

## LA CURE DE SOLEIL.

## THE SUN AS A PROPHYLACTIC.

It would be exceedingly interesting to know what effect the magnificent spell of sunshine has had on the health of the people of this country, but we fear statistics will not be available. We have all heard of the Sun Cure, but know little of the mystery of light, although we see around us the "diseases of darkness."

An article which appeared in Sunday's *Observer*, from its medical correspondent, touches on the natural miracles of the methods employed by Dr. Rollier, of Leysin, in Switzerland, and the writer reproaches himself that such marvels of the Sun Cure have only now come to his knowledge.

In the article it is stated that:—

"In our country some ten to twelve thousand deaths every year are caused by so-called surgical tuberculosis. The pain, misery, poverty, deformity, ugliness, and inefficiency, are beyond calculation. The thing would swamp our general hospitals, if they tried to admit all cases needing help."

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Our present methods, essentially surgical, are pitifully inadequate in every respect.

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"In 1913, at the International Medical Congress, Dr. Rollier, of Leysin, read a paper on another method, which he had then been practising for ten years. He had about twenty persons to hear him and see his cinema films, and none of them, he thinks, was English. In 1914 he published his book, 'La Cure de Soleil,' but the war withdrew attention from it.

"I have just spent a day with him, visiting a few of the thirty or more clinics at Leysin, where he is now treating about a thousand patients, sent to him from all parts of the world. Nearly all the cases are surgical tuberculosis. In general, they are grave, advanced cases, which have been treated—or, we now see, maltreated—elsewhere for years. Many of the 'pottiques,' for instance, are admitted with entire paralysis of the lower limbs, etc., due to the collapse of the spinal column by the tuberculous destruction of the vertebræ, and to the consequent pressure on the spinal cord. A horrible, lingering, malodorous, cruel death is the customary prospect for such patients. After reading the book, now seven years old, I now report on the work as it is to-day.

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"Leysin is some 4,700 feet high, and sheltered from the north wind. The air is usually dry and cool. There is a good deal of sunlight, though little compared with, say, California. Dr. Rollier puts his patients into the light, and it does the rest. They get well before your eyes. How the sun acts, he does not know, nor does anyone else. The skin, practically the whole surface of which receives the light-baths, pigments to a most surprising and amusing degree, and there is some parallelism between the pigmentation and the re-

covery, but physiologists would say that this pigmentation is protective against the ultra-violet rays which, we believe, are nevertheless the effective agents of the cure. Or, possibly, the pigment transforms those rays, whose penetrative power is slight, into rays of longer wave-length, which may penetrate deeply, and which are experimentally asserted, according to recent work, to be bactericidal. But, for myself, I have neither read nor heard anything that seems to me to explain the results obtained.

"The *modus operandi* does not matter for our present purpose. Our concern is that the cures effected by the sun at Leysin are of the order of natural miracles, too wonderful and too beautiful to be believed, until one has seen them for oneself. There is no special magic about the place. Many others would be as suitable or much more so. There is no extraordinary skill about the technique. During the past eighteen years Dr. Rollier and his assistants have worked out ingenious details as to beds and pillows and so forth, but the light is the physician. The knife is wholly abandoned. Radiography records the progress of all cases; the collection of plates runs into five figures. No massage, no electricity serves to keep the tone of the muscles which the patients cannot use. 'The sun is the best masseur,' as Dr. Rollier said to me; and the unused but firm and abundant musculature of the patients is the proof. His results are being obtained by other men in other parts of Switzerland and other countries.

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"I am acutely conscious, from the moment of sitting down to this article, that it is of the nature of an impertinence to discuss this matter in a few hundred words such as these. But they will serve at least to clear my conscience, which reproaches me in that I have not told the readers of *The Observer* many years ago, what the sun can do for surgical tuberculosis. At which section of the London Congress, eight years ago, I was relatively wasting my time, when Dr. Rollier was bringing the light to London, I do not know; but here and now let it be stated that whosoever will visit Leysin to see the work, which is certainly the most beautiful thing I have ever seen in my life, will learn, even in the first few minutes, that the knife and the plaster cast (never used in the sun-cure, for the one merely mutilates and complicates, and the other causes atrophy of the muscles which the sun develops in the dry, cool air), and all the rest of our customary methods are barbaric, stupid, obsolete, cruel, and useless, compared with the natural magic of the sun. You look at a radiogram of a hip joint, disorganised, disintegrated by the disease and by the secondary infections which have followed upon surgical treatment; and then you see the radiogram of a joint practically recreated by the natural resources of the body—usually a young body—which the sun has somehow evoked; and the smiling, brown patient, moving his new joint easily and painlessly, is before you. So, also, with the once paralysed 'pottique,' whose dreadful hump has vanished, whose limbs are at

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