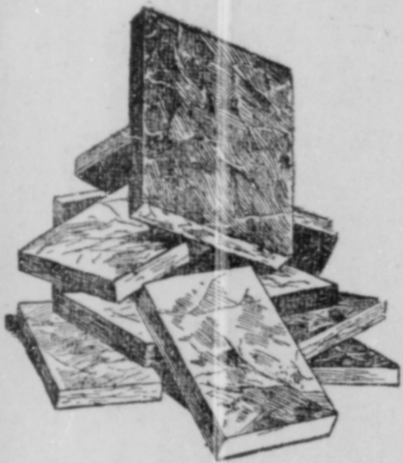


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BY FRED WHISHAW.
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SYNOPSIS.

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 a man who have as he supposes, abducted his father.

"He's like a will o' the wisp," Borofsky complained. "You think you've got him safe in your eye, and, batz!—he's gone—whither? Heaven knows; I don't. Yet he doesn't suspect me. He has never seen me, except in disguise, and not twice in the same. Why is he so suspicious?"

"Bad conscience," said Percy, and I've no doubt he hit the right nail on the head.

One afternoon in November Borofsky came hurriedly into the billiard room, where Percy and I were busy knocking the balls about for want of a better occupation.

"I want your help, both of you," he said. "That confounded young student is in with Andre. When he goes away, we must make another attempt to follow him. I must and will know where he goes. Will you help, both of you?"

Though I did not quite see of what use the addresses of all these rascals were to be to us, excepting as strengthening a case against Andre in the event of our requiring such evidence, I consented to help Borofsky to shadow his will o' the wisp, and so did Percy.

"Good," said Borofsky. "Now, see here. I am going to take up my stand at the corner of the palace bridge. I shall be in disguise. One of you can go toward the Liteynaya, to the right along the quay, and watch in some gateway or porch in case he goes that way. The other should wait until he hears the fellow departing. Keep this door open, and you'll hear him go down into the grand hall. I shall warn the porter to look which way he turns up or down the quay and to let you know the instant you appear. Don't lose a minute, but follow him."

Percy and I tossed up for the choice of duties, and I won. I chose that of shadowing our man from the very door. I preferred a chase to an ambush, having a strong objection to shivering in a gateway in hopes of catching sight of the quarry.

So away went Borofsky to the Dvortsovni Most, or palace bridge, and out sallied Percy to stand and shiver in his porch up Liteynaya way. I sat and read, expectant, prepared to dart forth after my quarry, like a tiger that lies and waits for the native postman just about due (as he knows) to trot through the jungle with the afternoon post; like a spider on the lookout for the fly which is audible, buzzing close at hand, but

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Mrs. Fred Hunt, of Burnt Hills, Saratoga Co., N. Y., says: "I read about Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription being so good for a woman with child, so I got two bottles last September, and December 13th, I had a twelve-pound baby girl. When I was confined I was not sick in any way. I did not suffer any pain, and when the child was born I walked into another room and went to bed. I never had an after-pain or any other pain. This is the eighth child and the largest of them all."

has not yet quite made up its mind to come and be eaten, and like a great many other things too numerous to specify.

At last I heard Andre's door open and shut. There were light steps running quickly down the marble stairs into the hall, the great door was open, and—

and then I was up and after him.

"He's gone to the left," whispered old Gregory, the hall porter, "running like a hare."

Well, if it came to running like a hare, I flattered myself I could probably go one better than any Russian student, will o' the wisp or otherwise, that ever "sprinted a hundred!"

Away I scudded, running on my toes, noiselessly—I had put on a pair of tennis shoes on purpose, for I wished to do my best for poor Borofsky this time. It was nearly dark and a cold evening, very different from an English November evening. There had been a hard frost for a week, and the Neva was covered with rough pack ice. In a day or two the restrictions against crossing the ice world would be removed, and roads would be formed over Neva's bosom in every direction that a short cut to any conceivable spot would justify.

My man had not run far. I saw him pass beneath a lamp 30 yards in front of me, walking quickly. He did not turn to go over the palace bridge, though he appeared to be about to do so and changed his mind. Could he have seen Borofsky? I did, at any rate, and whispered to him as I passed:

"It's all right, Borofsky," I said. "Leave this hunt to me; I'm blood hot!"

Then I continued down the quay, past the admiralty and straight for the English quay and the senate.

There were very few people about. The student hastened along, half running, half walking, and I after him, about 30 yards away, going noiselessly.

Suddenly he turned and saw me, or saw, at any rate, that he was followed. He did not know me by sight. Observing this, the student spurred, going a very fair pace for a Russian, but I easily held my own. He turned and observed that he had gained nothing upon me and, like a wise man, slowed down.

As for me, I did not care whether he liked to be followed or not or what he thought about it. I intended to follow him to the end. I therefore made no attempt to conceal my intention, but just went straight on. I could see that the poor fellow was growing very anxious. He did not like it. He ran into the Admiralty square and dodged round the Great Peter statue and into the Galer-naya, where there were more people and a better chance of giving me the slip, but when he turned to see I was still behind him.

Up the street he ran, or half ran, I after him and almost at his heels, for I was not going to be shaken off in the crowd, and so we reached the top, at the Nicholas palace, close to the great stone bridge of the same name, and over this bridge he made as though he would go.

But suddenly another idea struck him. He turned aside from the bridge and, running quickly down the steps that lead to the water, climbed the "danger" obstruction and got upon the ice with the evident intention of shaking me off by attempting the dangerous and forbidden enterprise of crossing the Neva before the ice had been pronounced safe.

I confess I did not like it. It was too cold and too dark for a bath. There was no particular reason for shadowing this unfortunate little wretch all night, until in desperation he should dart into the squalid hole he called his home. What did his address matter to us? I felt that I was doing a foolish thing. Yet I felt also that I must follow. Not because I expected to gain anything by it, but because the English blood in me was of the real old obstinate, bulldog vintage, I suppose, and I must stick to a thing once undertaken until I had carried it through.

So I followed with scarcely an instant's hesitation, and—well, sometimes the things which appear to be the most foolish turn out to be the wisest. I followed—risking my life—which was so unspeakably valuable to my dear mother, without once reflecting upon that domestic circumstance—and followed in the wisdom of utter foolishness, and—

Away scudded my little will o' the wisp, taking a diagonal line in the direction of the mining corps, which is a good half mile or more from the bridge on the other side, and away scudded I after him.

I could hear him run and pant in front of me, though it was so dark out here in midriver that I could not see him.

We had run, I should think, some 200 or 300 yards over the roughest possible ice that twisted one's ankles and

"BARRER" step when suddenly there was a scream followed instantly by a splash and an agonized cry for help.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RESCUE OF THE STUDENT.

My heart sank. I knew in an instant that I was in for an adventure, a wet and cold one probably, and perhaps a very dangerous one.

I did not feel heroic. I don't think I am made that way, and I honestly avow that if I had thought this wretched student fellow would be sure to get himself out of the water without assistance from me I should gladly have turned at this emergency and gone quietly home.

But unfortunately, or fortunately, my conscience would not hear of it for a moment.

"The little rascal will go under the ice in a minute," it said, "unless you go and pick him out of danger."

I knew my conscience was perfectly correct. One's conscience is about the only thing in this world that is infallible. Conscience is always right and almost always disagreeable and unpleasant.

If we listen to it—as we must in order to preserve that peace of mind without which life is not worth living—if we listen to its whisperings, we are obliged, at times, to do very revolting things and to leave undone many pleasant ones.

On this occasion I felt bound to leave untasted the pleasure of sneaking home, dry and safe, and to undertake the revolting duty of risking my life in order to save this little wretch, now yelling for help, from the watery grave that yawned for him. It was very unpleasant, and I hated doing it, therefore, sarcastic reader, do not imagine that in describing my action, as I must now do, I desire to pass as in the slightest degree heroic. I do not. I have confessed that I would rather have gone home. What I did I was obliged to do, whether I liked it or no, and it was certainly "no."

(To be Continued.)

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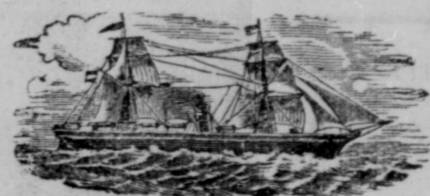
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