



The Principality

During the last few years the handkerchief-sized Principality of Liechtenstein has become a popular corner of Europe for the tourist who is seeking something "different". This independent miniature country is just under 61 square miles in area and is situated in the heart of the Alps on the right bank of the River Rhine.

Nestling between Switzerland and Austria, Liechtenstein is the last German-speaking monarchy still in existence. There is no poverty, no unemployment, no exchange control and the Customs is handled by the Swiss. There has been no army since 1868 and the last soldier died at the age of 95 years, peacefully in his home, in 1939. The police-force has a full complement of 26 men and one dog and is concerned mainly with traffic problems as crime is rare. Indeed, although the capital of Liechtenstein boasts a jail in the imposing government building, it is seldom used.

The scenery is superb... from the soft pastures of the valley to the towering alps which form the frontier with Austria there is a warmth and friendliness which all visitors feel. Although the main thoroughfares of Vaduz and Schaan (the latter being the second largest town in the country) bustle with activity during the summer holiday season, the peace and tranquility of the rest of the land remains. Many of the little roads in the "Unterland", around Schellenberg, are unknown to any except the local peasants who tread the same paths daily with their beloved cows. For cows in Liechtenstein are held in high regard as approximately 8% of the population of 20 000 people are

farmers... there are 6 276 cattle! During the summer month the majority of these are sent up to the high pastures mountains, to the Samina Valley near Steg and Malbun. Little huts are dotted about the mountain-side stacked with hay for winter feeding and above the stable-doors are wooden plaques with the letters "I. H. S." superimposed upon a cross. The "In Hoc Signo" signs are blessings from the church upon the herds. At this time of year Sunday mass is held in the open air high in the mountains to enable the peasants who look after the cattle to attend services. As the winds blow cold and autumn comes the animals are brought down to the valley again in a colourful ceremony called the "Alp Abfahrt" where the best milkers lead the procession down the mountains with their heads garlanded in flowers and crowned by an upturned milking stool. Paul Gallico wrote an enchanting story about it, called "Ludmila".

Founded in 1719, Liechtenstein then consisted of the lordships (or estates) of Vaduz and Schellenberg and was a part of the Holy Roman Empire. The country joined the Rhine Confederation in 1806 and it was included in the German Confederation from 1815 to 1866. From 1866 to the present day the little Principality has remained independent. A customs union was formed with Austria by an agreement signed in 1852, which also called for co-operation in economic and political affairs. After ten years the Ruling Prince Johann II granted a constitution to his people; this gave them the right to elect their own representatives and ever since that time

Liechtenstein has been a constitutional monarchy.

Liechtenstein was fortunate to be neutral during World War I, and afterwards when revolutions were sweeping over Europe the Austrian-Hungarian Empire broke up. It was at this time that the Principality entered into long drawn out negotiations to form the same agreement with Switzerland as it had enjoyed previously with Austria. By 1924 all formalities were complete and a customs, monetary and postal union was evolved which still operates today to the benefit of both countries. No loss of life or war damage was suffered by the little Principality in World War II as again it remained neutral. In 1943 the present Ruling Prince Franz Joseph II married Countess Georgine Wilczek of Vienna and in 1945 a son and heir, Prince Hans Adam, was born. The late Pope Pius XII was his godfather. Soon after the war they came to live in the beautiful thirteenth-century Castle Vaduz, perched on jutting rock overlooking the capital. (Gutenberg, the second castle in the land and situated near Balzers, is privately owned.) The ruling couple now have four sons and one daughter. They are loved and respected by their subjects.

The Ruling Prince's birthday on August 16th is marked by a gay and colourful ceremony, for on the previous evening the Royal Family assemble on the balcony of the High School in the centre of Vaduz. Speeches are made, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides from the whole Principality form a torchlight parade, songs are sung, the streets are packed with loyal citizens and when the Prince has spoken his thanks to his people