

army laying track, and the road is being pushed as fast as possible from Vladivostok to the west. It crosses great rivers, which have to be bridged, and it goes through some of the most wonderful scenery in the world. It skirts lake Bikal, one of the biggest lakes in the world, the average depth of which is more than a mile. Near this lake the road passes through the mountains, and has many tunnels and stone dikes. The mountains are of granite, and the work of construction will be very difficult. Throughout the whole central region and the west there is but a sparse population, and it is the same in the east. The workmen have to be sent from European Russia, and all of the rolling stock and iron have to come from there. Some of it is shipped from the west. That for the eastern section is being taken around through the Suez canal by sea, and there is another lot which is shipped down into Siberia, I am told, by the Arctic ocean. The road is being constructed in the very best manner. The rails weigh eighteen pounds to the foot. The bridges are of wood, and the road is well ballasted. The greatest distance allowed between the stations is thirty-five miles, and it is proposed to equip the road with enough rolling stock to form three sets of army trains every twenty-four hours. The road is to be to a large extent a military line, and Russia will probably use it to satisfy her Gargantuan appetite for more territory. The stations are built of wood in the interior, though some of the larger ones are of stones. The depot at Vladivostok is a big two-story stone and brick building. It is well constructed, and it would be a respectable depot in the United States.

A SIBERIAN RAILROAD RIDE.

I shall never forget my ride over the eastern section of the Trans-Siberian railroad. I had my permit from the chief of police, and through this I was able to buy a ticket to Nikolsk, which is about seventy miles from Vladivostok. Only third-class trains were running, and these had been opened to passenger traffic only a few days before, and so I practically took the first trip over the new route. I was accompanied by a bright young Japanese, Mr. Koboto, who spoke Russian and English, and who acted as my interpreter. I was living on board the steamer in the harbor, about three miles from the railroad. The train started at 11 p. m., and a great storm came up about 6. The harbor was full of white caps and the waves ran high. The wind was blowing, and a cold, misty sleet ran down into our bones like so many corkscrews as we left the vessel and started for the shore. I can't describe the severity of this wind. It almost split the scalp when it touched the back of my head, and I covered down in the sanpan which I had engaged, while the Chinaman in a waterproof coat sculled us through the darkness. The night was Egyptian in its blackness. A wall of light rose out of the sea in the distance, where the great barracks, with their thousands of Russian troops, covered the sides of the hills. Here and there out of the mist sparkled the lights of a great, black, monster steamer, and we rowed under the shadow of the black hulks which were carrying Russian prisoners to the Island of Saghalin. We narrowly missed getting the train. We left the steamer at 9:30, jumping into the

boat, which rose and fell like a bolt of paper upon the waves, and we had worked our way almost to the shore when I found I had forgotten my passport. The possibilities of a Russian prison came over me, and I insisted that we must go back to the ship after it. Both my Japanese guide and the Chinaman objected, but we finally turned back, and in the end reached the land, with only twenty minutes to make the train.

AT THE STATION.

Hiring a droschky, with two horses, we drove on the gallop through the mud to the station. This was filled with soldiers and police. They were common soldiers in uniform, army officers in heavy overcoats and guards by the scores marched up and down with bayonets and guns. There were police everywhere, and the station looked more like a barracks than a railroad depot. At one end of it was a restaurant, and at the other was the ticket window. After showing my passport and my police permit, I was able to buy a ticket to Nikolsk. The distance was, as I have said, seventy miles, and it cost me \$2.95 in silver. The ticket was about the size of a small business envelope. It was white and no thicker than note paper. Upon it were printed the date and distance, and the names of the stations. Showing it, I passed out of the door to the train, going by more guards and police as I did so. The train comprised about twenty-five cars, of which half a dozen were passenger coaches, and the others were freight and baggage cars. I made a rush for one of the cars, and my heart sank as I looked at the accommodation, and at the place where I had to sleep during the night. It was merely a freight car filled with wooden benches running clear across the car, and facing each other. Above the seats there were shelves, and I found these were upper berths. The lower seats were all filled when we entered, and I climbed up on one of these upper shelves to sleep. There were no cushions and no bedding. I rolled my coat up for a pillow, and wrapped myself in my blanket and lay down. The space between myself and the roof was not wide enough to allow me to sit up, and I rolled over on my side and looked with interest on the queer crowd surrounding me. The most of the passengers were soldiers, but there were emigrants and farmers, a half dozen Chinamen, one or two Tartars and several Japanese girls, who seemed to be of a very questionable character. They laughed and chatted with the soldiers, and were loud in their way.

SUSPECTED BY THE POLICE.

I found that the soldiers were very inquisitive. I was approached a half dozen times by officers and questioned. The guard of the train looked me over very carefully, and when the men found I could speak German, I had to answer all kinds of questions. The cars which are now used on the road are more like those of Europe than of the United States. They are only third and fourth class, and they look more like box cars than palace coaches. The first and second class cars will undoubtedly be good, and there will probably be a Pullman car running over the line when it is completed. At present the accommodations are anything but luxurious, and as I lay on that board shelf and was

carried along at the rate of perhaps fifteen miles per hour, I thought of the Pennsylvania Limited between New York and Pittsburg, with its library and sitting rooms, and as I looked at the candle which shone out of the lantern above me, and which formed the only light of the car. I compared it with the wonderful electric light system of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railroad, where the light is set into the back of your berth, and where, by moving a slide, you can make your berth as light as day at any hour of the night. As my bones ground holes into the wood, I thought of the good beds of the Canadian Pacific, over which I had ridden in going to Asia, and I longed for the railroads of our own civilized land. The air was stifling and ill-smelling, and the fifty-odd people whom we had in the car seemed, on the whole, to be rancid, and I was glad when the guard gave me a rude jerk and told me to get up for Nikolsk.

A QUEER SIBERIAN CITY.

Nikolsk is one of the largest towns of interior Siberia. It is a great military center, and it has vast areas of rich land surrounding it. The soil is as black as your boots, and it makes me think of what Senator Ingalls said about the fertility of Kansas, which is, according to him, so rich that you can poke your arm down into the ground up to the shoulder and pull out earth in your fist which is as rich as guano. A great deal of wheat is raised about this point, and the Russians have established great steam mills for the grinding of food for the soldiers. I visited these mills during my stay. Their machinery had been imported from Russia, and it was of the latest modern make. We passed many barracks, and we saw soldiers on guard everywhere. There were, I judge ten or fifteen acres of buildings connected with the mills, and the workmen seemed to be Chinamen. The land around Nikolsk is being settled like Russia. There are villages that own a great deal of land in common, and they sell their grain to the government. The town itself has a number of stores and business blocks. The houses are of wood, and they make me think of our western frontier towns. We stopped at the hotel which was run by a Chinaman. It was just daybreak when we arrived, and we asked for a room. He said he had none vacant, and, pointing into the billiard room, I saw four Russians with their boots on sleeping on the table. I asked for some breakfast, and after a time was given some fried eggs, smoked salmon and a cup of tea. The tea was served in a glass, and we had a big brass samovar, or Russian tea-urn on the table. After breakfast we took a ride through the city. The roads were as muddy as those of a swamp, and the streets were about two hundred feet wide. On the edge of the city there were a number of dugouts, which were inhabited by Chinamen, and we found Chinese everywhere.

ON THE EDGE OF CHINA.

This city of Nikolsk is not far from the Manchurian border, and it was once a great Tartar capital. There is now an immense wall enclosing a space at one end of the town, and this was the wall of the great Tartar city of the past. The probability is that Russia will gradually move her boundary line further south. As the boys say in playing marbles, she is always "inching" on her neighbors,