



Nancy
Hanks
Lincoln
Public
Library

THE UNDER-WORLD

To Jeannette, in the hope that this dramatic
novel may in time take root and grow.
L. O.

THE UNDER-WORLD

An Original Melodrama
in Four Acts

BY

LLOYD OSBOURNE



D. APPLETON & CO.

LONDON AND NEW YORK

1907

Entered, 1907, at Stationers' Hall, London

Copyrighted in the United States of America

All rights, including those of translation

strictly reserved

Edinburgh: T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to His Majesty

LIST OF CHARACTERS

ARTHUR LETCHFOOT, *a famous detective.*

GRIERSON,)
MILFORD, } *detectives in Letchfoot's service.*
LANFIELD,)

DANIEL RALSTON, *an ex-leader of the Under-World, who has reformed in prison.*

ARPAD ORLOFF, *the Anarchist leader.*

LUDWIG POLLNITZ,)
ALEXIS JORGSTROFF, } *Anarchists.*
GUERIN,)
MADAME JANKOVITCH,)

MORTON, *President of the Fourteenth National Bank of Chicago.*

STETSON, *a business man.*

WRIGHT, *a clerk in the Fourteenth National Bank Safe-Deposit.*

ROGERS, }
PARKER, } *employés of the Safe-Deposit.*

CHRYSTAL RALSTON, *Daniel Ralston's daughter.*

MISS MILLS, *a typist.*

Detectives, Anarchists, Mob, etc.

Seventeen speaking parts.

THE UNDER-WORLD

ACT I

SCENE I

Scene represents the interior of ARTHUR LETCHFOOT'S office, State Street, Chicago. Entrance at L., the door encircled by a low railing with a small gate opening inwards in it. A door at R. marked 'private' in gold letters. Nothing on walls but calendars, maps, time-tables, etc. Down front, with side towards audience, stands a large roll-top desk, and is so placed that LETCHFOOT, when seated, has a full view of the door at L. Typewriter's desk at some little distance from LETCHFOOT'S desk. At R. rear is a tall, old-fashioned desk with stool. A big filing cabinet against the wall at L. A large clock at rear, facing audience. Time, 4.45 P.M. Close to window at rear is a double-mirrored contrivance to

show the occupants of the room the passers-by on the street.

The curtain rises on MISS MILLS, the typist, busy at work ; and on a young clerk seated on a stool, deep in a large ledger. Enter GRIERSON, LETCHFOOT'S right-hand man. He has his hat on, which he hangs on a peg. He goes towards LETCHFOOT'S desk, carrying a telegram, and adds it to the letters and telegrams already heaped on it in a little pile.

MISS MILLS.

I don't believe Mr. Letchfoot's coming to-day, Mr. Grierson.

GRIERSON.

Doesn't look like it, Miss Mills.

[The door at L. is thrown open, and LANFIELD, one of LETCHFOOT'S detectives, enters the room in a brisk, businesslike way. He wears a very cheap, shabby overcoat, buttoned up to the neck, and a Derby hat, dented in, and splashed with plaster.

LANFIELD.

Where's the boss, Grierson ?

GRIERSON.

Don't know, Lanfield; but you had better wait for him.

LANFIELD.

[*Taking off his overcoat, and revealing the fact that he is well dressed beneath it. He pats his hat, gives it a brush on his arm, and puts it back on his head. In a moment he is transformed from a shabby, hungry-looking out-of-work into a well-dressed man.*] We caught the woman, Grierson, but we haven't got the man.

GRIERSON.

[*Impatiently.*] And why haven't you?

LANFIELD.

[*A little sulkily.*] Parsons and I have done all we can. It's time to leave it to Mr. Letchfoot.

GRIERSON.

Got your notes?

LANFIELD.

[*Producing them from his pocket.*] Here they are.

[*He hands GRIERSON a bundle of untidy memoranda. He then goes into the room marked 'private.'* GRIERSON returns to LETCHFOOT'S desk, smooths out the notes, and lays

THE UNDER-WORLD

them respectfully beside the other papers. He remains at the desk, facing the audience. A pause.

Enter MILFORD.

MILFORD.

Mr. Letchfoot says to get everything ready. [*Mysteriously to GRIERSON.*] You know what he means?

GRIERSON.

[*Calmly.*] All right. Go back to the door. We'll try it first.

[GRIERSON *fumbles under LETCHFOOT'S desk, and pressing a hidden electric button, causes the door at L., where MILFORD stands, to fly open. MILFORD shuts the door. GRIERSON presses the button again. It again flies open. MILFORD again shuts it. This piece of business is repeated until GRIERSON is satisfied that the trick-door is in proper working order. Then both men go to wall R., where GRIERSON opens a secret panel, four by two feet in size, disclosing within a small armoury, from which he takes two revolvers. He comes down to LETCHFOOT'S desk, and in full view of the*

audience, and on the side towards it, slips one of the revolvers into a secret leather pocket under LETCHFOOT'S chair. Then he crosses stage to large cabinet at L., and is seen to hide the second revolver under some loose papers. Then returning to LETCHFOOT'S desk he opens a drawer, takes out a box of cigars, and with the same quiet, businesslike air he has maintained throughout, lays it on the top.

There! I guess that 's about all!

MILFORD.

No—the look-out, Grierson.

GRIERSON.

Oh, of course!

[MILFORD goes to the mirrors next the windows at rear wall and adjusts them, while GRIERSON stands in the centre of the room and looks towards them.]

MILFORD.

[Turning his head to GRIERSON, as he continues to adjust the mirrors.] Now, can you see the front door below?

GRIERSON.

No—wait—the blind 's in the way. [*He goes to the window and raises the blind a little, and then returns. Business.*] A little more to the left—that 's all right. [*A pause, while GRIERSON continues to look into the mirrors. Then suddenly he cries out.*] By George! there 's Mr. Letchfoot in a hansom—he 's stopping—he 's getting out!

MILFORD.

[*Confidentially, as he is in the act of moving towards door L.*] What 's he going to do, Grierson?

GRIERSON.

[*Significantly.*] It looks to me like something serious.

MILFORD.

It must be. [*He turns and goes off slowly.*

[*GRIERSON goes to the little gate in the railing, opens it, and stands there expectant. LETCHFOOT is heard coming up the stairs. He enters in a brisk, cool way, smiling pleasantly at the occupants of the room, and nodding to MISS MILLS and the clerk as he pulls off his gloves. He is dressed very fashionably. Silver-mounted cane, flower*

in his buttonhole, etc. Over one arm lies a smart spring overcoat, and he carries a handsome dress-suit case.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Advancing towards his desk, and in a tone free from the least excitement.*] Have you prepared everything, Grierson?

GRIERSON.

[*Relieving him of his coat, cane, and suit-case.*] Yes, Mr. Letchfoot. Shall I pay the cabman, sir?

LETCHFOOT.

No, I may want him. Leave my things on that chair, please. [*As GRIERSON is about to remove the suit-case.*] No; that too—I might have to leave the room in a hurry—keep them all together. [*GRIERSON arranges the coat, cane, hat, and suit-case on the chair.*] There, that's right! [*Satisfied, he settles himself in a chair before his desk, lights a cigar deliberately, and then begins to open his letters and telegrams. He opens two of them in silence, crumpling them up, and tossing them into the waste-paper basket. The third he glances at more closely, and then hands it to GRIERSON, who stands respectfully facing him at the front of the desk.*] Better put Johnson on that.

[*He continues coolly opening telegrams while GRIERSON reads the one that has been handed to him, and makes a memorandum in a note-book. LETCHFOOT then reads a telegram that seems to interest him more than any of the others. He tilts back in his chair, continuing to stare at it. Then, speaking with a certain intensity.*] Is that clock right?

GRIERSON.

[*Looking at his own watch.*] Yes, sir.

LETCHFOOT.

[*To typist.*] I beg your pardon, Miss Mills, but I'll have to ask you to leave the room. [*Then to clerk.*] And you too, please, Harry. [*Then to GRIERSON, and with the same quiet voice, as the others move off.*] Who are on duty?

GRIERSON.

Milford, Lanfield, Hardy, and Johnson, sir.

LETCHFOOT.

Where's Burgess?

GRIERSON.

On the power-house case, sir.

LETCHFOOT.

You had better leave me, too ; I'll ring when I want you.

GRIERSON.

[*Surprised, and uneasy.*] Very good, sir. [*Exit.*]

LETCHFOOT.

[*Is seen to feel under the chair for his revolver. He takes it out, looks at the charges, and then, apparently satisfied, replaces it carefully. He sits smoking, and intently watching the door at L. in front of him. The sound is heard of a man's heavy footsteps deliberately mounting the stairs. The footsteps cease. A knock is heard at the door. LETCHFOOT makes no sign, but remains silently smoking. A pause. The knock is repeated.*] Come in !

Enter ORLOFF.

ORLOFF.

[*He is a foreign, distinguished-looking gentleman, of about fifty years of age, dressed in faultless frock-coat, etc. ; silk hat ; eye-glasses, with broad black ribbon. His face is pale, almost cadaverous. He speaks in painfully correct English, but with an accent.*] Mistaire Letchfoot, I presume ?

LETCHFOOT.

Pray come in, sir. Yes, I am Mr. Letchfoot.

ORLOFF.

[He opens the little gate in railing, comes in, and seats himself on visitor's chair in front of LETCHFOOT. The latter, in silence, watches ORLOFF intently, as with great slowness and deliberation he produces a pocket-book, and extracting from it a bank-note, lays it on the table in front of LETCHFOOT.] Five hundred—*[lays out another note]*—six hundred—*[lays out another note]*—seven hundred—eight hundred—nine hundred—one thousandt dollars! *[Then leaning back, and regarding LETCHFOOT solemnly, he replaces his pocket-book. A pause.]* Now, Mistaire Letchfoot, we can talk! *[A pause.]*

LETCHFOOT.

[Very coolly.] Do you not think it would be advisable, under the circumstances, first to let in your friends?

ORLOFF.

[Starting in well-feigned surprise.] Frentz! I have no frentz!

LETCHFOOT.

I mean those gentlemen who are listening outside my door.

ORLOFF.

[*Half-rising.*] I do not understand to what you refer.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Pressing the button under his desk. The door at L. flies suddenly open, disclosing three men, crowded together, listening. They are POLLNITZ, GUERIN, and JORGSTROFF. LETCHFOOT continues quietly.*] I mean those gentlemen! [*He is seen feeling for the revolver underneath his chair. Smiling, he motions the trio to enter.*] Will you not join us? [*The three men look at ORLOFF as though for instructions.*]

ORLOFF.

[*With a threatening sneer.*] Yaas, come in!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Rising, he politely indicates chairs. They seat themselves awkwardly. He proffers cigars, which are refused. Sitting down again, he leans comfortably back, and blows out rings of smoke. Then addressing ORLOFF.*] Now I think we can talk! [*A pause.*]

ORLOFF.

[*Slowly, and very impressively.*] Mistaire Letchfoot, would you be prepared to accept a commission from people who desire to remain nameless, but who will pay you *vairy, vairy well*?—a commission for which [*he leans forward, and earnestly taps the money on the desk*] this is the retaining-fee, with twenty thousand more when it is finished; and, when finished, you are to forget?

LETCHFOOT.

What are the particulars, gentlemen?

ORLOFF.

[*Exchanging glances with his three companions.*] Mistaire Letchfoot, we have outside an automobile. We will take a ride, you and I, of two hours' duration, to a certain place, where you will be presented to an old gentleman. Knowing your wonderful powers of disguise and imitation, we wish you to photograph physically this old man—in looks, in clothes, in hair, in man-naire, [*then, almost in a whisper*] and in voice!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Coolly crossing his legs.*] For what object, may I ask?

ORLOFF.

[*After a pause.*] Let us make this two thousandt dollars. [*Takes out his pocket-book again, and deliberately counts out more notes on LETCHFOOT'S desk. All this is done in silence. Then he returns the pocket-book to his pocket.*] Now, Mistaire Letchfoot, ze object! [*His three companions look at him nervously.*] In justice to yourself, let me assure you that you will run no risk, or at least one so slight— [*Shrugs his shoulders. A pause.*] Zat is all at this stage we can venture to enlighten you.

LETCHFOOT.

You do not think, then, that you can accord me the confidence and frankness I am accustomed to receive from my clients?

ORLOFF.

[*Shaking his head.*] Mistaire Letchfoot, [*he leans forward, and earnestly touches the money on the desk*] this is an on-usual sum, for an on-usual object. You must accept or reject it—blindfoldt! But it is essential in either case that we remain as we are now, unknown to you.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Smiling.*] Oh, very well! Will you not please give

me a careful description of this old gentleman I am asked to make up for, or photograph physically, as you term it?

ORLOFF.

[*Again looking at his companions, who gaze at one another dubiously.*] I am afraid we cannot.

LETCHFOOT.

But I must be in a position to know what necessaries to take with me.

ORLOFF.

Necessaries?

LETCHFOOT.

Grease-paints, wigs, crayons, and all that kind of thing. It is essential that you should describe this man to me exactly.

[ORLOFF *again looks at his companions, and this time they nod assent. Then ORLOFF again brings out his pocket-book, and produces a small, torn piece of a photograph.*

ORLOFF.

This is a photograph of the gentleman, taken several years ago. His hair and beard, once black,

are now flecked with grey. His eyes, like yours, are blue. His height is about your own.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Taking the photograph, and studying it earnestly.*] How many hours shall I be given to study this old gentleman?

ORLOFF.

[*After a pause.*] Will you permit us to withdraw one moment, and gonsult?

[LETCHFOOT assents with a movement of his hand. The four men retire to rear of stage, and talk earnestly in pantomime. As soon as their backs are turned, LETCHFOOT, for the first time, betrays excitement. He snatches open a drawer, and bringing out a large scrap-book, compares the photograph with one he finds in the book. Business of his using a magnifying-glass to examine not only the front, but the back of the photograph. He opens another drawer, and abstracting another scrap-book, hastily turns over the pages. ORLOFF and his companions come down stage, and seat themselves again with solemnity.]

LETCHFOOT.

[*Quite coolly.*] Well, sir?

ORLOFF.

Mistaire Letchfoot, you will be given with this old gentleman—one hour.

LETCHFOOT.

I am undecided whether or not to accept your proposal. Now one thing, before we go further: may I ask you a question? [*He pauses, and taps the photograph.*] Was this old man released from prison yesterday? [ORLOFF *starts.*] Ah, I think I know who you are now, gentlemen! [*He rings the bell once. Enter GRIERSON.*] Grierson, is there not a woman standing below in the street outside my front door?

GRIERSON.

[*Going to the mirrors, and looking into them.*] No, sir.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Gazing intently at ORLOFF.*] Then across the street, Grierson?

GRIERSON.

[*Still looking into the mirrors.*] Yes, sir—there is, sir!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Coolly.*] Is she not rather tall and dark, with
a——

GRIERSON.

[*Peering into mirrors, and interrupting him.*] Yes, sir, speaking to a man, sir, and pointing up here. [*Then with a start.*] Lord, sir——!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Quietly.*] Well, what is it?

GRIERSON.

There's a revolver in the man's hand!

LETCHFOOT.

Thank you; that will do, Grierson. [*Exit GRIERSON.* LETCHFOOT *slowly rises and looks down at the four men, all of whom, except ORLOFF, betray great uneasiness.*] Gentlemen, I am more than honoured to receive a visit from the Supreme Secret Council of American Anarchists. [*ORLOFF and his companions push back their chairs in amazement. ORLOFF'S goes over with a crash. LETCHFOOT continues in an outburst.*] Gentlemen, your audacity surprises me—to come here to me, Letchfoot, and expect to hire me

as a confederate in one of your criminal undertakings !
 What ! you'd have me go down to Pitman's Land-
 ing, [*all four Anarchists cry out*] and disguise myself
 as this old man in order that you may murder him
 the moment my back is turned—[*all cry out*—and
 then use me in his place in some plot concocted by
 that arch-assassin [*points at ORLOFF*] to further the
 hellish schemes of your accursed organisation !

[*He rings the bell, keeping his finger on the
 button. Three of the Anarchists crouch as
 though to rush at him. ORLOFF restrains
 them.*

ORLOFF.

[*Coldly.*] Stop ! He can't touch us !

[*The door at R. bursts open, and GRIERSON,
 MILFORD, LANFIELD, and another detective
 rush out.*

LETCHFOOT.

[*Continuing to address the Anarchists.*] Unknown
 to me, are you ? [*He points.*] Ludwig Pollnitz, tried
 for murder at the Central Criminal Court, March Ninth,
 Eighteen eighty-seven, and sentenced to imprisonment
 for life !—Unknown to me, are you ! [*Again points.*]
 Alexis Jorgstroff—first a watch-maker ; then wore stripes
 for six years ; now the most expert maker of dynamite

bombs in this country! [*Points again.*] James Guerin, associate of Cholgoz; thief, counterfeiter, and ex-convict! [*Again points, this time at ORLOFF.*] Vladimir Zirossofky, *alias* Zorn, *alias* Brandt, *alias* Orloff! [*The Anarchists all cry out.*] Fled here from Russia after the assassination of Czar Alexander Second. Editor of the *Firebrand*, suppressed in Ninety-two. Editor of *Revolt*, again suppressed for inciting to crime. Indicted before the Grand Jury of Chicago, September Ninety-seven, for the car-barn murders! Got off through the sudden and mysterious death of George Holburn, chief witness for the State! Was last seen in San Francisco by Secret Service Agent Pettus! Then was lost sight of altogether till to-day, June eighteenth, Nineteen hundred and six, he walks into my office in the brazen expectation of engaging my professional services! [*Then LETCHFOOT runs to the telephone against the wall.*] Exchange seven—connect me with the President of the Erie Railroad.—Hello, hello, hello! [*The four Anarchists begin to move towards the door, as though to slink out and escape. LETCHFOOT turns and detects them. He calls out sharply to his detectives, still holding the telephone receiver in his hand.*] Don't let them out! [*The Anarchists stand uneasily, cowed by the detectives. LETCHFOOT continues his conversation through the*

telephone.] Hello, hello, hello!—Is that the president of the—I say, Harry—yes, it's me, Letchfoot, Arthur Letchfoot! For God's sake, hold back the five-three fast express! I've got the case of my life! Yes, yes, I can make it! Pitman's Landing, P-I-T—, yes, yes, slow down, that's all! Thank you, old man, thank you! [*He hurriedly replaces receiver, puts a revolver in his hip pocket, grabs his hat, gloves, overcoat, and cane, and then calls to GRIERSON.*] Come along, Grierson! Yes, I'll need you! [*Indicating the dress-suit case.*] Bring that too! [*Then addressing the detectives, pointing at the Anarchists.*] Hold them here, boys, till I've caught that train! [*Then addressing ORLOFF.*] And as for you, you can tell your friends, with my compliments, that before the week's out I shall have you and all your pack behind the bars of the Illinois Street Jail! Good-bye!

[He dashes to the door, followed by GRIERSON, and both are heard hurriedly and noisily descending the stairs, three steps at a time.]

DROP.

SCENE II

SCENE: *Pitman's Landing, 7 o'clock P.M., two hours later. The scene represents a cheaply furnished bedroom in a cheap country hotel. A window at rear. A door at R. The curtain rises on a darkish scene, the only light being that of a kerosene lamp, turned down. The lamp is on a table beside a bed. Some one is heard putting a key in the lock of the door, and fumbling with it. The door is opened, and there enters stealthily a well-gowned woman—MADAME JANKOVITCH. With great precaution she shuts and locks the door, tiptoes into the room towards the bed, and feels under the pillow, etc., evidently searching for something. While she is thus engaged, heavy footsteps are heard nearing the door. In a terrified manner MADAME JANKOVITCH runs to the window, taps on it, and then is seen being assisted out by confederates. The stage is left empty. A pause, as the footsteps draw nearer. Then the door is heard being unlocked again, and it opens slowly, disclosing DANIEL RALSTON—a thin, aristocratic old man, of considerable dignity of*

presence. He wears a long dressing-gown, with a silk muffler around his throat, and presents an appearance of great bodily weakness. He locks the door deliberately behind him, leaves the key in the lock, unwraps the muffler from his neck, and coming Centre to the table, turns up the kerosene lamp. Then he notices the open window. For a moment he stands motionless with surprise. Slowly raising the lamp above his head, he examines the bed, and detects that the pillow and coverlet have been disturbed. He then slowly goes to the door, and unlocking it, places the lamp on the floor so that the light would fall on any one entering. Then from a corner of the room he takes a double-barrelled shot-gun, stations himself near the bed, and grimly covers the door and window. A pause. Steps are heard approaching. The handle of the door is seen to turn, and a timid knock is given. RALSTON falls on one knee, and aims at the door. The timid knock is repeated. Then RALSTON cocks both triggers of his gun. The door opens slowly, discovering CHRYSTAL RALSTON, in travelling costume, carrying a small valise. She stands on the threshold, transfixed at the sight of the pointed gun.

RALSTON.

[*Lowering his gun, and crying out. His voice is feeble—that of an old and very sick man.*] Chrystal!

CHRYSTAL.

[*Running towards him, and throwing herself into his arms.*] Father! [*Then incoherently.*] You knew I was coming! Oh, daddy, you frightened me so! Why did you point that gun at me?

RALSTON.

[*In agitation.*] Because—because—! [*He embraces her again, then holds her from him, studying her face tenderly.*] My little girl's a woman now! [*Gazes at her fondly.*] The little girl I've loved and longed for all these years—a woman! [*As CHRYSTAL makes a movement to embrace him again.*] No, no, let me look at you! Let me cross those terrible years of separation, and find the little daughter I loved so dearly! I want the memory of you to carry with me—before I say good-bye for ever!

CHRYSTAL.

[*In amazement and agitation.*] For ever?

RALSTON.

Your father's a hunted man!

CHRYSTAL.

[*With emotion.*] A hunted man?

RALSTON.

[*Going to the window, and with great precaution, lest he might be shot from the outside, shuts it, and then draws down the blind. He then returns, and leaning on the muzzle of his gun, looks down at CHRYSTAL, who is sitting on the bed weeping.*] For years I have lied to you! [*As CHRYSTAL starts.*] Yes, lied to you! Those mines in Utah had no existence. Those pressing affairs that engaged all my time and kept me absent from you—were a myth. I was not an honourable man, engrossed in honourable pursuits. Chrystal, I was a convict in a prison!

CHRYSTAL.

[*Brokenly.*] I can't believe it; I won't believe it!

RALSTON.

I was given my liberty yesterday, and the first thing I did was to telegraph you to meet me here. Here, in this out-of-the-way place, where I hoped to elude my enemies for a few hours.

CHRYSTAL.

But those letters you wrote me? Those letters I

treasured and cried over in my lonely room at school?

RALSTON.

Written in my cell, and mailed by a warder I had bribed.

CHRYSTAL.

[*Faltering.*] Why—why were you put—in prison?

RALSTON.

Because your father, whom you thought the soul of honour, was secretly directing a vast and criminal conspiracy. Chrystal, I was one of the leaders of an underground army, the army of organised anarchy!

CHRYSTAL.

[*With a cry.*] You—an Anarchist!

RALSTON.

Five years ago I was put in prison, and accepted my punishment in the spirit of a martyr. [*He hesitates.*] In prison I learned there is only one way to reform the world, and that is from above. [*He points upwards.*] The scales dropped from my eyes, and I beheld myself as I was, a fanatic, a criminal, a murderer. [*A pause.*]

CHRYSTAL.

[*In a trembling voice.*] But what have you to fear now?

RALSTON.

[*With intensity.*] Am I not a traitor to my old comrades? Am I not defying them? Their money and their secrets are in my power, and like wolves they are at my heels.

[*A pause, as with trembling hands he takes from an inner pocket a thick bundle of bank-notes, and forces them on* CHRYSTAL.

CHRYSTAL.

Father, what is this?

RALSTON.

Money to support you in the years to come. [*As she recoils from it.*] No, no, it's mine, and unstained by blood. I earned every dollar of it in days when I was an honest man, and it's yours to live on when I'm gone. Chrystal, take it and go, and leave me to fight my fight alone. [*He points at the door.*

CHRYSTAL.

[*Putting the money in the pocket of her cloak.*] Why do you want to send me away?

RALSTON.

[*In a paroxysm.*] Go, go! You've stayed here too long already. Chrystal, I command you!

CHRYSTAL.

[*Rising and looking up at him tenderly.*] And leave you when you are ill and old and in danger? I will never do that!

RALSTON.

[*Taking her by the arm as though to force her towards the door, and speaking incoherently.*] My God! you don't know what you are risking. Go, go, I beg you, I implore you! Chrystal, you must, you must!

[*He again lays a trembling hand on her arm.*]

CHRYSTAL.

[*Firmly.*] My place is beside my father!

RALSTON.

[*He utters a cry, and clasps her to his breast, breaking down completely, and shaking with dry sobs. Then he starts convulsively, raising his hand in sudden apprehension.*] Hush! did you hear that?

CHRYSTAL.

[*In alarm, and whispering.*] No!

RALSTON.

Sh-sh-sh—listen! [*A pause. Then he suddenly points with his hand at the window.*] Over there? [*He stealthily moves towards the window, and taking hold of the blind, lets it fly up with a loud rush. MADAME JANKOVITCH is seen for a moment, peering in. She disappears. RALSTON turns to CHRYSTAL in terrible agitation.*] Too late! too late! [*He staggers to a chair, and collapses on it.*] I've seen my death-warrant! [*Then pointing towards table.*] Give me that bottle—there, there [*collapses again*]. The—the dose is marked on it!

CHRYSTAL.

Oh, father, I'll get it!

[*She rushes to the table, and, guided in dumb show by RALSTON, takes up a small medicine-bottle, hurriedly glances at the directions, and pours out a dose in a glass of water.*

RALSTON.

[*Taking the medicine from her hands, and drinking it.*] Ah! that does me good—that does me good! [*Holds hand to his heart, groans, and then seems to revive a little.*] Hand me the gun. [*As CHRYSTAL hesitates, he repeats the order more emphatically.*] The

gun, Chrystal! [*She brings it to him, and he attempts to hold it, but is too weak to do so. He groans, and presses his hand to his heart.*] Oh, my heart, my heart! [*He starts.*] Chrystal, they're at the door—the door!

[*With an immense effort he manages to take the gun from her.*]

CHRYSTAL.

[*Making a movement towards the door.*] I'll lock it!

RALSTON.

[*Unable to hold the gun any longer, and letting it fall to the floor.*] No—no—stay here! Chrystal, you take it. [*She lifts up the gun, while RALSTON indicates the triggers.*] One finger there, the second finger there—so. [*Then pointing at the door.*] When it opens—fire!

[*A slight rustle is heard outside the door. A pause, followed by another rustle. CHRYSTAL and RALSTON listen intently. At a movement from RALSTON, CHRYSTAL puts the gun to her shoulder and aims at the door. It opens, disclosing LETCHFOOT and GRIERSON.*]

RALSTON.

[*In a low voice.*] Fire!

CHRYSTAL.

[*With a cry of recognition.*] It's Arthur—Arthur Letchfoot!

LETCHFOOT.

[*To GRIERSON.*] Lock the door, Grierson. [*Then advancing towards CHRYSTAL and RALSTON, and taking off his hat.*] I beg your pardon, I——

RALSTON.

[*Fiercely.*] Who are you?

LETCHFOOT.

[*Recognising CHRYSTAL, and running towards her.*] Chrystal! Chrystal Ralston! My God! what are you doing here?

CHRYSTAL.

Arthur!

[*They clasp hands warmly.*]

RALSTON.

[*Over CHRYSTAL'S shoulder.*] Who is he?

CHRYSTAL.

It's Mr. Letchfoot, the detective.

RALSTON.

[*Wildly.*] The detective! What is he doing here? I am a free man now, sir. What warrant have you to break in on me?

LETCHFOOT.

[*To CHRYSTAL.*] Is Ralston your father? Ralston, the Anarchist leader? Why did you never tell me?

CHRYSTAL.

[*In agitation.*] Arthur, I've just learned the truth.

RALSTON.

[*Furiously.*] What does he want here?

CHRYSTAL.

[*Trying to check her father.*] Don't—don't—he will help you.

RALSTON.

[*In amazement.*] Help?

CHRYSTAL.

[*Shyly.*] Father, Mr. Letchfoot is the gentleman I'm engaged to.

RALSTON.

[*In wonder.*] Engaged to?

LETCHFOOT.

Mr. Ralston, I came to help a defenceless man, trying to retrieve his past. But I never thought to find in you the father of the girl I love. [*Holds out his hand.*] I——

RALSTON.

[*Eagerly clasping it.*] You've indeed come to help me?

LETCHFOOT.

Yes! [*Gazes about the room.*] And the quicker we get away from here, the better!

RALSTON.

[*Despairingly.*] It's too late!

LETCHFOOT.

No, no, it's not! Get your things together. [*As RALSTON runs to his bag, and in a fever of impatience tries to pack it.*] Grierson, give him a hand. [*Business of GRIERSON assisting RALSTON hurriedly to pack the bag. LETCHFOOT tenderly takes CHRYSTAL'S hand.*] Don't be frightened.

CHRYSTAL.

[*Half crying.*] It isn't that! But—but——

[*Breaks down completely.*]

LETCHFOOT.

[*Putting his arm about her, and in a caressing voice.*] Don't cry, Chrystal! I know how terrible it is for you. I know how dearly you loved your father, and how proud you were of him. But, my darling, you must be brave; you must make his atonement easy; you must not break your heart at what cannot be helped.

CHRYSTAL.

[*Clinging to him.*] But it is broken, Arthur!

LETCHFOOT.

No—no! We have each other! What can come between us as long as we have that?

CHRYSTAL.

[*Miserably.*] But we haven't!

LETCHFOOT.

Haven't?

CHRYSTAL.

You can never marry me now!

LETCHFOOT.

And why not, I'd like to know?

CHRYSTAL.

[*Faltering.*] Because — I'm — a — a convict's daughter!

LETCHFOOT.

I love you, and that's enough.

CHRYSTAL.

But the disgrace?

LETCHFOOT.

It's not yours.

CHRYSTAL.

And people will say——

LETCHFOOT.

[*Interrupting her.*] A man has two kinds of friends, Chrystal—the true-as-steel, and the sheer-off-when-you're-in-trouble. Thank God! mine are of the first kind, and they will accept you for my sake, and then love you for your own.

CHRYSTAL.

But my father! If I have to choose between you, I must follow him.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Tenderly.*] We'll take care of him together.

CHRYSTAL.

And in spite of everything you can still love me?

LETCHFOOT.

My darling! [He presses her to him.]

GRIERSON.

[Coming up to him, followed by RALSTON.] We're all ready, sir.

LETCHFOOT.

[In his ordinary tone, and to CHRYSTAL, indicating her valise.] Is that yours?

CHRYSTAL.

Yes, Arthur.

LETCHFOOT.

[To GRIERSON.] Grierson, you take it, and go with Miss Ralston.

GRIERSON.

Yes, sir.

LETCHFOOT.

There's a servants' stairway at the end of the hall. At the bottom, turn to the right, make your way through the yard, and wait there in the shed till we join you.

GRIERSON.

I understand, Mr. Letchfoot.

CHRYSTAL.

[*Expostulating.*] But, Arthur—alone? Without you?

LETCHFOOT.

Your father and I will follow.

RALSTON.

[*Explosively.*] No, no!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Firmly.*] You must do what I say, sir. [*Then to GRIERSON and CHRYSTAL.*] Now go, both of you. [*RALSTON stands in indecision as the pair advance to the door. As GRIERSON opens it, and as CHRYSTAL passes out, LETCHFOOT moves towards him.*] Grierson!

GRIERSON.

[*Turning.*] Yes, sir.

LETCHFOOT.

[*In a stage whisper.*] Don't wait an instant. Strike across the marsh to that little station, and flag the first train. [*GRIERSON nods understandingly, and moves*

off. LETCHFOOT *locks the door, and then returns to RALSTON in the centre of the stage. He draws up two chairs at the table.* Sit down! [RALSTON *obeys in bewilderment.* LETCHFOOT *lays a revolver on the table in front of him, after that his watch, and then he seats himself opposite RALSTON.*] We'll give them three minutes to escape.

RALSTON.

[*Starting in terror.*] You said we were to join them!

LETCHFOOT.

I didn't want to frighten Chrystal. Sit down! [RALSTON *with a wild and apprehensive look, does so.*] Chrystal's safe with Grierson. Thank God we got her out of this; but you and I, Mr. Ralston, will have to face the music! [*A pause.* LETCHFOOT *lights a cigar coolly.*] Now the truth? [*He leans across the table.*] What is it they want? [RALSTON *stirs uneasily, but makes no reply.*] Is it your life?

RALSTON.

[*In agitation, and hesitating.*] No——

LETCHFOOT.

[*With intensity.*] Then what is it?

RALSTON.

[*Reluctantly and mysteriously.*] This key.

[*Discloses at his neck a small flat key, hanging from a leather string.*

LETCHFOOT.

A key? They want that key? Mr. Ralston, what does that key open?

RALSTON.

[*Staring at LETCHFOOT in terror, covering the key with his dressing-gown, and stammering.*] I—I oughtn't to h-have shown it to you. I—I——

LETCHFOOT.

[*In a sterner voice, pointing at RALSTON'S neck.*] What does that open?

RALSTON.

[*Rising in agitation.*] It's madness to stay here! They'll get us like rats in a trap! [*Pointing at the revolver.*] Take your pistol and come!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Also rising.*] Mr. Ralston, you must tell me what that key opens.

RALSTON.

[*With fierce and sudden vehemence.*] The gates of hell!

[*He staggers towards his bag, takes it up in his trembling hands, and then goes for his gun. While he is doing so, LETCHFOOT, pistol in hand, goes cautiously to the door, listens, stealthily unlocks it, and peers out into the dark hall. Then locking the door again, he returns to RALSTON, who has collapsed on the bed in a sitting position, with his head strangely fallen on his breast.*

LETCHFOOT.

Now before we go, Mr. Ralston—for the last time—I insist on knowing why these men are here, and what they want with that key. [*Then he perceives that RALSTON is in a sort of stupor. He shakes his shoulder.*] Mr. Ralston! Mr. Ralston! My God! he's fainted. [*He pulls out a small flask, and forces some whisky down the old man's throat. Then he seizes a newspaper, and begins to fan him. The old man groans. LETCHFOOT then unloosens RALSTON'S collar, exposing his neck and the mysterious key hanging from the leather string. LETCHFOOT hastily examines the key, while he continues to fan the old*

man with the newspaper.] 'Number eleven hundred and sixty-three! The Fourteenth National Bank.' Why, this is the key to a safe-deposit vault!

RALSTON.

[*Beginning to revive.*] Air! Air!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Again trying to force the flask to RALSTON'S lips.*] Try to swallow a little.

RALSTON.

[*Roughly repulsing him, and staggering to his feet.*] Help me to the window! Air, air! Oh God, I'm choking! [*He staggers wildly towards the window.*]

LETCHFOOT.

[*Running after him, and trying to restrain him.*] No, no—they're watching that window!

RALSTON.

[*Convulsively freeing himself, and staggering towards the window.*] Hands off!—I can't breathe—Air, air! Oh, my God, I must have air!

[*He reaches window, flings it wide open, and takes heaving breaths of air, growing visibly better as he does so.*]

LETCHFOOT.

[*Evidently frightened at seeing the old man thus expose himself to possible danger from the outside.*] They'll see you! [*He takes RALSTON'S arm as though to force him away. RALSTON will not move, and continues to inhale convulsive breaths.*] You're risking your life! Don't give them a chance to——

[*The report of a pistol is heard, and with it the crash of glass, as the window is shattered by a ball. RALSTON, shot, totters backward, and collapses on the bed, groaning.*]

RALSTON.

[*Gaspingly.*] Letchfoot—Letchfoot—hold me up!
[*Business.*] My daughter—Chrystal—Chrystal——!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Feeling with his hand.*] Where are you hurt?

RALSTON.

[*Gaspingly.*] Here! Here!

[*Passes his hand to his breast.*]

LETCHFOOT.

Let me look!

[*He begins to unbutton the old man's shirt.*]

RALSTON.

No, no, I can't bear it! It's no use, Letchfoot, no use! [*He seizes LETCHFOOT'S hand, and groaning, presses it warmly.*] Letchfoot, I want you to promise—Chrystal—Chrystal—you 'll——

LETCHFOOT.

I'll take good care of her, Mr. Ralston. I love her better than anything in the world.

RALSTON.

[*Still grasping LETCHFOOT'S hand.*] God bless you! [*Gasps.*] It's cruel to die—without, without—seeing her! I—I— [*he continues in an inarticulate whisper.* *At this moment three heavy resounding knocks are heard on the door, together with the hum of hushed voices and the sound of shuffling feet.* RALSTON *cries out in horror.*] It's Orloff!

LETCHFOOT.

Sh-sh-sh! [*He points his revolver at the door.*]

ORLOFF.

[*Off stage.*] Daniel Ralston!

RALSTON.

[*With a terrible effort to speak sufficiently loud.*]
Who's that?

ORLOFF.

Arpad Orloff! [*A pause.*] Open the door!

RALSTON.

[*In horror.*] What do you want, Arpad?

ORLOFF.

Let me in! [*Another knock against the door.*] You know what we want!

RALSTON.

All right—don't shoot—I'm coming! [*He tries desperately to rise, and then, utterly exhausted by the effort, falls back. Then he addresses LETCHFOOT.*] Open it—open the door! Give them what they want! [*With trembling hands he takes the key from his neck, and hands it to LETCHFOOT.*] Take him that!

[*RALSTON'S eyes close, and wearied out by the supreme effort he has made, he sinks back into a sort of stupor.*]

LETCHFOOT.

[*Pulls out a bunch of his own keys, and in full view of the audience makes a deliberate substitution. Then he looks down at RALSTON.*] Mr. Ralston? [*The old man only moans feebly. LETCHFOOT then replaces the leather string, together with the substituted key, on*

RALSTON'S neck. *Then he goes to the door, and speaks in a calm, clear voice.*] Mr. Orloff!

EXCITED VOICES OUTSIDE.

Letchfoot! Letchfoot! Letchfoot!

LETCHFOOT.

Mr. Orloff!

[There ensues a sudden and profound silence.]

ORLOFF.

Well, what do you think you are going to do, Mistaire Letchfoot?

LETCHFOOT.

Make terms!

ORLOFF.

[Contemptuously.] Terms! Open the door! *[A sudden rush is made against it by the Anarchists, and it seems as though it will burst in.]* Stop that, you fools! *[The noise ceases. Whispering and murmuring are heard.]* What are your terms, Mistaire Letchfoot?

LETCHFOOT.

One of you may enter and see Mr. Ralston.

ORLOFF.

Well?

LETCHFOOT.

He is badly hurt, and must be gently and considerately treated.

ORLOFF.

Yaas, that is agreed.

LETCHFOOT.

And you'll disturb him as little as possible.

ORLOFF.

Yaas—only Madame Jankovitch, she must come also.

LETCHFOOT.

But nobody else.

ORLOFF.

No ; nobody else.

[LETCHFOOT *unlocks and opens the door, and then stands to one side, revolver in hand, alert and ready for any treachery.* ORLOFF, *in the same faultless afternoon costume he wore in Scene I., enters with MADAME JANKOVITCH.* *In the open doorway behind them are seen a dozen wild-looking Anarchists, peering and pointing. Some have revolvers in their hands ; one has a sawed-off shot-gun ; two others have lighted*

lanterns. As ORLOFF enters, LETCHFOOT politely inclines his head, and the pair bow in return.

[*In an easy, man-of-the-world voice.*] Flag of truce, Letchfoot!

[*He goes over to the bed, accompanied by MADAME JANKOVITCH, and both look down at RALSTON, who is lying motionless and silent.*]

[*With a start.*] My God, he's dead!

MADAME JANKOVITCH.

Dead!

LETCHFOOT.

Dead!

ORLOFF.

[*To MADAME JANKOVITCH, and in a tone of genuine emotion.*] Why did you kill him? Oh, fools, fools! why did you not wait for me?

MADAME JANKOVITCH.

[*Tremblingly.*] With Letchfoot here, we did not dare to risk——

ORLOFF.

Look for the key!

[*Business.*]

MADAME JANKOVITCH.

There—at his neck!

[Recoils.]

ORLOFF.

[Taking the key, and then regarding RALSTON'S body with a strange and enigmatical expression.] They oughtn't to have shot him! [He turns, and accompanied by MADAME JANKOVITCH, moves towards the door. He addresses LETCHFOOT, indicating the body.] This was a mistake, Letchfoot!

LETCHFOOT.

[With bitter significance.] There'll be more mistakes before you and I get through with each other, Mr. Orloff.

ORLOFF.

[In a grim tone, in which there is a singular touch of the paternal.] Mistaire Letchfoot, you are a young man. Take advice from one who knows. Many have tried to cross me, but [indicating RALSTON'S dead body on the bed] that is always how it ends! Again I tell you, take advice— [with a sudden ferocity] Keep out!

MADAME JANKOVITCH.

[Mockingly.] Good-night, Mr. Letchfoot!

[Exeunt ORLOFF and MADAME JANKOVITCH.]

LETCHFOOT.

[*He watches them disappear. Then he stands in the doorway, looking after them. Then, shutting the door, he goes to the window, apparently still following their movements intently, and listening to their diminishing voices. He goes to the bedside, looks down at RALSTON, places a towel reverently over his face. He takes out the key, and regards it long and earnestly. His voice when he speaks is full of perplexity.*] Eleven hundred and sixty-three. The Fourteenth National Bank! [*From the key he again looks at RALSTON'S body.*] Ah, if those dead lips could only answer me! [*He looks at key again, with the same appearance of deep reflection.*] Why should they have killed him for this? [*He is interrupted by a strange noise at the door. He turns and stares at it. The knob is seen to turn. He runs to the door, opens it, and is confronted by GRIERSON, who reels against him. GRIERSON'S clothes are torn and ragged; his face is deathly pale; his whole appearance that of a man who has been beset by desperadoes, and has barely escaped with his life.*] Grierson! [GRIERSON, in a panting voice, mutters something inarticulate. LETCHFOOT assists him to a chair. GRIERSON sits huddled in it, his head sunken on his breast.] Grierson? Grierson?

GRIERSON.

[*Reviving.*] Mr. Letchfoot, I——

LETCHFOOT.

My God! where's Chrystal? [*Shakes GRIERSON'S shoulder.*] Chrystal? Where's Chrystal?

GRIERSON.

[*In a dazed sort of way.*] I—I don't know!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Nearly crazy with suspense.*] Don't know? Grierson, pull yourself together. Tell me what's happened!

GRIERSON.

[*Brokenly.*] They caught us in the marsh. I did my best, Mr. Letchfoot, I did my best—they didn't get her away from me without——

LETCHFOOT.

They got her away from you?

GRIERSON.

I put a bullet in two of them—but what could I do against eight?—When I went down, I rolled over like I was dead—and, my God! I nearly was, sir.

LETCHFOOT.

But Chrystal? Chrystal?

GRIERSON.

It was her they were after, sir—never minded me after I was down—they dragged her into an automobile, and were off like the wind!

LETCHFOOT.

[*He gives a groan of despair. Then putting his hand to his brow he speaks in an agonised voice.*] Let me think! Let me think!—The key!—Chrystal! Can it be that? [*Then to GRIERSON, who has greatly revived.*] Grierson—Grierson—I believe I've got it!

GRIERSON.

[*In bewilderment.*] Got it?

LETCHFOOT.

[*With the key still in his hand, and speaking more to himself than to GRIERSON.*] They want that key, don't they? The key of a safe-deposit vault. With Ralston dead, their only means now to use it is through his daughter Chrystal. Do you see, Grierson? Chrystal is the only person now alive who has the

legal right to open that vault. [*Raising his voice.*] What do *I* do? Get there before them; open it myself; lay bare every secret of their association; and then, as they appear with Chrystal at the bank, seize them all.

GRIERSON.

[*Examining the key.*] But, Mr. Letchfoot, no one can use this key but Mr. Ralston.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Significantly.*] *I* am Ralston! [*As GRIERSON looks startled.*] I must have a good drawing of him to guide me, to help me make up exactly in his likeness. [*He points at RALSTON'S body.*] Exactly, Grierson, and so perfect that even his own brother would be deceived. [*Again indicating the dead body.*] Quick, Grierson, hold him up! [*GRIERSON moves to the bed and lifts the dead man into a sitting position. LETCHFOOT takes the kerosene lamp off the table, and carrying it over hands it to GRIERSON. LETCHFOOT, eyeing the dead man keenly.*] A little closer to his face, Grierson. [*LETCHFOOT then retires a few paces, pulls out a small sketch-book and pencil, and seating himself proceeds to draw rapidly. GRIERSON, still very much exhausted, holds the lamp unsteadily near the dead man's face.*] I shall wear his clothes, walk

with his walk, speak with his voice, and, as Orloff brings Chrystal to the bank, they will find me there before them. [*A pause. LETCHFOOT continues to draw with swift, sure strokes. The lamp wavers in GRIERSON'S trembling hands.*] Steady, Grierson, steady!

CURTAIN.

ACT II

Time, the next day at 10.15 A.M. The scene represents the interior of the Safe-Deposit.Vaults of the Fourteenth National Bank, State Street, Chicago. This is a basement beneath the Bank itself, and is reached from rear of the stage by steps descending from the street. Vertical steel bars across the whole stage at rear, broken in the centre by a heavy grille gate. The audience has but an imperfect view of the street itself, and sees little but the legs of the passers-by. At the grille, seated in a chair, is ROGERS, one of the two attendants, a policeman-like man in a semi-police uniform. At R. is a narrow steel door which, when opened, discloses a practicable spiral staircase that rises to the Bank premises above. Beside the steel door, also seated in a chair, and reading a newspaper, is PARKER, the other attendant, in the same semi-police uniform. At R. is a desk, encircled by a low railing, where MR. WRIGHT,

the clerk, is seated. Before him is a large book like an hotel register, in which are entered customers' names, and their identifications, etc. The walls on both sides of stage are made up of safes of various sizes.

PARKER.

[Looking up from his newspaper, addressing WRIGHT.] Just listen to this, Mr. Wright. *[Reads.]* 'Mysterious shooting affray at a lonely road-house. Letchfoot the detective refuses to talk. Singular details.'

WRIGHT.

[Who is making an entry in his book.] Never mind that now; I'm busy.

ROGERS.

I used to be in Mr. Letchfoot's office, Parker—but I got out. Detective work is too darned perilous for a fambly man.

Enter STETSON at rear, down the steps from the street. He is a well-dressed business man, in silk hat, etc. In his hand are a couple of deeds.

[Recognising him, and respectfully rising and opening the grille.] Good morning, Mr. Stetson; fine day,

sir. [*Produces a key as STETSON brings out another.*]
Four five six eight, sir. Private room to-day, sir?

STETSON.

No, thank you, Rogers, I'm just putting in these
deeds. [*They both move over to a small safe.*]

WRIGHT.

Good morning, sir!

STETSON

[*Pleasantly.*] Good morning, good morning!

[*Business of ROGERS putting in his key in one
lock. Then he takes STETSON'S key and
puts it in another lock. The small safe
is thus opened, and STETSON places his
deeds into it. Then the double-locking
is repeated. All this is done in a per-
fectly matter-of-fact manner, accustoming
the audience to the routine of a safe-deposit
company. As STETSON passes out he
addresses ROGERS.*]

Strange attack on Letchfoot, wasn't it?

ROGERS.

Oh, it's all in the way of Mr. Letchfoot's business,
sir. That's what it is to be a detective, sir. Good
morning, sir. [*Exit STETSON.*]

WRIGHT.

[*Looking at his watch, and writing in the big book.*]

J. W. Stetson, arrived ten fifteen, left ten twenty.

ORLOFF.

[*He descends the steps at rear, and stops in front of the grille gate. ROGERS rises respectfully, but following the routine of the safe-deposit system, does not open the grille to a stranger.*] Eez this the Fourteenth National Bank Safe-Deposit?

ROGERS.

Yes, sir—it is, sir. Do you wish to take out a safe, sir? [*Then calling.*] Mr. Wright, here's a gentleman that——

WRIGHT.

[*Coming over.*] What can we do for you, sir?

ORLOFF.

May I not come in?

WRIGHT.

Strangers must state their business first, sir.

ORLOFF.

I am in the sad poss-ession of being guardian to a

young lady whose dead fazer was, I believe, one of your oldest clients. I wish to ask you——

WRIGHT.

Oh, kindly come in, sir. [*He guides ORLOFF into the railed-off office, while ROGERS closes the grille and resumes his seat. The ensuing conversation is not heard by either ROGERS or PARKER. WRIGHT offers ORLOFF a seat.*] Now I am at your service, sir. [*ORLOFF draws out a visiting-card and hands it to him. WRIGHT reads it respectfully.*] ‘Mr. Arpad Orloff.’ [*He bows.*]

ORLOFF.

[*Inclining his head.*] That is my name. [*A pause.*] Have the officials of this Bank heard of the death yesterday of Mistaire Daniel Ralston?

WRIGHT.

[*Rising, and assuming an expression of official regret.*] Dead, Mr. Orloff? Why, no, sir; we’ve had no news of it. Mr. Ralston—how very shocking!

[*Sits down again.*]

ORLOFF.

[*Shaking his head.*] Yaas, and I feel it all the more keenly, as I am the guardian of his beautiful daughter, Mees Chrystal, who is now with me at my residence.

Vairy sad! vairy sad! [*A pause.*] In the midst of life we are in death! Ah, vairy sad! [*Then in an altered tone.*] I am here to ask you kindly to put seals on Mr. Ralston's vault, the contents of wheech now descend naturally by law to his only child, Mees Chrystal.

WRIGHT.

[*Doubtfully.*] There is always a great deal of formality in such matters.

ORLOFF.

[*Smiling blandly.*] You need not tell me that. Only I wished to assure myself that seals are put on the vault at once.

WRIGHT.

Have you got Mr. Ralston's death-certificate?

ORLOFF.

[*Drawing out a large, legal-looking paper.*] No, not yet—but here, you see, is his will—[*business of WRIGHT looking at it*—there is my name—'hereby appoint Arpad Orloff, Esquire, sole executor of my will, with custody till she comes of age of my daughter Chrystal——']

WRIGHT.

[*Pushing it back.*] Before sealing the vault—an

unusual thing to do without the receipt of a death-certificate—we should require some proof of your own identity——

ORLOFF.

[*Producing a key.*] I presume that the possession of Mr. Ralston's key is almost of itself a conclusive——

WRIGHT.

Oh, you have his key, sir? Certainly, Mr. Orloff, that would go far to— [*examines the key with surprise*]. You are mistaken, sir!

ORLOFF.

[*Surprised.*] Mistaken?

WRIGHT.

This is no key of ours, sir!

ORLOFF.

[*Protestingly.*] But I received it from the hands of Mr. Ralston himself——

WRIGHT.

[*Returning the key.*] This is no key of ours, sir!

ORLOFF.

[*In subdued alarm.*] But suppose some person——

some unscrupulous person — should discover the genuine key, and——

WRIGHT.

Don't let that worry you, Mr. Orloff. It's easier for a man to break into Paradise than into the Fourteenth National Bank Safe-Deposit of Chicago!

ORLOFF.

[*Gazing gloomily at the key.*] Then this, even if it were the right key, is of absolutely no use to any one?

WRIGHT.

[*Solemnly.*] Except the dead Mr. Ralston himself, no one can open his vault without an order of court.

ORLOFF.

[*There is a pause as he reflects.*] I never knew a law yet that could not be broken—nor a bank, however clever, that could not be tricked! I want that vault sealed at once!

WRIGHT.

It can't be done, sir.

ORLOFF.

[*Rising, and with dignity.*] May I see the president of the Bank?

WRIGHT.

[*Stiffly.*] Certainly you can, sir. In fact, I think you had better do so. [*Rising, and calling to PARKER.*] Parker, show this gentleman up to Mr. Morton's private office.

PARKER.

[*Unbolting the steel door, and throwing it open, disclosing the spiral staircase within.*] This way, sir.

ORLOFF.

[*Bowing stiffly to WRIGHT.*] I am very much obliged to you for your courtesy.

[*He goes towards the steel door, and is ushered upstairs by PARKER. Both men disappear, and the door closes behind them.*]

WRIGHT.

[*Sitting down, and turning over the pages of the book.*] R—Ralston—here it is! [*Then to ROGERS at the grille.*] What was the number of Mr. Daniel Ralston's key?

ROGERS.

[*Absently.*] Eleven hundred and sixty-three, Mr. Wright.

WRIGHT.

Was it you who noted him here the day before yesterday?

ROGERS.

Yes, I did.

WRIGHT.

[*To himself, and cheerfully making a memorandum, mimicking ORLOFF'S voice.*] 'Vairy sad, vairy sad—midst of life we 're in death!' [*He takes out a packet of cigarettes, and furtively abstracts one. Then to ROGERS.*] Rogers?

ROGERS.

How?

WRIGHT.

[*Rising, and acting as though he means to sneak off for a moment's smoke.*] Give the spo-ho if I'm wanted!

[*ROGERS smiles and nods. WRIGHT moves off. The steel door opens and PARKER reappears. He picks his newspaper off the floor and calmly continues reading. At this moment LETCHFOOT, made up in the exact image of DANIEL RALSTON, is seen coming slowly down the steps at rear, his figure sharply silhouetted against the glare of the street behind him.*

LETCHFOOT.

[*At the grille.*] How do you do, Rogers?

ROGERS.

[*With cordiality.*] Why, if it ain't Mr. Ralston!
[*He opens the grille.*] Was just talking of you, sir.
Fine day, sir.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Kindly.*] Yes — delightful weather — delightful weather——

ROGERS.

[*Closing the grille with a snap.*] Number eleven hundred and sixty-three, is it not, sir? [*Produces key, and officiously takes the one LETCHFOOT hands him.*]
Private room to-day, sir?

LETCHFOOT.

[*Entering and following him.*] I hardly know yet. He follows ROGERS to a large safe, which is opened with the same formalities that attended STETSON a few minutes before. ROGERS discreetly returns to his post by the grille. LETCHFOOT hurriedly rifles the safe, pulling out packets of greenbacks, bags of money, bundles of securities, giving to each a cursory inspection before returning it. Then from a little drawer he brings out a manuscript book, and reads bits of it with

an appearance of feverish interest.] That's what I want!—Seventeenth Western District—Supreme Secret Council—President, Arpad Orloff. [*He turns more pages.*] What's this? Assassinations! Oh, my God, what a shambles of blood! [*Runs his finger down a list of names.*] Illington! I knew Illington well before he— Frank Lambert! Why, what's all this about him? [*He stops in horror; draws a deep breath, and clenches his fist.*] The papers said it was suicide! [*He hurriedly turns over more pages.*] Recipe for melinite—detailed drawings of clock-work infernal machines—subdivision of the trans-Mississippi, reporting to St. Louis—subdivision of the Far West, reporting to San Francisco! [*He hugs the book to his breast.*] Here is the key of the Under-World!

[*At this moment WRIGHT returns, and on seeing LETCHFOOT he utters a cry, and runs towards him.*

WRIGHT.

Good God! it's Mr. Ralston!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Hiding the book in his coat, and turning with an appearance of mild surprise.*] What's so strange in that, Mr. Wright?

WRIGHT.

[*As though he had seen a ghost.*] But you are dead, sir!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Apparently puzzled.*] I beg your pardon—I am what?

WRIGHT.

[*In great excitement.*] Dead, sir! It was reported to me hardly five minutes ago, sir! I—I had just entered it in my book!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Genuinely surprised.*] Reported? Who said I was dead?

WRIGHT.

A foreign gentleman, Mr. Ralston—he called himself Orloff—he's with Mr. Morton upstairs. You'd better go after him. Sir, he's a crook! [*Then to PARKER.*] Parker, quick!

[*PARKER hurriedly rises, and with LETCHFOOT and WRIGHT close behind him, unbolts the street door and opens it. It discloses ORLOFF and MORTON descending the spiral stair.*

MORTON.

[*Politely to ORLOFF.*] This way, Mr. Orloff. [*Then to WRIGHT.*] Mr. Wright, will you kindly turn up Mr. Ralston's page? The sad information has just reached me that our valued client is— [*He is about to say 'dead,' but stops in consternation on seeing LETCHFOOT.*] Ralston!

ORLOFF.

[*In horror.*] Ralston!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Coolly to MORTON, indicating ORLOFF.*] Is this the gentleman who brought the news?

MORTON.

[*In utter perplexity, fingering the will that is in his hands.*] Yes, and this, which he says is your will——

ORLOFF.

[*Breaking out passionately, and pointing a trembling hand at LETCHFOOT.*] That man's not Ralston, he's an impostor!

MORTON.

An impostor!

WRIGHT.

[*In amazement.*] An impostor!

ORLOFF.

[*Wildly to MORTON.*] He's masquerading in dead men's clothes. [*Then furiously to WRIGHT, as he sees the open vault.*] You let him break into that vault? My God, he's rifled it! [ORLOFF runs to vault, and searches it madly, tumbling out greenbacks, money, securities, etc., as though he cannot find the most precious thing of all.] It's not here! He's stolen it! [*Advancing on LETCHFOOT.*] I'll prove he's an impostor by tearing the beard off his face! I'll——

MORTON.

[*Catching him by the arm.*] Stop, sir—stop, I tell you! Parker!

[PARKER seizes ORLOFF, who struggles for a moment before he is overpowered.]

ORLOFF.

[*Hoarse and panting.*] I demand to have him searched!—There, it's in his breast; I see it! Open his coat!

MORTON.

[*To LETCHFOOT.*] Oblige me, sir, by——

ORLOFF.

[*Beside himself.*] Open his coat !

LETCHFOOT.

[*Coolly producing the book from his breast.*] Is there any objection to my taking my own papers out of my own safe ?

ORLOFF.

[*Struggling frantically.*] That's mine ! That's mine !

MORTON.

[*To ORLOFF.*] Mr. Orloff, you will have to explain your extraordinary conduct.

ORLOFF.

[*Panting and indicating PARKER.*] Yes, yes, but make him let go my arm.

LETCHFOOT.

[*In his own voice, abandoning the imitation of RALSTON.*] I think *I* had better do the explaining, Mr. Morton.

MORTON.

[*In amazement.*] Who are you ?

LETCRFOOT.

Letchfoot, the detective !

MORTON.

Letchfoot !

WRIGHT.

Letchfoot !

ROGERS.

Letchfoot !

PARKER.

Letchfoot !

LETCRFOOT.

[*He perceives that ORLOFF is no longer held by PARKER, and that the former is about to make a rush to escape.*] Parker ! [*As he utters the word, ORLOFF snatches the will from MORTON'S hand, and flies towards the unguarded gate, PARKER and ROGERS at his heels. LETCRFOOT drops the manuscript book to the floor, and starts to follow, crying*] Stop him ! Stop him ! [*ORLOFF gets through the grille, and is half-way up the stairs when he is caught by ROGERS and PARKER, and brought back struggling.*] Hold him tight, Rogers ! [*As ORLOFF is brought inside the Bank, LETCRFOOT produces a pair of handcuffs, and snaps them on his wrists.*] Now I've got you, my man ! [*He takes the*

will, and puts it in his pocket, and then genially addresses ROGERS, who stands smiling and panting.]
Like old days, eh, Rogers?

ROGERS.

It's a long time since I've heard the click of the darbies, sir!

LETCHFOOT.

Very smartly done, Rogers.

ROGERS.

[*Delighted.*] Thank you, sir!

MORTON.

You are indeed Mr. Letchfoot, the celebrated detective?

LETCHFOOT.

You are good to put it so pleasantly, Mr. Morton. Yes, I am Arthur Letchfoot.

MORTON.

I have no desire to put difficulties in your way, Mr. Letchfoot, but you will pardon me if, as president of this Bank, I——

LETCHFOOT.

Quite so, quite so—I am quite prepared to justify everything I've done. But, Mr. Morton——

MORTON.

Yes, sir?

LETCHFOOT.

First of all, permit me to send this man to the nearest police station.

WRIGHT.

[*As MORTON hesitates.*] Shall I ring up a couple of officers, sir?

ROGERS.

[*Eagerly to MORTON.*] Oh, I'll take him, Mr. Morton.

LETCHFOOT.

[*To ROGERS.*] What station is it?

ROGERS.

The eleventh.

LETCHFOOT.

Macintyre's?—yes, that's all right, if Mr. Morton will permit you to go. Tell Macintyre you're from Letchfoot, and ask him to hold this man on a felony charge till I come.

ROGERS.

[*To* MORTON.] Have I your permission, sir?

MORTON.

[*Unexpectedly.*] No!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Surprised, and indicating* WRIGHT.] Kindly let him telephone then——

MORTON.

Not yet, if you please. How do I know you are Letchfoot? For all I know—no offence is intended, sir—you may be the crook, and this [*indicating* ORLOFF] a perfectly respectable gentleman who may afterwards accuse me of having acted with great precipitation.

ORLOFF.

[*Regaining courage.*] How can you doubt it with that before you? [*He points at the open safe.*] He comes here in disguise; he breaks into that safe; he abstracts papers of immense importance; and then, when detected, the smooth rascal turns the tables on an honest man, and with the assistance of the Bank employés—mark that, sir—the assistance of the Bank

employés—he has the daring and effrontery to lock these on my wrists! [*Indicating handcuffs.*]

MORTON.

[*Evidently disturbed by this side of the situation.*]

Rogers, you oughtn't to have assisted——

ORLOFF.

[*Pressing his advantage home, and indicating the handcuffs.*] I demand to have these taken off at once!

MORTON.

[*Suspiciously to LETCHFOOT.*] I am afraid I shall have to ask you to consent——

LETCHFOOT.

One word first, Mr. Morton. Rogers?

ROGERS.

Yes, sir.

LETCHFOOT.

How many years were you in my service?

ROGERS.

Six, Mr. Letchfoot.

LETCHFOOT.

Do you think you recognise me?

ROGERS.

[*Beaming.*] Well, I should smile!

LETCHFOOT.

[*To MORTON.*] That ought to satisfy you.

MORTON.

[*Much relieved.*] Certainly it does.

ORLOFF.

[*Feverishly.*] But, Mr. Morton—Mr. Morton——

MORTON.

[*Coldly, and indicating LETCHFOOT.*] I am engaged with this gentleman. [*Then addressing LETCHFOOT.*] Now, Mr. Letchfoot, I am at your service.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Indicating ORLOFF.*] Not before him.

MORTON.

[*He looks about in some indecision, not knowing for the moment what to do with ORLOFF. Then he indicates the remotest part of the stage.*] Take him

over there, Parker, and give him a chair. [*Business.* MORTON *indicates* WRIGHT'S *desk and chair.*] Mr. Wright will not mind our turning him out. [*He moves towards desk, and politely indicates a chair to* LETCHFOOT.] Please be seated, sir.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Drawing his chair up confidentially to* MORTON.]
Now, Mr. Morton, the facts!

MORTON.

Yes, the facts.

LETCHFOOT.

It is an extraordinary story. This Ralston, who passed as a well-to-do mining man, was secretly the leader of a criminal association!

MORTON.

A criminal association!

LETCHFOOT.

He got into prison; he reformed there; and when he came out he defied his old associates. Last night they killed him—[*as* MORTON *starts and utters a cry*]. Oh, yes, murder's their business—a man's life to them isn't worth that! [*Snaps his fingers.*] They

killed him, and then seized his daughter, a girl of nineteen, and laid the plan you've just seen thwarted to open that vault. In it are their papers, their treasure, and God only knows what damning evidences of their lawless and desperate past. [*A pause.*] One question, Mr. Morton. Will you help me, or will you not?

MORTON.

[*Warmly.*] Indeed I will, Mr. Letchfoot, to the very limit of my ability!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Pointing.*] All I ask for is that book.

MORTON.

I am sorry, Mr. Letchfoot, but you cannot have it.

LETCHFOOT.

Oh, but I must!

MORTON.

Mr. Letchfoot, I have already overlooked—am glad to overlook, sir—the liberties you have taken here in the interests of justice. But don't ask me for the impossible. [*Addressing WRIGHT.*] Mr. Wright?

WRIGHT.

Yes, Mr. Morton.

MORTON.

Replace everything in the Ralston safe, and place seals on the locks.

LETCHFOOT.

[*In dismay.*] Seals!

WRIGHT.

Very good, sir.

MORTON.

You see, I am taking your word that Daniel Ralston is dead.

LETCHFOOT.

[*In expostulation.*] But, Mr. Morton——

MORTON.

Our rules leave us no choice. On learning the death of a client [*he points at WRIGHT, who is busily affixing seals*] that is our invariable procedure.

LETCHFOOT.

[*With intensity.*] But, Mr. Morton, that book is of priceless value to me. I can't do without it.

You are allowing these criminals to escape! [*As MORTON'S face remains inflexible.*] I don't ask to keep it—I don't ask even to take it away—but, Mr. Morton, for God's sake, let me look at it once again!

MORTON.

[*Coldly.*] Have you an order of court, commanding me to surrender it?

LETCHFOOT.

[*Bitterly.*] Of course I haven't.

MORTON.

Then I cannot meet your wishes.

LETCHFOOT.

Do you appreciate that Ralston's daughter is held a prisoner by these wretches, and that you are putting every obstacle in the way of her rescue?

MORTON.

[*A little crossly.*] I am not the chief of police, sir. I am the president of this Bank!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Beside himself.*] But, my God! aren't you a man?

MORTON.

[*Coldly.*] Were I in your place, Mr. Letchfoot, I should lay the whole matter before the district attorney.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Clutching at a straw.*] Would you honour his requisition to open that safe?

MORTON.

No, sir, it would not be in my power to do so.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Eagerly.*] I've another way. Leave me out altogether; but read those papers [*points at safe*] for yourself, and then act as your own judgment will tell you.

MORTON.

[*Coldly.*] Please understand, Mr. Letchfoot, that there is only one legal method of opening a dead man's vault in a safe-deposit company. And that is before witnesses, with an order of court in the name and presence of his heir-at-law.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Alarmed.*] What if they should bring Chrystal Ralston here with such an order?

MORTON.

I should consent——

LETCHFOOT.

[*Rising in his chair.*] Consent—— !

MORTON.

[*Smiling, and continuing in the same even tone.*]
Consent, and hold the party here until I had communicated with you.

LETCHFOOT.

You will promise me that ?

MORTON.

Indeed I will.

LETCHFOOT.

On your honour ?

MORTON.

[*Gravely.*] Any attempt to tamper with that vault will be reported to you at once.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Producing a visiting-card.*] There is my address. You may count on always finding either me or my right-hand man, Grierson.

MORTON.

[*Repeating the name.*] Grierson! I had better make a note of his name,

LETCHFOOT.

By all means. [*Business.*] Arnold Grierson.

MORTON.

It has been most painful to me to refuse your request, Mr. Letchfoot, about the book, sir—really most painful.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Rising, and holding out his hand.*] Well, a man must do what he thinks right. Many thanks, and good morning.

MORTON.

[*As they shake hands.*] Delighted to have met you, sir. I share your regret that I could not have helped you further. [*He calls to PARKER.*] Parker, Mr. Letchfoot's ready to go.

[PARKER and ORLOFF come to centre of stage to meet LETCHFOOT and MORTON. At this moment the street at rear becomes the scene of some unknown excitement. Cries are heard; feet are seen running; a crowd

rapidly gathers in front of the Bank. To the audience nothing is seen but a hurly-burly of converging legs. All sorts of legs: a gentleman's with spats; Italian street-cleaners', with straw bound around their feet; workmen's legs; clerks' legs; tramps' legs; a messenger-boy's legs; a cyclist's legs, etc. The audience, from the presence of a bicycle, begin to get a dim idea that the cyclist has run down a drunken man, and that a fight between them is imminent. There is a loud altercation, the sound of blows, the roar of the crowd enjoying the spectacle. The bicycle is seen to fall with a crash. Voices cry 'Police! Police!' Some of the crowd surge down the steps of the safe-deposit.

ROGERS.

[Who has run through the grille gate, and is on the steps looking up at the fight.] It's a cyclist who's bumped into a drunken Irishman, sir. *[Looks.]* There they go again. *[Renewed uproar.]*

MORTON.

[Angrily.] Disgraceful! Where are the police?

LETCHFOOT.

[*Passing his arm through ORLOFF'S, and addressing MORTON.*] Well, I'm off, Mr. Morton.

MORTON.

No, no, wait till it's over.

ROGERS.

[*As the noise diminishes.*] It's over now, sir.
[*Then as he looks again he begins to laugh heartily.*]
He's settling for fifty cents!

[*Again looks, and laughs harder than ever.*]

MORTON.

[*Also laughing.*] What is it, Rogers?

ROGERS.

[*Turning and laughing.*] The Irishman's biting it to see if it's good!

MORTON.

Sensible man.

ROGERS.

[*Looking up and laughing loudly.*] Now he says he's hurt a dollar's worth!

[MORTON, WRIGHT, and PARKER all smile.]

LETCHFOOT.

[*To MORTON, as though to move off.*] Remember, I have your word of honour, Mr. Morton.

MORTON.

[*Cordially.*] I shall not fail you, Mr. Letchfoot.

LETCHFOOT.

Good morning.

MORTON.

[*Ushering LETCHFOOT and ORLOFF out.*] Permit me.
[*He holds open the grille.*] Good morning, Mr. Letchfoot.

[*LETCHFOOT, with one arm through ORLOFF'S, slowly mounts the steps and starts to make his way through the crowd. As he does so, and is half lost to view, the uproar breaks out again, much louder than before.*

LETCHFOOT.

[*Struggling in the crowd.*] Hands off!—You'll shoot, will you? Take that, you dog!

[*A man falls as though felled by LETCHFOOT'S fist. The uproar increases. Shots are*

fired. The crowd scatters, showing LETCHFOOT, no longer with ORLOFF, struggling furiously against POLLNITZ, JORGSTROFF, and GUERIN. At the same moment the sound of a carriage is heard, furiously galloping away. LETCHFOOT, hitting out manfully, manages to free himself from his assailants, and staggering down a couple of steps, panting and dishevelled, draws a police-whistle and blows it loudly; then, apparently fainting, he reels down the steps and falls against the open doorway.

ROGERS.

[*Running to him.*] Oh, my God, they've killed him!

PARKER.

[*With horror.*] Look at the blood!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Panting hoarsely.*] No, no!—I'm all right—telephone Police Headquarters—general alarm—Orloff—Orloff—ten thousand dollars reward, dead or alive!

[*He faints in ROGERS'S arms.*

MORTON.

They've done for him, Rogers!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Reviving.*] No they haven't! No, no! Here,
Rogers, help me to the telephone! [Business.

CURTAIN.

ACT III

SCENE: LETCHFOOT'S office. Time, 10.20 A.M., two weeks later. LETCHFOOT and MILFORD are discovered in close conversation, both sitting at the desk. LETCHFOOT has one arm in a sling and looks pale, ill, and anxious. MILFORD has a mass of memoranda on his knee.

LETCHFOOT.

[*With depression, indicating the memoranda.*] Then we just come back to where we started.

MILFORD.

[*Dismally.*] Yes, after two weeks' hard work.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Touching the papers.*] We've followed up every one of those clues, and what have they brought us to?

MILFORD.

[*With depression.*] The same stone wall.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Rising, and taking a few restless steps.*] I wish Grierson would come back! Any news of him, Milford?

MILFORD.

Not a word, sir.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Sitting down again.*] Eight days is an age, and he still has two more.

MILFORD.

[*Bitterly.*] What a time for a holiday!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Bitterly.*] And that when I really needed him. Oh, how I've needed him!

MILFORD.

Too bad!

LETCHFOOT.

I am disappointed in Grierson. It wasn't right. It wasn't loyal. [*Then with some emotion.*] It—it was very unkind, Milford!

MILFORD.

Not very considerate, certainly.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Again rising, and taking the papers from MILFORD'S knee, which he proceeds to tear up and throw angrily into the waste-paper basket. His voice as he speaks is almost despairing.*] Good God, what are we to do! [Strides about restlessly, MILFORD remaining gloomy and silent. Then LETCHFOOT comes up to him.] Milford, I am at my wits' end. I'm desperate! It's terrible to stand here helpless, while—while——

[*He collapses miserably into a chair, and buries his face in his hands.*]

MILFORD.

[*Sympathetically.*] They wouldn't dare to hurt Miss Ralston.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Looking up.*] Dare! What's a girl's life to such scoundrels!

MILFORD.

Don't they still need her to get at Ralston's vault?

LETCHFOOT.

I've blocked that for Orloff, and he knows it.

MILFORD.

[*After a pause.*] Never fear, Mr. Letchfoot, you'll get him.

LETCHFOOT.

Get him! Oh, I've passed all that. My only thought now is to save the girl I love. [*Wildly.*] To save her, to save her!

[*The door opens, and in comes MORTON, the president of the Fourteenth National Bank, well groomed, suave and cool.*

MORTON.

Is this Mr. Letchfoot's office? [*Then as he recognises LETCHFOOT, he advances towards him, cordial and smiling.*] Oh, my dear Mr. Letchfoot!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Rising cordially, but surprised.*] Good morning, Mr. Morton. [*They shake hands. MILFORD rises respectfully, and offers his own chair to MORTON.*] Won't you sit down?

MORTON.

[*Seating himself, and in a pleasant, calm, friendly manner.*] It's not often I pay calls during banking

hours, but I could not resist the temptation of dropping in on you—— [*He hesitates.*]

LETCHFOOT.

Why, I'm sure I'm delighted to see you. [*He pushes a box of cigars towards him.*] Try one of these.

[*Business of their both taking and lighting cigars.*]

MORTON.

The truth is that a banker, like most people, has his moments of being human, and I must confess to an intense curiosity in that affair of old Mr. Ralston's vault. [*Puffs.*] Would it be trespassing too far on your good-nature, Mr. Letchfoot, to ask how you came to change your mind [*puffs*] in regard to that interesting Russian gentleman, Mr.—Mr. Orloff, is that not his name? [*Puffs.*] I——

LETCHFOOT.

[*Puzzled.*] Changed my mind?

MORTON.

I mean in discovering you were mistaken [*puffs*] in the—well—somewhat serious allegations you made against him? [*As LETCHFOOT looks thunderstruck.*] Surely you have not forgotten the exciting occurrences that took place the other day in the Bank, when——

LETCHFOOT.

I beg your pardon, Mr. Morton, but I do not understand a word you are saying. *Mistaken?* What do you mean, Mr. Morton?

MORTON.

[*Slightly nettled.*] After the extraordinary events of yesterday afternoon, I might ask, what do *you* mean?

LETCHFOOT.

[*Eccited and puzzled.*] The extraordinary events of yesterday afternoon? *Yesterday?* [*With increasing perplexity.*] *Yesterday?*

MORTON.

[*A little crossly.*] Yes, when Mr. Orloff opened the Ralston vault.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Springing to his feet.*] Opened Ralston's vault? My God, Mr. Morton, I can't believe my ears! Is it possible you permitted Orloff to rifle the safe and escape?

MORTON.

Certainly, sir, considering it was done with your full understanding and concurrence.

LETCHFOOT.

[*In amazement.*] Mine ?

MORTON.

[*Getting out his pocket-book and excitedly searching amongst a number of papers.*] One moment, one moment——

LETCHFOOT.

[*In a tone of intensity.*] I know nothing of this. Please give me the facts exactly. [*To MILFORD.*] Milford, take a shorthand note of this. [*Business.* LETCHFOOT *then addresses* MORTON.] Orloff came to the Bank yesterday afternoon : at what time ?

MORTON.

[*Looking very much upset.*] Just before we closed ; about three o'clock.

LETCHFOOT.

Alone ?

MORTON.

No. He was accompanied by a lawyer, a locksmith, and Ralston's daughter.

LETCHFOOT.

Ralston's daughter !

MORTON.

Yes, Miss Chrystal Ralston. He brought with him a certified copy of Ralston's will; the necessary proofs of his death, properly attested; and an order of court from Judge Lawrence, legally empowering the opening of the safe.

LETCHFOOT.

But why on earth didn't you send for me?

MORTON.

I did.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Indignantly.*] I was here in this office all yesterday afternoon.

MORTON.

I considered your letter a sufficient authority.

LETCHFOOT.

Letter! *My* letter! I never wrote you any letter!

MORTON.

Oh, yes; here it is! [*Hands a letter to LETCHFOOT.*] Naturally I held back and delayed matters till I could

communicate with you. Then, when I received that——

LETCHFOOT.

[*Reading the letter aloud.*] ‘ My dear Mr. Morton, I have no objection to make to Mr. Orloff’s opening the late Mr. Ralston’s safe, and can only say that through a chain of most unfortunate errors, for which I blame myself more than I can well express to you, I was misled into making charges against this gentleman that I must now sincerely recall. Regretting the great annoyance I have already caused you in the matter, and with kind regards to Mr. Orloff, who has generously consented to overlook my conduct, believe me, with many apologies, yours faithfully, Arthur Letchfoot.’ [*He lays the letter on the desk.*] That letter’s a forgery!

MORTON.

[*In agitation.*] A forgery! God bless my soul! [*He takes the letter, and examines it wonderingly, MILFORD looking at it also over his shoulder.*] What staggers me is that I told Abner Bryce to see you personally, and bring your answer.

[*He touches the letter.*

LETCHFOOT.

[*Sharply and suspiciously.*] Who’s Abner Bryce?

MORTON.

Our bank messenger, who has been in our service for twenty-eight years. A man whom I trust constantly with thousands of dollars. Why, Mr. Letchfoot, I'd sooner suspect my own brother than Ab——

LETCHFOOT.

[*Interrupting him.*] Ha! and it was he who brought you this? [Indicates the letter.]

MORTON.

Yes.

LETCHFOOT.

Are you certain? He himself?

MORTON.

Yes.

LETCHFOOT.

Mr. Morton, this is a matter of supreme importance. Think well. [*Then with intensity.*] You positively received this letter from the hands of Abner Bryce?

MORTON.

[*Unshakenly.*] Yes. [*Then he suddenly hesitates, and is seen in deep reflection.*] No, by George, I don't believe I did! No, I did not! I sent Abner—of

course, I remember that perfectly. But your reply—this—was given to me—yes, I recollect now—by one of my clerks—Harold Bolton.

LETCHFOOT.

[*With an ejaculation implying 'I knew you never got that from Abner Bryce.'*] Ah!

MORTON.

Though it stands to reason Abner must have brought it.

LETCHFOOT.

[*In a bustle of excitement.*] That's what we have to get at. Milford, my hat; quick! Excuse my hurrying you, Mr. Morton, but we must get back to the Bank as fast as we can. [MORTON rises. *The audience are led to believe that he and LETCHFOOT are on the point of rushing out together.*] No, telephone! [*He points at the instrument.*] Every minute's precious! Get Abner Bryce on the wire!

[MORTON rushes to the telephone, followed by LETCHFOOT and GRIERSON, the latter holding LETCHFOOT'S hat.]

MORTON.

Dearborn, two-seven-oh-three. Hello, hello, hello! Is that the Fourteenth National Bank? Hello, hello!

Is that the Fourteenth National Bank? Oh, Mr. Treadwell! Yes, it is I, Mr. Morton. I want to speak to Abner Bryce instantly. Abner Bryce! Ab-ner B-R-Y-C-E! Yes—yes—yes! [*Then aside to LETCHFOOT.*] They're calling him. [*The bell rings sharply.*] Is that you, Abner? What? Treadwell, my God! what are you saying? What?

[*He listens intently, uttering exclamations of surprise and horror.*]

LETCHFOOT.

[*Excitedly.*] Is Abner there?

MORTON.

[*Still at the telephone.*] No! [*Then he speaks into the receiver.*] This awful news has completely unmanned me! Yes, yes—the Bank will see to it—my God! it is the least we can do.

[*He staggers from the telephone in a condition of frightful agitation, still holding the receiver in his shaking hand.*]

LETCHFOOT.

What has happened?

MORTON.

Abner Bryce never returned to the Bank, and this morning he was found on the Lake Drive with his throat cut from ear to ear!

MILFORD.

Murdered!

MORTON.

Yes, murdered!

LETCHFOOT.

[*He restrains MORTON from replacing the receiver on the hook.*] Find out who brought that forged letter.

MORTON.

[*At the telephone.*] Treadwell? Hello, hello! Yes. I want Harold Bolton on the wire. Hello, hello! Is that you, Bolton? Yes, yes! I just heard it from Mr. Treadwell. Terrible, terrible! Who brought the letter you handed me yesterday, when the foreign gentleman was there with the young lady? A man? Well, what kind of a man?

LETCHFOOT.

[*Snatching the telephone from MORTON.*] Here, let me! [*Listens.*] About twenty-five? Plainly dressed—looked like a lawyer's clerk? Light hair, blue eyes,

seemed very uneasy, and eager to get away? Said nothing except that? Just important message from Mr. Letchfoot? Yes, yes! Do you think you'd know him again? Don't think you would? Don't think you'd recognise his voice? Don't think— [*He hands up the receiver with a gesture of annoyance.*] The fool!

MORTON.

This is a terrible affair, Mr. Letchfoot! [*He holds out his hand.*] If you need me in any way, be sure and——

LETCHFOOT.

[*As they shake hands.*] One second, please! [*To MILFORD.*] Ring for Lanfield. [*Business. Then to MORTON.*] May I send one of my men with you?

MORTON.

Why, certainly!

LANFIELD.

[*Entering.*] You rang for me, Mr. Letchfoot?

LETCHFOOT.

Yes, Lanfield. Go with Mr. Morton here, and see one of his clerks named Harold Bolton. Get the best description you can from him of a man we are after.

LANFIELD.

Very good, sir.

LETCHFOOT.

Take Bolton to Police Headquarters and search the Rogues Gallery. While you are there see Inspector O'Brien, and get all the particulars of Abner Bryce's murder yesterday.

LANFIELD.

[*Making a note in his book.*] Abner Bryce, Bolton.
[*Then to MORTON.*] Well, sir, I am at your service.

MORTON.

Good morning, Mr. Letchfoot.

LETCHFOOT.

Good morning, Mr. Morton.

[*Exeunt LANFIELD and MORTON. LETCHFOOT comes down stage, and throwing himself in a chair examines the forged letter that has been left lying on his desk. MILFORD, with an air equally baffled and hopeless, sits down opposite him.*

What do you make of all this? [MILFORD *shakes his head.*] Beat us hands down, didn't they? [MILFORD *nods.*] I ought to have had a man at the Bank the whole time.

MILFORD.

You had one.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Surprised.*] That's news to me!

MILFORD.

Morton.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Gloomily and contemptuously.*] Oh, Morton! [*He examines the forged letter.*] I didn't want to insult him by saying it, but this oughtn't to have deceived a child. Anybody could see it's a disguised hand. [*Both look at the letter, LETCHFOOT using a magnifying-glass.*] Compare that T with this one. Look at the top line, and then there. Clumsy, isn't it?

MILFORD.

[*Pointing.*] It was our letter-head that did it!

LETCHFOOT.

Milford, have new ones printed at once, and destroy the old stock.

MILFORD.

I'll see to it, Mr. Letchfoot.

LETCRFOOT.

You might leave me, Milford. I must try to think things out.

MILFORD.

[*Rising.*] I wish you all success, sir.

LETCRFOOT.

It's not wishes we want, [*touches his forehead*] it's the brains to see.

[*Exit MILFORD.* LETCRFOOT *sinks back in his chair with every appearance of deep dejection. He again looks at the letter, and then tosses it to one side; puffs at his cigar, and then throws it away. Then leaning back, he gazes at the ceiling with frowning brows. At this moment a low knock is heard at the door. LETCRFOOT seems so lost in his brown study that he does not hear it. The knock is repeated.*

[*With no appearance of interest.*] Come in! [*Then after a moment's pause.*] Come in!

[*The door opens, and CHRYSAL is discovered standing in the doorway, with lifted veil and clothed as though for automobiling. She is excessively pale, and wears a strained,*

frightened, pleading expression. LETCH-
FOOT *springs to his feet.*

Chrystal !

CHRYSTAL.

[*Advancing towards him, and betraying a mysterious apprehension.*] Arthur !

LETCHFOOT.

[*Clasping her in his arms and speaking incoherently.*]
My darling, my darling ! I did not know whether
you were alive or dead ! My heart's been breaking !
[*She weeps on his shoulder.*] Oh God ! the agony I've
endured, the torments of suspense and doubt and
dread—and to think that you are safe—that I'm
holding you in my arms—that my dear one—— !

[*He is unmanned by his emotion, and presses
her to him.*]

CHRYSTAL.

[*Gently disengaging herself.*] No, no—please, Arthur !
Don't, don't !

[*Glances apprehensively towards the door.*]

LETCHFOOT.

[*Puzzled and half obeying.*] You haven't ceased to
love me ?

CHRYSTAL.

[*Wildly.*] I am here because I love you so well!
 [A pause.] But—but! I have so little time, Arthur.
 [*Falters.*] I want to warn you—to plead with you—to beg—— [Weeps.]

LETCHFOOT.

[*Mystified, and taking her hand and caressing it.*]
 There is nothing to tremble at.

CHRYSTAL.

[*Brokenly.*] I have to go back at once! I went on my knees for these few precious minutes with you. I——

LETCHFOOT.

[*In consternation.*] Go back! [*Incredulously.*] You don't mean to Orloff?

CHRYSTAL.

Yes, to Orloff!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Coolly, and drawing forward a chair.*] Sit down there! [*She obeys. LETCHFOOT draws a revolver, and with an eye on the door, cocks it, and lays it on the table.*] Now what is all this?

CHRYSTAL.

From now on you must leave Mr. Orloff alone.

LETCHFOOT.

Did he send you to say that?

CHRYSTAL.

Yes.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Coolly.*] You mean I am to call off my detectives, and make no further efforts to track him down?

CHRYSTAL.

Yes, Arthur.

LETCHFOOT.

Why?

CHRYSTAL.

[*Tremulously.*] Because—because—you love me!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Tenderly.*] How can that have anything to do with it, Chrystal?

CHRYSTAL.

[*Brokenly.*] It has everything!

LETCHFOOT.

And if I should refuse?

CHRYSTAL.

You won't refuse—not, not—not when you know——

LETCHFOOT.

[*Repeating in perplexity.*] When I know?

CHRYSTAL.

Arthur, if you will promise to do this, they will set me free——

LETCHFOOT.

[*Gladly.*] Then, of course, I'll promise. How could you ever doubt for an instant?

CHRYSTAL.

[*Continuing.*] In two years.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Thunderstruck.*] Two years! I won't hear of it! Free? Why, you are free now!

[*He glances about the room.*]

CHRYSTAL.

No, I'm a prisoner!

LETCHFOOT.

A prisoner!

CHRYSTAL.

If you will not give your promise—oh, Arthur!—they say, they say [*falters*] you will never see me again!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Rising in agitation.*] You mean that I am to see you walk out of this room, resign myself to two years of agony and suspense, and not lift a finger against these scoundrels?

CHRYSTAL.

Yes!

LETCHFOOT.

It's madness! I wouldn't dream of consenting! [*With a bitter laugh.*] I see myself trusting Orloff!

CHRYSTAL.

[*Lowering her voice, and speaking with intensity.*] Arthur, you do not know his power. You have against you an underground army, vast, secret, and terrible. Not a movement do you make that fails to escape his spies. Not a word do you utter that is not overheard. In the duel between you and him there can be but one end—your death!

LETCHFOOT.

[*With biting significance.*] Or his!

CHRYSTAL.

You must do what I ask.

LETCHFOOT.

You called yourself a prisoner. What compulsion are you under?

CHRYSTAL.

My oath.

LETCHFOOT.

To Orloff?

CHRYSTAL.

Yes.

LETCHFOOT.

Extorted from you by force, it is worth nothing.

CHRYSTAL.

[*Proudly.*] I gave it willingly [*falters*] to save—
Oh, Arthur, it was for your sake I gave it!

LETCHFOOT.

What diabolical trickery!—to play on a girl's fears, a girl's tenderness and trust—and think to cajole me

into a preposterous acquiescence! As for my life, I will risk it, as I have risked it a hundred times before! And as for you, oath or no oath, Orloff shall never get you back!

CHRYSTAL.

[*Rising in agitation.*] I am on my honour, Arthur. I promised! I swore it on the Bible!

LETCHFOOT.

You do love me?

CHRYSTAL.

[*Faintly.*] Yes!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Putting his arm about her.*] Then no man on earth shall part us!

[*At this moment the door softly opens, unperceived by either LETCHFOOT or CHRYSTAL, and ORLOFF is disclosed standing in the doorway. Behind him, somewhat in the shadow, is seen his chauffeur, in leather coat, goggles on his cap, etc. ORLOFF stands silently regarding the pair before him.*

CHRYSTAL.

[*Disengaging herself.*] I have to keep my word. [*Then appealingly and incoherently.*] Arthur, I beg you, I implore you—two years is not long—they will treat me well; you mustn't fear they won't! They will send me to another country, to Italy or Spain, and the two years will pass before——

LETCHFOOT.

[*Holding her in his arms.*] No, no; no, no!

CHRYSTAL.

I pledged my honour, and even for you I will not violate it.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Holding her as she tries to disengage herself.*] I am going to keep you.

CHRYSTAL.

[*Pantingly.*] Let me go!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Fiercely.*] You shall stay here! [*As they struggle they suddenly perceive ORLOFF standing in the doorway, looking at them.*] Orloff!

CHRYSTAL.

Orloff!

ORLOFF.

[*Entering coolly.*] Pardon my interruption, but I have called for this young lady.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Fiercely.*] You shall not have her!

ORLOFF.

[*To CHRYSTAL.*] You have not persuaded Mr. Letchfoot to consent to our arrangement?

CHRYSTAL.

No.

ORLOFF.

[*Suavely.*] Too bad! Too bad! In that case, I fear, nothing *I* may say will——

LETCHFOOT.

[*In an outburst, advancing threateningly on ORLOFF, who smiles, and does not turn a hair.*] Assassin! Murderer! [*The chauffeur steps into fuller view as these words are said, and his hand significantly goes into his breast, as though if necessary to draw a revolver or a knife in ORLOFF'S defence.*] Your scheme

has failed, and the oath you wrung from this young lady is worth nothing ; for if she attempts to keep it, I shall hold her here by force.

ORLOFF.

[*Apparently mystified.*] Oath ! Force ! I am quite at a loss to understand you, Mistaire Letchfoot. I am a respectable Russian merchant, sir, and Mees Ralston, by her father's will, is under my guardianship.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Staggered by his effrontery.*] Don't push my patience too far. [*He points at the door.*] Go !

ORLOFF.

[*Sarcastically.*] With pleasure ! [*Then to CHRYSTAL.*] Mees Chrystal, we had better——

LETCHFOOT.

You shall not take her.

ORLOFF.

[*In pretended amazement.*] Do you actually threaten to detain her against her will and mine ? Sir, you forget yourself. [*As LETCHFOOT hesitates.*] Another word, and you will compel me to call in the police. [*Then coolly to CHRYSTAL.*] Come, Chrystal.

[*Both move towards the door.*]

LETCHFOOT.

[*In agitation, running towards CHRYSTAL, and putting his arm through hers.*] For God's sake, Chrystal——!

CHRYSTAL.

Oh, Arthur, I can't help myself!

LETCHFOOT.

[*To ORLOFF.*] I defy you to——

ORLOFF.

[*To the chauffeur.*] Forsyth! [*The chauffeur enters the room. ORLOFF then addresses LETCHFOOT.*] Your extraordinary conduct leaves me no alternative. Release that young lady's arm, sir, or I shall send my man for the police.

LETCHFOOT.

There are two sides to that game, Orloff.

ORLOFF.

[*Airily.*] Oh, you will make a counter-charge?

LETCHFOOT.

Of murder!

ORLOFF.

[*Incredulously.*] Murder?

[*Laughs.*]

LETCHFOOT.

Yes, the murder of Daniel Ralston, and the murder of Abner Bryce.

ORLOFF.

Such wild statements would only cover you with ridicule. You have no proof, no witnesses—only a crazy suspicion that I could dispel like that—Poof!

CHRYSTAL.

[*To LETCHFOOT.*] You are helpless, Arthur. For the last time let me implore you to give way. Oh, Arthur, for my sake! [*Then wildly to ORLOFF.*] He will promise! I know he'll promise——

ORLOFF.

You have to, Letchfoot. You're beaten.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Doggedly.*] If I am, I don't know it.

ORLOFF.

[*To CHRYSTAL, motioning her to come with him.*]
My dear——

[*CHRYSTAL, weeping, accompanies ORLOFF to the door. LETCHFOOT stands dazed and helpless, watching them. As the pair are about to pass out, LETCHFOOT utters a cry of despair, and takes a step after them.*]

LETCHFOOT.

Orloff? Orloff?

ORLOFF.

[*Turning.*] Well, Mistaire Letchfoot?

LETCHFOOT.

[*Brokenly.*] I won't make this promise! I cannot make it! [*As ORLOFF seems to be about to turn again.*] No, no! I have something better to propose. I am a richer man than you think I am, Orloff: I will give you a hundred thousand dollars for Chrystal Ralston.

ORLOFF.

[*Evidently tempted and impressed.*] A hondred thousandt dollars?

LETCHFOOT.

Yes, in cash. [*He points at the table.*] On that table, within ten minutes.

ORLOFF.

[*Doubtfully.*] You have not so much.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Excitedly.*] Then you agree? Oh, I can raise it! In cash, Orloff, in cash!

ORLOFF.

[*After a pause, in which he seems in deep reflection, and then shaking his head.*] A vairy fine price, Mistaire Letchfoot, a vairy fine price ; only I see not my way to accept it. Good morning, Mistaire Letchfoot. [*Then to CHRYSTAL.*] Take my arm, dear Chrystal. [FORSYTH, *the chauffeur*, holds open the door for the pair to pass out. ORLOFF laughs.] Ha, ha ! a hondred thousandt dollars ! A hondred thousandt dollars ! [*As he does so, FORSYTH, instead of following, takes a step to one side of the door, and gives LETCHFOOT a singular and significant look. This stops LETCHFOOT, who stares at him in surprise and bewilderment. FORSYTH then impassively passes through the doorway after CHRYSTAL and ORLOFF.*

LETCHFOOT.

[*Slowly, and like a man unable to believe his eyes.*] My God, it was Grierson !—Grierson !

CURTAIN.

ACT IV

Time, noon, six months later. Scene represents the headquarters of the Anarchists, and the place from which ORLOFF directs his far-reaching and sinister operations. Windows at rear. Against the wall L., a shaky, narrow, practicable stairway. To the R. rear of stage is a deep alcove, lit by flaring gas-lights, where there stands a large printing-press, worked by hand. Type-cases are arranged against the alcove wall. Here two men and one woman are working with composing-sticks, setting up type from slips of manuscript. One of these two men, unknown to the audience, is LETCHFOOT in disguise. To the L. centre stands ORLOFF'S desk and office chair. The desk is very large and handsome, and stands on a fine Oriental carpet. It bears the usual aspect of a professional man's desk—calendar, books, note-paper, etc., and an upright contrivance, about a foot high, for the apparent purpose of affixing seals to documents.

Immediately in front of the desk is a large arm-chair, with gun-metal trimmings on arms and legs. At a common wooden table sits JORGSTROFF, with outspread cog-wheels, clock-springs, etc., engaged in making an infernal machine. Three other infernal machines, already completed, are ranged in a neat row before him. He has a green shade over his eyes; occasionally uses a magnifying-glass in his labours, and has the general appearance of a working watchmaker.

The press is being worked by POLLNITZ and a frowsy woman. A damp sheet is lifted off the formes, and a wild-looking girl inks the type with a roller. At R. front is a sort of miniature laboratory; shelves with bottles, retorts, and test-tubes; a leaden sink, with practicable water-taps; a tub on the floor, with rubber tubing, both to receive water from a tap and to carry off the overflow. On the floor also are huge stoneware bottles of sulphuric acid. The laboratory is presided over by GUERIN, a crazy-looking Anarchist with spectacles. He is busy at work, assisted in his operations by GRIERSON, made up as FORSYTH, who pours out acid, etc. The effect is that GUERIN is the chemist, and that GRIERSON is merely a clumsy helper.

The whole scene must suggest an extraordinary mixture of luxury and squalor.

The curtain rises on MADAME JANKOVITCH, seated on ORLOFF'S desk, smoking a cigarette. The press is being worked, and a proof taken from the forme.

POLLNITZ.

[Advancing towards her with the freshly printed sheet, and laughing.] Ha, ha, that'll sting 'em up! That'll lash 'em! Yoost read that, comrade!

MADAME JANKOVITCH.

[Taking the sheet.] Glad you like it, Pollnitz.

POLLNITZ.

[Sniggering over her shoulder.] It's fine—fine! You never wrote nodding to beat that! *[He points humorously at JORGSTROFF.]* Makes his bombs look like thirty cents!

JORGSTROFF.

[Grinning good-naturedly, and holding up the bomb he is working on.] Anybody who gets on top of that, needn't join no Aero Club!

MADAME JANKOVITCH.

[Alarmed at his recklessness.] My goodness, Alexis, be careful!

JORGSTROFF.

[*Laughing and caressing the bomb against his cheek.*]
My leetle baby, nobody loves him but his papa!

GUERIN.

[*Coming over to POLLNITZ and MADAME JANKOVITCH with a test-tube in his hand, and indicating ORLOFF'S empty chair.*] The Comrade-President has not arrived yet?

MADAME JANKOVITCH.

[*Swinging her legs, and continuing to read the proof, and correcting it with a pencil.*] What?

GUERIN.

Where's Comrade Orloff? [POLLNITZ *whispers to him.*] What? No? Ah!

POLLNITZ.

[*Mysteriously.*] At Atlanta, on his way south—like M'Kinley! [*Whispers.*] See the idea?

GUERIN.

[*Tremendously impressed.*] For that I would give ten years of my life!

POLLNITZ.

[*Grinning.*] A little dynamite, that's all, and one of Jorgstroff's tickers!

MADAME JANKOVITCH.

[*Laying down the paper.*] Isn't it time for lunch?

POLLNITZ.

[*Looking at his watch, and then calling out to the printers.*] Say, knock off!

[*The printers and compositors all come down stage except LETCHFOOT, who remains busy at work, the type clicking in his composing-stick.*]

MADAME JANKOVITCH.

[*Back to LETCHFOOT.*] Aren't you coming, Paul?

LETCHFOOT.

[*Making business at the type-case.*] Can't leave in the middle of my stick!

POLLNITZ.

[*As they begin to move off.*] Paul's one of dem over-time fellars, who never knows when to leave off.

MADAME JANKOVITCH.

He's too good for that work. Orloff ought to put him to something better.

POLLNITZ.

[*Mysteriously.*] He's going to! [*Whispers.*

[*At this moment GRIERSON, who pretends to be a clumsy, loutish fellow, lets fall a big crock of acid. It crashes to the floor, and breaks all to pieces. He stands trembling, looking the picture of distress and humiliation.*

GUERIN.

[*Angrily.*] You idiot, you fool, you ass, you ninny!

GRIERSON.

[*Sullenly.*] My name's Forsyth, Mister—I mean Comrade—Guerin.

GUERIN.

And the name of that is nitro-glycerine!

GRIERSON.

[*Apparently terrified of GUERIN, as the latter rushes towards him. He puts his hand behind him, as though in agitation, and crashes a lot more glass to the floor.*]
It kinder came off in my hand, sir!

GUERIN.

[*While the others laugh.*] Swob that up!

GRIERSON.

[*Humbly going down on his knees with a rag to mop up the fluid.*] Yes, sir! Certainly, sir! I'm so sorry, sir! It won't happen again, sir!

GUERIN.

If it does, it will take you through the roof. My God, Forsyth! don't you know one wink is enough to explode it?

GRIERSON.

[*Swobbing vigorously.*] This ain't a job for a man like me—I ought to be driving the president's car.

GUERIN.

What, after that smash-up of yours when you stuck him on the railway track! [*He puts out his toe, indicating more nitro-glycerine.*] Here's an ocean of it!

MADAME JANKOVITCH.

[*From off stage, calling.*] Professor, Professor!

[*Exit GUERIN, growling to himself. A pause. Then LETCHFOOT comes stealthily down stage to GRIERSON, who starts as he looks up at him.*

LETCHFOOT.

Grierson !

GRIERSON.

Mr. Letchfoot, sir !

LETCHFOOT.

Anything new ?

GRIERSON.

No, sir ! And you, sir ?

LETCHFOOT.

I have the proofs to hang Orloff ten times over !

GRIERSON.

Good !

LETCHFOOT.

There's only one thing more I need.

GRIERSON.

What's that ?

LETCHFOOT.

To be certain that Chrystal is really a prisoner in this house.

GRIERSON.

Our men are guarding all the streets. Give the word and they will close in.

LETCHFOOT.

I daren't risk that till I've found out where she is.

GRIERSON.

Do you know what I think?

LETCHFOOT.

No?

GRIERSON.

That they've already killed her!

LETCHFOOT.

[*In great agitation.*] Grierson, I believe she is here, and alive!

GRIERSON.

[*Excitedly.*] Then why not draw the net this minute?

LETCHFOOT.

I daren't!

GRIERSON.

[*In expostulation.*] But, sir, we may never have the chance again.

LETCHFOOT.

What if they blow up the house rather than surrender?

GRIERSON.

Orloff might, but none of the others.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Interrupting him.*] No; I must first find out exactly where Chrystal is. I'm on a hot scent now, Grierson. Don't fear, I won't be long. [*In a voice of triumph.*] And then, Grierson!

GRIERSON.

[*Delightedly.*] Let her go, Gallagher!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Takes a piece of wax from his pocket and regards it.*] Grierson, you slip out and ask Milford to find the nearest locksmith. I'll be needing one in a hurry.

GRIERSON.

[*Surprised, and about to go off.*] A locksmith?

LETCHFOOT.

[*Indicating ORLOFF'S desk.*] This is the first chance I've had at Orloff's desk.

GRIERSON.

[*Understanding.*] To take impressions of the locks?

LETCHFOOT.

Yes, with a bit of wax. [*He goes towards the desk.*]
I told you I was on a hot scent. Well, Grierson, it
ends here! [*He taps a drawer.*]

GRIERSON.

[*About to go off.*] Any other instructions to Milford?

LETCHFOOT.

[*Who is on his knees, making business with wax and
lock.*] Only to step lively when the time comes.

GRIERSON.

[*Going off.*] Trust Milford for that! [*Exit.*]

[*A pause. Steps are heard at the top of
the practicable stair, and ORLOFF slowly
descends. LETCHFOOT makes no sign of
rising, and it seems as though he will be
caught in the act. ORLOFF notices him,
and bristling with suspicion, advances
rapidly. He stops and stares down at
LETCHFOOT. Just before he does so, LETCH-
FOOT pockets the wax and begins to look
down on the floor.*]

ORLOFF.

[*Hoarsely.*] Paul!

LETCHEFOOT.

[*Looking up quite unconcernedly.*] Why, it's the Comrade President! You gave me such a start, sir!

ORLOFF.

[*Sternly.*] What are you doing?

LETCHEFOOT.

Looking for a quarter that slipped out of my pocket. Guess it must have rolled underneath the desk, sir.

ORLOFF.

[*Plainly undecided whether to believe the story or not.*] A quarter?

LETCHEFOOT.

[*Reaching under the desk with his arm.*] I feel it! I've got it! [*With more contortions, he at length draws out a quarter. ORLOFF eyes it keenly, and then his suspicions seem to vanish.*] A fellow hates to lose money! [*He pockets the coin and rises.*] Once when I was in California I dropped a five-dollar gold-piece in a candy-store, and would you believe it, it rolled——

ORLOFF.

[*Not at all interested in the tale, and cutting it short.*] Where have they all gone to?

LETCHFOOT.

It's lunch-time, Comrade President.

ORLOFF.

Oh, yes, of course. But I want them. Tell them to come back. [*He seats himself at the desk, and acts as though he is much perturbed—drumming on the desk with his fingers, etc.*] Right off, do you hear!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Going off respectfully.*] Yes, Comrade President.

[*A pause. The others all return except GRIERSON. All stare expectantly at ORLOFF, as though awaiting some important news.*]

MADAME JANKOVITCH.

What's the matter, Arpad?

ORLOFF.

[*Leaning forward impressively and lowering his voice.*] I have a person who must be done away with! [*Sensation.*] Now! And one of you must do it!

POLLNITZ.

Who is it?

ORLOFF.

The Ralston girl!

[*Sensation.*]

MADAME JANKOVITCH.

[*Breaking out.*] But why not send her, as you proposed, to——

ORLOFF.

No, no! Because to kill her is not alone sufficient. Letchfoot has to see her body!

JORGSTROFF.

Why, what for? It is foolishness to——

ORLOFF.

[*Raising his hand for silence.*] He's hounding us to the gallows! In brains and courage and resolution we've met our master. Till he sees her lying dead at his feet he'll never relax his fingers from our throat! [*A pause. Then he continues savagely.*] Come, come, some one has to do it!

[*Another pause, while all look uncomfortable and undecided.*]

JORGSTROFF.

[*Scratching his head.*] It ain't that I'm backward, but——

POLLNITZ.

[*Sullenly.*] I did up Bryce for you—it's somebody else's turn now.

GUERIN.

[*Helplessly.*] The sight of blood always makes me sick!

ORLOFF.

[*With a tap of his finger on the table.*] Now then, gentlemen! [*He searches the various faces.*]

LETCHFOOT.

I'll do it! [*A buzz of approval and relief.*]

ORLOFF.

[*Relieved.*] Paul's a fellow after my own heart.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Advancing to the desk.*] I am at your service, Comrade President.

[*Exit POLLNITZ. The others light cigarettes and smoke, making themselves comfortable here and there.*]

ORLOFF.

[*To LETCHFOOT, indicating the armchair.*] Sit down, Paul. [*He lowers his voice.*] Don't be afraid. It's very easy. The only thing is to do it right, and precisely as I say.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Deferentially.*] Quite so, Comrade President.

ORLOFF.

She will be drugged, and to-night at midnight will be placed in a cab. You will drive that cab to the Italian Cemetery—here's a little map I've made for you—[*hands it to LETCHFOOT*] it's the only cemetery not locked at night, nor patrolled. You will pull her out on one of the graves, and——

[*Hesitating, he makes a movement of cutting his throat.*]

LETCHFOOT.

[*Carefully examining his map.*] I understand.
[*Points.*] But what's this?

ORLOFF.

That's where you bring back the cab.

LETCHFOOT.

But in case they are asleep, what name——?

ORLOFF.

[*Laughing.*] Oh, they won't be asleep!

LETCHFOOT.

Who will do this drugging?

ORLOFF.

[*With a shade of suspicion.*] That's not your affair.

LETCHFOOT.

But she's in this house, I suppose?

ORLOFF.

[*Lowering his voice.*] Yes.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Innocently.*] I thought I knew the whole place inside out. Where is she kept?

ORLOFF.

[*Smiling.*] You don't need to know that. [*Then as LETCHFOOT looks depressed.*] But I don't mind telling you. A good man's worth trusting.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Gratefully.*] Thank you, Comrade President!

ORLOFF.

[*Very confidentially.*] The house is very cleverly arranged. Now imagine you are standing on the third floor to the left of the secret staircase. You know the secret staircase, don't you?

LETCHFOOT.

[*Breathlessly.*] Yes, yes—to the left of the secret staircase.

ORLOFF.

There are three small doors, aren't there?

LETCHFOOT.

Yes.

ORLOFF.

Take the middle one. Pass straight on through the room, and then, about four feet to the——

POLLNITZ.

[*Rushing in.*] Comrade President! Comrade President!

ORLOFF.

[*Rising in excitement.*] What is it?

[*All the others come up to listen.*]

POLLNITZ.

This house is watched!

ORLOFF.

Watched!

POLLNITZ.

By Letchfoot's men—and Letchfoot himself is amongst us in disguise! [*Sensation.*]

ORLOFF.

[*Gazing about in terrible agitation.*] Amongst us?

ALL.

Letchfoot amongst us!

POLLNITZ.

And I can tell you the name we call him by!
[LETCRFOOT *starts.*] George Forsyth!

ORLOFF.

Forsyth a spy?

ALL.

Forsyth! Forsyth!

POLLNITZ.

George Forsyth is Arthur Letchfoot! [*Sensation.*
POLLNITZ *continues in swift explanation, the words tripping on his tongue in his excitement.*] Comrade President, it was like dis. I want to tell you from the beginning. Yesterday afternoon, when I says to him, says I, Forsyth, what for you always——

ORLOFF.

[*Interrupting him.*] No time for that now! Does he know he's discovered?

POLLNITZ.

No. Sh-sh-sh! [*Looks warningly towards door.*]

ORLOFF.

[*Shouting to the others.*] Then back to your work, every one of you. Do you hear? Back, back!

[*All except POLLNITZ hurry back to former places.*]

POLLNITZ.

[*Who, in his stupidity, still wishes to tell his story.*] Yoost now I follow him. He goes into street. He looks queer at a man—a loafer man—and does like this—so, [*he makes a gesture with his hand*] and the man he says——

ORLOFF.

Back, you fool!

[*POLLNITZ sullenly returns to the printing-press where the printing is resumed. LETCHFOOT is seen at the type-case, surreptitiously feeling for his revolver, the butt of which is seen for a moment. LETCHFOOT glances watchfully about the room, as though in anticipation of a fight. At this moment, in absolute ignorance of what has occurred, GRIERSON returns, humming a tune. All watch him as he walks unconcernedly across the stage, and acts as though he is ready to go on helping GUERIN.*]

GRIERSON.

[*To GUERIN, indicating a crock of chemicals.*] Is this to go under the tap, comrade?

ORLOFF.

[*Calling over to him in a calm, clear voice.*] Forsyth?

GRIERSON.

[*Turning, and surprised.*] Did you call me, Comrade President?

ORLOFF.

Yes; come here, please. [GRIERSON advances. ORLOFF indicates the armchair for him to sit in.] Sit down; I'd like to have a little chat with you.

GRIERSON.

[*Sitting down, and assuming a look of smiling, anxious simplicity.*] My! I hope I haven't done nothing——

ORLOFF.

[*Keenly watching him, and one of his hands stealing over to the seal-contrivance on his desk.*] Oh dear no! [*He continues in a rambling sort of way, his eyes fixed on GRIERSON'S hands, waiting till one of them touches*

the metal arm of the chair.] I have been very pleased with you, George—very pleased indeed. In fact, I believe you are entitled—yes, certainly entitled—to a little promotion.

GRIERSON.

[Leaning forward eagerly.] Promotion, Comrade President!

[His hands fall on the metal arms of the chair.

As ORLOFF sees this he rises, utters a cry, and snaps down the handle of the sham seal contrivance, which is in reality an electric switch, communicating a current to the chair. GRIERSON rises convulsively, writhes in horrible agony, and then sinks back dead, the chair sparkling and buzzing till the switch is turned off. A general commotion follows. All advance to the body but LETCHFOOT, who is seen to stagger before his type-case, and clutch at it as though almost fainting in horror at the sight he has just witnessed. The revolver that he has been holding in his hand falls to the floor, though in the hubbub this action passes unnoticed by the Anarchists.

ORLOFF.

[*Gloatingly, over GRIERSON'S body.*] Ha, ha, Letchfoot, you never suspected my electric chair, ha, ha!
[*Then to the others.*] Pull him out and search him!

[*Business of laying GRIERSON'S body on the floor, while POLLNITZ goes through his pockets. POLLNITZ extracts a revolver, police-whistle, some small change, a pen-knife, stylographic pen, silver watch, etc.*]

POLLNITZ.

[*Contemptuously.*] What I'd call a mighty bum lay-out!

MADAME JANKOVITCH.

[*Who, half sobbing, has been attentively studying GRIERSON'S face.*] That's not Letchfoot! [*Sensation.*]

ORLOFF.

[*Thunderstruck.*] What? [*He runs and kneels beside the body, pulling off wig and false beard, and then looks up in consternation.*] By God, it's not Letchfoot!

JORGSTROFF.

[*Looking down.*] It's that fellar we saw in his office!

ORLOFF.

[*Rising to his feet and shouting.*] Peskaloitner?

PESKALOITNER.

Yes, Comrade President?

ORLOFF.

[*In terrible agitation.*] Give the alarm! Tell Marsh to put a guard at every door! Not a soul leaves this house till Letchfoot is caught and killed!

[PESKALOITNER *rushes off.* *By this time LETCHFOOT has pulled himself together, and though he still acts as though he is very faint, he manages to join the others without exciting remark.*

LETCHFOOT.

[*Looking down at GRIERSON.*] Horrible, horrible!

[ORLOFF and POLLNITZ *talk in pantomime.*
Exit POLLNITZ hurriedly.

GUERIN.

[*Who has overheard LETCHFOOT'S exclamation, and addressing him in a voice full of suspicion.*] What's that you say?

LETCHFOOT.

[*Explaining.*] To have made such a mistake.

GUERIN.

[*Relieved.*] Don't you worry ; Letchfoot's a dead man !

ORLOFF.

[*Indicating the body.*] Drag it away ! [*Business.*

JORGSTROFF.

Are we to burn it in the furnace ?

ORLOFF.

No, no. Not yet ! Over there ! Cover it up !

[*Business of dragging body up stage, and covering it with sacks.*

GUERIN.

[*In surprise.*] What's your reason for that, Comrade President ?

ORLOFF.

[*Significantly.*] Because there is another to follow !

GUERIN.

[*Indicating the electric chair.*] In that ?

ORLOFF.

Yes, at once !

GUERIN.

[*Lowering his voice.*] Who?

ORLOFF.

Ralston's daughter!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Aside.*] Chrystal!

ORLOFF.

Fool that I was, not to have done it a month ago!

[*At this moment POLLNITZ and CHRYSTAL enter together. The girl gazes in bewilderment and dismay at the wild faces about her, and shrinks in terror. LETCHFOOT stealthily moves round to the desk, and places himself near the electric switch. ORLOFF greets CHRYSTAL in a sugary tone, full of kindness and consideration.*

Ah, Mees Chrystal, I have such good news for you!

CHRYSTAL.

[*Advancing timidly, and taking his outstretched hand.*] Good news?

ORLOFF.

[*Holding her hand and stroking it paternally.*]
You are free!

CHRYSTAL.

[*With delight.*] Free!

ORLOFF.

Yes, I have decided to let you go. [*He indicates the electric chair.*] Sit down and I will explain. [CHRYSTAL does so, looking very happy. ORLOFF leans back in a negligent attitude against the desk, keenly watching her hands, which lie crossed in her lap. LETCHFOOT lays his own hand against the switch.] Ah, what a happy face! Yes, yes, you are free, and all I ask is your word to reveal nothing you have seen here. [*Smiling.*] I envy Letchfoot such a prize! I envy your girlish joy at seeing him! Ah! youth, youth, what would I not give to——! [*As she lays one hand on the arm of the chair, he turns slightly, and tries to bring down the switch. But it remains upright in LETCHFOOT'S grasp.*] Let that go!

LETCHFOOT.

I won't.

ORLOFF.

[*Beside himself.*] Traitor!

LETCHFOOT.

No; Letchfoot!

ORLOFF.

Letchfoot !

ALL.

Letchfoot ! Letchfoot !

[ORLOFF grapples with him. Both men struggle violently. CHRYSTAL screams, and rises from the chair. Anarchists advance on LETCHFOOT. As the latter struggles with ORLOFF he manages to turn down the switch, and with a supreme effort, and after a sensational fight, hurls his enemy into the electric chair. It buzzes and sparkles as before. General consternation as ORLOFF is seen writhing convulsively, and then falls back dead.]

MADAME JANKOVITCH.

[Screaming, and rushing towards ORLOFF.] He's dead ! He's dead !

JORGSTROFF.

[Holding her back just in time.] Don't touch him !
The current will kill you !

[He turns off the switch, while MADAME JANKOVITCH throws herself on the body, weeping bitterly.]

K

GUERIN.

[*Rushing at LETCHFOOT with a dagger, at the same moment that POLLNITZ fires his revolver at him.*]

Look out, Pollnitz!

[*LETCHFOOT seizes GUERIN, and making a human shield of him against POLLNITZ'S threatening pistol, moves swiftly over to JORGSTROFF'S table. Here, releasing GUERIN, and addressing POLLNITZ and other advancing Anarchists, he snatches up two of the dynamite bombs and swings them over his head.*]

LETCHFOOT.

Touch that trigger and I'll blow you to pieces!
[*Then as POLLNITZ and the others hesitate and cower.*]

One, two——

[*At this moment CHRYSTAL, who has run to the rear, smashes open the window.*]

CHRYSTAL.

[*Screaming.*] Help! Murder! Help! Help!

JORGSTROFF.

[*Knocking up POLLNITZ'S revolver, and speaking in a trembling voice.*] Easy with them bombs, Mr. Letchfoot!

POLLNITZ.

[*Furiously to JORGSTROFF.*] You dam coward! Let me go, will you!

[*He tries to fire at LETCHFOOT, but is prevented.*]

CHRYSTAL.

[*Still screaming at the window.*] Help! Help!

[*Shouts are heard in answer from the street.*]

LETCHFOOT.

Throw up your hands! [*All do so except MADAME JANKOVITCH, who is kneeling beside ORLOFF'S body, and GUERIN, who tries to sneak round and take LETCHFOOT off his guard. LETCHFOOT detects him.*] None of that, Guerin! Get back there! GUERIN obeys.] Line up, line up, you dogs! [*Business.*] Closer! Closer!

[*By this time a terrific commotion is taking place below. Doors are heard being burst open, shots are being fired; there rises a pandemonium of yells, curses, tramping feet, and cheers.*]

MILFORD.

[*Rushes in with drawn revolver, followed by LANFIELD and a crowd of detectives. Not recognising*

LETCHFOOT, *he covers him with his weapon.*] Hands up!

[CHRYSTAL *runs down stage and joins* LETCHFOOT.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Smiling.*] If you pull that trigger, Milford, you will lose your job!

MILFORD.

[*Recognising* LETCHFOOT'S *voice, and running towards him, while his men cover the Anarchists with their revolvers.*] My God, if it isn't Mr. Letchfoot!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Genially.*] And mighty glad to see you!

[*They shake hands warmly.*

MILFORD.

[*Gazing in astonishment at* CHRYSTAL.] And Miss Chrystal, too!

CHRYSTAL.

[*Holding out her hand to him.*] Yes, Mr. Milford, and oh, so grateful to you! If you hadn't been so quick——

MILFORD.

[*Embarrassed.*] It was all Mr. Letchfoot's orders.

LETCHFOOT, *he covers him with his weapon.*] Hands up!

[CHRYSTAL *runs down stage and joins* LETCHFOOT.

LETCHFOOT.

[*Smiling.*] If you pull that trigger, Milford, you will lose your job!

MILFORD.

[*Recognising* LETCHFOOT'S *voice, and running towards him, while his men cover the Anarchists with their revolvers.*] My God, if it isn't Mr. Letchfoot!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Genially.*] And mighty glad to see you!

[*They shake hands warmly.*

MILFORD.

[*Gazing in astonishment at* CHRYSTAL.] And Miss Chrystal, too!

CHRYSTAL.

[*Holding out her hand to him.*] Yes, Mr. Milford, and oh, so grateful to you! If you hadn't been so quick——

MILFORD.

[*Embarrassed.*] It was all Mr. Letchfoot's orders.

LANFIELD.

[*Smiling.*] You begin by asking the young lady, sir!

LETCHFOOT.

I've got as far as that; but I mean the rest of it—
licence—minister——?

LANFIELD.

City Hall, Room B, J. H. Riley, registrar of——

LETCHFOOT.

They can rush it, can't they?

LANFIELD.

Two minutes—shake hands—kiss the bride—look
silly—and out you go, married!

LETCHFOOT.

Then call me a hansom! [*To* CHRYSTAL.] We'll
stop at the City Hall, and then drive home.

CHRYSTAL.

[*Faintly protesting.*] Oh, Arthur! I don't think—
Oh, we can't——!

LETCHFOOT.

[*Putting his arm about her.*] You are coming home with me!

CHRYSTAL.

[*Giving way.*] But I haven't any clothes, nor——

LETCHFOOT.

Come along! He said it would only take two minutes. [*She looks up smiling into his face.*] Tomorrow I'll buy you the town!

CURTAIN.

PR5493

0725

1907



Nancy
Hanks
Lincoln
Public
Library