

way in which the district visitor may advise and assist her poorer neighbours, are clearly and concisely dealt with. We are told that "the poor person who lives in a large town, and more particularly if he or she lives in the East End of London, is in frequent need of legal advice and help," and again, "A mechanic runs a far larger risk of accident at his work than any other person does; yet, as it happens, no part of English law is more full of pitfalls than that relating to accidents incurred by workmen at their work." It is evident, therefore, that this tract is written to meet a felt want, and we wish it a well merited success. It may be obtained from the secretary of the National Union of Women Workers, 59, Berners Street, London, W. The price is one penny.

The publication of cheap literature, written by experts and dealing in a practical way with the difficulties of the poor, is a means of helpfulness and education which cannot be too highly commended.

Our Russian Letter.

(BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

ANY one with the most vague idea of Russian institutions knows that in this country each person must hold a passport, but perhaps it will be news to many that these passports have any, even the most remote connection with hospitals; such, however, is the case, most of the hospitals being built and kept up by Government, and paid for out of the taxes.

The subject of passports is a large and complicated one, covering the whole field of taxation, of police supervision, and of local government, but I shall only touch upon one side of the question to-day.

Each person in Russia, as I have said, is obliged to have a passport, and is obliged, under penalty of a heavy fine, to keep it in order—that is to say, to take it to the police-station once a year, and pay a small sum as poll tax. This passport, among other things, states where the holder thereof was born, and to what city or village he (or she) belongs, and these, be it understood are not synonymous terms. A man belongs to the town or village from which his father, or rather his progenitors, originally came; and the poll tax is paid, not into the coffers of the town where he works, but to the *mir* or local government of the village from which his family has migrated. The *mir*, however distant from the place of the man's abode, is bound in return to provide for him in his old age should he become a pauper, and is bound also to provide for his treatment in hospital if he can prove that such treatment is necessary, and that he is unable to pay for it himself. Every soul, therefore, who is written in, as it is called, at St. Petersburg, and has paid his yearly tax, has the right to enter any one of the Government hospitals in that city free of charge. If, however, the soul is written in at Moscow, he must either go to Moscow to be doctored, or he must pay for his bed in a St. Petersburg hospital.

Perhaps the best manner of explaining the procedure in the case of a village pauper will be by a personal reminiscence.

In a garret of the house in which I live, there lived a widow with two children, who was reduced to a condition of want and poverty by her own fault, as was very apparent to all who tried to help her, and

was of course well-known to the police, and through them to the *mir* of her distant village. Her little girl was taken ill with peritonitis and a threatening of pneumonia, and the mother would do literally nothing but cry that her child was dying, so I thought it my duty to interfere. We washed the girl a little to make her presentable and sent her to the hospital, but she was refused admittance except upon the payment of a heavy charge. Knowing that all Russians pay for hospital treatment on their passports, I sent to the doctor in charge of the hospital, whom I know professionally, to ask what I was to do, and the answer was "send the child in, we will demand repayment of the *mir*, they are bound to pay us; if they can get the money out of the mother they will; if she is really unable to pay, they will do so themselves."

We followed his advice, and after a few days the child was sent back home so much better that good food and plenty of fresh air soon set her up again as well as ever. This plan strikes me as a valuable way of helping children whose parents are unfit to trust with money, and who, though perfectly able to work, prefer to beg.

I mentioned the other day to the children's nurse (an educated woman) that we had no passport system in England.

"What do you do, then, when you want to find anyone?" she asked.

"Oh, we advertise, or we apply to the police, or at the post office, and sometimes we find the person, and sometimes we do not."

Whereat she opened her eyes in astonishment and said: "And I have always understood that England is the most civilised country in the world."

ACORN COFFEE.

I do not think acorn coffee is well known or appreciated in England, but district nurses, at any rate, would do well to give it a trial; it is not very palatable it is true, but one soon gets accustomed to the taste; it would, too, I daresay, be regarded with contempt in rural districts as pig's food, but surely it is foolish to condemn a useful food stuff growing around our very doors for that reason.

I have often known it ordered by German or Russian doctors for patients recovering from one of the many bowel complaints, and I know families where the children always drink it of a morning. It is far more nourishing than tea, far preferable in many ways to the cheap brands so much in use among the poorer classes, and it is not so heating, and is much cheaper than coffee.

Acorn coffee can be obtained at all chemists in Russia, but it is quite easy to prepare it at home. When a sufficient quantity of acorns have been gathered and the husks removed, they are roasted and ground just like any other coffee, and are then ready for use. When ordered by the doctor, acorn coffee is boiled and taken in the proportion of half coffee half boiling milk—sugar to taste; but when only drunk as an economy, or as a home medicine, it is more usual to mix it first with a little real coffee, and boil up the two together. And here I may add that to buy any coffee ready ground at the grocer's may be a saving of trouble, but that it encourages adulteration, and that to obtain the best flavour coffee should be ground five minutes before it is boiled, or rather infused.

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