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**OUR LITTLE
RUSSIAN
COUSIN**

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Our Little Russian Cousin

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Cover](#)

[Titlepage](#)

[Preface](#)

[Our Little Russian Cousin](#)

Preface

Table of Contents

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 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.*

Our Little Russian Cousin

[Table of Contents](#)

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.

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 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 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.