

SIBERIAN EXILES.

What Banishment Means to Convicts in Russia.

PRINCE LUBOMIRSKI'S VISIT.

Prisoners Who Never See the 'Light of Day—How Polish Ladies Live and Die in the Mines.

Cincinnati Commercial.

Some of those liberty-loving Russian students who insisted on the right of petition are to be banished to Siberia for their imprudence in thinking they had rights the authorities should respect. In order that foreign nations might no longer call the subjects of the Czar a barbarous people capital punishment was abolished, but in its stead was substituted a system that to the victims is more painful. With few exceptions banishment to Siberia is slow but nevertheless certain death. Strangers are informed that arbitrary transportations ceased long ago. The Russians will, however, admit the truth when they are aware that the truth is known. They will then say that nearly every person transported to Siberia admits the justice of the punishment. This is doubtless true, for the only chance of obtaining a pardon, or of being allowed to communicate with friends, lies in a written confession of guilt. The poor fellows who refuse to give this are never heard of afterward. They do not even have the satisfaction of informing the world that they suffer unjustly. Convicts are sent to Siberia by sentence of the Courts or by an Imperial decree. When it is the latter the convict is said to be "awaiting the Czar's pleasure," and no one except the authorities ever know of his fate, unless, as is occasionally the case, some tender-hearted police official, taking pity on the bereaved wife, tells her to hope in the Czar's clemency; in other words, tells her that she is a widow. The convicts, except where a sufficient bribe is offered, are forwarded in convoys, which start on their way soon after the snows have disappeared in the spring. The whole journey is made on foot. They are escorted by mounted Cossacks, all armed with pistols, lances and long whips. Behind them jolt a long string of tumbrils without springs, in which are placed those who become too lame or sick to walk. They always start in the night and pass through towns only after dark. Each convict wears a sheepskin bonnet, knee boots and a gray caftan, with a brass numbered plate fastened to the breast. In addition he carries a rug, a mess-tin and a wooden spoon. The women wear black cloaks with hoods, and march in gangs by themselves. They have

AN ESCORT OF SOLDIERS.

And two or three female warders, who ride in carts. When the convicts leave large cities like St. Petersburg they are chained with their hands behind their backs. Except in the case of those marked "dangerous," as soon as they get outside the city their fetters are removed. The dangerous ones are compelled to wear four-pound leg chains all the way, and those who are desperate are yoked by threes to a beam of wood that rests on their shoulders and is fastened to their necks by iron collars. In procession no distinction is made between one class and another. Murderers, thieves, doctors, mutinous soldiers and loyal Poles, are all hurried along as fast as they can go. At the first church outside the city they are driven into the building and attend mass for the last time, and hear a sermon, in which the goodness of the Czar is always extolled. Then their chains are removed, and they are allowed to converse for the rest of the way, except when passing through towns. They sometimes sing and endeavor to drown their misery in plaintive cries about the homes they left behind them. Sympathy for them is universal. If only rogues were thus punished it would be otherwise. Villages will bring out their lasses to feed one of the "unfortunates." The Cossacks, even, manifest a rough sort of sympathy, and allow them to take whatever the villagers, having heard that they would pass that way, may have set by the roadside for them. This usually consists of tureons of steaming tschi, piles of newly-baked bread, and jugs of vodka. The guards make use of their whips only in case of insubordination. Frequently the delirium of fever is taken for insubordination, and

DELICATE MEN AND WOMEN

Are brutally whipped, that others may take warning. The rations are biscuit and salt beef. They drink water whenever they can find it. At times it is hardly to be got, and they suffer from thirst. They camp in pine forests, or just outside of villages, and have nothing to protect them from the weather but the clothes on their backs, and numbers die on the roads. From St. Petersburg to the Urals is over a six weeks' march, and many travel several weeks more. Before the frontier is reached all desire for conversation is gone and a settled look of terror is on their faces. The convict never knows what sort of life he is going to lead until he reaches Siberia. There are three classes of colonists—those who live at their own expense, and are permitted to have their families with them; those who are supported by the Government, but are allowed to eke out their small pittance by acting as servants to the richer colonists or working at trades; and those who are employed in the mines or on the public works. If a convict has sufficient money or influence he may be able to buy a warrant which consigns him to the lighter kinds of labor above ground; if he does not succeed in getting this he will inevitably be sent under the ground and never again see the blue sky until he is taken out to die in a hospital. The exiles in the mines never see the light of day. They work and sleep the year round under the cart, taking silver or quicksilver, watched by task-masters who are ordered to show them no mercy. Their beds are recesses hewn out of the rocks, into which they crawl on hands and knees. The streets or lodes at the bottom of the shaft are closed by iron gates, and the convicts are railed off from each other in gangs of twenty.

PRINCE JOSEPH LUBOMIRSKI.

Who, as they have since discovered, the Russian Government unwisely authorized to visit one of the mines, writes that he saw one of the convicts racked with the joint pains which quicksilver produces, men whose nails and eyebrows had dropped off, and who were as gaunt as skeletons, kept at work at hard labor under the lodes. Christmas and Easter are their only holidays. All other days, Sundays included, they must work until they are taken out to die. Five years usually finish a man, though a few have been known to live ten. No man who has worked in the mines is ever permitted to return home. Very rarely, as a reward for meritorious conduct, one is allowed to come up and work on the road gangs. Women serve as sitters, and are treated about as the men are. It has been said that Polish ladies have been sent down to rot and die, while at the same time Russian journals declared that they were living as free colonists. Many ladies connected with the recent Nihilist movements are in the mines in consequence of a sentence to hard labor—which means death. Pardons to convicts are seldom granted, and escape is impossible. Russia desires to be free from the odium of being considered a nation of barbarians, and yet in her treatment of those who are best able and most willing to lift her out of such a condition—the professors, the journalists and literary classes generally—she exceeds the barbarism of slavery.