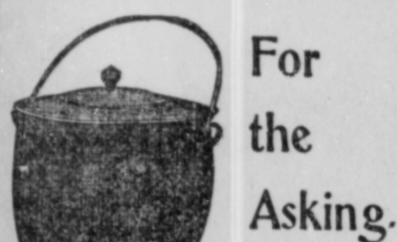


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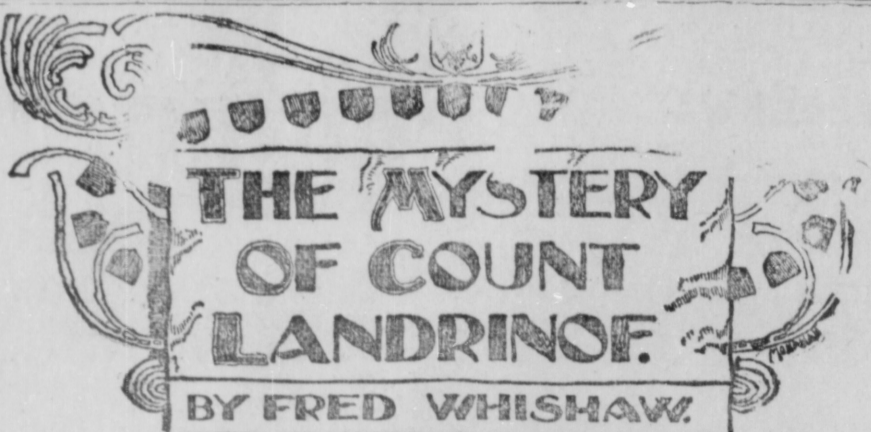


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SYNOPSIS.

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.

"And what they plotted," I asked, "and who they were?" "You are going too fast, my dear sir!" said Borofsky. "How could I possibly know all that? I was not in the room and all these people I have seen today for the first time."

"But how did you get to see them at all?" I asked. "Didn't you run a great risk?"

"Some risk, no doubt, but I wasn't Borofsky, mind you—I was disguised. I went to my lodgings early in the afternoon and put on a beggar's dress that I have in stock—a perfect disguise. In this I returned here, standing outside this very door till our friend came out. I did the same yesterday, but he kept me waiting several hours and never came at all. Well, this afternoon I had hardly been here a quarter of an hour when out comes my man, jumps into a drosky and drives away.

"Luckily I, too, had a drosky waiting round the corner and into this I jumped, throwing the cloak over me that was already prepared for my use in case of need and lay folded ready on the cushion.

"I followed his drosky right across to the island side, down the first line, over the Tuchkof bridge and into the Peterburgskaya. He turned into a small street that led out of the prospect, and I stopped in the main thoroughfare a few yards farther on, threw the cloak to my driver and hurried back to the corner of the small street.

"His drosky was returning empty, and he had disappeared, and I thought I had lost my man; but almost immediately another trap drove up, turned into the street and stopped at a little wooden house half way down it. So I limped toward the gate of that house—a beggar again, now—and took my stand near by.

"No less than seven other individuals drove or walked to that gate, sir, and entered the little wooden house, though I was not exactly on the spot when all arrived, for the first that came gave me a grievous (10 kopecks) and bade me go farther, very much farther; but we need not specify the destination he had fixed upon me. The next was no more polite, and rather than cause anger or rouse suspicion I moved a few doors away. When all had arrived—nine or ten there must have been in all—I waited a few minutes and then departed."

"Well done, Borofsky," said I. "You

have certainly advanced matters today it was undoubtedly a meeting of sorts. Our friend is up to no good, I'll be sworn! Well, now we know one of his haunts, anyway! We'll catch him out yet, and then we'll name our terms for saving his head from the only place it's fit to fill, and that's the noose."

"What manner of men were these friends of his?" asked Percy; "the other members of this charming committee? A set of desperate looking cutthroats, I'll bet."

"They were very mixed," said Borofsky. "There were some who looked quite respectable—officers; two fellows in civilian uniform; one or two awful looking specimens and a couple of stu-



"I was disguised."

dents with plaids and long hair and white faces and spectacles, all complete. Our own men were far the most respectable looking of the company."

We made Borofsky happy by praising him for his skill this afternoon. He had been and still was very sore over his London fiasco and needed encouragement.

This interregnum was very trying, however, to mother and to me. To be obliged to hang about without advancing the matter we had so deeply at heart until such time as our impostor should think fit to commit himself to some villainy and we should find means to suspect or discover it and thus put himself in our power was tantalizing indeed.

Besides, there was always the chance that he had lied throughout and that in reality he had nothing to reveal as to father's fate. Perhaps he had never seen father and knew nothing more of him than his name, excepting the fact that, by a stroke of excellent luck, he must so nearly resemble the real Landrinof that he was able to pass as the count with all but his closest relations, and that the count's house was uncommonly comfortable and that, thanks, from beginning to end, to the accidental resemblance, his lot had fallen in extremely pleasant places.

My mother was assured that our disreputable guest was none other than my father's brother Andre. He could be no other, she said, for though she now knew that there was nothing in the man's face to recall that of her dear Vladimir excepting the shape of the features and that it had been the grossest calumny upon the count even to mistake this other's photograph for his, yet the cast of the features was the same, and the man could be no other than the wretched Andre—supposed at this moment by the police to be far away in Siberia.

Our friend, however, had assumed an absolute ignorance of the existence of any such person as Andre Landrinof, the count's younger brother, when taxed by Borofsky with being that very individual. He had never heard of the man, he said. As for his own name, Borofsky would have to contrive to exist without knowing it if it depended on himself to tell it, because, said he, it was not Borofsky's business to know it.

But one evening our excellent friend rather gave himself away. He had taken to indulging somewhat freely in vodka, the spirit, distilled from rye, which is the favorite drink of the Russian people, and the vodka loosened his tongue.

Borofsky often sat with him of an evening, the only one of us who did, and on this occasion our guest, being slightly overrefreshed, suddenly broached the subject of Andre Landrinof.

"That brother of the count's you were talking about the other day, Borofsky," he said; "where is he, and what is he doing? Is he a count, too, and rich?"

"He isn't a count, but an infernal blackguard," said Borofsky. "and I should say he is just about as rich as the folks he has robbed are the poorer." "Ha, ha! Good!" said the fellow.

"So you think badly of him. Why? "Ask the police," said Borofsky. "Not I! A set of infernal rascals!" exclaimed the other. "I tell you they are 50 times worse, any one of them, than this Andre Landrinof. Now, Andre—" "Whom you don't know," laughed Borofsky. "Wait—I—I think I have met him under a different name. I think he is one who is or was known as Kornilof. I met him in London." "Not in Siberia—are you sure?" Borofsky put in.

"Curse you, why do you interrupt me?" shouted the other angrily. "I tell you I know nothing of Siberia. I met this man in London—Kornilof. He lives in London owing to persecutions in this infernal country, and has lived there for years."

"Then it can't be Andre," interrupted Borofsky again. "for Andre has spent the flower of his life in the mines of Siberia, where, it is to be hoped, he still blooms and will continue to bloom until judgment day or so."

"Oh, indeed! You seem to know a great deal of this Andre!" said our guest, with tipsy dignity and scorn. "Would you be surprised to learn that he is not such a confounded fool as you suppose, and, at the present moment, is thou—thousands of miles from Siberia and has no intention of re—returning there?"

"Kornilof, that is?" suggested Borofsky.

"Yes, Kornilof, or Andre—same thing—same man. Siberia is for fools, my friend, and the sooner you go there yourself the sooner you'll be in the place that's best suited for you."

CHAPTER XVII. ANDRE'S STUDENT VISITOR.

After this conversation Borofsky declared that he had no doubt whatever that our sham count was Andre Landrinof. But, though mother and I were quite disposed to agree with him, we could not think of any way in which this fact could be brought into connection with the mystery of father's disappearance.

Nevertheless, though we knew it not, we were now at last on the eve of more important discoveries than that of the mere identity of our guest. We were about to strike a trail and a strong one.

Among those who visited our guest, whom I shall crave permission to call Andre henceforth, since it was from this time that we became accustomed to regard him as undoubtedly father's worthless brother; among the shabby looking persons who visited Andre and held long consultations with him in the apartments set aside to his use was a student, one of that plaided and spectacled class of individuals, half famished and obviously ill nourished and poverty ridden, of whom there are many hundreds in St. Petersburg and from among whom the ranks of the disaffected are principally recruited, for the lot of the Russian student is a miserable one indeed, and it is no wonder that he is a reckless, discontented individual, only too ready to become the dupe or the accomplice of those who preach crusades against property and those who possess it. For he is not like the undergraduate of Oxford or Cambridge, passing rich upon a more or less liberal allowance from his father or his guardian. The Russian student keeps himself and pays his own fees in most cases. He gives lessons during the hours which are free of lectures, and by means of the income thus earned he gains just enough to pay his university fees and to starve handsomely on what is left over. The little student who visited Andre caused poor Borofsky an immense amount of annoyance and trouble, for he was the only one of Andre's visitors (of whom there were several) whom he had hitherto failed to track to his home, wherever that might be. Borofsky now knew the address of all the rest of the friends of our highly respectable guest. He also knew all the houses haunted by Andre himself, which were doubtless the homes of these same worthies, but the student had been too clever for Borofsky and would never allow himself to remain long enough in view to be shadowed for more than a few minutes at a time.

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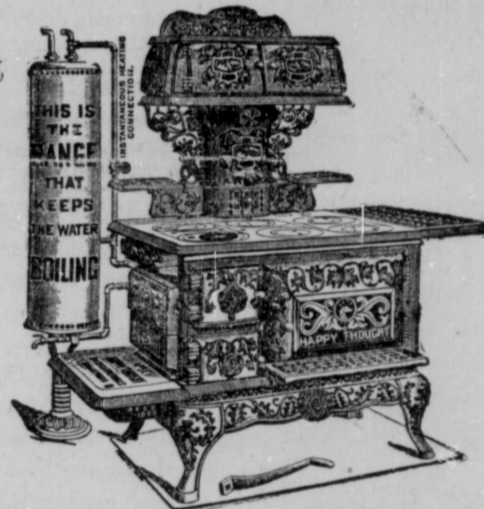
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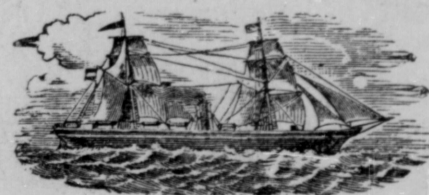
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