

determined that their care should be her sphere of work. To many of her friends, this desire seemed visionary in the extreme, and quite impossible of fulfilment. They pointed out that she was a woman, with health which was only too precarious; that she knew nothing of the Russian language; that she did not know a soul in that vast empire; that if one thing was more resented than another in the most autocratically governed land upon this globe, it was foreign inquisitiveness; that for Russian officials to see "a chiel amangst them takin' notes" had the same effect as a red rag proverbially produces upon a bull; and that—if by any miraculous concatenation of circumstances she could overcome these human difficulties—when she arrived in Siberia, she would find pathless forests and vast swamps, through which the natives could hardly travel, and which no European traveller could possibly penetrate. There was an immensity of common sense in all these objections, but somehow they failed to turn Miss MARSDEN from her purpose. She thought and talked and worked at the subject until at last the notice of the Princess of WALES was drawn to the matter, and finally Her Royal Highness, with many kindly words of encouragement, personally brought Miss MARSDEN'S wishes to the knowledge of her sister, the Empress of RUSSIA. At once, the initial difficulties were surmounted, and the very autocracy which would otherwise have proved so insuperable a bar to progress, ensured Miss MARSDEN a safe conduct and all assistance in every part of the Russian dominions. Armed with a letter from the Empress, and with her steadfast support, Miss MARSDEN'S preliminary difficulties were over, and, in due course, she made her way safely to Yakutsk. Then came the dangers from which no Government support, however all powerful, could shield her. She found that whenever, in these thinly populated tracts, a person showed signs of leprosy, he was driven out from the community, into the forests. In one province—about the size of France, with 70,000 inhabitants scattered over it—there was only one doctor, so that it was manifest that no one could get much

medical help, and the lepers, as a matter of fact, received none. She found that considerable uncertainty existed as to how many lepers there were in the country, or where they were, or, indeed, any facts relating to them. She was told that the forests were roadless, and that they abounded with wild beasts; that, where there were not forests, the path lay through swamps, not only dangerous in themselves but where fever was the lot of all who ventured near them. She was told that the only possible way of travelling was on forest ponies; that the only saddles were made of wood and iron, and must be ridden astride. To the astonishment of everyone, she expressed herself undaunted, and said she would never rest until she knew where all the lepers in the Viluisk circuit were—how they were housed, fed and treated, and what could be done to make their lives less hard and miserable. Her courage and her mission excited the enthusiasm of the people; twenty-nine Yakutsk men volunteered to form her escort; provisions for three months were collected, and at Midsummer, of last year, the expedition started. It must have been indeed a stirring sight. The Bishop of the Province came down in full canonicals to bless their mission, and the people of the town crowded around them bidding them God speed, but convinced that they would never see the Englishwoman's face again, even if some of their hardy brethren struggled back alive. So they went out into the pathless forest—the air alive with myriads of flies and mosquitoes, which bit through the seams of the thickest gauntlets, and made the hands and arms one mass of sores; wild beasts on every side; the only path, a tangled track where the horses could only walk in single file—now, stumbling over fallen branches, now, falling forward into hidden pools—such veritable rough riding that, what with the hard wood saddle, and the necessity of clinging to it for dear life, the riders' knees and heels speedily became quite raw; travelling by night to avoid the tropical heat of the day, oftentimes unable to sleep during the resting time for the same reason; living from moment to moment in peril of death—either from falling

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