

**SKETCH OF THE PRESENT STATE
OF MEDICINE, AND OF MEDICAL
INSTITUTIONS, IN RUSSIA.**

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**OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION AND
MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS IN RUSSIA.**

1. *Classification of the Medical Profession.*

It is now generally allowed that there is no essential distinction between medicine and surgery, although practitioners of medicine may be divided into different ranks and classes. Perhaps there is no country where this indivisibility, as regards the practice of the profession, is more strictly maintained than in Russia. The division of medical labour, which in former times simplified the duties of the respective practitioners in England, has never been adopted in Russia, where a physician embraces all the branches of the healing art, and acts as physician, surgeon, and accoucheur. If he do not practise his profession so generally as here stated, there is nothing to prevent him from using his own discretion in such matters. The physician in Russia is, in fact, identical with the general practitioner in England, save and except that in no instance does he dispense his own medicines. I employ the term general practitioner, because in reality the apothecary, at least in the English acceptance of the word, does not exist in Russia. Persons bearing this designation are mere vendors

of drugs and licensed preparers of physician's prescriptions; they are not supposed to be acquainted with more than the nocuous and innocuous properties of the drugs in their rough state. In no case are they allowed to compound medicines, or even sell the most innocent drug, without a written order from a medical practitioner. Their shop, or *apteka*, is no laboratory; for they are not wholesale chemists and druggists, but mere makers-up of prescriptions.

Many of the English physicians in Russia formerly persisted in adhering to the customs of their mother-country, as to the division of labour in the profession. In some instances, however, even the most orthodox have waived this point of etiquette. Dr. Dimsdale tried the experiment of inoculating the Empress Catherine for the small-pox; which same operation Dr. Halliday performed on all the Emperor Paul's children, though unquestionably this task appertained to the province of surgeon.

This combination of medical duties is not now a matter of choice, it is one of necessity, inasmuch as the interests of the mass of the community are to be considered of more importance than the ideas which a few individuals may form to themselves of medical orthodoxy; and in the present day all the English physicians residing in Russia are, as already stated, *de facto*, general practitioners.

Although in a practical sense, then, there is little difference in the duties performed by the different practitioners, of whatever rank they may be, still the superiority of rank is, in point of etiquette, most rigidly enforced in all cases where form is allowed to exercise its prerogative. There are several classes of practitioners, but the deference paid to each is not in a ratio with their medical, so much as their military or civil ranks. The degrees conferred by the universities are the following:—Physician; Surgeon in chief; Surgeon in ordinary; Staff Surgeon; Surgeon's mate; Hospital mate; Barber surgeon; Apothecary.

In general practice there is no positive distinction in the labours allotted to the three first ranks. The physicians and the surgeons, in most cases, practise indiscriminately in all branches of the profession. If they hold official situations in the military or civil service, then the difference of rank becomes immediately sensible. The physician receives homage from the surgeons, takes precedence as he passes through the wards of the hospital,

signs documents, and makes valid his rank by several operations. The hospital mates, dressed in military uniform, march up and down the wards, halt, face about, and stand attention, as their superiors command them; for all society in Russia is divided into ranks and classes, and medical men are included in this category. Schlatter informs us that, in 1781, "a physician ranked with a major in the army, and, as such, could drive four horses to his carriage, while those of inferior rank could drive only two. An apothecary at court had the rank of captain, and his apprentices the rank of ensigns. The surgeons of the district had the rank of lieutenants." In the present day physicians are ranked with the eighth class of the nobility, and surgeons in the seventh.

There are few instances, perhaps, where any practical use or abuse of such a division can be allowed to operate, but in some cases the possibility may exist. It is almost a law of the realm that no individual holding superior rank, whether civil or military, can be in the wrong in case of dispute with an inferior; and the spirit of this law is not without its influence in medical concerns. The superiority here alluded to is the honorary rank conferred by the crown, and not the medical one granted by the universities. Two physicians, of equal standing in medical honours, may be widely separated in civil or military rank; and he who bears no insignia of the order of St. Anne or St. Vladimir must give way in consultation to him whose breast is adorned with stars or crosses.

The physician, when called to the service of the imperial person, the *Leibmedicus*, or body physician, takes precedence of all his brethren, and his opinion must prevail in all cases where there is any official duty concerned. In the former part of this sketch it was mentioned that one of the Czars, suspecting that the illness of an illustrious individual was rather to be construed into a disinclination to appear at court, sent his body physician to ascertain the fact. Very similar proceedings take place in the present day. Patients, attended by ordinary physicians, are occasionally visited by body physicians, in order that they may enjoy every possible medical advantage, and this frequently without their request.

The hospital mates and surgeon's mates are completely under military control; although attached to civil institutions. They are subjected to punishments of

various kinds, for any impropriety of conduct.

The apothecaries, as before observed, are not to be considered as the same class of men who are so denominated in England. They are mere venders of drugs and preparers of recipes, and their shops are all licensed by government.

The first court *Apteka* was founded by an Englishman of the name of Frenshman, who arrived in Russia in 1581. He is reported to have brought with him an immense quantity of drugs; but it was some time before the natives understood the necessity of having recourse to medicine. The high price at which drugs continue to be sold in Russia would almost be proof sufficient that the *aptekas* were established by one of our countrymen; for, if apothecary's gain be synonymous with exorbitant charge in England, it is equally so in Russia. There is no country in which medicines are so highly charged; indeed, the price is almost double what it is in England. The apothecary's charge in Great Britain is not supposed to be in relation to the cost of the material; the value of his prescription is embodied in his draught, and is the means of his remuneration for his time and talents. The matter is very different in Russia, where the apothecary is the compounder only, and should be satisfied with a fair profit upon the material, as the prescription has already been paid for; whereas, the prices he pleases to put upon it allows of no consideration on his part. It is true that there is a tariff for the price of medicines, to which he is compelled to adhere; but this is excessively high, and not regulated by the current prices of the drugs imported into the empire. The proprietors of these *aptekas* are almost all Germans.

The regulations which were promulgated by the court physician, Dr. Blumentrost, in the time of Peter the Great, have, with very slight alterations, been handed down to the present time, and many of these are very excellent in their kind. To prevent mistakes arising from an imperfect knowledge of the Latin language, it was ordered that all prescriptions should be translated into Russian, and deposited in the chancery. The name of the physician and of the patient, together with the date of the day and month, were also registered in a book. The necessity of translating the prescription is now abandoned, but all the recipes are deposited in a drawer, and are not allowed to be given back; notwithstanding that each

is copied into a day-book, which is subjected to the inspection of proper authorities, who pay regular visits to the *aptekas* for the purpose of examining into the nature of the recipes. Not only are the original prescriptions not allowed to be returned, but a repetition of the same medicine cannot be procured without the physician's signature. A copy only is permitted to be issued from the *apteka*. From the same conservative principles, wholesale dealers in drugs are not allowed to sell them in small quantities. No medicine is allowed to be dispensed without being sealed with the private seal of the owner of the *apteka*, or with the seal of his establishment; for each shop is licensed under some specific name, generally taken from the name of the street in which it is situated; and the number of these is limited. This limitation in the number dates also from a remote period, and proceeded from good intentions; for it was asserted that the number of *aptekas* should be in a ratio with the demand for the medicines, and that, on the one hand, there should be a sufficient competition to prevent the public from being overcharged, and, on the other, not so great a supply as to allow the drugs to remain too long on hand, and be spoiled by age.

It is difficult to legislate in such matters; but the practitioner in Petersburg will find the advantage of sending his prescriptions to the *aptekas* which are in vogue, for the same recipe prepared in a frequented shop, or in one not much frequented, may show two very different things.

If poisons are prescribed in any dangerous quantity, the physician is compelled to sign his name in the *poison-book*, and state for what purpose he has prescribed the poison.

When these establishments were first instituted, they were all under the direction of an officer of state, who was styled the *Apteka Bojar*. They are now under the superintendence of a Chancery (*Physicant*), which is a court of appeal and punishment. If a physician can prove that any mistake has been committed in the preparation of his recipe, or that the drugs are of good quality, it is the apothecary who suffers. If he can prove that the physician has made a mistake in the writing of the prescription, the apothecary is at least absolved, unless he magnanimously consent to take the blame upon himself. If the shop-boys are in fault, they are subjected to corporal castigation.

The last class is the *Tsurinik*, or b-

ber-surgeon, and is a numerous and thriving brotherhood. It falls to their lot to bleed, cup, draw teeth, apply leeches, and perform other little jobs of minor consequence. They are well paid for their trouble: five roubles, or 3s. 6d., is the common fee for their operation, and they are in great request.

There are no distinct aurists; aural surgery forming part of the practice of the ordinary surgeons. There are likewise but few oculists who devote their whole time to the diseases of the eye. Many physicians and surgeons include the treatment of these diseases in their general practice.

Dentists abound in every street, and their profession is perfectly distinct, and not within the pale of the medical faculty. There are no distinct chiropodists in Russia.

II. *Remuneration of the Medical Profession*

This subject allows of several divisions, viz., the pay of medical officers serving under government, either in the army or navy, in civil institutions, and in the universities, and the remuneration of private practitioners.

In regard to the remuneration of the private practitioners, it may be summed up in a few words,—it is almost optional with the patient. He pays in a ratio with his means, with his liberality, or with the estimation in which his attending physician is held by the court or by the public. In this respect custom has not fixed any regular fee; but the law obliges a medical man to attend any patient who demands his services, for which the practitioner can claim a fee of five rubies (3s. 6d.) per visit. This is an extreme law, which however has, within my knowledge, lately been enforced. In most instances, private attendance is paid for at the termination of the case. The payment is often in the shape of presents, as snuff-boxes, diamond rings, and plate of various kinds. It is by many considered not quite delicate to offer a physician money, though few would consider themselves aggrieved by this species of remuneration.

The more common mode of procedure is the following:—A nobleman's family is committed to the care of a physician, who receives annually about 50*l.* for his attendance upon the superior members; while the servants, and the whole of the domestic department, are committed to a practitioner of less eminence, who is

styled *house doctor*, and receives about a fourth of this sum. It is incumbent upon them both to be at the daily call of the persons committed to their care, and, as the fee is the same for attendance under all circumstances, they are generally well employed in their respective vocations. In cases of severe illness, (if any of the nobles are in such predicament,) the opinion of those whose constant attendance should warrant the conclusion that they are conversant with the constitutions of their patients is little attended to. Consultation is crowded upon consultation, and the family physician is merely a spectator in the scene. To these consultations, however, he will not much object, for the responsibility will be thereby divided. The consulting physician is paid at the rate of a guinea or upwards per visit, by those at least who are in affluent circumstances. But there is all possible gradations as regards the scale of remuneration; generally speaking, however, the revenues of the first physicians in Russia are much lower than those of the same class in England.

Of all classes of the profession accoucheurs are the most liberally remunerated, and they enjoy an advantage over all their colleagues, viz., that, by a species of habit, almost equal to law, they receive their fee when the patient leaves her chamber. Fifty pounds is the usual remuneration with the higher classes for an attendance which is in most cases nominal; for the accoucheur is in an adjoining room, and is never required to attend except in cases of danger or difficulty. All the attendance is intrusted to midwives, when none is in reality required. This fee also admits of great fluctuation, but an accoucheur of standing and reputation will not receive less than 10*l.* under most circumstances.

When midwives are employed it is usual for them to receive from 2*l.* to 5*l.* for their attendance, even from the merchantile classes, and much more from the nobility. The system adopted is frequently unfair to the regular medical attendant. He is often requested to be within call, but unless there is danger, and the midwife demands his assistance, he receives no remuneration for the loss of his time or sleep. If he be called to the bedside then he is entitled to the full fee; but this places him in the situation of being responsible for all the bad cases, and deprives him of the counterbalancing advantages of all the ordinary ones. Among the middle classes of society these

attendances are stipulated for in the annual salary, which seldom exceeds 14*l.* sterling.

As regards surgical operations, I have no information which I can venture to give as authentic upon this subject. All those of a minor order are not paid for separately from the annual stipend. I am inclined to believe that such operations as lithotomy, amputation, &c., when successfully performed, would be requited with a liberal hand by the higher classes.

The pay of medical men in government employ, whether civil or military, is upon too low a scale to ensure to the individuals even the necessities of life. In the hospital establishments the head physician receives only Ro. 1500, or about 65*l.* sterling per annum, with lodgings upon the premises, and the usual perquisites of fuel and candles. Such remuneration can ill requite the time which he is obliged to devote to his duties; and were it not that, in general, a hospital physician has private practice, is attached to the court, and probably is a professor in the university, such pay would not entitle him to any respect or consideration. The visiting physicians, who act under his directions, have not the advantages which he enjoys of gratuitous lodgings, nor of the other perquisites; and they receive Ro. 800, or about half the sum of the superior. The service which they perform for this salary is a great demand upon their time.

The hospital mates (Fetters) receive nothing worthy of note; they are lodged and boarded in the hospitals.

With respect to the manner in which professional services in the universities are remunerated, some new regulations have just been issued. The salaries of all the professors are derived entirely from the crown; the students contributing nothing to the maintenance of the teachers. Their education is wholly at the expense of government.

The professors enjoy the privilege of importing, free of custom-house dues, all foreign pamphlets and journals which are published abroad upon those subjects which they teach in the universities, and all such books are not under the control of the censorship.

It is difficult to ascertain precisely what is the value of situations about court in the present day. There are many perquisites attached to such situations, and their value can never be ascertained. The physicians in immediate attendance upon the imperial family are supposed to

receive from ten to twelve thousand roubles per annum (500*l.*)

The pay of the medical military staff is the same with that of the hospital civil staff, and varies, according to rank, from 600 to 1,500 roubles per annum. This pay is quadrupled in active service, when out of the country.

There is a distinct class of court physicians. They perform active services alternately, and are obliged to remain the whole twenty-four hours in the palace. Each of these is called upon to serve about every fifth day. They receive 1,200 roubles (50 guineas) per annum as salary. They have no other duty than that which accident and emergency procure them, and are upon the spot to attend until other physicians arrive.—*British and Foreign Medical Review*.