THE ALPS AND CONSUMPTION.

We have received the following from a foreign correspondent:—

We have just had a foretaste of what is said to be the peculiar summer weather of Vienna; and if experience, as it threatens, repeats itself, the high winds and blinding clouds of dust which characterised it will shortly drive all who can afford to leave the capital to their summer retreats. To everyone this weather is most unpleasant, and especially obnoxious to the weak-chested, who require no scientific acquaintance with the etiology of consumption to be fully impressed with the necessity of seeking a more quiet and pure atmosphere if they wish to avoid contracting the dreaded 'Vienna disease.' Such a change of residence, however, is manifestly beyond the means of the great majority of phthisical persons here and throughout Austria, and so we find that the percentage of deaths from 'tuberculosis' is increased rather than diminished in this country during the summer months.

How very high this percentage at present is, and how Vienna especially suffers, may be readily learned. If I consult the newspapers of to-day I find that out of a total of 39 deaths in the city, 11 or 28·2 per cent. are from so-called 'tuberculosis.' This morning I counted in four wards in the General Hospital which I usually visit, 29 'tuberculous' cases, mostly phthisis, out of a total of 85 patients; that is 34 per cent. The published statistics of deaths give somewhat less alarming results, the yearly average being put down at 25 per cent., which, however, is a sufficiently great proportion to far surpass that of most other large cities. Thus it is twice as in London—12·5 per cent.; while in Paris, Nice, and New York, the percentages are 16·7, 14·3, and 12·5 respectively. Only the famous Madeira comes up with Vienna; there, also, a fourth of the deaths are from 'tuberculosis.'

This enormous death-rate from such diseases has at last alarmed the Austrians; and the Government has now felt it to be its duty to bestir itself in the matter, and to inquire into the spread of consumption in the land, and into the means to be adopted for combating it. Last year, accordingly, the Minister of the Interior laid before the Royal Imperial Central Statistical Commission, for their opinion, the work of Dr. Kuchenmeister, of Dresden, which appeared in 1869, and which is probably known to many of your readers. The Statistical Commission consulted at once with men familiar with the subject, and, following the advice which they received, asked the three medical Corporations in Vienna for their opinion. This week the answer of the Medical Club is being returned; that of the College of Physicians was sent in a short time ago; and so far the two agree in pronouncing on the subject to this effect: 'That such investigations on the spread of phthisis in Austria, and on the absence of the same from many mountainous regions, as well as on the cause which lies at the foundation of this, would not only furnish results of the greatest value to science, but also be invaluable for the well-being of the people. Whatever is to be done, however, must be undertaken and carried out with the greatest conscientiousness by able men standing at the head of the profession. Above

all, there must be organised a registration of deaths in the whole country, even in the most obscure districts.'

Meanwhile the absence of phthisis from Alpine districts has been turned to practical account by the most prominent physicians of Vienna, as Skoda, Oppolzer, Duchekera, who send many patients suffering from diseases of the lungs and larynx to reside during the summer in the high valleys of the Austrian Alps; and this, it is said, with the best, often with most surprising, results.

Ischl and Aussee are the two favourite health-resorts, and it is extremely probable that, when the Government comes to make arrangements for providing the poor with the benefits which as yet only the rich can enjoy in the way of change of climate, either of these two spots will be fixed upon. Ischl must be known to many English physicians as the most fashionable Austrian Alpine resort, and is extremely popular; but as a summer residence for consumptives, it cannot for a moment compare in the light of our latest experience in the south of Ischl, to which, as we have said, it is much to be preferred, not only however, on account of the perfect immunity of its inhabitants from tuberculosis, but also because it lies 2,100 feet above the sea-level (Ischl only 1,500), and because, from its being perfectly surrounded by mountains, the lowest of which is 4,000 feet high, such an unpleasant and dangerous element as wind is quite unknown.

A question here readily suggests itself—Why should not English physicians, following the example of their Viennese brethren, avail themselves of this hitherto to them almost unknown climate, and send their consumptive patients to the Austrian Alps, and to Aussee especially? Ischl is easily reached from the English side by taking the rail to Gmunden, and thereafter crossing the Waadersal lake of the same name; and Aussee is separated from Ischl only by a mountainous but excellent road of three hours. The whole of the country abounds in most romantic scenery.

For the benefit of those who prefer having their patients under careful medical superintendence while abroad, I am able to add that a Vienna physician, Dr. Schreiber, who devotes himself to the study of medical climatology, with a special view to the treatment of diseases of the lungs, has erected in Aussee a so-called sanatorium, where the delicate and sick are under his direct care, while deriving every advantage from the climate.

In thus drawing the attention of English physicians to the advantages of the Austrian Alps as a summer residence for invalids, I cannot but regret that Dr. C. T. B. Williams did not extend his tour beyond Switzerland and the Tyrol in his visit to Alpine summer quarters, of which he gives such a pleasant account in the 'British Medical Journal' for November 20 and 27, and December 4, 1869. The true value of the country to which I now refer might thus have been sooner recognised in England; as it is, I hope that during the coming season some competent English physician will visit it, and report upon the probable benefit to be derived by his countrymen from a climate which has already done so much for the Austrians.

Vienna, April 6, 1871.