



Our Russian Letter.

(BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

I AM often told we need an English-trained nurse here in St. Petersburg, and that it would be quite worth her while to come, but I am not at all sure that I agree with my informers. There is plenty of work to be done, it is true, and if there are not exactly new illnesses, there are certainly new developments, owing to different climate and different treatment to study. An English nurse to meet the need would have to be very adaptable to her surroundings (a qualification not much brought out by the routine of hospital training). She must be able to accommodate herself to a new climate, new rules for diet, and new customs and ideas on most subjects, besides being able to speak German fluently. I say German advisedly, for almost every doctor speaks German as well as he does Russian, and of course a knowledge of the latter tongue does not exist among English ladies; anyone coming to live here could soon pick up enough Russian to speak to the servants, and for almost everything else German does equally well. French, though useful, is not so absolutely indispensable as German.

All nurses, even probationers, are called "sisters" here, which thus becomes as confusing a term as nurse is with us, for they are not by any means all religious sisters.

Before being received for training at a hospital a woman must pass an easy examination on general subjects, or show that she has attained to the fourth school standard. The training for a religious sister is five years, one year's work in a hospital before she is received as a probationer, and four years' more before she takes the vows, but the work seems to me far lighter than that in a large general hospital in England. I cannot speak with certainty of the lay sisters, as every hospital seems to have rules of its own, and some take nurses from a much lower class than would be received in an English training school.

There is no general register of nurses here, but there is a register kept at the Alexandra Hospital for men, on which any thoroughly-trained nurse can place herself if she pleases, paying a small fee for every case she gets through the hospital, and I believe all the most reliable nurses have their names on this register. The nurse is paid not by the week, but by the day; two shillings for day duty, half-a-crown for night duty, a little over four shillings for taking entire charge of a case.

Besides sick nurses there are two classes of male nurses—the unlearned attendant who has had some experience in hospital work, and who, I imagine, fills much the same place as an asylum attendant in England, and the "felshar."

A felshar is half a doctor, if one may use the expression. He has passed all the lower medical

examinations, and is quite competent to set fractures. A felshar is a recognised medical officer of low standing. He is not a medical student who has failed in his final examinations, although I daresay some men are forced to remain felshars against their will. A surgeon is always attended in his work by a felshar, and if a nurse is needed for night duty in the case of a male patient it is most likely that a felshar will be summoned instead of a female nurse. These felshars obtain licences to practise in the villages where there are no better doctors. The distance between village and village is great, communication is generally very bad, and it is impossible in this thinly-peopled country to have doctors within reach of everyone. The village is therefore doctored by a felshar and a baba, or wise woman. Those who believed in the felshar would go to him in case of sickness, and all would go for small operations, but the greater part of the peasants would go to the baba to be cured by herbs and charms. She would attend the women in their confinements, and lay out the dead, and have far more to do than the felshar.

The Russian peasant is wonderfully hardy, the women being often again at work in the fields the day after their babies have been born, I am told. The weakly infants all die, which is probably the reason of this hardihood: the Greeks were wise in their generation, and did artificially that which nature does for the Russian.

Inventions, Preparations, &c.

JAEGER BLANKETS.

MESSRS. JAEGER, whose reputation for supplying first-rate goods is so well established that Jaeger and excellence are interchangeable terms, are now making a special display of yachting bedding and blankets for the coming season. Private nurses who are likely to accompany patients on yachting expeditions would do well to pay a visit to one of the show-rooms of this firm, and inspect their specialities. The difference between being well and ill-equipped may make a voyage enjoyable or the reverse, and anyone who is fitted out by Messrs. Jaeger should be fortified against all contingencies.

VIYELLA.

NURSES who are in search of high-class washing materials cannot do better than send for patterns of Viyella. It is a soft, and warm material, like flannel in its texture, but is warranted not to shrink, and the colours and designs are excellent. There are three qualities, light, medium, and heavy, and each may be obtained in natural colours, as well as in white and all the newest shades. It will be found most suitable for dresses, blouses, night-dresses and other under garments. We strongly recommend it to nurses, as well as to the general public. It can be obtained from all the leading drapers.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)