

Note on Falkenstein im Taunus, Germany, a health resort for consumption and diseases of the chest / by Henry Rundle.

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Rundle, Henry, 1845-1924.
Royal College of Surgeons of England

Publication/Creation

London : Adlard & Son, 1896.

Persistent URL

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NOTE ON
FALKENSTEIN IM TAUNUS,
GERMANY.

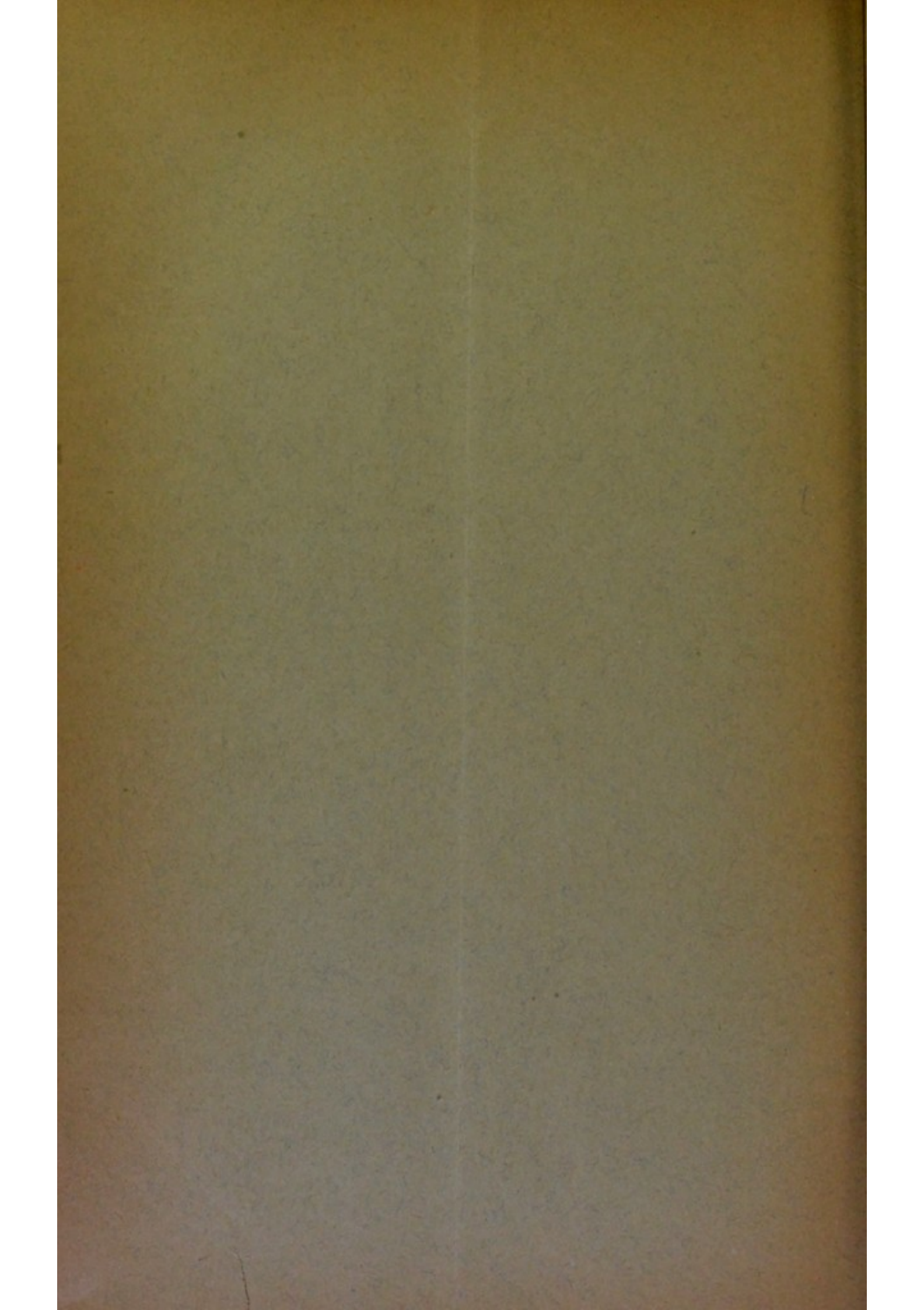
A HEALTH RESORT
FOR CONSUMPTION AND DISEASES OF THE CHEST.

BY
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Reprinted from
THE ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL JOURNAL, December, 1896.

LONDON:
ADLARD & SON, 22½, BARTHOLOMEW CLOSE, E.C.

1896.



A Visit to Falkenstein im Taunus.

A Health Resort for Consumption.

By HENRY RUNDLE, F.R.C.S.

AMONG the characteristic features of German life are the watering places and health resorts which are studded over the country. There is very little quackery. Instead of dosing himself with pills and patent medicines, the anxiety of the German for his health takes a sensible form; and he "takes his cure" at one of these places by dieting himself, drinking sundry daily glasses of waters, and living in the open air as much as possible. There are several places with medical establishments for the treatment of those suffering from diseases of the lungs. Those at Nordrach and Falkenstein are the best known. Holiday travel took me a few weeks ago through Frankfort, where I halted for a day, as I was anxious to visit the "Curhaus" at the latter place. A railway ride of forty minutes brought me to Cronberg, a distance of twelve miles. The railways in Germany, most of which are State property, are decidedly slow, but very safe. Slow speed, with the risk of mishap reduced to a minimum, is better, says the German, than the momentary advantages of rapid travel. Cronberg is an idyllic place, and well deserves the name of "Crown of the Mountain." A drive of about four miles, passing the residence of the Empress Frederick, brought me to the "Curhaus." This has an elevated position, 1300 feet above the sea level, on the southern slope of the Taunus range. Few places in Germany have such surroundings—pretty enough to attract the ailing and the healthy alike. To arrive there is to feel that the beauty of the place must contribute to your well-being. The valley is protected on the west, north, and

east, and open toward the south-east. On each side rise mountains, clad with firs and chestnut trees, which enclose a lovely view over the broad valley of the Main, dotted with towns and villages, and the plains of the Rhine district in the distance.

The Curhaus, which is surrounded by well-kept grounds and woods, consists of a main building, its two wings joining at an obtuse angle, so as to enclose a large terrace, and two annexes united to the main building by covered promenade galleries, opening towards the south. In direct communication, on the east side, is a large dining-hall, in which 200 persons can be comfortably seated. On the ground floor are drawing, music, and reading rooms, and a well-stocked library. The place is provided with all the comforts and luxuries needed for invalids.

The terrace enclosed by the wings of the main building has an especially protected situation, along which extend covered verandahs provided with curtains, so that even the weaker patients may be able to remain in the open air from morning to night. Similar structures and revolving pavilions are situated near the building, and serve the same purpose. In these and the verandahs are placed cushioned, cane sofas, which enable the patients to carry out in comfort the main part of the treatment, namely, prolonged sojourn in the open air. The institution has a plentiful supply of excellent water derived from springs on the slope of the hill beyond, and a good system of drainage constructed by an English engineer. With reference to the climate, the air is pure and free from dust. I was unable to ascertain the percentage of moisture. The variations of temperature are rarely great or sudden, and there is no perceptible fall at sunset. The evenings are characterised, almost the whole year round, by stillness and an even temperature. I was told that there is much warm sunshine in winter, enabling people to be out of doors a great part of the day. But Falkenstein is not merely a winter health resort like Madeira, or the towns on the Mediterranean coast. Experience has shown that the treatment may be carried out

with equally good results in summer and winter. The Curhaus is open all the year, and the beneficial influences of climate and treatment are felt at all seasons.

As to the course of treatment. The main factor is the utilisation of fresh air. This is carried out, for the weaker patients by resting on the sofas, and for the stronger ones by additional general exercise, combined with breathing exercises. Regular rubbing, dry or with alcohol or water, and cold douches, are applied by trained nurses. The object of this is to increase the natural action of the skin, and to harden the system against the changes of temperature. The diet is a liberal one, with plenty of milk, which is obtained from a farm belonging to the institution.

The daily round of life is rather monotonous. If the temperature is raised, the patient is sent to bed and kept there until it falls. For those who have no fever, first breakfast is taken from 7.30 to 8.30, then a walk in the garden till 10 o'clock, when second breakfast is served. Then out of doors or lying down until dinner at 1 o'clock. After dinner lying down until 4 o'clock, when milk is taken. Supper at 7.30, and bed from 9 to 10. The fact that tuberculosis is a contagious complaint, and that every effort must be made to defend against its germ, is strongly impressed on all the inmates. No one is allowed to expectorate except in the spittoons containing antiseptics, which are placed in the house and grounds, or else in a small glass receptacle which is carried in the pocket. Tubercular milk is guarded against by frequent bacteriological examination.

I have had two cases which have been treated at Falkenstein, and am well satisfied with the results; both in a marked manner have benefited by the change.

Mr. O. D—, æt. 21, had severe hæmoptysis in March, April, and May, 1892, with cough, expectoration, and night sweats, dulness over apices of both lungs, with moist sounds on left. At Falkenstein from December, 1892, to June, 1893. Weight on admission, 9 st. 10 lbs.; on leaving,

11 st. Since then has been free from cough and all symptoms of lung trouble. When I last saw him (August, 1896) he was quite well, and enjoying outdoor sports and amusements.

Miss M. A—, æt. 17. Father died from phthisis. Had several intercurrent attacks of hæmoptysis in 1894; well-marked physical signs at left apex. Went to Falkenstein in September, 1894, and returned home in May, 1895. Weight on admission, 8 st. 5 lbs.; on return, 11 st. 3 lbs. A second visit of three months early in 1896. She writes me that she is "very strong and well, keeping quite a normal temperature."

In each of these cases hæmoptysis was the first symptom to attract attention. This alarmed the patients and their friends, and caused them to act promptly in seeking change of climate. It cannot be too strongly urged, if change of climate is to be tried, that it should be done early. Consumptives are often sent away in the later stages of illness, too late for sun and air to work their wholesome charms.

How change of climate works as a curative agent in phthisis is still uncertain. The late Dr. Hilton Fagge writes, "on the whole it seems likely that the good effects of change of climate depend partly upon its improving the general health and increasing the resistance of the organism to the further progress of the disease, partly upon its protecting the patient from fresh attacks of bronchial catarrh." I think that Falkenstein meets these conditions, and when the disease is taken in the early stage, I believe that treatment there, will often work a cure.

I must acknowledge the kindness of Dr. Karl Hess, the senior resident physician, for devoting a morning to showing me over the place, and also for much information which he placed at my disposal. The result is this short account, which may be instrumental in introducing Falkenstein and its Curhaus to some Bart.'s men, and possibly through them to consumptive invalids.