



Riding through Siberia - A Mounted Medical Mission in 1891

Kate Marsden

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The author was a nurse in Bulgaria during 1878, caring for the wounded of the war between Russia and Turkey. While there, she saw for herself the plight of lepers, and decided to make a 2000-mile journey to the leper colonies of Yakutsk in the depths of Siberia. She hoped to find a herb which was said to grow there and which was allegedly a cure for leprosy. Although originally she set out to improve the lot of the lepers of India, she ended up trying to help the Yakutsk lepers, and attempted to raise funds to build a hospital for them. Even though she had the support of Queen Victoria, the Empress of Russia and her Lady in Waiting, the Countess Tolstoy, not to mention a pastoral letter from Bishop Meletie of Yakutsk, nobody believed that anyone could make such a journey, least of all a woman! This immensely readable book is a mixture of adventure, extreme hardship and compassion as the author travels the Great Siberian Post Road. "More struggling and floundering through marshes and bogs, more pitch-dark forests, bear-alarms, and frightened horses, and then a terrific thunderstorm," she writes casually. Kate Marsden became one of the first women to be elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in 1892.

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