

A RUSSIAN VISITOR.

TRADE WITH AUSTRALIA.

INTERESTING EXPERIENCES.

INTERVIEW WITH DR. KLATCHKO.

(By A.B.)

For the next fortnight or so a prominent figure in the streets of Perth will be a tall, well proportioned, and handsome man, with dark, close-cropped hair, short moustache, and clear, fresh complexion, wearing a simple but distinctive khaki military uniform with high boots and a Sam Browne belt indicating that he is an officer. This is Dr. Klatchko, who holds the rank of Captain in the Russian Grenadier Guard. He is attached to the Russian Consulate-General in Melbourne, and the object of his visit is to prepare the way for an extension of the sphere of influence of the Russian-Australian Bureau of Commerce and Information. I found Dr. Klatchko at the Esplanade Hotel on Thursday, the visitor having landed from the Zealanuia that morning.

We had just been introduced by Mr. Michelides, the Russian Consul for Western Australia, when we found ourselves on common ground at once. Noticing my returned soldiers' badge he remarked: "Why, I have seen you before. Have we not met in Egypt?" And we chatted for a space on men, places, and things that were familiar to both.

Dr. Klatchko readily complied with my request to relate his experiences. He is a vivacious talker, and although his English is sometimes a little difficult to understand, he was by no means embarrassed and did not let such a small matter interfere with the flow of his thoughts. He would occasionally be in a little fix, but was always put on the right track by Mr. Michelides, who diplomatically removed the sundry slight obstacles of expression and speech. When he did not have the correct

speech. When he did not have the correct English word ready he would resort to French which he speaks fluently. For instance, he told me how delighted he had been with a visit to Blackboy Camp, and went on to say how the P.M.O. had shown him a special method he had introduced to the men "for drying their—er, 'chemises.' 'Comment?'" (his sotto voce to Mr. Michelides.) "Shirts," corrected the latter. "Ah, shirts," and then to me: "Pardon, monsieur." But the doctor could not fix in his mind the English equivalent for "chemise," and had again to appeal to Mr. Michelides when the word "shirt" was required in the next sentence.

We talked in his bedroom. "Excuse me if I lie down," he said, and forthwith placed a rubber hot water bottle on his body. "You are not ill, I hope, doctor," I said surprised; "you appear to be one of the strongest and healthiest men I have ever met." "Ah," he replied, "I have been suffering from gastritis. All people say how well I look. I would prefer to look worse and feel better."

"Tell me something about yourself," I said.

"I am in my thirtieth year. I was born at Petrograd, where my home has always been. I have visited about every country in the world, and I went through the Manchurian campaign and the Russo-Japanese war."

"And the present war?" I suggested.

"When the war broke out I was a passenger on a German vessel, on my way from England to Japan. We were near Aden when war between Great Britain and Germany was declared, and the captain of the vessel made us prisoners and kept us on the vessel 25 days. Then a British warship captured it, and after that the ship was used as a transport between Alexandria and Lemnos. I was landed in Egypt and in accordance with instructions from the Russian Imperial headquarters I reported at the British headquarters. I was appointed to the 1st Australian General Hospital, at Heliopolis, which was in charge of Dr. Ramsay Smith, of Adelaide. My special department of work was to attend to injuries of the face and head

to attend to injuries of the face and head. As time went on I was transferred to the No. 2 A.G.H., then to the 1st Auxiliary Hospital, then to the 2nd Auxiliary Hospital, afterwards to the British hospital at Cairo, and from there to the Citadel Hospital at Cairo. I have also worked at Ismailia and Tel-el-Kebir.

"After that I was second medical officer on an Australian hospital ship. I was a patient in a Melbourne hospital for five weeks because the long time I was in Egypt affected my health. When I was discharged the conscription referendum came on, and I was attached to the Russian Consulate for the purpose of assisting in the recruiting of the 18,000 Russian natives in Australia should the vote be carried. However, the people said 'No,' and that was the finish of that business. Then the Bureau of Commerce was started, and I was appointed to my present position. In about three months I shall return to Russia and continue to work from there."

What methods will you adopt to bring about closer trade relations between Australia and Russia?

"There will be exhibitions of Russian manufactures in all the States of Australia, and exhibitions of Australian products in different parts of Russia, from Siberia to the Caucasus."

Will you name a few items of profitable exchange between the two countries?

"There are hundreds of them. Russia makes a great many things, and you have the raw materials. Look at these boots I have on. Feel how beautiful and soft the leather is. In Melbourne they would cost £8 a pair, but they only cost me £1 in Russia. Look at my large travelling trunk. It is made of Russian leather. It cost me 30s. in Russia, but would cost six times as much here. There are all kinds of leather work at which the Russians are clever, and you could send us the raw hides. Then we also make motor cars. That is not generally known, because before the war they were exported through Germany, and were regarded as German. Then Russia could exchange some of her vast

Russia could exchange some of her vast reserves of softwood for your hardwood. I am compiling a book about Australia and Russia, and half a million copies will be printed in English and Russian. Classes will be formed in Western Australia and the other States for teaching the Russian language."

You must have noticed how very few people have a knowledge of your language?

"Since I have been associated with the people of Australia I have only met three who could speak Russian. They are Lady Galway (the wife of the Governor of South Australia), Mr. Justice Isaacs, of Melbourne; and General Manifold, whom I met in Egypt."

What is your opinion about Australia?

"I am surprised that such a big country, with such a small population, should have done such a lot in this war. Your boys are good fighters. The volunteer, who does not go for pay, but for—what do you call it?—nobility and patriotism, is a splendid fighter. Ah! they are fine fellows! Then there is the Australian Red Cross. I have wondered how such a lot of things have been done by the Red Cross. I had a lot of things from them which you could not get in a shop. They were very good to me. Twenty Russian soldiers would not get what one Australian soldier gets from the Red Cross. It is wonderful. The boys have so much sometimes they have not room for it all in their bags. But when I come to Australia I understood it. All over Australia, even in the little places, the people are making things for the Red Cross. It is wonderful!

"I am glad to have taken a part in three things," said Dr. Klatchko, as he put on his tunic and belt preparatory to keeping an appointment. "The first was in seeing the old Khedive kicked out of Egypt, the second was being able to congratulate the new Sultan, and the third was the conscription referendum, but I am not going to express any opinion about that."

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"I am sorry I am here and not in Russia for that," he said, drawing himself up with pride. "In three months the old Government would have made a separate peace; but that won't happen now."

During his sojourn Dr. Klatchko will deliver a lecture under the auspices of the Chamber of Commerce.
