

A VISIT TO THE HELIOTHERAPEUTIC ESTABLISHMENTS AT LEYSIN.

When for many years one has been an admirer from afar of a beneficent work, and has taken every available means of studying it from afar, it is a peculiar delight to see it for oneself; and it was therefore with special pleasure that we learnt of the kind and hospitable invitation of Dr. Rollier to 100 members of the Conference of the International Council of Nurses to lunch at Leysin (an invitation which ultimately included 250) and to visit his Heliotherapeutic Clinics, so we looked forward to this visit with the keenest anticipation.

We left the Place du Lac at 7 a.m. on a glorious summer morning, and a drive through perpetual changes of scenery, with glimpses of villages and attractive towns on the French side of the Lake of Geneva, through vine-growing country, brought us to Aigle, where we began the zig-zag ascent (not without contretemps) into scenes of mountain grandeur, and ultimately arrived at Leysin—which stands on a mountain side some 4,500 feet above sea level—on that memorable Sunday when Doctor and Madame Rollier so munificently entertained some 250 of the members of the International Council of Nurses.

We were greeted by our hostess in the grounds of the first chalet in which Dr. Rollier in 1903 started in that high altitude his beneficent work for the cure by means of sun and air, of children affected with so-called surgical tuberculosis.

Here in the grounds were refreshments prepared with kindly forethought, though the earliest arrivals made their appearance shortly after 10 o'clock in the morning.

As we chatted, children offered us commemorative buttons in honour of the National Swiss Festival which is celebrated on August 1st, and community singing of national songs reached us from the clinic. As the Festival fell on a Monday this year, the opportunity of general enjoyment by the greater numbers of inhabitants at liberty on a Sunday had been agreed upon. So we had the unique opportunity of seeing Leysin gaily decorated with flags, and later in the afternoon the procession of a local pageant, including a portrayal of the historical incident of William Tell and the apple.

This first clinic was opened by Dr. Rollier for children in a typical Swiss chalet, much as it is to be seen to-day, but for the addition of the first Solarium built since Roman days. Though many different designs have been used in other clinics which have since increased to about 32, the Doctor still finds as valuable results can be obtained in this simply built chalet.

It was a great experience to listen to Dr. Rollier speaking on his now widely acknowledged method of cure. He personally conducted a party round the chalet, giving accounts of case histories, and showing X-ray plates in proof of the improvement which the patients concerned had made up to that time, clear evidence that a permanent cure could be safely anticipated.

He spoke of his methods of procedure in graduating the exposures, the several reasons for studying the individual's reaction to the sun's rays, and his final conclusions. Particularly interesting was his finding that massage was of no value, as the sun's reactions on the skin gave the same result as could be obtained through the most expert massage. At the same time health-giving properties in the skin itself were developed to a degree undreamed of by those who remained clad. Through these means noticeable muscular development could be observed in cases that had been bedridden for many months.

He has done away with the use of plaster in cases of articular tuberculosis, as he found it interfered with the

regular functioning of the skin, and was therefore incompatible with the full advantages of heliotherapy. He makes every possible use of all other orthopædic methods employed in the treatment of tubercular bones and joints, especially of the application of immobilisation, and extensions so cleverly thought out to lessen in every possible way the amount of covering of the affected limb.

DR. ROLLIER WELCOMES THE I.C.N.

We were then conducted to a hut, on entering which each one was presented with a packet containing a descriptive booklet, and a number of picture post cards. There Dr. Rollier delivered an intensely interesting lecture, illustrated by fine lantern slides, when he spoke as follows:—

LADIES,—

Before I begin to deal with the subject of which I intend to speak this morning, you will allow me to wish you a cordial welcome to Leysin. We are most happy to receive in this centre of heliotherapy the authorised representatives of the International Council of Nurses. You are, the world over, the most faithful collaborators of the medical profession; and I therefore appreciate the privilege of explaining heliotherapy to those who fulfil such a useful rôle at the bedside of all who suffer and too often despair.

The experience of many years (almost 25) has taught us to appreciate at their full value the services of our nurses in this great refuge of sufferers: Leysin. It is a pleasant duty to recognise publicly the affection they have won from our patients; and the great noble task which is theirs of comforting, consoling, and encouraging those who are placed in their care, thus maintaining amongst the patients that high morale which is one of the primary conditions of cure.

In the just words of Mme. Pieczynska, that noble woman who has devoted her life to the defence of all good causes, "A blessed influence emanates from the nurse. She alone creates the atmosphere of calm and gentle strength, which soothes anxiety in the most difficult hours of illness."

I cannot tell you with what relief I have often observed this favourable influence brought to bear on the most depressed patients. I would in no way decry the importance for a nurse of a scientific training, professional skill and medical knowledge acquired in the schools from which you hold your diplomas; but if I had to choose, I feel that above all that should be placed the qualities of the heart, self-sacrifice, the love of those who suffer, with the desire to help, and steadfast devotion.

These are the qualities of the true nurse, who regards her profession not as a lucrative employment only, but as a vocation adopted with enthusiasm in spite of all its disadvantages and worries in answer to an irresistible inner call, which many of you probably feel is a Divine summons. There is the true greatness of the nurse, her real title of nobility; and such a nurse is worthy of the beautiful name by which she was known in other days, Sister of Charity. May I go further and say in words that belong to another domain than that of medicine, that the true nurse should be not only a Sister of Charity but a daughter of that Charity which is of celestial essence, and of which a great apostle has said that it will never perish, that it is all faith and all hope and patience, and that it is the greatest of all the virtues which should adorn the Christian.

Ladies, the day you have chosen to honour Leysin with your visit is the eve of our national feast day. You will have noticed on the walls of our towns and villages the appeal for the 1st August. This appeal is in favour of our nurses; an appeal for the support of all in favour of these devoted women who consecrate their lives to the care of the unfortunate, the ill and the wounded, and who most certainly deserve the gratitude of the Swiss people, and full security for their old age.

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