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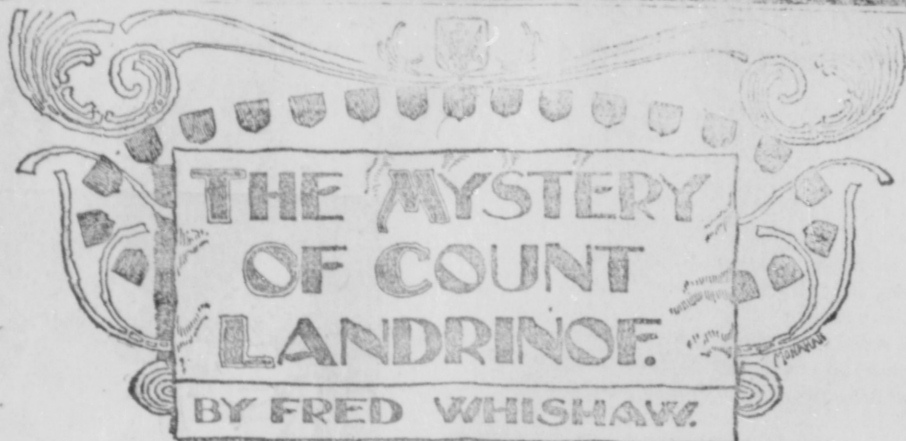
Great George Street... Charlottetown, P. E. Island

To My Customers and Prospective Customers:-

Permit me to call your attention to the fact that I am better prepared than ever before to supply your wants in Fresh Oysters. It is a fact that in order to be successful in the Oyster business one must be able to handle them in large quantities. With this object in view, I beg leave to solicit your patronage, and can assure you of satisfaction.

I may say that my Oyster Parlor will be conducted in the usual first class manner, where the delicate Bivalve may be obtained in every style to satisfy the taste of the most exacting epicure.

Yours, &c., **JOHN P. JOY,**
The P. E. I. Oyster King



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(Continued)

"Did Spiridon (the second keeper) drive him to the station?" I asked. Spiridon scratched his head and reflected. I drew a bow at a venture.

"You were drunk when our man came to interview you, Spiridon," I said. "Confess it. You don't remember what you told him."

"I certainly went home with the count from the moor," he said, "but when we reached the house he gave me a ruble and sent me back to the moor, to the other gentleman and Armin, saying they might want me to carry game. He had no luggage and would walk to the station." Then Spiridon grinned and scratched his head. "I may have been a little drunk when your man came down," he added; "the gentlemen had both tipped me generously."

There was no more to be got out of Spiridon. Then I went to the station and inquired of the station master, who said he knew the count well, whether he had seen my father on the day in question.

"Did he travel home by the afternoon train on Wednesday the—?" I asked. "Wednesday, the—," repeated the man reflectively, consulting his day-book. "Ah, I thought so—no, he did not, for that was the afternoon that the line was blocked. Some rascal had laid a tree across and the engine ran off the line—the up engine—and plowed the metals. I remember your father coming to the station, but he did not travel."

"What did he do, then?" I asked, flushing with agitation, for here, I thought, was the beginning of a clew. "Well, I can't tell you," he said. "He left the station, and now I come to think of it, he did not reappear. The other gentleman took the train next day, but not the count."

"Not the count!" I repeated. "Are you sure?" "Quite sure!" said the man. "He came on the Tuesday, but—well, he has not gone back yet, and that's a fact!"

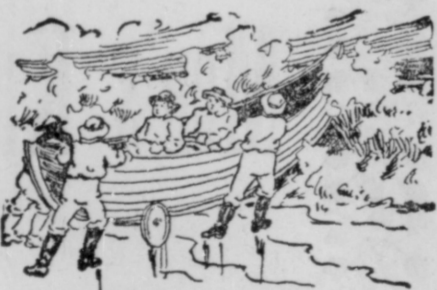
CHAPTER IV. A SLIGHT CLEW FOUND.

Here was a surprise indeed. Father had come to this place, of that there was no doubt whatever. He had been out on the moors, that was equally certain, and he had presented himself at the station with the intention of returning to town, but had been balked of his train and—And there was an end of the trail so far.

"Please think again," I murmured. "Are you perfectly certain the count did not catch some other train later in the day or perhaps early the next morning? Did you see each train away?"

"I have not missed a single train, in or out, since Easter," said the station master.

"Could he have gone home any other way?" I asked presently. "It is too far to drive in a village cart or to ride on



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There are greater dangers than those of the angry sea. That dread disease—consumption, kills more men and women in a generation than the sea has swallowed up since the earliest history of navigation.

There is a sure and safe life-boat ever ready to be launched for men and women who suffer from this merciless destroyer. It is Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. It cures 98 per cent. of all cases of consumption, bronchitis, asthma, laryngitis, weak lungs, spitting of blood and throat and nasal troubles. It acts directly on the lungs, driving out all impurities and disease germs. It soothes and heals the mucous membranes of the lungs, bronchial tubes, throat and nasal cavities. It restores the lost appetite, makes digestion and assimilation perfect, invigorates the liver, and purifies and enriches the blood. It fills the blood with the life-giving elements of the food that build new and healthy tissues. It tears down, carries off and excretes the diseased and half-dead tissues upon which the germs of consumption thrive. It checks the cough and facilitates expectoration until the lungs are thoroughly clear. It is the great blood-maker and flesh-builder. Unlike cod liver oil, it does not build flabby flesh, but the firm, muscular tissues of health. It does not make corpulent people more corpulent. Thousands have testified to their cure under this great medicine after they were given up by the doctors, and all hope was gone. An honest dealer will not suggest some inferior substitute for the sake of a little extra selfish profit.

A man or woman who neglects constipation suffers from slow poisoning. Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets cure constipation. One little "Pellet" is a gentle laxative, and two a mild cathartic. All medicine dealers sell them. No other pills are "just as good."

pony back; my father likes to travel comfortably. There's no post station about near here, is there?"

"Not nearer than Balota," said the station master, "and thence he would have to drive all the way round by Riabova, over a terrible road. The count would scarcely have done that." My friend, as chief officer upon the railway, a new institution, and very proud of his office, cherished an obvious scorn for the old-fashioned method of traveling by post road.

"Still," I said, "if he was in a great hurry he might have chosen that way in spite of the slowness and discomfort of the journey."

"Perhaps," said the station master and relapsing into a scornful silence as a protest doubtless against the very suggestion of any person of light and leading using the post road under any circumstances, now that the railway was laid. He showed no further inclination to converse. I wired Percy at our home in St. Petersburg that I had found a slight clew and begged him to come up and help me work it as soon as possible after his arrival, after which I set myself to make inquiries among the peasants in the village, hoping that I might find one among them who had seen my father on the fatal Wednesday and perhaps even driven him to Balota, to the post station there.

I interviewed half a dozen of the villagers, each one more crassly stupid than the last. They did not know the gentlemen who hired the shooting, even by sight, they declared. They knew the



Mother dried her tears and told me her story.

keepers. But what had they, the peasants, to do with the sportsmen? There was nothing to be got out of them, for they came to shoot, and shot and went away again, being in a hurry all the while, and therefore it was useless to cultivate their acquaintance.

Even the offer of a "nachaik," a tip, though it awakened the interest of the sleepy rascals, did not seem to stimulate their memories or even their inventive talents. The Russian moujik is the finest and most accomplished liar in the world if you give him time, but you must not hurry him. He is not intellectual enough to conjure up a plausible tale at a moment's notice. However, these men declared that they had seen neither count nor any one else on the Wednesday, and each one asked for a tip on the plea that to cast back one's memory so far was a serious exertion. One man explained that a tip was due to him for his truthfulness. "You can see I'm an honest man," he said, "for if I had lied and said I drove this barin to Balota you would have believed me and given me twice as much as I now ask."

But a short while after I had returned to the lodge, dispirited and bewildered and uncertain what next to do, a little peasant man came mysteriously into the room in which I sat. He bowed and crossed himself in front of the ikon in the corner and then oilily approached my chair and with finger to lip whispered "Sh-h!" Then he glanced melodramatically over his shoulder and back again at me and whispered, "May I speak to you, barin?"

I could scarcely help laughing at the comical little creature. I remembered him perfectly as one of those I had interviewed up at the village a few hours ago. He had sworn that he had never heard of or seen any gentleman answering to my description of my father.

"Speak on by all means," I said, "but no lies, mind!"

"Lord have mercy, barin, would I lie to you?"

"It strikes me you have done so once already, my friend," I said—"that is, if you have anything to tell me now." "Sh-h!" he said, glancing round again. "Not so loud, barin; that was necessary, because others were present who might not hear, but all the while I said to myself, 'When it is safe, and I can see this good barin alone, I will go and tell him all the truth,' and so I

promised myself, so I have performed. Here I am!"

"Very well," I said, "5 rubles if your tale sounds satisfactory, and another 5 if on inquiry it proves to have been true."

The fellow's eyes sparkled. "Glory to the highest!" he said. "Then I am sure of my money."

Then the little rascal spun a most circumstantial tale of how one day, a very short while since—

"Last week?" I interposed.

"Yes, last week, certainly, last week," he said, he had been driving his cart from the fields near the village, when three men in the road called to him to stop. One seemed ill, and the other two supported him. They asked whether he could drive them to Balota, to the post station, and he replied that for a certain sum he would do so, but the sum he mentioned was a large one, because his horse was tired.

"Drive us there in an hour," they said, "and you shall have double that!" Then, glad at heart—for money is scarce in these parts—he drove them quickly to Balota. At the post station they carried the sick man in. Then one came out and gave him the money, four times as much as he had asked, and said that this much was paid him because there were reasons why he should not breathe a word to living man or woman about having driven this party of three to Balota. On the other hand, they would be sure to know if his tongue should wag, and, by all that was sure and terrible, death would be his reward—a sudden and violent death—when he least expected it! My little informant at this point looked so pale and so obviously alarmed at his own temerity in telling me the story that I could not help being impressed by it. Either he spoke the truth or he was a most consummate actor as well as liar.

"Look here, my man," I said, wishing to test him further. "You are very rash. Supposing that I should prove to be the friend of these persons who employed you, sent by them purposely to try the good faith of the man they had trusted by offering a bribe as though from the other side. Why, you would be as good as a dead man and"—

The wretched fellow was on his knees in a moment; tears rushed to his eyes; he groaned and wailed and moaned, crossing himself vehemently and uttering inarticulate words—probably prayers—as unmistakable a picture of abject terror as the eye could see. Real or assumed, his fear took me in at once, and I believed his tale.

(To be Continued.)

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