

SOME IMPRESSIONS.

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CURIOSITY about conditions in Russia caused me to join a party of scientists which left London Bridge by Soviet steamer in August last. After passing through Kiel Canal and three pleasant days in the Baltic Sea the ship berthed in **Leningrad.** the Neva almost in the heart of Leningrad. Charabancs conducted us from the ship to our hotel where we lived in comparative luxury. Food was good and plentiful but the service slow. Splendid arrangements were made for our comfort, and everywhere we were most courteously received. Lists were prepared, giving places of interest to medical and general scientists, and each evening at dinner (which usually took place at 11 p.m.) we were asked to make our programme for the following day. Motor transport and excellent interpreters were always at our disposal, and no restrictions were placed on those who wished to stroll about alone.

Many fine hospitals and clinics run on orthodox lines were visited; equipment in operation theatres, &c., was modern and efficient; the nursing seemed slack to our English point of view and one frequently observed lack of general principles of hygiene, such as food left lying about attracting flies, and offensive sanitary arrangements. Space does not permit further description of hospitals and of the splendid work being done for child welfare, which is an outstanding feature of modern medicine in Russia. In 1905 the Tsar fled from St. Petersburg (Leningrad) to a town eighteen miles out in the hills known as Tsarsko Selo (Tsar's Village). Here, surrounding the palace were many great houses of the nobility; since the Revolution the name has been changed to Detskoy Selo (Children's Village) and is now used as a convalescent centre for hundreds of delicate children.

After several interesting days in Leningrad, a reception was given in our honour by the Commissar of Health, who stated that self-criticism was encouraged by the Department of Health and we were asked to criticize freely things we had seen.

From Leningrad we proceeded to Moscow by the Red Express, a fast and modern night train. This city is the hub of Soviet life and is very overcrowded; with thousands of drably-dressed people thronging the streets and with roads and **Moscow.** buildings under repair one gets the impression of a recently disturbed ants' nest. There is no sign of starvation and the masses, particularly the children, look well nourished and healthy. Expensive clothing is considered anti-social. Parks of culture and rest are a great feature of the city life, and one may see thousands of workers spending their day of rest playing various games—tennis in bathing slips, football, swimming and sun bathing, yachting and canoe racing on the rivers. For those interested in music there is good fare; excellent performances are given by orchestras in the city parks, and nights spent at the Opera as guests of the Government will long be remembered.

From Moscow we travelled by train to Nizni-Novgorod, and then nearly 1,000 miles down the Volga to the great new industrial city of Stalingrad. Most of our party were surprised to find large cities on the banks of the Volga, such as Kazan, Saratov and Samara, each containing fine hospitals and medical schools. The Volga steamers are large and comfortable, with single-berth deck cabins, but sanitary arrange-

ments are appalling. We carried about 1,000 peasants below deck whose habits, manners, and mentality reminded one of a flock of sheep.

On arrival at the Pavlov Institution in Leningrad one felt somewhat the same sensation received when seeing the names of one's textbook authors for the first time on Harley Street doors. Unfortunately Professor Pavlov himself was **Leningrad.** away on holiday, but his assistant, who speaks excellent English, conducted us. Although experiments are still being carried out, the production of canine gastric juice has become a commercial process. The dogs, about thirty in number, stand cab-rank fashion on long benches, suspended by rubber tubing round the fore and hind legs (to prevent much movement) to an overhead beam. After a complete section of the œsophagus the distal end is sealed, gastrostomy is performed and a rubber tube conducts gastric juice to glass receivers under the bench. A dish of meat food is placed on the bench in front of the dog and is eaten and re-eaten every few minutes, the complete mouthful passing out of the œsophagus and back into the dish with a splash; gastric juice flows freely as a result and the animals are thus "milked" for about eight hours daily. The juice obtained is strained through charcoal and exported to Germany for clinical purposes. The animals wagged their tails and seemed in no way distressed; they are taken down daily for exercise and fed through the gastrostomy tube each night. The building contains several laboratories and a well-equipped operation theatre where the animals are prepared.

One experiment was in process, to estimate the flow from the parotid gland caused by various types of food and the relation to sound. A dog with a fine rubber tube attached to Stenson's duct is placed in a sound-proof room, and the door closed; operations are conducted from outside. A revolving table containing twelve dishes of food—ranging from raw meat to boiled rice—has a cover worked from outside which exposes one at a time any of the twelve dishes. The parotid is stimulated according to the kind of food, saliva flows down Stenson's duct and the rubber tube to a delicate electric apparatus which records graphically the quantity and intensity of the flow.

A metronome beating at 100 to the minute was then placed in the room, after which, as on preceding tests of 100 beats, a piece of meat was exposed. The dog listened intently as if counting the beats and saliva flowed freely. The metronome was then set at 75 and 50, which caused the dog to take no further interest until the machine was reset at 100.

Although in the past Russia had many fine hospitals and much original and world-famous research work was conducted by men like Pavlov, Metchnikov and others, medical instruction for the masses and general hygiene seem to have been neglected. I was frequently told that such work was hindered by an overbearing priestcraft which taught the people that disease was "God-sent."

A new attitude towards medicine has been brought about by the Soviet. The slogan is prophylaxis. "Don't let them get sick" is quoted everywhere.

State medicine has made many things possible and should prove an interesting experiment to be observed by other countries before making a change. Some difficulty was at first experienced, as it is essential that medical practitioners and professors should belong to a Medical Workers' Union, including nurses, ambulance drivers, cooks, hospital orderlies, &c. Medical men refused to join and relations with the Soviet became very strained. All

dissenters were classed as Bourgeois and received only "C" class food ticket, which made life almost impossible. The matter was settled when it was agreed that the Medical Union should contain a sub-union for graduates only. The stigma Bourgeois was removed, Worker Intelligensia substituted, and "A" class food tickets provided, with results which on the surface appear to be satisfactory.

One direct result of this new system is that a group of two or three doctors is placed in charge of a sub-area containing about 2,000 patients. Consulting rooms known as Ambulatoria are provided, in which are dispensary and first-aid outfit. A doctor is expected to know all about the population in his area, whether healthy or sick. A medical history of the whole family is kept at the central office and is available to the doctors in the group and the district nurse. In the event of further opinion being required, the patient is sent to one of the new Out-Patient Departments called Prophylactoria. Several of these modern buildings are placed round the cities and all out-patients are seen by appointment; about 2,000 patients being seen daily. The patient arrives from the sub-area and obtains the notes containing all instructions about time and place of various appointments, i.e., X-ray, &c., and finally arrives at the room for consultation, where his local doctor awaits him. The district nurse who is in attendance notes instructions given and sees that they are carried out at home. The system works so well that it has been found that the waiting rooms provided outside each clinic are scarcely necessary.

Some form of Post-graduate education is compulsory. Practitioners from country districts are expected to visit a centre of medical education every three years, a locum being provided by the State. There are fifteen medical schools in Russia, of which there are three in Leningrad, two in Moscow, and others in cities such as Kiev, Odessa, Kharkov, Kazan, &c. Post-graduate lectures and classes are held and an opportunity given for resident hospital appointments. At one hospital of 2,000 beds there is a medical staff of 100, which included numerous practitioners engaged in a refresher course. In the past the medical course tended to be rather too academic, and the modern tendency is to make a period of internship obligatory.

Young graduates at the completion of the five years' course are encouraged to take up the study of some special branch of medicine, as it is hoped that in future clinics will be staffed by specialists rather than with general practitioners. The old system of feldshers, i.e., men and women entitled to practise in country districts after two years' training, has been abolished, and all such feldshers must now proceed to a medical school to graduate at the State expense or else cease to practise.

Practitioners employed in city areas are expected to work two hours each morning at their local ambulatorium, and two hours each afternoon at the prophylactorium; at least one hour per day is to be given to some research or post-graduate study. A series of very up-to-date laboratories are provided, and a doctor taking interest in any particular subject may obtain all necessary equipment.

Medical lectures to the lay public are encouraged, and these are well attended by a crowd eager for knowledge. Medical students are sent out to lecture to factory workers and act as guides to parties of illiterate peasants visiting medical exhibitions.

State religion has been abolished, but personal religion is not discouraged. Education is no longer in the hands of the priests, and the Soviet has decided that,

provided some science subjects are included in the State education, they need not worry about the future of religion. They consider agnosticism a necessary corollary of education. I visited several churches still open and holding unrestricted services; there has been a great increase in the Non-conformist type of religion which was persecuted before the Revolution. Several State-owned churches have been dismantled and large sums obtained from the sale of solid gold taken from the roofs have been devoted to child welfare clinics and other medical works.

St. Isaac's Cathedral, similar to St. Paul's in London, is now a museum. The great dome has been utilized to demonstrate the rotation of the earth (Galileo's experiment). The floor space under the dome is marked out into 360 degrees. A large pendulum hung by a fine wire from the dome swings across the floor which appears to move the full 360 degrees under the pendulum in twenty-four hours. Crowds gaze open-mouthed while the experiment is explained by a scientist.

In the past large sums of money were obtained from pilgrims visiting the monasteries containing the relics of saints. Indestructibility of the body was regarded by the masses as a sign of sainthood. Many of these bodies previously venerated have proved to be wax effigies, but the idea remains in the peasant mind. Medical science has proved of great assistance to the State in the preservation of Lenin's body which is almost deified. Lenin's tomb placed below the Kremlin walls in Red Square, Moscow, is a remarkable building in red and black granite. Thousands wait in a queue nightly to gain admission between 7 and 9 o'clock. I have never seen such wonderful preservation. Lenin, dressed in khaki uniform, lies guarded by soldiers, in a large invisibly lighted black marble hall. The features are perfect with no sign of discoloration or shrinking; it is really difficult to realize that he died in 1924. Careful drapery round the head covers the well-known incision for the removal of the brain.

General News.

THE Lord Mayor, the Lady Mayoress, the Sheriffs and their ladies were the guests of the Hunterian Society at a dinner held at the May Fair Hotel on February 11, to commemorate the 204th anniversary of the birth of John Hunter. Dr. David Ross, the President, was in the chair. Lord Meston, proposing "The Hunterian Society," said they thought that night of the wonderful man who had revolutionized in his day the whole of the science of medicine and surgery. He expressed the opinion that there were far too many societies in existence, the usefulness of a great number of them being questionable, and the purposes they served of doubtful value. He would be in favour of abolishing many societies, but the Hunterian Society deserved a lasting prosperity.

The President, in replying to the toast, mentioned incidentally that the Presidential Chair in which he sat would eventually be presented to the Royal College of Surgeons. He considered that the night was a great night for Aberdeen, for they had with them as guests the Rector and the Chancellor of the University of Aberdeen. In speaking of the strides that the Hunterian Society had made, and of its activities during the past



Some Impressions

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