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ESTABLISHED 1887

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## A. MACDONALD

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### Pose and Finish

of his photograph, but the public will be fully satisfied in this particular, by an inspection of the Artistic work done at this studio

## GEO. H. COOK

QUEEN ST., CH'TOWN

# THE MYSTERY OF COUNT LANDRINOF

BY FRED WHISHAW

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(Continued)  
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.

"What," he exclaimed, "took my photograph? For what purpose? Explain, sir, at once. How dared he take my photograph?"

"For the consolation of the countess, only," I hastened to reply. "That she and the young count might recognize that you were indeed your excellence and no other."

"Then the count's face softened, and he laughed.

"Of course, of course!" he said. "Naturally, not having received my presence in London and disinclined to believe I could have gone so far afield without letting them know—ha, ha! So they must verify my photograph taken by this youth, my son's friend! It is good, and very good—a curious turn and combination of events! And my wife recognized the portrait at once, I suppose, though it can have been but a mere daub of a thing, done by a boy, eh?"

"The countess recognized it at once, though she pronounced you haggard and worn as if with trouble."

"Ha, trouble! That's this infernal conspiracy that I told you of. Haggard with trouble. Lerd, I may well be all that, my friend, and more. Well, and the lad, the young count, he swore to me, too, no doubt, eh? One doesn't forget one's father in a week or two, even though worn with trouble and so on, eh?—ha, ha!—a good lad, this young count. So he knew me by the portrait?"

"At once," I said, "though he demurred to the clothes. You were accustomed to a tall hat and the coat that is called in English 'frock coat'; you would never wear such clothes and a soft felt, he said, such as these you now have on."

"Ah, la guerre, comme la guerre!" laughed the count. "Let the hunted fox change his coat if he can. Disguise, my friend, disguise!"

"That is how I myself explained the matter," I said.

"Good!" laughed the count. "You have served the countess well, and I shall tell her so with my own lips when I return to her."

"Ah, count, let that be soon," I said. "for, if I may say so, it is sad to see her worrying and fretting because of your absence."

"Hat Well, poor woman; I shall return. I shall return. It may be very

soon. I shall consider what is best. Have we finished? Shall we go? Do you desire to write to the countess and to tell her that it shall be as she wishes? Do so then, my friend, for my letters are, as we have seen, intercepted by my enemies. Tell the countess that I may return at any time, maybe this very week—who knows? Perhaps we shall return together, you and I."

"With that," wrote Borofsky, "we parted, but though we parted, I made sure that his excellence returned to the hotel, for I followed him. This was last night, and today we have not spoken. The count is considering, he told me, whether to risk a return at once. In a few days we shall know for certain—a week at latest. Have I done well? I have done my best."

### CHAPTER XIII

THE COUNT'S RETURN PROMISED.

Borofsky had done well—indeed he could scarcely have managed better. Nevertheless the whole of the story his letter told us, though undoubtedly a true story, rang, somehow, in a false key.

This picture of father was not like my dear old dad as I knew him, and I could not help feeling, though I said nothing of it to mother, that if Borofsky had exaggerated nothing in describing his violence and the eccentricity of his behavior, then my poor father must certainly be irresponsible, for the present, for his words and actions—in a word, something or some combination of circumstances had bereft him of his senses.

God grant Borofsky would succeed in bringing the poor, dear old man safely home with him! The soothing influence of quiet home life and the loving attention of his wife would be more likely to restore him to himself than any other treatment.

I could see that mother felt much the same as I about it. She looked at me with tear laden eyes when I had finished the letter.

"Is that all?" she asked.

"That's all, mother," I said, and I dared add nothing to this for fear of betraying myself. Neither did my mother speak for some little while, and, though I scarcely glanced at her, I knew well that she cried quietly.

"Borofsky will bring him back in a few days, dearest," I said at length. "and a little quiet home life will soon make him quite himself again."

"God grant it!" she said. "God grant it! Oh!" she added suddenly, with a burst of emotion. "What has my poor Vladimir ever done to be visited by so terrible an affliction, and what manner of calamity could have occurred to such a man that could be sufficiently overwhelming to unbinge his mind?"

These were questions which I could not answer, for they were the very ones that were vexing my own soul as well as hers.

"We shall know all, mother, in God's good time," I said. "Let us be patient and face the trouble. When father comes, we will make it our business to rid him of these delusions and fears, as though any one could possibly conspire against dear old pater! He hasn't an enemy in the world. I'm sure of it. What can possibly have put such ideas into his head? He imagines he has written constantly, you see, and that his letters have been intercepted. He has not intentionally left us without news even in this terrible time of mind unbinged and of many sad delusions."

It comforted mother to talk, and we conversed in this way for an hour and more, but without coming to any other conclusion than that father was undoubtedly out of his mind temporarily, and that the sooner our excellent little Sherlock Holmes succeeded in bringing him home the better.

How anxiously we awaited the next letter or telegram! No words could adequately describe the anguish of suspense we suffered. What if Borofsky should have failed, after all, to induce the poor, dear, delusion haunted old man to accompany him home? He might take fright at any moment and mistrust Borofsky's good faith, or, worse still, become violent and attack, perhaps even murder, the man in a paroxysm of madness. Merciful heaven forbid it, what a terrible thing that would be! I did not mention my forebodings to mother lest I should frighten her, but I spoke to Percy, who said he had felt the very same fears.

Then came Borofsky's third letter, a very short one, but a letter that gladdened our hearts and caused us to feel that all was well, or nearly so.

"I have persuaded the count to come," he wrote, "and we shall start tomorrow. I shall telegraph on Tuesday from the frontier if we shall have arrived so far in safety. Meanwhile, a few words of caution: Treat the count as though nothing had happened. Do

expressed a hope more than once that you will not speak of his return; would rather see and be seen by me but his own household, and the wants should be warned to say nothing of his absence or of his home coming. He imagines, you will bear in mind, that he has many enemies. These says the count, should be left to surprise he is still absent from St. Petersburg; otherwise he will not be allowed to dwell in peace."

Alas, poor old father. Well, at any rate, he was coming home. The future was in wiser hands than ours.

Tuesday found us all in a condition of unspeakable excitement. The Berlin express would reach the frontier early in the afternoon, and our telegram should arrive at about 4 or earlier.

How we got through the morning, mother and I, I cannot remember. I can recall nothing of that day excepting that Percy almost compelled me to go with him for a walk and tried to talk cricket to me and Oxford and Tiddlestone and all manner of subjects, but that I would have none of them and could only speak of telegrams and the frontier and the time of day, and so on.

Luncheon time came and passed and the afternoon slowly wore. Three o'clock was reached and done with; then half past and then 4, and still the telegram had not arrived. Had Borofsky failed, after all?

Then it came. The message was placed in my hands by one of the men. I tore the envelope open and read

Всего благополучно. (All well.)

BOROFSKY.

And with the document I rushed to my mother.

"It's all right, dearest," I blurted. "Borofsky has got him. Tomorrow evening dad will dine with us!"

I think we cried together over that telegram—tears of pure relief and rest from anxiety.

(To be Continued.)

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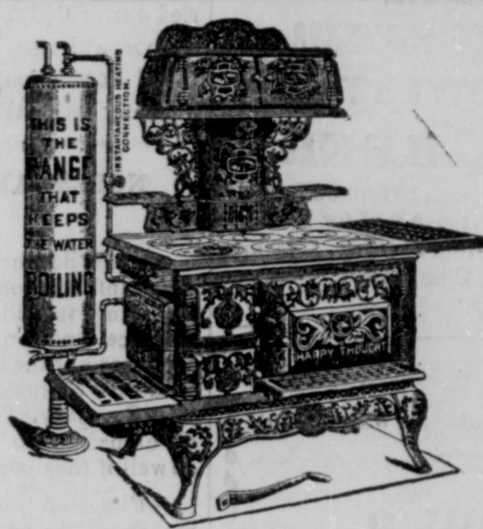
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