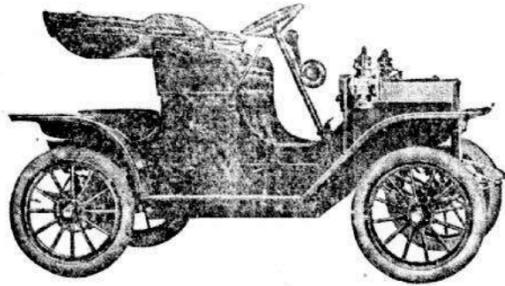


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ST. PETERSBURG, THE CAPITAL OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

By Della Austria



Entrance to the Hermitage

THE traveler to whom St. Petersburg is unknown, imagines the city as ancient, picture que and irregular. But it is laid out as regularly as many American cities. It is an ancient city dressed in a new guise. It is situated along the Neva, with many modern buildings and parks on the one side, churches and old buildings on the other.

The location of the city is not attractive; it is built on several islands in the delta. The ground is so low in many places that the buildings have to be raised on piles. This morass was changed into a splendid city by Peter the Great, who was instant that he was going to train himself and his people to a fondness for the sea. As a child he had been frightened by the sudden rushing of a cascade, and for years he could not see water without trembling and fear. When he was grown he said, "I shall build St. Petersburg here without bridges, that our people may be constantly on the waters of the Neva, crossing and recrossing." Since that time the city has grown and expanded greatly and bridges are a necessity. The St. Nicholas is a large and massive stone structure built on huge granite piers. Three other bridges are large floating structures which span the river in the summer, but are removed as soon as the river is frozen. On one side of the river are many pleasant summer homes and cottages surrounded by beautiful flowering gardens. On the other side are the barracks and the phoner part of the city.

Most of the public buildings are placed in a public square, so they are seen with little difficulty. At one end is the large senate and synod, before it stands the colossal equestrian statue of Peter the Great. To the south of the admiralty, the most important part of the city, is seen the Bolshar Storm, or greater side. Toward the west lies the Basilius island, with the large, splendid exchange, the important Academy of Sciences and the university.

The city is divided into four large divisions, separated by the Great and Little Neva and by the Great Neffa. The great side includes the court, the nobility and nearly half the population. Here many of the best streets and some of the handsomest residences are seen. The streets are broad and well paved. Here are spacious and well-built houses, while beyond are a succession of magnificent palaces. The need not sound strange, as there are no European cities having so many palaces and palaces. Even the dwellings of the poor have a showy magnificence about them. Everything is built on a gigantic scale. It is not unusual to find a house occupied by 200 families; but they are not built high, two stories being the average height. Building a home in this city is usually an expensive affair. The driving of the stakes alone often costs hundreds of dollars. But the palaces of the princes and nobility are usually as beautiful as the other homes are plain and unattractive. Here are found richly hand-carved furniture, splendid jade and malachite vases. There is so much of

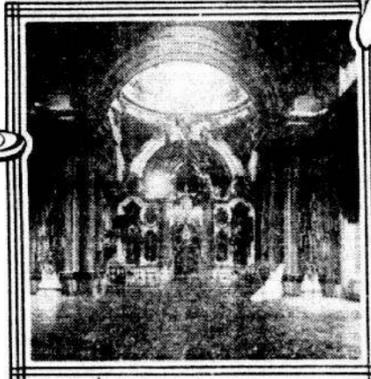
everything that it is really overpowering. The royal palaces are large and furnished at a great cost. The Annitschoff palace is inhabited more by the present imperial family than the Tauride palace. The former stands on the great Prjektin, the neighborhood of the Fontanka, and crosses the brilliant range of palaces in the street. It was originally built by Elizabeth 80 years ago it was bought as one of the emperor's abodes. It is handsomely built, though it has no historic significance.

A part of the court are usually here in residence, and it is here that the emperor holds many of his most important councils. Those who saw the winter palace before the fire, recall the mass of wealth devoured by the conflagration. In six hours priceless furniture, ornaments and rare pictures were destroyed.

The Hermitage is the San Saveri of St. Petersburg. This was built by



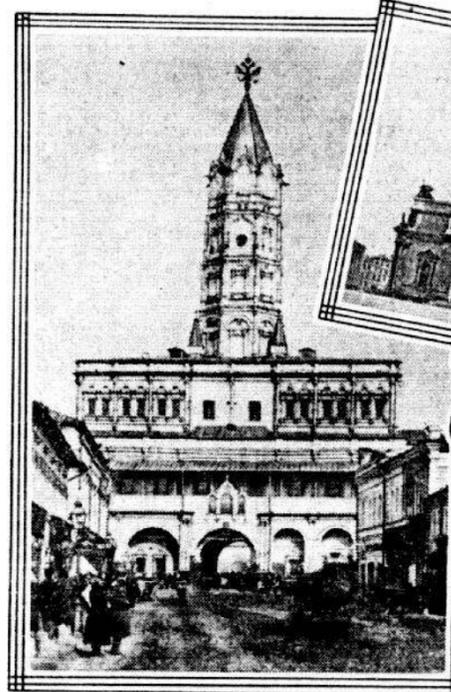
Statue of Peter the Great



Czar's Private Chapel Winter Palace

Catherine and used for her retreat after her work and that of her courtiers was done for the day. This palace is surrounded by beautiful shade forests, refreshed by fountains and pleasant groves, on cool days concerts and theatricals were given within the palace, while in the warm weather these were held out doors; beautiful music and rare voices resounded through the forest then.

The people of Russia do not object to the cold, unhygienic houses. Pleasant days bring thousands to the streets below. The Nevsky Prospect is a splendid street that intersects all the corners of the city. It winds its way between the handsome residences, pierces the chamber of commerce and touches the poorest parts of the city. Here all traces of Russian life are seen, from the proudest nobility, driving in their auto cars and handsome carriages, to the poorest peasants living in one of those immense, densely crowded, slutt-



Tower of Soud Kareff

ment buildings. The scene in this portion of the street at about midday may challenge comparison with any street in the world, and the spectacle is enhanced by the magnificence of the decorations. Besides the handsome residences there are many large shops and cafes offering refreshment to the crowds promingling up and down.

St. Petersburg has a number of large summer gardens, which are an adornment to the city and offer a pleasant rest to thousands in warm weather. The Summer garden is the largest and most attractive of these. Everywhere are the large, well-shaded benches, thronged with matrons, while the children play in the sand and catch their balls. On one side of the Summer garden is the Tzarzanski, Lux or field of Mars.

There are a number of buildings in St. Petersburg that are worth noting. On these the Exchange is certainly the most prominent. It stands on the northern point of Vassili before a large open space before it, and it is reared on an elevated foundation. The granite masonry on either side gives solidity, while a long flight of granite steps leads down to the river. The space between the building is separated with two long rows of columns supporting the pro-



St. Isaac's Cathedral

or 6,000 children. The principal buildings are in St. Petersburg, where the children are kept a few weeks. They are then sent to the countryside in the country, where they remain until they are six years old. The girls return to St. Petersburg, while there is a branch for the boys at Gatshina. The building of St. Petersburg is much more of a palace than a founding home. The main building is composed of what was formerly the palace of Prince Bohinski and Count Rasumoffski.

When the children are grown they are relieved from all obligations toward the institution. The boys are easily provided with positions in the trade and imperial factories; the girls are given positions as teachers and governesses.

Though St. Petersburg has fewer churches than Moscow, it has churches of all denominations and every style of architecture. Here are seen Greek Byzantine, old Russian, new Russian, new European architecture, and what not. The handsomest of these is St. Isaac's church. The church is large and imposing without. Inside it has many handsome decorations, costly pictures of saints and gold crosses.

The roof is supported by granite monoliths from Finland, buried for centuries in deep swamps. They are crowned with capitals of bronze and support the enormous beam of a roof formed of six polished blocks. But the crowning glory is made of copper and is overlaid with gold that glimmers like the sun on the mountains.

The Russian capital is most attractive in a pleasant summer season. The numerous buildings, the Academy of Arts, the Corps de Cadets, and the Academy of Sciences is surrounded as they are with water, a grassy park and splendid flower beds, present an ideal and salubrious life. The river is covered with sailing craft of nearly every description devoted to pleasure. It has several fine steam yachts which are used by members of the club for making trips up the gulf.