

MANIA SAKHALINOSA

AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF DR. ANTON CHEKHOV

by

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ALTHOUGH CHEKHOV is universally acknowledged as a short story writer and dramatist of genius, the fact that he was a practising doctor for a large part of his life and was deeply committed to the progress of scientific medicine is often forgotten. An attentive reader of the stories, however, must be aware how often patients and their doctors are portrayed therein. At times the conflicting claims of literature and medicine made him frustrated. On the whole, however, they lived in fruitful partnership. To use his own happy metaphor “medicine is my legal wife and literature my mistress. When I get tired of one I go and sleep with the other”.¹

On one occasion, however, Chekhov abandoned all his literary pursuits and devoted himself to a sustained and exacting task in the service of his legal wife. In 1890 when he was a young medical practitioner in Moscow with an already growing reputation as a writer, he announced his intention of making a five-thousand-mile journey across Asiatic Russia to visit and investigate the penal island of Sakhalin. This paper looks at the purposes and achievement of this journey with particular emphasis on those aspects relating to medicine.

Sakhalin, a mountainous island lying off the eastern seaboard of Siberia, is one of the most inhospitable outposts of the Russian Empire. It had been added to the Czar’s territories in 1875 after a prolonged dispute with Japan, but even prior to this the Russians had used it as a place of exile and imprisonment.² Not only was escape nearly impossible, but the government nursed the hope that in the course of time prisoners would colonize the island. Rumours about the pitiful condition of the criminals and political prisoners were circulating at this period and these must have troubled

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The main sources for this paper are Chekhov’s letters and his book, *Sakhalin Island*. Two volumes of selected correspondence have recently been published in English. That by Avrahm Yarmolinsky (London, Jonathan Cape, 1974) is the better translation, at least for readers on this side of the Atlantic. The edition of Simon Karlinsky (London, Bodley Head, 1973), however, is more helpful in providing footnotes and biographical information. I have used Yarmolinsky’s translation for the most part, but some letters relating to the subject have been newly translated by Mrs. Kathleen Swift, for whose help I am much indebted. Chekhov’s book on Sakhalin was translated by Robert Payne and published by the Washington Square Press, New York, in 1967 under the title *The Island, a Journey to Sakhalin*. It is out of print and copies are hard to come by. I have quoted from this translation throughout. The best general biography of Chekhov in English is that by Robert Hingley, *A new life of Chekhov* (Oxford University Press, 1976).

¹ Anton Chekhov, *Letter to A. S. Suvorin*, 11 September 1888.

² Yuri Semyonov, *Siberia, its conquest and development*, translated from the German by J. R. Foster, London, Hollis & Carter, 1963, pp. 292–314.

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the consciences of many liberal-minded Russians. But the obstacles in the way of doing anything to influence the situation were formidable. The autocratic government of Alexander III with its empty coffers and muscle-bound bureaucracy was very suspicious of any attempt to point out its inadequacies. Moreover, the huge distances involved and the perils of embarking on the Great Siberian Highway which, despite its name, was little more than a dirt-track for much of its length, subject to floods, wild animals, and bandits, made travel hazardous, prolonged, and expensive. No wonder that his brother, Michael, thought Chekhov was joking when told of the projected journey. Suvorin, the editor of the Petersburg journal, *Novoe Vremya* (New Times), and a close friend of the author, remonstrated with him but he was not to be put off.

I want to write one hundred to two hundred pages and thereby pay off some of my debt to medicine, towards which, as you know, I have behaved just like a pig. Perhaps I shall not be able to write anything; nevertheless the journey does not lose its attractiveness for me; by reading, looking round and listening, I shall get to know and learn a great deal. I haven't left yet but thanks to the books that I have been obliged to read, I have learnt much of what everyone should know under pain of forty lashes and of which I was formerly ignorant. . . . You say, for instance, that Sakhalin is of no use and no interest to anyone. But is that so? Sakhalin can be of no use or interest only to a country that does not exile thousands of people there and does not spend millions on it. After Australia in the past, and Cayenne, Sakhalin is the only place where one can study colonization by criminals. All Europe is interested in it and is it of no use to us? From the books I have read it is clear that we have let millions of people rot in prison, destroying them carelessly, thoughtlessly, barbarously; we drove people in chains through the cold across thousands of miles, infected them with syphilis, depraved them, multiplied criminals and placed the blame for all this on red-nosed prison warders. All civilized Europe knows that it is not the warders who are to blame, but all of us, yet this is no concern of ours, we are not interested.³

One of the purposes behind his journey was to provide material for a doctoral thesis for the University of Moscow. Although the content of this work would probably find its place today more appropriately in a department of sociology, in the late nineteenth century "medicine" had somewhat wider connotations than we are accustomed to today. Criminologists such as Lombroso, who was a doctor, had done much to stimulate medical interest in the treatment of criminals. Influences other than the purely scientific were at work in Chekhov's life, however. He had just witnessed the harrowing death of his brother Nicholas from pulmonary tuberculosis, an event that must have thrown an ominous shadow over his own prospects as he had noticed streaks of blood in his sputum for some years. Perhaps it was the thought that he might only have a short time left that spurred him on.

He spent some months making thorough preparations and reading about the island. "It's such painstaking work that I think I shall die of boredom and exhaustion before ever I reach Sakhalin. All day long I sit, read and take notes. In the head and on the paper, nothing but Sakhalin, mania, Mania Sakhalinosa."⁴

At length the preparations were completed and he set out on 25 April 1890, travelling by train to Yaroslavl, then taking a boat down the Kama and up the Volga, he crossed the Urals at Yekaterinburg. From here the journey became really difficult, being accomplished in a springless four-wheeled vehicle known as a tarantass, in which the luggage was stowed in the bottom of the vehicle, followed by a layer of

³ Anton Chekhov, *Letter to A. S. Suvorin*, 9 March 1890.

⁴ Anton Chekhov, *Letter to A. Pleshcheyev*, 15 February 1890.

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straw, and lastly the traveller who lay on top in a kind of leather envelope and was shaken unremittingly for days on end, bitten by fleas, cold, and soaked to the skin. Chekhov describes the terrible journey vividly in a series of letters to his sister Marya: how he was nearly killed when his vehicle was run over by three troikas going in the opposite direction, their drivers asleep on the box; and, having just recovered from this, he was nearly turned back by extensive flooding on the great Siberian rivers. Despite these problems, he kept a keen eye on the medical provisions made for the people in the areas through which he travelled. "There are no hospitals and no doctors," he wrote. "The only people to treat the sick are male orderlies. Blood letting with leeches and cupping there are, in huge brutal quantities. Once by the roadside I examined a Jew who was ill with cancer of the liver. He was exhausted and could scarcely breathe, but that didn't stop the district nurse from applying twelve huge blood-sucking leeches."⁵ This episode reminds one of the death in the story 'Peasants', of Chikildeyev, the writer, after being cupped by a medical orderly.⁶ Chekhov regarded these unqualified practitioners with their cups and leeches, exciting the admiration of the credulous with their nostrums and apparatus, as dangerous impostors, doing more harm than good.

At length he reached Lake Baikal by steamer, and from here he joined the course of the great river Amur on which he was carried by steamer for a thousand miles on its journey to Nikolaevsk on the Pacific, which he reached on 5 July. The crossing of the Tartar Strait to Sakhalin was made on an ocean-going vessel, the *Baikal*, which was carrying a detachment of soldiers to the island, together with a few convicts, one of whom was accompanied by his five-year-old daughter. Chekhov's first sight of the island was not reassuring. Huge forest fires were pouring out black smoke. At Alexandrovsk, the chief town of Northern Sakhalin, "I could not see the wharf and buildings through the darkness and the smoke drifting across the sea, and could barely distinguish the dim lights at the post, two of which were red. The horrifying scene was compounded of darkness, silhouettes of mountains, and beyond the mountains, a red glow which rose to the sky, from remote fires. It seemed that all Sakhalin was in flames." He took a cutter to the landing stage and went off in search of lodgings.

By a stroke of good fortune he ran across a junior doctor at the hospital who invited Chekhov to stay at his house and who turned out to be an outspoken critic of the administration and often presented petitions to the authorities on behalf of the convicts. The following day Chekhov made a courtesy visit to the island's commandant. He found him in the midst of preparing for the quinquennial visit of the governor general of Eastern Siberia. "I'm glad you are staying with our enemy," he remarked wryly. "You will soon learn all our little weaknesses."

It took Chekhov a while to accustom himself to the ubiquitous prisoners who crowded the streets and public places, as well as being engaged in many service occupations. He awoke one morning about four o'clock to find a convict approaching his bed, on tiptoe, scarcely breathing. "What's the matter? What do you want?", asked Chekhov nervously. "To clean your shoes, your honour." Next morning there was a

⁵ V. V. Khizhniakov, *Anton Pavlovich Chekhov kak vrach*, Moscow, 1947, p. 14.

⁶ Anton Chekhov, *Peasants*, in the Oxford edition of Chekhov's works, translated by Ronald Hingley, Oxford University Press, 1965, vol. 8, pp. 195–222.

ceremonial reception for the governor general with a sung *Te Deum* and bands playing on the square. Many petitioners presented requests, but he remarked that, out of ignorance, they often asked for something quite inappropriate that could easily have been granted by the local authorities. The governor must have been informed that a strange writer was on the island, for he invited Chekhov to pay him a visit and questioned him closely on the purpose of his journey. He must have been satisfied for he gave Chekhov permission to visit any parts of the island that he wished and to talk to any of the prisoners, except for those exiled for political offences. That evening the town was festooned with coloured lights and there were fireworks.

One of his first concerns was to visit the printing shop of the police department and to arrange for the printing of data cards. These were, in design astonishingly like those used in population studies today. Each card referred to one household and contained on successive lines, the name of the settlement, the number of the house, the status of the person interviewed (convict, settler, peasant, etc.), surname and patronymic, other members of the household, age, religion, duration of residence, occupation, marital status, and, finally, whether the household was assisted financially by the prison authorities. Armed with these, he spent the next few months, starting at five o'clock every morning, making his way round the households accompanied by a solitary guard, barefoot, and armed with a revolver, who carried his inkstand and often went ahead, hammering on the door to warn the inhabitants of the approach of the doctor and perhaps to give them his opinion of this strange enterprise. Considering the remoteness of many of the settlements and the virtual absence of roads on many parts of the island, it is an astonishing fact that he could claim to have interviewed every man, woman, and child and completed over ten thousand of these data cards. They are still, I believed, extant in the Lenin Library in Moscow. It was the material contained in these cards that Chekhov was to use to form the scientific core of his book *Sakhalin Island* which he wrote in the years following his return.

One of the first places that he visited was the prison at Alexandrovsk which stood in the centre of the town and consisted of six large wooden buildings surrounding a central courtyard. From the outside the prison gave an impression of cleanliness and order but inside the blocks conditions were very squalid. The whole of the middle of the building was taken up by a long sloping plank platform on which the convicts slept. There were no bedclothes and the entire room was littered with rags, paper, bread, and miscellaneous belongings. "It is a beastly existence, it is nihilistic, a negation of proprietary rights, privacy and comfort." However, these prisoners were relatively well off. They had no fetters and were free to walk about during the day. Escapees or those considered particularly dangerous were put in "the irons". Here conditions were appalling with twenty men to a cell, all shackled, emaciated, and half naked, and sleeping on the bare floor. They shared a common chamber-pot in the corner. Chekhov looked with particular interest at the latrines, and points out that this is an aspect of life to which his countrymen attach very little importance and consequently the arrangements are often extremely primitive. He mentions one prison in Kosov which had no latrine whatsoever and in which the prisoners were led out in groups to relieve themselves in the street. At Alexandrovsk, however, there was an open cesspool located in a separate outhouse between the prison buildings,

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and the toilets lined the side of this shed. The squalor and filth of the conditions under which the convicts lived, he pointed out, must have a corrupting influence on them. "That gregarious, animal-like existence with its gross amusements and the inevitable influence of evil on good, has long been acknowledged to affect the morals of the criminal in the most corrupt fashion. It slowly forces him to lose the habits of domesticity, those very qualities which must be preserved above all by a convict who, on his release from prison, becomes a self-sufficient member of a colony, where from the first day he is obliged by law under threat of punishment, to become a good householder and a good family man." As he watched the prisoners on the island, the questions that he continually asked himself relate to the ultimate effectiveness of this method of treating criminals. He tried to understand the mental processes of the exiles in exactly the same way that he had tried to enter the world of the patients, because he was convinced that only in this way could one devise strategies that worked alongside human psychology and not against it. The complete absence of any attempt at reform or rehabilitation, despite lip service to these concepts in the prison regulations, offended his therapeutic training, and he pointed at example after example.

Farther inland, at Korsakovka, the medical centre had recently been closed but had housed fourteen syphilitic patients and three mental patients. One of the latter contracted syphilis. The patients of this establishment were apparently occupied making up lint dressings for the surgical department! He expostulated that hospital conditions were at least two hundred years behind civilized countries. "If they made bonfires of lunatics by order of the prison doctors it would not surprise me."

To the south of Alexandrovsk was the grim town of Due, a centre for coal mining, and the place to which the most dangerous and recidivist of prisoners were sent. Here he saw pathetic creatures shackled to iron balls in dreadful conditions. On the morning he left Due "it was raw, gloomy and cold. The sea roared turbulently. I recall that on the road from the old mine to the new one we stopped for a minute near an old Caucasian who lay on the sand in a dead faint. Two of his countrymen held his hands. They kept looking round helplessly and disconcertedly. The old man was pale, his hands icy, his pulse slow. We spoke to them and went on our way without giving him any medical aid. When I mentioned to the physician who was with me that it would not have done any harm to give the old man at least some valerian drops, he said that the Voyevodsk prison had no medicines whatsoever."

During the next two months Chekhov travelled all over the island. Many of the accounts that he gives in his book might have come straight out of his short stories. Always alive to the humorous elements in any situation, he noted with glee the shopkeeper who mistook him for a government inspector and kept bringing out his papers for scrutiny, or the gentleman farmer with a penchant for latin names who when beans were served at table said "and this is Phaseolus". On the other hand the degradation of many of the prisoners he saw affected him deeply. One evening, he was housed in a furniture warehouse stacked with antique furniture. All the night he could not sleep for the rain and the strange animal-like cries that came to his ears. When he emerged next morning he was horrified to see that the warehouse was next to the hospital and the cries were coming from sick convicts who were drenched to the skin and were trying to persuade the warder to let them into the beds. He describes the system of

punishment for infringement of prison discipline which was savage and resorted to at the drop of a hat. The island commandant, General Kononovich, was himself opposed to corporal punishment. Nevertheless, flogging with birch rods or the more severe lashes were frequently administered. The former could be ordered for minor infringements of discipline: drunkenness or even the non-performance of work tasks. Lashes were a much more inhuman affair and sometimes resulted in the death of the victim. Chekhov forced himself to witness the administration of lashes to a convict named Prokhorov, who had been caught escaping, and describes the whole episode in horrifying detail including the tying down and stripping of the prisoner and his shrieks and vomiting as the strokes covered his back. After about half the ninety strokes had been administered Chekhov could stand the sight no longer and went outside for a breath of air. "Not only do the prisoners become hardened and brutalized, but those who inflict the punishment also and so do the spectators. Educated people are no exception. At any rate, I observed that officials with university training reacted in exactly the same way as the military medical assistants or those who had completed a course in a military school or an ecclesiastical seminary." He pointed out that the savagery of the discipline was very liable to lead to further brutality from the prisoners in reprisal, and that methods of punishment were being employed on Sakhalin that had long since been abandoned by civilized societies.

In the last chapter of his book Chekhov turns his attention to the illnesses that were prevalent on the island. The sources from which he drew his information were the "true books" of the infirmaries and the records of deaths in the church registers. He points out the unsatisfactory nature of both materials. Among the causes of death he found diagnoses such as "lack of development towards life", "inflammation of the body", and "excessive suckling at the breast", and many of the infirmary "true books" had not been maintained properly. He remarks that infectious diseases which were common at home rarely made an appearance in Sakhalin. Thus in 1889 measles was recorded only three times, and scarlet fever, whooping-cough, diphtheria, and croup not at all. Epidemics usually started in September or October when the sick children came with the new influx of convicts' families. Smallpox, which had once swept through the whole of Eastern Asia and had annihilated whole tribes in Kamchatka and Sakhalin, was at that time a comparative rarity. Only eighteen persons died of it in ten years. Enteric disease was recorded, but not on an epidemic scale. The church records which he searched indicated fifty deaths from "typhus" or "typhoid" over a period of ten years—and he did not see even one case in the infirmaries that he visited. There was another condition that was referred to as "inexactly definable feverish illness" which seemed to occur fairly frequently. "It appeared chiefly during the winter months with symptoms of a remittent type of fever, sometimes with the appearance of roseola and a general depression of the brain centres. In a short time, within five to seven days, the fever passed and complete recovery occurred rapidly." This illness was probably under-reported, as many of the cases were not treated but recovered by themselves, lying on the stoves in their huts. Dysentery was another rarity, and Asiatic cholera unknown. Respiratory illnesses were, however, common, and in particular pulmonary tuberculosis, which was responsible for fifteen per cent of deaths. There were more deaths during the winter, especially during the month of

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December when the temperature in Sakhalin was very low, and many of these were in the age range twenty-five to forty-five; the majority (sixty-six per cent) were convicts. He concludes that this high mortality was due to the adverse living conditions of the convicts, the very severe labours to which they were subjected, and the inadequate food. Another respiratory illness called "croupous pneumonia" was also responsible for significant numbers of deaths, especially during the winter months. Syphilis was recorded in the true books on 246 occasions but there were only five deaths. The pathetic state of many of the chronic cases of tertiary syphilis, who were left for years without any medical attention whatsoever, was duly noted. Almost as common was the diagnosis of scurvy. 271 cases were recorded in 1889, with six deaths. He states that twenty years earlier this disease had been much more prevalent and many soldiers and prisoners had died from it. "Some of the old writers, however, who favoured the founding of the penal colony on the island had completely denied the existence of the disease and they simultaneously praised wild garlic as a marvellous preventive of the condition." "The district commander and the prison doctor at Alexandrovsk told me that on May 2nd, 1890, the Petersburg landed 500 prisoners, 100 of whom were suffering from scurvy; 51 of these were put into the infirmary and the clinic by the doctor. One of these sufferers from scurvy, a Ukrainian from Poltava whom I found in bed in the infirmary, told me that he had contracted scurvy in Kharkov central prison." The significance of the wild garlic story was obviously not appreciated. Despite the fact that the nutritional origin of scurvy had been clearly identified by Lind in the eighteenth century, the unique dependence of the condition on dietary causes was far from being generally believed.

Neurological and mental diseases were encountered, but, as with the case of syphilis, very little provision was made for their care, and patients with gross mental disease were allowed to walk around unsupervised, as were patients with general paralysis whom he found in convict working parties. (The recognition that this was a form of tertiary syphilis had to await Wasserman's development of a specific serological test in 1905.) Gynaecological complaints were very frequent amongst the women convicts. One commission stated that seventy per cent of the women suffered from "chronic female complaints". On his visits to the huts Chekhov saw a large number of eye diseases, including cases of blindness of doubtful origin, and blind children. Less serious, but very common, was a form of epidemic conjunctivitis.

As might have been expected, accidents and injuries took a prominent place among the statistics. Among the orthodox population there were 170 cases of "unnatural death" recorded over a ten-year period. There were twenty-seven cases of suicide, which seems a very small number, mostly accomplished by shooting or taking henbane. In addition to these were seventeen cases of "sudden death", presumably of the same ilk as our modern epidemic.

Chekhov points out that the infirmary records very probably underestimate the prevalence of most diseases, as during the summer months many of the convicts lived at a considerable distance from the prisons, especially the gangs engaged in felling and transporting timber, and so they would not have been able to attend a medical centre when sick.

Chekhov now goes on to describe the medical facilities on the island. There were

three main medical centres, one in each of the districts, Alexandrovsk, Rykovskoye, and Korsokoff. Each had a hospital and a clinic where out-patients were treated, and each had been allocated one physician. The infirmary at Alexandrovsk had 180 beds and comprised several buildings made of wooden logs. Chekhov passed a well-kept and gleaming dispensary, resplendent with a bust of Botkin and boxes full of medicinal bark and roots. The wards, however, were filthy, and the patients were neglected. One of them, a convict who had cut his throat, had been left with a wound from which air was escaping. Cheek-by-jowl with this open wound was a Chinese with gangrene; next to him on the left, a case of erysipelas; and, in the corner, another. The dressings that Chekhov saw looked exactly as if they had been walked on. He questioned the *feldschers* whom he found standing around, but they were surly and unco-operative, confirming Chekhov's already low opinion of these partly-educated medical assistants. In the consulting room for ambulant patients the doctor sat enclosed in a wooden lattice "like a banker's office, so that during the examination the patient never comes close to the doctor, who in the majority of cases examines him from a distance—whilst a soldier with a revolver stands at the door. A young boy is brought in with an abscess on his neck. It needs lancing. I ask for a scalpel. The medical assistant and two men jump up from their seats and run off; they return in a little while and hand me a scalpel. The instrument is blunt, but they tell me that is impossible because the blacksmith sharpened it recently. Again the assistant and men jump up and after two or three minutes they bring me another scalpel. I begin to make an incision, and this scalpel also proves to be blunt. I ask for carbolic acid; they bring it to me but they take their time. It is obvious that carbolic acid is seldom used. There is no basin, no cotton balls, no probes, no good scissors and not even enough water." Obviously this minor operation was a rather frustrating experience for the visiting physician.

The *total* inventory of instruments in all three infirmaries was as follows: one gynaecological set; one laryngoscopic set; two maximum thermometers, both broken; nine thermometers "for taking body temperatures", two broken; one thermometer "for taking high temperatures"; one trocar; three injectors, the needle broken in one; twenty-nine pewter syringes; nine scissors, two broken; thirty-four enema tubes; one drainage tube; one large mortar and pestle, with cracks; one razor strop; fourteen cupping glasses. Chekhov compared the annual budget with that of one of the newer hospitals in the Moscow area, the Zemstvo Hospital at Serpukhov which had been built recently to the latest specifications, and concluded that Sakhalin medicine was not only appalling but it was also very expensive, thus disarming those critics who would dismiss his strictures on the plea of public poverty.

After three months' exhausting work on the island, Chekhov decided to return home by sea, and on 13 October he sailed on the liner *St. Petersburg*. He had been given a warm send-off by a deputation of officials, who organized a farewell dinner, and by a less organized but obviously affectionately disposed group of convicts who insisted on carrying him in their cart from the dinner to the point of embarkation. The return journey was much more tranquil than his journey out, the ship calling at Vladivostock which appalled him by its poverty; Hong Kong, where he had a word of praise for the English colonial administration; and Ceylon, before returning through the Red Sea to Odessa.



Figure 1.
A. P. Chekhov, 1894. (*Reproduced by kind permission of the Society for Cultural Relations with the U.S.S.R.*)



Figure 2.
Convicts hauling logs on Sakhalin. Photograph by Chekhov.



Figure 3.
Leg-fetters being attached to convicts. Photograph by Chekhov.

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Back in Moscow, he set to work putting his mountains of notes and statistics together into a continuous account. He felt a sense of elation at having accomplished so much. "I am up to my chin in satisfaction and am so enchanted that I wish for nothing more and would not feel wronged if I were struck down by paralysis or carried off to the next world by dysentery."⁷ But the writing of *Sakhalin Island* did not come easily to him. He found the endless references and statistics tedious—and his groaning over being "forced for the sake of a single mangy line or other to rummage among papers for a full hour"⁸ must strike a familiar note to anyone acquainted with writing scientific papers. It took him over three years to complete the book which was serialised in part by the journal *Russkaya Mysl* (Russian Thought) and published in full in 1894, although one of the chapters had been separately published in 1891 to help the famine victims. Reading it today, the exemplariness of the writing, the systematic way in which he presents the statistics with a realistic view of their limitations, and above all the concise recommendations for action put forward with a hard-headed understanding of the practical and financial implications, are quite astonishing in a writer whose fame had been established in the field of imaginative fiction. It appears inexplicably to have been turned down for an M.D. dissertation. Chekhov had on more than one occasion sought material for a thesis and had spoken to his friend Rossolino, who was a lecturer in neuropathology at the university. Chekhov was anxious to be allowed to teach clinical medicine to the students and, above all, wished to make them aware of what it was like to be a patient. What such a course would have been like one can only guess, as he never obtained his further degree. Rossolino asked the Dean of the Medical Faculty about the possibility of Chekhov submitting his Sakhalin material for a doctoral thesis and was curtly told that this would not be possible.⁹ There were more tangible results to the publication of the book, however. After its publication official attention was drawn to the plight of the convicts and a government commission was sent out to the island in 1896 to investigate conditions and make recommendations. Chekhov was haunted by the thought of the children he had met on the island, and organized the dispatch of thousands of books to the Sakhalin schools.

It was an episode that he could rightly feel proud of, and although he made strangely little use of themes from this journey in his subsequent fiction and plays, he recognized that he had now paid his "debt to medicine" and could turn for a time to other pastures. He wrote to Suvorin, "I have rendered just tribute to learning and to that which the old writers used to call pedantry. And I rejoice because the rough garb of the convict will also be hanging in my wardrobe. Let it hang there."¹⁰

⁷ Anton Chekhov, *Letter to I. L. Leontyev-Shcheglov*, 10 December 1890.

⁸ Anton Chekhov, *Letter to A. S. Suvorin*, 27 May 1891.

⁹ Khizhniakov, *op. cit.*, note 5 above, p. 16.

¹⁰ Anton Chekhov, *Letter to A. S. Suvorin*, 2 January 1894.