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RUSSIAN COUSIN

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Our Little Russian Cousin

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The Little Cousin Series

Each volume illustrated with six or more full-page plates in tint. Cloth, 12mo, with decorative cover, per volume, 60 cents.

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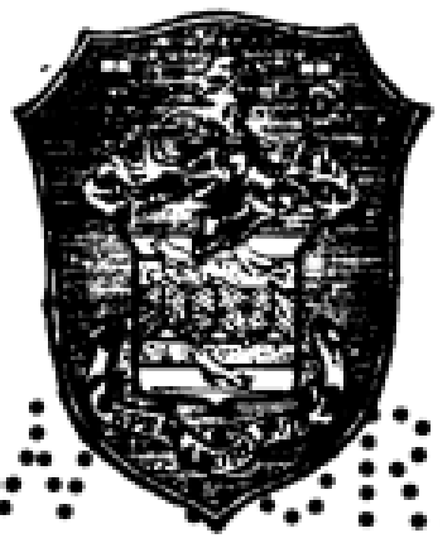
Our Little Russian Cousin

By

Mary Hazelton Wade

Illustrated by

L. J. Bridgman



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Tenth Impression, December, 1906.

Colonial Press:
Electrotyped and Printed by C. H. Simonds & Co.
Boston, Mass., U. S. A.

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Preface

A LARGE country, called Russia, lies in the eastern part of Europe. It stretches from the icy shores of the Arctic Ocean, on the north, to the warm waters of the Black Sea, on the south.

Many of the children of this great country have fair skins and blue eyes. They belong to the same race as their English and American cousins, although they speak a different language.

Some of them live in palaces, and have everything that heart could desire; but a vast number of them are very poor, and their parents are obliged to work hard to keep the grim wolf, hunger, away from the door.

Russia, as a nation, is very young, as compared with many others. She is still in her

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childhood. Perhaps it is because of this that her people do not enjoy as much freedom as ourselves.

A few years ago the Emperor of Russia spoke some words to which the people of the western world listened with surprise and delight. He said, "I wish there were peace between all countries, and that we could settle our differences with each other without fighting." These wise words did a great deal of good. The emperor, without doubt, meant what he said. He did wish heartily that wars should be at an end. He has not felt able, however, to carry out his ideas of peace, for at this very moment he is at war with the people of Japan.

Let us hope that this war will soon be over, and that the nation to which our Russian Cousin belongs will become as truly free and wise as she is now large and powerful.

MALDEN, MASS., *May 1904.*

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Our Little Russian Cousin

Petrovna is a dainty little floweret of the cold lands far away. She is your little Russian cousin. Her home is in the largest country of this great round ball, the Earth. How fair are her cheeks, how blue her eyes, and what long, beautiful, yellow hair she has! Her hands are so white and soft and plump, I know you would like to squeeze them.

She is very gentle and ladylike. Her mamma has taught her that is the right way to behave. Yet she is full of fun, and laughs at every joke that her brother Ivan makes. They have great sport together, these two children. Petrovna is ten, and Ivan eight years old.

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Sometimes they play they are grown up, just as you do. Then Petrovna puts on her mother's gown with a long train, and Ivan dresses himself up like a soldier. Petrovna "makes believe" that she is a princess at the court of the Emperor. She powders her hair, and puffs it on the top of her head, and places feathers in it. Ivan cuts shining ornaments out of a sheet of tin and fastens them on his coat. He pretends that these were given him for bravery in battle.

These little children live in a fine city near the sea. Its name is St. Petersburg. The streets look very much like those of Chicago and New York. There are many grand palaces, however, and the churches are quite different from ours.

Perhaps you would like to know why St. Petersburg was built. A long time ago Peter the Great was the ruler of Russia. There was no large city in the country near the sea at

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that time. Peter said, "If my country is to be powerful, I must have a city that is near the coast and that looks toward the rest of Europe."

Peter went to the shores of the river Neva, near the Baltic Sea. The land was low and marshy. That did not matter to him. He sent out an order for workmen. Great numbers of men came to the spot he had chosen, to prepare it for streets and houses. Thousands of piles must first be driven into the marshy soil. Millions of stones must be brought to fill it up before streets could be laid. It was such unhealthful work that, before the city was finished, hundreds of the poor workmen died of fever. But the work was done, and Peter the Great went to live there.

He brought all his court with him. He made the place his capital. It is now the most important city of Russia, and one of

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the largest in the world. It is often called the "Czar's Window," because he is said to look out over Europe from this place. (I forgot to tell you that the Emperor of Russia is called the Czar.)

Let us come back to Petrovna and Ivan, who are just going out on the river to skate. Their home is almost a palace, it is so big and grand. Their father is a merchant. He buys tea from the East and sells it to the people of his own country. He has grown so rich that he owns a fine house in the city, in which the family live during the long, cold winter. They go to another home on an island of the river Neva in the summer-time.

Let us look into the big drawing-room, where papa and mamma entertain their friends in the evening. How high the walls are! At one side of the room is an immense porcelain stove. It looks somewhat like a tomb. It is big enough for a play-house for Petrovna

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and Ivan. A big wood fire is built in the stove on cold winter mornings. When it has burnt down to glowing coals, the chimney is closed up, and port-holes from the stove are opened. Then the heat rushes out into the room. How close the air becomes! You do not wonder at it when you look around and notice that there are three sets of windows at each casing. There is only one pane in the whole room which can be opened to let in the outside air. The Russians are afraid of having the cold enter their houses. They have enough of it out-of-doors during at least six months of the year.

What is that strange-looking vessel on the side table? It is of shining copper. The maid polishes it very often, as it is used every evening by papa and mamma. They call it a "samovar," and no Russian home is complete without one. You probably can't guess the reason, so I will have to tell you.

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You must understand that the people of this far-away land are great tea-drinkers. Tea in the morning, tea at noon, tea at night, and tea between-whiles. They like it fresh, too. Tea always tastes best and is least harmful when drunk as soon as it is made. So these good Russians must have something near them on which to heat the water. In the middle of the samovar is a cylinder in which hot coals are placed, and the water is heated around this cylinder.

The boiling water is taken out whenever it is wanted and poured on the tea in papa's tumbler or mamma's cup. No milk, if you please, to suit their taste, and no sugar *in* the tea. They prefer to take a lump of the very hardest sugar in their fingers and nibble it as they swallow the beverage they like so much.

A slice of lemon is often put in the tumbler with the tea. People in our own country have begun to copy this custom, and drink

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what we call "Russian tea." No doubt you have heard of it.

Let us turn to the wall and notice the large picture of the Madonna and the infant Jesus hanging there. A lamp is burning in front of it. If Petrovna comes into the room now, she will go to that picture at once and cross herself before it. Every devout Russian has at least one religious picture in his house, and will always pay it reverence when he enters.

If a thief should happen to come into Petrovna's house in the night, he would not dare to steal in the presence of such a picture, however brave he might be. He would first hang a cloth over the painting. Then he would go on with his wicked work without further thought.

There is a large organ in this grand drawing-room. It is played almost automatically. (A big word, isn't it?) Petrovna and Ivan have music boxes here, as the Russians are

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very fond of music. I fear they are rather lazy, though, for many of their musical instruments do not depend on the skill of those who play upon them. They make what we call mechanical music.

There are several little tables about the room, as Petrovna's mamma and papa are fond of playing cards with their friends. Indeed, you need not be surprised at seeing the rich merchant playing a game at his store any hour of the day. He smokes and drinks tea while he plays. And mamma does the same. Yes, my dears, the women of Russia, of your own white race, roll their dainty cigarettes and smoke them as commonly as the men do. Petrovna will doubtless do this very thing when she is older. When she comes to America she will probably be much surprised to see only men practising the habit.

Petrovna and Ivan go to bed much later than their cousins across the Atlantic, while

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BABY BROTHER AND HIS NURSE.

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their parents often sit up till three or four o'clock in the morning. Such a gay city as they live in! Balls and parties, theatres and sleigh-rides, night after night in the winter season. Of course people cannot rise early for breakfast if they are awake nearly all night. It is not often that Petrovna's papa goes to his store before ten or eleven o'clock in the morning. The whole city looks sleepy and dismal before that time. The sky is gray and dreary, and the fog is thick and damp. The stores are closed, and few people are to be seen.

But it is dinner-time. Here come the children with their skates on their arms, and with them are the nurse and their baby brother. He has been out for a ride in his little sleigh. He is wrapped up so tightly you can hardly see his fat cheeks and the dimple in his chin.

As nurse takes off her hood and cape, I want you to notice her dress. It is the

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national costume of Russia. She wears a loose white undergarment with full short sleeves. It is low in the neck. She has a dark skirt over this. The band is fastened around her body under the arms, while straps over the shoulders hold it in place. I must not forget to mention a large white apron, which is fastened by a belt around her waist. Nor would she think herself dressed without her ear-rings and bead necklace. The moment her hood is taken off she puts a high cap of bright-coloured muslin on her head. This is always worn in the house to show she is a married woman.

And here come papa and mamma. Papa is a fine-looking man with a long beard. Mamma looks good and kind, and has a sweet voice, but she could not be called pretty.

Dinner is waiting, and all have fine appetites. As they enter the dining-room they do not sit down to the table at once. One by

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one they go up to a sideboard where all sorts of cold dishes are served. There are dried beef, smoked salmon, cheese, radishes, and other relishes of which Russians are fond. Each one helps himself to some of these dainties. They take small portions, however, for this is what they call the zakushka, or appetiser. You need not try to pronounce it unless you wish. It is to make them hungrier for the solid meal, which comes afterward.

How these people do eat! First there is cabbage soup, made of chopped cabbage which has been boiled with a piece of meat. Petrovna first dips her spoon into a dish of barley beside her plate, and then into the soup. She is very fond of this national dish. The richest and the poorest people, even the Czar himself, eat it continually and never tire of it. The only difference is that the poor peasant can seldom afford the meat which improves its flavour so much.

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Next comes a pie made of fish and raisins. It seems rather queer to us to have these two things cooked together, but our Russian cousins think it is very good. And now a roast lamb is served with salted cucumbers, followed by buckwheat pudding, and ices, for dessert.

Last, but not least, the samovar is set on the table, and cup after cup of delicious tea is drunk by the family.

I forgot to tell you that sour cream was served with the soup, and papa and mamma drank some cordial while they ate of the zakushka. This was to encourage their appetites still more. But I certainly can't see what need there was. They ate and ate, and drank tea and still more tea, till it seemed as if they would be made ill.

It is said that Russians are among the largest eaters in the world. If this be so, I do not wonder that so many of them grow stout. This makes me think of a story I

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read the other day. Perhaps you would like to hear it. There was a certain soldier in Russia who ate so much that his friends used to lay wagers with strangers as to the quantity he could eat at a single time. His friends generally won, too. It happened one day that the colonel of the regiment made a large wager that the man could eat a whole sheep at one meal. The cook prepared the sheep in many ways, in order to encourage the man's appetite. Of one part he made a pie, of another a stew, of still another a hash, and so on.

The man swallowed one preparation after another until the sheep was almost eaten, when he looked up and said, "If you give me so much zakushka, I am afraid I will not be able to eat the sheep when it is brought in." You understand the joke, of course, when you remember that the zakushka is made of the side dishes one eats before the regular meal

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is begun. Of course the colonel won his bet.

Besides the cabbage soup, there are still others of which the Russians are very fond. One of these is made with cold beer with pieces of cucumber, meat, and red herrings floating about in it, as well as bits of ice. Still another is made of a fish called the sterlet, which is found only in the Volga, the principal river of Russia. Then there are trout soup, perch soup, and several other kinds of which you probably never heard.

But now let us leave the dinner-table and go out into Petrovna's yard. At one end of it there is a high platform. It is built at least twenty feet above the ground. Steps lead up to it on one side, while from the other a long slant reaches down to a frozen pond below. This slant looks as though it were solid shining ice. But underneath there are stout boards to keep it smooth and

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unbending. They are fastened to a very strong framework. Now guess, if you please, why this ice hill, as it is called, was made in Petrovna's back yard. To amuse her and her little brother, of course.

They are very fond of coasting. They like it even better than skating. So their thoughtful papa hired two workmen. They made the framework and laid great blocks of ice close together upon the slant. They then poured water over the ice to make it perfectly smooth. The cold winds blew upon it. It froze solid in a few minutes, and not a crack in the ice can be seen. It will last all winter, for in Russia the warm days, that we sometimes have in January, are scarcely known.

Petrovna and Ivan take their sleds every morning as soon as lessons are over, and away they run up the steps of their ice hill. Hurrah! Now hold your breath, for away they go, faster and faster, down the hill and over the pond

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below. How they shout with delight! They travel more quickly than any express train you ever saw.

I am afraid you will be a little envious of their fun and wish you had a private ice hill like theirs. The best part of it is that these little Russians don't have to wait for a good snow-storm to make coasting for them. It is always on hand and made to order.

Petrovna has a hill made of polished wood at her summer home on the island. It cost a good deal of money, but her papa thought, "What does that matter? The children like coasting better than any other sport, so coasting they shall have."

There are public ice-hills in several parts of the city. Both old and young people are very fond of coasting. The Emperor himself has a slide of beautiful mahogany in his palace. It has been polished until it shines like one of the finest pieces of furniture.

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Petrovna and Ivan do not go to school as some of the poor children do. They have a French governess. She teaches them to read, write, and spell. She also gives them lessons in French and German. She is a fine scholar, and Petrovna's papa and mamma respect her greatly. She is treated like one of the family and meets all of their friends. Petrovna's mamma wished her children's governess to be a Frenchwoman, because French is generally spoken in good society in Russia. Of course she can teach them to pronounce it better than a person of their own country could.

Besides the two languages they are studying now, Ivan and Petrovna will soon take Latin, and perhaps Italian. Well-educated people of Russia often speak several different languages. But there are thousands, yes, millions of the poor in their land who cannot read their own language or even write their

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own names! The schools are not as common, you see, as in this country, but they are growing better every year.

By the way, I must tell you that there are more than forty different tongues spoken in the various parts of the great country of Russia. If you learned to speak the Russian language in one part of it, you might not understand what the people say in a different part.

In Petrovna's yard there is a little house close to the main one. If she should let you look in, you would see a large brick oven at the end of the room. Wide shelves are fastened one above another on the side of the wall. You can't imagine what this place is used for, so I shall certainly have to tell you. It is the family bath-house. I can hear you cry, "What a bath-house! I don't see any tub, or, in fact, *anything* that looks like a bath-house." But the children of

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Russia do not take water baths as you do. They are bathed by steam.

Every Saturday a big fire is made in the stove, and when the bricks are very hot, water is poured over them. The room is filled with hot steam. Petrovna delights in this weekly bath. At first she lies on a low shelf until she gets quite warm. The perspiration starts out all over her little naked body. Then her maid places her on a higher shelf and pours more water over the stove. More steam rises, and Petrovna grows warmer and warmer. It seems as though she would suffocate. Now for a still higher shelf in the room. Of course the higher up the little girl goes, the hotter she grows. The water fairly runs out of the pores of her skin, now. Instead of looking like a lily, she would remind you of a boiled lobster.

Shouldn't you think she would get cold after a hot bath like that, especially as she

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is going out of doors into the freezing air? She never does, however, and I will tell you why. When she has been steamed enough, she is slowly cooled off by having first warm and then cold water poured over her. When all is finished, and she has been rubbed down, she feels as fresh and sweet as a flower.

She is ready for the next day's duty and pleasure now. To-morrow is the Sabbath, and every good Russian takes his bath on the day before. Sunday morning comes. Every one of the family wears his holiday clothes, for, after breakfast, all will attend church service.

Petrovna's mamma has promised to take her to-day to the cathedral of St. Mark. She is so pleased she can hardly wait till the time comes to put on her wraps. No hat for her, if you please. That would not keep her dear little head warm enough. She wears a hood with a deep cape, and a long white

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cloak of astrakhan. Perhaps you have a muff of the same material. I wonder if you think it is fur. Astrakhan is the soft white fleece taken from the new-born lamb of a peculiar kind of sheep. The sooner the baby lamb is killed, the handsomer is the wool. Every year thousands of sheep are raised in Asia so that the beautiful white, gray, and black astrakhan can be sent to Russia, and to people in other parts of the world.

Petrovna wears her hood and cloak with the wool inside to keep her all the warmer. Her mamma has a hood and cloak of the richest sable. It cost thousands of dollars. You cannot see its beauty, for she wears it with the fur on the inside to keep her comfortable, just as Petrovna does.

The sleigh is at the door, and it is time to leave. What a curious one it is! It is low and small, and the back of the seat is so low that Petrovna might fall over backward

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if she were not used to it. There is just room enough for the little girl and her mamma, with a small seat in front for the coachman. Notice his queer clothes and his funny-looking hat. It makes you think of a battered stovepipe. The upper part of the crown is much wider than the lower part, and the narrow brim curls up. His blue cloak is quite loose, and has a long plaited skirt. It is fastened on one side with six metal buttons. A heavy leather belt is clasped around his waist.

Observe the horses. They are fine-looking animals, but how queerly they are harnessed. The middle one has a high wooden yoke about his neck. The rest of the harness is fastened to that. The horses on the outside are attached to the one in the middle by a single rein. They are left quite free in their motions. They are called madmen. Some sleighs have one horse, some two, and some three.

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And now Petrovna and her mamma are seated, the fur robes are tucked snugly in, the coachman jumps to his seat and makes a kind of clucking noise. The horses rush onward at a furious rate, and still Petrovna calls out, "Faster!" She is not afraid of accident, nor is she satisfied, although the horses seem to be doing their best. Russians are not fond of exercising themselves, but they dearly like to be moved as fast as possible. This is why they like sleighing and coasting better than any other sports.

As Petrovna rides along she finds that the streets are full of sleighs, yet they do not sound so merry as they do in our own land. What is the difference? There are no sleigh-bells. There is a law that none can be used in the cities of Russia. I will tell you the reason. There are so many sleighs, and the streets are so crowded with them (for hardly any person walks), that the drivers would get

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confused by the sound of so many bells, and run into each other. There is a very severe punishment for the one who causes such an accident. But strange to say, although there is so much driving, few people are injured. The coachmen are very careful, although they probably drive faster than the people of any other country.

In a few minutes Petrovna and her mamma arrive in front of a very grand building. This is the cathedral. Papa and the rest of the family drive up at the same time, and all alight. See the crowd of beggars at the gates! There are poor men and women who ask for enough money to buy a dinner of coarse black bread. There are nuns who are asking alms to support their convent. Few people are willing to refuse at the very doors of the church.

The cathedral is built in the shape of a cross. All churches in Russia are built in

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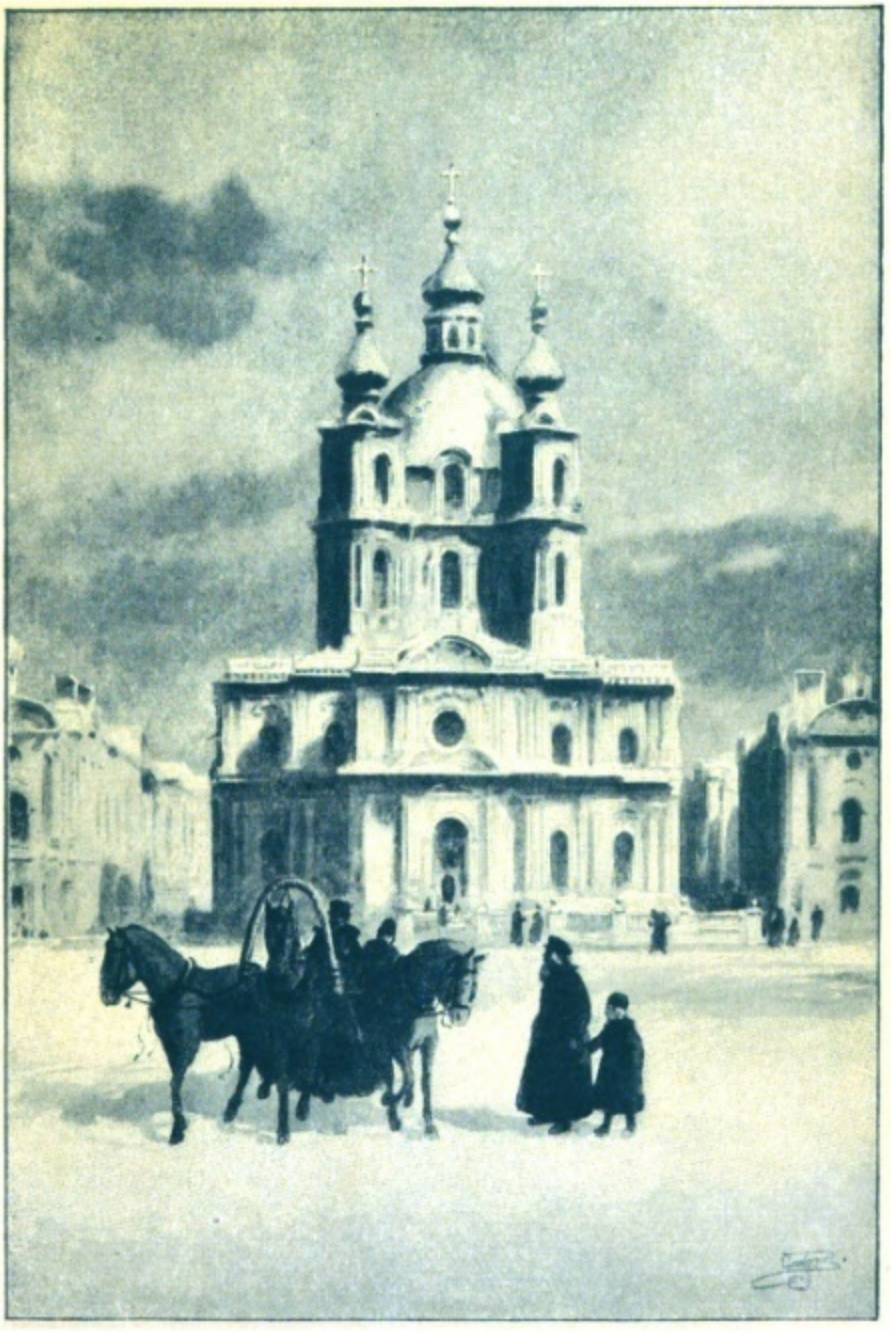

A VERY GRAND BUILDING.

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the same way. But notice these massive steps. Each is cut out of a single block of granite. Stand off a little and look at the great, shining dome. It is made of copper but is covered thickly with gold. It is so far up, and shines so brightly in the sunlight, that it is a beacon-light to the sailors far out on the sea.

Now let us follow our little cousin and enter the cathedral. How dark, and yet how beautiful it is! There are no seats. Rich and poor are standing together in worship. See those great columns of beautiful stones. The delicate sea-green is malachite. That heavenly blue is lapis lazuli. Does it not make you think of fairy-land? Notice, please, the number of beautiful pictures. There are no statues or images in the building, because the Russian Church does not think it right to worship them.

Listen to the music. There is no organ, but hidden from sight is a choir of men

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who are chanting. Are not their voices fine? Would you not like to stay all day to listen to such music? But what is Petrovna doing? As she entered the church she bought a candle at a stand near the door. Now she brings it to a shrine at the side of the great building. She offers it to a priest, who lights it and places it in a silver stand in front of the sacred picture. There are several holes in the stand, in which other candles are burning. The priest allows each candle to burn only a minute or two, because many other people keep coming up. They wish to have their candles burn there also.

As our dear little cousin stands there crossing herself devoutly, let us notice the picture of the Madonna before which the candles are burning. Her dress, as well as the halo around her head, is fairly covered with gold and silver and precious stones. Good and pious people have spent thousands of dollars

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for these beautiful gems. The only parts not covered are the face and hands. The background, even, is covered with gold. There are many other such shrines in the cathedral. A white-robed priest attends to the candles, which are kept burning night and day in each one of these shrines.

The church is filled with the odour of incense. Through the faint blue smoke we can still watch Petrovna as she stands throughout the service. Now and then she bows her body to the floor, or crosses herself as some sacred name is repeated.

And now it is over. A ride once more, and home is reached. The rest of the day is given up to play and pleasure. Papa goes to his club for a game of cards. Perhaps Petrovna and Ivan will go out coasting, or mamma will take them for a visit to some friends. After church service, Sunday in Russia is a gala-day for rich and poor. It is

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a time for parties in winter, and picnics in the summer-time.

Sometimes in the morning Petrovna and her brother go to early market with the maid. It is more fun in winter than in summer, even though "Jack Frost" is on the watch to nip off their noses. Snow is everywhere to be seen on the housetops and fences, and great drifts of snow are being dug out in the streets. Icicles are hanging from every corner. Yes, Jack Frost is a merry-looking fellow, but he is ready to bite you if he has half a chance. Petrovna touches her nose and cheeks every little while to be sure they are not numb. It is so easy in northern Russia to find oneself with a frozen ear or nose. A disagreeable surprise party, indeed.

But the market! You never saw anything like it. It is well that it is called "the frozen market." Here are whole sheep standing on their stiff, frozen legs, and looking at you with

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their frozen eyes. Beside them are pigs with their four legs pulled outwards, and looking, oh! so queer and odd. Quails, grouse, chickens, ducks, partridges,—all kinds of fowls and game, and all frozen. They have been frozen for weeks, and will stay so in this frosty air till they are handed over to the hard-hearted cooks. Then into the oven they will go, and come out, brown and tender, on the dinner-table.

Russia is a great place for game of all kinds. In the market there are great piles of fish in a solid frozen heap. Petrovna takes hold of a string, and lifts a brick of frozen milk. That is the way milk is sold. No quart measures are needed in winter in St. Petersburg.

The children ask the maid to take the long way home, for they wish to look again at the statue of their loved Kriloff. How dear he is to all Russian children! His stories of dogs, cats, rabbits, foxes, squirrels, and other living

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creatures, bring them nearer to the hearts of everybody. The figures of many of the animals that live in his stories are carved on his monument.

But look! What is all this commotion about? See the crowd gathering on the sidewalks. The street is cleared by the police, for the Emperor is coming, the Great White Czar. First comes a squadron of cavalry, and behind them is the royal sleigh. It is drawn by two beautiful horses. Three officers sit in the sleigh with the Emperor.

What a fine face and figure he has! He looks kind and noble, but worn with the cares of his great empire. As he passes along, the people cheer with might. They love him with all their hearts. He is the head of their Church. He is the father of this great people. They worship him, and would save him all his care if they could. But alas! there are enemies in this very city who may even now

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be plotting to take his life. They do not believe in kings, nor, indeed, in rulers of any kind. They work secretly against him with other people all over Russia. Although from time to time they are discovered and killed or sent into exile, others take their places. This great ruler, who is warmly loved by his subjects, is in danger of his life all the time. No wonder he looks so careworn.

Petrovna and Ivan look long and tenderly after him, cheering till their little throats are quite tired out. Then they hurry home to tell mamma what they have seen to-day.

At dinner Ivan said, "Papa, I wish you would tell me something about the Cossacks. They seem to go everywhere the Czar does. I noticed them in the body of cavalry this morning. They look and dress so differently from us, but they ride their horses nobly. I would like to look like a Cossack when on horseback."

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"They are noble men, indeed," said papa. "Their home is far away from us, in the south of Russia. A long time ago they were at war with us, but now they are good friends and strong defenders of our country. In time of war they are the spies and scouts. They are so faithful that the Emperor can feel perfectly safe when they are near. They pay no taxes, but give their services in the army instead."

"Papa," interrupted Ivan, "why do they wear long beards and have no buttons on their coats? That is not like the rest of the cavalry. And they carry no cartridge-boxes."

"That is true," was the reply. "The Cossacks detest buttons, and hook their coats over, just as ladies often do. The cartridges are carried in a row of pockets on the breasts of their coats. You see they are a very independent people, and insist on dressing in their own manner. The Czar allows them to do so because they are so good in other ways.

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"You should see them in war. They dare to go into the greatest of dangers. They admire bravery more than anything else in the world. Just before a battle they wash themselves and dress with the greatest care. They believe that they must be clean if they would enter heaven. But when the battle is over they draw up in line, leaving empty places for their fellows who have fallen. Then they sing sad songs in memory of them.

"In their own home they treat each other like brothers, and share the land in common. They are good to their cattle and horses. After a long march they will always care for their horses and feed them before doing anything for themselves. Before they eat they always wash themselves, oil their hair, and pray. They are as fond of tea as we are, my boy.

"But this is enough for to-night. I hope you will study your history carefully as you

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grow older. I want you to know more about the Cossacks, as well as many other interesting people who live in this great strong country of ours."

Not many miles from the fine city in which Petrovna lives are some other children whose home is very different from hers. Their parents are peasants who were serfs not many years ago. A serf was one kind of slave, for he belonged either to the Emperor or some rich nobleman. He could be bought and sold just like a horse. But the grandfather of the present Czar said, "My people must all be free. No human being in my empire shall be a slave any longer." That was the end of serfdom.

But these people are still very, very poor. Few of them can read a book. Many of them are lazy and fond of strong drink. They live in little villages all over Russia. There are more peasants than all other classes of people in the country.

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house. On the side of the well hangs a sacred picture, so that every one who comes there may worship first.

On the front of each hut are three little windows, close together. The sashes and frames are painted a bright red, or perhaps a gaudy purple. The Russian peasant is very fond of colour, and will work hard for the sake of a new red shirt for himself or a yellow skirt for his wife.

The porch and doorway are on one side of the hut. In summer time an earthen kettle hangs down from the roof, and as the father comes home from his work he will stop a moment and tip a little water out of the kettle over his hands. He rubs them together and wipes himself on the tail of his shirt. This is the only washing he has except the weekly steaming in the village bath-house.

Look at the flocks of pigeons around the house. They are very tame. They appear

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IN THE PEASANT VILLAGE.

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well fed and fat. In Russia the pigeon or dove is a sacred bird and is never harmed. The rough peasant will share his last crust with a pigeon.

Petrovna goes to the door of one of the cottages and passes inside. Oh dear, how close the place is! It smells strongly of the cabbage soup boiling for the day's dinner. Only one small room in the house. Yet there is a large family of children living here, besides half a dozen shaggy-haired dogs. With the exception of the big brick stove, there is no furniture except what the father made himself. In one corner of the room is a rickety table.

A narrow bench is built against the wall on two sides of the room. There are no chairs and no beds. How do they get along? And yet they seem quite happy and comfortable. Papa and mamma sleep up on top of the big stove. The older children sleep beside them. Don't worry, my dears. They

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do not get burned, but like their hard, warm bed very much. The logs burn down to ashes in the daytime. The bricks are just pleasantly warm by night.

But the little girl to whom Petrovna has brought the dress, and her three-year-old brother, where do they sleep? On the benches against the walls. If they should have bad dreams and tumble off in the night, it would not matter so very much, for the bench is near the floor.

When meal time comes, the family does not gather around the table, for as I told you, there are no seats that can be moved. They sit on the benches, and the table is therefore kept in the corner of the room. They can sit at only two sides of it, of course.

But I have not yet spoken of the most important thing in the house. It is the Ikon, or sacred picture. The priest blessed it before it was brought to the home. There is a place

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for a candle to burn in front of it, but these poor people cannot afford to keep one lighted all the time. This picture has no gold upon it, like the one in Petrovna's house. It cost only a few pennies, but it is sacred, nevertheless. The family give it reverence many times a day. It is never forgotten as they enter the room.

It sometimes happens, I am sorry to say, that the father comes home the worse for taking strong drink. Perhaps he cannot walk straight, and hangs his head from side to side. But when he opens the door, he remembers to turn to the sacred picture and cross himself before it.

Although there is so little furniture and so few windows, the room looks bright and gay. The table is painted a gorgeous red, while the benches are a brilliant green.

Black bread made from coarse rye-meal, cabbage soup, weak tea (for they cannot

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afford to have it strong), are the daily food of the peasants. If they can get some buck-wheat and dried herring, once in awhile, they think themselves well-off.

They have many happy times, these poor people of Russia. When work is done for the day, they dance and sing, and play upon the concertina, if any one in the village owns one of these cheap musical instruments.

When Petrovna takes out the red dress for the little girl and a large package of buck-wheat which mamma has sent to the family, every one in the house shouts with delight. It seems as though they could not thank her enough. Even the dogs wake up and begin to bark in excitement. In the midst of it all Petrovna's papa calls for her. She must go back to the grand city and her fine home. She will forget for a time that all children in the world cannot be as well dressed and well fed as herself.

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Petrovna has never yet been far away from St. Petersburg. She longs to go to the beautiful white-walled city of Moscow. Her mamma has been there, and has described its beauties over and over again.

It is a long journey from St. Petersburg. As you draw near the city, a blaze of colour is spread out before you. Domes of red and gold and purple are shining on the hilltops in the glorious sunlight. Churches and towers and palaces are without number, and differ from each other in shape and beauty. Moscow is a mass of colour made of countless gems and countless tints. In the midst of the city is the Kremlin or citadel. But the Kremlin is not one building. It is really a fortress surrounded by a massive wall that encloses many palaces and cathedrals, beautiful gardens and stately convents. Great gates open into it, and each has its story. One of them is called the Nicholas gate. A picture

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of St. Nicholas, whom the Russians worship, hangs over it. At one time the French were at war with the Russians. They stormed this gate and split its solid stonework, but the picture was unharmed. "It is a miracle," the people said.

There is a picture of the Virgin over another gate. The French tried to get this picture, but they did not succeed. This was another miracle, all thought, and no one passes through that gate now without taking off his hat. Within the Kremlin are other sacred pictures, which the people believe can work miracles.

The oil of baptism is prepared and blessed by the high-priest in a certain cathedral in Moscow. It is sent to every church in Russia, that all new-born children may be baptised with it.

Petrovna's mamma went to the city of Moscow when the Czar was crowned. He could not be formally made Emperor in St.

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Petersburg. That was not to be thought of. All Czars must be married as well as crowned in Moscow, and, until the time of Peter the Great, all have been buried there.

The coronation of the present Czar was the greatest spectacle of modern times. Petrovna hears her mamma sigh when she tries to describe it. Everything was so grand and shining and gorgeous, — processions and fireworks, music and feasting, everybody pleased and gaily dressed; men in silk and velvet, ladies sparkling in satins covered with pearls and diamonds; the double-headed eagle, the bird of Russia, showing its gilded crowns everywhere.

In the evening there were no rockets and Roman candles, but fireworks that were constantly shining, while the fronts of the buildings were covered with candles burning in glass globes.

Such horses, such elegant carriages, and

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such fine parks to drive in! And through the city ran the river, reflecting the lights from all sides.

There were days and days of feasting, from the time the new Emperor arrived in the city. He appeared in the grand procession mounted on a snow-white horse. He was dressed very simply in dark green, wearing a cap of astrakhan. Behind him came a great array of princes and grand-dukes. Next came the Emperor's mother in a carriage drawn by eight superb horses. After this appeared the carriage of the Empress. It was all of gold, and also drawn by eight snow-white horses.

How the crowd cheered, and cheered again! If this could show how devoted the people were to their ruler, their love could not be measured.

The governor of the city came out to meet the Czar and presented him with bread and salt.

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public eye for three days. They must fast and pray until the time that the Czar should be crowned, else they would not be in right condition for this ceremony. But the others in the crowded city did not fast. The days were given to pleasures of all kinds, — eating, drinking, music, and dancing.

At last the Czar was crowned! It was in the cathedral, where all other Czars have been crowned before. He himself put on the robe and collar, and assumed the crown of empire. The heavy crown of gold was placed on his head by his own hands. He then made a noble prayer for himself and the great empire, and for the millions of people who are his devoted subjects. How fair and strong and kindly was his face! Never had Petrovna's mamma seen anything so grand or so solemn. She stops and repeats a prayer now for the good Emperor Nicholas II.

When the ceremony was ended there was a

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ringing of bells all over the city. Hundreds of cannon were fired. Then more feasting and merriment followed for days yet to come. Free dinners were served every day to five thousand of the poor. The Czar did not forget them. They feasted as they had never done before in their lives.

At last came the great day of the festival. It was called the "people's fête." Every one was welcome. There were shows of all kinds that you can imagine. There were concerts and plays, boxing and fencing matches, trained animals, — everything to make the people happy. Overlooking it all sat the Czar in a grand pavilion. All the lords and ladies of the land were about him.

How delightful it was! Petrovna's mamma leans back in her chair and smiles softly to herself as she thinks of that joyful time.

On many a winter evening, as they sit around the big porcelain stove and sip the

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tea, Petrovna and Ivan beg for stories. They like fairy tales best of all. Their favourite one is the story of "Frost." Perhaps you would like to hear it.

Once upon a time there was a man who had three children. His wife was extremely fond of two of the daughters, but she was cruel and unkind to the third girl, whose name was Marfa. This was because Marfa was her stepdaughter. She made Marfa get up early in the morning to work, while her stepsisters were having a nice nap. The poor girl had to feed the cattle, bring in the wood, make the fire, and sweep the room. After this she must mend the clothes and do many other things before the rest of the family stirred. What a hard time she had, poor child! And then she was only scolded for her labour.

She did not have a kind word from any one except her old father, and then only when they were alone together. He was afraid of

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MARFA AND FROST.

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There was nothing but snow for Marfa to look upon now. The ground was covered with great drifts. The bushes were buried under it. The branches of the trees were bending under its weight. Not a sound could be heard save the falling of icicles and the creaking steps of Frost as he leaped from tree to tree.

Marfa was chilled through. Her teeth chattered. Her lips were blue and stiff. She was too cold to sob or cry out. Frost was coming nearer and nearer. Pretty soon he was in the tree above Marfa's head. He cried out, "Maiden, are you warm?" "Oh, yes, quite warm enough, dear Father Frost," she answered. Then he came down from the tree. Now she was almost frozen.

He called again, "Are you warm, my sweet girl? Are you sure you are warm enough?" By this time Marfa was so numb she could hardly move her lips. But she tried to

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sure of that." Then she said to her daughters, "I have found a bridegroom for you. You must go to meet him."

The next morning the girls got up and dressed themselves in their best. They were very happy. They thought to themselves, "Oh, my, what a fine time we shall have!" They got into the sledge with their father and away they went. They soon came to the pine-tree where Marfa had stayed the other night. They got out and sat down. Their father drove away.

The girls began to laugh together. They said, "What a queer idea of mother to send us here for a bridegroom, — as if there were not enough young men in the village." It was bitter cold, and they soon began to get cross and quarrel with each other. One of them said, "Suppose only one bridegroom comes, whom will he take?" "It will be I, of course," was her sister's reply. "Indeed,

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no," exclaimed the other; "I will be the chosen one." They grew colder and colder, stiffer and stiffer. But they kept quarrelling and calling each other bad names.

Frost was some way off, but the girls now heard him cracking his fingers and snapping the pine-trees. "Listen, some one is coming. I hear sleigh-bells," said the older sister. But the other would not listen. She declared she was too cold.

Frost came nearer and nearer. At last he stood in front of the two girls. He spoke to them just as he had to Marfa before. "Well, my darlings, are you cold?" But the girls only answered with bad words. They called Frost names such as no wise person would dare to speak to this great being. Yet again he called out, "Are you warm, my pretty ones?" And again they answered him with curses. But as they did so they fell dead to the ground.

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The next morning the old woman said to her husband, "Come, harness the horse quickly, and go fetch the girls home. There was a terrible frost last night. They must be half-dead with cold." The father did as she bid him, and drove away to the pine-tree. But what did he see? Two lifeless bodies, frozen stiff! He put them in the sledge, covered them over, and carried them home. As he drove up to the cottage, the old woman went out to meet her daughters.

What a sight was there! The girls had indeed met their bridegroom, but it was Death. After this the old woman treated her step-daughter all the worse for awhile, but she soon got over it. She grew kind and loving. They lived pleasantly ever after.

Marfa married a neighbour who had a good home to give her. She and her children are very happy. But when her children are naughty, their grandfather frightens them

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by saying, "Look out, or Frost will get you."

Petrovna and Ivan shiver as the story ends, and draw nearer their dear mamma, as though she could protect them from any danger.

The long, cold winter is gone at last. The ice of the river begins to break up. It has been frozen solid for months, but now it is cracking and softening and beginning to move out to the sea. The commander of the fort on the opposite side of the river discovered this last midnight. He did not wait a single moment. He started at once to carry the glad news to the Emperor, while cannon were fired off from the fort.

When he reached the palace, perhaps you think the attendants kept him waiting because the Czar was asleep. Not at all. He was shown at once into the royal presence. He presented the Czar with a goblet filled with ice-cold water he had brought from the

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river. This was his way of stating the good news. The Emperor drank to the good fortune of the city, and then filled the goblet with silver for the bringer of the news. In olden times the goblets grew larger every year. It cost the Czar more money each time. At last he said, "Let the glass always be of a certain size, after this." Of course, that settled it.

When the news was brought to the city, everybody was glad. The next day was made a holiday. Petrovna and Ivan were excused from lessons and went out to see the sights.

Eight weeks before Easter, comes Butter-Week. The whole city gives itself up for seven days of feasting and festival. Pancakes are eaten at every meal. Not like the pancakes your mamma makes, my dears. At least, I hope not. For the Russian pancakes, or "blinni," as they are called, are much too rich for your little stomachs. They are made

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of flour and butter, cooked in butter, and eaten with butter. And not only is this greasy food eaten in quantities, but many other things containing a great deal of fat.

Petrovna's mamma has a blinni party for her friends, and Petrovna has another for her playmates. The family are invited out to blinni parties at other houses. They are the queerest parties you ever heard of. Even in the grandest houses they are held in the kitchen. Perhaps you can guess the reason. The cakes must be eaten hot, as soon as they come off the griddle. Therefore the people must sit as near the stove as possible.

Petrovna eats her favourite cakes, until she can swallow nothing more. By the end of the week her head, as well as her stomach, begins to ache. She is all ready for the seven weeks of fasting before Easter. She is a faithful little girl, and never thinks of fussing because she must now live very quietly. She

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goes often to church, and repeats many prayers. She eats the simplest food, but all Russia does the same, so she has plenty of company.

The night before Easter comes at last. Petrovna and Ivan do not go to bed as early as usual. They leave home with their parents a little while before midnight. They are going to church. Everybody else in the city goes, too.

The streets are full of carriages as they ride along. Our little Russian cousins are driven to the same cathedral to which you have been with them before. They enter and join the crowd of worshippers. The lights burn dimly. All is silent. The great bell begins to ring the midnight hour. The other bells of the city join. As the last stroke is sounded the priests come out through the doors of the sanctuary. Listen! they are chanting, "Christ is risen! Christ is risen!" The people respond, "Christ is risen."

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At the beginning of the chant all begin to move around, kissing friends and acquaintances in every direction. The bells keep pealing forth the glad news. Cannon are fired off throughout the city. Rockets are flashing in the sky. The cathedral itself suddenly becomes ablaze with light.

The kissing lasts all night and during the next day. No one thinks of meeting another without a cordial greeting and a kiss. Old men kiss each other. Old women kiss, children kiss. The Emperor kisses all those of his household. Petrovna's papa kisses his clerks. Petrovna herself, dear little maiden, kisses right and left, with the most loving heart in the world. For this is Easter-time, the glorious time when all should love each other and show it as best they can.

Feasting begins with the kissing. It is a great holiday for everybody. Petrovna's mamma has a grand dinner-party for her

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friends. But she does not forget those who are not so well off as herself. Many a basket of good things is sent out to poor homes. Many a blessing is given our little Petrovna, who rides about the city leaving her mamma's gifts. Yes, indeed, it is a beautiful time, this Easter day in Russia.

As the weather gets warmer, Petrovna begins to look forward to the great fair of Nijni-Novgorod. It will be a long, long journey. She has never travelled so far in her life before. But dear kind papa has promised her she shall go with him this time. He travels there himself every year to trade with the merchants of far-away countries.

The day before they are ready to start, he comes home earlier than usual from his place of business. He says, "Come, Petrovna and Ivan, ask the maid to put on your best clothes. I am going to take you to the Winter Palace. You have teased me to take

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you there often enough. Hurry, or we shall not have time."

The children scamper away. They are soon dressed. Their papa looks at his pretty children with pride, as he helps them into the carriage. Away they dash over the pavements till they draw up in front of an immense building. It is painted brownish-red and yellow. The outside is ornamented with the figures of angels, and many other beautiful things.

This is the Winter Palace. It is the largest residence in the whole world. Six thousand people live in it. Shouldn't you be afraid of getting lost there? There is a story that a servant kept some cows in one of the garrets there, a long time ago, and no one found it out for a long while.

Petrovna and Ivan open their eyes wide as they pass through the high gilded halls; they see so many beautiful things to admire. Such richly carved chairs and tables! Such

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immense vases of malachite and jasper and porphyry! So many fine paintings of the Czars and generals and other great people of Russia!

In the throne-room of Peter the Great the walls are hung with red velvet. Golden eagles are beautifully embroidered upon it. But the royal jewels! How Petrovna's blue eyes sparkle as she looks upon the crown of her Emperor. It is in the shape of a dome, and is studded with large diamonds, with a border of pearls. At the very top of it is an immense ruby. It is very beautiful. The Empress's coronet is most dainty. It is of diamonds of the same size. It is enough to dazzle one with its beauty. In the room where these jewels are kept and guarded there are many others noted all over the world.

The sceptre of the Czar bears one of the largest diamonds ever discovered. Many years ago a rich count gave it to the

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Empress Catherine II. There are bracelets and necklaces and coronets made of precious stones. It seems as though Petrovna and Ivan had suddenly landed in the cave of Aladdin.

But it is getting late. It is long after their dinner hour. They must leave these beautiful sights and hasten home to mamma.

The morning for the great journey comes. It finds our Russian cousins awake bright and early. The trunks are strapped, the dear baby brother is fondly kissed, and papa, mamma, Petrovna, and Ivan begin their long ride. They pass many little villages as the express train rushes along. Then they go onward over great plains of barley and rye. The train is crowded with others, who are taking the same journey as themselves, and papa talks with many friends who have business at the great fair.

They travel all day and all night, besides

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several hours of the next day. As they near the end, the weather grows warmer, the trees are larger and the grass greener than at home. For they are farther south. They are too tired to look out of the windows any longer. Petrovna is dozing away, and dreaming of her loved ice-hill, when she finds herself gently shaken. Mamma is smiling at her and saying, "Wake up, my darling, we are here at last."

The train has stopped. Every one is getting out. Our little cousins are helped out of the car into a comfortable low carriage and are driven to a grand hotel. A good dinner is served, and Petrovna and Ivan are put to bed. They must get rested and prepare for the excitement of the coming week. They are both so tired and sleepy they are glad to rest after the long, hard journey.

Perhaps you do not know that this great fair is held every year for the benefit of the people of Asia as well as Russia. After a

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long night's sleep our merchant's family go out into the streets of the old city and see many curious sights. Men of many nations are gathered together. Chinamen with their long queues and big sleeves are jostling Persians in flowing silk robes and gay turbans. Here are Cossacks mounted on fine horses acting as policemen. There are some gypsies on their way to the fair. They expect to tell fortunes and make much money out of the curious peasants.

What a bustle and commotion! What a discord of strange languages on every side! What variety of costumes, and, above all, what dust!

The fair grounds are about a mile from the hotel. Our little cousins are in as much of a hurry to get there as you would be. It does not take long, however, for the driver of their carriage hurries his horses onward through the crowd.

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Now for the fair itself. It is arranged in the shape of a triangle, and covers a square mile. Not an inch of space is wasted. Everything is in order. Every trade has a street of its own. Many of the bazaars have signs in front. These bear the names of all the goods that are sold inside. Petrovna's papa is, of course, interested most in the tea. He wishes to buy a large stock of it for his trade at home. There are many kinds to choose from. But he must be sure to get some of the delicious yellow tea, which he will sell for fifteen dollars a pound. It is said to be made from the flowers of a certain kind of tea-plant, and is quite rare. The wealthy people of Russia like it so much that no one else in the world gets a chance to buy any. So I have heard, at least. If you should drink ever so little of it, you might be kept awake all night. Yet it looks very weak.

Besides many expensive teas, Petrovna's

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Besides all the rich and rare things which Asia can send to the fair, Russia furnishes many things to exchange with her great neighbour. There are all kinds of goods, which have been made in the factories of her cities. The most important are the cotton goods, the cutlery, and the fine articles of silver. There are also immense stores of wheat, barley, and other grains, and quantities of dried fruits.

Especially for her own people, there are bazaars and bazaars filled with samovars of every style, rich furs from the animals of the cold lands of the north, and candles by millions.

Day after day, Petrovna and Ivan wander about the fair grounds. Each time they see something new they wish to buy. When they are tired of looking about in the bazaars, they go to one of the concert-halls. They will be sure to hear some music they like. Or else

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they go to a theatre, and see a play that makes them laugh till their sides are sore. Perhaps they watch the performance of some jugglers, and try to discover how they do their wonderful tricks. Quite often they go into one of the restaurants with papa. While he is drinking tea and talking over prices with the men he meets, the children have a dainty lunch, and watch the waiters. What queer-looking people they are! They are Tartars. They look much like the Chinese, except that their heads are shaven. They wear white linen shirts and trousers. Their feet are bound with pieces of cloth and encased in sandals.

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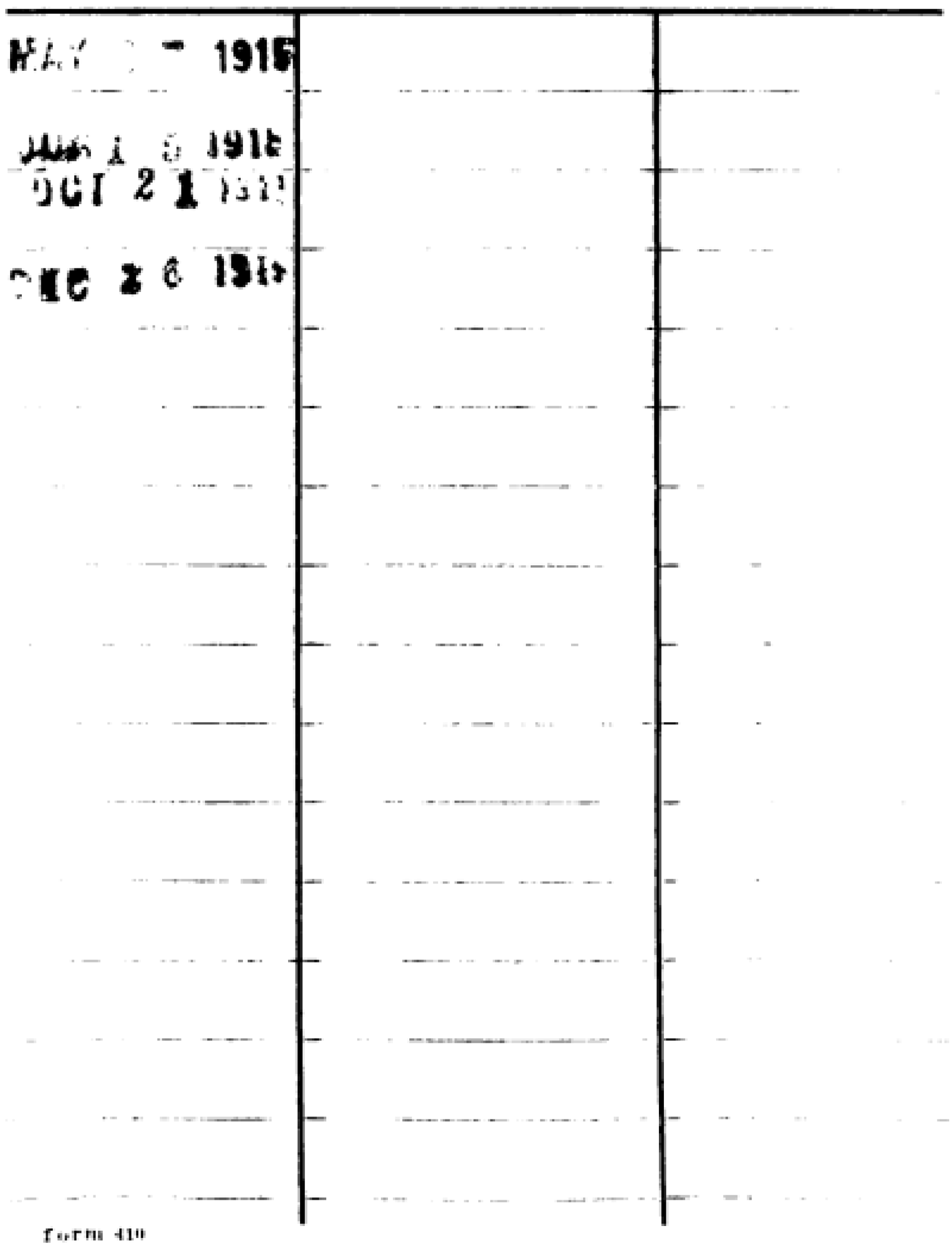

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