

## IX. SHERLOCK HOLMES ARRIVES TOO LATE

“It is really remarkable, Vermont, what a close resemblance you bear to Arsène Lupin!”

“How do you know?”

“Oh! like everyone else, from photographs, no two of which are alike, but each of them leaves the impression of a face... something like yours.”

Horace Vermont displayed some vexation.

“Quite so, my dear Devanne. And, believe me, you are not the first one who has noticed it.”

“It is so striking,” persisted Devanne, “that if you had not been recommended to me by my cousin d’Estevan, and if you were not the celebrated artist whose beautiful marine views I so admire, I have no doubt I should have warned the police of your presence in Dieppe.”

This sally was greeted with an outburst of laughter. The large dining-hall of the Château de Thibermesnil contained on this occasion, besides Vermont, the following guests: Father Gélis, the parish priest, and a dozen officers whose regiments were quartered in the vicinity and who had accepted the invitation of the banker Georges Devanne and his mother. One of the officers then remarked:

“I understand that an exact description of Arsène Lupin has been furnished to all the police along this coast since his daring exploit on the Paris-Havre express.”

“I suppose so,” said Devanne. “That was three months ago; and a week later, I made the acquaintance of our friend Velmont at the casino, and, since then, he has honored me with several visits—an agreeable preamble to a more serious visit that he will pay me one of these days—or, rather, one of these nights.”

This speech evoked another round of laughter, and the guests then passed into the ancient “Hall of the Guards,” a vast room with a high ceiling, which occupied the entire lower part of the Tour Guillaume—William’s Tower—and wherein Georges Devanne had collected the incomparable treasures which the lords of Thibermesnil had accumulated through many centuries. It contained ancient chests, credences, andirons and chandeliers. The stone walls were overhung with magnificent tapestries. The deep embrasures of the four windows were furnished with benches, and the Gothic windows were composed of small panes of colored glass set in a leaden frame. Between the door and the window to the left stood an immense bookcase of Renaissance style, on the pediment of which, in letters of gold, was the word “Thibermesnil,” and, below it, the proud family device: “Fais ce que veulx” (Do what thou wishest). When the guests had lighted their cigars, Devanne resumed the conversation.

“And remember, Velmont, you have no time to lose; in fact, to-night is the last chance you will have.”

“How so?” asked the painter, who appeared to regard the affair as a joke. Devanne was about to reply, when his mother mentioned to him to keep silent, but the excitement of the occasion and a desire to interest his guests urged him to speak.

“Bah!” he murmured. “I can tell it now. It won’t do any harm.”

The guests drew closer, and he commenced to speak with the satisfied air of a man who has an important announcement to make.

“To-morrow afternoon at four o’clock, Sherlock Holmes, the famous English detective, for whom such a thing as mystery does not exist; Sherlock Holmes, the most remarkable solver of enigmas the world has ever known, that marvelous man who would seem to be the creation of a romantic novelist—Sherlock Holmes will be my guest!”

Immediately, Devanne was the target of numerous eager questions. “Is Sherlock Holmes really coming?” “Is it so serious as that?” “Is Arsène Lupin really in this neighborhood?”

“Arsène Lupin and his band are not far away. Besides the robbery of the Baron Cahorn, he is credited with the thefts at Montigny, Gruchet and Crasville.”

“Has he sent you a warning, as he did to Baron Cahorn?”

“No,” replied Devanne, “he can’t work the same trick twice.”

“What then?”

“I will show you.”

He rose, and pointing to a small empty space between the two enormous folios on one of the shelves of the bookcase, he said:

“There used to be a book there—a book of the sixteenth century entitled ‘Chronique de Thibermesnil,’ which contained the history of the castle since its construction by Duke Rollo on the site of a former feudal fortress. There were three engraved plates in the book; one of which was a general view of the whole estate; another, the plan of the buildings; and the third—I call your attention to it, particularly—the third was the sketch of a subterranean passage, an entrance to which is outside the first line of ramparts, while the other end of the passage is here, in this very room. Well, that book disappeared a month ago.”

“The deuce!” said Vermont, “that looks bad. But it doesn’t

seem to be a sufficient reason for sending for Sherlock Holmes.”

“Certainly, that was not sufficient in itself, but another incident happened that gives the disappearance of the book a special significance. There was another copy of this book in the National Library at Paris, and the two books differed in certain details relating to the subterranean passage; for instance, each of them contained drawings and annotations, not printed, but written in ink and more or less effaced. I knew those facts, and I knew that the exact location of the passage could be determined only by a comparison of the two books. Now, the day after my book disappeared, the book was called for in the National Library by a reader who carried it away, and no one knows how the theft was effected.”

The guests uttered many exclamations of surprise.

“Certainly, the affair looks serious,” said one.

“Well, the police investigated the matter, and, as usual, discovered no clue whatever.”

“They never do, when Arsène Lupin is concerned in it.”

“Exactly; and so I decided to ask the assistance of Sherlock Holmes, who replied that he was ready and anxious to enter the lists with Arsène Lupin.”

“What glory for Arsène Lupin!” said Velmont. “But if our national thief, as they call him, has no evil designs on your castle, Sherlock Holmes will have his trip in vain.”

“There are other things that will interest him, such as the discovery of the subterranean passage.”

“But you told us that one end of the passage was outside the ramparts and the other was in this very room!”

“Yes, but in what part of the room? The line which represents the passage on the charts ends here, with a small circle

“Yes, he is a clever man, but some day I shall have the pleasure of

placing on his shoulder the hand I now offer to you, Monsieur Devanne.

And I believe that Arsène Lupin and Sherlock Holmes will meet again

some day. Yes, the world is too small—we will meet—we must meet—and

then—”

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—The further startling and thrilling adventures of Arsène Lupin will be

found in the book entitled “Arsène Lupin versus Herlock Sholmes.”—

advantage of chance opportunities, I create them.”

But time pressed, and since Lupin had been so kind as to send the automobile, they resolved to profit by it. They seated themselves in the comfortable limousine; Edouard took his place at the wheel, and away they went toward the railway station. Suddenly, Devanne’s eyes fell upon a small package in one of the pockets of the carriage.

“Ah! what is that? A package! Whose is it? Why, it is for you.”

“For me?”

“Yes, it is addressed: Sherlock Holmes, from Arsène Lupin.”

The Englishman took the package, opened it, and found that it contained a watch.

“Ah!” he exclaimed, with an angry gesture.

“A watch,” said Devanne. “How did it come there?”

The detective did not reply.

“Oh! it is your watch! Arsène Lupin returns your watch! But, in order to return it, he must have taken it. Ah! I see! He took your watch! That is a good one! Sherlock Holmes’ watch stolen by Arsène Lupin! Mon Dieu! that is funny! Really... you must excuse me....I can’t help it.”

He roared with laughter, unable to control himself. After which, he said, in a tone of earnest conviction:

“A clever man, indeed!”

The Englishman never moved a muscle. On the way to Dieppe, he never spoke a word, but fixed his gaze on the flying landscape. His silence was terrible, unfathomable, more violent than the wildest rage. At the railway station, he spoke calmly, but in a voice that impressed one with the vast energy and will power of that famous man. He said:

marked with the letters ‘T.G.’ which no doubt stand for ‘Tour Guillaume.’ But the tower is round, and who can tell the exact spot at which the passage touches the tower?”

Devanne lighted a second cigar and poured himself a glass of Benedictine. His guests pressed him with questions and he was pleased to observe the interest that his remarks had created. The he continued:

“The secret is lost. No one knows it. The legend is to the effect that the former lords of the castle transmitted the secret from father to son on their deathbeds, until Geoffroy, the last of the race, was beheaded during the Revolution in his nineteenth year.”

“That is over a century ago. Surely, someone has looked for it since that time?”

“Yes, but they failed to find it. After I purchased the castle, I made a diligent search for it, but without success. You must remember that this tower is surrounded by water and connected with the castle only by a bridge; consequently, the passage must be underneath the old moat. The plan that was in the book in the National Library showed a series of stairs with a total of forty-eight steps, which indicates a depth of more than ten meters. You see, the mystery lies within the walls of this room, and yet I dislike to tear them down.”

“Is there nothing to show where it is?”

“Nothing.”

“Mon. Devanne, we should turn our attention to the two quotations,” suggested Father Gélis.

“Oh!” exclaimed Mon. Devanne, laughing, “our worthy father is fond of reading memoirs and delving into the musty archives of the castle. Everything relating to Thibermesnil interests him greatly. But the quotations that he mentions only

serve to complicate the mystery. He has read somewhere that two kings of France have known the key to the puzzle.”

“Two kings of France! Who were they?”

“Henry the Fourth and Louis the Sixteenth. And the legend runs like this: On the eve of the battle of Arques, Henry the Fourth spent the night in this castle. At eleven o’clock in the evening, Louise de Tancarville, the prettiest woman in Normandy, was brought into the castle through the subterranean passage by Duke Edgard, who, at the same time, informed the king of the secret passage. Afterward, the king confided the secret to his minister Sully, who, in turn, relates the story in his book, “Royales Economies d’Etat,” without making any comment upon it, but linking with it this incomprehensible sentence: “Turn one eye on the bee that shakes, the other eye will lead to God!”

After a brief silence, Vermont laughed and said:

“Certainly, it doesn’t throw a dazzling light upon the subject.”

“No; but Father Gélis claims that Sully concealed the key to the mystery in this strange sentence in order to keep the secret from the secretaries to whom he dictated his memoirs.”

“That is an ingenious theory,” said Vermont.

“Yes, and it may be nothing more; I cannot see that it throws any light on the mysterious riddle.”

“And was it also to receive the visit of a lady that Louis the Sixteenth caused the passage to be opened?”

“I don’t know,” said Mon. Devanne. “All I can say is that the king stopped here one night in 1784, and that the famous Iron Casket found in the Louvre contained a paper bearing these words in the king’s own writing: “Thibermesnil 3-4-II.”

Horace Vermont laughed heartily, and exclaimed:

They approached the machine, and Mon. Devanne questioned the chauffer:

“Edouard, who gave you orders to come here?”

“Why, it was Monsieur Vermont.”

“Mon. Vermont? Did you meet him?”

“Near the railway station, and he told me to come to the chapel.”

“To come to the chapel! What for?”

“To wait for you, monsieur, and your friend.”

Devanne and Holmes exchanged looks, and Mon. Devanne said:

“He knew the mystery would be a simple one for you. It is a delicate compliment.”

A smile of satisfaction lighted up the detective’s serious features for a moment. The compliment pleased him. He shook his head, as he said:

“A clever man! I knew that when I saw him.”

“Have you seen him?”

“I met him a short time ago—on my way from the station.”

“And you knew it was Horace Vermont—I mean, Arsène Lupin?”

“That is right. I wonder how it came—”

“No, but I supposed it was—from a certain ironical speech he made.”

“And you allowed him to escape?”

“Of course I did. And yet I had everything on my side, such as five gendarmes who passed us.”

“Sacrabieu!” cried Devanne. “You should have taken advantage of the opportunity.”

“Really, monsieur,” said the Englishman, haughtily, “when I encounter an adversary like Arsène Lupin, I do not take

granite block formed the tombstone of Duke Rollo, and the word "Thibermesnil" was engraved on it in relief. Now, they were in the little ruined chapel, and the detective said:

"The other eye leads to God; that means, to the chapel."

"It is marvelous!" exclaimed Devanne, amazed at the clairvoyance and vivacity of the Englishman. "Can it be possible that those few words were sufficient for you?"

"Bah!" declared Holmes, "they weren't even necessary. In the chart in the book of the National Library, the drawing terminates at the left, as you know, in a circle, and at the right, as you do not know, in a cross. Now, that cross must refer to the chapel in which we now stand."

Poor Devanne could not believe his ears. It was all so new, so novel to him. He exclaimed:

"It is incredible, miraculous, and yet of a childish simplicity! How is it that no one has ever solved the mystery?"

"Because no one has ever united the essential elements, that is to say, the two books and the two sentences. No one, but Arsène Lupin and myself."

"But, Father Gélis and I knew all about those things, and, likewise—"

Holmes smiled, and said:

"Monsieur Devanne, everybody cannot solve riddles."

"I have been trying for ten years to accomplish what you did in ten minutes."

"Bah! I am used to it."

They emerged from the chapel, and found an automobile.

"Ah! there's an auto waiting for us."

"Yes, it is mine," said Devanne.

"Yours? You said your chauffeur hadn't returned."

"At last! And now that we have the magic key, where is the man who can fit it to the invisible lock?"

"Laugh as much as you please, monsieur," said Father Gélis, "but I am confident the solution is contained in those two sentences, and some day we will find a man able to interpret them."

"Sherlock Holmes is the man," said Mon. Devanne, "unless Arsène Lupin gets ahead of him. What is your opinion, Vermont?"

Vermont arose, placed his hand on Devanne's shoulder, and declared:

"I think that the information furnished by your book and the book of the National Library was deficient in a very important detail which you have now supplied. I thank you for it."

"What is it?"

"The missing key. Now that I have it, I can go to work at once," said Vermont.

"Of course; without losing a minute," said Devanne, smiling.

"Not even a second!" replied Vermont. "To-night, before the arrival of Sherlock Holmes, I must plunder your castle."

"You have no time to lose. Oh! by the way, I can drive you over this evening."

"To Dieppe?"

"Yes. I am going to meet Monsieur and Madame d'Androl and a young lady of their acquaintance who are to arrive by the midnight train."

Then addressing the officers, Devanne added:

"Gentlemen, I shall expect to see all of you at breakfast tomorrow."

The invitation was accepted. The company dispersed, and a few moments later Devanne and Vermont were speeding toward Dieppe in an automobile. Devanne dropped the artist in front

of the Casino, and proceeded to the railway station. At twelve o'clock his friends alighted from the train. A half hour later the automobile was at the entrance to the castle. At one o'clock, after a light supper, they retired. The lights were extinguished, and the castle was enveloped in the darkness and silence of the night.

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The moon appeared through a rift in the clouds, and filled the drawing-room with its bright white light. But only for a moment. Then the moon again retired behind its ethereal draperies, and darkness and silence reigned supreme. No sound could be heard, save the monotonous ticking of the clock. It struck two, and then continued its endless repetitions of the seconds. Then, three o'clock.

Suddenly, something clicked, like the opening and closing of a signal-disc that warns the passing train. A thin stream of light flashed to every corner of the room, like an arrow that leaves behind it a trail of light. It shot forth from the central fluting of a column that supported the pediment of the bookcase. It rested for a moment on the panel opposite like a glittering circle of burnished silver, then flashed in all directions like a guilty eye that scrutinizes every shadow. It disappeared for a short time, but burst forth again as a whole section of the bookcase revolved on a pivot and disclosed a large opening like a vault.

A man entered, carrying an electric lantern. He was followed by a second man, who carried a coil of rope and various tools. The leader inspected the room, listened a moment, and said:

“Call the others.”

Then eight men, stout fellows with resolute faces, entered the room, and immediately commenced to remove the furnishings. Arsène Lupin passed quickly from one piece of

of a clock, and the reverse side of the letters can be reached. Lupin worked the combination from this side—that is all.”

“What proof is there of that?”

“Proof? Why, look at that puddle of oil. Lupin foresaw that the wheels would require oiling.”

“Did he know about the other entrance?”

“As well as I know it,” said Holmes. “Follow me.”

“Into that dark passage?”

“Are you afraid?”

“No, but are you sure you can find the way out?”

“With my eyes closed.”

At first, they descended twelve steps, then twelve more, and, farther on, two other flights of twelve steps each. Then they walked through a long passageway, the brick walls of which showed the marks of successive restorations, and, in spots, were dripping with water. The earth, also, was very damp.

“We are passing under the pond,” said Devanne, somewhat nervously.

At last, they came to a stairway of twelve steps, followed by three others of twelve steps each, which they mounted with difficulty, and then found themselves in a small cavity cut in the rock. They could go no further.

“The deuce!” muttered Holmes, “nothing but bare walls. This is provoking.”

“Let us go back,” said Devanne. “I have seen enough to satisfy me.”

But the Englishman raised his eye and uttered a sigh of relief. There, he saw the same mechanism and the same word as before. He had merely to work the three letters. He did so, and a block of granite swung out of place. On the other side, this



“Now, take the letter B. Move it back and forth as you would a bolt.”

Devanne did so, and, to his great surprise, it produced a clicking sound.

“Quite right,” said Holmes. “Now, we will go to the other end of the word Thibermesnil, try the letter I, and see if it will open like a wicket.”

With a certain degree of solemnity, Devanne seized the letter. It opened, but Devanne fell from the ladder, for the entire section of the bookcase, lying between the first and last letters of the words, turned on a pivot and disclosed the subterranean passage.

Sherlock Holmes said, coolly:

“You are not hurt?”

“No, no,” said Devanne, as he rose to his feet, “not hurt, only bewildered. I can’t understand now.... those letters turn.... the secret passage opens....”

“Certainly. Doesn’t that agree exactly with the formula given by Sully? Turn one eye on the bee that shakes, the other eye will lead to God.”

“But Louis the sixteenth?” asked Devanne.

“Louis the sixteenth was a clever locksmith. I have read a book he wrote about combination locks. It was a good idea on the part of the owner of Thibermesnil to show His Majesty a clever bit of mechanism. As an aid to his memory, the king wrote: 3-4-11, that is to say, the third, fourth and eleventh letters of the word.”

“Exactly. I understand that. It explains how Lupin got out of the room, but it does not explain how he entered. And it is certain he came from the outside.”

Sherlock Holmes lighted his lantern, and stepped into the passage.

“Look! All the mechanism is exposed here, like the works

furniture to another, examined each, and, according to its size or artistic value, he directed his men to take it or leave it. If ordered to be taken, it was carried to the gaping mouth of the tunnel, and ruthlessly thrust into the bowels of the earth. Such was the fate of six armchairs, six small Louis XV chairs, a quantity of Aubusson tapestries, some candelabra, paintings by Fragonard and Nattier, a bust by Houdon, and some statuettes. Sometimes, Lupin would linger before a beautiful chest or a superb picture, and sigh:

“That is too heavy.... too large.... what a pity!”

In forty minutes the room was dismantled; and it had been accomplished in such an orderly manner and with as little noise as if the various articles had been packed and wadded for the occasion.

Lupin said to the last man who departed by way of the tunnel:

“You need not come back. You understand, that as soon as the auto-van is loaded, you are to proceed to the grange at Roquefort.”

“But you, patron?”

“Leave me the motor-cycle.”

When the man had disappeared, Arsène Lupin pushed the section of the bookcase back into its place, carefully effaced the traces of the men’s footsteps, raised a portière, and entered a gallery, which was the only means of communication between the tower and the castle. In the center of this gallery there was a glass cabinet which had attracted Lupin’s attentions. It contained a valuable collection of watches, snuff-boxes, rings, chatelaines and miniatures of rare and beautiful workmanship. He forced the lock with a small jimmy, and experienced a great pleasure in handling those gold and silver ornaments, those exquisite and

delicate works of art.

He carried a large linen bag, specially prepared for the removal of such knick-knacks. He filled it. Then he filled the pockets of his coat, waistcoat and trousers. And he was just placing over his left arm a number of pearl reticules when he heard a slight sound. He listened. No, he was not deceived. The noise continued. Then he remembered that, at one end of the gallery, there was a stairway leading to an unoccupied apartment, but which was probably occupied that night by the young lady whom Mon. Devanne had brought from Dieppe with his other visitors.

Immediately he extinguished his lantern, and had scarcely gained the friendly shelter of a window-embrasure, when the door at the top of the stairway was opened and a feeble light illuminated the gallery. He could feel—for, concealed by a curtain, he could not see—that a woman was cautiously descending the upper steps of the stairs. He hoped she would come no closer. Yet, she continued to descend, and even advanced some distance into the room. Then she uttered a faint cry. No doubt she had discovered the broken and dismantled cabinet.

She advanced again. Now he could smell the perfume, and hear the throbbing of her heart as she drew closer to the window where he was concealed. She passed so close that her skirt brushed against the window-curtain, and Lupin felt that she suspected the presence of another, behind her, in the shadow, within reach of her hand. He thought: "She is afraid. She will go away." But she did not go. The candle, that she carried in her trembling hand, grew brighter. She turned, hesitated a moment, appeared to listen, then suddenly drew aside the curtain.

They stood face to face. Arsène was astounded. He murmured, involuntarily:

"Nothing. These facts would doubtless explain the cause for the restitution, but that is a side issue that I cannot wait to investigate. The main question is the secret passage. First, tell me, is there a chapel some two or three hundred metres from the castle?"

"Yes, a ruined chapel, containing the tomb of Duke Rollo."

"Tell your chauffer to wait for us near that chapel."

"My chauffer hasn't returned. If he had, they would have informed me. Do you think the secret passage runs to the chapel? What reason have—"

"I would ask you, monsieur," interrupted the detective, "to furnish me with a ladder and a lantern."

"What! do you require a ladder and a lantern?"

"Certainly, or I shouldn't have asked for them."

Devanne, somewhat disconcerted by this crude logic, rang the bell. The two articles were given with the sternness and precision of military commands.

"Place the ladder against the bookcase, to the left of the word Thibermesnil."

Devanne placed the ladder as directed, and the Englishman continued:

"More to the left.... to the right....There!....Now, climb up.... All the letters are in relief, aren't they?"

"Yes."

"First, turn the letter I one way or the other."

"Which one? There are two of them."

"The first one."

Devanne took hold of the letter, and exclaimed:

"Ah! yes, it turns toward the right. Who told you that?"

Sherlock Holmes did not reply to the question, but continued his directions:

“Was yesterday the first time you have spoken those two sentences to any one?”

“Yes.”

“You had never communicated then to Horace Velmont?”

“No.”

“Well, order the automobile. I must leave in an hour.”

“In an hour?”

“Yes; within that time, Arsène Lupin solved the problem that you placed before him.”

“I... placed before him—”

“Yes, Arsène Lupin or Horace Velmont—same thing.”

“I thought so. Ah! the scoundrel!”

“Now, let us see,” said Holmes, “last night at ten o’clock, you furnished Lupin with the information that he lacked, and that he had been seeking for many weeks. During the night, he found time to solve the problem, collect his men, and rob the castle. I shall be quite as expeditious.”

He walked from end to end of the room, in deep thought, then sat down, crossed his long legs and closed his eyes.

Devanne waited, quite embarrassed. Thought he: “Is the man asleep? Or is he only meditating?” However, he left the room to give some orders, and when he returned he found the detective on his knees scrutinizing the carpet at the foot of the stairs in the gallery.

“What is it?” he enquired.

“Look.... there.... spots from a candle.”

“You are right—and quite fresh.”

“And you will also find them at the top of the stairs, and around the cabinet that Arsène Lupin broke into, and from which he took the bibelots that he afterward placed in this armchair.”

“What do you conclude from that?”

“You—you—mademoiselle.”

It was Miss Nelly. Miss Nelly! his fellow passenger on the transatlantic steamer, who had been the subject of his dreams on that memorable voyage, who had been a witness to his arrest, and who, rather than betray him, had dropped into the water the Kodak in which he had concealed the bank-notes and diamonds. Miss Nelly! that charming creature, the memory of whose face had sometimes cheered, sometimes saddened the long hours of imprisonment.

It was such an unexpected encounter that brought them face to face in that castle at that hour of the night, that they could not move, nor utter a word; they were amazed, hypnotized, each at the sudden apparition of the other. Trembling with emotion, Miss Nelly staggered to a seat. He remained standing in front of her.

Gradually, he realized the situation and conceived the impression he must have produced at that moment with his arms laden with knick-knacks, and his pockets and a linen sack overflowing with plunder. He was overcome with confusion, and he actually blushed to find himself in the position of a thief caught in the act. To her, henceforth, he was a thief, a man who puts his hand in another’s pocket, who steals into houses and robs people while they sleep.

A watch fell upon the floor; then another. These were followed by other articles which slipped from his grasp one by one. Then, actuated by a sudden decision, he dropped the other articles into an armchair, emptied his pockets and unpacked his sack. He felt very uncomfortable in Nelly’s presence, and stepped toward her with the intention of speaking to her, but she shuddered, rose quickly and fled toward the salon. The portière closed behind her. He followed her. She was standing trembling and amazed at the

sight of the devastated room. He said to her, at once:

“To-morrow, at three o’clock, everything will be returned. The furniture will be brought back.”

She made no reply, so he repeated:

“I promise it. To-morrow, at three o’clock. Nothing in the world could induce me to break that promise....To-morrow, at three o’clock.”

Then followed a long silence that he dared not break, whilst the agitation of the young girl caused him a feeling of genuine regret. Quietly, without a word, he turned away, thinking: “I hope she will go away. I can’t endure her presence.” But the young girl suddenly spoke, and stammered:

“Listen.... footsteps....I hear someone....”

He looked at her with astonishment. She seemed to be overwhelmed by the thought of approaching peril.

“I don’t hear anything,” he said.

“But you must go—you must escape!”

“Why should I go?”

“Because—you must. Oh! do not remain here another minute. Go!”

She ran, quickly, to the door leading to the gallery and listened. No, there was no one there. Perhaps the noise was outside. She waited a moment, then returned reassured.

But Arsène Lupin had disappeared.

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As soon as Mon. Devanne was informed of the pillage of his castle, he said to himself: It was Vermont who did it, and Vermont is Arsène Lupin. That theory explained everything, and there was no other plausible explanation. And yet the idea seemed preposterous. It was ridiculous to suppose that Vermont

“And my furniture?”

“Would not have been carried away.”

“Ah! but my goods are here. They were brought back at three o’clock.”

“By Lupin.”

“By two army-wagons.”

Sherlock Holmes put on his cap and adjusted his satchel. Devanne exclaimed, anxiously:

“But, monsieur, what are you going to do?”

“I am going home.”

“Why?”

“Your goods have been returned; Arsène Lupin is far away—there is nothing for me to do.”

“Yes, there is. I need your assistance. What happened yesterday, may happen again to-morrow, as we do not know how he entered, or how he escaped, or why, a few hours later, he returned the goods.”

“Ah! you don’t know—”

The idea of a problem to be solved quickened the interest of Sherlock Holmes.

“Very well, let us make a search—at once—and alone, if possible.”

Devanne understood, and conducted the Englishman to the salon. In a dry, crisp voice, in sentences that seemed to have been prepared in advance, Holmes asked a number of questions about the events of the preceding evening, and enquired also concerning the guests and the members of the household. Then he examined the two volumes of the “Chronique,” compared the plans of the subterranean passage, requested a repetition of the sentences discovered by Father Gélis, and then asked:

several hours of fruitless efforts, and the people at the castle were awaiting the arrival of the English detective with a lively curiosity. At first sight, they were a little disappointed on account of his commonplace appearance, which differed so greatly from the pictures they had formed of him in their own minds. He did not in any way resemble the romantic hero, the mysterious and diabolical personage that the name of Sherlock Holmes had evoked in their imaginations. However, Mon. Devanne exclaimed with much gusto:

“Ah! monsieur, you are here! I am delighted to see you. It is a long-deferred pleasure. Really, I scarcely regret what has happened, since it affords me the opportunity to meet you. But, how did you come?”

“By the train.”

“But I sent my automobile to meet you at the station.”

“An official reception, eh? with music and fireworks! Oh! no, not for me. That is not the way I do business,” grumbled the Englishman.

This speech disconcerted Devanne, who replied, with a forced smile:

“Fortunately, the business has been greatly simplified since I wrote to you.”

“In what way?”

“The robbery took place last night.”

“If you had not announced my intended visit, it is probable the robbery would not have been committed last night.”

“When, then?”

“To-morrow, or some other day.”

“And in that case?”

“Lupin would have been trapped,” said the detective.

was anyone else than Velmont, the famous artist, and club-fellow of his cousin d’Estevan. So, when the captain of the gendarmes arrived to investigate the affair, Devanne did not even think of mentioning his absurd theory.

Throughout the forenoon there was a lively commotion at the castle. The gendarmes, the local police, the chief of police from Dieppe, the villagers, all circulated to and fro in the halls, examining every nook and corner that was open to their inspection. The approach of the maneuvering troops, the rattling fire of the musketry, added to the picturesque character of the scene.

The preliminary search furnished no clue. Neither the doors nor windows showed any signs of having been disturbed. Consequently, the removal of the goods must have been effected by means of the secret passage. Yet, there were no indications of footsteps on the floor, nor any unusual marks upon the walls.

Their investigations revealed, however, one curious fact that denoted the whimsical character of Arsène Lupin: the famous *Chronique* of the sixteenth century had been restored to its accustomed place in the library and, beside it, there was a similar book, which was none other than the volume stolen from the National Library.

At eleven o’clock the military officers arrived. Devanne welcomed them with his usual gayety; for, no matter how much chagrin he might suffer from the loss of his artistic treasures, his great wealth enabled him to bear his loss philosophically. His guests, Monsieur and Madame d’Androl and Miss Nelly, were introduced; and it was then noticed that one of the expected guests had not arrived. It was Horace Velmont. Would he come? His absence had awakened the suspicions of Mon. Devanne. But at twelve o’clock he arrived. Devanne exclaimed:

“Ah! here you are!”

“Why, am I not punctual?” asked Vermont.

“Yes, and I am surprised that you are.... after such a busy night! I suppose you know the news?”

“What news?”

“You have robbed the castle.”

“Nonsense!” exclaimed Vermont, smiling.

“Exactly as I predicted. But, first escort Miss Underdown to the dining-room. Mademoiselle, allow me—”

He stopped, as he remarked the extreme agitation of the young girl. Then, recalling the incident, he said:

“Ah! of course, you met Arsène Lupin on the steamer, before his arrest, and you are astonished at the resemblance. Is that it?”

She did not reply. Vermont stood before her, smiling. He bowed. She took his proffered arm. He escorted her to her place, and took his seat opposite her. During the breakfast, the conversation related exclusively to Arsène Lupin, the stolen goods, the secret passage, and Sherlock Holmes. It was only at the close of the repast, when the conversation had drifted to other subjects, that Vermont took any part in it. Then he was, by turns, amusing and grave, talkative and pensive. And all his remarks seemed to be directed to the young girl. But she, quite absorbed, did not appear to hear them.

Coffee was served on the terrace overlooking the court of honor and the flower garden in front of the principal façade. The regimental band played on the lawn, and scores of soldiers and peasants wandered through the park.

Miss Nelly had not forgotten, for one moment, Lupin’s solemn promise: “To-morrow, at three o’clock, everything will

regretted, for Sherlock Holmes scrutinized him from head to foot with such a keen, penetrating eye that Arsène Lupin experienced the sensation of being seized, imprisoned and registered by that look more thoroughly and precisely than he had ever been by a camera.

“My negative is taken now,” he thought, “and it will be useless to use a disguise with that man. He would look right through it. But, I wonder, has he recognized me?”

They bowed to each other as if about to part. But, at that moment, they heard a sound of horses’ feet, accompanied by a clinking of steel. It was the gendarmes. The two men were obliged to draw back against the embankment, amongst the bushes, to avoid the horses. The gendarmes passed by, but, as they followed each other at a considerable distance, they were several minutes in doing so. And Lupin was thinking:

“It all depends on that question: has he recognized me? If so, he will probably take advantage of the opportunity. It is a trying situation.”

When the last horseman had passed, Sherlock Holmes stepped forth and brushed the dust from his clothes. Then, for a moment, he and Arsène Lupin gazed at each other; and, if a person could have seen them at that moment, it would have been an interesting sight, and memorable as the first meeting of two remarkable men, so strange, so powerfully equipped, both of superior quality, and destined by fate, through their peculiar attributes, to hurl themselves one at the other like two equal forces that nature opposes, one against the other, in the realms of space.

Then the Englishman said: “Thank you, monsieur.”

They parted. Lupin went toward the railway station, and Sherlock Holmes continued on his way to the castle.

The local officers had given up the investigation after

disappeared within the house. He saw her no more.

A cloud obscured the sun. Arsène Lupin stood watching the imprints of her tiny feet in the sand. Suddenly, he gave a start. Upon the box which contained the bamboo, beside which Nelly had been standing, he saw the rose, the white rose which he had desired but dared not ask for. Forgotten, no doubt—it, also! But how—designedly or through distraction? He seized it eagerly. Some of its petals fell to the ground. He picked them up, one by one, like precious relics.

“Come!” he said to himself, “I have nothing more to do here. I must think of my safety, before Sherlock Holmes arrives.”

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The park was deserted, but some gendarmes were stationed at the park-gate. He entered a grove of pine trees, leaped over the wall, and, as a short cut to the railroad station, followed a path across the fields. After walking about ten minutes, he arrived at a spot where the road grew narrower and ran between two steep banks. In this ravine, he met a man traveling in the opposite direction. It was a man about fifty years of age, tall, smooth-shaven, and wearing clothes of a foreign cut. He carried a heavy cane, and a small satchel was strapped across his shoulder. When they met, the stranger spoke, with a slight English accent:

“Excuse me, monsieur, is this the way to the castle?”

“Yes, monsieur, straight ahead, and turn to the left when you come to the wall. They are expecting you.”

“Ah!”

“Yes, my friend Devanne told us last night that you were coming, and I am delighted to be the first to welcome you. Sherlock Holmes has no more ardent admirer than.... myself.”

There was a touch of irony in his voice that he quickly

be returned.”

At three o'clock! And the hands of the great clock in the right wing of the castle now marked twenty minutes to three. In spite of herself, her eyes wandered to the clock every minute. She also watched Vermont, who was calmly swinging to and fro in a comfortable rocking chair.

Ten minutes to three!....Five minutes to three!....Nelly was impatient and anxious. Was it possible that Arsène Lupin would carry out his promise at the appointed hour, when the castle, the courtyard, and the park were filled with people, and at the very moment when the officers of the law were pursuing their investigations? And yet....Arsène Lupin had given her his solemn promise. “It will be exactly as he said,” thought she, so deeply was she impressed with the authority, energy and assurance of that remarkable man. To her, it no longer assumed the form of a miracle, but, on the contrary, a natural incident that must occur in the ordinary course of events. She blushed, and turned her head.

Three o'clock! The great clock struck slowly: one.... two.... three....Horace Vermont took out his watch, glanced at the clock, then returned the watch to his pocket. A few seconds passed in silence; and then the crowd in the courtyard parted to give passage to two wagons, that had just entered the park-gate, each drawn by two horses. They were army-wagons, such as are used for the transportation of provisions, tents, and other necessary military stores. They stopped in front of the main entrance, and a commissary-sergeant leaped from one of the wagons and inquired for Mon. Devanne. A moment later, that gentleman emerged from the house, descended the steps, and, under the canvas covers of the wagons, beheld his furniture, pictures and ornaments carefully packaged and arranged.

When questioned, the sergeant produced an order that he had received from the officer of the day. By that order, the second company of the fourth battalion were commanded to proceed to the crossroads of Halleux in the forest of Arques, gather up the furniture and other articles deposited there, and deliver same to Monsieur Georges Devanne, owner of the Thibermesnil castle, at three o'clock. Signed: Col. Beauvel.

"At the crossroads," explained the sergeant, "we found everything ready, lying on the grass, guarded by some passers-by. It seemed very strange, but the order was imperative."

One of the officers examined the signature. He declared it a forgery; but a clever imitation. The wagons were unloaded, and the goods restored to their proper places in the castle.

During this commotion, Nelly had remained alone at the extreme end of the terrace, absorbed by confused and distracted thoughts. Suddenly, she observed Vermont approaching her. She would have avoided him, but the balustrade that surrounded the terrace cut off her retreat. She was cornered. She could not move. A gleam of sunshine, passing through the scant foliage of a bamboo, lighted up her beautiful golden hair. Some one spoke to her in a low voice:

"Have I not kept my promise?"

Arsène Lupin stood close to her. No one else was near. He repeated, in a calm, soft voice:

"Have I not kept my promise?"

He expected a word of thanks, or at least some slight movement that would betray her interest in the fulfillment of his promise. But she remained silent.

Her scornful attitude annoyed Arsène Lupin; and he realized the vast distance that separated him from Miss Nelly,

now that she had learned the truth. He would gladly have justified himself in her eyes, or at least pleaded extenuating circumstances, but he perceived the absurdity and futility of such an attempt. Finally, dominated by a surging flood of memories, he murmured:

"Ah! how long ago that was! You remember the long hours on the deck of the 'Provence.' Then, you carried a rose in your hand, a white rose like the one you carry to-day. I asked you for it. You pretended you did not hear me. After you had gone away, I found the rose—forgotten, no doubt—and I kept it."

She made no reply. She seemed to be far away. He continued:

"In memory of those happy hours, forget what you have learned since. Separate the past from the present. Do not regard me as the man you saw last night, but look at me, if only for a moment, as you did in those far-off days when I was Bernard d'Andrezy, for a short time. Will you, please?"

She raised her eyes and looked at him as he had requested. Then, without saying a word, she pointed to a ring he was wearing on his forefinger. Only the ring was visible; but the setting, which was turned toward the palm of his hand, consisted of a magnificent ruby. Arsène Lupin blushed. The ring belonged to Georges Devanne. He smiled bitterly, and said:

"You are right. Nothing can be changed. Arsène Lupin is now and always will be Arsène Lupin. To you, he cannot be even so much as a memory. Pardon me....I should have known that any attention I may now offer you is simply an insult. Forgive me."

He stepped aside, hat in hand. Nelly passed before him. He was inclined to detain her and beseech her forgiveness. But his courage failed, and he contented himself by following her with his eyes, as he had done when she descended the gangway to the pier at New York. She mounted the steps leading to the door, and