

# PLATONOFF

## A THUMB-NAIL HISTORY.

The net of the law brings to the surface some strange fish. It gathered in Platonoff on Friday. There was no great difficulty about it, as he was camped near the Inverell show ground and had been there for a fortnight or so. Lots of people had come to know him by sight, for he was frequently about Otho Street. He was frankly a vagrant, yet he wore his rags with an air. Well set up, about twelve stone in weight, with the square shoulders and upright bearing of the man who has seen military training, he looked the whole world in the face, and it is moderately certain that, like the village blacksmith, he owed not any man. He would not give the chance. He carried a little

the chance. He carried a little stick with an air of almost jauntiness, and when he reached the bank corner he went to stop and gaze absently at the Byron Arcade with an air of a man who rather thought it would be a good investment for his cash. His clothes were green with age, and when the weather was cold he wore an overcoat that was in tatters, so that people turned to look at him.

His little history in Australia is enshrined in the Rogue's Gallery at the police offices and this fact, coupled with other little indiscretions, was his undoing. Constable Cox saw Plotonoff and was haunted by the memory of a face. Somewhere he had seen it. The album was referred to and there it was, with a description and record attached. It showed that sometimes you can call him Plotonoff Beloshapka but the Christian name—if it be suitable—will do as well.

He was born in Russia and his father has the broad flatness of the Kalmuck

with the Tartar infusion strong in  
No town, no village, just Russia, which  
is a place where 120 millions of people  
live. All that is known of Plotonoff  
is that he came here in some ship  
(name unknown) in 1913. His first  
contact with the iron hand of the law  
was when he travelled without the  
formality of purchasing a railway ticket.  
That was in 1915. In 1916 he  
had reached the lower stage of stealing  
and was sentenced for that offence  
at Wee Waa. Then followed a series  
of short sentences for vagrancy, which  
showed that he had come to look at  
gaol as a home. Nine times he  
faced the bar of justice and the  
won every time. The only variation  
in lapses was in 1918, when he  
saulted a constable. His convictions  
in order were at the Central Court  
Sydney, Wee Waa, Liverpool, four  
Queensland, then back again at  
Central, then Gunnedah, Glen Innes  
and finally on Friday, for the ninth  
time, at Inverell.

Plotonoff is not connected with

Platonoff is not ashamed, neither  
he repentant. When questioned  
Constable Zahn he admitted that  
had received money. He speaks En-  
lish, which shows that he has origi-  
ally had some education, a remark-  
thing in Russia, where only  
nobles and higher classes are literate.  
"There are lots of rich people in the  
country," he remarked to the con-  
stable, "and if they choose to give  
me money where is the harm?" The  
young constable was not to be enticed  
into the ethical subtleties involved in  
the query, and, being rather a matter-  
of-fact young man to whom a tramp  
was just a tramp, he put Platinoff  
in gaol.

Platinoff was composed and dis-  
composed when he faced Mr. Loxton, and  
physically he was as good a man as  
any in court. He looked round, but  
without curiosity. Courts are a  
novelty to him. He was as bored as  
the journalists who looked on.

He was ordered to leave the to

He was ordered to leave the town at once, and did so. As the brightly animated throngs of Saturday shoppers, smiling and gay, were meeting friends and chatting, Platonoff, horribly alone but unruffled, shouldered his dusty bluey and strode along Otho Street with an air of a king in disguise. He still looked the whole world in the face, with a certain amount of philosophic interest. He was born for Queensland, and will be at home there. A paternal Government will have a fellow feeling for the traitor and will hand him out meat tickets and orders on the local stores for groceries.

There may be a story behind Platonoff's fall, or he may be just constitutionally lazy, but he is certainly unconventional. And the world has no use for the being who is not built according to pattern. Not understanding him, they put him in gaol.

It is a busy age and one has not time—or inclination—for problems. The world is just a derelict ship that has put

is just a derelict ship that has passed  
in the night. **Exit Plotinoff!**

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