Little napkins, embroidered with nibbling chickens, bore witness—if such was needed—to the presence of a delicate, feminine hand that was interested in detail, something that makes all the difference.

Of course, we still needed to explore Trier, the Roman ruins, and the house where Karl Marx was born. Dividing our time between visits to places of historical importance, the dining table of our hosts, and the warm company of the Haag family, our stay seemed very short to us, indeed.

HIRSCHGASSE

Heidelberg - 9.05 pm

No one could ever dream of being received with greater deference. Because of the late hour at which we arrived, we couldn't help but notice the extreme courtesy of our hosts. I remember that it was close to nine o'clock when we were still on the road, our car climbing the narrow streets of Heidelberg, as we were looking for the hotel where we were to stay.

Since we had left Berlin that very morning for an appointed obligatory round-trip, we hadn't used the rather uninteresting highway very much, which was straight as a rail, where the only available places for respite were the official rest stops specifically intended for highway traffic. We no longer had the delicious freedom of stopping wherever we fancied and, as often happens when one is tired, we were no longer enjoying anything. At the end of the trip, as we entered Heidelberg, we weren't even in the mood to look at the evening's illuminations that gave the town a festive color as they displayed the ruins of the Chateau. And yet the show deserved to be admired. In the dusky light of the clouds, the modestly sized town enjoyed the meandering of its alleyways in which the foreign visitor never fails to get lost. It gave the impression of being conscious of its beauty and, at the heart of the confluence of Rhine and Neckar, it had managed to keep the water of the latter for itself as it flowed beneath its Old Bridge. In its honor, the river was lit up at night by shimmering reflections, men's artificial lights put spangles on its flow like a patch of star-filled sky.

Having found our way, and now driving along the river, we had taken a steep left that was not frequently used. Finally, the gorgeous façade of the hotel appeared before us. In front of the entrance were parking spaces for the hotel's patrons. The air was sultry and calm when we stepped out of the car. We were too tired to gather our thoughts, but he met us at the door, took our hands in his, looked at us joyfully, glanced at the car and our luggage, and gave a brief order to a young boy, then introduced us to his wife. It all happened before you could take a breath. Now we were following the couple into the house where they had picked the most beautiful apartment for us we could have dreamed of. To help us recover from our trip, they invited us to dinner. We were to find them again a few minutes later by the entrance to the hotel. It was hard to believe what such a welcome did to uplift body and spirit, it was miraculous. We had found all our morning energy back again.

We were very pleased with the extreme comfort of the apartment they had reserved for us. The atmosphere was created by the stylized leaves in the cashmere cloth on a pretty table, by the ruffles of the pillows on a small couch, by the apple-green color of the canopy bed, and a radiant feeling came over us, awakening us to the pleasures of the moment. The television could not be seen and appeared only on command when a little key was inserted in a keyhole in the machine itself. The screen would rise to eye level, raising the light-colored wood cover with it. Large and noble leather English sofas adorned the space, small frames here and there decorated tables and refined furniture, the walls were yellow, as were the curtains, which had a pale green hue as well. The vanity and the large bathroom completed the sophisticated comfort of the place.

As we went through the hallways, we had definitely regained our good mood. We could count on our hosts' punctuality who were sitting at the bar waiting for us. Mr. and Mrs. Kraft had the reputation of having high standards, whether that concerned their careful presentation, the quality of the service they provided, or the good manners that seemed to come naturally to them. Underneath her dark jacket, Mrs. Kraft was wearing a lovely but proper little blouse in soft colors that set off her porcelain complexion. Carefully coiffed, her straight blonde hair framed her face, while bangs covered her forehead, emphasizing her eyes. The young woman was originally from England and

still had that humor, refined spirit, and taste for interior decoration that is so British. For several years now, Mr. Kraft had been managing the family hotel he had inherited. By his side, his mother still continued to take care

of the place and its occupants. She had come to greet us very amiably as soon as we arrived, watching the entrance all the while. The presence of Madame Mother contributed gaiety and warmth and her femininity was an additional enchantment of the hotel where she kept busy on a daily basis.

A tall and handsome man, Ernest Kraft piqued our interest from the first evening on with tales of duels and picturesque scenes that had once taken place in the hotel.

The hotelkeeper's eyes were shining and when they looked straight at their interlocutor, they seemed to be quite capable of piercing through all kinds of mysteries. His curly blond hair, cut short at the temples, gave the face strength and class. He wore a white shirt, a striped tie, and a dark suit that reminded one of the stylish and formal clothes a student might wear on graduation day.

While we were eating, comfortably settled at a large round table of sculpted wood with prestigious inscriptions and signatures, we listened to the proprietor tell us the history of the Hotel Hirschgasse. Despite the discredit having to do with duels and fights, the taste for experience, audacity, and the willingness to face the risks of being wounded for life and be slashed across the face, were part of a desirable and virile training that a young man of German high society had to achieve. Knife fighting would help him gain his place in the elite corps-at-arms whose members shared the same honor code, the same sense of camaraderie and support, and a genuine fondness for drunken parties. The place where the duel would occur would be known only to the interested parties and the gash on a face would confer the injured man with a lifelong passport that opened every door in high society.

In his early years, Count Bismark immersed himself in this manly ritual, right here at Hirschgasse. While Mr. Kraft continued talking, he showed us a few lines carved in the wood of the table that the illustrious figure had written for posterity. Even if the sharpened blades were no

HIRSCHGASSE



longer being crossed at Hirschgasse and physicians today only came to the hotel to deal with minor ailments, the tradition of the duel still survived in other places and other German towns. As we listened to our hosts this evening, we had been content to feast simply on a small salad with diced bacon and a tomato salad with mushrooms and potatoes. We were holding off for the grand evening the following day when a special menu would be prepared for us, to be served in the very beautiful restaurant dining room with its inlaid parquet floor and red fabric walls. In this convivial theater we would have the best table set up in a box on a kind of balcony overlooking the rest of the room. It had thus been decided that tomorrow's dinner would be elegant and refined.

As agreed the previous evening, a personal menu was awaiting us on our table, placed on a delicate, beige and tea rose-colored cloth, already indicating the direction our dining festivities would take. German wines accompanied the courses and the predetermined order of dishes seemed most enjoyable. Catfish, oysters, crawfish, a small green frisée salad, a frothy scallop soup, venison, foie gras, Brussels sprouts, and a nougat Napoleon were part of the celebration.

We were nothing but satisfied when came back to our suite. We were getting ready to open our door when a charming gesture caught our attention. Our hosts had had the lovely idea of attaching a sign with our name on it on the wall next to the door. One couldn't imagine a more polished act. But that was how it went in the Kraft family, from the moment a guest entered the Hirschgasse, everything was done to please the individual.



WEINGUT TRIAS

Burgstadt/Franken - 5 37 pm

On the nose of our friend the winegrower his small glasses began to move all by themselves and, together with his lips and fine mustache, they seemed to wiggle with joy and ease. His eyes crinkled in ringing laughter. He was talking about friends and associates: Rudolf, his father; Monika, his wife; Sebastien, his son, who was so important to the continuation of the business. Paul and Monika Fürst are lovely people who

know how to open their door to others with great warmth. On this late afternoon, the day was beginning to come to a close over Bürgstadt, when we crossed the village and arrived

at the property. Having tasted the Fürst wine in a fine restaurant, **there was no way in the world that we wanted to miss the opportunity of coming here to meet the fantastic artisans of the nectar whose substance remains so beautifully in the mouth.**

The Sylvaner, Spätlese, and Trocken wines of the Fürst house and of the four friends who came together to round off the sacred beverage in a bouquet of vineyards, bearing the name Trias, deserve to be visited.

Johann Ruck of Iphofen, Karl Martin Schmitt of Randersacker, Armin Störlein of Randersacker, and the Fürst Löwenstein house of Kreuzwertheim have therefore joined Paul. In union there is strength. By bringing everything together, they have benefited from greater expertise and the skills have been increased tenfold. In this group of talented professionals everything is done according to the rules of the art. Cultiva-

tion on the three different kinds of soil has become more and more rigorous, and the quality of the wines has vastly improved because of it. And to everyone's great joy—whether one is a connoisseur or a simple lover of good wine—the work and discipline have borne fruit. The Trias wine cultivation is now masterful and the wines have developed into remarkable products.

To taste one of Paul's great wines, we sat down at Mr. Fürst's table in the small room beneath an amusing chandelier of bunches of green bottles. Listening to the man, in the prime of his life, speak to us about this professional adventure of five, which had begun just a few years earlier, excited us immediately. While he explained his love for the vine to us, he lingered on the dry wine, which he certainly was not the only one to appreciate.

We saw Monika and her beautiful smile pass between two doors. We were no longer tired from the trip at all. We were happy to be here, at the table, in the warmth of the great winegrower's lights and passions, while outside the night had fallen.



VILLA HAMMERSCHMIEDE

Pfinztal-Sollingen - 4 55 pm

“When it's a question of eating carrots, the two little rabbits behave frugally but they take all the more pleasure in the shape of their bodies as a Ying-Yang heart. They are masters at loving and have a playful soul.” Mr. Schwalbe said of them, laughing. He was the proprietor of the Villa Hammerschmiede and presented us with them as a welcoming gift. “These little rabbits will accompany you for the rest of your trip and will bring you luck.” That was the decision made for us on this late morning in Pfinztal. From now on, we wouldn't be alone any longer and would travel only in the company of the rabbit couple, eternally petrified in their Netsuke ivory. Mr. Schwalbe is like that—generous. He slips little things into your hands and pockets and, to the delight of his guests, spreads the good will of lovely surprises. When we speak of the house of Mr. Schwalbe we have to say that the attractive villa he has transformed into a hotel is a **temple of good taste and sophisticated objects.** Mr. Schwalbe has unearthed marvelous treasures that he skillfully knew how to place in spots obviously meant for them. The Hammerschmiede house has thus acquired the luxury of sumptuously modern furniture and art objects and its rooms are decorated in a variety of soft fabrics and precious accessories. The villa has the most elegant décor possible but its additional specialty is having an excellent chef.

Marcus Nagy is a handsome dark-haired young man who passionately loves cooking and one quickly sees why. Stinginess and he don't go together and although it isn't always easy or cheap for a restaurant owner to obtain the best produce on the market, this chef doesn't flinch from these kinds of difficulties.

Food comes to him and that is all to the benefit of the patrons. Whatever the cattle or vegetable farm, the chef chooses them because they represent the finest quality. Mr. Nagy has no qualms about ordering fish from Rungis—a market next to Paris—and stocks up there on the finest foodstuffs. For him, poultry will make the trip from Bresse or the Alsace; melons come from

the Charente. Vegetables and suckling pig are raised much closer by, in the region itself, and enrich the chef's menu together with the bread that is found in the next village, Ellmendingen. Thus, every day the same ritual is followed between the bakery and the hotel. Johan Becker, the baker, makes the deliveries of his fine bread while Karin, his wife, tends the shop.

Only a few months earlier, Eric Griese had joined the hotel team. The young man seemed to be acquitting himself very well of his new managerial position beside Miss Schwalbe, the attractive and professional director. He is good at showing friendly interest in the clients and has the courtesy to address them in their native tongue, which immediately eases the atmosphere. Yesterday, Mr. Griese had a little chat with us as he guided us to the restaurant.

The dining room's décor, as of a riding school, was not intrusive and had the wisdom to remain motionlessly in the background, simply elegant. The center of the room was raised on a circular platform, the perimeters had bay windows.

The most important aspect, however, was the cuisine. The chef enchanted us with a first course of shrimp, tomatoes, white beans, followed by a marvelously presented variety of foie gras—hot foie gras, foie gras ravioli, foie gras with figs, and a terrine de foie gras. Then came a John Dory covered in

the aromatic and subtle warmth of its body, and delicious tender and firm frogs' legs. The rice and veal was full of flavor and the bison meat excellent. Since no great meal can come to an end without dessert, a frozen Charente melon mousse was the icing on the cake. We were very happy after all these wonderful things and ready to return to our luxurious room and dream of future grand meals.



RESTAURANT ZIRBELSTUBE

stuttgart - 7:34 pm

At first sight, the man seemed rather reserved but it was merely an initial impression that actually concealed a fine education, which forces him to be somewhat withdrawn with the person with whom he is talking. It is his role, which is very important to him and which he performs admirably, that sets his energy and care in motion. Mr. Schmitt is a talented and sensitive man who has managed to surround himself with great chefs and convinced them to come and join the kitchens of the Hôtels Althoff group of which he is one of the gastronomic leaders. There is no doubt that it is from the cooks that the strength and uniqueness of this gathering emanate. Beyond the hotels in which they work, they make the name Althoff shine by bringing their proprietor a bouquet of gourmet stars, a miraculous cuisine unique in Germany. Among these places of grand dining is the elegant restaurant Zirbelstube in the hotel Am Schlossgarten, with Bernhard Diers as its chef. If the hotel itself doesn't hold your attention, his food certainly does.

We found the place at lunch time. The restaurant is done all in wood and is reminiscent of a luxurious and elegant chalet in a fashionable ski resort. We were relaxing for a few moments in a seat upholstered in a cheerful pink fabric with birds and branches, with a white cloth on the table, and very soon our impatience to start eating was compensated. We couldn't resist the delightful menu suggested. The appetizers looked like a group of cheeky children, brightly colored and appealing, for which our stomach instantly felt a feverish desire. The sweet little faces of these refined and fragrant bits were presented on the platter in a joyous, quivering circle. We tasted a delicious tiny quiche, a round and light puff-pastry mignonne with chives, and an acidulous sushi. We had a melon mousse and then delighted in a small creamy bouill-

abaisse that communed beautifully with its base of calamari and lamb broth. It was all very good and the result was that it definitely stimulated our appetite.

We began our meal enthusiastically with a remarkable foie gras beaded with a fine aspic that came with a brioche that could have only originated in the restaurant's baker's oven where it had just been made. Presented on a large white platter with a golden edge, it was an exceptional and regal dish, its texture dense, smooth, sensitive, and its scent a mingling of subtlety and calculated evanescence. The crawfish and the Saint Pierre, our second course, were also memorable in every way.

The young woman who was our sommelier had chosen German wines for us. Florian Gartner, the maitre d', in a dark gray suit, was smiling, skillful, and courteous who formed an elegant duo with the sommelier. My only regret during the entire meal was the absence of plain water. It could have been an infinitely discreet accompaniment to Mr. Diers' harmonious and delicate food while, instead, the bubbly water was grating, overtaking the palate, and didn't match the polished cuisine and its refined dishes. However, this was secondary, after all, or almost...and we continued our feast as enthusiastically as before with a tender and delicious venison, small tasty and elegant carrots, and a flavorful, creamy potato puree. We ended our meal with a rich, warm little apricot tart. The cuisine of Bernhard Diers turned out to be as subtle and refined as it was lively and spirited. There was a kind of purity in the art the chef had mastered that was able to sublimate the product by magnifying its taste without relying on extravagance in any way. It was obvious that he respected everything he touched and worked with, as if to him there were nothing more important in life, and yet he had a wife and daughters whom he missed. For the time being, they were living far away in Munich, for Mr. Diers had not yet been able to locate a house for them closer by in Stuttgart. This regrettable although temporary fact saddened him, judging by his blue eyes that turned dark as a stormy sky when he spoke of it. However, out of modesty, he didn't complain about it and in spite of the heartache of separation his smile continued to be dazzling. One could tell that Mr. Diers had faith in the future and undoubtedly would soon find a solution, whereupon his happiness would be complete.

The chef told us of the hotel's second restaurant and advised us to try that as well. A few days after our memorable experience in the Ziberlstube, we wanted to get to know the second place with its simpler cuisine. We decided to go there for dinner and eat on the terrace. I remember a tomato carpaccio with fresh and good fish, tender and delectable medallions of beef with admirable mushrooms and carrots, and a fine dessert of strawberries and rhubarb. It was a good address to remember for a dinner with friends, a serious lunch, or—why not?—a meal for lovers.



BRENNER'S PARK HOTEL & SPA

Baden-Baden - 6:35 pm

With a light heart we set out on our journey. We had a good reason to feel happy. The moment we decided to go to Baden-Baden our spirits were elated. We reached the spa town by a small road that rolled gently between the local vineyard and the Black Forest. A furtive sun was lovingly scattering light through the dense foliage. The sky was clear.

When the car drove beneath the centuries-old trees that lined the Lichtenather lane, it seemed to me that I recognized the immense park. Trees of every species from all over the world stood in the middle of open and cheerful spaces. Some of them, such as the tropical plants with their enormous trunks spread their branches out to form a thick curtain. Beeches, oaks, maples, and chestnut trees also rose to the sky, gleaming in the center of the bright lawn and the enchanting glades. While the main, regularly laid out route was a masterpiece of austerity, the narrow sinuous paths that could be seen through the underbrush seemed to have merited the pretty benches that were set on the banks of the Oos. Later on, as we were taking a walk we would discover the stone-covered bed of the totally transparent river that flowed merrily along. It seemed that every pleasure the world had to offer was present here. We had arrived in an explosion of greenery from which the town appeared to be smiling. We were savoring the image of a little girl with her arm around a woman sitting next to her; a group of young girls was laughing heartily. We would have loved slipping into the conversation of two elderly gentlemen who were chatting animatedly. A lady was caressing the cheek of a small boy who was looking deep into her eyes. A joyous atmosphere hung in the air, intoxicating because of the expanse of the park, the pure air, the crystal-clear sky, the flower beds, the breathing trees, the river that seemed to be talking to itself, and the playful populace that filled its lanes. Now I understand why the place was so familiar to me; it was shielded like the village of my childhood. Here one breathed the mellow air of a resuscitated

other era, of a vanished and eternal world that I knew well. Baden-Baden had managed to stop time by transforming its reveries into a reality of stones and landscapes. We had guessed at the presence of the large hotel a few seconds before it appeared. Private and stately, a bright spacious driveway led us there. We stopped in front of the main door beneath a canopy as immense as a tent, installed to welcome the prestigious attendants of a tournament of knights.

Once the suitcases were taken from the car by a staff that could not have been more discreet, we followed the porters into the exquisite hall of the great establishment. We studied every last little detail in the place, which had a noble dignity. The daylight was playing through the windows and glass doors that looked out over the garden, the trees, and the sky.

It was then that someone interrupted our thoughts and asked us to follow him. Behind him we went through long hallways with wall-to-wall thick woolen carpeting. A delicate fragrance of powder floated through the corridors. All of it produced infinite delight. Suddenly our guide stopped in front of a door and put an odd little key into the lock whose head looked like a round face that began to smile as soon as it was turned. That was the sign that we could enter, our escort explained.

We walked around the premises. An immense bouquet of pale roses welcomed us, together with an impressive basket of fruit, a carafe of water, and vintage champagne in a silver bucket. Beneath one of the glasses was an envelope with our name on it. We carefully opened it while the bellboys finished arranging our luggage. Frank Marrenbach's large and elegant handwriting in green ink was visible on the eggshell-colored page bearing all sorts of kind words.

Whenever we so desired, they would be waiting for us with a full body massage in the palace's Oriental islands. A private suite had been reserved for us for relaxation and beauty treatments. We could also stop in with the athletic coaches or, if we preferred, swim in the blue water of the extraordinary swim-



BRENNER'S PARK HOTEL & SPA

ming pool. Everything was waiting to attend to our merest wish, all we needed to do was signal the competent staff. They could thus arrange a health report as well as a beauty renewal. The guest even had the possibility of improving his or her smile thanks to a highly qualified dental office. An Olympian cloud of solemnity, professionalism, and silent gentleness surrounded the palace, which pleased us enormously. We were made to feel like important guests in one of the last remaining and sublime grand hotels. Mr. Marrenbach, whom we met the very next day, was a director who was used to managing any situation, from the slightest and most commonplace to the most eccentric and unusual ones. He had, indeed, maintained the grand and elegant style of the courteous gentleman, and his training at Cornell University predisposed him to a modern enterprise of breadth, renovation, and expansion. The director was young and undoubtedly very intelligent, which made him modest when he was complimented, tolerant and respectful of others, and attentive to all. We thought he was handsome, which didn't hurt either. After exchanging a few formalities and liking each other, we learned that he was married to a gorgeous young brunette who had born him two boys of whom he was extremely proud. We watched him in action, a kind word for everyone, communicating with both hotel staff and guests with the same warmth, and at the same time preserving the spirit of the lovely place. Every time he was needed, he apologized for the interruption,

which never lasted more than a few necessary moments and then he'd pick up the conversation precisely where we'd left off, as if he had nothing more important to do than chat with us. He didn't have the time and so he made it, which is always the approach of all great hotel directors. During our stay at Brenner's, we also met Barbel who for ten years had been in charge of all the palace's communications. Her presence warmed my heart more than I could say and I immediately had great admiration for her. The young blonde beautifully managed every battle, professional or private, that she was involved in and had escaped with talent from the abrasions destiny had dealt her, which made her quite lovable and gave her a profoundly intense look. Barbel Gohner had guided us, as only she was able to do, with great kindness through the maze of the palace's huge hallways. We had followed her, surprised to discover adjoining apartments that were reserved for long-term stays, that sometimes continued for years. We had returned to view the beautiful objects scattered through the hotel, a Gobelin tapestry, authenticated old paintings and furniture. We appreciated the gentle refinement that was the hotel's stock in trade. We were interested in hearing about the meeting on 15 February 1962 between Chancellor Adenauer and General de Gaulle that had been so fundamental for Europe. We continued our tour with Barbel in the tepid and soft wind of the palace to a gym that contained all the modern equipment imaginable. We discovered the planet of Kanebo, its treatments, oils, creams, and perfumes. After such an extensive expedition, we were ready to undertake a gustatory cruise of the restaurant. Before finding this fine place, however, we left our guide and went to relax a little in the luxury of our suite. Its wood paneling, its finely worked moldings, the thick fringed curtains, the clever ways of hiding the modern appliances to be seen only when in use, the view, the terrace overlooking the park, the deliciously comfortable armchairs, the period furniture, the marble of the white bathroom, and the double bed we knew would be soft, all worked together in the civilized and endlessly elegant, reserved, and stylized universe of the grand establishment. How many hours went by this way in delightful lasciviousness? We weren't counting. It was a moment of bliss and we were completely happy. Delight wouldn't stop here. Hours flew by like minutes and we were beginning to feel an urge to eat. That first evening, we preferred the winter garden that offered a rich and simple menu. Beneath the foliage of trees, the place looked out over the park as well. It was a captivating display, both because of the view it gave onto nature but also because of the local and worldly patrons who would come to relax here. It was already late. Behind the large glass wall, the still very clear sky was slowly turning silver, the shadow of the leaves were dancing over a small path. Mr. Carlo Castelletta, the maitre d', had shown us to an attractive table. We were watching the fantastic image of diners who, by some strange alchemy, seemed to be

ennobled by the surroundings and at one with the place. Even before an elderly lady had found the time to place her hand on the glass door, Carlo was ahead of her. **He bent down over the delightful figure, dressed in**

a formal gown, to kiss her hand and offer her his arm. As we saw them pass close by our table they took our breath away. She was proud and inaccessible; he was the courteous servant who took care of her. As he spoke to her, she lightly nodded her head and placed her hand on Carlo's arm. It was the same ritual every evening; together they would cross the room as long as a church, until they reached the spot reserved for the lady who'd give him a naughty wink. The sky was clear, still silvery, motionless, just as these two people were. Mr. Castelletta sweetly took care of his customer every day. It was affection, love, connected to the pleasure of serving, of providing happiness. For forty years he'd been doing this, the faithful, devoted, and irreplaceable Carlo, who, taking small steps, knew exactly how to lead the charming and frail 90-year old princess to her table. He was magnificent in his dark suit, his ruddy complexion set off by the white shirt, his eyes shining, and he'd look at everyone with the same handsome dark gaze without blinking.

We were watching the trees, the marvelous lawns, the fluttering of the little butterflies, while at the same time enjoying the sunny dishes we had chosen. A fresh and nicely spiced tomato salad, a small rustic dish so difficult to find these days, a flavorful and delicious Charente melon, and medallions of veal with cream sauce completed the delightful meal. We drank a Domaine des Planes rosé wine from the Provence.

We were awakened the following morning by bird songs and were delighted to see a breakfast arrive that was perfect for food lovers. We planned to spend this Sunday exploring the town and its environs, the half-timbered houses of Oberkirch, and the Baden vineyards at the foothills of the Black Forest. Toward eleven o'clock they brought us our car in which, to our great surprise, we found two packages on the driver's seat that contained a snack, prepared by the personnel. **"Just in case," Gaetano Moretti told us with a big smile as he closed the car door.** At the same time we also noticed that the car had been washed. All of this had been done with the single aim of pleasing us.

I remember the tour we made that day with the same pleasure as I do the joy we had in opening our snack boxes. We had been hesitant to do this on the fresh grass of a field. We pre-



ferred pursuing the road to a small lake with dark water at the foot of the Hornsgrinde, where we finally settled down on the edge of a path near a babbling brook. We felt liberated as we floated between con-

temptment and the desire to throw ourselves on the smoked ham, hard-boiled eggs, good bread, cheese, and a cool light topaz-colored wine.

We came back to the hotel rather late in the afternoon. The fresh air had given us an appetite and so we went directly to the restaurant. Adjacent to the winter garden, the place was more formal than the latter, and its food more sophisticated. We sat down on fine chairs upholstered in turquoise velvet. Raspberry red curtains gave the interior a theatrical ambience. White tablecloths and pretty porcelain reminded us of the art of table setting. Marcus Verscht, the maitre d', welcomed us with simplicity and was already showing us the bright evening menu. We entrusted Karl-Heinz Schopf with the choice of wine to accompany a vegetable terrine, crawfish in aspic, and a Breton lobster with a puree of green peas. All we told him was that we'd like it to be a cool light wine. The sommelier suggested a Blanc de Blanc from the domain of Hauteville des Bouches-du-Rhône 2CC1. It was a very nice bottle and Rudolf Pellkofer and Andreas Krolik's cuisine was excellent.

Throughout our stay, too brief for our taste, we had many happy surprises, one of which was seeing a friend from Hamburg. The young man knew the Baden-Baden palace because he had once worked there. These days Henning Reichel was the director's right hand man. Congratulating him on this well-deserved promotion, we reminded him of the first evening we'd ever spent together on the banks of the Elbe, watching the boats go by. At that time, he'd been running the restaurants of a very pretty hotel. It was a summer evening and all three of us were in a very good mood. Perhaps I'd had a little too much fine Riesling that night? When we'd first met the young manager, I ventured to tell him that he reminded me of a well-known American actor. Mr. Reichel had a good sense of humor and had burst out laughing good-naturedly.

Thus, we discovered to our delight that Henning Reichel had joined the masterfully orchestrated symphony of the Brenner. Mr. Marrenbach had expertise in yet another art, that of knowing how to surround himself with superior staff and how to delegate, but coming from him that was not surprising. Because of what he was and what he did, Frank was a model for his profession.

ZUM ALDE GOTT

LE JARDIN DE FRANCE

The car was moving along at a nice pace on the little road leading to the Zum Alde Gott restaurant as if it already knew that our meeting with Lise and Wielfrid would be a moment of happiness for us. To sit down at their table was to celebrate life, praise God, and become a child of the family. Thanks to Wielfrid we feasted and thanks to Lise we were entertained. She'd speak in a whisper as if what she was saying contained inadmissible secrets. Then suddenly interrupting her hushed conversation, she'd continue with roaring laughter. Sunlight flooded the house, the pretty terrace where one could eat, the well-laid tables with their yellow cloths, and the chairs upholstered in green, red, and yellow checks. The atmosphere was casual, good-natured, and invigorating. We were drinking a regional bubbly white wine, while looking out over what Lise called the landscape of "German Tuscany." It was, indeed, a beautiful view. It looked out over a hill covered in the leaves of the Lord's vineyard. There was something sacred about the place. Perhaps it was the love between Lise and Wielfrid that spread out into the atmosphere like an elixir even more intoxicating than the wine. Lise's response was to throw her head back as if she wanted to kiss all the world's bliss in a burst of laughter. Wielfrid, too, seemed to savor every moment and thrived on the 28 years of their complicity. Listening in admiration to his wife, he'd still tease her saying that "women are big talkers." He immediately provoked a playful reaction from Lise. **There was no doubt that the cuisine, the restaurant, and the two boys they'd brought into the world had put the finishing touches on a life that was a daily celebration.**

Lise mentioned that her husband was "a true man of the Black Forest" which might have meant that he was hot-blooded. He was tall, strong, and yet, when he fell ill—as he had that autumn day, the first time we had come—Lise coddled him like a baby, even if it was just an innocuous fever. We could tell she was worried and saw her disappear from the room to go and check on her dear convalescing husband in bed. It was then, watching her in action this way, that we understood her life was intricately interwoven with his to the point of almost being one.

A happy, romantic excitement rendered the room both animated and calm. One had to go there at night to find its hospitality and cheer, with sunflowers on the white tablecloths. Andréa, with the lovely smile, would serve us. Like a corolla around her face, she had short dark hair with some white right at the top of her head, as if a small snowcap had come down on it. We enjoyed the chef's tasty cuisine. A refined salmon tartare; the halibut wrapped in bacon, covered with a red wine sauce, made an appetizing course. The vegetable aspic was fresh and subtle. We were quite overcome by Wielfrid's fine dishes. In the Zum Alde Gott, nothing and no one was common; everything there was original and welcoming.

He was a great chef and, as such, the only steam he was familiar with was that of his kitchen. **Monsieur Bernhard's horizons lay at his stoves.**

Sophie and Stephan's restaurant was situated in the vaulted shadows of a passageway, in the discreet gap between two shops. It lay comfortably in the other garden of an interior courtyard, in the shelter of a loquaciously singing fountain above which the statue of a lovely lady and child stood guard. The place was appealing and bright with its black and white diamond-shaped floor, its verandah, its mirrors that increased the amount of light, and its walls covered with large paintings of roses. A little music pervaded the air. Popular French melodies cooed and talked about Java Beue and Ménilmontant. **A benevolent warm charm emanated from this Jardin de France, which in Sophie had found the most gracious proprietor possible.** The friendly young woman served her guests with gentle gestures. The team by her side acquitted itself marvelously well of its task and we could only enjoy the expert service. For our first meal, we had chosen round pink radishes in a fresh salad; sumptuous crawfish whose flesh was both firm and soft. We had tasted a remarkable home-made foie gras on a bed of garden cherries in a Banyuls sauce. This dazzling dish would bring us back to the restaurant, as would the change of seasons and courses.

Another time, we had the foie gras presented with mirabelle plums, differently interpreted by the chef. One lunch we enjoyed pork cheeks with small succulent potatoes and young carrots from the family vegetable garden. We succumbed to a little mullet whose taste was both round and pointed, placed on a barely reddened tomato; a fine and tender-fleshed brill; and succulent and delicate venison.

We never could resist the chef's fine desserts, for he was also a talented pastry chef. We'd devour quetsch compote, vanilla ice cream, coffee mousse, and extraordinary little cream puffs with or without chocolate.

These moments in the Jardin de France sent us into a world of food masterfully prepared that would satisfy our spirit as much as our appetite.



HOTEL BAREISS

Baiersbronn-Mitteltal - 3 40 pm

It was that morning or the next one that we heard the cuckoo clocks responding to each other in the hallways of the large house. Like a kind of endemic chiming disease, their sound seemed to be perpetuated through the village streets, from one

church bell to another.

The previous evening, our path had led us into a valley surrounded by conifers. **Toward one o'clock in the afternoon, we had stopped to have lunch in a village on a small road that, in its knots, resembled a ball of wool a playful cat would like to have loosened.** The houses were set so that they seemed like musical notes, useful to one another but indifferent to strangers and stingy with indications. There were so few inscriptions and signs that we might well have driven straight past the hotel.

It was the well-groomed entrance, the path, and then the inner courtyard of the building with its flower-covered walls that made us realize we had arrived. Of all the places in Germany devoted to hospitality and tourism, this was certainly one of the most extraordinary. The few hours we had intended for lunch turned into days. Luckily, there were still a few vacancies. The hotel itself was a village crawling with ideas, opulence, original suggestions, and it offered remarkable catering expertise. Among other things, it had the characteristically German quality of knowing how to organize everything without a false note or any down time.

Every stay, whether that be several days or several weeks, became memorable and each guest always wanted to come back one day. As soon as we arrived and had barely settled into a suite with a springtime décor, we would open the pane-glass doors to the private terrace. Welcome gifts, pastries, cookies, canapés, glasses of champagne, tea, coffee, would arrive almost as soon as we had—with a carafe of cool water that we enjoyed enormously, because the clear liquid was something that even the grand hotels don't frequently offer. Everything in the place was flawless. **In a way, for someone who wanted to familiarize himself with the art of hospitality, it was the place to go and learn what it meant to truly take care of a client.** Thus, at night the bedcovers were always turned down, the sheets flattened, the pillows fluffed and the blankets folded by the housekeeping staff, and the toiletries that had been used were replaced. Bottles of signature perfume awaited us on a stool in a sophisticated bathroom. One was packaged in green for men, the other in mauve for women.

In the evening we went downstairs, eager to discover what the evening meal would be, a buffet that we hoped would be informal. In the middle of a large luminous room stood a crowd around a long, wide sideboard with a carved top, covered with dishes presented in the form of figurative sculptures. Giant recreated vegetables that could have swallowed up their

cooked offspring; platters with structures of meats and fish as we had only seen in picture books.

After a good night's sleep, we were in a fine mood the next day. As soon as we opened the window we inhaled the fresh air, wondering whether it would soon be time for coffee. Everything was punctual and a royal breakfast arrived. Nothing was missing: from fruit to jams, butter croissants, the crusty bread of a baguette, whole grain bread, cakes and cookies, small cream cheeses, eggs, cheese, and good local ham. After the meal we decided to explore first the outside and then the inside. The swimming pool resembled that of an aquatic center, the spa offered every treatment imaginable. The little shops were located beneath the vault of a gallery. The place was active and incredibly busy like a beehive. For a long time, its queen had been Hermine Bareiss, a fantastic business woman, who had turned a country inn into a royal hotel. Today, Hermann Bareiss had inherited the scepter and had



succeeded in making it prosper even more. Mr. Bareiss had made it into a German place of reference. He was a tall man with a fine bearing, who wore the traditional dress of the Black Forest like an aristocrat.

The second evening, to our surprise, we encountered a ritual that at first seemed strange to us. We had an appointment in the bar with Uta Schlägenhauf, the gorgeous communications director of the hotel. To find her, we went through a hallway

Freiburg - 4 55 pm

that we hadn't seen before. Around the edge of a room, in a circle, sat dozens of people hoping to meet the owner of the establishment. Each day, Mr. Bareiss made the opportunity available to greet each client, having the elegance and the memory to recall the details and story of every individual. When he began a conversation, it was decisive for the guest who was made to feel quite distinguished. And everyone in the group sat patiently waiting on a chair for the sacred moment that he or she would be noticed. The great gentleman of hotel management, Hermann Bareiss, thus devoted several hours every day to shaking hands, inquiring after the health of a child, getting news. **We found this phenomenon of another era enchanting.**

For us, the other revelation came from the Bareiss restaurant. There were several places in the large establishment where one could eat. The Kaminstube had a classic and pleasant cuisine and the typical and warm Dorfstubben offered a simple and excellent regional cuisine. But the gastronomic restaurant,



very fashionable and with a great reputation, was something else. The chef who ruled there was Claus Peter Lumpp. He had trained under such culinary stars as Alain Ducasse and Heinz Winkler before coming back to put down his pots and pans in the Black Forest.

In the intimate restaurant, with just a limited number of tables, we were presented with the chance to enjoy the culinary talents of Mr. Lumpp. A Breton Lobster with melon and a touch of exquisite vanilla, a marvelous and delicately flavored salmon with caviar, a fully cooked mullet surrounded by melting baby artichokes, a tender turbot: the chef's talent was apparent. **A soaring and masterful cuisine.** Mr. Lumpp knew how to highlight his product and magnify it. He had the intelligence to remain faithful to the great classics while at the same time simplifying them. There was no denying that Claus Lumpp was a great chef, while the dining room service, directed by the brilliant Thomas Brandt, was in perfect harmony with the courses. For us these moments of fine dining and the others we experienced throughout our stay at the Bareiss were among the most exalting we ever had the pleasure to experience in Germany.

The few weeks in Freiburg, Brisgau, were particularly mild that fall. Besides the amazingly gentle lifestyle the town emanated, we were delighted to be able to explore the boundless space of the Black Forest, which was nearby. We enjoyed discovering the Baden plain and the hillsides covered with vineyards and fruit trees. We climbed up and down the paved alleys of the old town, wanting to meld with the colorful crowd.

It was new for us to relax daily on a café

terrace. Right next to us, some students were always excitedly involved in animated conversations, taking over the space and moving tables together in a cheerful cacophony when classes were over.

Each walk brought us new discoveries, but we invariably returned to the square by the cathedral to admire the church that seemed to be the most noteworthy building in town, whose construction was begun in 1200. Beneath the portal's tympanum, we'd stretch our necks to look up at the detail of a gargoye. Among the allegories displayed, the archivolts showed a very rare one of the Creator observing the Sunday repose. We were ardent in our passion for history, spending the mornings visiting one museum after the other. The big city's atmosphere was playful, indeed.

The "Bächle", filled with burbling cool water, wandered like clear ribbons along the endless streets. The welcoming rivulets were besieged by funny birds while children of all ages sat on their edges. Dangling their feet in the clear water, they'd chat and laugh, at one with the feeling and noise of the moment. It was a serene and vivid scene, the sun intermittently playing with and reflecting in the water as well.

There was so much to see and do in Freiburg that we decided to prolong our stay there.

In its abundant comfort, the hotel we had chosen added to our desire to relax. We were happy that we'd been able to find a suite there, for it was a special place and highly sought after by travelers. It wasn't the first attempt of the proprietors, who were fantastic builders. After having run a few extremely successful restaurants, they had bought this place some 25 years earlier to turn it into a warm and perfect apartment complex. It was without a doubt the town's grand hotel, and turned out to be a very hospitable and sophisticated place, well served by a stylish staff that made every effort to carry out their art of receiving and serving the customer.

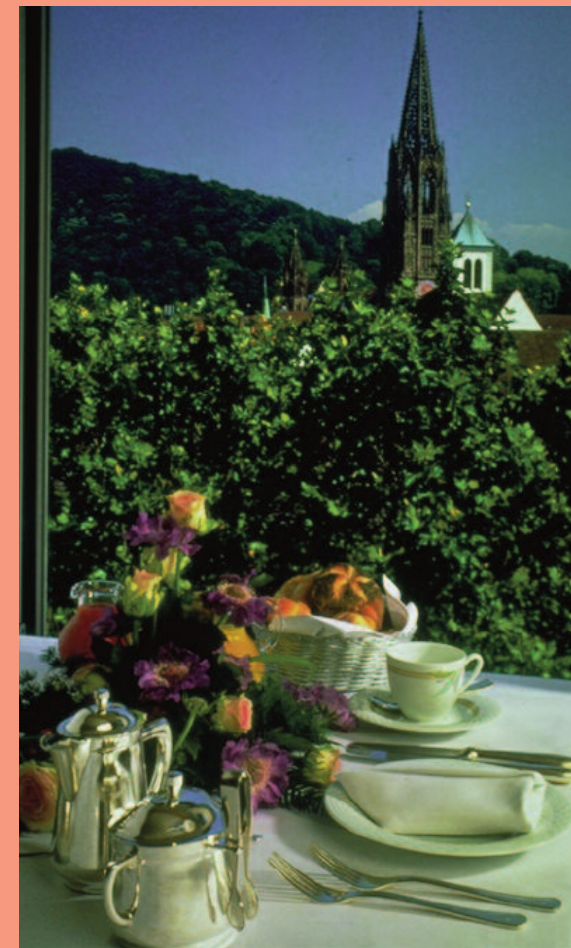
The rooms, whose decoration was often done by the elegant proprietress, resembled beaded jewelry boxes with their light fabric, their pretty mouse-gray edging, and their beige carpeting with its subtle touches of green and pink branches. Studded mirrors like antique works of art completed the impression of brightness crowning the head of the bed with a large letter C, the hotel's emblem. Before they became the owners of the Hotel Colombi, Mr. and Mrs. Burtsche were great travelers. In fact, they had met during one of their journeys when they were both on a ship going to America.

Roland Burtsche was a man of caliber, not afraid of new experiences. After years of apprenticeship, which had taken him from Hamburg to Canada, he had become chef on the cruise ship the "President Roosevelt."

As for Waltraud Burtsche, she had decided to move to New York, where she stayed for a year, and learn the language. A few years later, once back in Germany, Roland and Waltraud were married, had three daughters, and settled in Freiburg. A competent and intelligent man, Mr. Burtsche wasn't reluctant to take initiatives he decided were interesting. He became a restaurant manager while his wife managed his establishments. In '78, Mr. and Mrs. Burtsche bought the Hotel Colombi.

Wanting to improve their place, they also acquired the adjoining tea salon. They retained its pastry chef. It was rare to find a hotel that had a pastry shop open to outside patronage. The shop's small quarters were always animated and filled with people who met there and might have a hot drink and a pastry. **The terrace, looking out over the lane, the trees, and the sun, was open in fine weather. And in Freiburg, the weather was often fine.**

The Hotel Colombi wouldn't have seemed complete without its pleasant bar where we'd stop in each evening to have a drink before dinner. We'd rely on the bartender, who—if I remember cor-



rectly— was of Italian origin and always made fine choices for us. **He was perfect and always in a good mood,** the way Italians are. **He'd illuminate the place with a simple glance.** The moments flew by and before we knew it we were being asked to sit down for dinner. Yet, we were happy to get up, knowing full well that the small effort would guide us to a delightful sophistication we wouldn't be able to resist.

COLOMBI HOTEL

ROMANTIK HOTEL SPIELWEG

WEINGUT BERCHER

Munstertal - 2.05 pm

The person who'd most often come to find us in his friendly manner was the sommelier of this gourmet restaurant. We liked him from the first moment on. His huge body couldn't escape the complicated movement leading him from one room to the next and, so as not to bump himself, forced him to bend over slightly as soon as he approached a doorway that wasn't quite high enough for him. He always gave in to our wishes and never imposed his own taste in wine on us. **The man knew how to guide his customer gently and deliberately in the universe of beverages and he managed to have us order an unfamiliar bottle every time.** Since he spoke both French and English, he was a shrewd maitre d' for us as well and both positions fit him like a glove. He was efficient, precise, discreet, and had a rare humility in the way he'd suggest a dish without imposing a personal opinion.

The feeling of freedom we had continued right to the plate, adorned with lovely fare whose presentation was by no means accidental and would have satisfied the appetite of the most demanding gourmets. Of all the dishes suggested to us, we were delighted with a crisp Coquille St. Jacques that melted in the mouth and was served with a most refined white butter sauce. We had an unforgettable saddle of venison, brought to the table before it was carved, that resplendent moment when the meat shows its firm and juicy tenderness; it was accompanied by small Brussels sprouts, red cherries, and delicate spätzle. Alfred Klink was a great chef who acquitted himself of his work as if it were the only thing in his life. He transformed each food, performed every preparation with true respect for the product. With him, everything gained a quality of freshness and simplicity. **The vegetables, raised on the land, then having passed through the chef's skillful hands, would come to the table like small, vibrant, and tasty beings whose hearts were beating;** the fine-fleshed fish were anchored in a sea of fragrant bouillon; the meat fell apart in the mouth, in a flavorful composure of the large, maternal animal.

From the farmers, the chef would daily gather the finest produce the earth had to offer, render it sublime by preparing it without ever betraying its true flavor. During the courses he taught, Alfred Klink sowed fine seeds that would one day grow into new chefs. He was an excellent pedagogue and made sure that tradition would not vanish. Among the apprentice chefs, it was not unusual to find a few sons of good hotelkeeping families who came to learn the art of cooking from him. With his young disciples, Mr. Klink was as strict as he was with himself. When one saw him come into the dining room in his fine white outfit, a scarf tied elegantly around his neck, his carefully clipped mustache, his eyes bright and his open face, to inquire whether the guests had enjoyed the meal, one could sense that he was concerned about satisfying people dear to him. The meals here were always exquisite and when one complimented the artist, he said that he was only a craftsman and owed a great deal to his mother who was a fine cook. Alfred Klink was generous and attentive to others, as great chefs are. He'd inquire after one's health and always be concerned about every

person's eating habits. What made this figure even more appealing, however, was that this former soldier thought and said there was nothing better on earth than peace...and there was no doubt that, for him,

peace began at the dining table.

Mrs. Fuchs is lovely in her traditional pale green dress that sets off her sunnanned face. The décolleté of her pretty blouse shows a throat as plump as a full moon. The wonderful hostess resembles the landscape around her; full of flowers; the summer sun; the green grass of the mountain pastures.

We also visit Joséphine de Spielweg to dream and wander around all day in the hollows and massive parts of the little fleshy hills that cover the landscape. The walking paths are legion. They run along the walls of dry stone, make their way into the fields and pine tree forests, catch a few goats by surprise, a young donkey and its mother, a herd of cows, some horses, a few farmers, a village, and even some wild animals like a doe and a roe deer. **The paths go on and curve along the slopes like small faces of white pebbles, and join a stream that hurtles down the hillside.**

One cannot get lost in this pastoral world because Joséphine is watchful. When it starts to get late and only an evening sky of gentle blue exists above one's head, the lovely hostess begins to worry. Then Joséphine resembles a shepherdess

whose only concern is her sheep. She goes out in search of her lost guests to bring them back to the fold. Some evenings when a storm is rumbling, Mr. Fuchs is the one responsible and brings his latecomers back by car, so they will not get wet.

Everything is a celebration for the Fuchs family. The terrace in front of the house, which runs into the neighboring road, is filled with flower boxes that form a perfumed barrier between the place where one can eat and the public passage. But in truth, Joséphine's terrace is open to all, even the villagers all seem to congregate there.

Except for the inhabitants of the small hotel, the street is not particularly affluent or noisy. Other than the chirping and singing birds, the ringing of church and cow bells, or the deep voice of the dog who, for no apparent reason, begins to sound off, one can't figure out what might possibly disturb the moment and the silence, unless it were a child's cry, happy to be on vacation, or Joséphine's pearling laughter that bursts forth into a chain of tinkling, crystalline sounds.

In Mr. and Mrs. Fuchs' circle, children play an important role. Joséphine loves her attractive daughter and speaks tenderly about her. Today and the rest of the week she won't be at the hotel. The young woman's absence is noticeable but her husband, the inn's chef, has remained at his stove.

This day, the sun is high in the blue sky, the wine is white and lively, the fresh vegetable salads on the plate are prepared with the finest summer ingredients, the excellent ham and the pâté are transformed into an inexhaustible supply of happy memories. In the evening, in the dining

room with its carefully chosen décor, the chef will have us taste a well-prepared foie gras, a piece of tender and flavorful beef, home-made cheeses, and for dessert we'll have a fine crème brûlée. Then we will go to bed happy, in one of the lovely rooms.

The charming little village of Burkeim is very picturesque. It is not far from Fribourg-en-Brigau and lies on the Colmar side as well. It is a spot that contains all the bliss of childhood, lying isolated in the middle of a field on the edge of the forest. Its houses have a cheerful look and are to be admired for their wonderfully refined architecture. The pretty winding streets look like gardens, decorated with bowls and vases filled with multicolored flowers. One of its neat little roads, with splendid flower beds, rounds off the pavement and indicates a square that makes it clear one has arrived. In a benevolent gesture like a gift, a ray of sun balances first on our feet and then on the façade of a great aristocratic house. On one of its walls, the building has a wrought-iron sign giving the year 1457.

It's in this ancestral framework that the adventure of the brothers Rainer and Eckhart Bercher began, whose dream it was to bring to life their passion for wine. In the early seventies, the two men set out on the mission that would inspire their actions and aspirations. They learned to cultivate the grapevine in all seriousness. Even if the pinot grape had been growing here for more than a hundred years, the time had come for them to magnify the sap by feeding it with pure bunches; to harvest the grapes by hand; to cultivate the wine rigorously by learning from the great winegrowers how to raise the fruit and make wine. The progress they made was spectacular. Rainer and Eckhart Bercher are today part of a most courted family of great winegrowers. **The structure, the aromatic complexity and the nobility of the tannin of their vintages produce the finest wines around. The Bercher family achieves miracles with its marvelous pinots, whether those be white, rosé, or red.**

Since good news never arrives alone, the continuation of this winegrowing family is now assured: Rainer and Eckhart each have a son. On this day, Martin isn't there and Arne plays master of the house. The young man is a professional, both of the vine and of wine. He hadn't been hesitant to travel the world to learn his craft. Today he is back in the village to take over the torch of viticulture together with Martin. The clock



SCHWARZWALD HOTEL ADLER

Hausern - 3 40 pm



It had taken five generations to turn a farm that subsequently became a butcher's shop into one of the finest restaurants in the region.

The place could boast a kitchen masterfully orchestrated by a chef of whom it could be said that he was "born in the theater," for the expression "born in the kitchen" doesn't exist, not even when a cooking pot is one's first home. Winfried

Zumkeller came in a straight line from practitioners of the food profession. After his father—a sometime chef and a butcher the rest of the time—Winfried, the family's son, had in turn become an ambassador of fine food. Through hard work and with a strong will, he'd even managed to make his place into one of the finest restaurants to be found in all of Germany.

Winfried was a great cook and, like all great cooks, had retained his good nature and a generosity that made him a most

appealing and especially popular person. To be convinced of this, all you needed to do on a Saturday night, was wander through the crowd of guests waiting to meet the master. If by chance there was an empty seat, you'd sit down waiting for the arrival of the chef who'd appear in due time to have a friendly chat with each of the guests. Everyone would await his turn and it would all happen in an established, prize-giving ritual. When our moment had come to be noticed, we behaved like two children confronted by a teacher, as we stammered a few words. Winfried was polite and acted as if he hadn't noticed our stammering, but asked us with a great smile what we'd like to have for dinner. His manners were gentle, he had beautiful frizzy hair, very light blue eyes, and he wore a white chef's jacket and dark pants. After introducing us to his slender wife, who was wearing the traditional regional dress, he led us to our table. They were an open-minded couple who loved foreigners. We were immediately at ease with Mr. and Mrs. Zumkeller.

The meal that followed was, without a doubt, one of the finest we have ever tasted in Germany. Even now, the memory makes my mouth water. A tuna carpaccio with a well-seasoned curry sauce was a sun-drenched, sparkling dish that warmed both body and soul. A small gem of splendid, tender lamb followed. It was presented like an egg enveloped in aspic, with dried tomatoes, and impudent cepes like hot and hilarious will-o'-the-wisps on the tongue. A perch came next, surreptitiously slipping its smooth, full body into a corner of the mouth, its consistency aromatic, caressing, and silky. We were regaling ourselves, drinking the exceptional wines of the Bercher vineyards. Dear God, how fine all of this really was! The crawfish that came next were equally worthy of being remembered but, because it was so good, the dish seemed almost too small. It was round, dense, and ample, staying in the mouth, and came with a lively, sensual bisque. It was a marvel of fine eating. The chef proved to be a superb sauce maker. How can one not mention the course that followed, which truly had to be good to suffer the comparison of excellence with what we had just tasted. A marvelous and royal Venison, the traditional dish, arrived, accompanied by small beads of flavorful and tender spätzli in fine butter. Then there were sweet, tender, and creamy baby cabbages, served on a small plate. For dessert we decided to have a compote of quetsch and plums, and we also tasted the champagne Sabayone and hazelnut ice cream. It was an exquisite moment.

We could now talk at leisure about the warm and carefully chosen décor of the bright pillared room we'd been given, from the large soft bed, in which we slept very well, to the gorgeous and cheerful façade of the hotel with its balconies filled with

ALPENHOF MURNAU

Murnau - 5 36 pm

pots of flowers in every color. For us, however, none of this had the same importance anymore, because Mr. Zumkeller's cuisine superseded everything else and was, in and of itself, well worth the trip.

In Munich we had decided we would go to Murnau, about which we had read in a tourist brochure, for a few days of rest. The high mountains of the Zugspitze were tempting us with their sharp forms that purify the heart from any worldly desire. We were dreaming of long walks, wandering hither and yon, and achieving the lengthy hikes necessary to reach Gletscherbahn at an altitude of 2,064 meters. We wanted to climb the mountain, stop at every turn and take advantage of the unobstructed view over the opulent landscapes whipped up by the Föhn. Its breath would increase the view, blow away the clouds, and bring good weather. The power of the

rocky barrier would parade before our eyes, and the peaks, which had seemed to block the horizon just a few minutes earlier, would be reaching up behind it. It would try to retain each of the extraordinary, mobile colors that were blending together. This way we'd escape from the routine of the usual perspectives and recognize the image before us of the four neighboring countries in a panorama that rendered one speechless. We'd be able to see farther and at the same time we'd discover this part of Germany; the Dolomites and Italy; the peak of the Bernina and Switzerland; the Grossvenediger and Austria. We wanted to see the last outposts of the Kaisergerbe, the Dachstein, and the Karwendel; the icy summits of the Upper Tauern; the Upper Alps of the Tyrol, the Ortler, and the Bernina; the mountains of the Allgau and the Ammergau; the lower regions of Bavaria. We were eager and impatient and wanted only to begin wandering under these skies that were unknown to us. As we were driving rather fast, the distance diminished and so did the hours, and soon we were arriving in the blue land we had wanted to get to know so much. We were in Murnau.

Closely associated with the hotel, Thomas Heilig had welcomed us with a dazzling smile as soon as we arrived. Facing the blue sky, the young, elegant manager of the Alpenhof chatted

about the fine weather we must have brought with us, then obligingly asked after our trip, cleverly keeping our ideas in mind.

We'd entered the place through the paved courtyard of the hotel, all in flower, and parked our car in front of the main entrance, in the court surrounded by well-kept buildings, the way the great Swiss chalets are in the green mountain pastures and fields. Thomas seemed to enjoy our pleasant exchanges that continued until evening on the terrace and later at a table in the dining room of the genteel restaurant. We found out that the young man was married and that his wife originally came from South Africa where they had met, and that they had two children. Outside of his family, which mattered more to him than anything else, Thomas loved his profession. He was proud to have had his first hotel experience as a kitchen

apprentice, even if he'd rather quickly come to prefer working in the dining room before finally taking over the direction of the establishment. He spoke so wonderfully about his adopted Bavaria, which he liked to compare to Austria, the land of his birth. We listened to him, enjoying the moment of communication and sharing, which mixed with the cloudless sky, the distant blue mountains and,

at their feet, the sheep-like wool of water droplets subduing them in a strange shawl of mist, the delicate blooms on the balconies close to us, and the flowers in the park and pastures. On the table stood freshly squeezed fruit juices that Thomas had offered us; the buttercup yellow façade of the house responded to the rays of the sun; the shutters, green like little corners of the field were opening up to springtime. Watering cans in every color and size seemed to be standing at attention on the ground in the perfect alignment of a squadron ready for inspection.

We were staying in one of the elegant wings of the hotel and occupied the prettiest suite one could dream of. A bottle of bubbly champagne awaited us in its silver bucket together with endlessly appetizing delicacies on delightful little platters. Their sinful and delicious little bites aroused our desire and were devoured in less time than it takes to mention them.



ALPENHOF MURNAU

We were equally thrilled with the décor, the luxurious comfort of the large rooms, the two bathrooms whose guests we were to be for a few days and which, we already knew, would be hard to leave. The hotel was providing us from the beginning with every sign of respect that a high-placed guest could claim. We experienced the spa, the baths, sauna, solarium, gym, the



health center and beauty salon, and both the inside and outside swimming pools. We kept the bicycles for our excursion the following morning. The night had been sufficient to rid us of the tainting compli-

cations of our frantic life. Gradually, our sense of well-being extended to the traces marked by our escapade to Wieskirche, for which breakfast had helped us prepare. The first meal of the day was marvelous with its little stacks of sweet pastries perched on branches of wrought-iron like birds in an open cage. Everything was pretty and delicious, the jams, fruit salads, farmer's cheese, and tea. We were looking forward to a walk of several hours but that wasn't counting on what was coming to surprise us.

We'd taken a beautiful path that kept twisting and turning until it finally opened out on the plain. We'd been hearing the tinkling of the cowbells before we caught sight of a church, nestled like a white beauty spot in the lovely valley. The place of worship had let itself be domesticated by the fields. Flowers appeared in small spots of color like bouquets in the green grass of meadows. We saw some sheep as well and, when we approached the church, chickens were pecking away. The joy of being within reach of a deep emotion made us enter the church of Wies without hesitation; then the door closed gently behind us. We found ourselves in a cheerful world, bathing our souls with translucence, surrounded by lights and angels and splendidly colored frescos. We felt irresistibly attracted by the gate of eternity, intrigued by a little boy on the back of a dolphin, by the figure of a pelican. We saw colors—red and blue, pink and yellow, white and gold—caressing a rainbow and enchanted with the figure of a small putto whose painting continued in the form of a stucco sculpture in the foot of the cherub. All of it thrilled us; we were in the ecstasy of a moment of absolute grace, dazzled and happy. By opening the door to this paradise, painted in perfect grace and refined balance, the place of worship had guided our thoughts toward heaven. It mattered little then to know that the style of this jewel with its sumptuous decorations was Rococo and that it was one of the sites of UNESCO's international patrimony; all that counted was the emotion we were feeling—the inner peace and joy that the church in Wies brought us. It took the rest of that day and a few more to regain our interest in less ethereal preoccupations. The extraordinary castles of Louis II of Bavaria—Herrenchiemsee in the paradise-like solitude of its island; the precious little palace of Linderhof; the Wagnerian fortress of Neuschwanstein, fairytale-like and dramatic, standing on its rocky spur that seemed to be holding back the clouds in their passing, none of this had been able to touch us with the same intensity as the church in Wies. Our visit there was extraordinary. We deliberately extended it and enjoyed other visits having to do with people: the well-known dead such as Wassily Kandinsky, Gabriele Münter, and Odön von Horváth who had lived in Murnau—living ones, perhaps less well-known, but who were making this moment of life into a small event of incalculable wealth that didn't depend on memory to exist, even if it might later become a shared remembrance.

His talents as a hotelkeeper brought Didier Morand great respect in the profession where he was appreciated both for his intelligence and for the future he undoubtedly would have. We



hadn't yet had the pleasure of meeting him, for he had needed to absent himself to see his father who was bedridden. We had thus waited for a fine clear and warm morning to meet this charming man.

Downstairs, comfortably seated in the luminous hall, we were planning the direction of our next excursion when the hotel director introduced himself to us in all simplicity. He had crossed the immense hallway in just a few steps of his long legs to come and join us. Mr. Morand was young and cut a fine figure. He was very tall and thin. He had short hair and managed to keep his face guileless and frank like a child's. His look was reserved and open at the same time, and gleamed with mischief. He emanated instant sweetness and his marvelous kindness wasn't without irony. He had a refined and funny mind, an open-hearted spontaneity that made him laugh at himself and feel compassion for the lot of others. We'd noticed that he spoke French, English, Spanish, Italian, as well as German. He said that languages can be learned quickly, to reassure those who don't have the gift. Mr. Morand was a fantastic director and a marvelous man, someone you would want to have as a friend.

One of his talents was that he knew how to tell great stories with tact and feeling. Sitting together, we listened to him talk and go back in time.

This particular day, he chose to tell us the story of "the hobos": "At the time, my aunt who was a nun used to live in the charming town of Angers in northwestern France. Every day, other nuns helped her serve soup to the poor from the surrounding area. This was not a simple task. At high noon, a crowd would appear. The way a large family would gather in the huge refectory, several hundred individuals would be in the room to share their only warm meal of the day. For these destitute people, it was a moment of intense pleasure, a parenthesis of dignity, emotion, exchange, and friendship, like a sparkle of hope that warmed their lives. The encounter with them—whom today I lovingly call my hobos—was a true revelation for me. Through them I learned the meaning of taking care of others. Their faces still keep me company today. I

learned what the act of giving meant. It is blissful and validating both for the one who receives and the one who gives. That realization has followed me throughout all my years in the life and profession as a hotelkeeper. As a small boy, I'd learned the importance of listening. If today my clients are my special preoccupation, it is thanks to them that I have the same feeling when I see an expression of joy in their eyes, and it reminds me very much of the one I saw as a child in the looks of other people, "my hobos." As he finished his story, Didier escorted us to the restaurant, for that night we were going to dine together.

We truly enjoyed the company of this attentive and generous man, the lovely décor of the room, the delicious courses, but we were already heading toward other memories. These concerned Switzerland, Mr. Morand's native country; his years in Zurich and in Lausanne where he had studied at the prestigious hotel school; his memories of Basel where, having become chef at the International Hotel, he chose to be second in command of reception, instead. We discovered he was a music lover and cultivated, and the time spent with him at the table was so wonderful that it seemed far too short.

A Bercher pinot noir marvelously complemented dinner. Guarino Tugnoli, the spirited Italian maitre d' added all the charm of his native country to his service. We tasted the subtle cuisine of Patrick Auer and, from the first bite on, were convinced of his talent as a chef. The particular variety of foie gras was a delicate and perfect symphony of flavors; the tender-fleshed turbot was a treat, perfectly matching the horn of plenty. The baby goat in a crust, surrounded by carrots left us most satisfied, it was that excellent. Dessert was a chocolate Napoleon that was utterly delicious. Before saying good night to our host at the end of the meal, we wanted to thank the chef for having given us this opportunity to enjoy an exceptional gustatory experience. Patrick Auer had beautiful light blue eyes and was a very pleasant man. One could sense his passion for what he did and one felt how important it was for him to make people happy. We had been very happy, indeed, thanks to him. When we went back to our room we were very content. We

RESIDENZ HEINZ WINKLER

Aschau im Chiemgau - 2.39 pm

knew that the following day would be similar in every way, equally auspicious and joyful as the one we'd just experienced. In the sophisticated Alpenhof Hotel, life could only be sweet and one's vacation nothing but successful.

This part of the journey was more beautiful than I could have dreamed. The road went through fields that stretched out as far as the eye could see, only interrupted every now and then by the trees' green spots. The sky was clear and the sun was shining. There were very few

cars around, mostly just **villages with their churches and onion dome bell towers amidst the houses**, and a few crucifixes and sanctuaries, too, although they were in the middle of the fields.

With their white peaks clearly outlined against the sky, the Alps, serving as a backdrop to the landscape, took one's breath away in the juxtaposition of blue, gray, and white, contrasting with the tender green of the pastures. We weren't very far from the Lake of Ghensee, the Herreninsel (the Gentlemen's Island) and Fraueninsel (Ladies' Island). While the Herreninsel held the Herrenchiemsee chateau of Louis II, the Fraueninsel was home to the Frauenchiemsee convent. We were taking our time on this road, feeling very curious and as if we were accomplices of the land around us—which seemed to be celebrating the early summer—and watching the counterbalance of the trees. It seemed as if we were going through villages on holiday that, with the many flowers on the balconies, appeared to be competing with the wild flowers, the multicolored May poles as one can see in Bavaria, and local people in their traditional dress. Our contented feeling rose to a sense of true well-being when the car arrived in front of a superb house in Aschau. We had just reached our destination. The sun stood high in the sky and from the moment we came out of the car it wrapped us in its warm light. We were blessing the fine weather thinking of the

lovely, free
d a y s
awaiting

us, the delightful excursions we would certainly make.

We hadn't noticed a young man approaching who, with a quick gesture, had opened the car door to take out our luggage. He invited us to follow him into the large, bright house with its little windows framed by red and white striped shutters.

The hall was spacious—columns on the sides might well have been marble—and trompe l'oeil landscapes added an extraordinarily lively touch to the walls that made us want to scrutinize them carefully. In spite of our interest, we had somehow slipped outside into the garden to have a glass of tea. The gay colors of the façade matched the sweetness of the little flowered tablecloths, in which yellow dominated; the still spring-like air; the plump clouds that were passing by in the blue sky, while a bit farther on the solemn silhouette of the Alps unfolded. Our conversation stopped before this spectacle that touched us so, filling us with joy and inner peace.

From the first moment on in the Residence of Hans Winkler, everything seemed beautiful and joyous. The magnificent cutlery and the quality of the menus were unequalled in Germany and that evening we would abandon ourselves to the culinary creations of the great chef, but before that revelation occurred we first had to leave the garden, find our suite, and unpack.

Upstairs, the windows opened out onto the terrace, the room was dazzling in soft pink, while the staircase that led there was done in moss green carpeting. Reminiscent of hieroglyphs, a frieze ran along the living room walls. It was a delightful moment of happiness and laughter.

Finally, the evening came around as did our hunger. We went down the hallway to find the restaurant. Like the entry hall, it was also covered with colorful trompe l'oeil paintings. Well-spaced tables with light-colored cloths; large branches of greenery and lovely plants; statues and paintings—all of it transformed the space into a place of light. The maître d' introduced himself. He had class, was tall and dark-haired, wore black tails, a white shirt, and a gray necktie with a large bow held down by an elegant pin. He acquitted himself of his task with such natural grace that it was pointless to ask him whether he liked the place. The service was divine

The service was divine



and everyone worked to make the client comfortable. Fabrice was attentive to the ceremony that promised to be exceptional. We'd been seated in a place of honor. Small dishes accompanied a marvelous champagne. We already smelled the fine fragrances of the courses coming to our table. Our feeling of gourmandise was ineluctable—imperious—when we saw a soft green emulsion, our tongue consecrating itself to the sweetness of freshly picked peas. Raw marinated Coquilles St. Jacques on a cream sauce with caviar spoke of freshness and firmness in the languor of their flesh. How precious and important a dish is when it makes someone happy so immediately. What to say about the langoustines that besieged the palate by splashing it with tepid droplets only to then blur it with carnal pleasures. The potatoes, in minuscule golden dice, were exquisite and rivaled in refinement with a sole that slipped into the mouth like silk and went, all by itself, straight for the happiness of the heart, the stomach, and the spirit. We wanted to taste the venison in its sauce of elderberry leaves. We ended the meal with crepes stuffed with a mousse of Grand Marnier and oranges and we were sure that **a feast such as this would stay with us forever as a grateful and eternal memory.** We absolutely had to meet the chef to tell him how grateful we were to him for this very special moment. As we were having coffee, he came to us, a man in his prime, the age that shows men at their best when experience and character have combined. He was striking in his charisma and charm. Hans Winkler was well-built, wore dark pants and a blue shirt with a barely visible tie beneath his white chef's jacket that might make one think of a doctor or a laboratory researcher. His perfect teeth matched the whiteness of his jacket, his eyes showed intense light, the hair of a blond Venetian could be a reminder that he was of Italian origin.

We had heard people speak of him long before this grand evening. **His reputation as a chef had crossed every mountain, spurned every border.** His talent was recognized in France and Italy, two countries that for generations have been absolute references in culinary matters. Moreover, we knew that he had spent several years there for training. After some time in Switzerland—another country of good food—then returning to Munich, he'd finally obeyed the sign that his lucky star was giving him by taking over the lovely house where we were meeting him today.

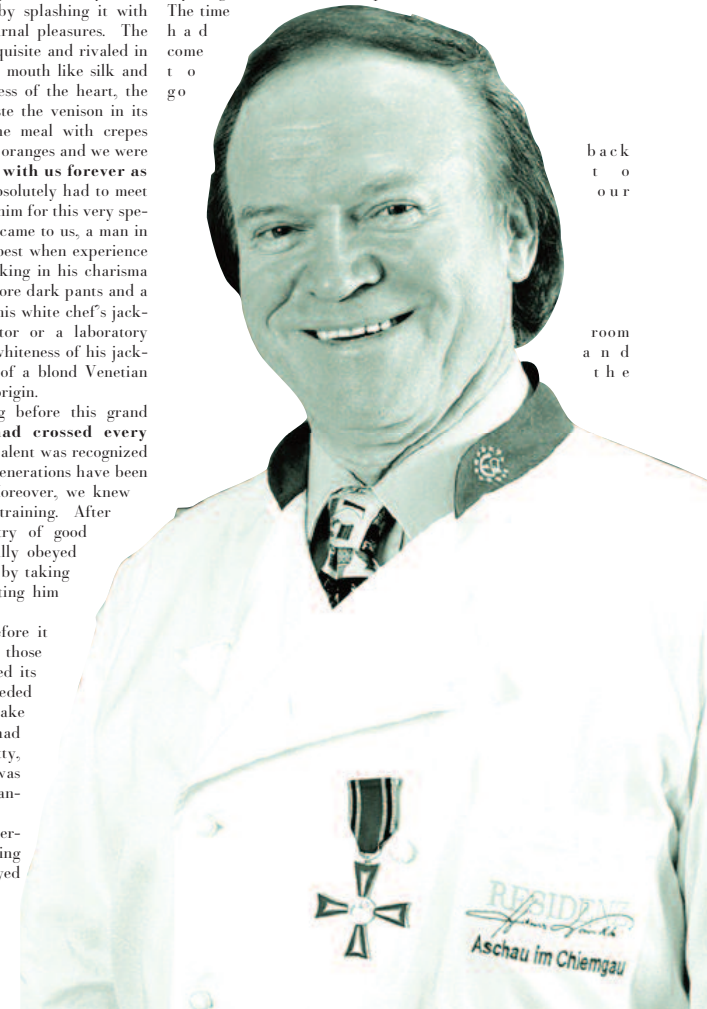
In 1405, the place had been a tavern, before it became a restaurant a few years later. In those days, cooking in Germany hadn't yet earned its letters of nobility and recognition. It had needed the arrival of great chefs for it to finally take flight. One of these was Hans Winkler. He had married and had two children with his pretty, elegant wife who was as intelligent as she was warm to foreigners. Together, they had managed to make their dreams come true.

It seemed to be a convenient time for the interview with the chef and memories came flooding back from his childhood when he had enjoyed

working on his father's farm with his brothers and sisters. He was the youngest of eleven children, and for his parents the large family was a challenge they had to meet so as not to slide into poverty. With his father's consent, Hans had left home at age 14, intending to become a cook. It was his sisters—fine cooks themselves—who had put the idea in the boy's head. He was not to return and had gone way beyond the point anyone had hoped for. From then on in, after our stay in Aschau, we, too, would do nothing but sing the praises of this great chef.

The lights were shimmering around us. I looked at my empty crystal glass in which he had poured us sweet wine.

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BAYERISCHER HOF

munich - 3 47 pm

thought alone made me happy. I knew my sleep would be filled with beautiful dreams that night.

The doorman understood immediately and opened the car door with a knowing smile. The Bayerischer Hof was very definitely the most beautiful hotel in Munich and it was always a pleasure for us to come here.

The day we arrived this time, the colors—blue shutters, white façade—were oddly matched to the gray rain and seemed to warm the cold Munich weather. We arrived dead tired but all we need-

ed was to see the large, bright building

to do the one thing we wouldn't have thought ourselves capable of just a few moments earlier. Smiling had suddenly become natural for us. As we crossed the animated large entrance hall and a stylish young woman came toward us to ask the usual information, we had already found our equanimity again.

She escorted us into the elevator and to the floor of our room. The door opened on the ample space and had hardly closed behind her when we were already taking possession of the place.

We sat down in the large comfortable armchairs to experience the present moment and enjoy the lovely arrangement of the room. Outside the windows, the clarity of the day came through the curtain of rain. Motionless, we listened to the water lapping in the gutters and then turn into whispering. This music seemed like a message from life to me. The weather had turned cooler, but we were actually shivering with pleasure in the large room and its elegant décor. From our window we saw the roof across the way, the sky that was magically beginning to clear up. Time passed, it was a delightful moment. We went to



take a bath in the beautiful, elegant bathroom and wanted nothing other than wait for night to come and, with a good book, slip between the fine sheets of the welcoming double bed. We were going to bed early and would sleep till morning.

From our first stay at the Bayerischer Hof—seeing the enormous size of the place—our curiosity had been aroused by the organization that such an enterprise would require on the part of its owners. We figured that to direct this smoothly running and comfortable universe, great authority would be needed. Intrigued, we had wanted just one thing and that was to meet the owners.

The hotel had been in the Volkhard family for more than a hundred years. One evening, when we returned from a visit to the New Pinacothèque and were enchanted with our wonderful look at the paintings of Thomas Gainsborough, William Turner, and Goya that we'd admired there, we met a tall beautiful woman in the lobby, in the company of a staff member whom we knew. Although we had only noticed the young woman's presence in passing—we suspected she was one of the staff—she had smiled at us and, after introducing herself, asked about our stay in a charming and delightful way. We'd just met Miss Volkhardt who was presently run-

ning the great establishment all by herself. There was something very pleasant in the young woman's expression and her voice went straight to your heart, inspiring trust. We had heard that she had a reputation of being a formidable builder, something we'd noticed ourselves at each of our stays. Still, we were surprised at the new décor that had been created, at the renovations she had made. Her passion for remodeling every room in the hotel, for creating new suites, more spacious and comfortable apartments, without ever just settling for the ancestral possessions, had pleased us right away and seemed worthy of admiration. She had a very sure eye for judging

WALD UND SCHLOSSHOTEL FRIEDRICHSRUHE

friederichsruhe - 6 17 pm

faces and more, after a quick summary, she'd wished the new arrival a smiling welcome, the guest would remain an excellent stay. Innegrit Volkhardt was supremely kind and immensely generous, something that showed when she knew you better and when she'd end up by definitively adopting you. Among the numerous services the hotel offered—bars, restaurants, boutiques, conference rooms, concerts—we had our own favorites. It may actually be rather unexpected to be making such a choice in a hotel of this kind where everyone dreams of nothing but leisure. But the hotel's business center—with the engaging name of Qualimero—made our life so much easier that we never were aware of the time we spent there. There is no doubt that we freed ourselves from the work we had to do quickly and under the best conditions. What business people would ask for would become a high priority for the center's director, a demand that was immediately granted. Guido Feurriegel, the director of this top-of-the-range office, was competence personified and knew how to satisfy a client's every request—with the help of assistants that were as charming as they were efficient—in a minimum of time with maximum results. Thus, work became a pleasant interlude without any pointless moments of tension.

Happy, we'd see ourselves returning very soon and for a longer time to this beautiful German city, come back to the Bay-

erischer Hof and maybe even be transformed into real Munich inhabitants.

A sinous road. Birds fluttering beneath the trees, intoxicated by the sun. Carefully mowed lawns. The great white house, patinated with age, stylish and smooth with its stone facing and indented façade, was aging in a delightful manner since the time that Lothar Eiermann and his wife had taken it over. It was already thirty years since the extraordinary chef had been propelled onto the international culinary stage, side by side with the great: Chapel, Troisgros, Haerberlin, who had all been honored with "le poivrier d'or" as well.

Going up the broad driveway now, we were steering the car farther onto the property. The sun had risen over the top of the main house. We had stopped a bit beyond, on a small square where several cars were already parked. Amidst the trees, one of the two other buildings, of older stone, had taken possession of the space in profound serenity. Here we'd made ourselves comfortable for the past few days, as if it concerned a vacation in our own home. We would wander around on the nearby paths, enjoy the discovery of pastures interspersed with shrubbery, and inhale the scent of cut hay. Intrigued by



WALD UND SCHLOSSHOTEL FRIEDRICHSRUHE



the horses, which were sometimes sulky and pretentious, and at other time would beg for caresses, we'd spend hours watching them. By car we went as far as Schwabisch Gmund, the gold and silver town containing some 70 studios. On the market square there was a lovely babbling fountain with a statue of the Holy Virgin that attracted much attention.

Of course, we never planned our wandering in advance. On vacation, we'd decide which direction to go depending on the mood of the moment. Still, there was a certain constancy in the way we arranged our days, for we'd never miss a meal.

Light of foot, though with an imposing figure, Jean Borgeat kept busy spending time with each guest, and thus made the tour of the large dining room several times. The spirited maitre d' acquitted himself quite well of this task, just as he knew how to maintain the quality of the flawless service.

In a way, he was a goldsmith in the art of serving. He seemed to address each person with infinite kindness, delicate and detailed attention, never rushing around even when a waiter seemed a little clumsy to him. He intervened only when he thought it was absolutely necessary and never interrupted the execution of the meal. In a way, it was a daily and never repetitive creation and to his position he brought the majesty of another era. When Mr. Borgeat glanced toward the door we already knew he'd heard footsteps approaching. He'd go over to greet the arrival before showing him a seat at the reserved spot. And since he had fine and infallible taste, we would listen to his precious advice when choosing dishes and wines.

Later, when we were lazily settled and warm from the drink, we

saw Lothar Eiermann approach. We realized he was not going to join us at our table because he had important business to attend to, which did not take very long. We saw the man arrive with a dish on which we heard a well-cooked golden duck sputtering in its gravy. The chef carved the pink flesh with the precise gestures of a surgeon and placed it on the plate. It was then that it seemed to us that **everything began to breathe and the silence was broken.** We had witnessed a remarkable act of cutting, accompanied by fragrant, irresistible, and appetizing spirals. The chef left as discreetly as he had come to our table, leaving us to our gourmandise. The duck was surrounded by small plump and tender cherries, with a smooth and shiny skin and the impertinent flavor of wild fruit. The refinement of the meat of the sacrificial animal was exalted by that of the sun-ripened cherries. Since the dish came in two separate servings, the duck's legs arrived next, fleshy and tender, to take part in the sensual feast, accompanied by hearts of romaine, that first grow in the soil, then to be cooked slowly and gently in a small fondue pot with a large chunk of butter. These have nothing in common with their distant cousins, the chicory lettuce that grows in hothouses and comes out of its glass nursery as if it were returning from a house of correction, full of bitterness and frustration.

It was Lothar Eiermann's ethic to give his customers the best nature had to offer, depending on the seasons, and the chef made no concessions in choosing his produce. He was an exceptional cook who didn't settle for pleasing at any cost or for the fiat of going along with the fashion by suggesting combinations of

GRAND HOTEL RUSSISCHER HOF

weimar - 4 55 pm

extravagant foods, with antinomic flavors, even if they might help the business and bring him renown. Respecting ingredients and good food that arouse the appetite, I understood the chef's choice of never having subscribed to that kind of dangerous and disappointing practice. On my path, I had tried that kind of avant-garde cuisine. I'd found the creations of those kitchen acrobats amusing because they were unusual, but in the end I'd remained without any appetite for their work. Therefore, I had no need or desire to renew the experience.

At Mr. Eiermann's table, we were also regaled with a perfect foie gras with green grapes that was expressed with opulence and delicacy. Then there was a Coquille St. Jacques with marinated fennel, ginger, and an orange sauce, like a dessert that glorified the mouth in its embrace of anis, its strong rhizome fragrance and the delicate one of scallops. The St. Pierre with baby vegetables also became one of those memorable experiences. **We were simply in the great traditional cuisine that honors the product. An eternal and perfect cuisine, food-loving, appetizing, joyous, and sensual.** In the restaurant with its theatrical red walls, we were enchanted by a rice and veal dish, small well-prepared potatoes, and were relaxing as we watched young Johannes Velten very seriously and gently serve us wine. Some evenings Lothar Eiermann would stay and talk with us. That is how he told us about some of his encounters. Charlie Chaplin was part of one of the important moments for him. The book *Starke Stucke* that the chef had written made him quite proud. We'd listen attentively, without interrupting the great chef, for fear that he wouldn't continue the account of his memories.

In the morning, we'd wake up in our lovely suite with **the sunlight pecking through a crack in the curtains.** We'd get a whiff of the morning scents, **the fragrance of flowers, then that of the delicious coffee steaming in the cups and announcing the butter croissants.** We were grateful for this royal breakfast. A platter of raspberries, a plate of gooseberries, but also competing in their freshness were melon, pineapple, and grapefruit. We gazed hungrily at the breads, the young farmer's cheese, yogurts, muesli, and bowls of dried fruit. We weren't aware of time anymore, but only felt a deep sense of inner peace.

In the center of the city is a lovely home with a large, welcoming, red-carpeted entrance that links the street to the interior. As soon as the door is opened to the incessant coming and going of people, strangely enough one has a feeling of calm and activity at the same time. Chandeliers made of drops of Bohemian crystal light the principal aisle. The floor is decorated in a light marble that contains the emblem of the Austro-Hungarian Empire—the eagle with two heads—preceded by the inscription "Ihr Lieben", with the signature of Franz Liszt inside a bronze sun. It was with these words of welcome that the musician received Clara and Robert Schumann at the Russischer Hof Hotel one day in November 1841. Time passed by. The words became golden-stemmed calligraphy that set their stamp in the marble of the gracious house. Many years later, the first inhabitants of the Russischer Hof remained proud of it and the adornment of its history and the establishment itself preserved an inspiring, benevolent **shadow of great artists—now gone—who had lived there, and this seemed to cover its walls with a mist of poetry. In their time, musicians, writers, poets, philosophers, and painters had been inspired by the**

place. The hotel was blessed and felt like an oasis, it continued to be attached to that which is best in humankind. Here they had all proclaimed, "Noble is man helpful and good". Goethe, Schiller, Herder, and Wieland had raised the dignity of humanity's spirit.

But the dark had followed the light, and with the town present around the building—an imperious one, indeed—the admirable humanist vision of great men had been caught by surprise almost a hundred years later by a fanatic faith, the way a clarion calls for the moment of combat.

Then it was Adolph Hitler's turn to make Weimar into his general



GRAND HOTEL RUSSISCHER HOF

quarters. What is there left to say that hasn't been said before? A few kilometers from Weimar, we watched dusk falls over Büchenwald. Right at the end of a small path that one might have thought was simply surrounded by the carefree canopy of greenery, we crossed the hill of Ertersberg. It was here that men had dared bury hopefulness.

The hotel was the only place where I wanted to stay during our time in Weimar. **We loved getting lost in the long hallways with their imperial imprint reminding us that a certain Bonaparte had passed through not far from here.** The years hadn't changed the romanticism of the décor, in which I felt marvelously safe. I forgot all notion of time and boredom became a word devoid of meaning for me.

There were the tours of Weimar for which we had found a very lovely guide! She was waiting for us sweetly in the hall of the hotel at eleven in the morning, like the mischievous little girl she once must have been, who wants nothing more than to grasp the hand of a beloved person and have that one follow her to see a garden full of flowers. Following her small steps and bouncy gait, we walked with her through the sunlit town. She

fought his battle against the Prince of Hohenlohe there.

We always returned very happily to the Grand Hotel Russischer Hof by the end of the afternoon. We knew that we would be greeted with kindness and comfort. One evening we were quite spontaneously introduced to Albert Voigts. The hotel director was a discreet man and infinitely warm to us, as the managers of the hotels Derag had been, whom we had a chance to meet both in Munich and Berlin. Mr. Voigts was elegant and courteous, inquired after our needs and, to make our bliss complete, he found a wonderful table for us, although the restaurant was presumably fully reserved for that evening. We couldn't have wished for anything more than a dinner by candlelight.

We loved the restaurant's careful décor that reminded us of a chic brasserie—welcoming wall seats in a pretty fabric of leaf green and red stripes, an opulent chandelier, and Empire style woodwork and furniture.

We were eager to start with a vegetable terrine and tender venison. The previous evenings we'd preferred the simplicity of a Viennese escalope and small nutty-flavored potatoes. We'd stay at the table for a while after the meal to enjoy the moment,



had led us nicely toward life itself. We penetrated the universe of wonders, the music of Hummel, Liszt, Strauss, and Bach; Wieland's poetry; Nietzsche's philosophy, for all of them had lived in Weimar. Trotting ahead of us, our guide took us to visit the houses of Goethe, Liszt, and Schiller. In front of the buildings that had contained the Bauhaus, we cried out in surprise, which made her smile. The Bauhaus was born in Weimar, numerous painters as well as the great Kandinsky had chosen to live there. We were sorry we weren't able to visit the bookstore with the extraordinary work of the Duchess Anna Amalia, which was closed for renovation. Time was flowing along and extremely pleasant. The next morning arrived and we visited Lena, famous because of the French Emperor Napoleon I who

then we'd go over to the open fire to relax and converse some more.

In the morning, we'd wake up with a ray of sunshine peaking through the beautiful half-closed curtains. The birds outside were wholeheartedly devoting themselves to putting us in a good mood and their enchanting song completed our happiness. Rather than have the vast buffet in one of the lovely rooms on the ground floor, we preferred the delicious and elegant breakfast served in our room that gave us the opportunity to fully enjoy all the pleasures of our suite. **The time spent at the Russischer Hof was sweet, poignant, and unforgettable.** It was a moment of introspection, meditation, and very carefree for us.

BRANDENBURGER HOF

berlin - 1132 pm

After going up three steps, we swept into the hotel in the Eislebener Strasse, so dear to sophisticated travelers who knew the German capital city well. A young doorman standing in the opening of the door was looking straight ahead and greeted us with deference. He quickly explained to one of his colleagues where to park the car, take our luggage, and at the same time escorted us to the reception desk. A graceful young woman named Sandy welcomed us and had us escorted to our suite. Even though all of this happened very rapidly, I did have time to admire the impressive white lobby with its tall columns, its museum-like staircase, its modern décor and ancient paintings, which came for the most part, as I would soon find out, from the collection of the Berlin antique dealer Seidel, just a few streets farther down.

As we went through one of the long and narrow, elegant hallways leading to the suite reserved for us, I wondered which one would be ours. Soon I found out and saw a bright and spacious apartment in which we were pleased to see the fine Bauhaus style furnishings, the care for detail, the quality of the finishing touches, the luxurious bathroom, large television sets with both national and international channels, closets, high ceilings, and the handsome, fine paintings. The suite of adjoining rooms looked out over the green carpet of the interior courtyard. We relaxed in the bedroom like royal princes in a castle and stretched out on the large soft bed. Yet, all of this couldn't appease our hunger, sharpened by the view of an assortment of small canapés that a young man had just brought up to our room. We slipped delicious bits of foie gras into our mouths. We began to crave the courses of salmon, a carpaccio of suckling pig, white beans placed on porcelain plates of a setting for dolls. We didn't resist the great ice cold champagne, the plate with petits fours, and the fruit ices. Berlin appeared to us in a better, new, and enchanting light.

While we were staying in the most wonderful small hotel in town, ideally located not far from the great parks, it seemed to me that the Berlin spring had never been more lovely or the big city's atmosphere more smiling and easygoing. **It**



BRANDENBURGER HOF

was a delightful place that made life beautiful. The Brandenburger Hof Hotel was a place for the emotions.

This hotel "folly" has Daniela Sauter as a owner, a woman of great taste, and the place abounds in qualified young people, like Stephane, whom can be distinguished by the positions they fill. Even if one knows the director's modesty, the Brandenburger Hof can rightfully feel honored to have found the ideal person in Markus Otto Graf. He is a man of principles and persistence, has an instinctive goodness and a curiosity for other people that makes him very engaging. His frequent walks through the hotel help him to organize everything with ease and to leave nothing to chance. It doesn't hurt that he is tall and handsome either: blue eyes, hair with the romantic locks of a hero, and an impeccably tailored suit make it a pleasure to look at him. He often arrives unexpectedly and takes us to taste a pastry in the restaurant or orders a glass of champagne for us. Having been kept on the premises until very late at night, it is not unusual to see him in the lobby, at the reception, or in the bar prodigiously advising a staff member or to catch him at one of the innumerable activities inherent in his position as director. If he has time, we like to have him join us in the lounge while the pianist plays dulcet melodies. Whatever the subject we touch upon, he always refuses to pronounce an unkind word or criticize anyone. An evening with him is as wonderful as a dinner at "Die Quadriga" even if the restaurant is by far our favorite when it comes to culinary matters.

"Die Quadriga" has pretty little paintings on the beige walls, woodwork and tall plinths, carpeting that absorbs the sound of the waiters' footsteps in their perpetual coming and going and those of Pascal Boitreau, the maître d', whose task it is to see that everyone is satisfied.

Nevertheless, in everyone's heart the star of the restaurant is still the chef, even though he might vie for the title with the charming wine waitress, Romana Echensperger. Moreover, Miss Echensperger's main role is to check the cellar many times daily to be assured that its buried treasure is in good shape or to choose the wines for her clients. The stocked wines are exclu-

sively German with the exception of the champagnes that obviously come from France. The list is impressive and the refined and knowledgeable sommelière knows how to discuss them and highlight the desired bottles. It is customary in Germany that one can woo several dozen of them in the course of a meal. The liquid normally comes poured in small doses in tiny glasses to avoid getting drunk. One is just beginning to master one when another is already coming to be tasted. The kitchen plays the same infinite music with its list of suggested dishes that run from sardines to sea bass, from langoustine to a terrine of goose foie gras, from turbot to guinea hen, from veal to lamb, all of them prepared with equal care. The work in the kitchen is very well done; the survey of possibilities and the talent of the chef is so complete that one dreams of giving each dish its due at a separate meal in which nothing else would be eaten and where it would be king as the only course on the table.

If "Die Quadriga" is the hotel's gastronomic restaurant, "Der Wintergarten" is there to encourage the appetite with lovely, more modest but very delectable food. Thus, in the attractive brasserie, one can be regaled with tarts, fennel soup, risotto, or gnocchi. Everything is fresh, endlessly pleasant, as is the service orchestrated by Werner Hinze, who is experienced because—before he came to full bloom in Berlin—he worked in great and beautiful establishments such as the Brenner Hotel in Baden-Baden or the Moulin de Mougins in France.

Unfortunately, it is self-evident that all good things must come to an end, but we may hope to come back one day, see them again, and so, before we go to our room, we stop once more in one of the pretty lounges to admire the landscapes by Rudolf Hellgrewe on the walls.

This evening, there is a small night-blue box on one of the scented pillows on the bed, with a little poem: "I wonder if I am alone, or if others have also known. - The splendid scenery and wondrous view, - That surround us all anew. Anytime we take the time to stop and see, - The portrait of life given for free...". The Brandenburger Hof Hotel wishes you goodnight.



KPM

It was only the beginning of a fine summer afternoon. Berlin was deserted and resembled a monotonous plain. In the crushing heat everything seemed to drone. A few clusters of trees seemed resigned to their role as guards and softly moved their branches, wreathing the street in shadow and light. I'd been walking for while at a decent pace and had unwittingly approached the Reichstag. I was amazed I'd reached my goal so quickly. The important site of the parliament was close to the place where I had an appointment. The building that I could now see stretched out freely in a large courtyard wrapped in the brick colors that dressed it up and on which the sun was playing. It seemed cheerful and solid next to the German Chancellery. On the landing below a small staircase, a young woman was waiting for me. We'd met by chance the previous evening, and I'd been intrigued by and then interested in the story she'd told me, in which her life mingled with the names Frederick the Great, the Sultan of Brunei, and the link between their meetings that lay outside time but inside the land of white gold. The Königliche Porzellan Manufacture where she worked had kept the name the King of Prussia had bestowed on it two centuries before and had preserved the symbol the monarch had given it: the blue scepter. Thus, my encounter yesterday, which might have led nowhere, had been transformed today into a fantastic, eloquent, and passionate guide, just for me. She revealed an art to me, two hundred and fifty years old, which had managed to remain almost secret in spite of its success. I felt honored to have been allowed to penetrate this home of the KPM, its abbreviated name for the sake of easier reading and pronouncing.

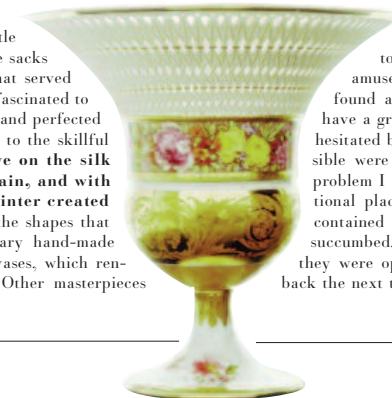
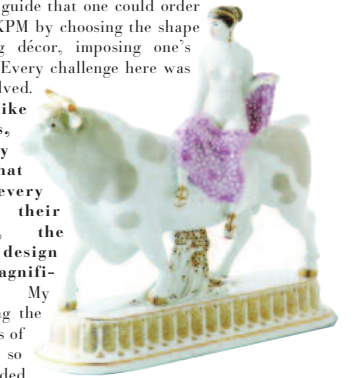
Populated by dozens of workers, the vast industrial palace that we had entered through long hallways, contained quite a few surprises and studios. Having noticed my interest, my guide stopped at each workstation and showed me with what care and perfectionism every individual was taking his or her task seriously. Like naughty little girls, we put our hand in the large sacks of kaolin, feldspar, and quartz that served to make the fine porcelain. I was fascinated to watch how dinner sets were made and perfected with simplicity and talent, thanks to the skillful hands. I watched brushes move on the silk of a piece of fine-grain porcelain, and with what delicacy and care the painter created a flower or a leaf. I admired the shapes that each object took, the extraordinary hand-made design, like lace fabric on some vases, which rendered them frail and precious. Other masterpieces

combined richly and opulently gleaming gold with floral motifs, drawn and painted by hand, making each piece unique. The marvelous expertise of these artists-craftsmen, trained for many long years of high caliber apprenticeship, had made them into master virtuosi of a special area, aided and abetted by time itself. Hands knew how to knead the paste like good bread and, as the potter does, mold, turn, pound, smooth, refine, and soften the material, only to finally reach the desired and perfect resulting item. The highly precise machines then carry on their work by humidifying and hardening the porcelain, turning the soft material hard. The only audible sounds were those of the machines, for in the workshops a monastic silence reigned.

I learned from my guide that one could order directly from the KPM by choosing the shape oneself, indicating décor, imposing one's taste and desires. Every challenge here was made to be resolved.

Brushes looked like dancing legs, marvelously expert utensils that marked every entrecchat with their own imprint, the premises of a design that was both magnificent and exact. My eyes were following the curves, the nuances of a petal that the so skillfully hand-guided tool would reproduce. I was astonished

by the subtlety of a butterfly wing. At times, other hands would sculpt the fold in a dress, shape a porcelain body, crease the face of a portrait bust making it more real than nature. Still others contributed only a pure line, an extreme conciseness of form and treatment. The ease around me was palpable and incontestable. Beauty was being manufactured here. I spent hours this way without growing weary, watching how a piece was constructed. I'd touch an object, caress an edge, and was amused by the shapes of a white bear. I found a superb angel on a shelf. I wanted to have a group of gracious and elegant figurines. I hesitated before a coffee service. The choices possible were all around me, but that was the only problem I encountered. Before leaving the exceptional place with my arms full of packages that contained the porcelain temptations to which I'd succumbed, I was careful to ask the hours and days they were open to visitors. I already knew I'd be back the next time I came through Berlin.



He is lying sideways, his head and chest raised, the upper part of his limbs close together, and his back turned to the road. In front of the door to the shop he is all one can see, almost as the sign for the store. The very moment we go down the Keithstrasse, it is his large canine body we notice, like a sphinx on the sidewalk announcing that the shop is open. As we reach him, he begins to come alive. The moment we enter he changes position and gently tries to prevent us from invading his home. But he can't do anything about it and always withdraws under the loving pressure of his master's hand.

The large black poodle is so huge that I always forget to ask the Seidel family what his name is. I give him a pat and know that we are friends.

At first glance, the place we've entered is small and well organized. It is charming, a marvelous house filled with very beautiful antiques. The collection is truly rare: ewers, little eighteenth century clocks, fire screens from the Napoleonic era, precious teapots, Fabergé eggs, seventeenth century bronzes, Prussian blue vases, Schinkel chandeliers, and sculptures from the Italian Renaissance. One can find marvelous clocks, extravagant chests of drawers, opulent inlaid furniture, tables, buffets, and paintings by great masters.

These wonderful objects are elegantly and carefully presented. They embody the price and beauty that Bernd Seidel attributes to history. After the war and his father Hugo's years of incarceration in the Russian prison of Workuta, Bernd and his mother's life was reconstructed around beautiful things and, thanks to them, it could then go on again. Mr. Seidel is an elegant and sensitive man who doesn't like to feel sorry for himself or speak about his heartbreak. Yet, he doesn't avoid painful memories—the return of his sick father, the family's destitution—and was involved from the age of 16 on in rebuilding and realigning the threads of his lost paradise, thereafter regained thanks to his hard work and courage.

He is a success today and his reputation as an antique dealer is well known. Because of his determination and love, life once again has the upper



hand. Alexandra was born.

Alexandra Seidel, blonde and pretty, grew up and was taught by her father so that she could take over the business. She already began her apprenticeship as a

little girl. She learned to watch her father, knew how to listen, and once she was old enough she was eager to continue her education by going to Christie's. With the years and the experience gained she became a true professional, capable of buying the finest pieces for the boutique and advising her clients. She acquires rare objects in second-hand shops and transmits her passion to the buyers.

Through the small panes of the window, the yellow walls of the inner courtyard shed a luminous summer aura as they send the gentle sun into the shop. Alexandra sits with her father and us at the large table that stands majestically in one of the rooms. She is wearing a pretty white blouse with pink stripes and an open collar that shows a platinum crown set with turquoise stones on her satin skin. The piece is magnificent, as is the young woman, her cheeks flushed with the heat. They have offered us large glasses of water while Alexandra's words come flowing from her lips, comfortably and with charming subtlety, as from a fountain. She recalls that she invested her first savings right away by purchasing a piece of art, a sculpture by August Gaul, which she'd spotted in a shop and then pined for until she bought it. It is hardly surprising, however, when you know Mr. Seidel, a great connoisseur and superb antiquarian, that his beloved daughter has inherited his noble and irresistible affinity for beautiful things.

We had come to the Seidels to find a painting by Rudolf Hellgrewe, whom we had admired on one of the walls at the apartment hotel where we were staying. Mr. Graf, the director of the Brandenburger Hof had been kind enough to give us the antiquarian's address, since he had a few of the painter's canvases. Therefore we'd gone to look at them in the shop and, as we hadn't made up our mind, we'd come back again. Besides, every time we came to Berlin, Bernd and Alexandra had become accustomed to having us visit them.



cologne - 05 54 pm

We thought that the distance would become irrelevant if we'd take time for a stop beyond the highways, but Holland was too far from Cologne for us to plan any escapades. By necessity, we'd repressed our desires and settled for taking one highway after another, which added nothing to the pleasure of our expedition. As previously planned, we were in Cologne at the end of the afternoon, but arrived worn out by the trip.

The center of the quarter where we had landed was filled with a crowd of pedestrians who seemed to take pleasure in wandering through the streets of the city. The car could hardly get through, inching forward here and there, trying to extricate itself from traffic jams. Still, through the windows—which we had lowered to get the sun—we took it all in with the great and furtive attention of tourists on the verge of discovering a new town. The curious, gathered in front of the cathedral, seemed not to get weary looking way up high at the two black arrows stretching their arms to a large clear sky. The church bells resounded through the streets in joyous clamor and for us the moment had come to get out of the car.

He was familiar with the fatigue of travel. The sensitive concierge took good care of us. His hand and glance were unfailing as he released us from our luggage. Like all the great hosts of this world, he had comforted us with a welcoming smile without immediately asking us for pieces of identification or a credit card for the future bill. He acted as if he knew us, suggested some refreshments, and then took us to the our suite.

The long hushed and luxurious hallways breathed calm, a light perfume arose, clothing the space in a delicate atmosphere. Once the door to our suite was opened, a row of three rooms with thick carpeting in warm, discreet colors became visible. They'd picked the main room as living room and furnished it with handsome couches and armchairs, an inlaid wooden desk with gilded bronzes, mirrors, pretty knickknacks on the side tables, books, and a television. A little farther on, the bedroom had a view over a street that at this hour was rather busy. That evening, after having eaten many little snacks—that someone had put on a small table for us—I and my companion fell asleep very early in the large soft double bed and its sweet-smelling sheets.

The next morning saw us rising in a good mood with a breakfast as spontaneous as life itself. We gorged ourselves on fruit, fine dark bread, buttered toast, jam, farmer's cheese, and hot coffee that smelled of chocolate. Then we both took a shower and half an hour later we were touring the square—across from the hotel—where the Cathedral stood. One of those fine mornings, when the sun pierces the mist, was greeting us.

This Sunday, the cathedral was filled with the sound of church hymns and good Christians spending silent time and praying

amid the noisy crowd of the curious. I loved the whiff of incense and, like the rest, made sure to lower my head piously at the Elevation. Our eyes came to rest on the extreme opulence of the stain glass windows more than our ears were registering the sermon. We already knew that aside from the Sunday mass, we'd return to see the treasure: the cross of Saint Peter, the ostensory of relics with the saint's chain and the fabric of the Three Kings, brought from Milan in 1164.

Half an hour later we were back at the hotel where everything was quiet. We admired the skill with which the concierges and porters dealt with business, smiling and answering the clients' questions. We had reserved a table in the restaurant for dinner.

The Excelsior Hotel had two restaurants that encouraged guests to follow their own tastes. We chose Taku this evening,



exotic and with excellent food. Coming down the grand staircase of the hotel was an experience as sublime as it was brief, but the pressing event of a fine dinner quickly made us forget any other distraction that would keep us from the joy of eating. Nevertheless, before entering the restaurant we had noticed that in front of the stairs in the floor was a stream of

EXCELSIOR HOTEL ERNST

water with fish in it, flowing like a transparent wave. The clear flow slipping by in its little canal was topped—right into the center of the room—by polished glass like a frozen path, which served as a bridge. You'd cross over it above the current, in the golden sheen of artificial lights that pierced the cradle of water with little stars. As soon as you reached the end of the long carpet with its frozen appearance, you were surprised to find yourself surrounded by tables, projected onto the front of a stage as if you were on the podium of a fashion show. We were seated quietly beneath the watchful eye of a splendid bonsai, while the top of the table was filled with plates with small bites and sophisticated delicacies. The little victual characters smiled as they were dying like good samurai, slipping into the door of our mouth, the tender pink love note of quail in ginger. In this delicious procession also appeared petals of braised eggplant in sesame sauce, a small sculpted salad of fried cabbage and vegetables, the firm meat of a duck on an egg flan, and spicy radish flowers. We were very hungry and as the continuation of our meal we'd ordered lobster with asparagus, steamed turbot with bamboo shoots and young leeks, shiitake mushrooms, and raw tuna. All of it was excellent, as were the desserts: a pancake with banana sorbet, and a melon zabaglione. The chef's food didn't have one false note, it was precise and high class. Svan Feldmann was the young prince of this kitchen where Asia's soul seemed to blossom as if it had found itself in the very heart of the Far East. Dressed entirely in black, Svan asked with infinite delicacy whether his guests were happy. We admired his confidence and talent in so closely approaching the Asian cuisine, yet adding his personal touch to it. We had just spent a wonderful evening at Taku. To end our day we didn't stop in at the piano bar but preferred to go to our suite and fall in Morpheus' arms without any resistance. We went up the grand staircase in lieu of making any greater effort, feeling that the elevator would come in handy another time. The next morning we had to send some emails out to America and pick up our latest messages. At the hotel everything was calm, even in the office where the computers were and which had a few clients there already. Everyone was thrilled with this particular service offered by the hotel, being able to work under good conditions and have comfortable seats where you could sit for hours without getting tired. We quickly took care of business and were already back in the hall with its light marble, the solemn grand staircase, and our favorite concierge behind the mahogany counter. In passing, I hadn't missed the opportunity of glancing at the hotel dress store run by Mahi Degenring. The creations were both elegantly modern and classic and far too tempting to resist for very long. My companion could sense I was about to suc-



cumb and reminded me that we had an appointment with the hotel director and that we'd come back later for a possible closer look and fitting. We were introduced by a young, blonde and beautiful cowork-

EXCELSIOR HOTEL ERNST

he'd been in charge of the hotel for a while. He'd benefited equally from great professional experience, having traveled far and wide with his family and lived as expatriates for several years. He'd worked for more than ten years in a hotel caravansary in tropical countries, which had brought him a few difficulties but also great pleasure. He was on Mauritius where he ran one of the great establishments. Being adaptable, he'd opened himself to cultures quite different from his own and had known how to turn the customs of the local population to his advantage. He still felt somewhat nostalgic for Mauritius. The wild charm of the island, the overwhelming candor of its endearing people had touched him deeply. After Australia, Cyprus, South Africa, he had finally come back to Germany. Mr. Luxem returned to Cologne to become director of one of the great German hotels. We were sorry to have to leave him so soon, but he had other appointments and I had some shopping to do that I wouldn't want to forget for anything in the world. After long walks in the city, marked by the flow of publishers, printers, television stations there, we discovered the great diversity of art galleries, we visited the chocolate museum and the Far East museum, after which we went back to our hotel suite, happy to find it again in its peacefulness, brightness, and luxury. We decided which place to choose for lunch and went to say hello to the impressive director of the house, Romain Witt. For thirty-five years or so, Romain Witt has been presiding over the Hanse Stube Restaurant of the Hotel Excelsior. He is an exquisite man, extremely discreet, with an incomparable skill at sliding one dish after another down right under the eyes of his guests. His gestures are slow, precise, and soft, as are his steps that seem to have adjusted to the tranquil course he follows, in soft indoor shoes so as not to disturb the meal his guests are enjoying. It is as if Hans Stube belonged to Mr. Witt, that is the extent to which he has managed to make the visit to the restaurant an obligatory one for a demanding clientele. Even if the food is good, the décor elegant with its dark wood, its lovely modern paintings, its beige velvet seats, its blue-striped carpeting, its appliques that remind you of a dining car in one of the great mythic trains, you come here for the fantastic maitre d'. The medallion of lobster was a moment of grand eating. The turbot was firm and tender, the beef very flavorful. After this well prepared cuisine, what else could we possibly hope for, except perhaps a walk that would take us all afternoon. We were going to see a few more museums and didn't want to miss the carillon—on the gable of the 4711 House in the Glockengasse—playing the French Marseillaise, recalling a period of occupation. Finally, to preserve the present and our memories, we bought a bottle of the famous Eau de Cologne 4711 with which we sprayed ourselves upon returning to the Hotel Excelsior.

MAHI DEGENRING COUTURE

For Mahi Degenring, her precious fabrics were a creative enterprise with which other stores could not compete.

In the countryside in the Cologne region, she had established fashion studios where the city's noise and turmoil wouldn't be a handicap to her small hands. Here, according to her indications, people created suits, skirts, pants, evening dresses, and they even knitted marvelous sweaters of her design. One sunny morning she drove us to this bit of land, far removed from everything else where, in a small village, she and her group of ingenious workers practiced her passion for fashion.

The young woman created gold and turned every piece of fabric into a valuable item of clothing that her customers immediately walked off with. She'd artfully compose a garment, knowing how

to hide a broad waist by a clever draping of the cloth; how to place a pleat in the perfect spot where it would emphasize the figure's subtlety. She surrounded herself with beautiful fabrics that would sometimes come from far away. She didn't make the mistake of following new styles to the letter and if she used any trinkets at all on a fabric it served only as an improvement on her creation. Here and there she might try an effect that a taffeta ribbon on velvet would produce, or some hand-made embroidery from India on the upper part of a blouse, but she would never get bogged down in such additions. **She knew how to be rigorous, wouldn't fall into superficiality and always applied herself to making every woman more beautiful.**

Mahi used to be a fashion model but, from show to show and in a moderate way the young woman began to prefer doing what she loved best, which was designing for and dressing the bodies of other people.

Today Mahi has a lovely dark-haired daughter—who looks like her—with a figure even more willowy than her mother's. It was now Shirin who, together with other models, showed the clients the new creations at the fashion shows that Mahi organized.

Each year, the event would take place in one of the shops that Mahi Degenring had established in Cologne and that served as intermediaries with the studios. On that particular day, we rushed to the Brückenstrasse to admire the new line and even if we didn't need to renew a wardrobe, we could always acquire a precious little—very high fashion—item that would complement an outfit purchased the year before.

With Mahi, everything harmonized and offered an unending chain of completion. Every piece had been designed to suit another like a sophisticated puzzle that only the woman wearing it would know and that others seemed to discover on each new occasion. Thus, the outfits were always new and up-to-date, and that marriage agreed both with the client's aesthetics and her wallet, which could adjust without suffering too much. Mahi had the talent of making High Fashion at a ready-to-wear price, which explained why her address had become so popular with a demanding and refined client base that came from all over Germany.

DIETER MÜLLER

bergisch-gladbach - 133 pm

We had left Bensberg for Lerbach, interested in learning more about the Althoff Hotels to which both establishments belonged. But the primary reason for our change of location was motivated more by the desire to discover the cuisine of the chef, Dieter Müller. In Germany, this chef enjoyed a tremendous reputation.

The welcome at Lerbach was charming. **The isolated place seemed to belong to the little songbirds in the trees and by the pond.** It was so peaceful that one could almost see a fawn play around on the grass. We figured that we could spend enough time here to have lunch. Besides, in the pasture were two small temples, perfect for having a quick meal. One could sense that these summer structures were ideal for all sorts of confidences and at the same time could seriously satisfy the appetite by being adorned for a refined dinner with a carefully laid table and the finest dishes.

The building in the park was a large bourgeois structure that had the airs of a manor house. In the entryway floated a particular feeling of warm intimacy and innate elegance. It was in good taste and, in addition, had a certain opulence, sweetness, and discretion. A staircase of such magnificence led to the rooms above that it made you think these would rival one another in refinement and luxury. The one intended for us was comfortable and had an old-fashioned intimate décor. The most remarkable element of the room seemed to be hanging

SCHLOSSHOTEL



on one of the walls in a huge gilded frame—a painting of an immensely beautiful landscape. Our room was right above the entrance hall and offered an unobstructed view over the comings and goings of the clients. Our wide windows opened onto a winding path that went along the entire property and ended in front of the hotel displaying a small esplanade. We were amused to watch cars arrive and line up in front of the building's entryway. The porters were skillful at placing them at an angle just a millimeter from the curb. Only beautiful cars and the latest models were

allowed to have a bit more room. The other, less spectacular ones were removed from the clients' view and parked a bit farther along on a higher level.

We had lunch in the sun on the terrace, which belonged to the hotel's informal restaurant, and enjoyed a salad, vegetables, and fruit. We waited for the end of our stay to approach the great restaurant, for we knew that it would be the icing on the cake. The next day, a table had been reserved for us at Dieter Müller's restaurant.

At noon, we were the first to enter the den of food-loving cupidity. A tall blonde lady welcomed us with the delicate expertise of a perfect hostess. Each waiter seemed to fade in her presence and we understood that beyond her fine solemn figure the power of a person in charge lay hidden. Our thoughts were confirmed when the maitre d' told us that it was Mrs. Müller whom we had just met. The lovely lady had gracefully vanished after



DIETER MÜLLER SCHLOSSHOTEL LERBACH

having entrusted us to André Thomann. We couldn't have been in better hands. Mr. Thomann directed the service in the gentle, harmonious, and soft-spoken restaurant and was distinguished in the art, which reached perfection that day.

As an opening, we were served an assortment of sumptuous appetizers, among which a cream of foie gras with a mellow aroma and smooth consistency and a slice of rabbit with black truffles that was voluptuous and exquisite. We chose our favorite bread from a large basket brought by a nimble-footed young waitress in a long dark skirt. Of course, the menu, too, was brought to us by qualified hands and since the foie gras had touched us beyond words we wanted to revisit the experience and enrich our memories with another version of the same. We threw ourselves excitedly and without any hesitation on a foie gras trilogy. It took a great deal of talent to make the great refined tradition of a foie gras, as it is eaten in the finest places of Alsace, meld together through the dexterity characteristic of a great German chef. Mr. Müller proved his true artistry with this spirited and superb first course.

We'd hardly had time to enjoy the elegance of the place. The restaurant looked out onto an interior garden, whose walls seemed to be expecting the climbing embrace of gleaming green leaves. The window appeared to reflect the statue of a dreaming Neptune in the back of the garden and create its double in paint on one of the walls in the room. The second course had caught me in my thoughts by surprise and brought me out of my reflections about the décor.

A white-fleshed fish awakened our appetites. It was presented unadorned like a block of firm clean alabaster.

It was cut with great precision and the knife went through it as if it were smooth butter. The turbot had the subtle offering of a marinated lemon to sublimate it. It was accompanied by a little risotto, a delicate gustatory cleansing in a sepia of cuttlefish. We had given in to the temptation of a pink-fleshed filet of venison, and were overcome by tender green and creamy Brussels sprouts. We tasted the full essence of two cherries sprinkled with a fine gentle pepper. The perfect moment was coming to an end. We decided not to have any of the good French cheeses even if they looked extremely appealing. We wanted to save some room for dessert—a chocolate *Moëlleux*, a *crème brûlée* with thyme, and rhubarb ice cream completed this memorable evening. When we were leaving the restaurant the chef came over to introduce himself.

He was blond and carried himself well in his fine white jacket and striped pants. He was simple and generous as are all great chefs and we immediately complimented him on his talent. He responded that the skill had been given to him by other people. **He spoke to us of his love for cooking, for the products, for France, the land of good food**

where he had worked, and of the love for his own country, Germany.

Dieter Müller still had a solid sense of attachment to his farmers' roots that, beyond any honors and praise, never let him forget that he should get to work each day with humility. As we left him, we knew that the great chef possessed the wisdom of intelligent human beings who know how to remain modest and listen to others.



JEAN-CLAUDE BOURGUEIL

dusseldorf - 833 pm

At midnight, the restaurant where the cheerful brouhaha of the final festive moments reigned had not yet emptied out. The room was full of joyful cries and embracing friends who had spent long hours at the same table and were still not ready to take their leave. We had finished tasting the fantastic cuisine of Mr. Bourgueil, exalting to the spirit as much as the stomach. The great chef's artistry provided instant pleasure and led one to believe that his work was based on a rigorous foundation. **The results turned out to offer aromas that were both classic and exotic**, such as the pigeon pastilla with a crust as delicate as lace and tender meat; an appetizing giant clam shell with, in its hollow, the soft round meat of a bird. The date purée with ginger spoke of a sunny distant island, and the praliné sauce of a pretty, emotional marquise. The splendid food appeared in nuances and precious details but could also be ample and strong. The sea bass was as masterful as it should be, a celebration of the fish done with daring subtleties. A barely perceptible touch of smoke rendered the flesh of the fine fish even more interesting and smooth; a small celery salad added a delicious impudence that enlivened it and rounded it off. It was a remarkable dish, as were the *cannelloni* with a truffled rice and veal. The meal came to an end and, to top it all off, reawakened the appetite instead of appeasing it. The feast continued in the direction of the world of sweetness. We were thrilled to find a small chocolate pastry that was part soufflé, part mousse, part rice; minuscule and perfect petits fours; and regal chocolate truffles.

We had spent a long time at our table. It was a precious moment and then we had the good luck to meet the chef. It seemed to us that he had never expressed such vivid pleasure in meeting new people and we had immense respect for the great chef who had suddenly chosen to settle down in a country so different from his own.

When he arrived, the Germany of the seventies was not yet interested in elegant dishes. Although the body needed food, it was only prepared in a rustic fashion. It took the arrival of a new generation of chefs for cuisine to finally acquire its letters of nobility and become interesting to a vaster, educated, and food-loving public. Even if at the beginning of the twenty-first century a certain infatuation with the pleasures of dining and a willingness to compete with the planet's finest kitchens could be noticed, Germany continued to favor the pragmatic side of life. On the other side of the Rhine, they preferred foods that were synonymous in richness to clothes and cars. However, the

great tables weren't suffering from this lack of interest in fine food, but they were few in number and didn't have any real competitors.

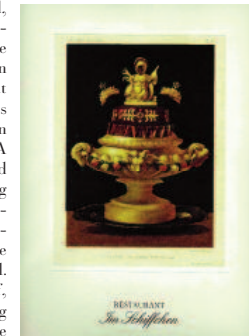
In West Germany, the restaurant *Im Schiffchen* was one of these rare places, which Jean-Claude Bourgueil, **an exceptional chef, had turned into an epicurean address of major influence.**

He was born in France in a village in Touraine. From childhood on he'd been fed fine products. His grandparents made their own bread and Jean-Claude would wake up every day with the wonderful smell of bread baking in the oven. Other fragrances wafted their appetizing spirals through the house, coming from meat dishes and simmering vegetables. Each morning brought the most aromatic awakenings to push the boy out of bed, his taste buds up and lying in wait for the scents his little nose inhaled. The child would wait impatiently for the

family meal that would be a feast.

Oddly enough, the experience of his early years didn't inspire in him the desire to cook. At the time he was dreaming of following the Lord, in the footsteps of the village priest. The latter made long treks through the countryside on foot—no matter what the weather—to visit his parishioners and bring them the good word. The priest, together with the family doctor and the teacher, were some of the personalities to whom the entire village listened and who were respected by all. The young boy aspired to bringing joy to others and dreamed only of a spiritual life. However, as an adolescent, Jean-Claude's ideals came back down to more terrestrial nourishment. He turned adamantly to the fine scents of the stove and the preparation of dishes in

which he was expertly helped by an apprenticeship with a great chef whom he quickly began to see as his adoptive father. Paul Bocuse made an artisan of the boy. Alain Chapel, where he continued his training, promoted him to artist. Jean-Claude had an unlimited devotion to Bocuse and, by his own admission, said admiringly that his time with the great Chapel had changed his life. We then touched upon metaphysical areas and Mr. Bourgueil became downright dithyrambic. That was how our conversation at the end of the meal began. We extended the moment, as time with the chef was passing by too fast. We were the only ones left in the room. Both he and we were very happy with our encounter and the opportunity he had given us to speak of fine topics. We were deeply appreciative of this friendly sharing and were still talking with the chef as we reached the restaurant's door, as if his words were attached to a magic cord. The stars were taken to task—the conversation didn't want to die but it did want to get some rest. It was one o'clock in the morning—maybe later—and we just couldn't tear ourselves away. On the sidewalk of the lighted street the three of us were remaking the world.



LANDHAUS ZU DEN ROTHEN FORELLEN

ilsenburg - 6:35 pm



It is wonderful here when in honor of springtime the sky is blue and the lake is clear. When the temperature is mild I like to sit down on one of the benches on the edge of the promenade to look at the other shore, the hotel, and the new arrivals. The view of the languid water immerses me in a state of profound day-dreaming. Hours fly by like minutes as I observe the small town's activity that isn't very eventful, barely alive and with long periods of rest. In the warm season I enjoy taking evening walks. Still stimulated by the wine we had with the meal, it's good to get some fresh air and stroll around casually with my companion. We go a little way down the promenade that resembles a dike and find my bench again, the lake rustling golden beneath the light of the lamps, and the sunset resplendent. I look up at the sky and the crescent of the moon and, in spite of some voices reverberating in the distance, the silence is stronger than that and enters my soul. The path that runs around the lake gets lost quickly in the tamed footpaths of a gentle green arboretum. This evening, gently brushed by the warmish breeze, the place has a romantic feel to it. Far off in the village, we can see many little lights that seem to have taken their dazzle from the stars in the sky. It is all one whole and, seen from here, the hotel looks even prettier with its terrace reflected in the lake.

We came to the hotel on the day we were going to Goslar and, as if the house were awaiting our arrival, we obviously made it our vacation nest. This encounter was to figure forever in our destiny, which unbeknownst to us had carefully prepared the surprise. That particular day, it was as if the small world of Ilsenburg had dressed up for a party. In the lovely hotel, a marvelous little room, the only one available in the whole

place, had been made even more coquette to welcome us with its bouquets of wildflowers in vases, its lampshades of dolls that disseminated their diaphanous light throughout the room, its large soft armchairs, its fine sheets on the wide smooth bed, and its tiny, sophisticated and cheerful bathroom. It was a charming place. Bright as a summer day, it welcomed us in a way that only reinforced our first impression of having landed in a home of bliss.

It was our lucky day. Zu den Rothen Forellen was a poetry-filled place. A small magic and captivating spot where the pure, invigorating air makes the blood tingle and happily invites you to have a solid breakfast before taking a tour outside to explore what the surroundings are like. It is true that our original idea was to visit Goslar, not far by car from the village of Ilsenburg. We had read about its extraordinary monuments in every guidebook, all of which unconditionally recommended the visit. We had gladly given in to the gentle diktat from the outside to go and see the town's palace. The marketplace, too, had enthused us and we had waited there in astonishment, like so many hundreds of other strollers, crowded together side by side, nose in the air, staring at the village carillon, and waiting for it to play its bells. Then, like children, we were dazed by the sight of the clock's doors opening to let out the flamboyant parade of little animated characters that represented mineworkers. One after the other, the little men would greet the audience and then leave again on their track. They had been carefully sculpted and reminded the passersby that the mines were close and could also be visited. But there was much else we wanted to discover besides Goslar. The Harz massif and its peak, the Brocken, at an altitude of 1142 meters were only two steps from the hotel, as were the strange creatures that inhabit it. The witches have turned it

LANDHAUS ZU DEN ROTHEN FORELLEN

SHERATON HOTEL

frankfurt - 7:07 pm

into their main habitat and gather there every year on the first night in May. In the village of Ilsenburg, signs alert you to the danger and ask you to be careful crossing the road. The witches who, as everyone knows, use a broom to get around, always come through on the roadway unexpectedly. Even though no victim has yet been chronicled in the town hall's books, these specific beings riding their brooms can thus cause terrible accidents. Furthermore, Jörg Steinhäuser, the hotel director, had an accident. We don't believe that it was caused by a witch, for the man wouldn't have such an irresistible smile then. Mr. Steinhäuser is tall and carries himself well. He doesn't seem to be affected by the handicap that makes him limp slightly. The cane he uses when he moves around gives him the elegant look of an English lord. It is his little boy's fifth birthday today and nothing seems to please Mr. Steinhäuser more than being together with his wife and two children for the birthday dinner. The tall gentleman is warmly welcoming, attentive, and cannot do enough to make his guests feel comfortable. He has entrusted the delicious Kordula Mika, his right hand woman, with the task of making sure we are taken care of. We are in good hands. **The room is a model of sweetness, soft and tender, opening up to the blue sky and the tranquillity of the courtyard.** Time seems to be standing still.

Tomorrow we'll decide perhaps to eat in the lovely room of the restaurant, but this evening we want to take advantage of the terrace and the sunset that keeps on sending its reddish flames to heaven. The flamboyant sunset doesn't let us forget to appreciate the dinner and the chef's cuisine. We have a cold and pleasant cucumber soup, an excellent St. Pierre, and a black currant parfait.

Tomorrow's weather is supposed to be beautiful and warm. My companion and I decided to take a walk through the village at a solid pace. As we turned a corner, we read a sign that told us witches passed here but since Kordula had reassured us that their supernatural powers and their influence over human beings were limited, we didn't worry. In all honesty, we would even have had the impudence to borrow one of the famous flying brooms. But we saw not a living soul...and no broom either.

A few minutes later, however, we did have an important encounter with the ice cream vendor and his musical van. In addition to the seductive melodies coming from the van, which was colorfully painted with all kinds of characters, a large bell shimmering in the sun began to sound as soon as a child came out of a house. The Ilsenburg ice cream vendor was doing a fine business. We returned to the hotel licking at the huge ice cream cones of pistachio, wild strawberries, and chocolate we'd bought as our holidays were happily continuing.

Obviously, the story of Zu den Rothen Forellen can't end here. Besides, we had already planned to go back, for beautiful stories cannot end.

A plane was circling and buzzing like an annoyed insect in the vast space above Frankfurt. I had opened the window of the car that separated me from the world outside as I dreamed of the pleasures the future held for me. Soon an occasional rain puddle shimmered in front of us in the indentations of the asphalt pavement. As is often the case on highways, there was construction going on. All around us, the line of traffic uncoiled like a calm sea reminiscent of a long creature that, pushed by a vague wind, moves forward. We had to stop frequently and were silent. Then we left the main highway to enter the vast airport sector. It was just the early afternoon of a lovely summer day, but the sun was already vanishing behind the buttresses of the tall buildings that stood like statues of cement and steel. We'd taken streets, some of them transversal, others longitudinal, that ran between the tall buildings and provided all the useful information needed. But the traffic was dense and the drivers were in a hurry, exerting a strange pressure on my companion, which made us go too fast to catch the directions we wanted to read. Thus, we'd been circling through the same streets for some time before we found what we wanted to see.

We'd just arrived at the threshold of a modern fortified castle whose walls rose so high that, like a segment of the night, they barred the sun although it was at a high point. We parked the car on the esplanade of the hotel and followed the eager porter who had suddenly appeared. Everything was done to lighten our burden and make our arrival easy and comfortable. The young man led us to the elevator, which brought us to an enormous, bright entrance hall without any walls. Here we were warmly welcomed by Claudia, the prettiest guide we could have wished for. It was difficult to imagine that, although we were in the very heart of one of the world's largest airports, the hotel offered a direct opening onto the immense complex without having to leave the inside. In the labyrinth of endless hallways, the palace remained impregnable to the feverish activity surrounding it and as soon as one entered the front door the environment was transformed, the hotel providing a **protective island of calm in its center.** Nothing disturbed the silence of its walls or jolted the wide bay windows that looked out over the sky. Without the noise of their motors, the planes now presented no more than a silent wing movement. They just passed by briefly and, even if the hotel's exterior was subject to the construction all around it, giving the impression of a superhuman power, once you entered, it became a place where peace was to be found. It was hard to believe that it would soon be thirty years old, for everything was elegant and astonishingly modern. A great deal of construction had been done whose only goal was to embellish the

SHERATON HOTEL

place, and over the years this effort had turned it into one of the most sought-after hotels in the city and the surrounding area. Therefore, when you came to Frankfurt, you'd come here without needing the pretext of having to catch a plane.

Claudia had brought us to our suite, which she had been careful to have us check first. Besides the fact that the rooms were quite large, everything in them had been chosen specifically to satisfy new occupants as much as possible. Elegant luxury emanated from the living room, study, and bathroom. What surprised me more was the sweetness of the bedroom, the incredibly soft bed that had every characteristic needed for enjoying the most comfortable night possible. We were going to spend several days in this fine place, having postponed the flight that was to take us to New York. We were unbelievably comfortable in this grand hotel where we'd stopped and were taking advantage of the huge television screen to discover what the newest films were the market had to offer. We were delighted to be protected from the heat outside by the comfortable air conditioning inside. Nevertheless, we did go out a few times to take a walk in the old city of Frankfurt where we explored Goethe's father's house and the St. Bartholomew Cathedral. We weren't thrilled with the city's skyscrapers, which we knew very well from our familiarity with their older siblings in America, but we weren't quite able to avoid their obvious presence.

We did love the Main River that flowed between the houses with a light rustling sound and we'd always take one of the bridges to cross to the other side. We'd walk to the residential quarter, attractively adorned with green spaces, where everything was well tended. We'd see entire families there just taking a walk. We truly were on vacation. That year, we really wanted to believe the summer, or the carefree feeling of the happy days that came with it, would never end. When we returned to the large hotel we didn't feel



constrained to be involved in the laborious obligations of the working world, even though the place was set up for every possibility and requirement that business people might need. Our own work was facilitated by the most recent technologies available.

In the evening we could often be found at the bar. The place was boldly lit like the prettiest of airport runways, with small bulbs changing to play with each surface and bring new odd-shaped and fascinating objects to light. After drinks, we decided to go to the excellent restaurant. It had an elegant and very pleasant room, with a handsome buffet. Roasts and other elaborate

dishes were presented here but, before getting lost in these delights, we were eager to try all kinds of shellfish, fish, and vegetable appetizers. It was a feast. Faced with such overabundance, our stomach began to bubble with excitement but we reined in the gluttonous instrument and firmly

directed ourselves to the main dish. After much deliberation, we chose the exquisite meat of a kangaroo accompanied by small carrots and crêpes soufflées. It was a memorable moment. The chefs in their impeccable white uniforms were painstakingly doing their work in view of the clients. They'd cook the dishes and no smell would come into the restaurant from the open kitchen. We were delighted with the quality of the menu and when we finished our meal we didn't think of resisting the colorful and appetizing display of the sweet offerings—crème brûlée; caramelized, English, praliné, whipped, or chocolate; floating island; cakes and tarts, fruit, ices, and sorbets. Since it wasn't possible for us to make the whole tour of these delights, we returned to the same restaurant the next day to continue the experience.

SHERATON HOTEL

There were times when we preferred the comfort of our apartment and would eat there in the quiet privacy of the evening, having ordered the meal from room service. Invariably, we'd then choose a Caesar salad and a rib eye steak, with a good American wine. It was a bit of a celebration and an homage to the America we loved. Tired and satisfied, we'd then stretch out on the bed and sleep like a baby.

We didn't want to leave for anything in the world without having met the hotel's director. We expected him to be an exceptional personality to be able to direct such a ship without a single false note. We had run into him and Claudia one morning in one of the rooms reserved for the demanding public. It was no wonder that he was a man of irreproachable bearing, dressed in a tight-fitting dark blue suit, who came toward us, smiling widely.

His white shirt suited him beautifully and set off his complexion nicely, he wore a striped tie, his eyes were light and deep, and his short gray hair made him look classy and austere. He had charisma and a dimension that was both adventurous and mysterious. Perhaps it was the many journeys, which had led him to go and live in distant countries, that explained the attention he gave to others. He was very human and this was not the least of his qualities. Every time Mr. Edmond A. Pinczowski left on a hotel tour as if invested with a mandate, he could have been an ambassador, an emissary, a missionary, but he became a hotel keeper. He had been to Turkey, Nigeria, and Jamaica. He had spent time in Jerusalem, on the island of St. Martin, and had lived in Kenya for several years, then in Brussels for a while. Mr. Pinczowski had directed the grandest of hotels and didn't expect to leave it at that. Asia fascinated him.

Perhaps we would go to Asia one day as well and have the pleasure of seeing this unusual man again. Today, however, the director was still living and working in Frankfurt. It wasn't time yet for his wife and children to pack their bags and leave. The Pinczowski family was happy and secure in Frankfurt's largest hotel such a ship without a single false note.

FRANKFURT AIRPORT

frankfurt - 12 55 pm

Before flying out, we were crossing the hallways linking the Sheraton Hotel to the airport for the second time. The place was enormously crowded. Prestigious passengers were mixing in with visitors we had seen passing by several times before: the curious, hands in their pockets, who did nothing but go back and forth, or others who, with determined steps, must have been heading for the terraces of the terminal



to watch the planes take off; those in a hurry pulling a suitcase on wheels behind them; couples carrying children. Some were going through the airport

like roaming herds,

not knowing what the next stage might be; others were going home and seemed to know what to expect. Businessmen were easily recognizable by their attaché cases and their straitlaced faces as they came out of one of the airport's conference rooms. They all wore the same well-cut suits, had the same drawn faces and absent look. The women gave themselves away by their elegant high-heeled shoes that had caused their feet to swell and slowed down their walking, which in

their sedentary jobs they had forgotten how to do. Still, in the airport the same amenities were available to them as to all other passengers: moving sidewalks, escalators, elevators, little mechanical cars to be waved down and that could take them from one gate to another. There was also a train that linked the different terminals to make them more accessible. Every now and then we'd come across a man and his dog who seemed happy to see each other again. What was their story? It was a good possibility that, during this holiday time, the man had been unfaithful to his four-footed friend and left him to fly off by himself to far away places. The animal had waited for his master, spending his days and nights in a most agreeable fashion. Seeing him today, all frisky, his coat shining, his pink tongue and bright eyes, standing on tall hind legs, his tail wagging like a whip, it was easy to guess that wherever he had stayed had not been unpleasant for him. It was easy to imagine that in the airport's "dog house hotel" they had groomed and coddled him every moment of the day, as they did with the twenty-five or so occupants that were its regular clientele.

Every journey was allowed in Fraport. It was a different and fascinating world that could be self-sufficient. Under its roof, art lovers came to see painting exhibitions. The long halls had restaurants and shops happily competing with each other and a tired, feverish, or sick traveler could even find a place where they would take care of him. Pharmacists, dentists, and opticians were not the only ones who offered their services. Doctors received patients in the airport clinic. If one ventured elsewhere onto a different artery, one could find a square and even a café. A few people were having breakfast there at little tables being supplied with food by the waiters. Other customers preferred a small coquette

inn. Since not everyone was living on the same time of day, one wondered if it was lunch or dinner for that person. Others wanted a croque-monsieur, sushi, or spaghetti. The great house of the airport was alive all night long, never overcome by sleep, its energy had faded in the surroundings, but among the fifty restaurants that had found a right to exist here many kept their rhythm going graciously. For the traveler who was



less than calm and needed repose, it would be appropriate to go to the chapel that welcomed and celebrated marriages and baptisms, in particular.

I was wandering around the airport just for pleasure in a second state of self-detachment. The place had an odd effect on me, even though it concerned just a brief period of time. It was a magical universe of attractions and professionalism. I would enter Fraport Airport impatiently and worried, but I'd always come out of it with my mind at rest. For us the vacation was over and if we'd felt a pang in leaving Germany, we were privileged to say farewell to this magnificent country, absolutely sure and confident that we'd be back through Fraport again on another journey.

Page 4
FRANKFURT AIRPORT

Page 5/6
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Page 15
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Page 16/17
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Page 30
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Page 34/35

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Page 36

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Page 37/38

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Page 39/40

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Page 41/42

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Page 43

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Page 44

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Page 45/46

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Page 48

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Page 49/50

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Page 52/53

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Page 53/55

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Page 55/56

FRANKFURT AIRPORT

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