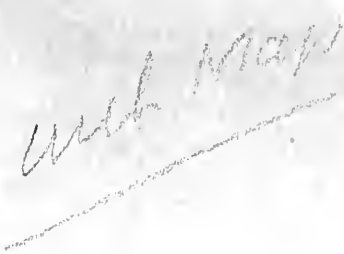
THE LAST STAND OF THE OLD SIBERIA

R. A. F. PENROSE JR.



GROUP OF THE SIBERIAN NATIVE TRIBE OF SAMOYEDES

THE LAST STAND OF THE OLD SIBERIA

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INTRODUCTION

THIS brief narrative of "The Last Stand of the Old Siberia" is based on observations made during a geological and geographical reconnaissance by the author through Siberia in 1901, just after the Boxer war in China and adjoining parts of Siberia. The reason that the narrative was not published many years ago is that the region was still the old-time Siberia, for the Great Siberian Railway was only partly completed and had not yet materially changed the people or their conditions. This old-time Siberia had been much described, much discussed, and more often than not, much and unjustly abused; enough had been said about it for that time.

Soon, however, Siberia began to change under the influence of the new life brought by the railway. It began to shuffle off its mediæval aspects and to assume more modern methods and appearances. Whether or not this was for the better is a matter for discussion,

but it always seems sad to see nature trammeled by the blighting aggressiveness of man.

The following narrative relates to the last stand of the grand old Siberia, just before it was engulfed in the upstarting new Siberia; and this history may be of interest to some as describing the conditions in the world's greatest and most glorious wilderness as it met the fanatical onrush of selfish and relentless humanity advancing under the name of modern civilization.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE CONQUEST OF SIBERIA *by the* RUSSIANS

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WHEN, in 1580 to 1582, the Cossack adventurer, Yermak, led a party of his countrymen, the Cossacks of the Don, across the Ural Mountains and defeated the Tartars, he little thought that he was taking the first step toward the later conquest by the Russians of the whole of northern Asia. Much less, probably, did he realize when he turned over the conquered regions to the Russian Tzar, Ivan the Terrible, that future generations of Russians would immortalize him in their history and song as one of their greatest heroes, and that his bronze statue would to-day occupy one of the most conspicuous positions in the Alexander Museum at St. Petersburg (year 1901).

The Russian Empire in the time of Yermak was struggling for existence, and had only a few generations before emerged from two

centuries of vassalage to the Mongols and Tartars of the Golden Horde, the descendants of the followers of Jenghiz Khan. They were an isolated inland people, having as yet acquired no outlet to the sea, "an eye through which to look at Europe," such as Peter the Great gave them over a hundred years later. They were harassed on different sides by Swedes, Poles, Mongols, and Turks, and even among themselves local dissensions made their government unstable. About 1580 some of the Cossacks of the Don, discontented with the political conditions in their own country, followed Yermak in an expedition across the Urals into what is now West Siberia. Little seems to have been known of Yermak up to this time. It is said by some that he was an outcast from justice, who had been condemned to death for robbery; but this is contradicted by others, who say that not he, but some of his followers, were outcasts. However this may have been, his subsequent bravery and services have expiated, in the eyes of his

countrymen, any crimes of which he or his men may have been guilty.

The great Asiatic empire established by Jenghiz Khan began to go to pieces in the fifteenth century, and various more or less independent governments were established on the site of the ancient realm. Dissensions among these people caused some of them to spread northward, and in the beginning of the sixteenth century, before Yermak's expedition, the Tartars had occupied much of the territory east of the Ural Mountains. They had found it easy to overcome the scattered inhabitants who had lived there previously, but they found more difficulty with the Russians with whom they came in contact in the Urals, so that in 1555 the Tartar Prince Ediger agreed to pay a yearly tribute of 1,000 sable skins to the Tzar, though otherwise still preserving a nominal independence. His successor, however, the Khan Kutchum, rebelled against this tribute shortly before Yermak's arrival, and the Stroganoffs, a

powerful family in the Ural Mountains, encouraged Yermak to make his invasion.

When Yermak crossed the Urals he found several well-established Tartar communities, and he first carried on operations successfully on the east slope of the mountains. He moved then eastward and easily captured Isker, the stronghold of Khan Kutchum, in the valley of the River Tobol, near where the town of Tobolsk now stands. He sent messengers to the Tzar describing his victories, and announcing that he held the conquered regions subject to his commands. The Tzar, Ivan IV, surnamed the Terrible, greatly pleased with the services of Yermak, raised him in royal favor, and sent him a hundred rubles, a silver cup and two cuirasses, as well as a fur robe which he had worn himself—a sign of special favor. The Tartar legend relates that a small black animal like a hound emerged from the Tobol River, while a large white shaggy wolf emerged from the Irtish. They met on a sandy island near the confluences

A Siberian Village

of the two streams and fought, the smaller animal finally killing the larger one; then both disappeared in the Irtish. The native soothsayers interpreted this as meaning the overthrow of the Tartars by the Russians.

Yermak continued his work of invasion, but in 1584 was defeated by the Tartars, and was drowned in the River Irtish. After his death, however, the Russians promptly followed up the conquests that he had begun, and rapidly occupied the vast regions to the east. In 1587 the now flourishing city of Tobolsk was founded near the site of the old Tartar stronghold of Khan Kutchum. In 1604 the Russian advance had progressed so far to the east that the town of Tomsk, almost 1,000 miles from the Urals, now one of the most flourishing commercial centers of northern Asia, was founded; and in 1622 the town of Yakutsk, over twice that distance, was founded; while in 1647 the Cossack Dezhneff crossed Bering Straits, over 4,000 miles east of the Urals. In 1643 the

explorer Poyarkoff discovered the Amur region in southeastern Siberia; and in 1649–52 the celebrated Khabaroff entered this same vast region and defeated the natives and the Chinese armies that defended it. It was, however, subsequently returned to the Chinese by the treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689, and was not again recovered by the Russians until 1858, when, by the skill and diplomacy of Count Muravioff, it was ceded to them by the treaty of Aigun without any fighting. Shortly after the middle of the seventeenth century the town of Irkutsk, west of Lake Baikal, and the town of Nerchinsk, east of Lake Baikal, were founded.

Thus within less than a hundred years after the campaigns of Yermak the Russians had carried their explorations and conquests across Asia to the farthest points on the Pacific Coast; and all the northern part of the continent, from the Urals to the Pacific, and from the Turko-Mongolian possessions and the Chinese frontier on the south, to the

Arctic Ocean on the north, was under Russian control. This immense area forms the main part of what is now known as Siberia, which, however, has been considerably enlarged along its southern and southeastern borders since the days of the early explorers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 1697 the peninsula of Kamchatka was formally annexed to Russia, and in 1724 the explorer Bering was sent to investigate it. In 1732 he was sent again to explore the same region, together with the Okhotsk country and other places on the northeast coast of Asia and the adjoining parts of America, and to take possession of such regions as were not occupied by other powers. It was during this expedition (1732–1741) that Alaska was explored and occupied by the Russians, who afterward sold it to the United States in 1867. The Russian explorations of this time extended as far south along the American coast as California.

CHAPTER II

PHYSICAL FEATURES OF SIBERIA

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THE total area of all Asiatic Russia is over 6,500,000 square miles, of which Siberia represents over 5,000,000 square miles and covers over thirty degrees of latitude. The great size of this region can be appreciated when compared with that of the United States, which, including Alaska but not other outlying possessions, covers an area of a little over 3,600,000 square miles.

In a country covering so wide a range of latitude as Siberia, equal to that of from our Great Lakes to southern Mexico, a great variety of climates and products is necessarily found. In some of the southern parts the climate is not extreme, and in the province of Ussuri, on the Pacific Coast, the vegetation shows a strong approach to southern species, while in the Chinese province of Manchuria, to the south, cotton is cultivated. The winter temperature, however, is colder even in the

southern provinces than in corresponding latitudes of America and Europe, as the high mountains on the Chinese border cut off most of the influence of warm winds from the south. Toward the north the climate, of course, becomes still colder, and at Verkhoyansk, in the Territory of Yakutsk, we find the coldest known place in Asia, the thermometer registering sometimes lower than 90° below zero Fahrenheit, and the average winter temperature being about 53° below zero. Even in this region, however, the summers, though short, are very hot, the temperature often rising to over 100° Fahrenheit.

In many parts of Siberia the ground is frozen during the whole year, thawing only for a short distance from the surface in the summer; but crops of grain and vegetables are often made to grow in this thin layer of soil underlaid by a perpetually frozen subsoil. Though the summers are short, the long days, while they last, give the grain every opportunity to mature before autumn sets in.

In its western part Siberia consists of plains or steppes not unlike the prairies of Kansas and Nebraska, with a luxuriant growth of grass and many fresh and saline lakes and marshes. This is pre-eminently the agricultural region of the country, though farming is also carried on in other sections. The southern border of Siberia is marked by rugged mountain ranges separating it from Mongolia and Manchuria, and representing the northern extension of the great central Asiatic plateau, as it breaks off in its northern escarpments. Prominent among them are the Altai, Sayan, and other ranges rising from 8,000 to 11,000 feet above sea-level. East of the valley of the upper Obi these mountains widen out in more or less parallel ranges, covering most of the northeastern part of Siberia.

The great forest belt of Siberia extends north of the steppes from the Ural Mountains to the Pacific Coast, a distance of over 4,000 miles; and in eastern Siberia it also

reaches southward, covering a large part of the mountain region of that section. These forests are known as the "Taiga," and are the favorite haunts of the fur hunters. To the north of the forest belt is a low, marshy country, covered with moss and lichens, and areas of stunted trees, known as the "tundra," along the Arctic Coast.

Before the construction of the Great Siberian Railway traveling in Siberia was done on rivers, postroads, caravan routes, and trails; and even yet, in regions not traversed by the railway, these means of communication are still actively maintained. The great river systems, however, with which the country is peculiarly favored, have always been of especial importance as channels of traffic. Numerous rivers rise in the mountains on the southern border of Siberia and flow north, finally combining in a few large streams which continue thence to the Arctic Ocean. This is true of all the region from the Urals on the west to the Yablonoi and Stanovoi

View on Amur River

Mountains near the Pacific Coast, beyond which the rivers, notably the Amur, flow into the Pacific. The principal rivers in this interior basin are the Obi, Yenisei, and Lena, with their many large tributaries, while numerous other similar but smaller river systems drain independently into the Arctic.

Most of these streams are navigable for long distances above their outlets in the north—the larger ones for over 2,000 miles and the Lena for about 3,000 miles; while their more important tributaries afford useful means of lateral communication from the main north and south rivers. The waters of the River Ket, a tributary of the Obi, at one point come so close to the waters of the Kas, a tributary of the Yenisei, that a canal has been cut through the low divide that separates them. In this way there is continuous navigation in an east and west direction for almost as great distances as in a north and south direction; and it is not only possible to go from the Chinese frontier on the south to

the Arctic Ocean on the north on these rivers, but also from the Ural Mountains on the west to the Altai Mountains and the mountains of East Siberia on the south and east. This ready means of communication between far distant parts of the country is comparable with that over an area equal to from New York to the Rocky Mountains and from the Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico, and was one of the reasons why the Russians in earlier days were able so readily to overrun all Siberia. Even in the present day the water systems are of the greatest importance to the traffic of the interior towns.

CHAPTER III

THE GREAT SIBERIAN RAILWAY

THE GREAT SIBERIAN RAILWAY

MANY Russians once supposed that the construction of the Great Siberian Railway would ruin the traffic of the river systems; but it was found, on the contrary, that with the coming of the railway the river traffic was actually very greatly increased. This was due partly to the great stimulus given to business generally throughout Siberia, and also to the fact that these rivers, excepting the Amur, are dangerous of access by the cold sea route of the Arctic Ocean, and until the railway came, had no ready outlet for their traffic. Ocean steamers can readily enter the mouth of the Amur, but very few enter the great rivers which empty into the Arctic, on account of the difficulty and danger of navigating the Arctic Ocean north of the continent of Europe and Asia. Occasionally vessels from Russian ports and some from English and other ports in Europe make

the trip; but the service is not regular and many of them are compelled to turn back, while not a few are lost. Hence the railway has been of peculiar benefit to the traffic of these rivers by supplying a connection with the outside world which could not be gotten satisfactorily by sea.

Though the rivers and military postroads offered ready means of local travel before the railway was built, yet the distances in Siberia are so great that these methods, even under the most favorable circumstances, were slow and tedious; and, moreover, during a large part of the year the rivers are frozen and sleighs had to be used. The journey to different places took many months, and sometimes years, and was accompanied by great hardships and dangers, not only from the intense cold of the winter, but also from the intense heat of the short summer, and from hostile natives, brigands, wild beasts, and famine. In early days the journey from Moscow to Irkutsk took about a year, while to

Railway Station on Great Siberian Railroad

Kamchatka it took six months more. Later on, however, the improvements on the military postroads and in the service on them made travel much more rapid, and a distance of 200 miles a day was not an unusual rate. Nevertheless, it became yearly more evident that more rapid communication was necessary for the proper development and protection of this vast region; and as far back as about 1860 the project of railways in Siberia was much discussed. Many schemes to connect different river systems by short lines of railway, thus facilitating transcontinental traffic, were considered; but it was finally decided to build a continuous line from European Russia across Siberia to the Pacific. The discussion over the route of this line lasted for over twenty-five years, until finally, in 1891, the Tzar Alexander III chose the present one, and in his announcement of his decision to his son, the Tzarevitch, the future Tzar Nicholas II, who was then returning to Vladivostok after a journey to the far east, wrote as follows:

"Your Imperial Highness:

"Having given the order to build a continuous line of railway across Siberia, which is to unite the rich Siberian provinces with the railway system of the interior, I entrust to you to declare My will upon your entering the Russian dominions after your inspection of the foreign countries of the east. At the same time, I desire you to lay the first stone at Vladivostok for the construction of the Ussuri line, forming part of the Siberian railway, which is to be carried out at the cost of the State and under direction of the Government. Your participation in the achievement of this work will be a testimony to My ardent desire to facilitate the communications between Siberia and the other countries of the Empire, and to manifest My extreme anxiety to secure the peaceful prosperity of this country.

"I remain your sincerely loving

"ALEXANDER."

An elaborate monument at Vladivostok commemorates the arrival of the Tzarevitch at that place in 1891, and his inauguration of

the Great Siberian Railway. The road was to be started from both ends and to be pushed as rapidly as possible. In the meantime the railway system of European Russia had already been continued east from Moscow to the Urals, and in 1892 the extension to Tchelyabinsk on the Asiatic side of the Urals was opened. This town was considered the starting point of the Great Siberian Railway, and from here the line was built eastward, passing through the Government of Orenburg, along the southern border of the Government of Tobolsk and the northern border of the Kirgiz Steppe; thence through the Governments of Tomsk, Yenisei, and Irkutsk to Lake Baikal, reaching the town of Irkutsk in 1898. The passengers and freight are at present (year 1901)* transferred across the lake by boat,

* The reader is reminded that this manuscript was written in 1901. Since then the railroad has been built around the south end of Lake Baikal, and many other changes have occurred in transportation and other matters in Siberia. (The author.)

though the railway is being constructed around its south end. The road begins again on the other side of the lake, and has been completed eastward through Transbaikalia to Stretensk, on the Shilka River, to which point it was opened for travel in 1901. From here it was originally the intention to build down the Shilka to the Amur River, and thence down the Amur to Khabarovsk. It is doubtful, however, if it will be extended further in this direction for some time to come, as there is river communication between Stretensk and Khabarovsk, and the latter place has already been connected with Vladivostok by the Ussuri division of the railway, which was completed in 1897. Moreover, in the meantime, the East-Chinese Railway, built under Russian auspices through Manchuria, has been completed. This line connects the line in Transbaikalia with the Ussuri Railway, thus establishing a through route from St. Petersburg and Moscow to the Pacific Coast port of Vladivostok. A

Monument Commemorating the Starting of the Great Siberian Railroad

branch line also connects the East-Chinese Railway with Port Arthur and the splendid new Russian seaport of Dalny.

The distance from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok via the Great Siberian Railway and the Shilka and Amur Rivers is approximately 6,500 miles, though by the East-Chinese Railway the distance is several hundred miles shorter. On the lines in Siberia the rails are about eighteen pounds to the foot, which on our basis would be called fifty-four-pound rails; that is, fifty-four pounds to the yard. These are being replaced (year 1901) by heavier rails in many places. The gauge of the railway is five feet, similar to the standard gauge throughout the Russian Empire. The highest point reached by the railway is in the Yablonoi Mountains in Transbaikalia, which it crosses in a pass not quite 3,500 feet above the sea. This is low compared with the passes ranging from 7,000 to 12,000 feet, through which some of the American railways traverse the Rocky Mountains. Many bridges

are required to cross the numerous rivers of Siberia, and some of them are fine substantial structures of iron and steel. The station buildings are substantially built of stone or wood, and many of them contain excellent dining-rooms, lunch counters, and other conveniences, where the traveller can find as good meals as at any American eating stations, with wine and other luxuries.

A daily train* starts from Moscow for the Great Siberian journey, but twice a week this train is faster than on the other days, and is known as the "train de luxe." Its average speed is about twenty miles an hour from Moscow to Lake Baikal, and slower from there to Stretensk. The time required is about eight days from Moscow to Lake Baikal; three days from Baikal to Stretensk; from ten to thirty days, according to the condition of the water, from Stretensk to Khabarovsk by river; and thirty odd hours from

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* This was in 1901, the date of this description.

Khabarovsk to Vladivostok by rail. When the road around the south end of Lake Baikal is completed, and when the East-Chinese Railway is open for general travel,* much more rapid time from Europe to the Pacific can be made; while with the introduction of heavier rails and with shorter stops at stations a much faster rate of speed can be maintained.

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* Shortly after this article was written the East-Chinese Railway was opened to the public for travel.

CHAPTER IV

MOSCOW TO IRKUTSK

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Preparation

THE writer crossed Siberia in the summer and autumn of 1901, shortly after the railway as far as Stretensk had been opened for travel, having before leaving St. Petersburg for Moscow secured much valuable information and assistance for the trip through the kindness of our American Ambassador, Mr. Tower, and the Secretaries of the Embassy, Mr. Pierce and Mr. Morgan. He also secured much valuable advice about travelling in Siberia from Mr. Emery, an American from the state of Maine, who for many years had conducted trading posts throughout Siberia and who was well and favorably known from one end to the other of that vast region. The name "Emery" over a log cabin in the wilderness meant, as the writer later discovered, that there the Russians and the native tribes could trade

peacefully with furs or other products of the forest and get in return the products of civilization. The writer met Mr. Emery in Moscow and learned that he had crossed Siberia seventeen times before the railway was built, but that now he was anxious to return to his native land. He looked and talked like one of those hardy pioneers in the middle of the last century in our far-west states.

The Siberian Train

The large station at Moscow was a crowded place when the Siberian train was ready to start, for even to Russians the journey is a long one, and the friends of many of the passengers were there in great numbers to see them off. Finally the regulation three bells, rung at intervals of several minutes, gave the signal to start, and promptly on schedule time, at 9.05 P. M., we pulled out of the ancient capital of the empire for its newer possessions in the far east.

The train was composed of first and second

class passenger cars, with a dining car, library, bath-room, barber shop, and apparatus for gymnastic exercises. This last feature becomes important in so long an overland journey as across Siberia, and it might well be adopted by some of the American transcontinental trains. The passenger cars were divided into compartments with two or four berths in each and an aisle on the side of the car; while the whole train was lit by electricity. The cars were attended by Tartar porters, who here, as in most hotels and public places in Russia, are the usual servants. They are said to be honest, trustworthy, and fairly sober. The whole train was in charge of a Russian official. Some of the trains carry a church car in which services are held for passengers, as well as for the people at the stations at which the train stops long enough for this purpose.

We had a separate compartment in one of the cars, our neighbors on one side being a priest of the Greek Church and his family,

and on the other side, the family of a banker in Siberia. Several Russian officers were also on board, as well as several civilians bound for the gold districts, another bound for the far north on the Lena Valley, a Frenchman who had butter dairies in the Obi Valley, and many others. Very few were going all the way across Siberia, most being bound for intermediate points.

The train was much crowded, but all were good humored and courteous as they filled every available corner with their many bags and bundles, including large baskets of supplies, the inevitable tea-pots and boxes of cigarettes, and a great deal of bedding with mattresses, sheets, and pillows. This bedding is not necessary on the train, as it can be procured there by paying extra, and it is stipulated by the railway authorities that they will have the sheets and pillow-cases changed once every three days of the journey; but it is needed when the passenger leaves the train and branches off on the river boats and

Cossack Village, Siberia

postroads. Bedding is also useful at many of the hotels of Siberia, because very often when a traveller rents a room he finds in it a bare iron or wooden bedstead, as he is expected to carry his own bedding. At many of the hotels, however, these articles can be procured from the proprietor at a fixed price for each sheet, pillow, pillow-case, etc., so that a bill for one night's lodging and fare often includes a dozen or more items.

Across the Ural Mountains and the Steppes

Our route led us first through the grain districts of eastern European Russia, in the valley of that great water highway, the Volga River, past the agricultural metropolis of Samara, and thence to the Ural Mountains. The Urals are a picturesque, forest-clad range not unlike parts of the Allegheny Mountains, and they separate the plains of eastern Europe from those of western Asia. Where the dividing-line is crossed in the heart of the Urals, a

large stone monument has been erected bearing on one side the inscription "Europe" and on the other side, "Asia." The most noticeable feature as we descended the east slope of the mountains into the plains of Asia was the greater size, freshness, and succulence of the vegetation, which here shows a wonderfully luxuriant growth, while on the western slope it was dry and parched. This feature is characteristic of the whole of Siberia, and many of the shrubs and trees which are common to both regions grow to much greater size there than in Europe. On both sides of the mountains we passed numerous iron manufacturing districts, for this part of the Urals is the great iron region of Russia; and at many of the stations some of the products of the works, such as cutlery, daggers, and small ornamental castings, were offered for sale.

We continued eastward over unbroken steppes for over 1,000 miles in the Governments of Tobolsk and Tomsk and the Kirgiz country, across the valleys of the Tobol,

Ishim, Irtish, and Obi Rivers, whose courses meandering toward the north are marked by long lines of trees intersecting the plains. As far as the eye can see are scattered fields of grain, separated by grass-lands brilliant with wild flowers, and dotted by droves of cattle with their Kirgiz herdsmen; while occasionally caravans and emigrant wagons pass slowly along the country roads. Whole trainloads of butter from the dairies of the Obi Valley are shipped in cold storage cars to Europe. Much of it goes to Riga and is shipped thence by sea to England. Bee culture has also reached a very considerable stage of development in the Tomsk Government and throughout the regions to the east, the bees seeming to prosper greatly, and immense quantities of honey are produced. Of such importance has this industry become that the Russian Government has appointed a special commissioner to look after bee culture and to study the best methods of promoting it.

The steppe regions contain numerous prosperous rural communities, and a number of towns of considerable size, with populations of from 10,000 to 60,000 people.* Along the line of the railway Tchelyabinsk, Kurgan, Petropavlovsk, Omsk, Tomsk, and other places, are especially noteworthy. The town of Kurgan is built on what are supposed to be the ruins of an old Tartar fort, though the native legend relates that this spot was the tomb of the daughter of a powerful Tartar chief, that robbers attacked it to obtain the treasure buried with her, and that the princess in rage rose up and drove off in a chariot drawn by two white horses.

Tomsk is connected with the main line by a branch road, and is the chief town of the government of the same name, as well as the commercial center of West Siberia. Like many other Siberian towns, it was started as a fort

* These populations were the estimates at the time of this narrative in 1901. Since then many of the towns have greatly increased in population.

in the early days, but gradually expanded as the commercial necessities of the region required, until now (year 1901) it contains over 60,000 people. It has fine buildings, telephones, telegraph lines, electric lights, churches, theaters, newspapers, hospitals, and all the equipments of a modern city. It has many schools, scientific societies, and one institution of higher learning, the Tomsk Imperial University, with a library of over 100,000 volumes.

Across the Valley of the Yenisei

To the east of Tomsk we approached the mountain region and travelled for about 1,000 miles through a rugged country, occasionally intersected by higher mountain ranges, with many fertile valleys, across the Governments of Yenisei and Irkutsk to Lake Baikal. This country is abundantly watered by many streams, the most important being the Yenisei and its tributary, the Angara, and in many parts it is heavily covered with forests. Hunting is a popular occupation here

among both Russians and natives, but it has been carried on so actively during the three hundred years or more in which Siberia has been known to the Russians, that some of the animals, especially the sable, which is the most sought after of all the fur animals, have been almost exterminated. Laws have been recently made, however, restricting hunting to certain times of year, and also defining the methods under which it shall be carried on, thus giving the game a chance to escape complete extermination.

The mining resources of this mountainous region are rapidly becoming prominent, especially the gold mining, which is a newer industry here than in the Urals. The gold occurs both in placer deposits and in veins, most of the production, however, coming from the placers, as vein mining has been but little developed; but even in placer mining only the richest alluvium is worked. The Ural Mountains and the Yakutsk and Amur Territories are the chief gold-producing regions of

Asiatic Russia, though the Governments of Tomsk, Yenisei, and Irkutsk, and the Territory of Transbaikalia, produce considerable, while the Territory of Ussuri and the region of the Okhotsk Sea and Kamchatka produce a little. The total production of all Russia in 1900, including Siberia and the Urals, was a little over $20,000,000. Taking Siberia and the rest of Asiatic Russia as a whole, its possibilities as a gold-producing region are simply enormous. It is bounded on the south, west, and east by gold-bearing mountains, and an extraordinary number of the streams from these ranges show signs of gold in their alluvium, while many of them are wonderfully rich.

It would seem that at no very distant time the gold mines, if properly exploited, might easily produce, instead of $20,000,000 annually, many times this amount; and in these great gold possibilities surely lies enormous future wealth for the Government and the people of Russia.

Coal or lignite of various geological ages, including Carboniferous, Jurassic, and Tertiary, is very generally distributed throughout the eastern part of Siberia, but wood is so cheap that coal has not been much worked except for the railway and on the coast for ocean steamers. The beds are of considerable size, and the quality is often that of a very good bituminous coal, while elsewhere, especially in the Tertiary strata, it is in the form of brown coal or lignite. Iron ores also occur in a great many places in the Ural Mountains and in the mountains of the eastern part of Siberia. They are extensively smelted on both slopes of the Urals, but further east they are worked to only a limited extent in the Governments of Yenisei and Irkutsk and the Territory of Transbaikalia. The abundance, however, of iron ore and fuel in Siberia offers the basis of a great manufacturing industry, though up to the present time (year 1901) the limited markets have retarded its development.

CHAPTER V

IRKUTSK AND LAKE BAIKAL

IRKUTSK AND LAKE BAIKAL

THE largest town in the mountain region of the upper Yenisei valley is Irkutsk, in the Government of the same name, which we reached after eight days' and nights' continuous travel from Moscow. It was founded about the middle of the seventeenth century as a fort and trading post, at which the tribute of furs paid the government representatives by the native Buriat tribes was collected. It has played an important part in Siberian history, and by the census of 1897 it had 52,000 people, though it has grown considerably since then. Like Tomsk, it has all the conveniences of a modern city, and the newer and finer stone buildings are in strange contrast with the older heavy one-storied log cabins, surrounded by high fences of equally heavy logs, and entered through mysterious looking small gates or doors, recalling the days when Siberian houses were built more

for security than for beauty. The activity of the town by day and night, the saloons, restaurants, and hotels crowded with people, together with the dance halls running full blast, are the result of the sudden boom given by the railway, which arrived there in 1898.

Leaving the city of Irkutsk, we continued up the Angara Valley for a few miles to the station of Baikal on Lake Baikal. This lake is the largest body of fresh water on the continent of Europe and Asia, and is second only to the great lakes of America and Africa, being about 400 miles long and from seventeen to fifty-five miles wide, with a depth said sometimes to reach between 3,000 and 4,000 feet. It is fed by numerous streams, notably the Selenga, flowing from Mongolia, and has its outlet in the Angara River, a tributary of the Yenisei. It is completely surrounded by rugged mountains, and has many rocky islands and precipitous capes, eroded by the elements into fantastic forms which are

believed by the natives to be the homes of different deities; hence the lake is known by them as the "Holy Sea." It is noted for the stormy weather usually prevailing, and the normal condition of the waters during a large part of the year seems to be one of turbulence. In spite of this, however, the lake is an important channel of communication, and a number of boats do a lucrative business on it. The railway maintains (year 1901) powerful steamers for the transportation of passengers and freight, pending the time when the road shall be completed around the south shores. One of these boats, the "Baikal," is a very powerful ice-breaker, used in crossing the lake in the winter, as the water freezes to a depth of from four to seven feet. It is also used in the summer as an ordinary transport.

On arriving at the lake we found the steamer "Baikal" waiting for the train. The weather during the morning had been clear and perfect, and we began to think we might have a

good passage; but before the boat started a heavy storm arose, and as we left the shore the waters of this grand but inhospitable inland sea were a mass of billows and spray.

On the boat could be seen, better than on the railway, the different races and tribes that circulate along this great interior highway. Russian soldiers and peasants from all parts of the empire, Chinese, Tartars, Tungus, Ostiaks, Voguls, Buriats, Samoyedes, Yakuts, and various other tribes, each in its own native dress, all talking in different languages at the same time, crowd and jostle one another in their rush to cross the gang-plank and board the ship. Below, in the cabin, the few first-class passengers eat, drink, smoke cigarettes, and play cards and musical instruments. The steamer continues through the fog and storm, the deck passengers become colder and wetter, the cabin passengers grumble at the slowness of the voyage, and finally, after about seven hours,

the lights of the Mysovaya mole and the shrill whistles of the transport announce the arrival in port. The passengers are quickly transferred to the new train and again the land journey is resumed toward the east.

CHAPTER VI

LAKE BAIKAL TO THE HEAD OF THE AMUR RIVER

LAKE BAIKAL TO THE HEAD OF THE AMUR RIVER

Transbaikalia

AFTER leaving Lake Baikal we entered the Transbaikal Territory, also known as Transbaikalia, which, with the exception of an area of steppe land in the southeast, in the direction of the Desert of Gobi, is almost entirely a high mountainous country, well watered by many streams; and though the climate is very severe, the subsoil over almost the whole of the Territory being frozen both summer and winter, yet many valleys are successfully cultivated in places where the upper soil thaws for a depth of a few inches during the summer. The Amur Territory adjoins the Transbaikal Territory on the east, and is, like it, essentially a mountainous country. It is separated from the Chinese province of Manchuria by the Amur River, which is the main artery of travel through the region.

It was in Transbaikalia, on the Onon River, that, according to the Mongol legend, their great chief of the thirteenth century, Jenghiz Khan, was born. In fact, the original home of the Turko-Mongolian tribes, which overran Asia and eastern Europe in the middle ages, is supposed to have been in southern Transbaikalia and the adjoining parts of China. The Turks, of what is now the Turkish Empire, probably came originally from here, but they have become so much mixed with Caucasians since they settled in Europe and western Asia that they are a very different people from the original Turkish stock which is seen in its less adulterated condition in some of the Siberian tribes.

It may be stated here that the natives of Siberia are mostly scattered nomadic tribes, differing considerably in different parts, but, with the exception of a few tribes of uncertain ethnology, they are probably largely of Mongolian origin; and many of them, at least, are descendants of once much more

numerous and powerful people, having been driven by superior force, or by the overcrowding of their original homes, to seek new lands to the northward in the unoccupied or sparsely inhabited regions of Siberia. Among the most numerous are the Kirgiz tribes of southwestern Siberia, the descendants of the Turko-Mongolian hordes whose invasions in the middle ages carried terror to the people of Europe; the Yakuts, who wandered many ages ago from their more southerly homes to the Arctic regions, and have now become so thoroughly acclimatized that they not only exist there, but are even among the few native tribes of Siberia that are increasing in number; the Tongus, a Mongolian tribe, which extends in greater or less numbers from the Yenisei River to the Pacific Coast. Among other more or less numerous tribes may be mentioned the Ostiaks, Voguls, Samoyedes, Buriats, Tartars, Giliaks, Aleuts, and others.

Transbaikalia occupies a unique position among the provinces of Siberia, inasmuch as

it has been for ages the great channel of entry for Chinese products into Russia and for Russian products into China. This is partly because it is the shortest route to Europe from eastern China, and partly because the Selenga valley offers a much easier passage across the frontier than any of the routes to the west, where the rugged mountains make the few passes that do exist more or less difficult. From the earliest days a large part of the tea brought to Russia from China has come over this route. The town of Kiakhta, in the Selenga valley, near the frontier, was and is still the great international market where the Slav and Mongol meet and trade.

A novel industry in Transbaikalia is the catching and domesticating the "maral," or wild deer, for the sake of its horns, which are considered a very valuable medicine by the Chinese. The maral sheds its horns once a year, and they are collected and sold at high prices to the Chinese merchants, who ship them south to China. In a similar manner

View Near Stretensk, Siberia

the Siberian finds ready purchasers among the Chinese for the bones, claws, and other parts of the northern tiger, which abounds in Ussuri on the Pacific Coast. These parts, when ground up and administered to a patient, are supposed to have wonderful effects and the Chinese are said to give this medicine to their soldiers to keep up their courage.

Stretensk and the Shilka and Amur Rivers

We continued our journey eastward from Lake Baikal through the mountain country, across the Yablonoi Range, which, in Transbaikalia, forms the continental divide between the water of the Arctic and Pacific, past the historic towns of Petrovsk, Tchita, and Nerchinsk, to the terminus (year 1901) of the railway at Stretensk on the Shilka River, one of the headwaters of the Amur River.

This town was only a short time ago a quiet Cossack village, a line of log cabins

strung along the river bank, but the arrival of the railway has given it an unwonted activity, for it is here that all the transcontinental traffic has to be changed from train to boat, or vice versa. On our arrival, our first effort was to secure passage on a steamer down the Shilka and Amur Rivers. After applying at several boats along the shore and finding that they were all full, we secured passage on a freight boat named the "Vladimir Monamakh." This was a large, flat-bottomed, stern-paddle steamer loading with salt and general merchandise for the lower Amur; and as even this boat was very much crowded, we were fortunate in securing the right to sleep on the seats in the dining saloon.

The loading of the boat was all done by hand, no trucks were used, and everything was carried on men's backs. Gaily attired music girls played harps and violins alongside the gang-plank to encourage the men, and this, together with frequent drinks of vodka, seemed to inspire them to great

View on the Shilka River

activity. The more vodka they drank and the more music the girls played, the harder the men worked, until at last the boat was loaded. Then some cattle and sheep were driven aboard for the settlers on the lower Amur; and finally, after waiting three days, the boat was ready and we started down the Shilka, crowded with freight and emigrants and carrying a few cabin passengers, and with a mixed crew of Russians, Manchurians, and Koreans.

The Russian Government has done much to improve navigation on the Shilka and the main Amur, as they comprise a most important channel of travel, not only because the Amur is on the Manchurian frontier, but because it is the gateway through the mountains to the Pacific provinces. Lighthouses from point to point indicate the course of the channel, and signal stations are established at certain intervals, indicating by means of graduated poles, visible at long distances, the depth of the water from day to day, so that

the steamboat captains have only to glance at these indicators as they pass to learn the condition of the water. Steam dredges are also kept working at shallow places in the channel. In fact, the methods for assisting navigation are remarkably complete, and rarely anywhere can be seen a more thoroughly efficient system for river navigation than this one established by the Russian Government in the remote interior of Asia.

The Shilka below Stretensk flows through a high rolling country in the foothills of the Yablonoi Mountains, until it reaches the eastern limit of Transbaikalia, where the Argun, flowing in a broad muddy stream from northern China, joins it, and together they form the Amur. To the eastward the Amur River divides the Amur Territory of Siberia from the Chinese Territory of Manchuria on the south.

CHAPTER VII

FROM THE HEAD OF THE AMUR TO BLAGOVESCHENSK

FROM THE HEAD OF THE AMUR TO BLAGOVESCHENSK

River Settlements

A SHORT distance below, where the Shilka and Argun Rivers combine to form the great Amur River, is the village of Pokrovsk, a small Cossack settlement of a few hundred inhabitants, which we reached on the second evening from Stretensk. This is one of a number of Cossack villages which represent posts established along the left bank of the Amur by Count Muravioff, for protection of the frontier, after the treaty of Aigun with China in 1858. They are usually built in clearances in forests on the bank of the river, and consist of rows of log cabins, above which rise the spires of the Greek churches which they almost all possess. The people live, in times of peace, by farming, hunting, fishing, and gold mining; while in times of war they are soldiers.

We arrived at Pokrovsk late in the evening, and as at most of the Cossack villages, as soon as our boats touched shore, women and children hurried to the river bank selling milk, onions, and mushrooms to the passengers, a large flat mushroom fried in fat having a ready sale. A dense fog settled down on the river shortly afterward, so that we were compelled to anchor until it cleared the next morning. Some distance below, the river flows through the Big Khingan Mountains, which extend from the Great Wall of China northward into Siberia.

The country is very wild and mountainous, densely covered with forests, and with but a few settlements. An occasional small village, or the isolated log house of the guardian of a river signal station or an emigrant's raft floating slowly down stream, are all that break the primeval grandeur of that region. Large flocks of wild geese and ducks, migrating southward with the approach of winter, flew up from protected coves as our boat

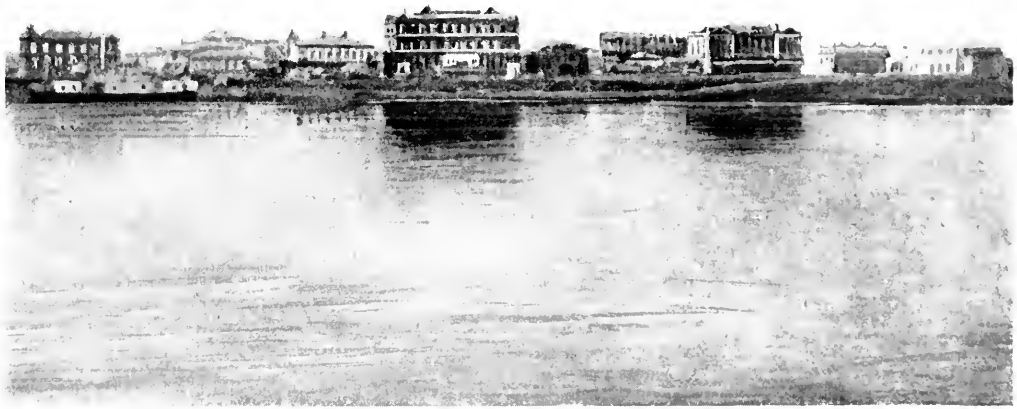
River Boat on the Amur River

passed rapidly down the swift mountain current.

The next night, some distance below the Cossack village of Dzhalinda, we were again compelled to anchor on account of fog, and did not start until late in the morning. The evening was spent taking wood on board for fuel, an operation that had to be performed every day. The wood-choppers, who have camps along the river, build fires during the night to attract the attention of the steamers as they pass, and the captains of the boats bargain for fuel. On this night the fog came down thickly as the sun sank behind the mountains, and the dense forests were dimly lit up in spots by the beacons of the Russian wood-choppers, whose heavy forms in their long coats could be dimly seen through the mist, warming themselves by the fires; while the tall, gaunt, half-naked forms of the Manchurians and Koreans, belonging to the boat's crew, moved up and down the steep banks carrying their burden of wood.

Passing down the river we continued through the mountains for three days more, occasionally reaching open areas as some large tributary emptied into the Amur. Each night we were stopped by dense fogs, but each morning it cleared off into a perfect day, cold and bright. After six days we finally reached Blagoveschensk, the capital and commercial metropolis of the Amur Territory, with a population (year 1901) of about 33,000 people.

We arrived on September 10, 1901, and the next day the first news of the shooting of President McKinley, on September 6th, reached Blagoveschensk in a short telegram to the Russo-Chinese Bank, stating that the President had been shot, but that the wound might not be fatal. It was gratifying for an American to observe the universal sympathy and regret shown by the people of this remote Siberian town over the dastardly attack on the President, and their



Blagoveschensk from the Amur River

universally expressed hope that summary justice would be dealt out to the would-be assassin.

It was at Blagoveschensk in July, 1900, during the Boxer troubles in China, that the Manchu-Chinese threatened to massacre the people of Blagoveschensk and of the small Russian settlements along the river. It is easy to imagine the feeling of the isolated Russian communities in this vast region, where, from Irkutsk to the Ussuri River, a distance of over 2,000 miles, there is only one town of any considerable size, and that is Blagoveschensk; while just to the south, separated from them only by the river, were millions of Chinese and Manchurians whom the Chinese Government had never been able to hold much in check, waiting only for a chance to massacre. Under such conditions the civilized man must strike to kill in protection of his home and family, and that is what the Russians did. Any other course would have meant ruin for them.

The story goes that the Chinese population of Blagoveschensk, about 5,000 in number, had planned, in connection with Chinese and Manchurians from over the Amur, to massacre the people of the town on a certain day; but the Russians anticipated their plans and attacked them, killing many and driving the others into the river, where most of them were drowned. The Chinese from the Manchurian side of the river bombarded the town, but did little damage, and were finally driven away. A story is told of two Russian soldiers, each wounded in one arm, and being unable to handle their guns alone, they stood together, one holding his gun with his uninjured arm, and the other pulling the trigger with the one hand that remained to him. The fight, once started, was continued until the Chinese were driven far into the interior of Manchuria and their river settlements abandoned and burned. Notable among these was the town of Aigun, twenty-three miles below Blagoveschensk, on the Chinese side of the

Manchurian Camp (Chinese) on the Manchurian Side of the Amur River

river, an old and prosperous river port, made familiar by the Russo-Chinese treaty of 1858 and one of the most populous settlements of this part of Manchuria. Not a house is left standing, nothing remains except innumerable brick chimneys rising up from the ashes of the town, like blackened tombstones in a graveyard. Near by, on the river front, a small camp over which the Russian flag floats (year 1901) indicates the dwelling of the guard left by the victors.

Russia had not abandoned Manchuria since she first invaded it at this time, and it is well for that beautiful but ill-governed country, for the Russians are rapidly restoring law and order where formerly there were riot and anarchy, and where the country was overrun by brigands. Moreover, the East-Chinese Railway, which was being constructed through Manchuria under Russian direction, and in accordance with a definite agreement with China, did

not receive protection from the Chinese Government in the troubles of 1900, so that the Russians were forced to guard their own property.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM BLAGOVESCHENSK TO VLADIVOSTOK

FROM BLAGOVESCHENSK TO VLADIVOSTOK

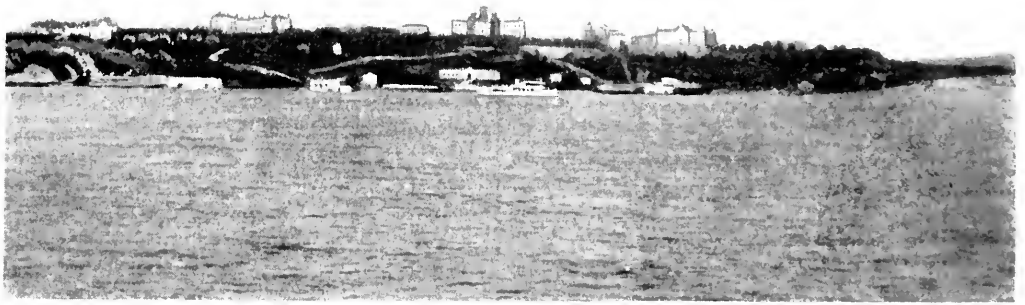
The Lower Amur

WE LEFT the "Vladimir Monamakh" at Blagoveschensk, and after a short stay there secured passage on the mail steamer "John Cockerill," a fine river boat bound for Nikolaievsk, near the mouth of the Amur. We had intended to stay longer in this region but winter was coming on and we had to reach the Pacific Coast before the river froze. The "John Cockerill" was crowded with freight and passengers, including many emigrants. The cabin passengers were more numerous than on the "Monamakh," and included many Russian officers going to different stations in the eastern part of Siberia.

On leaving Blagoveschensk the river widens out into a magnificent stream of from one to three miles in width, bounded on both sides by broad plains, though the mountains

again closed in as we approached the Little Khingan Range, and still further down the Vanda and the Kendeh-a-lin Ranges. Three days after leaving Blagoveschensk we reached Khabarovsk, a town of about 15,000 people, beautifully situated on the high bluffs of the Amur, just below its confluence with the Ussuri River. It is named after the famous Cossack leader Khabaroff, who invaded the Amur region about the middle of the seventeenth century, and contains a fine monument to Count Muravioff, who finally acquired this region for Russia two centuries later. Here we heard the news that an operation had been performed on President McKinley and that he was expected to recover, a hope in which we greatly rejoiced, but in which we were to be sadly disappointed on our arrival at Vladivostok a few days later.

We left the mail boat at Khabarovsk and took the Ussuri branch of the railway to Vladivostok, a distance of over 400 miles south through Ussuri province. The country



Habarovsk on the Amur River

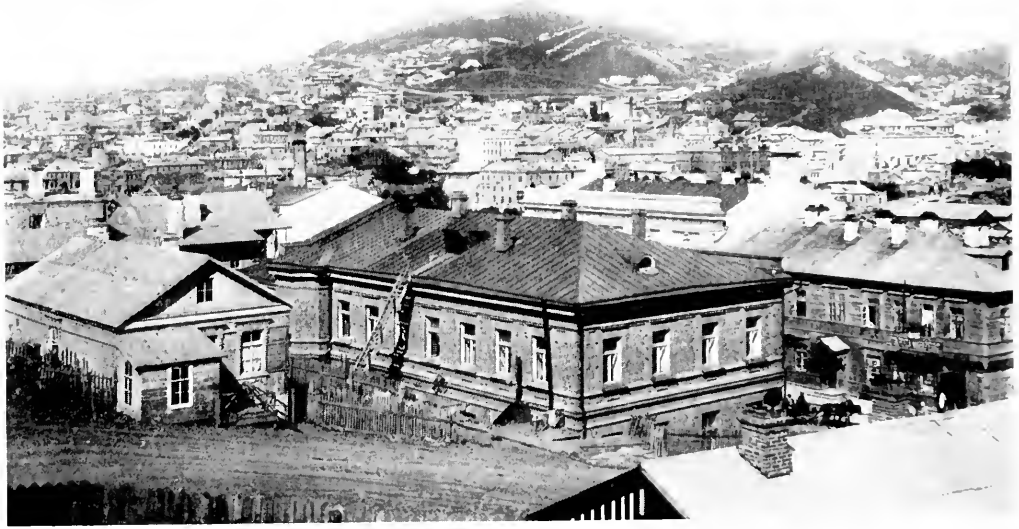
became more and more cultivated as we proceeded south, and showed the ameliorating effects of the proximity to the Pacific in a climate much milder than that we had found in the Amur Valley. Many small settlements and villages were passed on the way, but none of them was of any considerable size except Nikolsk, with about 15,000 people, which is the point of junction with the East-Chinese Railway and is an important military station.

Vladivostok

On our arrival at Vladivostok we were heartily welcomed by our efficient American Commercial Agent, Mr. Greener, who is (year 1901) the only official representative of the United States Government in all Siberia. A large American flag floating from the top of his house on a prominent hill in the city was a most grateful sight to one who had not seen this emblem for a long time; but a second glance showed it to be at half-mast, and

with a shock we recognized this first sad intimation we had received of the death of President McKinley, three days before. The Russian naval fleet then in the harbor showed its sympathy with the loss of our nation by firing salutes and making other naval demonstrations; and universal regret and indignation over the assassination were heard on all sides.

Vladivostok is the great Pacific Coast port of Siberia, and is situated on a narrow strip of hilly land extending into Peter the Great Bay at the head of the Japan Sea. The harbor of Vladivostok is known as the Golden Horn, and is one of the best on the coast of Asia. Its depth is great enough for any ships navigating the Pacific Ocean, while its mouth is narrow and protected from the sea by protruding tongues of land and islands. The town is in latitude 43° 6′ N., which is only a very little north of the latitude of New York; yet the climate, owing to the cold Arctic influences along the Siberian coast, is as severe



Vladivostok from a Hill on Outskirts of the Town

as in many places much further north in America. The harbor is frozen usually from the middle of December until early in April, but the channel is successfully kept open by ice-breakers, and commerce is not interrupted at any time of the year.

Vladivostok was founded by the Russians as a military post in 1860. At that time it was of little commercial importance, but it grew rapidly, and in about ten years it had replaced Nikolaievsk as the principal port of the Siberian coast. In 1891 the Ussuri Railway was started as the first division of the Siberian Railway, and by its completion to Khabarovsk in 1897, as well as by the completion of lines west of Stretensk, somewhat later, Vladivostok was connected directly with Europe by railway and river routes. The town now has a population of some 60,000, about half being Russians, with a few other Europeans and a few Americans, and the rest Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans. It is one of the most substantially built towns

in Siberia, most of the houses being of stone and brick, and the government buildings and banks being fine modern edifices. The docks, which were formerly built of wood, are being largely replaced by massive stone structures that make the town look as if it was there to stay. It contains a number of schools, churches, charitable and scientific societies, several periodicals, hotels, and a theater hall. The Eastern Institute, situated here, is a school where students are taught the Chinese, Manchurian, Japanese, Mongolian, Korean, and other Asiatic languages, to prepare them for government service at Asiatic stations.

In the streets everything is active and noisy; carriages dash up and down, with the horses galloping in a way that delights the heart of the Russian cab driver; heavy trucks loaded with merchandise move slowly back and forth from the docks; occasionally a company of Russian troops passes through the main streets—strong, healthy, powerfully

Bay of the Golden Horn, Vladivostok. Showing Pacific Squadron of Russia

built men who look well capable of filling their task of guarding northern Asia. In the marketplace, on the shore of the Golden Horn, Chinese and Korean junks unload and offer their goods for sale, while further along the bay the large sea-going steamers are loading and unloading, and the Korean dock laborers, in their white clothes, together with the Chinese, seem to work harder than any one in town. Back from the bay, on the other side of the town, is the camp of the garrison of Vladivostok, and near by is an exile settlement made up of neat log cabins with gardens, and beautifully situated on the side of a hill. The exiles here are those that have finished their terms of hard labor. They look clean and well kept, and have a great deal of freedom. Further down the hill, on the shore of the bay, is a brewery surrounded by an attractive grove of trees, where on hot days Russians go to drink beer.

CHAPTER IX

RUSSIAN CIVILIZATION IN SIBERIA

Rapidity of its Spread

THE rapidity with which the Russians explored and subjugated Siberia has already been described, and it was all the more remarkable when we consider that, while this was going on, they were at different times involved in wars with the Swedes, Germans, Poles, Turks, and Mongols. Nevertheless, they found time and means not only to defend themselves successfully from their enemies in Europe and southern Asia, but also to conquer northern Asia. In this they were much assisted by the great river systems of Siberia, which offered a ready means for travel in different directions, and by the fact that the scattered native tribes offered but a feeble resistance to the advance of the organized forces of the Russians, so that, with the exception of the campaigns of Yermak in West Siberia and of Khabaroff on the Amur,

and a few other important conflicts by other commanders, the invasion and occupation of Siberia were accomplished with but little bloodshed.

The fur hunters, moreover, were a potent factor in Russia's rapid advance into Siberia. They penetrated the most remote regions, often making journeys, lasting several years, in search of the sable and other fur animals, and incidentally brought back information about unknown sections, which was of the greatest use in later conquests. They were the first explorers in new regions in Siberia, just as in America the seekers for gold and silver, as well as the fur hunters, from the time of Cortez and Pizarro to recent times in our western states, and even to the present time in Alaska, have been the pioneers in unexplored regions. The Russians, however, did not take notice of mines in early days. They were fur hunters and not miners, and the gold-mining industry became important only at a later date.

Market Place, Vladivostok

Though the fur hunters played an important part in the early exploration of Siberia, they did but little toward the permanent colonization of the region. This fell to the lot of the Cossacks, the exiles, and the free settlers, and these three classes of colonists represent the mass of the Russian population of Siberia to-day (year 1901).

The Cossacks

The Cossacks were the people who stood the brunt of the hard work of early colonization, and it was due to their wonderful endurance and spirit that the country was successfully settled. In order to understand the results accomplished by these remarkable people it is necessary to say a few words about their origin and development. They are supposed to have been originally refugees from different tribes, who collected, in the turbulent times following the period of Mongol oppression, on the southern frontier of European Russia. At first they were

distinguished as the Cossacks of the Don and the Cossacks of the Dnieper, as they inhabited parts of the valleys of those rivers. They lived on the islands of the rivers or in the surrounding marshes, and had strongly fortified positions for their protection. They were essentially independent democratic communities, ever jealous of their liberty and freedom of action. They held their property in common among themselves and elected their own "Hetmans," or leaders. They were a fierce, warlike, restless people; and their neighbors, the Russians, Poles, and Turks, were constantly seeking their assistance in their wars with one another. The Cossacks served with all of them at different times, but gradually became more and more identified with Russia, until finally they declared allegiance to that country, and became completely "Russified."

The Cossacks of the Don were from very early times more or less under Russian

control, but the Cossacks of the Dnieper preserved greater freedom until, by the treaty of Radzine in 1681, they put themselves under Russian protection. They both, however, retained more or less of their old organization, and were allowed much more freedom than other tribes of the empire; but their restless spirit led them to frequent disturbances and revolts against imperial authority, and the general government was obliged to restrict their privileges more and more, and often to deport them to different parts of the empire. Even now, however, they possess special privileges which distinguish them from other Russians.

In the various vicissitudes through which the Cossacks have gone they have become, both by voluntary migration and enforced deportation, greatly scattered, so that now, instead of simply the Cossacks of the Don and of the Dnieper, as of old, we find the Cossacks of the Danube, of the Black Sea, of the Azoff, of the Caucasius, of Orenburg, of

the Ural, of Astrakhan, of the Kirgiz Steppe, of Transbaikalia, of the Amur, of the Ussuri, and elsewhere. They are true frontiersmen, and though they have at times given the Russian Government much trouble, they have also been of great service as explorers, settlers, and soldiers. Without them the settlement of Siberia would probably have been a much slower and more difficult task.

The Cossacks were almost invariably the first people sent to occupy newly acquired parts of Siberia, and at the present time they are found from one end to the other of Asiatic Russia. Though many of them have been sent there as settlers and for the protection of frontiers, yet many have gone voluntarily, and they all are loyal Russians, ever ready and desirous of fighting for their country. In consideration of the special privileges they enjoy (year 1901) they are supposed to be at the command of the Government whenever they are needed, and they are generally used for cavalry and artillery, though sometimes

as infantry. They are usually stationed at points on the frontier or other exposed places where their services might be required. They are settled in isolated communities, and in times of peace they practise agriculture or the cruder arts, while in times of war they are soldiers.

Exiles

The banishment of exiles to Siberia began in the year 1593, shortly after Yermak's conquests, and since then it has continued, the number varying greatly from time to time, from a few thousand to 20,000 yearly, according to circumstances and the various vicissitudes through which the empire has passed. At first banishment to Siberia was confined almost entirely to people of rank, mostly political and religious offenders, who were exiled instead of being put to death, but later all kinds of criminals were sent there, and the region became the penal colony of Russia. Capital punishment, except in special cases,

was, nominally at least, abolished in Russia in the middle of the eighteenth century, so that many exiles were sent to Siberia instead of being executed.

The free emigration to Siberia has increased so rapidly in the last few years that the colonists of this class now far outnumber the exiles; and the latter are said to amount to less than six per cent. of the total population (year 1901). Many of the exiles are educated people, whose influence has proved valuable in the new communities, yet many of them are common criminals, and as the voluntary settlers increased in number, their enforced association with the criminal convicts naturally resulted in a demoralizing influence. These convicts were mostly people who were not of a class that made good pioneers in a new country, and they preferred to live by their old lawless methods rather than to attempt to earn a livelihood by legitimate means. This condition of affairs for many years resulted in numerous protests on the

View in Vladivostok Harbor

part of the settlers, with the result that finally an edict was promulgated by which most offenses were to be punished by imprisonment, and the exile system of Siberia was to be largely restricted except for certain classes of common criminals, who were to be sent mostly to the distant island of Sakhalin, on the Pacific Coast.

It is not the intention of the writer to enter into the discussion of the Russian exile system, but in justice to the Russian Government (year 1901) it should be stated that the latter has often been unjustly and too harshly criticized for this system. Many of the people sent to Siberia would have been put to death in other countries, and whatever disadvantages may have accompanied the exile system, the intention of the Government was humane and charitable. This is shown by the very fact that, at a time when in other countries of Europe the death penalty was being dealt out with an unsparing hand, the Slav was quietly trying to abolish it as cruel, and

was sending its criminals to a distant but habitable land in hope of reforming and making good settlers of them. The Russian Government has not intentionally abused its exiles. Of course, in such a vast country as Siberia, petty officials in remote districts, beyond the reach of ready supervision, may often have overstepped their authority, but when they have been found doing so, they have been punished. The Government did not want the exiles ill treated, not only for reasons of humanity, but because it needed them as settlers in a new country, and to have ill treated them would have thwarted this object.

Free Settlers in Siberia

Shortly after the first exiles were sent to Siberia attempts were made to start colonies of free settlers from European Russia. This was difficult at first, as European Russia was not sufficiently crowded to make people seek more space in a new country, and there was

no great inducement to go to Siberia, such as there was in America to go west when gold and silver were discovered there. In order to hasten colonization, therefore, communities of peasants in European Russia were deported and sent to Siberia, but the result of this method, though it did something toward establishing Russian civilization in northern Asia, was not altogether satisfactory. The very fact that a settler had been deported to a new country indicated that he preferred to stay at home, and therefore he was not so efficient a colonist as the voluntary emigrant, who went there under the influence of an enthusiasm for new conditions which made his work felt. Hence the enforced settlers have not been a large element in the development of Siberia, and the system of such deportation has not been much practised since the early days, except with the Cossacks.

In later years, however, as Siberia became better known and as European Russia developed its wonderfully rapid increase in

population, voluntary emigration has become more general. In the beginning of the eighteenth century there were only about 150,000 settlers in Siberia, and in the beginning of the nineteenth century they had increased only to about 500,000; but the number grew rapidly in the latter half of the nineteenth century, so that shortly before the construction of the Great Siberian Railway was commenced, there were probably over 3,000,000 people in Siberia, which number has increased (year 1901) to probably very close to 6,000,000. The emigration is now going on faster than ever; all the trains and boats are crowded, and along the rivers many emigrants are seen on rafts floating down to their new homes, with their families, cattle, horses, hogs, and household possessions.

The railway, of course, has been the great stimulus to immigration in recent years, and before long Siberia will doubtless have a very much larger population than at present. It has frequently been the experience with our

western railways in America that wherever they were built, no matter how barren or unprepossessing the country might seem, yet people began to travel on them, and before long settlements grew up and the region assumed a prosperity that was totally unexpected. So it will doubtless be with Siberia. The old impression that the region was a bleak, frozen desert was a great drawback to its colonization; but now it is known to be a rich country, full of resources for the farmer, miner, and manufacturer, and with a climate which, though severe, is in many places remarkably healthy. In our own country of America parts of our western prairie states a generation ago were marked as "deserts" on our maps, but now they are among the richest agricultural regions; and no one who travels through Siberia and sees the rich steppes covered with luxuriant grass, the mountains with their fertile valleys, the rivers abounding in fish, and the great forests, can doubt that the same mistake was made in adjudging

Siberia a desert as was made when that verdict was passed on our domains. Of course, in the far north Siberia is a cold, bleak region, unfit for Russian colonization; but in the southern and eastern parts it is in no way inferior to some of our northern states or to the provinces of Canada along the American boundary.

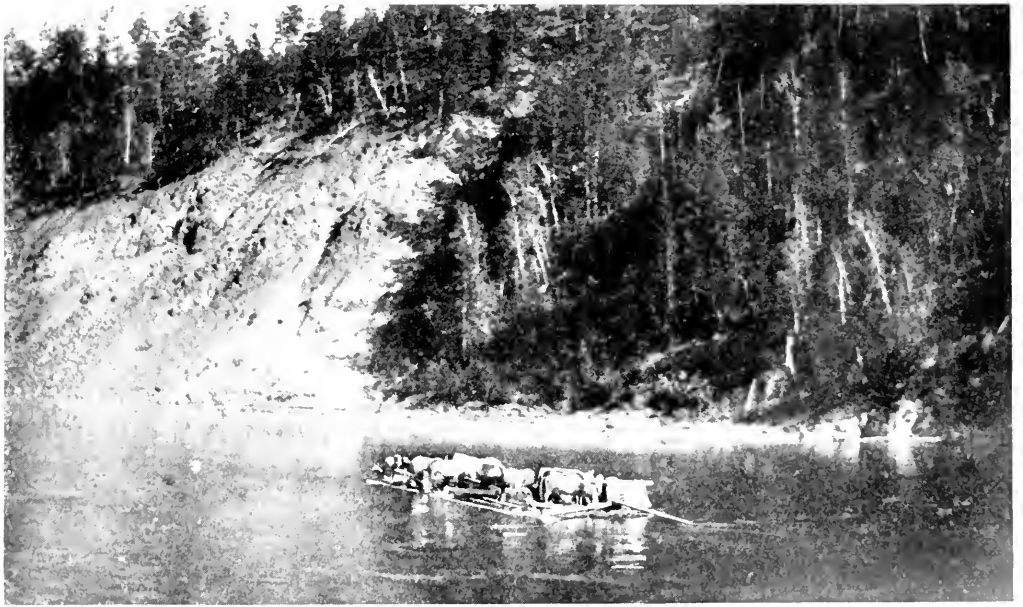
Some Industries of Siberia

The principal industries of Siberia are agriculture, cattle raising, gold mining, fishing, hunting, and lumbering. Until now trade has consisted largely of the exchange of raw materials for the manufactured products of Europe. There are but few manufacturing industries, and those that do exist are mostly on a small scale, supplying a purely local demand. With the vast quantities of raw material, however, that are capable of being manufactured on the spot, with the abundant coal fields, iron ores, and products of the farm, there is every opportunity for Siberia,

with cheap railway transportation, to become an important manufacturing country. The fisheries of Siberia are a most important industry, as they supply food not only for man, but for the dogs he uses in the north for beasts of burden. All the great rivers abound in fish, and on the Pacific Coast their numbers are almost incredible. They are largely varieties of salmon, carp, sturgeon, pike, and other species. The keta is one of the most abundant, and is used as food for men, dogs, and hogs; while on the coast the natives use the skin for clothing, boots, and for making sails for their boats. In addition to the fisheries, the novel occupation of hunting mastodon tusks for ivory gives employment to thousands of natives on the Arctic Coast. The remains and even the whole carcasses of these now extinct animals are found in the lower valleys of the rivers running into the Arctic, where they have been frozen for ages, and many tons of tusks are annually collected in Yakutsk and other northern provinces.

The emigrants to Siberia do not go alone into a new region, as many American settlers have done, but they move in bodies, and sometimes a whole village in European Russia will move in a mass to Siberia. This is due to the peculiar organization of Russian villages, which amounts to a commune, in which the people own and cultivate their lands in common. Hence throughout Siberia we find numerous small agricultural settlements separated by almost totally uninhabited areas.

The settlers are probably better treated and better cared for than any colonists that ever entered a new country. In the first place, if a certain community wishes to go to Siberia, the Government allows them to send a representative to travel through the country and pick out lands which he thinks are desirable. In doing this he is offered by the Government every opportunity to make his investigations; and when he returns and starts to Siberia with his people the Government grants a certain amount of land for



Emigrant Raft Passing down the Amur River

each male member of the community. Their railway fare is very low, and at most of the stations they can get supplies at almost nominal prices, and sometimes for nothing; at points where the emigrants leave the railway and start off in various directions by rivers or wagons, medical and feeding stations have been established where those who are sick can receive free treatment, and all can be fed. At some of these stations there are sleeping apartments and kitchens for the use of emigrants. When they arrive at their destination they are often given assistance in the way of lumber and agricultural implements, as well as other paternal attentions; while they often find Cossacks in the vicinity to protect them against danger.

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