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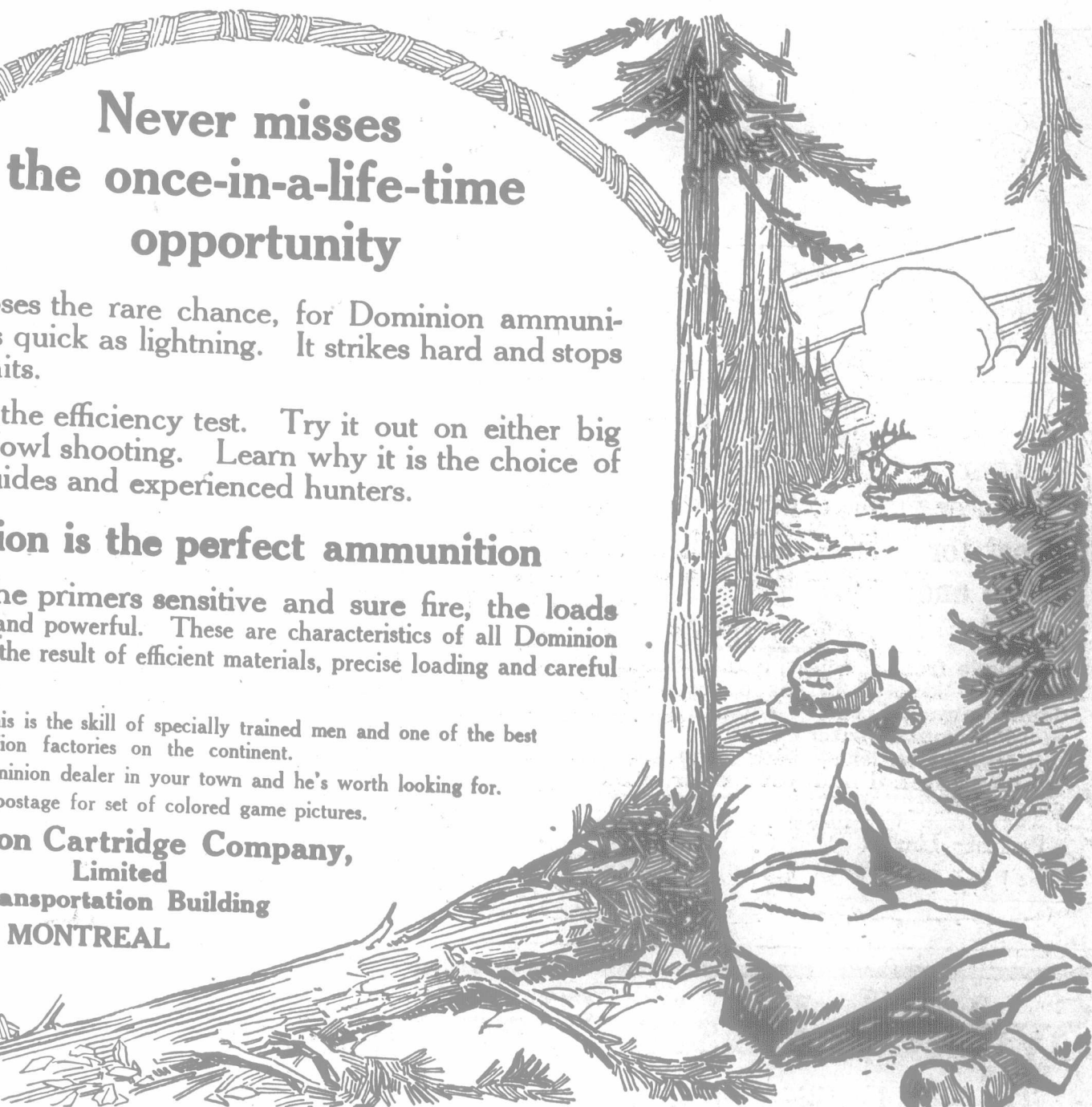
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young girl, saying she had not  
a minute to spare, as she had  
to meet her father, who would  
not wait, readjusted her wraps, kissed  
Miss Felicia on both cheeks, sent an-  
other flying through the air toward  
Peter from the tips of her fingers, and  
with Jack as escort—he also had to see  
a friend who would not wait a minute  
—danced out of the room and so on  
down to the street.

The Scribe will not follow them very  
far in their walk uptown. Both were  
very happy, Jack because the scandal  
he had been dreading, since he had last  
looked into her eyes, had escaped her  
ears, and Ruth because of all the young  
men she had met in her brief sojourn in  
New York this young Mr. Breen treated  
her with most consideration.

While the two were making their way  
through the crowded streets, Jack help-  
ing her over the crossings, picking out  
the drier spots for her dainty feet to  
step upon, shielding her from the pollut-  
ing touch of the passing throng, Miss  
Felicia had resumed her sewing—it was  
a bit of lace that needed a stitch here  
and there—and Peter, dragging a chair  
before the fire, had thrown himself into  
its depths, his long, thin white fingers  
open fan-like to its blaze.

"You are just wasting your time,  
Peter, over that young man," Miss  
Felicia said at last, snipping the end of  
a thread with her scissors. "Better  
buy him a guitar with a broad blue  
ribbon and start him off troubadouring,  
or, better still, put him into a suit of  
tin armour and give him a lance. He  
doesn't belong to this world. It's just  
as well Ruth did not hear that rig-  
marole. Charming manners, I admit—  
lovely, sitting on a cushion looking up  
into some young girl's eyes, but he will  
never make his way here with those  
notions. Why he should want to anger  
his uncle, who is certainly most kind to  
him, is past finding out. He's stupid,  
that's what he is—just stupid!"—to  
break with your bread and butter and  
to defy those who could be of service

to you being an unpardonable sin with  
Miss Felicia. No, he would not do at  
all for Ruth.

Peter settled himself deeper in his  
chair and studied the cheery blaze be-  
tween his outspread fingers.

"That's the very thing that will save  
him, Felicia."

"What—his manners?"  
"No—his adorable stupidity. I grant  
you he's fighting windmills, but, then,  
my dear, don't forget that he's fighting  
—that's something."

"But they are only windmills, and,  
more extraordinary still, this one is  
grinding corn to keep him from starv-  
ing," and she folded up her sewing  
preparatory to leaving the room.

Peter's fingers closed tight: "I'm not  
so sure of that," he answered gravely.  
Miss Felicia had risen from her seat  
and was now bending over the back of  
his chair, her spare sharp elbows rest-  
ing on its edge, her two hands clasping  
his cheeks.

"And are you really going to add this  
stupid boy to your string, you goose of  
a Peter?" she asked in a bantering  
tone, as her fingers caressed his  
temples. "Don't forget Mosenthal and  
little Perkins, and the waiter you  
brought home and fed for a week, and  
sent away in your best overcoat, which  
he pawned the next day; or the two  
boys at college. Aren't you ever going  
to learn?" and she leaned forward and  
kissed the top of his bald head.

Peter's only reply was to reach up and  
smooth her jewelled fingers with his  
own. He remembered them all; there  
was an excuse, of course, he reminded  
her, for his action in each and every  
case. But for him Mosenthal—really, a  
great violinist—would have starved,  
little Perkins would have been sent to  
the reformatory, and the waiter to the  
dogs. That none of them, except the  
two college boys, had ever thanked him  
for his assistance—a fact well known to  
Miss Felicia—never once crossed his  
mind—wouldn't have made any difference  
if it had.



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