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"Aha!" thinks I to myself. "Here's where Herbert K. becomes about as popular as a judge at a baby show!"

But I needn't have feared. The Prof. had no end o' tact. He promised all the ladies a chance at leadin'. He said he'd never seen so much good looks in one crowd. "Feminine pulchritude," he called it, an' I looked it up, too, later on. He told Miss Keen she had an interestin' face an' the widow Carter that her hair would screen like spun gold. There were smiles an' blushes an' titters all over the hall.

"I am very glad to see," he remarked, genially, "that you have some munition firms here. Is it not a happy coincidence that a munition plant figures to a large extent in our very first drama? The heroine despoiled of the money goes to work on a lathe. Right next to her works the hero. A good deal of the love interest is featured amid whirling belts and resounding blows of iron on steel. Not perhaps so delightful as a rose arbor under a full moon, but we must stick to our script. After all, true art is reflected nature. And always keep in mind that these dramas are of ourselves, done by ourselves for ourselves. Shall we continue meekly to watch American dollar-chasers usurp our atmosphere and plant their trade-marks on plays of Canada? No, a thousand times no!"

"Hear, hear!" responded the whiskered town fathers.

The second day business began in earnest. On an empty lot next to the hall a flock o' carpenters began to build "sets." The Prof. diligently drilled the principals an' taught them the gentle art o' not lookin' at the camera lens. The camera he had fetched with him. It

Action, camera! Well, that's a bit better. There's a lot of hugging and kissing yet, Mr. Billing, so no fox passes. This must be the real thing."

We had secured sev'ral scenes in the shell-room and the fuse departments o' the local munition plant. It had been a little difficult to get permission for this, but we'd cut right through a wad o' red tape an' the Prof. wasn't long gettin' hand-in-glove with the foreman. As a special favor he was also given sev'ral hundred feet o' the new shell-cappin' process, introduced first in Easyburg. How the brave lads overseas would be tickled with that!

The Prof. had two dramas runnin' at once, an' he said he'd never seen such dramatic ability, even among professionals. He said the plays would have a pull like flypaper.

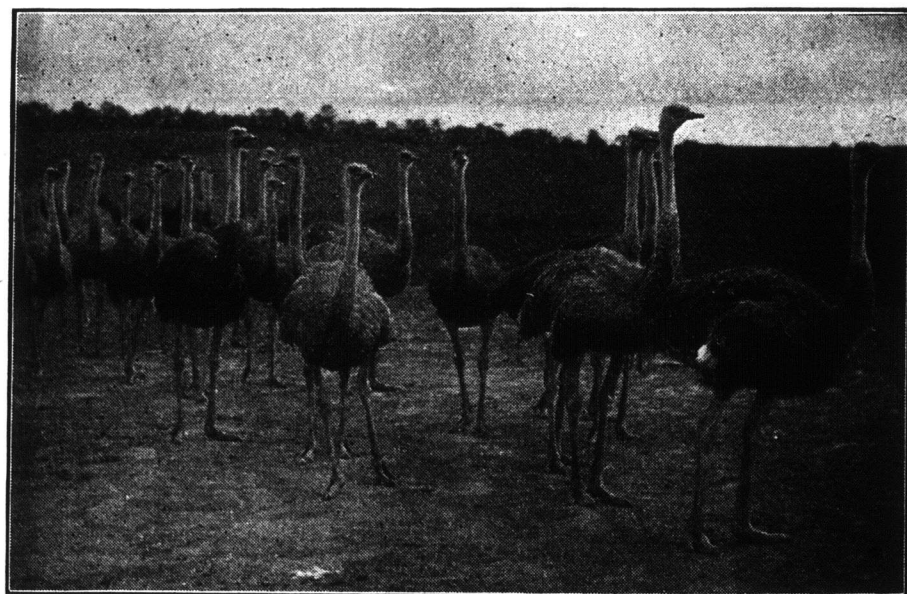
Then, on this afternoon I speak of he was suddenly handed a telegram. He sure wasn't expectin' it. I was right beside him an' I seen him turn kinda pale green as he read it.

"Bad news. My brother has met with an accident," he explained in a kinda hushed voice.

"Oh, we're so sorry, Professor!" cried all the skirts.

"I'm called to his bedside. Is—is there a train from here going east before six?"

Well, he bade us all a temp'rary but hurried farewell, leavin' old Doc Hibrow, the Collegiate Principal, in charge. The Doc had a lot o' tangles to straighten out, or try to, even this early in the game. There'd been some distressin' domestic squalls an' some o' the married couples wasn't speakin'. One or two o' the skirts even boasted that there might be divorce proceedin's in the offing, but



The Home of the Ostrich, New Zealand

was a bird an' he turned the crank himself an' directed, too. Talk about energy plus!

I got real pally with the Prof. about the third day an' he told me I had good comedian stuff in me. He let me turn the crank when he was rushed. The chief used to drop round an' he never said a word when he seen me. Things at the office was slow. He even let Gladys off sometimes. The whole town was behind this thing, he said, an' business be hanged!

So, behold us on Thursday o' that same week busy as bees in the honey season. The Prof. never lost his temper, I'll say that for him. He was here, there an' everywhere at once, patten' ladies' dress folds into better shape, changin' chairs an' lights an' all the time keepin' up that fascinatin' flow o' gab.

"Don't forget the lip movements, you in the support. Color doesn't take, Miss Burke, but blush till the cows come home if you like. It's a pretty sight. Don't act so scared, Mr. Meighan, the lady won't bite. Go back and come in again registering delighted surprise, Mr. Billings. You've been registering an ulcerated tooth. (Turn a little slower, Archie). Miss Pickleford mustn't look at the lens! Now we absolutely mustn't spoil any more film. (Cut, Archie). . . . You two lovers must put more pep into the gooey stuff. If you really were in love you would, you know. What's that? She's a married woman? Well, don't you worry about that. I'll attend to hubby if he horns into this! Put your arms about Miss—or Mrs. Pickleford, Mr. Billings, no, both arms. Register devotion. Ignore the camera, both of you. Ready?

that what great artiste hasn't had to go through this sort o' thing in her search for self-expression an' a soul mate! Two o' the local athletes in emulatin' Doughty Doug, had been rewarded with much praise an' a broken leg apiece. Art for art's sake! The town had threatened to come on us for damages to the hall. The Prof. had been called away "most inopportunistly," said everybody. (His vocabulary was catchin', you see).

Days passed into weeks and the Professor didn't so much as send a picture postcard. The good people however, worried not. They rubbed their hands an' chuckled an' explained that it was merely "the absentmindedness of genius," an' that he was most likely gettin' those first five hundred feet o' film developed an' projected. Wasn't his middle name Hustle?

We went on rehearsin' an' quarrelin'. Five weeks slipped by an' then one day the foreman at the shell plant found a time bomb hidden away under a pile o' coal in an unused bunker. It wasn't very big an' it was fixed so it looked like an ordinary piece o' coal, rough an' just lyin' amongst the other hunks, where it would be shovelled into the blastfurnaces in its turn maybe, or if not where it'd go off, after a certain time. They brought it up to our office, an' after a while it was found that it was a dud. There was a great-to-do an' before the examination was fairly begun along comes a letter from one o' the Easyburg heroes over in the trenches, written to a chum on leave.

"That much-boasted new shell-capping can't be so very new after all," said part o' this letter, "for Heinie now has one just like it. We began noticing them