

## RECLAIMING THE OREGON DESERT

ROCK WORK  
ALONG LINE OF  
DITCH NEAR ECHO

By Lula R. Lorenz.

THE return of Oliver P. Morton, attorney for the government reclamation service, from his recent trip to Washington, has caused the report to be circulated that the lands in what is known as the "East Umatilla project" will be opened to homestead entry and settlement during the present season. While refusing to give a definite answer to the inquiries made, Mr. Morton stated that the work was progressing in the most satisfactory manner and that nothing seemed to be in the way of an early opening.

The government project covers 20,000 acres of excellent land on the Columbia slope of the Umatilla valley, in the northern part of Umatilla county. To irrigate these lands an immense storage reservoir is being constructed by building a dam 100 feet high across the mouth of Cold Springs canyon, which will be filled from the flood waters of the Umatilla river by means of a feed canal 35 miles long, the construction of which will be completed May 1. The work on the reservoir is being carried on by the reclamation service engineers, employing a large force of men, and is one of the gigantic tasks undertaken by the government in providing homes for homesteaders.

## Installing Machinery.

Practically all of last winter was spent in preparing to begin operations and every device for saving labor and expediting the work has been installed. Four locomotive engines, 80 self-dump gravel cars, two huge steam shovels, rock crusher, steam cement mixer, steam power rock drills, excavators and other labor saving machinery were transported overland from Hiramston, on the O. R. & N. to the dam site, eight miles distant, on temporary tracks laid for this purpose. This machinery is now actively engaged in prosecuting the work. The dam is to be 1,400 feet long, 190 feet high and 500 feet wide at the bottom. The walls of the canyon are solid rock, affording perfect anchorage. At the upper side of the dam a trench 30 feet wide at the bottom was dug to bed rock and a cement core will be made to cut off any underflow. At the lower side of the dam a huge trestle was constructed on a level with the banks on which a railroad track has been laid connecting with the gravel pit three miles away. Four trains are

HEADGATE ON THE UMATILLA  
PROJECT BELOW ECHO

kept busy hauling gravel loaded by the steam shovel and dumped from the trestle.

The dam construction is to be equal parts earth and gravel, with the lower side 100 per cent gravel and crushed rock. As fast as the material is received it is thoroughly wet down and rolled, making it as compact and solid as a macadamized road. The dam will form a lake over five miles in length and contains upwards of 60,000 acre feet of water above the line of discharge in the distribution canal sufficient to cover each acre of land to a depth of three feet. It is expected that this will be finally completed early the coming fall, the reservoir to be filled with the flood waters of next winter.

The government project represents but half the land to be brought under irrigation in northern Umatilla county this season. Two private en-

terprises join the government project, all owned by a local company of Pendleton and Umatilla county citizens. The altitude is 500 feet above sea level, the soil is a rich sandy loam, absorbing water readily and retaining the moisture, and as it warms early in the season will produce the earliest vegetation.

Already Preparing Land.

Should the experiment demonstrate that no difficulty will be had in supplying water for this season's irrigation, these lands will be opened to sale and settlement about April 8. In advance of a general sale a quarter section was bought by F. H. Page, the well-known produce commissioner of Portland, and J. W. Kyle, who now have a large force of men at work clearing the land of sagebrush and putting it into cultivation. This will be the model farm of the enterprise and is under the direct

supervision of Mr. Kyle. Mr. Kyle stated that this season's crop would consist of 80 acres of potatoes, 10 acres of watermelons, 10 acres of cantaloupes, 5 acres of cabbages, 5 acres of tomatoes, 1 acre of sweet potatoes, 10 acres of sweet corn, with liberal experiments in early garden vegetables. This fall they will plant 20 acres in strawberries, raspberries, loganberries and other small fruits, and next spring begin planting an orchard of the earliest varieties of cherries, apricots, peaches and pears.

Mr. Kyle believes that it will be possible to produce ripe strawberries early in May, with other small fruits following, which guarantees to the growers the prevailing high prices of the early season. Should his prediction be verified the entire tract will be devoted to producing small fruits and vegetables for the markets of Portland and the cities on the sound, shipments being

loaded at midnight reaching Portland for morning delivery.

There is some complaint that the secretary of the interior has made too many restrictions in the rules to govern the operation of the lands under the reclamation project. Homesteads will be limited in size from 10 to 40 acres, water for which will be sold at \$60 an acre on 10 years' time, the entrymen being compelled to occupy and cultivate the land during that time, making all payments when due. There is no objection to the cost, for the land will have a value of \$200 to \$300 per acre when under a high state of cultivation, and even if when the works are completed it is found that the cost amounts to \$75 an acre there will be several applicants for each entry. But the government is not friendly to speculators and the class of pioneers, who are willing to do the work of reclaiming the land, want to realize on their work without having to wait the full time.

There are no restrictions in the private enterprises. One can buy as much land as he wants and sell any portion when the price offered proves to be a temptation. The plan of the inland company is to make its project a cooperative enterprise. With each acre of land sold a share of stock in the ditch company is transferred, conveying a proportionate interest in the canal, so that with the final transfer of the land the entire canal has been sold to the landowners, the cost of maintenance being the only expense to be provided for.

One of the conditions which assures the greatest success in the Umatilla valley irrigation enterprises is the high duty of water. The lands lie adjacent to the great wheat fields of the inland empire, and receive almost enough moisture to produce crops of wheat in two or three irrigations will be all that is required, assuring a minimum of expense and a maximum of results.

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## HORRORS OF LIFE IN THE CZAR'S NEW LAND OF DEATH

By B. C. Baakerville.

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THE Russian autocracy has found a new dumping ground for exiles in the wilds of far Siberia already has been reported in the newspapers of Europe and the United States. But the horrors of life in the district of Naryn, the frozen marsh land which only since the middle of last year has been used as a place of confinement for the victims of despotism, scarcely an idea has yet been given.

No visitors are allowed to penetrate this desolate region. Recently, however, a few medical students and others have managed to escape from administrative exile there, and on the authority of these, and through letters from men and women who are suffering a living death in the new Siberian hell that I am able to supply some details regarding the terrible fate of those doomed to banishment within its confines.

## A Country of Ice.

Painted an appropriate blue on the map this vast swamp of Naryn stretches over hundreds of miles in the province of Tomsk. It consists of dense primeval forests and marshes on which grows a coarse, rank grass. It is frozen solid for nine months of the year. During the brief summer it is a region of miasms and mosquitoes. It is intersected by the river Obi and its tributaries. It is destitute of even the scantiest appliances for roads. Here and there along the banks of the river Obi live the few Russian colonists. Boats afford them the only means of communication.

The native inhabitants are Ostyaks—savages of the lowest type found in Siberia—who subsist by hunting and fishing in the brief summer, and during the long winter live half famished in wretched, indescribably filthy mud hovels. They number now only 3,000. Two years ago there were 5,000. Many of them, but the advent of the white man brought with it the white man's curse—liquor. Disease and alcoholism are killing the Ostyaks off fast. All are drunkards when they get the chance, even the children.

## Exiles Are Educated.

Several thousands of Russian men and women have been sent to this ghastly region since the Russian government discovered its capacity for educating fresh horrors to Siberian banishment. Of these, moreover, the great majority have been in no way criminals, recent convicts having been made up principally of school teachers and students, male and female, medical men, professors and other educated persons who were accused only of having circulated socialist literature.

All classes of society, however, are represented, among the rest being some soldiers who on their return from Port Arthur found their families ruined and maltreated. They complained of this and asked for redress from the authori-

ties, and were, in reply, banished to this awful district.

Many of these exiles were taken from their homes within 15 minutes of their arrest, without even being permitted to take a change of garments, and as they were, in light summer clothes, they had to start on their ghastly journey to Siberia. And, once arrived, it is impossible for these unfortunates to wrest a livelihood out of the frozen marshes. They cannot earn anything to supplant the miserable pittance the government allows them, averaging only 2½ cents a day. They are, therefore, doomed to a perpetual struggle with disease and starvation. The weak ones succumb early and are buried by their servile comrades, or, if the ground be frozen, left on the marshes till spring.

## Pitiful Hopes Shattered.

Those who arrived in Naryn during the brief summer still cling to the illusion that their lives would be bearable. The native Ostyaks were out fishing and hunting, so the youths or mud huts were comparatively empty, only the old and helpless being left at home. Fish was cheap. Even coarse rye bread could be bought. But this state of things did not last long. The

frigid weather returned all too soon. The natives returned, the huts were crammed with filthy humanity and drying fish. The symphony of howl and storm raged outside. In the freezing cold of this region only the warmly clad bear venture out, and most of the exiles have only rags and tatters. Noses, ears, fingers and toes are carried off by the frost, leaving horrible wounds behind.

Immediately with the opening of winter, too, the price of the fish which hangs in the huts goes up alarmingly. However good the haul, there is never enough and to spare, for the savage eats his fill when there is plenty and starves afterwards. Bread disappears from the market.

## Death the Only Relief.

There is the dried grass from the marshes and the exile waits that. He begins to wonder why he was glad to hear his death sentence had been commuted to life-long exile—but that was before he knew Naryn. Now he envies his comrades who perished one grey morning on the ramparts of a court martial.

True, he might have been sent even

farther from civilization—to Yakutsk on the Lena, which was once thought to be the worst spot in the 10 Russian provinces that a political exile could live in. Here, he would be utterly out off from communication with his kind, unless, by some miracle, he could get a native to take him a hundred versts or so to his next-door neighbor.

But now, the settlements of Yakutsk are healthier than those of Tomsk. The unfortunate people are not so close together, the struggle for existence is consequently less hard. In the more crowded settlements, however, in Naryn, typhus and kindred diseases, engendered by starvation and filth, carry off hundreds. Leprosy, the Siberian scourge, is another horror, for the huts are infected with it. The Ostyaks, who accept it as a matter of course, make matters worse by reason of their filthy habits. They are said to be the dirtiest people in the world—it is hardly surprising, for they live in a country where the water is frozen for nine months out of the 12.

## Government Forbids Kindness.

When the first batch of exiles arrived in Naryn in last June the settlers received them kindly and

helped them in various ways, but the governor, hearing of it, coerced the inhabitants into a practical boycott of the victims of autocratic inhumanity. The police threatened them with severe punishments if they loaned any of the exiles either boots or nets.

As a few common law criminals had been banished there, the police spread the report that all exiles were such and should be avoided as robbers. In consequence of this persecution many of the half-clothed wretches had to live in the open for weeks before they could find shelter of any sort. As a result of having to herd with the filthy savages 50 per cent of them have been smitten with loathsome diseases.

The supply of medical help is practically confined to that afforded by the few medical students among the exiles who are permitted to help the sufferers. In Naryn is a small hospital with 10 beds, but it is in so awful a condition that an army officer who had gone there died in despair after a few days, unable to enter the filthy. Escape from this hell is almost impossible. Those who attempt it, even if they succeed in eluding the police, almost invariably die of hunger or cold.

Visitors to Siberia are permitted to see only the show exile settlements to

be found along the new railroad. The huts there are decently built of wood, the inhabitants well clothed and well fed. They make a brave show of going off in their sledges on a holiday, their horses tearing over the snow, the sun bright, the wind calmed. This is the picture which officials delight in showing to distinguished tourists. And within a few hundred versts of some of these, the awful swamp where the exiles pray for death.

Even in conservative Russia the war of drafting for Siberian convoys has greatly changed. There was a time when the czar's dangerous subjects made the journey on foot, guarded by Cossacks, who beat them unmercifully. Men and women were made to walk 2,000 miles and more. Some were sent as far as the river Amur, by the Manchurian frontier. How they survived the hardships of such a journey is a mystery. They were thrown into dungeons, starved, dogged and exposed to Siberian frosts without warm clothing. Yet some of them were dragged all the way back again and perished in Moscow at the stake.

Later on sledges were used. They were shaped like barrels and covered with hides. Mounted Cossacks escorted

these convoys, which contained some of Russia's noblest men and women. Many died on the way; others lived to work in the mines and existed for years in spite of blindness, disease and the wardens' knouts. When railways were built the journey was made in trains as far as possible, then on foot or in sledges. Since the railway was opened a greater part of the journey to Siberia is done by train, and in out-of-the-way stations it is not unusual to see, among the freight trains, a wagon which differs from the rest in that it has small heavily-barred windows. Sometimes a listless face, perhaps a child's, will be peeping out. The wagon contains exiles on their way to Moscow, where they will join one of the special "exile" trains which now run regularly to Siberia—that is, if the word "run" can be used for anything so slow. These trains are a new departure and were started because the number of exiles has grown to such an extent within the last year that the old way of sending them with ordinary freight trains was found impracticable.

The scenes at the little stations, where the people begin their journey, are no heart-breaking that even the stolid military escorts who have orders to suppress undue expression of grief in their charges, are sometimes moved to tears. But as the days and nights pass, the exiles lose the capacity for grief. They settle down into a dull despair, which is written on the faces of those who look listlessly from behind the bars.

Not all of them go to Siberia. Some are drafted off to the province of Archangel and Volodga. Here, though the winters are severe, they have some chance of getting work. But even in these "favored districts" life is full of hardships. Each adult is allowed about \$1.12 a month. Half of this goes in rent. Food is as dear as in Russian towns and villages. Many exiles arrive there without boots or overcoats—months spent in the prisons have been exchanged for food or that much prized tobacco—cigarettes.

Of late many inhabitants of the Naryn region have made desperate efforts to run away. Sometimes their bodies are found on the marshes. They had started with the wild idea of walking to the nearest town, eluding the police and tramping a thousand miles or so to Europe.

The government says that such sufferings will put a stop to the anarchy which reigns in Russia. "Chaos and anarchy," have said as far as they can, "Russia's history shows that the daily events mock them, too. As the exile trains take their human freight to Siberia, other trains continue to bring to arms and ammunition. Hundreds of thousands of rifles and shotguns are hidden in Russia at the moment. The police would not allow a fraction of them, but the paper tells us that they are there. The situation is desperate. The suffering and the exile are alike victims."



THE FIRST STEP TO SIBERIA



THE FIRST FALL OF SNOW ON THE GRAVES OF EXILES