

I said I had.

"Ah, he is good," she said with a sigh of extreme satisfaction. "He helps—he always does help. One only hears good of him, and his way is so simple."

I had heard of Ast's curious diagnostic method before, but seeing my companion wanted to talk, asked her what her experience had been.

"All he wants," she said, endorsing all I had heard before, "all he wants is a little piece of hair off the nape of the patient's neck. He looks at that through a microscope, and at once knows what is the matter."

"And writes a prescription?"

"Oh, no! There would be no time with so many patients! The prescriptions are all ready in a box divided off into partitions. He says which one is to be taken out, and someone who is helping him gives the recipe to the patient, with injunctions to have it made up in Winzen."

"Why in Winzen?"

"Only in Winzen they may make them up. If people take them elsewhere the doctor gets into trouble."

That is to say, the law steps in. Ast has been fined heavily for illegal practice more than once. But fines are a mere bramble scratch to him. He reaches for the heavy fruit beyond, and thrives. I cannot understand why the paternal German Government (generally so ready to smooth all things straight) cannot step in here. Neither can I understand why Winzen concocts Ast's prescriptions unscathed, but then my knowledge of legal affairs is of the slightest. Having hitherto found the ten commandments sufficient for my peace of mind, it is one of the subjects I have carefully avoided.

"And how many patients came with you to Mr. Ast?" was my next question.

"Sixty or eighty at least, and that was a second relay. Sometimes they come by thousands. Last Whitsuntide 1,800 (!) gathered round his door. They waited in the streets for hours. As it was terribly cold, some were half perished before they could get in."

"And does Ast take money from all these people?"

"He *exacts* nothing, but all pay; one mark [nearly a shilling] is the least anyone gives for looking at a tuft of hair and giving a prescription, and rich people give much more. One man arrived with a handbag, it was full of hair, he had brought it from his village. The hair was cut off the heads of the people there who wished to consult Ast, and could not come

themselves; this man was their deputy. Ast prescribed for each person who had sent a sample, and for each prescription he received a mark. Sometimes," continued my recorder, warmed by my interest, "sometimes people who have no faith send stupid things to the Wonder-Doctor to try him. One man sent him cow's hairs, but he knew them at once."

"What did he say?"

"No good," she replied, rendering the Low-German accent, and the scornful gesture of the keen-witted peasant with unconscious dramatic talent, "no good, cow's hairs!"

I laughed aloud of the thought of anyone setting so clumsy a pitfall for the shrewd Wonder-Doctor, and my companion, delighted to discuss her idol, plied me with anecdotes.

Long before we reached our journey's end I was heartily weary of the shepherd of Radbruch, of his age, which is about 77, of his patients, his cleverness and his goodness, and of his personal appearance—the regular North-German type it seems: blue eyes, light hair and medium height.

But my fellow-traveller enjoyed talking about him, and that settled the question. We parted at last—the best of friends—she wishing me a "happy journey," after the warm-hearted fashion of her country, and I wishing her "health," rather sadly and doubtfully at heart, I confess, though we parted with mutual smiles.

As the express whizzed out of Hamburg, carrying me northward, my mind kept flying southward to Winzen, to the Wonder-Doctor and to my late companion. With eyes luxuriously closed upon the rushing tearing landscape outside, I re-lived the recent conversation *en route* to Hamburg. All that I had heard was but an echo of many voices—all united to praise the peasant's skill—and among them were voices of those to whom one would naturally have attributed the power of educated reflection. What is the secret of their tale? Is it the old time-worn one of the strong will controlling the weaker, and leading them like sheep? And then I drifted on to other similar examples—to the unexplained influence of mediæval leeches with their weird pharmacy and gruesome surgery. At all events Ast holds aloof from this last, and, from all accounts, his drugs are herbs of the field.

But who can explain his wondrous influence, the charm he casts over his patients?

I leave the solving of the riddle to readers of the NURSING RECORD. LINA MOLLETT.

CARLSBAD—the renowned Spa in Bohemia—was thronged last summer with patients suffering from all kinds of liver and gouty complaints, who have reaped great benefit from taking the celebrated waters; but it is not sufficiently known that persons unable to visit the Spa can obtain the *natural* Carlsbad Sprudel Salts or Waters at all Chemists, Stores, &c. To distinguish the *natural* salts from artificial imitations, note the names on wrapper of "LOEBEL SCHOTLAENDER, CARLSBAD," and INGRAM & ROYLE, Ltd., Sole Agents, 52, Farringdon Street, E.C., 19, South John Street, Liverpool; 80, Redcliff Street, Bristol. Pamphlet on application.

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