

THE WRONG SILK HAT.

(Continued from yesterday.)

III.
One evening, about three weeks later, I was startled by a loud ring of my door-bell. As all the servants had gone to bed I answered the summons myself. My sister-in-law, Albert's wife, nearly fell fainting into my arms. She was pale, breathless and excited.

"Is Albert here?" she gasped, anxiously.

"No, I haven't seen him since Tuesday," I replied, as I led her into the library.

"I wonder where he's got to? I hope nothing's happened to him," she said, apprehensively, as she sank into a seat.

"Why, whatever should make you think anything has happened to him?" I asked.

"It's such an unusual thing for him to stay out without sending a wire or message to say where he is going. And then he never stops out late except when he comes here."

I tried to reassure her, but in vain. I returned with my sister-in-law to her home, and we sat up all night anxiously awaiting Albert's return. But he came not, and the young wife was nearly distracted.

I had gathered from her that my brother had started soon after breakfast for the British Museum, saying he would be home to lunch. I accordingly made inquiries at the Museum, where he was well known, as he was a frequent visitor there. He had spent all the forenoon in the reading-room, and had left about one o'clock. I tried to trace his subsequent movements, but in vain. Where he had gone on leaving the Museum, and what had become of him, was an inscrutable mystery which baffled all my efforts to solve.

Of course, we called in the aid of the police and offered a large reward for information. Hopes were raised once and again, only to be dashed. The police seemed as helpless as our selves.

The long weary days lengthened into weeks, the weeks interminable as they seemed, grew to months, until a whole year passed by. It seemed a century. It made my heart bleed to see the awful effect the sickening suspense was having on my sister-in-law. She was but a shadow of her former self, with scarcely sufficient strength to go from one room to another.

One day, about fifteen months after Albert's strange disappearance, my servant informed me that a lady wished to see me privately. The name on the card the maid handed me was unknown to me, but as the words of "the utmost importance" were added in pencil I decided to see the stranger.

"Monsieur does not remember me, I fear," said the lady in English, but with a decided foreign accent, as I placed a chair for her.

As I gazed into her large black eyes and beheld her smile, I fancied I had seen her before.

"Monsieur will perhaps remember travelling with a lady from St. Petersburg to Vilna, about fifteen months ago?" she added, without waiting for me to reply to her former query.

Fifteen months ago! I recalled the journey perfectly well. Yes. It was my fair vis-a-vis who was before me.

"Yes, I remember now," I replied.

"Monsieur no doubt also remembers that I was detained—what you call it?—arrested at Vilna?" she continued.

"Yes, I remember that too."

"And monsieur will remember falling asleep, and when he woke I had his hat in my hand?"

"Yes, I do. What has this to do with your visit?" I queried, rather impatiently, for her garrulity was beginning to bore me.

"Everything," she returned. "Zat affair of ze hat has been ze means of bringing all this misfortune on monsieur. Yes, monsieur, I am ze cause—ze innocent cause of all your trouble."

"I don't understand, mademoiselle," I said.

"But if monsieur will bear with me and listen to my explanation he will understand all."

I nodded assent, not knowing what to say.

"Monsieur thinks, doubtless, zat I am a revolutionary. It is true zat I was a member of ze brotherhood. But I was not a free agent. My father forced me to join when I was young—before I understood what it meant. I was his tool, his blind, willing tool at first, but afterwards—ah, good heavens! What have I not suffered!"

I was moved. The feeling of aversion I had at first experienced faded away.

"But I have not come to talk about myself, but about monsieur's brother," she went on, after a pause, during which she had mastered her emotion.

"My brother!" I exclaimed. "You know something about him? Good heavens. You don't mean to say that he's got into the clutches of your diabolical society?"

"Yes and no. Yes to the first question. No to your second."

"Then for heaven's sake tell me what you know."

"Monsieur's brother is in the prison of St. Peter and St. Paul, at St. Petersburg."

I stared at my visitor in speechless amazement.

"My brother in a Russian prison?" I gasped.

"Surely, mademoiselle, you are—"

"Alas, no. I am not mistook. Let monsieur listen. Then he can judge for himself if I am mistook or not. My arrest at Vilna, which monsieur witnessed, was because I was suspected of being the bearer of some important secret despatches to the fraternity at Berlin. I had the despatches in my possession when I left St. Petersburg, but I had a—what you call it?—a sort of presentiment that I was being watched—shadowed, in fact. Fearing ze consequences if ze despatches should be found on my person, I put them between ze silk lining and outer covering of your hat while you were dozing. That accounts for your seeing your hat in my hand."

"Yes, yes. Please go on."

"Well, as monsieur knows, I was detained at Vilna and searched; but as nothing was found on me I was soon liberated. On my arrival in Berlin I made known to ze branch there what I had done with ze despatches. As I had carefully noted your name and address, ze recovery of ze papers seemed to us an easy task. But in this we were disappointed. Word was sent to ze friends in London, and one of our society, disguised as a parson, paid you a call, and while waiting in ze hall examined, as he supposed, ze inside of your hat. To his dismay ze papers were not there."

"Go on, please," I said, eager to hear the rest.

"At first it was feared that you had extracted ze papers and sent them to ze police," she continued. "Accordingly, you were carefully watched and all precautions taken. But a second attempt to get temporary possession of your hat was made, for as ze self-styled parson had been interrupted it was thought he might in his haste have overlooked ze despatches. This time it was noticed that ze initials 'A. M. T.' inside ze hat were not identical with yours."

"This helped us to solve the riddle. It then dawned upon us that there had been an exchange of hats. Someone—A. M. T., doubtless—had most likely taken your hat in mistake for his own. It was our business to find out who A. M. T. was. We soon found out—it is not necessary for me to say how—that it was monsieur's brother."

"Ze third attempt to get ze despatches was successful."

"You refer to the incident in Regent's Park?"

"Yes. Well, about a month later, we heard of ze disappearance of monsieur's brother. Henski, ze companion of ze man who knocked Monsieur Tollemache's hat off in ze park, disappeared ze same day. Though we were struck by ze coincidence, we did not think ze was any real connection between ze two disappearances."

"And was there?"

"Yes. Henski, who effected his escape has just brought us ze news that monsieur's brother was kidnapped by Russian spies at ze same time as himself."

"Kidnapped!—in London! Impossible!" I cried. "In Russia such things may be. But here, in England in the twentieth century, such things are impossible. No man dare—"

"Monsieur does not know the Russian spies. They dare anything."

"But my brother has committed no crime—nothing that they could—"

"I have heard that Monsieur Tollemache joined a debating society in Moscow for ze purpose of perfecting his Russian," interposed my interlocutrice. "Also that he openly expressed his sympathy with ze Stundists. Add to this that he appeared to be on friendly terms with Henski; zat is quite enough."

"I never heard my brother mention the name," I protested.

"Zat may well be. Henski met monsieur's brother twice accidentally subsequent to ze hat affair. Ze second occasion was in one of your parks. It was then they were kidnapped. Ze spot was little frequented. Ze spies had a carriage waiting. No time was lost in getting Monsieur Tollemache and Henski on board a Russian ship lying in ze Tamise. Ah! It was not necessaire for Henski to tell us how it was done. We know their methods."

"Good heavens! Can this be true?" I cried to myself rather than to my visitor.

"I am sorry monsieur doubt me, but I am not surprised. Monsieur can, however, put me to the test. He can find out through ze British Ambassador whether Monsieur Albert is in ze prison at St. Petersburg or no."

I reflected that such was the case, and decided that I would accept the girl's challenge. I set to work at once and found, after considerable delay, caused by red tapism, that my brother Albert was really incarcerated in the celebrated St. Petersburg prison.

How to effect his release now became my one supreme object. For—

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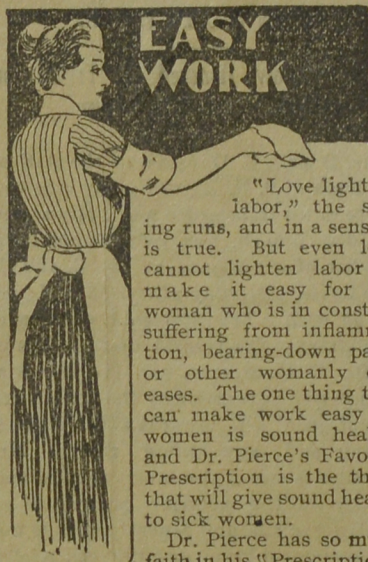
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Unfortunately Lady Agard, the Foreign Secretary's daughter, was one of my patients. I was sure, therefore, of having the powerful co-operation of the Foreign Secretary.

When he promised to do his utmost for me I knew that all that could possibly be done, short of actually going to war with Russia, would be done.

I was not disappointed. A month later I received the joyful intelligence that my brother Albert had been liberated.

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Sealed tenders, addressed to the undersigned, and marked on the outside "Tender for Coal House, Sydney," will be received up to and including

SATURDAY, THE 2ND DAY OF JULY, 1904,

For the construction of a Coal House with Hoisting Machinery at SYDNEY, N. S.

Plans and specification may be seen at the Station Master's office, Sydney, N. S., and at the office of the Chief Engineer, Moncton, N. B., where forms of tender may be obtained. All the conditions of the specification must be complied with.

D. POTTINGER,

General Manager.

Railway Office, Moncton, N. B.,

15th June, 1904.

June 18—d111

INTERCOLONIAL RAILWAY.

TENDER FOR BUILDING.

Sealed tenders, addressed to the undersigned, and marked on the outside "Tender for Building, Ste. Flavie," will be received up to and including

MONDAY, THE 4TH DAY OF JULY, 1904,

For the construction of a Wooden Building at STE. FLAVIE, P. Q.

Plans and specification may be seen at the Station Master's office, Ste. Flavie, P. Q., and at the office of the Chief Engineer, Moncton, N. B., where forms of tender may be obtained. All the conditions of the specification must be complied with.

D. POTTINGER,

General Manager.

Railway Office, Moncton, N. B.,

17th June, 1904

may 21—d91

Sealed tenders addressed to the undersigned, and endorsed "Tender for Campbellton Wharf," will be received at this office until Friday, July 8, 1904, inclusively, for the construction of a deep water wharf at Campbellton, Restigouche County, N. B., according to a plan and a specification to be seen at the offices of E. T. P. Shewan, Esq., Resident Engineer, St. John, N. B., Geoffrey Stead, Esq., Resident Engineer, Chatham, N. B., on application to the Postmaster at Campbellton, N. B., and at the Department of Public Works, Ottawa.

Tenders will not be considered unless made on the printed form supplied, and signed with the actual signatures of tenderers.

An accepted cheque on a chartered bank, payable to the order of the Honourable the Minister of Public Works, for four thousand dollars (\$4,000.00), must accompany each tender. The cheque will be forfeited if the party tendering decline the contract or fail to complete the work contracted for, and will be returned in case of non-acceptance of tender.

The Department does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any tender.

By order,

FRED. GELINAS,

Secretary.

Department of Public Works,

Ottawa, June 9, 1904.

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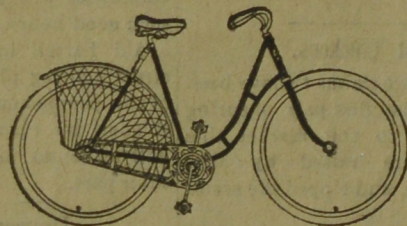
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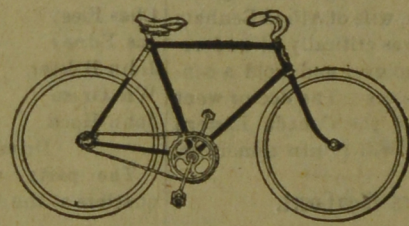
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