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Democrat Watchman.

Belleville, Pa., Feb. 5, 1897.

Moscow.

(Continued from last week.)

We decided to dine at Hotel de Moscow, where the high-toned Moscovite merchants dine, noted for its exquisite cuisine. The proprietors of it are a corporation of waiters and cooks three hundred in number.

The tartar waiters were all uniformed in white trousers and very long white sack coats (the roushka) with purple colored belt at the waist. The dining room was a model of decoration, in frescos representing scenes in the "Life of the Tsar," the Russian National Opera. Before dinner a Russian takes several appetizers. These are generally placed on a side table, and consist of several glasses of vodka, some caviar, a morsel or two of salt herring or perhaps a piece of ham, some radishes, onions, olives and cheese. After that he commences a ten course dinner. If ladies are in the party they drink vodka, like the men, and smoke cigarettes. They make short work of a glass of vodka, no water with it, no sipping, presto change, the ruby lips open, "now you see it, now you don't."

Feeding in Russia belongs to the Art and science department, and when the post-prandial, inflated philosophy begins to flow, when they all make speeches at once, you view that the Kingdom of the Tsar is really a realm of epicures and orators. The French think they know how to prepare a good dinner.

It is not a lost art in Russia. I tried their throat scorching vodka and found it atrociously bad. To try my Russian on the descendant of Genghis Khan I ordered water and he brought me mustard, and we left the restaurant then to our philosopher Pyotr. The Russian wines from Bessarabia we found good, the French being out of our reach, selling for two or three times their price in France. There was an immense organ in the dining room which Pyotr says cost 60,000 roubles. I called for Yankee Doodle and after much consulting the repertoire the head waiter acknowledged with many apologies that the machine could not play it but offered to grind out God save the Queen which Editor Harrity refused to listen to! The Russian National Hymn, Lohengrin, Carmen were, however, played majestically.

Editor Harrity wanted to see the Russian prisons where are confined criminals such as are sent to Siberia.

We went our cards in to the Director in Chief of the prisons of Moscow, and he consented to receive us after having inspected our passports. I thought he was particularly pleased with mine for he lingered longer over it as a *connoisseur* does over an old *papyrus*. I was honored by being elected spokesman and I addressed the Director in French, as I used to do when introducing Mayor Stewart, of Philadelphia, to the visiting French Admirals on board the French War ships, in port.

I told him we were all journalists, that I did not believe the horrible accounts written about Russian prisons, that we were pleased with Russia and that, sympathetically disposed, we wanted to write the truth about the prisons.

He replied that the request was unusual, that many attempts were made to secure admittance by finesse or fraudulent representations but that we had so squarely stated our object that he would give us permission. But, he added "there is not much to see now, we have just sent away fifteen hundred and navigation being now closed no more will be sent away until spring." The prison with a jaw-breaking name which I will not inflict on you is a low, yellow painted, immense building surrounded by vast open spaces—there is room to spare in Russia—we are at once admitted and by polite, uniformed officials shown through the whole establishment. They showed us where the men slept, how they were compelled to bathe, the arrangements for heating, where bread was baked, soup and meats were prepared, the sanitary arrangements, the tailors and bony makers at work. We tasted the rations. Then they showed us the prisoners. They had half the head shaved, were nearly all of dark complexion, thin, nervous, wiry, strong men, a villainous looking lynx-eyed lot. At the approach of their keeper they all stood up like a frightened animal in his lair and wild-eyed stared at us. Their crimes were principally murder, arson and anarchistic revolt against constituted authority. There were about 900 men. The women, in a separate part of the building, were more desperate, wicked and abandoned looking than the men. There were over 300 of them mostly accused or condemned for murdering their husbands or rivals, or for house burning. One of them, a wild eyed Gypsy woman suddenly sank on her knees and commenced an impassioned, delirious prayer for protection, deliverance.

About twenty boys, some bright eyed, many fellows aged from twelve to fifteen were there. The keeper explained they were incorrigibles and would be exported with all the others, in the spring to penal establishments in Siberia. One little fellow ran out of the ranks caught me around the legs imploring, with upturned face, in an unknown tongue, Harry, whose recollections of prison life were recent and vivid burst into tears. The keeper had to release the little fellow's grasp by force. Everything I saw was humane and hygienic.

The prisoners take exercise every day in the open air, solitary confinement is not practised except to protect the others from a violent prisoner. The food appeared to

be better and the prison cleaner than a Spanish boarding house. Harry said it was in every respect superior and more humane than English prisons. The prisoners are taught daily to read and write etc. There may have been concealed knouts, and thumb-screws; we did not see them.

After a judicious distribution of *back-sheesh* and an exchange of cards we returned to inspect an orphan asylum 4500 inmates, maintained from the tax on playing cards, which is a government monopoly.

Faithful Pyotr explains that in the prison we had just inspected there are sometimes five thousand prisoners, and, headed, by way of sermonizing the effete civilization of the West, we Russians believe it is more humane to let a murderer live and repent (in Siberia) than to hang, strangle or electrocute them as do the nations of the occident.

We drove to Petrovsky and Sokolniki parks at the doors of Moscow, where, in what appear to be vast artificial forests, delightful villas with vast verandas peep out from a maze of vines, bushes and trees.

Here in the torrid summers the rich live in a public park, in their own houses, built on land owned by the government. Petrovsky park is the great favorite. Here is the Royal Castle and opposite in the Chodinsky Pola, is the pavilion from which the Tsar in the recent coronation ceremonies, showed himself to the populace. This field is the scene of the great disaster in which it is estimated fifteen thousand persons lost their lives.

It is a vast, waste place, drill ground for the military, in which great, deep holes had been dug to get out sand and numerous wells had been sunk. The government had arranged as a part of the Coronation Ceremony booths before which the moujiks passed to receive a present from the Tsar of an enameled drinking goblet and a handkerchief printed with national devices. There were perhaps one million people in this field. So great was the crowd, the crush, the desire to get to the booths, that those behind pushing with an irresistible force, of perhaps 500,000 people forced those near the wells and sand holes into them, where under a mass of struggling humanity they were buried alive.

Editor Harrity returned to St. Petersburg and, we part with many reciprocal protestations of regard, he offering me a sub-entership in the agricultural department, on his paper!

He saw my competence in farming from my superior manner of digging potatoes on Sparrow Hill.

Pyotr and I continue our excursions, I want to learn all about Russia. One day picking our way over the rough stony streets we espied a procession and Pyotr, who by the way is a brilliant barrister, informed me that the procession was escorting the Iberian Virgin. Oh! let us wait and see the girl. But protested Pyotr it's an image—an icon. The Iberian Icon was being transported in an antediluvian, six horse vehicle escorted by greasy, dirty, long-haired, unkempt, bearded monks. Sick people and those faltering in the faith send for it and have it brought to the house. Families have it brought to the house once a year to tranquilize their minds and insure their lot in the great unknown, *die Everigkeit*.

For the service of the Icon one to a thousand or more roubles are paid, according as one is rich or poor, and in proportion to the imagined impending danger. Pyotr proposed that we go and see it assuring me that when the genuine, miraculous virgin was out calling, dispensing her blessings, she is replaced by a duplicate, an exact counterfeit, which the faithful worship with as much devotion as the genuine. The habit of this palladium of Moscow is in a little chapel, sparkling with light, in the Red Square, at the entrance to the Kremlin, at the Holy Gate. It looks like all the rest of the icons, a long, dark, oval face, Chinese eyes without color or expression. It is made of wood. In the diadem is a mass of rubies, emeralds and diamonds of great value. The crown and robes of the Iberian Virgin and the Infant Jesus are of massive, solid gold. It takes four men to carry this faith-inspiring, superstition fostering Icon-Idol.

The faithful come and kiss it, touching their lips where millions of humid lips have touched before, regardless of the teachings of the microbial theory.

The Russian has a vodka-proof stomach! Two monks guarding the virgin chant and sprinkle the faithful with holy water. They have long, greasy hair, low foreheads, cunning eyes and sensual lips. They look like brigands.

Icon is a Greek word meaning, God, shrine.

The Icon plays a great role in Russia, it is an ornament you see everywhere. It is ever present. It is in your room at your hotel, in the dining room, in the—in every room of every business house, in the cafes, in the banks, lottery dealers and in the large business houses there is a lamp burning directly in front of it. It is simply a religious picture with much gilt about it that has been blessed by a pope and therefore brings holiness to the house. If it would only bring the twin attribute of holiness. The picture may be of the Holy Virgin, of Jesus Christ or of any of the saints; they all possess the same specific virtue, from the Icon which costs twenty kopeks to the Iberian Virgin, which is estimated worth half a million of roubles. Is business bad? Send for the Iberian Virgin, fashionable weddings are not celebrated without her, her presence is inseparable from the last sad scenes at the death bed.

I ask Pyotr what the principal differences are between the Roman Catholic church, (for which I have great admiration), and the Russian, and he explains

that; in the Russian church a man must be married before he can become a priest and if his wife dies he must go to a cloister; that the Russians accept or acknowledge no pope; they do not sell indulgences or pardon for sins; but the rituals are not printed in Latin but in the local language of the people.

These explanations of Pyotr I offer for the appreciation of my readers without comment. I am simply a *chick among them takin' notes*.

Now said my faithful Pyotr, looking in his handkerchief for a dry place to blow his nose, here I dare say is a curiosity for you and he showed me a large public square an oval, iron and fire brick frame. Here is where in the severe cold weather great fires are built and the poor huddle, crouch, lie around them because they cannot keep warm at home. Several of these are built in the different poor quarters of the city.

The thermometer marks frequently 59 degrees below zero and remains at times at 45° during weeks. Snow covers the ground 200 days in the year. The mortality of Moscow is the highest in Europe, 37 per thousand. The public reports show that every week an average of 900 persons are picked up in the streets of Moscow helplessly inebriated on fiery throat scorching vodka. I have now and then, been the owner of a colossal, delicious thirst, but if I were condemned to drink vodka, I would prefer drowning myself in Apollinaris.

So great has the vice of drunkenness become in Russia, that the government has taken the matter of the sale of liquors and wines in hand and has in more than two thirds of the empire made it a government monopoly, by purchasing the distilleries which the state operates, and controls the sale of all spirits through their own officials. This shuts up the cross-roads dram-shops and compels the moujiks to buy a bottle—a sealed—original package. The fate of cigars, tobacco and cigarettes has long been controlled by the government and the monopoly is so stringent that a single cigar or cigarette cannot be purchased! You can however buy a sample of two in a neat little box closed by the internal revenue wrapper, showing that the tax has been paid, but it must be sold unopened, under heavy penalty. A neat glass front to the little box allows you to see the cigars.

The money in circulation in Russia is silver, bankbills and copper kopeks, the rouble, fluctuating in value, between 50 and 60 cents, being the unity, divided into hundredths called kopeks. Gold is never seen and to obtain it you must pay a premium of 50 per cent. A curiosity in the way of money is a bank bill, (of denominations 50, 100 & 200 roubles) about seven inches long by five wide, with eight coupons, two at each end and two each side, bearing interest at the rate of 4 per cent, payable semi-annually. They are good for the payment of all debts and duties on imports, excepting where gold is stipulated. These bills circulate freely from hand to hand, the accumulated interest being calculated and agreed upon between payer and payee. Is this not the basis of Senator Puffer's socialistic-financial bill in the Senate about two years ago? There are 200,000,000 roubles of these bills in circulation. They run for four years and can be renewed by reissue.

That the Sanitary Inspection Committee of Moscow is not a sinecure was shown by a noteworthy occurrence. A fashionable cafe-conditere where tea, cake, coffee, wine, delicatessen, etc., are served to consumers was inspected and by them declared unclean. The police ordered it closed and the customers who were sipping their *tschai* or wine or savouring the delicious pasteten were put out in the street.

I left Moscow with regret as one separates from an interesting friend or *gentille* mistress. But I must not delay for soon the Volga would be ice-bound and all Russia buried in the shroud of snow. To Nijni Novgorod, then, I travel. One night in a sleeping car. The next morning I was somewhat astonished to see a moujik lying prone on the floor before my compartment. Volka! In my next I will write about Nijni and my 36 hours trip on the Volga to Rybinsk.

From ice-bound Russia to sun-kissed Italy what a transition! Roses and violets from *Tuscum* are selling in the streets of Rome for cinque centesimi. Here, at Naples, I see old Vesuvius spewing red-hot lava. The sun is so deliciously hot it warms the blood in your veins.

As I saw again the ruins of eternal Rome those potent reminders of the epoch makers Caesar, Cicero, Caligula, Augustus, Nero, Anthony and Cleopatra, I regretted that in those days had not lived an Edison with his phonograph, to perpetuate their voices in human speech; or the Cinematograph to show us how Nero danced and fiddled gloating over burning Rome. St. Peter's statue in St. Peter's church has a new foot, oui Monsieur, the faithful had, by oxidation kissed away his great toe.

From under the Citrons, *Kennt du das Land wo die Citronen bluh'n?* Enjoying a surfeit of *Maccheroni*, *Poleuta* and *Asi Spumanti*, Major Hastings, the Governor's long whiskered brother, wishes his friends and readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

An Ingenious Youth. Freddie—"What do you want to catch the fly for?" Little Johnnie—"Sister has just made herself a glass of lemonade, and I'm awful dry."

On With the New. She—"I was madly in love with you in those old days." He—"And have you fully recovered?" She—"Oh, yes; I have a bicycle now."

Truth.

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—Oklahoma has an easy divorce law of which a good many parties who have grown weary of their matrimonial ties have taken advantage. Those who regard marriage ties lightly are apt to regard other obligations lightly too, and a large number of those who have obtained divorce decrees in Oklahoma have skipped the territory without paying the court costs.

And hereby hangs a tale. The Oklahoma divorce law contains a section to the effect that no divorce granted in the territory shall be valid until the costs are all paid. Those who skipped the territory without paying the costs are still married, and those who have married again are bigamists just the same as they would have been had they never sought an Oklahoma divorce.

The upshot of it all seems to be that an Oklahoma divorce doesn't divorce unless the parties applying for divorces pay their debts to court and lawyers. The Oklahoma divorce law isn't as easy as it seemed to be. The revenue clause in it was probably the chief inspiration for it passage, and the Oklahoma lawyers and courts don't propose to be cheated out of their fees.

—For more than a hundred years Shakers have been studying the remedial properties of plants. They have made many discoveries, but their greatest achievement was made last year. It is a cordial that contains already digested food and is a digester of food. It is effective in removing distress after eating, and creates an appetite for more food so that eating becomes a pleasure. Pale, thin people become plump and healthy under its use. It arrests the wasting of consumption.

There never has been such a step forward in the cure of indigestion as this Shaker Cordial. Your druggist will be glad to give you a little book descriptive of the product.

Give the babies Laxol, which is Castor Oil made as palatable as honey.

—In Dantzie alone during last year nearly one hundred tons of amber were turned to the smoker's purpose in pipes and cigarette-holders. This, of course, is amber of the familiar yellow variety. Sicilian amber, on the other hand, shows a wonderful variety of tints, from ruby red to turquoise blue, as may best be seen in the private collection of Arnold Balfour, an American of fortune, who has made colored ambers his hobby, has written a book about them and has recently been on a visit to London, carrying with him a number of his finest specimens.

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—The death of Sir Isaac Pitman in London removes a man who was a benefactor of mankind. He was practically the inventor of modern shorthand, an invention which is almost indispensable to-day in the Courts and larger businesses. Pitman was a great worker. For nearly seventy years he spent from ten to fourteen hours a day at his desk, with scarcely a vacation. Though not the actual inventor of the system of phonetic characters he developed it and applied it practically in such a way that its present perfection is due almost entirely to his efforts. His brother, Ben Pitman, visited the United States and introduced the system here.

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—Congress goes on appropriating money for public buildings as lavishly as though the treasury was overflowing. The Senate has just passed a bill for a new Custom House in New York City, to cost \$5,000,000.

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