

Tomsk,

3rd December, 1902.

Dear-----

I wrote you last from Irkutsk on Monday, posting then 3 letters which I hope will have reached you when you get this. The Russo Bank undertook to post them. Tales get about of letters being intercepted, but as mine are favourable to Russia I do not suppose mine will share that fate.

I travelled here in good company, several English and German people being in the train, but I was charmed with a very nice Belgian who has been for 2 years constructing the Hankow Peking line from the Hankow end, of which there are now 400 kilometres finished, and the extension is going on at the rate of 20 miles per month. He had lived entirely amongst Chinese, in the Province of Honan, and gives them a most excellent character in every way. There they do not kill their girls, but have families of a dozen. He likes the Chinese best as Buddhists or Confucians and deprecates the efforts to convert them. Before being in China he had been engaged for 6 years in constructing the Congo Line from Boma or Maladi to Leopoldville. He spoke only French, and I had therefore 2 days practice in that language. He stuck to me as I to him, and we had all our meals together, and sat all day in the restaurant saloon, which has easy chairs and couches and every comfort. We were 2½ hours late in reaching Taiga, the junction for Tomsk, and 60 miles away. We got there at 5 a.m., and I had to wait an hour in the Buffet, but it was very warm. At 5.30, or so, we left for Tomsk, and I was joined in my carriage by a Russian Gurlist or lawyer, who has suffered exile for 20 years for political discontent. His name is Mde Karaonloff,



of mixed Tartar, Polish and German ancestry. He was condemned when 22 by a military Tribunal, and served 4 years with hard labour in the Castle of Schlanelberg on Lake Ladoga. He was afterwards sent by rail and steamer to Tuimen, and then marched into Eastern Siberia. Later he was allowed to live in Krasnvizark, where his wife died 3 years ago. He has an only son who is here at the great Technological School or College, who is studying science. It is a School of magnificent size and equipment, built by Nicholas II the present Emperor. The son has been at this Hotel 2 or 3 times, and is a fine young fellow, just 21. He has sandy hair. His Father is tall and dark, rather like Washington Williams, both in appearance and disposition. He speaks French, and was most kind to me, inviting me to ride from the station here, about 2 or 3 miles in his sleigh, mine being full of baggage. We return together to Taiga to-morrow night, and meanwhile he has promised to bring M. Doulgourosiky here, one of the relations of Princess Doulgourosiky, widow of Alexander II who is also an exile here, and practicing law. This place is most captivating. It is large with 80,000 inhabitants, but with wide streets and standing on such ground. It is full of beautiful buildings, and houses, the latter of wood; the former of brick or stuccoed. The ground is picturesque, hill, dale and plain and many striking views are obtainable. The West end is the finest. There are situated, the University the great Schools, and the Cathedral of the Trinity. There are about 10,000 students here, male and female, in the Schools and University. The latter is the only one in Siberia. It is a public holiday to-day, and the Emperor's birthday to-morrow,



otherwise I should have been able to leave to-night. Public places are practically all closed; also shops and banks.

The morning was given up to religious services. The Trinity was a blaze of splendour, with its magnificent gilded, and painted screens and chandeliers. The Cathedral is square in shape, with a great central dome and four cupolas. Outside the Church is snow-white, with grey blue domes and cupolas. Around the square are fine buildings red and white, with roofs of a beautiful green. The ground is, of course, covered with snow. Inside the Church is magnificent with carving, gilding, paint and pictures, no plain wall; the style the richest Byzantine. It was crowded with people of all classes; all standing. The Choir was noble, I have never heard such chanting before. The priests were in cloth of gold and silver, and the Chief Priest wore a black hat of this shape

He was a beautiful

man, with long golden hair moustache and long fair imperial. His brows were straight; his nose straight and in his magnificent dress he looked noble. He was supported by others in beautiful robes, but without caps, and they chanted in a trio most melodiously. I should have said that the Chief Priest wore under his robe of cloth of silver and gold, a tunic of warm peach coloured silk or satin, embroidered deeply with gold at the hem, and over which came his stole of gold and silver, with a chased silver crucifix, and in his hand a large crucifix of the same metals. At the end of the service he stood on the steps of the Holy of Holies, which was all glorious within, with gold, silver, silken draperies and lights. In front of him, a yard or two away, stood a desk covered with silk or velvet, on which lay a gold backed Bible, with a Holy Family in paint or



enamel. The people of all classes moved slowly to the front and before going away each one knelt or bowed, and some kissed the figures on the Bible; others pressed up to the Priest and he gracefully presented the Crucifix to them to kiss. He waved it in a most skilful manner so that a great number kissed it in a short time, and many after kissing the crucifix, once or twice, kissed the back of the Priest's hand which was small and white, and which held the crucifix. It was a singular and beautiful medieval picture, full of contrast. He in his magnificence and beauty, and they, many of them in picturesque squalor; their faces were clean, but their hair and moustaches and beards were rough and medieval. There were also many ladies and gentlemen, mixed with the crowd in rich furs, but the elderly ladies mostly wear a white cloth over their heads and hair, and a long dark cloak, with fur collar. Lots of these got down on their knees, and bowed their heads to the ground, and the peasants nearly all touch the ground with their foreheads, before the shrines.

I ought to have said that in the centre of Tomsk in an enormous market place, surrounded by booths, and that this in the morning is crowded with sleighs and peasants from far and near, one of the most picturesque sights in the world.

It would take me longer to describe the market scene, than the Cathedral one, and I have to go to a concert at the Club, which is to be followed by a Ball. I have not yet had time to call on the Governor, General Stroganoff, but I hope to do so to-morrow morning, when I am also going through the Technical College. The buildings are splendid, like a part of the Paris Exhibition. An American



gentlemen, a Mr. Keating, who is here, says this is the richest country for gold in the world: that American is not in it. He is managing a gold mine on one of the Rivers near Krasnoiyarsk. All the gold being got at present is being washed out of the River beds. Dust, fine gold and large nuggets. I saw specimens of it at Irkutsk. The Russian Government are now becoming more liberal; they used to stipulate that all gold should be sold to them at full price, but now it can be sold to anyone provided full returns are made. It is the native gold that has provided so many large Siberian fortunes, and the winners give large sums away for educational and philanthropic purposes. The younger Russians are fond of wine and women, but the elder ones are many of them most devout and benevolent. Siberia now is a great contrast in many ways to what our ideas of it were, and it is going ahead wonderfully fast, and the climate gives energy to the people. I shall miss this beautiful pure air when I get back, and long to return. Violence, however, still prevails in many parts, there are many lawless and cruel inhabitants from the escaped and disbanded criminal class, but these are being quickly outnumbered. The first question I was asked on returning from Alexandrovski was whether I had a revolver and whether I was "shot at" I said no, and never thought of such a thing though I had been sleighing two hours in the moonlight. Mr. Karaouloff says that crime in the country is common, but the worst people are soon captured and sent to Saghalien. They are not hanged, but they are worked hard for the good of the community, and if reformed they are allowed a measure of freedom, as at Alexandrovski. I am now tired, but my little finger is slowly healing. In the morning I must write Sir Alfred and Sir Ernest Satow.



I shall turn up, all being well on Christmas Eve, or the day before. I don't see how I can get through in less time. The extension of my travel will be compensated for in the richness of my knowledge and experience. I have never had anything so full of interest and variety before, and I am not the least tired of travelling. I have a large and comfortable sitting and bed-room combined here, and people keep calling to see me.

Yours etc.