



Our Russian Letter.

(BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

WEIGHTS and measures are all different here to those in use in England. An English pound is a pound and a quarter Russian; a Russian yard is only twenty-six inches, while the inch is nearly two of our inches in length, etc., etc. This change makes invalid cooking very puzzling at first; if a recipe be made up entirely of pounds, of course there is no difficulty, but as soon as ounces and drachms are added it becomes very confusing. A nurse could always use her own private scales, of course, but I fancy in the long run it would be less trouble to learn the Russian scale.

But in nothing will the nurse find more changes than in the rules for diet, to take one or two of the most common articles of food, for instance. The milk here is not nearly so rich as in England, and I have never known it ordered diluted with water; the game, which is cheap, is eaten quite fresh, and veal is given to convalescents before mutton and beef; in the winter time almost all the meat and poultry and game are sold in a frozen state, and have first to be thawed, then cooked; bread, again, and all kinds of confectionery are light and digestible. No one eats bread which is a day old; in many houses the bread baked in the morning is considered too stale to eat in the evening, and a fresh loaf is brought from the baker's; while many of the cakes, or sweet buns rather, are so harmless and light that they are given quite fresh to tiny children.

The temperature of a patient is calculated by centigrade. Now this is easily seen, as almost all our charts have both scales marked on their margin, and, of course, provided your thermometer is centigrade, it is all the same to a nurse which scale she uses. The puzzling part is that the tenth of a degree means so much more centigrade than it does Fahrenheit that the relative amount of the fever is hard to realise, and I have more than once caught myself saying, "it is only a slight rise in temperature, hardly to be called fever," when the patient had in reality a temperature of nearly 101°.

The temperature of the air is calculated by Reaumur. Now, when once understood, Reaumur is far more simple than Fahrenheit, but I have known people live here for years before they get accustomed to the new scale.

Another of the nurse's troubles will be the ventilation of the sick-room, a matter difficult of adjustment even in England. In the summer it is easy enough, of course. She must only remember that St. Petersburg itself, and most of the summer resorts in the neighbourhood are situated on boggy soil, so that the evening air is more or less malarious, and cold mists

occur both at sunset and sunrise, which necessitate closed windows, however high the thermometer stands; it is, however, in the winter that her difficulties begin, and winter arrangements prevail here from the middle or end of September till Easter. None of the windows in a Russian house open top and bottom, in warm weather the whole pane is thrown wide, in the winter a second window (a whole window frame and all) is added to the summer arrangement, and both are pasted down so as to keep out every breath of air, while in one window of each room a small pane is left unfastened which can be opened at pleasure to air the room; but in the winter it is impossible to open this with the patient in the room; the ventilation is generally done by opening the small pane in the next room, and after it has been shut again, opening the door of communication between the two, and so letting in the cooler air; but sometimes it is even too cold for this. Russian houses are generally built with the rooms opening one into another, and are let in flats. Nor can the nurse rely upon her fire to help with the ventilation. You never see an open fireplace in a bedroom here; in fact, most of the houses have no open fires even in the sitting-rooms or kitchen, the most usual mode of heating is by a stove. This stove is filled with billets of birchwood, and burns for about an hour; then, when the flame is exhausted, the stove is "shut up," not only the external doors into the room, but also the openings into the chimnies are made as air-tight as possible, and for the next twenty-four hours the stove gives out heat, but does not change the air of the room; it must be remembered, too, that except in a small room, it is some time before the result of the heating is felt, as the stove gives out more heat after it is shut down than while the fire is burning. Gas is never burnt in Russian houses, and it is wonderful how much lighter the air is in consequence; also, of course, when several rooms open out of one another, there is more air and less draught.

Russians are not very fond of fresh air in their houses, and keep them very hot, although they do not mind how many hours they spend out in the frost. And the Germans are even more afraid of a breath of air, and a nurse coming here must expect to encounter strange prejudices, and in many ways must learn to "do in Rome as the Romans do."

Inventions, Preparations, &c.

UNSHRINKABLE FLANNELS.

WE have received from Messrs. Barker and Moody, of Leeds, samples of their unshrinkable flannels. These include heavy materials for cycling and other costumes, and thinner flannels for shirtings and other purposes. We hope that our readers will immediately send for patterns of the shirtings, and then give orders for a large or small amount, and make it up into shirts for the Greek wounded. The cycling clothes appear

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)