

thin as paper, and eyes—with the very Devil in them.

Another was only three or four and twenty years of age, her face of pink and white was surrounded by a wealth of flaxen hair, and she had such large, light-blue, dreamy eyes, it was a puzzle for a while to tell whether the look in them was one of childish innocence or precocious maturity of crime. But the pity of it that the sweet angel-nature of a woman should be brought so low!

But some of the gangs of exiles that we met were not on foot, but riding in little carts. But a glance at their faces was enough to prove to us that morally they were of a different type; and I was not surprised to learn that these were not criminal, but political exiles. I met many others afterwards—men and women—in some cases of high character and blameless life, who, because within the circle of their acquaintance they have given expression to opinions which are considered to be unfavourable to the existing form of government, are sent out to spend the remainder of their lives in the desolate seclusion of some remote Siberian settlement.

It is illegal to give a public lecture in Russia, or to call together more than a very limited number of people for any private purpose whatever, even for a dinner-party in one's own house, without the special permission of the police, and, if such permission is granted, it is on the express understanding that detectives shall be admitted to the assembly. With a continually increasing pressure in the boiler, there is only one alternative; and if in Russian society the safety-valve of free discussion is to continue weighted thus with exile and Siberia, sooner or later the pent-up forces will release themselves by the explosive violence of revolution.

The Russian Church is so closely connected with the State that dissent from it is a political offence, and the object for which religious Nonconformists are sent into exile is not so much to extirpate false doctrine as to uphold the power of the government. It is said that there are not less than fifteen millions of Dissenters in European Russia, and this is evidence of a considerable degree of toleration.

But when, like the Stundists, a sect becomes aggressive, disseminating its opinions, and seeking to win outsiders to its fellowship, it comes at once into collision with the ruling powers.

The Russian clergy are very lenient to

their parishioners. Habitual drunkenness, dishonesty, licentiousness, even atheism itself, if not too noisy, seldom provoke serious denunciation, and are regarded as venial offences compared with that of joining the Dissenters—a moral sin, which no amount of intelligence, education, or saintliness can palliate. The more Dissenters it sends out to Siberia, the more there are to send.

None of the exiles ever thinks of attempting to escape in the winter, nor when winter is approaching, but the spring seems to offer a favourable opportunity. So formidable are the difficulties which confront these fugitives that, of all those who escape from the convict stations, one-third come back and ask to be readmitted, and one-third perish in the forest, the remaining third only managing to maintain themselves in freedom.

These escaped exiles are the terror of the Trans-Baikal Province. They are said to number not less than twenty thousand. One by one, as they manage to obtain passports, they set out for Europe, keeping well hidden by the forest while following the direction of the post-road. Most are content to run the risk of travelling with forged papers. An escaped exile, who is determined to have a genuine passport, must murder, rob, and personate a man who has one. Such a "varnak" is to be feared. Every traveller I met in that region was armed; and one, who for a few hundred miles shared my tarantass, always sat for an hour or two at twilight, revolver in hand, looking down at the road from his side of the conveyance. "Any man who shows himself here is a bradyaga," he said, "so shoot him without a word."

Dr. Wenyon passed only two small towns in the six hundred miles from Irkutsk to the Yenisei. This river is the largest in Asia, and one of the largest in the world. Rising on the table-lands of Mongolia, 5,000 feet above the level of the sea, before it reaches that level it runs a course of more than 3,000 miles; 2,000 miles above its entrance to the Arctic Ocean it is half a mile wide, and it is navigable for several hundred miles above this place.

There are few other civilized countries in the world where all the necessities of life can be ob-