

In Tribute

(From *Dalhousie Gazette* of March 6, 1936)

LAST month the terse words, "Professor Ivan Petrovitch Pavlov is dead," was flashed to the press of the world. To me that came as some personal loss, for through his books and scientific articles there grew up in me a profound admiration for the man and scientist—Pavlov.

Born of a modest clerical family, whose finest attribute was the desire to educate their children, Ivan Pavlov came into this world with no gifts save a liberal and free-spirited mind. In short measure he became one of the world's greatest scientists, indeed, the greatest of our day. That he was respected, both by the Czarist and revolutionary regimes of Russia, is a tribute sufficient to mark him as a truly great man.

To the student he has always typified the modern enlightened scientist—the true research man—"the man who follows where the evidence leads."

True enough, the research man himself is for the moment impractical, but soon his discoveries dawn upon the world and make that world a better one in which to live. Most spectacular of all discoveries in the medical world of the last century has been the dawn of a greater and more important physiology, the outgrowth of the mind of Professor Ivan Petrovitch Pavlov of the Military Medical Academy, Leningrad. He has revolutionized scientific medicine and has given an impetus for others to follow. His work can only be compared with that of Charles Darwin, whose "Origin of the Species" has also left an everlasting imprint upon the thought of the world.

No greater tribute can be bestowed upon any man than that paid Dr. Pavlov by H. G. Wells, who, after visiting the venerable scientist in 1922, wrote: "Pavlov is a star which lights the world, shining down a vista hitherto unexplored." It is comparable to the tribute paid Milton by Wordsworth when the latter wrote, "Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart."

Truly enough, Pavlov did dwell apart. In him there awakened the desire to explore, the desire to experiment on those things which interested him. It was the ancient Greek Spirit again, reawakened by the Renaissance, which prompted Pavlov to his work. His was the belief that the mysteries of the world could be uncovered if only man's abilities could be cultivated. He set out to do his best toward unravelling these mysteries of nature.

His life was guided throughout by the fervent desire to obtain knowledge, and the energy and singleness of purpose with which he always championed scientific truth is remarkable. With an unwavering conviction that truth and science are the only worthwhile goals in life, says his biographer, "Pavlov had always promptly rejected all compromise, all considerations which seemed to be dishonorable, and he had zealously thrown his whole being on the side of truth and right."

But Pavlov was not only a successful laboratory investigator: he was a great scientist, and a prophet, whose voice sounded above the din and confusion of the world with a challenge to find and face facts, to subject our pride and prejudice in conformity to them and to follow where they lead up.

His epitaph might be written in his own words, uttered with such awe-inspiring force that it compelled silence during protests made to unwelcome statements in one of his lectures: "I am speaking only the scientific truth, and whether you will or not, you must hear it."

Such were the dynamic characteristics of the man Pavlov; it is no wonder that he stands as the master in scientific conquests. He has embodied, in his comparatively small span of time on this earth, a new, vast understanding of man and his machinery.

Small wonder, then, that he stands as a model for lesser lights. In life he had seen success attained only in the most difficult manner. To the end he went on, apparently not ceasing in his interest for the unknown, and inspiring young bloods to the venture. In death he has gained immortality, and a world thankful for the benefits his genius had bestowed upon it.

I. R. G.

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