

# OVER THE WHITE SNOWS

By STACEY BLAKE

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The white scud—the flying scud of frozen water—that powdered over Petersburg was singularly like the scud blown from the edges of the waves by a cyclone in the China seas. It was falling softly, steadily, almost imperceptibly, with a temperature 40 degrees below freezing point.

John Calvert, who was the correspondent of a certain London newspaper, put his head down as the north wind blew the smother in his face, and drew his neck down a little lower into his fur collar. He descended a flight of sanded steps from the Admiralty gardens and reached the ice of the frozen Neva, whereupon he took himself by one of the many paths out across the ice from bank to bank, towards the northern side, which was an island, and a part of the city where business was transacted. He went through a line of ice-embedded shipping, and ascended the steps to the quay-side. He made for a block of buildings that seemed part offices and part dwellings, and stopping before a tall, narrow house, he gained admittance and mounted the stairs right to the very top. There, pushing open a door, he entered a room that was evidently an office.

"Are you there, Pearson?" he cried. An inner door was thrust open hastily, and a rather short and very thick-set young man, with a pen behind each ear, bounced in.

"Gad, I'm glad to see you have come!" he exclaimed, seizing the journalist's hand. "There's trouble! I want to get a brain bearing on the subject. Hamlyn is in the hands of the police."

"The dickens!"

"He was set on last night in the Prospect, and he was made to disappear. Jingo! I should like to have seen the fight he would put up, but there were numbers. He got a hit from behind."

"He would fight prettily, I know," said Calvert. "I wish I could have seen it. Copy is scarce. In the Prospect, eh? That's darling—a British subject. But how have you got to know?"

"The affair was seen from a doorway, by a beggar, to whom Hamlyn had given half a rouble a little while before. The beggar, knowing him, and having the rare sense of gratitude, brought his news along here last night."

"But what has Hamlyn done?" asked Calvert. "He's only been back a day or two from his—er—fur-buying expedition. Has he been obtaining more—er—furs than the Russian government like?"

"Probably yes," said Pearson, gloomily. He dropped his voice. "Hamlyn came back with the plans of Tversk in his head."

"Great Scott! And they have tracked him, eh?"

"And trapped him. He's been arrested secretly. He'll be disposed of secretly. Good heavens! don't you see he's not got a snail's chance, unless we move in the matter?"

"But, dash it! there's the legation. He's a British subject, and they can do something."

"I don't think they can. I don't think it was in the bargain that they were to in such circumstances, and even supposing they did, they could only make representations through the usual diplomatic channels. Inquiries would be promised, denials of the arrest would be made, the wires would be warmed up between Petersburg and London, and meanwhile Hamlyn would be out of reach—perhaps dead, or worse than that—just at the beginning of a living death."

"You know something definite, then?"

"I don't. Only I know what has happened before. Anything can happen in Russia. Men whom the Russian government fear have a habit of disappearing suddenly."

"Myes, that's so. Look here, we want information."

"And it's here, I believe," said Pearson, under his breath, as there came the sound of a footfall on the stairs outside. The next moment there came a knock at the door. Pearson opened it and disclosed to view a yellow-haired lad fumbling in the breast of his skin jacket. After much struggling, he produced a crumpled letter, and handing it to Pearson, turned about and made down the stairs.

"What is it?" asked Calvert, as he saw the other's eyes open wide with astonishment.

"Read," muttered Pearson, hoarsely, thrusting the dirty piece of limp, criss-cross lined paper into the correspondent's hand.

"Why, confound it, it's English!" muttered Calvert in astonishment, and he read:

"Geoffrey Hamlyn was taken from the Mirsky prison two hours before dawn this morning en route for Yugovskov."

"I say, where has this note come from?" he asked. "Is it all right? I mean, is there any fake about it?"

"I'll swear there isn't. It's from that man—that beggar, who, whatever he

is, is not a moujik. He spoke English to me."

"And he writes a better fist than I do," said Calvert. "Somebody else who is not what he seems. What a country this is!"

"He's able to find out things, anyhow," returned Pearson, "and for my part I feel like believing. Do you know where this Yugovskov is?"

"Sort of penal island on the Arctic coast, isn't it?"

"That's it. I've heard it described—a fiendish place absolutely remote from any civilization whatever. It is about five miles from the mainland. Nothing grows there. In summer it is more or less of a swamp, with mosquitoes that will bore holes through a blanket swarming there in millions, and in winter it is one long night. The prisons are not guarded. If they go away and cross the ice to the mainland, they only die, for five or six hundred miles of swamp and forest lie between the coast and any settlement. Prisoners never come back from there. They mostly commit suicide. Even the guards are men who have been sent there for punishment. The place is only accessible in winter by sledge, and even then it is fifteen hundred miles' journey."

"And he's already started," said Calvert, gloomily, "under a sufficient guard, I have no doubt. I suppose they'd start for Viborg by the 6.05 train. From there they'd begin the sledge journey. Now, what's to be done? Such a thing as a sledge being held up has happened before now," he added, thoughtfully.

"I'm open for anything," declared Pearson.

"You mean you are willing to run risks," said the correspondent, feeling for a big pipe in his jacket pocket, and when he had found it thoughtfully crumpling it with coarse tobacco. "Now, what sort of risks? It's a big order butting one's head against the Russian government."

"I know, but I owe it to Hamlyn. He once helped me out of a hole, and it was a bad hole, and he ran pretty bad risks in doing it. You know, I am a bad hand at putting these things into words, but what I feel is that even if I knew that an attempt to rescue him would be fruitless, even then I should try."

"By the way," murmured the journalist, gazing reflectively out of the window, "that car you have imported for the Grand Duke Alex—is it gone—delivered, eh? I fancy his grace has not yet returned from the Crimea."

"The car is still in the warehouse," returned Pearson, lifting his eyes suddenly as though to read the purport of the other's question.

"Then if you're seeking risks," said Calvert, slowly, "seek useful ones. How long would it take to get that car tuned up and going?"

"Gad!" cried Pearson, under his breath, "is that your idea? I'm with you. It's our best chance! Let's look at the map."

"The air's nippy, eh?" said Calvert, as he slipped the second speed in. They were going over the bridge which leads to the Viborg high road. The journalist was steering, with hands encased in fingerless gloves made of fur.

"It's enough to cut your face off, that's a fact," answered Pearson, gazing forward through the frozen scud. "We really need masks for this job."

The thermometer was one degree above zero. The cold as they sped through the air seemed to lay hold of the muscles of their faces and paralyze them. They lost sense of feeling in their ears. Their eyebrows and eyelashes grew stiff with ice.

They crouched low in the car, these two who, with little thought, had started out with their lives in their hands. It was a desperate enough journey in itself, without what lay beyond, but the one was urged on because he had a debt to pay—a kind of debt that is so seldom paid—a debt of gratitude, while the other just because, viewing the thing with professional eyes, he had perceived "copy" in it. And, moreover, his sense of danger had become blunted long ago.

The man whom they pursued had, with his captors, got a 12 hours' start. By means of discreet bribes placed in the right quarters they had found confirmation of their first information, and they had learned that as soon as Viborg was reached the prisoner would be hurried away north without delay. Here the railway ended, or rather went on to the west to Ekman and Abo. To go north and east meant journeying by sledge—fifteen hundred miles of it, a slow, terrible journey—in chains. Somewhere after Viborg they hoped to overtake the sledge. What would happen then depended on circumstances. They were prepared to take risks.

Now they were away from the city. The houses grew sparse. Odd clumps of white-edged pines straggled here and there along the roadside.

Viborg at last! A white silent city. A light here and there shone through the double windows, and there was a fragrant, hospitable smell of wood-smoke in the air. They did not stop. It was a place where questions might have been asked.

They carried enough food with them and they ate as they went along. Night came on again and found them no more than 20 miles beyond Viborg.

A wall of close-growing pines beset them on each side. The gloom of the forest was about them. Post-houses they did not stop at, for fear of questions being asked as to their journey.

"And yet," observed Calvert, through his furs, "we shall have to risk it. We shall have to call at the next post-house because we want in-

formation. We want to know how far ahead our man is. Why, it's there—just beyond, I can see a light. We'll just drive ahead of the hat, and then I'll go back and have a look at things."

Calvert came out presently hot with information.

"It was an inspiration to stop there," he said under his breath. "There are three Cossacks inside swilling vodka. They are part of a guard of six, escorting Hamlyn. The sledge with the prisoner has gone on to the next post-house, the other three guards doing duty. These beggars having found a friend here look like putting another hour in before they'll start. Now you can bet they intend stopping at the next post-house, which is 30 versts from here. I calculate the sledge will be a third of that distance on its way. The question is, can we catch them before the stopping place?"

"Well try," answered Pearson, grimly, as he let the clutch in. "My revolver is full," he added, "but I think you might slip a packet of cartridges and drop half in my pocket."

Now, it was a strange thing that where they anticipated difficulties none came. These troubles were to come later. For when they came in sight of the sledge, a black blot against the snow, and black blots about it, a crackle of revolver shots set the three Cossacks galloping ahead. The frightened sledge-driver plied his whip as the great car plunged through the white smother at its rear, but he pulled up the steaming horses, as a bullet tugged at his skin jacket, and he crouched down in the sledge when he was threatened with instant death if he resisted.

"Oh, you beggars!" cried an English voice from under the furs in the sledge. "Oh, you daring beggars! But I'm tied in here. They are leather thongs. Saw them with your knives, and look out for shots. My amiable guards will be scouting among the trees in a minute, though you did startle them."

It was found, for all his cheerful speech, that Hamlyn could not move when the thongs were cut, for the long cramped position and the intense cold had literally taken all life out of his limbs. Calvert picked him up and put him in the car, and he swung himself aboard as the great vehicle surged forward again.

"Lie low," cried Hamlyn, who lay in the tonneau upon an uncomfortable stack of petrol tins, "there are some bullets coming."

Three spots of fire broke out on the gloom of the forest to the left of them almost the next moment. A bullet clattered harshly on the bonnet, but that was the only hit.

"I fancy they'll follow us," said Hamlyn, "and I suppose this is your best pace. Whist! it is snow plying. You're a pair of lucky beggars. If you'll allow me, I'll try and get some blood into my limbs. I say, where are you making for?"

"The coast," answered Calvert.

"Nikolaistadt, eh? It was closed by the ice a fortnight ago, and the next ships that are there will stop till winter; yet, I have friends there. Hello! my sweet guards are following, as I thought. If you could lend me a shooter, I'll try and make them jump when they're near enough."

But the pursuers came no nearer. They could be seen easily keeping their position a quarter of a mile away. The pace of the car had dropped down to ten miles an hour.

"What we have to fear is that at the next post-house they'll use the telegraph," said Rupert Hamlyn, "in which case every guard along the road will turn out and be ready looking for us."

"Then I reckon we'll cut the wire a little further on," answered Pearson, laconically.

Now, this story ought to end here, but it really didn't, because life and fate have no sense of dramatic fitness. To begin with, Pearson's business as a general importer was seriously jeopardized by Grand Duke Alex countermanding the order for the car by reason of its being so behind time in delivery. As a matter of fact, the big car had to lie aboard ship at Nikolaistadt all the winter till the breaking of the ice in the spring permitted it to be delivered at Petersburg again, for the bringing of it overland was not to be thought of; and when at length it was landed at the capital again, and another duty paid upon it, the police made pointed remarks as to its condition, observing that its tires were well worn, and that it had more scratches and bruises, and dents about its body than are usually looked for in a new car. To all of which objections Pearson had ingenious reasons to offer, backed by portions of hard currency concealed in the palm at the crucial moment.

And then Rupert Hamlyn found that at Nikolaistadt he was by no means out of the wood, for it took him the best part of the winter to get by easy stages over the Prussian frontier. Perhaps Jack Calvert was the only gainer, for he made a newspaper boom out of the thing that will be remembered now, though he, like Hamlyn, has found it safer to leave Russia out of the sphere of his activities just for the moment.

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**Ibsen's Methods.**

Blumenthal, the great theater manager of Berlin, was once talking with Tolstoy about Ibsen and said: "I have put a good many of his plays on the stage, but I can't say that I quite understand them. Do you understand them?" "Ibsen doesn't understand them himself," Tolstoy replied; "he just writes them and then sits down and waits. After awhile his expounders and explainers come and tell him what he meant."



# Lim Jucklin on First Love

By Opie Read

"And so you are Cal Atterson's boy," said Lim Jucklin as he sat down on the steps of the grocery store. "My, how you young chaps come on. And you? Ab Sarver's youngest, eh? Hasn't seemed more than a week since I saw you riding a stick horse and here you are big enough to make love to the girls."

"Don't make love to 'em? Go on with you. I'll bet your heart has been wrung and hung out to dry more than once. When I was about your age I fell sick along about tobacco-cutting time, and I didn't think I was ever goin' to get well. The cause of my sickness was a young gal that came into the neighborhood to visit her uncle. I haven't time now to tell you how beautiful I thought she was. I didn't believe she belonged on the ground at all—just touched it now and then to accommodate the earth, you know. She flew down from a cloud that the sun was a shinin' on and didn't care to go back. Recollect how astonished I was the first time I ever saw her eat. I thought she just naturally sucked the honey out of the honey-suckle along with the hummin' birds, and when I saw her worryin' with an ear of boiled corn big enough to scare a two-year-old calf I went out and leaned against the fence. But it didn't hurt my love any. I thought she did it just to show that she might possibly be a human being. She didn't treat us all to feel bad. One night I groaned so that mother came to me and wanted to put mustard plasters on me. She loved that mebbly she might draw out the inflammation. She thought I had somethin' the matter with my stomach because I had lost my appetite. I told her that I had an inflammation she couldn't draw out with a yoke of steers. Then she thought I ought to have an emetic. I said that if she had one that would make me throw up my soul she might fetch it along, but otherwise it would be as useless as saying mew to a dead cat. Then she thought I must be crazy and came mighty nigh hittin' the mark, I tell you."

"A few days afterward, about the time I was at the height of my fever, I met the girl in the road and she smiled at me, and I ran against a beech tree and if I didn't knock the bark off I'm the biggest liar in the world. When I came to I had my arm around a sheep, a walkin' across the woods pasture."

"My, my, what a time that was to live. The sun had just riz for the first time and they had just called up the birds to give out the songs to them. They wasn't quite done settin' the stars out in the sky, and they hadn't put more than one coat of whitewash on the moon. Music—it wasn't there till she came, and the orchards bloomed as she walked along down the lane. But she didn't appear to know it, and I want to tell you that I marveled at such ignorance."

"I didn't have the courage to go straight up to her, and one night at meetin', when I was feastin' my soul with merely lookin' at her, up walked a feller and asked if he might take her home. I looked at him, quick-like, expectin' to see him drop dead, but he didn't. Then I waited for the lightning to strike him, but it didn't. Then I waited for her to kill him with a look, but she didn't. She smiled and said yes. Then I sneaked outside and whetted my knife on my boot. There wasn't power enough on earth to keep me from bathin' my hands in his blood. Mother saw that there was somethin' wrong with me and she came out and asked me if I was sick. I told her I was a dyin', but before I bid farewell to the earth I was goin' to cut a scoundrel into strips and feed him to the dogs. But pap he came and took the knife away from me and said if he heard any more such talk he'd tan my hide till it was fitten for shoestrings. I don't know how I got home that night, but after a long time I found myself a smooth-erin' in bed. There was a well in the yard and I thought I'd slip out and drown myself. Just then I heard a rooster crow, and recollectin' that there was to be a fight over across the creek within a few days, I decided that mebbly I still had somethin' to live for."

"I tell you love can't stand much laughin' at. It's the tenderest part that ever peeped out of the soft lap of creation, and in laughter if there is no sympathy there's frost. When a feller stops lovin' he sees more than he did before and yet he is blinder. He sees more in other folks, but sees that they ain't like the one he loved. And the reason that so few people marry first love is because that sort of love takes hold as if it wanted to kill. Don't appear that anything else will satisfy it. There's no use tryin' to dodge it, boys; a thief in the night can't slip up on you half so sly. It is the oldest thing in the world, but it is so new that nobody knows yet how to handle it. It makes ignorance as wise as a god and hangs a lamp with perfumed oil where darkness always fell before. A good many of the old chaps make fun of it, but when they do you may know that they ain't nothin' but money getters, and that marks the death of the soul. Does me good to look at you young fellers; I like to think of the sweet misery you've got to go through with. Oh, yes, there's more than one love. It's like the rheumatism. One attack may be worse than the others, but it's all rheumatism just the same, and no matter how light you've got it you know when it's there. So you are Ab Sarver's boy. What's your pap doin' to-day?"

"Arguin' politics with a feller when I left home."

"Well, he was always a mighty hand to argue. I haven't seen him in a long time. It's a good way to your house, ain't it?"

"About ten miles."

"Yes, and the miles get longer and the days shorter as we grow older. But no matter how old we get, if the heart remains sound, we never forget that rheumatism I told you about. I wouldn't give the memory of it for hardly anything in the world. One of these days you will see her comin' down the road, a makin' the orchards bloom as she passes along, and you'll wonder how you can live another minute, and you'll wish yourself dead just to make her feel bad. If she laughs at anything anyone else says it will send a knife blade through your heart, and if she sighs you'll think it's over some other feller. There'll be no such thing as pleasin' you, but I'd rather have it in store for me than a mountain range made of gold. Well, boys, it's about time I was a goin' on home. There's a woman there that I fell in love with years ago, and I haven't fallen out with her yet."

"So you are Ab Sarver's boy. You make me think, my son. It was your daddy that told the girl I had met a bull, and it was your mammy that made the orchards bloom."

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# I'VE BEEN THINKING

By Charles Battell Loomis

I HEARD a beautiful story the other day about an afflicted father, a loving daughter, and a piano.

It seems that the father had long wished his daughter to become a proficient performer on the piano, and the daughter, distrustful of her own capabilities, had made up her mind that she could never play well enough to make her devotion of hours and hours of practice worth while.

Suddenly, and almost without warning, her father was stricken with blindness, and then the daughter, taking a leaf out of Dickens, determined to play Dot to his Caleb, and with that in view she bought a piano player on the installment plan.

Her father had been away for some weeks when the automatic player came to the house, and upon his return she said to him: "Father, dear, would you like to hear some music?"

And her father said: "I would, indeed, daughter, if you can play some for me. I want to see if you have improved during my absence."

So the old gentleman sat himself down on the sofa and turned his ear toward the piano, and the daughter put a Hungarian Rhapsody by Liszt in its place and started the mechanism.

When she came to an end her father called her to him and kissed her upon her forehead and patted her

cheek and said: "What a dear little thing it is and how much it loves to please its papa. Paderewski might interpret it differently but he could not play it any faster."

And while the daughter's pride and her conscience were having it out between them, her father said: "Daughter, I too have a surprise."

He turned toward her and continued: "While in New York I visited an oculist and I can now see as well as I ever could. How much do you have to pay a month for the thing?"

INCLOSE an interesting clipping that will appeal especially to you. Let me know what you think of it."

And then she doesn't inclose it and the recipient of her letter vainly hunts for it.

The noninclosing habit follows the postal route all over the world.

It can be carried to maddening extremes, as when the young man who is stranded in the west receives a loving letter from his mother, in which, after telling him all the little inconsequents of his native village, she says, "I did not know what to get you for your birthday and so inclose a five-dollar bill."

Imagine the feelings of the poor tenderfoot, down to his last cent, when he finds that she has forgotten the inclosure. If only she had forgotten the village gossip and remembered the

thing that would have made that particular letter memorable.

In the same class as the noninclosers are those who say, "Of course, George will have written you about the mysterious happenings in the house of Cynthia Alendale. How do you account for them?"

It is more than likely that if George has written at all he will have said, "I suppose that Emma has told you all about the blood-curdling affair at Cynthia Alendale's so I will not waste your time by telling you about it. But wasn't it awful? What are we coming to?"

If only George and Emma had assumed that the other had not told a single thing about the interesting affair! Here and there are people who hate to receive letters, but most of us are human (Heaven be praised!) and so in writing put in all the human touches you can think of, and don't assume that "the other fellow" has written all the interesting news because you may depend upon it he hasn't.

And remember to put in the inclosure even if you forget to post the letter containing it.

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**Puzzles in Millinery.**

"The hats this last winter have been puzzles to even their owners," said the well-dressed woman, as she carefully adjusted before the mirror a handsome creation of velvet and plumes. "When I went to my milliner's a few days ago with this hat on she looked at me a minute in surprise, and then said: 'You are not wearing your hat right.' She removed it and replaced it as she had intended it to be worn, and then I saw that all winter I had been walking one way and wearing my hat the other."

