

**R.E. TREBILCOCK DIARY**  
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*Transcription by Rosanne Walker*

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Notes on Russian units:  
'verst' = 1.067 kilometre  
'Reamur' = 0.8 X degrees Celsius

**Irkutsk to Vercholensk**

5/6/03 (Friday)

Left Irkutsk early in morning by post horses – two conveyances ea having three horses. Bells – two small bells suspended from the top of the arch over the middle horse. Carriage slung on poles, no springs! Each stage is about 20 to 35 versts long. At the end of each there is a real house where a supply of fresh horses is always ready, & where the traveller can get a samovar, or if necessary free shelter for 24 hours. The horses travel very quickly, their drivers often urging them into a gallop, much to the discomfort of the traveller if he is not well provided with pillows & cushions. First we passed through hilly country covered with a dense growth of small beech trees. These looked very well in their spring leaves of pale green & their snowy white trunk

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which contrasted strangely with the dark foliage of a few small pines scattered amongst them.

Flowers – plentiful. Yellow ranunculi with orange centres, blue columbines with blue & yellow centres, small mauve azalias, small blue lycopodiums etc.

Birds on Stage I. Plentiful – finches, larks, crows (black & black & white), black & white long tailed magpies, grey & white wagtails. Saw one Jack-snipe sittg on top of telegraph pole. Plenty of tame pigeons, every house having its dove-cot beneath the roof. Soon we left the hilly country & got into a large stretch of cultivated ground – no fences.

Stage II – through flat country

Birds – Crows, magpies, finches (one with white stripe down brown head & two white tail feathers), yellow bunting (looks like the

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large dandelions he delights to live amongst). Hawks.

Stage III Hill & treeless plain, few birds, whole place bright with yellow candytuft & dandelions. Large patches of wild violets, also white candytuft etc.

Stage IV Started at 8 pm. Flat, no trees, few birds. Cold & dreary. Our drivers here are all Booyarts.

Stage V Night. Cold!! Moonlight. Did not reach station till 1 a.m.

Complaint book fastened by strong cord & sealed to prevent removal is kept at every station. So if you are badly treated .....!

Stage VI Night. Awful!!!

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Reached station more dead than alive at 4 a.m. No more night stages for me! Country of this & previous stage – no trees & extremely uninteresting.

Bells on arch above horse have to be tied up while in towns to prevent their ringing. This does not refer to villages.

Stage VII Hilly & a little timber. Birds more plentiful – crows, small & large, hawks etc. Heard the note of the northern cuckoo for the first time. Never to be forgotten. No wonder the poets rave about it. The first half of the beautiful liquid note sounds just at your elbow whilst the second appears to come from miles away – “at once far off & near”. The bird

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itself which is about the size of a pigeon & a pale slatey color may be anywhere. It is rather shy & difficult to find.

Stage VIII First part agricultural. Afterwards a large river valley, slopes of hills cultivated. Birds numerous. Got first sight of a cuckoo sitting on a post & “talking” to himself in a subdued tone. He didn’t seem to notice us altho’ we passed within a few yards from him.

Bread – Can’t get white bread here at all, & think ourselves lucky if we can get brown. This is made from a mixture of wheat & rye flour & is not bad if fresh & well-baked. Often however it was neither and was then rather sour. It was nevertheless better than black bread (chorny klep) which is made from rye alone.

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Butter is without salt & is imported largely from Moscow. Much of it is fearfully adulterated with what looks like dripping. In the hot weather the pure butter melts but the adulterated remains in a kind of granulated mass. The bread here is mostly baked in the form of a ring.

Stage IX Down river valley. Cross river by ferry. Splendid contrivance! Stream does all the work. [*diagram not copied*]

Stage X Mountainous, timbered. Birds plentiful especially along river. Hundreds of swifts

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nesting in the mudstone cliffs. Reached Vercholensk, & stayed the night at the rest house.

### Vercholensk to Gigalowa

7/6/03 (Sunday)

On reaching Vercholensk we found that no boat left from there so we had to travel still further down the river. Our course was along the Lena through picturesque hilly country well covered with pines etc. The river was broad rapid & full of flat islands covered with willows.

Birds were very plentiful – duck, wagtails, swifts nesting in the crevices of mudstone cliffs, finches, hawks, crows, etc.

Gigalowa is a fair size village 375 versts from Irkutsk. We covered the distance in three days & one night.

From Vercholensk to Gigalowa is rather

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interesting country to pass through. Once more we crossed the river by the same kind of curious ferry. Nothing exciting happened, except that at one stage our driver had had too much vodka & nearly tipped us into the river.

Mon 8/6/03.

Gigalowa to Oustkoutsk

This distance (335 versts) we did in a boat, mainly by drifting with the current, in four days & three nights.

Our boat, which was one of the usual kind used on the Lena for such purposes was about 40 ft. long, & had a deck house wh. though not high was large enough to shelter us & our luggage at night.

Much of our provisions we purchased at Gigansk, though luxuries in the way of jam

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cheese pickles etc. we had brought with us from Irkutsk. The rest we purchased at the villages through wh. we passed. Bread (black), eggs, milk, potatoes, & sugar are cheap. Butter is rather dearer.

We started at 8 am Monday. The scenery is very imposing & beautiful – a broad rapid stream winding between high mountains densely covered with a forest of pines. Here & there the pines had been cleared off & the ground cultivated, while every 20 or 30 versts we would pass a small village – no village however small being without its church with its green cupola & its bells. In this beautiful river valley the stillness is broken only by the call of birds which echo between the hills. In the evening it becomes very peaceful

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& the cuckoo's note echoes from forest to forest in a most pleasing manner. I often sat for an hour or so in the evening, as the boat swiftly drifted with the silent stream, listening to the note of this bird. For some moments there would be silence, then the rich liquid cuc | koo! would break out apparently only a few feet off. Then would be a pause & presently the muffled echo would steal across the river from the other side, dying away into a whisper. Then all would be silent again. On all sides would be forests of pines reflected in the calm water, & seeming as it were to shut us off from the rest of the world.

During the day we saw plenty of birds. A small grey and white wagtail was very plentiful & very tame, habitually settling in the boat & even resting on the

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oar if held out of the water for a few seconds. It seemed to have no fear of us at all.

Another common bird was a beautiful finch with a rich brown back & a bright yellow breast. It builds, either on the ground or amongst drift timber etc, a small open cup shaped nest & lays five greyish brown eggs. The cock bird sits as well as his mate.

Siberia is very rich in finches.

A shot from a gun in these valleys produces quite an alarming effect, the echo sounding like a distant peal of thunder & appearing to be much louder than the report itself. Barges – many drifting down stream. Carry goods. Made of pine – when reach destination timber sold – not worth towing

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back empty. Shape [*diagram not copied*]. Curious rudder made from large pine tree about 50 ft. long. Blade formed by root. 6 to 8 men required to work

it. Our boat had a similar shaped rudder. [diagram not copied] Rapids at night (or even in day time) cause some trouble for water often very shallow. At night can hear but can't see well. Fortunately few rocks in the stream.

Tues 9/6/03

Rather cold "at the wheel" last night. At 4 a.m. Reamur thermometer stood at 0°. Boat white with frost. Butter quite brittle – couldn't spread it on the bread – had to cut it like cheese. Hot in the daytime. At noon 20° (Reamur). Plenty of fine wild flowers. A few blue isises, ranunculi plentiful – white, blue & yellow, a few violets. Snow a foot thick in patches. Most of the snow however has melted here.

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Wed 10/6/03

My night watch last night. Very impressive scenery. Had some very swift rapids to negotiate. Fortunately moonlight. Wonderful echoes. Fired revolver for effect & thought I had brought the mountains down on top of me.

Thurs. 11/6/03

Moss amongst the pines several inches thick, moss growing over fallen trees so as to completely hide them. Fallen timber decayed & like a sponge when trodden on. Moss, moss, moss! Moss everywhere. Lichens hanging from the pines like long hair. Everything sodden with icy cold water.

Yellow candytuft & yellow pansies. Pigeons booming in the forest but can't see them. Difficult to shoot birds in this dense forest. Even if you manage to see a bird you can't well shoot – too close. If you

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shoot it, then the trouble is to find it in the dense undergrowth. Can't creep up to a bird. Breaking of dead twigs makes too much noise. but plenty of birds about – can hear them – & there the mre ends. At 8 a.m. sun quite hot altho' patches of snow lying about.

The call of the Siberian pigeon like that of the cuckoo is very deceptive as to its locality & distance.

Took a photo – ice 2 ft thick. Thermometer 23° Reamur.

Fri 12/6/03

Snow becoming more plentiful. Days getting very long. Quite light at 2 am now. Reached Oustkoutsk this morning. Stayed at shipping coys rest house – 30 K per day.

Orchids (pink), wild strawberry. Polyanthus (mauve), May flower.

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Birds – Passer montanus, Passer domesticus, crows (nests) swallows (three species) woodpeckers, thrushes tiny grey tit with yellowish tinge, Pigeons, Cuckoo.

Biscuits – got some made like the bread in rings. Flour & water but no sugar, no flavor. Hard as nails. Sold on a string.

Oustkoutsk to Jarkutsk

Sat. 13/6/03

Caught steamer “ДЕРМБЕУ” down river. Passenger boat, stern paddles, carries mails. Engines aft, boiler for’ard. Burns wood of course. Very comfortable considering locality – very little diffce betn 1st & 2nd class except in price. But third class! Meals not supplied for the fare – meal tariff very high. Boat travels very fast.

Russians cross themselves on starting their journey.

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(Oustkoutsk – Vilim)

Sun 14/6/03

Passed a number of merchants barges drifting down stream. These are veritable floating warehouses, doing both a wholesale & a retail biz at an enormous profit, giving credit & charging for it. Also passed some timber rafts. Mon. 15/6/03 High cliffs – some about 200 ft. sheer into the water. On the other side low flat ground. These two alternate along the river. River getting broad. Had a very pleasant evening of a social nature. French was the language. Got on very well with two young Russian ladies. See Mr. Hall for this!

Tues. 16/6/03 Vilim

- shot a few birds – owl, rose breasted finch etc. Ice near landing

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three feet thick. Forgetmenots thick everywhere. Ice breaks on the Lena about May 16<sup>th</sup>. In the earth banks all along the river martins are nesting in thousands. Burrow about 18 in. into soft earth near top of cliff. Tunnel about 2 in. diam. & not always straight. At end of tunnel is a cavity broad & flat (not rounded) from 4 to 5 inches across. Eggs 3 pure white 0.7” x 0.5”. “The birds fly rather heavily & without grace” (RH) & are easily shot on the wing. One colony occupied 200 yards of a bank, the top 2-3 feet being riddled with holes. Wed. 17/6/03 Shot a rather pretty squirrel (female) with 5 brown stripes down back. The Russians call it “Boorondooke”

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Thurs. 18/6/03

Found a beautiful orchid in flower. See photo. Dog rose (rosa canina) in flower here. Also small honey-pot flowers – two kinds.

[pencilled note: Look up names]

Clematis – white flower 4 in. across! Hawthorn in flower. Reached Olekminsk – fair sized town built chiefly of the timber from barges. Further down river onions grow wild in the swampy ground. The onion is small but the purple flower is large & rather pretty. In the scrub where the onions grew flowers were very numerous, especially white ranunculi. So were mosquitoes. Shot a number of tiny grey tits – miles

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of birds to skin. Heard the booming of a bittern in the distance. “He who steals the gold or the mosquito net of a traveller in the tundra, steals his best possession” (R.H.). Mosquitoes are terrible here. They settle on the gun barrel so thickly that you can’t see the sight.

The willow is very useful here. – They make chains of it to tie up their timber rafts with. In fact the raft is lashed together with willows.

Fri. 19/6/03

Arrived in Jarkutsk. Took 14 days from Irkutsk. (2700 versts) [pencilled note 1800 m.] Describe town by aid of photos. Built on a large plain. River very wide & full of flat islands covered with willows, clothed with flowers, &

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cursed with mosquitoes. The ground on which the town is built is so boggy that you feel it gave way under you [*sic*] weight. The streets, which are very dirty after rain, are made of wooden chips. The pavements are of wooden planks (old barges) raised above the road several inches.

The houses are log built & very comfortable.

The town has a pine cathedral & several churches. (see photos)

Old houses of the first settlers, Cossacks, are still standing. 300 years old. They are preserved as relics of the past (see photo)

Pop. 6000. Jarkuts, Russians, Cossacks (descendents [*sic*] of the early settlers). The Cossacks are semi-military & are under the command of an ataman or chief.

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The Jarkuts hunt or chop wood in the winter only. They have two residences – one for the summer & the other for winter. The firewood is floated down the river in a kind of crate made of saplings lashed together with willows. When this reaches its destination the raft is broken up & the firewood floated to the shore where it is stacked for the winter. (see photos)

Ice cellars much used for summer. The walls are composed of blocks of ice collected of course from the river in winter.

Fire engines – saw firemen watering the streets. One cart held the pump – worked by hand, while others brought the water in large barrels.

Swallows (*Chelidon urbica*) nesting under the eaves in hundreds. Saw 42 nests in 7 yards. Bird has white

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rump & under surface & is feathered right down to the toe-nails. Eggs 4-5 pure white. Nest of mud, side entrance, but no retort (see photo), lined with grasses & a few feathers, 5" to 7" across.

Swifts nesting (see descriptn hereinar) (p.33) Also martins in banks of river. Longicorn. Mr. Hall caught a splendid one for me – body  $\frac{3}{4}$ " long, antennae  $6\frac{1}{4}$ " across (*Astynomus aedilis*)

Sat. 20/6/03 Stayed on board today till we could make arrangements for going Westwards. Had tea with the captn and his wife. \* \* \* \*

Left Jarkutsk for the Tundra at 10.30 pm with two horses & a four wheeler (see photo) & a driver. In addition to our Russian interpretor [*sic*] we took a young Jarkut hunter to shoot birds & to act as interpretor amongst the Jarkuts. (He turned out

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to be a failure as far as shooting was concerned, wasting nearly a poont of powder & getting only two or three common birds, & those shot to pieces). (At seven versts out we pitched camp beside a pool at the foot of a steep hill – that is to say we put up a screen of boughs, spread a sheet of felt on the ground, wrapped ourselves in our fur coats & slept n the open air.

Sun 21/6/03

The morning sun & the mosquitoes got me up at 3 a.m., so I went out & took a photo of a finches nest – on the ground at the foot of a tiny fir tree. Breakfast at 3.30 & we were off again.

After negotiating some steep hills & travelling several miles through forests of fir & beech we came to a swampy lagoon about 20 versts from Jarkutsk. At the edge of this we pitched our mosquito tents & set to work, but birds were scarce, so we struck camp & pressed on.

The wildflowers here are glorious – large patches, blue with forgetmenots, thirty or forty yards across. Then a similar patch mauve with polyanthus. Another of white ranunculi – & so on. The forgetmenots were very thick & large. Amongst the blue I found white & a few pink ones.

Beautiful as these large masses of flowers are I think I prefer them blended. Just below Olekminsk for example I saw a very pretty picture; the blue of the forgetmenots was relieved by a few white ranunculi & yellow buttercups, &

scattered between them grew a pink phlox. The whole of this was set in in [*sic*] bank of delicate green grass – what could be more lovely!

Soon we came to swampy country, wooded in parts, & clothed in moss. The mosquitoes were fearful. There were three distinct species – a large grey, a small grey, and an enormous yellow brute with a terrific appetite.

Through this swamp we had to travel. Our waggon sank to the axles, & once we had to un-harness the horses to get one of them out of a bog. In crossing a creek the waggon lurched & sent some of our luggage into the mud, & a little further on it upset most of it into

the water. The result was that as soon as we reached some firm ground we pitched our mosquito tents & lit a large fire to dry our luggage. Fortunately not much damage was done – though we had to try to sleep without rugs that night. On all sides was swamp. Mosquitoes were in millions. They swarmed over our tents & crept in through the slightest crevice in the doorway. It was torture.

Mon 22/6/03

Early this morning we passed a Jarkut homestead & purchased a large bowl of milk for 10 Kopeks. This was a very welcome addition to our bill of fare which usually consisted of black bread, boiled meat, butter, cheese, jam, & plenty of tea (sounds all right till you have to have the same thing every

meal day after day)

Here we found the nest & eggs of the grey & white wagtail. Nest like a pipits but larger, cup shaped, made of dry grasses & lined with horsehair. External dimensions 7" x 5". Internal 3". Depth of cavity 1¾". Six brown mottled eggs.

Also found thrushes nest on top of a fence post. Nest open, saucer shaped neatly made of coarse grass & lined with same material. (for dimensions see RH) Eggs 6 greenish spotted with brown.

Pitched camp beside a large lagoon.

Large dragon flies were very numerous here. Good luck to them, for they feed on mosquitoes. May they have good appetites!

R.H. shot a solitary snipe. It was nesting in a tussocky swamp. Looked for nest but without success. Also

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shot a gull, evidently nesting here – a long way from the sea!

Tues. 23/6/03

We woke this morning after an almost sleepless night. To sleep in the open air with the thermometer at 5<sup>0</sup> R. is not very pleasant. Then the mosquitoes tortured us day & night. During the day, the day of about 20 hours, the sun streamed down on us & the heat was unbearable beneath our mosquito nets; & the bites of those insects raised our blood almost to boiling point. Even at our meals we dared not lift our nets, but preferred to watch our opportunity & slip a mouthful of food beneath them. Night brought no relief, no sleep. The mosquitoes still crept into our tents & tortured us & no darkness came to give us an opportunity

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to sleep – for even at midnight the red glow of the sun shows on the northern horizon. Add to this the want of proper food, & the disappointment at finding that we had been wrongly informed as to the character of the country, & it is easy to see why, when we rose this morning, we mutually agreed, without discussing the matter, to get back to Jarkutsk with all possible speed. For here there were very few birds. We had been told in Jarkutsk that if we journeyed West for 25 versts we should reach the Tundra. Here – over 30 versts W of the town – we were in a swamp, but it was not the true Tundra, for here were large forests of fir trees, & patches of undulating land. In the Tundra there should be neither.

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On making further enquiries we were told that if we travelled for 1000 versts we should still be in the same sort of country!

So in the morning we struck camp (see photo) & started for Jarkutsk.

Woodpeckers. Shot a three toed woodpecker this morning. Also got five nestlings of red headed woodpecker in a fir tree, 20 ft. from the ground. Entrance neatly drilled & about 2½” in diam. Cavity about 12 in. deep – no lining.

On reaching the Jarkut homestead we camped for the night. Got some more milk in a pail made of beech bark, & had some coffee & some porridge – a welcome change of diet.

There is a rodent here that does a lot of damage. Has strong claws, burrows like a

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rabbit, climbs trees. They are very cautious animals. Shot several of them. (Ivraska) This animal has from 8-10 young at a time! Reindeer moss (*Gladonia rangiferina*) grows here. Also a medicinal moss which is made into tea for colds (*Clavaria coralloides*). Neither are really mosses, but lichens.

(Plants see p 51)

Wed 25/6/03



We reached Jarkutsk today after an absence of four days. We found that the police had been making inquiries about us as they had received a wire from Irkutsk notifying our intention of going to Jarkutsk, & as we had not presented ourselves to them they came to look for us! Want to know whether they can give us any assistance!

No one can imagine the relief we felt at getting clear of the mosquitoes, for

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they do not seem to come much into the town. Even the Jarkuts' horses suffer from their bites, & you see the poor animals standing almost over the smouldering fires that the Jarkuts light for that purpose.

About ten versts from Jarkutsk is a real Skopt village. Here were several mills driven by means of a horse walking up the side of a large wheel placed not quite horizontally but at an incline.

We are now staying with the Karle family (carriers) who have been very good to us. They were German settlers in Russia & were transported here for some offence or other.

Thurs 25/6/03 We have just received a visit from the chief of Police. The governors manager at Irkutsk (Gandalli) had wired him to

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treat us well, & he has done so, for he has invited us to his house & told us to make ourselves at home till we leave Jarkutsk. He has given Mr. Hall a fine lot of photos from which very good lantern slides can be made. Caviere – a great Russian luxury – raw fish spawn. Sold in tins.

Swifts (*Hirundo urbica*) nesting on beams under verandah of large marketplace. They do not nest in close company although they congregate in great numbers. "Fly quickly, soar well, single shrill note" (R.H.). Four toes in the same plane, strong grasp. Nest (1) a few straws & feathers cemented, probably by saliva, to a beam; (2) an open mud nest wh looks like stolen nest of feathered toed swallow under the same roof in

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large numbers. Eggs white 2-3. Great difficulty in getting these owing to superstitious fear of disturbing the birds.

Description of Jarkuts winter house: Wooden, low, sloping walls plastered all over with mud or cowdung, windows small deep set & without glass. Walls & doors very thick, door lined inside with reindeer skin. Enormous fireplace. Roof flat & covered with earth

Ilford plates can be obtained even in Jarkutsk. Unfortunately they are not quarter plates, but the continental size. Manufactured (as says label) specially for Russian use. 26/6/03 – 29/6/03 Plenty of hawks hovering over the town, in search of chickens (?)

Crossed the river in a small dug-out

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with Indian paddles to one of the large flat sandy islands. Covered with willows (*Salix*). Millions of mosquitoes. Long grass, equiselum, wild onions, sorrel 4 ft high, blue flox, white ranunculi, crucifers (white & mauve). Many insects, two species of pale green curculios very plentiful. *Polyanthus* (mauve) etc. etc.

Blue iris plentiful near swamps near Jarkutsk. Also liliium tigrum.

Wild horse radish found on the river flats in great quantity. (Sat. Evening)  
Went with Chief of Police & a Judge of Supreme Court for an evenings fishing.  
Drove several miles out of town to river bank. Lit fires on the sand to keep  
mosquitoes off, & settled down. Cooked fish in, to us, a novel way.

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Run sharp stick into mouth & down to tail; make a few deep cuts each side  
of fish & rub in salt; stick stick into sand so that fish is close to flames. Soon  
gets well toasted. Then turn it round. Excellent!

Shot a pair of curious brown mice as they were swimming across a small  
creek (Time 11 p.m.)

Could hear a bittern in the distance.

Current in River Lena very swift so they use a curious sinker on their fishing  
lines which acts as an anchor. It is made of brass [*diagram not copied*] Fishing  
nets here are often double so as to mesh both large & small fish. The large fish  
get meshed in the coarse mesh while the smaller ones swim through & get  
caught in the fine mesh. Very ingenious contrivance. [*diagram not copied*]

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Sun 28<sup>th</sup> 03

Went with Chief of Police (Zooyeff) for a drive. Introduced to Manager  
Steamer "Lena", also to captain of "Graph-Ignatjeff" who gave us some  
splendid orchids 4 in. across. (see photo)

The bells in a Russian town or village sound very well indeed on a calm  
summer's evening.

In Jarkutsk the thermometer often falls to  $-40^{\circ}$  R & sometimes even to  $-50^{\circ}$   
R (=  $-145^{\circ}$  Fahr.). In summer it sometimes rises to  $+40^{\circ}$  R (=  $150^{\circ}$  Fahr). This  
gives a range of nearly  $300^{\circ}$  Fahr.!

Finch (*Carpodarcus erythrinus*). R.H. found nest & eggs in Hawthorn. Eggs  
greenish blue with a few dark brown spots at end; rest made of grass. (See  
photo) "Hen bird greyish. Male red head & breast" (R.H. saw male but we were  
unable to shoot it)

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Partars of photographs given Mr. Hall by Mr. Zooyeff.

Lamoute driving sledge

Captured reindeer (Jarkutsk)

Station house for dog mails in the N.

Jarkuts dog sledge

Mouth of Lena R. (can't reproduce)

Jarkuts resting on rough road.

Domestic reindeers – Lena R.

Tchukch Hut of Tunguse wood cutters

Tunguse hunter

Tunguse cooking food

Chief of Police (Mr Zooyeff) & Baron Toll Rich

Tchukch woman in winter dress

Jarkut archer on bullock

Jarkuts grinding corn

Tchukch family  
Jarkuts house – and store-room.

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Spring time on Lena R. (not worth reproducing)  
Cossack house near Jarkutsk  
Scenery in the forest not far from Jarkutsk.  
Scenery on Lena R.  
Below Boulun do.  
Spot near wh reindeer was shot.  
“Permyark” Boulun  
“Lena” on River below Boulun – opposite where we saw the bear. (Similar to Negative  
“Jarkutsk 4”  
‘Lena’ taking wood at mouth of river.  
“Lena” Floating warehouses.  
Jarkutsk street scene. Police Street (Jarkutsk) & Station  
Jarkutsk street scene. Warehouses (Jarkutsk) & The Club.  
Waterfall not far from Jarkutsk.

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Hunting party of Russian officials, Jarkutsk.  
Reindeer Young elk  
River steamers at Vitim  
How the Jarkuts bake their bread – the dough is wrapped round a stick & pressed flat, & the stick is then stuck into the ground before the fire.  
Visited Museum at Jarkutsk. Badly looked after – but considering locality it is wonderful that there is one at all. Head & tusks of mammoth, also head of rhinoceros – found at Olekminsk. They have a fine specimen of a Siberian goat.  
Yellow bunting is very common all between Irkutsk & Jarkutsk.  
In the winter in the far north the mail is carried by dog sledges.

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A good dog is worth 25 Roubles. They often wear boots to keep the ice from getting between their toes. If not they stop every few versts & lick it out. The leader is generally a splendid animal & looks after the others & sees they do their share of the work. He will turn round & bite any dog that is getting rather lazy! The Jarkuts are very fond of their dogs. I have seen one man on the boat crying like a child because his dog got left behind. These dogs have very intelligent looking faces & soon make friends with you. During the summer they have a holiday but then they have to forage for themselves. During winter they have to work, & are then well fed.

Edelweiss flowers in Jarkutsk in

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July.

Names of some of the Siberian birds we have collected:- Turdus naumain – rufus thrush Picus tridactylus – three toed wood-pecker Hirundo urbica – swift Dryocopus martins – great black woodpecker Corvus corax – raven Turdus pilaris – field-fare Garrulus infaustus – Siberian Jay (long feathers) Emberiza leucocephalus – white headed finch Fringella linaria – mealy red-poll Emberiza

aureola – yellow breasted bunting *Cuculus canorus* – cuckoo *Chelidon urbica* – feathered toed swallow *Pinicola erithrinus* – finch (blue eggs)

Natives of Siberia Boojartes – about L. Baikal

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Jarkutsk – Bulun

Tchukches – Extreme N. of Siberia, E. Of the Lena R. Stay there all winter  
Tunguse – Mouth of Lena R. & Eastwards. Migrate S. during winter. Jarkuts – Jarkutsk district & surrounds. Lamoutes – Verchoyansk district Jarkutsk to Mouth of Lena Jarkutsk to Gigansk – 900 versts. Gigansk to mouth of river – 900 versts.

Tues 30/6/03

Started for mouth of river at midnight last night in steamer “Lena” (screw). The Chief of Police handed us over to the care of the manager Mr. Gorinovitch (T. Topuroeure). The “Lena” originally took part in an Arctic expedition but on reaching the Lena R was no longer wanted, so was sent to Jarkutsk & sold. She now take [*sic*] two or three trips down the river every year to the fishing

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stations N. of Bulun.

Wed. 1/7/03

Along the river banks are thousands of tons of drift timber high above the present level of the river & marking the flood level. The banks are covered with rubble ground smooth by the action of ice & water, & in many places the banks show great furrows caused by the enormous force of the drifting ice.

Gulls nesting on floating vegetation in a small lagoon. Two species – a large & a small. Small species has brown head & pinkish breast which fades soon at death. Got eggs of both & young of the latter. Young looked very pretty swimming amongst green leaves in the calm water. Vegetation a mass of

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tangled roots, bore my weight easily if I didn't stand too long in same place. Water beneath 6 ft. deep. Roots so tangled that one couldn't possibly fall through. Curious sensation.

Leper station – 200 miles N. of Jarkutsk.

Mr. Hall shot a large hawk 5 ft. across. Splendid bird, more like an eagle than a hawk.

Thurs 2/7/03

Storm last night. So bad that we had to run under bank for shelter. River 25 versts across here – quite large waves. The men on board are no sailors – allowed the heavy grapnel to swing against the ship's bows all night.

Equisetum arvense (horse tails)

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very common about here.

300 miles below Jarkutsk. Country flat & sandy. River wide & full of flat islands. Stanovoi Mountains (?) clearly to be seen in the distance.

There is no proper chart of this river & probably never will be, as it is continually altering its course. The pilots are Jarkuts. Soundings are being taken with a long pole nearly all the time.

Expeditions down the Lena In 1900 two Finns travelled along part of the Lena on a botanical tour – no ornithology.

In 1898 some Norwegians with Prof. Franklin were here searching for Andreme. They travelled down the Lena by steamer & along the Arctic coast as far as the Tennessee

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with reindeer. No ornithological work was done so far as is known.

The survivors of the Jeanette expedition after leaving the wreck of their ship travelled over the ice as far as the mouth of the Lena, but died there from want of provisions.

Last year Baron Toll travelled down the river with an expedition to explore the islands at the mouth of the river. No work was done on the way.

Last year an English millionaire named Clifton was at Jarkutsk – but merely on a shooting expedition for pleasure.

In future another expedition will have to be recorded in the annals of science – the first ornithological expedition along the River Lena.

Flowers very plentiful along the

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river – see lists.

Thurs 2/7/03

Shot a very noisy sandpiper with long legs & bill, perching on a bush near the river. Returning in half an hour heard a peeping & careful search revealed four young birds – found them by the cry, for impossible to see them amongst the debris the color of wh they so much resembled. They were just out of the eggs & are particularly long-legged.

Here the frozen ground is clearly shown in a section caused by the falling of the river bank. For a foot from the surface the earth was friable, for the next two feet or more it was sodden with water & frozen solid. This section also showed a fissure in the earth several

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inches broad that had become filled with water & frozen & was now solid ice constantly dripping & causing the bank to become undermined. This frozen ground extends all over the north of Siberia but one would never know it from examining the surface of the earth. It is only by digging, or as above that one becomes aware of it.

Birds certainly are safe in the summer in Northern Siberia. They have more than enough food, an almost perfect security from enemies & a country large enough for millions more of them. Before they have time to eat more than the smallest portion of the seeds & insects the snow of quickly coming autumn comes & covers everything up. That is the largest ice chamber known

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& contains the greatest number of preserves. Then the birds must go – if they have not done so already. Spring again comes & the birds following the thaw from the South to the North at the rate of about 1000 miles per week do not have to wait for their food to grow. It has been kept frozen for them all the winter. On the Lena, they do not stay at Jarkutsk but go still further north,

though at Jarkutsk there is a wealth of insect & plant life that ought to satisfy any bird. In early May they are to be seen in thousands passing north. Had they waited a fortnight they could have had at Jarkutsk as rich a store of food as any bird could well desire.

Crossed the Arctic Circle today a few miles south of Gigansk. (see note on this

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2/7/03

place p ). Tonight the sun did not set, & at midnight was trying to struggle through some clouds on the horizon.

3/7/03

(A beautiful smelling white pear blossom is found along the upper Lena. While in our small boat drifting down the stream the scent of it often was wafted to us from the banks)

Sat. 4/7/03

Coal seams are clearly seen in the great cliffs along the river. Often as many as three seams one above the other. This coal is of little commercial value.

**Some plants collected betn Oustkutsk & Jarkutsk:-**

(Follow on from p.31)

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Cedrus (Olekminsk) (cedar)

Larix (fir) loses its needles each year & is bare in winter.

Mutisicae – white everlasting flower

Fregaria – strawberry

Pansy – Viola

Ranunculus – the large heavy yellow species is Pulsatila

Rhododendron siberica (Irkutsk)

Rosaceae arcticus – (a drink made from the berries of this plant)

Cerasus padus Myosotis – right to the Arctic Ocean

Phlox.

Morchella esculanta (see drawing)

Reindeer moss (Cladonia)

Crataegus – hawthorn

Red current [sic]- Rubesiaea rubrum

Arctostaphylos uva ursi – honey flower

Alliea cepa – wild onion

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Eurphoria – curious green flower

Rumex – sorrel

Legumes. vicia cicer, & v. sativa

Heliotropium sibericum

Lilium sibericum (? tigrum)

Papaver – poppy

Betula – catkin.

Linum – flax

Alnus.

Veronica Below Jarkutsk. & even within the Arctic Circle:-

Rhodoracea ledum – plant like rosemary in leaves & smell, white flower.  
Very common near Boulun

Dianthus. Chamaenerium (purplish) Vitis rosea.

Dock.

Rulus idaens (wildraspberry)]

p. 55 [sic] (actually p. 54)

Sun 5/7/03 First cold weather we have had for some time. Saw mock suns in the misty clouds in the evening [*diagram not copied*]

Snow 3 ft. thick in places. Banks of river very much scored by the ice.

Mon 6/7/03 Reached Boulun – first of the fishing stations (see photos). Village built of log huts, on a small river Wet locality, moss very plentiful. Also plenty stunted firs. Growing on dead or dying firs is a curious black lichen.

The Lena R. here is narrow & well defined. Further up it is more like a lake.

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Some very fine blue columbines growing near Boulun.

Dinner – out of 5 courses 4 were fish:- Caviere Boiled fish Fish soup Fish boiled & then fried with eggs Bottled fruit.

Mr. Hall shot a sandpiper that looks remarkably like the Australian little stint (*Tringa minuta*). But its forehead is not white Also shot a finch that had in its bill two large larvea, one dipterous fly, & three mosquitoes.

Small rodent without a tail very common amongst the rocky hills. It utters a shrill piercing cry & keeps perfectly motionless when it

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suspects danger. The skins were no good as it was just moulting.

Tues 7/7/03

Shot a beautiful fly-catcher grey with throat-rufus patch surrounded by a most brilliant blue. This bird makes a curious note – a succession of suctional clicks followed by a short shrill whistle. These notes are also given while in flight. The colors in the female are not so bright.

Coleoptera – very few within the Arctic circle.

Snow – plenty of it on the hills across the river.

Flowers – Iceland poppy very plentiful, crucifers, large strawberry like flower, equisetum, campanula plentiful dark & pale blue & white,

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liverwort in fruit, moss – tons of it, Firs (rather dwarfed), reindeer moss, medicinal moss, marsh & other buttercups, Mayflower (poor), sorrel, heliotrope, violets (small), columbine, Rhodoracea ledun etc etc

Midsummer but snowing all the same. Temperature 3<sup>0</sup> R.

Mammoth-tusks – This year the “Lena” takes part of her cargo 600-700 pounds. Selling price here is 25 Roubles a poud, lowest price. Good ivory is worth much more. Last year one trader alone sent away 1000 pounds, the total export for the year being 1500 pounds. The heavier the tusks the higher per poud is the price. London is the market. Price is paid in eatables & vodka. The tusks are

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collected in the Arctic Ocean at ebb tide, & in small creeks. Those that have been in salt water, or in the ice are of a cobalt blue color on the outside. Most of the tusks have an external appearance *[sic]* like weather-beaten wood. The trade in mammoth ivory is almost exclusively carried on from the Lena, little or none being exported from the Tennessee

Sun not visible here betn Novr. 8<sup>th</sup> & Jan 20<sup>th</sup>. In summer it rains, in winter – snowdrifts.

The fish caught on the Lena below Boulun is taken to the mines near Vitim where there is a population of 10,000.

Today Mr Hall got the young of the little stint. They are very pretty little fledglings (see his notes for actions of parent)

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“The nest was a small flat structure of old grasses placed betn small tussocks. Its dimensions *[sic]* were 4.5” x 2.5”. There was scarcely any depression. Surroundings were very moist, & the ground within a foot or so of the surface frozen. This bird is solitary while nesting.” (R.H.)

Red headed finch. Nest in a small fir tree three feet from ground (see photo). Made of small twigs externally & lined with grass, moss & fur. Diam. & depth of whole 3”. Female stood quite still on edge of nest, after feeding young, while I took a photo. Seemed to have very little fear of me.

Nest of the Siberian thrush – placed four feet from the ground in the fork of a fir tree. Made of grasses externally & internally with a

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layer of sandy loam between – not unlike the English thrush only a little neater. This bird is rather shy & not easily approached *[sic]*. The nest contained 5 young almost fully fledged.

Today we made a little expedition 10 versts to the NW of Boulun. We were told that there we would meet with flat tundra. Again we were disappointed. For miles & miles stretched stony moss covered ranges, with stunted lichen-covered firs growing in the valleys between. At length a river blocked our way & we had to turn back. (see photo). In the sheltered valleys snow lies many feet deep, & beneath it is ice which never melts (see photo)

Except on the stony ridges the ground is covered with thick spongy

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moss which is full of water like a sponge. Beneath this moss the earth is frozen solid.

On the ridges the stones, rough & jagged, are covered with lichens, & between them grow reindeer & medicinal mosses. One very pretty lichen has its spores a bright red situated in a cup shaped cavity. The rest of the plant is a greenish grey.

Here & there in sheltered places we came across a few pines very stunted & spreading their crooked branches right down on the ground. The whole tree would not be more than three feet high.

We returned along the more thickly timbered banks of a creek which empties itself into the Lena just below Bulun.

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Here the sodden moss was very thick & the mosquitoes were unbearable.



Here we found growing small pale violets, poppies (one a deep orange) Lycopods (on a stony rise – two species) Pale purplish crucifers, dog roses, white heliotrope, White petalled daisy, 1” across, yellow daisy, blue daisy with yellow centre, white ranunculus, Buttercup, Marsh buttercup etc etc

Reindeer moss tastes insipid for the first minute. Then it gives the usual mild fungus flavor: not unpalatable. During winter the reindeers dig up the snow in search of this & other mosses (see photos)

Plover – shot three – beautiful birds. Also got a young bird. Parent made great, fuss, feined [*sic*] broken wing etc

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Young crouches close to stony ground & is very difficult to see so well does its color & markings resemble its surroundings.

Grouse – Caught sight of a nestling crouching on the stony ground near a creek. On picking it up the chick squeaked & immediately the mother flew up in a terrible fluster pretending to be wounded. I afterwards found four other chicks – they can run very well. Being yellowish they were very difficult to see amongst the lichen covered rocks. One chose rather a poor hiding place with merely its head out of sight & stayed there for more than ten minutes while we made a photo of it. Another I only discovered by treading on it. The male bird did not put in

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an appearance. In winter this species is netted & sold by the Tunguse for 5 Kopeks each. The Tunguse count distance by dog-versts & reindeer versts. If you ask a Jurkut pilot what is the distance betn two places on the river he will ask you whether you mean in up-stream versts or down-stream versts.

Wed 8/7/03 Butter here is only for the use of wealthy people. It is 4/- a pound. It is unsalted. Today we left Boulun & went a few versts up the river to get some cargo. We had dinner at the house of a Russian merchant. He lives near Boulun & in winter goes with his sledges hundreds of versts East or

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West purchasing skins, mammoth ivory etc from the Tunguse or Tchukches On our arrival incense was burned to drive out the mosquitoes. It is a sweet smelling smoke which does not hurt the eyes. Tea with raspberry jam in it & raw fish were the only dishes we do not see in Melbourne.

In exchange for skins etc the natives will not take coin – that is no good to them. What they want is provisions clothing, boots, gloves etc & vodka.

The Jarkutes & Tunguse along the river cut wood for the steamers. All the pay they get is a glass of Vodka! So fuel does not cost the company much.

Along the river bank about here is a high ridge & pebbles left by the

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melting ice. This is now gay with blue bells (campanula) dark & light blue, & white, & poppies (Iceland) Yellow & a few orange, cream, or white.

9/7/03 Stint (little) About midnight I found a clutch of young (the second we have found) There were three well hidden about three inches apart from one another. They were recently hatched & they lay so perfectly motionless & so well mimicked their surroundings that I never would have found them if I had not adopted my method of mathematically searching the ground by means of

sticks placed to mark the ground I had been over. The father kept flying around & settling in adjacent points of vantage & continually trilling in a fearsome way. The female during this time was seen only once & then

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flying high in the air with a piercing note. The male varied his note occasionally as he passed over the young. The little ones scarcely moved. For 35 minutes they kept perfectly quiet & were then photographed (see photo). As we left the father came & nestled over them, & upon our approaching fluttered off as if wounded. As there were only three birds I set to work to find the nest with a hope that the fourth egg might be in it. After several minutes search I found the empty shell of an egg. A few moments afterwards I discovered the fourth bird several yards from the others & this of course ended my search. The photograph was taken at 12.20 a.m. with the sun behind a hill. Stop F32, plate – ordinary

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Exposure 15 seconds.

Fri. 10/7/03

Back to Boulun again

Sat 11/7/03

Left Boulun for the mouth of the River.

Dianthus – pale purple – plentiful within the Arctic circle, especially below Boulun.

“Samovar” means self-boiler. The derivation is – sam – self, varish – to boil.

“Cyn! Cyn!! Cyn!!!” with large lumps of meat or fish in it!

“Tau! Tau!! Tau!!!” without milk, & with lemon, essence, or jam in it!

Ever since we passed Boulun we are stopping every few versts to leave empty barrels & salt to cure the fish

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(N. of Boulun)

Towards the mouth the river is hemmed in & kept from widening by enormous cliffs. The hills here are almost entirely destitute of vegetation, but in sheltered places a few stunted pines & shrubs are growing, & near the water are often growing wildflowers.

Small-pox is very common in Siberia. Below Boulun there is a small village the entire population of which was carried off by this fearful scourge. It is now deserted.

I almost tumbled over a black bear this morning, & my gun was loaded with nothing but no. 10 midget. The animal made off & I followed but lost sight of him in some scrub & rocks.

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Flowers – Larkspur (blue & violet-blue with blue centre), Myosotis & Poppies common. Across the river – high rocky range totally destitute of vegetation. Clouds hanging like a flag to the leeward of hills not many feet above water level.

Merchants here do well. They give credit & charge enormous interest, & in exchanging goods for fish & skins charge a high price for their goods & reckon a low one for what they get in exchange.

Here we have meals at all hours. Dinner often just before midnight. We turn in at all hours of the morning & sometimes don't get up till noon. Very little difference between day & night now – so what odds!

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Larix Island Sun. July 12<sup>th</sup>

Today we reached Larix Island in the mouth of the river. This is our furthest north 72<sup>o</sup>.

We are now 1800 versts from the nearest post office & 4500 versts (3000 miles) from the nearest railway station.

Larix Island is so called because at one end of it there is a hill covered with stunted firs (larix). The rest of the island is perfectly flat & consists of tundra protected from the river by a low sand bank.

It is here where wading birds fly to their northern home. It is here where sandpipers & snipe come from different parts of the globe to build their nests & rear their young.

The tundra, & especially the bank that forms

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the boundary of it is gay with many beautiful flowers amongst which forgetmenots & Iceland poppies are prominent.

The whole place is swarming with birds – sandpipers of numerous species, snipe, one species of finch, & in the lagoons many ducks while overhead flew several species of gulls.

Fortunately, so far north mosquitoes are absent & this makes the long summer day, of many weeks duration, a day of pleasure instead of one of agony.

The birds have a most delightful summer home. The great area of that land has the appearance of rice fields being cut up into numerous small paddocks, full of a rice like grass growing in water, & separated from one another by low ridges of partially dry earth. The hugh [sic] cracks in the ground, filled with water & resembling the canals of an irrigated

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rice field complete the curious resemblance.

The plainest of the wading birds as we see them are now very beautiful. Australia does not know them in their summer dress of the northern hemisphere.

Today we arrived here after spending five months on the way. Today we leave & expect to reach Australia five months hence. The birds will not leave for a few weeks but they will be in Victoria long before we will.

Vegetation in the far north is very stunted – the fir trees being not more than eighteen inches high.

Along the sandy beach, which in many places was still frozen right on the surface, was enormous blocks of river ice, some of them measuring as much as twelve feet high. The picturesque effect which their

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fantastic shapes would have produced, was however spoiled by their being covered with sand & small pebbled [sic], piled up as they were being rolled over & over by the enormous force of the breaking ice & flood waters

The right bank of the river here is a precipitous cliff in which beautiful strata of dark & light stone showed now in level band, now gently undulating & now crumpled up into fantastic shapes by some enormous subterranean force.

Now for a description of the tundra. A large expanse of flat swampy ground covered with a coarse grass – that is the starting point. Winter comes & covers it all up feet deep with snow & the fearful cold causes the ground to crack. In summer the cracks become filled with with *[sic]* water which expands next winter making the cracks

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deeper & wider & forcing the surrounding ground up into a mound on each side of the crack thus cutting the grassy swamp up into a number of small paddocks several yards across. In time these cracks become about two feet wide & as deep as six feet. On the mounds grow moss which also finds a footing on the tussocks of grass. The moss grow *[sic]* & dies & fresh moss grows on top of it till it is several inches thick. Everything is sodden with cold water. A few stunted firs growing on the higher ground, a few stunted shrubs, & innumerable grey plovers complete the picture. In crossing such a swampy plain you walk for several yards through coarse grass growing in swampy spongy ground partly covered with water. In this ground

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you sink half way up to your knees, when your foot rests on frozen ground which prevents you from sinking any further.

Then you step on to a mossy mound, raised two or three inches above the water, into which your foot sinks up to the ankle. Then comes a deep crack, two feet wide & six feet deep filled with icy water, then another mossy bank, after which comes another grass covered bog.

The whole of this is like a sponge full of semi-stagnant water. The foot makes a depression & immediately it is filled with water. When the pressure is relieved the mass resumes its original condition leaving little or no trace of the footstep.

Every few hundred yards is to be found small lagoons & on these ducks are plentiful.

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We were fortunate for a splendid mirage showed us the open Arctic ocean upon the surface of which we could plainly see several high rocky islands.

The cliffs on the opposite side of the river produced some very fine echoes – a shot from a gun producing an effect that sounded like an avalanche, while the whistle of the steamer was drawn out into a long clear note gradually dying away into silence.

The Tunguse say the geese leave the lagoons & go to the riverside in order to avoid the mosquitoes! (?)

The Tunguse here dry fish in a curious way. After removing the head they split the fish right down to the tail & then cut the flesh into strips not cutting however through the skin. Thus treated the fish are

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hung on thin poles to dry, after which they are smoked. This is eaten raw & is not bad when one is hungry, though rather tasteless & oily.

Now we are homeward bound!

Mon. July 13<sup>th</sup> 03

Amongst the blue forgetmenots is found an occasional white one, or more rarely a pink flower. Is this reversion or is it another species. The pink seems to be a reversion.

Mr. Hall saw a bird fly into a crack in the rocks on the side of the cliff. We worked at it for two hours with a pick but could find no trace of a nest.

Mr. Hall found a splendid fossil (ammonite) on the boulder strewn shore.

“Lena” & Barge “Olga” drifted ashore with a heavy wind & damaged one another slightly

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by bumping together. Eventually a grapnel was taken in a boat (after being upset once) out into the river & the steamer hauled out with the winch after a couple of hours work. We were on shore watching proceedings.

Tunguse nets – made either of twisted horse hair or from the bark of a tree. Floats & sinkers are of two kinds. In one kind the float is a flat piece of pine wood [*diagram not copied*] cut somewhat pear shaped with a hole in the smaller end; & the sinkers are made of pebbles sewn up in beech bark [*diagram not copied*]. In the other kind the float is made of a small roll of beech bark [*diagram not copied*] the string entering the end of the centre, then out through a hole in the side, twisted once around the roll, & into another hole near

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the other end. The sinker is formed of a pebble tied inside a ring made of what appears to be willow [*diagram not copied*]

The Tunguse made the horse hair string for the specimens we have, while we waited. It was surprising how rapidly they could twist it.

Curing fish is done on beach, no sheds. Cut made from head to tail along ventral side & long incision made on ea side of the backbone. They are then packed into barrels in layers with a layer of salt between each.

Hills that in Victoria would be quite dry are here sodden. The frozen ground continuing to thaw right through the summer keeps the ground quite sippy.

Fish – a fish called “nalim” is found in the Lena. It measures up to 5 ft long. Its tough

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skin is used by the natives for making tents & bags.

The fish the natives export is salted while that they keep for themselves is smoked. the only part of a fish not used is the head. This is thrown away. The internal soft parts of the large fish are eaten by the natives, while those of the smaller fish are boiled for oil. The bones are dried & scraped into a powder which is used for making soup. The more solid parts of the bones are crushed for the same purpose.

A fish called “moodsune” makes a splendid soup. The largest attain 5 lbs. in weight.

The export each year from the Lena mouth up to Boulun amounts to 720,000 lbs. The SS “Lena” is the only

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boat loading here. She generally makes three trips a year.

Tues 14/7/03 Reindeer – A fine stag (wild) 4 or 5 years old was seen under the cliffs of river. A “colt repeater” made it take to the water in the hope of reachg or side. A bullet through the brain stopped its career. Fine sight swimming with little but its delicately shaped head & fine antlers above water.

The tongue was very good eating. The soup was excellent. The chops were only medium, the flesh being soft & rather tasteless.

Took a snapshot at midnight as a specimen to show how good the light is. (Aperture F.16 – Plate – ordinary) (See photo “Siberia”).

Wed 15/7/03

Shot a female Grouse – This makes the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Went out to find the bear we saw when last here but had no luck.

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Thurs 16/7/03

Boulun once more.

Eagle – shot male and female on top of a cliff about 300 ft. high on a ledge near the top of wh they were nesting. Both birds flew savagely at me when I approached [*sic*]. One fell over the cliff & lodged about 1/3 of the way up & a fine climb I had to get it. Could not get the nest as the rock was rotten & gave way at the slightest provocation.

Black fox skins are extremely rare. A good one was sold in Jarkutsk last year for 3000 Roubles. Buyers came from Western Russia to a market in Jarkutsk where skins & ivory are sold every year.

Mosquitoes – are said to leave the river about 18<sup>th</sup>. to 20<sup>th</sup>. July. Then comes

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another small pest in the shape of a tiny fly which climbs into ears, nose & eyes etc.

Fri 17/7/03

Dinner – with the leading merchant of Boulun, who is going up the river with us as far as Jarkutsk. first comes a drink – take your choice from many bottles. Then a stand up taste with a fork from a tin of lobster or a dozen other tinned or fancy dishes. Then the table is laid. First comes fish, then fish soup, then fish jelly with boild [*sic*] fish in it in large lumps, then something that looked like grilled beef, & finally fruit soup containing dried apples, prunes, figs, cherries & the like. Drinks plentiful including two non- intoxicants – black-bread beer, & white-bread

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beer. The latter is not at all bad, but the former is rather sour.

Sat. 18/7/03

Left Boulun early this morning for Jarkutsk.

Campanula (blue bell) very plentiful on the stony ridges along the river. Some dark blue, some pale, others pure white. They are very large.

Dog-rose (rosa canina) here is covered with a rich yellow fungus which gives them a great struggle for existence. The same fungus is found on the willows.

Sun 19/7/03

Candles are used in the best hotels in Siberia as oil would be dangerous in the pine log houses.

For the past month we have had no artificial light, for since leaving

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Jarkutsk the light has been so good even at midnight that we can dissect, read & write without any lamp.

Mon. 20/7/03

Rain – fell slightly today. During the three weeks we have been within the Arctic circle it has rained only once before. Then it alternatively [*sic*] rained & snowed all one day & night & covered the adjacent hills & distant mountains.

Boulders. The cliffs here show huge waterworn boulders imbedded in the sandstone. Some of them would weigh as much as a couple of tons. The cliffs are about 300 ft high & almost perpendicular.

Plants – Camomile vulgaris – fac-simile of a marguerite flower – a herb instead of a bush.

Oxycoccus palustris – a small waterplant that grows in Russia. From its betties is made an

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essence used by the Russians for flavoring their tea. A couple of drops in a glass is quite sufficient.

Hawk & young – Mr. Hall shot another species of hawk. Afterwards nest was found by Tunguse under ledge of rock in an easily climbed cliff. No building material, the bare sandstone & accumulated sand being used. 3 young birds with white down (see photo “Siberia 16”) The middle toe of left leg of adult showed an old break & a setting of the bone at right angles. Two of the young were secured by the captain who intends to rear them for falconry.

We afterwards saw two more nests of this species of hawk

Gulls – Young gulls about seven days old or less were plentiful in places – Color [*sic*] sandy & mottled. They generally go in pairs. The adult is a large white gull with massive yellow

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bill with a red mark on the lower mandible.

Tues 21/7/03

Tonight the sun set for almost 10 minutes. This is the first sunset that we have been able to witness for three weeks.

Wed 22/7/03

Migration of birds. Today we saw hundreds of finches in flocks of about 20 each going south. They seemed to be the red headed finches. They are setting out early, & fly only a short distance & then settle for a few moments, then fly again. The stream of birds is continuous for between the flocks would be odd birds apparently catching up to the flock ahead. Not a single bird could I see that was flying in any other direction than south.

(Young swallows are still in the nests)

Duck – with young on the river bank. Tried

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to climb cliff but couldn't – then took to the water & dived.

Geese –

Mr Hall shot a goose up the Miankiaria R. Took a boat up river, came on flock of a dozen preening their feathers on the bank. They quickly entered the water, swimming & diving well. The head & part of neck only was out of the water. Only one attempted to fly as the process of moulting had done away with all their quills. The tail feathers however were perfect. (?Old or new). Later we came across another flock of moulting birds. As soon as they saw our steamer they started to run along the river bank. When close a boat was lowered. The geese were very strong in the legs & could run well. Finally all but two rushed into the water. these two ran up the cliff side a little way & tried to hide among the boulders & between [sic]

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bushes. Twenty minutes later we came across a flock of about 40 birds standing together on the beach. As the steamer approached they started running along the waters edge so quickly that for several minutes the distance from us was scarcely decreased. A rifle ball made them flutter into the stream & begin diving great distances in all directions. The steamer went right amongst them frighting them very much. These birds had their wing quills half grown, & when swimming had their backs out of water. Their condition was poor – very lean. Later we saw a small flock of two or three able to fly. They swam with their bodies well out of the water. This illustrates well the buoyancy of feathers. (Very good eating)

Little stint – Mr Hall got another clutch of small fledglings on the bank of the R. Miankiaria.

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He shot one parent – the other as usual not being in evidence.

Accident with a “Colt repeater”. In unloadg magazine, rifle accidentally went off. Ball (soft nosed) struck deck & went into fragments several of which lodged in leg & foot of Mr Lebedeff our fellow passenger. Fortunately no bones broken.

Gull. Shot one from a large rookery where from the steamer we saw the young running about as we passed. For miles the cliffs were about 200 ft high. Two thirds of the way up, the downy young were seen. Below, others were running near the waters edge & could easily be seen from the steamer as we came abreast of them some 20 yards away. When however I returned to the spot the young had carefully hidden & although I hunted for about an hour & a

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half, could find no trace of them. On my way back to the steamer one gull followed me for nearly a mile & then returned to advise the rookery that all was well. While I was searching for the young the old birds at first made a fearful fuss, but afterwards calmed down & settled calmly on the jagged rocks of the cliff, to fly fiercely down at me every now & then, dropping their feet & soaring upwards only when a few inches from my head.

Thurs 23/7/03

Arrived at Gigansk.

This village is situated a few miles north of the Arctic circle. A few years ago a band of convicts escaped, stole a boat, & travelled some distance along



the river. At Gigansk they stopped & murdered most of the inhabitants, the rest escaping to Boulun.

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For several years the place was absolutely deserted, but now there are two or three families living there. In this “deserted village” the grass is a couple of feet high & the most beautiful wild flowers imaginable flourish. Larkspurs grow in large masses thirty or forty yards across & often four or five feet high. In one spot I measured several over 6 feet, & they were only in bud & would still grow several inches more. Also a small blue flower flourished; & masses of yellow, & of pink were seen everywhere. In the sheltered spots the blue iris flourished.

The old Greek churches are still deserted save by the swallows (*Chelidon urbica*) who are nesting in hundreds under the eaves. The young birds are still in their nests. (These birds also nest in colonies under projecting rocks of the high cliffs)

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At Boulun we left the “SS Lena” & went on board the paddle steamer “Gromot” which is taking us to Jarkutsk. The “Lena” returns to the mouth of the river to pick up the Russian expedition there.

26/7/03

Hare – Mr. Hall shot a large leveret amongst tall equisetum 2 ft high. It had white tail, black tips to ears, under surface nearly white, upper surface brown with grey edgings to hair.

29/7/03

Gooseberry like berry growing on a vine like plant is plentiful here. It turns black when ripe. The Russians make wine of it.

Red currants also plentiful – fine large fruit. Splendid eating.

In Siberia we have found growing wild the following well known fruits:-

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Strawberries – at Oustkoutsk & Southwards Raspberries – both below & above Jarkutsk Red-currants – below Jarkutsk, even far within the Arctic circle.

Today at one of our stopping places I found growing wild a lot of Canterbury-bells. They were large, white with small purplish marks on the inside.

Gull – Mr. Hall shot the young of the brown headed species. It was flying by itself on the beach & making the feeble cry of a young bird.

Fri. 30/7/03

Reached Jarkutsk. Sandbanks were very numerous at junction of Aldan R. This caused delay & made us miss a steamer.

A month ago it was spring, now it is summer. Everything is dry & dusty. The long grass of the flats has been cut for hay.

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Today we dined at “The Club” with Mr. Zooyeff & 3 Judges, two of them of the Supreme Court.

After dinner we watched a game of Russian billiards. They play with either 5 or 15 balls each ball being numbered & having a certain value. The ball they all

play with is white like the rest but has two sets of three black lines drawn round it at right angles to ea or [diagram not copied]

While Mr. Hall was exploring the museum again I had "Tau" with Mr. Lebedeff (his full name is Semion Nikolaevitch Lebedeff)

Martin – Got young of the burrowing martin. Very much like the adult.

Swift – got young swifts.

Grasshopper – Curious species. While on wing made a strong rasping

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continuous note. Wings rich crimson. Difficult to catch, flight continuous flying from place to place in a zigzag manner without settling.

Exile – One of 54. Spoke English – had English wife in London. 2 yrs in fortress, now 5 yrs 1800 miles from here. 5 ride & take provisions. Isolation.

Warehouses (floating) fitted up inside like shop. Counters, attendants. All Jews.

Railway – from Jarkutsk to Oustkout will be completed in 5 yrs.

Steamer is 7 versts from town. Cant [sic] come into channel on wh Jarkutsk is. Too shallow now. This is about the shallowest. Deepest water is of course just after thawing of snow.

Exile found lodgings for us. Hostess all

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right, but live stock too plentiful! Zooyeff has packed up to leave for Olekminsh where he will be "Chief" so couldn't accommodate us.

Very few mosquitoes now – but small flies are a nuisance.

Sat 1/8/03

Took a long hot walk to the steamer & had dinner with T. Topunoburg. Mail boat not yet in, so had to walk back to Jarkutsk again.

Sun 2/8/03

Mail boat "ëormapú" arrived. Go on board & stay there. "Pochtar" means "mail-boat". Met two old friends on board – P/O officials from the "ëepnau" Younger one is – HukoiraU Hukoiraeburf Cerespennunodg. Address is

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Konmopa

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Jarkutsk – Oustkout

The elder is an amateur photographer & lent me his office for a dark room & offered me the neccy outfit.

Mon 3/8/03

Good-bye to Jarkutsk. At one of our stopping places for wood in the evening R.H. shot a long-eared owl. Sev1 of them about. Could hear them hooting.

(In Jarkutsk you don't generally enter house direct from street. Houses are surrounded with high massive fences. Ponderous gate opens into sort of compound into which doors of sev1 houses often open.)

Tues 4/8/03

Two of passengers – young lady of about 16 & companion about 20 – going to Petersburg. Very good. Kept us supplied

with plates of wild strawberries.

Soundings – Rings painted on soundg pole are ea 4 vershocks (6 in) broad. “Nemyarchel” means “no bottom”. “Vahlabon” means “up to the tobacco-pouch”. When men are towing boats up river they often have to enter water – when they tie their tobacco pouches round their necks. Hence the term.

Nature’s cathedral – passed some fine rugged cliffs about 300 ft. high, with splendid pinnacles (See photo)

Wed. 5/8/03

Pine forest on fire. Lots of smoke about.

Poppies here are small & nearly all white.

Thurs 6/8/03

Reached Olekminsk. Cucumbers 8K each. Cucumbers are are [*sic*] great article

of food in Russia. They salt a lot down. Olekminsk is a rather pretty town – very much unlike Jarkutsk. There are no lamps in the street – the householders having lamps at their gates.

Priests of the Greek Church – They wear long hair, heavy silver chain & cross, & long cloaks.

Harvest time now here. The Skopts are total abstainers, & vegetarians – neither do they smoke. They are perpetual exiles. They generally are very fat, wear no beards no moustaches. They are perpetual exiles.

Tools used here in building houses are simple – axe, augur, saw, & plane. The logs are held togr with wooden pegs.

By road Olekminsk is 657 versts

from Jarkutsk.

In every village there is a board on which is painted the date of settlement, the number of houses, & the number of residents, male & female.

Cheese – in a ball as big as your head – 60 kopeks per pouod [*sic*].

The arches over the horses in the sharves of a Russian waggon are generally carved & painted in bright colors – red, blue, green & yellow.

Butter – 45 K per pouod – very good & extremely cheap.

Birds – shot several new species. Found a young Chelidon urbica dead near some nests. Kept this bird for myself.

Fri 7/8/03

Devoted all my energy to skinning birds. No time for anything else.

Sat 8/8/03

Cedars more common & less firs.

Sorbus in fruit – also in flower (late)

Shot a yellow bunting – the first we left Jarkutsk for Boulun. They are getting further south. Before, we got plenty at Jarkutsk.

Wild raspberries ripe abut here – splendid eating, but not enough of them. Many other berries – so plenty for the birds to eat.

Flowers – a few larkspurs, no poppies.

Spring has gone – it is summer here now. The river is low – almost at its lowest.

Passed the “ëëpinaki” on her way down to Jarkutsk. Saw some old friends – (captain & mate) on board.

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Sun 9/8/03

Our fellow passengers are splendid hosts. They seem to take a delight in seeing how much they can make us eat.

Mon 10/8/03

Took of [sic] photo of officers & fellow passengers on the bridge.

Reached Vitim in the afternoon. As the river is now too shallow for the “ëormapo” to take us any further we shift on to a smaller boat the “Jarkut”.

At Vitim there is a customs house the officers of wh search the baggage of travellers going up the river, for tea brought overland from Ochotsk – where there is no duty.

Tues 11/08/03

Rain all day!

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Oustkout

Rain all day! This is the beginning of the rainy season here. The clouds are very low, & fogs are plentiful & troublesome to navigation.

Thurs 13/8/03

Reached Kerinsk early in the morning. At last the rain has cleared off.

In offices Russian officials are supplied free of charge by the Govt with tea & the caretaker of the building is paid a small sum to keep their samovars going. They also get a pocket-knife every year.

Perevodcheek ill! So we must do our own interpretg. Perhaps the vodka bottle could tell a tale if it would!

Fri 14/8/03

Reached Oustkout.

A large gipsy encampment is on the other side of the tributary.

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Oustkout – Gigalowa

Left Oustkout at 8 p.m. by boat to be towed up river by stages – three horses ea stage is what is charged for though they often supply only two.

There are 17 stages at wh the horses & men are changed – Also the boat unless you do as we did – hire a private boat for the whole distce. (Cost 8R). This avoids having to continually shift the luggage & in addition you get a house closed in at ea end & not open like the mail boats. Sometimes we had as many as five men (or boys) at a time – three on the horses, on [sic] in the bow of the boat (the captain) & another at the rudder.

Sat 15/8/03

The Govt tax on travellers both by boat & coach is 10 K. per horse per stage actually used (unless of course you use

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private horses). This pays for the upkeep of the post-stations along the river & roads & for keeping the roads in repair.

Caught a large bright green dragon fly as it rested on the boat. It was carrying its eggs beneath the end of its tail Detatched [sic] them & put them in spirit & let the insect go.

Sun 16/8/03

Puff ball – found one 36 in. in circfce

Nettles – found two species. One looked like a nettle & didn't sting. The other when not in flower did not look like a nettle. There were a couple of ladybirds on a branch so I made a grab at them! – they escaped!

Swallows – the burrowing martins have gone, & the chelidon urbica has come further up the river.

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Mon 17/8/03

One of the “boys” on the horses this stage was a girl. The village could not supply the necessary number of boys.

When we came down the river the banks were rather bare & muddy. Now grass grows right to the waters edge & even in the water. In some places the river is full of water plants.

Birds – Crows, Hawks (sevl species) & dotterel (sevl species).

The scenery here is very fine. The river winds about amongst the hills like a snake.

Today we had a thunderstorm & some very heavy rain, much of wh found its way through our roof & made things uncomfortable. The difficulty was to keep our collection of birds dry.

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Gigalowa

At the post stations the price of everything is fixed by Govt. A samovar is 10 K. They must supply you with a samovar if you ask for it, altho' they can refuse every- thing else – even bread. They must supply you with horses & drivers independt of time or weather.

Tues 18/8/03

Last night was fearfully wet. Had to use sleeping bag & leather coat to keep dry. Rain came thro [sic] the roof everywhere. Fearfully cold notwithstandg thick clothing.

Tues 18/8/03

Reached Gigalowa early this mornng. Left there by post horses for Irkutsk. Having learned by bitter experience the folly of posting in Siberia without plenty of cushions we had our sleeping bags well filled with straw – result – comfort

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in the place of agony.

There are no brakes on the post waggons. When they come to a steep hill they put an iron “shoe” on one of the wheels.

The crops of wheat, oats, rye, & barley are now being cut. Men & women are both at work in the fields. they use ei a light, straight-handled scythe, or sickles, but no machinery.

Birds – above Oustkout are quite diffit from those below. This seems to be the boarder [sic] line betn the mountain species & those of the river. Here

nearly every bird we see is new to us. The black & white long billed magpie, & the black & white crow, wh are so plentiful here are not found below Oustkout.

Flowers – Pincushions – cream (small) & violet-blue (fine). Also many of the

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flowers we saw further north.

(To avoid the bother of changing coaches a special coach may be had at Oustkout to go right thro' to Irkutsk Price 10 R)

Wild berries etc – At the stations children brought for sale plates of wild raspberries, strawberries (small) blue- berries, & red-black currants. The first & second are splendid eating but I did not care for the rest.

A New Testament is to found in every post house, on the small triangular table before the picture of Christ, in the corner of the room. The post-houses betn Oustkout & Vercholensk are as alike as peas, even to the arrangement of the furniture in them.

Tonight we reached Vercholensk &

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spent the night at the post house, but not to rest – the live stock was too plentiful.

Wed 19/8/03

Travellg by post is not such agony after all when you know how to do it.

Posting – 4½ K. per verst per horse + 10 K. per horse govt tax + tips to drivers – (10 or 15 K). 100 v. per day is fair travellg. They lost little time – travel day & night if neccy, are not supposed to keep you waiting at the post-stations more than 15 min. by day or 30 min. by night. They gallop up hills instead of walking, unless the hill is a long one. The whip is seldom used. The bells sound very musical, especially at a distance. The drivers almost invariably when shiftg your luggage from one waggon to anor, put it almost exactly in the same position as they found

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it (with the exception of occasionally puttg a box the wrong way up!)

At one village got soup for 2 in one bowl – 10 K.

Crossed Lena R. for the last time. Bad waggons from here to Irkutsk & also bad drivers, but good roads – not so hilly, not such large forests Land cultivated.

The river valley here is thick with large villages.

Many of the drivers from here on are Booyarts.

There are no long-tailed magpies on the lower River, neither is the black & white crow. They are plentiful here.

The sheep are most black & the pigs white. The Russians like bright red clothes – ladies dresses & mens tunics (peasants)

Reached Manjoorskaya (pop. 2000) Not enough horses so had to spend the night there.

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Heating stoves are solidly built of brick. They get hot and keep hot.

Thurs 20/8/03

Wild rhubarb grows along roadside.

Crows are in enormous flocks here – they make little or no noise. The two species, the black & the black & white, congregate together.

In place of the yellow flowers on these plains when we were here before, are now blue & mauve flowers, mauve daisy with yellow centre, campanula (branched) small blue columbine etc. Ladies pincushions (creamy)

Reached Oust-ordenskar & stayed the night.

Passed sev'l caravans, of from 25-30 vehicles each, going North.

Fri 21/8/03

Flowers – Ladies pincushions (violet-blue), Poppies still here (much later than furr N.)

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pink

Summer has not yet arrived here – everything is still green. The swallows have assembled & sit in immense numbers on the telegraph wires.

In the villages each householder is a member of the fire brigade. One has the engine, another a water barrel, another the horses, another a rope, an axe, or a ladder. On ea gate is a small black board on wh is painted the article that house holds.

Reached Irkutsk.

Sat. 22/8/03

Spent the day shopping & generally having a look round the bazaars.

Caught the train for St. Petersburg at 11 p.m. Ticket 48 R. 2<sup>nd</sup> class.

Here begins the last stage of our Russian trip.

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General

The Russn Govt is very liberal with education at Jarkutsk. Boarders 75 R a year. If from a distce (eg Balun) govt pays fares. If from a great distce (eg Kamchatka) & so can't go home till education finished, then board is free. From 7-9 yrs of age children are at preparatory school. They attend the higher school till 16.

Schools are open in winter only. All schools have to be inspected from time to time even tho' they are as distant as Boulun & have like that school only 7 pupils.

Russn bath. Water is dashed on to hot bricks & people sit round the room in the steam. The higher you ascend the steps the hotter. They beat themselves with birch branches to induce profuse

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perspiration & encourage circulation!

In Siberia (& Russia) the villages are all compact. There are no scattered homesteads, & no comfortable homes amongst the peasants.

Some curious things they do in Russia:- Eat jam with a spoon Drink tea without milk out of glasses. & leave the spoon in the glass & pour the tea into saucer when too hot. Put jam or essences into the tea Everyone helps himself from a dish placed in the centre of the table In the soup are large lumps of meat or fish. This is taken out & eaten as a separate course before the soup. First meal of the day consists of a glass of tea & a slice of bread & butter –

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Irkutsk to St. Petersburg nothing more till 1 p.m. Eat raw fish Instead of puttg sugar in the tea they take a lump (broken off loaf sugar) bite off a piece & strain the tea through it.

Sun 23/8/03

Forests of pine & beach [sic]

Passed 5 or 6 waggons with barred windows

Tobacco all cut & very dry – plug not attainable.

Australian newspaper with part blacked out. Impossible to read.

Russian upper Officials are easy to get on with – if properly approached.

White bread obtainable at last. Quite a change. Ate it like cake!

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Butter very poor. Adulterated. In hot weather part melts: rest remains – looks like dripping.

Mon. 24<sup>th</sup>. Aug/03

Still passing through forests of pine & beech. Flowers plentiful & beautiful.

Train very slow & with long stops at stations. Railway very crooked to avoid hills.

At 7 p.m. reached Toolam.

Tues. 25<sup>th</sup>. Aug./03

Timber getting smaller & scarcer

Bought sweet turnip 1 K. Good

Small flies are troublesome here just now. People all wearing veils.

Milk – 5 K. a bottle.

Wed. 26 Aug/03

At 5 p.m. – a small scattered town on a fine river.

Railway now straight. Fine bridges

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Pine forests again. Nothing much to write about. Train slow.

Getting into agricultural land. Hundreds of old-fashioned windmills. Small town & villages

Mon. 31<sup>st</sup>. Aug.

5.30 p.m. reached ÑßæÑËÛ

Changed trains. An improvement. Gas instead of candles.

Tues. 1 Sept.

Arrived at Moscow 6 a.m. Sun shining on gilded minerals. Took a walk through the city.

Streets paved with cobble stone rounded at top! Droschkis: well sprung.

Had refreshment at a tea house – tea in glasses, no milk of course, hard bread without butter – nothing else!

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Moscow

Arrived at Kremlin. Wall very thick. Was stopped. Explained to me that this was the gateway at which Napoleon was stopped & was therefore held sacred and I must not wear a hat. I removed it walked out. Turned round, crossed myself, & walked through with hat off; & met with applause.

Inside the Kremlin walls very interesting, mostly official building & churches. Some Saint's day, so peal upon peal of bells.



Enormous bell stands in the open. It was to be the largest bell in the world. Unfortunately when it was cast the heat was so great that it set fire to the building; and water pumped on to it caused the bell to crack and a large triangular piece to split off. It was left to stand.

Inspected Museum & Art gallery. Very fine, everything well looked after

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Moscow

Art gallery – some wonderful painting but badly hung. No head light.  
xx 1820. 2 Lodges. Regalia.

Booked sleeping berth in train for tomorrow. 1.50 R, for St Peters- burg.

St. Petersburg.

Wed. 2/9/03

Arrived at St. Petersburg – early this morning. Booked in at a comfortable hotel in Nevski Prospect –

Was told by police when I presented my passport that I would have to be registered as a resident for 14 days before permission could be given to leave Russia – so I was duly registered as a resident at Nevski Prospect St. Petersburg.

In due course permission was endorsed on my passport and I took

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a train for Berlin

[Continued in new book.]