POOR DOCUMENT

MC 2033

THE CHOICE

By E. R. PUNSHON

CHAPTER IV—(Continued.)

She began to move about the kitchen, attending to various small matters, while Fred went on with his drawing. He seemed very intent on it, and she avoided even looking at him. It seemed to her, with the strain of fatalism that Russia, land of illimitable distances and resistless happenings, teaches to all who inhabit her, that what he had just said was yet another sign of the inevitable path her feet were destined to tread. Even her scruples he answered, all her doubts he resolved. Then she thought that if he would only look at her, she would tell him all; but he went on steadily with his work. And she knew well that to breathe a word to him would be equivalent to a denial of what her three visitors had asked of her in exchange for her father's life they held in their hands. She did not doubt their power for a moment, for she knew enough of the strength of the revolutionary organsiation to believe they could do greater things than the rescue of one condemned prisoner. But Fred would not understand that; Fred would rush off to ambassadors and cold officials, persons who could give him smooth words that would not delay for a moment the leap of the fatal bullets on the morning that seemed already so fearfully near. Or perhaps—most probable of all, this—he would just rush headlong off to Russia himself, and merely put himself into danger without doing any good.

The ticking clock upon the mantlepiece seemed to be saying to her, "Decide—decide—your father's life;" but when this appeared to change to "Decide—your own husband's hindrance" she nearly cried aloud in her anguish. She contemplated herself with frozen horror that she should seem to hesitate when what was to be done was to save her father's life, and would at the same time permit Fred to avail himself of the chance offered him. When Fred did look up from his work, he saw that she had her hat on.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To get some muffins for tea," she answered.

"Oh," he muttered absently, shading with his pencil. "Do you know," he observed, "a nose is a most awkward thing to draw to get the exact length that is funny without being vulgar. Pike said I must be most careful to avoid all vulgarity; to avoid vulgarity is the chief aim of his editorial life, I gather. I also gathered he thinks his efforts in that direction are brilliantly successful."

He laid down his pencil and smiled at her, but she went out making no answer. In the passage she lingered, and through the half-open door she saw him move to a shelf and take down from it an old atlas they had. She was certain it was the map of Italy he was going to look at. As noiselessly as possible, she went down the passage and having opened the front door closed it with a bang she was certain Fred could not help noticing. But she herself remained standing in the passage.

As noiselessly as before, she stole back and peeped again into the kitchen. Fred was sitting now, with the atlas open at the map of Italy. His pencil was in his hand, and with the point of it he indicated one city after another, pronouncing the name of each with a deep and lingering affection. Venice, Florence, Naples, Milan, Rome—such a roll of mighty names came lovingly, thrillingly from his tongue. The girl crouched outside in the passage, endured each one as a fresh stab at her suffering heart, a fresh confusion to her bewildered mind.

"And Sir William was quite right," she heard him mutter presently. "It's just what I want; without it, I shall never do much. If it wasn't for Annie, Annie—— Well, I must have another shot at that nose."

He jumped up abruptly and went back to his sketch; while Annie tip-toed down the passage and let herself out as noiselessly as possible. She felt that she had heard enough. It seemed that if it wasn't for her—— Well, soon he should not be able to say that, at any rate. Perhaps she had been too selfish in her happiness, and that was why this sacrifice was required of her. The cry of her father for help, the murmur of Fred, that but for her . . . they seemed to blend together in her mind. She remembered, too, her prayer, and she did not doubt but that it had been answered. Or else why had Sir William's offer been made to Fred this very day of all days in their lives?

She was glad her course was at last settled; for short in reality as the time had been for so momentuous a decision, to her confused and bewildered mind it seemed the period of doubt had been whole years almost. But she was glad to think Fred would now become a great artist. Of his talents, she was well assured; and had long since decided that the only cause for his comparative non-success must be in his lack of training. And her father would live now and not die; that word parricide would no longer haunt her ears so dreadfully. And for Madam Ross and Catherine everything possible would be done also. But, above all, now her father would not die, but live.

Her mind was calm and peaceful as she sped through the streets to the address the old man had given her when she let him and his two companions out after Fred's arrival. She was even not without hope, for perhaps in the future—when her father was safe in England—when Fred was a great artist—perhaps they might come together again. Nor had she any of that fear another girl in her position might have experienced, for she knew well that now she had joined the Revolutionaries, she would be to them a comrade, and among them absolutely safe so far as they could help and protect her.

At a telegraph office near her destination—for she was yet but a bungling conspirator—she sent off a message of farewell to Fred, bidding him good-bye. Then she hurried on and knocked at the door of a shabby house in a square near Tottenham Court Road.

It was himself who admitted her, then he crossed himself.

"Yes, I have come," she answered quietly.

"Well, God knows all," said Golovin. "But that old man is always right. Come upstairs, Anna Paolovna," he added in Russian.

"What is the old man's name?" she asked in the same language as she followed him.

"If I knew that—" said Golovin, looking at her strangely. "But he calls himself Ivan Ivanovitch—that is enough for wise people. Here we are," he added, opening a door and ushering her into the presence of his two companions, neither of whom appeared at all surprised to see her.

Half-an-hour later, in the company of the old man, whom Golovin called Ivan Ivanovitch, and of young Michael Popyaloff, she came down again and drove away in a four-wheeler Golovin had summoned; while Golovin himself, having settled with the landlady, and informed her none of them would return, started off at a brisk towards the city.

Almost at the self-same instant of time when the four-wheeler rolled away from the house in the square near Tottenham Court Road, Fred Dering, getting hungry for his tea and the muffins that had not yet arrived, was standing reading with a frowning brow a telegram just delivered to him.

Puzzled and annoyed, but only vaguely uneasy, he went into the front room to see if he could see Annie coming down the street, and noticed lying on the floor that photograph of Nikolas Andreivitch Kamff which old Ivan Ivanovitch had shown to Annie, and then dropped on the floor and forgotten at the moment of Fred's arrival.

He picked it up and, looking at it, was impressed both by the singular beauty and recklessness of the pictured countenance, and by the air of distinction and command it had. He sat for some minutes looking at it, and the thought came crawling into his mind like a snake with dripping fangs that he knew practically nothing of his wife's existence in Russia. One moment his expression was incredulous and scornful of himself; the next, it would be full of a hard doubt. Once he flung the photograph into a corner of the room and let it lie there while he went back to his drawing.

Annie will be back soon," he said to himself.

But on the table lay the telegram he had just received, and though that he crumpled up impatiently and flung into the fire, it burned more truly in his heart than on the hot coals.

He returned to the sitting room and, picking up the photograph, put it in his pocket and went out. He remembered distinctly the name of the post office whence the telegram had been sent off, and though they gave him no information there, he went on making inquiries in the neighborhood.

At first he heard nothing, and then he began to hear too much, till it really seemed to him the whole district must be populated solely with foreigners. But when he showed the photograph, he met only with blank head-shaking.

"No," said one old shop-keeper, "that looks like a gentleman, and there's none of that sort among the foreigners about here—if so he is a foreigner," he added doubtfully, evidently rather of the opinion that "gentleman" and "foreigner" were two mutually exclusive terms.

But Fred persisted doggedly with his inquiries, day after day, till people began to know him and to look on him with doubt and suspicion. He was even cross-examined once by a policeman scenting some deep plot and anxious to distinguish himself.

Still Annie did not return, and there grew a fever in Fred's veins—a dry fever, that seemed, as it were, to burn him up with internal fires. His face became small and pinched looking, his eyes hollow and intense; without ceasing there was in his ear a small voice whispering, "Why—why did she go?" It seemed to him necessary above all things that he should know just why she had gone, to know the cause he would have bartered his life with a smile; the desire to know fed upon him till he had no other thought or feeling. Then one day, about a fortnight after Annie's disappearance, he came quite by accident across a man who recognized instantly the photograph when Fred showed it to him.

"Why, that's that Russian Prince," he said, "what came round asking for Jem Rounds."

Fred inquired further, and learned that Jem Rounds was a footman at that moment out of employment owing to a tendency to indulge in periodic drinking bouts. He lived in the Mile End Road, it appeared, and Fred immediately started for the address given him.

Fortunately, Mr. Rounds was at home, and proved to be an affable person, who congratulated Fred warmly on his good fortune on having found him.

"I was leaving tomorrow," he explained, "to enter the service of a Russian Prince what's just come over here to get married, though, as I understand, she is a Russian, too, or comes from there, so goodness only knows why there didn't do the trick in their own country."

"Have you seen her?" Fred asked, with a curious sensation at his heart.

Mr. Rounds shook his head.

"I ain't seen nothing yet," he said, "and don't half like the job, neither. For twopence-'apenny," he explained exactly, "I would chuck it, even though the oof's liberal, and no error."

It occurred to Fred that the man had been drinking, though his outward condition gave no sign of it. A public-house was just across the way.

"Well, come over the road," said Fred genially, "and have a glass with me. I should like a bit of a chat."

"I see you are a gentleman," said Mr. Rounds, as he wiped his lips with the back of an appreciative hand and prepared to follow Fred—Fred in whose veins the obsession to know, to understand, was like a fever that fed upon his life.

CHAPTER V.

N. A. Kamff, General Agent.

In one of those tall buildings in the city of London in which during the day clerks and business men abound like rabbits in a warren, and in which, at night, not a soul is to be seen, there was a suite of offices on the second floor lately occupied by a new tenant.

There were three rooms in all, communicating with one another and opening by separate doors on a corridor. Two of these outer doors on the corridor bore the word "Private" painted on them in big letters; on the third was the name "N. A. Kamff," and underneath, in different lettering, "General Agent."

Entering by this door, one found oneself in a small, plainly-furnished office, with typewriter, copying-press, and everything else the ordinary place of business requires. Here sat always a suave, elderly clerk, who did not leave his stool even for lunch, which he always consumed where he sat. He was known to the porter and lift-boy as Mr. Ignat, and he appeared at the same hour every morning with extreme regularity. He always seemed very busy with pen and ledger, and the frequent canvassers and beggars thinly disguised who haunt all city offices, he always got rid of very quickly and with great politeness. He used often to apologise to them for not being able to listen to them longer, and would explain that his employer, Mr. Kamff, was really terrible, one who would think no more of discharging a clerk than of killing a fly.

The second apartment was fitted up in similar strict business style. In the centre of the room stood a writing-table covered with papers, from which it appeared that Mr. Kamff's business was of a large and varied kind; nor was there anyone except the uninterested office cleaner to observe that these papers seldom changed, and that whatever business they were connected with, seemed very much at a standstill. By the window stood a large American roll-top desk, and, as is the prudent custom of many men of business, Mr. Kamff was always particular to pull the top down and make sure the spring lock was fast before he ever left the room. There was also a large bookcase containing a slightly more miscellaneous collection of volumes than is usual in offices; for if the lowest shelf was sternly business-like, the topmost held treatises seldom seen in the city. There was also a small safe and, of course, a chair or two, and other articles of no special interest.

The third apartment was the only one at all unusual in appearance. Its furniture consisted of a large, plain, deal table, around which a few chairs were standing, and a very large safe, a perfect masterpiece of the manufacturer's art. Its huge and massive door hung open now, and a casual observer might have been surprised to see that it held nothing but one large ledger. That same casual observer would, however, have been still more surprised to learn that this ledger the reeling Government of Russia would have given literally millions even to see, while to possess it they would have poured out blood like water. For it contained the financial history of the Revolution, and its plain rows of figures told the tale of how the mightiest of earth's governments had at last been brought to bay to fight in the sight of all men for its very life. Our suppositious casual spectator would have experienced, however, yet more, and this time excessively disagreeable, surprise, if he had somehow received the further information that the attempt of any uninstructed person even to lift the book down from the shelf on which it lay would infallibly have been followed by an explosion of force sufficient to sweep book and rash would-be remover of it out of existence together, and probably half the building as well.

The only other point of interest in the room was that the door leading into the corridor had been permanently blocked up by the careful insertion over it of a large sheet of plate glass. The agent of the building and the uninterested office cleaner had alike been informed with considerable detail that this precaution had been taken because Mr. Kamff was often engaged in secret stock exchange operations, which more than once rival operators had endeavored to overhear. It was in this room, too, that the telephone was placed.

In the middle office one day, about three weeks after Annie's flight, Nickolas Andreivitch Kamff was sitting at his desk, slowly checking off a long list written in a cypher which he appeared to read quite easily.

The photograph the old man, Ivan Ivanovitch, had shown to Annie in no way flattered him, for he was indeed a man of most striking presence. Even in the busy city streets, where all alike hurried, intent but to offer acceptable worship to Mammon their god, men often turned to look at him and wonder who he was. It was not only that he was tall beyond the common so that, like Saul, he stood a head above the people, nor was it even the remarkable beauty of his face, curling hair, nor yet the grace and ease with which every movement he made was instinct to a degree only to be seen when there is matchless strength with perfect balance and control. There was something in his presence more than all this mere bodily perfection, so that the people in turning to look at him felt the kind of authority and high dignity that was about the man, as if he were one marked out by divine decree for great ends. Those who knew he was a Russian almost invariably described him as a Russian Prince, taking his princedom for granted. In point of fact, he was the son of a drunken market porter in Kiev, the accident of his birth in that famous university town being the one solitary advantage niggard Fortune had bestowed on him. He had gone to work in a baker's shop when he was eight, and had run away when he was nine. After that his life had been one long desperate fight for the two prime necessities—bread and learning. Now, at the age of about thirty-five, he was one of the greatest forces behing the rising in Russia, and to him some millions of his fellow creatures looked with hope as their saviour and deliverer to be. Even the blind, blundering Government of the Tsar knew him and feared him, but they entertained hopes that some day he would come over to their side. This was because he had once come in contact with one of the Grand Duchesses and had done her a slight service. In return, she proclaimed loudly that Monsieur Kamff was really a gentleman, a thorough aristocrat, who could not possibly go on acting with the vulgar, scoundrelly and unwashed common people for long.

Nickolas was still busy with his long list in cypher when the door opened and there entered the suave clerk.

"Monsieur Golovin is here," he said.

"Show him in," said Kamff briefly, and the suave Ignat withdrawing, Golovin entered.

He was carrying a large leather bag, and, taking off his hat, he said in Russian:

"God be with you, Nickolas Andreivitch. Where shall I put this?"

"And with you, also," answered Nickolas. "Put the bag in the corner. Have you brought news?"

"Ivan Ivanovitch will be here in a moment,' said Golovin. "I suppose he knows all—I know nothing. Will the bag be safe here, do you think?"

"I suppose so," Kamff replied indifferently, going on with his work; and a moment or two later Ignat opened the door again.

"Monsieur Ivanovitch is here," he said.

"Show him in," repeated Nickolas; and as the old man entered he said quickly: "Well . . . and the young lady?"

"Misha is bringing her," Ivanovitch answered. "They were to leave Brighton by the early train."

Nickolas nodded gravely.

"It is well," he said. He seemed to muse a little with his head upon his hand. "Well," he said, "I find it undoubtedly a little strange to reflect that this is my wedding day."

"You shrink from nothing in the cause of the Revolution," said Golovin admiringly. "But then, you have not been married before. Now, I have, and to an Englishwoman, also. Such a time," he said, raising his eyes to the ceiling, "talk, talk, talk. One had no peace day or night. If this one turns out like that one, I am indeed sorry for you, Nickolas Andrevitch No matter how I beat her, she still talked. At last I make it a rule to thrash her every night and then one day, I know not why, she ran away."

Neither Nickolas nor Ivanovitch seemed, however, to take much interest in Golovin's domestic history. Possibly, they had heard it before. They were whispering together; and then old Ivanovitch, moving to fetch himself a chair out of a corner, nearly kicked the bag Golovin had brought in with him.

"Here, I say, be careful," Golovin protested. "There are three bombs in there."

Ivanovitch skipped with an agility his bent form did not promise to the opposite corner of the room, where he stood, alternating scraps of prayers with lively abuse of Golovin.

"In the name of God," he cried, pale and trembling, "what did you bring the devilish contrivances here for?"

"They are not devilish contrivances," retorted Golovin indignantly; "they are only bombs. What is the matter with you? They are quite safe so long as you do not kick them."

"Take them away, take them away," repeated the old man, still trembling violently. "Take them away, do. Kolia, Kolia, make him take them away at once."

"Yes, you had no business to bring them here at all," said Nickolas severely. "What do you mean by it?"

"Well, it seems I have not the luck to please anyone today," grumbled Golovin. "Besides, they are only such little ones. See, let me show you."

He picked up the bag and was about to open it. Ivanovitch positively squealed with terror, and the perspiration ran down his face in streams. Nickolas half rose from his chair and spoke very angrily.

"Really, Fedor Alexandrovitch, if you play the fool like this, I shall lose all my patience with you. You know very well you had no business to bring them here; an accident might easily occur and upset everything. Take them down to Poplar immediately."

Golovin picked up his bag, hugging it lovingly in his arms, and retired grumbling towards the door.

"All this seems to me a lot of fuss about nothing," he complained. "Besides, how could there be an accident when they are not even loaded yet?"

"Not loaded?" exclaimed Nickolas; "then what did you mean by warning Ivan Ivanovitch against touching them?"

"Because I was afraid of his breaking them," Golovin answered sulkly. "A bomb is a very delicate piece of machinery, let me tell you. Nothing is easier than to throw the mechanism of one of my little bombs out of order. They are—"

"Oh, be off with you," shouted Nickolas, between anger and laughter; "be off, or I shall lose patience with you."

Golovin vanished hastily, and old Ivanovitch collapsed into the nearest chair.

"Oh, the chucklehead, the great chucklehead," he kept muttering as he wiped the streaming perspiration from his face. "He will be the death of me some day, I am quite sure. Only fancy! bringing such things here."

"Come, come, pull yourself together," said Nickolas. "After all, there was no danger, you know, if the things were not loaded."

"No, but I thought there was, and that's worse," answered Ivanovitch, wiping his forehead again. "Besides, it's all very fine for you," he grumbled. "You are young—when you are as old as I am, you will know each day of life left you grows more and more precious. Besides, I never pretend to be a hero."

"You have chosen a strange way of life for a coward," said Nickolas, looking at him with an oddly mingled expression of contempt, affection and respect.

"It was my conscience and the love of God," said the old man simply. "When I thought how some day God might come up to me and say, 'Now, about all these poor people of Mine; what did you do to help them?' I was still more afraid. And it is worse to be afraid of God than of man."

"Well, for my part," observed Nickolas, "I am afraid of neither. Why should one be when one does what one can? However, this girl will be here soon, will she not?"

Ivanovitch nodded. He was still trembling violently.

"If Golovin does this kind of thing again," he declared with a kind of weak spitefulness, "I shall blow him up with one of his bombs. Just fancy—to bring three of them here!"

"I will speak to him; he will not do it again, "Nickolas assured him. "But about this marriage—I suppose it really is necessary."

Ivanovitch was so astonished at this remark that he quite forgot his late terrors. He crossed himself quickly.

"What next?" he said. "Surely you are not hesitating?"

"No," answered Nickolas. "I do not hesitate—but I have a presentiment."

"Well, what next, now?" murmured Ivanovitch, more profoundly astonished than ever; "you with a presentiment, indeed!"

"It seems to me the business will turn out badly," said Nickolas.

"Well, there is no other way of getting the money, is there?" asked Ivanovitch; "and you know as well as I do how crippled we shall be if we lose this huge sum. We have no proof that it is ours, and they will not give us up a penny without proof. Whereas, once you are married to this girl, they believe to be Elena Mikhailovna, all will be safe."

"Well, well," said Nickolas, with a sigh, "I suppose it is the only way, but none the less I do not like it. I have always felt it safer for me to keep away from women altogether."

Ivanovitch looked doubtful.

"Well, it cannot be helped now," he said.

"Some people have thought I hated women," Nickolas continued, half to himself, "but this is not the case; it is only that I was afraid of them. Still, it cannot be helped. I have found the man Rounds," he added abruptly.

"I am glad of that," said Ivanovitch; "he is a faithful fellow, and can be trusted. You must be careful he does not drink, though."

"I warned him," Nickolas answered. "He called here yesterday, and I told him candidly if he accepted the situation his life might depend on his faithfulness. I told him over here life was very sacred, but where I came from one thought no more of snuffing out a man than a candle. I was surprised to se him so young."

"I have not seen him myself," Ivanovitch remarked; "but he served in that Ubrinoff affair most faithfully. Still, he must be nearly forty."

"He does not look it," observed Nickolas, "nor does he look like a man who drinks. However, I have engaged him, and, after all, he will not know much; in fact, nothing to speak of. Misha ought to be here now," he added abruptly, and continued, with a rather grim smile, "It only wants forty minutes to the wedding hour."

"I think they are here," said the old man, hearing some sounds from the outer office.

Rising, he opened the door and showed young Michael Popyaloff, looking more pale and delicate than ever, with Annie at his side. The old man motioned them to enter.

"Madam," he said to Annie, indicating Nickolas, who had risen and stood, tall and imposing, by his desk, this is Nickolas Andreivitch, of whom you have been told."

Nickolas saw how Annie trembled. He felt very sorry for her.

"Leave us alone for a few minutes," he said, turning to the others. "I wish to talk to Madam.'

Ivanovitch shrugged his shoulders, but went out. Michael followed him, giving at Annie as he went a look of tenderness and affection. Nickolas closed the door on them and then turned back to Annie, who stood trembling, her eyes upon the ground, where it seemed to her she saw alike the reproachful face of her father, the reproachful face of her husband.

CHAPTER VI.

Nickolas and Annie.

For a moment or two neither of them spoke, a mutual embarrassment holding them silent. Each was acutely aware of the strangeness of the position, and Nickolas wondered if two people about to be married within forty minutes had ever been such utter strangers to each other.

"Will you not be seated?" he said; and, as if to give her courage by setting her the example, he went back to his desk and sat down.

His sense of embarrassment increased, and it seemed to him he was only now realizing the strangeness of this affair that hitherto he had taken very much for granted. He began to be conscious of a distinct wish that it had not fallen to his lot to carry through. Till this morning it had just seemed to him a disagreeable business that had to be accomplished for the sake of the Revolution, but now he perceived that it had another side.

"Madam," he said gently, "I hope you will not think me impertinent if I say I greatly regret the necessity that has arisen, owing to the most unexpected circumstances, for this ceremony. You will, I hope, regard it as quite formal, and may I assure you that I shall always hold myself at your service in every possible way."

She did not answer his somewhat conventional words, and only a faint tremor she gave showed she so much as heard them. Nickolas had been in many strange and doubtful situations during the long, fierce struggle of his life, but never in one that affected him as this did. She stood there, a silent and a drooping figure, this woman whom in a few minutes he was to wed, and her very immobility affected him unpleasantly. He wished that she would raise her veil that he might see her features. All he knew about her was that she had consented to personate the dead Elena Popyaloff, in order that the protection of the Revolutionary Committee might be extended to her condemned father, and her arrested mother and sister. On a sudden, he found that his forehead was damp, and this both surprised and annoyed him.

"You are not afraid, are you?" he asked aloud, as still she did not move; and then he paused in a bewilderment of astonishment, as he realized that he himself was afraid and that that was why his forehead had become damp. "Well, what next?" he muttered, quite stupified with amazement at himself.

But this time there had been something in his voice that Annie could not help noticing. She looked up at him dully. It had all seemed like a dream to her; a dream in which she lived, and moved, and had her being, but which had about it no poignancy of reality. Since entering the room she had just been vaguely conscious of a man of unusual size and height, whose presence seemed somehow curiously overpowering; and it also seemed to her that someone a long time ago had whispered in her ear that she and this big man were to marry, though she did not understand how that could be possible, seeing that she was married already. She had waited, meekly acquiescent, but now this new tone in his voice touched her heart and made her glance up at him quickly.

"Come, come," said Nickolas, with an awkward laugh. "It seems we are to be comrades. Will you not sit down and lift your veil? If we are to be friends, we ought to know one another."

She did as he said, and he was conscious of a curious thrill of relief as he scanned her large features, and her countenance, even more worn and sallow than it had been before.

"Yes, that's better," he said gaily. "You are Miss Ross, the elder daughter of Paul Ross, of Moscow?"

"Yes," she answered with difficulay.

Nickolas rubbed his hands with an air of satisfaction. He was experiencing a wonderful relief, for he now understood what had been the cause of the anxiety and fear he had felt all that day. Well as he had learned the hard discipline of life, he knew the fiery intensity of the passions he kept so securely in his heart. People often thought that he was cold and indifferent, though indeed the son of the drunken market-porter at Kiev would never have traveled so far had he not been urged on by a white heat of energy and passion within him. Nickolas, however, knew himself better, and having once met Catherine Ross in Moscow, he had expected her elder sister to be of the same type of fascinating beauty. It was a relief to him to find her, on the contrary, rather plain, only redeemed, in fact, from the commonplace by a certain large dignity of manner and presence. Today, even her one good point, her brightly tender eyes, was hidden, for the eyes were red and swollen with unshed tears. In his relief, Nickolas grew genial and cheery.

"I do hope we shall be good friends," he said. "You must not let what we are to go through trouble you at all. It happens to be necessary, for we cannot afford a minute's delay in getting back our money we entrusted to the Popyaloffs; but don't be uneasy about it. In the Revolution we are all comrades, and what you are doing will be of immense service to the Cause."

"Will you tell me one thing?" she asked. "On your honor—is it really necessary that—that—that this should be done? I have not been deceived in any way?"

"Oh, no," he answered, evidently shocked at the mere idea.

"And my father will be saved?"

"If it is in any way possible," Nickolas answered. "You have been informed of the steps that have been taken."

She nodded and looked at him thoughtfully.

"Well, in that case," he said, "we may as well try to make the best of it, I think. Shall we not? I know your father; he is a good man. I esteem it an honor to have the privilege of his daughter's acquaintance. Please do not look so troubled. Have they told you," he asked, lowering his voice, a sudden instinct teaching him that perhaps this would be the best way of soothing and reconciling her—"have they told you that if all had gone well I was to have married Elena Popyaloff, little Misha's sister."

"Did you love her, then?" Annie asked, almost with anxiety, as it seemed, in her voice.

"Oh, yes, indeed, most truly," he replied at once. "I was very fond of her, indeed. She was a most charming girl, so good and bright. Yes, I loved her very dearly."

"Oh, was that all?" muttered Annie, in tones of bitter disappointment. "I was hoping you had loved her, perhaps."

"Why," he said, a little puzzled. "I have just been saying that I did."

"Yes, I know," she answered. "But I meant loved her, you understand."

Nickolas looked at her and found himself for once in his life quite puzzled, and with no knowledge of even where to find the key to what baffled him. He saw she had a meaning, but for the life of him could not imagine what it might be. The relief he had experienced at first began to diminish, and in its place a vague and subtle uneasiness possessed him. He crushed it down with an effort and, rising from his chair, went and stood by the fire. When he spoke, it was in brief, business-like tones.

"Well, Miss Ross," he said, "I am exceedingly sorry that you have been entangled in this affair which, I can understand, you regard with extreme repulsion. At the same time, I think it is not a small thing that in this crisis in Russia's history, when at last a gleam of hope appears, you have it in your power to give such help to those who are struggling for what is the right of every man. Such a consideration must be put far above the idea of any one individual's happiness or comfort. For the welfare of Russia everything must give way—the individual is nothing, the cause alone matters."

It occurred to Annie that he himself, as he stood there towering above her with his air of authority and distinction, did not look like one easily willing to allow his own individuality to be absorbed in any movement whatever. Rather would he be more likely to stamp his own image on it. He noticed how her eyes searched his face with their calm and intent gaze, and once more that vague thrill of uneasiness passed through his heart. It struck him that perhaps after all it might have been better if she had been beautiful like her sister, and this thought surprised him very much. Still, he could not help reflecting that, for example, if all her features had been lovely, one would not have noticed so much the depth of her eyes, swollen though they were at present. And then he began to feel a little annoyed with her, both because of her tacit assumption that all the sacrifice was on her side, and also because he understood very well that she doubted whether he, in point of fact, did believe that he as an individual was nothing.

"I have shown my devotion to the cause of the Revolution not infrequently, I think," he said. "Perhaps this affair is not so much easier for me than for you."

She laughed a little.

"Well," he said, piqued, "that is as it may be. There are, however, one or two points I wish to mention. You know a furnished house has been taken in Groombridge Square in Kensington? Until this money has all been paid over, it will be necessary for us to live there and even to do some entertaining. No suspicion must be aroused."

(To be continued.)

Young Man, Stay in New Brunswick

(By a New Brunswicker Now Living in Illinois).

There seems to be a feeling on the part of the young man that he can do better elsewhere than he can at home in New Brunswick. This is particularly true of many young men who have been reared on the farm. They believe they have worked too hard for the returns received, and are willing to seek their fortunes in a new land or in a new section of the home land. The writer has met many such and at no time has he seen any one whit better off than he might have been in New Brunswick had he applied the same industry and perseverance. True, they have earned more money, but the value of a dollar depends on its purchasing power. With increased wages, they have had to pay more for their necessities, consequently when the balance is struck they are no better off than they would have been at home with lower wages and less to pay for necessities.

The writer of this left New Brunswick twenty-five years ago, not because of any dissatisfaction with New Brunswick, but because his people were going and he was too young to "resist."

During that time he has had many educational advantages but none that he might not have received at home. He has studied the American nation from the foundation and is acquainted with all the prevarications and misrepresentations that have a place in the alleged history of the country. He is well aware of the sentiment regarding Canada, and knows of the story of the plot of Republican senators who hoped to appease the South and expedite reconstruction by sending 100,000 Confederate veterans and 100,000 Federal veterans to invade Canada and wrest it from the hereditary enemy. Undoubtedly nothing but the assassination of Lincoln and the accession of that incompetent ruffian, Andrew Johnson, prevented the carrying out of this well laid plot.

At the same time, the writer has kept posted on events in his own country, and has studied her government and institutions until he has come to the conclusion that Canada is the only democracy on the continent.

While a resident (not a citizen) of the States for all these years, it has ever been his dream to return to his native province, but the thought has forced itself upon him that he was now a stranger in his own country. Nevertheless, he returned this summer and enjoyed to the full the pleasure of meeting old friends and making new ones. As soon as arrangements can be settled he will return to live in New Brunswick.

It is due to the memories awakened on this trip that he has been pondering over a message of encouragement to his fellow countrymen who contemplate leaving the home land. To all such he would say: "Don't."

New Brunswick has advantages not to be met with elsewhere. There does not prevail that rabid commercialism that is common in the States, and in our own west. Men are not driven like so many cattle or machines, and yet all have enough and to spare. The time is not so taken up in the mad rush for the almighty dollar that men have no time to be men. Work hard? Of course you work hard. Who desires a life of idleness? Work is one of God's choicest blessings.

Perhaps work has seemed hard because you have been working for some one else. If that is the case work for yourself, for that is more possible in New Brunswick than in any place I have seen. In nine cases out of ten it is possible for you to work for yourself in New Brunswick, while in the States in nine cases out of ten you will labor for some one else.

This is true, because New Brunswick is the best place in the world for the man of moderate means. In no other place that I have visited are there so many opportunities for operating profitably upon small capital some line that will pay well for the effort put forth. No chance to become millionaires, perhaps, but then many of you have as much of an opportunity as had Alexander Gibson.

In this connection know this: When you labor for another he expects to make money on your labor or he would not want you.

Did I hear you say that not every one could get into something for himself? Well, you are mistaken, for in New Brunswick there is an opportunity for every industrious and sober young man to work for himself. That place is on a good piece of New Brunswick land. Be a farmer, you say? Why not? Do you know any better man than a reliable New Brunswick farmer? God does not make any better.

Now listen to me. You leave home. Go among strangers in a strange land and work your utmost for some one who pays you wages. You most probably board and remain single or marry and live in a rented house which you eventually pay for for your landlord. What have you in ten years? Not much. I know a man who has worked fifteen years and his salary has averaged about $800, and today he would have a struggle to scrape up $600. Extravagant? No. He has never parted with a dollar without squeezing it till the eagle screamed and parted with a sheaf of tail feathers. On the other hand, the man who has gone onto a piece of New Brunswick land will have a home of his own in ten years, and enough to make him comfortable besides saving more than the city man can save working for some one else.

Lonely on the farm? Well, then keep away from it and spend your life slaving for some one else. That is all you are good for. But for a sober, industrious man, well endowed with common sense, the farm is a golden opportunity.

A man who is not sober cannot do much anywhere. I could tell you of many poor fellows who came to the States to seek their fortunes and failed on account of drink, and last summer I saw their poor old fathers and mothers who had not even received a letter for years. The Prodigal Son was a gentleman of culture and refinement beside a man who would thus desert his people, for the Prodigal did reform and return.

Any young man who leaves New Brunswick with an appetite for strong drink goes forth hugging to his bosom a serpent that will surely destroy him unless it is put to death when young.

Horace Greely thought he was wise when he said: "Young man go west and grow up with the country." I think he was otherwise. I would say to you: Young man stay at home and develop New Brunswick. Your work is cut out for you—get busy. If I should say that there were millions of dollars right at home awaiting you, you would doubt my sanity; but let me show you.

In 1906, in New Brunswick, there were grown from 20,824 acres 406,853 bushels of wheat, making an average of about twenty bushels to the acre. If by careful preparation of the soil, seed selection and proper crop rotation, that could have been increased to twenty-eight bushels, the gain to the farmers, at seventy-five cents a bushel, would be $124,944.

This is not an impossible thing to do, because the census of Canada for 1901 showed the New Brunswick average to be about twelve bushels to the acre. Therefore it ought to be possible to still further raise the average.

For the same year (1906) on 194,647 acres were raised 5,595,580 bushels of oats, averaging about thirty bushels to the acre. If, as above stated, this could be increased to an average of forty bushels to the acre, the extra ten bushels at fifty cents a bushel, or five dollars an acre would mean a gain to the farmers of $973,235. The Canada census (1901) gave the New Brunswick oat average as about twenty bushels to the acre. You see another gain of ten bushels to the acre is entirely possible.

The potato crop in 1906 was 5,352,922 bushels, grown on 39,613 acres, making an average of about 135 bushels to the acre. The average for Carleton county was about 170 bushels per acre. If this average for Carleton county could be made the average for the province, the gain would be thirty-five bushels per acre, which we will call ten barrels. These sold at one dollar a barrel would mean a gain of $396,130 for potato growers. This ought to be possible as the average was only 113 bushels according to the census of 1901.

Let us look at the live stock proposition. Referring to the census of Canada, 1901, the only figures at my command, I find these facts:

The 35,051 persons who occupy land in New Brunswick have 1,405,615 acres of improved land which means an average of forty-one acres each. The average number of acres of unimproved land is about eighty-six and one half acres.

According to the census above referred to there were 111,084 milch cows, 180,626 sheep and 50,243 swine in the province in 1901. Let us see what that means. It would be one hog for each twenty-eight acres of improved land; one sheep to almost eight acres and one cow to twelve and one half acres.

Ahe New Brunswick farmers living up to their privileges? It would hardly seem so.

Imagine one lone hog roaming about in a twenty-eight acre field! Let us give him company and decide to have one hog for every seven acres. Granting that these three additional hogs mature and are slaughtered and average ten dollars each, the total value to 35,051 owners would be $1,051,530. Three additional sheep at $4 each would mean a gain of $420,612. Three additional cows, worth $20 per head (the average for the province) would mean a gain of $6,665,040. This is not at all improbable. It can be done in New Brunswick. It will be done in New Brunswick. The resources of the province from an agricultural stand point have been merely dipped into; therefore, young man, stay at home and develop them. If you do no more than what has been suggested here the gain to the province would be as follows:

Increased values from	
Wheat	$ 124,944
Oats	973,235
Potatoes	396,130
Swine	1,051,530
Sheep	420,612
Cows	6,665,040
Total	$9,631,491

Almost ten millions in the pockets of New Brunswick farmers gained by more thorough cultivation, keeping more and better stock and a careful selection of seed is entirely within the possibilities. At that rate the farmers alone could retire the provincial debt with as much alacrity as they have retired an incompetent government and still have enough left to complete that monument of constructive statesmanship known as the Central Railway, thus starting Premier Hazen out with a clean slate.

The Sand Man.

He comes at eve in a ship of pearl,
Crossing the harbor bar,
And only hovering spirits see
The sand man from afar.

He makes his way through the city gate
And mingles with the throng,
And hums to himself, though none may hear,
The snatches of a song.

Oh, white and fine is the sand he brings,
Gathered where no one knows.
And at every step he scatters it,
As the seed the sower sows.

Within the homes where the hearth fires glow,
The old man takes his stand,
And over the children there at play
Scatters his shining sand.

Quickly he goes and their eyelids close,
Forgotten are their toys,
They fall to sleep and in slumbers deep
Dream of the morrow's joys.

He threads his way through the houses drear,
Where mothers sit and sew;
Where the light is dim and children weep,
And the pulse of life is low.

When the step is heard their wailings cease,
For he is welcomed there;
His clean white sand is Gilead's balm,
To weak ones everywhere.

Be the children rich, or be they poor,
He loves them all the same;
He laughs with some and he weeps with some,
God only knows his name.

—Philadelphia Bulletin.

When terrified the ostrich will travel twenty-five miles an hour.