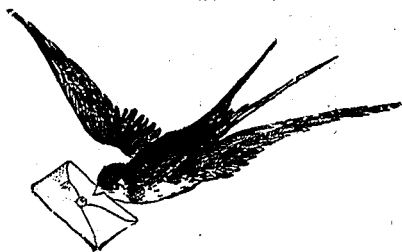


Our Holiday Letter

FROM RUSSIA.



day once a year, so that the fortnight or so away at the sea is out of the question; secondly, if we did get a week or two free every summer, we should be very much puzzled where to go, as it takes so long to get to any nice place, that half the time is lost in travelling.

So we follow the Russian custom and hire a *dácha* (or villa) for the summer; most of us choose a place near enough to town, for the bread winner of the household to go up every morning to his work; those of us who can afford it go further away into Finland, where the air is purer and less damp. We went to a little village near the Finnish frontier called Uki, a very pretty place, and the only one in the neighbourhood of S. Petersburg, where there is any hilly ground. The *dáchas* there vary from the hovel of a room or two to a commodious country residence, with large garden and many verandahs. These are necessary, for the summer, though short, is hot and pleasant, and many people not only spend all day in the open air, but even take their meals outside.

All the schools here, in S. Petersburg, give long summer holidays—the usual length being from the middle of May to the 1st September, and in spite of holiday tasks, the children have a very good time. Everybody moves out of town; the nobles go down to their estates, the middle-classes take a *dácha*, the poor even take a room or two, the laundress, the cobbler, the shop clerk, the very concierge from your town house send their wives and children out of town; in consequence, some of them live in very peculiar buildings. There was one family of four who had a little hovel built for them on the common at the back of our house, I felt very curious as to how they lived, for the place was so tiny that it could have been placed bodily in a good-sized room; there was but one tiny window and no chimney; the family spent all their time out of doors, it is true, and very dreary it looked, sometimes, to see them drinking their tea in the rain. Upon one occasion I passed when the door was standing open, and to my amazement I saw that the building was divided into three rooms; but, in spite of everything, the two children got fat and rosy in the country.

Uki is about three miles from a railway station, and the only conveyances obtainable are carts, and the roads are so unspeakably bad in rainy weather that bicycles are out of the question; what with cobbles, hills, mud and clay, nothing but a cart or a tarantas could live upon them. These carts go over it all at a fast trot, and the poor passengers are thrown about from side to side, and bounced up into the air unmercifully, arriving at the station splashed from head to foot, with hats all crooked and parcels all untidy (as there is only one little common shop the parcels accumulate when one goes into town). The butcher and the baker come to us it is true; a fishmonger comes round with a tub

or fish on his head two or three times a week; sometimes a fruit man will wander past, or a man with a cart full of haberdashery stores, but they never come when they are most needed.

The sanitary arrangements at Uki (and at most villages) are primitive in the extreme, even in the nice houses there is generally only a seat over a hole—no water, no trap, no ventilation even, and the kitchen refuse is collected in a large wooden pail, just outside the door, and emptied out twice a day. The peasants live a very hard life, many of their huts are far from water tight, and what some of them must suffer in the winter time must be dreadful, yet the children look well and jolly, and I am told things are much worse in the villages further from town. A woman gets about 9d. a day for field work, and peasants consider themselves fortunate if they get a regular engagement to wash for a family in town through the winter. They will tramp 15 or 20 miles overnight; sleep anywhere, and begin washing at four next morning, the day is not over till about nine in the evening, and for this they get about 1s. 2d., with a tip at Christmas and Easter.

One little anecdote will throw some light upon their manner of life. There is always a bath house in every village which is heated on Saturday and on the eve of a holiday, or oftener, if there are many inhabitants. One of my servants went there one day to wash, and met a woman and three children just coming out with evident signs upon them of a very recent bath; while my servant was washing, a second peasant woman came in with a bundle, which turned out to be a newborn baby, which received its first cleaning there and then, without any extra preparation; next, just as my servant was leaving the place, the woman she had first seen returned for a second bath, having, in the meanwhile, been delivered of the baby who had occupied the second woman's attention.

N.B.—The bath-house at Uki has neither window nor chimney, and for some time I thought it was a very small barn, and could not think why it was rather lower than the level of the common. M. E. F.

Nurses Needed in Austria.

A correspondent of the *Morning Post* says:—

"Some time ago I drew attention to the overflowing of the market in the Dual Monarchy with a certain class of English governesses and the dangers to which they are exposed. The girl really wanted in Austria is the governess who, in addition to English, knows French and music. It is not essential to know German, though I believe that attention is now being paid to that tongue in the various Institutions in Great Britain. It is, however, of the demand which has set in for trained British nurses for Austria that I wish more particularly to speak. Those trained nurses in Great Britain who have temporarily fallen out of the ranks through illness or other causes might do well to turn their attention to this new field. Hospital and private nursing in Austria is of the poorest. The Vienna General Hospital, perhaps the largest in the World, is abolishing the old staff of Mrs. Gamps, and introducing nuns as nurses. Doctors are already recommending trained English nurses for rich private patients, and there is no reason why in time they should not be seen in the Hospitals here, some of which are models of perfection scientifically. I would advise intending candidates, however, to make themselves proficient in the German language."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)