

A correspondent writes:—It is a long time since I wrote you any news from Russia, and I must begin by saying that there have been very good articles in several of the periodicals this autumn and winter describing some of the efforts being made here for the improvement of the people, for combatting drunkenness, and for housing the aged poor, which show that even the despised Russian is in many respects quite up to date. In one particular, at least, we must own that she is ahead of us. In the village "Mir" or commune, a woman, if she is a householder, is in every respect equal to a man—she has an equal vote, an equal share of commune land, an equal voice in the deliberations of the Mir, although never elected to be an "elder." As students, too, men and women are equal.

But I had a story to tell you, as I know you like to hear of brave things done by anyone, not only by nurses.

The Imperial Government, you must know, appoints doctors for all districts of Russia, paying them from the proceeds of a tax, so that the poor people have a right to their attendance free of charge. These doctors often have huge districts under their care, where there are no railways, and the roads in spring and autumn are as bad as only Russian country roads can be. To help them, "Felshers" are appointed; Felshers are men who have passed some of the lower doctor's examinations, and they are a class of themselves. A Felsher does not mean a man who has failed in his examinations. These Felshers do much of the work which in England would be divided between doctors, nurses, and medical students, and are to be met with at all hospitals, in every large village where there is no resident doctor, and at all mills and factories where the law compels the mill-owners to pay a man to give medical attendance to the "hands" free of charge.

It is of one of these "district doctors" that my anecdote relates. He was summoned to the cottage—or rather hovel—of a peasant, and found a little boy lying on a heap of straw suffering from malignant small-pox. The child had been ill for a fortnight, with no one to care for him or wash him; with no change of linen; with no open window, you may be sure, as it was winter; with no nourishment, I was told, but water. One would imagine that he must have been dying, only that Russian peasants are wonderfully strong; all that are *not* die in infancy.

The doctor rolled the boy up in his own rug and put him beside him in his sledge (it was probably a country sledge without any seat, made to hold one, or at a pinch two passengers lying full length on the straw), and took him to the hospital, ten miles or so off. There the doctor himself cut off all of his hair and shirt that could be removed by those means, and bathed—or rather one would say soaked—him until the rest had come away, and sat up with him all night; the boy recovered, and the doctor, too, I believe, got no harm.

This, of course, is only one of many such actions. It is only by the merest chance that I or anyone else heard of it, and the doctor's only earthly reward will ever be the love of his patients and the respect of the few, the very few, persons of a higher rank of society who live within his district.

The Hospital World.

PROGRESSIVE MANAGEMENT.

As we have reported, the Governors of King's College Hospital have under consideration a scheme for the removal of the hospital to a more salubrious site. It is whispered that whilst remaining within about four miles of Lincoln's Inn Fields, thus continuing one of the metropolitan medical schools, "King's" means to spread its wings—an up-to-date hospital, containing 600 beds, is, we hear, in contemplation.

The present hospital has been in existence over sixty years, and is a freehold property, so that the Governors would realise a goodly sum, variously estimated at between £30,000 and £40,000, on sale. But the sum realised for the site is not expected to prove anything like sufficient for the cost of the purchase of another site and reconstruction combined. So that a public appeal, at some future date, when plans are fully matured, is not improbable. We congratulate "King's" on taking time by the forelock—it is the early bird that gets the worm.

Under the will of the late Robert Reeve Storke, of The Elms, St. Margaret's, Twickenham, King's College Hospital seems likely to receive about £60,000. The will provides that £20,000 is to be applied in founding, endowing, or maintaining a ward to be dedicated to the memory of the testator's father.

INCREASED EXPENDITURE IN HOSPITALS.

The special requirements of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, making an appeal for £300,000 necessary at the present time, are by no means singular, for every hospital in the country, the committee of which is desirous of doing full justice to the sick, finds itself in debt and distress. Lincoln, Leicester, Cambridge, and a dozen other invaluable hospitals have been compelled to extend their borders, and to say nothing of the cost of bricks and mortar, the cost of up-to-date medicine and nursing is enormous. This necessary expenditure must be realised by all those who attempt to manage hospitals, and accusations of extravagance withheld, because they cannot be run on former lines. Whether the general public will rise to the demand for greatly increased financial support we doubt. Through taxation many palatial Poor Law infirmaries, excellently well conducted, meet the needs of the very poor, and the primary reason for voluntary hospitals for the care of this class of destitute poor has passed away. One thing is certain—the cost of hospital management will continue to increase. In America and Canada they have solved the difficulty by setting aside a certain number of free beds, and organising blocks for paying patients. Sooner or later we must follow suit.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)