

TAKING THE WATERS -Continued

specialized in the nature and effects of the springs. At 7 a.m. next day, or even earlier, M. le Docteur arrives at your hotel, smiling, social, overflowing with questions about everything that has happened to you in the way of illness since you were a child. Thereafter he pays occasional early morning calls and you go to him periodically in the afternoon to report results and symptoms, if any, so that he may regulate the doses of water and, if necessary, change your spring and form of bath. The result being that not only are you completely overhauled, but you bask in the delightful sensation of receiving all the attentions paid to an invalid without the drawbacks of being one. Note, please, that this is not the isolated experience of one person; visitors to Vichy are unanimous in praise of the care taken of them by their medical advisers. The fee is inclusive and quite reasonable.

The Springs

THE cure takes twenty-one days. You have four doses of water a day, two in the morning at the hour prescribed by the doctor, two in the late afternoon. You begin with very small quantities, which are gradually increased for a fortnight, then decreased towards the end. There are about twelve different springs with varying properties, nearly all of them grouped among the big trees of the *Parc* round the Casino. They bubble up in explosive gushes, controlled by glass covers, in what look like large baptismal fonts with nickel taps from which women-attendants in grey-and-white striped dresses and frilled white caps fill your marked glass to the required measure. Warm, and heavily charged with odorous—you can put a "mal" before it if you like—mineral salts, they are supposed to have their source in unknown volcanic regions in the bowels of the earth, and as they rise now, so they rose in the time of the Romans, who used also to take cures at Vichy. It is said that the daily yield of each spring all the year round is about 140,000 litres. This is all carefully carried off for bottling, to supply the baths, to the great *distillerie* where the salts are extracted, and so on.

The Baths

THE baths are taken in a palatial and splendidly-appointed white-domed building near the *Parc*. They are of all kinds, but the general favourite is *massage sous l'eau*. This consists in lying on a hollowed slab and being massaged by four vigorous hands for twelve minutes, measured by an old-fashioned sand hour-glass, under a length-wise spray of warm Vichy water, followed by an equally vigorous *douche-ing* and *hose-ing*. This operation, which it is convenient to get over very early in the morning, is peculiarly invigorating, and you walk back to your hotel thinking how extraordinarily blue the sky is, how absurdly green the trees, how marvellously brilliant the flower-beds, all be-diamonded with the morning hose, and it requires effort to keep yourself from openly marching to the tune of the band playing in one of the *Parc* stands.

The Casino

VIVID colours and merry music give a much truer impression of Vichy than grey waters and soft-voiced, black-coated doctors. There is nothing visible that suggests illness. It is packed with smart cosmopolitan crowds from all parts of the world, and there is a never-ceasing round of amusements. The centre of its social life is the stately Casino, its white domes and towers clear-cut against the high blue-and-gold sky, the outlines of its marble terraces broken by clusters of tropical trees, its lawns bordered by brilliant exotic blooms, its shady gardens packed with deck-chairs from which loungers watch the ever-moving cinematograph-like scene. Inside—what isn't there? In the fine theatre, operas are given daily by celebrated singers and orchestras, and the best actors appear in their successes; in the concert-hall there is a never-ceasing round of popular or chamber music, and special *matinées* given by one star or another; the ball-room is in daily use with occasional Period fancy-dress balls; there are vast reading-rooms where you can see the newspapers and magazines of various countries or get through correspondence; the restaurant, small and very expensive, is one of the best in Europe.

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