

## *A Diplomatic Adventure*

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"Better not," said Merton. "My wife's share should not, even now, be told."

"You are right," said the countess, "quite right. But how did it occur to you, Madame Merton, to use the ashes as you did?"

"Let me answer," said the colonel. "Any American would know how completely ashes are non-conductors of heat. I knew of their use on one occasion in our Civil War to hide and preserve the safe-conduct of a spy."

"And," said I, "their protective power explains some of the so-called miracles when, as in Japan, men walk over what seems to be a bed of glowing red-hot coals."

"How stupid the losing side appears," said the count, "when one hears all of both sides!"

"But," asked the countess, "how did you get the papers to London? It seems a simple thing, but my husband will tell you that never have there been such extreme measures taken as in this case. The emperor was furi-