

OBITUARY

W. I. KEDROWSKY*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my sorrowful duty to have to announce the decease of an illustrious member of the International Leprosy Association. Dr. Wassily Ivanovitch Kedrowsky, born on December 16, 1865, former Professor of Bacteriology and Pathology at the First University of Moscow and for some years Director of the Leprosy Department at the Institute for Tropical Diseases in that city, died of an attack of angina pectoris on December 4th, 1937, a fortnight before his seventy-second birthday.

In spite of his white hairs he was still young-looking, and his highly intelligent brain was always fully active. Having been released from his duties as lecturer, he devoted almost all his time to research work on leprosy. His son, Dr. Boris Kedrowsky, has told me that his father spent the whole of his last day in life inoculating test animals with cultures of rat leprosy which he had just received from Dr. Marchoux, of the Pasteur Institute in Paris.

The few minutes at my disposal do not allow me to give a full account of the life work of this unique man. I hope later on, to be able to give a more detailed biography in one of our periodicals. To-day I will only give you a few glimpses, perhaps of interest, of our last meeting in Moscow in October of last year.

In his laboratory he showed me several nonacid-fast cultures which he had recently isolated from leprosy nodules, and in his boyish manner he smilingly said: "All of these are *real* leprosy strains, but neither you nor I am able to convince the dogmatists of this fact." He also let me see preparations showing a pronounced necrosis in the kidneys of sheep which he had injected with cultures of his strains in order to prepare an antileprosy serum. For some time he had been very much interested in such a serum, and had also obtained obvious improvements in cases of nodular leprosy. The necroses I have just mentioned were to him positive proof that the microorganism of leprosy, like its twin the germ of tuberculosis, is able to produce toxins, even if they are much weaker than the tuberculosis toxins. "And if," he said, "it can produce toxins, why should it not be possible to produce antitoxins, and probably also other antibodies, by injecting animals especially with the nonacid-fast life-forms of the microorganism." Although,

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as is well known, he never jumped to conclusions, he was nevertheless forced to admit that the favorable results of his serum could not be explained merely by assuming a nonspecific action, especially since different kinds of nonspecific therapy have been used for decades without such results being obtained as serum treatment has shown.

We two, who have both carried on our research work along the same lines—lines which to outward appearances are somewhat fantastic—had for more than a year planned to write a small textbook on the real bacteriology of leprosy, especially the nonacid-fast life-forms of the microorganism, which, as well as the acid-fast ones (the bacillus of Hansen), are only broken-down stages of a lower fungus. Kedrowsky was also anxious to obtain the cooperation of Dr. Linwood Walker, of whom he had a very high opinion, but on consideration he found that San Francisco was too far distant to make such a plan possible. How the matter is to be arranged now I do not know.

Kedrowsky's life work has not been fully appreciated because so few investigators have followed his example and, without preconceived opinions, have devoted long years to the highly interesting chapter of the true bacteriology of leprosy. The name of Kedrowsky, together with that of Hansen, will always remain the most important in the history of the bacteriology of leprosy. It will serve as a beacon for coming generations and will inspire them to continue in the furrow which he has ploughed. If they do so they will thereby give him that reward of which his forty years of research work has made him so well deserving.

Finally, I wish that Wassily Ivanovitch Kedrowsky, that modest man with a very noble character, may now have perfect rest.

—JOHN REENSTIERNA