

## RUSSIA AND AUSTRALIA

### AVENUES FOR TRADE.

#### INTERVIEW WITH DR. KLATCHKO.

A conspicuous figure in the streets of Kalgoorlie yesterday was Dr. Klatchko, who holds the rank of captain in the Russian Grenadier Guards, and wears the picturesque uniform of that branch of the Russian Army. At present he is attached to the Russian Consulate-General in Melbourne, but prior to coming to Australia a few months ago he had been serving as a doctor in Gallipoli and Egypt. On the outbreak of war he was travelling from Japan to England on a German steamer, which was captured by a British warship. Dr. Klatchko was landed in Egypt, and served for two years and four months as a medical officer with the Australian Imperial Forces. Subsequently he was appointed medical officer on an Australian hospital ship, but on reaching Melbourne he became ill, and had to go into hospital. On regaining his health he was commissioned to travel throughout Australia and establish branches of the Russian Bureau of Commerce and Information, and his visit to this State marks the conclusion of his work.

In the course of conversation with a representative of the "Kalgoorlie Miner" yesterday, Dr. Klatchko said:—

"The object of the Russo-Australian Bureau of Commerce and Information is to bring about closer trade relationship between Australia and Russia, and to increase knowledge in each country regarding the other. I am very glad I have had the opportunity of coming to Australia. The country and its people have surprised me. Until I came here I knew as little about Australia as Australians appear to know about Russia. All I knew about Australia was what I read in Foster Fraser's book, and now I am told that Fraser did little more than

Foster Fraser's book, and now I am told that Fraser did little more than visit the capital cities and did not even come as far as the goldfields. I am writing a book on Australia, describing the country as I have seen it. I shall also print statistics supplied by the State Governments, so that the book may be useful to Russian commercial men desirous of entering into trade with Australia. I am also translating a book which will give much information about Russia, and when printed it will be circulated in Australia through our bureau. Thus we shall make a start to know each other better.

"Very few Australians have any knowledge of the Russian language. In my travels I have met only three who could converse in Russian. Australians wishing to trade with Russia would have a great advantage if they understood the Russian language, and, in order to afford facilities in that direction, the bureau is establishing classes in each State. With the permission of the Education Department, a class will be opened at the Perth Technical School next week, the teacher being a Russian lady from Petrograd.

"In the near future direct shipping lines will be opened between Australia and Russian ports. Steamers will run from the Baltic ports and Vladivostock to Colombo, and will there connect with vessels from Australia. The voyage from Australia to Russia will occupy 27 days, and special terms and facilities will be offered to Australian members of our Bureau. They will be granted a concession of 25 per cent. on the fares, and arrangements will be made to give them every facility for acquiring information during their travels in Russia.

"The grip which Germany had secured on Russian trade and industry was astounding, but as a result of very recent events, German influence has been completely broken, and the way is now open for the British people to come in and take the place of the Germans who have gone out. We ask nothing from

the place of the Germans who have gone out. We ask nothing from you that will not be returned many fold. We have a great country, rich in the greatest variety of resources, but we recognise that we have not developed those resources as fully as they should be developed. Mining, for instance, has been left to a few foreign companies, but the Russian people will now take an interest in the development of Russian mineral resources. We know you have specialised in various branches of mining throughout the British Empire, and we want you to help us—to give us the benefit of your knowledge. You

have men trained in your technical schools, and familiar with the most modern mining methods. Some of these men may at some time wish to try their fortune at mining in Russia. Australia could easily spare a few of her trained mining men, for you are training more every day, and when a start is made to open up Russia's mineral resources on a large scale, there will be plenty of inducements for skilled men to come and assist. Therefore, I have come to Kalgoorlie—one of the greatest goldmining centres—to see something of your mines, to talk with your mining men, and, finally, to appoint a representative of our bureau, through whom any information regarding Russian commerce may be obtained. Mr. W. R. Burton has been appointed to represent the bureau here, and in due course he will have at hand statistics and general information regarding Russian trade and industry, which will be available to anyone requiring information."

The conversation turned on to recent happenings in Russia.

"I have been surprised," said Dr. Klatchko, "to hear people in Australia say that Russia was no longer a force to be reckoned with in the war, but I can assure you they

are mistaken. The trouble in Russia, which has resulted in a complete change in the old order of things, was the outcome of a struggle between the democrats, who were determined to carry out the war, and the aristocrats, who wished to make terms with Germany. Some little time ago there were cablegrams in the newspapers stating that Russia was starving, yet prior to the war Russia was exporting millions of pounds worth of wheat, the export of which was cut off by the war. Russia should really have been overstocked with food, but in some parts a shortage of food was deliberately brought about by agents of Germany. That was done by unnecessarily recruiting men from the most fertile agricultural districts, and leaving the fields bare. Russia did not do any fighting for nine months because of arrangements made between the Ministers and the pro-Germans. The position grew so bad that the people rose up and cleared the country of German influence. Russia is now fighting again, and I feel positive that the war will be carried on until Germany is knocked out. But to win the war is not enough. We must prevent the enemy from regaining his strength after the war. Germany, as I have said, had obtained a great hold on Russian trade and commerce, as well as on the trade of other nations. That hold has now been broken, and the way is clear for England and Australia and other parts of the British Empire to come in and take the place of Germany by trading with Russia."

Dr. Klatchko spoke in warm terms of praise of the Australian troops with whom he had been so closely associated, and of the splendid work of the Australian branch of the Red Cross Society. The Australians, he thought were better off in the way of comforts than any other section of the allied armies. Personally he was under a debt of

other section of the allied armies. Personally, he was under a debt of gratitude to the Red Cross workers on many occasions, when he had been provided with a much needed change of clothing. After seeing the Australians he felt that the volunteer soldier was the finest fighter in the world. The Australians went into the firing line as though they were entering into a game. Their spirits were wonderful. He had met in Australia many of the returned men he had known in Egypt. The first one he met said, 'Hullo, doctor! Come and have a pot!' He didn't know what a 'pot' was at the time, but he had found out since, for he had met many old acquaintances throughout Australia, and most of them insisted upon extending characteristic Australian hospitality to him as a stranger in a strange land. "They are fine fellows," said the doctor, "and wherever I have gone in this great country the people have made me feel quite at home."

Dr. Klatchko will leave for Perth to-day or to-morrow, and will meet the members of the Perth Chamber of Commerce before leaving the State. At an early date he will proceed to Russia on business connected with the Bureau of Commerce and Information.