

EXILES AT IRKUTSK.



OUR ride of 1040 miles from the city of Tomsk to the capital of Eastern Siberia was in some respects a harder and more exhausting journey than that from Tiumen to the mountains of the Altai. Long-continued rain had spoiled the road and rendered it almost impassable in places; the jolting of our heavy tarantas through deep ruts and over occasional stretches of imperfect corduroy gave us violent headaches and prevented us from getting any restful sleep; warm, nourishing food was rarely to be obtained at the post stations; we had not yet provided ourselves with winter clothing, and suffered more or less every night from cold; and finally, we were tormented constantly by predatory insects from the roadside prisons and étapes. No single hardship connected with our investigation of the exile system was more trying to me than the utter impossibility of escaping from parasitic vermin. Cold, hunger, sleeplessness, and fatigue I could bear with reasonable patience and fortitude; but to be forced to live for weeks at a time in clothing infested with fleas, lice, or bed-bugs from the unclean bodies of common criminal convicts not only seemed to me intolerable in itself, but gave me a humiliating sense of physical defilement that was almost as bad as a consciousness of moral degradation. We tried in every possible way to rid ourselves of these parasitic prison insects, but without success. The older and more neglected étapes along the road were swarming with vermin of all sorts, and whenever we examined one of these places we came away from it with a small but varied entomological collection in our clothing. The insects soon secured lodgment in our blankets and pillows as well as in the crevices and lining of our tarantas, and then it was impossible either to exterminate or to escape them. After throwing away successively two or three suits of underclothing, I abandoned all hope of relief and reconciled myself to the inevitable as best I could. There were insects on my body or in my clothing during the greater part of four months, and when I was able to undress for the first time after our nine-days' journey

from Krasnoyarsk to Irkutsk I found myself spotted and blotched from head to foot as if I was suffering from some foul eruptive disease. It is not pleasant, of course, to go into these details, but I wish the reader to understand clearly and definitely what life in an étape is, and what Siberian exile means to a cultivated human being.¹

I do not know that it is possible to get rid entirely of obnoxious insects in old and sometimes half-decayed buildings through which pass every year thousands of criminals from the lowest social classes. It is possible, however, to keep the étapes decently clean and to provide the exiles, both in the forwarding prisons and on the road, with proper facilities for bathing and for changing and washing their clothing. How far these things are done now I shall try to show by quoting in another part of this paper an official statement made to me soon after my arrival in Irkutsk.

As we approached the East Siberian capital, towards the end of the second week in September, the weather finally cleared up, and upon the south-eastern horizon, far away in the distance, we caught sight of the blue, ethereal, snow-crowned peaks of Tunka, situated on the frontier of Mongolia near the southern end of Lake Baikal. They were evidence that Irkutsk was near. When the morning of Sunday, September 13, dawned cool and bright we found ourselves riding over a good road, along the swift but tranquil current of the river Angara, and through a country the extensive cultivation and prosperous appearance of which indicated its proximity to a market. About 2 o'clock in the afternoon we stopped to change horses at the last post station, and with inspiring anticipations of rest, sleep, clean linen, and letters from home we entered the travelers' waiting-room and read, in the official distance-table hanging against the wall, the significant words and figures:

POST STATION OF BOKOFSKAYA.

DISTANT

From St. Petersburg	5601 versts.
From Irkutsk	13 versts.

¹ A common method of gambling among criminal convicts in Siberian étapes is to spread down an overcoat or a dirty linen foot-wrapper on the floor of the kamera, and guess at the number of fleas that will jump upon it within a certain length of time. Every convict, of course, backs his guess with a wager. Another method, equally common, is to draw two small concen-

tric circles on one of the sleeping-platforms, put a number of lice simultaneously within the inner circle, and then give all the money that has been wagered on the event to the convict whose louse first crawls across the line of the outer circle. Exiles on the road are not supposed to have playing-cards, but facilities for gambling in the manner above described are never lacking.

You may subtract 13 from 5601, or divide 5601 by 13, or put the two numbers through any other mathematical process that you choose, but you will never fully appreciate the difference between them until you have traveled 5601 versts in the Russian Empire and have only 13 versts more to go.

As soon as fresh horses could be harnessed we dashed away up the Angara towards Irkutsk, looking eagerly forward to catch the first possible glimpse of its gilded domes and its snowy cathedral walls. I had not seen the city in

of the city. I was somewhat disappointed in its appearance. Its gilded or colored domes, white belfries, and scattered masses of foliage, when seen from the opposite side of the river, give to it a certain half-oriental picturesque-ness; but to an observer in its streets it presents itself as a large, busy, thriving, but irregularly built and unattractive Russian provincial town. After unsuccessfully seeking shelter in the new and pretentious Moscow House and in the Siberian Hotel, we finally went to the Hotel Deko, where, as we were informed, Lieutenants Harber and Scheutze staid when they passed through the city in 1882 on their way to the Lena Delta. An elderly and rather talkative servant who brought

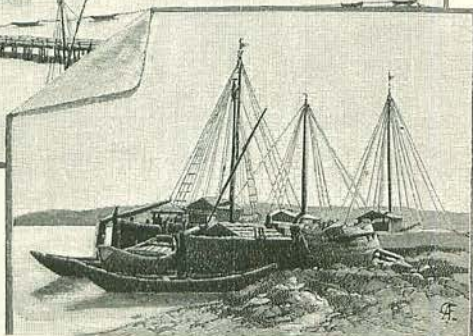
EXTENSION OF VIEW BELOW.



IRKUTSK FROM THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE RIVER.

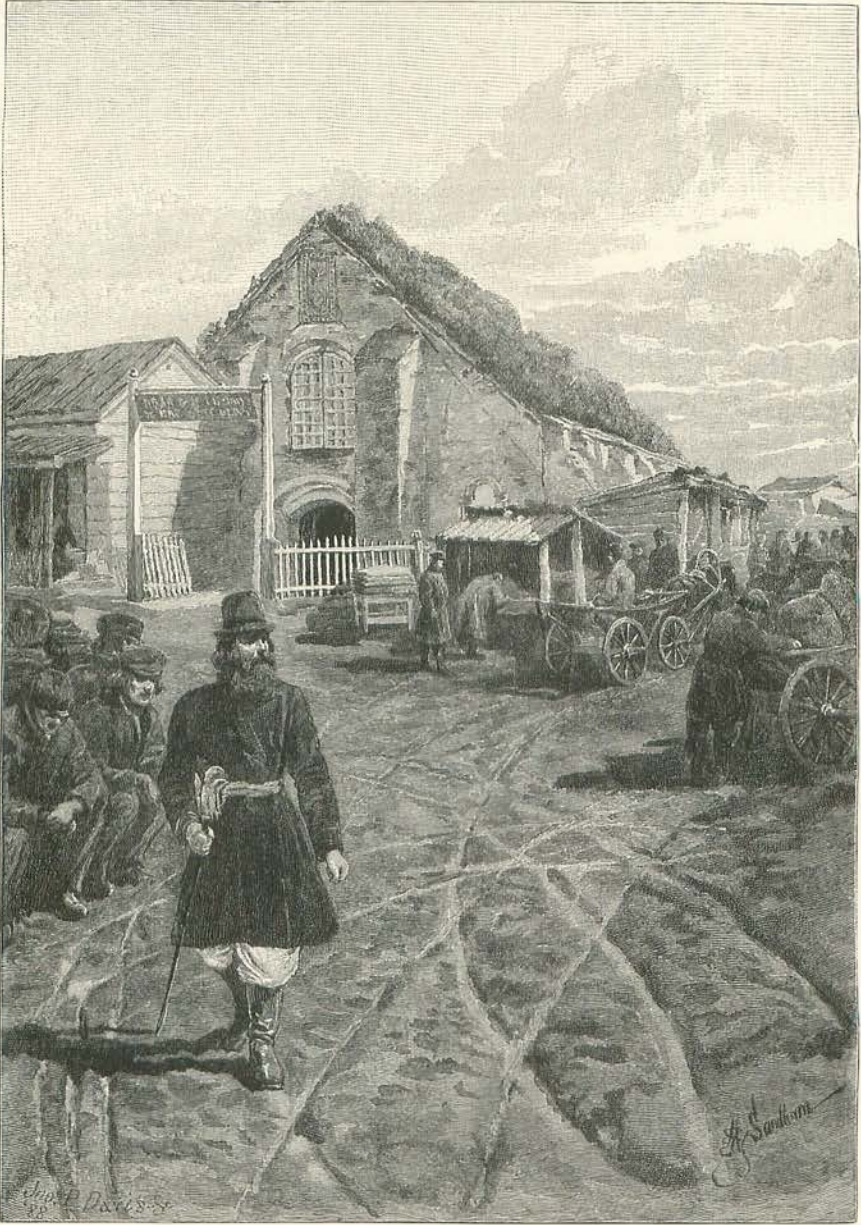
eighteen years, and meanwhile it had been almost entirely destroyed by fire, and had been rebuilt. I feared, therefore, that it would not present so beautiful and striking an appearance as it did when I saw it first, in the winter of 1867. About five versts from the city we passed the picturesque white-walled monastery of Vosnesensk, with a throng of dirty, ragged, long-haired pilgrims gathered about its principal entrance, and beyond it we began to meet unarmed soldiers, peasants, peddlers, tramps, and nondescript vagabonds of all sorts who had been spending the Sabbath-day in the city and were straggling back on foot to their respective places of abode in the suburban villages. Nearly half of them were more or less intoxicated, and the number of open "kabaks," or drinking-places, that we saw by the road seemed fully adequate to explain if not to excuse their condition.

We crossed the swift current of the Angara by means of a "swing," or pendulum, ferry, and drove up from the landing into the streets



BOATS ON THE ANGARA RIVER.

our luggage to our room introduced himself by saying that he always used to wait on Mr. Harber and Mr. Scheutze, and that the former loved him so that he called him "Zhan" (John). He seemed to think that "Zhan" was an American nickname expressive of the tenderest and most affectionate regard, and that he needed no other recommendation than this to an American traveler. I told him that if he would take care of us properly we also would call him "Zhan," at which he seemed very much gratified. From the frequency and the pride with which he afterwards referred to this caressing nickname, I feel confident that when he comes to die, and a



OLD POWDER MAGAZINE AND BAZAR.

tombstone is placed over his mortal remains, no possible enumeration thereon of his many virtues will give to his freed spirit half so much pleasure as the simple epitaph,

THE
AMERICANS
CALLED HIM
"ZHAN."

It was so late when we reached Irkutsk Sunday afternoon, and we were so tired from our thousand-mile ride, that we did not at-

tempt to do anything except bathe, change our clothing, dine, and go to bed. Monday, after we had sent our passports to the police station, Mr. Frost strolled down to the riverside to make some sketches, while I went out to look at the city and find, if possible, a certain political exile to whom I had a letter of introduction.

Irkutsk is situated on the right, or northern, bank of the Angara, about forty miles from the point where that navigable river flows out of Lake Baikal. At the time of our visit it had a

population of 36,000, and was therefore the largest city in Siberia. It contained an excellent weekly newspaper,¹ a public library, a branch of the Imperial Geographical Society, a good theater, and about thirty public schools, and the business of its merchants, traders, and manufacturers amounted annually to more than 11,000,000 rubles. The city had not yet fully recovered from the great fire of July, 1879, which destroyed nearly 4000 buildings, rendered homeless 15,000 people, and consumed property valued at 20,000,000 rubles. Traces of this fire were still to be seen in many parts of the city, and even where such traces were not visible the streets and buildings had a raggedness and newness that suggested a rapidly growing frontier mining town rather than a city founded in 1652. Generally speaking, it seemed to me a much less interesting and attractive place than when I saw it first in 1867. One of the most curious and apparently one of the oldest buildings spared by the fire was a massive stone powder magazine, which stood on the outskirts of the open-air bazar in the midst of the lower half of the city. Its roof was overgrown with grass and weeds; its sides were incrustated with the barnacle-like stalls and booths of retail traders, and around it, during all the busy hours of the day, surged a throng of Buriats, Mongols, Cossacks, and Russian peasants, who seemed to be buying or bargaining for all sorts of merchandise, from a tarantas or a telega to a second-hand pair of boots.

After exploring the bazar, rambling about the city for two or three hours, and delivering some of my letters of introduction, I returned to the hotel. Zhan, with a perturbed countenance, met me in the hall and informed me that the chief of police had just been there after us and had left a verbal request that we call upon him at once. Zhan's experience of life had evidently convinced him that a visit from the chief of police, like the appearance of a stormy petrel at sea, was a threatening phenomenon; and although he asked no questions, he looked at me with some bewilderment and anxiety. Upon going to our room I found two cards bearing the name of Christopher Fomich Makofski, the Irkutsk chief of police, a gentleman with whom we were destined to become somewhat intimately acquainted, and an officer who had been connected with one of the ghastliest tragedies in the recent history of political exile—the hunger strike in the Irkutsk prison. So far as I could remember, there had been nothing suspicious in our movements since our arrival in Irkutsk, and

I was at a loss to know why we were so soon "wanted"; but I had always made it a rule in Russia to obey promptly the first summons of the police, and in less than ten minutes Mr. Frost and I were on our way to Captain Makofski's house. Learning that he was not at home, we left cards and drove to the central police station. He was not there. Having thus done all that we could, we returned to the hotel, and Mr. Frost went out again to sketch the old powder magazine shown in the illustration on the opposite page. Half an hour later Zhan appeared with a dejected air, holding gingerly between his fingers another card of the chief of police, who, he said, was waiting in the corridor and wished to see us. This second call within two hours surprised me a little, but of course I told Zhan to show the chief of police in. I heard quick footsteps and the jingle of spurs in the hall, and in another instant Captain Makofski, in full uniform, entered the room. I was prepared for something unpleasant, and rose from my chair fully expecting to meet a man with a stern official face who would look at me suspiciously and either tell me that there was something wrong with my passport, or else inquire how long and for what purpose I had been looking up political exiles. Imagine my surprise to see a rather handsome officer of middle age, with good features, blue eyes, closely cut hair, and a full brown beard, who advanced to meet me with outstretched hand, and whose face fairly beamed with smiling cordiality as he said: "I am Makofski, the chief of police. I have the pleasure of knowing you by reputation,—I have read your book,—and when an eminent foreign traveler comes to Siberia to study the country, I regard it as only my duty to call upon him and offer my services."

I was so nearly paralyzed with astonishment at this wholly unexpected greeting that for a moment I could hardly reply; but I managed to thank him and ask him to take a seat. We had a pleasant chat of ten minutes with regard to the roads, the weather, our Siberian experiences, the changed appearance of Irkutsk, etc., and then Captain Makofski said: "I understand that you are interested, among other things, in prisons and the exile system. I think you will find the city prison here in good condition. I will send some one to show you through it, and I will not forewarn the prison officers that you are coming—you shall see it just as it is every day."

"This," I said to myself, "is the kind of chief of police that every well-regulated Siberian city ought to have."

In the general discussion of the exile system which followed, Captain Makofski admitted that it was a great burden to the country and

¹ The "Sibir," edited by Mr. M. V. Zagoskin. After a long struggle with the press censorship, this enterprising and ably conducted newspaper has finally been suppressed.

an evil thing in itself, but he said that there did not seem to be any prospect of its speedy abolition.

"The chief difficulty in the way," he said, "is the financial difficulty. The adoption of a central prison system in European Russia in place of the exile system has been suggested and discussed, but the change would necessitate the building of twenty large new prisons at a cost of about ten million rubles, and the financial condition of the country is such as to render this impracticable."

While we were talking Mr. Frost came in, and after some further general conversation the chief of police took his leave, urging us to call upon him informally and soon. I could not at this interview fully make up my mind with regard to his character and motives. He seemed to be everything that was amiable; but there was a suggestion of surface artificiality about his beaming smile and a touch of exaggeration in his complimentary deference which suggested diplomacy rather than perfect sincerity. I felt, however, that I had no right on this ground to throw stones at anybody, since I myself was living in a very large and very fragile glass house.

On Wednesday we returned Captain Makofski's call, and Thursday afternoon he came to our hotel to escort us to the prisons. The general city prison and the forwarding prison of Irkutsk are situated side by side a little out of the busy part of the city, from which they are separated by a small shallow stream called the Ushakofka. The forwarding prison, which at Captain Makofski's suggestion we visited first, proved to be nothing more than a large but old and half-decayed *étape*, varying from the usual roadside type of such buildings only in size and in the arrangement of its *kameras*. One could see at a glance that it was in very bad repair. The logs in some places had rotted almost entirely away; the stockade around the court-yard looked old and weather-beaten; and in almost every window one or more panes of glass had been broken out and the holes had been stopped with rags, old clothes, or pieces of coarse dirty matting. Captain Makofski, observing that I noticed these things, said in explanation of them that it had not been thought best to make extensive repairs, because there was a plan under consideration for the erection of a new building.¹ As we entered the main corridor the officer of the day sprang hastily to the door, saluted the warden, who was with us, and in a sort of rapid mo-

notonous recitative said, without once taking breath, "Your-high-nobility-I-have-the-honor-to-report-that-the-condition-of-the-Irkutsk-forwarding-prison-on-this-the-5th-day-of-September-1885-is-blagopoloochno [prosperous or satisfactory] and-that-it-now-contains-271-prisoners." The warden nodded his head, said "All right," and we began our inspection of the prison. It seemed to me an extremely dreary, gloomy, and neglected place. Its *kameras* did not differ essentially from those in the forwarding prison of Tomsk, except that they were less crowded. Most of them were fairly well lighted, they were warmed by large square brick ovens, and they contained no furniture except low plank sleeping-platforms of the usual type. The prisoners had no bedding except their overcoats, and in a few cases small thin "crazy quilts" about two feet wide and six feet long, which they had evidently made for themselves out of countless hoarded rags and scraps of cloth and which they used to spread down upon, and thus soften a little, the hard planks of the nares. I did not see a blanket nor a pillow in the prison. The *kameras* contained from twenty to forty men each, and the heavy foulness of the air showed that there was little or no ventilation. The floors, judged by Siberian standards, were not disgracefully dirty, but they had been freshly sprinkled with white sand in evident anticipation of our visit. Throughout the prison the men seemed to be wholly separated from the women and children, and in the *kameras* devoted to the latter there was less overcrowding, more cleanliness, and purer air.

From the forwarding prison we went to the general city prison, which stood about a hundred yards away on the same street, and which consisted of a large two-story building of brick covered with white stucco and roofed with tin. In general type it resembled a little the forwarding prison of Tiumen; but it differed from the latter in having an interior court-yard 75 or 100 feet square which, by means of graveled walks and prim geometrical flower-beds, had been turned into a sort of garden and which served as a place of exercise for the inmates. This prison was erected in 1861 at a cost of 62,000 rubles, and was intended to accommodate 450 prisoners. At the time of our visit it held 743, and the warden admitted to me that it sometimes contained 1500. According to Mr. S. S. Popoff, who made a special study of this prison and who wrote a monograph upon it for the newspaper "Sibir," no less than two thousand prisoners have at times been packed into its *kameras*. In other words, every cell has been made to hold more than four times the number of prisoners for which it was intended.² The results of such overcrowding I have already described several

¹ Three years have elapsed since that time, but Irkutsk has no new forwarding prison yet.

² "The Prisoners of the Irkutsk Prison Castle, and their Maintenance," by S. S. Popoff, *Sbornik of the newspaper "Sibir,"* p. 210. Irkutsk, 1876.

times in my sketches of other Siberian prisons. The air in the kameras was somewhat less poisonous than in the forwarding prison of Tiumen, but it was nevertheless very foul, and many piteous complaints of it were made by the prisoners, both to Captain Makofski and to me, as we passed through the cells. The condition of the atmosphere in the overcrowded and badly ventilated hospital seemed to me to be something terrible. Although we went through only two or three wards, and that hastily, and although I held my breath almost to the point of suffocation rather than take such terribly polluted air into my lungs, I came out feeling faint, sick, and giddy.¹

The prevalent diseases here, as in other Siberian prisons, were typhus fever, scurvy, anæmia, rheumatism, and bronchitis—all of them disorders pointing to unfavorable sanitary conditions.

From the hospital we crossed the little interior garden to the so-called "secret" or solitary-confinement cells, where the chief of police said there was one political prisoner with whom he would allow me to talk. I had already heard much of the prison life of the Russian revolutionists, but I had not as yet seen a single one actually in solitary confinement. Entering a sort of hall at one corner of the court-yard, Captain Makofski, accompanied by a turnkey, preceded us through a locked and grated door into a long narrow corridor, where an armed sentry was pacing back and forth in front of a row of cells. The heavy wooden doors of these cells were secured by padlocks, and in the middle of every one was a small square aperture through which food could be passed and the prisoner be watched by the guard. The name of the political offender whom we were about to visit was Ferdinand Liustig,—formerly an army officer, Captain Makofski thought,—who had been arrested in St. Petersburg in March, 1881, soon after the assassination of the late Tsar. He had been tried as a revolutionist, had been sentenced to four years of penal servitude, had finished his term, and was on his way from the mines of Kara to some place in Eastern Si-

beria, where he was to be settled as a forced colonist.

The turnkey unlocked and threw open a door marked "No. 6," and we stepped into a long but narrow and gloomy cell, where a good-looking young man with closely cut hair, blue eyes, and a full brown beard was sitting in a dejected attitude upon a small wooden bed. He rose hastily when we entered, as if he were anticipating some change in his fortunes, and Captain Makofski, with an air of hearty good-fellowship, exclaimed, "Good-afternoon, Mr. Liustig! We have come to cheer you up a little. These are American travelers who have been looking through the prison, and I thought that perhaps you would like to see them." The transient expression of hope and expectancy in the young man's face slowly faded as he shook hands with us, and his manner became nervous and embarrassed, as if he had been isolated so long from all human society that he hardly knew how to talk or what to say. The situation was an awkward one, even for me, on account of the presence of Captain Makofski, the turnkey, and a soldier. If Mr. Liustig and I had been alone together, we should soon have come to an understanding and should undoubtedly have talked for hours; but under existing circumstances I could say nothing that I wished to say, and felt conscious that I must appear to him like a mere tourist, who had come to look at a "nihilist" in prison, as one might look at a new species of wild animal in a zoölogical garden. The cell occupied by Mr. Liustig was about 20 feet long by 6 feet wide and 12 feet high. It was lighted by one very small barred window in the end wall opposite the door. This window, which was so high that I could not reach it, would have opened upon the little garden in the court-yard, had not a high stockade been erected in front of it at a distance of a few feet. The stockade hid not only the whole outside world, but even the sky, so that Mr. Liustig could hardly tell, by looking up at his little window, whether the weather was clear or stormy—whether it was winter or summer. Although the walls and ceiling had been whitewashed, the cell was

¹ In the annual report of the Medical Department of the Ministry of the Interior for 1884, the prisons and prison hospitals of Tomsk, Yeniseisk, and Irkutsk are referred to as follows: "From the reports of the medical administration it is evident that the sanitary condition of many prisons, both in the provinces [gubernias] and in the territories [oblasts], is extremely unsatisfactory. The majority of them are altogether too small for the number of prisoners usually contained in them. Many of them lack proper ventilation, have badly constructed retrades, or are situated on low, damp ground. The prisons in which the absence of favorable hygienic conditions is most marked are those situated in the provinces of . . . Yeniseisk, Irkutsk, and Tomsk, and in the territory of the Trans-Baikal.

Many prison hospitals are not provided with proper hospital supplies or appliances, and are so small that they cannot accommodate all of the sick. In many prisons, moreover, there is no special medical staff."

The report then gives the following statistics to show the sanitary condition of the prisons and prison hospitals in four Siberian provinces, including Irkutsk, in 1884:

Provinces.	Prison Hospitals.	Beds.	Number of Sick.	Number of Deaths.	Death Rate Per cent.
Yeniseisk	3	145	5176	168	3.2
Irkutsk	2	115	1620	99	6.1
Tobolsk	10	242	4648	303	6.5
Tomsk	3	230	1514	259	16.4

dark and gloomy, and it seemed to me, moreover, to be very cold. It contained no furniture except a small wooden bedstead covered with a thin gray blanket, and a square box in which there was a pail or bucket for excrement. The prisoner was not allowed to have chair, table, books, or writing-materials; he could not get even so much as a glimpse of the outside world; and he had absolutely nothing to do except to sit on his bed in that gloomy prison twilight and think. I asked him how long he had been there, and he replied, "Since the 1st of June"—nearly four months. He was detained, Captain Makofski said, to await the decision of a question that had been raised as to the place where he should be colonized. How soon his case would be reached in the Circumlocution Office of the Government nobody knew, and apparently nobody cared. Meanwhile his condition was worse than if he had been in penal servitude. I wished very much to ask him a few questions with regard to his life at the mines of Kara; but I knew that it would be useless to interrogate him in the presence of Captain Makofski, and so, after shaking hands with him again and wishing him a speedy release, I bade him good-bye. Ten minutes later, as it was beginning to grow dark in the prison, and as I had seen all that I cared to see, we returned to our hotel. I could not agree with Captain Makofski that the Irkutsk prisons were "in good condition"; but as he did not ask me what I thought of them, I volunteered no opinion.

Several days elapsed before I saw the chief of police again, and in the mean time a visit of inspection was made to the prisons by Count Ignatief, the newly appointed Governor-General of Eastern Siberia, who had just assumed the duties of his position. Tuesday of the following week Captain Makofski called upon us, and after the interchange of a few unimportant remarks said to me with some eagerness, "Mr. Kennan, please tell me frankly what impression was made upon you the other day by our prisons." I told him frankly that Siberian prisons generally made upon me a very bad impression, and that all I could truthfully say of the prisons in Irkutsk was that they were a little better—that is, somewhat less bad—than the prisons in Tiumen and Tomsk.

"I asked the question," he resumed, "because Count Ignatief and his wife have just made a visit of inspection and they are terribly dissatisfied [oozhasno nedevoinee]. The Count finds the prisons dirty and overcrowded, the air foul and bad, the linen of the prisoners dirty and coarse [grooboi], and the state of things unsatisfactory generally. Of course I know myself that the air in the kameras is foul; but if you have to put thirty men into a room like this [indicating our hotel room],

how can you keep the air pure? It is very true also that the linen of the prisoners is cheap and coarse, but it is the best that can be had for the money that the Government allows. If you go to a hotel and pay two rubles for a dinner, you have a right to expect a good one; but what can you expect if you pay only eight kopecks? As for the prisoners' linen being dirty—of course it's dirty! The Government gives a prisoner only one shirt every six months and one khalat [gray overcoat] every year. In these clothes he lives and sleeps twenty-four hours a day and thirty days a month without once taking them off except to bathe—of course they get dirty!"

"If a prisoner has no spare clothing," I inquired, "how does he get his one shirt washed? Does he never wash it, or does he go half the time naked?"

"When he visits the bath-house," replied Captain Makofski, "he usually washes at the same time his body and his clothing, dries the latter as best he can, and puts it on again—he has no change."

I referred to the sufferings of exiles who are compelled to sleep in wet clothing after every rain-storm on the road, and said I did not wonder that the hospitals of the forwarding prisons were crowded with the sick. He assented and said, "The life of prisoners on the road is awful [oozhasnoi]. So far as the condition of the prisons here depends upon me," he continued after a moment's pause, "it is as good as circumstances will permit. There are no accumulations of filth anywhere, and the sanitary condition of the buildings is as good as I can make it—better perhaps than that of many private houses in the city."

It was interesting and instructive to me to see how unconscious Captain Makofski seemed to be of the existence of any very extraordinary evils in the Irkutsk prisons. Apparently he had grown so accustomed to the state of things there that it seemed to him to be nearly if not quite normal, and it gave him a sort of mental shock to find that the new Governor-General was so dissatisfied with the prisons and their management. He attributed this dissatisfaction, however, largely to the influence of the Countess Ignatief, whom he characterized as a kind-hearted but inexperienced lady who did not appreciate the difficulties in the way of such a system of prison administration as she desired to bring about.

"The Countess, however," I said, "seems to be a lady of quick perceptions and unusually good sense. An officer of the exile administration whom I met at dinner yesterday told me that during the visit of the Governor-General and his wife to the prisons the other day the Countess asked to be shown some of

the prisoners' soup. The warden brought some to her in a clean fresh plate, but she evidently thought that it had been especially prepared for the occasion. She therefore declined to taste it, and asked whether there had not been left in the bottom of the kettle some soup from the prisoners' dinner. Upon examination some soup was found there, and she desired that a spoonful of it be given to her. She tasted it, and then, handing back the spoon, remarked to the warden quietly, 'I 'm glad to see that you are washing out that kettle—it ought to have been washed long ago.' Now you can't say," I concluded, "that such a lady as that does n't know something about your prisons and that she is n't very observing."

"Observing—observing!" exclaimed Captain Makofski, "that may all be; she is a very kind-hearted and benevolent lady, but she is impractical. She thinks that a common criminal prison ought to be in as good condition all the time as a young ladies' institute—and you and I know that that is utterly impossible."

I said that I thought the Irkutsk prisons might be improved a good deal without bringing them up anywhere near the level of a young ladies' institute.

Our conversation was interrupted at this point by the entrance of callers, and Captain Makofski took his leave, evidently somewhat disturbed by the attitude that the new Governor-General had taken towards the prisons.

On Count Ignatief's first public reception day Mr. Frost and I called upon him, partly as a mark of respect and partly with the hope that he might be willing to talk about the exile system and the penal institutions of the city. We found him to be a large, somewhat corpulent man about forty-five years of age, with a massive, nearly bald head and a strong, but heavy and almost lethargic face. He received us courteously but formally, and began to talk to us at once in English, which language he spoke fairly well but with some hesitation. At the first favorable opportunity I expressed my interest in the exile system and ventured to give him the results of some of my observations in the prisons of Tiumen and Tomsk and on the road. He responded without any apparent hesitation, and said frankly that he believed the exile system to be very prejudicial to all the interests of Siberia, and that in many respects it needed modification. He thought that

the common criminal exiles ought to be utilized as laborers. There was plenty of useful work to be done in Siberia, and he could see no reason why the convict exiles should not be compelled to do it. A system of enforced labor would be better for them than the present method of keeping them shut up in prisons in idleness or turning them loose as colonists, and it certainly would be better for the country. He was about to take a step in this direction, he said, by setting one hundred convicts to work in the streets of Irkutsk. I spoke of the overcrowding of the prisons and étapes along the great exile road, and he admitted that they were too small and in very bad condition. He said that a plan was under consideration for the transportation of exiles from Tomsk to Irkutsk in summer only and in wagons. This would relieve the Government from the expense of providing them with winter clothing, it would greatly diminish the amount of suffering, and it would perhaps be more economical.¹

While we were discussing this subject the Governor-General's wife came in to hand him a letter, and we were presented to her. She was a woman perhaps thirty years of age, of medium height, with brown hair, gray eyes, and a good, strong, intelligent, but somewhat impassive face. The appearance of the Countess Ignatief interrupted our discussion of the exile system, and as we were making a merely formal call upon the Governor-General, we had no opportunity for renewing it.

In the course of the twelve days that we spent in Irkutsk we made many pleasant and interesting acquaintances, among them Mr. Adam Bukofski, a well-known East Siberian mining proprietor, who spoke English well and whose hospitable home was always open to us; Dr. Pisaref, a well-known physician of the city, to whom we brought a letter of introduction from St. Petersburg; Mr. Butin, formerly of Nerchinsk, who had traveled extensively in the United States and who was half an American in his ideas and sympathies; and Mr. Zagoskin, the venerable editor of the newspaper "Sibir."

On the 21st of September, a little more than a week after our arrival, we were overtaken by our countryman Lieutenant Scheutze, who was on his way to the province of Yakutsk with the gifts sent by our Government to the people in that province who had aided and suc-

¹ This reform was strongly urged by Colonel Zagarin, the Inspector of Exile Transportation for Eastern Siberia, as long ago as 1882 or 1883. It is a noteworthy circumstance that although three years have elapsed since I had this conversation with General Ignatief, nothing has yet been done, and the exiles continue to march that thousand of miles between Tomsk and Irkutsk, in rain-storms and snow-storms, in dust and in mud, in scorching heat and in bitter cold. It is probable that

an excuse for continued inaction will now be found in the projected trans-Siberian railroad. It will be argued that it is unnecessary to organize a great exile horse-express service, because there will soon be steam communication. The railroad will not be finished in ten years, however, and in the mean time thousands of human beings, a majority of them innocent women and children, will have died a slow death of torture on that thousand-mile stretch.

cored the survivors of the Arctic exploring steamer *Jeannette*. He had left America long after our departure, and it was a very great pleasure to us to meet him in that far-away part of the world, to hear his New York and Washington news, and to compare our respective experiences of Siberian travel.

A few days after my talk with Captain Makofski about the Irkutsk prisons, I called upon him at his house, and drew him into conversation upon the subject of political exile. He spoke very bitterly, almost contemptuously, of the revolutionists and "nihilists" generally, and seemed to regard most of them as wild fanatics, who were opposed, not only to the present form of government in the empire, but to government in any form, and who therefore should be put down with a strong hand. He said he once asked one of them, an exiled lady, what government she and her companions would establish in Russia if they had their way—a limited monarchy, a republic, a commune, or what? She replied that all men had been created free and equal, and that any kind of government was a violence done to individual liberty. "This, of course," said Captain Makofski, "was simply nonsense.

"There are several classes of political exiles, however," he continued, "for whom I have a great deal of pity and sympathy. In the first place, there are the young people who have never committed political crime themselves, but have happened to be in innocent correspondence with real revolutionists or upon terms of some intimacy with them. They have to suffer merely for being in bad company. In the second place, there are people who, to oblige friends or acquaintances, take charge temporarily of packages or satchels without ascertaining their contents. These packages, upon seizure by the police, are found to contain seditious proclamations, dynamite, or something of that sort. It is of no use for the innocent possessor of such a package to explain how it came into his hands, nor to declare that he was ignorant of its contents. He is always exiled. The third class consists of persons who have innocently lent money to revolutionists, the money being afterwards used, without the knowledge or consent of the lenders, for revolutionary purposes. Such men are also exiled, although they may be perfectly innocent of any thought of conspiracy against the Government. Finally, there is a certain class of young men, from eighteen to twenty-three or twenty-four years of age, who are full of ardor and enthusiasm, who really desire the good of their country, who see defects in the present system of government that they think can be remedied, and who desire not revolution but modification and reorganiza-

tion. Such young men are almost certain to be drawn into secret societies or revolutionary circles, and then they fall into the hands of the police and are sent to Siberia, although they cannot be called bad men, and all their aims and intentions may be pure and good. I have known many cases in each of these classes, and have always felt very sorry for them."

I have quoted Captain Makofski's words because they are a frank admission that the Russian Government sends to Siberia not only the flower of its youth, but banishes also at least three classes of people who not only have never committed crime, but are guiltless of any intention to commit crime. I was well aware myself of this fact, but I had never before heard it admitted by a chief of police.

There were not many political exiles in Irkutsk at the time of our visit, and we had some difficulty in finding them. At last, however, we succeeded, without asking the help of Captain Makofski; and although he, as chief of police, was supposed to know everything that was going on, I do not think he dreamed that I sometimes went directly from his house to a place where I met all the political exiles in the city, and that I was spending with them half my nights.

Two of the most interesting politicals whom we met in Irkutsk were Mr. and Mrs. Ivan Cherniavski, who were banished to Siberia by administrative process in 1878. I became very well acquainted with them, and for Mrs. Cherniavski especially I came to feel the profoundest pity and regard. Few women, even in Russia, have had before the age of thirty-five so tragic and heart-breaking a life, and still fewer have maintained through hardships, sickness, and bereavement such cheerfulness and courage. She was arrested in Odessa in the early part of 1878 at the age of about twenty-five, and after a long term of imprisonment was sent by administrative process to the province of Tobolsk. In the city prison of Kiev, on her way to Siberia, she was detained for a few days, and while there was forced to be almost an eye-witness of the assassination of her dearest friend. A young man of English descent named Beverly, whom she had known from childhood, had been arrested shortly before upon the charge of living on a false passport and carrying on a revolutionary propaganda, and he was at that time in the Kiev prison. The night before Mrs. Cherniavski was to resume her journey to Siberia, Beverly, with a comrade named Izbitski, attempted to escape through a tunnel which they had succeeded in digging from their cell to a point outside the prison wall. The prison authorities, however, had in some way become aware of the existence of the tunnel, and had

posted a squad of soldiers near the place where the fugitives must emerge from the ground. Late at night, when they made their appearance, they were received with a volley of musketry. Beverly was mortally wounded, and as he lay writhing on the ground he was dispatched by a soldier with repeated bayonet-thrusts. Izbitski, wounded and severely beaten, was taken back into prison. The next morning when Mrs. Cherniavski started with her party for Siberia she had to march past the bloody and disfigured body of her dearest friend, which was still lying where it had fallen, in plain sight of the prison windows.

"I can bear my own personal torment," she said to me with a sob as she finished the story of this tragedy, "but such things as that break my heart."

I need not recount the hardships and miseries that she, a cultivated and refined woman, endured on the road and in the roadside *étapes* between Kiev and the small town in the Siberian province of Tobolsk where she and her husband had been assigned a residence. They reached their destination at last; a child was there born to them, and they lived there in something like comfort until March, 1881, when Alexander III. came to the throne and Mr. Cherniavski was required to take the oath of allegiance. He refused to do so, and they were sent farther eastward to the town of Krasnoyarsk. A second refusal to take the oath of allegiance resulted in their being sent to Irkutsk. By this time winter had set in, and they were traveling in an open tarantas with a delicate baby thirteen months of age. It was with the greatest difficulty that Mrs. Cherniavski could keep her baby warm, and at the last station before reaching Irkutsk she removed the heavy wrappings in which she had enveloped it and found it dead. With the shock of this discovery she became delirious, and wept, sang pathetic little nursery songs to her dead child, rocked it in her arms, and prayed and cursed God by turns. In the court-yard of the Irkutsk forwarding prison, in a temperature of thirty degrees below zero, Mr. Cherniavski stood for half an hour waiting for the party to be formally received, with his wife raving in delirium beside him and his dead child in his arms.

Mrs. Cherniavski lay in the prison hospital at Irkutsk until she recovered her reason, and to some extent her strength, and then she and her husband were sent 2000 miles farther to the north-eastward under guard of gendarmes,

and colonized in a Yakut settlement known as the Bataruski oolooos, situated in the "tiaga" or primeval wilderness of Yakutsk, 165 miles from the nearest town. There, suffering almost every conceivable hardship and privation, they lived until 1884, when the Minister of the Interior allowed them to return to a more civilized part of Siberia.

Mrs. Cherniavski when I made her acquaintance was a pale, delicate, hollow-cheeked woman, whose health had been completely wrecked by years of imprisonment, banishment, and grief. She had had two children, and had lost them both in exile under circumstances that made the bereavement almost intolerable; for seven years she had been separated by a distance of many thousand miles from all of her kindred; and the future seemed to hold for her absolutely nothing except the love of the husband whose exile she could still share, but whose interests she could do so little in her broken state of health to promote. She had not been able to step outside the house for two months, and it seemed to me, when I bade her good-bye, that her life of unhappiness and suffering was drawing to a close. I felt profoundly sorry for her,—while listening to her story my face was wet with tears almost for the first time since boyhood,—and hoping to give her some pleasure and to show her how sincerely I esteemed her and how deeply I sympathized with her, I offered her my photograph, as the only memento I could leave with her. To my great surprise she sadly but firmly declined it, and said, "Many years ago I had a photograph of a little child that I had lost. It was the only one in existence, and I could not get another. The police made a search one night in my house, and took away all my letters and photographs. I told them that this particular picture was the only portrait I had of my dead boy. The gendarme officer who conducted the search promised me upon his word of honor that it should be returned to me, but I never saw it again. I made a vow then that it should not be possible for the Russian Government to hurt me so a second time, and from that day to this I have never had a photograph in my possession."

I do not know whether Mrs. Cherniavski is now living or dead; but if she be still living, I trust that these pages may find their way to her and show her that on the other side of the world she is still remembered with affectionate sympathy.

George Kennan.

