

# THE MYSTERY OF GRASLOV

By Ashley Towne  
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(Continued from last week)

## CHAPTER II

THE BLACKSMITH AND THE PRINCE.  
On a road leading from the city of Danville to the forest on the south there stood a rude cluster of buildings, all of them old and in a poor state of repair. This collection of huts was the home and forge of the Paulpoffs, ironworkers.

Here worked old Michael Paulpoff and his son Vladimir, and it had been to this uninviting place that Frances Gordon had come to make the chance acquaintance of the young giant.

"The huts and the surroundings were rapidly growing even less inviting, for nothing was being done now to keep anything in repair.

A collection of household goods, over which old Mamma Paulpoff watched carefully, gave evidence that the family were about to remove themselves and their belongings to another place.

But still the old man and the young one were at work. The blows that Vladimir struck were tremendous. The iron under his hammer bent and flattened as the sparks shot like firework to the far corners of the place. There was a gasp of surprise on the face of a girl who had just come in.

"What is it that you say—our Vladimir talking of marrying?"

"American girl who thinks well of our—"

"Hush!" exclaimed Vladimir impatiently. "You are speaking of one whose name must be sacred."

"His face was flushed, and Nesterov looked at it searchingly.

"You are very fortunate," said Nesterov jokingly. "I can get no one to marry me."

"You had best just. Any one would be pleased to marry one of Russia's wealthiest princes."

"But such a one?" continued the indignant old man. "She is beautiful, she is rich, and she sends him books."

"Good! She is educating you. She must love you," said Nesterov.

"Oh, as to love, that is different. Her acts are kind, and I feel grateful. But for marrying it will require a fine man to make her happy."

"He will make any one happy," put in the old woman, with a glance of pride at the young giant.

"Yes, that is a happy day, Papa Paulpoff," the young man said brightly, placing his hands on the white fire and withdrawing a bar of iron.

"What will?" asked the old man, looking sidelong at his son, but continuing his work.

"The day I can take you and the little mother to a better home."

"We have been happy here," replied old Papa Paulpoff, looking round at the dingy interior.

"Yes, we have been happy—we shall always be happy, for we are simple and require little. But with greater comfort and more material happiness ought to come. It is time to feel yourself growing to be somebody in the world—to feel yourself expand, broaden."

"study that does it, and work. The knowledge gives me more pleasure than the wealth. But we also need the wealth."

"The old man sighed.

"Yes, that is good, that knowledge. But you will grow away from us. You will perhaps marry that American girl, and she would not like our simple ways."

"The hammer in Vladimir's hand came down with redoubled force.

"What is that you say—our Vladimir talking of marrying?" asked the tremulous voice of Mrs. Paulpoff. "I came to say that the meal is ready, and I find—what do I find?"

"Oh, Papa Paulpoff is dreaming one of his dreams," said Vladimir, with a gay laugh.

"But is it not so, old woman?" asked Papa Paulpoff. "Is it not quite possible that our Vladimir may marry that handsome American girl?"

"I have seen it so," answered the old woman. "It seems that no young woman would take this interest if she did not love."

"Oh, nonsense!" cried Vladimir. "We are friends. She is good. I admire. Why, I could almost worship her, but I am a peasant. She is—"

"Ah! Then I suppose you will be getting married?"

"That is something I have not thought of. I do not know."

"Somebody else knows," chuckled the dotting Papa Paulpoff. "There is an all—"



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The box trick is as clever as well known and as old as any. A heavy, brass bound chest is exhibited. An assistant is placed in a large canvas bag, the mouth of which is securely fastened to the top of the chest, which is locked and roped.

The box is concealed for a few seconds, and when it is revealed the occupant is sitting upon it, the chest and sealed bag beside him. The cords and the box are then taken off.

This astonishing feat is accomplished thus: The occupant of the bag has inserted a wooden plug in the mouth while the tying is being done. When the chest is locked, he pulls it out, slips on his hands, pulls off the cords, gets out and replaces the cords over the top of the sack.

By the time the chest is roped he is free. The chest has a secret opening, usually at the end, and while it is hidden he crawls out, the chest man is usually employed to do the trick.

The vanity fair trick is one of the most baffling in the repertoire of the black art. A woman stands before a large mirror about ten feet high and placed in a heavy frame. A foot three feet from the floor is a small shelf placed against the mirror, the bottom of which is about eighteen inches from the floor. The glass having been duly inspected, the woman mounts the shelf. She then turns to arrange her hair by the mirror. She is asked to face the audience, but again and again turns her back, hence the name of the trick.

Finally, losing patience, the performer thrusts a small screen in front of her, fires a pistol at the spot where she has vanished, such a noise as to startle the audience, and she has vanished.

The top, bottom and sides of the mirror have been in view all the time and only the center has been hidden for a few seconds.

The "Why" lies in the fact that the lower part of the mirror is made double, the bottom of the upper part being concealed by a second sheet of silvered glass placed in front of it.

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Through this hole the lady instantly slips, and escapes by a board which has been pushed forward from behind the scenes while the vanity fair by-play was going on. The glass then slides down to its original position, and the mirror appears just as solid as it was before.

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TIME TABLE. Corrected to May 1, 1901.

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