

**SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND LITERARY
CAREER OF AUGUSTUS VON
KOTZEBUE; WITH THE JOURNAL OF
HIS EXILE TO SIBERIA. WRITTEN BY
HIMSELF. IN TWO VOLUMES. VOL. II**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649706259

Sketch of the Life and Literary Career of Augustus Von Kotzebue; With the Journal of His Exile to Siberia. Written by Himself. In two volumes. Vol. II by August von Kotzebue

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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AUGUST VON KOTZEBUE

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

A Collection

OF THE

MOST INSTRUCTIVE AND AMUSING

LIVES

EVER PUBLISHED,

WRITTEN BY THE PARTIES THEMSELVES.

**WITH BRIEF INTRODUCTIONS, AND COMPENDIOUS
SEQUELS CARRYING ON THE NARRATIVE TO THE
DEATH OF EACH WRITER.**

VOLUME X.—KOTZEBUE.

LONDON :

PRINTED FOR HUNT AND CLARKE,

YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

C. H. REYNELL, PRINTER, 45, BROAD STREET, GOLDEN SQUARE.

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THE
LIFE OF KOTZEBUE.

THE MOST REMARKABLE YEAR OF MY
LIFE, &c.

BUT what calmed my mind more than the hopes of remaining at Tobolsk, was an incident the counsellor now related. "A year ago," said he, "I was conducting a woman this way; we had already arrived near Casan, when a courier overtook us, and presented me with an order directing me to return with her immediately. Her case had been re-examined, and other information had been received, by which she was found to have been innocent." Scarcely had the counsellor related this anecdote, than I began to apply the adventure of the woman to my own situation.

"I, then, as well as she," said I, "may be found innocent."

"Of that," replied he, "there can be no doubt."

"And what did the woman say? What became of her?"

"She was very happy, as you may well think; she gave me her gold watch."

This even struck my imagination very forcibly, and I cannot describe with what magic it impressed my whole soul. I had incessantly the image of this woman before my eyes, joining her hands together, and lifting them up to heaven, shedding tears of joy, and eagerly taking her watch from her side; I followed her carriage as it was returning back, felt what

she must feel as she approached her home; I saw her discover her mansion, observed her children looking out at the window; saw her then drive up to the door, throw herself out of the carriage, and faint with delight in their arms. Yes, this coarse-minded man had, without being aware of it, found out the true remedy for my affliction; it was the balm that was best adapted to heal the deep wounds of my soul.

From the time I received this cheering information, I was every moment expecting the arrival of a courier. As soon as I heard the bells* sound behind us, my heart began to flutter in the most violent manner. My papers, thought I, have been examined, and I am found innocent: an order has been instantly issued, a courier on horseback has been dispatched after me, and he will render me the most happy of men. But I forgot, or strove to forget, that my papers were not taken at all into consideration in this affair. I still recurred to the idea of the kind courier pushing on his horse to overtake me; I calculated how many days my papers must be on the road, how long a time their examination would require, and I could have wished to have slackened our pace, that the courier might the sooner overtake us.

Three days had passed since we left the castle of Stockmannshoff, and I now strove to eat for the first time. Our people had devoured the Bologna sausage, and drunk all the Dantzic brandy; they had even swallowed the bread, the butter, and the cold meat, which M. de Beyer had ordered to be put into the carriage. I wished for some wine and coffee; we were not able to procure either the one or the other, and I had nothing to eat but some eggs. The nights were very cold, and the day not warm, on account of a piercing wind that was continually blowing. I was desirous to lay the cloak at my feet, which had been lately given me; but the courier had taken possession

* In Russia the post-horses wear bells about their necks.

of it, and likewise had put on my boots. I forebore, however, to claim any of these things, as my companions made use of what belonged to me without the least ceremony; and when they had once appropriated it, they considered it as a lawful prize. This conduct extended even to my purse: on the least thing being purchased for me, or any repairs being made to the carriage, I produced a note of twenty-five roubles; it was changed, and it was not common to return me the overplus; or if I ever obtained anything back, it was only a part. The counsellor at last grew short of money, and borrowed of me without ceremony. Taking it once into my head to refuse him, his whole manner of behaviour became so much altered, that I was forced at length to yield. I paid every expense on the road, and though I had taken nothing but bread, milk, and eggs, and sometimes a little roast veal, this journey cost me upwards of four hundred roubles, without reckoning the carriage. I paid for everything; these fellows bought brandy with my money, and never gave anything to the poor peasants in return for the provisions which they furnished us: an extortion of which these wretched people dared not even complain.

Here I cannot refrain from praising that hospitality which prevails among the Russian peasantry, and which is still more remarkable the farther we advance into the country. They are all anxious to receive strangers, and consider it a very great honour done them. They set before their guests everything they have, and are extremely delighted to see them relish the repast. I shall never forget the uneasiness of a female villager on seeing us approach, because she had no refreshments at hand. She ran about the cottage, and exclaimed, with tears in her eyes: "Here are three good little guests, and I have nothing to set before them:" the words, good little guests, made me smile. The peasants never demand any money in return for their hospitality; they refuse to be paid for bread,

quass, and such things; and for their poultry, cream, and eggs, they are always satisfied with whatever price is offered for them. As they never receive anything but curses from the soldiers and couriers who call on them, they take care not to acknowledge that they have any provisions in the house: I am however convinced, that a traveller would always find plenty when he accosts a Russian peasant in a civil manner. Whenever we wanted anything out of the common way, I undertook the business alone, and promising to pay for what we ordered, we were supplied with everything we desired; but the manner in which soldiers and couriers usually act is extremely tyrannical. "Where is the desätnick?" (an officer somewhat like the mayor and bailiff in Germany)—The desätnick presents himself with all humility.—"We want such and such things."—He makes excuses, and declares he has none of them. The depredators swear in a horrid manner, and threaten to beat him: he then sets out in quest of provisions, and if he find any, brings them; but as he is not to be paid for them, he procures the worst that are to be had. Were it not for this deeply-rooted abuse, travelling in Russia would be very agreeable; for these good and hospitable peasants, who are so easily won over, are everywhere to be met with. A thing of no value, a mere trifle, a piece of sugar given to their children, makes them instantly your friends. In this way I acted during the whole journey, and I had all the mothers on my side. I gave the preference to children about the size of two of my own daughters. Often, very often, the tears came into my eyes: "You have certainly children at home," the women would say to me.—"Six," replied I, with a heavy heart; "and the youngest not a year old." Then I was sure to read that compassion in their eyes, which is so easily understood. I would then get into my carriage, and they would bless me.

But let me waive these digressions and return to my