



Plakat der euganeischen Thermen in Battaglia (Bildteil) 1827 • Part of the Poster of the Thermal Baths at Battaglia (1827)  
Sammlung von Zur Westen The von Zur Westen Collection

Our health resorts make extensive use of posters in order to advertise the beauties of their surroundings, the magnificence of their "kurparks" and buildings for the use of visitors. They inform us that Altheide cures heart disease, that Springtide in Wiesbaden is gloriously beautiful. Few people, however, are probably aware that this form of publicity is very old; for it has a tradition of some two centuries or so and is older than the poster advertisements of trade and industry. In the olden time watering-places followed the example of strolling leeches who like jugglers and showmen were wont to extol their medical skill and the miraculous efficacy of their medicines for every ailment under the sun in illustrated bills which they posted up wherever they went. One poster dating from 1600 claims such miraculous cures for the springs of Burgwindheim at the Steigerwald that once belonged to the Cistercian Abbey of Ebrach which was secularized in 1803. The blind, the deaf, the lame, lepers even and people suffering from paralysis, cancer, gallstones, consumption and jaundice could, it was stated, be cured by this water. The woodcut depicts crudely but vividly how the sick were taken to the baths, how they drank the waters, and how a cripple was cured and could walk without crutches. The poster ex-

tolling Bad Thalfingen near Ulm dates from 1665 and praises the mineral springs of that watering-place for their efficacy in healing all maladies excepting tuberculosis. However, people would appear to have grown somewhat sceptical for the proprietor of the springs and descendant of an old patrician family in Ulm had the water tested by a medical man, who laid down some extraordinary directions for its use. The cure started with purging and patients were supposed to take a bath lasting two hours twice a day. Such was medical opinion in those days. The pleasing copper engraving shows us what for that age were comfortable lodgings, dining-rooms and baths for the visitor's use. By the nineteenth century three posters praised the *Thermae of Battaglia* (between Padua and Bologna). Their efficacy in cases of gout and rheumatism had become of widespread fame by 1827, and the spa authorities only required to praise the excellence of the bathing arrangements, the pleasures of a stay at the charming watering-place and the natural beauties of its situation at the foot of the castle-topped hill of S. Helena. As may be seen from their small size these posters were obviously intended for the interiors of hotels and hostelries which would also explain the inclusion of prices which today find a place in the prospectuses of such establishments.

Translated by Flora Salmond-Volkman