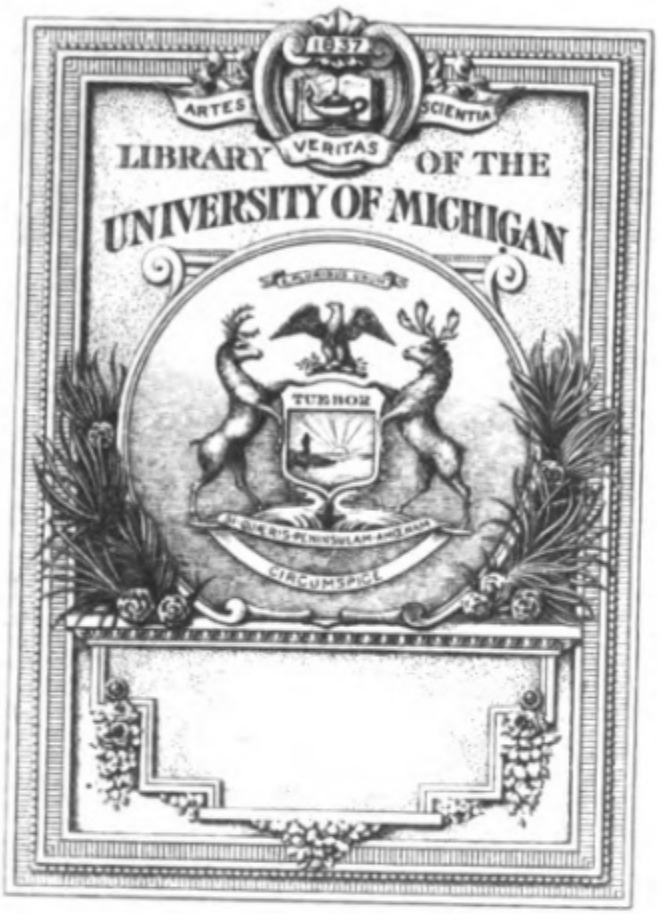
A 498581

FANTÔMAS
A ROYAL PRISONER

PIERRE SOUVESTRE
AND
MARCEL ALLAIN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

848
S731Sm
t

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

A ROYAL PRISONER

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

FANTÔMAS DETECTIVE TALES

By

PIERRE SOUVESTRE and MARCEL ALLAIN

12mo. Cloth. Price, **$1.40**, net, each.

I.

FANTÔMAS

The Adventures of Detective Juve in Pursuit of a Master in Crime.

II.

THE EXPLOITS OF JUVE

In this continuation of "Fantômas" the further adventures of Detective Juve are narrated and tell of his efforts to run the notorious criminal to earth. Fantômas appears here as the leader of a gang of Apaches.

III.

MESSENGERS OF EVIL

This third Instalment of the adventures of Detective Juve contains a recital of some remarkable happenings in the life of this master-criminal of Paris.

IV.

A NEST OF SPIES

Fantômas now appears as the representative in Paris of a Foreign Government whose real business is to obtain important military secrets for Germany. Juve succeeds in defeating his efforts, but the criminal himself escapes once more.

V.

A ROYAL PRISONER

This volume tells of the daring exploits of Fantômas in his attempts to get possession of the King of Hesse-Weimar's famous diamond.

Other Volumes in Preparation

BRENTANO'S

Digitized by Google

Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

THE FANTÔMAS DETECTIVE NOVELS

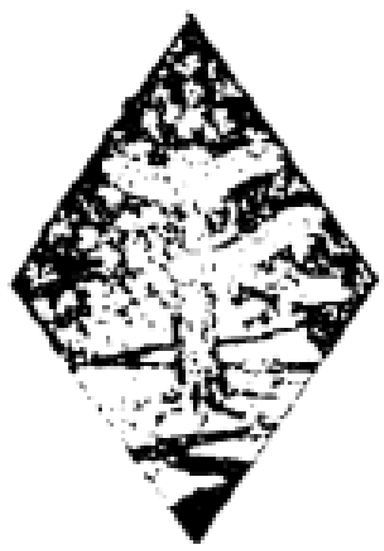
A ROYAL PRISONER

BY

PIERRE SOUVESTRE

AND

MARCEL ALLAIN



NEW YORK
BRENTANO'S
1918

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

COPYRIGHT, 1918, BY BRENTANO'S

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	A Royal Jag	3
II.	Mother Citron's Tenants	12
III.	The Tragedy of the Rue De Monceau	21
IV.	Who Do They Think I Am?	33
V.	By the Singing Fountains	42
VI.	The Investigation Begins	49
VII.	The King Receives	63
VIII.	Marie Pascal	69
IX.	A Party of Three	76
X.	Wulfenmimenglaschk	86
XI.	One Hundred and Twenty-Seven Stations	98
XII.	Camouflage	110
XIII.	The Kingdom of Hesse-Weimar	118
XIV.	Queen Hedwige Receives	127
XV.	The Mysterious Prison	137
XVI.	The Theft of the Diamond.	146
XVII.	On the Right Trail	155
XVIII.	A Sleeper	165
XIX.	Free!	174
XX.	Frederick-Christian	180
XXI.	Horrible Certainty	190
XXII.	Between Us Three—Fantômas!	195
XXIII.	Official Opinions	210
XXIV.	Juve's Lies	218
XXV.	"I Want to Live!"	224
XXVI.	The Accusing Waistcoat	227
XXVII.	The Explosion of the Nord-Sud	234
XXVIII.	Innocent or Guilty?	243
XXIX.	Compromising Discoveries	250
XXX.	Shadowed	256
XXXI.	The Death Watch	264
XXXII.	The Arrest of Fantômas	270

Digitized by Google

Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

A ROYAL PRISONER

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

A ROYAL PRISONER

CHAPTER I

A ROYAL JAG

"AFTER all, why not celebrate? It's the last day of the year and it won't come again for twelve months."

It was close upon midnight.

Jerome Fandor, reporter on the popular newspaper, *La Capitale*, was strolling along the boulevard; he had just come from a banquet, one of those official and deadly affairs at which the guests are obliged to listen to interminable speeches. He had drowsed through the evening and at the first opportunity had managed to slip away quickly.

The theatres were just out and the boulevard was crowded with people intent on making a night of it. Numberless automobiles containing the fashionable and rich of Paris blocked the streets. The restaurants were brilliantly illuminated, and as carriages discharged their occupants before the doors, one glimpsed the neat feet and ankles of daintily clad women as

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

they crossed the sidewalk and disappeared inside, following their silk-hatted escorts, conscious of their own importance.

Many years of active service in Paris as chief reporter of *La Capitale* had brought Jerome Fandor in touch with a good third of those who constitute Parisian society, and rarely did he fail to exchange a nod, a smile, or half a dozen words of friendly greeting whenever he set foot out of doors.

But in spite of his popularity he led a lonely life—many acquaintances, but few close friends. The great exception was Juve, the celebrated detective.

In fact, Fandor's complex and adventurous life was very much bound up with that of the police officer, for they had worked together in solving the mystery of many tragic crimes.

On this particular evening, the reporter became gradually imbued with the general spirit of gaiety and abandon which surrounded him.

"Hang it," he muttered, "I might go and hunt up Juve and drag him off to supper, but I'm afraid I should get a cool reception if I did. He is probably sleeping the sleep of the just and would strongly object to being disturbed. Anyway, sooner or later, I'll probably run into some one I know."

On reaching Drouet Square, he espied an inviting-

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

looking restaurant, brilliantly lit. He was about to make his way to a table when the head waiter stopped him.

"Your name, please!"

"What's that?" replied Fandor.

The waiter answered with ironical politeness:

"I take it for granted you have engaged a table. We haven't a single vacant place left."

Fandor had the same luck at several other restaurants and then began to suffer the pangs of hunger, having, on principle, scarcely touched the heavy dishes served at the banquet.

After wandering aimlessly about, he walked toward the Madeleine and turned off into the Rue Royale in the direction of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré.

As he was passing a discreet looking restaurant with many thick velvet curtains and an imposing array of private automobiles before it, he heard his name called.

He stopped short and turned to see a vision of feminine loveliness standing before him.

"Isabelle de Guerray!" he cried.

"And how are you, my dear boy? Come along in with me."

Fandor had known Isabelle de Guerray when she was a young school teacher just graduated from

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Sévres. Her career, beginning with a somewhat strange and unorthodox affair with a young man of good family who had killed himself for her, had progressed by rapid strides and her name was frequently cited in the minor newspapers as giving elegant "society" suppers, the guests being usually designated by their initials!

Fandor remarked that the fair Isabelle seemed to be putting on weight, especially round the shoulders and hips, but she still retained a great deal of dash and an ardent look in her eyes, very valuable assets in her profession.

"I have my table here, at Raxim's, you must come and join us," and she added with a sly smile, "Oh—quite platonically—I know you're unapproachable."

A deafening racket was going on in the narrow, oblong room. The habitués of the place all knew each other and the conversation was general. No restraint was observed, so that it was quite permissible to wander about, hat on head and cigar between lips, or take a lady upon one's knees.

Fandor followed Isabelle to a table overloaded with flowers and bottles of champagne. Here and there he recognized old friends from the Latin Quarter or Montmartre, among them Conchita Conchas, a Spanish dancer in vogue the previous winter. A tiny woman,

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

who might have been a girl of fifteen from her figure, but whose face was marked with the lines of dissipation, ran into him and Fandor promptly put his arm round her waist.

"Hello, if it isn't little Souppe!"

"Paws down or I'll scratch," was the sharp reply.

The next moment he was shaking hands with Daisy Kissmi, an English girl who had become quite a feature of Raxim's.

Further on he noticed a pale, bald, and already pot-bellied young man, who was staring with lack-lustre eyes at his whiskey and soda. This premature ruin was listening distraitly to a waiter who murmured mysteriously into his ear.

At the end of the room, surrounded by pretty women, sat the old Duke de Pietra, descendant of a fine old Italian family, and near him Arnold, an actor from the music halls.

The patrons had no choice in regard to the supper, which was settled by the head waiter. Each received a bottle of champagne, Ostend oysters, and, later, large slices of *pâté de foie gras*, and as the bottles were emptied, intoxication became general, while even the waiters seemed to catch the spirit of abandon. When the Hungarian band had played their most seductive waltzes, the leader came forward to the mid-

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

dle of the room and announced a new piece of his own composition, called "The Singing Fountains." This met with instant applause and laughter.

As the night wore on the noise became positively deafening. A young Jew named Weil invented a new game. He seized two plates and began scraping them together. Many of the diners followed his example.

"Look here," exclaimed Conchita Conchas, leaning familiarly upon Fandor's shoulder, "why don't you give us tickets for to-morrow to hear these famous Fountains?"

Fandor started to explain that the young woman would be in bed and sound asleep when that event took place, but the Spanish girl, without waiting for the answer, had strolled away.

The journalist rose with the intention of making his escape, when a voice directly behind him made him pause.

"Excuse me, but you seem to know all about these 'Singing Fountains.' Will you kindly explain to me what they are? I am a stranger in the city."

Fandor turned and saw a man of about thirty, fair-haired, with a heavy moustache, seated alone at a small table. The stranger was well built and of distinguished appearance. The journalist suppressed a start of amazement.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Why, it's not surprising that you have not heard of them, they are quite unimportant. On the Place de la Concorde there are two bronze monuments representing Naiads emerging from the fountains. You probably have seen them yourself?"

The stranger nodded, and poured out another glass of champagne.

"Well," continued Fandor, "recently passers-by have fancied they heard sounds coming from these figures. In fact, they declare that the Naiads have been singing. A delightfully poetic and thoroughly Parisian idea, isn't it?"

"Very Parisian indeed."

"The papers have taken it up, and one you probably know by name, *La Capitale,* has decided to investigate this strange phenomenon."

"What was Conchita asking you just now?"

"Oh, nothing, merely to give her a card for the ceremony."

The conversation continued and turned to other subjects. The stranger ordered more wine and insisted on Fandor joining him. He seemed to be particularly interested in the subject of women and the night life of Paris.

"If only I could persuade him to come with me," thought Fandor. "I'd show him a stunt or two, and

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

what a scoop it would make . . . if it could be printed! He certainly is drunk, very drunk, and that may help me."

On the Place de la Concorde, deserted at this late hour, two men, arm in arm, were taking their devious way. They were Fandor and the stranger he had met at Raxim's.

The journalist, with the aid of an extra bottle, had persuaded his new friend to finish the night among the cafés of Montmartre. The sudden change from the overheated restaurant to the cold outside increased the effects of the alcohol and Fandor realized that he himself was far from sober. As his companion seemed to be obsessed with the idea of seeing the Fountains, the journalist piloted him to the Place de la Concorde.

"There you are," he exclaimed, "but you see they're closed. No more singing to-night. Now come and have a drink."

"Good idea, some more champagne."

Fandor hailed a taxi, and ordered the chauffeur to drive to the Place Pigalle. As he was shutting the door, he observed an old beggar, who evidently was afraid to ask for alms. Fandor threw him a coin as the taxi started.

It was three in the morning, and the Place Pigalle

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

was crowded with carriages, porters and a constant ebb and flow of all sorts of people.

The journalist and his companion emerged some time later from one of the best known restaurants, both drunk, especially the stranger, who could scarcely keep his feet.

"Look here, we must go . . . go . . ."

"Go to bed," interrupted Fandor.

"No. I know where we can go. . . ."

"But we've been everywhere."

"We'll go to my rooms . . . to her rooms . . . to Susy d'Orsel . . . she's my girl . . . d'ye know, she's been expecting me for supper since midnight."

"More supper?"

"Of course . . . there's plenty of room left."

With some difficulty the stranger managed to give the address, 247 Rue de Monceau.

"All right," said Fandor to himself, "we'll have some fun; after all, what do I risk?"

While the taxi shook them violently from side to side, Fandor grew comparatively sober. He examined his companion more closely and was surprised to see how well he carried himself in spite of his condition.

"Well," he summed up, "he certainly has a jag, but it's a royal jag!"

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CHAPTER II

MOTHER CITRON'S TENANTS

"NOW you've forgotten the fish knives and forks! Do you expect my lover to eat with his fingers like that old Chinaman I had for three months last year!"

Susy d'Orsel spoke with a distinct accent of the Faubourg, which contrasted strangely with her delicate and distinguished appearance.

Justine, her maid, stood staring in reply.

"But, Madame, we have lobsters. . . ."

"What's that got to do with it, they're fish, ain't they?"

The young woman left the table and went into the adjoining room, a small drawing-room, elegantly furnished in Louis XV style.

"Justine," she called.

"Madame."

"Here's another mistake. You mustn't get red orchids. Throw these out. . . . I want either mauve or yellow ones. . . . You know those are the official colors of His Majesty."

"Queer taste his . . . His Majesty has for yellow."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"What's that to do with you. Get a move on, lay the table."

"I left the *pâté de foie gras* in the pantry with ice round it."

"All right."

The young woman returned to the dining-room and gave a final glance at the preparations.

"He's a pretty good sort, my august lover." Justine started in surprise.

"August! Is that a new one?"

Susy d'Orsel could hardly repress a smile.

"Mind your own business. What time is it?"

"A quarter to twelve, Madame." And as the girl started to leave the room she ventured:

"I hope M. August won't forget me, to-morrow morning."

"Why, you little idiot, his name isn't August, it's Frederick-Christian! You have about as much sense as an oyster!"

The maid looked so crestfallen at this that Susy added, good-naturedly:

"That's all right, Justine, A Happy New Year anyway, and don't worry. And now get out; His Majesty wants nobody about but me this evening."

Susy d'Orsel, in spite of her physical charms, had found life hard during the earlier years of her career.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

She had become a mediocre actress merely for the sake of having some profession, and had frequented the night restaurants in quest of a wealthy lover. It was only after a long delay that fortune had smiled upon her, and she had arrived at the enviable position of being the mistress of a King.

Frederick-Christian II, since the death of his father three years previously, reigned over the destinies of the Kingdom of Hesse-Weimar. Young and thoroughly Parisian in his tastes, he felt terribly bored in his middle-class capital and sought every opportunity of going, incognito, to have a little fun in Paris. During each visit he never failed to call upon Susy d'Orsel, and by degrees, coming under the sway of her charms, he made her a sort of official mistress, an honor which greatly redounded to her glory and popularity.

He had installed her in a dainty little apartment in the Rue de Monceau. It was on the third floor and charmingly furnished. In fact, he was in the habit of declaring that his Queen Hedwige, despite all her wealth, was unable to make her apartment half so gracious and comfortable.

Thus it was that Susy d'Orsel waited patiently for the arrival of her royal lover, who had telephoned her he would be with her on the night of December the thirty-first.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The official residence of the King while in Paris was the Royal Palace Hotel, and although in strict incognito, he rarely spent the whole night out. But he intended to make the last night of the year an exception to this rule. As became a gallant gentleman, he had himself seen to the ordering of the supper, and a procession of waiters from the first restaurants of Paris had been busy all the afternoon preparing for the feast.

Suddenly a discreet ring at the bell startled Susy d'Orsel.

"That's queer, I didn't expect the King until one o'clock!" she exclaimed.

She opened the door and saw a young girl standing on the landing.

"Oh, it's you, Mademoiselle Pascal! What are you coming at this hour for?"

"Excuse me, Madame, for troubling you, but I've brought your lace negligée. It took me quite a time to finish, and I thought you'd probably like it as soon as possible."

"Oh, I thought it had already come. I'm very glad you brought it. There would have been a fine row if it hadn't been ready for me to wear this evening."

Susy d'Orsel took the dressmaker into her bedroom

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

and turned on the electric lights. The gown was then unwrapped and displayed. It was of mousseline de soie, trimmed with English point.

Susy examined it with the eye of a connoisseur and then nodded her head.

"It's fine, my girl, you have the fingers of a fairy, but it must put your eyes out."

"It is very hard, Madame, especially working by artificial light, and in winter the days are so short and the work very heavy. That is why I came to you at this late hour."

Susy smiled.

"Late hour! Why the evening is just beginning for me."

"Our lives are very different, Madame."

"That's right, I begin when you stop, and if your work is hard, mine isn't always agreeable."

The two women laughed and then Susy took off her wrapper and put on the new negligée.

"My royal lover is coming this evening."

"Yes, I know," answered Marie Pascal. "Your table looks very pretty."

"You might make me a lace table cloth. We'll talk about it some other time, not this evening; besides, I can't be too extravagant."

The dressmaker took her leave a few moments later

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

and made her way with care in the semi-obscurity down the three flights of stairs.

Marie Pascal was a young girl in the early twenties, fair-haired, blue-eyed and with a graceful figure. Modishly but neatly dressed, she had a reputation in the neighborhood as a model of discretion and virtue.

She worked ceaselessly and being clever with her fingers, she had succeeded in building up so good a trade in the rich and elegant Monceau quarter, that in the busy season she was obliged to hire one or two workwomen to help her.

As she was crossing the court to go to her own room, a voice called her from the porter's lodge.

"Marie Pascal, look here a moment."

A fat woman dressed in her best opened the door of her room which was lit by one flaring gas jet.

Marie Pascal, in spite of her natural kindliness, could scarcely repress a smile.

Madame Ceiron, the concièrge, or, as she was popularly called, "Mother Citron," certainly presented a fantastic appearance.

She was large, shapeless, common, and good-natured. Behind her glasses, her eyes snapped with perpetual sharp humor. She had a mass of gray hair that curled round her wrinkled face, which, with a last remnant of coquetry, she made up outrageously.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Her hands and feet were enormous, disproportionate to her figure, although she was well above middle height. She invariably wore mittens while doing the housework.

Mother Citron, however, did very little work; she left that to a subordinate who, for a modest wage, attended to her business and left her free to go out morning, noon and night. She now questioned Marie Pascal with considerable curiosity, and the young girl explained her late errand to deliver the gown to Susy d'Orsel.

"Come in and have a cup of coffee, Mam'zelle Pascal," urged the old woman, as she set out two cups and filled them from a coffee pot on the stove.

Marie Pascal at first refused, but Mother Citron was so insistent that she ended by accepting the invitation. Besides, she felt very grateful to Madame Ceiron for having recommended her to the proprietor of the house, the Marquis de Sérac, an old bachelor who lived on the first floor.

The Marquis had used his good offices to obtain for her an order for laces from the King of Hesse-Weimar. Mother Citron showed a kindly interest in this enterprise.

"Well, did you see the King?"

Marie Pascal hesitated:

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"I saw him and I didn't see him."

"Tell me all about it, my dear. Is the lover of our lady upstairs a good-looking man?"

"It's hard to say. So far as I could judge, he seemed to be very handsome. You see, it was like this. After waiting in the lobby of the Royal Palace Hotel for about an hour, I was shown into a large drawing-room; a sort of footman in knee breeches took my laces into the adjoining room where the King was walking up and down. I just caught a glimpse of him from time to time."

"What did he do then?"

"I don't know. He must have liked my laces for he gave me a large order. He didn't seem to pay much attention to them; he picked out three of the samples I sent in and what seemed queer, he also ordered some imitations of them."

The concièrge smiled knowingly.

"I expect the imitations were for his lawful wife, and the real ones for his little friend. Men are all alike. Another cup of coffee?"

"Oh, no, thanks."

"Well, I won't insist; each one to his taste. The life Susy d'Orsel leads wouldn't suit you. And the amount of champagne she gets through!"

"No, I shouldn't care much about that."

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"All the same, there's something to be said for it. She has a first-rate position since she got the King . . . and I get first-rate tips! Take to-night, for instance; I'll bet they'll be carrying on till pretty near dawn. It upsets my habits, but I can't complain. I'll probably get a good New Year's present in the morning."

"Well, as it's very late for me, I'll go up to bed."

"Go ahead, my dear, don't let me keep you."

Marie Pascal had reached the stairs when she turned back.

"Oh, Madame Ceiron, when can I thank the Marquis de Sérac for his kindness in introducing me to Frederick-Christian?"

"No hurry, my child, the Marquis has gone to the country to spend the New Year's day with his relations and he won't be back before next week."

Marie Pascal climbed the stairs to her room on the sixth floor and the concièrge returned to her quarters and settled herself in an armchair.

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CHAPTER III

THE TRAGEDY OF THE RUE DE MONCEAU

SUSY d'ORSEL, tired of waiting for her royal lover, was sound asleep before the fire in her bedroom. Suddenly she was awakened by a loud noise. Still half asleep, she sat up listening. The sounds came from the stairs. Mechanically Susy glanced at the clock, which marked the quarter after three.

"I'll bet it's him, but how late he is!"

As the sounds drew nearer, she added:

"He must be as drunk as a lord! After all, Kings are no better than other men."

She quickly passed to the outer door and listened.

"Why, it sounds as if there were two of them!"

A key fumbled in the lock, then the owner of it apparently gave up the task as hopeless and began ringing the bell.

Susy opened the door and Frederick-Christian staggered in followed by a man who was a total stranger to her.

The latter, bowing in a correct and respectful manner, carried himself with dignity.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The King bubbled over with laughter and leaned on the shoulder of his lady-love.

"Take off your overcoat," she said, at length, and while he was attempting to obey her, she whispered:

"If your Maj . . ."

Before she could finish the sentence the King put his hand over her mouth.

"My . . . my . . . my dear Susy . . . I'm very fond of you . . . but don't begin by saying stupid things. . . . I am here . . . incog . . . incognito. Call me your little Cri-Cri, Susy. . . ."

"My dear," she replied, "introduce me to your friend."

"Eh," cried the King, "if I'm not forgetting the most elementary obligations of the protocol; but after fourteen whiskeys, and good whiskey, too, though I've better here. . . . Susy don't drink any, she prefers gooseberry syrup . . . queer taste, isn't it?"

Susy saw the conversation was getting away from the point, so repeated her request:

"Introduce me to your friend."

Frederick-Christian glanced at his companion and then burst out laughing:

"What is your name, anyway?"

Fandor did not need to ask that question of the King. The moment he had set eyes on him in Raxim's

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

he recognized in the sturdy tippler his Majesty Frederick-Christian II, King of Hesse-Weimar, on one of his periodic sprees. It was this fact which had made him break his rule and indulge freely himself.

With a serious air he explained:

"Sum fides Achates!"

"What's that?" cried the King.

"Exactly."

Susy d'Orsel now thought both men were equally drunk. She fancied they were having fun with her.

"You know I don't want English spoken here," she said drily.

The King took his mistress round the waist and drew her to him.

"Now don't get angry, my dear, it's only our fun, and besides it's not English, it's Latin . . . bonus . . . Latinus . . . ancestribus . . . the good Latin of our ancestors! . . . the Latin of the Kitchen! Cuisinus . . . autobus . . . understand?"

Turning to the journalist he stretched out his hand:

"Well, my old friend Achates, I'm jolly glad to meet you."

"Achates isn't a real name," cried Susy, still suspicious.

"Achates," explained Fandor, "is an individual belonging to antiquity who became famous in his faithful

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

friendship for his companion and friend, the well-known globe-trotter, Æneas."

"Come and sit down," shouted the King, as he rapped on the table with a bottle of champagne.

"Hurry up, Susy, a plate and glass for my old friend, whose name I don't know . . . because, you see, he's no more Achates than I am."

"Oh, no, Madame," Fandor hastened to say, "I couldn't think of putting you to the trouble, besides spoiling the effect of your charming table. In fact, I am going home in a few moments."

"Not on your life," shouted the King, "you'll stay to the very end."

"Well, then, a glass of champagne, that's all I'll take."

By degrees Susy had become reassured in regard to the young man. Although slightly drunk, his polite manner and good form pleased her. She took her place on the divan beside the King. Fandor sat opposite them and lighted a cigarette.

Suddenly Susy rose from the table.

"Where are you going?" demanded the King.

"I'll be back in a moment . . . something must be open. I feel a draught on my legs."

"Why not show us your legs!" cried Frederick-Christian, and turning to the journalist added:

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"She's built like a statue . . . a little marvel."

Susy returned.

"I knew it! The hall door was open. I hope nobody has got in."

The King laughed at the idea.

"If anyone did, let him come and join us, the more the merrier."

"I thought I heard a noise," continued Susy, but the King made her sit down again beside him and the supper went on.

As she drank glass after glass of wine, she became more and more amiable toward Fandor. And since the King paid little attention to her caresses, she began a flirtation with the journalist in order to pique him.

This brought a frown from the royal lover, and Susy amused herself between the two men until supper ended and they all adjourned to her boudoir.

Fandor, who had now become more sober, decided it was time to take his leave.

"Suppose you both come and lunch with me tomorrow, will you?" he asked. To this they agreed and it was finally arranged that Fandor should call and pick them up at one o'clock the following day.

The journalist felt his way downstairs in the semi-darkness and was just about to ask the concièrge to let

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

him out when he was startled by seeing a heavy form fall with a thud onto the ground of the inner court.

With a gasp of alarm the young man rushed forward and quickly realized that he was in the presence of a terrible tragedy.

Lying on the ground, inert, was the body of Susy d'Orsel.

The unfortunate girl had fallen from the third floor.

Without hesitating, he lifted the body and finding no sign of life, cried loudly for help.

But the entire house was asleep.

What was to be done?

Immediate action was necessary. After a moment's pause, he decided to take the unfortunate girl back to her own apartment. Arrived at the door, he found it locked on the inside. After ringing for some time, it was opened finally by the King. At the sight of Susy apparently lifeless, her head hanging backward, the King staggered to the wall.

He wanted to ask a question, but the words stuck in his throat.

Fandor entered the bedroom and laying Susy down attempted to undo her corset.

"Vinegar and some water," he ordered.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The King between his drunkenness and his alarm was quite useless, and the journalist, after applying a mirror to the girl's nostrils and lips, with a gesture of despair exclaimed:

"Good God, she is dead!"

However, being unwilling to risk his own judgment, he started to the door to seek aid.

At this moment a violent knocking began and a voice from the hall cried out:

"What's the matter? Is anyone hurt? I'm the concièrge."

"The concièrge! Then, for Heaven's sake, Madame, get a doctor. Mademoiselle d'Orsel has killed herself, or at least she is very badly injured."

The words were scarcely out of Fandor's mouth when the rapidly disappearing footsteps of the concièrge were heard clattering downstairs. Frederick-Christian, in a dazed condition, stood in the dining-room, mechanically drinking a liqueur.

"Look here, what does this mean?" cried Fandor.

The King looked at him with intense stupefaction, trying, it seemed, to co-ordinate his faculties. Then, with a greater calmness than in his condition seemed possible, he replied:

"Why, I haven't the least idea."

"But . . . what have you done since I left you?

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

You were both seated side by side on the sofa. How did Susy d'Orsel come to fall out of the window? What have you done?"

"I don't know. I didn't budge from the sofa until you rang the bell."

"But . . . Susy!"

"She left me for a moment. I thought she had gone to see you out."

"That's impossible . . . she didn't leave you . . . it's you who . . . for God's sake, explain! . . . It's too serious a business."

The King seemed unable to take in the situation. Fandor determined to try a shock. Going close to him he spoke in a low voice:

"I beg your Majesty to tell me."

This had an immediate effect. The King staggered back and stared, wide-eyed.

"I . . . I don't understand."

"Yes," insisted Fandor, "your Majesty does understand. You know that I am aware in whose presence I am standing. You are Frederick-Christian II, King of Hesse-Weimar . . . and I, your Majesty, am Jerome Fandor, reporter on *La Capitale* . . . a journalist."

The King did not appear to attach much importance to Fandor's words. Peaceably, without haste, he put

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

on his overcoat and hat. Then, picking up his cane, he moved toward the door.

"Here! what are you doing?"

"I'm going."

"You can't."

"Yes, I can; it's all right, don't worry, I'll arrange matters."

The King appeared so calmly confident that Fandor stood dumbfounded.

Here certainly was an individual out of the common! The journalist had seen many strange happenings in his adventurous career, but never had he come across such an amazing situation. For now he had no doubt of the guilt of the King. What, however, could have been the motive of such odious savagery? Was it possible he had taken seriously the innocent flirtation between Susy and himself? Had the King taken vengeance upon his mistress in a moment of jealous insanity?

No, that was out of the question.

In spite of his intoxication, Frederick-Christian seemed to be a man of normal temperament, and of a kindly disposition. His face betrayed none of the characteristics of the drink-maddened.

The young man was about to question Frederick-Christian further when the hall door bell rang sharply.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Fandor quickly opened the door and let in two policemen.

"Is it here the tragedy took place?"

"What! You know already?"

"The concièrge notified us, Monsieur."

Then turning to his companion:

"See that no one gets out."

"But I've sent for a doctor. . . . I must go and find one," cried Fandor.

"That has already been attended to. We are here to ascertain the facts, to make arrests. Where is the victim of the crime?"

As Fandor took the officer into the bedroom he expected at every moment to hear some exclamation at the discovery of the King. But the latter had mysteriously disappeared.

The officer surveyed the body of the young woman and seemed in doubt how to begin his interrogatory. Suddenly his attention was diverted to the vestibule, where whispering was going on.

Both men quickly returned to the hall door and Fandor overheard the final words of a third person who had entered the room, evidently the concièrge. She was saying:

"It must be 'him' . . . only treat him politely . . . he isn't like an ordinary . . ."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Upon seeing the journalist the old woman stopped abruptly and made him a deep bow.

"Ah, it's you, Madame," cried Fandor, "well, have you brought a doctor?"

"We're looking for one, Monsieur," replied the old woman, "but to-night they seem to be all out enjoying themselves."

One of the officers turned to Fandor and spoke with evident embarrassment.

"It might be better if Monsieur would tell us exactly what happened. On account of possible annoyances . . . besides, the business is too important . . . and then the Government . . ."

Fandor explained briefly all he knew. He was careful not to mention the King by name, leaving it to his Majesty to disclose his own identity when the time came.

"Then Monsieur means to say that a third person was present?" one of the officers asked.

"Of course!" replied Fandor.

"And where is this third person?"

The officer looked decidedly skeptical and the journalist began to grow uneasy.

"He was here with me just now; probably he's in one of the other rooms. Why don't you search?"

But the search disclosed nobody.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

What on earth had become of the King? thought Fandor. He couldn't have jumped out of the window. The servant's staircase came into his mind, but the door to that he found locked.

"It is useless for Monsieur to say more; kindly come with us to the police station."

"After all, Monsieur was alone with the little lady," added the concièrge.

Fandor went rapidly to the dining-room. He would show the three places at the table. But suddenly he remembered his refusal to take a plate. There were only two places laid.

The two officers now held him gently by each arm and began to walk away with him.

"Don't make any noise, please," they urged, "we must avoid all scandal."

Without quite understanding what was happening, Fandor obeyed.

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CHAPTER IV

WHO DO THEY THINK I AM?

THE first faint light of dawn was filtering through the dusty windows of the police station.

Sergeant Masson, pushing aside the game of dominoes he had been playing with his subordinate, declared:

"I must go and see the chief."

"At his house?" demanded the other in a tone of alarm.

"Yes; after all, if I catch it for waking him that won't be so bad as having him come here at ten."

The sergeant rose and stretched himself. He had entire charge of the Station and was responsible for all arrests. As a rule he felt himself equal to the task, but this time the tragedy of the Rue Monceau and the peculiar circumstances surrounding it seemed too much of a burden to bear alone.

Ought he to have arrested the individual now at the Station? Had he been sufficiently tactful? What was to be done now?

"Yes, I'm going to see the chief," he repeated, "be-

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN