

ODD CITY of IRKUTSK



PRINCIPAL STREET, IRKUTSK

A THOUSAND miles after you have left Russia, journeying across a flat, featureless ocean of steppe toward the rising sun, you will enter a wood.

Light-heartedly you plunge through a crevice of that dark wall of evergreen foliage. The cool gloom is pleasing after the shadeless steppe. Towering masts of pine and fir and cedar. Infrequent glimpses of sky through chance vents in the roof. A faint dank stench of rotting logs and waterlogged moss. Not a bird or a beast to see or hear; clusters of mosquitoes wounding in spirals up a glancing shaft of twilight. The silence of the grave, writes Basset Digby in the New York Tribune.

Yes; pleasant after the shadeless steppe. . . . It must be a deep wood though. Miles have drawn into leagues. Suddenly night falls.

If you find a track in the next three days, which is improbable, you will live to celebrate, in some turf-roofed log hut, your first week's passage through this forest—yes, you begin to call it a forest now.

Well, to summarize, if you are a pretty good walker and have luck you will be getting near the eastern fringe of that forest about seventeen weeks later. Long before that you will cease to wonder at a certain moroseness, a certain long-faced silence, in your woodland hosts. And not improbably you will have vowed to pause or a day at the frontier of this forest—if frontier it should have, indeed—to lie on your back on the steppe and gaze at clouds. You have almost forgotten what a big, spacious cloud looks like.

Out of the Cedars.

Comes a morning when the cedars and firs thin out and birch copple ensues. Presently the birches thin and thin, trickling away into a broad downward sweep of treeless prairie. A few leagues ahead glints of gold and silver flash incomprehensively out of the far distance. Then splashes of dazzling white, spires and towers and domes, and a city appears, swept on three sides by a river of foam-flecked emerald, the Siberian metropolises.

If you are looking for Occidental grandeurs (sic), comforts and culture, approaching this outpost of empire with the Berlin or the Boston point of view, you will find Irkutsk crude. To appreciate her you should come upon her, mentally if not in actuality, out of the awful solitudes of forest that hedge her about; then you will not cry ne upon her for being the capital city of Northern Asia and having neither street-cars nor skyscrapers, few drains and fewer street lamps, hotels a rite, an actorless opera house and roads that are lakes of mud or drifts of stinging dust.

Facts? Facts? You can't find a guide book dealing with Siberia, and you chomp your hungry jaws for facts? No; there are no guide books. Facts? Oh, well then—Irkutsk, the capital city of a largish slab of the world's dry land, about three times the size of all Europe, exclusive of Russia, has 89,000 inhabitants who labor under the delusion that they are Europeans, though 70 per cent of the hairiest are honest enough not to give the matter much thought, wearing their shirts outside their trousers and dwelling in small log huts and bovine tranquility.

In 1652 Ivan Pakhobov, leader of a filibustering gang of Cossacks and ex-cedding tough, built a stockaded timber fort at the junction of the rivers Angara and Irkut. Atristralic patriotism was less of a motive of his than legitimized plunder of the Booriat Mongol fur trappers. He levied tribute on them—extorted loot to the accompaniment of flag waggings. Some of it may eventually have reached the treasury at Moscow. Who knows?

When Professor Gmelin came out, in 1734, on the pioneer scientific exploration of Northern Asia, he found 939 log huts at Irkutsk, of which most contained, in addition to a stove and a bathroom, "une chambre sans fumee ou en se tient en famille," which is more than one can say nowadays. In 1803 the whole of Siberia was placed under the administration of a governor general, with a residence at Irkutsk. Today the city has a cathedral—Our Lady of Kazan—thirty-two Orthodox Greek churches, sixteen parish churches, thirty-five private chapels attached to residences, some Roman Catholic churches, a German Lutheran church, forty-nine schools, eighteen charitable institutions, an opera

house with nothing going on most of the time, a government gold laboratory, barracks by the score, several banks and breweries and monasteries and jails, a fine museum with an alert educational programme of lectures, and so forth, a very few factories, several tanneries and a major in a cavalry regiment who weighs 31 stone, which is just short of a quarter of a ton—a bilious boy who can probably ride a gun carriage with the most reckless of em.

Of the Irkutskians Gmelin wrote: "Ils aiment l'exces l'oisivite, le vin et les femmes"—not till he got out of town, though. I'm still in Irkutsk, at the mercy of the mob, so wait awhile.

Late Dinner Hour.

An odd city, this. At 6 o'clock this morning frost gripped the ground. At 2 o'clock in the afternoon the sunny sides of the street were deserted for the shade, where it was only 81 degrees Fahrenheit! A leafed town. No one appears on the streets till after 10 o'clock in the morning. Early lunchers begin to drop into the restaurants about 2 o'clock. The dinner hour is from 10 at night till 1 o'clock in the morning, and you linger over your drinks and Crimean cigarettes till 3 or 4 o'clock, listening to the orchestra or moving from table to table to chat with your friends.

The chief restaurant in town, the resort of the creme de la creme of wealth and smartness, offers not uninteresting glimpses. It is quite good form, for instance, to enter the crowded room vigorously scraping your hair and mustachios and whiskers and beard with a large and greasy comb. None of the lunchers through whom you thus thread your way are squeamish enough to push away their soup plates from your scurf strewn wake. Wanting a waiter, you bang your plate with a knife, clamorously and with application, till he appears. Mold and manure stained earthenpots, standing in water-logged saucers, hold the rooted once-we-were-flowers on your table. Argumentative canaries and vainly shrill linnets trilling from a dozen cages drive you nearly silly. Yet the food is excellent and the waiters models of their genus, apart from a lamentable tendency to snatch the fork from your plate wherewith to pry the cork from a bottle of wine.

Few men care to saunter about Irkutsk after dark without a Browning in a handy pocket. The first time I came to this town I was assured that there was at least a murder on the streets every four-and-twenty hours, with considerably more some nice, warm nights, when it was a pity-to-be-indoors-don't-you-know. I doubted the fact till I came back subsequently and verified it. And now, this spring, after an absence of three years, I find vesperal murders more popular than ever. Nasty, uncomfortable murders, quiet murders in the dark by gentlemen who haven't a thing against you, but need a spare shirt, or merely want to keep in good training. There are no street lamps half a mile from the heart of this metropolis. That helps, too.

The lazy and inartistic spirits merely slide up in felt slippers and sandbag or club you. The real union murderers are garroters. Even as Tomsk is the educational and cultural centre of Siberia, Irkutsk is every ambitious young provincial garrotter's goal. It is a high honor to be in with the garrotting Four Hundred of this town, the aristocracy of homicide. Squatting low on their heels, they lurk in the gutter at the sound of your approaching steps till you appear close by, silhouetted against the starlight. Then the hide lasso is neatly cast over your head; swiftly and silently you are choked to death. Or a partnership of three will operate. Two chase you. At the crescendoing sound of rushing footsteps the third man draws a rope taut across the street. You trip and fall headlong. Before you are up again you are knifed in the back.

Small Per Capita Debt.

The total debt of the forty-eight state governments of this country on June 30, 1913, as reported by Director Harris of the census bureau, was \$422,796,525, as against a total national debt of \$2,916,204,914. Less cash in the treasury available for payment of the national debt, it amounted to only \$1,028,064,055, or \$15.59 for each man, woman, and child. That is very small, as national debts go. That of France, for example, is \$160 per capita.

SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE

ONE VETERAN RETIRED AND RECRUIT TOOK SERVICE.

Gringo Civilian Got a Taste of Stirring Life and Found It to His Liking, So the Account Was Balanced.

Silently the steamer slipped over the starlit waters, Momotombo's plume of steam 6,000 feet above us. The pier we were to take was hidden in the blackness ahead. Every light aboard was doused, for we had no wish to make a show of ourselves.

Then somebody opened the fire doors under the boilers. A plume of sparks flew from the smoketank and lit the boat brightly and a hundred men on deck swore, not too softly.

Answer came in a flash from the black shore ahead of us. Bang! came the bark of a field gun. A rosy spark boring its way through the night passed over our heads and on into the night and lake.

"Turn around, captain! Turn quick, and go back!"

So our brave Colombian general in command; a patriot for Nicaragua and 300 pesos a month.

Pray, don't imagine that he was scared. He wouldn't endanger his men out there on the water; the enemy on firm land and beyond reach of machetes. No. He boldly stood grasping the rail, and if his arm fairly shook me as we were crowded against each other it was no doubt because he trembled with bold ardor.

At least I couldn't see that he changed color. But then, I never saw an ace of clubs change color. Still, there's a difference in blacks. The general's shade was the shiner of the two in the light from our plumes of sparks.

"Go back, captain, to a thousand meters!" the general ordered again, but with no very great authority of tone.

"You go to thunder!" Captain Tooth blurted with what seemed to me an approach to bluntness. "Isn't there a man aboard who'll take a crack at them chaps ashore?"

The commanding general walked aft. A gringo civilian said:

"Hold her as she goes, Cap. I'll try a shot."

He dropped to the main deck, sighted the little beauty of a breechloader and jerked the lanyard. A shell strolled shoreward, struck and broke in many pieces. A locomotive on the pier vomited burning sparks and rumbled away from there. The natives who were the crew of the gun dipped coffee sacks in a bucket of water and laid them on the gun.

"Get out of this with your dishrag! What dye mean! Give me that shell, pronto!" yelled that mad gringo, jerking the sacks overboard and snatching the shell.

Half a dozen other shells went ashore and smashed themselves to ruins, one going through the planking of the motorboat of which the rebels proposed to make a man-o-war to take Managua.

Then that intrusive gringo hunted up the commanding general and asked:

"Why not land now and take the place?"

But he ordered the expedition to return to Managua. He wouldn't risk his brave men by a night attack. They might run into ambush under fire of our gun.

The general retired from the service, and the 390 pesos, the next day. So a soldier of fortune was lost to the cause of the government. But the account was balanced that very day, for that gringo, beguiled by an offer from the president and the taste he had had of war, became a soldier of fortune.

Lakes Drying Up.

A report just laid before the senate at Cape Town says definitely that South Africa is drying up not because of any lessening of the average rainfall, but on account of the steady disappearance of the local water supplies. "There is no doubt," it adds, "that many parts of the Union will eventually become uninhabitable."

Long ago Livingstone pointed out this probability, and within the last half-century quite a number of lakes in central Africa have disappeared, while Lake Chad is shrinking every year.

Europe is in no better case. A German geologist recently made an exhaustive inventory of the European lakes and found that hundreds had disappeared or been reduced to insignificant proportions. In the canton of Zurich 150 lakes were catalogued in 1660; now there are barely 70.

The Dancing Floor.

From year to year various substances are suggested, tried out, found satisfactory and then superseded by others to produce smooth dancing floors. The wax candle, chipped liberally over the floor and then energetically rubbed in, has had its day. So has talcum powder, which has been used by the bestful to produce a good dancing surface. Now corn meal is looked upon as the best polisher of a dancing floor. It is sprinkled over the floor, not too liberally, and rubbed in by the dancing feet.

Pleasurable Madness.

"Poppleigh is always entertaining some sort of utopian dream."

"I rather think the dream entertains him."

New Indian Animal Stories

How the Martin Won the Gourd Nest

By JOHN M. OSKISON



Children, Color Up This Picture.

Long time ago, the fork-tailed martin used to build their gourd-like nests under the eaves of the council house. And that was a very convenient place, too—both for the martins, who liked to live close to the people, and for the little Indian boys, who liked to watch the birds swooping and flashing in the air.

Sometimes one of the boys who was not satisfied with watching the birds in the air would climb to the eaves and bring down one of the nests. And if he waited until after the young martins had gone away, it was all right. Then one of the old men would tell the boys why the martin's nest was like a gourd.

It happened at the time of the first ball game between the birds and the four-footed animals.

On one side, the Great Bear was the captain of the players, and for the birds the Great Eagle was leader; and for many days before the game the big animals went about the earth saying what good ball players they were. But the Great Eagle told the birds that they must not boast; and it was because they did not boast that the little bat and the tiny flying squirrel joined the birds and helped to win the game.

Well, the game was played in a smooth meadow beside the river, and it began early in the morning, when the dew was fresh and sparkling on the grass. Out in the center of the meadow stood the Great Beaver ready to toss the ball. He looked toward the Great Bear and asked if he was ready, and the Great Bear said:

"The game may as well begin." The Great Bear spoke in a sort of tired way, as if it was really no use to go on, but he supposed that the birds would not be satisfied until the animals showed them how much better they were. And then the Great Beaver asked the Great Eagle if the birds were ready.

"We have just seen the edge of the sun coming over the tree-tops," said the Great Eagle, "and we are ready to play."

BOXING TAUGHT AT COLLEGE

Several of Big Educational Institutions Follow Example of University of Pennsylvania.

Columbia university, Franklin and Marshall and several others of the big educational institutions are following the lead of the University of Pennsylvania in introducing boxing among the methods of physical training. A few years ago such an idea would have been bitterly opposed, and there would have been small chance of its adoption. But times change, and people grow more broad-minded every day. There is no question of the benefit of a knowledge of boxing as a means of self-defense. Anyone doubting this can get the proof instantly by undertaking to impose on a man who is a skilled boxer, even if he is a much smaller person. But the best use for boxing is as a means of healthful exercise. In learning to box the student learns to act quickly, to keep cool and to watch for an opening. He finds that in order to successfully cope with an opponent he must not lose his temper. The man who loses his temper while boxing is sure to get the worst of it. Outside of swimming there is no exercise to compare with boxing for a complete use of the muscles of the body, and, of course, swimming cannot be enjoyed except in the water. Boxing, being a competitive exercise, is superior to swimming through the fact that the nerves as well as the muscles are exercised in the sparring bout. Quickness of the eye is one of the things that come with constant practise of boxing. The lungs are expanded and every muscle from the top of the head to the soles of the feet is brought in-

Fundamental Principles of Health

By ALBERT S. GRAY, M.D.

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WATER.

Water is such a common, every-day thing that few of us give it any thought whatever, and just because it is free a very large number of persons do not drink it in sufficient quantities to maintain a good degree of physical health. No other article of diet enters so completely into the construction and support of all living things both animal and vegetable as water, and it is this very omnipresence of water acting on that peculiar twist of the human mind that leads us to treat familiar things with reckless contempt that results in our criminal indifference to water supplies.

As a matter of fact, water is an element of vast significance in the maintenance of human life and efficiency, and to secure and maintain health the individual citizen must know the truth concerning this most important part of our diet.

The scaly cells on the surface of our skin, our hair and the tips of our nails are the only parts of our bodies that can live in air. About 99 per cent of the cells that constitute our bodies are still aquatic organisms and can and do live and grow only when swimming in salt water.

Under favorable conditions we can live for 30 days or more without food, but not more than a few minutes without air and only about three days without water. Were we to spend a material part of the money we squander on food for good air and good water no doubt we should be vastly more efficient, certainly we would be happier, for there can be no real happiness without good health.

Deprived of water for three days we become delirious and die from poisoning by our own waste products. A steady stream of water flowing through our bodies is necessary to wash out and carry away the toxins resulting from cell activity or we must inevitably succumb to disease; and to keep this cleansing stream flowing in sufficient volume we should drink about two quarts of fluid daily. Absolutely pure water is not found on earth.

According to average local standards, water is "pure" and fit to drink if it is more or less clear, does not smell bad and does not quickly originate some clearly defined disease in the body of the drinker. That it contains pathogenic organisms or poisons from the action of bacteria upon decaying organic matter is demonstrated only by some unusually severe outbreak of disease in a community, and generally not until then is it even suspected that the water may be "impure." If you are in ill health have your drinking water analyzed and the source of supply investigated.

Delivery of drinking water containing elements deleterious to life is going on in every section of this country, but because of our grossly inadequate vital statistics bookkeeping we are unable to deduce the vastly valuable knowledge to be derived therefrom. However, the concentration of people in the cities has compelled attention to public health matters so that money and organizations are employed and rules and regulations enforced that have for their object the protection of the inhabitants against infection through water, milk and waste products.

Taking typhoid fever as a gauge, let us compare conditions in several parts of the world. Germany, with a population density of 310.9 per square mile (more than ten times greater density than our own), had in the same period of time a typhoid death rate of 4.7, compared with our 23.5 per 100,000 inhabitants; the Netherlands, with 468.8 density, a death rate of 5.4; Switzerland, with a density of 242.7, a mortality of 2.8, and England and Wales, with a density of 372.5, a death rate of only six per 100,000 inhabitants, compared with the United States with a density of only 30.9 and a mortality of 23.5.

The city of Chicago in 1891 had a typhoid rate of 173.8 per 100,000 inhabitants. An investment of \$62,000,000 (approximately \$27 per capita for the population of the year 1912) in a drainage canal and the adoption of other reasonable sanitary precautions reduced the typhoid fever death rate in 1912 to only 7.5 per 100,000 inhabitants, probably the lowest rate ever recorded for an American city of more than 500,000 inhabitants.

Obviously this demonstrates what may be done in the prevention of disease. If we are as intelligent as we assume ourselves to be, and there is not something fundamentally and radically wrong with our entire system of doing things, why this difference in the same period between Europe, or even the city of Chicago, and the total vital statistics registration area of the United States? And what about the non-registration area? Good health and long life can be purchased, why do we not buy it?