

THE SITUATION OF SCIENTIFIC MEN IN RUSSIA

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: The information about Professor Pavlov conveyed in a letter to SCIENCE (March 12) is somewhat puzzling in its purport. It is customary to make announcement of events which actually occurred; as for instance birth, deaths, marriages, etc. It would be a most unique procedure to treat the public to news items like these: so-and-so has not yet been born, has not yet died, married, got an increase in salary. Why then this item that on a certain date A.D. Professor Pavlov *was not yet dead*?

It seems likely, therefore, that the only object of the note was to give publicity to a quotation from a letter of Pavlov to some other party to the effect that he was starving and instead of engaging in scientific pursuits was occupied in peeling potatoes. Now, this alleged quotation bears earmarks of a spurious nature. It undoubtedly belongs to that class of hoaxes which the daily press has been imposing upon its innocent readers with an invidious design. It is impossible to reconcile the two statements in the quotation, that Professor Pavlov is starving, and that he has so many potatoes to peel as to be obliged on that account to forsake his science. Even one not versed in the theory of nutrition would be skeptical about the probability of starvation in the midst of plenty of potatoes. (Consult Hinhede on the nutritional value of the potato.)

Like all statements intended primarily to force public opinion into a preformed mould, it is not what is actually said but what is indirectly implied that really matters. The quotation from Pavlov's letter is obviously calculated to rouse in us indignation over the sufferings of the distinguished physiologist. But does it not also insinuate a suggestion that the genius which was the man's great asset under the benign and enlightened government of the Czar of all the Russians has under the new régime become a crushing liability on him? So, ere we are moved to deep pity over Pavlov's unfortunate lot, let us re-

flect if with our well-meant sympathy we may not cause him more distress than comfort.

It so happens that I have some news of another venerable savant, Professor Timiriazev, distinguished botanist of the University of Moscow, an Sc.D. of Cambridge, a fellow of the Royal Society. As I have no "obvious" reason for hiding my informant, I may say that he is Arthur Ransome, whom I herewith quote:

He [Timiriazev] is about eighty years old. His left arm is paralyzed, and, as he said, he can only work at his desk and not be out and about and help as he would wish. A venerable old savant, he was sitting with a green dressing gown about him, for his little flat was very cold. He spoke of his old love for England and for the English people. Then speaking of the veil of lies drawn between Soviet Russia and the rest of the world, he broke down altogether and bent his head to hide his tears. I suffer doubly—he said—I suffer as a Russian, and, if I may say so, I suffer as an Englishman. My grandmother was actually English. I suffer as an Englishman when I see the country I love misled by lies, and I suffer as a Russian because those lies concern the country to which I belong, and the ideas which I am proud to hold.

The old man rose with difficulty, for he, like every one else in Moscow, is half starved. "If I could let them know the truth—he said—those friends of mine in England, they would protest against actions which are unworthy of the England we have loved together."

S. MORGULIS

THE CREIGHTON UNIVERSITY

RUSSIAN AND AMERICAN SCIENTIFIC MEN

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: In SCIENCE of March 5, I have noticed the report that Professor Pavlov, still alive in Petrograd last summer, was peeling potatoes when last heard from. Without wishing to jest on this truly pitiable situation, it may not be amiss to submit also the report that no small portion of the professors of this country are now likewise engaged in peeling potatoes or similar menial work, at any rate for a large part of their time. Under present conditions they can not get others to do such work for them.