

In 1876, he made the circuit of the Gulf of Bothnia, and as a result of this visit a copy of the Scriptures was forwarded for every room in every prison, for each bed in every hospital in all Finland, for the Finnish institutions for the deaf and dumb, and for the saloons of the steamers plying on the Scandinavian coasts. The expense was divided between the Finnish Bible Society and the British or Foreign Bible Society. During this journey, the steamer was unexpectedly delayed for a day at a town on the coast of Finland. He says:—"I was anxious to visit the hospital, and was inquiring about a horse, when a passenger said she had friends in the town, who, she thought, could render assistance. I went with her; and that simple incident may be said to have originated my subsequent tour through the prisons of Siberia; for it was followed by correspondence with a lady member of the family to whom I was introduced, Alba Hellman, who began by modestly asking me, chiefly because I was an Englishman and the only one she knew, whether I could not do something for the welfare of the Siberian exiles."

"When in health she had been wont, like Elizabeth Fry, but on a smaller scale, to spend part of her time in visiting prisoners. Now, acute heart disease forbade such visits, and even compelled her to sleep in a sitting posture, so that for 2,068 nights, or nearly seven years, she never went to bed. My coming to Finland, visiting prisons, had awakened memories of her former work, and she set herself, after my departure, to write me a letter in English. She had had only a few lessons in this language when a girl; but, possessing a Swedish and English New Testament in parallel columns, and a dictionary, she set herself, with an industry and patience almost incredible, to find clauses and expressions that conveyed her meaning in Swedish, and then to copy their English equivalents, her letter ending, for example, 'Here are many faults, but I pray you have me excused.' The force of her language, however, was unmistakable, thus: 'You (English) have sent missionaries round the all world, to China, Persia, Palestine, Africa, the Islands of Sandwich, to many places of the Continent of Europe; but to the great, great Siberia, where so much is to do, you not have sent missionaries. Have you not a Morrison, a Moffatt, for Siberia? Pastor Lansdell, go you yourself to Siberia!'"

Other letters followed, the interest of our author became more and more excited, until finally he determined to spend the summer of 1879 in the wilds of Asiatic Russia. The books selected were principally the New Testament and the Book of Psalms in Russian, a Russian reprint of the British Workman, full of pictures, and well suited to the masses, some engravings and wall-sheets, and thousands of Russian tracts, which had passed the censor's hands. A permanent authority to distribute, duly endorsed by the police, had been received; and with permission from the Russian Government, numerous letters of introduction to parties in Siberia, and three wagon-loads of books and baggage, H. Lansdell left St. Petersburg on the 12th of 5th month, 1879. After a journey of some thousands of miles by railroad and steamer on the Volga, he reached Ekaterineburg, at which point his travel by wagon and horses commenced.

The Ural mountains, which separate Eu-

rope from Asia, though 1700 miles in length, form a comparatively low range; the highest peak does not attain an elevation of more than 6000 feet. On reaching their summit, there stretches before the traveller the immense regions of Russia in Asia, 4000 miles from east to west, and 2000 miles from north to south. The Altai range of mountains, with its eastern offshoots, forms the general features of the southern boundary; and from these heights the land gradually slopes towards the northern bays, which extend to the frozen ocean. The country is intersected by three of the largest rivers on the globe, the Obi, the Yenisei, and the Lena, not one of which is much less than 3000 miles long, and all of them, through great part of the year, flow under masses of ice to the Arctic Ocean. A fourth river, the Amoor, runs an easterly course of 2000 miles into the Gulf of Tartary. Much of the country of Siberia consists of immense plains called steppes, and marshes and pools, and is most thinly settled.

The circumstance which most deeply interests people of other lands in Siberia, and which indeed led to the visit of H. Lansdell, is the long established practice of the Russian Government of transporting thither criminals of various grades. The condition of these exiles from their native land was a leading subject of inquiry with our author, who had unusual facilities for acquiring reliable information on this subject, from personal observation, access to official statistics, and conversation with persons of various grades in society and different occupations.

The government of Russia is an absolute monarchy. It is altogether at variance with our ideas of right, that despotic and irresponsible power should be placed in the hands of any man; and experience shows that it often leads to great injustice, for which the victim can find no remedy. Hence we are predisposed to regard the Russian police with suspicion, and those whom they treat as criminals, as being wrongly oppressed. That such is often the case, we may readily believe; yet the results of our author's inquiries somewhat modify our previous impressions as to the extent of this unjust treatment.

The great mass of the exiles are ordinary criminals, such as in other countries of Europe are found in the prisons. The number sent to Siberia for several years past has been from 17,000 to 20,000 per annum, including the wives and children who choose to accompany the prisoners. Of these nearly 8,000 on their arrival at their destination, are set free to gain their own living, remaining under the surveillance of the police. About 4,000 of these exiles are charged with no particular offence beyond being idle and drunken persons, who will not pay their taxes and support their families, but leave these things to be done by their neighbors. When the patience of these is exhausted, a village parliament is called, which votes such a man a nuisance, and agrees to defray the expense of sending him to Siberia. If this judgment is confirmed by the higher authorities, he is sent there to get his living as a colonist. The number exiled for political offences is considerable, but this class is not the most numerous. About one-seventh of the banished are condemned to hard labor, and the remainder for residence in Siberia, either for life or for certain terms. Wherever they may be, the exiles are under police inspection, and are furnished with papers which

## Siberia.

For "The Friend."

"Through Siberia," is the title of a book by Henry Lansdell, an English clergyman, who had been for a number of years interested in visiting prisons, and distributing religious books and tracts during his vacations. In 1874, he made a tour through the northern part of Europe into Russia. He says, "I had feared that perhaps the orthodox Russians would decline to receive books from Protestants, as do the Romans. We found however, that they would accept such books as had been approved by the censor, and accordingly, we sent 2000 pamphlets into the prisons of Petersburg, reserving a third thousand for giving away on the railway to Moscow, not knowing at that time that for such open distribution a permission is needed. I can never forget the surprise of the people and their desire to get the books. The peasants came and kissed our hands; the railway guards directed us to the attention of the station masters, who came to receive our gifts. Priests took the books, and approved them; and many who offered money in return were puzzled to see it declined. Our stock was soon exhausted, and I determined some day to make a tour in Russia to distribute on a larger scale."

they have to show at intervals, and which tie them to a certain place, whence they can move to a distance only by permission.

The severance of family and social ties is one of the great hardships of Siberian exile. In illustration of this our author relates the following incident :

“ One lady, who had a convict for her nurse, told me that she gave her her own clothes, paid her £1 a month, provided her a home in the best house in the province, to say nothing of sundry perquisites, and yet she sometimes found her, when alone, in tears ; and, on asking what was the matter, the answer was— ‘ Oh, if I only knew something of my friends in Russia ! ’ She had not learned to write, her friends were in the same position, and the difficulty of procuring an amanuensis, together with uncertainty as to address, made communication almost impossible ; and so she said she could not tell whether her friends were dead or alive, or what might be their fate. I recollect, too, in a prison at Uleaborg, in Finland, finding a woman who had escaped from exile, of whom I asked how she liked Siberia ; to which she replied that as regards the country she had nothing to complain of ; but, she pathetically added, ‘ I did so want to see my mother ! ’ And to do this she had taken flight, during three years had traversed more than 2,000 miles, had reached her old home, and was then retaken ! ”

(To be continued.)