

The following is translation of the article from [Electronic Jewish Encyclopedia](#).

**Nikitin Victor Nikitich**; born about 1839, died in 1908 in St. Petersburg. Russian publicist, historian, and writer.

At the age of 9 he was conscripted as [cantonist](#) and sent to [Nizhny Novgorod](#). There he was baptized and given Russian name. His Jewish name and surname are unknown. Thanks to his neat handwriting, he became a clerk, then, in 1850, the home secretary for the general Kaufman, the manager of the office of the ministry of war.

He zealously educated himself and made a successful career. After the end of term of his military service in 1869, he served as one of directors of Petersburg Prison Committee, then as Officer For the Special Tasks at the ministry of Agriculture and State Properties.

In 1860<sup>th</sup>, during the time of prison reform, he attracted public attention by writing essays about prison life, and practices of Courts of Peace in *The Son of The Fatherland* ("Сын Отечества"), *The St. Petersburg News* ("Санкт-Петербургские ведомости"), *Court's Courier* ("Судебный вестник"), and other periodicals.

Nikitin is the author of fundamental researches:

- *The Overview of the Prisons of St. Petersburg, And Regulations Pertaining To The Same*, 1871;
- *Prisons and Exile: Historical, Legal, Administrative and Everyday Life of The Convicts, Persons On The Way To The Places Of Imprisonment, Their Children, And Persons Released From Imprisonment* (1560 - 1880);

and others that created the basis for history and sociology of the prison system in Russia.

Nikitin was the first to describe the fate and everyday life of cantonists in autobiographical work *Long-suffering*, published in 1872 and 1896, and in the novel *Life is Harder Than Crossing A Field: The Tales Of A Discharged Soldier*, 1873, The Jewish Library, vol. IV; published as a separate book in 1876; (abridged version *Children's Hard Labor* was published in Leningrad in 1926).

He researched almost untouched before him in Russia problems of the Jewish agricultural colonies in serious, based on archival data, works

- *Jews – Farmers: Administration and Everyday Life of Colonies in Khersonskaya and Ekaterinoslavskaya Guberniya in 1807 – 1887* (*Dawn* magazine, 1881 – 1886, published as a separate book in 1887);
- *The Jewish Settlements of North-Western and South-Western Guberniyas in 1835 – 1890* (1894);

These works were highly praised by Russian, Polish, German, and French press.

His works of fiction were published in separate books:

- *Greed: The Tales of A Restless Man* (1875);
- *The Stories and Essays* (1875);

and in Russian-Jewish press, e.g. *Happiness Seeker: The Tales of An Outcast* (*The Jewish Library*, 1875, vol. V.).

His *Memoirs* were partially published in *The Russian Antiquity* magazine in 1906 – 1907.