

VICHY AND ITS THERAPEUTICAL RESOURCES

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Vichy and its therapeutical resources by Prosser James

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THERAPEUTICAL
RESOURCES**

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BY

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Madrid, and Barcelona;
&c., &c., &c.*

FIFTH EDITION.

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ALEXANDER AND SHEPHEARD,

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1883.

PREFACE TO FIFTH EDITION.

THIS production has been out of print for many years, the previous issues having appeared in 1866, under the title of "A Visit to Vichy."

The present edition has been carefully corrected to date, the author having been at Vichy with a view to its preparation as late as last season.

Many passages which possessed only a temporary interest, or which are no longer applicable, have been omitted. On the other hand, numerous additions have been made, especially in the chapters on the properties and uses of the mineral waters. In accordance with this enlarged scope, the title has been changed.

P. J.

3, DEAN STREET, PARK LANE, W.,
March, 1883.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

THE following pages, hastily put together amidst the fatigues of travelling, contain an account of the mineral waters of Vichy and their medicinal uses, as well as an outline of the treatment usually practised at the springs, and the maladies in which it is mostly prescribed.

It has not been deemed necessary to enter into a detailed examination of the theories which have from time to time been proposed as to the mode of action of this class of remedies on the human system. Further, numerous points insisted upon by French writers on Vichy have been simply enumerated or altogether passed over.

The object of the publication is to furnish such special information on the leading French Spa as may be useful to the English practitioner, so that a mere reference frequently takes the place of extended explanations.

The few comments interspersed are so condensed as to leave the pamphlet at least the merit of brevity. Whether the author has succeeded in imparting to it clearness the reader will judge. He hopes it will be found to contain all that is necessary on the subject. For what is superfluous, provided it relieve the dullness of other details, he will probably receive the same measure of indulgence that has been accorded to his other productions.

December, 1865.

By the same Author.

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VICHY.

CHAPTER I

THE THERMAL ESTABLISHMENT—THE MINERAL SPRINGS.

VICHY is 220 miles—eight hours by rail—south of Paris, and lies in a pleasant valley, 800 feet above the sea-level, on the right bank of the Allier, just before that river receives the smaller stream of the Sichon. Every year thousands of invalids resort to the town in order to take the thermal baths and drink at the alkaline springs. These springs, as well as the buildings in which the waters are utilised, belong to the State, but are leased by the *Compagnie Fermière*. On my first visit, in 1865, the late M. Callou, then Director of the Company, kindly acted as my guide in exploring the spa, and placed at my disposal every facility for studying its resources. The following description, though then first written, has been so far modified as to accord with the changes brought about in the subsequent period, and verified by a visit as late as last season.

The Thermal Establishment is the centre around which all the life of Vichy revolves. No hesitation,

then, as to where to commence our exploration. Leaving, therefore, one of the numerous well-appointed hotels, we crossed the miniature park, and entered the building. It is quadrangular in form—this side being supported on pillars, above which the twenty windows of the upper story look upon the narrower end of the Park. Passing beneath the central columns and ascending a couple of steps, we enter the picture gallery, nearly 250 feet long, forming a sort of transept to the building, of which it occupies the whole length. Its walls are covered with paintings, and it is always open to the public. Left and right extend long corridors as far as the other end of the building, and on each side of these corridors the doors of the small bathing-rooms are seen, each with its number, and above each a little bell to summon the attendant. At the other end of the picture gallery, and at right angles with it, forming what may be considered the front of the building, is the "Gallery of the Springs"—a sort of portico supported on columns—where, at intervals, for free consumption, are some of the mineral waters. They are conducted hither in tubes direct from the earth;—around the orifice of each is a basin, so that they have all the appearance of fountains. Glasses, as well as girls in attendance to wash them and fill them fresh for each person inclined to drink, are also provided.

Turning to the right on issuing from the picture gallery, and passing to the end of the corridor, we reach in the corner the principal spring of Vichy,

called *Grande Grille*, on account of a large iron fence with which it was at one period surrounded. There is nothing particularly striking in it—a large fountain-basin, as it were, in the centre of which water, and that not very clear, is copiously bubbling up. There is, however, a perceptible warmth, as of vapour, in the atmosphere around. Touching the waste water in the basin, it is warm. Stretching forth the ladle that lies for use—but, stay, the girl in attendance puts forth her hand to do it for you with her “*Veillez boire, Monsieur, Madame,*” fills with this long ladle a tumbler, and presents it to you to taste. It is hot, soapy, at first nauseous, but the taste is soon acquired. Observe, that this young woman takes special care to fill the glass from the very centre of the bubbling stream, so that you may take the medicine just as it comes from the bowels of mother earth, before it has had time to change in temperature or any other quality. Though paid by the company, the visitor who spends a season and drinks the water daily—and some take many glasses a-day—usually presents, on leaving, a *souvenir* in the shape of coin to the girl at the spring from which he drinks. She is also permitted, for those who desire it, to sell tumblers graduated for measuring the exact dose, and keeps them on separate pegs exclusively for the purchaser's use.

Glancing at the people as they crowd after each other to take their draughts, the reputation of this spring is stamped upon the countenances of its patrons, and the same remark is equally appli-