

pression. "What manner of father is this that leaves his woman-child to the tender raising of the Swampy Sioux? Now, see you! While buying furs for the Nor'westers ten years ago I came on the girl by chance. Like a fair lily, she had flowered in the muck of an Indian camp, and to protect her tender growth, I stayed and made her people my people. It was my gun, my traps that supplied the teepee of the old squaw, her mother, in the years that the deer failed and a murrain took the rabbits. I nursed, tended her through the fevers of childhood. But for me she would have been the broken mother of a squalid brood at the age that a white child begins her schooling; but because of the tie of blood between us I waited the appointed years before I took her into my teepee. Who then has the right of her—who protected her growth? You, who left her to brute chance?"

I saw Mr. Temple wince at the squalid chance he mentioned and he gravely answered: "Your kindness has earned a reply. To your charge I can only say that until five days ago I was ignorant of her existence. I am not unaware that nature punishes ignorance more heavily than folly, and I can never be sufficiently grateful for the part you played in my stead. Still, in convicting me of remissness, you but double my sense of present duty. Enter our service and your advancement will be measured only by your abilities. But as for leaving her with you—that were too high a price. From here she goes to Montreal to be educated—"

"Oui!" the breed hotly interrupted.

"You will prison her within stone walls—she who has had only the wide prairies for her chamber, the stars for a night-light, the wind for her lullaby. Then I say that your present intention is even more cruel than your past neglect. You spoke of your law, and I tell of a higher—the law of the wild that governed her growth. Can you graft a grown tree? Train a prairie rose into a garden bloom? She is a woman grown. When you say that I must give her up, I answer that her head has pillowed on my shoulder for this year. I will not—if she asked it herself—and will you try her?"

Mr. Temple shook his head in a grave pity. "I might—three years from now. Come!" He thrust out a friendly hand. "Come, see the sense of this. At Fort York we need a factor—"

Stepping, the breed spat on the frozen scalp. "And you would make of me such another? To York, I may go; aye, and to Churchill, La Trappe, Winnipegos; to every tribe between the Red and the Rockies. But—for your fair words I give fair warning—it will be to turn their trade to the Nor'westers."

Through all Mr. Fraser had listened impatiently. Now he broke in. "Pish! Did I not say that he would be the better of a little hanging? To the gates with him!"

"No, no." Once more the governor shook his head. "No, I am too heavily his debtor. I shall ask you only to detain him with every courtesy for the next three weeks."

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

MYSTERIOUS COLONEL DROUSKI

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16.

that you do not attract suspicion to yourself.

Colonel Drouski drove hurriedly back to the Hotel Der Grosse.

"Mr. Rubitini 'as gone to 'is room," Hawkins advised the Colonel.

"He has had no message?" Drouski asked.

"None whatever."

"You will kindly accompany me to Mr. Rubitini's room; I wish to speak with him."

When they reached the fourteenth floor Colonel Drouski said: "A page will present my card to Mr. Rubitini in his room, I shall enter at once, and you might remain in close attendance by the door, Mr. Hawkins."

Barely waiting Mr. Rubitini's invitation, Colonel Drouski entered the latter's room, closing the door behind him. Somewhat curiously the Colonel's right hand rested in a pocket of his coat. As he turned the light struck upon his face, and Rubitini, who had taken a step forward to meet his guest, recoiled and involuntarily raised his hand as though he held a rapier at guard. Then a smile flitted over his lips and, bowing with mock deference, he sneered: "Colonel Drouski—" he flipped the card he held insolently to the floor. "You will forgive me, mon brave Colonel, if I fail to associate the name with a past acquaintance-ship. May I ask why Nicholas does me the honour of a visit at this hour—Nicholas, whom I thought at this hour with his moujiks?"

"I have brought a letter from a lady which, when you have read it, we will discuss, Alexis." Colonel Drouski extended the letter with a full sweep of his long arm. There was a weariness in his movement which did not escape Rubitini, who muttered in a sibilant sneer, "Mon brave Colonel, you are nervous—come, excitement causes your hand to tremble."

He turned to the light above his dresser, tore the envelope, and Drouski saw his face pale as he perused its contents.

Colonel Drouski stood with his back against the door, waiting in impassive silence as the other read the letter twice. Presently Rubitini, placing it upon the dresser, turned, saying: "Nicholas—pardon, Colonel Drouski—has lost none of his old cunning; he always played with loaded dice, and—need I say it—always won."

"Against such as Signor Rubitini—always, yes," Drouski responded in an unruffled tone of voice. "I have your letter to Countess Boskovitch—I have the Baron's ring and the lady has confessed—"

"Nicholas still seeks to rival Ananias," Rubitini interrupted with a sneer.

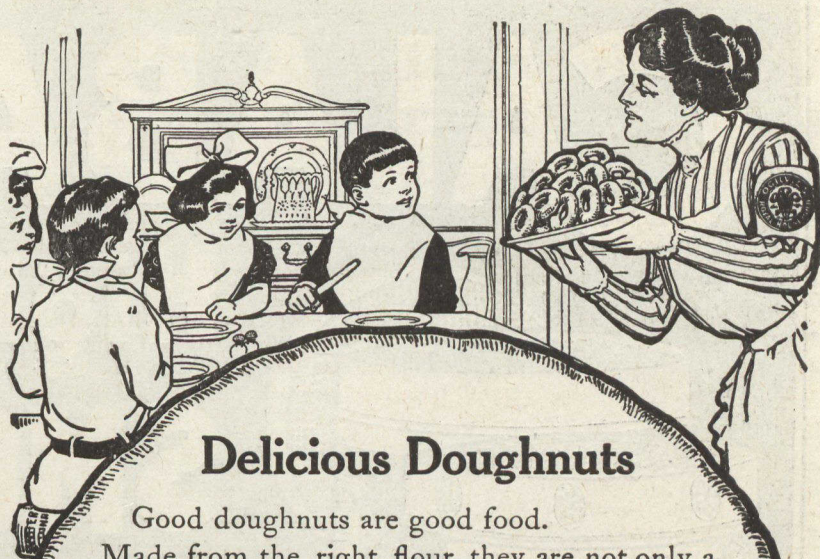
Colonel Drouski continued as though the other had not spoken: "Presently I shall leave you for a brief space while I call an officer; you will be arrested, Alexis, and undoubtedly hanged for the murder of—"

"Karl Pffer," the other interrupted.

"Yes, the Baron. And Little Mannon, as accomplice, will be sent to the American Siberia. There are certain names that are never registered against such as are hanged for murder."

As Colonel Drouski spoke, Rubitini seemed measuring him as if for a spring; there was a stealthy, panther-like droop of the shoulders, a crouching forward on the toes, the lips were curled in a snarl.

Drouski saw it and said quietly: "It is quite useless, Alexis; you have no chance—no chance. For the move you meditate here is checkmated." The Colonel's hand that had rested idly in his pocket now showed the cold blue of a pistol barrel.



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