

Fertile Siberia.

The Russian Convicts go from a bad climate to a better, and are in such good company that the disgrace of transportation gets much modified. Only the third class—criminals of the deepest dye—work in the mines. These mines are, however, not all underground; they may consist of gold washeries, or the exile may be set to the almost pleasurable excitement of searching for gems. At one time the worst class of convicts, usually murderers and particularly offensive politicians, were not only compelled to work underground, but they had to live there, and—horrible thought!—were buried there also. No wonder that Siberia got a bad name. But not over one fourth of the Siberian miners are convicts, and a recent explorer is even of the opinion that the latter are in better circumstances physically, and lead quite as comfortable and more moral lives than the corresponding class of free men in America, England or Australia. Society in the large towns is pleasant and polished. Banishment to Siberia has been overdone, and thus the mischief is righting itself by the natural law of compensation. It has long ceased to be a disgrace; it is rapidly ceasing to be a punishment.

No country in the world, except, perhaps the valleys of the Amazon and the Mississippi, has such a perfect system of water communication as Siberia. The rich meadows near the mouth of the Yenisei, even though far within the Arctic Circle, astonished the Norwegian walrus hunters who accompanied Professor Nordenskiöld. "What a land God has given the Russians!" was the half admiring, half envious exclamation of a peasant seaman who owned a little patch among the uplands in the Scandinavian Norland. Yet these fine pastures are unoccupied and uncultivated. The river has good coalbeds and fine forests, and south of the forest region, level, stony plains, covered, for hundreds of leagues with the richest "black earth" soil, only wanting the plough of the farmer to yield abundant harvests. Still further south the river flows through a region where the vine grows in the open air. Altogether, it is believed that, by the expenditure of about one hundred thousand pounds, Yenisei could be made navigable, through its tributary, the Angara, on the Lake Baikal—an inland sea not much smaller than Lake Superior—and the Obi could be connected with the Yenisei, and the Lena—London Standard.

PRIZES FOR THE BEST KEPT FARMS.—The Council of the Agricultural Association met in Hamilton on Monday evening when the award of the judges on prize farms was read which was as follows:—First prize gold medal, Mr. J. B. Carpenter, Townsend township, north riding of Norfolk; second prize, silver medal, Mr. Christ Barker, South Dumfries, north riding of Brant; third prize, bronze medal, Messrs. H. & J. Hutchinson, Niagara; bronze medal, Mr. R. Snyder, Woodhouse; bronze medal, Mr. Thomas Edgar, North Dumfries; bronze medal, Mr. Dilman Shantz, Waterloo; bronze medal, Mr. John Fothergill, Nelson. In the case of Messrs. H. & J. Hutchinson, Niagara, it was suggested that a silver medal should be substituted for the bronze, as the work was very superior. The districts examined entered the following societies:—Niagara, Welland, Lincoln, Haldimand, Moulton, North and South Wentworth, North and South Brant, North and South Norfolk, North and South Waterloo, and Halton.

How INDIANS DO THEIR TRADING.—In her book on Manitoba Miss Fitzgibbons says:—"I watched some Indians shopping, and was astonished to see how invariably they waded aside inferior goods and chose such materials as meriting at \$1.50 to \$2 (7d) a yard. One of the merchants told me it was useless to offer them anything but the best. An Indian who could speak English or French, and wanted five things divided his money according to his idea of their relative cost in little piles upon the counter, and going through a pantomime descriptive of his wants, was handed first some silk handkerchiefs. Taking up one, he felt it, held it up to the light, and throwing it aside, shook his head vigorously, uttering an "Eh!" of disgust. When shown a better one, he was doubtful; but upon a much superior being produced, he took it, and willingly handed over one pile for it. This, however, was too much, and when given the change he put it on one of the other piles, and proceeded in the same way to make the rest of his purchases. "How easily they could be cheated," I said to the clerk after the Indian had left. "No," he replied, "not so easily as would appear. They generally come in from their camps in great numbers once a year, to sell their furs and make purchases. They go to different shops, and on their return compare notes as to the cost and quality of their goods. Then, if one has paid more than another, or has been cheated in quality, he will never enter the shop again; and the firm that gives the greatest bargains is the most patronized on their return."

The origin of the apple is unknown, though it has been cultivated time out of mind. As the apple is mentioned in the Bible, it is presumed to be a native of Palestine, although at present in Canada and the surrounding region it is of no value. It is now imported into Egypt and Palestine from the neighborhood of Damascus. It was extensively raised by the Romans, albeit, the Roman apple is thought by some to have been very different from the apple described in the Scriptures. Many say that his countrymen were acquainted with 22 varieties; America produces more than 200 varieties. The apple is very hardy. It grows on all soils free from excessive moisture, except those of a peaty or very sandy character. The tree is noted for longevity, often bearing fruit for 200 or 250 years, the finest kind of apple coming from trees from 50 to 80 years old.

A report comes from Fort Ellis, N.W.T., of the outbreak of war between the Sioux, Stoney, and Mandan Indian tribes, and that a number have been killed on both sides. There is a prospect of the war being transferred to United States territory.

Scottish Apparition

Mr. Rogers mentions how a friend of his own was returning late on a summer evening to his residence at Earlston from the vicinity of Montrose. The road lead through a piece of unfrequented moorland, a solitary waste. The night was oppressively hot; the course was up hill. To relieve himself a little he threw open his vest, uncovering his head in a light colored handkerchief, and raising his hat aloft upon his cane. On a sudden a figure started from the footpath and disappeared amidst a forest of whins. The traveller appears to have been a little terrified himself. Approaching the spot where the figure seemed to be concealed, he called out, "Who is there?" Then came the immediate reply, "I'm—I'm—I'm a weaver from Gallashiels; but ooh, man! I'm glad to hear you speak for you were an awful like sight comin' over the hill, I thot you were a giant, I amist feared out o' my Judgment!"

No doubt many a ghost has as natural a solution or dissolution; but such stories do not less tend to show a characteristic of the national mind. In his very interesting but now rare, book on "Scotland, Social and Domestic," Dr. Rogers has collected a number of instances; some of them were personal and household alarms arising from simple causes, but there are many also to which he does not furnish any explanation, and some of them of quite recent occurrence. In the University of St. Andrews a custom obtains that, on the death of a professor, intimation of the event is conveyed by messenger to the other members of the institution. In 1842 an aged professor was very ill, and his decease was expected daily. One of his colleagues was down to his usual evening devotions with his household. His wife was reading a portion of Scripture when, having in hand the professor asked her whether it was not precisely half past nine. The lady, taking off her watch, answered that it was. When the service was concluded, the professor explained that at the time he had interrupted the reading he had seen his ailing colleague who had signified him an ailment. He felt satisfied his friend had then expired. Not long after a messenger arrived, reporting that Dr. H. had died that evening at half past nine.

There is a singular story connected with the death of Mungo Park on his second great African expedition. His sister, Mrs. Thomas, lived with her husband on their farm of Myerton, among the Ochils. She had received a letter from her brother, expressing his hope that he would shortly return home, and saying that she would be unlikely to hear from him again until she saw him on his return. Shortly after this she was in bed; she fancied she heard a horse's foot on the road before her window. Sitting up in bed she instantly saw her brother, the great traveller, open the door and walk toward her in his usual attire. She expressed her delight, sprang up from bed, stretched out her arms to receive him, and only folded them over her own breast. By the dim light she could still see that he had been ill, and while she was upholding him for retreating from her, her husband came into the room and assured her of her delusion. This was the last that was heard of Mungo Park; the date of his death is unknown. Mrs. Thomas is described as a shrew, intelligent woman, not at all inclined to superstition, but she always believed that his death took place at the time when she imagined he had returned to her at Myerton. Such stories as these hover over all Scotland, and seem to interlace themselves with the histories of all her families—Leisure Hour.

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