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A. MACDONALD

# THE MYSTERY OF COUNT LANDRINOF.

BY FRED WHISHAW.

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"Possibly Grishka" (the driver's name) "might remember the way to the house and the very house itself if he were to drive your merciful highness into town, though the name of the street has escaped his memory. I might hire horses for your highnesses at—a certain rate!"

"Hire them, hire them, little father," I cried, "at any price you please, and Grishka here shall drive us to the very house! Gad, Percy," I added in English, "we're on the scent now with a vengeance. This fellow will take us to the very house the rascals carried father to. It's splendid!"

"It does seem rather rosy!" said Percy.

Within five minutes the horses were harnessed and ready. We jumped into the trap and drove rapidly toward St. Petersburg. Three hours later the city lights danced before us, and we knew that in a quarter of an hour the secret of dear old dad's whereabouts, or at all events a strong clue, would be in our hands.

"Sherlock Holmes is not in it," had been the burden of our conversation during the exciting drive. We had done this thing well and were in full swing for success—the reward of patience and good management.

Now we were driving through the streets. Over the Tuchkof bridge we dashed, and through Vassili Ostrof and across the Nicholas Vassie; then to the left by the English quay to the Winter palace and straight on to the Palace quay—the most fashionable of all quarters of the town. "Grishka, you fool!" I shouted. "Where are you taking us to? It could not have been here the party came?"

"There's no mistake, highness," said Grishka over his shoulder. "This was certainly the way."

"Good heavens, Boris!" said Percy. "Do you know what? He's taking us to your own house. He must have brought the count and the others here on some former occasion."

It was too sickeningly true. Straight as an arrow he drove us to our own door—147 Palace quay—and drew up there!

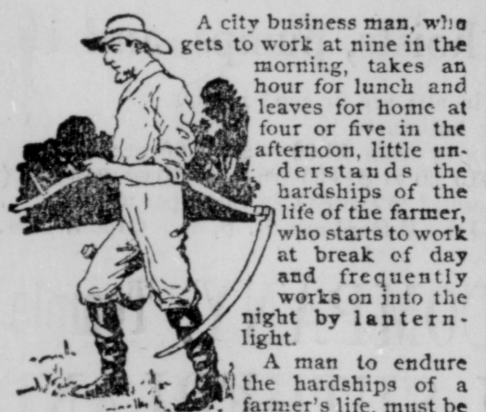
"There!" said Grishka. "The very house. I remember it by the big stone balcony."

I climbed sadly out—dejected and disappointed. Percy was scarcely merrier.

"Grishka," I said, "do you tell me you brought those gentlemen here last week?"

"Last week? Have mercy, barin, no, not last week—many weeks, months ago."

I paid the fellow and sent him away. We had been done—whether intentionally or not, I had not the heart as yet to think out. We had, I firmly believe,



A city business man, who gets to work at nine in the morning, takes an hour for lunch and leaves for home at four or five in the afternoon, little understands the hardships of the life of the farmer, who starts to work at break of day and frequently works on into the night by lantern-light.

A man to endure the hardships of a farmer's life, must be robust physically at the outset, and if he would live a long life, always keep a watchful eye upon his health. He should remember that it is the apparently trifling disorders that eventually make the big diseases. It does not do for a hard working man to neglect bilious attacks or spells of indigestion. If he does, he will soon find himself flat on his back with malaria or crippled with rheumatism. Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery is the best of all medicines for hard working men and women. It makes the appetite keen and hearty, the digestion perfect, the liver active, the blood pure and rich with the life-giving elements of the food, and the nerves strong and steady. It builds firm muscles and solid flesh. It is the greatest of all blood-makers and purifiers. It cures malarial troubles and rheumatism. It is an unfailing cure for biliousness and indigestion. An honest dealer will not try to substitute some inferior preparation for the sake of a little additional profit.

"I was a sufferer for four years with malarial fever and chills," writes Robert Williams, of Kiowa, Barber Co., Kan. "Four bottles of Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery cured me and I now weigh 160 pounds instead of 130, my old weight."

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struck a true trail, but had lost it almost in the finding.

#### CHAPTER VI. DETECTIVE IN THE CASE.

After this failure, which had promised at one moment to be a grand success, Percy and I felt so humbled that we actually consulted with mother as to whether the police should be invited to take over the matter, or at least asked to assist us in our further inquiries.

My dear mother was, however, very much adverse to such a step. She had always felt horror of the Russian detective force, that "terrible third section," the ununiformed, secret, mysterious, spying creatures who swarm, or swarmed at that time, in the capital city of the czar. "For the love of heaven," she entreated us, with tears in her eyes, "let us keep our sorrow out of their knowledge. I would not have those hateful people to know of our grief or to bandy about your dear father's name as a stalking horse for their arrestings and spyings. We will leave them out as long as we can."

Mother was convinced that Percy and I had, as I have said, struck the trail of the mystery at Erinofka, and this opinion received a kind of terrible confirmation a few days later when, walking in the Nefsky with Percy, I met Hulbert, the Englishman, who, with father and another, rented the shooting of that splendid moor.

Hulbert was decorously sympathetic about our family trouble, for of course he knew of it, though we carefully preserved it from becoming a matter of general knowledge and tittle tattle. Then he told me that he had just been to Erinofka, and that an extraordinary and horrible murder had been committed in the village. No stranger had been seen about the place, it was said, yet one of the villagers had been stabbed dead in his hut—heaven only knew why or by whom, for he hadn't an enemy in the world.

My heart almost stopped beating when I heard this. I glanced at Percy and caught his eye. His face had suddenly gone quite pale; so, he said afterward, had mine.

"What is it?" said Hulbert. "Are you one who can't bear to hear of bloodshed? I'm sorry I told you."

"I don't like horrors," I said, "but do go on; what was the poor fellow like? Did you go and see him?"

"I did, as it happens. A small fellow with a bald head, rather little eyes and a longish beard."

It was our mysterious informant to the life.

Then his tale had been true, and the unfortunate fellow had actually met his doom for breaking faith with his terrible employers. How did the rascals know that he had broken faith? Was it our fault? God forbid! I had tried my best to shelter him. It was his own fault. He ran the risk with his eyes open. Probably the poor wretch did not really believe the threats of those fearful people whom he had driven to Bala.

And these were the very persons into whose hands father must have fallen. If it were indeed so, then God help him!

We decided to tell mother nothing of this last development, for it could only frighten and shock her and would do no good.

But we persuaded her to allow us to engage the services of a private detective, one who should be entirely unconnected with the police. If we could find a suitable person, we explained, he could go to Erinofka and take up the trail where we had lost it. We were known there now and would be taken in at every turn by those, or their agents, whose interest it was to keep the truth from us. A professional detective would be far more likely to manage successfully this delicate matter of clew hunting than we should. Somewhat regretfully, my mother agreed to allow us to employ such a man, and by dint of many inquiries we hit upon a young fellow, by name Borofsky, who suited us very well.

Borofsky was not very much older than I. He may have been 22, at most, while my age was just 19 and Percy's about the same; not a very aged trio to undertake and conduct so delicate an inquiry as this of ours.

He dined with us on the evening of his engagement, and we talked over the entire subject. Borofsky thought well of the work we had done at Erinofka. We had hit upon the right track, no doubt, he said. But probably the rascals who had drugged and carried father off had long since placed him in safety, and even if we could follow the trail as far as St. Petersburg we should lose it there.

"But what do you suppose they wanted with the count, Mr. Borofsky?"

asked Percy "money, by way of ransom, or what?"

"Heaven knows!" said Borofsky. "That is one of the things we must find out."

Then our friend startled us by saying: "By the way, the pristaf of the police department of this district mentioned your father to me today. I was at the office on another matter of business which does not concern this affair. What do you think the pristaf said?"

"I am sorry you spoke to the police about my father," I replied somewhat warmly. "It is the very thing we are trying to avoid."

"I did not believe me. It was the pristaf who mentioned him, apropos of nothing particular, and mind you, though I am no great lover of the police, I am ready to admit that their system is marvelous, and they generally know where to lay their hands upon any given person. I was not speaking of your father, nor had I mentioned him. But the pristaf said, 'You are to undertake business for Count Landrinof, Borofsky, I conclude, since you have been for two days in communication with the young count.' (They watch us, you see, these fellows.) 'It is odd that the old bird should have gone to prosecute his inquiries in London, whatever they may be, while the young one leaves London in order to work out something here.'

"Is the count in London, then? I said innocently. 'I did not know it.' And the pristaf said, 'Certainly!' and that your father had left St. Petersburg on the—I forget the exact date—about a week or ten days ago. Of course we know this is not the case, but it is odd that the pristaf should have said it."

I said nothing. I was too astonished. Could Percy after all have seen the old dad, then? I had persuaded him long since that he had been the victim of an illusion, a chance likeness, and that wherever my poor father should prove to be he could not be in London. But this was surprising, an utterly unexpected and bewildering confirmation of Percy's story.

Percy himself was equally surprised and startled, and Borofsky was not slow to observe our excitement.

"Well, what?" he said, smiling. "You don't attach any importance to what the pristaf told me, do you? I think you need not, for these brigands, or whoever the mysterious rascals should prove to be, would scarcely take their victim so far afield. They would be safe 50 yards over the frontier. Why should they go so far?"

I consulted with Percy. Ought we not to tell Borofsky that Percy believed he had seen my father in London?

"It would be a pity to set him upon a false scent if it should have been a case of mistaken identity, as of course it may have been!" said Percy.

"And as I quite believe, even now, that it was," I said, "but I think Borofsky should know. It would not hurt, and it might possibly lead to some development."

(to be Continued)

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