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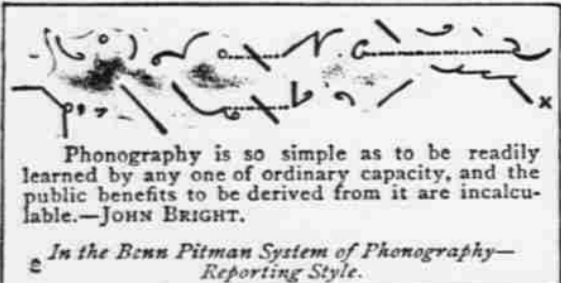
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**The SOWERS**

By  
**Henry Seton Merriman**

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(CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK)

brought a sudden gleam to the Frenchman's eyes.  
"If," said Steinmetz, looking from one to the other—"if you two have been deceiving Paul I will have no mercy, I warn you of that."  
Etta turned on him.  
"Can you not believe me?" she cried.  
"I have practiced no deception in common with M. de Chauville."  
"The Charity league is quite enough for you, my friend," put in the Frenchman hurriedly.  
"You know no more of the Charity league than you did before, than the

hand down over his face, covering his mouth for a second.  
"But he died. He was found on the steppe and buried at Tver."  
"So the story runs," said De Chauville, with easy sarcasm. "But who found him on the steppe? Who buried him at Tver?"  
"I did, my friend."  
The next second Steinmetz staggered back a step or two as Etta fell heavily into his arms. But he never took his eyes off De Chauville.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

**S**TEINMETZ laid Etta on a sofa. She was already recovering consciousness. He rang the bell twice, and all the while he kept his eye on De Chauville. A quick touch on Etta's wrist and breast showed that this man knew something of women and of those short lived fainting fits that belong to strong emotions. The maid soon came.  
"The princess requires your attention," said Steinmetz, still watching De Chauville, who was looking at Etta and neglecting his opportunities. Steinmetz went up to him and took him by the arm.  
"Come with me," he said.  
The Frenchman could have taken advantage of the presence of the servant to effect a retreat, but he did not dare to do so. It was essential that he should obtain a few words with Etta. To effect this he was ready even to face an interview with Steinmetz.  
He preceded Steinmetz out of the room, forgetting even to resent the large, warm grasp on his arm. They went through the long, dimly lit passage to the old part of the castle, where Steinmetz had his rooms.  
"And now," said Steinmetz, when they were alone with closed doors, "and now, De Chauville, let us understand each other."



"Just we three."

whole world knew before, except this lady's share in the disposal of the papers," said Steinmetz.  
"And this lady's share in the disposal of the papers will not be welcome news to the prince," answered De Chauville.

"Welcome or unwelcome, he shall be told of it tonight."  
Etta looked round sharply, her lips apart and trembling.  
"By whom?" asked De Chauville.

"By me," replied Steinmetz.  
There was a momentary pause. De Chauville and Etta exchanged a glance. Etta felt that she was lost. This Frenchman was not one to spare either man or woman from any motive of charity or chivalry.

"Even if that is so," he said, "the princess is not relieved from the embarrassment of her situation."  
"No!"

"No, my astute friend. There is a little matter connected with Sydney Bamborough which has come to my knowledge."  
Etta moved, but she said nothing. The sound of her breathing was startlingly loud.

"Ah, Sydney Bamborough," said Steinmetz slowly. "What about him?"  
"He is not dead; that is all."  
Karl Steinmetz passed his broad

band of voice; he had never seen quite that look on the heavy face.  
"I have known you now for twenty-five years," went on Karl Steinmetz, "and I cannot say that I know any good of you. But let that pass. It is not, I suppose, my business. The world is as the good God made it. I can do nothing toward bettering it. I have always known you to be a scoundrel, a fact to be deplored, and that is all. But so soon as your villainy affects my own life, then, my friend, a more active recognition of it is necessary."  
"Indeed!" sneered the Frenchman.  
"Your villainy has touched Paul's life, and at that point it touches mine," continued Karl Steinmetz, with slow anger. "You followed us to Petersburg; thence you dogged us to the government of Tver. You twisted that foolish woman, the Countess Lanovitch, round your finger and obtained from her an invitation to Thors. All this in order to be near one of us. Ach! I have been watching you. Is it only after twenty-five years that I at last convince you that I am not such a fool as you are pleased to consider me?"  
"You have not convinced me yet," put in De Chauville, with his easy laugh.

"No, but I shall do so before I have finished with you. Now, you have not come here for nothing. It is to be near one of us. It is not Miss Delafield. She knows you. Is it I?"  
He touched his broad chest with his two hands and stood defying his lifelong foe.  
"Is it me that you follow? If so, I am here. Let us have done with it now."  
De Chauville laughed. There was an uneasy look in his eyes. He did not quite understand Steinmetz. He made no answer, but he turned and looked at the window.  
"Is it Paul?" continued Steinmetz. "I think not. I think you are afraid of Paul. Remains the princess. Unless you can convince me to the contrary I must conclude that you are trying to get a helpless woman into your power."

Steinmetz was standing with his back to what appeared to be the only exit from the room. There were two other doors concealed in the oaken panels, but De Chauville did not know that.  
"I am waiting," said the German, "for you to explain your conduct."  
"Indeed!" replied De Chauville.  
"Then, my friend, you will have to continue waiting. I fail to recognize your right to make inquiry into my movements. Kindly let me pass."

Steinmetz was getting calmer. There was an uncanny lush about him.  
"Then I am to conclude," he said, "that you came to Russia in order to persecute a helpless woman. Her innocence or her guilt is for the moment beside the question. Neither is any business of yours. Both, on the contrary, are my affair. Innocent or guilty, the Princess Howard Alexis must from this moment be freed from your persecution."  
De Chauville shrugged his shoulders. He tapped on the floor impatiently with the toe of his neat riding boot.

"Well," he said. "Let me pass."  
"Your story of Sydney Bamborough," went on Steinmetz coldly, "was a good one wherewith to frighten a panic stricken woman. But you brought it to the wrong person when you brought it to me. Do you suppose that I would have allowed the marriage to take place unless I knew that Bamborough was dead?"  
"You may be telling the truth about that incident or you may not," said De Chauville. "But my knowledge of the betrayal of the Charity league is sufficient for my purpose."

"Yes," admitted Steinmetz grimly, "you have information there with possibilities of mischief in it. But I shall discount most of it by telling Prince Pavlo tonight all that I know, and I know more than you do. Also, I intend to seal your lips before you leave this room."  
De Chauville stared at him with a dropping lip. He gulped down something in his throat. His hand was stealing around under the fur jacket to a pocket at the back of his trousers. "Let me out!" he hissed.

There was a gleam of bright metal in the sunlight that poured in through the window. De Chauville raised his arm sharply, and at the same instant Steinmetz threw a book in his face. A loud report, and the room was full of smoke.  
Steinmetz placed one hand on the table and, despite his weight, vaulted it cleanly. This man had taken his degree at Heidelberg, and the Germans are the finest gymnasts in the world. Moreover, muscle, once made, remains till death. It was his only chance, for the Frenchman had dodged the novel, but it spoiled his aim. Steinmetz vaulted right on to him, and De Chauville staggered back.  
In a moment Steinmetz had him by the collar; his face was gray, his heavy eyes ablaze. If anything will rouse a man, it is being fired at point blank at a range of four yards with a revolver.

"Ach!" gasped the German. "You would shoot me, would you?"  
He wrenched the pistol from De Chauville's fingers and threw it into the corner of the room. Then he shook the man like a garment.  
"First," he cried, "you would kill Paul, and now you try to shoot me! Good God, what are you? You are no man. Do you know what I am going to do with you? I am going to thrash you like a dog!"  
He dragged him to the fireplace. Above the mantelpiece a stick rack was affixed to the wall, and here were sticks and riding whips. Steinmetz selected a heavy whip. His eyes were shot with blood; his mouth worked beneath his mustache.

"So," he said, "I am going to settle with you at last."  
De Chauville kicked and struggled, but he could not get free. He only succeeded in half choking himself.  
"You are going to swear," said Steinmetz, "never to approach the princess again, never to divulge what you know of her past life."  
The Frenchman was almost blue in the face. His eyes were wild with terror.  
And Karl Steinmetz thrashed him.

It did not last long. No word was spoken. The silence was only broken by their shuffling feet, by the startling report of each blow, by De Chauville's repeated gasps of pain.  
The fur jacket was torn in several places. The white shirt appeared here and there. In one place it was stained with red.  
At last Steinmetz threw him huddled into one corner of the room. The chattering face, the wild eyes that looked up at him, were terrible to see.  
"When you have promised to keep the secret you may go," said Steinmetz. "You must swear it."  
De Chauville's lips moved, but no sound came from them. Steinmetz poured some water into a tumbler and gave it to him.

"It had to come to this," he said, "sooner or later. Paul would have killed you. That is the only difference. Do you swear by God in heaven above you that you will keep the princess' secret?"  
"I swear it," answered De Chauville hoarsely.  
Steinmetz was holding on to the back of a high chair with both hands, breathing heavily. His face was still livid. That which had been white in his eyes was quite red.

De Chauville was crawling toward the revolver in the corner of the room, but he was almost fainting. It was a question whether he would last long enough to reach the firearm. There was a bright patch of red in either liver colored cheek. His lips were working convulsively. And Steinmetz saw him in time. He seized him by the collar of his coat and dragged him back. He placed his foot on the pistol and faced De Chauville with glaring eyes. De Chauville rose to his feet, and for a moment the two men looked into each other's souls. The Frenchman's face was twisted with pain. No word was said.

The Frenchman went slowly toward the door. He faltered and looked round for a chair. He sat heavily down, with a little exclamation of pain and exhaustion, and felt for his pocket handkerchief.  
At last the Frenchman stood slowly up and with characteristic thought of appearances fingered his torn coat.  
"Have you a cloak?" asked Steinmetz.  
"No."  
The German went to a cupboard in the wall and selected a long riding cloak, which he handed to the Frenchman without a word.  
Steinmetz followed De Chauville through the long passage they had

traversed a few minutes earlier and down the broad staircase. The servants were waiting at the door with the horse put at the Frenchman's disposal by Paul.  
De Chauville mounted slowly, heavily, with twitching lips. His face was set and cold now. The pain was getting bearable, the wounded vanity was bleeding inwardly. In his dull eyes there was a gleam of hatred and malice. It was the face of a man rejoicing inwardly over a deep and certain vengeance.  
"It is well!" he muttered between his clinched teeth as he rode away, while Steinmetz watched him from the doorstep. "It is well! Now I will not spare you."

**CHAPTER XXXIV.**  
**K**ARL STEINMETZ walked slowly upstairs to his own room. The evening sun, shining through the small, deeply embowered windows, fell on a face at no time joyous, now tired and worn. He sat down at his broad writing table and looked around the room with a little blink of the eyelids.



And Karl Steinmetz thrashed him.

"I am getting too old for this sort of thing," he said.  
His gaze lighted on the heavy riding whip thrown on the ground near the door where he had released Claude de Chauville after the terrible punishment meted out to that foe with heavy Teutonic hand. Steinmetz rose and, picking up the whip with the grunt of a stout man stooping, replaced it carefully in the rack over the mantelpiece. He stood looking out of the window for a few moments.  
"It will have to be done," he said resolutely, and rang the bell.  
"My compliments to the prince," he said to his servant, who appeared in-

(CONTINUED ON THIRD PAGE)

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