

THIRTY DAYS WITH ALFRED ADLER

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Evelyn Feldmann (Mrs. Ernest A.), was Alfred Adler's secretary during 1935 to 1937, at which time she was Evelyn Roth (Mrs. Sydney M.). She was also a close friend of the family and traveled with Adler on his lecture tours in the company of his wife, Raissa. The following notes, aside from a few added comments by Mrs. Feldmann, were taken by her from her diary and the appointment book she kept for Adler during his lecture tour in England in 1936, a year before his death.

The notes are not equally systematic throughout, and at times there is a bit of boldness. This is to be accounted for in part by the informal relationship and the youth of the writer at that time. But they give first-hand evidence of Adler's indefatigability in lecturing, seeing patients, and meeting with people, as well as of some personal characteristics revealed in close association with him. The thirty days from April 24 to May 23 suggested themselves as a good unit for the purpose of giving a concrete sample, so to speak, of Adler's life and work.

Mrs. Feldmann also saved newspaper clippings of this period which give substance and background to her own account and confirm the impressive interest and acclaim accorded to Adler. Highlights from these are inserted in smaller type. Some further relevant data provided by the editor are also inserted in this manner.

Friday, April 24

Aboard S. S. Manhattan. Dr. Adler dictating *Delineator* article entitled, "Inferiority Complex in Women."

The fate of this article is unknown. But Adler had previously given an interview in this periodical, entitled, "Clinic for Sick Marriages" (2).

Saturday, April 25

Dr. Adler seasick. Just before this happened he explained that people who get seasick are those who want to *control*. When they can't, as when they are on a ship or train, they get sick. I was on a hobby horse in the gymnasium while he was generously giving forth

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on people who can't stand to be out of control—and suddenly he disappeared. Later in the afternoon when Adler joined Mrs. Adler and me, and started dictating some letters, I spoke up, "By the way, Dr. Adler, what was that you said about people who want to be in control, and seasickness?" "That will do, Mrs. Roth; now take a letter."

Friday, May 1

London. We are staying at the Basil Street Hotel, Knightsbridge, S.W. 3. Dr. Adler lecturing in Exeter.

Saturday, May 2

Dr. Adler away, lecturing in Folner.

Sunday, May 3

Dr. Adler returning prematurely, not completing his itinerary. I knew he would not, if I were not around to act as a buffer. He resisted being lionized. After giving lectures, seeing patients, etc., he wanted to be left alone. He would say, "Let them waste their own time, not mine." Discovered how much help I am to him.

Monday, May 4

Luncheon given by the Institute of Medical Psychology at Hotel Great Central, Wharnccliffe Rooms, Marylebone Road, where Dr. Adler was greatly honored. About 500 people present. I was proud to sit at the speaker's table.

3 p.m. Train to Cardiff, Wales. The train was late and we were afraid we would be late for the lecture. Phyllis Bottome and her husband, A. E. Forbes Dennis, met us at the station with photographers.

Miss Bottome is the well known novelist and good friend of Adler who became his biographer (4).

8 p.m. Lecture at University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, Cathays Park, Cardiff. Our host was Dr. McGowan, Velendre, Whitschurch, Cardiff. The lecture was packed and a great success. We stayed at the Hotel Angel.

Tuesday, May 5

Visited Cardiff Mental Hospital.

Miss Bottome relates in her autobiography that it was a Dr. Muriel Northcote at Cardiff Mental Hospital "who had given me my chance of obtaining the materials that I used for *Private Worlds*" (5, p. 263), a novel about mental hospitals and mental illness.

Later, big ceremony in honor of Dr. Adler at the Lord Mayor's of Cardiff. Adler was asked to write his name in the Great Book of honored guests. What do you think Adler did? He stepped forward, took the plumed pen and said: "It would please me very much if you would allow my secretary, Mrs. Roth, to sign for me." I stepped forward, took the plumed pen and, with the greatest pride I had ever known, wrote: "Professor Alfred Adler by Evelyn Mary Roth." Needless to mention why Adler did this. I had a fantasy of royal descent which Dr. Adler knew, and this was not the only time he gave me "royal" recognition. He had a deep kindness and a delightful sense of humor. He was always doing something thoughtful and surprising to those close to him—his family and intimate friends.

Train back to London with the Forbes-Dennis'. Back at the hotel, Adler gave an interview to a reporter from the *Evening Standard*.

The interview, by Dudley Barker, appeared in the *Evening Standard* the next day, May 6. We find the following particularly interesting: "While working on failures in life, Dr. Adler wanted to express the attitude of a man who feels beaten, feels that he cannot accomplish what he must. He called that attitude an 'inferiority complex.' 'But that is only a phrase,' he insisted. 'All the world uses it now, but I seldom use it myself. It has acquired some curious meaning through its popularity, meanings that I never intended for it.'" This reminds us of what is happening today to Adler's term, "life style."

Wednesday, May 6

We, that is Dr. Adler, Mrs. Adler, the Forbes-Dennis' and I, leaving early for Oxford. Invited for lunch by Mrs. Lord and daughter, Americans living abroad and auditing classes at Oxford. I was greatly impressed with the 400- to 600-year-old tradition in education.

Tea at Christ Church, Oxford University, in honor of Dr. Adler.

After the tea, at 5 p.m., Dr. Adler lectured to the student body on "Individual Psychology." A fight ensued from the Freudians who were present who blatantly called Adler a devitalized Freud. Adler kept the fracas friendly, suggested a debate—and judging from the "Hear, Hears!" Adler won.

In the evening a private formal dinner in the Cardinal Wolsey Room, Christ Church, again in honor of Dr. Adler. Very few Americans are ever invited to the Cardinal Wolsey Room for formal dinner. After dinner, we all drove back to London.

Thursday, May 7

Evening. Lecture before the Medical Society of Individual Psychology at the Great Hall of the British Medical Association. It was a formal affair. I sat on the speakers' platform too. The lecture was preceded by a press conference at our hotel at 5 p.m.

Friday, May 8

At noon photographers came. In the afternoon we went to the most attractive flat of Ivor Novello, the actor, dramatist, and composer who, incidentally, was born in Cardiff. It was an affair for press appointments. About 25 to 30 reporters came and sumptuous refreshments were served.

8 p.m. Lecture at the Institute of Medical Psychology, with Dr. J. R. Rees as chairman.

Saturday, May 9

Very lovely day. On our way to Maidstone, Kent. Miss Jephson entertained us for luncheon at her 400-year-old cottage with beautiful orchard and garden. Then, on to Maidstone, to the Caldecott Community School.

4 p.m. Lecture there on "The Science of Living." After the lecture, Professor and Mrs. Arthur Ellis drove us to their home for dinner—the Sherwood House, a wonderful old English home with magnificent grounds.

Sunday, May 10

Appointments at 10 and 10:30 a.m. and at 3, 4, and 5 p.m. This was a typical Sunday.

For luncheon at our hotel: Miss Jephson, a Miss Cope, Mr. Herz and Mr. Ehrenstein, Dr. Herbert Schaffer, Dr. Adler, Mrs. Adler, and myself.

Monday, May 11

Appointments all day, and talk to teachers, evidently arranged by Miss Bell Rennie, 20 Princess Garden.

8 p.m. Conway Hall. Lecture on "The Science of Individual Psychology," the first of three public lectures sponsored by the

Medical Society of Individual Psychology, London, and the Individual Psychology Club. Dr. Walter Langdon-Brown, chairman. Lady Brown very charming and active in community organizations.

One of the notable points in Adler's lecture was: "It is part of the structure of life to conquer, to overcome things. We cannot live without thinking of striving for success, for achievement. As long as that striving persists, life is granted. As soon as the personality does not see any possibility of success, the possibility of death appears." This is taken from the report in the *Daily Mail* the following day, May 12.

The report was focused on Adler's answers to questions from the audience. Among these one was on Adler's opinion regarding Freudian theories. Adler replied: "That is a very inconvenient question. Freud is this year celebrating his 80th year. All the world is worshipping him, and I am not going to utter a word of criticism."

Tuesday, May 12

Appointments with patients. Photographers at noon. Teachers' meeting 5 to 6 p.m.

8 p.m. Conway Hall. "The Science of Social Psychology," Dr. H. C. Squires, chairman. This lecture was again very good, with Dr. Adler better than ever in projecting his material. After the lecture we all went to Appenscot's in Piccadilly Circus for supper (German food).

Wednesday, May 13

5-6 p.m. Meeting with teachers' group.

8 p.m. Conway Hall. "The Science of Prevention of Neurosis and Crime," Dr. W. Norwood East, Chairman. This was the last of this series of three lectures, and the applause was overwhelming.

Now I have a pretty good picture of the Individual Psychology Club and the Medical Society of Individual Psychology. The rankling and their differences are disturbing to Dr. Adler.

Thursday, May 14

Appointments in the morning as usual.

2 p.m. Leaving for Birmingham, Midland Hotel. At 7 p.m. reception there preceding lecture at the University of Birmingham on "The Character of Education," Sir Charles Grant Robertson, chairman.

Friday, May 15

Leaving Birmingham for Liverpool, Adelphi Hotel.

Evening. Lecture at the University of Liverpool on "Understanding Children." Sir Hector Hetherington, vice-chancellor of the University, chairman.

The *Manchester Guardian* reported the following day, May 16, "Picton Hall which holds upwards of 1200 people, was crowded, and many people had to be content with seats on the gangway steps. Even then many were unable to gain admittance."

Saturday, May 16

The newspapers are full of Adler. In fact, news of Adler and his lecture tour is all over England. I sent clippings to Mr. O. for his scrap book. Summer courses for next year are being planned.

Three addresses for teachers, social workers, and others interested, at Liverpool University, sponsored by the Liverpool Council of Social Service and the Liverpool and District Home and School Council, as follows:

11 a.m. "The Relation of Parent and Child." 3 p.m. "Social Misfits." 5 p.m. "Delinquency." At the last two lectures the Archbishop of Liverpool, Dr. Downey, presided.

The *Manchester Guardian*, May 18, reported, "The Archbishop of Liverpool, Dr. Downey, . . . thought Dr. Adler more than any one man in modern times had placed psychology on a sound scientific basis."

Years later, in her autobiography, Miss Bottome so to speak completed this statement. She quotes Dr. Downey as having said when he accepted the chairmanship: "In the history of psychology there are three great releasers of man's personality. I call them the three great A's: Aristotle, Aquinas, and Adler" (5, p. 263).

Monday, May 18

Back in London. Seeing patients until noon. Leaving from Basil Street Hotel for Cambridge by chauffeured car, six of us. Stopping for lunch at an old castle situated on beautiful grounds. Dr. Adler is extremely sentimental and even impassioned about flowers, trees, and the green grass. He confided that it hurt him to step on this beautiful carpet of green-green grass, because it was so alive and magnificent. The way Adler stood among all this richness of nature made me feel that he was aware of the architect and gardner of the world.

The Reverend Ernst Jahn, the German Protestant minister who participated with Adler in the confrontation of Individual Psychology with Christian guidance (3, pp. 272-274), years later concluded similarly, "Today I am convinced that Adler was not an atheist," as quoted by Ellenberger (6, p. 625).

Cambridge. Stopping for tea at the University Arms Hotel. Mrs. Adler and I going sight-seeing afterwards.

7:30 p.m. Dinner for Dr. Adler alone with Professor Ernest Barker at the Peter House, at High Table.

8:30 p.m. Lecture on "Some Recent Developments in Individual Psychology," sponsored by the Cambridge University Education Society and the New Education Fellowship, Cambridge Branch, in the Mill Lane Lecture Room. Dr. Adler was introduced by Professor Barker. The lecture was a huge success! Stopped for supper on the way back to London.

The *Cambridge Independent*, a weekly paper, wrote on May 22: "The attendance was enormous; every inch of floor was occupied, and many had to be turned away at the door. Women formed a large proportion of the assembly."

Tuesday, May 19

Stayed in bed with a cold in my chest. Dr. and Mrs. Adler keeping me constant company and medicating me. In between patients Dr. Adler would come in and look after me. I mention this to show the warmth and personal interest he gave. He really lived his "social feeling." But I did get up to go with the Adlers to a theatre matinee.

3:15 p.m. Phoenix Theatre. Three one-act plays by Noel Coward, with the playwright in the leading parts. The second play, *The Astonished Heart*, was about a psychiatrist who solves his own love entanglement by throwing himself out of the window. Great acting! We all went backstage and it was exciting.

This theatre party is mentioned by Phyllis Bottome in her biography of Adler (4, pp. 95-96). But her statement regarding an influence of Adler's writings on Coward may be questioned until further evidence is found. So far, we only have the author's following comment on the play: "Its theme, the decay of a psychiatrist's mind through a personal sexual obsession, was too esoteric to appeal to a large public. It gave us [Noel Coward and Gertrude Lawrence], however, good opportunities for dramatic acting" (7, p. 204).

The others of our party stayed for tea, but Dr. Adler and I went back to the hotel and discussed the matter of the *Journal*.

This refers to the *International Journal of Individual Psychology*, published from 1935 through 1937 in Chicago, with Alfred Adler as editor-in-chief and Sydney M. Roth as publisher and business editor.

Thursday, May 21

1:15 p.m. Luncheon arranged by The University of London Board of Studies in Psychology.

5 p.m. Reception by the provost of University College, London.

5:30 p.m. Lecture on "Some Recent Developments in Individual Psychology," University College, University of London, Great Hall, Professor Cyril Burt presiding.

Saturday, May 23

Noon. Seeing Romola Nijinsky, wife of Vaslav, the Russian dancer of almost legendary fame who became schizophrenic and was at the Sanatorium Bellevue, Kreuzlingen, Switzerland, under the care of Ludwig Binswanger. Mrs. Nijinsky had written for an appointment a week earlier. In her letter, in German, she reminded Dr. Adler, "We met two years ago when you visited my husband at the Sanatorium Bellevue in Kreuzlingen."

This letter supports the following account by Phyllis Bottome: "Adler once visited Nijinsky by request, after his mental illness had lasted many years. Adler made such an instant impression upon Nijinsky that his caretakers begged Adler to take over his case. . . . Adler succeeded in getting into real contact with Nijinsky and even made him laugh; but Adler could not follow up the treatment, since he foresaw then it would take at least two years' constant work, and that he must have Nijinsky under his own roof. 'Still,' Adler added regretfully, 'if I had had time enough, I think I could have helped him'" (4, pp. 96-97). Prior to Adler, Mrs. Nijinsky had consulted with Bleuler, Wagner Jauregg, Kraepelin, Ferenczi, Freud, and Jung (8, p. 432).

4-6 p.m. Reception at a country home where Dr. Adler gave an informal talk. The hostess had some ideas about no angles—everything rounded. Her home and furniture were somewhat along these lines. I sat on one of these rounded-bottom chairs and fell over, feet straight up in the air! Dr. Adler remarked upon lifting me up, "For a moment I thought we were at the Follies Bergères!" We all had a good laugh.

Adler was guided by the conviction that "The science of human nature . . . can have for its proper goal only the understanding of human nature by every human being" (1, p. 15). This conviction has only recently begun to come into its own, partly through the Community Mental Health movement of the last decade. In accordance with this principle Adler tried to reach as many people as possible, which created the dilemma be-

tween training experts and addressing himself directly to the larger numbers. This had already been a problem in Vienna, according to his early coworker and good friend, Carl Furtmüller (3, pp. 385-388).

From the present lecture tour the opinion among his professional colleagues was apparently that he had gone too far in the second direction, judging by the account in the publication of the Medical Society of Individual Psychology, London. We read: "During over a month in England, Adler addressed or took part in more than thirty meetings . . . besides having very numerous interviews and talks with individuals and small groups. . . . His visit was a very great success. . . . The arrangements of his visit, however, resulted in his covering a very wide field rather than allowing any one group the opportunity for intensive work and study" (9, p. 6).

Adler was apparently determined to make up for this the following year (4, p. 257). For June and July, 1937, series of 12 to 14 lectures at Edinburgh, Liverpool and Exeter were planned in conjunction with his daughter, Dr. Alexandra Adler (4, pp. 285-286). But Adler died in Aberdeen on May 27, 1937, and his daughter had to carry the burden alone.

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