

*Frenzied Fiction
for the Dog Days*

(Done by the Dipperful)

by
Stephen Leacock

Illustrated
by
C.W. Jefferys

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Frenzied Fiction *for* *the Dog Days* (Done by the Dipperful)

By Stephen Leacock

Author of "Further Foolishness," "Moonbeams of the Larger Lunacy," etc.

Illustrated by C. W. Jeffrys

Wearing old clothes
at Go-Home Bay



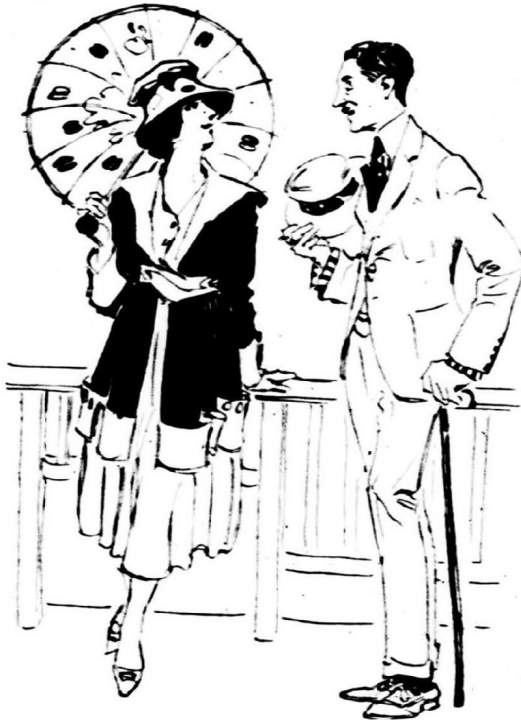
These are the Dog Days. It is too hot to read. It is too hot even to write. It is almost too hot for the magazine staff to draw their pay. But not quite.

Yet at the same time there is a persistent, if artificial, demand for reading matter. The reading public is now betaking itself to the country, to the lakes and to the woods. It is out camping in Algonquin Park, it is summering in the Thousand Islands or simmering at Scarboro, wearing old clothes at Gohome Bay or new ones at the Royal Muskoka. And wherever it goes it insists on taking its magazines with it. It cannot do without them. How else could it

light a fire at a picnic, paper the bedroom of a bungalow or stop the leaks in a canoe?

This demand then has got to be met. There is great need for summer fiction and yet nobody wants to be bothered with actually reading the magazines in this awful heat. I have, therefore, suggested to the *Editor* of MACLEAN'S that he should let me find a way out of this dilemma. With his consent I present herewith a *Magazine in Miniature* suitable for the Dog Days. It contains all the usual parts and items of the best magazines, or at least as much of them as any reasonable person would want to read in AWFUL AUGUST.

or new ones at the
Royal Muskoka



**in *Somebody's*, or *Anybody's* or any other
of the popular magazines.**

I don't mind admitting that most, if not all, of the stuff is stolen. In fact, I may as well indicate straight out in each case where it comes from.

Let us begin then with the first item, the Great Summer Serial. The scene of this has to be laid in Italy. So we will call it *The Vendetta of the Vendiglia*. This title gives the summer reader the chance to call out from his hammock, to his sister. "Say, Agnes, what the—— does vendetta mean?"

However, here it is, or the few lines of it that are enough for the hot weather. The full original text can be found, any month, in the *Petropolitan*, or in *Somebody's*, or *Anybody's* or any other of the popular magazines.

THE VENDETTA OF THE VENDIGLIA.

Chapter LLLXXXXVIII. Ring Two.

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters. Pasquale Pasquale, a condottiere, is in reality a noble scion of the house of Vermicelli, but is unaware of his own birth. He has fallen madly in love with Teresa della——

[There, that's all the synopsis of any story that anybody needs. *His* name is Pasquale, and *hers* is Teresa. Now we begin.]

"Zitto!" exclaimed Teresa between her closed teeth. "Zitto! Hush!"

She took Pasquale by the hand and led him down the dark passagio till their further progress was stopped by a barred door. "Harko!" she said. "Listen!"

The condottiere leaned forward in an attentive attitude, his head against the door, his ear intent, his eye bright, his body alert, his mind active, his whole

There! He's on the *qui viva*; let us leave him there! That's enough, more than enough. Nobody could want to read more of a Summer Serial than that. Nobody ever does. What they do is to take the serial out to a hammock for a long afternoon's read and fall asleep over the first page. Or take it in a canoe to be read aloud in some sheltered place under the deep foliage that lines a river's bank. Such at least is the proposal by an idle man in flannels to a distracting girl. But not a line of it do they read; or at best the little scrap above will amply suffice. It will set them talking about the characters of Pasquale and Teresa and from that they can drift off into talking

of their own characters hers and his; and the magazine has done its work and is needed no more.

But after all some people do read, more or less, seriously in the summer. On a wet day especially—let us say in a wooden house in Muskoka, or on the side verandah of a hotel, in a corner well out of the wind—there are always women reading. And they prefer best to read something about *men* and *women*, their one topic of interest. And they like it best if it has a dash of spite in it against the men. Even they don't need very much as they are constantly interrupted and only too willing to quit if some one says "Bridge."

Here is our sample of what they need, taken almost verbally from the pages of the *Ladies Own Journal*, and *Woman's Some Companion* and such.

HOW I NEARLY LOST MY HUSBAND.

(Continued, apparently, from somewhere
in the middle.)

Well, from that time on the miserable conviction began to dawn upon my mind that John was drinking. I don't mean to say that he was drunk, or that he was cruel to me. It was not that. It showed itself in small things. He would come up to breakfast looking fagged and heavy as if he had not slept well. I say "up" because by this time John, like any other well trained husband such as those, no doubt, of countless of my readers, slept in the cellar. But I would notice often as he brought up the coal to light the fire in my bedroom in the morning that his hand shook and the scuttle rattled. He endeavored to pass it off by saying that it was the cold in the cellar that made his hand shake; but I knew better. Especially as Fido had always slept in the cellar, at any rate in the milder weather, till I had given him a little rug at the foot of my bed.

But I began to notice in John, as I say, especially in the morning while he was moving about the house getting my breakfast before going out to his work, signs of sullenness that I could only connect with drinking. At times he broke out into bursts of temper. Once when he accidentally burnt his finger at the electric stove in making my toast, he let the toast fall, in a fit of demoniacal rage—I can only call it so—and said: "Gee! I've burnt myself!" "John!" I said. "How can you! How dare you! How wicked of you to give way like that!" I think he saw by my sobs how deeply I was bruised and for a day or so things were better.

Then the old troubles began again. Often in the evenings instead of staying quietly in his own den he would wander into the house in a queer,

restless way. I should say that I had fitted John up a den, out in the coal shed, so that he could have a place where he could smoke in the evenings. Once we heard him—by we, I mean my mother and I and two lady friends who were with us that evening—apparently moving about in the pantry. I should explain that we were in the upstairs sitting room playing cards.

“John!” I called down. “Is that you?”

“Yes, Emily,” he answered—quietly enough, I admit.

“What are you doing there?” I asked.

“Looking for something to eat,” he answered.

“John,” I said, “you are forgetting what is due to *me* as your wife. You were fed at six. Go back to your den.”

We heard him groan, but he went.

These little signs kept multiplying. What could be the cause?

Sometimes I felt as if John’s love for me was dwindling. I asked myself, what is the matter? Is it that I am doing too much for him? Do I make myself too cheap? Perhaps I am letting my heart run away with my head!

Every reader likes an article
with a "punch" in it.



I thought it all over, wearily enough, and went over to myself all the things that I had done, vainly as it seemed now, to hold John's love. I had kept him in at nights. I had stopped his playing cards. I had cut his smoking down to four cigarettes a week.

What more could there be? What else could I cut off? And if the only result was to be that John has started drinking——

nough! The reader has fallen asleep, but would admit before doing so that one page of this sort of thing is as good as fifty. Better.

That is quite as much pure fiction as the reader ever attempts to read. For the other stories nothing is needed except the title and one or two opening sentences. The reader looks at them, shudders, and passes on.

Thus, the inevitable French-Canadian story. Let us call it.

L'ANGE GARDIEN DU PETITE
MARIE.

[Quite so, it ought to be “de la.” But it isn’t.]

It begins like this:

On the threshold of the *fermerie*, Mère Floquet—for every one in Le Petit Anse called her *mère* Floquet—kneeled idly scrubbing the steps like the *bonne ménagère* that she was. On the opposite side of the long *rue* that ran through the *village*, the *horloge* of the *presbytère* had just struck three o’clock.

“Trois heures!,” murmured Mère Floquet to herself, as she counted the chiming strokes.

[Well done. Mère Floquet. Lucky it wasn’t eleven.]



But, as I say, no one needs more than that on a summer afternoon. Next!

Let me see. After that we have to supply our readers with something a little more solid. Something with *facts* sticking out in it like plums in a cake.

Facts and what has come to be called “punch.” Every reader likes an article with a “punch” in it. Tell a thing to a modern reader in a quiet gentlemanly fashion and he is bored to death. What he likes is to have it “punched” into him. So we have to insert an article, at least one, dealing with some kind of facts, big ones, noisy ones—some subject such as, shall we say, the grain crop of Canada. Only it mustn’t be called that. It has to be labelled

JOHNNY CANUCK’S BREAD BASKET.

The article should, properly speaking, be written by Miss Ag—— but, no, let us not mention names. We’ll have to write it ourselves. And in the summer time a very little of it will do. It has to run like this:

A million cars a month! Think of it. With thirty billion bushels of grain in them! Set them end to end and they reach from Toronto to Talahassee! Multiply them by a million and they will reach over the same distance a million times! Imagine it? You can’t! Ha! Then imagine, if you dare, the whole of this boundless crop loaded in a single oil steamer, on a single afternoon!

[Ha! That beat you! Then quit reading.]

There is practically nothing needed now to complete the miniature magazine, except a few loose columns of “Hearth and Home” stuff, useful hints, that would be of inestimable benefit if one could remember them overnight. We will head up this column

HOME HINTS FOR THE SUMMER BUNGALOW

and will put in just one sample of what is needed.

HOW TO LIGHT A FIRE IN FIVE MINUTES.

Take an old newspaper. Select one that is thoroughly dry, such as—but it would be unfair to mention. Crumple the sheets well and sprinkle freely with kerosene. Lay the paper in the fireplace, or stove, with the kerosene spots turned towards the sun, or moon. Get a basketful of dry pine shavings—they may be had at any carpenter’s—and heap them up on the paper. Wet the shavings with kerosene. Then get an armful of old dry pine shingles and, with a knife, split each one into four. Lay the shingles carefully on the

shavings in layers, across and across. Sprinkle freely with gunpowder and lay two large sticks of dynamite across the top.

"Looking for something to eat"



Then touch a match to the kerosened paper at the bottom.

That fire—so you would at least think—will light.

But if you think so it only shows that you have never been out camping, or summering, among the northern lakes of this, our beautiful country, after three days' rain. That fire will *not* light. Try it. The match will flare up feebly, the kerosene will flicker into a little flame and go out, the gunpowder will give a feeble sizzle and send out a little wet smoke, then a large drop of

rain will fall through the roof of your tent or bungalow and the whole thing will go out with a biff.

Except perhaps the dynamite. That might explode all right. But try it, try it. The only way is to try it.

Even in a summer magazine, it is just as well to end up with a few answers to correspondents. These are easily provided for. The Editor merely looks up something in an encyclopedia and then writes a letter to himself to find out about it. We might arrange it thus:

QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

To the Editor.—I am most anxious to find out the relation of the earth's diameter to its circumference. Can you, or any of your readers, assist me in it?

Yours, etc.,
CAREWORN MOTHER.

Answer.—The earth's circumference is estimated to be three decimal one four one five nine of its diameter, a fixed relation indicated by the Greek letter *pi*. If you like we will tell you what *pi* is. Shall we?

Yours, etc.,
EDITOR.

On the other hand real questions sometimes come in to be answered, which prove embarrassing to the uninitiated. To a trained editor they give no trouble. Here is one that happened to be sent in while this very article was being prepared.

Editor, Queries and Answers,

Dear Sir.—Can you, will you, tell me what is the Sanjak of Novi Bazar?

Yours,
BRINK OF SUICIDE.

Answer.—The Sanjak of Novi Bazar is bounded on the north by its northern frontier, cold and cheerless, and covered during the winter with deep snow. The east of the Sanjak occupies a more

easterly position. Here the sun rises—at first slowly, but gathering speed as it goes. After having traversed the entire width of the whole Sanjak, the magnificent orb, slowly and regretfully sinks into the west. On the south, where the soil is more fertile and where the land begins to be worth occupying, the Sanjak is, or will be, bounded by the British Empire.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Illustrations have been relocated due to using a non-page layout.

A cover was created for this ebook which is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *Frenzied Fiction for the Dog Days* by Stephen Leacock]