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THE MYSTERY OF COUNT LANDRINOF

BY FRED WHISHAW.

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SYNOPSIS.

The hero of this story, Boris Landrinof, is a young Russian, who was sent to England to be educated. He is hastily summoned home by his mother owing to the sudden disappearance of his father, Count Landrinof. Shortly after, in London, he is astonished when a friend tells him he has just seen his father. Accompanied by this friend he returns to Russia. Boris discovers a clue, and sets out in search of two men who have as he supposes, abducted his father.

"My dear sir," said the student blandly, "you are forgetting one thing and that is that the police will be prejudiced in favor of Mr. Andre, or rather of the count, as they suppose him."

"Why?" I said angrily. "You are talking nonsense, my friend."

"Nonsense or wisdom, it is nevertheless true. See here, now. The police have committed one of the stupidest blunders that ever befell officialdom performed, and that is saying much. They have sent the wrong man to Siberia and left a dangerous revolutionist at large. Do you suppose, as a reasonable, reasoning creature, that they will be so very ready to admit their error at your bidding and on so flimsy a story as this you will bring them in support of your assertion? They will laugh in your face and say that you are a mad schoolboy and had better go back to your English school or to the English asylum you have escaped from. Even if they believe your tale—which, of course, they may do, though they will pretend they do not—they will still laugh in your face and refuse to move in the matter."

"Do you seriously mean that they will refuse to set right this fearful blunder that they themselves have committed?" I said. "You are saying all this, as Andre's friend, in the hope that I will allow matters to remain as they are. You wish to screen Andre, and my father's fate is nothing to you. But do not make that mistake, my friend. I shall move heaven and earth. I shall spend thousands of pounds. I shall never rest night and day until I have compelled the authorities to redeem their sinful blunder."

"My dear sir, you rave!" said the student coolly. "Your father's fate is, of course, of little interest to me, excepting in so far as—out of compliment to yourself—I should like to see so polite a friend as you have proved yourself gratified. But neither is Andre's fate of any interest to me. To me it is nothing whether he lives in this palace or in Sakhalin. I have no personal affection for him. To prove that I do not wish to screen him, I invite you to go as soon as you please to the nearest pristaf of police, tell him the whole story and see what he will say. You will not, of course, mention me, or give any hint of my existence, or, indeed, speak of the details of your father's capture, and so on. Tell them simply that their recapture of Kornilof on such



True happiness does not begin for a womanly woman until she becomes a mother. The fear of death stands between thousands of women and this supreme joy. If a woman will but take the right course, she may trample this fear out of her heart, and all cause for it out of her body.

There is practically no danger, and but little pain, in maternity, for a woman who is thoroughly healthy and strong in a womanly way. Dr. Pierce's Favorite Peppermint Cure makes the delicate organs that bear the burdens of maternity strong, healthy, virile and elastic. It banishes the distress of the period of impending maternity, and insures the new-comer's health and so ample supply of nourishment. An honest druggist will not try to get you to take some substitute for his profit's sake. Prospective mothers who write to Dr. R. V. Pierce will receive the best advice of an eminent and skillful specialist, for thirty years chief consulting physician to the great Invalids' Hotel and Surgical Institute, at Buffalo, N. Y.

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Pellets.

and such a day was a blunder, that they took this wrong man and that the right man is at this moment in your house. See what the pristaf will say. He will laugh in your face."

"And if he does, if he and his superiors refuse to set the thing right, am I to concur tamely in their decision? Not I, my friend. I will go to the czar himself, but I will see justice done to my dear father!"

"There will be no need to go to the czar," laughed the student. "Go to a lesser man, though perhaps as worthy a one. Go—or rather come back—to me. I shall have something to propose, only there must be another arrangement in this event—and another check!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE COUNT'S EXILE TO SIBERIA.

"Do you mean," I said, "that you will be able to provide evidence that this man Andre is the convict Kornilof and not my father?"

"Perhaps," said the student, smiling conceitedly.

"It is ridiculous," I cried hotly, "to suppose that the police will refuse to accept the evidence of a man's own wife and child and will believe yours for the asking."

"It may be ridiculous, but the police never admit a blunder if they can make any one else suffer for it instead of themselves. As for my part in the business, you forget that I possess information of various kinds with regard to Andre, which might be useful and even important to them and might throw a light on this matter."

"I see," I said. "But I shall be both surprised and disgusted if it prove to be as you say, and the authorities refuse to believe our evidence. I shall leave you now and consult my friends. I believe your story as to father's capture; so you may consider your check safe. At the same time you are to remain where you are until other matters are settled. You have no objection to continue as my guest?"

"So long as my safety is guaranteed I shall be charmed to remain," said the student. "Does Andre enjoy the run of the house? He must not see me or know that I am here. He would murder me, and your cause would be ruined."

"He shall not come here or know of your presence. I shall see that only trusted persons are aware that I have an acquaintance staying in the house."

"Good! See that the same wine is served to me, like the generous host you are, and plenty of it!" He shouted the last words at me as I left the room.

"I shall have you watched, my fine fellow," I said to myself as I hurried away to confide my great news to Percy and Borofsky, "for you are a pearl of great price." And I may say in this place that from this time until—well, until certain things had happened, either Percy or Borofsky or I was constantly on duty in the passage outside the student's room, both to see that he did not attempt to escape and to guard against surprises, from without, Andre being a kind of bugbear that one must suspect and fear all times.

I found Borofsky and Percy playing billiards.

"Well?" cried the latter. "What luck?" Both he and Borofsky laid down their cues and waited for me to speak. Now that I was here and my heart bursting with the news I had to tell them, I was unable to utter a single word. I suppose I dreaded being discouraged. I had formed lovely hopes so many times and on each occasion they had been dashed from me that I suppose I feared to be told by Borofsky that all this which my student had told me was mere buncombe; that he had taken me in, and there was not a word of truth in his story.

"You'll probably say it's all a tissue of lies," I blurted at length, with difficulty.

"That's extremely probable," said Borofsky, who had been soured of late by his ill successes and was not in the best of humors.

"At any rate, old man, we'll consider it in its bearings," said Percy. "Three heads are better than one, though I admit yours is not such a bad one. Is it so very incredible?"

"On the contrary, I don't think it is so at all," I said, "but Borofsky may with his detective order of mind, and I simply dread to be told there's nothing in it—because—"

"Well—because what?" said Borofsky. "I shall criticise. It is my duty. But I shall be only too glad to recognize a real clew!"

"I think it is a real clew, and that I now know what became of my poor father," I said. "You see, the student couldn't have known that we—"

"Stop! You forget that we should like to hear the tale itself before listen-

ing to your comments on it.

Borofsky. Then I told them as clearly as I could, and without the circumlocution that my conceited student garnished the tale with, how father had been cruelly and wickedly entrapped and substituted for a wretch who was wanted by the police, and how the police had fallen into the ambush prepared for them and had in all probability deported father to Siberia, while Andre was left to live in luxury and freedom.

I paused when I had finished the story. Then, "Great Caesar!" murmured Percy. Borofsky meditated in silence.

"Well, Borofsky," I said presently. "don't keep me in suspense. I long to hear your opinion. Is the tale true or a tissue of lies?"

"Stop!" said Borofsky. "Did you tell the rascal anything of your journey to Erinofka and your finding of a clew there?"

I reflected a moment. "No," I said, "I don't think I did. I'm sure I didn't."

"Ah! Then the tale is true," said Borofsky, "for it fits in with that which we know, unless, of course, he was sharp enough to put two and two together and build his tale on the rumors he may have heard of our researches at Erinofka. His precious society, or brotherhood, or gang of thieves, or whatever you like to call it, may have heard of our being on the scent there, even though it were not they who murdered the wretched little peasant who brought you information."

"No," said Percy. "The Erinofka bit belongs all right; it is part of our affair. The little peasant told us a true tale and suffered death for it. Who murdered him? Why, these infernal rascals: possibly the student himself. The story is consistent, Borofsky, from beginning to end. Boris has got hold of the right man at last. You were after him, I know, for weeks, and therefore the credit is yours as much as his; but Boris it was that nabbed him. Well done, Boris, old boy! You deserve your success. Gad, Borofsky! You wouldn't have gone in after the fellow into an ice hole! Come, would you now?"

(To be Continued.)

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