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Kate Marsden

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On Sledge and Horseback to Outcast Siberian Lepers

Kate Marsden (1859–1931), the youngest of eight children from a poor family, was a highly committed nurse. She cared for soldiers in the Russo-Turkish War in 1877–8, and undertook missionary travels to various countries, but she was especially concerned about the plight of those suffering from leprosy. This volume, published in 1893, describes her remarkable journey to Siberian leper colonies. At first she travelled by sledge with a friend, but continued alone on horseback, facing appalling weather conditions with her customary courage. Her commitment to leprosy sufferers led her to found the St Francis Leprosy Guild in London in 1895, and she organised a leprosy hospital in the remote Siberian town of Vilyusk in 1897. She was made a Member of the Russian Imperial Red Cross Society, and she was also one of the first women to be appointed a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

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KATE MARSDEN



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Balmoral Castle.

October 27 1892

Victoria R.

The Queen has taken a deep interest in the work undertaken by Miss Marsden amongst the lepers and desires to recommend her to the attention and consideration of any persons

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whose assistance she
may have occasion to
require in connection
with her benevolent efforts
in the cause of humanity

Henry F. Benson
General
Private Secretary
to the Duke



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C'est de ma propre
initiative et avec le sentiment
de rendre témoignage à une
touchante vérité que je donne
cet écrit à Miss Kate Marsden,
certaine que chaque Russe sera
prêt à en faire autant.

L'œuvre que Miss Marsden
a entreprise dans notre pays est
si importante, si pleine de charité
humanitaire, que nous ne pourrions
voir en Miss Marsden qu'un
instrument, choisi par le Seigneur
lui-même pour adoucir la condition
miserable, tant morale que physique,

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des pauvres Léproux.

Soutenue par Dieu et sa
grande foi en Lui, Miss
Marsden a pu jeter en peu de
temps les premiers fondements
d'une colonie destinée à créer
une nouvelle existence à ces mal-
heureux abandonnés.

Ses amans purs eux ne
vulaient devant aucun obstacle
et le même amour a allumé
bien des cœurs, qui se sont mis
à l'unisson de son idée généreuse.

Saute Auguste Saureraine elle-même
a bien voulu donner à Miss Marsden
des preuves de sa sympathie. L'ayant
vue à plusieurs reprises et revêtue
touchée de son dévouement chrétien

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Elle a eu la bonté de lui auorder
 sa protection et de s'aider à accomplir
 son voyage en Sibirie dont au-
 tra un jour les détails énumèrent
 les difficultés immenses que Miss
 Marsden a surmontées n'aurait fait
 qu'attirer son zèle pour une
 cause à laquelle elle donnerait
 tous ses efforts, - de même qu'elle
 lui a déjà donné sa santé.

Que toutes les âmes généreuses
 qui savent apprécier de pareils
 sacrifices se joignent à nous
 pour demander au Seigneur de
 bénir l'œuvre et celle qui s'y est
 consacrée.

Camille R. Talbot
 13 Mai. Dame d'honneur de Sa
 1892. Majesté l'Impératrice
 de Russie
 Palais d'Hiver
 St Pétersbourg.

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Frontispiece.

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ON SLEDGE AND HORSEBACK TO OUTCAST SIBERIAN LEPERS.

Illustrated from Photographs and Drawings.

BY

K A T E M A R S D E N .

MEMBER (SPECIAL BADGE) OF THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION ;
MEMBER AND MEDALLIST OF THE RUSSIAN IMPERIAL RED CROSS SOCIETY, etc., etc. ;
FELLOW OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY.

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To

HER MOST GRACIOUS AND IMPERIAL MAJESTY
THE QUEEN,

The most queenly woman and the most womanly Queen,
whose keen sympathy with suffering has made her,
personally, as beloved,
as the progress of the British Empire, under her rule,
has made her Throne magnificent,

THIS STORY

Of a woman's work

On behalf of helpless, hopeless, and homeless outcasts,

IS,

With the most profound respect and humble gratitude,

DEDICATED.

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PREFACE.



THE first practical step preparatory to commencing this work amongst the lepers was my presentation to Her Majesty the Queen in 1890. I sought this honour, knowing that it would help me in carrying on the work in foreign countries. Three days after the presentation, Her Royal Highness, the Princess of Wales, commanded my attendance at Marlborough House for the purpose of hearing particulars of what I proposed to do. Her Royal Highness showed the warmest interest and sympathy, and promised to write and solicit the approval and assistance of Her Imperial Majesty, the Empress of Russia, in accomplishing the end I had in view.

At my audience with the Empress, my most sanguine expectations were realised. Her Imperial Majesty showed the utmost kindness, entered heartily into my plans, and, gave me an invaluable letter, requesting Russian officials to facilitate my wishes in visiting

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hospitals and leper settlements in the Empire. This letter was as follows :—

“(Dated St. Petersburg, April 20th (May 2nd), 1890.)

“The bearer of this, the British subject, Miss Kate Marsden, is proceeding to India with the object of devoting herself wholly and entirely to the care of the lepers. Before her departure for India, Miss Marsden visited St. Petersburg, and had the happiness of being presented to Her Majesty the Empress. Afterwards she inspected some of the hospitals here, and has now the intention of inspecting the like in other towns and places of the Empire. H.I.M., estimating at its worth the highly Christian and sincerely philanthropic significance of the journey so undertaken by the traveller, and also all its difficulty, has been pleased to command me to hand to her these lines, that she might show them to all persons in authority in such hospitals as she may desire to visit. H.M. the Empress will be extremely grateful to the said authorities if they will give Miss Marsden their co-operation during her inspection of the hospitals in charge, especially those in which occur patients suffering from leprosy.

“(Signed) PRINCE IVAN GOLITSYN.”

Again, on my return journey from Siberia, whilst resting in Tomsk, Her Majesty's unbounded graciousness was again shown by the following telegram, sent

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in response to one I had the honour of sending to Her Imperial Majesty, on the occasion of their Majesties' silver wedding-day :—

“Very many thanks for your good wishes. Hope you are getting on well. “EMPRESS.”

The rest of my story is contained in the following pages ; but I desire, in this place, to draw special attention to one or two further matters of importance.

I appeal to all true English-speaking men and women not to find in this book fresh causes of complaint against Russia, but to exhibit, rather, by their sympathy, a spirit of union in Christian and philanthropic work, as well as the same forgetfulness of sect and creed which was shown by our Lord in His works of love and mercy.

In our little company at Yakutsk, away in the north-east of Siberia, there were three nations and three religions represented—Russians, Yakuts, English ; the Greek, the Roman Catholic, and the Protestant Churches. Most of my escort were members of the Greek Church. The *ispravnick* (Captain of the Police) was a Catholic, and I a Protestant. Throughout our journey there was not a word of discussion or dispute on the religious differences between us ; we were all bent on reaching the lepers and being of service to them. Later, on my return to St. Petersburg, when the Greek priest up in Viluisk, beyond Yakutsk,

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heard I was ill, he at once held a special service to pray for my health, the Catholic ispravnick and the principal Yakuts who accompanied me being present. The next day the ispravnick sent for the Greek father to hold another service in his house for the same purpose. The letters which I received from these men bear ample testimony to the entire absence of all bitter sentiment from religious differences.

I have never taken any active part in promoting temperance principles, but now I think that the record of my exertions in Siberia, without the aid of stimulants, may prove as beneficial to others as if my voice had been raised in furthering the cause for years past. I took no alcohol whatever throughout the journey, except on two occasions of great exhaustion, when the stimulants only made me worse. I have, therefore, good ground for recommending abstinence from alcohol where much physical endurance is necessary.

Humanly speaking, I believe I owe my life to this abstinence, and also to Jaeger clothing, without which it would have been quite impossible to go through all the changes of climate, and to remain for weeks together without changing my clothes.

I wish to bear grateful testimony to the warm sympathy and assistance given to me at the American Embassy, St. Petersburg. The assurance of America's friendship and willingness to co-operate has raised the highest hopes with regard to my American lecturing

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tour, which I propose to commence at once. As Russia helped America in the past, so America can help Russia now. I am proud to be a member of the "King's Daughters;" and I venture to ask the members of that Union to help the work by selling this book and the photographs, and forming "tens" for that purpose, and for collecting donations, which may be sent to my headquarters.

The appeal which I have made to American women I would also make to all members of my sex, both in England and everywhere; for this leper work is essentially women's work. Such co-operation may be carried out by inducing friends to buy the book, and also the photographs, which were taken and printed in Moscow, and which may be had by writing to my headquarters, 376 Strand, London, W.C.

I cannot bring these remarks to a conclusion without expressing, in the most emphatic manner I know how, my heartfelt sense of obligation to Mr. Henry Johnson, without whose literary aid and experience this record in its present form would have been impossible. He has helped me at every turn of the narrative; and, indeed, the book owes its literary characteristics to his skill. I also desire to give every acknowledgment for the courtesy I have received from all I have come in contact with.

Readers of the following pages must bear in mind that in the whole world there was no one more un-

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worthy, more full of faults and failings, than I, to undertake this leper work. And my earnest hope is that what God has enabled me to do may encourage others, however far down in the scale, or however much they may have turned from God, not merely to “do likewise,” but to throw all their strength into greater work than that to which my poor life is dedicated. One rule we must constantly observe—to set our faces heavenwards.

On behalf of all such workers for the furtherance of Christ’s kingdom, and for the good of humanity, I venture to repeat the prayer contained in a letter which I received, shortly before setting out to Siberia, from that ideal servant of the sick and suffering, dear to every Englishwoman:—“May the Father Almighty, Omniscient, who is Infinite Love, be your Guide and your Help, is the prayer of, Yours sincerely, FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

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