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THE EASTER FESTIVAL IN RUSSIA.

In the old romantic city of Moscow, and almost 'cheek by jowl' with the wonderful Kremlin, stands what is perhaps the most remarkable cathedral in the world—the cathedral of St. Basil. Nine cupolas of nine different colours, striped or checked like a Highlander's plaid, lift their gay domes toward the gray Russian sky, while rainbow windows, green pillars, red arches, and yellow pinnacles help to complete a veritable harlequin monument to Ivan the Cruel, who erected it, and who, it is said, was so well pleased with his achievement that he put out the eyes of the poor architect who planned it in order that he might never build such another.

Strange as it may seem, this fantastic church is a great favourite with the people, and thither, on Easter eve, shortly before midnight, flock many inhabitants of the royal city, filling it completely, and overflowing into the great square in front. Here a fur-wrapped nobleman stands side by side with the peasant in his sheepskin; high-born dames brush skirts with the wife of the lowliest *muzhik*; distinguished generals, grey-coated soldiers, tradespeople, boys and girls, for once meet together on common ground, and one and all bear waxen tapers in their hands.

The silence of hushed expectancy broods over the motley throng, but suddenly the ponderous bell of Ivan the Great tolls twelve solemn notes, which, in a twinkling, are taken up and echoed and re-echoed from every brazen tongue in the whole city, and, it may be, throughout all Russia. The firing of guns adds to the joyful din, cannons roar, and every man, woman, and child lights his or her candle, thus forming a truly fine illumination. With an imposing church ceremonial, then, the morn of Resurrection is ushered in, concluding with the blessing of the Easter cakes, which are placed in long rows, each

one being adorned with a blazing taper, and sprinkled with holy water.

Friends and acquaintances salute one another with a kiss on each cheek, and the greeting: '*Christus vosces!* *Christus vosces ihu mortue!*' (Christ is risen! Christ is risen from the dead!) To which the immediate response is, '*Vo istinay vosces!*' (He is risen indeed!)

Very funny would it look to us to see aged men and officials gravely rubbing their beards together! But it is imperative. No one is excused from the *Pascha* salutation, not even the Czar himself, who for a full hour and a half is kept busy in his Winter Palace at St. Petersburg kissing clergy and council, Senators and Generals, to say nothing of the numerous officers of his army, navy, and household. Poor custom-ridden man! Do you not think he must rejoice when the hour of three puts an end to this kissing reception?

A rather amusing story is told of the Czar Nicholas. It seems that one Easter morning he greeted the guard at the palace door with the customary greeting, 'Christ is risen!'

To which the soldier unexpectedly replied, 'Not at all, your Imperial Majesty.'

'And what do you mean by that?' demanded the astonished monarch so very sternly that the man was much alarmed.

He, however, bravely explained that being a Hebrew, his Jewish faith forbade his admitting any such resurrection. Probably he expected to lose his head or be sent to Siberia after this acknowledgment; but, luckily for him, Nicholas was liberal, and admiring the fellow's sincerity and boldness in sticking to his principles, instead of depriving him of his head or his liberty, presented him with a handsome gift 'to remember Easter by.'

Numberless eggs as well as kisses are exchanged between friends at the glad *Pascha* feast, and extremely

gorgeous affairs some of these are, while the Russian young folks—who have hardly recovered from the effects of Palm Sunday, when the lazy ones were whipped out of bed with a stout bundle of twigs, and the good ones were rendered happy by lovely palm branches of silver or gold filigree hung with flowers, toys, and trinkets—make themselves very merry over their curious Easter games.

And thus, with a flourish of lights, strident noise, cordial greetings, and many a curious national custom, the Easter tide is kept in the cold Northern realm of the imperial Czar.

A CONVICT'S AERIAL SHIP.

In the Kings County penitentiary, says the *New York Recorder*, there is confined a man who claims that he has invented an aerial machine proved by many tests to be perfect in every respect. He has written to President Cleveland and the Secretary of the Interior, Hoke Smith, asking them to see that the Government give it a trial, and, if satisfactory, that the Government purchase the right to manufacture the machine. His ideas concerning its value are inflated. For the right to manufacture he asks the modest sum of £5,000,000.

This man is Victor L. Ochs. He is 35 years old, and he is a prisoner for endeavouring to create a revolution in Mexico about a year ago. He is of medium height, well built, and finely educated, apparently speaking French, Italian, German, and Spanish with much fluency. By birth he is a Mexican; but soon after he was born his parents settled in Texas, and he is an American citizen.

The value of the machine to the Government, in the estimation of its inventor, rests in its utility for the purposes of warfare. He claims that one of his air ships will be more effective than eighty battle-ships and will travel through the air at the rate of 300 miles an hour which, if possible, would be faster than any gale that ever swept the surface of the earth and fast enough to disrupt the machine itself.



D. Wilson, photo. Musterton.

THE WAIRARAPA HOUNDS.

HAROLD WELCH (Huntsman), on his well-known Roan Hunter 'Two Up,' in the centre. WHIPS.—H. D. WATSON on 'Kenmore,' and HERBERT WELCH on 'Bamboo.'