HEALTH STATIONS.

MONTREUX.

THE extraordinary popularity attained during the last ten or twelve years by Montreux, on the Lake of Geneva (Lac Lemman), and its repute as an agreeable spot in which to spend a winter, has depended more on its pleasing situation, excellent hotel accommodation, and on the facilities afforded by electric and funicular railways to reach the neighbouring snow-levels of Glion, Caux, and Les Avants for the snow sports, than on its real merits as a winter health resort.

The days of its appreciation by pulmonary invalids are long passed. The blazing rays of Alpine sunshine have been effectual in attracting delicate persons, as well as the vigorous, higher up the mountains to the cloudless blue skies and dry air of Davos, Clavadel, Arosa, Montana, and Leysin, where *poitrinaires* are welcomed. There is, however, one particular feature which distinguishes the eastern extremity of Lac Lemman from all other low-lying lake situations in Switzerland, with the exception of Locarno on Lago Maggiore—viz., the remarkable calmness of the atmosphere experienced during winter-time.

The district, comparatively limited in extent, to which these observations refer, includes not only Montreux proper, but the adjoining villages of Veytaux, Territet and Clarens. Building operations have proceeded so much apace that the agglomeration of hotels, villas, and other constructions make these subdivisions of the district indistinguishable to the eye of an ordinary spectator; consequently, the whole inhabited area currently passes under the embracing name of Montreux. Perfect shelter from the biting north and north-east wind is afforded by the southern spurs of the Jaman range—mountains of 3,000 to 5,000 feet—by the towering Rochers de Naye and by Mont Arvel.

The conspicuous Dent du Midi (10,450 feet) is due south, thirty miles distant. On the west lie some of the Savoy Alps, and almost the whole length of the lake is open to view, bounded by the Jura range fifty miles away. Over this stretch of water the most gorgeous sunsets appear; more especially if a higher point of vantage is taken such as Glion. So far, therefore, as shelter is concerned, Montreux leaves little to be desired. Beyond Clarens this acceptable protection from the so-called *bise*, or north-east wind, becomes less and less adequate, until we approach Vevey, where the *bise* attains at times considerable force. On these occasions Lausanne, Geneva, and other places along the lake are swept by a bitterly cold wind of intense violence. Fortunately, these northern gales from which Montreux is exempt are not of frequent occurrence, some winters being almost free from them.

The most common storms felt on the lake are those proceeding from a southerly direction, the so-called *föhn*—a hot dry wind in its first phase, which ripens the grapes in autumn and melts the snow in spring. In the winter months it is somewhat enervating, before ending with rain or a fall of snow. Heavy squalls may sometimes be expected from the west and south-west, but they are of short duration. The quarter from

which most of the light currents of air reach Montreux is north-west, on an average force of about 1 or 2 degrees Beaufort Scale. This is, of course, in striking contrast to the rude winds of the British Isles in winter.

In respect of temperature, owing to its sheltered position and to the proximity of a large body of water which absorbs heat during the summer and gives it off in winter, Montreux is for its latitude the mildest winter station in Switzerland. The vegetation and growth of the olive and palm witness to the absence of prolonged low temperatures; but with regard to the sensation of cold experienced in lake climates I shall refer again.

Montreux is 1,200 feet above sea-level. Its mean temperatures are: October, 50°; November, 42°; December, 36°; January, 33°; February, 37°; March, 42°; April, 49°. The relative humidity of any climate is usually expressed at so much per cent. of saturation. The basin of Lac Léman has a moderate degree of humidity. It is considerably drier than anywhere in the British Isles, but less so than in the mountains. The mean annual relative humidity for Montreux is 73 per cent., and there are on an average 122 days on which some rain falls (Torquay shows a mean of 84 per cent., with 187 rainy days).

The seasonal variations show the winter months to be the most humid. In the mountains, on the contrary, the winter months are the driest.

From the readings of the thermometer, it appears that there are about fifty days in the year when the temperature is below freezing-point. Wintry weather commences in the early part of the month of December, and lasts to the middle of February. During this time there may be some periods of mild weather with quite warm sunny days, but for the most part the lower temperatures, when the sun is obscured, convey a feeling of raw cold, especially if accompanied by any haze or mist rising from the lake. This is an invariable feature of lake climates in cold weather in any part of the world. The subjective sensations receive the impression of a much lower temperature near evaporating water, by a river, or at the seaside, than is registered by the thermometer. That depends on the rapid abstraction of heat from the body when cold air is humid. At high elevations where the air contains little moisture, low temperatures, even with deep snow covering the ground, are felt to be much less trying. Although the actual winter is somewhat cold, occasionally raw, and often overcast, the reputation of Montreux as a climatic station depends chiefly, first, on its complete shelter from wind; second, on the number of sunny days—about one third—which are experienced throughout a comparatively short winter. The month of November resembles our October without the wind and with less rain. In March and April it is one of the best climates in Europe, although there may be a brief return of wintry weather with a slight fall of snow. Spring may not be further advanced than in the South of England, but the sun will have greater power.

At one time, about thirty years ago, consumptives flocked eagerly to Montreux in winter, as a substitute for the sun and warmth of the Riviera, and before the matchless climates of the Grisons became famous for their cloudless skies and radiant winter sunshine; but it must be clearly understood now, that those persons suffering from tuberculosis are looked upon as infectious cases and are unwelcome.

Some hotels announce that they will in no case be received. To what patients, then, may Montreux be recommended? The answer to this question will depend on what season is selected for residence. The climate on the whole is somewhat sedative, especially in spring and autumn, and the winter, although calm, is much colder than places along the Riviera. To persons suffering from debility, anæmia, or from the effects of malarial fevers acquired in India or other hot climates, Montreux offers an agreeable resort from November to April. Chronic bronchitis, gout, rheumatism, in elderly people, do fairly well here. Many forms of heart disease are distinctly benefited if care is taken against undue exposure on very cold days. Persons suffering from Bright's disease should absent themselves in the months of December, January and February, as they will do better further south or in Ajaccio, Egypt, Algiers, etc. For delicate children of tubercular predisposition and who constantly get bronchial catarrh at home, and for Indian children, Montreux offers a beneficial change in climate, and there are facilities for education. For convalescents who have recovered from pneumonia, bronchitis, or pleurisy, and for neurasthenia and certain diseases of the nervous system, the climate is not unsuitable. There is much to commend the place to the less active and robust who desire to escape the wind and rain of the British Isles for a residential town twenty and a half hours from London, with beautiful scenery, comfortable quarters, and plenty of entertainment. It is an advantage to Montreux to have such stations as Glion (2,200 feet), Les Avants (3,200 feet), and Caux (3,500 feet), readily accessible by mountain railways where snow-sports can generally be indulged in from Christmas until about the middle of February.

TUCKER WISE, M.D.,
Diplôme Suisse Fédéral.