STEPHEN LEACOCK

FURTHER FOOLISHNESS

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Leacock S.

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Содержание

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Preface

Many years ago when I was a boy at school, we had over our class an ancient and spectacled schoolmaster who was as kind at heart as he was ferocious in appearance, and whose memory has suggested to me the title of this book.

It was his practice, on any outburst of gaiety in the class-room, to chase us to our seats with a bamboo cane and to shout at us in defiance:

Now, then, any further foolishness?

I find by experience that there are quite a number of indulgent readers who are good enough to adopt the same expectant attitude towards me now.

STEPHEN LEACOCK
McGILL UNIVERSITY
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Follies in Fiction

I. Stories Shorter Still

Among the latest follies in fiction is the perpetual demand for stories shorter and shorter still. The only thing to do is to meet this demand at the source and check it. Any of the stories below, if left to soak overnight in a barrel of rainwater, will swell to the dimensions of a dollar-fifty novel.

(I) AN IRREDUCIBLE DETECTIVE STORY

HANGED BY A HAIR OR A MURDER MYSTERY MINIMISED

The mystery had now reached its climax. First, the man had been undoubtedly murdered. Secondly, it was absolutely certain that no conceivable person had done it.

It was therefore time to call in the great detective.

He gave one searching glance at the corpse. In a moment he whipped out a microscope.

"Ha! ha!" he said, as he picked a hair off the lapel of the dead man's coat. "The mystery is now solved."

He held up the hair.

"Listen," he said, "we have only to find the man who lost this hair and the criminal is in our hands."

The inexorable chain of logic was complete.

The detective set himself to the search.

For four days and nights he moved, unobserved, through the streets of New York scanning closely every face he passed, looking for a man who had lost a hair.

On the fifth day he discovered a man, disguised as a tourist, his head enveloped in a steamer cap that reached below his ears. The man was about to go on board the *Gloritania*.

The detective followed him on board.

"Arrest him!" he said, and then drawing himself to his full height, he brandished aloft the hair.

"This is his," said the great detective. "It proves his guilt."

"Remove his hat," said the ship's captain sternly.

They did so.

The man was entirely bald.

"Ha!" said the great detective without a moment of hesitation. "He has committed not one murder but about a million."

(II) A COMPRESSED OLD ENGLISH NOVEL

SWEARWORD THE UNPRONOUNCEABLE

CHAPTER ONE AND ONLY

"Ods bodikins!" exclaimed Swearword the Saxon, wiping his mailed brow with his iron hand, "a fair morn withal! Methinks twert lithlier to rest me in yon glade than to foray me forth in yon fray! Twert it not?"

But there happened to be a real Anglo-Saxon standing by.

"Where in heaven's name," he said in sudden passion, "did you get that line of English?"

"Churl!" said Swearword, "it is Anglo-Saxon."

"You're a liar!" shouted the Saxon, "it is not. It is Harvard College, Sophomore Year, Option No. 6."

Swearword, now in like fury, threw aside his hauberk, his baldrick, and his needlework on the grass.

"Lay on!" said Swearword.

"Have at you!" cried the Saxon.

They laid on and had at one another.

Swearword was killed.

Thus luckily the whole story was cut off on the first page and ended.

(III) A CONDENSED INTERMINABLE NOVEL

FROM THE CRADLE TO THE GRAVE OR A THOUSAND PAGES FOR A DOLLAR

NOTE.-This story originally contained two hundred and fifty thousand words. But by a marvellous feat of condensation it is reduced, without the slightest loss, to a hundred and six words.

(I)

Edward Endless lived during his youth
in Maine,
in New Hampshire,
in Vermont,
in Massachusetts,
in Rhode Island,
in Connecticut.

(II)

Then the lure of the city lured him. His fate took him to
New York, to Chicago, and to Philadelphia.

In Chicago he lived,
in a boarding-house on Lasalle Avenue,
then he boarded—
in a living-house on Michigan Avenue.

In New York he
had a room in an eating-house on Forty-first Street,
and then—
ate in a rooming-house on Forty-second Street.

In Philadelphia he
used to sleep on Chestnut Street,
and then—
slept on Maple Street.

During all this time women were calling to him. He knew
and came to be friends with—
Margaret Jones,
Elizabeth Smith,
Arabella Thompson,
Jane Williams,
Maud Taylor.

And he also got to know pretty well,
Louise Quelquechose,
Antoinette Alphabetic,
Estelle Etcetera.

And during this same time Art began to call him—
Pictures began to appeal to him.
Statues beckoned to him.
Music maddened him,
and any form of Recitation or Elocution drove
him beside himself.

(III)

Then, one day, he married Margaret Jones.
As soon as he had married her
He was disillusioned.

He now hated her.

Then he lived with Elizabeth Smith—
He had no sooner sat down with her than—
He hated her.

Half mad, he took his things over to Arabella Thompson's flat to live with her.
The moment she opened the door of the apartment, he loathed her.
He saw her as she was.
Driven sane with despair, he then—
(Our staff here cut the story off. There are hundreds and hundreds of pages after this. They show Edward Endless grappling in the fight for clean politics. The last hundred pages deal with religion. Edward finds it after a big fight. But no one reads these pages. There are no women in them. Our staff cut them out and merely show at the end—

Edward Purified—
Uplifted—
Transluted.

The whole story is perhaps the biggest thing ever done on this continent. Perhaps!)

II. Snoopopaths; or, Fifty Stories in One

This particular study in the follies of literature is not so much a story as a sort of essay. The average reader will therefore turn from it with a shudder. The condition of the average reader's mind is such that he can take in nothing but fiction. And it must be thin fiction at that—thin as gruel. Nothing else will "sit on his stomach."

Everything must come to the present-day reader in this form. If you wish to talk to him about religion, you must dress it up as a story and label it *Beth-sheba*, or *The Curse of David*; if you want to improve the reader's morals, you must write him a little thing in dialogue called *Mrs. Potiphar Dines Out*. If you wish to expostulate with him about drink, you must do so through a narrative called *Red Rum*—short enough and easy enough for him to read it, without overstraining his mind, while he drinks cocktails.

But whatever the story is about it has got to deal—in order to be read by the average reader—with A MAN and A WOMAN, I put these words in capitals to indicate that they have got to stick out of the story with the crudity of a drawing done by a child with a burnt stick. In other words, the story has got to be snoopopathic. This is a word derived from the Greek—"snoopo"—or if there never was a Greek verb snoopo, at least there ought to have been one—and it means just what it seems to mean. Nine out of ten short stories written in America are snoopopathic.

In snoopopathic literature, in order to get its full effect, the writer generally introduces his characters simply as "the man" and "the woman." He hates to admit that they have no names. He opens out with them something after this fashion: "The Man lifted his head. He looked about him at the gaily bedizzled crowd that besplotched the midnight cabaret with riotous patches of colour. He crushed his cigar against the brass of an Egyptian tray. 'Bah!' he murmured, 'Is it worth it?' Then he let his head sink again."

You notice it? He lifted his head all the way up and let it sink all the way down, and you still don't know who he is. For The Woman the beginning is done like this: "The Woman clenched her white hands till the diamonds that glittered upon her fingers were buried in the soft flesh. 'The shame of it,' she murmured. Then she took from the table the telegram that lay crumpled upon it and tore it into a hundred pieces. 'He dare not!' she muttered through her closed teeth. She looked about the hotel room with its garish furniture. 'He has no right to follow me here,' she gasped."

All of which the reader has to take in without knowing who the woman is, or which hotel she is staying at, or who dare not follow her or why. But the modern reader loves to get this sort of shadowy incomplete effect. If he were told straight out that the woman's name was Mrs. Edward Dangerfield of Brick City, Montana, and that she had left her husband three days ago and that the telegram told her that he had discovered her address and was following her, the reader would refuse to go on.

This method of introducing the characters is bad enough. But the new snoopopathic way of describing them is still worse. The Man is always detailed as if he were a horse. He is said to be "tall, well set up, with straight legs."

Great stress is always laid on his straight legs. No magazine story is acceptable now unless The Man's legs are absolutely straight. Why this is, I don't know. All my friends have straight legs—and yet I never hear them make it a subject of comment or boasting. I don't believe I have, at present, a single friend with crooked legs.

But this is not the only requirement. Not only must The Man's legs be straight but he must be "clean-limbed," whatever that is; and of course he must have a "well-tubbed look about him." How this look is acquired, and whether it can be got with an ordinary bath and water are things on which I have no opinion.

The Man is of course "clean-shaven." This allows him to do such necessary things as "turning his clean-shaven face towards the speaker," "laying his clean-shaven cheek in his hand," and so on.

But every one is familiar with the face of the up-to-date clean-shaven snoopopathic man. There are pictures of him by the million on magazine covers and book jackets, looking into the eyes of The Woman—he does it from a distance of about six inches—with that snoopy earnest expression of brainlessness that he always wears. How one would enjoy seeing a man—a real one with Nevada whiskers and long boots—land him one solid kick from behind.

Then comes The Woman of the snoopopathic story. She is always "beautifully groomed" (who these grooms are that do it, and where they can be hired, I don't know), and she is said to be "exquisitely gowned."

It is peculiar about The Woman that she never seems to wear a *dress*—always a "gown." Why this is, I cannot tell. In the good old stories that I used to read, when I could still read for the pleasure of it, the heroines —that was what they used to be called—always wore dresses. But now there is no heroine, only a woman in a gown. I wear a gown myself—at night. It is made of flannel and reaches to my feet, and when I take my candle and go out to the balcony where I sleep, the effect of it on the whole is not bad. But as to its "revealing every line of my figure"—as The Woman's gown is always said to—and as to its "suggesting even more than it reveals"—well, it simply does *not*. So when I talk of "gowns" I speak of something that I know all about.

Yet, whatever The Woman does, her "gown" is said to "cling" to her. Whether in the street or in a *cabaret* or in the drawing-room, it "clings." If by any happy chance she throws a lace wrap about her, then it clings; and if she lifts her gown—as she is apt to—it shows, not what I should have expected, but a *jupon*, and even that clings. What a *jupon* is I don't know. With my gown, I never wear one. These people I have described, The Man and The Woman—The Snoopopaths—are, of course, not husband and wife, or brother and sister, or anything so simple and old-fashioned as that. She is some one else's wife. She is *The Wife of the Other Man*. Just what there is, for the reader, about other men's wives, I don't understand. I know tons of them that I wouldn't walk round a block for. But the reading public goes wild over them. The old-fashioned heroine was unmarried. That spoiled the whole story. You could see the end from the beginning. But with Another Man's Wife, the way is blocked. Something has got to happen that would seem almost obvious to anyone.

The writer, therefore, at once puts the two snoopos—The Man and The Woman—into a frightfully indelicate position. The more indelicate it is, the better. Sometimes she gets into his motor by accident after the theatre, or they both engage the drawing-room of a Pullman car by mistake, or else, best of all, he is brought accidentally into her room at an hotel at night. There is something about an hotel room at night, apparently, which throws the modern reader into convulsions. It is always easy to arrange a scene of this sort. For example, taking the sample beginning that I gave above, The Man, whom I left sitting at the *cabaret* table, above, rises unsteadily —it is the recognised way of rising in a *cabaret*—and, settling the reckoning with the waiter, staggers into the street. For myself I never do a reckoning with the waiter. I just pay the bill as he adds it, and take a chance on it.

As The Man staggers into the "night air," the writer has time—just a little time, for the modern reader is impatient—to explain who he is and why he staggers. He is rich. That goes without saying. All clean-limbed men with straight legs are rich. He owns copper mines in Montana. All well-tubbed millionaires do. But he has left them, left everything, because of the Other Man's Wife. It was that or madness—or worse. He had told himself so a thousand times. (This little touch about "worse" is used in all the stories. I don't just understand what the "worse" means. But snoopopathic readers reach for it with great readiness.) So The Man had come to New York (the only place where stories are allowed to be laid) under an assumed name, to forget, to drive her from his mind. He had plunged into the mad round of—I never could find it myself, but it must be there, and as they all plunge into it, it must be as full of them as a sheet of Tanglefoot is of flies.

"As The Man walked home to his hotel, the cool night air steadied him, but his brain is still filled with the fumes of the wine he had drunk." Notice these "fumes." It must be great to float round with them in one's brain, where they apparently lodge. I have often tried to find them, but I never

can. Again and again I have said, "Waiter, bring me a Scotch whisky and soda with fumes." But I can never get them.

Thus goes The Man to his hotel. Now it is in a room in this same hotel that The Woman is sitting, and in which she has crumpled up the telegram. It is to this hotel that she has come when she left her husband, a week ago. The readers know, without even being told, that she left him "to work out her own salvation"—driven, by his cold brutality, beyond the breaking-point. And there is laid upon her soul, as she sits there with clenched hands, the dust and ashes of a broken marriage and a loveless life, and the knowledge, too late, of all that might have been.

And it is to this hotel that The Woman's Husband is following her.

But The Man does not know that she is in the hotel, nor that she has left her husband; it is only accident that brings them together. And it is only by accident that he has come into her room, at night, and stands there—rooted to the threshold. Now as a matter of fact, in real life, there is nothing at all in the simple fact of walking into the wrong room of an hotel by accident. You merely apologise and go out. I had this experience myself only a few days ago. I walked right into a lady's room—next door to my own. But I simply said, "Oh, I beg your pardon, I thought this was No. 343."

"No," she said, "this is 341."

She did not rise and "confront" me, as they always do in the snoopopathic stories. Neither did her eyes flash, nor her gown cling to her as she rose. Nor was her gown made of "rich old stuff." No, she merely went on reading her newspaper.

"I must apologise," I said. "I am a little short-sighted, and very often a *one* and a *three* look so alike that I can't tell them apart. I'm afraid—"

"Not at all," said the lady. "Good evening."

"You see," I added, "this room and my own being so alike, and mine being 343 and this being 341, I walked in before I realised that instead of walking into 343 I was walking into 341."

She bowed in silence, without speaking, and I felt that it was now the part of exquisite tact to retire quietly without further explanation, or at least with only a few murmured words about the possibility of to-morrow being even colder than to-day. I did so, and the affair ended with complete *savoir faire* on both sides.

But the Snoopopaths, Man and Woman, can't do this sort of thing, or, at any rate, the snoopopathic writer won't let them. The opportunity is too good to miss. As soon as The Man comes into The Woman's room—before he knows who she is, for she has her back to him—he gets into a condition dear to all snoopopathic readers.

His veins simply "surged." His brain beat against his temples in mad pulsation. His breath "came and went in quick, short pants." (This last might perhaps be done by one of the hotel bellboys, but otherwise it is hard to imagine.)

And The Woman—"Noiseless as his step had been, she seemed to *sense* his presence. A wave seemed to sweep over her —She turned and rose fronting him full." This doesn't mean that he was full when she fronted him. Her gown—but we know about that already. "It was a coward's trick," she panted.

Now if The Man had had the kind of *savoir faire* that I have, he would have said: "Oh, pardon me! I see this room is 341. My own room is 343, and to me a *one* and a *three* often look so alike that I seem to have walked into 341 while looking for 343." And he could have explained in two words that he had no idea that she was in New York, was not following her, and not proposing to interfere with her in any way. And she would have explained also in two sentences why and how she came to be there. But this wouldn't do. Instead of it, The Man and The Woman go through the grand snoopopathic scene which is so intense that it needs what is really a new kind of language to convey it.

"Helene," he croaked, reaching out his arms—his voice tensed with the infinity of his desire.

"Back," she iced. And then, "Why have you come here?" she hoarsed. "What business have you here?"

"None," he glooped, "none. I have no business." They stood sensing one another.

"I thought you were in Philadelphia," she said—her gown clinging to every fibre of her as she spoke.

"I was," he wheezed.

"And you left it?" she sharped, her voice tense.

"I left it," he said, his voice glumping as he spoke. "Need I tell you why?" He had come nearer to her. She could hear his pants as he moved.

"No, no," she gurgled. "You left it. It is enough. I can understand"—she looked bravely up at him—"I can understand any man leaving it."

Then as he moved still nearer her, there was the sound of a sudden swift step in the corridor. The door opened and there stood before them The Other Man, the Husband of The Woman—Edward Dangerfield.

This, of course, is the grand snoopopathic climax, when the author gets all three of them—The Man, The Woman, and The Woman's Husband—in an hotel room at night. But notice what happens.

He stood in the opening of the doorway looking at them, a slight smile upon his lips.

"Well?" he said. Then he entered the room and stood for a moment quietly looking into The Man's face.

"So," he said, "it was you." He walked into the room and laid the light coat that he had been carrying over his arm upon the table. He drew a cigar-case from his waistcoat pocket.

"Try one of these Havanas," he said.

Observe the *calm* of it. This is what the snoopopath loves—no rage, no blustering—calmness, cynicism. He walked over towards the mantelpiece and laid his hat upon it. He set his boot upon the fender.

"It was cold this evening," he said. He walked over to the window and gazed a moment into the dark.

"This is a nice hotel," he said. (This scene is what the author and the reader love; they hate to let it go. They'd willingly keep the man walking up and down for hours saying "Well!")

The Man raised his head! "Yes, it's a good hotel," he said. Then he let his head fall again.

This kind of thing goes on until, if possible, the reader is persuaded into thinking that there is nothing going to happen. Then:

"He turned to The Woman. 'Go in there,' he said, pointing to the bedroom door. Mechanically she obeyed." This, by the way, is the first intimation that the reader has that the room in which they were sitting was not a bedroom. The two men were alone. Dangerfield walked over to the chair where he had thrown his coat.

"I bought this coat in St. Louis last fall," he said. His voice was quiet, even passionless. Then from the pocket of the coat he took a revolver and laid it on the table. Marsden watched him without a word.

"Do you see this pistol?" said Dangerfield.

Marsden raised his head a moment and let it sink.

Of course the ignorant reader keeps wondering why he doesn't explain. But how can he? What is there to say? He has been found out of his own room at night. The penalty for this in all the snoopopathic stories is death. It is understood that in all the New York hotels the night porters shoot a certain number of men in the corridors every night.

"When we married," said Dangerfield, glancing at the closed door as he spoke, "I bought this and the mate to it—for her—just the same, with the monogram on the butt—see! And I said to her, 'If things ever go wrong between you and me, there is always this way out.'"

He lifted the pistol from the table, examining its mechanism. He rose and walked across the room till he stood with his back against the door, the pistol in his hand, its barrel pointing straight at Marsden's heart. Marsden never moved. Then as the two men faced one another thus, looking into

one another's eyes, their ears caught a sound from behind the closed door of the inner room—a sharp, hard, metallic sound as if some one in the room within had raised the hammer of a pistol—a jewelled pistol like the one in Dangerfield's hand.

And then—

A loud report, and with a cry, the cry of a woman, one shrill despairing cry—

Or no, hang it—I can't consent to end up a story in that fashion, with the dead woman prone across the bed, the smoking pistol, with a jewel on the hilt, still clasped in her hand—the red blood welling over the white laces of her gown—while the two men gaze down upon her cold face with horror in their eyes. Not a bit. Let's end it like this:

"A shrill despairing cry—'Ed! Charlie! Come in here quick! Hurry! The steam coil has blown out a plug! You two boys quit talking and come in here, for heaven's sake, and fix it.'" And, indeed, if the reader will look back he will see there is nothing in the dialogue to preclude it. He was misled, that's all. I merely said that Mrs. Dangerfield had left her husband a few days before. So she had—to do some shopping in New York. She thought it mean of him to follow her. And I never said that Mrs. Dangerfield had any connection whatever with The Woman with whom Marsden was in love. Not at all. He knew her, of course, because he came from Brick City. But she had thought he was in Philadelphia, and naturally she was surprised to see him back in New York. That's why she exclaimed "Back!" And as a matter of plain fact, you can't pick up a revolver without its pointing somewhere. No one said he meant to fire it.

In fact, if the reader will glance back at the dialogue—I know he has no time to, but if he does—he will see that, being something of a snoopopath himself, he has invented the whole story.

III. Foreign Fiction in Imported Instalments

Serge the Superman: A Russian Novel
(Translated, with a hand pump, out of the original Russian)

SPECIAL EDITORIAL NOTE, OR, FIT OF CONVULSIONS INTO WHICH AN EDITOR FALLS IN INTRODUCING THIS SORT OF STORY TO HIS READERS. We need offer no apology to our readers in presenting to them a Russian novel. There is no doubt that the future in literature lies with Russia. The names of Tolstoi, of Turgan-something, and Dostoi-what-is-it are household words in America. We may say with certainty that Serge the Superman is the most distinctly Russian thing produced in years. The Russian view of life is melancholy and fatalistic. It is dark with the gloom of the great forests of the Volga, and saddened with the infinite silence of the Siberian plain. Hence the Russian speech, like the Russian thought, is direct, terse and almost crude in its elemental power. All this appears in Serge the Superman. It is the directest, tersest, crudest thing we have ever seen. We showed the manuscript to a friend of ours, a critic, a man who has a greater Command of the language of criticism than perhaps any two men in New York to-day. He said at once, "This is big. It is a big thing, done by a big man, a man with big ideas, writing at his very biggest. The whole thing has a bigness about it that is —" and here he paused and thought a moment and added—"big." After this he sat back in his chair and said, "big, big, big," till we left him. We next showed the story to an English critic and he said without hesitation, or with very little, "This is really not half bad." Last of all we read the story ourselves and we rose after its perusal—itself not an easy thing to do—and said, "Wonderful but terrible." All through our (free) lunch that day we shuddered.

CHAPTER I

As a child. Serge lived with his father—Ivan Ivanovitch —and his mother—Katrina Katerinavitch. In the house, too were Nitska, the serving maid. Itch, the serving man, and Yump, the cook, his wife.

The house stood on the borders of a Russian town. It was in the heart of Russia. All about it was the great plain with the river running between low banks and over it the dull sky.

Across the plain ran the post road, naked and bare. In the distance one could see a moujik driving a three-horse tarantula, or perhaps Swill, the swine-herd, herding the swine. Far away the road dipped over the horizon and was lost.

"Where does it go to?" asked Serge. But no one could tell him.

In the winter there came the great snows and the river was frozen and Serge could walk on it.

On such days Yob, the postman, would come to the door, stamping his feet with the cold as he gave the letters to Itch.

"It is a cold day," Yob would say.

"It is God's will," said Itch. Then he would fetch a glass of Kwas steaming hot from the great stove, built of wood, that stood in the kitchen.

"Drink, little brother," he would say to Yob, and Yob would answer, "Little Uncle, I drink your health," and he would go down the road again, stamping his feet with the cold.

Then later the spring would come and all the plain was bright with flowers and Serge could pick them. Then the rain came and Serge could catch it in a cup. Then the summer came and the great heat and the storms, and Serge could watch the lightning.

"What is lightning for?" he would ask of Yump, the cook, as she stood kneading the *mush*, or dough, to make *slab*, or pancake, for the morrow. Yump shook her *knob*, or head, with a look of perplexity on her big *mugg*, or face.

"It is God's will," she said.

Thus Serge grew up a thoughtful child.

At times he would say to his mother, "Matrinska (little mother), why is the sky blue?" And she couldn't tell him.

Or at times he would say to his father, "Boob (Russian for father), what is three times six?" But his father didn't know.

Each year Serge grew.

Life began to perplex the boy. He couldn't understand it. No one could tell him anything.

Sometimes he would talk with Itch, the serving man.

"Itch," he asked, "what is morality?" But Itch didn't know. In his simple life he had never heard of it.

At times people came to the house—Snip, the schoolmaster, who could read and write, and Cinch, the harness maker, who made harness.

Once there came Popoff, the inspector of police, in his blue coat with fur on it. He stood in front of the fire writing down the names of all the people in the house. And when he came to Itch, Serge noticed how Itch trembled and cowered before Popoff, cringing as he brought a three-legged stool and saying, "Sit near the fire, little father; it is cold." Popoff laughed and said, "Cold as Siberia, is it not, little brother?" Then he said, "Bare me your arm to the elbow, and let me see if our mark is on it still." And Itch raised his sleeve to the elbow and Serge saw that there was a mark upon it burnt deep and black.

"I thought so," said Popoff, and he laughed. But Yump, the cook, beat the fire with a stick so that the sparks flew into Popoff's face. "You are too near the fire, little inspector," she said. "It burns."

All that evening Itch sat in the corner of the kitchen, and Serge saw that there were tears on his face.

"Why does he cry?" asked Serge.

"He has been in Siberia," said Yump as she poured water into the great iron pot to make soup for the week after the next.

Serge grew more thoughtful each year.

All sorts of things, occurrences of daily life, set him thinking. One day he saw some peasants drowning a tax collector in the river. It made a deep impression on him. He couldn't understand it. There seemed something wrong about it.

"Why did they drown him?" he asked of Yump, the cook.

"He was collecting taxes," said Yump, and she threw a handful of cups into the cupboard.

Then one day there was great excitement in the town, and men in uniform went to and fro and all the people stood at the doors talking.

"What has happened?" asked Serge.

"It is Popoff, inspector of police," answered Itch. "They have found him beside the river."

"Is he dead?" questioned Serge.

Itch pointed reverently to the ground—"He is there!" he said.

All that day Serge asked questions. But no one would tell him anything. "Popoff is dead," they said. "They have found him beside the river with his ribs driven in on his heart."

"Why did they kill him?" asked Serge.

But no one would say.

So after this Serge was more perplexed than ever.

Every one noticed how thoughtful Serge was.

"He is a wise boy," they said. "Some day he will be a learned man. He will read and write."

"Defend us!" exclaimed Itch. "It is a dangerous thing."

One day Liddoff, the priest, came to the house with a great roll of paper in his hand.

"What is it?" asked Serge.

"It is the alphabet," said Liddoff.

"Give it to me," said Serge with eagerness.

"Not all of it," said Liddoff gently. "Here is part of it," and he tore off a piece and gave it to the boy.

"Defend us!" said Yump, the cook. "It is not a wise thing," and she shook her head as she put a new lump of clay in the wooden stove to make it burn more brightly.

Then everybody knew that Serge was learning the alphabet, and that when he had learned it he was to go to Moscow, to the Teknik, and learn what else there was.

So the days passed and the months. Presently Ivan Ivanovitch said, "Now he is ready," and he took down a bag of rubles that was concealed on a shelf beside the wooden stove in the kitchen and counted them out after the Russian fashion, "Ten, ten, and yet ten, and still ten, and ten," till he could count no further.

"Protect us!" said Yump. "Now he is rich!" and she poured oil and fat mixed with sand into the bread and beat it with a stick.

"He must get ready," they said. "He must buy clothes. Soon he will go to Moscow to the Teknik and become a wise man."

Now it so happened that there came one day to the door a drosky, or one-horse carriage, and in it was a man and beside him a girl. The man stopped to ask the way from Itch, who pointed down the post road over the plain. But his hand trembled and his knees shook as he showed the way. For the eyes of the man who asked the way were dark with hate and cruel with power. And he wore a uniform and there was brass upon his cap. But Serge looked only at the girl. And there was no hate in her eyes, but only a great burning, and a look that went far beyond the plain, Serge knew not where. And as Serge looked, the girl turned her face and their eyes met, and he knew that he would never forget her. And he saw in her face that she would never forget him. For that is love.

"Who is that?" he asked, as he went back again with Itch into the house.

"It is Kwartz, chief of police," said Itch, and his knees still trembled as he spoke.

"Where is he taking her?" said Serge.

"To Moscow, to the prison," answered Itch. "There they will hang her and she will die."

"Who is she?" asked Serge. "What has she done?" and as he spoke he could still see the girl's face, and the look upon it, and a great fire went sweeping through his veins.

"She is Olga Ileyitch," answered Itch, "She made the bomb that killed Popoff, the inspector, and now they will hang her and she will die."

"Defend us!" murmured Yump, as she heaped more clay upon the stove.

CHAPTER II

Serge went to Moscow. He entered the Teknik. He became a student. He learned geography from Stoj, the professor, astrography from Fudj, the assistant, together with giliodesy, orgastrophy and other native Russian studies.

All day he worked. His industry was unflagging. His instructors were enthusiastic. "If he goes on like this," they said, "he will some day know something."

"It is marvellous," said one. "If he continues thus, he will be a professor."

"He is too young," said Stoj, shaking his head. "He has too much hair."

"He sees too well," said Fudj. "Let him wait till his eyes are weaker."

But all day as Serge worked he thought. And his thoughts were of Olga Ileyitch, the girl that he had seen with Kwartz, inspector of police. He wondered why she had killed Popoff, the inspector. He wondered if she was dead. There seemed no justice in it.

One day he questioned his professor.

"Is the law just?" he said. "Is it right to kill?"

But Stoj shook his head, and would not answer.

"Let us go on with our orgastrophy," he said. And he trembled so that the chalk shook in his hand.

So Serge questioned no further, but he thought more deeply still. All the way from the Teknik to the house where he lodged he was thinking. As he climbed the stair to his attic room he was still thinking.

The house in which Serge lived was the house of Madame Vasselitch. It was a tall dark house in a sombre street. There were no trees upon the street and no children played there. And opposite to the house of Madame Vasselitch was a building of stone, with windows barred, that was always silent. In it were no lights, and no one went in or out.

"What is it?" Serge asked.

"It is the house of the dead," answered Madame Vasselitch, and she shook her head and would say no more.

The husband of Madame Vasselitch was dead. No one spoke of him. In the house were only students, Most of them were wild fellows, as students are. At night they would sit about the table in the great room drinking Kwas made from sawdust fermented in syrup, or golgol, the Russian absinth, made by dipping a gooseberry in a bucket of soda water. Then they would play cards, laying matches on the table and betting, "Ten, ten, and yet ten," till all the matches were gone. Then they would say, "There are no more matches; let us dance," and they would dance upon the floor, till Madame Vasselitch would come to the room, a candle in her hand, and say, "Little brothers, it is ten o'clock. Go to bed." Then they went to bed. They were wild fellows, as all students are.

But there were two students in the house of Madame Vasselitch who were not wild. They were brothers. They lived in a long room in the basement. It was so low that it was below the street.

The brothers were pale, with long hair. They had deep-set eyes. They had but little money. Madame Vasselitch gave them food. "Eat, little sons," she would say. "You must not die."

The brothers worked all day. They were real students. One brother was Halfoff. He was taller than the other and stronger. The other brother was Kwitoff. He was not so tall as Halfoff and not so strong.

One day Serge went to the room of the brothers. The brothers were at work. Halfoff sat at a table. There was a book in front of him.

"What is it?" asked Serge.

"It is solid geometry," said Halfoff, and there was a gleam in his eyes.

"Why do you study it?" said Serge.

"To free Russia," said Halfoff.

"And what book have you?" said Serge to Kwitoff.

"Hamblin Smith's *Elementary Trigonometry*," said Kwitoff, and he quivered like a leaf.

"What does it teach?" asked Serge.

"Freedom!" said Kwitoff.

The two brothers looked at one another.

"Shall we tell him everything?" said Halfoff.

"Not yet," said Kwitoff. "Let him learn first. Later he shall know."

After that Serge often came to the room of the two brothers.

The two brothers gave him books. "Read them," they said.

"What are they?" asked Serge.

"They are in English," said Kwitoff. "They are forbidden books. They are not allowed in Russia. But in them is truth and freedom."

"Give me one," said Serge.

"Take this," said Kwitoff. "Carry it under your cloak.

Let no one see it."

"What is it?" asked Serge, trembling in spite of himself.

"It is Caldwell's *Pragmatism*," said the brothers.

"Is it forbidden?" asked Serge.

The brothers looked at him.

"It is death to read it," they said.

After that Serge came each day and got books from Halfoff and Kwitoff. At night he read them. They fired his brain. All of them were forbidden books. No one in Russia might read them. Serge read Hamblin Smith's *Algebra*. He read it all through from cover to cover feverishly. He read Murray's *Calculus*. It set his brain on fire. "Can this be true?" he asked.

The books opened a new world to Serge.

The brothers often watched him as he read.

"Shall we tell him everything?" said Halfoff.

"Not yet." said Kwitoff. "He is not ready."

One night Serge went to the room of the two brothers. They were not working at their books. Littered about the room were blacksmith's tools and wires, and pieces of metal lying on the floor. There was a crucible and underneath it a blue fire that burned fiercely. Beside it the brothers worked. Serge could see their faces in the light of the flame.

"Shall we tell him now?" said Kwitoff. The other brother nodded.

"Tell him now," he said.

"Little brother," said Kwitoff, and he rose from beside the flame and stood erect, for he was tall, "will you give your life?"

"What for?" asked Serge.

The brothers shook their heads.

"We cannot tell you that," they said. "That would be too much. Will you join us?"

"In what?" asked Serge.

"We must not say," said the brothers. "We can only ask are you willing to help our enterprise with all your power and with your life if need be?"

"What is your enterprise?" asked Serge.

"We must not divulge it," they said. "Only this: will you give your life to save another life, to save Russia?"

Serge paused. He thought of Olga Ileyitch. Only to save her life would he have given his.

"I cannot," he answered.

"Good night, little brother," said Kwitoff gently, and he turned back to his work.

Thus the months passed.

Serge studied without ceasing. "If there is truth," he thought, "I shall find it." All the time he Thought of Olga Ileyitch. His face grew pale. "Justice, Justice," he thought, "what is justice and truth?"

CHAPTER III

Now when Serge had been six months in the house of Madame Vasselitch, Ivan Ivanovitch, his father, sent Itch, the serving man, and Yump, the cook, his wife, to Moscow to see how Serge

fared. And Ivan first counted out rubles into a bag, "ten, and ten and still ten," till Itch said, "It is enough. I will carry that."

Then they made ready to go. Itch took a duck from the pond and put a fish in his pocket, together with a fragrant cheese and a bundle of sweet garlic. And Yump took oil and dough and mixed it with tar and beat it with an iron bar so as to shape it into a pudding.

So they went forth on foot, walking till they came to Moscow.

"It is a large place," said Itch, and he looked about him at the lights and the people.

"Defend us," said Yump. "It is no place for a woman."

"Fear nothing," said Itch, looking at her.

So they went on, looking for the house of Madame Vasselitch.

"How bright the lights are!" said Itch, and he stood still and looked about him. Then he pointed at a burleski, or theatre. "Let us go in there and rest," he said.

"No," said Yump, "let us hurry on."

"You are tired," said Itch. "Give me the pudding and hurry forward, so that you may sleep. I will come later, bringing the pudding and the fish."

"I am not tired," said Yump.

So they came at last to the house of Madame Vasselitch. And when they saw Serge they said, "How tall he is and how well grown!" But they thought, "He is pale. Ivan Ivanoviteh must know."

And Itch said, "Here are the rubles sent by Ivan Ivanovitch. Count them, little son, and see that they are right."

"How many should there be?" said Serge.

"I know not," said Itch. "You must count them and see."

Then Yump said, "Here is a pudding, little son, and a fish, and a duck and a cheese and garlic."

So that night Itch and Yump stayed in the house of Madame Vasselitch.

"You are tired," said Itch. "You must sleep."

"I am not tired," said Yump. "It is only that my head aches and my face burns from the wind and the sun."

"I will go forth," said Itch, "and find a fisski, or drug-store, and get something for your face."

"Stay where you are," said Yump. And Itch stayed.

Meantime Serge had gone upstairs with the fish and the duck and the cheese and the pudding. As he went up he thought. "It is selfish to eat alone. I will give part of the fish to the others." And when he got a little further up the steps he thought, "I will give them all of the fish." And when he got higher still he thought, "They shall have everything."

Then he opened the door and came into the big room where the students were playing with matches at the big table and drinking golgol out of cups. "Here is food, brothers," he said. "Take it. I need none."

The students took the food and they cried, "Rah, Rah," and beat the fish against the table. But the pudding they would not take. "We have no axe," they said. "Keep it."

Then they poured out golgol for Serge and said, "Drink it."

But Serge would not.

"I must work," he said, and all the students laughed. "He wants to work!" they cried. "Rah, Rah."

But Serge went up to his room and lighted his taper, made of string dipped in fat, and set himself to study. "I must work," he repeated.

So Serge sat at his books. It got later and the house grew still. The noise of the students below ceased and then everything was quiet.

Serge sat working through the night. Then presently it grew morning and the dark changed to twilight and Serge could see from his window the great building with the barred windows across the street standing out in the grey mist of the morning.

Serge had often studied thus through the night and when it was morning he would say, "It is morning," and would go down and help Madame Vasselitch unbar the iron shutters and unchain the door, and remove the bolts from the window casement.

But on this morning as Serge looked from his window his eyes saw a figure behind the barred window opposite to him. It was the figure of a girl, and she was kneeling on the floor and she was in prayer, for Serge could see that her hands were before her face. And as he looked all his blood ran warm to his head, and his limbs trembled even though he could not see the girl's face. Then the girl rose from her knees and turned her face towards the bars, and Serge knew that it was Olga Ileyitch and that she had seen and known him.

Then he came down the stairs and Madame Vasselitch was there undoing the shutters and removing the nails from the window casing.

"What have you seen, little son?" she asked, and her voice was gentle, for the face of Serge was pale and his eyes were wide.

But Serge did not answer the question.

"What is that house?" he said. "The great building with the bars that you call the house of the dead?"

"Shall I tell you, little son," said Madame Vasselitch, and she looked at him, still thinking. "Yes," she said, "he shall know.

"It is the prison of the condemned, and from there they go forth only to die. Listen, little son," she went on, and she gripped Serge by the wrist till he could feel the bones of her fingers against his flesh. "There lay my husband, Vangorod Vasselitch, waiting for his death. Months long he was there behind the bars and no one might see him or know when he was to die. I took this tall house that I might at least be near him till the end. But to those who lie there waiting for their death it is allowed once and once only that they may look out upon the world. And this is allowed to them the day before they die. So I took this house and waited, and each day I looked forth at dawn across the street and he was not there. Then at last he came. I saw him at the window and his face was pale and set and I could see the marks of the iron on his wrists as he held them to the bars. But I could see that his spirit was unbroken. There was no power in them to break that. Then he saw me at the window, and thus across the narrow street we said good-bye. It was only a moment. 'Sonia Vasselitch,' he said, 'do not forget,' and he was gone. I have not forgotten. I have lived on here in this dark house, and I have not forgotten. My sons—yes, little brother, my sons, I say—have not forgotten. Now tell me, Sergius Ivanovitch, what you have seen."

"I have seen the woman that I love," said Serge, "kneeling behind the bars in prayer. I have seen Olga Ileyitch."

"Her name," said Madame Vasselitch, and there were no tears in her eyes and her voice was calm, "her name is Olga Vasselitch. She is my daughter, and to-morrow she is to die."

CHAPTER IV

Madame Vasselitch took Serge by the hand.

"Come," she said, "you shall speak to my sons," and she led him down the stairs towards the room of Halfoff and Kwitoff.

"They are my sons," she said. "Olga is their sister. They are working to save her."

Then she opened the door. Halfoff and Kwitoff were working as Serge had seen them before, beside the crucible with the blue flame on their faces.

They had not slept.

Madame Vasselitch spoke.

"He has seen Olga," she said. "It is to-day."

"We are too late," said Halfoff, and he groaned.

"Courage, brother," said Kwitoff. "She will not die till sunrise. It is twilight now. We have still an hour. Let us to work."

Serge looked at the brothers.

"Tell me," he said. "I do not understand."

Halfoff turned a moment from his work and looked at Serge.

"Brother," he said, "will you give your life?"

"Is it for Olga?" asked Serge.

"It is for her."

"I give it gladly," said Serge.

"Listen then," said Halfoff. "Our sister is condemned for the killing of Popoff, inspector of police. She is in the prison of the condemned, the house of the dead, across the street. Her cell is there beside us. There is only a wall between. Look—"

Halfoff as he spoke threw aside a curtain that hung across the end of the room. Serge looked into blackness. It was a tunnel.

"It leads to the wall of her cell," said Halfoff. "We are close against the wall but we cannot shatter it. We are working to make a bomb. No bomb that we can make is hard enough. We can only try once. If it fails the noise would ruin us. There is no second chance. We try our bombs in the crucible. They crumble. They have no strength. We are ignorant. We are only learning. We studied it in the books, the forbidden books. It took a month to learn to set the wires to fire the bomb. The tunnel was there. We did not have to dig it. It was for my father, Vangorod Vasselitch. He would not let them use it. He tapped a message through the wall, 'Keep it for a greater need.' Now it is his daughter that is there."

Halfoff paused. He was panting and his chest heaved. There was perspiration on his face and his black hair was wet.

"Courage, little brother," said Kwitoff. "She shall not die."

"Listen," went on Halfoff. "The bomb is made. It is there beside the crucible. It has power in it to shatter the prison. But the wires are wrong. They do not work. There is no current in them. Something is wrong. We cannot explode the bomb."

"Courage, courage," said Kwitoff, and his hands were busy among the wires before him. "I am working still."

Serge looked at the brothers.

"Is that the bomb?" he said, pointing at a great ball of metal that lay beside the crucible.

"It is," said Halfoff.

"And the little fuse that is in the side of it fires it?

And the current from the wires lights the fuse?"

"Yes," said Halfoff.

The two brothers looked at Serge, for there was a meaning in his voice and a strange look upon his face.

"If the bomb is placed against the wall and if the fuse is lighted it would explode."

"Yes," said Halfoff despairingly, "but how? The fuse is instantaneous. Without the wires we cannot light it. It would be death."

Serge took the bomb in his hand. His face was pale.

"Let it be so!" he said. "I will give my life for hers."

He lifted the bomb in his hand. "I will go through the tunnel and hold the bomb against the wall and fire it," he said. "Halfoff, light me the candle in the flame. Be ready when the wall falls."

"No, no," said Halfoff, grasping Serge by the arm. "You must not die!"

"My brother," said Kwitoff quietly, "let it be as he says. It is for Russia!"

But as Halfoff turned to light the candle in the flame there came a great knocking at the door above and the sound of many voices in the street.

All paused.

Madame Vasselitch laid her hand upon her lips.

Then there came the sound as of grounded muskets on the pavement of the street and a sharp word of command.

"Soldiers!" said Madame Vasselitch.

Kwitoff turned to his brother.

"This is the end," he said. "Explode the bomb here and let us die together."

Suddenly Madame Vasselitch gave a cry.

"It is Olga's voice!" she said.

She ran to the door and opened it, and a glad voice was heard crying.

"It is I, Olga, and I am free!"

"Free," exclaimed the brothers.

All hastened up the stairs.

Olga was standing before them in the hall and beside her were the officers of the police, and in the street were the soldiers. The students from above had crowded down the stairs and with them were Itch, the serving man, and Yump, the cook.

"I am free," cried Olga, "liberated by the bounty of the Czar—Russia has declared war to fight for the freedom of the world and all the political prisoners are free."

"Rah, rah!" cried the students. "War, war, war!"

"She is set free," said the officer who stood beside Olga. "The charge of killing Popoff is withdrawn. No one will be punished for it now."

"I never killed him," said Olga. "I swear it," and she raised her hand.

"You never killed him!" exclaimed Serge with joy in his heart. "You did not kill Popoff? But who did?"

"Defend us," said Yump, the cook. "Since there is to be no punishment for it, I killed him myself."

"You!" they cried.

"It is so," said Yump. "I killed him beside the river.

It was to defend my honour."

"It was to defend her honour," cried the brothers. "She has done well."

They clasped her hand.

"You destroyed him with a bomb?" they said.

"No," said Yump, "I sat down on him."

"Rah, rah, rah," said the students.

There was silence for a moment. Then Kwitoff spoke.

"Friends," he said, "the new day is coming. The dawn is breaking. The moon is rising. The stars are setting. It is the birth of freedom. See! we need it not!"—and as he spoke he grasped in his hands the bomb with its still unlighted fuse—"Russia is free. We are all brothers now. Let us cast it at our enemies. Forward! To the frontier! Live the Czar."

Movies and Motors, Men and Women

IV. Madeline of the Movies: A Photoplay done back into Words

EXPLANATORY NOTE

In writing this I ought to explain that I am a tottering old man of forty-six. I was born too soon to understand moving pictures. They go too fast. I can't keep up. In my young days we used a magic lantern. It showed Robinson Crusoe in six scenes. It took all evening to show them. When it was done the hall was filled full with black smoke and the audience quite unstrung with excitement. What I set down here represents my thoughts as I sit in front of a moving picture photoplay and interpret it as best I can.

Flick, flick, flick! I guess it must be going to begin now, but it's queer the people don't stop talking: how can they expect to hear the pictures if they go on talking? Now it's off. PASSED BY THE BOARD OF—. Ah, this looks interesting—passed by the board of—wait till I adjust my spectacles and read what it—

It's gone. Never mind, here's something else, let me see—CAST OF CHARACTERS—Oh, yes—let's see who they are—MADELINE MEADOWLARK, a young something—EDWARD DANGERFIELD, a—a what? Ah, yes, a roo—at least, it's spelt r-o-u-e, that must be roo all right—but wait till I see what that is that's written across the top—MADELINE MEADOWLARK; OR, ALONE IN A GREAT CITY. I see, that's the title of it. I wonder which of the characters is alone. I guess not Madeline: she'd hardly be alone in a place like that. I imagine it's more likely Edward Dangerous the Roo. A roo would probably be alone a great deal, I should think. Let's see what the other characters are—JOHN HOLDFAST, a something. FARMER MEADOWLARK, MRS. MEADOWLARK, his Something—

Pshaw, I missed the others, but never mind; flick, flick, it's beginning—What's this? A bedroom, eh? Looks like a girl's bedroom—pretty poor sort of place. I wish the picture would keep still a minute—in Robinson Crusoe it all stayed still and one could sit and look at it, the blue sea and the green palm trees and the black footprints in the yellow sand—but this blamed thing keeps rippling and flickering all the time—Ha! there's the girl herself—come into her bedroom. My! I hope she doesn't start to undress in it—that would be fearfully uncomfortable with all these people here. No, she's not undressing—she's gone and opened the cupboard. What's that she's doing—taking out a milk jug and a glass—empty, eh? I guess it must be, because she seemed to hold it upside down. Now she's picked up a sugar bowl—empty, too, eh?—and a cake tin, and that's empty—What on earth does she take them all out for if they're empty? Why can't she speak? I think—hullo—who's this coming in? Pretty hard-looking sort of woman—what's she got in her hand?—some sort of paper, I guess—she looks like a landlady, I shouldn't wonder if—

Flick, flick! Say! Look there on the screen:

"YOU OWE ME THREE WEEKS' RENT."

Oh, I catch on! that's what the landlady says, eh? Say! That's a mighty smart way to indicate it isn't it? I was on to that in a minute—flick, flick—hullo, the landlady's vanished—what's the girl doing now—say, she's praying! Look at her face! Doesn't she look religious, eh?

Flick, flick!

Oh, look, they've put her face, all by itself, on the screen. My! what a big face she's got when you see it like that.

She's in her room again—she's taking off her jacket—by Gee! She *is* going to bed! Here, stop the machine; it doesn't seem—Flick, flick!

Well, look at that! She's in bed, all in one flick, and fast asleep! Something must have broken in the machine and missed out a chunk. There! she's asleep all right—looks as if she was dreaming. Now it's sort of fading. I wonder how they make it do that? I guess they turn the wick of the lamp down low: that was the way in Robinson Crusoe—Flick, flick!

Hullo! where on earth is this—farmhouse, I guess—must be away upstate somewhere—who on earth are these people? Old man—white whiskers—old lady at a spinning-wheel—see it go, eh? Just like real! And a young man—that must be John Holdfast—and a girl with her hand in his. Why! Say! it's the girl, the same girl, Madeline—only what's she doing away off here at this farm—how did she get clean back from the bedroom to this farm? Flick, flick! what's this?

"NO, JOHN, I CANNOT MARRY YOU. I MUST DEVOTE MY LIFE TO MY MUSIC."

Who says that? What music? Here, stop—

It's all gone. What's this new place? Flick, flick, looks like a street. Say! see the street car coming along—well! say! isn't that great? A street car! And here's Madeline! How on earth did she get back from the old farm all in a second? Got her street things on—that must be music under her arm—I wonder where—hullo—who's this man in a silk hat and swell coat? Gee! he's well dressed. See him roll his eyes at Madeline! He's lifting his hat—I guess he must be Edward Something, the Roo—only a roo would dress as well as he does—he's going to speak to her—

"SIR, I DO NOT KNOW YOU. LET ME PASS."

Oh, I see! The Roo mistook her; he thought she was somebody that he knew! And she wasn't! I catch on! It gets easy to understand these pictures once you're on.

Flick, flick—Oh, say, stop! I missed a piece—where is she? Outside a street door—she's pausing a moment outside—that was lucky her pausing like that—it just gave me time to read EMPLOYMENT BUREAU on the door. Gee! I read it quick.

Flick, flick! Where is it now?—oh, I see, she's gone in—she's in there—this must be the Bureau, eh? There's Madeline going up to the desk.

"NO, WE HAVE TOLD YOU BEFORE, WE HAVE NOTHING …"

Pshaw! I read too slow—she's on the street again. Flick, flick!

No, she isn't—she's back in her room—cupboard still empty—no milk—no sugar—Flick, flick!

Kneeling down to pray—my! but she's religious—flick, flick—now she's on the street—got a letter in her hand—what's the address—Flick, flick!

Mr. Meadowlark
Meadow Farm
Meadow County
New York

Gee! They've put it right on the screen! The whole letter! Flick, flick—here's Madeline again on the street with the letter still in her hand—she's gone to a letter-box with it—why doesn't she post it? What's stopping her?

"I CANNOT TELL THEM OF MY FAILURE. IT WOULD BREAK THEIR …"

Break their what? They slide these things along altogether too quick—anyway, she won't post it—I see—she's torn it up—Flick, flick!

Where is it now? Another street—seems like everything —that's a restaurant, I guess—say, it looks a swell place—see the people getting out of the motor and going in—and another lot right after them—there's Madeline —she's stopped outside the window—she's looking in—it's starting to

snow! Hullo! here's a man coming along! Why, it's the Roo; he's stopping to talk to her, and pointing in at the restaurant—Flick, flick!

"LET ME TAKE YOU IN HERE TO DINNER."

Oh, I see! The Roo says that! My! I'm getting on to the scheme of these things—the Roo is going to buy her some dinner! That's decent of him. He must have heard about her being hungry up in her room—say, I'm glad he came along. Look, there's a waiter come out to the door to show them in—what! she won't go! Say! I don't understand! Didn't it say he offered to take her in? Flick, flick!

"I WOULD RATHER DIE THAN EAT IT."

Gee! Why's that? What are all the audience applauding for? I must have missed something! Flick, flick!

Oh, blazes! I'm getting lost! Where is she now? Back in her room—flick, flick—praying—flick, flick! She's out on the street!—flick, flick!—in the employment bureau —flick, flick!—out of it—flick—darn the thing! It changes too much—where is it all? What is it all—? Flick, flick!

Now it's back at the old farm—I understand that all right, anyway! Same kitchen—same old man—same old woman—she's crying—who's this?—man in a sort of uniform—oh, I see, rural postal delivery—oh, yes, he brings them their letters—I see—

"NO, MR. MEADOWLARK, I AM SORRY, I HAVE STILL NO LETTER FOR YOU…"

Flick! It's gone! Flick, flick—it's Madeline's room again—what's she doing?—writing a letter? —no, she's quit writing—she's tearing it up—

"I CANNOT WRITE. IT WOULD BREAK THEIR …"

Flick—missed it again! Break their something or other —Flick, flick!

Now it's the farm again—oh, yes, that's the young man John Holdfast—he's got a valise in his hand—he must be going away—they're shaking hands with him—he's saying something—

"I WILL FIND HER FOR YOU IF I HAVE TO SEARCH ALL NEW YORK."

He's off—there he goes through the gate—they're waving good-bye—flick—it's a railway depot—flick—it's New York—say! That's the Grand Central Depot! See the people buying tickets! My! isn't it lifelike?—and there's John—he's got here all right—I hope he finds her room—

The picture changed—where is it now? Oh, yes, I see —Madeline and the Roo—outside a street entrance to some place—he's trying to get her to come in—what's that on the door? Oh, yes, DANCE HALL—Flick, flick!

Well, say, that must be the inside of the dance hall —they're dancing—see, look, look, there's one of the girls going to get up and dance on the table.

Flick! Darn it!—they've cut it off—it's outside again —it's Madeline and the Roo—she's saying something to him—my! doesn't she look proud—?

"I WILL DIE RATHER THAN DANCE."

Isn't she splendid! Hear the audience applaud! Flick—it's changed—it's Madeline's room again —that's the landlady —doesn't she look hard, eh? What's this—Flick!

"IF YOU CANNOT PAY, YOU MUST LEAVE TO-NIGHT."

Flick, flick—it's Madeline—she's out in the street—it's snowing—she's sat down on a doorstep —say, see her face, isn't it pathetic? There! They've put her face all by itself on the screen. See her eyes move! Flick, flick!

Who's this? Where is it? Oh, yes, I get it—it's John—at a police station—he's questioning them —how grave they look, eh? Flick, flick!

"HAVE YOU SEEN A GIRL IN NEW YORK?"

I guess that's what he asks them, eh? Flick, flick—

"NO, WE HAVE NOT."

Too bad—flick—it's changed again—it's Madeline on the doorstep—she's fallen asleep—oh, say, look at that man coming near to her on tiptoes, and peeking at her—why, it's Edward, it's the Roo—but he doesn't waken her—what does it mean? What's he after? Flick, flick—

Hullo—what's this?—it's night—what's this huge dark thing all steel, with great ropes against the sky—it's Brooklyn Bridge—at midnight—there's a woman on it! It's Madeline—see! see! She's going to jump—stop her! Stop her! Flick, flick—

Hullo! she didn't jump after all—there she is again on the doorstep—asleep—how could she jump over Brooklyn Bridge and still be asleep? I don't catch on—or, oh, yes, I do—she *dreamed* it —I see now, that's a great scheme, eh?—shows her *dream*—

The picture's changed—what's this place—a saloon, I guess—yes, there's the bartender, mixing drinks—men talking at little tables—aren't they a tough-looking lot?—see, that one's got a revolver —why, it's Edward the Roo—talking with two men—he's giving them money—what's this?—

"GIVE US A HUNDRED APIECE AND WE'LL DO IT."

It's in the street again—Edward and one of the two toughs —they've got little black masks on —they're sneaking up to Madeline where she sleeps—they've got a big motor drawn up beside them —look, they've grabbed hold of Madeline—they're lifting her into the motor—help! Stop! Aren't there any police?—yes, yes, there's a man who sees it—by Gee! It's John, John Holdfast—grab them, John—pshaw! they've jumped into the motor, they're off!

Where is it now?—oh, yes—it's the police station again —that's John, he's telling them about it—he's all out of breath—look, that head man, the big fellow, he's giving orders—

"INSPECTOR FORDYCE, TAKE YOUR BIGGEST CAR AND TEN MEN. IF YOU OVERTAKE THEM, SHOOT AND SHOOT TO KILL."

Hoorah! Isn't it great—hurry! don't lose a minute—see them all buckling on revolvers—get at it, boys, get at it! Don't lose a second—

Look, look—it's a motor—full speed down the street—look at the houses fly past—it's the motor with the thugs—there it goes round the corner—it's getting smaller, it's getting smaller, but look, here comes another—my! it's just flying—it's full of police—there's John in front—Flick!

Now it's the first motor—it's going over a bridge—it's heading for the country—say, isn't that car just flying —Flick, flick!

It's the second motor—it's crossing the bridge too—hurry, boys, make it go!—Flick, flick!

Out in the country—a country road—early daylight—see the wind in the trees! Notice the branches waving? Isn't it natural?—whiz! Biff! There goes the motor—biff! There goes the other one—right after it—hoorah!

The open road again—the first motor flying along! Hullo, what's wrong? It's slackened, it stops —hoorah! it's broken down—there's Madeline inside—there's Edward the Roo! Say! isn't he pale and desperate!

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.