

I had just replied that we also regretted extremely the necessity for this separation, when a boy brought me a letter. I opened it, and found it was from Mr. Enderton. It read as follows:

MY DEAR SIR: I have determined not to wait here until to-morrow, but to proceed eastward by this evening's train. I desire to spend a day in Chicago, and as you and the others will probably not wish to stop there, I shall, by this means, attain my object without detaining you. My sudden resolution will not give me time to see you all before I start, but I have taken a hurried leave of my daughter, and this letter will explain my departure to the rest.

I will also mention that I have thought it proper, as the natural head of our party, both by age and position, to settle the amicable dispute in regard to the reception and disposition of the money paid, under an

(To be concluded in the next number.)

excusable misapprehension, for our board and lodging upon a desert island. I discovered that the receptacle of this money had been left in the custody of the clerk, addressed to Mrs. Lecks, who has not only already refused to receive it, and would probably do so again, but who is, in my opinion, in no wise entitled to hold, possess, or dispose of it. I, therefore, without making any disturbance whatever, have taken charge of the package, and shall convey it with me to Chicago. When you arrive there, I will apportion the contents among us according to our several claims. This I regard as a very sensible and prudent solution of the little difficulty which has confronted us in regard to the disposition of this money. Yours hurriedly,

DAVID J. ENDERTON.

P. S. I shall stop at Brandiger's Hotel, where I shall await you.

Frank R. Stockton.

RUSSIAN PROVINCIAL PRISONS.*



HERE are in Russia outside of the city of St. Petersburg no prisons intended primarily for political offenders and devoted exclusively to that class of criminals. Persons arrested upon political charges in the provinces await trial in prisons which were originally built for the detention of common vagrants, thieves, forgers, burglars, and murderers, and which are always filled to overflowing with felons of that class. Although the politicals are separated by cell partitions from the common criminals, they necessarily share with the latter all the evils and miseries that result from the overcrowding, bad management, and bad sanitary condition of the prison buildings. How terrible and sometimes intolerable such evils and miseries are, only those who have had an opportunity to inspect Russian prisons can imagine, and only those who have been shut up in them can fully understand. Attempts—and apparently earnest and sincere attempts—have been made again and again by the Ministry of the Interior and the Central Prison Administration to improve the condition of the penal institutions of the empire, but with very little success.

As long ago as 1867 Baron Velio, Chief of the Department of Executive Police, made a report to the Minister of the Interior based on an inspection of forty-nine provincial prisons, in which he said that in every one of the institutions visited he found violations of law of a more or less flagrant character. He reported, for example, that little attention was

paid to the classification and separation of prisoners—insolvent debtors being shut up with hardened criminals of the worst type; prisoners were not properly supplied with clothing, and many of them were barefooted and in rags; men and women sick with contagious diseases were allowed to remain for days without care in crowded “kamas”; † the hospitals were in a “very unsatisfactory condition,” and the medical authorities failed properly to discharge their duties; prisoners were illegally detained beyond the periods of confinement to which they had been sentenced, and the prison wardens, with rare exceptions, were negligent, incompetent, and unfit for their places. ‡

In 1869—two years later—Actual State Councilor Kossagofski made another inspection of provincial prisons, which resulted in “the discovery of many disorders, abuses, and violations of law,” which are set forth with specifications in a circular letter to provincial governors. The Minister of the Interior “observes,” he says, “with regret that most of the prison disorders found by State Councilor Kossagofski to exist in 1869 were the same which had been reported upon by Baron Velio in 1867.” In other words, there had been no improvement. §

In 1872 the Minister of the Interior again earnestly called the attention of provincial governors to the disorders and violations of law which continued to prevail in the prisons subject to their control, and referred “with regret” to the fact that although seven previous circulars had been issued on the same subject, there had been little if any change for the better. ||

* [These articles are prefatory to Mr. Kennan's illustrated papers on “Siberia and the Exile System.”—THE EDITOR.]

† A “kamera” is a large room or cell in which from twenty to a hundred and sixty prisoners are shut up.

‡ Circular letter of the Minister of the Interior to provincial governors, No. 151, July 8th, 1867.

§ Circular letter No. 220, August 18th, 1869.

|| Circular letter No. 84, August 27th, 1872.

The evils complained of were evidently too deeply-rooted and had existed too long to be eradicated by Ministerial circulars, however mandatory their tone.

In 1879 the Ministry of the Interior sent still another letter to provincial governors, based on a report from Senator Grote calling attention once more to the glaring defects of the prison system, and urging the adoption of measures to remedy them and to secure a more rigid enforcement of the laws.*

Most of the circular letters above cited related to disorders which were the direct result of bad management and incompetent supervision; † but coincident with them there was issued another series, devoted more particularly to the overcrowding and bad sanitary condition of the prison buildings. From the letters comprised in this latter series it appears that "most of the prisons of the empire" were overcrowded, many of them containing twice or three times the number of prisoners for which they were intended. ‡ In a report made by the Chief of the Central Prison Administration to the Minister of the Interior in 1883, it was stated that in the province of Sedlets there were 484 persons in a prison intended for 207; in the province of Suvalki there were 433 in a prison built for 165; and in the province of Petrokof there were 652 in a prison designed for 125.

In the annual report of the Central Prison Administration for 1882 it was admitted that there was not a prison in the empire which afforded its occupants one cubic fathom of air space per capita; § that in more than half the prisons the per capita air space was little more than a third of a cubic fathom, and that in some cases the overcrowding went to such an extent as to reduce the per capita air space to one-fifth of a cubic fathom. In other words, there were prisons where five human beings lived together and tried to breathe, in a volume of air which might have been contained in a packing-box seven feet square and seven feet high. ||

Much of this overcrowding is due to the slowness of judicial procedure in Russia, and still more, perhaps, is attributable to the provision of law which makes it a criminal offense to be without a passport or to allow one's passport to lapse. In some parts of the empire

twenty-five and even thirty per cent. of the so-called "criminals" in the jails are mere vagrants and "bezpassportni"—persons not provided with the papers necessary to prove their identity. ¶

792,933 persons were received into the prisons of the empire in 1884 and 698,418 were discharged therefrom, leaving 94,515 in prison on the first of January, 1885. Of this last number 26,307 were awaiting trial.**

It further appears from the series of circular letters above referred to, that in many prisons women were not adequately separated from the men, and male overseers were allowed to search the persons of female prisoners; †† officials took bribes from the criminals in their custody and furnished them secretly with intoxicating liquor; ††† the sanitary condition of the prison buildings was almost everywhere bad, the wells being poisoned by leakage from neglected and improperly constructed privies, and the air in the overcrowded cells being polluted and rendered unfit for respiration by miasmatic exhalations from the same sources; †††† the prison hospitals were in an "extremely unsatisfactory condition," and many of them were so small and so ill provided with medicines as to be of little use to the sick; |||| and the hospital officers sometimes neglected their duties to such an extent as to render themselves liable to criminal prosecution. In one case, cited by the Minister of the Interior as an illustration, a prison surgeon in a provincial town, wishing to get rid of a troublesome patient who had been left there sick by a passing criminal party, ordered the man to be sent forward to his destination, notwithstanding the fact that he was in a dying condition. The unfortunate prisoner lived only long enough to reach the first etape, fifteen or twenty miles away. ¶¶¶

The condition of the provincial prisons, as it appears from these circulars, is, to adopt the words of the Minister of the Interior, "an extremely unsatisfactory" one; but the picture thus outlined still falls far short of a full and true representation of the real state of affairs. Prison inspectors like Baron Velio and State Councilor Kossagofski necessarily see the penal institutions of the empire at their best. The provincial governors and the prison officials

* Circular letter No. 33, March 6th, 1879.

† Thirteen such letters were sent to provincial governors between 1859 and 1879, besides seventeen other circular letters aimed at specific abuses.

‡ Circular letters No. 9650, Nov. 5th, 1864; No. 33, March 6th, 1879; No. 4560, Nov. 28th, 1879; and No. 8, April 6th, 1883.

§ The Russian fathom is seven English feet.

|| Abstract of the Report of the Central Prison Administration for 1882. Newspaper "Sibir," May 1st, 1883.

¶ Report of the Central Prison Administration for 1884, p. 17.

** Report of the Central Prison Administration for 1884, pp. 5-8.

† Circular letter of the Minister of the Interior, No. 33, March 6th, 1879.

†† Circular letter No. 266, Dec. 20th, 1866.

††† Circular letter No. 21, July 30th, 1882.

|||| Circular letters No. 151, July 8th, 1867; and No. 33, March 6th, 1879.

¶¶¶ Circular letter No. 151, July 8th, 1867.

are always forewarned of their coming and have ample time to put the prisons into a temporary and deceptive state of comparative order; the inspection is generally a formal and perfunctory one, taking note only of irregularities and abuses which, to use a Russian expression, "throw themselves into the eyes"; and, finally, the stereotyped phrases, "violation of law," "extremely unsatisfactory condition," and so forth, in which the results of the inspection are set forth by the Minister of the Interior, convey to the mind of the reader no definite idea of the state of facts to which such euphemistic expressions refer.

A RUSSIAN PRISON AND ITS LIFE.

WITHOUT, however, going behind official sources of information, it is possible to obtain a much clearer view of Russian prison life than that afforded by ministerial circulars. Now and then a fearless and honest prison official, shocked by the disorder, wretchedness, and misery which he is forced to witness but is powerless to remedy, and convinced of the futility of formal report and remonstrance, prints in some Russian periodical as much of the results of his prison experience as the censor will allow him to print. In 1885 Mr. I. Reve, an official connected with a provincial prison in one of the northern provinces of European Russia, published in the "Juridical Messenger," the organ of the Moscow Bar Association, two long and carefully prepared papers entitled "A Russian Prison and its Life," in which there is drawn a much darker picture of prison disorder and demoralization than that outlined in the ministerial circulars above cited. The author does not hesitate to assert that the laws which are supposed to regulate Russian prisons bear hardly a semblance of relation to the real facts of prison life. "Nine-tenths of such laws," he says, "are not enforced at all, and the remaining tenth is enforced in a way very different from that which the statutes themselves contemplate." He recites at length the regulations for the government of prisons contained in the fourteenth volume of the Russian collection of laws, and shows that in the prison to which his observations relate hardly a pretense was made of observing any one of them. And this, he maintains, is not a state of affairs which exists in a single prison only, but a state of affairs which, with slight and inconsiderable variations, prevails everywhere. In 1880 the prison described by Mr. Reve was, he says, "a little tsardom, where the highest law was the will of the warden, and where the superior officials of the province either did not dare or did not care to show their faces." The procureur, who was required by law to visit the

prison every Friday, came thither once or twice a year. The prison surgeon paid no attention whatever to the sanitary condition of the buildings, nor to the food, clothing, or habits of the prisoners, but contented himself with visiting the hospital for a few moments once a week. The priest, whose duty it was to go to the prison "not less than twice a week," for the purpose of instructing ignorant prisoners and ministering to the spiritual welfare of the whole prison population, did not appear there at all. The prison workshop was in chaotic disorder, and the prisoners, instead of working in it, spent a large part of their time in smoking, gambling, quarreling, or fighting. Hardly a pretense was made of feeding them decently or regularly; but as most of them were allowed to wander about the town and seek work during the day-time they earned money enough to feed themselves, and shared the remainder of their wages with the warden who allowed them the privilege. The trade in intoxicating liquor was an organized system, and the warden himself set the example of drunkenness. Disciplinary punishment was inflicted at his caprice, and he executed his own sentences by beating the prisoners in the face with his fists. The prison committee, which should have supervised and controlled the whole domestic economy of the prison, was absolutely dead and inert. "It was not," Mr. Reve says, "a living institution, but a mere bureaucratic fiction."

It seems almost incredible that such a state of things as this should have been allowed to exist in any prison in European Russia, but the statements of fact are made by an official over his own signature, and the articles were printed in the most influential legal journal of the empire, presumably with the consent of the Moscow censorial committee. It must not be inferred, however, that no attempt was made by the higher authorities of the province to remedy the evils above set forth. Such attempts were made, but as they had their origin in official caprice rather than in a serious determination to enforce the existing laws, their results were far from satisfactory. Every official who stands at the head of a provincial government has his own peculiar character and his own peculiar views, and such character and views are reflected in the administration of prison affairs within the limits of his province. As the result of successive changes of provincial governors, the prison above described had, between 1880 and 1885, three different wardens and was subjected to five abrupt and radical changes of administrative policy. "What can be expected," Mr. Reve asks, "under such circumstances, except complete disorder and disorganization? A prison

so managed is like the proverbial child with seven nurses which always grows up crooked."*

Mr. Reve does not state what efforts he made, if any, to improve the condition of the prison which he describes; but in 1882 another official, Associate Procureur N. Timofeief, published through the same medium a long and instructive account of his attempts to remedy the horrible state of things which he found to exist in another provincial prison which it was a part of his official duty to visit and inspect.

The prison, he says, was an old, badly constructed, badly ventilated building with dark entries and corridors, and was so saturated with offensive odors, disease germs, and miasmatic exhalations from neglected privies that its atmosphere was to an unaccustomed person almost insufferable. During the time that Mr. Timofeief had official relations with this prison it rarely contained less than twice the number of occupants for which it was intended, and often held three times that number. Two-thirds of the prisoners, unable to find room on the "nares," or sleeping-benches, slept under them on the bare, filthy floor without bedding, blankets, or pillows. As the result of this overcrowding and of the bad sanitary condition of the building, from ten to twenty per cent. of the prisoners were constantly in the hospital, and there were two epidemics of typhus fever in one summer. The bath-house attached to the prison was in such a ruined and tumble-down condition that the warden would not allow the prisoners to use it, and in such washing as they could give their bodies in the overcrowded cells, they were compelled to use clay in the place of soap. Clothing was furnished to the prison upon the basis of the number of prisoners which it was intended to hold; but as the real number was always twice and sometimes three times the estimated number, one-half to two-thirds of the prisoners were dressed in filthy rags swarming with vermin, and had neither shoes nor a change of underclothing. At three different times in the course of one winter they were ordered to work out-of-doors barefooted, in a temperature of minus twenty degrees Réaumur. The mayor of the town was official purveyor for the prison, and as he was also a dealer in provisions, he found it convenient and profitable to feed the prisoners with spoiled products for which there was no market. The members of the prison committee rarely assembled oftener than once in six months, and ignored entirely the duties imposed upon them by law. The provincial prison bureau held one or two sessions a year, but committed the supervision of prison affairs

to an indifferent and incompetent clerk. The priest, whose legal duty it was to look after the moral training of the prisoners and to conduct religious services every Sunday for their benefit, made but one visit to the prison in the course of twelve months, and went there then only at the urgent solicitation of the *ispravnik*, "for the sake of form and decency." The prison turnkeys, who received salaries of from \$3.50 to \$4.50 a month, acted as purchasing agents for prisoners who had money, and supplied them with intoxicating liquor. One of the overseers — a renegade Jew — hired a degraded courtesan by the month, brought her every night to the prison, and received the wages of her prostitution.

ATTEMPTS AT REFORM.

If Mr. Timofeief had been a weak man, a selfish man, or a timid man, he would have dealt with this cesspool of misery and vice as many weak, selfish, and timid men had dealt with it before — that is, he would have visited it as rarely as possible, would have characterized it in his annual report as "very unsatisfactory," and would have quieted his conscience with the reflection that his responsibility for the existing state of affairs was much less than that of the warden, the prison surgeon, the priest, the prison committee, the mayor, the provincial prison bureau, the *ispravnik*, the procureur, the governor, and the governor's council. Fortunately, however, Mr. Timofeief was not a man of that character. As soon as it became his official duty to visit the prison he did visit it, and, shocked by its terrible sanitary condition, he made a report thereupon to the prison administration. No attention, however, was paid to his representations. He made another report, with the same result. Finally, during one of the epidemics of typhus fever in the prison, he succeeded in enlisting the sympathies of the district surgeon, and with the aid of the latter prevailed upon the prison authorities to put ventilators in some of the cell windows, and induced the district assembly to authorize the district apothecary to furnish him with thirty-six pounds of coppers for use as a disinfectant. This was a very moderate measure of success, but it was probably more than had been done for that prison in the previous decade.

Mr. Timofeief then turned his attention to the ruined bath-house, and after an official correspondence which lasted more than a year, after three successive sets of plans and estimates for a new bath-house had been drawn up and sent back and forth to and from St. Petersburg, and after the provincial architect had made four journeys of three hundred versts each to inspect the old bath-house, — spending in mileage more than half enough

* "A Russian Prison and its Life," by I. Reve. "Juridical Messenger," No. 5, May, 1885, pp. 120-142; and Nos. 6 and 7, June and July, 1885, pp. 389-490.

to put up a new building,—the persistent associate procureur succeeded in getting an appropriation for a small quantity of lumber, and permission to employ the idle prisoners in the work of repair. The bath-house was then put in usable condition in two weeks.

The next reform in order was that relating to clothing. Soon after Mr. Timofeief's appointment, a number of prisoners, pale and emaciated from sleeplessness and partial asphyxia, came to him "almost in desperation," showed him their foul and ragged clothing, which was alive with vermin, and which they had worn night and day without change for months, and said to him in the graphic metaphorical language of the Russian peasant that "all their strength had been eaten up by beasts." The quantity of parasites on their bodies was, Mr. Timofeief says, "something astounding." He sent complaint after complaint to his immediate superior, the procureur of the circuit court, setting forth the intolerable sufferings of the prisoners and asking that they be supplied with the clothing to which they were legally entitled. The procureur replied that the letters of complaint had been "appropriately referred for suitable action, in accordance with law," and that ended it. Mr. Timofeief then went personally to the higher authorities of the province and urged them to make at least an effort to remedy what seemed to him the shameful and insufferable condition of things in one of their own prisons. The high officials said to him, "My dear sir, the evils of which you complain are not exceptional; they are common to all of our prisons, and they can not be remedied by temporary and exceptional measures." Determined that his superiors should fully understand, even if they would not remedy, the sufferings of the "beast"-tormented prisoners, Mr. Timofeief caused one of the latter to be stripped naked, made a package of his ragged, filthy clothing, loaded as it was with "a mass of parasites" and indescribably offensive to every sense, sewed it up in stout linen cloth, and sent it under seal, without a word of explanation, to the procureur of the circuit court. This heroic measure brought the desired clothing; but it brought also a reprimand from the procureur, who regarded such action on the part of a subordinate as impertinent and "out of place." In concluding his recital, Mr. Timofeief says that an associate procureur who attempts conscientiously to perform the duties laid upon him by the prison reform law of 1864 simply "makes

for himself personal enemies, and earns the reputation of being a troublesome man."*

I have summarized Mr. Timofeief's paper, not for the purpose of calling attention to one particular drop of suffering in an ocean of human misery, but for the purpose of illustrating some of the defects of a hopelessly bad system. The evils against which Mr. Timofeief bravely but vainly struggled are, as the provincial officials frankly said to him, common to all Russian prisons, and can not be remedied by local, temporary, and exceptional measures. It would, of course, be hasty and unfair to say that all provincial prisons in Russia are so bad as the one above described; but that there are scores, if not hundreds, which resemble this one to a greater or less extent can, I think, be shown beyond the possibility of doubt. The statistics furnished by the Government itself are fully adequate to prove that Mr. Timofeief's prison was not an exceptional nor an unusual phenomenon.

According to the report of the Central Prison Administration for 1884 there were in the empire 144 prisons in which the sick-rate for the year exceeded twenty per cent. of the whole number of prisoners therein confined; in 52 prisons it was more than thirty per cent.; in 25 prisons it exceeded forty per cent.; in 8 prisons it was more than fifty per cent.; and in the prison of Kutais it reached seventy-two per cent.† That in computing these sick-rates the officials did not take into account trifling ailments is shown by the fact that in 55 places of confinement the average period of sickness per capita was more than forty days, and in some prisons the patients were sick on an average seventeen weeks.‡ Scurvy—a preventable disease—was reported from 223 prisons, and in 19 of them it constituted more than ten per cent. of the whole aggregate of sickness.§ There were in the course of the year 391 scorbutic cases in the prisons of St. Petersburg alone, not taking into account the two fortresses of Petropavlovsk and Schlüsselburg.|| In explanation of this extraordinary prevalence of scurvy in the penal institutions of the capital itself, the prison physicians maintained first that the scorbutic patients had the disease in an incipient form when they were admitted to the prisons, and second that scurvy is infectious!¶ Typhus fever—another preventable disease, due chiefly to filth and overcrowding—was reported from 336 prisons, but in only 45 of them did the number of cases exceed 20. In

* "Prison Methods," by N. Timofeief, Associate Procureur.—"Juridical Messenger," No. 6, pp. 284-305. Moscow, June 1st, 1882.

† Report, Central Prison Administration for 1884, pp. 216-218; St. Petersburg: Ministry of the Interior, 1886.

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‡ Ibid., p. 221.

§ Ibid., p. 222, and Appendix, pp. 1-129.

|| Ibid., Appendix, pp. 69-117, 124.

¶ Ibid., pp. 234-236.

Odessa, however, there were 58 cases; in Kharkoff, 73; in Saratoff, 121; in St. Petersburg, 158; in Warsaw, 261; in Perm, 484; and in Moscow, 1206. The malady was epidemic in 17 prisons, and in one of them constituted ninety-four per cent. of the total aggregate of disease.* The whole number of sick patients treated in prison hospitals during the year was 89,523, not including 700 insane, and the whole number of "hospital days" was 2,055,524. Every prison in the empire had therefore on an average 101 cases of serious sickness and 2325 "hospital days" in the course of the year.† In the face of official statistics like these it seems to me impossible to maintain or to believe that the condition of the prison described by Associate Procureur Timofeief was either exceptional or unusual.

SUFFERINGS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS.

THE feeling of apprehension, humiliation, and misery which educated and sensitive human beings must endure in such prisons as these while awaiting trial is still further intensified by imperfect separation from common criminals of the worst class. The solitary-confinement cells which political offenders occupy were originally intended for felons whose depraved character or boisterous behavior made it necessary to isolate them from the rest of the prison population. Such cells are still partly used for that purpose, and the result is that innocent young women arrested upon suspicion of political "untrustworthiness" are sometimes imprisoned side by side with the most degraded and foul-mouthed criminals of their sex, and are compelled to hear things which to a refined and pure-minded young girl are inexpressibly shocking and terrible. I met in Siberia many young women who told me that they had had this experience, and there were doubtless many more who were too shy and timid to suggest to a man and a stranger some phases of their prison life.

The solitary-confinement cells are also used for the purpose of isolating common felons sick with small-pox or other contagious diseases. In many, if not in most, Russian prison hospitals all the patients occupy what is practically one large room or a series of intercommunicating rooms, where there are no facilities for the separate treatment of infectious disorders. Small-pox patients are therefore put into solitary-confinement cells side by side with politicals and on the same corridor, and the same attendants serve both.

In the hospitals and lazarets politicals suf-

fering from nervous affections, or sick with brain-fever brought on by intense anxiety and solitude, are often put into the same ward with insane criminals who are undergoing what is known as "ispitanie" or "probation." The effect produced by the incessant babbling or raving of a lunatic upon the disordered nerves of a sick political prisoner, who perhaps feels conscious that his own mind is already breaking, and who is compelled to see and hear continually in another that which he most dreads for himself, can be imagined. The results of such experience were described to me as particularly disastrous and terrible in the cases of young and nervous women who had been reduced to a chronic hysterical condition by solitary confinement.

In addition to all of the sufferings and privations which political offenders must inevitably endure in such prisons as those described by Mr. Reve and Associate Procureur Timofeief, they are not infrequently subjected to cruel and illegal personal treatment at the hands of brutal or hot-tempered wardens.

In the year 1879 there were confined in the provincial prison of Kiev two political offenders named Izbitski and Beverly — the latter a young man of English descent on his father's side, but of Russian birth. In the summer of that year these two young men, seeing no prospect of an early trial, made an attempt to escape by digging a tunnel under the prison wall. For many weeks they labored hard with tin cups, pieces of board, and such rude implements as they could fashion for themselves out of the materials at their command, and by working at night, depositing the earth from the tunnel in vacant spaces under their cells, and carefully replacing the floors every morning, they succeeded in wholly concealing their operations from the eyes of the prison officials. At last the tunnel was completed. Its outer end was only a few feet below the surface of the ground, at a sufficient distance from the prison wall to render flight from it reasonably safe, and the young men were only waiting for a dark night to carry their plan of escape into execution. At this critical moment the prison officials, visiting the cell of one of the young men during the latter's temporary absence, discovered and explored the tunnel. In view of the fact that within a short time there had been several daring and successful escapes from the Kiev prison, the warden determined to make such an example of these young men as would deter others from following in their footsteps. Instead, therefore, of removing them to other cells and thus frustrating their plan of escape, the warden allowed them to suppose that no discovery had been made, and then prepared an ambush for them at the end of the tunnel.

* Report of the Central Prison Administration for 1884, pp. 222-225.

† *Ibid.*, p. 213.

When, on the first dark night, the fugitives came up through the ground outside the prison wall they were fired upon by a squad of soldiers, who had been stationed there by the warden with instructions to shoot the prisoners as soon as they should make their appearance. Beverly was killed outright, and Izbitski, who was dangerously wounded, was carried back into the prison. Beverly's blood-stained body was allowed to lie on the ground where it had fallen in plain sight of the prison windows until late the following day, as a sort of ghastly object-lesson for the instruction of the other prisoners. The exile who gave me these facts, and who was Beverly's dearest friend, left the Kiev prison for Siberia on the morning after the tragedy, and was compelled to march past the dead body of the man whom he loved, as he told me, "better than a brother." There can, I think, be no question that the deliberate and coolly planned assassination of Mr. Beverly under such circumstances was as truly a treacherous and shameful murder as it would have been had the warden shot him while asleep in his cell.

Such occurrences as this are, of course, not common even in the worst of Russian prisons, but that even this is not an isolated case appears from a ministerial circular sent to provincial governors on the 9th of February, 1870, in which a precisely similar occurrence is narrated and in which the prison officials are mildly rebuked for "permitting and even organizing crime." The minister declares that "such methods are not consistent with the conditions of prison life, nor with the objects of prison discipline, nor with the dignity of prison officials, and that they interfere with the moral reformation of the prisoners!"

The bearing of this whole series of facts upon the life of political offenders who have the misfortune to be arrested in the provinces hardly needs to be pointed out. Mr. Timofeief, in the article from which I have quoted, says very justly that when the executive power "deprives an individual of his liberty, paralyzes his volition, and subjects him to the restraints of a rigid system of prison discipline, it is bound to guarantee to him all the rights which are still his by virtue of law. The most important of such rights—the right to an endurable human existence, the right to live without danger of losing health and strength—is not guaranteed in most of our prisons, particularly in those remote, abandoned, almost forgotten places of confinement where the face of a high official is never seen and where the prisoners do not live, but merely languish in filth, and corruption, and hunger, and cold."*

If the right to "an endurable human existence" ought to be guaranteed to a burglar or a

murderer,—to a common felon of low intelligence and coarse fiber, who has been duly tried and found guilty of crime,—how much more should that right be guaranteed to an educated, sensitive young man or woman who has never been tried nor confronted by a witness, and against whom there is no other charge than "an intent to change the existing form of government . . . at a more or less remote time in the future."

METHODS OF INTERCOMMUNICATION.

THE hardships, humiliations, and petty miseries innumerable of life in a Russian provincial prison are alleviated to some extent by the possibility of secret communication between prisoners who occupy adjacent cells. Although such intercommunication is strictly forbidden by law, and renders the prisoners who attempt it liable to "disciplinary punishment," it prevails to a greater or less extent in all the prisons of the empire, with the single exception, perhaps, of the castle of Schlüsselburg. Every possible measure of prevention has been tried again and again by the prison authorities, but the ingenuity, patience, and persistence of the political prisoners have triumphed over all difficulties, and have virtually set official prohibition at defiance. Even in the gloomy and closely guarded casemates of the Petropavlovski fortress, it has been found impossible wholly to deprive the prisoners of this much-prized source of encouragement, support, and consolation.

The methods of intercommunication commonly resorted to by political prisoners in solitary confinement are based upon what is known as the "knock alphabet"—an ingenious combination of letters and figures so arranged that the letters have numerical values and the figures alphabetical equivalents. This inarticulate language of knocks has recently become familiar to a large number of people in Russia, including probably four-fifths of the whole "untrustworthy" class; but in the early days of the revolutionary movement, before "neblagonadezhnost" or "the-condition-from-which-nothing-good-is-to-be-hoped" became a crime, the ability to transmit intelligence through a solid brick wall was a rare accomplishment, and was confined chiefly to wily recidivists of a vulgar type, who, to use their own expression, had "been through fire, water, and a copper tube," and had received the degree of "Artium Magister" from half the penal institutions in the empire.

THE "KNOCK ALPHABET."

THE talented Russian novelist X—, who has been twice exiled to Siberia and half a dozen times imprisoned, told me last summer

* "Prison Methods," before cited, p. 305.

that when he was arrested for the first time he had never even heard of the "knock alphabet"; and that when, during the second day of his imprisonment, he noticed a faint tapping on the other side of the wall, he regarded it merely as an indication that the adjoining cell was occupied, and gave it no particular attention. As the knocking continued, however, and as the faint taps seemed to be definitely segregated into groups by brief intervals of silence, he became convinced that his unknown neighbor was endeavoring to communicate with him. Upon what principle or plan the knocks were grouped he did not know, but he conjectured that the number of taps between two "rests" might correspond with the serial number of a letter in the alphabet,—one knock standing for "a," two for "b," three for "c," and so on up to twenty-six for "z." Upon putting this conjecture to the test he was delighted to find that the knocks resolved themselves into the letters "D-o-y-o-u-u-n-d-e-r-s-t-a-n-d?" He replied with forty-nine knocks, so grouped and spaced as to make "Y-e-s"; but long before he had finished this short word he became mournfully conscious that, at the rate of forty-nine knocks for every three letters, he and his unknown correspondent would not be able to exchange more than half a dozen ideas a week. The invisible prisoner on the other side of the wall did not seem, however, to be at all discouraged, and began at once another long series of knocks, which extended to two hundred and ninety-six, and which, when translated, made the words "Teach you better way—listen!" Mr. X— then heard one loud tap near the corner of the cell, followed by a sound of scratching, which proceeded from that point towards the door at about the height of a man's head, as if the unknown were drawing a long horizontal line with some hard substance on the other side of the wall. After a brief interval of silence there came two staccato taps and the noise made by the scratching of a second line parallel with the first one, but a little lower down. When seven of these invisible lines had been drawn under one another about a foot apart, with a group of knocks at the beginning of each one to denote its number, the unseen artist went back to one knock, and proceeded to draw six perpendicular lines crossing the first series at right angles, so as to make a huge audible checker-board. As soon as Mr. X— heard this invisible diagram, the purpose for which it was intended flashed upon his mind, and before the unknown instructor had finished knocking out the words, "Put alphabet in squares," the quick-witted pupil had scratched upon the floor of his cell a reduced copy of the audible tracing, and was numbering its lines and col-

umns. His diagram when finished looked something like this:

	1	2	3	4	5
1	a	b	c	d	e
2	f	g	h	i	j
3	k	l	m	n	o
4	p	q	r	s	t
5	u	v	w	x	y
6	z				

After giving Mr. X— time to construct the figure, the unknown prisoner began another series of knocks so grouped and spaced as to indicate the lines and columns in which the required letters were to be found. Five knocks followed by three knocks meant that the equivalent letter would be found at the intersection of the fifth line and third column; two knocks followed by one knock indicated letter "f," at the intersection of line two and column one; and five knocks followed by four knocks meant letter "x," at the intersection of line five, column four. The first question asked by the unknown was 53 23 35 11 43 15 55 35 51: "Who are you?" The prisoners then exchanged brief biographies, and Mr. X— discovered that he had learned his a b c's and taken his first lesson in prison telegraphy from a common criminal,—a burglar, if I remember rightly,—who was awaiting exile to Siberia.

THE "CHECKER-BOARD CIPHER."

THE object of the "checker-board cipher" is, first, to facilitate the transmission of letters and words, and, second, so to disguise them as to make them unrecognizable to persons who have not the key. The cipher in the form above shown is an extremely simple one; but it reduces from 351 to 157 the number of knocks necessary to represent the English alphabet, and it is susceptible of variation and complication to an almost unlimited extent. The letters of the alphabet, for example, may be arranged in the square in twenty-four different symmetrical ways, and every such alphabetical scheme can be combined with two variations in the order of the figures and four in their arrangement, making 192 different ciphers. This, however, is only the beginning of the varied and complex system of secret intercommunication which the political prisoners have

built up on the corner-stone of the lettered square. By combining an understood key-word with the alphabetical checker-board, they have made a number-cipher which has thus far defied the ingenuity of the "cipher bureau" of the "gendarmierie" and which seems to me to be absolutely inscrutable.

Suppose that the message to be put into cipher is "Nicholas arrested," and that the understood key-word is "prison." The letters of the key-word are first written under the letters of the message as many times as may be necessary to fill out the space. The numerical equivalents of the two series of letters are then found in the lettered and numbered square and are added together to make a new series:

N	i	c	h	o	l	a	s	a	r	r	e	s	t	e	d
P	r	i	s	o	n	p	r	i	s	o	n	p	r	i	s
34	24	13	23	35	32	11	44	11	43	43	15	44	45	15	14
41	43	24	44	35	34	41	43	24	44	35	34	41	43	24	44
75	67	37	67	70	66	52	87	35	87	78	49	85	88	39	58

The last series constitutes the cipher, and its peculiar merit is that the same number never stands twice for the same letter. "A" in "Nicholas" is represented by "52"; "a" in "arrested" is represented by "35"; "e," the first time it occurs, is "49"; and the next time, "39"; the number "67," in the cipher message, stands in one place for "i" and in another for "h"; while "87" stands once for "s" and once for "r." In deciphering the cryptograph the numerical equivalents of the letters of the key-word are, of course, to be subtracted from the cipher-numbers, and then the letters which correspond with the figures of the remainder are to be sought in the alphabetical square.

It is apparent at a glance that a cryptograph of this kind, which can be indefinitely varied, and in which the same number never stands twice for the same letter, cannot be deciphered by any of the ordinary methods.

VARIOUS APPLICATIONS OF THIS CIPHER.

ANOTHER merit of the "checker-board cipher" is the wide range of its applicability. It can be used not only as a knock alphabet, but as an oral language, as a signal-code based on vision, and as a method of secret intercommunication by means of almost imperceptible dots or indentations in paper, sand, dust, or the leaf of a tree. Any substance which can be dotted, indented, or pierced may serve as a medium for the conveyance of the cipher numbers. The use of the alphabetical square in the form of an oral language is not common, but it is frequently resorted to in prisons where the number of politicals is so large that they can safely defy control. In such cases they do

not restrict themselves to secret intercommunication by means of knocks, but shout the cipher-numbers to one another openly from their cell windows. It is not possible to punish a hundred or more people for this offense by putting them all into dark cells,— the capacity of an already overcrowded prison will not admit of such a method of dealing with the evil,— and if the authorities resort to physical violence the prisoners meet it with an organized "hunger-strike." This desperate form of protest creates an excited state of public feeling in the town where the prison is situated; it exasperates the friends of the sufferers to such a degree as to endanger the lives of the prison officials; it is an occurrence which the warden must report to the Minister of the Interior, and it is almost certain to be followed by an investigation of the prison management, which may bring to light the illegal practices from which the warden, overseers, and turnkeys derive pecuniary profit. These inevitable consequences of a hunger-strike are greatly dreaded by the prison authorities, and it often happens that a warden, in order to avoid what is known in the prison world as a "skandal," winks at relatively trivial infractions of prison discipline. In this way a *modus vivendi* is established, by virtue of which the warden permits oral communication between the political prisoners, and the latter tacitly agree not to create a disturbance prejudicial to the interests of the warden. Such a state of things existed in the Kiev prison in 1883, and at almost any hour of the day or night a pedestrian passing the prison wall might have heard the voices of the politicals calling out in a steady monotone from their cell windows, "Twelve, fifteen, fifty-four, twenty-four, thirty-two, fifteen, fourteen." Nearly all of the political exiles whom I met in Siberia were skilled in the use of the checker-board cipher, and could transmit intelligence either by knocks or by calling the equivalent numbers at the rate of from ten to fifteen words a minute.

The use of this cipher as a signal code by prisoners who are so situated that they can see one another is more common, the numbers being made by visible motions of the hand instead of by audible knocks. At night the prisoner, if allowed to have a candle, makes the numbers by moving a book or a towel back and forth in front of the light so as to alternately hide it and reveal it. In this way conversations are sometimes carried on between politicals at their cell windows and friends in houses standing outside the prison wall and at a considerable distance.

One of the most ingenious and successful adaptations of the checker-board cipher to the peculiar conditions and necessities of prison

life is the method by which the political convey secret intelligence to their relatives and friends in open letters forwarded through official hands. When a political offender has been subjected to final examination and the papers in his case are ready for submission to the Department of Justice, he is generally allowed to exchange letters with his relatives. All such letters, however, must be sent to the procureur or the local chief of gendarmes for examination, and they are not only carefully scrutinized, but are often subjected to heat and to the action of chemical re-agents, in order to ascertain whether or not they contain invisible writing in sympathetic ink. In spite, however, of such measures of precaution, the political prisoners manage, with the aid of the checker-board cipher, to transmit contraband information through the hands and under the very eyes of the most subtle and experienced officials. As an illustration of the way in which this is accomplished, take the following extract from the letter of a prisoner:

I have received your welcome letter of the nineteenth instant and am very glad to learn from it that you are all well at home and that you received safely the letter which I wrote you on the twenty third of last month. I wish I could hear from you oftener.

There is apparently nothing unusual or suspicious either in the language or in the chirography of this letter,—it would probably be approved and passed by nine officials out of ten,—and yet it contains the words, "Tell Alexe to fly—arrest threatened." A close and careful examination of the writing will show that the letters are segregated into groups by minute and almost imperceptible spaces. The first words are spaced as follows: "Ihaverece-i-vedyo-urw-el-com-el." The number of letters in each group is regarded as a figure and every two figures constitute a number, whose alphabetical equivalent is to be found in the cipher square. The numbers in the above groups are 45 15 32 32, which the checker-board resolves into the letters, "T-e-l-l." The embarrassment which would be caused by the

word-spaces is obviated by a rule that such spaces shall be disregarded unless the final stroke of the terminal letter is upward, as in the word "of" in the first line of the foregoing illustration. That sign indicates that the word-space which follows it is also a cipher-space and is to be taken into account in determining the limits of the cipher-groups. This method of conveying information is now known to the "cipher bureau" of the gendarmerie, but for a long time it was practiced successfully, and it is still resorted to occasionally in remote provincial prisons.

Nothing has done more than this sort of intercommunication to prevent suicide and insanity among political prisoners in solitary confinement. Complete isolation is perhaps the most terrible punishment that can be inflicted upon an educated human being, and when to such isolation are added perfect stillness, limitation of vision by four bare walls, and deprivation of all means of employment for the intellectual powers, life soon becomes

unendurable and the prisoner either commits suicide, goes insane, or sinks into an apathetic stupor which terminates in dementia. The possibility of intercommunication—of sharing one's thoughts and emotions with another—lends some interest even to the dreariest existence, and the contrivance of schemes to baffle official vigilance and secure such intercommunication affords the mental faculties exercise enough to keep them from decay. Scores of political offenders have gone insane in Russian prisons, but the number of lives thus wrecked is much smaller than it would have been if the imprisoned revolutionists had not contrived, by ingenious methods of intercommunication, to support, encourage, and comfort one another in hours of despair.

George Kennan.