

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 Trans-Siberian railroad. Frances is interested in the fortunes of Vladimir Pauloff, a stalwart Russian blacksmith. She asks Neslerov to use his influence for Vladimir, but Neslerov says Vladimir is but a blacksmith. The blacksmith has talent and shows Neslerov a picture he has painted. It is the portrait of a woman of rank copied from a miniature. The Prince is excited and asks for the original. Vladimir's father says it has been lost. To Vladimir old Pauloff confesses that he lied to Neslerov and still has the miniature. III—Neslerov has the Pauloffs sent to Siberia as exiles. IV—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. V—Gordon wishes his daughter to marry Jack Denton, an American bridge engineer. The blacksmith demands that her father intercede with the governor for Vladimir. They start for Obi. Neslerov boards the same train, which breaks in two, and Neslerov has Frances alone in his power. VI—Neslerov demands Frances before a priest and bids him to perform a marriage ceremony. Jack Denton comes to the rescue. Neslerov is beaten off. VII—Denton nearly kills Neslerov in a duel. VIII—Jack promises Frances to save the blacksmith. IX—Jack repairs a disabled engine and hauls a car containing the wounded prince and Frances toward Obi. On the road they meet Gordon, returning with a special car for his daughter. Frances witnesses Neslerov's business. X—Neslerov sends his creature Jansky, chief of police, to the Siberian mines to recover the original of Vladimir's picture from the Pauloffs; also to put Denton out of the way, secretly. XI—Princess Olga, cousin of Neslerov, visits the palace at Tomsk. She recognizes in the Vladimir picture the portrait of Princess Alexandra, the deceased wife of Neslerov's brother, and connected with a mystery at Graslov. XII—Princess Olga secretly leaves the palace and meets Jack Denton, Frances Gordon and Neslerov. Vladimir and Jack are prisoners in dungeons under the palace. The dead Princess Alexandra has a son who disappeared in childhood and was repudiated. He was here at the Graslov and Neslerov estates. The body was never found and it was said that his mother was murdered by Prince Neslerov's father. XIII—Princess Olga has for a confederate one Therese, who has a key to the Mystery of Graslov, the fate of Princess Alexandra and the missing boy. The women plot to release Jack and Vladimir. After dragging the prisoners keepers they descend to the vaults and get lost in the winding passages. XIV—Jack Denton is released, but Vladimir cannot be found. Jack goes away to fetch Papa Pauloff, who can unravel the mystery of Graslov. XV—Neslerov sends Jansky and his assistant, Unsethoph, in pursuit of Jansky. XVI—Princess Olga and Neslerov. She releases Vladimir, and he rides away to the mines. Jansky and Unsethoph killed by Vladimir, who arrives in time to rescue Jack and old Pauloff. XVII—The governor general at the palace. There is her story.

"The two, the duke and Prince Nicholas, paid my husband to take the child and drown it. He was a wicked man, my husband, and he agreed. He did take the child to the Kama and was about to take from it the telltale clothes when it cried lustily, and a powerful man sprang from the bushes and took the child. There was a fight in which my husband was badly whipped. But he did not dare report to the duke that he had failed, and so he carried out the plans and reported the finding of the clothing at the river. This was the clothing he had taken off preparing to throw the child in the river. To me this revelation was a great shock, but my husband threatened my life if I ever breathed a word of it to a single person. I knew he would keep his threat, and so I dared say nothing for the house of Graslov was rich and powerful, and I feared to speak even to the police.

"Thus I lived year after year with the shadow of my husband's crime upon my heart, until I thought I would go mad. Moved by an impulse I could not control, I determined to learn if the child was alive. I found it in the house of the blacksmith Pauloff at Fern. Having learned that the little Alexandra came, and happy I felt at last, but resolved that when my opportunity came I would reveal the truth. The old duke died and Nicholas became his heir and finally became governor of Tomsk. A short time ago my husband died, and I was free to tell. There came to Graslov one day a beautiful girl, giving a name that was not familiar, but she was the picture of that lovely princess who had died, and I watched her. I knew she was searching for the truth, and I told her what I knew. We went to St. Petersburg, where she told the czar, and he gave her authority under his seal. We went back to Fern, but the Pauloffs were on their way to Siberia. The princess resolved to follow, and this meeting is the result."

"How did you know the boy in Pauloff's house was the young prince?" asked the governor general.

"I saw his mother's picture which had been around his neck. I recognized his face, his voice, his manner, and Pauloff told me how he came into his possession."

"This is strange," said the governor general, turning to the old man sternly. "How was it that you kept the young prince and did not disclose the

man's identity?"

"And this American! Where is he?"

"Wounded, lying in the house of a priest at Tivolofsky," answered Vladimir, or, as he should now be called, Alexis.

"Nicholas Neslerov, what have you to say?" asked the governor general.

"It is a lie," said Nicholas.

"Your own face does not indicate it. I believe this is the truth. You are a prisoner! Call the officer of the guard!"

"I am here, your excellency!"

"This lieutenant," said Olga, "whose name I do not know, assisted me in freeing the prince from the dungeons under this palace. I told him he would be a captain."

"Your name?" said the governor general.

"Ormidoff."

"Captain Ormidoff, conduct this prisoner to the same dungeon in which he had confined the prince, and see that



"I am your slave forever."

he is treated as becomes a murderer and enemy of Russia. This is enough, princess. I congratulate you."

The eyes of De Muloff were moist, and he took Olga's hands and pressed them.

They heard Neslerov cursing as he was led away. He was chained in the dungeon and, in an effort to free himself that night, burst a blood vessel and died, with no hand to help.

As the governor general turned away Olga smiled at Alexis.

"You are not quite my cousin, yet we are in a way related," she said. "I am glad that I have succeeded in giving you your own."

"I am your slave forever," he answered, stooping, with his great shoulders almost covering her, and his lips met hers and she did not resist.

In the house of the priest at Tivolofsky Denton was recovering from his wounds. His first feeling as he gradually came to himself was of great weakness. A cool small hand was placed upon his brow, and he looked up into the face of Frances Gordon.

"Do you know me, Jack?"

"Yes, I know you, Frances. What has happened?"

"You have been ill. You were shot two weeks ago in the house where the Pauloffs lived. Do you remember?"

"Yes—they came—did they kill poor old Pauloff?"

"No, Vladimir—the one we know as Vladimir, but now the Duke of Graslov—came and killed them instead. He killed Jansky and Unsethoph and brought you here."

"Then it is proved already?" he said, staring.

"Yes, a princess, Olga Neslerov, cousin of his mother, having penetrated the veil of mystery, came to Tomsk to pursue her inquiries. She unmasked Nicholas Neslerov before the governor general, and he died that same night in the very cell in which Vladimir had been confined."

"I am glad," he said, with a sigh. "I knew he was not the son of the Pauloffs, and since you loved him, I did not wish you to marry an unknown. That was why I tried to restore him to his rank. I did not do it, but I am glad it was done—glad for him and for you."

"Poor Jack!" she said, nestling her head close to his. "Did you think I was going to marry him?"

"Yes; I thought you loved him. That was why I wanted to bring him to his own."

"Poor, noble Jack! Do you know who I am going to marry? There was never any love between Vladimir and me. I helped him, and he appreciated it. But I am going to marry the noblest, bravest, best man on this earth."

"I hope you will be happy, Frances."

"I know I shall be, Jack. And can you forgive me, Jack, for all these ugly things I said? And will you love me—just the same as you used to—for it's you—yes, Jack, I want to marry if you want me."

"Frances?"

"That's right," said the soft voice of the old priest. "He is all right now. I say to you, Denton, that an angel hovered at your bedside, and it was not the angel of death. It was a strong, fine young woman."

"I nursed you, Jack, and papa has been here every day."

"And I'm here now," said the voice of Gordon.

"He is awake?"

"He is awake, but he hasn't said he wants to marry me," said Frances, with a laugh.

"He don't need to say it. Well, old chap, I'm glad you're pulled through, but I'm hanged if I think you would if it hadn't been for Frances."

"I am sure of it," he answered, "and I am going to spend all the rest of my life paying her for it."

She laughed—the happiest laugh of her life—and stooped and kissed him.

THE END.

"To live with Vladimir," said the old

WASHINGTON LETTER.

By CHAS. A. EDWARDS.

December 18, 1903.

The talk about democratic presidential possibilities is still one of the popular themes of conversation and discussion at the national capital. Many of the politicians are giving out interviews here to the local papers and to their big dailies of the East, and telling how the people of the country respectively states feel about the matter in their opinions. The consensus of this opinion is about equally divided between Messrs. Gorman, Hearst and Parker. The chief note running through all this interview matter from the politicians of the party is 'anybody, O Lord, in order to win.' It is perfectly natural that a politician who is an officeholder should place the offices to be obtained by the election of a democratic president above principle and everything else that democrats hold sacred. They seem to forget that there are millions of people in this country who do not hold office or seek office or want office, and that those people must be considered in this matter. These millions of non-office-holding people have opinions, and they are of as much consequence as are the opinions of the politicians and the officeholders and they are going to make those opinions known and felt before the conventions are held to send delegates to the national convention. When they do the politicians either will climb into the band wagon suggested by the millions of non-office-holding voters or they will have to walk. I had a long talk the other day with a shrewd and far-seeing politician who is not an officeholder, and who recently has traveled extensively all over the country, especially in the East and Central West. His business compels him to come in contact with the great mass of the common people, who are not after office, and who look at this thing of electing a president from the standpoint of principle and not office-holding graft.

He is not an enthusiast, and has no particular choice for the democratic presidential nomination. What he said to me, therefore, impressed me with its accuracy from the standpoint of gathering a correct idea of the feeling of these people who must be consulted in this matter. He says that the idea that we must win with any old thing in order to get the offices does not appeal to the masses of the democracy in the country. He says there is a distinct feeling that unless the democrats nominate a man who stands for something that is totally against the republican idea of this government of, by and for the people, that they will go fishing on election day and allow the election to go by default. The feeling among them, says this gentleman, is absolutely against the nomination of any man who believes in dealing with the Wall Street gang and the trusts and the tariff in the same manner as the republicans are now dealing with them, and that to nominate such a man he would have to go to the trusts and the Wall Street gang and get his campaign fund—and that means he would really have to make promises to them which would be a virtual sell out. They could see no difference between that kind of a democrat and a republican in the White House, except in the distribution of the offices; and they do not want any of the offices. He says that this feeling is growing all over the middle west, and especially in Illinois, which will be

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Mr. John H. Cullom, Editor of the Garland, Texas, News, has written a letter of congratulations to the manufacturers of Chamberlain's Cough Remedy as follows: "Sixteen years ago when our first child was a baby he was subject to croupy spells and we would be very uneasy about him. We began using Chamberlain's Cough Remedy in 1887, and finding it such a reliable remedy for colds and croup, we have never been without it in the house since that time. We have five children and have given it to all of them with good results. One good feature of this remedy is that it is not disagreeable to take and our babies really like it. Another is that it is not dangerous, and there is no risk from giving an overdose. I congratulate you upon the success of your remedy." For sale by S. R. Biggs.

a battle ground in the next campaign. Since this is the case, he says they are pointing out the fact William Randolph Hearst is the only one of the possibilities who has not come before the democrats of the country with a proposition that 6,500,000 presumably sane men who followed the flag in the battle of 1866 shall forget they ever fought or that they ever possessed certain essential principles. They dwell upon the fact that he alone of the possibilities has not come with a wiser than-thou air and told the people that they would have to turn the democratic horse around and forsake the ideas that had become a part of constitutional democracy. They point out, he said, that people as a rule do not like to wake up and find that they have done everything the wrong way, and the men who undertake to demonstrate such a proposition to the masses of the people will find in any case that he is up against the toughest proposition of his life. He stated that this truism obtains with much force in the present situation; that it makes possible the man from New York and makes prominent the movement for his nomination. He said that he did not predict the nomination of William Randolph Hearst, but he did predict that either he or some man who stands for what he does or on similar lines will be nominated, for certainly the sentiment of the people is positively opposed to an attempt at a retrograde movement for which the other possibilities are taken as standing. No compromise with the trusts, with the powers that be in Wall Street, and with the principle, will be created by the men who make the next platform. No candidate who presumes either a compromise or a delusion like that of the last Cleveland administration will stand any chance of coming under the wire a winner in the next democratic convention. And he concluded by saying that the sooner the politicians and office hunters of the democratic party learn this fact the better for them.

The Hon. Jesse Overstreet of Indiana, is a member of Congress from that state, is the Secretary of the Republican Congressional Committee and is the chairman of the House Committee on the Post Offices and Post Roads. To this committee has been referred the recent report of the Fourth Assistant Postmaster General, Bristow, on the grafting and looting in the Post Office Department. In that report the Fourth Assistant P. M. G. in veighs strongly against the game of graft by men in high places in which they have the allowance of some obscure post office increased several hundred dollars a year and then place some favorite in that office to draw as a salary the increased allowance for the office. It now transpires that the Hon. Jesse Overstreet, whose committee has been charged with the work of inspecting Bristow's report, and reporting to the House of Representatives on the same, has been guilty of exactly the same offense that Bristow condemns so earnestly in his report. He got the allowance

of some small post office in the state of Indiana increased, and then sent a young lady, who has been acting as his secretary to draw the salary thus created by the allowance.

It will thus be seen how sincere is the attempt of the republicans to bring any of the offenders to justice when they place the report of the investigation in the hands of a man who is guilty of the same offense as others developed in the investigation.

Until there is a democratic administration the people need not expect anything to come from this investigation of rottenness in the Post Office Department. Every move on the part of the republicans is merely a bluff to hoodwink the people of the nation. It is up to the people to move the matter.

Everybody is aware of the strenuous and reverberating vociferousness of the President as a civil service reformer. It has been his hobby which he has ridden for years with all the delight which he evinces when busting a broncho. He protests in season and out of season that he will allow no infringement of the law governing the civil service, and will hold every man to a strict observance of the same. Let us see if all these protests and vociferation are sincere, are only a bluff to fool the people. Not long ago the President sent Civil Service Commissioner Alfred W. Cooley over to Philadelphia to investigate as to the doings of Postmaster Michael of that city who had been reported as using his office and his power as Postmaster for purely political and partisan purposes, and in other ways violating the civil service law. Mr. Cooley went and made out his report to the President and in that report he declared that the Philadelphia postmaster was guilty of all the offenses charged against him and recommended his dismissal for good and sufficient cause. As soon, however, as Matt Quay, the Pennsylvania republican boss, got wind of the matter, he went to the White House and read the riot act to the President to the effect that he did not intend to have one of his chief henchmen and tom-tom beaters in Pennsylvania disgraced in his fat office. He had placed him, he intimated, in the position he occupied for the very purpose of having him to do the things he is charged with having done in flagrant violation of the civil service laws of the country, and he intimated, also, that the President would better be careful how he disturbed his pets. What was the result?

The President hastened to send for Civil Service Commissioner Cooley, and, practically taking him by the throat, demanded of him that he straightway write another report of the findings against the Philadelphia postmaster, in which he would find nothing to his discredit, and in which there would be no recommendation of dismissal.

The second report has been written and the Philadelphia postmaster, who has been guilty of the most flagrant violation of the civil service law, will not be disturbed in his fat job. And this, at the behest of the Chief Executive of the nation who has sworn to execute the laws; this, at the hands of the chief officer of civil service reform in all the country. Disgraced and having it all blown off, the man who has caused it carries in the hollow of his hand the republican delegation to the next republican national convention, and Roosevelt wants that delegation. How do the people like it?

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