

for and obtained a return showing the proportionate contributions to the revenue from all sources—from excise, customs, and general taxation—made by England, Scotland, and Ireland respectively. According to their return it appears that England and Wales contribute 79 per cent. of the total taxation, that Scotland contributes 11 per cent., and Ireland 10 per cent. This would entitle England and Wales to 515 representations, Scotland to 72, and Ireland to 65. But here again, as in the case of population, we must have regard to the exceptional position of London, in which, not to mention other considerations, the rating of houses is adventitiously high and the rating of lands is exceptionally limited. If this be taken into account, it will be found on a fair estimate that England is entitled to 507 seats in the House of Commons, Scotland to 78, and Ireland to 67. It was probably by giving effect to this consideration that Mr. Gladstone fixed the proportionate number of seats to which Scotland was entitled at 78—the same number as has just been specified.

This conjecture is warranted by other considerations. For example, if we compare the annual value of house property in Scotland with that in England as a whole, the result gives to Scotland only 11·5 per cent.; but if we compare Scotland with England, excluding London, the result gives to Scotland 16·1 per cent. If we compare the returns for Income Tax (for the year 1880–81) with the whole of England, we find that Scotland contributes only 11·5 per cent.; but if we exclude London, Scotland's proportion is again 16·1 per cent., which would entitle her to 74·4 members in the House of Commons.

Perhaps the fairest way to arrive at a definite conclusion is to combine the results produced by the application of these various tests and to strike an average. By this method Scotland is fairly entitled to 73·5 members, so that Mr. Shaw-Lefevre's estimate of 72 members—70 for boroughs and counties, and 2 for the universities—is the lowest number with which the people of Scotland ought to be satisfied. This claim becomes the stronger and the more irresistible when it is remembered that it rests, not merely on statistical grounds, but also and quite as much on the position of Scotland as an integral factor in the composition of the United Kingdom, possessing a history of its own, and a nationality that is worthy of being respected and preserved, and that cannot be ignored without loss to the imperial copartnership.

W. SCOTT DALGLEISH.

### RUSSIAN PRISONS.

It is pretty generally recognised in Europe, that altogether our penal institutions are very far from being what they ought to be, and no better indeed than so many contradictions in action of the modern theory of the treatment of criminals. The principle of the *lex talionis*—of the right of the community to avenge itself on the criminal—is no longer admissible. We have come to an understanding that society at large is responsible for the vices that grow in it, even as it has its share in the glory of its heroes; and we generally admit, at least in theory, that when we deprive a criminal of his liberty, it is to purify and improve him. But we know how hideously at variance with the ideal the reality is. The murderer is simply handed over to the hangman; and the man who is shut up in a prison is so far from being bettered by the change, that he comes out more resolutely the foe of society than he was when he went in. Subjection, on disgraceful terms, to a humiliating work gives him an antipathy to all kinds of labour. After suffering every sort of humiliation at the instance of those whose lives are lived in immunity from the peculiar conditions which bring man to crime—or to such sorts of it as are punishable by the operations of the law—he learns to hate the section of society to which his humiliation belongs, and proves his hatred by new offences against it. And if the penal institutions of Western Europe have failed thus completely to realise the ambition on which they justify their existence, what shall we say of the penal institutions of Russia? The incredible duration of preliminary detention; the horrible circumstances of prison life; the congregation of hundreds of prisoners into dirty and small chambers; the flagrant immorality of a corps of gaolers who are practically omnipotent, whose whole function is to terrorise and oppress, and who rob their charges of the few coppers doled out to them by the State; the want of labour and the total absence of all that contributes to the moral welfare of man; the cynical contempt of human dignity, and the physical degradation of prisoners—these are the elements of prison life in Russia. Not that the principles of Russian penal institutions were worse than those applied to the same institutions in Western Europe. I am rather inclined to hold the contrary. Surely, it is

less degrading for the convict to be employed in useful work in Siberia, than to spend his life in picking oakum, or in climbing the steps of a wheel; and—to compare two evils—it is more humane to employ the assassin as a labourer in a gold mine and, after a few years, make a free settler of him, than peaceably to turn him over to a hangman. In Russia, however, principles are always ruined in application. And if we consider the Russian prisons and penal settlements, not as they ought to be according to the law, but as they are in reality, we can do no less than recognise, with all the best Russian explorers of our prisons, that they are an outrage on humanity.

In England and in the United States several attempts have recently been made to represent the Russian prisons under the most smiling aspect. The best known of them are those made by the Reverend Mr. Lansdell in England, and by Mr. Kennan in the United States. Mr. Kennan came to the conclusion that his sojourn as an officer of the Overland Telegraph Company on the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk—a few thousand miles, more or less, from the penal quarters of Siberia—entitles him to speak authoritatively about Siberian prisons and prisoners. Is it surprising that his experience should be flatly contradicted by those Russians who have seriously studied the life of prisoners in Siberia? Of Mr. Lansdell there is something more to say. He has seen Siberian gaols. Outstripping the post in his career, he has crossed a country which has no railways, at a speed of 6,300 miles in 75 days; and in the space of fourteen hours, indeed, he breakfasted, he dined, he travelled over 40 miles, and he visited the three chief gaols of Siberia—at Tobolsk, at Alexandrovskiy Zavod, and at Kara. Amply furnished with official recommendations, he saw, during this short time, as much as the officials chose to show; and for a country like Siberia that is surely a great deal. Had he anything of the critical faculty which is the first virtue of a traveller, it would have enabled him to appreciate the relative value of the information he obtained in the course of his official scamper through the Siberian prisons; and his book—especially if he had taken note of existing Russian literature on the subject—might have been a useful one. Unhappily, he neither saw nor read, and his book—in so far, at least, as it is concerned with gaols and convicts—can only convey false ideas. This being the case, I think the present paper may prove of interest. Such information as it contains is, at least, authentic, inasmuch as it is derived, not only from books, but from the personal experience of prison life of myself and certain of my friends.

One of the greatest results of the Liberal movement of 1857–1862 was the judicial reform. The old law-courts, in which the procedure was all in writing, were done away with, and trial by jury, which had disappeared under the despotism of the Tsars of Moscow, was re-introduced. The new law of judicial procedure, promulgated in 1864,

was considered as decidedly the most liberal and humane in Europe. About the same time punishment by the *knot* and the branding-iron was abolished. It was high time. Public opinion was revolted by the existence of these shameful implements, and it was so powerful at that time that governors of provinces refused to confirm the sentences that enjoined their use; others—as I have known in Siberia—would give the executioner to understand that, unless he merely played at doing his abominable office (a well-known and highly profitable art), ‘his own skin should be torn to pieces.’ But, like all other reforms of the last reign, the benefits of the new judicial reform were paralysed by subsequent modifications. The reform was not made universal, and in thirty-nine provinces out of seventy-two, the old courts are still maintained. They are in operation over the whole of Siberia, for instance; and each of them is a perfect sink of corruption. Again, the old penal code, with a scale of punishments in flagrant disagreement with the present state of our prisons, was maintained; while subsequent regulations have completely altered the sense of the Judiciary Law of 1864. I shall only set down what is continually repeated in the Russian press, if I write that the examining magistrates (*juges d'instruction*) have never enjoyed the independence bestowed on them by the new law; that the judges have been made more and more dependent upon the Minister of Justice, whose nominees they are, and who has the right of transferring them from one province to another; that the institution of sworn advocates, uncontrolled by criticism, has degenerated absolutely; and that the peasant whose case is not likely to become a *cause célèbre* does not receive the benefit of counsel, and is completely in the hands of a creature like the procureur-impérial in Zola's novel. Independent jurors are, of course, impossible in a country where the peasant-juror knows that he may be beaten by anything in uniform at the very doors of the court. As for the verdicts of the juries, they are in poor repute indeed; they are not respected at all if they are in contradiction with the judgment of the governor of the province, and the acquitted may be seized as they leave the dock and imprisoned anew on the simple order of the Administrative. Such, for instance, was the case of the peasant Burounoff. He came to St. Petersburg on behalf of his fellow-villagers to bring a complaint to the Tsar against the authorities, and he was tried as a ‘rebel.’ He was acquitted by the court; but he was rearrested on the very flight of steps outside, and sent in exile to the peninsula of Kola. Such, too, were the cases of Vera Zassoulitch, of the *raskolnik* (nonconformist) Tetenoff, and many more. The Third Section and the governors of provinces look on the new courts as mere nuisances, and act accordingly. Finally, a great many cases are disposed of by the Executive *à huis clos*—away from judges and juries alike. The preliminary inquiry in all

cases in which a 'political meaning' is discovered is simply made by gendarmerie officers, sometimes in the presence of a procureur, who accompanies them in their raids—an official in civil dress attached to the corps of gendarmerie, who is a black sheep to his fellows, and whose function is to assist, or appear to assist, at the examination of those arrested by the Third Section. Sentence and punishment (which may be exile for life within the Arctic circle in Siberia) are the wish of the Third Section, or of the Executive. In this category are included, not only the cases of political offenders belonging to secret societies, but also those of religious dissenters; almost all cases of disobedience to authority, both individual and collective; the strikes; the 'offences against His Majesty the Emperor'—under which 2,500 people were recently arrested in the course of six months; in short, all those cases which might compromise the authorities, or tend—to use the official language—'to the production of excitement in the public mind.' As to political trials, only the early societies were tried under the law of 1864. Afterwards, the government having perceived that the judges are rather well disposed than otherwise towards political offenders, they were tried before packed courts; that is, by judges nominated especially for the purpose. To this rule the case of Vera Zassoulitch was a memorable exception. She was tried by a jury, and acquitted. But—to quote Professor Gradovsky's words in a journal suppressed since—'It is an open secret in St. Petersburg that the case would never have been brought before a jury but for certain "quarrels" between the Prefect of Police on the one side, and the Third Section and the Ministers of Justice and the Interior on the other—but for certain of those *jalousies de métier*, without which, in our disordered state of existence, it would often be impossible for us to so much as breathe.'

It need hardly be noted that true reports of political trials in the press were never permitted. Formerly the journals were bound to reproduce the 'cooked' report published by the *Official Messenger*; but now the Government has perceived that even such reports produce a profound impression on the public mind, which is always favourable to the accused; and now its work is done in complete darkness. By the law of September 1881 the governor-general and the governors of provinces are enabled to request 'that all those cases be heard *in camera* which might produce a disturbance of minds (*sic*) or disturb the public peace.' For preventing the divulgence of the speeches of the accused, or of such facts as might compromise the Government, nobody is admitted to the court, not even members of the Ministry of Justice—'only the wife or the husband of the accused (always in custody also), or the father, mother, or one of the children; but no more than one relative for each person accused.' At the last trial of Terrorists, when ten people were condemned to death, the mother of Sukhanoff was the one person who enjoyed this privilege.

Many cases are despatched in such a way that nobody knows when the trials take place. Thus, for instance, we remained in ignorance of the fate of an officer of the army, son of the governor of the gaol of the St. Petersburg fortress, who had been condemned to hard labour for connection with revolutionists, until we learned it incidentally from an act of accusation read at a trial a long while posterior to his own. The public learns from the *Official Messenger* that the Tsar has commuted to hard labour for life a sentence of death pronounced on revolutionists; but nothing transpires either of the trial, or of the crimes imputed to the condemned. Nay, even the last consolation of those condemned to death, the consolation of dying publicly, was taken away. Hanging will now be done secretly within the walls of the fortress, in the presence of none from the world without. The reason is, that when Ryssakoff was brought out to the gallows he showed the crowd his mutilated hands, and shouted, louder than the drums, that he had been tortured after trial. His words were heard by a group of 'Liberals,' who, repudiating any sympathy with the Terrorists, yet held it their duty to publish the facts of the case in a clandestine proclamation, and to call attention to this flagrant offence against the laws of humanity. Now nothing will be known of what happens in the casemates of the fortress of Paul and Peter after the trial and before the execution. At least, the Government think so, after having sent to hard labour the son of a gaoler and a dozen soldiers accused of letter-carrying between prisoners and their friends in the town. But we know—and I have not the slightest hesitation in asserting the fact—that at least two revolutionists, Adrian Mikhailoff and Ryssakoff, were submitted to torture by electricity.

In 1861, our governors of provinces were ordered to institute a general inquiry into the state of the prisons. The Government—that of the early years of Alexander II.—was Liberal at that time, and on the whole the inquiry was fairly made. Its results determined what was generally known: namely, that the prisons in Russia and Siberia were in the worst state imaginable. The number of prisoners in each was commonly twice and thrice in excess of the maximum allowed by law. The buildings were so old and dilapidated, and in such a shocking state of filth, as to be for the most part not only uninhabitable, but beyond the scope of any theory of reform that stopped short of reconstruction.

Within affairs were even worse than without. The system was found corrupt to the core, and the officials were even yet more in need of improvement than the gaols. In the Transbaikal province, where, at that time, almost all hard-labour convicts were kept, the committee of inquiry reported (I was secretary to it, and entrusted with the drawing up of its report) that the prison buildings were mostly in ruins, and that the whole of the penal system had followed suit. Throughout the Empire it was recognised that theory and

practice stood equally in need of light and air; that everything must be changed, alike in matter and in spirit; and that we must not only rebuild our prisons, but completely reform our prison system, and reconstitute the prison staff from the first man to the last. The Government, however, elected to do nothing. It built a few new prisons which proved insufficient to accommodate the new prisoners (the population having since increased by more than 10,000,000); convicts were farmed out to proprietors of private gold mines; a new penal colony was settled on Sakhalin, to colonise an island where nobody was willing to settle freely; and that was all. The old order remained unchanged, the old mischief unrepaired. Year after year the prisons fall further into decay, and year after year the prison staff grows more dishonest and more shameless. Year after year the Ministry of Justice applies for money to spend in repairs, and year after year the Government is content to put it off with the half, or less than the half, of what it asks; and when—as in 1879 to 1881—it calls for over three million roubles, can spare it no more than a paltry twelve hundred thousand. The consequence is that the gaols are becoming permanent centres of infection, and that, according to the report of a recent committee, at least two-thirds of them are urgently in need of being rebuilt from top to bottom. Rightly to accommodate her prisoners, Russia would have to build half as many prisons again as she has. Indeed, in 1879, there were 70,488 cases for trial, and the aggregate maximum capacity of the Russian prisons is only for 54,253 souls. In single gaols, built for the detention of 200 to 250 persons, the number of prisoners is commonly 700 and 800 at a time. In the prisons on the route to Siberia, when convict parties are stopped by floods, the overcrowding is still more monstrous.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Russian prison system is thus constituted: First of all, we have 624 prisons or lock-ups, for cases awaiting trial, for a maximum of 54,253 inmates, together with four houses of detention for 1,134 inmates. The political prisons at the Third Section and in the fortresses are not included in this category. Of convict depôts—for prisoners waiting transfer to their final stations—there are 10, with accommodation for 7,150; with two for political convicts (at Mtsensk and Vyshniy-Volochok), with accommodation for 140. Then come the *arrestantskiya rotty*, or 'convict companies,' which are military organisations for the performance of compulsory labour, and which are worse than the hard-labour prisons in Siberia, though they are nominally a lighter punishment. Of these there are 33, with accommodation for 7,136 (9,609 in 1879). In this category must be included also the 13 'houses of correction': two large ones with accommodation for 1,120 (962 in 1879), and 11 smaller ones for 435. The hard-labour cases are provided for in 13 'central prisons.' Of these, there are seven in Russia, with accommodation for 2,745; three in Western Siberia, with accommodation for 1,150; two in Eastern Siberia, with accommodation for 1,650; and one on Sakhalin Island, with accommodation for 600 (1,103 in 1879). Other hard-labour convicts—10,424 in number—are distributed among the Government mines, gold-washings, and factories in Siberia; namely, at the Kara gold-washings, where there are 2,000; at the Troitsk, Ust-Kut, and Irkutsk salt-works, at the Nikolayevsk and Petrovsk iron-works, and at a prison at the former silver-works of Akatui. Finally, hard-labour convicts are farmed out to private owners of gold-

The great majority of our prisoners (about 100,000) are persons awaiting trial. They may be recognised for innocent; and in Russia, where arrests are made in the most haphazard way, three times out of ten their innocence is patent to everybody. We learn, in fact, from the annual report of the Ministry of Justice for 1876, that of 99,964 arrests made during that year, only 37,159—that is, 37 per cent.—could be brought before a court, and that among these were 12,612 acquittals. More than 75,000 persons were thus subjected to arrest and imprisonment without having any serious charge against them; and of the 25,000 or so who were convicted and converted into 'criminals,' a very large proportion (about 15 per cent.) are men and women who have not complied with passport regulations, or with some other vexatary measure of our Administration. It must be noted that all these prisoners, three quarters of whom are recognised innocent, spend months, and very often years, in the provincial lockups, those famous *ostrogs* which the traveller sees at the entrance of every Russian town. They lie there idle and hopeless, at the mercy of a set of omnipotent gaolers, packed like herrings in a cask, in rooms of inconceivable foulness, in an atmosphere that sickens, even to insensibility, any one entering directly from the open air, and which is charged with the emanations of the horrible *parasha*—a basket kept in the room to serve the necessities of a hundred human beings.

In this connection I cannot do better than quote a few passages from the prison experiences of my friend Madame C——, *née* Koutou-zoff, who has committed them to paper and inserted in a Russian review, the *Obscheye Dyelo*, published at Geneva. She was found guilty of opening a school for peasants' children, independently of the Ministry of Public Instruction. As her crime was not penal, and as, moreover, she was married to a foreigner, General Gourko merely ordered her to be sent over the frontier. This is how she describes her journey from St. Petersburg to Prussia. I shall print extracts from her narrative without comment, merely premising that its accuracy, even to the minutest details, is absolutely unimpeachable:—

I was sent to Vilno with fifty prisoners—men and women. From the railway station we were taken to the town prison and kept there for two hours, late at night, in an open yard, under a drenching rain. At last we were pushed into a dark corridor and counted. Two soldiers laid hold on me and insulted me shamefully. I was not the only one thus outraged, for in the darkness I heard the cries of many desperate women besides. After many oaths and much foul language, the fire was lighted, and I found myself in a spacious room in which it was impossible to take a step in any direction without treading on the women who were sleeping on the floor. Two women who occupied a bed took pity on me, and invited me to

washings in Siberia. The severity of the punishment can thus be varied *ad infinitum*, according to the wish of the authorities and to that degree of revenge which is deemed appropriate.

share it with them. . . . When I awoke next morning, I was still suffering from the scenes of yesterday; but the female prisoners—assassins and thieves—were so kind to me that by-and-by I grow calm. Next night we were 'turned out' from the prison and paraded in the yard for the start, under a heavy rain. I do not know how I happened to escape the fists of the gaolers, as the prisoners did not understand the evolutions and performed them under a storm of blows and curses; those who protested—saying that they ought not to be beaten—were put in irons and sent to the train, in the teeth of the law which says that in the cellular waggons no prisoner shall be chained.

Arrived at Kovno, we spent the whole day in going from one police station to another. In the evening we were taken to the prison for women, where the lady-superintendent was railing against the head gaoler and swearing that she would give him bloody teeth. The prisoners told me that she often kept her promises of this sort. . . . Here I spent a week among murderers, thieves, and women arrested by mistake. Misfortune unites the unfortunate, and everybody tried to make life more tolerable for the rest; all were very kind to me and did their best to console me. On the previous day I had eaten nothing, for the day the prisoners are brought to the prison they receive no food; so I fainted from hunger, and the prisoners gave me of their bread and were as kind as they could be; the female inspector, however, was on duty: she was shouting out such shameless oaths as few drunken men would use. . . . After a week's stay in Kovno, I was sent on foot to the next town. After three days' march we came to Mariampol; my feet were wounded, and my stockings full of blood. The soldiers advised me to ask for a car, but I preferred physical suffering to the continuous cursing and foul language of the chiefs. All the same, they took me before their commander, and he remarked that I had walked three days and so could walk a fourth. We came next day to Wolkowysk, from whence we were to be sent on to Prussia. I and five others were put provisionally in the dépôt. The women's department was in ruins, so we were taken to the men's. . . . I did not know what to do, as there was no place to sit down, except on the dreadfully filthy floor: there was even no straw, and the stench on the floor set me vomiting instantly. . . . The water-closet was a large pond; it had to be crossed on a broken ladder which gave way under one of us and plunged him in the filth below. I could now understand the smell: the pond goes under the building, the floor of which is impregnated with sewage.

Here I spent two days and two nights, passing the whole time at the window. . . . In the night the doors were opened, and, with dreadful cries, drunken prostitutes were thrown into our room. They also brought us a maniac; he was quite naked. The miserable prisoners were happy on such occurrences; they tormented the maniac and reduced him to despair, until at last he fell on the floor in a fit and lay there foaming at the mouth. On the third day, a soldier of the dépôt, a Jew, took me into his room, a tiny cell, where I stayed with his wife. . . . The prisoners told me that many of them were detained 'by mistake' for seven and eight months awaiting their papers before being sent across the frontier. It is easy to imagine their condition after a seven months' stay in this sewer without a change of linen. They advised me to give the gaoler money, as he would then send me on to Prussia immediately. But I had been six weeks on the way already, and my letters had not reached my people. . . . At last, the soldier allowed me to go to the post-office with his wife, and I sent a registered letter to St. Petersburg. [Madame C— has influential kinsfolk in the capital, and in a few days the governor-general telegraphed for her to be sent on instantly to Prussia.] My papers (she says) were discovered immediately, and I was sent to Eydtkunen and set at liberty.

It must be owned that the picture is horrible. But it is not a whit overcharged. To such of us Russians as have had to do with

prisoners, every word rings true and every scene looks normal. Oaths, filth, brutality, bribery, blows, hunger—these are the essentials of every *ostrog* and of every dépôt from Kovno to Kamchatka, and from Arkhangel to Erzerum. Did my space permit, I might prove it with a hundred stories more.

Such are the prisons of Western Russia. They are no better in the East and in the South. A person who was confined at Perm (it is a pity that Mr. Lansdell, when arrested in August last under suspicion of Nihilism, in the neighbourhood of Perm, did not make acquaintance with this prison!) wrote to the *Poradok*:—'The gaoler is one Gavriloff; . . . beating "in the jaws" (*v morda*), flogging, confinement in frozen black-holes, and starvation—such are the characteristics of the gaol. . . . For every complaint the prisoners are sent "to the bath" (that is, are flogged), or have a taste of the black-hole. . . . The mortality is dreadful.' At Vladimir, there were so many attempts at escape that it was made the subject of a special inquiry. 'The prisoners declared that on the allowance they received it was utterly impossible to keep body and soul together. Many complaints were addressed to headquarters, but they all remained unanswered. At last the prisoners complained to the Moscow Superior Court; but the gaoler got to hear of the matter, instituted a search, and took possession of the document.' It is easy to imagine that the mortality must be immense in such prisons; but, surely, the reality supersedes all that might be imagined. Thus, the priest of the Kharkoff prison said in 1878 from the pulpit, and the *Eparchial Gazette* of 1869 reproduced the fact, that in the course of four months, of the 500 inmates of the prison *two hundred died from scurvy*. No Arctic expedition, recent or remote, was so mortal as the detention in a Russian prison. At Kieff, the gaol was a sink of typhus fever. In one month the deaths were counted by hundreds, and fresh batches were brought in to fill the room of those removed by death. This was in all the newspapers. Only a year afterwards (June 12, 1882) a circular from the Chief Board of Prisons explained the epidemics as follows:—'1. The prison was dreadfully overcrowded, although it was very easy to transfer many of the prisoners to other prisons. 2. The rooms were very damp; the walls were covered with mildew, and the floor was rotten in many places; 3. The cesspools were in such a state that the ground about them was impregnated with sewage; and so on, and so on. The Board added that owing to the same foulness other prisons were also exposed to experience the same epidemics.'

The chief prison in St. Petersburg, the so-called 'Litovskiy Zamok,' is cleaner; but this old-fashioned, damp, and dark building should simply be levelled to the ground. The common prisoners have a certain amount of work to do. But the political ones are kept in their cells in absolute idleness; and some friends of mine—the heroes



of the trial of 193 who had two years and more of this prison—describe it as one of the worst they know. The cells are very small, very dark, and very damp; and the gaoler Makaroff was a wild beast pure and simple. The consequences of solitary confinement in this prison I have described in a former paper. It is worthy of notice that the common allowance for food is seven kopeks per day, and 10 kopeks for prisoners of privileged classes, the price of black rye bread being three and four kopeks a pound.

But the pride of our authorities—the show-place for the foreign visitors—is the new ‘House of Detention’ at St. Petersburg. It is a ‘model prison,’—the only one of its kind in Russia,—built on the plan of the Belgian gaols. I know it from personal experience, as I was detained there for three months, before my transfer to the lockup at the Military Hospital. It is the only clean gaol for common prisoners in Russia. Clean it certainly is. The scrubbing-brush is never idle there, and the activity of broom and pail is almost demoniac. It is an exhibition, and the prisoners have to keep it shining. All morning long do they sweep, and scrub, and polish the asphalt floor; and dearly have they to pay for its brightness. The atmosphere is charged with asphaltic particles (I made a paper-shade for my gas, and in a few hours I could draw patterns with my finger in the dust with which it was coated); and this you have to breathe. The three upper stories receive all the exhalations of the floors below, and the ventilation is so bad that in the evenings, when all doors are shut, the place is literally suffocating. Two or three special committees were appointed one after the other to find out the means of improving the ventilation; and the last one, under the presidency of M. Groth, Secretary of State, reported in June last that to be made habitable, the whole building (which has cost twice as much as similar prisons in Belgium and Germany) must be completely rebuilt, as no repairs, however thorough, could make the ventilation tolerable. The cells are ten feet long and seven feet wide; and at one time the prison rules obliged us to keep open the traps in our doors to the end that we might not be asphyxiated where we sat. Afterwards the rule was cancelled, and the traps were shut, and we were compelled to face as best we could the effects of a temperature that was sometimes stiflingly hot and sometimes freezing. But for the greater activity and life of the place, I should have regretted, all dark and dripping as it was, my casemate in the fortress of Peter and Paul—a true grave where the prisoner for two, three, five, ten years hears no human voice and sees no human being, excepting two or three gaolers, deaf and mute when addressed by the prisoners. I shall never forget the children I met one day in the corridor of the House of Detention. They also, like us, were awaiting trial months and years along. Their greyish-yellow emaciated faces, their frightened and bewildered looks, were worth whole volumes of essays and reports ‘on the benefits of cellular

confinement in a model prison.’ As for the administration of the House of Detention, sufficient to say that even the Russian papers talked openly of the way in which the prisoners’ allowances were sequestered; so that last year, a committee of inquiry was appointed, when it was found that the facts were even darker than had been reported. But all this is a trifle, indeed, in comparison with the treatment of prisoners. Here it was that General Trepoff ordered Bogoluboff to be flogged, had the prisoners who protested in their cells knocked down and beaten, and afterwards confined several of them—for five days—in cells by the washing-rooms, among excrements, and in a temperature of forty-five degrees. In the face of these facts, what a pitiful irony is in the words of Mr. Lansdell’s admiring remark:—‘Those who wish to know what Russia *can* do, ought to visit this House of Detention’!

The great variety of punishments inflicted under our penal code may be divided broadly into four categories. The first is that of hard labour, with the loss of all civil rights. The convict’s property passes to his heirs; he is dead in law, and his wife can marry another; he may be flogged with rods, or with the *plète* (cat-o’-nine-tails) *ad libitum* by each drunken gaoler. After having been kept to hard labour in the Siberian mines, or factories, he is settled for life somewhere in the country. The second category is that of compulsory colonisation, accompanied by a complete or partial loss of civil rights, and is equivalent to Siberia for life. Under the third category are dealt with all convicts condemned to compulsory labour in the *arrestantskiya roty*, without loss of civil rights. The fourth—omitting much of less importance—is of banishment to Siberia, without trial, and by order of the Executive, for an undetermined period; that is, mostly for life.

The subject of Siberian exile is so vast and tragical in itself, and has given rise to such an amount of error and misrepresentation, that it would be idle to approach it in this place. On a future occasion I hope to discuss it at length. In the present paper, however, I shall confine myself to an account of such convicts as are detained in Russia itself, in the so-called Provisory Central Prisons.

These are but recently introduced. Formerly, the hard labour convicts were sent straight off to Siberia: to the mines belonging ‘to the Cabinet of the Emperor’—that are, in other words, the private property of the Crown. Some of these, however, got worked out; others were found (or represented) so unremunerative in the hands of the Crown administration that they were sold to private persons who made fortunes with them; and Russia in Europe was compelled to take charge of her hard labour cases herself. A few central prisons were therefore built in Russia, where convicts are kept for a time (one third to one fourth of their sentence) before being sent to Siberia or Sakhalin. Society at large is of course inclined to regard hard labour

convicts as the worst of criminals. But in Russia this is very far from being the case. Murder, robbery, burglary, forgery, will all bring a man to hard labour; but so, too, with an attempt at suicide; so with 'sacrilege and blasphemy,' which usually means no more than dissent; so with 'rebellion'—or rather what is called rebellion in Russia—which is mostly no more than common disobedience to authorities; so with any and every sort of political offence; and so with 'vagrancy,' that mostly means escape from Siberia. Among the murderers, too, you will find not only the professional shedder of blood—a very rare type with us—but men who have taken life under such circumstances as, before a jury, or in the hands of a honest advocate, would have ensured their acquittal. In any case, only 30 per cent. or so of the 2,000 to 2,500 men and women yearly sent down to hard labour are condemned as assassins. The rest—in nearly equal proportions—are either 'vagrants' or men and women charged with one of the minor offences recapitulated above.

The Central Prisons were instituted with the idea of inflicting a punishment of the severest type. The idea was—there can, I am afraid, be no doubt about it—that you could not take too little trouble with convicts, nor get rid of them too soon. To this end these prisons were provided with such gaolers and keepers—mostly military officers—as were renowned for cruelty with men; and these ruffians were gifted with full power over their charges and with full liberty of action, and had orders to be as harsh as possible. The end to which they were appointed has been magnificently attained: the Central Prisons are so many practical hells; the horrors of hard labour in Siberia have faded before them, and all those who have the experience of them are unanimous in declaring that the day a prisoner starts for Siberia is the happiest of his life.

Exploring these prisons as a 'distinguished visitor,' you will, if you are in search of emotions, be egregiously disappointed. You will see no more than a dirty building, crammed with idle inmates lounging and sprawling on the sloping, inclined platforms which run round the walls, and are covered with nothing but a sheet of filth. You may be permitted to visit a number of cells for 'secret' or political cases; and if you question the inmates, you will certainly be told by them that they are 'quite satisfied with everything.' To know the reality one must oneself have been a prisoner. Records of actual experience are few; but they exist, and to one of the most striking I propose to refer. It was written by an officer who was condemned to hard labour for an assault committed in a moment of excitement, and who was pardoned by the Tsar after a few years' detention. His story was published in a Conservative review (the *Russkaya Ryech*, for January 1882) at a time, under Loris-Melikoff's administration, when there was much talk of prison reform and some liberty in the press; and there was not a journal that did not recognise the unimpeachable veracity of this tale. The experience of our friends wholly confirms it.

There is nothing uncommon in the account of the material circumstances of life in this Central Prison. They are in some sort invariable all over Russia. If we know that the gaol was built for 250 inmates, and actually contained 400, we do not need to inquire more about sanitary conditions. In like manner, the food was neither better nor worse than elsewhere. Seven kopeks (1½d.) a day is a very poor allowance per prisoner, and the gaoler and économe being family men, of course they save as much as they can. A quarter of a pound of black rye bread for breakfast; a soup made of bull's heart and liver or of seven pounds of meat, twenty pounds of waste oats, twenty pounds of sour cabbage, and plenty of water—many Russian prisoners would consider it as an enviable food. The moral conditions of life are not so satisfying. All day long there is nothing to do—for weeks, and months, and years on end. There are workshops, it is true; but to these only skilled craftsmen (whose achievement is the prison-keeper's perquisite) are admitted. For the others there is neither work, nor hope of work—unless it is in stormy weather, when the governor may set one half of them to shovel the snow into heaps, and the other half to shovel it flat again. The blank monotony of their lives is only varied by chastisement. In the particular prison of which I am writing, the punishments were varied and ingenious. For smoking, and minor offences of that sort, a prisoner could get a two hours' kneeling on the bare flags, in a spot—the thoroughfare of icy winter winds—selected diligently *ad hoc*. The next punishment for the same minor offences was the black-holes—the warm one, and the cold one, underground, with a temperature at freezing point. In both, prisoners slept on the stones, and the term of durance depended on the will of the governor.

'Several of us,' says our author, 'were kept there for a fortnight; after which they were literally *dragged out* into daylight and then dismissed to the land where pain and suffering are not.' Is it any wonder that during the four years over which the writer's experience extends, the average mortality in the prison should have been thirty per cent. per annum? 'It must not be thought,' the writer goes on to say, 'that those on whom penalties of this sort were inflicted were hardened desperadoes; we incurred them if we saved a morsel of bread from dinner for the supper, or if a match was found on a prisoner.'

The 'desperadoes' were treated after another fashion. One, for instance, was kept for nine months in solitary confinement in a dark cell—originally intended for cases of ophthalmia—and came out all but blind and mad. There is worse behind.

In the evening (he continues) the governor went his rounds and usually began his favourite occupation—flogging. A very narrow bench was brought out, and soon the place resounded with shrieks, while the governor, smoking a cigar, looked on and counted the lashes. The birch-rods were of exceptional size, and when not in use were kept immersed in water to make them more pliant. After the

tenth lash the shrieking ceased, and nothing was heard but groans. Flogging was usually applied in batches, to five, ten men, or more, and when the execution was over, a great pool of blood would remain to mark the spot. Our neighbours without the walls used at these times to pass to the other side of the street, signing themselves in horror and dread. After every such scene we had two or three days of comparative peace; for the flogging had a soothing influence on the governor's nerves. He soon, however, became himself again. When he was very drunk, and his left moustache was dropping and limp, or when he went out shooting and came home with an empty bag, we knew that that same evening the rods would be set at work.

After this it is unnecessary to speak about many other revolting details of life in the same prison. But there is a touch that foreign visitors would do well to lay to heart.

On one occasion (the writer says) we were visited by an inspector of prisons. After casting a look down the scuttle, he asked us if our food was good? or was there anything of which we could complain? Not only did the inmates declare that they were completely satisfied, they even enumerated articles of diet which we had never so much as smelt. . . . This sort of thing (he adds) is only natural. If complaints were made, the inspector would lecture the governor a little and go away; while the prisoners who made them would remain behind and be paid for their temerity with the rod or the black-hole.

The prison in question is close by St. Petersburg. What more remote provincial prisons are like, my readers may imagine. I have mentioned above those of Perm and Kharkoff; and, according to the *Golos*, the Central Prison at Simbirsk is a centre of speculation and thievery. Friends of mine report the same of the second Central Prison of the government of Kharkoff, where political convicts are detained. These latter are far worse off than their companions, the criminals. They are kept for three to five years in solitary confinement and in irons, in dark, damp cells that measure only ten feet by six, absolutely isolated from any intercourse with human beings. Knowing by two years and a half of personal experience what solitary confinement is, I do not hesitate to say that, as practised in Russia, it is one of the cruellest tortures man can suffer. The prisoner's health, however robust, is irreparably ruined. Military science teaches that in a beleaguered garrison which has been for several months on short rations, the mortality increases beyond any measure. This is still more true of men in solitary confinement. The want of fresh air, the lack of exercise for body and mind, the habit of silence, the absence of those thousand and one impressions which, when at liberty, we daily and hourly receive, the fact that we are open to no impressions that are not imaginative—all these combine to make solitary confinement a sure and cruel form of murder. If conversation with neighbour prisoners (by means of light knocks on the wall) is possible, it is a relief, the immensity of which can be duly appreciated only by one who was reduced for one or two years to absolute separation from all humanity. But it is also a new source of sufferings, as very often your own moral sufferings are increased by those

you experience from witnessing day by day the growing madness of your neighbour, when you perceive in each of his messages the dreadful images that beset and overrun his tormented brain. That is the kind of confinement to which political prisoners are submitted when awaiting trial for three or four years. But it is still worse after the condemnation when they are brought to the Kharkoff Central Prison. Not only the cells are darker and damper than elsewhere, and the food is worse than common (the allowance being five farthings a day); but, in addition, the prisoners are carefully maintained in absolute idleness. No books are allowed, and, of course, no writing materials, and no implements for manual labour. No means of easing the tortured mind, nor anything on which to concentrate the morbid activity of the brain; and, in proportion as the body droops and sickens, the spirit becomes wilder and more desperate. Physical suffering is seldom or never insupportable; the annals of war, of martyrdom, of sickness, abound in instances in proof. But moral torment—after years of infliction—is utterly intolerable. This our friends have found to their cost. Shut up in the fortresses and houses of detention first of all, and afterwards in the Central Prisons; they go rapidly to decay, and either go calmly to the grave, or become lunatics. They do not go mad as, after being outraged by gendarmes, Miss M——, the promising young painter, went mad. She was bereft of reason instantly; her madness was simultaneous with her shame. Upon them insanity steals gradually and slowly: the mind rots in the body 'from hour to hour.'

In July 1878 the life of the prisoners at the Kharkoff prison had become so insupportable, that six of them resolved to starve themselves to death. For a whole week they refused to eat; and when the governor-general ordered them to be fed by injection, such scenes ensued as obliged the prison authorities to abandon the idea. To seduce them back to life, officialism made them certain promises: as, for instance, to allow them walking exercise, and to take the sick out of irons. None of these promises were kept; and for five long years the survivors were left to the mercy of such a gaoler as I have described. A few months ago a first party of our friends detained in Central Prisons were sent to the Kara mines (to make a total of 154 political prisoners, men and women, at these mines); they knew very well the fate that was reserved to them in Siberia, and still the day they left this hell was considered by all them as a happy day of deliverance. After the Central Prison, hard labour in Siberia looks as a paradise.

It may seem that the harshness of solitary confinement in such conditions cannot be surpassed. But there is a harder fate in store for political prisoners in Russia. After the 'Trial of the Sixteen' (November 1880), Europe learned with satisfaction that out of five condemned to death, three had had their sentences commuted by the



Tsar. We now know what commutation means. Instead of being sent to Siberia, or to a Central Prison, according to law, they were immured in the fortress of Peter and Paul at St. Petersburg; in cells contrived in what has been the ravelin.<sup>2</sup> These are so dark that candles are burnt in them for twenty-two hours out of the twenty-four. The walls are literally dripping with damp, and 'there are pools of water on the floor.' 'Not only books are disallowed, but everything that might help to occupy the attention. Zoubkovsky made geometrical figures with his bread, to practise geometry; they were immediately taken away, the gaoler saying that hard-labour convicts were not permitted to amuse themselves.' To render solitary confinement still more insupportable, a gendarme and a soldier are stationed within the cells. The gendarme is continually on the watch, and if the prisoner looks at anything or at any point, he goes to see what has attracted his attention. The horrors of solitary confinement are thus aggravated tenfold. The quietest prisoner soon begins to hate the spies set over him, and is moved to frenzy by the mere fact of their presence. It is superfluous to add that the slightest disobedience is punished by blows and black-holes. All who were subjected to this *régime* fell ill in no time. After less than one year of it, Shiryaeff had taken consumption; Okladsky—a robust and vigorous working man, whose remarkable speech to the Court was reproduced by the London papers—had gone mad; Tikhonoff, a strong man likewise, was down with scurvy, and could not sit up in his bed. By a mere 'commutation of sentence' the three were brought to death's door in a single year. Of the other five condemned to hard labour, and immured in the same fortress, two—Martynovsky and Tsukermann—went mad, and in that state were constantly black-holed, so that Martynovsky at last attempted suicide.

I cannot enter here into more details and give more facts to illustrate the fate of political and common law convicts in Russia. The foregoing give, however, some idea of it. The whole is summed up in a sentence of that record of prison life on which I have already drawn so largely and to such terrible purpose.

In conclusion (writes the author) I must add that the prison now rejoices in another governor. The old one quarrelled with the treasurer on the subject of peculation from the prisoners' allowance, and in the end they were both dismissed. The new governor is not such a ruffian as his predecessor; I understand, however, that with him the prisoners are starving far more than formerly, and that he is in the habit of giving his fists full play on the countenances of his charges.

This remark sums up the whole 'Reform of Prisons' in Russia. One tyrant may be dismissed, but he will be succeeded by some one

<sup>2</sup> The authentic record of their imprisonment was published in the last number of the *Will of the People*, and reproduced in the publication *Na Rodinye* ('At Home').

as bad, or even worse, than himself. It is not by changing a few men, but only by changing completely from top to bottom the whole system, that any amelioration can be made; and such is also the conclusion of a special committee recently appointed by the Government. But it would be mere self-delusion to conceive improvement possible under such a *régime* as we now enjoy. At least half a dozen commissions have already gone forth to inquire, and all have come to the conclusion that unless the Government is prepared to meet extraordinary expenses, our prisons must remain what they are. But honest and capable men are far more needed than money, and these the present Government cannot and will not discover. They exist in Russia, and they exist in great numbers; but their services are not required. Mr. Lansdell knew one, and has described him—Colonel Kononovitch, chief of the penal settlement at Kara. He has told us how, without any expense to the Crown, M. Kononovitch had repaired the weatherworn, rotten buildings, and had made them more or less habitable; and how, with the microscopic means at his disposal, he contrived to improve the food; and all he has told is true. But Mr. Lansdell's praise, together with like praise contained in a letter intercepted on its way from Siberia, were sufficient reasons for rendering M. Kononovitch suspicious to our Government. He immediately was dismissed, and his successor received the order to reintroduce the iron rule of years past. The political convicts, who enjoyed a relative liberty after the legal term of imprisonment had expired, are in irons once more; not all, however, as two have preferred to commit suicide; and once more affairs are ordered as the Government desires to see them. Another gentleman, of whom Mr. Lansdell speaks, and justly, in high terms—General Pedashenko—has been dismissed too, for refusing to confirm a sentence of death which had been passed by a military tribunal on the convict Schedrin, found guilty of striking an officer for insulting two ladies, his fellow sufferers, Bogomolets and Kovalsky.

It is everywhere the same. To devote oneself to any educational work, or to the convict population, is inevitably to incur dismissal and disgrace. Near St. Petersburg we have a reformatory—a penal settlement for children and growing lads. To the cause of these poor creatures a gentleman named Herd—grandson of the famous Scotchman employed by Alexander I. in the reform of our prisons—had devoted himself body and soul. He had an abundance of energy and charm; his whole heart was in the work; he might have rivalled Pestalozzi. Under his ennobling influence boy-thieves and ruffians, penetrated with all the vices of the streets and the lockups, learned to be men in the best sense of the word. To send a boy away from the common labour-grounds or from the classes was the greatest punishment admitted in this penal colony, which soon became a real model colony. But men like Herd are

not the men our Government is in need of. He was dismissed his place, and the institution he ruled so wisely has become a genuine Russian prison, complete to the rod and the black-hole.

These examples are typical both of what we have to suffer and of what we have to expect. It is a fancy to imagine that anything could be reformed in our prisons. Our prisons are the reflection of the whole of our life under the present *régime*; and they will remain what they are now until the whole of our system of government and the whole of our life have undergone a thorough change. Then, but only then, 'Russia may show what it *can* realise;' but this, with regard to crime, would be—I hope—quite different from what is now understood under the name of 'a good prison.'

P. KRAPOTKINE.

### ON TASTE IN DRESS.

It will readily be agreed that fashion in female dress should be in good taste, but to say dogmatically what constitutes good taste in costume or lay down precise rules to govern it would not be easy. Opinions on such a subject may be but opinions, more or less coloured by individual idiosyncrasy, education, and habit, and it is desirable that a wide margin should be left for the play of fancy in combinations that are almost infinite. Mountains are made up of molecules; the atmosphere in which we move has much to do with the life we live; no one floats independently on the current that carries all along, and it is impossible to suppose that habits of mind will not be influenced by the impressions surroundings make upon us. We become habituated to bad or good language, coarse or refined manners, and acquire more or less the one or the other. Fashion, as long as it deals only with outward effects, if not persistently bad enough to destroy natural taste, is not a matter to be treated with overmuch solemnity. Proportion is to be observed even in our sincerest convictions, and we may smile or sigh lightly over aberrations which have no more importance than can belong to things put on one moment and thrown off the next. But if such things become indications of the presence or absence of what is much to be regretted or much to be valued, they reasonably give rise to reflections deeper and more serious than their essence seems at first to warrant. In complicated machinery all things may be said to depend upon all other things; and what so complex as our social machine? The waywardness of feminine fashions is not a subject for puritanic objection; the changeableness affords occupation for many, and variety is a better thing than monotony. But while these considerations should check dogmatic utterances, it will not do to ignore conclusions based upon acknowledged principles. What we may certainly lament is the apparent want of any principle in the fluctuations of fashion, excess in one direction being invariably followed by excess in the opposite direction. Crinoline is dropped, but everything seems to be dropped with it. The fashionable lady's gown fits so closely to her person that freedom of movement becomes impossible. One thing only appears to be a permanent idea—that a very small waist is a beautiful thing, a thing to be attained at the expense of health and comfort and good sense.