

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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SCENES IN RUSSIA.

BY THE EDITOR.

In the vast square of the Admiralty at St. Petersburg stands the celebrated colossal statue of Peter the Great. Around him are palaces, academies, arsenals, gorgeous temples with their light and starry cupolas floating up like painted balloons, and tall spires sheathed in gold, and flashing like pillars of fire. This place, which is large enough for half the Russian army to encamp in, is bounded upon one side by the Admiralty building, the Winter Palace, and the Hermitage, the *façades* of the three extending more than a mile: in front of the Winter Palace rises the red, polished granite column of Alexander, the largest monolith in the world; from the side opposite the palace radiate three great streets lined with stately and imposing buildings, thronged with population, and intersected by canals, which are all bridged with iron; across the square, on the side opposite the statue, stands the Isaac's Church, built of marble, bronze, granite, and gold, and standing upon a subterranean forest, more than a million large trees having been driven into the earth to form its foundation. The Emperor faces the Neva, which pours its limpid waters through the quays of solid granite, which for twenty-five miles line its length and that of its branches; and beyond the river rise in full view the Bourse, the Academy of Arts and Sciences, and other imposing public edifices.

"This equestrian statue has been much admired, we think justly so. The height of the Emperor's figure is eleven feet, and that of the horse seventeen feet. The action of the horse is uncommonly spirited and striking, and the position of the Emperor dignified and natural. He waves his hand, as if, like a Scythian wizard as he was, he had just caused this mighty, swarming city, with all its palaces and temples, to rise like a vapour from the frozen morasses of the Neva with one stroke of his wand. In winter, by moonlight, when the whole scene is lighted by the still, cold radiance of a polar midnight, we defy any one to pause and gaze upon that statue without a vague sensation of awe. The Czar seems to be still preading in sculptured silence over the colossal work of his hands, to be still protecting his capital from the inundations of the ocean, and his empire from the flood of barbarism which he always feared would sweep over it upon his death."

The Russian peasants are vigorous and hardy, accustomed to the rigours



STATUE OF PETER THE GREAT AT ST. PETERSBURG.

of a severe and varying climate, and to the hardships of merciless military conscription and of occasional famines. They are of a cheerful temper, fond of song and violin, and addicted to excessive drinking. The use of vapour baths is common, though cleanliness is far from being a national virtue. Their sheepskin coats, like Bryan

O'Lynd's, are "mighty conveyance," but not always clean. The farmhouses are picturesque wooden structures, as shown in our engraving. They abound with painted images of the saints. Their one or three horse drookies are swift and flying vehicles, the most conspicuous feature of which is the immense bow over the horse's back.

A RAILWAY TRIP FIFTY YEARS AGO.

It is just fifty years, says the *Detroit Free Press*, since the first trip was taken on the Albany and Schenectady railroad. The cars were coach-bodies from an Albany livery-stable, mounted on trucks. The trucks were coupled with chains, leaving two or three feet slack, so that when the train started the passengers were "jerked from under their hats," and in stopping they were sent flying from their seats. The locomotive fuel was pitch-pine, and a dense volume of the blackest smoke floated toward the train. Those on top of the coaches had to raise their umbrellas, but in less than a mile the cloth was burned off and the frames were thrown away. The passengers spent the rest of the time whipping each other's clothes to put out the fire, the sparks from which were as big as one's thumb-nail.

Everybody had heard of the trip, and came thronging to the track as though a Presidential candidate was on exhibition. They drove as close as they could get to the railroad, in order to secure a place to look at the new curiosity. The horses everywhere took fright, and the roads in the vicinity were strewn with the wrecks of vehicles.

THE PAPER MUFF.

I SAW a picture of content the other day which touched me strangely. It was very cold. The pale December sun had given up its feeble efforts to take the edge off the December wind. The people in the street were hurrying along with blue faces and red noses, and heads held down to avoid the cutting blast. I watched them with pity from my cosy sitting room. Presently a little girl passed by. She was scantily clad, and her feet were bare. The old black shawl, which was wrapped about her shoulders was much too large for her, and trailed behind in a forlorn-looking peak. The rim of her hat was torn, and a dragged leather hung limply over one eye. Yet the little maiden was walking along with a brisk step; her head was high in the air, and a smile of content was on her face. And why? Because, having found a substantial paper bag, she had torn open the closed end of it, and, putting her little cold hands within, she was enjoying the unusual luxury of a muff! No one had explained to her the peculiar efficacy of paper in excluding the air. I do not suppose she has ever heard of paper blankets, but her native wit had supplied her