THE MYSTERY CLEARED UP;

OR, THE HERITAGE OF MADAME YALTA.

CHAPTER III.—(Cont'd)

"Perhaps, too, he does not believe you will carry out your threat."

"Yes; these French always imagine it is impossible to treat them like simple mortals, and that one would not dare to act here as one would in St. Petersburg. But I charge myself with undeceiving him. You will get ready the rolling prison that serves for these transports, and when he sees it all drawn up he will decide, perhaps, to speak."

"The question is whether he has really anything to confess," said Vacili, timidly.

"Do you doubt it?"

"Your excellency, I should not allow myself to entertain a different opinion from my master, but if you will deign to hear my reasons—"

"Speak, I consent."

"First, is it likely that any one in league with Nihilists would so easily have fallen into the trap I laid for him? The rascals of that sect do not dream of embarking for America."

"I have not said he was a regularly enrolled Nihilist. Firstly, he is not Russian; he is merely a simpleton whom one of their infernal women has seduced."

"Your excellency forgets that he loved the daughter of M. Dorgeres."

"Did he not rob me of my papers on the very day he was dismissed by the banker? On that day he listened to the voice of a woman who had been his mistress. She promised him her protection in foreign parts, and he was content with the fifty thousand francs taken from the safe."

"Unless it was sent to him as he asserts."

"Bah! This person who suddenly remembers an old debt is a very improbable character."

"However it may be, your excellency, this accomplice of M. de Carnoel it has been impossible to find."

"Because the search has not been well made. The information I have recently received from the chief of the third section is very incomplete. There are obscure women whom no one has thought of as managing and arranging these plots. They knew that my casket contained the whole plan of my mission, all my correspondence with the general and the minister."

"What is extraordinary is that they should have been aware of the depositing of the casket with your banker."

"Informed by the secretary, no doubt."

"Your excellency, I have made a minute inquest concerning the life led by the young man, and it is certain that he did not associate with a single Russian. I have gone so far as to obtain information concerning this Countess Yalta, who has funds deposited at M. Dorgeres and I am satisfied that he has never seen her."

"Oh, the Yalta has no connection with Nihilists. I have pointed her out to the department. She has been watched very closely, and it is certain that she is not engaged in politics. Her father was a kind of Circassian prince, who sold his principality to the emperor for several millions of rubles. The daughter married some other dispossessed lord, who soon left her a widow. She left Russia in her childhood, and has since only thought of her pleasures. Let us leave her and return to the Frenchman. I must decide what course to take. His month of probation will end tomorrow. I must, before giving it up, make one more attempt. I saw the banker yesterday, and he told me that the time of his daughter's marriage was fixed. We shall see what the prisoner will say to this disastrous intelligence. It is the ruin of his last hopes. What do you say to my idea, Vacili?"

"Your excellency, I confess another has occurred to me."

"Let us have it."

"I start from a principle you have just laid down, that the young man will keep silence to the end for fear of the vengeance of the Nihilists. I have more than once been disposed to regret his capture. Do you not think that had he remained free he would have compromised himself by some imprudent act?"

"Yes," murmured the colonel, "we were perhaps too hasty. Unfortunately it is too late to retrace our steps. This Carnoel is forewarned. He would not be so foolhardy as to visit his accomplices, or rather his accomplice, for am convinced it is only a woman."

"Your excellency," said Vacili, with embarrassment, "there is still time to have recourse to a means you have overlooked. I believe it would be better to restore M. de Carnoel to liberty."

"To release the Frenchman! You are mad, Vacili."

"Pardon me, your excellency. I have reflected much on the situation and I see no other means of discovering M. de Carnoel's accomplices."

"You forget that his first care would be to avenge himself on me. He would enter a complaint for arbitrary sequestration."

"Your excellency, I do not believe it. It would compel him to enter into explanations which he would rather avoid. Besides, you could exact a promise of silence. If he gave you his word of honor he would keep it."

"I admit that he will not complain to the authorities, but if he sees Mlle. Dorgeres or writes to her, which is infinitely probable, he will naturally be led to explain why he did not appear for a month."

"Your excellency, I know him, I have studied him. If he promises you silence he will be silent even with Mlle. Dorgeres."

"But you forget there was some one who saw the Frenchman enter this house."

"Your excellency alludes to the child who came to ask for him the day I brought him here. The child's conduct proved that he suspected something, and I should have watched him closely, but I learned next morning that there was nothing more to fear. He was picked up half-dead on the boulevard. What happened to him is not known, but I suspect he was trying to scale the garden wall and fell. What is certain is that he is an idiot and will never speak of what he knows."

"I am not too sure of that. He might get well. And it is very extraordinary that a groom should have risked his neck to ascertain what had become of the banker's ex-secretary. Who knows if this chap hadn't something to do with the theft. You ought to have made an inquest."

"Your excellency, it has been done, and I have ascertained positively that it was a mere chance. Fortunately he broke his head before he had time to babble. And the proof is that during this month no attempt has been made to deliver M. de Carnoel."

The door opened and a valet de pied entered, bearing a card on a silver waiter.

"Who is it?" asked the colonel, with a gesture of impatience. "I have said I should receive no one."

"Your excellency, this gentleman insisted, saying that he came on pressing business."

M. Borisoff took the card, and read with astonishment the name of his visitor.

"Ask him into the salon" he said to the valet de pied.

When alone with his steward: "Do you know who asks for me? It is the nephew of the banker Dorgeres. I do not know him. What can he want with me?"

"Your excellency, perhaps the young man was sent to you by his uncle."

"Very likely; but for what? It is singular that he appears just as we were speaking of the secretary. Say to the head of the stables to make ready my travelling-carriage at all events. It is by no means certain that I shall decide to release our man."

The intendant bowed profoundly, and left the room backward

After dismissing him, M. Borisoff rose from the divan and passed into the neighboring salon.

He found Maxime Dorgeres standing by a window, and by the expression of his countenance judged that his errand was of a grave nature It was not the first time he had seen the banker's nephew, but had never spoken to him, and their meeting would have been cold enough but for the colonel.

"Monsieur," he said, "before inquiring what has brought you, permit me to congratulate myself on your visit. M. Dorgeres has frequently spoken of you, and have regretted that I had not the pleasure of your acquaintance."

"I am obliged to you, sir," replied Maxime, coldly; "but when you learn why I have come—"

"Tell me something of M. Dorgeres. I have not seen him for some days."

"I do not come on his behalf I—"

"How is his lovely daughter? Is it true that her marriage day is fixed?"

"I do not know, sir, and I have something else to talk about."

This was said in so dry a tone and so serious an air that the colonel immediately changed his attitude and language.

"Then, sir, be kind enough to explain yourself," he said, haughtily. "I thought you wished to pay me a friendly visit. It seems I was mistaken; but I cannot guess what you have to say to me."

"I have to ask what has become of M. de Carnoel," replied Maxime, looking fixedly at M. Borisoff.

It must have been that the colonel was gifted with a sang froid that was invincible, for he replied without betraying himself:

"You wish to know what has become to M. de Carnoel, who was employed, I believe, with M. Dorgeres, my banker?"

"Yes," replied Maxime.

"Well, I wish to know why you address yourself to me, who had no relations with this gentleman. I saw him, I believe, once in M. Dorgeres' office, and did not speak to him."

"It is possible, but subsequently you were much occupied with him."

"Be good enough to explain yourself more clearly."

"Willingly. I need not say that M de Carnoel left my uncle's house the evening the safe was robbed. A casket was taken belonging to you, and M. de Carnoel was accused of the theft."

"It is true. But it was agreed that this should be kept secret, and I am astonished that M. Dorgeres has related it to you."

"No matter, I know it; and I know also that you charged yourself with discovering M. de Carnoel."

"I engaged your uncle not to lodge a complaint. It would be offensive to me to have my name mixed up with judicial inquests. M. Dorgeres yielded to my view, and begged me to make use of my diplomatic relations for the discovery of the wretch who had robbed him. Unfortunately the researches ended in nothing. M. de Carnoel went into Brittany, and after his return to Paris could not be traced further. It is likely he has left France. But you know all this, since you are so well informed, and I cannot sufficiently express my surprise at such a proceeding. It is not, I presume, your uncle who has recommended it"

"No, sir; I have consulted no one but have acted with a perfect knowledge of the facts, and I demand once more an answer to my question: 'What has become of M. de Carnoel?'"

"Do you ask me this seriously?"

"Very seriously."

"It is so strange that I might take it in bad part, but I content myself with saying that I have already answered you. M. de Carnoel is in foreign parts, I have every reason to suppose."

"M. de Carnoel is in Paris."

"How do you know?"

"I have seen him."

"When?"

"A month ago."

"Very possibly; but in a month he has had time to cross the frontier, and even the seas."

"I saw him pass near here in a carriage, which went toward Monceaux Park."

"It is to be regretted you did not follow it. We might have known where it conducted M. de Carnoel."

"I did not follow it, but some one saw it again afterward."

"Ah! really! and where did it go?"

"It went to the Rue de Vigny, it stopped before your house, the gate opened, the carriage entered—"

"What! here!" cried M. Borisoff. "Ah! this is too much, and I am amazed you should attach importance to so absurd an invention."

"It is no invention. The person who saw it made no mistake."

"So," replied the colonel, feigning to suppress a strong inclination to laugh, "you believe that this secretary, after having been sent off and accused of theft, has made me a visit. It was probably for the purpose of returning my casket."

"I do not suppose he came here voluntarily."

"Then I kidnapped him in the midst of Paris and in full light of day? And for what purpose may I ask"

"I cannot say, sir, but I know that M. de Carnoel has been brought to your house, and that he must be still there."

(To be continued.)

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The Traders Bank has in the past paid particular attention to Ontario business and the fact that it has covered the Ontario field most thoroughly is shown in the great number of branches in the Province. Now, however, their operations are rapidly extending in Western Canada, and fifteen branches have been established at important points. We understand that the most gratifying results have come to the Bank from the new territory thus opened as well as from the new offices opened in Toronto and other parts of Ontario. The business public is not slow to show its appreciation of the economical management and the conservative progressiveness of this flourishing Bank and on the other hand the Directors have felt justified in increasing the annual dividend to an eight per cent. basis.

The detailed statement of the business for the year ending 31st De ember, 1909, was presented at the Annual Shareholders meeting held at the Head Office, Toronto, on Tuesday of last week.

We notice that from the profits of the year, after making the usual deductions and the usual conditional allowances, there were paid three quarterly dividends at the rate of 7 per cent, per annum and one at the rate of eight per cent. The sum of $200,000 was added to the rest account, bringing the total up to $2,200,000, and $102,443.40 was placed to the credit of profit and loss account. There has been a very satisfactory growth in deposits; these show an increase of $4,420,000, or 17.44 per cent. over the increase of the preceding year, the present year beginning with a total of $29,813,194. The circulation also showed a large increase, the average being about $2,500,000, though during the year it reached the highest figures in the history of the bank—namely, $3,543,000. There is a very large increase in the assets of the bank as compared with the previous year. The increase in this respect was $5,104,000, as against an increase in 1908 of $1,139,000. The assets of the bank now total $39,963,996.11. A decided increase is reported in business connections as well as an expansion of operations represented by the opening of twelve new branches. The report shows a healthy condition of the business of the bank, a strengthening of its resources, and a decided advance in all departments.

Mr. Stuart Strathy, the General Manager, in his address, said that the Bank's ramifications have been extended during the past year by the opening of several new branches. Amongst the most important he mentioned Montreal and Vancouver. The Bank's growing business demanded the occupation of these important points, and the growth of the Provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta has induced the Directors to increase the Bank's sphere of influence in those Provinces.

The Vice-President, the Hon. J. R. Stratton, said at the last Annual Meeting the statement was made that for 1909 great progress might be looked for. He was delighted to say that this statement has been fully verified. The Bank has made, so far as he was aware, absolutely no bad debts during the year, except in the few small accounts which may yet be realized. The whole twelve months present a record of credits well observed, debts promptly paid, and no losses.

One of the best investments of the Bank continues to be the Head Office Building. Every foot of rentable space is occupied, and the rents are promptly paid. After paying all outgoings, the Bank receives nearly 5½ per cent. net profit on the investment, or, to be exact, 5.40 per cent. Rents appear to be increasing, notwithstanding the many new office buildings, and with the Bank's equipment and accommodation for tenants, there need be no fear as to the future revenue from this source. The other buildings also yield a good return and promise well for the future.

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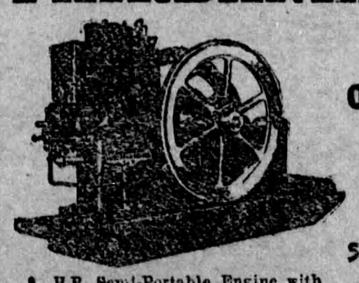

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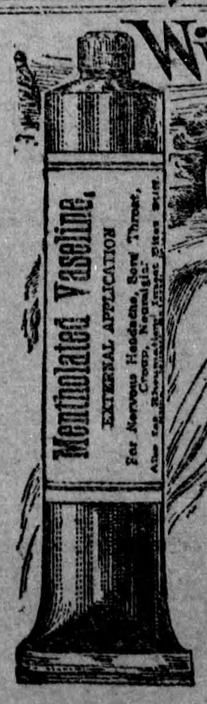

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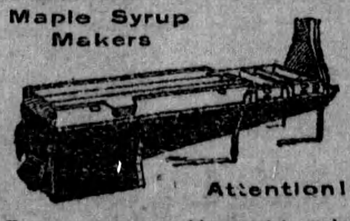

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