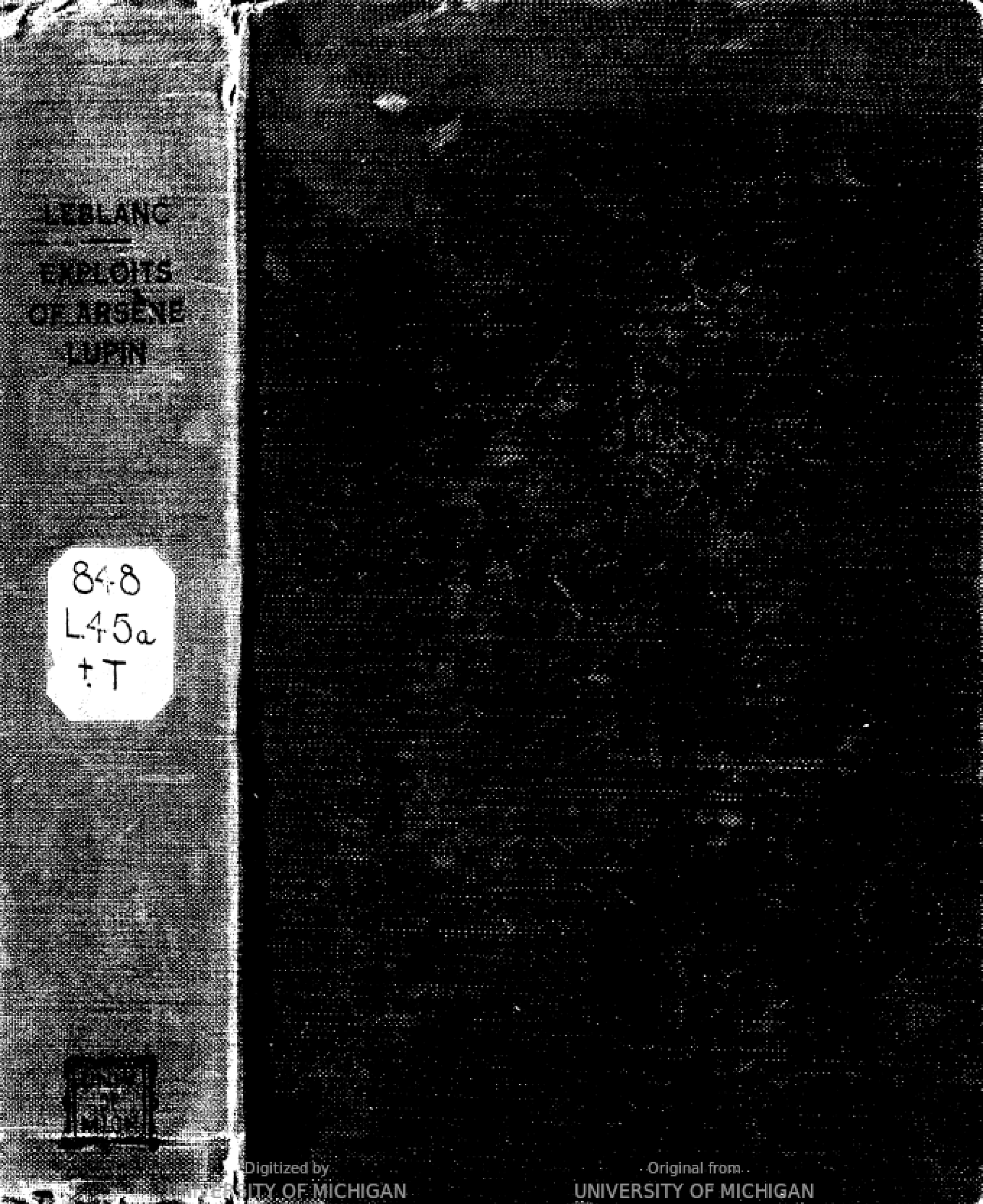

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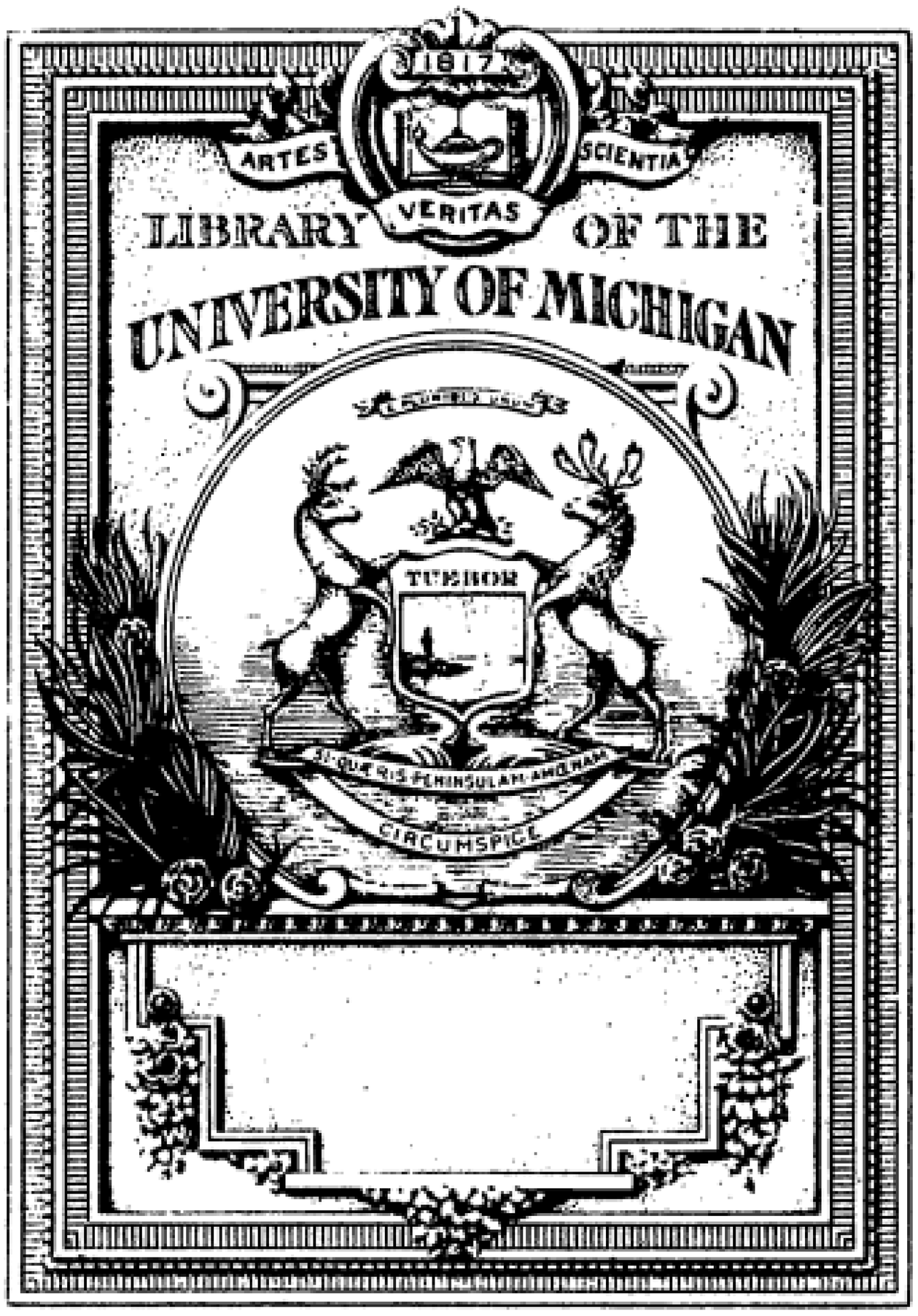

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THE EXPLOITS OF ARSÈNE LUPIN

BY

MAURICE LEBLANC

TRANSLATED BY
ALEXANDER TEIXEIRA DE MATTOS

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

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THE STRANGE CHARACTER KNOWN AS ARSÈNE LUPIN WAS CREATED AND FIRST GIVEN TO THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD THROUGH THE REMARKABLE EXPLOITS NARRATED IN THIS VOLUME

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THE ARREST OF ARSÈNE LUPIN

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THE EXPLOITS OF ARSÈNE LUPIN

I

THE ARREST OF ARSÈNE LUPIN

THE strangest of journeys! And yet it had begun so well! I, for my part, had never made a voyage that started under better auspices. The *Provence* is a swift and comfortable trans-atlantic liner, commanded by the most genial of men. The company gathered on board was of a very select character. Acquaintances were formed and amusements organized. We had the delightful feeling of being separated from the rest of the world, reduced to our own devices, as though upon an unknown island, and obliged, therefore, to make friends with one another. And we grew more and more intimate. . . .

Have you ever reflected on the element of originality and surprise contained in this grouping of a

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number of people who, but a day earlier, had never seen one another, and who are now, for a few days, destined to live together in the closest contact, between the infinite sky and the boundless sea, defying the fury of the ocean, the alarming onslaught of the waves, the malice of the winds, and the distressing calmness of the slumbering waters?

Life itself, in fact, with its storms and its greatnesses, its monotony and its variety, becomes a sort of tragic epitome; and that, perhaps, is why we enjoy with a fevered haste and an intensified delight this short voyage of which we see the end at the very moment when we embark upon it.

But, of late years, a thing has happened that adds curiously to the excitement of the passage. The little floating island is no longer entirely separated from the world from which we believed ourselves cut adrift. One link remains, and is at intervals tied and at intervals untied in mid-ocean. The wireless telegraph! As who should say a summons from another world, whence we receive news in the most mysterious fashion! The imagination no longer has the resource of picturing wires along which the invisible message glides: the mystery is even more insoluble, more poetic; and we must have recourse to the winds to explain the new miracle.

And so, from the start, we felt that we were

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being followed, escorted, even preceded by that distant voice which, from time to time, whispered to one of us a few words from the continent which we had quitted. Two of my friends spoke to me. Ten others, twenty others sent to all of us, through space, their sad or cheery greetings.

Now, on the stormy afternoon of the second day, when we were five hundred miles from the French coast, the wireless telegraph sent us a message of the following tenor:

"Arsène Lupin on board your ship, first class, fair hair, wound on right forearm, travelling alone under alias R——"

At that exact moment, a violent thunderclap burst in the dark sky. The electric waves were interrupted. The rest of the message failed to reach us. We knew only the initial of the name under which Arsène Lupin was concealing his identity.

Had the news been any other, I have no doubt but that the secret would have been scrupulously kept by the telegraph-clerks and the captain and his officers. But there are certain events that appear to overcome the strictest discretion. Before the day was past, though no one could have told how the rumor had got about, we all knew

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that the famous Arsène Lupin was hidden in our midst.

Arsène Lupin in our midst! The mysterious housebreaker whose exploits had been related in all the newspapers for months! The baffling individual with whom old Ganimard, our greatest detective, had entered upon that duel to the death of which the details were being unfolded in so picturesque a fashion! Arsène Lupin, the fastidious gentleman who confines his operations to country-houses and fashionable drawing-rooms, and who one night, after breaking in at Baron Schormann's, had gone away empty-handed, leaving his visiting-card:

ARSÈNE LUPIN

Gentleman-Burglar

with these words added in pencil:

"Will return when your things are genuine."

Arsène Lupin, the man with a thousand disguises, by turns chauffeur, opera-singer, bookmaker, gilded youth, young man, old man, Marseillese bagman, Russian doctor, Spanish bull-fighter!

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THE ARREST OF ARSÈNE LUPIN

Picture the situation: Arsène Lupin moving about within the comparatively restricted compass of a transatlantic liner, nay—more, within the small space reserved to the first-class passengers—where one might come across him at any moment, in the saloon, the drawing-room, the smoking-room! Why, Arsène Lupin might be that gentleman over there . . . or this one close by . . . or my neighbor at table . . . or the passenger sharing my state-room. . . .

"And just think, this is going to last for five days!" cried Miss Nellie Underdown, on the following day. "Why, it's awful! I do hope they'll catch him!" And, turning to me, "Do say, Monsieur d'Andrézy, you're such friends with the captain, haven't you heard anything?"

I wished that I had, if only to please Nellie Underdown. She was one of those magnificent creatures that become the cynosure of all eyes wherever they may be. Their beauty is as dazzling as their fortune. A court of fervent enthusiasts follow in their train.

She had been brought up in Paris by her French mother, and was now on her way to Chicago to join her father, Underdown, the American millionaire. A friend, Lady Gerland, was chaperoning her on the voyage.

I had paid her some slight attentions from the

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first. But, almost immediately, in the rapid intimacy of ocean travel, her charms had gained upon me, and my emotions now exceeded those of a mere flirtation whenever her great dark eyes met mine. She, on her side, received my devotion with a certain favor. She condescended to laugh at my jokes and to be interested in my stories. A vague sympathy seemed to respond to the assiduity which I displayed.

One rival alone, perhaps, could have given me cause for anxiety: a rather good-looking fellow, well-dressed and reserved in manner, whose silent humor seemed at times to attract her more than did my somewhat "butterfly" Parisian ways.

He happened to form one of the group of admirers surrounding Miss Underdown at the moment when she spoke to me. We were on deck, comfortably installed in our chairs. The storm of the day before had cleared the sky. It was a delightful afternoon.

"I have heard nothing very definite," I replied. "But why should we not be able to conduct our own inquiry just as well as old Ganimard, Lupin's personal enemy, might do?"

"I say, you're going very fast!"

"Why? Is the problem so complicated?"

"Most complicated."

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"You only say that because you forget the clews which we possess towards its solution."

"Which clews?"

"First, Lupin is travelling under the name of Monsieur R——."

"That's rather vague."

"Secondly, he's travelling alone."

"If you consider that a sufficient detail!"

"Thirdly, he is fair."

"Well, then?"

"Then we need only consult the list of first-class passengers and proceed by elimination."

I had the list in my pocket. I took it out and glanced through it:

"To begin with, I see that there are only thirteen persons whose names begin with an R."

"Only thirteen?"

"In the first class, yes. Of these thirteen R's, as you can ascertain for yourself, nine are accompanied by their wives, children, or servants. That leaves four solitary passengers: the Marquis de Raverdan . . ."

"Secretary of legation," interrupted Miss Underdown. "I know him."

"Major Rawson . . ."

"That's my uncle," said some one.

"Signor Rivolta . . ."

"Here!" cried one of us, an Italian, whose

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face disappeared from view behind a huge black beard.

Miss Underdown had a fit of laughing:

"That gentleman is not exactly fair!"

"Then," I continued, "we are bound to conclude that the criminal is the last on the list."

"Who is that?"

"Monsieur Rozaine. Does any one know Monsieur Rozaine?"

No one answered. But Miss Underdown, turning to the silent young man whose assiduous presence by her side vexed me, said:

"Well, Monsieur Rozaine, have you nothing to say?"

All eyes were turned upon him. He was fair-haired!

I must admit I felt a little shock pass through me. And the constrained silence that weighed down upon us showed me that the other passengers present also experienced that sort of choking feeling. The thing was absurd, however, for, after all, there was nothing in his manner to warrant our suspecting him.

"Have I nothing to say?" he replied. "Well, you see, realizing what my name was and the color of my hair and the fact that I am travelling by myself, I have already made a similar inquiry

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and arrived at the same conclusion. My opinion, therefore, is that I ought to be arrested."

He wore a queer expression as he uttered these words. His thin, pale lips grew thinner and paler still. His eyes were bloodshot.

There was no doubt but that he was jesting. And yet his appearance and attitude impressed us. Miss Underdown asked, innocently:

"But have you a wound?"

"That's true," he said. "The wound is missing."

With a nervous movement, he pulled up his cuff and uncovered his arm. But a sudden idea struck me. My eyes met Miss Underdown's: he had shown his left arm.

And, upon my word, I was on the point of remarking upon this, when an incident occurred to divert our attention. Lady Gerland, Miss Underdown's friend, came running up.

She was in a state of great agitation. Her fellow-passengers crowded round her; and it was only after many efforts that she succeeded in stammering out:

"My jewels! . . . My pearls! . . . They've all been stolen!"

No, they had not all been stolen, as we subsequently discovered; a much more curious thing had happened: the thief had made a selection!

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From the diamond star, the pendant of uncut rubies, the broken necklaces and bracelets, he had removed not the largest, but the finest, the most precious stones—those, in fact, which had the greatest value and at the same time occupied the smallest space. The settings were left lying on the table. I saw them, we all saw them, stripped of their gems like flowers from which the fair, bright-colored petals had been torn.

And to carry out this work, he had had, in broad daylight, while Lady Gerland was taking tea, to break in the door of the state-room in a frequented passage, to discover a little jewel-case purposely hidden at the bottom of a bandbox, to open it and make his choice!

We all uttered the same cry. There was but one opinion among the passengers when the theft became known : it was Arsène Lupin. And, indeed, the theft had been committed in his own complicated, mysterious, inscrutable . . . and yet logical manner, for we realized that, though it would have been difficult to conceal the cumbersome mass which the ornaments as a whole would have formed, he would have much less trouble with such small independent objects as single pearls, emeralds, and sapphires.

At dinner this happened: the two seats to the right and left of Rozaine remained unoccupied.

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And, in the evening, we knew that he had been sent for by the captain.

His arrest, of which no one entertained a doubt, caused a genuine relief. We felt at last that we could breathe. We played charades in the saloon. We danced. Miss Underdown, in particular, displayed an obstreperous gayety which made it clear to me that, though Rozaine's attentions might have pleased her at first, she no longer gave them a thought. Her charm conquered me entirely. At midnight, under the still rays of the moon, I declared myself her devoted lover in emotional terms which she did not appear to resent.

But, the next day, to the general stupefaction, it became known that the charges brought against him were insufficient. Rozaine was free.

It seemed that he was the son of a wealthy Bordeaux merchant. He had produced papers which were in perfect order. Moreover, his arms showed not the slightest trace of a wound.

"Papers, indeed!" exclaimed Rozaine's enemies. "Birth-certificates! Tush! Why, Arsène Lupin can supply them by the dozen! As for the wound, it only shows that he never had a wound . . . or that he has removed its traces!"

Somebody suggested that, at the time when the theft was committed, Rozaine — this had been proved — was walking on deck. In reply to this it

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dering to right and left, mixing with the crew, questioning and ferreting on every hand. His shadow was seen prowling about at night.

The captain, on his side, displayed the most active energy. The *Provence* was searched from stem to stern, in every nook and corner. Every state-room was turned out, without exception, under the very proper pretext that the stolen objects must be hidden somewhere—anywhere rather than in the thief's own cabin.

"Surely they will end by finding something?" asked Miss Underdown. "Wizard though he may be, he can't make pearls and diamonds invisible."

"Of course they will," I replied, "or else they will have to search the linings of our hats and clothes and anything that we carry about with us." And, showing her my five-by-four Kodak, with which I never wearied of photographing her in all manner of attitudes, I added, "Why, even in a camera no larger than this there would be room to stow away all Lady Gerland's jewels. You pretend to take snapshots and the thing is done."

"Still, I have heard say that every burglar always leaves a clew of some kind behind him."

"There is one who never does: Arsène Lupin."

"Why?"

"Why? Because he thinks not only of the crime

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which he is committing, but of all the circumstances that might tell against him."

"You were more confident at first."

"Ah, but I had not seen him at work then!"

"And so you think . . ."

"I think that we are wasting our time."

As a matter of fact, the investigations produced no result whatever, or, at least, that which was produced did not correspond with the general effort: the captain lost his watch.

He was furious, redoubled his zeal, and kept an even closer eye than before on Rozaine, with whom he had several interviews. The next day, with a delightful irony, the watch was found among the second officer's collars.

All this was very wonderful, and pointed clearly to the humorous handiwork of a burglar, if you like, but an artist besides. He worked at his profession for a living, but also for his amusement. He gave the impression of a dramatist who thoroughly enjoys his own plays and who stands in the wings laughing heartily at the comic dialogue and diverting situations which he himself has invented.

He was decidedly an artist in his way; and, when I observed Rozaine, so gloomy and stubborn, and reflected on the two-faced part which this curious individual was doubtless playing, I was

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unable to speak of him without a certain feeling of admiration.

Well, on the night but one before our arrival in America, the officer of the watch heard groans on the darkest portion of the deck. He drew nearer, went up, and saw a man stretched at full length, with his head wrapped in a thick, gray muffler, and his hands tied together with a thin cord.

They unfastened his bonds, lifted him, and gave him a restorative.

The man was Rozaine.

Yes, it was Rozaine, who had been attacked in the course of one of his expeditions, knocked down, and robbed. A visiting-card pinned to his clothes bore these words:

"Arsène Lupin accepts M. Rozaine's ten thousand francs, with thanks."

As a matter of fact, the stolen pocket-book contained twenty thousand-franc notes.

Of course, the unfortunate man was accused of counterfeiting this attack upon his own person. But, apart from the fact that it would have been impossible for him to bind himself in this way, it was proved that the writing on the card differed absolutely from Rozaine's handwriting, whereas it was exactly like that of Arsène Lupin, as re-

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produced in an old newspaper which had been found on board.

So Rozaine was not Arsène Lupin! Rozaine was Rozaine, the son of a Bordeaux merchant! And Arsène Lupin's presence had been asserted once again and by means of what a formidable act!

Sheer terror ensued. The passengers no longer dared stay alone in their cabins nor wander unaccompanied to the remoter parts of the ship. Those who felt sure of one another kept prudently together. And even here an instinctive mistrust divided those who knew one another best. The danger no longer threatened from a solitary individual kept under observation and therefore less dangerous. Arsène Lupin now seemed to be . . . to be everybody. Our over-excited imaginations ascribed to him the possession of a miraculous and boundless power. We supposed him capable of assuming the most unexpected disguises, of being by turns the most respectable Major Rawson, or the most noble Marquis de Raverdan, or even—for we no longer stopped at the accusing initial—this or that person known to all, and travelling with wife, children, and servants.

The wireless telegrams brought us no news; at least, the captain did not communicate them

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to us. And this silence was not calculated to reassure us.

It was small wonder, therefore, that the last day appeared interminable. The passengers lived in the anxious expectation of a tragedy. This time it would not be a theft; it would not be a mere assault; it would be crime—murder. No one was willing to admit that Arsène Lupin would rest content with those two insignificant acts of larceny. He was absolute master of the ship; he reduced the officers to impotence; he had but to wreak his will upon us. He could do as he pleased; he held our lives and property in his hands.

These were delightful hours to me, I confess, for they won for me the confidence of Nellie Underdown. Naturally timid and impressed by all these events, she spontaneously sought at my side the protection which I was happy to offer her.

In my heart, I blessed Arsène Lupin. Was it not he who had brought us together? Was it not to him that I owed the right to abandon myself to my fondest dreams? Dreams of love and dreams more practical: why not confess it? The d'Andrézys are of good Poitevin stock, but the gilt of their blazon is a little worn; and it did not seem to me unworthy of a man of family to think of restoring the lost lustre of his name.

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Nor, I was convinced, did these dreams offend Nellie. Her smiling eyes gave me leave to indulge them. Her soft voice bade me hope.

And we remained side by side until the last moment, with our elbows resting on the bulwark rail, while the outline of the American coast grew more and more distinct.

The search had been abandoned. All seemed expectation. From the first-class saloon to the steerage, with its swarm of emigrants, every one was waiting for the supreme moment when the insoluble riddle would be explained. Who was Arsène Lupin? Under what name, under what disguise was the famous Arsène Lupin lurking?

The supreme moment came. If I live to be a hundred, never shall I forget its smallest detail.

"How pale you look, Nellie!" I said, as she leaned, almost fainting, on my arm.

"And you, too. Oh, how you have changed!" she replied.

"Think what an exciting minute this is and how happy I am to pass it at your side. I wonder, Nellie, if your memory will sometimes linger . . ."

All breathless and fevered, she was not listening. The gang-plank was lowered. But, before we were allowed to cross it, men came on

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board: custom-house officers, men in uniform, postmen.

Nellie murmured:

"I shouldn't be surprised even if we heard that Arsène Lupin had escaped during the crossing!"

"He may have preferred death to dishonor, and plunged into the Atlantic rather than submit to arrest!"

"Don't jest about it," said she, in a tone of vexation.

Suddenly I gave a start and, in answer to her question, I replied:

"Do you see that little old man standing by the gang-plank?"

"The one in a green frock-coat with an umbrella?"

"That's Ganimard."

"Ganimard?"

"Yes, the famous detective who swore that he would arrest Arsène Lupin with his own hand. Ah, now I understand why we received no news from this side of the ocean. Ganimard was here, and he does not care to have any one interfering in his little affairs."

"So Arsène Lupin is sure of being caught?"

"Who can tell? Ganimard has never seen him, I believe, except made-up and disguised.

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Unless he knows the name under which he is travelling . . . ”

“Ah,” she said, with a woman’s cruel curiosity, “I should love to see the arrest!”

“Have patience,” I replied. “No doubt Arsène Lupin has already observed his enemy’s presence. He will prefer to leave among the last, when the old man’s eyes are tired.”

The passengers began to cross the gang-plank. Leaning on his umbrella with an indifferent air, Ganimard seemed to pay no attention to the throng that crowded past between the two handrails. I noticed that one of the ship’s officers, standing behind him, whispered in his ear from time to time.

The Marquis de Raverdan, Major Rawson, Rivolta, the Italian, went past, and others and many more. Then I saw Rozaine approaching.

Poor Rozaine! He did not seem to have recovered from his misadventures!

“It may be he, all the same,” said Nellie. “What do you think?”

“I think it would be very interesting to have Ganimard and Rozaine in one photograph. Would you take the camera? My hands are so full.”

I gave it to her, but too late for her to use it. Rozaine crossed. The officer bent over to Gani-

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mard's, ear; Ganimard gave a shrug of the shoulders; and Rozaine passed on.

But then who, in Heaven's name, was Arsène Lupin?

"Yes," she said, aloud, "who is it?"

There were only a score of people left. Nellie looked at them, one after the other, with the bewildered dread that *he* was not one of the twenty.

I said to her:

"We cannot wait any longer."

She moved on. I followed her. But we had not taken ten steps when Ganimard barred our passage.

"What does this mean?" I exclaimed.

"One moment, sir. What's your hurry?"

"I am escorting this young lady."

"One moment," he repeated, in a more mysterious voice.

He stared hard at me, and then, looking me straight in the eyes, said:

"Arsène Lupin, I believe."

I gave a laugh.

"No, Bernard d'Andrézy, simply."

"Bernard d'Andrézy died in Macedonia, three years ago."

"If Bernard d'Andrézy were dead I could not be here. And it's not so. Here are my papers."

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"They are his papers. And I shall be pleased to tell you how you became possessed of them."

"But you are mad! Arsène Lupin took his passage under a name beginning with R."

"Yes, another of your tricks—a false scent upon which you put the people on the other side. Oh, you have no lack of brains, my lad! But, this time, your luck has turned. Come, Lupin, show that you're a good loser."

I hesitated for a second. He struck me a smart blow on the right forearm. I gave a cry of pain. He had hit the unhealed wound mentioned in the telegram.

There was nothing for it but to submit. I turned to Miss Underdown. She was listening, with a white face, staggering where she stood.

Her glance met mine, and then fell upon the Kodak which I had handed her. She made a sudden movement, and I received the impression, the certainty, that she had understood. Yes, it was there—between the narrow boards covered with black morocco, inside the little camera which I had taken the precaution to place in her hands before Ganimard arrested me—it was there that Rozaine's twenty thousand francs and Lady Gerland's pearls and diamonds lay concealed.

Now I swear that, at this solemn moment, with

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Ganimard and two of his minions around me, everything was indifferent to me—my arrest, the hostility of my fellow-men, everything, save only this: the resolve which Nellie Underdown would take in regard to the object I had given into her charge.

Whether they had this material and decisive piece of evidence against me, what cared I? The only question that obsessed my mind was, would Nelly furnish it or not?

Would she betray me? Would she ruin me? Would she act as an irreconcilable foe, or as a woman who remembers, and whose contempt is softened by a touch of indulgence—a shade of sympathy?

She passed before me. I bowed very low, without a word. Mingling with the other passengers, she moved towards the gang-board, carrying my Kodak in her hand.

"Of course," I thought, "she will not dare to, in public. She will hand it over presently—in an hour."

But, on reaching the middle of the plank, with a pretended movement of awkwardness, she dropped the Kodak in the water, between the landing-stage and the ship's side.

Then I watched her walk away.

Her charming profile was lost in the crowd,

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came into view again, and disappeared. It was over—over for good and all.

For a moment I stood rooted to the deck, sad and, at the same time, pervaded with a sweet and tender emotion. Then, to Ganimard's great astonishment, I sighed:

"Pity, after all, that I'm a rogue!"

It was in these words that Arsène Lupin, one winter's evening, told me the story of his arrest. Chance and a series of incidents which I will some day describe had established between us bonds of . . . shall I say friendship? Yes, I venture to think that Arsène Lupin honors me with a certain friendship; and it is owing to this friendship that he occasionally drops in upon me unexpectedly, bringing into the silence of my study his youthful gayety, the radiance of his eager life, his high spirits—the spirits of a man for whom fate has little but smiles and favors in store.

His likeness? How can I trace it? I have seen Arsène Lupin a score of times, and each time a different being has stood before me . . . or rather the same being under twenty distorted images reflected by as many mirrors, each image having its special eyes, its particular facial outline, its own gestures, profile and character.

"I myself," he once said to me, "have forgotten

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what I am really like. I no longer recognize myself in a glass."

A paradoxical whim of the imagination, no doubt; and yet true enough as regards those who come into contact with him, and who are unaware of his infinite resources, his patience, his unparalleled skill in make-up, and his prodigious faculty for changing even the proportions of his face and altering the relations of his features one to the other.

"Why," he asked, "should I have a definite, fixed appearance? Why not avoid the dangers attendant upon a personality that is always the same? My actions constitute my identity sufficiently."

And he added, with a touch of pride:

"It is all the better if people are never able to say with certainty: 'There goes Arsène Lupin.' The great thing is that they should say without fear of being mistaken: 'That action was performed by Arsène Lupin.'"

It is some of those actions of his, some of those exploits, that I will endeavor to narrate, thanks to the confidences with which he has had the kindness to favor me on certain winter evenings in the silence of my study. . . .

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ARSÈNE LUPIN IN PRISON

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II

ARSÈNE LUPIN IN PRISON

EVERY tripper by the banks of the Seine must have noticed, between the ruins of Jumièges and those of Saint-Wandrille, the curious little feudal castle of the Malaquis, proudly seated on its rock in mid-stream. A bridge connects it with the road. The base of its turrets seem to make one with the granite that bears it—a huge block detached from a mountain-top, and flung where it stands by some formidable convulsion of nature. All around the calm water of the broad river ripples among the reeds, while water-wagtails perch trembling on the top of the moist pebbles.

The history of the Malaquis is as rough as its name, as harsh as its outlines, and consists of endless fights, sieges, assaults, sacks, and massacres. Stories are told in the Caux district, late at night, with a shiver, of the crimes committed there. Mysterious legends are conjured up. There is talk of a famous underground passage

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that led to the Abbey of Jumièges and to the manor-house of Agnés Sorel, once the favorite of Charles VII.

This erstwhile haunt of heroes and robbers is now occupied by Baron Nathan Cahorn—or Baron Satan, as he used to be called on the Bourse, where he made his fortune a little too suddenly. The ruined owners of the Malaquis had to sell the abode of their ancestors to him for a song. Here he installed his wonderful collections of pictures and furniture, of pottery and carved wood. He lives here alone, with three old servants. No one ever enters the doors. No one has ever beheld, in the setting of these ancient halls, his three Rubens, his two Watteaus, his pulpit carved by Jean Goujon, and all the other marvels snatched by force of money from before the eyes of the wealthiest frequenters of the public salesrooms.

Baron Satan leads a life of fear. He is afraid, not for himself, but for the treasures which he has accumulated with so tenacious a passion and with the perspicacity of a collector whom not the most cunning of dealers can boast of having ever taken in. He loves his curiosities with all the greed of a miser, with all the jealousy of a lover.

Daily, at sunset, the four iron-barred doors that command both ends of the bridge and the entrance to the principal court are locked and

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bolted. At the least touch electric bells would ring through the surrounding silence. There is nothing to be feared on the side of the Seine, where the rock rises sheer from the water.

One Friday in September the postman appeared as usual at the bridge-head, and, in accordance with his daily rule, the baron himself opened the heavy door.

He examined the man as closely as if he had not for years known that good jolly face and those crafty peasant's eyes. And the man said, with a laugh:

"It's me all right, monsieur le baron. It's not another chap in my cap and blouse."

"One never knows," muttered Cahorn.

The postman handed him a pile of newspapers. Then he added:

"And now, monsieur le baron, I have something special for you."

"Something special! What do you mean?"

"A letter . . . and a registered letter at that!"

Living cut off from everybody, with no friends nor any one that took an interest in him, the baron never received letters; and this suddenly struck him as an ill-omened event which gave him good cause for nervousness. Who was the mysterious correspondent that came to worry him in his retreat?

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"I shall want your signature, monsieur le baron."

He signed the receipt, cursing as he did so. Then he took the letter, waited until the postman had disappeared round the turn of the road, and, after taking a few steps to and fro, leaned against the parapet of the bridge and opened the envelope. It contained a sheet of ruled paper, headed, in writing:

"*Prison de la Santé, Paris.*"

He looked at the signature:

"ARSÈNE LUPIN."

Utterly dumfounded, he read:

"MONSIEUR LE BARON,—In the gallery that connects your two drawing-rooms there is a picture by Philippe de Champaigne, an excellent piece of work, which I admire greatly. I also like your Rubens pictures and the smaller of your two Watteaus. In the drawing-room on the right I note the Louis XIII. credence-table, the Beauvais tapestries, the Empire stand, signed by Jacob, and the Renaissance chest. In the room on the left the whole of the case of trinkets and miniatures.

"This time I will be satisfied with these objects, which, I think, can be easily turned into cash. I will therefore ask you to have them properly packed, and to send them to my name, carriage paid, to the Gare de Batignolles, on or before this day week, failing which I will myself see to their removal on the night of Wednesday, the 27th

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instant. In the latter case, as is only fair, I shall not be content with the above-mentioned objects.

"Pray excuse the trouble which I am giving you, and believe me to be Yours very truly,

"ARSÈNE LUPIN."

"P. S.—Be sure not to send me the larger of the two Watteaus. Although you paid thirty-thousand francs for it at the salesrooms, it is only a copy, the original having been burned under the Directory, by Barras, in one of his orgies. See Garat's unpublished Memoirs.

"I do not care either to have the Louis XV. chatelaine, which appears to me to be of doubtful authenticity."

This letter thoroughly upset Baron Cahorn. It would have alarmed him considerably had it been signed by any other hand. But signed by Arsène Lupin! . . .

He was a regular reader of the newspapers, knew of everything that went on in the way of theft and crime, and had heard all about the exploits of the infernal housebreaker. He was quite aware that Lupin had been arrested in America by his enemy, Ganimard; that he was safely under lock and key; and that the preliminaries to his trial were now being conducted . . . with great difficulty, no doubt! But he also knew that one could always expect anything of Arsène Lupin. Besides, this precise knowledge of the castle, of the arrangement of the pictures and furniture

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was a very formidable sign. Who had informed Lupin of things which nobody had ever seen?

The baron raised his eyes and gazed at the frowning outline of the Malaquis, its abrupt pedestal, the deep water that surrounds it. He shrugged his shoulders. No, there was no possible danger. No one in the world could penetrate to the inviolable sanctuary that contained his collections.

No one in the world, perhaps; but Arsène Lupin? Did doors, draw-bridges, walls, so much as exist for Arsène Lupin? Of what use were the most ingeniously contrived obstacles, the most skilful precautions, once that Arsène Lupin had decided to attain a given object? . . .

That same evening he wrote to the public prosecutor at Rouen. He enclosed the threatening letter, and demanded police protection.

The reply came without delay: the said Arsène Lupin was at that moment a prisoner at the Santé, where he was kept under strict surveillance and not allowed to write. The letter, therefore, could only be the work of a hoaxer. Everything went to prove this: logic, common sense, and the actual facts. However, so as to make quite sure, the letter had been submitted to a handwriting expert, who declared that, notwithstanding certain points of resemblance, it was not in the prisoner's writing.

"Notwithstanding certain points of resem-

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blance." The baron saw only these five bewildering words, which he regarded as the confession of a doubt which alone should have been enough to justify the intervention of the police. His fears increased. He read the letter over and over again. "I will myself see to their removal." And that fixed date, the night of Wednesday the 27th of September!

Of a naturally suspicious and silent disposition, he dared not unburden himself to his servants, whose devotion he did not consider proof against all tests. And yet, for the first time for many years, he felt a need to speak, to take advice. Abandoned by the law of his country, he had no hope of protecting himself by his own resources, and was nearly going to Paris to beg for the assistance of some retired detective or other.

Two days elapsed. On the third day, as he sat reading his newspapers, he gave a start of delight. The *Réveil de Caudebec* contained the following paragraph:

"We have had the pleasure of numbering among our visitors, for nearly three weeks, Chief-Inspector Ganimard, one of the veterans of the detective service. M. Ganimard, for whom his last feat, the arrest of Arsène Lupin, has won an European reputation, is enjoying a rest from his arduous labors and spending a short holiday fishing for bleak and gudgeon in the Seine."

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Ganimard! The very man that Baron Cahorn wanted! Who could baffle Lupin's plans better than the cunning and patient Ganimard?

The baron lost no time. It is a four-mile walk from the castle to the little town of Caudebec. He did the distance with a quick and joyous step, stimulated by the hope of safety.

After many fruitless endeavors to discover the chief-inspector's address, he went to the office of the *Réveil*, which is on the quay. He found the writer of the paragraph, who, going to the window, said:

"Ganimard! Why, you're sure to meet him, rod in hand, on the quay. That's where I picked up with him, and read his name, by accident, on his fishing-rod. Look, there he is, the little old man in the frock-coat and a straw hat, under the trees!"

"A frock-coat and a straw hat?"

"Yes. He's a queer specimen—close-tongued, and a trifle testy."

Five minutes later the baron accosted the famous Ganimard, introduced himself, and made an attempt to enter into conversation. Failing in this, he broached the question frankly, and laid his case before him.

The other listened without moving a muscle or taking his eyes from the water. Then he turn-

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ed his head to the baron, eyed him from head to foot with a look of profound pity, and said:

"Sir, it is not usual for criminals to warn the people whom they mean to rob. Arsène Lupin, in particular, never indulges in that sort of bounce."

"Still . . ."

"Sir, if I had the smallest doubt, believe me, the pleasure of once more locking up that dear Lupin would outweigh every other consideration. Unfortunately, the youth is already in prison."

"Suppose he escapes? . . ."

"People don't escape from the Santé."

"But Lupin . . ."

"Lupin no more than another."

"Still . . ."

"Very well, if he does escape, so much the better; I'll nab him again. Meanwhile you can sleep soundly and cease frightening my fish."

The conversation was ended. The baron returned home feeling more or less reassured by Ganimard's unconcern. He saw to his bolts, kept a watch upon his servants, and another forty-eight hours passed, during which he almost succeeded in persuading himself that, after all, his fears were groundless. There was no doubt about it: as Ganimard had said, criminals don't warn the people whom they mean to rob.

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The date was drawing near. On the morning of Tuesday the twenty-sixth nothing particular happened. But at three o'clock in the afternoon a boy rang and handed in this telegram:

"No goods Batignolles. Get everything ready for to-morrow night. ARSÈNE."

Once again Cahorn lost his head—so much so that he asked himself whether he would not do better to yield to Arsène Lupin's demands.

He hurried off to Caudebec. Ganimard was seated on a camp-stool fishing on the same spot as before. The baron handed him the telegram without a word.

"Well?" said the detective.

"Well what? It's for to-morrow!"

"What is?"

"The burglary! The theft of my collections!"

Ganimard turned to him, and, folding his arms across his chest, cried in a tone of impatience:

"Why, you don't really mean to say that you think I'm going to trouble myself about this stupid business?"

"What fee will you take to spend Wednesday night at the castle?"

"Not a penny. Don't bother me!"

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"Name your own price. I am a rich man—a very rich man."

The brutality of the offer took Ganimard aback. He replied, more calmly:

"I am here on leave and I have no right to . . ."

"No one shall know. I undertake to be silent, whatever happens."

"Oh, nothing will happen."

"Well, look here, is three thousand francs enough?"

The inspector took a pinch of snuff, reflected, and said:

"Very well. But it's only fair to tell you that you are throwing your money away."

"I don't mind."

"In that case . . . And besides, after all, one can never tell with that devil of a Lupin! He must have a whole gang at his orders. . . . Are you sure of your servants?"

"Well, I . . ."

"Then we must not rely upon them. I'll wire to two of my own men; then we shall feel safer. . . . And now leave me; we must not be seen together. To-morrow evening at nine o'clock."

On the morning of the next day, the date fixed by Arsène Lupin, Baron Cahorn took down his trophy of arms, polished up his pistols, and made

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a thorough inspection of the Malaquis without discovering anything suspicious.

At half-past eight in the evening he dismissed his servants for the night. They slept in a wing facing the road, but set a little way back, and right at the end of the castle. As soon as he was alone he softly opened the four doors. In a little while he heard footsteps approaching.

Ganimard introduced his assistants—two powerfully built fellows, with bull necks, and huge, strong hands—and asked for certain explanations. After ascertaining the disposition of the place he carefully closed and barricaded every issue by which the threatened rooms could be entered. He examined the walls, raised the tapestries, and finally installed his detectives in the central gallery.

"No nonsense, do you understand? You're not here to sleep. At the least sound open the windows on the court and call me. Keep a look-out also on the water-side. Thirty feet of steep cliff doesn't frighten blackguards of that stamp."

He locked them in, took away the keys, and said to the baron:

"And now to our post."

He had selected as the best place in which to spend the night a small room contrived in the thickness of the outer walls, between the two

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main doors. It had at one time been the watchman's lodge. A spy-hole opened upon the bridge, another upon the court. In one corner was what looked like the mouth of a well.

"You told me, did you not, monsieur le baron, that this well is the only entrance to the underground passage, and that it has been stopped up since the memory of man?"

"Yes."

"Therefore, unless there should happen to be another outlet, unknown to any but Arsène Lupin, which seems pretty unlikely, we can be easy in our minds."

He placed three chairs in a row, settled himself comfortably at full length, lit his pipe and sighed.

"Upon my word, monsieur le baron, I must be very eager to build an additional story to the little house in which I mean to end my days to accept so elementary a job as this. I shall tell the story to our friend Lupin; he'll split his sides with laughter."

The baron did not laugh. With ears pricked up he questioned the silence with ever-growing restlessness. From time to time he leaned over the well and plunged an anxious eye into the yawning cavity.

The clock struck eleven; midnight; one o'clock.

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Suddenly he seized the arm of Ganimard, who woke with a start.

"Do you hear that?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"It's myself, snoring!"

"No, no, listen. . . ."

"Oh yes, it's a motor-horn."

"Well?"

"Well, it's as unlikely that Lupin should come by motor-car as that he should use a battering-ram to demolish your castle. So I should go to sleep if I were you, monsieur le baron . . . as I shall have the honor of doing once more. Good-night!"

This was the only alarm. Ganimard resumed his interrupted slumbers, and the baron heard nothing save his loud and regular snoring.

At break of day they left their cell. A great calm peace—the peace of the morning by the cool water-side—reigned over the castle. Cahorn, beaming with joy, and Ganimard, placid as ever, climbed the staircase. Not a sound. Nothing suspicious.

"What did I tell you, monsieur le baron? I really ought not to have accepted . . . I feel ashamed of myself . . ."

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He took the keys and entered the gallery.

On two chairs, with bent bodies and hanging arms, sat the two detectives, fast asleep.

"What, in the name of all the . . ." growled the inspector.

At the same moment the baron uttered a cry:

"The pictures! . . . The credence-table! . . ."

He stammered and spluttered, with his hand outstretched towards the dismantled walls, with their bare nails and slack cords. The Watteau and the three Rubens had disappeared! The tapestries had been removed, the glass-cases emptied of their trinkets!

"And my Louis XVI sconces! . . . And the Regency chandelier! . . . And my twelfth-century Virgin! . . ."

He ran from place to place, maddened, in despair. Distraught with rage and grief, he quoted the purchase-prices, added up his losses, piled up figures, all promiscuously, in indistinct words and incompleted phrases. He stamped with his feet, flung himself about, and, in short, behaved like a ruined man who had nothing before him but suicide.

If anything could have consoled him it would have been the sight of Ganimard's stupefaction. Contrary to the baron, the inspector did not move. He seemed petrified, and, with a dazed

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eye, examined things. The windows? They were fastened. The locks of the doors? Untouched. There was not a crack in the ceiling, not a hole in the floor. Everything was in perfect order. The whole thing must have been carried out methodically, after an inexorable and logical plan.

"Arsène Lupin! . . . Arsène Lupin!" he muttered, giving way. . . .

Suddenly he leaped upon the two detectives, as though at last overcome with rage, and shook them and swore at them furiously. They did not wake up.

"The deuce!" he said. "Can they have been . . . ?"

He leaned over and closely scrutinized them, one after the other; they were both asleep, but their sleep was not natural. He said to the baron:

"They have been put to sleep."

"But by whom?"

"By him, of course . . . or by his gang, acting under his instructions. It's a trick in his own manner. I recognize his touch."

"In that case, I am undone; the thing is hopeless."

"Hopeless."

"But this is abominable!—it's monstrous!"

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"Lodge an information."

"What's the good?"

"Well, you may as well try . . . the law has its resources. . . ."

"The law! But you can see for yourself. . . . Why, at this very moment, when you might be looking for a clew, discovering something, you're not even stirring!"

"Discover something, with Arsène Lupin! But, my dear sir, Arsène Lupin never leaves anything behind him! There's no chance with Arsène Lupin! I am beginning to wonder whether he got himself arrested by me of his own free will in America!"

"Then I must give up the hope of recovering my pictures or anything! But he has stolen the pearls of my collection. I would give a fortune to get them back. If there's nothing to be done against him, let him name his price."

Ganimard looked at him steadily.

"That's a sound notion. Do you stick to it?"

"Yes, yes, yes! But why do you ask?"

"I have an idea."

"What idea?"

"We'll talk of it if nothing comes of the inquiry. . . . Only, not a word about me to a soul if you wish me to succeed."

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And he added, between his teeth:

"Besides, I have nothing to be proud of."

The two men gradually recovered consciousness, with the stupefied look of men awakening from an hypnotic sleep. They opened astounded eyes, tried to make out what had happened. Ganimard questioned them. They remembered nothing.

"Still, you must have seen somebody."

"No."

"Try and think."

"No."

"Did you have a drink?"

They reflected, and one of them replied:

"Yes, I had some water."

"Out of that bottle there?"

"Yes."

"I had some too," said the other.

Ganimard smelled the water, tasted it. It had no particular scent or flavor.

"Come," he said, "we are wasting our time. Problems set by Arsène Lupin can't be solved in five minutes. But, by jingo, I swear I'll catch him! He's won the second bout. The rubber game to me!"

That day a charge of aggravated larceny was laid by Baron Cahorn against Arsène Lupin, a prisoner awaiting trial at the Santé.

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The baron often regretted having laid his information when he saw the Malaquis made over to the gendarmes, the public prosecutor, the examining magistrate, the newspaper reporters, and all the idle, curious people who worm themselves in wherever they have no business to be.

Already the case was filling the public mind. It had taken place under such peculiar conditions, and the name of Arsène Lupin excited men's imaginations to such a pitch, that the most fantastic stories crowded the columns of the press and found acceptance with the public.

But the original letter of Arsène Lupin, which was published by the *Echo de France*—and no one ever knew who had supplied the text: the letter in which Baron Cahorn was insolently warned of what threatened him—caused the greatest excitement. Fabulous explanations were offered forthwith. The old legends were revived. The newspapers reminded their readers of the existence of the famous subterranean passages. And the public prosecutor, influenced by these statements, pursued his search in this direction.

The castle was ransacked from top to bottom. Every stone was examined; the wainscotings and chimneys, the frames of the mirrors and the rafters of the ceilings were carefully inspected. By the light of torches the searchers investigated the

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immense cellars, in which the lords of the Malaquis had been used to pile up their provisions and munitions of war. They sounded the very bowels of the rock. All to no purpose. They discovered not the slightest trace of a tunnel. No secret passage existed.

Very well, was the answer on every side, but pictures and furniture don't vanish like ghosts. They go out through doors and windows, and the people that take them also go in and out through doors and windows. Who are these people? How did they get in? And how did they get out?

The public prosecutor of Rouen, persuaded of his own incompetence, asked for the assistance of the Paris police. M. Dudouis, the chief of the detective service, sent the most efficient bloodhounds in his employ. He himself paid a forty-eight hours' visit to the Malaquis, but met with no better success.

It was after his return that he sent for Chief-Inspector Ganimard, whose services he had so often had occasion to value.

Ganimard listened in silence to the instructions of his superior, and then, tossing his head, said:

"I think we shall be on a false scent while we continue to search the castle. The solution lies elsewhere."

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"With Arsène Lupin! If you think that, then you believe that he took part in the burglary."

"I do think so. I go further: I consider it certain."

"Come, Ganimard, this is ridiculous. Arsène Lupin is in prison."

"Arsène Lupin is in prison, I agree. He is being watched, I grant you. But if he had his legs in irons, his hands bound, and his mouth gagged I should still be of the same opinion."

"But why this persistency?"

"Because no one else is capable of contriving a plan on so large a scale, and of contriving it in such a way that it succeeds . . . as this has succeeded."

"Words, Ganimard!"

"They are true words, for all that. Only, it's no use looking for underground passages, for stones that turn on a pivot, and stuff and nonsense of that kind. Our friend does not employ any of those antiquated measures. He is a man of to-day, or, rather, of to-morrow."

"And what do you conclude?"

"I conclude by asking you straight to let me spend an hour with Lupin."

"In his cell?"

"Yes. We were on excellent terms during the crossing from America, and I venture to think

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that he is not without a friendly feeling for the man who arrested him. If he can tell me what I want to know, without compromising himself, he will be quite willing to spare me an unnecessary journey."

It was just after mid-day when Ganimard was shown into Arsène Lupin's cell. Lupin, who was lying on his bed, raised his head, and uttered an exclamation of delight.

"Well, this is a surprise! Dear old Ganimard here!"

"Himself."

"I have hoped for many things in this retreat of my own choosing, but for none more eagerly than the pleasure of welcoming you here."

"You are too good."

"Not at all, not at all. I have the liveliest feelings of esteem for you."

"I am proud to hear it."

"I have said so a thousand times: Ganimard is our greatest detective. He's *almost*—see how frank I am—*almost* as good as Holmlock Shears. But, really, I'm awfully sorry to have nothing better than this stool to offer you. And not a drink of any kind! Not so much as a glass of beer! Do forgive me: I am only passing through!"

Ganimard smiled and sat down, and the pris-

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oner, glad of the opportunity of speaking, continued:

"By Jove, what a treat to see a decent man's face! I am sick of the looks of all those spies who go through my cell and my pockets ten times a day, to make sure that I am not planning an escape. Gad, how fond the government must be of me!"

"They show their taste."

"No, no! I should be so happy if they would let me lead my quiet little life."

"On other people's money."

"Just so. It would be so simple. But I'm letting my tongue run on. I'm talking nonsense, and I dare say you're in a hurry. Come, Ganimard, tell me to what I owe the honor of this visit?"

"The Cahorn case," said Ganimard, straight out.

"Stop! Wait a bit. . . . You see, I have so many on hand! First, let me search my brain for the Cahorn pigeon-hole. . . . Ah, I have it! Cahorn case, Château du Malaquis, Seine-Inférieure. . . . Two Rubens, a Watteau, and a few minor trifles."

"Trifles!"

"Oh yes; all this is of small importance. I have bigger things on hand. However, you're

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interested in the case, and that's enough for me. . . . Go ahead, Ganimard."

"I need not tell you, need I, how far we have got with the investigation?"

"No, not at all. I have seen the morning papers. And I will even take the liberty of saying that you are not making much progress."

"That's just why I have come to throw myself upon your kindness."

"I am entirely at your service."

"First of all, the thing was done by you, was it not?"

"From start to finish."

"The registered letter? The telegram?"

"Were sent by yours truly; in fact, I ought to have the receipts somewhere."

Arsène opened the drawer of a little deal table which, with the bed and the stool, composed all the furniture of his cell, took out two scraps of paper, and handed them to Ganimard.

"Hullo!" cried the latter. "Why, I thought you were being kept under constant observation and searched on the slightest pretext. And it appears that you read the papers and collect post-office receipts. . . ."

"Bah! Those men are such fools! They rip up the lining of my waistcoat, explore the soles of my boots, listen at the walls of my cell; but not

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one of them ever thought that Arsène Lupin would be silly enough to choose so obvious a hiding-place. That's just what I reckoned on."

Ganimard exclaimed, in amusement:

"What a funny chap you are! You're beyond me! Come, tell me the story."

"Oh, I say! Not so fast! Initiate you into all my secrets . . . reveal my little tricks to you? That's a serious matter."

"Was I wrong in thinking that I could rely on you to oblige me?"

"No, Ganimard, and, as you insist upon it . . ."

Arsène Lupin took two or three strides across his cell. Then, stopping:

"What do you think of my letter to the baron?" he asked.

"I think you wanted to have some fun, to tickle the gallery a bit."

"Ah, there you go! Tickle the gallery, indeed! Upon my word, Ganimard, I gave you credit for more sense! Do you really imagine that I, Arsène Lupin, waste my time with such childish pranks as that? Is it likely that I should have written the letter if I could have rifled the baron without it? Do try and understand that the letter was the indispensable starting-point—the main-spring that set the whole machine in motion. Look here, let us proceed in order, and,

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if you like, prepare the Malaquis burglary together."

"Very well."

"Now follow me. I have to do with an impregnable and closely guarded castle. Am I to throw up the game and give up the treasures which I covet because the castle that contains them happens to be inaccessible?"

"Clearly not."

"Am I to try to carry it by assault, as in the old days, at the head of a band of adventurers?"

"That would be childish."

"Am I to enter it by stealth?"

"Impossible."

"There remains only one way, which is to get myself invited by the owner of the aforesaid castle."

"It's an original idea."

"And so easy! Suppose that one day the said owner receives a letter, warning him of a plot hatched against him by one Arsène Lupin, a notorious housebreaker. What is he sure to do?"

"Send the letter to the public prosecutor."

"Who will laugh at him, *because the said Lupin is actually locked up!* The natural consequence is the utter bewilderment of the worthy man, who is ready and anxious to ask the assistance of the first-comer. Am I right?"

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"Quite so."

"And if he happens to read in the local news-sheet that a famous detective is staying in the neighborhood . . ."

"He will go and apply to that detective."

"Exactly. But, on the other hand, let us assume that, foreseeing this inevitable step, Arsène Lupin has asked one of his ablest friends to take up his quarters at Caudebec, to pick up acquaintance with a contributor to the *Réveil*, a paper to which the baron, mark you, subscribes, and to drop a hint that he is so-and-so, the famous detective. What will happen next?"

"The contributor will send a paragraph to the *Réveil*, stating that the detective is staying at Caudebec."

"Exactly; and one of two things follows: either the fish (I mean Cahorn) does not rise to the bait, in which case nothing happens, or else (and this is the more likely presumption) he nibbles, in which case you have our dear Cahorn imploring the assistance of one of my own friends against me!"

"This is becoming more and more original."

"Of course the sham detective begins by refusing. Thereupon a telegram from Arsène Lupin. Dismay of the baron, who renews his entreaties with my friend, and offers him so much

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to watch over his safety. The friend aforesaid accepts, and brings with him two chaps of our gang, who, during the night, while Cahorn is kept in sight by his protector, remove a certain number of things through the window, and lower them with ropes into a barge freighted for the purpose. It's as simple as . . . Lupin."

"And it's just wonderful," cried Ganimard, "and I have no words in which to praise the boldness of the idea and the ingenuity of the details! But I can hardly imagine a detective so illustrious that his name should have attracted and impressed the baron to that extent."

"There is one and one only."

"Who?"

"The most illustrious of them all, the arch-enemy of Arsène Lupin—in short, Inspector Ganimard."

"What! myself?"

"Yourself, Ganimard. And that's the delightful part of it: if you go down and persuade the baron to talk you will end by discovering that it is your duty to arrest yourself, just as you arrested me in America. A humorous revenge, what? I shall have Ganimard arrested by Ganimard!"

Arsène Lupin laughed long and loud, while the inspector bit his lips with vexation. The joke

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did not appear to him worthy of so much merriment.

The entrance of a warder gave him time to recover. The man brought the meal which Arsène Lupin, by special favor, was allowed to have sent in from the neighboring restaurant. After placing the tray on the table he went away. Arsène sat down, broke his bread, ate a mouthful or two, and continued:

"But be easy, my dear Ganimard, you will not have to go down there. I am going to reveal a thing to you that will strike you dumb: the Cahorn case is about to be withdrawn."

"What?"

"About to be withdrawn, I said."

"Nonsense! I have just left the chief."

"And then? Does Monsieur Dudouis know more than I do about what concerns me? You must learn that Ganimard—excuse me—that the sham Ganimard has remained on very good terms with Baron Cahorn. The baron—and this is the main reason why he has kept the thing quiet—has charged him with the very delicate mission of negotiating a deal with me; and the chances are that, by this time, on payment of a certain sum, the baron is once more in possession of his pet knicknacks, in return for which he will withdraw the charge. Wherefore, there is no ques-

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tion of theft. Wherefore, the public prosecutor will have to abandon . . ."

Ganimard gazed at the prisoner with an air of stupefaction.

"But how do you know all this?"

"I have just received the telegram I was expecting."

"You have just received a telegram?"

"This very moment, my friend. I was too polite to read it in your presence. But if you will allow me . . ."

"You're poking fun at me, Lupin."

"Be so good, my dear friend, as to cut off the top of that egg gently. You will see for yourself that I am not poking fun at you."

Ganimard obeyed mechanically, and broke the egg with the blade of a knife. A cry of surprise escaped him. The shell was empty but for a sheet of blue paper. At Arsène's request, he unfolded it. It was a telegram, or, rather, a portion of a telegram, from which the postal indications had been removed. He read:

"Arrangement settled. Hundred thousand spondulics delivered. All well."

"Hundred thousand spondulics?" he uttered.

"Yes, a hundred thousand francs. It's not

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much, but these are hard times. . . . And my general expenses are so heavy! If you knew the amount of my budget . . . it's like the budget of a big town!"

Ganimard rose to go. His ill-humor had left him. He thought for a few moments, and cast a mental glance over the whole business, to try to discover a weak point. Then, in a voice that frankly revealed his admiration as an expert, he said:

"It's a good thing that there are not dozens like you, or there would be nothing for us but to shut up shop."

Arsène Lupin assumed a modest simper, and replied:

"Oh, I had to do something to amuse myself, to occupy my spare time . . . especially as this stroke could only succeed while I was in prison."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Ganimard. "Your trial, your defence, your examination: isn't that enough for you to amuse yourself with?"

"No, because I have decided not to attend my trial."

"Oh, I say!"

Arsène Lupin repeated, deliberately:

"I shall not attend my trial."

"Really!"

"Why, my dear fellow, you surely don't think

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that I mean to rot in gaol? The mere suggestion is an insult. Let me tell you that Arsène Lupin remains in prison as long as he thinks fit, and not a moment longer."

"It might have been more prudent to begin by not entering it," said the inspector, ironically.

"Ah, so you're chaffing me, sirrah? Do you remember that you had the honor to effect my arrest? Well, learn from me, my respectable friend, that no one, neither you nor another, could have laid a hand upon me if a much more important interest had not occupied my attention at that critical moment."

"You surprise me."

"A woman had cast her eyes upon me, Ganimard, and I loved her. Do you realize all that the fact implies when a woman whom one loves casts her eyes upon one? I cared about little else, I assure you. And that is why I'm here."

"Since some considerable time, allow me to observe."

"I was anxious to forget. Don't laugh; it was a charming adventure, and I still have a touching recollection of it . . . And then I am suffering a little from nervous prostration. We lead such a feverish existence nowadays! It's a good thing

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to take a rest-cure from time to time. And there's no place for it like this. They carry out the cure in all its strictness at the Santé."

"Arsène Lupin," said Ganimard, "you're pulling my leg."

"Ganimard," replied Lupin, "this is Friday. On Wednesday next I'll come and smoke a cigar with you in the Rue Pergolèse at four o'clock in the afternoon."

"Arsène Lupin, I shall expect you."

They shook hands like two friends who have a proper sense of each other's value, and the old detective turned towards the door.

"Ganimard!"

Ganimard looked round.

"What is it?"

"Ganimard, you've forgotten your watch."

"My watch?"

"Yes, I've just found it in my pocket."

He returned it, with apologies.

"Forgive me. They've taken mine, but that's no reason why I should rob you of yours — especially as I have a chronometer here which keeps perfect time and satisfies all my requirements."

He took out of the drawer a large, thick, comfortable-looking gold watch, hanging to a heavy chain.

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"And out of whose pocket does this come?" asked Ganimard.

Arsène Lupin carelessly inspected the initials: "'J. B.' . . . Oh yes, I remember: Jules Bouvier, my examining magistrate, a charming fellow. . . ."

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THE ESCAPE OF ARSÈNE LUPIN

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III

THE ESCAPE OF ARSÈNE LUPIN

ARSÈNE LUPIN finished his mid-day meal, took a good cigar from his pocket, and complacently studied the gold-lettered inscription on its band. At that moment the door of his cell opened. He had just a second in which to throw the cigar into the drawer of the table and to move away. The warden came in to tell him that it was time to take his exercise.

"I was waiting for you, old chap!" cried Lupin, with his unfailing good-humor.

They went out together. Hardly had they turned the corner of the passage when two men entered the cell and began to make a minute examination. One of these was Inspector Dieuzy, the other Inspector Folenfant.

They wanted to have the matter settled once and for all. There was no doubt about it: Arsène Lupin was keeping up a correspondence with the outside world and communicating with his confidants. Only the day before the *Grand Journal*

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had published the following lines, addressed to its legal contributor:

"SIR,—In an article published a few days ago you ventured to express yourself concerning me in utterly unwarrantable terms. I shall come and call you to account a day or two before my trial commences.

"Yours faithfully,

"ARSÈNE LUPIN."

The handwriting was Arsène Lupin's. Therefore, he was sending letters. Therefore, he was receiving letters. Therefore, it was certain that he was preparing the escape which he had so arrogantly announced.

The position was becoming intolerable. By arrangement with the examining magistrate, M. Dudouis himself, the head of the detective service, went to the Santé to explain to the prison governor the measures which it was thought advisable to take, and on his arrival he sent two of his men to the prisoner's cell.

The men raised every one of the flag-stones, took the bed to pieces, did all that is usually done in such cases, and ended by discovering nothing. They were about to abandon their search when the warden came running in, and said:

"The drawer . . . look in the drawer of the table!

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