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The Purpose of this Advertisement

is to remind the public that the Photo work from the Studio of G. H. Cook, is the most elegant finished in the city. Every one is particular about the

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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 lastly 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.

This was the happiest afternoon and evening we had spent for two months. True, tomorrow's meeting would be painful no doubt; but, oh, the difference to have father with us, ill though he might be, rather than to think of him as a poor lost soul alone in London, helpless and friendless and demented! I thought the evening of that Wednesday would never come. How slowly the wingless moments crawled! We prepared everything for father's comfort; we made his rooms look as inviting as loving hands could render them; we adorned them with flowers and pretty hangings and photographs; we spent hours in doing all this, and yet the time would not move on quickly enough for us.

The train was due at or about the dinner hour, and Percy and I were at the station half an hour before time. Now that the supreme moment had arrived I felt unaccountably nervous and somewhat depressed. Percy rallied me upon my foolishness.

"Why, hang it, old man," he said, "this ought to be one of the happiest moments of your life!"

"So it is," I murmured. "I am awfully happy. But I don't know what it is—I feel as though even now father will disappoint us somehow, as though all this were not a reality. What if this man should turn out to be not father, after all, but—"

"Oh, rot!" said Percy rudely. "Let's talk of something else. If you get thinking that kind of thing, you'll force yourself to believe that he isn't he, even when you see him with your own eyes."

"Oh, not I shall know father," I murmured, "if he really comes."

"Of course he'll really come," said Percy. "Whom do you expect? Come now, don't be an old ass, Boris. Your nerves are playing old Harry with you."

Then, almost as we spoke, the train came groaning and creaking in. It pulled up, and the passengers began to get out and walk on the platform, and the usual crowd formed.

In the crowd, as we went to and fro looking for our travelers, I saw suddenly Borofsky and another.

At the first glance I thought it was my father, and my heart gave a great bound for joy. Then I looked closer, and—

"Percy," I whispered—"Percy for

the love of heaven, tell Borofsky"—

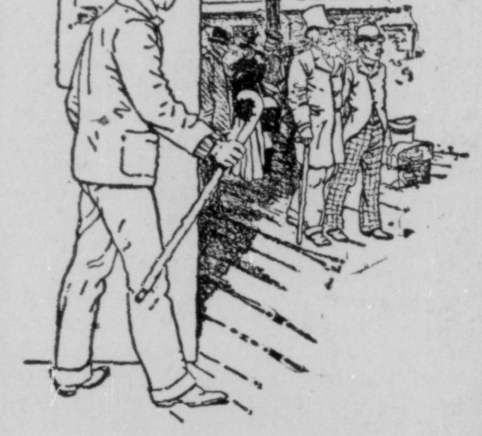
"Well, tell him what? Where is he? Do you see them? What's up, old man?" said Percy.

"Tell Borofsky to wait. I must get home and prepare my mother. Tell him—come behind these boxes so that they don't see us—tell him it isn't father, Percy. I'd swear with my last breath it isn't."

"Good heavens, man!" began Percy. "See if you can avoid bringing him home at all," I continued. "But in any

case give me time to get back and warn mother or the shock will kill her. No, don't speak. I tell you, man, it is not father. Do you think I don't know?"

I left Percy on the platform and rushed away. My heart felt like lead. God help us, I thought! What will happen now?



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CHAPTER XIV. MISTAKEN IDENTITY.

Each attempt to unravel the mystery which lay like a black cloud over our lives had only served to deepen the gloom. Here was darkness indeed.

Destiny was treating us too cruelly. Who was this, this scoundrel who had hoodwinked our detective and actually meditated the personation of father in his own house? Could it be my precious uncle, escaped somehow from Siberia? Where was father? Did this man know? Was he concerned in father's disappearance?

My brain ached with the hopeless weight of these questions as I drove rapidly homeward. And as I neared the house another came crushing down upon my heart. How should I break this news to my poor mother, waiting at this moment in joyful expectation to clasp her beloved husband? God grant the shock did not kill her!

I had no time to think or invent or to arrange my scattered thoughts. I rushed up to mother's room.

"Has he come?" she cried, meeting me. "Is he well? Oh, Boris, what is it?"

"Be brave, mother, darling, and brace yourself for a cruel blow," I began, speaking so huskily that I wonder she understood me.

"Tell me at once!" she muttered, suddenly seating herself on the nearest chair. "He is dead—is that it? He was mad and—"

"No, no, dearest, not that, thank God!" I faltered. "This man is not father. I have seen him, and it is not father!"

"Ah, I can bear that, if that is it," she said. "But perhaps you are mistaken, Boris! Stop—I could not bear to greet and speak to him if he were not my Vladimir. What shall I do, Boris? Can I see him and remain unseen? Where could we go, you and I? We will make sure, quite sure, that we must be disappointed before we will allow our hearts to break over it."

"Dear mother, you are brave," I said, kissing her. "Let us sit in the porter's little room in the great hall. We can peep through the window and watch them arrive."

"Come!" said mother, and together we made for the wide staircase that led down into the huge entrance hall. But before we had reached the hall the carriage drove up. Mother heard and grasped my hand.

"We are too late," she whispered. "But now we are here, we will stand our ground together."

The hall porter, an old servant, ran to the big doors and flung them open, bowing low and greeting "Vladimir Antonich" (my father's patronymic).

A tall man entered with Percy and Borofsky. He took no notice of old Gregory's greeting, which seemed to surprise the porter, who looked pained.

Conversing with Borofsky, while Percy followed, silent and depressed, the new arrival came toward us. Mother's hand tightened over mine. She gave me a convulsive grip and then loosed me again. I saw her eyes brighten as she caught sight of his face and

quickly grow dim. I saw her lips tremble enough to father to utter her hopes for but one second; then she saw, as she must inevitably see, how unlike was the likeness. The little group reached us and paused a moment. Borofsky was about to speak, but he suddenly realized how matters stood and refrained. Mother bowed and passed down stairs with me. Percy turned and came with us. Borofsky and the other continued their journey up stairs. I distinctly heard the fellow ask Borofsky who the lady was. This man that was her husband, forsooth, and my father!

Poor mother sank upon a couch in the hall and cried quietly. Thank God that she did that! I could say nothing to comfort her, excepting to blurt out that we should yet find father and restore him to her one day.

"At all events, he is not mad, as we feared, mother," I added. "Almost anything is better than that. Have you the heart to go on hoping, in the face of this blow?"

"Mother played the heroine that night. Not only did she assure me that she was still full of hope and confidence, but she comforted poor old Percy, who was disconsolate, declaring that this last misfire and all the disappointment of it was entirely his fault (which it certainly was in a way), by telling him that if she and I could be taken in by the portrait it was surely no wonder that he was taken in by the original."

"They are marvelously alike," said mother, "and yet, oh, how unlike! This is his brother, of course!"

"Mother, do you really think so?" I exclaimed. "How can he have escaped from Siberia?"

"That is another mystery," she said. "Perhaps the mystery of dear father's disappearance is connected with this one, and that with this wretched Andre delivered thus, as it were, into our hands we may learn something from him."

"Bah! I shall kick him out of the house in ten minutes if I have to get a couple of policemen to help me!" I raved.

"No, my son, we will allow him to remain. We will give him shelter and show him kindness. Then perhaps if he knows anything and if there is any particle of good in him he may help us in some way to unravel our mystery."

"Mother, it's impossible!" I said. "We can't have a brute of a fellow like this murdering, nihilistical rascal sleeping in the house. I shouldn't feel that you were safe. He would murder the whole lot of us for the price of a dinner."

"We will take precautions, of course. Let him remain, Boris—tonight at least."

"It would be wiser to give him money and turn him out of the house. Offer him more on condition he keeps away and still more for any news he can give us of father."

"Do nothing in a hurry," said mother. "He shall stay tonight at least. Tomorrow we shall see how the land lies. What do you think, Percy?"

(To be Continued.)

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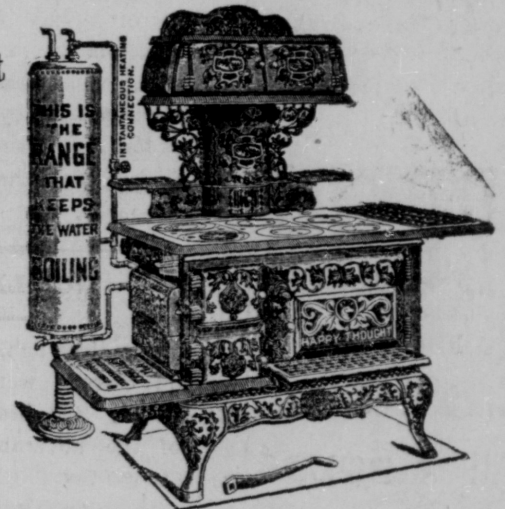
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