Paracelsus

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SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER

On Sunday the 16th of August about thirty members and friends of the Manchester Swiss Club met at Clitheroe for a day out in the country in one of the most beautiful parts of North Lancashire and over the border into West Riding of Yorkshire.

The outing was led by our President, Mr. Berner, who arranged that after a short run in cars we had our picnic lunch and visited Brownsholme Hall — one of the "Stately Homes" of the district. We were shown round this fine old house by the owner, who gave us an interesting insight into English mediæval history.

The last stage of our short journey was to go to Mr. Berner's home — about five miles distant, to which some of the party travelled by car, but the majority walked. The route lay through lanes between fields and woods which, assisted by almost perfect weather, inspired the party as usual to break into song.

On arrival at our destination we were met by our hostess, Mrs. Berner, who had arranged a running buffet of a great variety of meats and salads, beautifully set out for our temptation. Our appetites justified her efforts! This generous treat was given in Mr. Berner's large garage, which was wonderfully decorated in proper Swiss style to resemble a traditional "Festhütte". In this happy setting with such a profusion of good food and drink, after such a full day, we all felt very grateful to our hosts for their efforts to make the day such a success and one which will not be quickly forgotten. We finished the day with some traditional Swiss music as accompaniment to a show of slides given by our old friend, Mr. Sam Hanna.

AMT.

ADDITION

In our issue of 24th July we reported Switzerland's large part in the project of the Vianden Hydro-electric development scheme (Luxembourg). We have just been informed that the Escher Wyss group of companies supplied five complete sets of turbines and pumps out of a total of nine.

The turbines have an output of 142,200 h.p., while the power required to drive the pumps is 92,800 h.p. In addition to the five complete sets, the Escher Wyss group has also supplied various auxiliary plant such as rotary valves, etc.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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OUR NEXT ISSUE

Our next issue will be published on Friday, 25th September. We shall be glad to receive reports and articles not later than Wednesday, 16th September. Short news items only can be accepted later.

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PARACELSUS

Philip Aurelius Paracelsus Bombastus von Hohenheim, born at Einsiedeln on 1st November 1493, was an odd character. His father, who was a noted scholar in his day, took him to Villach, where he worked at the school of mining opened by the famous bankers Fugger.

Paracelsus grew up surrounded by the secrets of nature and he remained under their spell for the rest of his days. He discovered mines, forges, metal, petrifactions and alchemy. "All these fundamental things that provide the sciences with a solid foundation I first learnt about and came to know in good lessons given by my father, Wilhelm von Hohenheim."

With a mind replete with observations and experience, Paracelsus had no ears for doctrinarians — not even when he came to construct dubious theories of his own. Throughout his life, Paracelsus called in question what was regarded as established beyond doubt. In some ways he brought about a revolution in science similar to that achieved by Luther in the field of religion. He refused to crystallize his discoveries in a new dogma: he remained a perpetual seeker at a time when alchemy was heralding "scientific research".

A perennial wanderer across Europe and a most difficult man to deal with, Paracelsus spent one of the longest stable periods of his life in Basle: a whole ten months! He was a friend of Erasmus and Oecolampadius, and through their recommendation he was appointed professor at the young University of Basle. But he began by publicly burning Avicenna's "Canon medicinae", the "bible" of the doctors in those days. His impossible character aggravated the impression made by his extravagant gestures and actions. Did he not presume to teach in street dress instead of a professional gown? He preferred personal experiment to repeating what was written in books. He had the audacity to lecture in German instead of Latin, the only learned language. And, as a final outrage, he inspected the drugs sold in town by the apothecaries and denounced their malpractices! Intrigues and quarrels proliferated round a professor so very much in the public eye: following a virulent pamphlet he published against the magistrates of Basle, Paracelsus left town by night.

His passion for discovery then led him all over Europe; he treated princes in the German courts and peasants in the mountains of Appenzell, always seeking the secrets hidden in the heart of nature — and in his own. For he had an admirable motto: "Never be someone else if you can be yourself".

Paracelsus may be considerel the originator of psychosomatic medicine. He held that the doctor and drugs canonly contribute towards a recovery but that the latter depends primarily on hope and spiritual forces.

[S.N.T.O.]

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