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THE MYSTERY OF GRASLOV

By Ashley Towne

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SYNOPSIS.—Prince Neslerov wants to marry Frances Gordon, the charming daughter of an American who is building the Transiberian railroad. Frances is interested in the fortunes of Vladimir Paulpoff, a stalwart Russian blacksmith. She asks Neslerov to use his influence to get Vladimir's father out of Siberia as a nihilist. Frances Gordon goes to the forge with books for Vladimir. At the door of the lonely hut she encounters Neslerov. The prince presses his suit violently, and Frances stuns him with a pistol shot in the head. Gordon wishes his daughter to marry Jack Denton, an American bridge engineer. Frances demands that her father intercede with the governor for Vladimir. They start for Obl. Neslerov boards the same train, which breaks in two, and Neslerov has Frances alone in his power. Neslerov drags Frances before a priest and bids him to perform a marriage ceremony. Jack Denton comes to the rescue. Neslerov is beaten off.

CHAPTER VII.

A DUEL.

Neslerov recoiled, and the writhing of his face in pain and fury, together with the long red cut made by the whip, gave him the expression of a demon.

"You! You!" he gasped.

"Yes, I!" said Denton. "Fortunately, I arrived in time to toll this dastardly attempt of yours to take advantage of a defenseless girl. I have been riding along the railway from stream to stream examining the bridges. I reached this place on my horse a moment ago. A boy saw me coming and hurried to tell me what was going on. I had no idea I should find a friend in need of help. But, thank God, I was in time."

"You will never leave this place alive!" said Neslerov.

He plucked a revolver from his pocket and aimed at Denton.

A woman standing near held out her hands and caught the form of Frances and bore it into her house. Denton, with flashing eyes, leaped forward and closed with Neslerov.

"It is a battle to the death between giants!" cried a man in the crowd.

The pistol fell from the grasp of Neslerov, and the whip before wielded by Denton dropped to the ground.

The iron fingers of Denton would close on the throat of Neslerov, and it seemed as though the struggle would end that moment, but Neslerov would wrench himself free and leap at his enemy with a curse and growl.

"It is you or I! One of us must die!" cried Neslerov.

A swinging, crushing blow from the American's right hand sent the governor to the ground, where he lay as if stunned.

"Take care of him, somebody," said Denton in Russian. "I don't want to kill him."

He turned without a look at the fallen man and started toward the hut into which Frances had been carried.

"Look out!" cried a woman.

At the cry, which was echoed in the crowd, Denton turned suddenly. The dastardly Neslerov had feigned. He had risen to his feet and was creeping



And now began a duel, upon his enemy with a dagger drawn.

"Oh, you are an assassin, eh?" said Denton as he drew his revolver. "Let me see if we can't settle you once for all."

While it might be that not one of the villagers sympathized with Neslerov, yet his act was not a crime to them. With their sordid understanding of women having no rights, no freedom, no liberties save what their lords and masters gave them, the men of this place looked upon the eagerness of Neslerov to be married to so beautiful a girl as natural.

One of them, realizing that the governor's safety was necessary to their own, sprang upon Denton and drove a knife through the fleshy part of his arm.

The pistol fell to the earth near that of Neslerov and two villagers picked them up and hid them.

Like a flash Neslerov was upon his unarmed foe, and his knife was raised to strike, but Denton, with a quicker

Miscellaneous Reading.

GREAT MEN'S WIVES.

And the Tributes Great Men Have Paid to Them.

"This place is perfect," Charles Kingsley once wrote to his wife from the seaside, "but it seems a dream and imperfect without you. I never before felt the loneliness of being without the beloved being whose every look and word and motion are the keynotes of my life. People talk of love ending at the altar—Fools, I lay at the window all morning, thinking of nothing but home; how I long for it!"

There is nothing in the history of love more attractive than the pictures of the ideally happy married lives enjoyed by some of our greatest men, or more touching than the tribute they paid to the women who filled their days with sunshine. Indeed, if one were asked to present a picture of the sublimity of married happiness it would be only necessary to recall the scene in which Charles Kingsley, within a few days of his own death, having escaped from his sick room, sat for a few blissful moments by the bedside of his wife, who was lying seriously ill in the next room. Taking one of her hands in his, he said, in a hushed voice: "Don't speak, darling. This is Heaven."

Few men, great or small, have been happier in their married life than John Bright, and the story of his inconsolable grief when his wife, "the sunshine and solace of his days," was taken from him, forms one of the most pathetic pages of human history. "It seems to me," he pitifully said, "as though the world was plunged in darkness, and that no ray of light could ever reach me again this side of the tomb."

It was Cobden who shook him at last from the lethargy and despair which were paralyzing his splendid energies. "There are thousands of homes in England at this moment," he said, "where wives, mothers and children are dying of hunger. Now, when the first paroxysm of your grief is past, I would advise you to come with me and we will never rest until the corn law is repealed."

The late Dean Stanley, it is said, worshipped the very ground his wife, Lady Augusta, trod on, and many are the compliments he paid her. "If I were to epitomize my wife's qualities," he once said, "I couldn't do it no better than in the words of a cabman who drove us on our honeymoon. 'Your wife,' he said to me, 'is the best woman in England—and I quite agree with him.'"

"Why should you pity me?" Mr. Fawcett, the blind postmaster general, remarked to a friend who has expressed sympathy with him in his affliction. "My wife is all the eyes I want, and no man ever looked out on the world through eyes more sweet or true."

Sheridan was very happy in his wives, although one of them, before marrying him spoke, of her future husband as "that fright, that horrid creature." In marked contrast to this unflattering description was the compliment he paid to his first wife, whom he had wooed disguised as a hackney coachman, when he spoke of her as "the connecting link between a woman and an angel."

No man ever relied more completely on his wife's guidance and counsel than John Keble, the poet of the "Christian Year." From the day when he installed his bride in Hursley Vicarage to the last day, 20 years later, when he died in her arms at Bournemouth, she was, as he often declared, his "consent, memory and common sense."

Dr. Pusey's too brief married life was also crowded with happiness, and his wife's memory was his one solace during the 43 years he survived her. To his dying day the very sight and smell of the verberna plant affected him to tears, for it was a sprig of verberna he offered to Miss Barber when he asked her to marry him—"the most sacred and blissful moment" of his life.

William Cobbett was very properly proud of his wife, the brave and devoted woman who was, in his words, "the best helpmate an underserving man ever had. Whatever mistakes I have made in my life—and they have been many and great—she has never had a word of blame for me, nothing but sweet sympathy and consolation. The price of such a wife should indeed be far above rubies."

Dr. Wadsworth, late Bishop of Lincoln, said that his wedded life had been "as near perfection as was possible this side of Eden." "Their children," a friend once wrote, "can never remember a day or even an hour when, even in surface matters, the perfect harmony was infringed upon," and a favorite joke with the bishop was that he and his wife had never been "reconciled"—for the happy reason that they had never quarrelled.—Tit-Bits.

SOW WHEAT.—It takes constant and earnest exhortation to arouse people to an appreciation of their duty and to hold them to a rigid performance of it. "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little." Such was Isaiah's idea of instructing the people on their moral and religious duties. The same plan holds good in the business world. Patience, earnestness, kindness, sympathy will accomplish much more in fields, or factory than the stern and heartless orders and commands of the master. It is the repeated suggestion that wins men to the performance of everyday duties. Some of our readers may think that too much has been said for several months in the Spartan in regard to sowing small grain, thereby laying the foundation for a pea crop and soil improvement. Some of the best farmers of the county tell us to keep up the advice and suggestions. Some persons will be benefited by it. Some of the seed thus promiscuously sown will fall on good ground. Hence we say to the farmers of the Piedmont to make a special effort

to get in a full wheat crop. The sooner this is done the better. Thorough preparation of the land will be good for the next crop, whether peas, or corn or peas. Pea stubble turned with a two-horse plow, or rather edged up, and pulverized with a cutaway harrow will put the land in the condition for wheat, whether put in with a drill or sown by hand and covered with a harrow or double foot plow. The wheat mills of the county are now idle. Only a few farmers have wheat to grind. There will be a constant demand for flour until next July. Let every farmer endeavor to make wheat enough for all persons on his farm.—Spartanburg Spartan.

A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE.

The Best Way to Get Rid of a Debt Is to Pay It.

The appeal of the men who wish to avoid the payment of their debt to the holders of the bonds which they voted to build a narrow gauge railroad from Augusta to Greenville may be found in another column.

Their unfortunate circumstances is a matter of regret to all, but repudiation, or the resort to doubtful methods, is not the way for men to discharge their obligations. The voters of that day and time were warned against the act which placed the debt on their property. The men who had charge of the undertaking or the taxpayers made mistakes for which the men who graded the road are in nowise responsible.

Not so long ago, this town had an unjust and an unlawful debt saddled upon it by railroad enthusiasts. That debt could have been avoided by a simple appeal to the courts. There was not the shadow of constitutional authority for assuming the debts of others, but rather than make a question whereby the credit of the town might be injured, we paid the debt, dollar for dollar.

There is something repulsive in the act of repudiating a debt, or avoiding its payment by a technicality.

If towns, townships or counties may surrender their charters to avoid the payment of their debts, the credit of the state will be injured, and the character of our people may suffer.

But this effort in sympathy for the unfortunate will bring its evil consequences upon others. Even if every man in the state should vote for the repudiation of their railroad debts, the act will not avail.

The courts, as a rule, were organized for the express purpose of making unwilling debtors settle their obligations.

The people of the United States will never encourage repudiation—no matter how willing we may be to repudiate our debts.

It is a matter of principle which should avoid the payment of its debts while other communities pay theirs. The United States courts will hardly discriminate, even if South Carolina resorts to doubtful methods.—Abbeville Press and Banner.

THE STATE DISPENSARY.

Sam Jones Writes of South Carolina's Gin Mill and Its Liquor.

The biggest thing in South Carolina is the dispensary. Ben Tillman and the devil saddled the thing on South Carolina and the politicians and the fools and rascals who buy the liquor. Whiskey is sold from the dispensary from sun up till sun down and the price ranges from 10 cents for half pint bottle to \$1.00 for pint bottle, from pop-suckle to "good lickit." Drummers and "gentlemen" buy the "good lickit," and Negroes and poor whites buy the 10 cents a pint stuff. All the dispensaries of the state are furnished their liquor from the Columbia wholesale shop.

The state takes its profits at headquarters before the town and county dispensaries get hold of it. Then the town and county divide the profits equally. And the work of drunkard-making goes steadily on. I find in mingling with the people (I mean the good people), for I go with no other sort, they are all opposed to the dispensary. They say it's better than the saloon. Just as they prefer measles to smallpox. They say it's death to morals and manhood, whether it's furnished by saloon, blind tiger or dispensary.

The dispensary is as much in politics in South Carolina as the saloons of Chicago or Atlanta are in politics. Therefore both gangs know that when they go out of politics they must go out of business. And so it goes, and it looks like as long as the infernal greed of whiskey dealers and the infernal appetite for drink shall possess men that the traffic will go on, but I am still at my old game fighting the gangs on both sides. They tell me I can't stop it, but I tell them that I am like the boy who grabbed the calf by the tail and the calf took off down the road at break-neck speed, and the boy keeping up with the procession, and by and by a gentleman said to the boy, "Tom, what are you doing with that calf?" "I am trying to stop him." "You can't stop him that way," said the gentleman. "I know I can't," said the boy, "but I'm slowing him up some."—Atlanta Journal.

WHERE WOMEN PROPOSE.—In the Ukraine, Russia, the woman does all the courting. When she falls in love with a man, she goes to his house and informs him of the state of her feelings. If he reciprocates, all is well, and the formal marriage is duly arranged. If, however, he is unwilling, she remains there, hoping to coax him to a better mind. The poor fellow cannot treat her with the least discourtesy, nor has he the consolation of being able to turn her out, as her friends in the insult. His remedy, therefore, if determined not to marry her, is to leave his home and stay away as long as she is in it. A similar practice to that in the Ukraine, exists among the Zuni tribe of Indians. The woman does all the courting and also controls the situation after marriage. To her belong all the children, and descent, including inheritance, is also on her side.

DEADLY LONG RANGE RIFLES.

A Movement in Canada to Forbid Their Use in Hunting.

Not far from Mont Cref, one of the northern settlements, a little tragedy occurred this week which ought to be a warning to deer hunters.

A young French woman was standing at the door of her little home, her five-months old child in her arms, when she suddenly felt a shock of some kind, and her baby screamed, struggled violently and, in a moment or two, was dead. The father was near by, and aroused by the screams, came in as the mother sank to the floor unconscious.

Her long fainting was overcome with difficulty. Then they tried to account for the sudden death of the child. It was not until the little body was stripped of its clothing that the matter became clear to the investigators.

Then a stain upon the inner garment, one tiny wound in the chest, and one in the back, told the tale of a bullet gone astray, the bullet itself was found in the clothing of the mother, where it had lodged.

It had come from one of the German long range rifles, sold commonly in this country at a low price a few years ago. Whose gun dispatched it, or from what distance it had come, is not known probably never will be known, as many hunters are afield in the deer country just now.

It was about 30 miles southeast of the scene of this incident that last autumn a sawmill hand, standing on a boom above the furnace, suddenly dropped his pipe, and a steel bullet in his brain.

No report was evidently almost spent, and the man who killed his fellow was never discovered—perhaps never knew of the outcome of his long-range shooting. Indeed, he may have been a mile away from his victim at the time.

Only a few days ago, two sons of one of the country's most prominent men were crossing a lake after ducks when, without warning of any kind, one of them received a shock which almost threw him out of the boat. A flying bullet had ploughed transversely in a slightly downward direction across his chest, inflicting an ugly, painful, though fortunately not dangerous, wound. As his doctor said, that lad can never be much nearer death, no matter what befalls him.

News of somewhat similar happenings are being reported from other sporting districts. In this region, the rather slow moving settlers are beginning an agitation for a gun license fee, and for an act of parliament behind it, which shall compel the use of a government stamp upon sporting firearms certifying that their range is not above 500 yards.

How thoughtless some men are in their use of firearms, and how accidents often occur were forcibly demonstrated lately. A farmer had just retired for the night, when he noticed the sound of blows upon his shingled roof.

This was followed by the noise of breaking glass in the attic chamber, next to which he was lying. Fortunately for him, he had philosophy enough to subdue his curiosity until morning, when he discovered that several bullets had pierced the walls and windows of his spare bedroom.

During the day a couple of hunters came in for supplies from a large shooting party encamped beside the pond about half a mile away. Upon inquiry it turned out that as the men could not sleep that first night they had amused themselves by firing in the moonlight at a dead tree top on the other side of the water.

The question of where the bullets they heedlessly set going might stop had not occurred to them.—Hull, Canada, Dispatch.

TOLD BY A LETTER CARRIER.

His Story of a Ghost For Whom His Father Had a Love Letter.

"Tell you the story? Cert, Captain Fanning of the Tenth Ohio fought through the civil war. At its close he went over to Ireland with the Fenians and was, I believe, imprisoned there for a time. However, on his return he lived in my father's district and he became intimate with him, as they were both Fenians. The captain, after a year or two, enlisted in the regular army and with an unsuspected activity, he threw himself directly in front of me and momentarily blocked my passage. 'Stick out your tongue,' he said in a commanding tone of voice, and I obeyed him. 'I see,' he said, after carefully scrutinizing my tongue. 'Let me feel your pulse,' he said, as he grabbed my wrist. 'I see,' he said again. 'How's the appetite?' he asked, and I told him. 'I see,' he said again.

"Sleep uneven, eh?" he continued, "and you feel tired all the time. Suffer with nausea, too, I suppose, and your food doesn't agree with you, and your nerves are in bad shape, and pain in the breast, and heavy headache, and—I see—I see," he said after awhile. He pulled a little box out of his pocket, fumbled for a few seconds and then handed me a half-dozen small pills, with the instruction that I take one every three hours. 'Fifty cents,' he said, 'for diagnosis and medicine.' I protested, telling him that I had not asked his assistance. He drew a large, ugly-looking pistol from his pocket, and, looking me squarely in the eye, simply repeated, 'Fifty cents.' I gave it to him, and to tell the truth, he was glad to get off so lightly in that wild region of the hold-up business and I experienced a new sensation as a result of it all.

"Inquiry developed the fact that no such man lived permanently in that section, and I was laughed at considerably because I had been made the victim of a tramp's crooked enterprise."—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

Some people are so good-natured that they are disagreeable.

Under all circumstances make the best of your surroundings.

HOW SCANDAL GROWS.

How a Story Gains in Size, Like a Rolling Snowball.

Mr. Jones is a solemn gentleman with a pessimistic view of life in general and his neighbors' actions in particular. He looks sad in a pleased sort of way as he speaks to his wife across the breakfast table.

Mr. Jones—It is really too bad how that young Ferguson is going on. Only married a few months, and his wife is such a nice girl. Poor little woman!"

Mrs. Jones (with eager interest)—What has he been doing? I have always had my suspicions of him, but, of course, I have said nothing.

Mr. Jones (attacking his omelet)—Why when I went down last night to the board meeting, Ferguson was on the same train and alone. He was beaming in the most undignified way, like a schoolboy out on a lark. When I came home, I passed one of the theatres just as it let out, and caught a glimpse of Ferguson sailing away with a stunningly dressed woman—most devoted, too. They were on their way to supper, for I watched them turn into a cafe.

Mrs. Jones (ecstatically)—The wretch! And I suppose poor Carla was sitting patiently at home waiting for him, or else crying her eyes out! It's disgraceful! I'll wager she wishes now she had married Mr. Raymond instead, even if he is old enough to be her father!

SCENE 2.

Sitting room of Mrs. Smith. She is almost touching heads with her caller, Mrs. White.

Mrs. Smith—What! You haven't heard? Why, that young man Ferguson is treating his wife horribly, and she is so brave about it. Poor thing; goes out just the same and never once drops her pretty smile. He is infatuated with another woman—takes her to theatres and wine suppers and is out every evening in the week. Mrs. Jones knows all about it and she says Carla bitterly regrets her mistake in not taking that nice Mr. Raymond instead. Of course, he is dull, but then he would not have neglected her. Oh, these young men!

Mrs. White—I always did feel that he wasn't to be trusted!

SCENE 3.

Mrs. White has three women to luncheon.

Mrs. White—And so Carla has reached the limit of her endurance! She's going to get a divorce and marry Mr. Raymond—he was desperately in love with her before she made the mistake of marrying Ferguson and has jumped at the chance. I admire her spirit, though I hate to see a home broken up. It serves Ferguson just right. I only wonder why she delays leaving him and going back to her father.

Chorus of women—Yes, isn't it odd? Poor child, what an unhappy experience for her—and how she keeps her troubles to herself.

SCENE 4.

The home of the Fergusons. Carla and her husband are contentedly sitting by the reading lamp cutting magazines.

Ferguson (suddenly)—Say, dear, you know my new hat—the one I went down on the train ahead of you to buy the evening we took in the theatre last week? Well, I've splashed ink on it. Can you clean it?

Carla—Yes, certainly. You look so well in that hat, Dick. I was proud of you when you came to meet me at the station. Say, what on earth do you suppose all the women I know? They have gazed at me with tears in their eyes the last few days and patted me on the shoulder. Today Mrs. Jones said I could always rely on her and there were plenty of others to back me up.

Ferguson (amusedly)—Search me. Why don't you ask 'em?

She does, and Ferguson, coming home next evening, is swamped with hysterical torrent of speech, in which inoffensive Mr. Raymond, "gossipy, horrid women," coruscating wrath and choking laughter are inextricably mingled.

Ferguson (after three distinct attempts to speak his mind, which end in failures)—And there's absolutely nothing we can do to convince people it's untrue! Carla, come weep on the shoulder of your villainous husband—and let's us to the theatre to celebrate!"—Chicago Daily News.

The First Strike.

The terrible plague of 1348, which continued during eight years, and of which such grewsome stories may be read in history and romance, destroyed it is believed, nearly two thirds of the human race then existing. In London 50,000 bodies were buried in one graveyard; in Lubek, 90,000; in Spain, over half the population was destroyed; and in the countries of the East, 20,000,000 perished in one year. One result of this protracted "dance of death," far more terrible than Hans Holbein's weird conception was a scarcity of labor so great that it was feared it would not be possible to provide for the living.

Such a state of affairs naturally encouraged the skilled craftsmen of the time to increase the price they asked for their services. Their terms became so exorbitant that it was impossible, in the impoverished condition in which the ravages of the plague had left all the great cities of the world, to meet their demands, as it was equally impossible to do without their services. It was the first recorded "strike" in the history of mankind, and as on all subsequent occasions, it was met by force. Governments hurriedly enacted "labor laws," and policed the cities with whatever armed forces they could muster. It was an attempt to take an unfair advantage of disaster, and death, and it failed, as it deserved to fail; but it proved how absolutely necessary to mankind were certain forms of labor, and sounded their keynote of the call for all subsequent strikes down to the present day.—Exchange.

Suspicion is a source of great unhappiness.