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HOME NEWS

In connection with the Rossi affair, a memorandum has been addressed to the Italian Government by the Federal Council; the contents of same have not yet been published. In the meantime three interpellations have been tabled in the National Council, the one by the Liberal Councillor Maunoir (Geneva) being in the following terms:—

Le Conseil fédéral peut-il nous dire s'il est exact qu'un citoyen italien du nom de Cesare Rossi ait été victime, sur territoire suisse, d'un guet-apens pour l'affirer sur territoire italien et le livrer aux autorités de police de Campione.

Y a-t-il eu directement ou indirectement une intervention de la part du gouvernement italien?

Si les faits sont exacts, et si d'une manière générale des faits d'espionnage pratiqués sur notre territoire sont établis, quelles sont les sanctions que le Conseil fédéral envisage pour faire respecter la souveraineté et la dignité de la Confédération.

In the second one Dr. A. Schmid (Socialist, Aargau) asks for information as to the measures the Federal Council intends to take to stop the activities of Fascist spies, which is also the purpose of the third interpellation, presented by M. Zelli (Socialist, Ticino). Similar interpellations in the Grand Council of the Ticino have not shed new light on the affair, but it is officially stated that preliminary enquiries have confirmed the reports published in the Ticinese local papers.

Following certain police enquiries into supposed cocaine trafficking, an extended system of espionage has been discovered in Lugano, with ramifications in the remaining part of the Ticino. Several arrests have been effected seriously implicating, according to the *Gazzetta Ticinese*, the Fascist régime. It is also officially stated that two Italian spies have been expelled from Swiss territory.

Over twelve million francs is to be spent by the canton of Aargau on road improvements during the next nine years. The whole of the cost is borne by motor taxation.

The hospice of Fleurier has received a further donation of Frs. 100,000 from M. Eug. Vaucher-Bersier of Fleurier.

A hunter, Robert Gasser of Sierre (Valais), who was hiding behind a tree trunk waiting for his quarry, was mistaken for an animal by two other sportsmen who unexpectedly came on the scene: before the latter discovered their mistake he was shot at and subsequently died.

An official representative of the Federal Political Committee for Foreign Affairs was present at the Auslandschweizertag in Lucerne: some of the delegates, notably the one from Milan, severely criticised the way in which the interests of the Swiss residing abroad were handled by the Federal authorities and earned a sharp rebuke from the official Government spokesman, who threatened that he would not attend these gatherings any more if such questions were raised in future.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

Sun Treatment.

The First International Conference on Light was opened at Lausanne on Sept. 10th, when about 250 delegates from sixteen different countries attended. This modern movement is without a doubt due to the initial research work of, and subsequent successful treatment in, the clinics of Dr. Rollier at Leysin. Though heliotherapy has been preached indefatigably in this country by Dr. C. W. Saleeby, medical circles seem to be somewhat slow in applying the conclusions reached elsewhere after years of scientific study and experiment. England, with its fog and smoky cities, will derive far greater benefit from an extended application than any other country. The following article is from *The Times* (Sept. 11th), and offers very instructive reading:—

"The sun, unhappily, did not shine on the first meeting of the International Conference on

Treatment by Sunlight. Even Lausanne, usually so brilliant, was overclouded, and the Alps had hidden themselves. Nevertheless, the enthusiasm of a body of delegates which is representative of every country in Europe was not diminished. It is a distinguishing feature of the young science of helio-therapy that all those who are devoting themselves to its pursuit are fired by the spirit of pioneers. Working, often, against handicaps of apathy, they have succeeded in convincing the world that, in the rays of the sun, mankind possesses a healing power of almost measureless value.

This conviction, as was pointed out by M. Chamorel, Rector of the University of Lausanne, is the foundation on which the science of heliotherapy has been built. It inspired, in the beginning, the work of Bernhard, of St. Moritz, and of Rollier, of Leysin, thanks to whose efforts the treatment of surgical tuberculosis had been wholly reformed. It inspired also the work in Vienna and elsewhere on the treatment of rickets. The rays of the sun, as was emphasised by many speakers, are capable of developing in the human skin, and in the human blood, germicidal powers which afford protection against disease. They are capable of giving to the human organism nourishment of a subtle and peculiar kind, whereby it is stimulated to energy and, at the same time, rescued from danger.

These discoveries have led, as was inevitable, to many different inquiries as to the nature of the healing which is present in sunlight. It has been established beyond all doubt that the power resides in the actinic rays, those violet and ultraviolet rays which are filtered out of the sunlight by clouds, mist and smoke. The high Alps, which so often rise above the clouds, thus afford a great natural sunbath. Switzerland is the home of sunlight treatment, largely because, in Switzerland, all the essentials of that treatment are present in a natural form.

The Swiss experience, as is granted, has informed the world. It is evident, however, that there is need for further and fuller information. Nothing is more impressive than the insistence of Swiss physicians on the need of care in the use of sunlight, especially at the beginning of the treatment. At Leysin, where, on Thursday, physicians from all parts of the world will do honour to the work of Rollier, treatment is begun with a degree of caution which would certainly astonish some of the advocates of "light baths" in our own country. Patients at Leysin are actually sheltered and protected from the sunlight during their early days in the high Alps. When at last it is deemed safe to "expose" them to light, exposure is confined to a very small area of the body, perhaps a foot, and lasts only a very few minutes.

Nor is this caution abandoned at any time. It is true that, when the skin becomes pigmented, large "doses" of sunlight can be tolerated. It is true that naked children, all of them nut-brown in colour, are permitted to play games in the sun, under the clear Alpine sky. But watchful eyes are ever ready to detect signs of "overdose" and to prevent the evil results which follow that mistake. In other words, the sunlight is used, at Leysin, to provoke natural reactions against disease; it is never allowed to overwhelm the patient. In consequence, a steady progress towards healing is usually recorded. This method stands in sharp contrast to the careless fashion in which, in so many cities of Europe to-day, "light baths" of artificial sunlight are given by un instructed persons. Sunlight treatment is bound to fall into disrepute unless the methods of its administration are brought everywhere under strict control.

The International Conference is not unaware that attacks on the new treatment are now developing in certain quarters and that further attacks are certain to be made in the near future. The inevitable reaction against the enthusiasm which heliotherapy has aroused in the public mind is due. It is, therefore, more than ever necessary just now to proceed carefully.

In fact, it is the work of artificial sunlight, and of those foods which are substitutes for sunlight, which stands in greatest need of supervision. And in the Alpine clinics which have been established in other countries the treatment is under the control of experienced physicians. But men and women of no experience whatever are now engaged in prescribing and administering doses of violet light and of those chemical substances which possess the potency of sunlight. Instances are on record of cases in which damage has been inflicted by this ill-advised therapy.

The future of heliotherapy is, clearly, a very great one. Recent research has indicated the possibility of administering exact doses, and of suiting the dosage to the individual need. Again, the British discovery of Ergosterol, the substance which can absorb light, is opening the way to a very simple form of treatment, which is especially well suited to the needs of our own and other northern countries. Sunlight can be given, to-day, just as other medicines are given. The effects of Ergosterol on the bones and on the blood are now being intensively studied. Here again, it would appear, success depends on care in administration, and on wide knowledge of the effects of the substances prescribed. The International Conference will have achieved a great service to humanity if its deliberations result in a general awakening to the need, which exists everywhere, of instituting some form of control on light treatment."

Inherited Insanity.

The far-reaching law recently promulgated in the canton of Vaud is giving rise to a good deal of comment in the English Press. Here is what the *Sunday Chronicle* says on Sept. 9th:—

Important developments in this country are likely to follow the drastic action of the Swiss Canton of Vaud in passing a law for the compulsory sterilisation of the mentally unfit.

The *Sunday Chronicle* learns that the whole question of legal sterilisation will be raised when Parliament reassembles. It will be urged that similar measures be adopted here, the object being to prevent mental defectives becoming parents and thus passing on their affliction to their children.

There is already a large and growing body in favour of compulsory sterilisation in this country. They include several M.P.'s and a very large proportion of medical men.

Statistics are being prepared showing the very high birthrate among mentally unfit persons. Documented evidence has also been obtained revealing the extent to which such persons are responsible for swelling the criminal calendar.

Important views on the subject were obtained from a number of prominent people by the *Sunday Chronicle* yesterday.

"I am certain that before long sterilisation under strict limits will have to be made legal," declared Lady Askwith, the well-known social worker. "A medical officer of health at a recent board of guardians meeting declared that there are no fewer than 140,000 wretched creatures in our mental hospitals, as well as a similar number of mental defectives not under control.

"I heard of a case recently of 14 mentally defective women who between them have 100 children, mostly in asylums and workhouses.

"At a great establishment for the blind and deaf, which I visited not long ago, the superintendent said that three-quarters of the inmates owed their misfortunes to inherited venereal disease.

"We are rearing, with vast trouble and at enormous expense, a huge army of unfit who are a grave encumbrance to the State—and often a misery to themselves and their relations.

"Surely the State has some rights in the matter? If it is to own responsibility for its children it must endeavour to restrict the number of unhealthy births. At present it does the reverse."

Alarming figures showing the increase in insanity during the past 50 years were given by the Educational Secretary of the Eugenics Society, Mrs. C. B. S. Hodson.

"Fifty years ago," she said, "the insane numbered one in every five hundred of the population. To-day they number nearly one in every two hundred. Opinion among students of the problem in Europe is becoming more and more to the view that some check such as sterilisation is required.

"A good deal of the increase is undoubtedly due to asylum cases returning home and increasing the size of their families.

"Sterilisation is still largely misunderstood by the public. It doesn't change the personality of the subject at all or interfere with his normal health. All that it does is to make procreation impossible.

"In America, where 21 States have compulsory sterilisation, 8,515 persons had been operated upon up to January 1st this year. In California, where sterilisation has been in force for 15 years, the total number treated only amounts to 5,820."

Professor A. M. Low, the well-known