

Lettre du bout du quai

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40 francs; nurse's fees, 10 francs per day; extras negligible. At the rate of 25 francs to the pound, it will be seen that these charges are, according to our ideas, ridiculously small. The service was, in every way, by far the best that the patient had ever enjoyed.

Now for the surgeon. He was helped by a personal friend of the patient, who made no charge, and who gave the anæsthetic. The operation was unusually tiresome and protracted, owing to the previous surgical vicissitudes of the patient. The work was beautifully done, and there were no complications. Three weeks after the operation the patient was bathing in the lake. The surgeon himself visited the patient three times a day for the first three days, thereafter twice daily, the first visit at about 7.30 a.m. Sundays made no difference. He paid at least thirty visits to his patient. No one could have been more assiduous and careful with an imperial patient. The slightest symptoms were studied and dealt with. After and for all this, including the preliminary examinations of his patient, he sent in an account for 250 francs—that is to say, £10. In closely similar circumstances, another lady, the aunt of this patient, was operated upon a few years ago in London. The surgeon never saw her after the operation, and asked for 75 guineas, later reduced to 50, which was very nearly 50% of her annual income. I can confidently aver that in no respect of experience and skill or standing could the London surgeon be counted the superior of the Swiss.

On all counts, therefore, small and great, from the surgeon's fee to the nurse's, including the amenity of the home and its intangible atmosphere, the Swiss record belongs to a different *ethos* altogether from our own: though Joseph Lister as well as Florence Nightingale are ours. Here in Switzerland their spirit and skill were incarnate and available at, say, one-fifth to one-tenth of the cost of services in England, notably inferior in certain essential particulars. What is the explanation?

Here I am by no means sure of my ground in all respects and can only present some considerations to the reader. Of course, no first-class London surgeon could operate at such fees, given his customary scale of expenses. A friend of mine has adequate but very modest rooms in Welbeck Street, which cost him £400 a year, and he is not a surgeon, nor does he obtain any fees like those of a surgeon. The Swiss surgeon has rooms in the very best part of his city, but admittedly the visitor must ascend two flights of uncarpeted stone stairs before he reaches the apartment, which probably costs no more than £60 a year. But his patients think no less of him for that.

No intelligible reason occurs to me why the standard of nursing, feeding, cleanliness, comfort should be so much higher in the Swiss nursing home, and there is much to say regarding the necessity for raising the standard of such places in our own country; but in respect of the fees charged by surgeons it seems probable to me that we are here involved in questions which concern the type and structure of the respective societies in question. Here in Switzerland there is a republican form of Government, with a genuinely democratic form of society. There are no titles. There is no powerful, privileged, favours-and-honours-dispensing, leisured and dominant class. My Swiss surgeon's wife is not concerned to get hold of so much money that she can give such dinner parties as may attract the kind of persons who may later on be induced to present her daughters at Court. (She is herself a doctor, and his assistant). All that sort of thing, which is almost too disgusting to write about, is unknown in Switzerland. If a man is a good surgeon, he is known and spoken of and held in honour as a good surgeon, and that is good enough for him and his family, as it should be. He does not consider it beneath his dignity to visit his patient, even when she is doing perfectly well, and another doctor is also visiting her twice a day. He has no social ambitions, because he has already realised what should be the height of any good man's ambition.

If anyone could obtain the services of a first-class metropolitan surgeon, and nursing, etc., all told for £30 or less in England, the problem of the cost of surgery, as we know it, would scarcely exist. There is an impression that this problem at present concerns only the middle classes. The rich have what they want, and the lucky poor have our glorious and incomparable voluntary hospitals. The trifling circumstance that the poor have their names in many thousands at any one time on the waiting lists of our London hospitals, where they remain often for months, awaiting operations many of which should be urgently and instantly performed—this is forgotten. Meanwhile, large numbers of competent young surgeons eat their heads off because it would not be consonant with their professional standing or prospects to perform abdominal operations for £10. The whole thing, as it stands, is a stupid and cruel scandal. Alas, that its roots are so old and wide and deep!

Iodine and Health.

This is another example of Swiss superiority in successful treatment for preventing the growth of certain diseases; our friend, Dr. Saleeby, the great apostle of the sunlight cure, makes the following appeal in the *Daily Telegraph* (Sept. 21st):—

In Switzerland, whence I have just returned, there has been made in recent years a great advance in the conquest of disease by the simplest, safest, and least expensive means imaginable, which I have been advocating for our own country during some years, and for which I now seek to invoke your readers' interest on behalf of national health and efficiency. The new practice consists in the restoration of iodine to the national dietary. This long familiar element is known to all of us in the form of the tincture applied as a first-aid antiseptic to wounds in the trenches or the nursery. But 31 years ago the bio-chemists discovered that iodine is a necessary constituent of the unique and most potent secretion of the thyroid gland in the neck. Without iodine this gland, therefore, cannot effectively work for us, and we suffer in all the ways—many, various, vital—which depend upon failure of its activity. The most frequent symptom is goitre.

Now in Switzerland and in the United States and Canada and New Zealand and Austria, and many other countries, the practice is spreading of making a small addition of iodine to the usual dietary—which is disastrously depleted of iodine, for reasons of too detailed interest to find room in this brief letter—and thus ensuring that the thyroid shall never lack raw material for its irreplaceable product.

Success has followed success. The first reports were admirable, and the latest are more so. Rumours of the power of iodine reached my ears in 1921, when I happened to be travelling in the "goitre belt" of the United States, the Middle West, where iodine is exceptionally scanty in the soil. Just two years ago, Sir David Bruce, the world-famous master of tropical hygiene, in his presidential address to the meeting of the British Association in Toronto, on "The Conquest of Disease," named the prevention of goitre by the use of iodine as the latest achievement in this life-giving field.

Already those who, like myself, visit Switzerland every year, can observe a marked diminution in the number of cases of goitre in young people encountered in the streets, and it is reported that no more cretins are being born in certain cantons since the regular administration of iodine—as a food, not a drug—to expectant mothers. Far more even than goitre and cretinism is involved. The range of protective and constructive power possessed by the thyroid gland has not even yet been fully measured. For instance, in the Galton Laboratory of National Eugenics at University College, London, Dr. Percy Stocks has shown the co-relation between cancer and goitre, and has suggested the general use of iodine in middle life as a preventive of cancer. Doubtless we all need our share of this vital element at all ages from the womb to the tomb.

The cost, as in the iodisation of salts, now officially practised in various parts of the world, is negligible. In certain of the United States and in certain cantons of Switzerland none but iodised salt is now allowed to be sold. In some other Swiss cantons the price of iodised salt is fixed no higher than that of ordinary iodine-destitute salt. In England a few health and school authorities have made beginnings, and glorious reports have lately come from Cumberland County Council, for instance; but the student can scarcely summon patience who sees hundreds of millions squandered yearly on the "cure" of disease that remains uncured, on palliation and anodynes, whilst so simple and natural and costless and proven a course as I advocate remains a suspected curiosity.

QUOTATIONS from the SWISS STOCK EXCHANGES.

BONDS.	Sept. 21		Sept. 28	
	Fr.		Fr.	
Confederation 3% 1903	100	79.50	100	79.12
5% 1917, VIII Mob. Ln.	100	101.50	100	101.25
Federal Railways 3½% A—K	100	83.60	100	83.45
" " 1924 IV Elect. Ln.	100	101.50	100	101.50
SHARES.	Sept. 21		Sept. 28	
	Fr.		Fr.	
Swiss Bank Corporation	500	797	500	791
Crédit Suisse	500	852	500	842
Union de Banques Suisses	500	665	500	664
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	1000	2337	1000	2360
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	1000	3850	1000	3957
Soc. Ind. pour la Schappe	1000	2937	1000	2920
S.A. Brown Boveri	350	520	350	516
C. F. Bally	1000	1185	1000	1185
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	200	549	200	557
Entreprises Sulzer S.A.	1000	1010	1000	1010
Comp. de Navig. sur le Lac Léman	500	560	500	540
Linoleum A.G. Giubiasco	100	93	100	90
Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon	500	785	500	770

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LETTRE DU BOUT DU QUAI.

Vous savez comme moi le rôle intense qu'a joué dans l'histoire des siècles passés, le petit endroit charmant que l'on nommait et que l'on appelle encore un "boudoir". Il était pour la femme, toutes les femmes, le lieu où l'on commence par causer, où l'on jase ensuite et où, pour finir, s'insinue l'intrigue et même parfois davantage! Que de têtes tombèrent, au moment de la Révolution Française, d'abord dans une conversation de boudoir puis ensuite sur la place publique!

De nos jours le boudoir est un peu "vieux jeu", nos diplomates internationaux ont trouvé beaucoup mieux. Ils ont transformé la Société des Nations en "boudoir select", et le grand bâtiment du bout du quai, n'est plus en somme que le toit bienveillant sous lequel naissent, grandissent, explosent ou meurent les propos bons ou mauvais qui conduiront le monde de demain. Plus que jamais cette dernière Assemblée des Nations a prouvé l'exactitude de ce fait. Et comme elle vient de se clore à la vitesse d'un des nouveaux express du "Great Western" il m'est loisible de vous en dire quelques mots. Lorsque l'on a suivi jour après jour le travail de ces Messieurs, il est bon pour vous comme pour moi de tirer quelques conclusions.

Tout d'abord une chose est très nette, c'est que l'Assemblée est une institution parfaitement inutile. Elle n'est désormais plus qu'un prétexte, un paravent qui voile le vrai travail, —si j'ose employer ce mot pour désigner un fait aussi immatériel!— Cette constatation est un grand dommage, pour l'avenir et de la Société et du monde en général. L'Assemblée ne compte plus parce qu'elle n'est plus qu'un Corps amorphe et sans tête. Il lui manque un chef, une personnalité qui la conduise, qui l'oblige à prouver sa nécessité par son travail, et sa volonté par son contrôle. Or d'hommes semblables il n'y en a plus, ou presque!

Branting, le grand Branting est mort; Lord Cecil, le Grand Lord Cecil, est bien encore vivant, mais il était chef lorsqu'il représentait l'Afrique du Sud; il ne l'est plus, il ne peut plus l'être comme Représentant du Cabinet Baldwin. Il reste bien le Docteur Nansen (et l'on ne dira jamais assez tout ce que l'esprit scandinave a déjà donné de forces vives à la Société des Nations) mais sa manière tranchante et individualiste d'envisager un problème, lui enlève un peu de la popularité que son confrère suédois avait su acquérir. Cependant Nansen est le dernier, le seul, qui cherche encore à examiner les agissements du Conseil sans avoir "a priori" dit "oui et amen! à tout". Vous m'objecterez que les Grandes Puissances ont des hommes de tout premier plan qui de loin, de Londres ou de Tokio, semblent être des chefs. Je vous répondrai que ces hommes existent effectivement et même à foison, mais qu'il n'est pas de l'intérêt des Puissances d'en faire des Chefs, et qu'au contraire, les Omnipotents tentent en ce moment de donner une influence quasi dictatoriale au Conseil (ceci au détriment naturellement de l'Assemblée) tout en laissant en façade ce dernier se réunir en grandes pompes une fois l'an.

Pour le surplus, comme je vous le disais au début tout se passe en petits comités, en parties à deux, à trois, ou sept au maximum; dans quelque salle bien isolée du Secrétariat, ou encore mieux entre la poire et le fromage dans quelque petit café de triste mine au coin de la vieille ville. La fameuse "atmosphère de Genève" est partout, sauf à la Salle de la Réformation, et le Café des débarqueurs de la rade est devenu "le boudoir du monde!" Notre destinée se joue au coin d'une table, et s'équilibre à la valeur des qualités culinaires de quelque brave savoyarde, et tout le monde trouve cela très bien, très "moderne", très "dernier chic"!

Cependant le réveil sera dure et une fois de plus les Allemands l'auront causé! Eux, ont compris ce qu'on pouvait tirer de l'Assemblée; eux, ont compris ce que l'on peut tirer de tout l'organisme de Genève si au lieu de le prendre comme un jouet agréable, on s'en sert comme une machine réelle et qu'on en pousse tous les rouages à fond. Eux, ne se contentent pas de discours, si beaux, si émouvants que... l'on ne sache plus à la fin ce que l'on disait au début. Eux, parleront peu, mais travailleront beaucoup. Ils se créeront une clientèle: tous ceux qui cherchent un chef et qui ne demandent pas mieux que d'obéir. Le temps ne sera plus éloigné alors où un Grand Homme réapparaîtra alors au sein de l'Assemblée, cet homme sera un Allemand. Il sera trop tard alors pour récriminer. Les Allemands auront été les seuls à prendre la Société des Nations au sérieux, très au sérieux, ils en récolteront les fruits, et ce jour là on fermera l'attrayant "boudoir international", une Voix impérative parlera au nom des autres!...

LE "BOY" DE L'ASCENSEUR.

EIDGENÖSSISCHE GLOSSEN.

Gesundheitsamtlicher Jargon.

Im Berichte des Eidgenössischen Gesundheitsamtes über seine Geschäftsführung im Jahre 1925 wird gesagt, "dass sich die Frequenz der übertragbaren Krankheiten in durchaus normalen Grenzen gehalten habe." In durchaus normalen Grenzen! Wenn wir nun untersuchen, was bei uns normal ist, so kommen wir zum Ergebnisse,