### WILLS EYE HOSPITAL, PHILADELPHIA

The IX Annual Clinical Conference of the Staff and Society of Ex-Residents of Wills Eye Hospital will be held at the hospital on February 8 and 9, 1957. The Conference this year will be of especial interest since it will be an important feature in commemorating the 125th anniversary of the founding of the hospital.

The Bedell Lecture will be delivered by Dr. John M. McLean of New York City on the subject of "Management of the Primary Glaucomas".

The programme will also include scientific papers by members of the staff and ex-residents of the hospital, technical exhibits, and a colour television programme sponsored by Smith, Kline, and French Laboratories.

On completion of the two-day programme, the Wills Eye Hospital Society will hold its annual meeting and dinner at the Union League, Philadelphia.

Before the Conference on February 7, there also will be a meeting, preceded by dinner, of the Ophthalmological Section of the College of Physicians in Philadelphia. Dr. James H. Allen of New Orleans will be the guest speaker. All ophthalmologists are invited.

# OBITUARY

## VLADIMIR PETROVICH FILATOV

(1875–1956)

The ophthalmological world will regret that Vladimir Petrovich Filatov died in Odessa on October 31, 1956, at the age of 81. He was born in Saransk in the Ukraine on February 15, 1875, and graduated in medicine in Moscow in 1897 where he held his first hospital appointments. In 1908 he went to Odessa where he eventually became the Director of the Ophthalmological Institute; here he worked until the time of his death, the latter part of his life being spent as Director of the Ukrainian Experimental Institute for Eye Diseases and Tissue Therapy.

In addition to his ophthalmological work, which embraced many aspects of our specialty, he took a considerable interest in general medicine and was also a deputy of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet. He was undoubtedly one of the great ophthalmologists of our generation, and many of us in Great Britain have regretted the fact that closer contact with him and a more personal appreciation of his ideas have been impossible.

In ophthalmology his greatest contribution was in the biology of corneal grafts and the perfecting of the surgical techniques of keratoplasty. It will be remembered that von Hippel of Göttingen was the pioneer who, towards the end of the last century, made this operation a clinical possibility. Filatov shares with Elschnig of Prague the distinction of evolving the technique to make the operation a practical surgical procedure. As early as 1913 he was experimenting on the feasibility of total corneal grafting, transplanting the entire cornea with a margin of sclera and conjunctiva. This drastic procedure, of course, gives no clinical results of value, but the attempt illustrates his courage as a surgical enthusiast.

There are two big advances with which his name is associated in connexion with corneal grafts. The first of these concerns the use of cadaver eyes. Some time previously Magitot of Paris had shown that a graft could be preserved for a period varying from one to two weeks at a low temperature in haemolysed blood. With this as basis Filatov went further and popularized the use of grafts removed from cadaver eyes which, as early as 1934, he was using 41 hours after death. This, of course, opened up a vast source of graft material and is universally practised to-day with great benefit.

The second great advance he made was in the employment of lamellar grafts not for visual purposes but with a view to obtaining a suitable bed for a final graft. In the previous century von Hippel had practised lamellar keratoplasty and Elschnig in the

early 1920s had demonstrated that a corneal graft would take only if there were a sufficiency of clear cornea in the eye of the recipient; a graft inserted into a bed of corneal scar tissue invariably turned opaque. In such a cornea Filatov inserted a clear lamellar graft and at a later stage inserted a penetrating graft for visual purposes.

In work such as this he noticed that the implantation of a graft tended to clear corneal opacities which might already be present. Upon this observation he built up a theory of the stimulation of tissues by the release of "biogenic substances", a theory which became a considerable cult in Russian medicine. With this as the theoretical basis, he launched a new method of therapy based on the injection, topically or systemically, of a vast number of animal and vegetable substances, the products of which were assumed to stimulate the tissues of the host, and for a time this method of "tissue therapy" was widely employed in the treatment of a host of degenerative ocular diseases which responded to no other therapy—myopic chorio-retinal atrophy, primary pigmentary degeneration of the retina, optic atrophy, and so on. The most common material ultimately employed was derived from the placenta which was used either as the injection of placental extract or the subconjunctival implantation of placental tissue. Most ophthalmologists are agreed that whatever the theoretical justification for this method of therapy, in practice it brought little or no benefit, and it has generally fallen completely out of use. However this may be, Filatov will always be remembered for his achievements in technical surgery and the originality of his concepts.

## R. C. J. MEYER

Reinhard Carl Johannes Meyer, who died on November 7, 1956, in Johannesburg, was born in 1883 in Kimberley, Cape Province, South Africa. He was the son of a missionary, and was educated in Kimberley and in Cape Town, where he graduated B.A. in 1902. He was awarded the Jamieson Scholarship and took a medical training at Edinburgh University where he graduated M.B., Ch.B. in 1908.

He returned to South Africa to become house physician and house surgeon at the Johannesburg General Hospital from 1910 to 1912. In 1953 he returned to Europe for further studies, taking his M.D. and F.R.C.S. at Edinburgh, and his D.O. at Oxford.

After demobilization from World War I he became a house surgeon at Moorfields Eye Hospital (R.L.O.H.), and he returned to South Africa in the latter part of 1919 to begin practice as an ophthalmic surgeon in Johannesburg. He was appointed ophthalmic surgeon to the Transvaal Memorial Hospital for Children in 1923 and to the staff of the Johannesburg General Hospital in 1924, where he served for a first term of 15 years. He was recalled to the Johannesburg General Hospital for the years 1939–1945 during the absence of other senior ophthalmic surgeons on war service.

In 1930, together with the late Dr. Wood of Cape Town and Dr. Verwey of Pietermaritsburg, he was instrumental in forming the Ophthalmological Society of South Africa, of which he became President in the years 1938 and 1939.

He was one of the pioneers in South Africa of diathermy treatment for detachment in the early 1930s, of intra-capsular extractions of cataracts about the same time, and of corneal grafting in 1937.

He took a keen interest in the work of the Society to help the civilian blind in Johannesburg, and was associated from the inception with the St. John Ophthalmic Foundation which established an Eye Hospital on the outskirts of Johannesburg to begin work in 1951.

He was married in Bournemouth in 1916 to Phyllis Bagshaw who survives him, as do also his only daughter, and three sons who are members of the medical profession.