

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
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Bronner Campe Horváth Barlach Heine Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Tersteegen Gilm Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Lafontaine Gryphius
Chamberlain Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Claudius Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gibbon Tschchow
Lafontaine Schilling Kralik Iffland Sokrates
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil
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Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
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**The Moving Picture Girls
Snowbound Or, The Proof on the
Film**

Laura Lee Hope

Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

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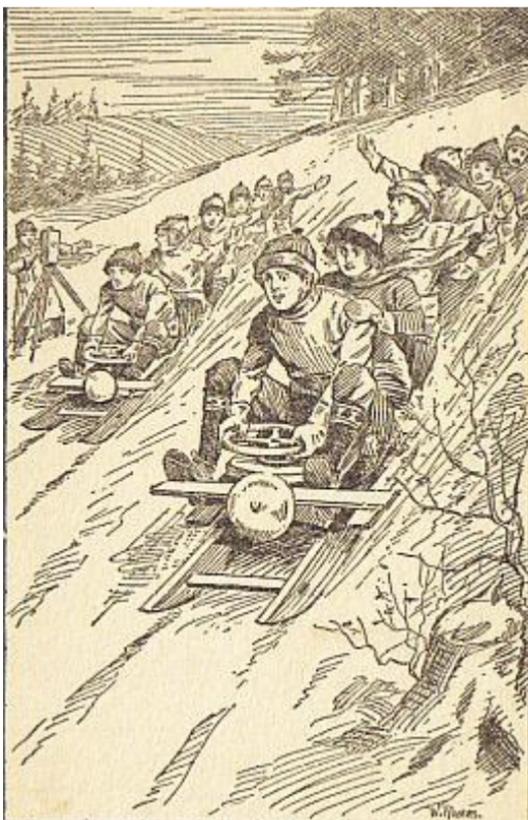
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THE MOVING PICTURE RACE WAS ON.
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THE MOVING PICTURE GIRLS

SNOWBOUND

CHAPTER I

TROUBLE

"Daddy is late; isn't he, Ruth?" asked Alice DeVere of her sister, as she looked up from her sewing.

"A little," answered the girl addressed, a tall, fair maid, with deep blue eyes, in the depths of which hidden meaning seemed to lie, awaiting discovery by someone.

"A little!" exclaimed Alice, who was rather plump, and whose dark brown hair and eyes were in pleasing contrast to her sister's fairness. "Why, he's more than an hour late, and he's seldom that! He promised to be back from the moving picture studio at four, and now it's after five."

"I know, dear, but you remember he said he had many things to talk over with Mr. Pertell, and perhaps it has taken him longer than he anticipated.[2]

"Besides you know there are some new plans to be considered," went on Ruth. "Mr. Pertell wants to get some different kinds of moving pictures—snow scenes, I believe—and perhaps he has kept daddy to talk about them. But why are you so impatient? Are you afraid something has happened to him?"

"Gracious, no! What put that idea into your head?"

"Well, I didn't know whether you had noticed it or not, but poor daddy hasn't been quite himself since we came back from Oak Farm. I am afraid something is bothering him—or worrying him."

"Perhaps it is his voice, though it has seemed better of late."

"I think not," said Ruth, slowly, as she bent her head in a listening attitude, for a step was coming along the hallway in the Fenmore

Apartment, where the DeVere girls and their father had their rather limited quarters.

"That isn't he," said Ruth, with a little sigh of disappointment. "I thought at first it was. No, I don't mean that it was his voice, Alice. That really seems better since he so suddenly became hoarse, and had to take up moving picture work instead of the legitimate drama he loves so much. It is some other trouble, Alice." [3]

"I hadn't noticed it, I confess. But I suppose you'll say that I'm so flighty I never notice anything."

"I never called you flighty, dear. You are of a lively disposition, that's all."

"And you are a wee bit too much the other way, sister mine!" And then, to take any sting out of the words, Alice rose from her chair with a bound, crossed the room in a rush, and flung her arms about her sister, embracing her heartily and kissing her.

"Oh, Alice!" protested the other. "You are crushing me!"

"I'm a regular bear, I suppose. Hark, is that daddy?"

They both listened, but the footsteps died away as before.

"Why are you so anxious?"

"I want some money, sister mine, and daddy promised to bring my moving picture salary up with him. I wanted to do a little shopping before the stores close. But I'm afraid it's too late now," the girl added, ruefully. "Daddy said he'd be here in plenty of time, and he never disappointed me before."

"Oh, if that's all you're worrying about, I'll lend you some money."

"Will you, really? Then I'll get ready and go. [4] There's that little French shop just around the corner. They keep open after the others. Madame Morey is so thrifty, and there was the sweetest shirt waist in the window the other day. I hope it isn't gone! I'll get ready at once. You be getting out the money, Ruth, dear. Is there anything I can get for you? It's awfully kind of you. Shall I bring back anything for supper?"

"Gracious, what a rattlebox you're getting to be, Alice," spoke Ruth, soberly, as she laid aside her sewing and went to the bureau for her pocketbook.

"That's half of life!" laughed the younger girl. "Quick, Ruth, I want to get out and get back, and be here when daddy comes. I want to hear all about the new plans for taking moving picture plays. Is that the money? Thanks! I'm off!" and the girl fairly rushed down the hall of the apartment. Ruth heard her call a greeting to Mrs. Dalwood, who lived across the corridor—a cheery greeting, in her fresh, joyous voice.

"Dear little sister!" murmured Ruth, as she sat with folded hands, looking off into space and meditating. "She enjoys life!"

And certainly Alice DeVere did. Not that Ruth did not also; but it was in a different way. Alice was of a more lively disposition, and her father said she reminded him every day more and more of her dead mother. Ruth had an element of romanticism in her character, which perhaps accounted for her dreaminess at times. In the work of acting and posing for moving pictures, which was what the two girls, and their father, a veteran actor, were engaged in, Ruth always played the romantic parts, while nothing so rejoiced Alice as to have a hoydenish part to enact.

Alice hastened along the streets, now covered with a film of newly fallen snow. It was sifting down from a leaden sky, and the clouds had added to the darkness which was already coming that November evening.

"Oh, it's good to be alive, such weather as this!" Alice exulted as she hastened along, the crisp air and the exercise bringing to her cheeks a deeper bloom. Her eyes shone, and there was so much of life and youth and vitality in her that, as she hastened along through the falling snow, which dusted itself on her furs, more than one passerby turned to look at her in admiration. She was a "moving picture" in herself.

She lingered long in the quaint little French shop, there were so many bargains in the way of lingerie. Alice looked at many longingly, and turned some over more longingly, but she thought of her

purse, and knew it would not stand the strain to which she contemplated putting it.[6]

"I'll just have to wait about the others, Madame," she said, with a sigh. "I've really bought more now than I intended."

"I hope zat Mademoiselle will come often!" laughed the French woman.

Back through the streets, now covered with snow, hastened Alice, tripping lightly, and now and then, when she thought no one was watching her, she took a little run and slide, as in the days of her childhood. Not that she was much more than a child still, being only a little over fifteen. Ruth was two years her senior, but Ruth considered herself quite "grown up."

"I wonder if daddy has come back yet?" Alice mused, as she hastened on to the apartment. "That looks like Russ Dalwood ahead of me," she went on, referring to the son of the neighbor across the hall. Russ "filmed," or made the moving pictures for the company by whom Mr. DeVere and his daughters were engaged. "Yes, it is Russ!" the girl exclaimed. "He has probably come right from the studio, and he'll know about daddy. Russ! Russ!" she called, as she came nearer to the young man.

He turned, and a welcoming smile lighted his face.

"Oh, hello, Alice!" he greeted, genially. "Where's Ruth?"[7]

"Just for that I shan't tell you! Don't you want to walk with *me*?" she asked, archly. "Why must you always ask for Ruth when I meet you alone?"

"I didn't! I mean—I—er— —"

"Oh, don't try to make it any worse!" she laughed at his discomfiture. "Let it go at that! Did you just come from the studio?"

"Yes, and we had a hard day of it. I forget how many thousand feet of film I reeled off."

"Was my father there?"

"Yes, he was with Mr. Pertell when I came out."

"I wonder what makes him so late?"

"Oh, there's a rush of work on. But I think he'll be along soon, for I heard Mr. Pertell say he wouldn't keep him five minutes."

"That's good. Oh, dear! Isn't it slippery!" she cried, as she barely saved herself from falling.

"Take my arm," invited Russ.

"Thanks, I will. I came out in a hurry to do a little shopping. Ruth is at home. There, I told you after all. I'm of a forgiving spirit, you see."

"I see," he laughed.

They stepped along lightly together, laughing and talking, for Russ was almost like a brother[8] to the DeVere girls, though the two families had only known each other since both had come to the Fenmore Apartment, about a year before.

"Did they film any big plays to-day?" asked Alice. "I know Mr. Pertell said he wouldn't need Ruth and myself, so of course they didn't do anything really good. Not at all conceited; am I?" she asked, with a rippling laugh.

"Well, you're right this time—there wasn't much of importance doing," Russ replied. "Miss Pennington and Miss Dixon had some pretty good parts, but the stuff was mostly comic to-day."

"That suited Mr. Switzer, then. I think he is the nicest German comedian I ever knew, and I met quite a number when father was appearing in real plays."

"Yes, Switzer is a good sort. But you should have seen Mr. Sneed to-day!"

"Found fault with everything; eh?"

"I should say so, and then some, as the boys say. He said something was sure to happen before the day was over, and it did—a stone wall fell on him."

"Really?"

"Really, but not real stone. It was one of Pop Snooks's scenic creations. One of the pieces of wood hit Mr. Sneed on the head, so something[9] happened. And what a fuss he made! He's the real grouch

of the company, all right. Well, here we are!" and the young man guided his companion into the hallway of the Fenmore.

"See you again!" called Alice, as she went into her door and Russ into his.

"Is that you, Alice?" called Ruth, from an inner room.

"Yes, dear. Has daddy come home?"

"Not yet. I wonder if we'd better telephone?"

"No, I just met Russ, and he said daddy would be right along. He's planning something with Mr. Pertell."

The table was nearly prepared when a step was heard in the hall.

"There he is now!" cried Alice, as she flew to open the door before her father could get out his key. But as he entered, and Alice reached up to kiss him, she cried out in amazement at the look on his face.

"Why, Daddy! Has anything happened?" she asked.

"Yes," he said in his hoarse voice—a hoarseness caused by a throat affection. "Yes, something has happened, or is going to. I'm in serious trouble!"[10]

CHAPTER II

AN UNPLEASANT VISITOR

Ruth overheard the question asked by Alice, and her father's answer. She came in swiftly, and put her arms about him, as her sister had done.

"Oh, Daddy dear, what is it?" she asked, anxiously.

"I—I'll tell you—presently," he replied, chokingly. "I am a little out of breath. I am getting too—too stout. And my throat has bothered me a good deal of late. Would you mind getting me that throat spray and medicine Dr. Rathby left? That always helps me."

"I'll get it," offered Alice, quickly, as her father sank into a chair, and while she searched in the medicine closet for it, there was a dull ache in her heart. More trouble! And there had been so much of it of late. The sun had seemed to break through the clouds, and now it had gone behind again.[11]

And while the girls are thus preparing to minister to their father, I will tell my new readers something of the previous books of this series, and a little about the main characters.

In the initial volume, entitled "The Moving Picture Girls; Or, First Appearances in Photo Dramas," I related how Mr. Hosmer De Vere, a talented actor, suddenly lost his voice, by the return of an old throat affection. He had just been "cast" for an important part in a new play, but had to give it up, as he could not speak distinctly enough to be heard across the footlights.

The De Vere family fortunes were at low ebb, and money was much needed. By accident Russ Dalwood, a moving picture operator, suggested to one of the girls that their father might act for a moving picture film company, as he would not have to use his voice in such employment.

How Mr. De Vere took the engagement, and how Ruth and Alice followed him, as well as their part in helping Russ to save a valuable camera patent—all this you will find set down in the first book.

In the second volume, entitled "The Moving Picture Girls at Oak Farm; Or, Queer Happenings While Taking Rural Plays," the scene was shifted to the country. There you may read of[12] many strange occurrences, as well as funny ones—how Alice fell into the water—but there! I must save my space in this book for the happenings of it. I might add that, incidentally, the girls helped to solve a strange mystery concerning Oak Farm, and solved it in a way that made glad the hearts of Mr. and Mrs. Felix Apgar, the parents of Sandy, and of the heart of Sandy himself.

Mr. Frank Pertell was the manager of the Comet Film Company, with whom Mr. DeVere and his daughters had an engagement, and the entire company, including the DeVeres, spent a whole summer at Oak Farm, in New Jersey, making rural plays.

The company had just returned to New York City, to finish some dramas there, and Mr. Pertell was working on new plans, which were not, as yet, fully developed.

The Comet Film Company included a number of people, and you will meet some of them from time to time as this story advances. You have already heard of a few members. In addition there was Wellington Bunn, a former Shakespearean actor, who could never seem to get away from an ambition to do Hamlet. Pepper Sneed was the "grouch" of the company, always finding fault, or worrying lest something happen. Paul Ardite[13] was the "leading juvenile," the father of the moving picture girls being the leading man. The girls themselves, though comparatively new to the business, had made wonderful strides, for they had the advantage of private "coaching" at home from Mr. DeVere.

Miss Pearl Pennington and Miss Laura Dixon were former vaudeville actresses, who had gone into the "movies," and between them and the DeVeres there was not the best of feeling; caused by the jealousy of the former.

Carl Switzer, a German with a marked accent, generally did "comics." Then there was Mrs. Maguire, who did "old woman" parts. She had two grandchildren, Tommy and Nellie, who frequently played minor rôles.

"Do you feel any better, Daddy?" asked Ruth, as she took from her father's hand the atomizer he had been using on his throat.

"Yes, the pain is much less. Dr. Rathby's medicine is a wonderful help."

"Do you feel like—talking?" inquired Alice gently, for she saw that the worried look had not left her father's face.

"Yes," he answered, with a smile, "but I do not want to burden you girls with all of my troubles."

"Why shouldn't you?" asked Ruth, quickly.[14] "Who would you share your troubles with, if not with us? We must help each other!"

"Yes, I suppose so," returned Mr. DeVere, in a low voice. "And yet, after all, I suppose this is not such a terrible trouble. It will not kill any of us. But it will make a hard pull for me if I cannot prove my contention."

"What is that?" asked Alice. "Is there some trouble with the film company? You haven't lost your engagement; have you, Daddy?"

"Oh, no, it isn't that," he answered. "I'll tell you. Just a little more of that spray, please, Alice. I will then be better able to talk."

In a few moments he resumed:

"Did you ever hear me speak of a Dan Merley?"

"You mean that man who came to see you when we lived in the other apartment—the nicer one?" asked Ruth, for the Fenmore was not one of the high-class residences of New York. The DeVeres had not been able to afford a better home in the time of their poverty. And when better days came they had still remained, as they liked their neighbors, the Dalwoods. Then, too, they had been away all summer at Oak Farm.

"Yes, that was the man," replied Mr. DeVere. "Well, in my hard luck days I borrowed five hundred dollars from him to meet some pressing[15] needs. I gave him my note for it. By hard work, later, I was able to scrape the five hundred dollars together, and I paid him back."

"Unfortunately Dan Merley was a bit under the influence of drink when I gave him the cash, and he could not find my promissory note to return to me.

"He promised to send it around to me the next day, and, very foolishly, as I see it now, I let him keep the money, not even getting a receipt for it. I am not a business man—never was one. I trusted Dan Merley, and I should not have done so."

"Why?" asked Ruth.

"Because he came to me to-day, for the first time in several months, and demanded his five hundred dollars. I told him I had paid it, and tried to recall to him the circumstances. But, as I said, he was slightly intoxicated when I gave him the bills, and his mind was not clear. He declares positively that I never paid him, and he says he will make trouble for me if I do not hand him over the money in a short time."

"But you did give it to him, Daddy!" exclaimed Alice.

"Of course I did; but I have no proof."

"Did you pay him by check?" asked Ruth,[16] who was quite a business woman, and keeper of the house.

"Unfortunately I was not prosperous enough in those days to have a bank account," answered Mr. DeVere. "A check would be a receipt; but I haven't that. In fact, I haven't a particle of evidence to show that I paid the money. And Dan Merley has my note. He could sue me on it, and any court would give him a judgment against me, so he could collect."

"But that would be paying him twice!" exclaimed Alice.

"I know it, and that is the injustice of it. It would be out of the question for me to raise five hundred dollars now. My throat treatment has been expensive, and though we are making good money at the moving picture business, I have not enough to pay this debt twice."

"He is a wicked man!" burst out Alice.

"My dear!" Ruth gently reproved.

"I don't care! He is, to make daddy pay twice!"

"Yes, it is hard lines," sighed the veteran actor. "I have begged and pleaded with Merley, imploring him to try and remember that I paid him, but he is positive that I did not do so."

"Do you suppose he really thinks so—that he[17] is honest in his belief that you never paid him?" asked Ruth.

"Well, it is a hard thing to say against a man, when I have no proof," replied Mr. DeVere, "but I believe, in his heart, Dan Merley knows I paid him. I think he is just trying to make me pay him over again to cheat me."

"Oh, how can he be so cruel?" cried Alice.

"He is a hard man to deal with," went on her father. "A very hard man. This has been bothering me all day. I simply cannot pay that five hundred dollars; and yet, if I don't— —"

"Can they lock you up, Daddy?" Alice questioned, fearfully.

"Oh, no, dear, not that. But he can make it very unpleasant for me. He can force me to go to court, and that would take me away from the film studio. I might even lose my engagement there if I had to spend too much time over a lawsuit.

"But, worst of all, my reputation will suffer. I have always been honest, and I have paid every debt I owed, though sometimes it took a little while to do it. Now if this comes to smirch my character, I don't know what I shall do."

"Poor Daddy!" said Ruth, softly, as she smoothed his ruffled hair.

"There, girls, don't let me bother you," he[18] said, as gaily as he could. "Perhaps there may come a way out."

"Why don't you ask the advice of Mr. Pertell?" suggested Ruth.

"I believe I will," agreed her father. "He is a good business man. I wish I was. If I had been I would have insisted on getting either a receipt from Merley, or my note back. But I trusted him. I thought he was a friend of mine."

"Well, let's have supper," suggested Alice. "Matters may look brighter then."

"And I'll go see Mr. Pertell this evening," promised Mr. DeVere. "He may be able to advise and help me."

The meal was not a very jolly one at first, but gradually the feeling of gloom passed as the supper progressed. Mr. DeVere told of what had happened that day at the film studio where the moving pictures were made.

"Now I think I'll go see Mr. Pertell," the actor announced, as he rose from the table. "He said he would be in his office late to-night, as he is working on some new plans."

"What are they, Daddy?" asked Alice. "Are we to go off to some farm again?"

"Not this time. I believe there are to be some winter scenes taken, though just where we will go for them has not been announced. Well, I'm[19] off," and, kissing the girls good-bye, Mr. DeVere went out.

Ruth and Alice, in his absence, discussed the new source of trouble that had come to them. They had been so happy all summer, that the blow fell doubly heavy.

"Isn't it just horrid!" exclaimed Ruth.

"Too mean for anything!" agreed Alice. "I wish I had that Dan Merley here. I—I'd — —"

But Alice did not finish. Ruth had looked at her, to stop her rather impulsive sister from the use of too violent an expression. But there was no need of this. An interruption came in the form of a knock at the door.

"Who is it?" asked Ruth, and there came a little note of fear into her voice, for she was timid, and she realized at once that it was not one of their kind neighbors from across the hall. Russ, his mother, and his brother Billy always rapped in a characteristic manner.

"It's me — Dan Merley, and I want to see the old man!" was the answer. The girls drew together in fright, for they recognized by the thickness of the voice that the owner was not altogether himself.