

THE BOUNDARY POST.

They have marched away into Siberia!



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SIBERIA AND THE EXILE SYSTEM.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.



BEFORE beginning this series of papers upon Siberia and the Exile System, it seems to me both proper and necessary that I should say a few words with reference to the circumstances under which I made the journey that I am about to describe, and the opinions concerning Russian affairs which I held at the time it was undertaken. The idea of exploring some of the less known parts of Siberia, and of making, in connection with such exploration, a careful study of the exile system, first took definite form in my mind in the year 1879. From such observations as I had been able to make during a residence of

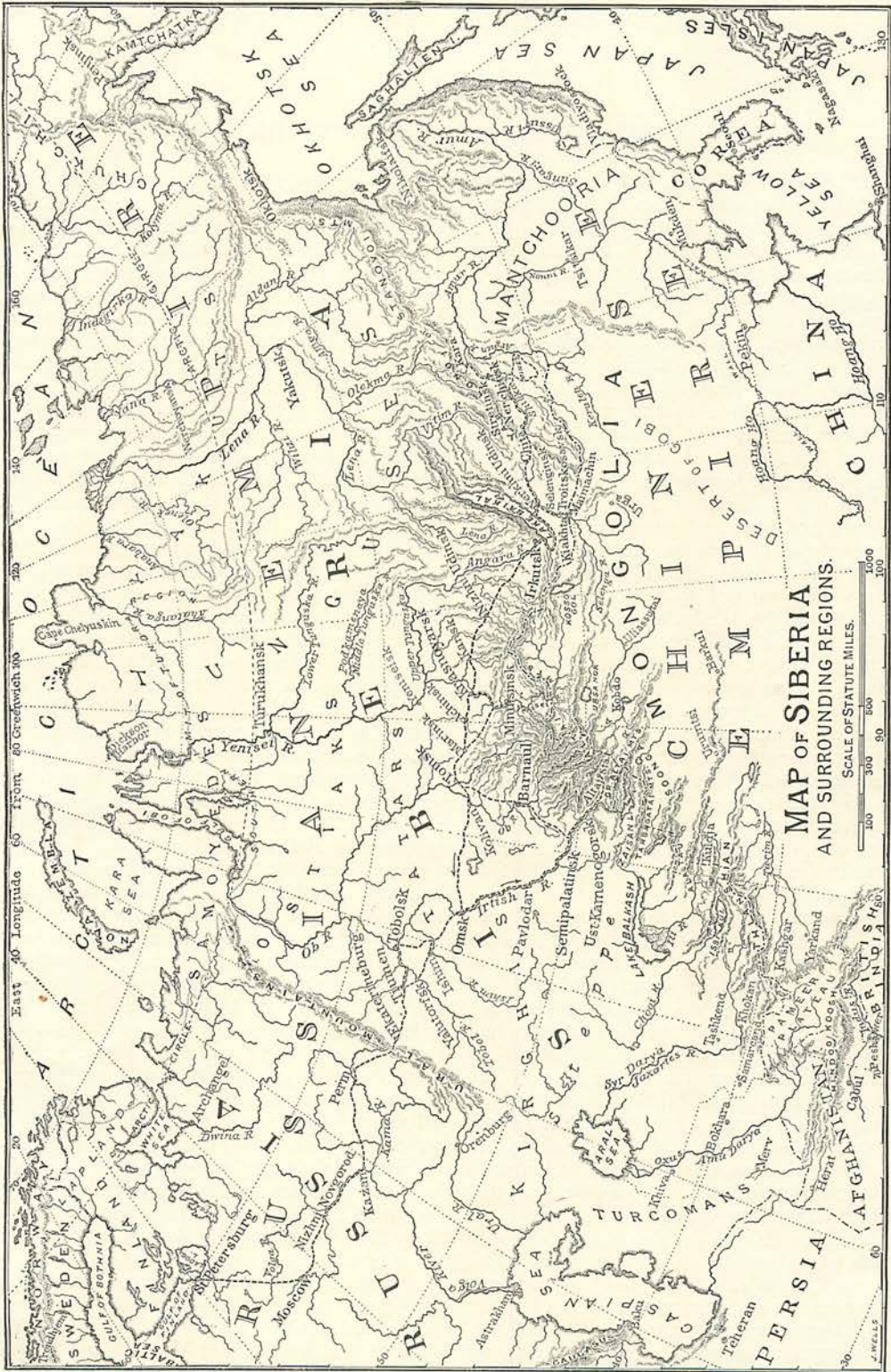
two and a half years in the country, and a subsequent journey of five thousand miles overland to St. Petersburg, it seemed to me that Siberia offered to a competent investigator an extremely interesting and promising field of research. To the Russians, who had possessed it in whole or in part for nearly three centuries, it was, of course, comparatively familiar ground; but to the average American, at that time, it was almost as much a *terra incognita* as central Africa or Thibet. In 1881 the assassination of Alexander II., and the exile of a large number of Russian revolutionists to the mines of the Trans-Baikal, increased my interest in Siberia and intensified my desire not only to study the exile system on the ground, but to investigate the Russian revolutionary movement in the only part of the empire where I thought such an investigation could successfully be made,—namely, in the region to which the revolutionists themselves had been banished. It seemed to me a hopeless task to look for nihilists in the cities of St. Petersburg and Moscow, or to seek there an explanation of the political events and the social phenomena which interested me. Most of the leading actors in the revolutionary drama of 1878-79 were already in Siberia; and if the Imperial Police could not discover the few who still remained at large in European Russia, it was not at all likely that I could. In Siberia, however, communication with exiled nihilists might perhaps be practicable; and there, if anywhere, was to be obtained the information which I desired.

Circumstances, and the want of time and means for such an extended journey as I wished to make, prevented me from taking any definite steps in the matter until the summer of 1884, when the Editor of THE CENTURY MAGAZINE became interested in my plans, and proposed to me that I should go to Siberia for that periodical and give to it the results of my work. I thereupon made a preliminary excursion to St. Petersburg and Moscow for the purpose of collecting material and ascertaining whether or not obstacles were likely to be thrown in my way by the Russian Government. I returned in October, fully satisfied that my scheme was a practicable one; that there was really nothing in Siberia which needed concealment; and that my literary record—so far as I had made a record—was such as to predispose the Russian Government in my favor, and to secure for me all the facilities that a friendly investigator might reasonably expect. The opinions which I held at that time with regard to the Siberian exile system and the treatment of political offenders by the Russian Government

were set forth fully and frankly in an address which I delivered before the American Geographical Society of New York in 1882, and in the newspaper controversy to which that address gave rise. I then believed that the Russian Government and the exile system had been greatly misrepresented by such writers as Stepniak and Prince Krapotkin; that Siberia was not so terrible a country as Americans had always supposed it to be; and that the descriptions of Siberian mines and prisons in the just-published book of the Rev. Henry Lansdell were probably truthful and accurate. I also believed, although I did not say, that the nihilists, terrorists, and political malcontents generally, who had so long kept Russia in a state of alarm and apprehension, were unreasonable and wrong-headed fanatics of the anarchistic type with which we in the United States have recently become so familiar. In short, all my prepossessions were favorable to the Russian Government and unfavorable to the Russian revolutionists. I lay stress upon this fact, not because my opinions at that time had intrinsically any particular weight or importance, but because a just estimate of the results of an investigation cannot be formed without some knowledge of the preconceptions and personal bias of the investigator. I also lay stress upon it for the further reason that it partly explains the friendly attitude towards me which was taken by the Russian Government, the permission which was given me to inspect prisons and mines, and the comparative immunity from arrest, detention, and imprisonment which I enjoyed, even when my movements and associations were such as justly to render me an object of suspicion to the local Siberian authorities. It is very doubtful whether a traveler who had not already committed himself to views that the Government approved would have been allowed to go to Siberia for the avowed purpose of investigating the exile system, or whether, if permitted to go there, he would have escaped serious trouble when it was discovered that he was associating on terms of friendly intimacy with political criminals of the most dangerous class. In my frequent skirmishes with the police, and with suspicious local officials in remote Siberian villages, nothing but the letter which I carried from the Russian Minister of the Interior saved me from summary arrest and imprisonment, or from a search of my person and baggage which probably would have resulted in my expulsion from the empire under guard and in the loss of all my notes and documentary material. That letter, which was my sheet-anchor in times of storm and stress, would never, I think, have been given to me, if I had not publicly defended the Russian Government against some of its numerous assailants, and if it had not been believed that personal pride, and a desire to seem consistent, probably would restrain me from confessing error, even should I find the prison and exile system worse than I anticipated, and worse than I had represented it to be. How far this belief was well founded, and to what extent my preconceived ideas were in harmony with the facts, I purpose, in the present series of papers, to show.

Before closing this preface I desire to tender my most sincere and hearty thanks to the many friends, acquaintances, and well-wishers throughout European Russia and Siberia who encouraged me in my work, coöperated in my researches, and furnished me with the most valuable part of my material. Some of them are political exiles, who imperiled even the wretched future which still remained to them by writing out for me histories of their lives; some of them are officers of the Exile Administration, who, trusting to my honor and discretion, gave me without reserve the results of their long experience; and some of them are honest, humane prison officials, who, after reporting again and again upon the evils and abuses of the prison system, finally pointed them out to me, as the last possible means of forcing them upon the attention of the Government and the world. Most of these people I dare not even mention by name. Although their characters and their services are such as to make their names worthy of remembrance and honor, it is their misfortune to live in a country where the Government regards a frankly expressed opinion as an evidence of "untrustworthiness," and treats an effort to improve the condition of things as an offense to be punished. To mention the names of such people, when they live under such a government, is simply to render them objects of suspicion and surveillance, and thus deprive them of the limited power they still exercise for good. All that I can do, therefore, to show my appreciation of their trust, their kindness, and their aid, is to use the information which they gave me as I believe they would wish it to be used,—in the interest of humanity, freedom, and good government. For Russia and the Russian people I have the warmest affection and sympathy; and if, by a temperate and well-considered statement of the results of my Siberian investigations, I can make the country and the nation better known to the world, and ameliorate, even little, the lot of the "unfortunates" to whom "God is high above and the Tsar is far away," I shall be more than repaid for the hardest journey and the most trying experience of my life.

George Kennan.



MAP OF SIBERIA
AND SURROUNDING REGIONS.

SCALE OF STATUTE MILES.
100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000

--- Line of Route
- - - National Boundaries

ACROSS THE RUSSIAN FRONTIER.

THE Siberian expedition of THE CENTURY MAGAZINE sailed from New York for Liverpool on the second day of May, 1885. It consisted of Mr. George A. Frost, an artist of Boston, and the author of this paper. We both spoke Russian, both had been in Siberia before, and I was making to the empire my fourth journey. Previous association in the service of the Russian-American Telegraph Company had acquainted us with each other, and long experience in sub-arctic Asia had familiarized us with the hardships and privations of Siberian travel. Our plan of operations had been approved by THE CENTURY; we had the amplest discretionary power in the matter of ways and means; and although fully aware of the serious nature of the work in hand, we were hopeful, if not sanguine, of success. We arrived in London on Sunday, May 10, and on Wednesday, the 13th, proceeded to St. Petersburg by rail, via Dover, Ostend, Cologne, Hanover, Berlin, and Eyd-kuhnen. As the season was already advanced, and as it was important that we should reach Siberia in time to make the most of the summer weather and the good roads, I decided to remain in the Russian capital only five days; but we were unfortunate enough to arrive there just at the beginning of a long series of church holidays, and were able to utilize in the transaction of business only four days out of ten.

As soon as I could obtain an interview with Mr. Vlangalli, the assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, I presented my letters of introduction and told him frankly and candidly what we desired to do. I said that in my judgment Siberia and the exile system had been greatly misrepresented by prejudiced writers; that a truthful description of the country, the prisons, and the mines would, I thought, be advantageous rather than detrimental to the interests of the Russian Government; and that, inasmuch as I had already committed myself publicly to a defense of that Government, I could hardly be suspected of an intention to seek in Siberia for facts with which to undermine my own position. This statement, in which there was not the least diplomacy or insincerity, seemed to impress Mr. Vlangalli favorably; and after twenty minutes' conversation he informed me that we should undoubtedly be permitted to go to Siberia, and that he would aid us as far as

possible by giving us an open letter to the governors of the Siberian provinces, and by procuring for us a similar letter from the Minister of the Interior. Upon being asked whether these letters would admit us to Siberian prisons, Mr. Vlangalli replied that they would not; that permission to inspect prisons must in all cases be obtained from provincial governors. As to the further question whether such permission probably would be granted, he declined to express an opinion. This, of course, was equivalent to saying that the Government would not give us *carte-blanche*, but would follow us with friendly observation, and grant or refuse permission to visit prisons, as might from time to time seem expedient. I foresaw that this would greatly increase our difficulties, but I did not deem it prudent to urge any further concession; and after expressing my thanks for the courtesy and kindness with which we had been received, I withdrew.

At another interview, a few days later, Mr. Vlangalli gave me the promised letters, and at the same time said that he would like to have me stop in Moscow on my way to Siberia and make the acquaintance of Mr. Katkoff, the well-known editor of the Moscow "Gazette." He handed me a sealed note of introduction to Baron Buhler, keeper of the Imperial Archives in Moscow, and said that he had requested the latter to present me to Mr. Katkoff, and that he hoped I would not leave Moscow without seeing him. I was not unfamiliar with the character and the career of the great Russian champion of autocracy, and was glad, of course, to have an opportunity of meeting him; but I more than suspected that the underlying motive of Mr. Vlangalli's request was a desire to bring me into contact with a man of strong personality and great ability, who would impress me with his own views of Russian policy, confirm my favorable opinion of the Russian Government, and guard me from the danger of being led astray by the specious misrepresentations of exiled nihilists, whom I might possibly meet in the course of my Siberian journey. This precaution — if precaution it was — seemed to me wholly unnecessary, since my opinion of the nihilists was already as unfavorable as the Government itself could desire. I assured Mr. Vlangalli, however, that I would see Mr. Katkoff if possible; and after thanking him again for his assistance, I bade him good-bye.



THE "FAIR-CITY" OF NIZHNI NOVGOROD, FROM THE SOUTHERN BANK OF THE OKA.

In reviewing now the representations which I made to high Russian officials before leaving St. Petersburg, I have not to reproach myself with a single act of duplicity or insincerity. I did not obtain permission to go to Siberia by means of false pretenses, nor did I at any time assume a deceptive attitude for the sake of furthering my plans. If the opinions which I now hold differ from those which I expressed to Mr. Vlangalli in 1885, it is not because I was then insincere, but because my views have since been changed by an overwhelming mass of evidence.

On the afternoon of May 31, having selected and purchased photographic apparatus, obtained all necessary books and maps, and provided ourselves with about fifty letters of introduction to teachers, mining engineers, and Government officials in all parts of Siberia, we left St. Petersburg by rail for Moscow. The distance from the Russian capital to the Siberian frontier is about 1600 miles; and the route usually taken by travelers, and always by exiles, is that which passes through the cities of Moscow, Nizhni Novgorod, Kazan, Perm, and Ekaterineburg. The eastern terminus of the Russian railway system is at Nizhni Novgorod, but in summer steamers ply constantly between that city and Perm on the

rivers Volga and Kama; and Perm is connected with Ekaterineburg by an isolated piece of railroad about 180 miles in length, which crosses the mountain chain of the Ural, and is intended to unite the navigable waters of the Volga with those of the Ob.*

Upon our arrival in Moscow I presented my sealed note of introduction to Baron Buhler, and called with him at the office of the Moscow "Gazette" for the purpose of making the acquaintance of its editor. We were disappointed, however, to find that Mr. Katkoff had just left the city and probably would be absent for two or three weeks. As we could not await his return, and as there was no other business to detain us in Moscow, we proceeded by rail to Nizhni Novgorod, reaching that city early on the morning of Thursday, June 4.

To a traveler visiting Nizhni Novgorod for the first time there is something surprising, and almost startling, in the appearance of what he supposes to be the city, and in the scene presented to him as he emerges from the railway station and walks away from the low bank of the Oka River in the direction of the Volga. The clean, well-paved streets; the long rows of substantial buildings; the spacious boulevard, shaded by leafy birches and poplars; the

* During our stay in Siberia this railroad was extended to Tiumen, on one of the tributaries of the Ob, so that St. Petersburg is now in communication, by

rail or steamer, with points in Siberia as remote as Semipalatinsk and Tomsk, the former 2600 and the latter 2700 miles away.

canal, spanned at intervals by graceful bridges; the picturesque tower of the water-works; the enormous cathedral of Alexander Nevski; the Bourse; the theaters; the hotels; the market places—all seem to indicate a great populous center of life and commercial activity; but of living inhabitants there is not a sign. Grass and weeds are growing in the middle of the empty streets and in the chinks of the travel-worn sidewalks; birds are singing fearlessly in the trees that shade the lonely and deserted boulevard; the countless shops and warehouses are all closed, barred, and padlocked; the bells are silent in the gilded belfries of the churches; and the astonished stranger may perhaps wander for a mile between solid blocks of buildings without seeing an open door, a vehicle, or a single human being. The city appears to have been stricken by a pestilence and deserted. If the new-comer remembers for what Nizhni Novgorod is celebrated, he is not long, of course, in coming to the conclusion that he is on the site of the famous fair; but the first realization of the fact that the fair is in itself a separate and independent city, and a city which during nine months of every year stands empty and deserted, comes to him with the shock of a great surprise.

The fair-city of Nizhni Novgorod is situated on a low peninsula between the rivers Oka and Volga, just above their junction, very much as New York City is situated on Manhattan Island between East River and the Hudson. In geographical position it bears the same relation to the old town of Nizhni Novgorod that New York would bear to Jersey City if the latter were elevated on a steep terraced bluff four hundred feet above the level of the Hudson. The Russian fair-city, however, differs from New York City in that it is a mere temporary market—a huge commercial caravansary where 500,000 traders assemble every year to buy and to sell commodities. In September it has frequently a population of more than 100,000 souls, and contains merchandise valued at \$75,000,000; while in January, February, or March all of its inhabitants might be fed and sheltered in the smallest of its hotels, and all of its goods might be put into a single one of its innumerable shops. Its life, therefore, is a sort of intermittent commercial fever, in which an annual paroxysm of intense and unnatural activity is followed by a long interval of torpor and stagnation.

It seems almost incredible at first that a city of such magnitude—a city which contains churches, mosques, theaters, markets, banks, hotels, a merchants' exchange, and nearly seven thousand shops and inhabitable buildings, should have so ephemeral a life, and should be so completely abandoned every

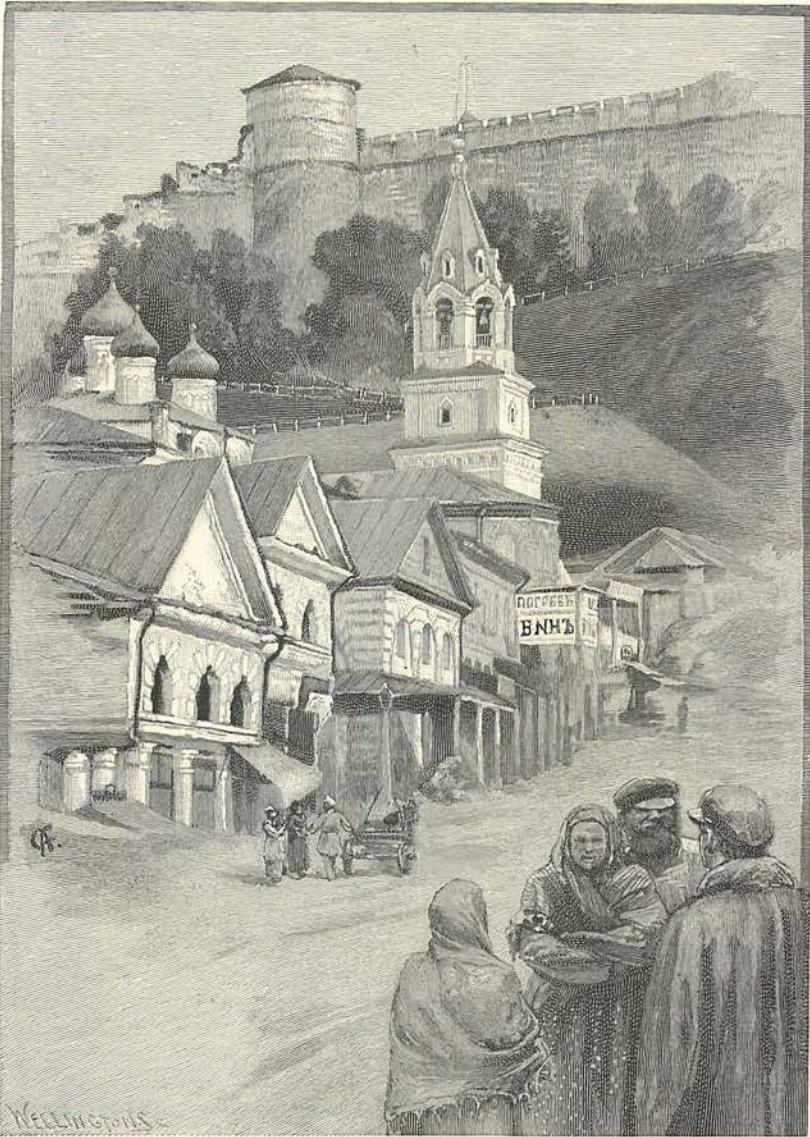
year after it has served the purpose for which it was created. When I saw this unique city for the first time, on a clear frosty night in January, 1868, it presented an extraordinary picture of loneliness and desolation. The moonlight streamed down into its long empty streets where the unbroken snow lay two feet deep upon the sidewalks; it touched with silver the white walls and swelling domes of the old fair-cathedral, from whose towers there came no clangor of bells; it sparkled on great snow-drifts heaped up against the doors of the empty houses, and poured a flood of pale light over thousands of snow-covered roofs; but it did not reveal anywhere a sign of a human being. The city seemed to be not only uninhabited, but wholly abandoned to the arctic spirits of solitude and frost. When I saw it next, at the height of the annual fair in the autumn of 1870, it was so changed as to be almost unrecognizable. It was then surrounded by a great forest of shipping; its hot, dusty atmosphere thrilled with the incessant whistling of steamers; merchandise to the value of 125,000,000 rubles lay on its shores or was packed into its 6000 shops; every building within its limits was crowded; 60,000 people were crossing every day the pontoon bridge which connected it with the old town; a military band was playing airs from Offenbach's operas on the great boulevard in front of the governor's house; and through all the streets of the re-animated and reawakened city poured a great tumultuous flood of human life.

I did not see the fair-city again until June, 1885, when I found it almost as completely deserted as on the occasion of my first visit, but in other ways greatly changed and improved. Substantial brick buildings had taken the place of the long rows of inflammable wooden shops and sheds; the streets in many parts of the city had been neatly paved; the number of stores and warehouses had largely increased; and the lower end of the peninsula had been improved and dignified by the erection of the great Alexander Nevski cathedral, which is shown in the center of the illustration on page 7, and which now forms the most prominent and striking architectural feature of the fair.

It was supposed that, with the gradual extension of the Russian railway system, and the facilities afforded by it for the distribution of merchandise throughout the empire in small quantities, the fair of Nizhni Novgorod would lose most of its importance; but no such result has yet become apparent. During the most active period of railway construction in Russia, from 1868 to 1881, the value of the merchandise brought annually to the fair rose steadily from 126,000,000 to 246,000,000

rubles,* and the number of shops and stores in the fair-city increased from 5738 to 6298. At the present time the volume of business transacted during the two fair-months amounts to something like 225,000,000 rubles, and the

old town on the other side is maintained in summer by means of a steam ferry, or a long floating bridge consisting of a roadway supported by pontoons. As the bridge, at the time of our arrival, had not been put in posi-



A STREET IN THE OLD TOWN OF NIZHNI NOVGOROD.

number of shops and stores in the fair exceeds 7000.

The station of the Moscow and Nizhni Novgorod railway is situated within the limits of the fair-city, on the left bank of the river Oka, and communication between it and the

*The value of the Russian ruble is a little less than half a dollar.

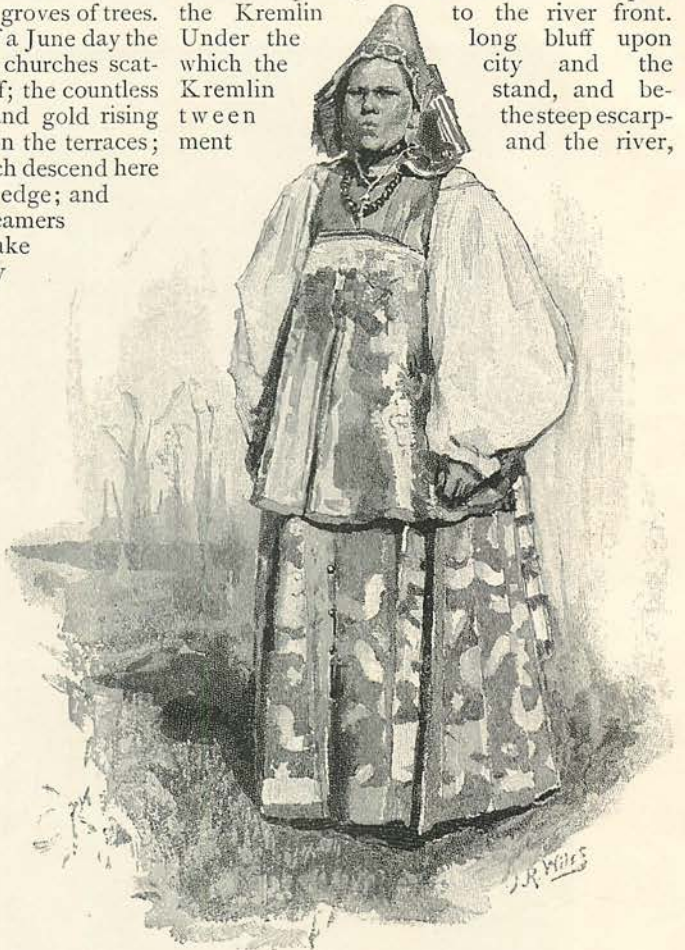
tion for the season, we crossed the river on a low flat barge in tow of a small steamer.

The view which one gets of the old fortified city of Nizhni Novgorod while crossing the Oka from the fair is both striking and picturesque. The long steep bluff upon which it is situated rises abruptly almost from the water's edge to the height of four hundred

feet, notched at intervals by deep V-shaped cuts through which run the ascending roads to the upper plateau, and broken here and there by narrow terraces upon which stand white-walled and golden-domed cathedrals and monasteries half buried in groves of trees. In the warm, bright sunshine of a June day the snowy walls of the Byzantine churches scattered along the crest of the bluff; the countless domes of blue, green, silver, and gold rising out of dark masses of foliage on the terraces; the smooth, grassy slopes which descend here and there almost to the water's edge; and the river front, lined with steamers and bright with flags—all make up a picture which is hardly surpassed in northern Russia. Fronting the Volga, near what seems to be the eastern end of the ridge, stands the ancient Kremlin,* or stronghold of the city, whose high, crenelated walls descend the steep face of the bluff toward the river in a series of titanic steps, and whose arched gateways and massive round towers carry the imagination back to the Middle Ages. Three hundred and fifty years ago this great walled inclosure was regarded as an absolutely impregnable fortress, and for more than a century it served as a secure place of refuge for the people of the city when the fierce Tartars of Kazan invaded the territories of the Grand Dukes. With the complete subjugation of the Tartar khanate, however, in the sixteenth century, it lost its importance as a defensive fortification, and soon began to fall into decay. Its thirteen towers, which were originally almost a hundred feet in height, are now half in ruins; and its walls, which have a circuit of about a mile and a quarter, would probably have fallen long ago had they not been extraordinarily thick, massive, and deeply founded. They make upon one an impression of even greater solidity and strength than do the walls of the famous Kremlin in Moscow.

* A Kremlin, or, to use the Russian form of the word, a "Kremlen," is merely a walled inclosure with towers at the corners, situated in a commanding position near the center of a city, and intended to serve as a stronghold, or place of refuge, for the inhabitants in time of war. It differs from a castle or fortress in that it generally incloses a larger area, and contains a num-

ber of buildings, such as churches, palaces, treasuries, etc., which are merely protected by it. It is popularly supposed that the only Kremlin in Russia is that of Moscow; but this is a mistake. Nizhni Novgorod, Kazan, and several other towns in that part of Russia which was subject to Tartar invasion, had strongholds of this kind.



A PEASANT WOMAN OF SIMBIRSK.

there is a narrow strip of level ground which is now given up almost wholly to commerce and is known as the "lower bazar." Upon this strip of land are huddled together in picturesque confusion a multitude of buildings of the most heterogeneous character and appearance. Pretentious modern stores, with gilded signs and plate-glass windows, stand in neighborly proximity to wretched hucksters' stalls of rough, unpainted boards; banks, hotels, and steamship offices are sandwiched

between the buildings, such as churches, palaces, treasuries, etc., which are merely protected by it. It is popularly supposed that the only Kremlin in Russia is that of Moscow; but this is a mistake. Nizhni Novgorod, Kazan, and several other towns in that part of Russia which was subject to Tartar invasion, had strongholds of this kind.

in among ship-chandlers' shops, old-clothes stalls and "traktirs"; fantastic highly colored churches of the last century appear in the most unexpected places, and give an air of sanctity to the most disreputable neighborhoods; and the entire region, from the river to the bluff, is crowded with wholesale, retail, and second-hand shops, where one can buy anything and everything—from a paper of pins, a wooden comb, or a string of dried mushrooms, to a ship's anchor, a church bell, or a steam-engine. In a single shop of the lower bazar I saw exposed for sale a set of parlor chairs, two wicker-work baby-carriages, a rustic garden seat, two cross-cut log saws, half a dozen battered samovars, a child's cradle, a steam-engine, one half of a pair of elk horns, three old boilers, a collection of telescopes, an iron church-cross four feet in height, six or eight watches, a dilapidated carriage top, feather dusters, opera-glasses, log chains, watch charms, two blacksmith's anvils, measuring tapes, old boots, stove covers, a Caucasian dagger, turning lathes, sleigh bells, pulleys and blocks from a ship's rigging, fire-engine nozzles, horse collars, an officer's sword, axe helms, carriage cushions, gilt bracelets, iron barrel-hoops, trunks, accordions, three or four soup plates filled with old nails and screws, carving-knives, vises, hinges, revolvers, old harnesses, half a dozen odd lengths of rusty stove pipe, a tin can of "mixed biscuits" from London, and a six-foot bath tub. This list of articles, which I made on the spot, did not comprise more than a third part of the dealer's heterogeneous stock in trade; but I had not time for a careful and exhaustive enumeration. In a certain way this shop was illustrative and typical of the whole lower bazar, since nothing, perhaps, in that quarter of the city is more striking than the heterogeneity of buildings, people, and trades. The whole river front is lined with landing-stages and steamers: it is generally crowded with people from all parts of the empire, and it always presents a scene of great commercial activity. Steamers are departing almost hourly for the lower Volga, the frontier of Siberia, and the far-away Caspian; huge black barges, which lie here and there at the landing-stages, are being loaded or unloaded by gangs of swarthy Tartar stevedores; small unpainted one-horse "telegas," which look like longitudinal halves of barrels mounted on four wheels, are carrying away bags, boxes, and crates from the piles of merchandise on the shore; and the broad dusty street is thronged all day with traders, peddlers, peasants, longshoremen, pilgrims, beggars, and tramps.

Even the children seem to feel the spirit of trade which controls the city; and as I

stood watching the scene on the river front, a ragged boy, not more than eight or nine years of age, whose whole stock in trade consisted of a few strings of dried mushrooms, elbowed his way through the crowd with all the assurance of an experienced peddler, shouting in a thin childish treble, "Mushrooms! Fine mushrooms! Sustain commerce, gentlemen! Buy my mushrooms and sustain commerce!"

The diversity of popular types in the lower bazar is not perhaps so great in June as it is in September, during the fair, but the peculiarities of dress are such as to make almost every figure in the throng interesting and noteworthy to a foreign observer. There are swarthy Tartars in round skull caps and long loose "khalats"; Russian peasants in greasy sheepskin coats and huge wicker-work shoes, with their legs swathed in dirty bandages of coarse linen cloth and cross-gartered with hempen cords; disreputable-looking long-haired, long-bearded monks, who solicit alms for hospitals or churches, receiving contributions on small boards covered with black velvet and transferring the money deposited thereon to big tin boxes hung from their necks and secured with enormous iron padlocks; strolling dealers in "kvas," mead, sherbet, and other seductive bright-colored drinks; brazen-throated peddlers proclaiming aloud the virtues of brass jewelry, salted cucumbers, strings of dried mushrooms, and cotton handkerchiefs stamped with railroad maps of Russia; and, finally, a surging crowd of wholesale and retail traders from all parts of the Volga River basin.

The first thing which strikes the traveler on the threshold of south-eastern Russia is the *greatness* of the country—that is, the enormous extent of its material resources, and the intense commercial activity manifested along its principal lines of communication. The average American thinks of south-eastern Russia as a rather quiet, semi-pastoral, semi-agricultural country, which produces enough for the maintenance of its own half-civilized and not very numerous population, but which, in point of commercial activity, cannot bear comparison for a moment with even the most backward of our States. He is not a little astonished, therefore, at Nizhni Novgorod, to find the shipping of the Volga occupying six or eight miles of river front; to learn that for its regulation there is in the city a shipping court with special jurisdiction; that the "pristan," or, as a Western steamboatman would say, the levee, is under the control of an officer appointed by the Minister of Ways and Communications and aided by a large staff of subordinates; that the number of steamers plying on the Volga and its tributaries is greater than the number



STREET IN A PEASANT VILLAGE ON THE VOLGA —
WATER-CARRIER IN THE FOREGROUND.

on the Mississippi; * that \$15,000,000 worth of products annually come down a single tributary of the Volga—namely, the Kama, a stream of which few Americans have ever heard; and, finally, that the waters of the Volga River system annually float nearly 5,000,000 tons of merchandise, and furnish employment to 7000 vessels and nearly 200,000 boatmen. It may be that an ordinarily well-educated American ought to know all these things; but I certainly did not know them, and they came to me with the shock of a complete surprise.

On the morning of Saturday, June 6, after having visited the fair-city and the Kremlin and made as thorough a study of Nizhni Novgorod as the time would permit, we embarked on one of the Kamenski Brothers' steamers for a voyage of nearly a thousand miles down the Volga and up the Kama to Perm.

It has been said that Egypt is the creation of the Nile. In a different sense, but with equal truth, it may be said that eastern Russia is the creation of the Volga. The ethnological composition of its population was mainly determined by that river; the whole history of the country has been intimately connected with it for more than a thousand years; the character and pursuits of all the east Russian tribes have been greatly modified by it; and upon it

* In 1880 there were on the upper and the lower Mississippi 681 steamers. The number on the Volga and its tributaries is about 700.

now depend, directly or indirectly, the welfare and prosperity of more than 10,000,000 people. From any point of view, the Volga must be regarded as one of the great rivers of the world. Its length, from the Valdai hills to the Caspian Sea, is nearly 2300 miles; its width below Tsaritsin, in time of high water, exceeds 30 miles, so that a boatman, in crossing it, loses sight entirely of its low banks and is virtually at sea; it washes the borders of nine provinces, or administrative divisions of the empire, and on its banks stand 39 cities and more than 1000 villages and settlements. The most important part of the river, commercially, is that lying between Nizhni Novgorod and the mouth of the Kama, where there ply, during the season of navigation, about 450 steamers. As far down as the so-called "Samara bend," the river presents almost everywhere a picture of busy life and activity, and is full of steamers, barges, and great hulks, like magnified canal-boats, loaded with goods from eastern Russia, Siberia,

and central Asia. The amount of merchandise produced, even in the strip of country directly tributary to the Volga itself, is enormous. Many of the agricultural villages, such as Liskovo, which the steamer swiftly passes between Nizhni Novgorod and Kazan, and which seem, from a distance, to be insignificant clusters of unpainted wooden houses, load with grain 700 vessels a year.

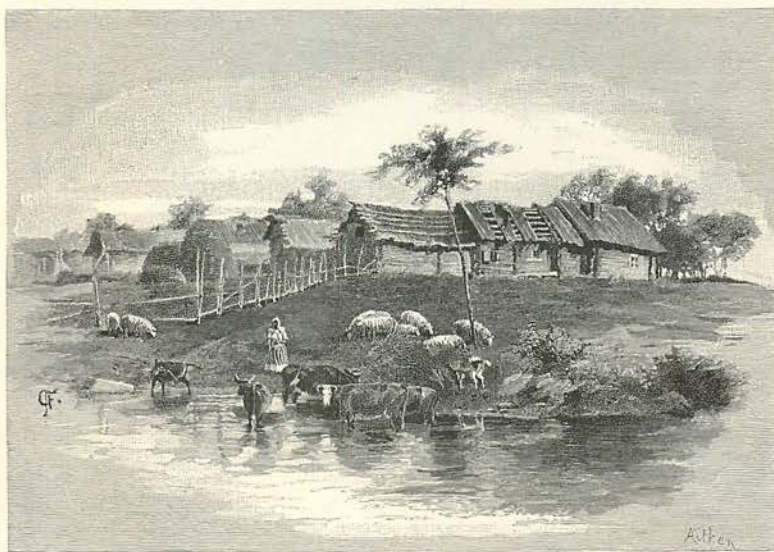
The scenery of the upper Volga is much more varied and picturesque than one would expect to find along a river running through a flat and monotonous country. The left bank, it is true, is generally low and uninteresting; but on the other side the land rises abruptly from the water's edge to a height of 400 or 500 feet, and its boldly projecting promontories, at intervals of two or three miles, break the majestic river up into long still reaches, like a series of placid lakes opening into one another and reflecting in their tranquil depths the dense foliage of the virgin forest on one side and the bold outlines of the half mountainous shore on the other. White-walled churches with silver domes appear here and there on the hills, surrounded by little villages of unpainted wooden houses, with elaborately carved and decorated gables; deep valleys, shaggy with hazel bushes, break through the wall of bluffs on the right at intervals, and afford glimpses of a rich farming country in the interior; and now and then, in sheltered nooks half up the mountain-side overlooking the

river, appear the cream-white walls and gilded domes of secluded monasteries, rising out of masses of dark-green foliage. Sometimes, for half an hour together, the steamer plows her way steadily down the middle of the stream, and the picturesque right bank glides past like a magnificent panorama with a field of vision ten miles wide; and then suddenly, to avoid a bar, the vessel sweeps in towards the land, until the wide panorama narrows to a single vivid picture of a quaint Russian hamlet which looks like an artistically contrived scene in a theater. It is so near that you can distinguish the features of the laughing peasant girls who run down into the foreground to wave their handkerchiefs at the passing steamer; or you can talk in an ordinary tone of voice with the "muzhiks" in red shirts and black velvet trousers who are lying on the grassy bluff in front of the green-domed village church. But it lasts only a moment. Before you have fairly grasped the details of the strange Russian picture it has vanished, and the steamer glides swiftly into a new reach of the river, where there is not a sign of human

the blended fragrance of flowery meadows and damp forest glens; the river lay like an expanse of shining steel between banks whose impenetrable blackness was intensified rather than relieved by a few scattered spangles of light; and from some point far away in the distance came the faint voice of a timber rafter, or a floating fisherman, singing that song dear to the heart of every Russian boatman—"V 'nis po matushke po Volge" ["Down the Mother Volga"].

After drinking a few tumblers of fragrant tea at the little center-table in the steamer's small but cozy cabin, we unrolled the blankets and pillows with which we had provided ourselves in anticipation of the absence of beds, and bivouacked, as Russian travelers are accustomed to do, on the long leather-covered couches which occupy most of the floor space in a Russian steamer, and which make the cabin look a little like an English railway carriage with all the partitions removed.

About 5 o'clock in the morning I was awakened by the persistent blowing of the steamer's whistle, followed by the stoppage of



A PEASANT HAMLET ON THE BANK OF THE VOLGA.

habitation, and where the cliffs on one side and the forest on the other seem to be parts of a vast primeval wilderness.

Fascinated by the picturesque beauty of the majestic Volga and the ever-changing novelty of the scenes successively presented to us as we crossed from side to side, or swept around great bends into new landscapes and new reaches of tranquil water, we could not bear to leave the hurricane deck until long after dark. The fresh, cool air was then filled with

the machinery, the jar of falling gang-planks, and the confused trampling of a multitude of feet over my head. Presuming that we had arrived at Kazan, I went up on deck. The sun was about an hour high and the river lay like a quivering mass of liquid silver between our steamer and the smooth, vividly green slopes of the high western bank. On the eastern side, and close at hand, was a line of the black hulls with yellow roofs and deck-houses which serve along the Volga as land-

ing-stages, and beside them lay half a dozen passenger steamers, blowing their whistles at intervals and flying all their holiday flags. Beyond them and just above high-water mark on the barren, sandy shore was a row of heterogeneous wooden shops and lodging-houses,

of Kazan stands was washed by the waters of the Volga; but it has been left four or five miles inland by the slow shifting of the river's bed to the westward; and the distant view of the city which one now gets from the shore is only just enough to stimulate the imagina-



A SIBERIAN VILLAGE GATE-KEEPER (PASKÓTNIK).

which, but for a lavish display of color in walls and roofs, would have suggested a street of a mining settlement in Idaho or Montana. There were in the immediate foreground no other buildings; but on a low bluff far away in the distance, across a flat stretch of marshy land, there could be seen a mass of walls, towers, minarets, and shining domes, which recalled to my mind in some obscure way the impression made upon me as a child by a quaint picture of "Vanity Fair" in an illustrated copy of the "Pilgrim's Progress." It was the famous old Tartar city of Kazan. At one time, centuries ago, the bluff upon which the Kremlin

tion and to excite, without gratifying, the curiosity.

The pristan, or steamer-landing of Kazan, however, is quite as remarkable in its way as the city itself. The builders of the shops, hotels, and "rooms for arrivers" on the river bank, finding themselves unable, with the scanty materials at their command, to render their architecture striking and admirable in form, resolved to make it at least dazzling and attractive in color; and the result is a sort of materialized architectural aurora borealis, which astounds if it does not gratify the beholder. While our steamer was lying at the

landing I noted a chocolate-brown house with yellow window-shutters and a green roof; a lavender house with a shining tin roof; a crimson house with an emerald roof; a sky-blue house with a red roof; an orange house with an olive roof; a house painted a bright metallic green all over; a house diversified with dark-blue, light-blue, red, green, and chocolate-brown; and, finally, a most extraordinary building which displayed the whole chromatic scale within the compass of three stories and an attic. What permanent effect, if any, is produced upon the optic nerves of the inhabitants by the habitual contemplation of their brilliantly colored and sharply contrasted dwellings I am unable to say; but I no longer wonder that "prekrasni," the Russian word for "beautiful," means literally "very red"; nor that a Russian singer imagines himself to be using a highly complimentary phrase when he describes a pretty girl as "krasnaya devitsa" ["a red maiden"]. When I think of that steamboat-landing at Kazan I am only surprised that the Russian language has not produced such forms of metaphorical expression as "a red-and-green maiden," "a purple-scarlet-and-blue melody," or "a crimson-yellow-chocolate-brown poem." It would be, so to speak, a red-white-and-blue convenience if one could express admiration in terms of color, and use the whole chromatic scale to give force to a superlative.

About 7 o'clock passengers began to arrive in carriages and droshkies from the city of Kazan, and before 8 o'clock all were on board, the last warning whistle had sounded, the lines had been cast off, and we were again under way. It was Sunday morning, and as the weather was clear and warm, we spent nearly the whole day on the hurricane deck, enjoying the sunshine and the exhilarating sense of swift movement, drinking in the odorous air which came to us from the forest-clad hills on the western bank, and making notes or sketches of the strange forms of boats, barges, and rafts which presented themselves from time to time, and which would have been enough to identify the Volga as a Russian river even had we been unable to see its shores. First came a long stately "caravan" of eight or ten huge black barges, like dismantled ocean steamers, ascending the river slowly in single file behind a powerful tug; then followed a curious kedging barge, with high bow and stern and a horse-power windlass amidships, pulling itself slowly upstream by winding in cables attached to kedging anchors which were carried ahead and dropped in turn by two or three boats' crews; and finally we passed a little Russian hamlet of ready-made houses, with elaborately carved

gables, standing on an enormous timber raft 100 feet in width by 500 in length, and intended for sale in the treeless region along the lower Volga and around the Caspian Sea. The bare-headed, red-shirted, and blue-gowned population of this floating settlement were gathered in a picturesque group around a blazing camp-fire near one end of the raft, drinking tea; and I could not help fancying that I was looking at a fragment of a peasant village which had in some way gotten adrift in a freshet and was miraculously floating down the river with all its surviving inhabitants. Now and then there came to us faintly across the water the musical chiming of bells from the golden-domed churches here and there on the right bank, and every few moments we passed a large six-oared "lodka" full of men and women in bright-colored costumes, on their way to church service.

About 11 o'clock Sunday morning we left the broad, tranquil Volga and turned into the swifter and muddier Kama, a river which rises in the mountains of the Ural on the Siberian frontier, and pursues a south-westerly course to its junction with the Volga, fifty or sixty miles below Kazan. In going from one river to the other we noticed a marked change, not only in the appearance of the people, villages, boats, and landing-stages, but in the aspect of the whole country. Everything seemed stranger, more primitive, and in a certain sense wilder. The banks of the Kama were less thickly inhabited and more generally covered with forests than those of the Volga; the white-walled monasteries, which had given picturesqueness and human interest to so many landscapes between Nizhni Novgorod and Kazan, were no longer to be seen; the barges were of a ruder, more primitive type, with carved railings and spirally striped red and blue masts surmounted by gilded suns; and the crowds of peasants on the landing-stages were dressed in costumes whose originality of design and crude brightness of color showed that they had been little affected by the sobering and conventionalizing influence of western civilization. The bright colors of the peasant costumes were attributable perhaps, in part, to the fact that, as it was Sunday, the youths and maidens came down to the steamer in holiday attire; but we certainly had not before seen in any part of Russia young men arrayed in blue, crimson, purple, pink, and violet shirts, nor young women dressed in lemon-yellow gowns, scarlet aprons, short pink over-jackets, and lilac head-kerchiefs.

Our four-days' journey up the river Kama was not marked by any particularly noteworthy incident, but it was, nevertheless, a novel and a delightful experience. The weather was as

perfect as June weather can anywhere be; the scenery was always varied and attractive, and sometimes beautifully wild and picturesque; the foliage of the poplars, aspens, and silver-birches which clothed the steep river banks,

the hills. So comfortable, pleasant, and care free had been our voyage up the Kama that when, on Wednesday, June 10, it ended at the city of Perm, we bade the little steamer *Alexander* good-bye with a feeling of sincere regret.



THE CITY OF PERM.

and in places overhung the water so as almost to sweep the hurricane deck, had the first exquisite greenness and freshness of early summer; and the open glades and meadows, which the steamer frequently skirted at a distance of not more than fifteen or twenty feet, were blue with forget-me-nots or yellow with the large double flowers of the European trol-lius. At every landing-place peasant children offered for sale great bunches of lilies of the valley, and vases of these fragrant flowers, provided by the steward, kept our little dining-saloon constantly filled with delicate perfume. Neither in the weather, nor in the scenery, nor in the vegetation was there anything to suggest an approach to the frontier of Siberia. The climate seemed almost Californian in its clearness and warmth; flowers blossomed everywhere in the greatest profusion and luxuriance; every evening we heard nightingales singing in the forests beside the river; and after sunset, when the wind was fair, many of the passengers caused samovars to be brought up and tables to be spread on the hurricane deck, and sat drinking tea and smoking cigarettes in the odorous night air until the glow of the strange northern twilight faded away over

Perm, which is the capital of the province of the same name, is a city of 32,000 inhabitants, situated on the left bank of the Kama, about 125 miles from the boundary line of Asiatic Russia. It is the western terminus of the Ural Mountain railroad, and through it passes nearly the whole of the enormous volume of Siberian commerce. In outward appearance it does not differ materially from other Russian provincial towns of its class; and although cleaner and more prosperous than Nizhni Novgorod, it is much less picturesque, both in architecture and in situation.

In Perm, where we spent only one night, we had our first skirmish with the Russian police; and although the incident has intrinsically little importance, it is perhaps worth recital as an illustration of the suspicion with which strangers are regarded on the great exile route to Siberia, and of the unlimited power of the Russian police to arrest and examine with or without adequate cause. Late in the afternoon on the day of our arrival, Mr. Frost and I set out afoot for the summit of a high hill just east of the town, which we thought would afford a good point of view for a sketch. In making our way towards it

we happened to pass the city prison; and as this was one of the first Russian prisons we had seen, and was, moreover, on the exile route to Siberia, we naturally looked at it with interest and attention. Shortly after passing it we discovered that the hill was more distant than we had supposed it to be; and as the afternoon was far advanced, we decided to postpone our sketching excursion until the following day. We thereupon retraced our steps, passed the prison the second time, and returned to our hotel. Early the next morning we again set out for the hill; and as we did not know any better or more direct route to it, we took again the street which led past the prison. On this occasion we reached our destination. Mr. Frost made a sketch of the city and its suburbs, and at the expiration of an hour, or an hour and a half, we strolled homeward. On a large, open common near the prison we were met by two droshkies, in which were four officers armed with swords and revolvers, and in full uniform. I noticed that the first couple regarded us with attentive scrutiny as they passed; but I was not as familiar at that time as I now am with the uniforms of the Russian police and gendarmes, and I did not recognize them. The two officers in the second droshky left their vehicle just before reaching us, walked away from each other until they were forty or fifty feet apart, and then advanced on converging lines to meet us. Upon looking around I found that the first pair had left their carriages and separated in a similar way behind us, and were converging upon us from that direction. Then for the first time it flashed upon my mind that they were police officers, and that we, for some inconceivable reason, were objects of suspicion, and were about to be arrested. As they closed in upon us, one of them, a good-looking gendarme officer about thirty years of age, bowed to us stiffly, and said, "Will you permit me to inquire who you are?"

"Certainly," I replied; "we are American travelers."

"When did you arrive in Perm?"

"Yesterday."

"Where did you come from?"

"From Nizhni Novgorod."

"Where are you going?"

"To Siberia."

"Ah! To Siberia! Allow me to inquire what you are going to Siberia for?"

"We are going there to travel."

"But tourists [with a contemptuous intonation] are not in the habit of going to Siberia. You must have some particular object in view. What is that object?"

I explained to him that American travelers — if not tourists — are in the habit of going

everywhere, and that the objects they usually have in view are the study of people and places, and the acquirement of knowledge. He did not seem, however, to be satisfied with this vague general statement, and plied me with all sorts of questions intended to elicit a confession of our real aims and purposes in going to such a country as Siberia. Finally he said, "Yesterday you deigned to walk past the prison."

"Yes," I replied.

"What did you do that for?"

I explained.

"You looked at it very attentively?"

"We did."

"Why did you do that?"

Again I explained.

"But you did not go up on the hill — you merely went a little way past the prison and then came back; and in going and returning you devoted all your attention to the prison. This morning it was the same thing over again. Now, what were you looking at the prison in that way for?"

When I understood from these questions how we happened to fall under suspicion, I could not help smiling in the officer's face; but as there was no responsive levity, and as all four officers seemed to regard this looking at a prison as an exceedingly grave offense, I again went into explanations. Finally the gendarme officer, to whom my statements were evidently unsatisfactory, said, a little more peremptorily, "Give me your passport, please." When informed that our passports were at the hotel, he said that we must regard ourselves as under arrest until we could satisfactorily establish our identity and explain our business in Perm. We were then separated, Frost being put into one droshky under guard of the gendarme officer, and I into another with a gray-bearded official whom I took to be the chief of police, and we all proceeded to the hotel. We were evidently taken for political conspirators meditating an attempt to release somebody from the Perm prison; and as I politely invited our captors into our room at the hotel, gave them cigarettes, and offered to get them tea to drink while they examined our papers, the suspicious young gendarme officer looked at me as if I were some new species of dangerous wild animal not classified in the books, and consequently of unknown power for evil. Our passports did not seem, for some reason, to be satisfactory; but the production of the letter of recommendation from the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs brought the comedy of errors to an abrupt termination. The gendarme officer's face flushed a little as he read it, and after a whispered consultation with the chief of police he came to me with some embarrassment and

said that he hoped we would pardon what was evidently an "unfortunate misunderstanding"; that they had taken us for two important German criminals (!) of whom they were in search, and that in detaining us they were only doing what they believed to be their duty. He hoped that they had not treated us discourteously, and said that it would gratify them very much if we would shake hands with them as an evidence that we did not harbor any resentment on account of this "lamentable mistake." We shook hands solemnly with them all, and they bowed themselves out. This little adventure, while it interested me as a practical illustration of Russian police methods, made me feel some anxiety with regard to the future. If we were arrested in this way before we had even reached the Siberian frontier, and for merely looking at the outside of a prison, what probably would happen to us when we should seriously begin our work of investigation?

On Thursday, June 11, at half-past 9 o'clock in the evening, we left Perm by the



A VERST-POST ON THE URAL RAILROAD.

Ural Mountain railroad for Ekaterineburg. As we were very tired from two days spent almost wholly in walking about the streets of the former city, we converted two of the extension seats of the railway carriage into a bed, and with the help of our blankets and pillows succeeded in getting a very comfortable night's rest.

When I awoke, about 8 o'clock on the following morning, the train was standing at the station of Biser near the summit of the Urals. The sun was shining brightly in an unclouded sky; the morning air was cool, fresh, and laden with the odor of flowers and the resinous fragrance of mountain pines; a cuckoo was singing in a neighboring grove of birches; and the glory of early summer was over all the earth. Frost made hasty botanical researches beside the railroad track and as far away from the train as he dared to venture, and came back with alpine roses, daisies, wild pansies, trollius, and quantities of other flowers to me unknown.

The scenery of the Ural where the railroad crosses the range resembles in general outline that of West Virginia where the Baltimore and Ohio railroad crosses the Alleghanies; but it differs somewhat from the latter in coloring, owing to the greater preponderance in the Ural of evergreen trees. All the forenoon, after leaving Biser, the train swept around great curves in a serpentine course among the forest-clad hills, sometimes running for an hour at a time through a dense larch wood, where there was not a sign of human life; sometimes dashing past placer mining camps, where hundreds of men and women were at work washing auriferous gravel; and sometimes coming out into beautiful park-like openings diversified with graceful clumps of silver-birch, and carpeted with turf almost as smooth and green as that of an English lawn. Flowers were everywhere abundant. Roses, dandelions, violets, wild strawberries, and lilies of the valley were in blossom all along the track, and occasionally we crossed an open glade in the heart of the forest where the grass was almost entirely hidden by a vivid sheet of yellow trollius.

We were greatly surprised to find in this wild mining region of the Ural, and on the very remotest frontier of European Russia, a railroad so well built, perfectly equipped, and luxuriously appointed as the road over which we were traveling from Perm to Ekaterineburg. The stations were the very best we had seen in Russia; the road-bed was solid and well ballasted; the rolling stock would not have suffered in comparison with that of the best lines in the empire; and the whole railroad property seemed to be in the most perfect possible order. Unusual attention evidently had been paid to the ornamentation of the grounds lying adjacent to the stations and the track. Even the verst-posts were set in neatly fitted mosaics three or four feet in diameter of colored Ural stones. The station of Nizhni Tagil, on the Asiatic slope of the mountains, where we stopped half an hour for dinner, would have been in the highest degree creditable to the best railroad in the United States. The substantial station building, which was a hundred feet or more in length, with a covered platform twenty feet wide extending along the whole front, was tastefully painted in shades of brown and had a red sheet-iron roof. It stood in the middle of a large, artistically planned park or garden, whose smooth, velvety greensward was broken by beds of blossoming flowers and shaded by the feathery foliage of graceful white-stemmed birches; whose winding walks were bordered by neatly trimmed hedges; and whose air was filled with the perfume of wild roses and the murmuring splash

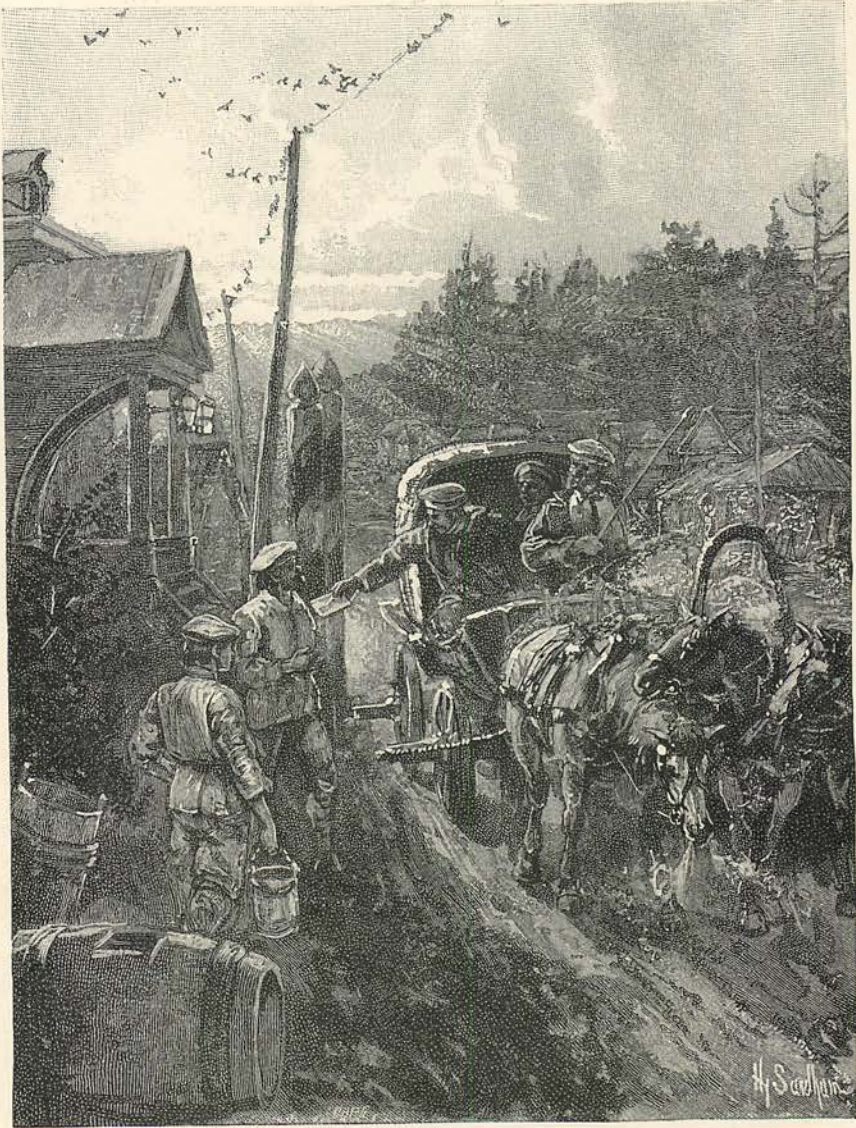


A STREET IN EKATERINEBURG.

of falling water from the slender jet of a sparkling fountain. The dining-room of the station had a floor of polished oak inlaid in geometrical patterns, a high dado of dark carved wood, walls covered with oak-grain paper, and a stucco cornice in relief. Down the center of the room ran a long dining-table, beautifully set with tasteful china, snowy napkins, high glass epergnes and crystal candelabra, and ornamented with potted plants, little cedar-trees in green tubs, bouquets of cut flowers, artistic pyramids of polished wine-bottles, druggists' jars of colored water, and an aquarium full of fish, plants, and artificial rock-work. The chairs around the table were of dark hard wood elaborately turned and carved; at one end of the room was a costly clock as large as an American jeweler's "regulator," and at the other end stood a huge bronzed oven by which the apartment was warmed in winter. The waiters were all in evening dress, with low-cut waistcoats, spotless shirt-fronts, and white ties; and the cooks, who filled the waiters' orders as in an English grill room, were dressed from head to foot in white linen and wore square white caps. It is not an exaggeration to say that this was one of the neatest, most tastefully furnished, and most attractive public dining-rooms that I ever entered in any part of the world; and as I sat there eating a well-cooked and well-served dinner of four courses, I found it utterly impossible to realize that I

was in the unheard-of mining settlement of Nizhni Tagil, on the Asiatic side of the mountains of the Ural. This, however, was our last glimpse of civilized luxury for many long, weary months, and after that day we did not see a railway station for almost a year.

Early in the evening of Friday, June 12, we reached the city of Ekaterineburg, on the eastern slope of the Urals, about 150 miles from the Siberian frontier. As the railway from Ekaterineburg to Tiumen had not then been completed, we began at this point with horses a journey which lasted nine months, and covered in the aggregate a distance of about 8000 miles. At the time when we reached Ekaterineburg there was in operation between that city and Tiumen an excellent horse express service, by means of which travelers were conveyed over the intervening 200 miles of country in the comparatively short time of 48 hours. The route was let by the Government to a horse express company, which sold through tickets, provided the traveler with a vehicle, and carried him to his destination with relays of horses stationed along the road at intervals of about eighteen miles. The vehicle furnished for the traveler's use in summer is a large, heavy, four-wheeled carriage called a "tarantas," which consists of a boat-shaped body without seats, a heavy leathern top or hood, and a curtain by which the vehicle can be



A POST STATION ON THE GREAT SIBERIAN ROAD.

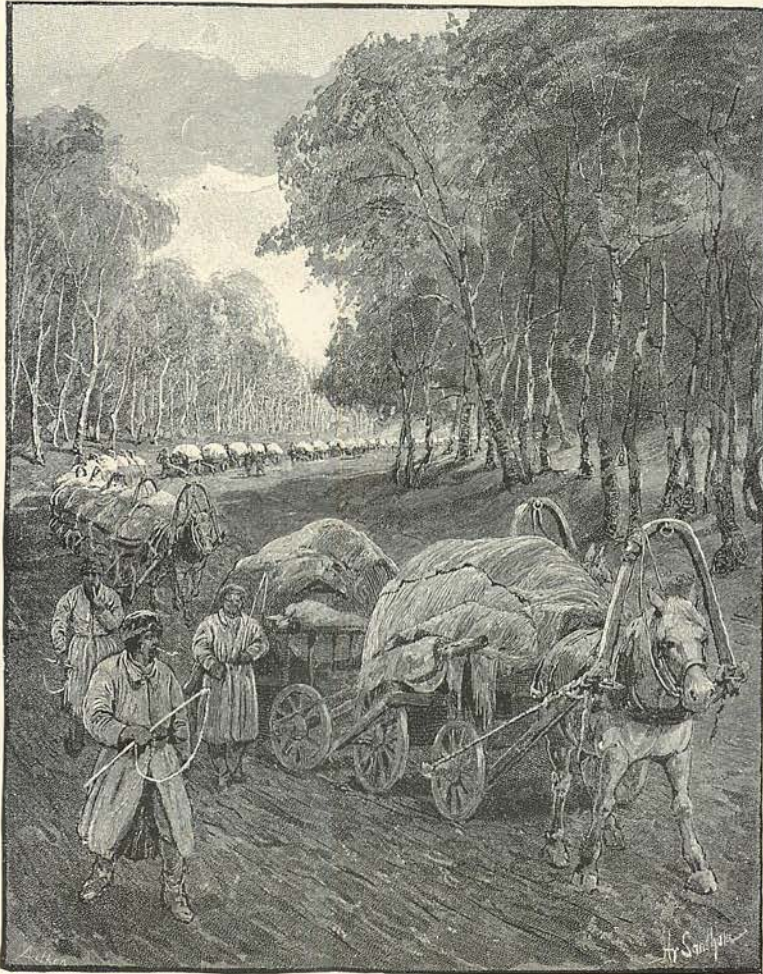
closed in stormy weather. The body of the tarantas is mounted upon two or more long stout poles, which unite the forward with the rear axletree, and serve as rude springs to break the jolting caused by a rough road. The traveler usually stows away his baggage in the bottom of this boat-shaped carriage, covers it with straw, rugs, and blankets, and reclines on it with his back supported by one or more large soft pillows. The driver sits sidewise on the edge of the vehicle in front of the passenger and drives with four reins a team of three horses harnessed abreast. The rate of speed attained on a good road is about eight miles an hour.

On the evening of June 16, having bought through tickets, selected a tarantas, and stowed away our baggage in it as skillfully as possible, we climbed to our uncomfortable seat on Mr. Frost's big trunk, and gave the signal for a start. Our gray-bearded driver gathered up his four reins of weather-beaten rope, shouted "Noo rodneeya!" ["Now, then, my relatives!"], and with a measured jangle, jangle, jangle of two large bells lashed to the arch over the shaft-horse's back we rode away through the wide unpaved streets of Ekaterineburg, across a spacious parade-ground in front of the soldiers' barracks, out between two square white pillars surmounted by double-

headed eagles, and then into a dark, gloomy forest of pines and firs.

When we had passed through the gate of Ekaterineburg we were on the "great Siberian road" — an imperial highway which extends from the mountains of the Ural to the head-waters of the Amur River, a distance of more than three thousand miles. If we had

large wooden pins. Every horse is fastened by a long halter to the preceding wagon, so that a train of fifty or a hundred obozes forms one unbroken caravan from a quarter of a mile to half a mile in length. We passed 538 of these loaded wagons in less than two hours, and I counted 1445 in the course of our first day's journey. No further evidence was needed



A TRAIN OF FREIGHT WAGONS (OBOZES) ON THE SIBERIAN ROAD.

ever supposed Siberia to be an unproductive arctic waste, we soon should have been made aware of our error by the long lines of loaded wagons which we met coming into Ekaterineburg from the Siberian frontier. These transport wagons, or "obozes," form a characteristic feature of almost every landscape on the great Siberian road from the Ural Mountains to Tiumen. They are small four-wheeled, one-horse vehicles, rude and heavy in construction, piled high with Siberian products, and covered with coarse matting securely held in place by

of the fact that Siberia is not a land of desolation. Commercial products at the rate of 1500 tons a day do not come from a barren arctic waste.

As it gradually grew dark towards midnight, these caravans began to stop for rest and refreshment by the roadside, and every mile or two we came upon a picturesque bivouac on the edge of the forest, where a dozen or more oboz drivers were gathered around a cheerful camp-fire in the midst of their wagons, while their liberated but hopped horses grazed and jumped



BIVOUAC OF A PARTY OF TEAMSTERS (OBOZ DRIVERS).

awkwardly here and there along the road or among the trees. The gloomy evergreen forest, lighted up from beneath by the flickering blaze and faintly tinged above by the glow of the northern twilight, the red and black Rembrandt outlines of the wagons, and the group of men in long kaftans and scarlet or blue shirts gathered about the camp-fire drinking tea, formed a strange, striking, and peculiarly Russian picture.

We traveled without stop throughout the night, changing horses at every poststation, and making about eight miles an hour over a fairly good road. The sun did not set until half-past 9 and rose again about half-past 2, so that it was not at any time very dark. The villages through which we passed were sometimes of

great extent, but consisted almost invariably of only two lines of log houses standing with their gables to the road, and separated one from another by inclosed yards without a sign anywhere of vegetation or trees. One of these villages formed a double row five miles in length of separate houses, all fronting on the Tsar's highway. Around every village there was an inclosed area of pasture land, varying in extent from 200 to 500 acres, within which were kept the inhabitants' cattle; and at the point where the inclosing fence crossed the road, on each side of the village, there were a gate and a gate-keeper's hut. These village gate-keepers are almost always old and broken-down men, and in Siberia they are generally criminal exiles. It is their duty

to see that none of the village cattle stray out of the inclosure, and to open the gates for passing vehicles at all hours of the day and night. From the village commune they receive for their services a mere pittance of three or four rubles a month, and live in a wretched hovel made of boughs and earth, which throughout the year is warmed, lighted,

grouped in parties and sent to their places of banishment on foot. Able-bodied exiles of both sexes, unless they belong to certain privileged classes, are compelled to walk; but rude carts or telegas are provided for the sick and the infirm. As I did not have an opportunity to travel with a marching party of exiles until I reached Tomsk, I will not in this paper



HUTS OF VILLAGE GATE-KEEPERS.

and filled with smoke by an open fire on the ground.

On the next day after leaving Ekaterineburg we saw for the first time an étape, or exile station house, and began to pass parties of criminals on their way to Siberia. Since the establishment of regular steam communication between Nizhni Novgorod and Perm, and the completion of the Ural Mountain railroad, exiles from points west of the Urals have been transported by rail and barge from the forwarding prisons of Moscow, Nizhni Novgorod, and Kazan to Ekaterineburg. None of them are now compelled to march until after they have crossed the Urals, when those destined for points in western Siberia are

attempt to describe the life of such a party on the road.

On the second day after our departure from Ekaterineburg, as we were passing through a rather open forest between the villages of Markova and Tugulimskaya, our driver suddenly pulled up his horses, and turning to us said, "Vot granitsa" ["Here is the boundary"]. We sprang out of the tarantas and saw, standing by the roadside, a square pillar ten or twelve feet in height, of stuccoed or plastered brick, bearing on one side the coat of arms of the European province of Perm, and on the other that of the Asiatic province of Tobolsk. It was the boundary post of Siberia. No other spot between St. Petersburg and the Pacific

is more full of painful suggestions, and none has for the traveler a more melancholy interest than the little opening in the forest where stands this grief-consecrated pillar. Here hundreds of thousands of exiled human beings — men, women, and children; princes, nobles, and peasants — have bidden good-bye forever to friends, country, and home.

No other boundary post in the world has witnessed so much human suffering, or been passed by such a multitude of heart-broken people. More than 170,000 exiles have traveled this road since 1878, and more than half a million since the beginning of the present century. As the boundary post is situated about half-way between the last European and the first Siberian étape, it has always been customary to allow exile parties to stop here for rest and for a last good-bye to home and country. The Russian peasant, even when a criminal, is deeply attached to his native land; and heart-rending scenes have been witnessed around the boundary pillar when such a party, overtaken perhaps by frost and snow in the early autumn, stopped here for a last farewell. Some gave way to unrestrained grief; some comforted the weeping; some knelt and pressed their faces to the loved soil of their native country, and collected a little earth to take with them into exile; and a few pressed their lips to the European side of the cold brick pillar, as if kissing good-bye forever to all that it symbolized.

At last the stern order "Stroisa!" ["Form ranks!"] from the under officer of the convoy put an end to the rest and the leave-taking, and at the word "March!" the gray-coated troop of exiles and convicts crossed themselves hastily all together, and, with a confused jingling of chains and leg-fetters, moved slowly away past the boundary post into Siberia.

Until recently the Siberian boundary post was covered with brief inscriptions, good-byes, and the names of exiles scratched or penciled on the hard cement with which the pillar was originally overlaid. At the time of our visit, however, most of this hard plaster had apparently been pounded off, and only a few words, names, and initials remained. Many of the inscriptions, although brief, were significant and touching. In one place, in a man's hand, had been written the words "Praschai Marya!" ["Good-bye, Mary!"] Who the writer was, who Mary was, there is nothing now left to show; but it may be that to the exile who scratched this last farewell on the boundary pillar "Mary" was all the world, and that in crossing the Siberian line the writer was leaving behind him forever, not only home and country, but love.

After picking a few flowers from the grass at the base of the boundary pillar, we climbed into our carriage, said "Good-bye" to Europe, as hundreds of thousands had said good-bye before us, and rode away into Siberia.

George Kennan.



INTERLUDES.

I. MEMORY.

MY mind lets go a thousand things,
Like dates of wars and deaths of kings,
And yet recalls the very hour —
'T was noon by yonder village tower,
And on the last blue noon in May —
The wind came briskly up this way,
Crisping the brook beside the road;
Then, pausing here, set down its load
Of pine-scents, and shook listlessly
Two petals from that wild-rose tree.

II. A REFRAIN.

HIGH in a tower she sings,
I, passing by beneath,
Pause and listen, and catch
These words of passionate breath —
"Asphodel, flower of Life, amaranth, flower of Death!"