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THE TRAIL OF THE BEAST

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THE TRAIL OF THE BEAST

BY

ACHMED ABDULLAH

AUTHOR OF "BUCKING THE TIGER"

"THE BLUE-EYED MANCHU"

NEW YORK

JAMES A. McCANN COMPANY

1919

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TO MY FRIEND
ROBERT SIMPSON

1925

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CHAPTER I

OLD FRIENDS

It puzzled Tennant from the very first.

It was not the fact that he happened to run across his friend in this part of Paris, which was unsavory both from the social and the olfactory point of view, with its population of produce dealers and apache gangsters and its low-ceilinged, tumble-down shops which made a specialty of tripe and snails. Nor was it because his friend brushed past him without recognizing him, although it was still light, not yet five, the packed snow in the streets making up for the sun which was dying beyond the roof-tops. For it was not the first time that Tennant had seen Lord Menzies-Kerr roaming the streets of this section of Paris, and the man had always seemed intent, self-centered, self-involved, and had never seemed to see him.

What bothered him was the presence of the girl.

He was quite sure he knew who she was, though he had never met her personally. She was perhaps the best-known and decidedly the most gifted of the younger French actresses, and he himself had seen

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and applauded her more than once in the Théâtre Alexandre, where she played the ingénue rôles. Of course Angele was a friend of Lord Menzies-Kerr. The boulevard papers spoke of it, some even making more or less veiled allusions to a love affair between the two—legitimate or not, according to the exact shade of yellow of the individual paper.

The ordinary observer would have dismissed the incident as meaningless and negligible, explaining it negatively with "why shouldn't Lord Menzies-Kerr and Angele Lantaigne stroll about the Quarter of Saint-Sulpice if it pleased them?" But Tennant was a detective.

He was a great detective; and, by the same token, he did not work with clews and finger-prints and other mechanical details or devices. His weapons were common sense, plain, everyday logic, and straight psychology. His maxim was that nothing happened, that nothing was done or undone without a mental or emotional reason. He used to say that it was the evolution of this reason and its adaptation into the mazes of the daily social rule called law which spelt the difference between criminals and honest men. And so, seeing Lord Menzies-Kerr and Angele Lantaigne together in this evil, old part of town, where they did not belong, he wondered. He puzzled. He began to look for the reason.

The man—yes! He might have taken a fancy to an afternoon stroll among the smelly streets of Saint-Sulpice. For Lord Menzies-Kerr was erratic and eccentric. But why were they *both* here? What was the girl doing here? There were no curio-shops in the neighborhood, nor little dressmakers who knew how

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to copy a thousand-franc frock of the Rue Royale for fifty.

Tennant turned and watched them. He saw them stop at the corner, in front of a little café, the Café des Reines.

He knew the place. It did not have a very good reputation. Yet the two went inside; not as if they felt suddenly thirsty, but as if they had an appointment there.

Tennant shook his head.

He did not like it, simply because he did not know the reason for it.

Should he shadow them? Find out what he might?

No! That would not be fair. He had no business shadowing his best friend unless he suspected him of—of what?

He walked on.

He would not give in to temptation.

He went straight back to his apartment on the Place Fontenoy, and sat down near a window, looking out. But he found no enjoyment in the street scene, epitome of all Paris though it was, which spread below him like a painted fan: with a view, beyond the Pasteur monument, of the tracery of the elm-trees which bordered the square, farther on the sharp contours of the Military School and a tawny glimpse of the Champ de Mars, to the north the bombastic dome of the Hôtel des Invalides, the whole sprinkled and seasoned with the types of all Paris—work-girls in black taffeta and high-laced boots, carrying enormous round boxes; silken-bearded, comfortable business men on a rapid jump from office to café in search of a pink or pea-green drink and a game of dominoes; once in a while

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a blue-bloused artizan, a priest in sober garb talking gently to a little child, and women of either world, pleasantly conscious of their fine feathers.

Paris in miniature, with its wealth of bustle and color and sound, its fine sweet Latin logic, its sober art of living.

Tennant had looked forward to it ever since, a few months earlier, he had received the cable from Henri Ducastel, the head of the world-renowned detective agency of the same name, asking him to sever his connection with the O'Byrne agency of New York and to join the Paris agency at a salary which was fabulous for frugal France and generous even when measured with the dollar yard-stick.

Of course he had accepted the offer. He knew and loved Paris from former visits. He spoke the language like a native. Too, to be called to Paris, the acknowledged brain and heart of international detective work, as a special investigator, put the final seal of approval on his chosen career.

But to-day he was dissatisfied.

He rose. He thought he would go back to the office and work—best medicine against the blues.

The next moment Lord Menzies-Kerr came into the room. He was a man of Tennant's age, about thirty-three, and at a cursory glance strangely alike to him in clean-cut features and dark, curly hair, in cool, gray-blue eyes and rather short, well-muscled body. The only difference was the complexion.

Tennant's was an even, smooth, outdoor brown speaking of golf and tennis and horseback rides after the day's grind; while the other's was pale, with a faintly greenish tinge which accentuated the fairly high

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cheek-bones; and when the man rose, as he was doing now, it was noticeable that he dragged his right foot as if a heavy weight were attached to it, and that he was conscious of it, as if he hadn't been used to it long.

"It's all your fault, Allistair," Tennant began abruptly.

"What is? You mean your cursed black mood?" The nobleman talked with a slight guttural Highland accent.

"Exactly."

"How so?"

"How?" Tennant rose. "Let me be frank about it."

"Go ahead, old chap. Frankness is said to be a Yankee characteristic."

"I am not a Yankee; I am from Charleston, South Carolina!"

The Scotchman made a noise in his throat which was meant to be a laugh.

"Bit again, didn't you?" he asked. "Same old joke I used to crack during our old school-days in Switzerland, seventeen years ago."

"That's just it!" impatiently interrupted Tennant. "Our old school-days! We used to be chums in those days, weren't we?"

"Rather. The best of pals."

"Quite romantic the other fellows thought our friendship. I, plain American and rather offensively republican, I reckon, in the eyes of those blue-blooded young jackanapes who were our classmates! And you, Lord Allistair Menzies Neale Menzies-Kerr, only son of His Grace the Duke of Shetland, tracing your descent back to I don't know what pagan old Celtic swashbuckler!

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Well, we made a good team, you and I. Swore eternal friendship. Meant it, too, I reckon."

"Yes."

"Then came manhood. We drifted apart. I to Harvard law-school and, when my dear old dad stuck to planting cotton in spite of fire, high water, low prices, and the advice of government experts, and I couldn't make a living as a lawyer, into detective work; you, to believe the New York Sunday supplements, into a mad, eccentric whirl of travel and adventures."

"Well?"

"I meet you here in Paris by a mere chance, after seventeen years. We renew our friendship. We take this apartment together, and—"

"And?"

Tennant sat down across from Menzies-Kerr.

"You don't call this friendship," he asked, "do you?"

"What?"

"You know exactly what I mean. Last I heard of you—again through the newspapers and some mutual friends—you were seen in French Indo-China, bound for the interior, on one of your usual mysterious errands. That was a little over two years ago. Then I meet you, and you are a changed man. Just take a good look at yourself. Look at your complexion; see your limp!" he continued with an access to American directness. "And when I ask you—and goodness knows it isn't curiosity—you give evasive answers; you hedge like a pacifist on the stump, as if I were a stranger—or a policeman!"

"But you *are* a detective, aren't you?" came the drawling rejoinder.

"Not to you—unless I can help you, Allistair, I don't

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want to be sentimental; it isn't my line. But—damn it!—when the best friend I have in the world treats me as you do—"

"What do you mean—treats you?"

"Just this! When I speak to you suddenly you glare at me as if I were about to bite you, or as if you were about to bite me. When I ask you a question, you weigh your reply before giving it—of course, I know you're Scotch. But it isn't right to be Scotch between friends. There's a limit even to being canny."

"Is that all?"

"No! I have to go through a confounded lengthy rigmarole before I am allowed to enter your bedroom, like last night, when I wanted to borrow a match. You told me you couldn't let me in. Told me you weren't dressed. Opened the door an inch and handed me a match, as if you were a coy young girl. And—"

"And?" There was faint hostility in the Scotchman's accents.

Tennant stepped up close.

"You are afraid of something, Allistair!"

"How do you know?" The words came sharp, challenging, staccato.

"I am a detective."

"That's no answer."

"It's all the answer I'm going to give you. Something else: Why do you, Lord Allistair Menzies-Kerr, only son of the Duke of Shetland, choose your friends among the apaches of the Quartier des Halles, the rottenest part of Paris? Why do you go on mysterious errands two or three nights a week?"

"How do you know that I do?"

"Because I have seen you. I have recognized you;

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your pale complexion," he continued brutally, "your way of dragging your right foot, in spite of the fact that you wore a loose coat and a battered old felt hat pulled over your eyes. Why, man," he added, half-grim, half-jesting, "if you were a criminal I'd tell you that you needed another disguise. Your complexion and your limp are dead giveaways!"

He added in a lower voice, quite suddenly, speaking before he thought, and sorry for it a moment later, since he did not wish to be considered curious:

"What were you doing this afternoon in the Quarter of Saint-Sulpice, together with Mlle. Lantaigne?"

Menzies-Kerr gave a start. Then he controlled himself.

"Jealous?" he asked.

"I don't know her."

Again the other smiled.

"That's the worst of being a detective," he remarked sententiously. "Always sniffing about for clews like a lackadaisical bloodhound. Anyway"—it was evident that he was trying to change the subject—"I do know a few decent people besides the apaches of the Quartier des Halles."

Tennant laughed. He was not the man to bear a grudge very long.

"You bet," he replied. "The boulevard sheets are filled with spicy allusions. They say that you are paying a lot of attention to Mlle. Lantaigne."

"Are you jealous because she is pretty, or because she is the daughter of M. Lantaigne, the chief of the French secret political police?"

Tennant smiled.

"Neither one nor the other. I am not so easily

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captured by golden hair and blue eyes. And as to her father—well, of course he is at the head of his particular branch. But we of the Agence Ducastel really do not need him. Our work is along different lines."

"Well," laughed the Scotchman, "here's where I am going to kill two birds with one stone. I'm going to show you that the boulevard sheets are wrong and that I am not in love with Mlle. Lantaigne; also I am going to prove to you that I am your friend."

"How?"

"By introducing you to her." He walked to the door. "Put on your duds if you care to come along. She won't leave for the theater until after seven."

"All right. I am with you." Tennant consulted his watch. "It's half-past six now. Enough time to say 'how-de-do.' Where does she live?"

"A couple of streets from here; with her father."

"So you know the big chief?"

"Of course, of course—"

There was just a shade of annoyance—unreasonable annoyance, it seemed—in Menzies-Kerr's words, and Tennant was quick to notice it. But before he had time to frame the rather belligerent reply which was trembling on his lips, the hall-door opened and George W. Brown, the aged colored servant who had followed him, protesting, from South Carolina to New York, and thence, still protesting, here to Paris, announced that "M. Doumay's outside, suh. Wants to see you right away, suh."

"Nothing important, I wager." Tennant turned to Menzies-Kerr, who was about to step into the adjoining room. "Stay. Doumay is one of my subagents and

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inclined to be fussy. I'll put his mind at ease in half a jiff." A minute later M. Paul Doumay came in.

He was short, stout, and bearded, and his eyes and mouth were hardened by his long years' contact with Paris criminals; but there was both admiration and honest liking in the way he looked at the American.

"*Monsieur*," he announced, "Anatole Jarvet has been found murdered in the library of his house in the Rue Férou. The metropolitan police has, of course, called in the Ducastel agency to help them solve the case," he added with a certain pompous nonchalance.

At that moment Tennant, whose ears were delicately attuned, heard a faint, choking sound behind him, from the direction of the couch where Menzies-Kerr had sat down.

He looked into the mirror, which, French style, was between the two tall windows, and saw that his friend had turned paler than ever and was trying hard to control his quivering throat-muscles.

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CHAPTER II

When, only a few minutes earlier, Tennant had told his friend that in his relations to him he was not a detective, he had spoken the truth consciously. But subconsciously, his sixth sense, his recording, registering trigger sense, which made him what he was, began to work as soon as he had noticed that the news of the murder had given the other a nervous shock. He asked:

"Did you know Anatole Jarvet?"

He asked the question quite casually and of the room at large, being careful to address it neither direct to Menzies-Kerr nor to Paul Doumay, and thus he was confirmed in his uneasy, unformed suspicions when it was the former who took it unto himself to reply:

"Yes."

Tennant turned.

"Oh, you did?"

The tone was still casual, but the Scotchman must have caught an infinitesimal, hardly noticeable inflection, for he hastened to explain that of course he had known who Anatole Jarvet was. Who hadn't, here in Paris, where his name was a household word? Why, Jarvet had been a powerful political figure, an ultra-radical socialist and intolerant pacifist, an enemy of

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everything that smacked of law and order and established authority, nearly an anarchist, a ruthless demagogue who had always been considered a grave danger to the French Republic, with its sound ideas of universal military service as the main basis of national defense.

"Term after term," continued Menzies-Kerr, whose voice was steadying every second, but steadying with an effort, as Tennant noticed, "he was elected into the House of Deputies—"

"Yes," Tennant interrupted, "he was sent up to the House of Deputies by the apache gentry who inhabit the Quartier des Halles, the part of town where you have so many unsavory friends and where you go on so many mysterious errands," he added in an aside.

The subagent had caught just a few words.

"Yes," he said. "The Quartier des Halles. Anatole Jarvet had many admirers there. *Monsieur*, those gentlemen of the underworld adored and obeyed him slavishly. He was their master; more than that, their savior, their god; and he retaliated. Many a time did he use his political influence to protect them when they got into trouble with the police."

He pointed at the wall calendar. The date was January 4, 1914, about half a year before the outbreak of the great European war.

"Yesterday, M. Jarvet's Apache constituents reelected him into the House of Deputies. To-day, alas—!" He shrugged his broad shoulders with mock sympathy.

"But you must know all that," cut in Menzies-Kerr, who had regained his presence of mind completely and was looking at the American with an expression of sar-

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donic amusement, softened by the honest friendship he felt for him. "You must know all that, Jamie. After all, you—"

"After all, I'm a detective. Can that joke. It's got whiskers. What I want to know is if you knew Anatole Jarvet personally; and how well?"

"I—I—" Menzies-Kerr stammered, hesitated, then came out with a rush: "I don't see how that's any of your business. I—"

"Pardon, *monsieur*," broke in Doumay's cool, metallic voice, "I believe that Milord Menzies-Kerr did —ah—know the murdered M. Jarvet."

"That's a lie!" Menzies-Kerr rose in his excitement. He moved up threateningly to the Frenchman, who stood there, unafraid, used to disagreeable scenes in the course of his duties, and taking bad words as part of the day's work. "I have never met Jarvet in all my life. What the devil do you mean by—"

"*Monsieur*," suavely interrupted the subagent, "I did not mean to say that you knew Jarvet personally."

"Then what in blazes did you mean?"

"That you knew him impersonally, indirectly. *Bon sang!* There are certain links—weak, hardly visible to the naked eye—but we of the detective service—"

Tennant lost no shade of inflection, no gesture, not the slightest byplay. He knew better than to interfere. He believed in letting a play play itself, without interruptions, without too much help.

But when Doumay was silent and looked at him as if asking permission to continue, he directed him with a few words to go on.

"Fire away, Doumay. What did you mean by that last cryptic allusion of yours?"

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"Begging milord's pardon,"—the subagent bowed to the Scotchman—"but I learn that milord has been paying court of the most arduous, the most impassioned, the most romantic, to Mlle. Angele Lantaigne—"

"That's another lie!" boomed Menzies-Kerr.

Tennant smiled in spite of himself.

"Let it pass, Allistair," he said. "Don't forget that Doumay is a Frenchman and likes to embroider a little when it comes to affairs of the heart. All right, Doumay. I know that my friend has been often in the company of Mlle. Angele Lantaigne. What's that got to do with it?"

Doumay drew himself up triumphantly.

"*Mademoiselle* was also—how shall I put it—*mademoiselle* was also the very good friend of the murdered M. Anatole Jarvet. She was—"

Menzies-Kerr gave a cry of rage and a leap, and it was Tennant's body which catapulted between the Scotchman and the object of his wrath and saved the latter from a severe beating.

"Cut it out, both of you!" he said, holding them at arm's length. "What do you mean, Doumay, by making such remarks about—"

"It's the truth—name of a name of a name!" fumed Doumay. "*Mademoiselle* is—was—" And when Menzies-Kerr made another, quickly frustrated attempt to get at him, Tennant pushed him toward the hall-door.

"Never mind this, old man. Leave me alone with Doumay. You go and call on Miss Lantaigne."

"Call on her? Call on her?" Doumay broke into peals of laughter. "That is impossible!"

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"Why?" asked Tennant.

"Because Mlle. Angele Lantaigne is in jail, charged with the murder of M. Anatole Jarvet."

"God! She's innocent!" The Scotchman's words were thick, and the Frenchman, now thoroughly irate, asked maliciously:

"Innocent, is she? Milord knows it? Milord is sure of it? Ah—it appears that milord knows a great deal about the murder of M. Anatole Jarvet!"

And Tennant was inclined to agree with him. He remembered what he had seen earlier in the afternoon; Menzies-Kerr and Angele Lantaigne together in that evil old part of Paris which, ironically, takes its name from sacred Saint-Sulpice.

There was mystery there, and drama, and the stark figure of a murdered man.

And politics! He was sure of it. Politics was always back of mystery and murder in France.

Two minutes later, Tennant was bunched over the steering-wheel of his light American roadster, hastening toward the scene of the murder, Paul Doumay by his side. In and out of the traffic he guided the car, speeding up, taking a corner on two wheels, shaving a lamp-post, flashing a word here and there to an excited, gesticulating, white-gloved policeman and causing him to stand aside with a respectful salute when he cried rapidly: "It's all right, officer. I'm Tennant of the Agence Ducastel!" He pushed straight into the heart of the Latin Quarter.

There, not far from the flaunting Luxembourg Gardens, a spider's web of narrow, crooked, cobble-stoned streets and alleys and cul-de-sacs entangles itself about the ancient Church of Saint-Sulpice. Streets

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answering to names flavored with a certain quaint, provincial charm: Rue Palatine, Rue Garancière, Rue Férou. Old, sad, silent streets; so silent that the mewing of some dusty ash-bin cat, the twittering of a canary hanging in its cage from a kitchen window, or the tinkly bell of a knife-sharpener's pushcart strikes your ear with the force of a sudden blow; streets detached from the noisy, whirling, clanking, laughing Latin Quarter which hems them in on all sides; streets clinging with the obstinacy of the very old to the dusty, melancholy centuries that are past and gone; streets where the houses, some of them terraced, stand each in the center of its own walled garden and are shaded by great trees, poplar and elm and oak and rose-pink chestnut.

Streets quiet with the quiet of death.

Yet once these same streets had seen the history of France in the making, the unmaking, and the remaking. For there, during the Terror, the proscribed aristocrats went in search of refuge and asylum. There, in the shadow of the old Church of Saint-Sulpice, they tried to hide their powder-bags, their brocaded coats, their lace jabots, their jeweled snuff-boxes, their simpering love letters, and their worn-out, feudal ideals.

Thence the ragged, wool-capped hangmen of Robespierre ferreted them out and dragged them forth to lamp-post and guillotine and the potter's field, and it had been with a certain amount of truth that one of the late M. Anatole Jarvet's political opponents had said that the Rue Férou, where Jarvet lived, was "pregnant with the blood-stained specters of lust and cruelty and thus a peculiarly fit *milieu* for a man of his ruthless, anarchistic principles."

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The night before had heard the culminating cheers of weeks of electioneering. Jarvet had been sent back by an overwhelming majority of his old ward into the House of Deputies, though the election posters, sticking to fences and houses and kiosks, proved that the sentiment of Anatole Jarvet's opponent, quoted above, was echoed by others.

Tennant read a line or two as the car whizzed past. They were posters used by the candidate of the Republicans—the party in the saddle—who had tried to buck the game here, in the very heart of the apache quarter which for years had given to Jarvet admiration, slavish obedience and yotes.

The posters were trenchant with the ferocious personal animosity characteristic of French elections.

"DO NOT VOTE FOR JARVET, THE INTERNATIONALIST!" screamed one poster, staring black on brightest orange. "A VOTE FOR JARVET IS A VOTE FOR THE ENEMY. JARVET MEANS UNPREPAREDNESS, DISASTER! JARVET MEANS A PAWN GIVEN INTO THE HANDS OF GERMANY! REMEMBER THE LOST PROVINCES! REMEMBER ALSACE AND LORRAINE! REMEMBER SEDAN!"

Another poster said succinctly that Jarvet was the sort of man who would like to drench France in the blood of her best because the perverted sensation of such a monstrosity would amuse him, while a third, beginning glibly and politely with the statement that Jarvet was a man of splendid education and great culture, a man of undoubted genius, of charm, of personality, a born leader, went on to say:

"YET THIS SAME JARVET HAS PROSTITUTED THE DIVINE GIFTS WHICH GOD HAS GIVEN HIM TO STRIKE A BLOW AGAINST FRANCE, THE MOTHER! HE WANTS TO

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SEE FRANCE UNPREPARED, DEFENSELESS—CARRION FOR THE BIRD OF PREY THAT FLAPS ITS SINISTER WINGS BEYOND THE RHINE! JARVET HAS THE BOWELS OF COMPASSION OF A HYENA AND LESS PRINCIPLES AND DECENCY THAN THE HORNED TOAD. HE IS A DANGER. A DANGER WHICH SHOULD BE CRUSHED UNDER THE HEEL OF THE REPUBLIC!"

And always the refrain was the same: "VOTE AGAINST JARVET!" and Jarvet's own posters seemed mildly innocuous in comparison, saying simply: "VOTE FOR JARVET! VOTE FOR LIBERTY! DOWN WITH THE ARMY! DOWN WITH THE BRASS-BUTTONED, RED-TROUSERED POPINJAYS!"

Doumay smiled.

"'Do not vote for Jarvet, enemy of the Republic!'" he quoted sarcastically, pointing at a long array of crimson three-foot letters on a sign-board above a low-roofed shop.

"Well, they did vote for him, for all that," came Tennant's answer above the running of the engine.

"Yes—and to-day he's dead—and I expect the gentlemen of the government are not exactly displeased."

"Not they!" replied Tennant, slowing down the car as the gray, fretted, turreted pile of Saint-Sulpice stood clear from the crowding, uneven house-tops. "But what about these people—there?" He swept his left hand toward the muttering, nervous, uneasy mob that was surging from the near-by streets toward the bottlelike entrance of the Rue Férou.

"What about the gentry of the underworld?" he continued. "Just look at them! Listen!"

He whirred the roadster skillfully in and out of the

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swerving masses which were spilling over from dank, low-ceilinged drinking shops and greasy, jerry-built houses to the sidewalks and from the sidewalks to the streets, moving in a solid phalanx, minatory, unconsciously dramatic, toward the ancient peace of the Rue Férou.

Jarvet was dead! Dead—murdered—the man whom they had adored, followed, obeyed!

A low, sinister grumble rose from the crowd—like the grumble of beasts of prey, hungry for flesh, thought Tennant. On they moved, and the cordon of blue-coated gendarmes drawn across the opening of the street had its work cut out trying to stem the giant human tide.

"Give way there!"

"Look out—damn you!"

A mounted policeman's horse reared and plunged and snorted with fear.

Came raucous shouts. Words of hate bitten off and flung free. Curses. Cries of pain. Now and then a smart *swish-swish-swish* as the flat of a saber whipped across leg or back or clutching hand.

"Give way!"

"Back!"

"Ah—thou wilt then, wilt thou—*sal' cochon!*"

"Assassin! Hyena! Rhinoceros! Lump of nauseating pig flesh!"

"*O les vaches!*"

The crowd became thicker, and Tennant, stopping at a stone's throw from the Rue Férou, hailed and requisitioned a passing policeman, gave the car into his keeping, and walked by the side of Doumay toward the scene of the murder, straight into the crowd, clear-

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ing a way with elbow and fist and foot, and an occasional, good-humored, appealing:

"But you must let me through, citizens! I have come here to clear up the murder of M. Anatole Jarvet, the man whom you loved. I come to bring the guilty to justice!"

They were decidedly not prepossessing, these denizens of the underworld. They were obviously unwashed, reeking of bad tobacco and worse cognac; and it was evident, from their protruding jaws to their shifty eyes and low, apish foreheads, that they had been conceived and born in an ether of crime and vice. They were the original apaches, the descendants of long generations that had spawned and sinned and spawned again in these old streets since the days of François Villon. They were pungent and scabbed with viciousness and bestial lust. They were the base metal—basest of base—which Anatole Jarvet had forged into a weapon for himself, and against the weal of the Republic—Anatole Jarvet who lay murdered in the library of his house. But in this also were they apaches that they had the strange, steely, unreasoning loyalty of the underworld.

They had loved Jarvet. And now, when Tennant told them that he had come here to investigate the murder, to bring justice, and the vengeance which justice implies, they screwed their vicious faces into a semblance of geniality and gave way; and a few minutes later Tennant and Doumay found themselves up against the cordon of gendarmes.

A rapid word, a salute, and they passed quickly down the street. They stopped in front of number fourteen.

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Henri Ducastel himself, the head of the agency, was at the garden gate waiting for them.

"Ah, at last!" he said impatiently, taking the American by the arm and leading him through the garden and into the house; a detached villa, like so many houses of that old Quarter. "Come straight up to the library. We left the body as we found it."

Tennant followed quickly. Once he stopped for a moment and listened.

A great cry, a solid volume of sound blown out in unison by a thousand lips, rose from the packed mass beyond the police cordon. A cry that was tense, tragic, shuddering:

"The government murdered Jarvet, friend of the people! Down with the government!"

Then a pause, and again a cry—but thin, slightly halting, jerked out by a single throat:

"Down with the army!"

"What's the matter?" inquired Ducastel nervously. "What are you stopping for?"

"Did you hear that last cry?"

"Yes. What about it?"

"Oh—nothing!" replied Tennant as he opened the door of the library.

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CHAPTER III

CLEWS

JAMES OLIVER TENNANT was not the sort of detective of fiction who moves through the room where a crime has been committed on his hands and knees, nose and eyes close to the ground after the manner of a slobbering, sniffling, blue-mottled otter-hound, looking for cigar ashes or hair-pins or bits of limburger with which to construct his case.

Nor was he the sort who, on the spur of the moment, often even before the spur of the moment, invents, develops, perfects, manufactures, and uses a marvelously intricate and delicate recording apparatus which automatically, when clamped around the jugular vein or the liver of the culprit, bellows through a gramophone-horn: *"Thou art the Man! Confess!"* After which follows confession, contrition, and conviction—not to speak of compensation.

On the contrary, it is doubtful if he had ever heard of deductive ratiocination, and he shocked the French and therefore uncompromisingly logical mind of his chief, Henri Ducastel, by succeeding in spite of his methods, which were unorthodox, negligent, cavalierly —quite South Carolinian, in fact.

For he calmly passed over most small details, saying that a criminal who was big enough would either him-

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self eradicate all treacherous clews or plant wrong clews on purpose to deceive the police, while if the criminal did not have enough sense to go through and act according to such reasoning, he, Tennant, for one had no intention of getting mixed up with the case. He preferred worth while game.

So he usually proceeded in his investigations by methods which Henri Ducastel called slipshod, which he himself pronounced to be applied psychology, and which might, with equal truth, be styled applied poetry. For he progressed by sudden leaps of his imagination, by sudden graspings at situations and entanglements. Occasionally he left loose ends which he picked up and tied into nooses—hangmen's nooses, frequently. He did this whenever he had a chance, and forgot all about it when the chance did not arise. He was really too clever a man to be afraid of inconsistencies.

To-day, with the library door closed behind him and the angry mutterings of the apaches at the opening of the Rue Férou drifting in like the humming of bees, he moved swiftly through the apartment as was his wont, while Ducastel looked on with a mixture of admiration and disapproval. The latter's active years were over. But he was still the head of the great Agence Ducastel, and, old man though he was, he liked to be present when a mystery was being solved. It was meat and drink to him.

The American walked straight over to where the dead man was slouched in a leather-backed armchair, his back to the window, facing the broad, massive writing-table of carved oak, when Ducastel stopped him.

"Aren't you going to have a look at the doors and windows first?" He knew the answer he would receive,

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but his logical Latin mind insisted on the question and the implied protest.

"No. Why should I?"

"But, my friend!" Ducastel clutched his neat, gray beard with a gesture of despair. "You are a special investigator. I pay you a salary worthy of the purse of Fortunatus!"

"Don't I earn it?" came the calm query, and then the reply:

"Yes. Of course, my boy. But you should ascertain how the assassin got into the room, and how he left!"

Tennant lifted a corner of the white cloth which covered the face of the dead man. He said it made no difference to him how the murderer got in nor how he got out. The man had come in somehow and got out somehow. That was all there was to it.

"But—but—" the other stammered, then whispered the potent shibboleth of his craft:

"Finger-prints, Tennant! Finger-prints!"

He pronounced the word with a sibilant, dramatic hiss, but Tennant was unimpressed.

"Why look for finger-prints," he asked, "since the police have already arrested Mlle. Lantaigne as the culprit."

"The police have been at work less than an hour. The murder was committed a little before six. There was an upturned clock, which stopped clicking, also the testimony of Anatole Jarvet's housekeeper. She said that—"

"Never mind just now what she said. What about the police—and the finger-prints?"

"The case against *mademoiselle* is not yet perfect.

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The police have found certain evidence. But they found no finger-prints. They thought that's where you would help."

"Not I!" Tennant shook his head. "All the finger-prints I want are those of the fellow who gave that last yell just before we came in here, 'Down with the army!'"

"What's he got to do with it? There you go off on one of your usual tangents!" Ducastel repeated, excitedly: "What's that apache got to do with the murder?"

"I don't know exactly, yet! As to the other finger-prints—there aren't going to be any."

"Why not?"

"The person who committed the murder wore gloves."

"How do you know?"

"Psychology, *monsieur*, psychology! Anatole Jarvet was a dangerous and mighty shrewd man and, by clear reasoning, his enemy—he who killed him—must have been as dangerous and as shrewd. Otherwise he would not have succeeded, as he did succeed." He pointed at the stark form in the armchair. "And thus, being shrewd and dangerous, he most certainly took the ordinary precaution of wearing gloves."

He drew the white cloth away, exposing the dead man's face to the rays of the electric bulb which dropped from above the table. Even in death and though slightly bloated and blackened by strangulation, the features had a certain greatness, a certain cruel, massive, satanic beauty. "The face of a vicious latter-day Roman emperor with a touch of Manchu," Tennant said as he bent close and examined the swollen neck.

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"Strangled," he went on, "and, as I told you, no finger-prints."

"I suppose your first guess was right," grumblingly admitted Ducastel. "She must have worn gloves."

Tennant smiled grimly.

"It wasn't a she who wore the gloves; it was a he!"

Ducastel pointed at the blue marks which ran from below the ears of the dead man and met in a deep blackish spot at the height of the spinal column, where the murderer's thumbs had met.

"A very small hand," he said; "a woman's hand."

"Small, yes. But not a woman's. No woman had the strength to kill that huge machine of flesh and blood and bones and vital energy with her bare hands. I know what you are going to say," he went on as Ducastel was about to interrupt. "You were going to give me the good old bromid that even the weakest woman will find superhuman strength in moments of stress and despair."

"Exactly."

"Well, there's some truth in that. A weak woman can become a monster in strength. But only on the spur of the moment. She can only kill suddenly, before she realizes what she is doing, with a single great effort; while it took continuous pressure, steady brutal strength, and an iron will to strangle this man to death." And he walked away from the table and up and down the length of the room, his hands folded behind his back, a puckered frown torturing his forehead.

"Hunting for clews after all?" Ducastel asked, a trifle sarcastically.

Tennant shook his head without stopping.

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"Not a bit of it. I am looking for a confirmation of my opinion."

"You have one already formed?" Ducastel's tone was still sarcastic, and he was utterly taken aback when he heard the other's calm, matter-of-fact reply:

"Oh, yes."

Ducastel could not help smiling. He had a deep personal liking for this keen young American, and while French logic told him that the man's methods were wrong, the same logic told him that his results were good. Alert, interested, he watched him walk up and down, looking at the ceiling and the bookcases and the soft Smyrna rug as if for a spark of inspiration.

But when Ducastel made a jocular remark, asking the other why he was blowing up his nostrils like a race-horse on the end stretch, and inquiring if he were trying to sniff in a bit of that applied psychology of which he was in the habit of boasting, Tennant replied that he was simply wondering if Jarvet had been an opium smoker.

"No," replied the Frenchman. "I knew him personally. He was a very abstemious man—except with women. Why do you ask?"

"Take a little sniff for yourself. Won't cost you anything," said the American.

"That's so." For the first time Ducastel became aware of the faint, stale, acrid odor that permeated the room.

But when Tennant went on to say that, since Jarvet was not an opium smoker, the murderer must have been, and that this was an additional sign of Mlle. Lantaigne's innocence, the Frenchman protested vigorously.

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"Nothing of the sort. There's more than one actress in Paris—"

"Who smokes opium? Sure enough. I don't deny it. But—" Again he bent over the inert mass in the chair, inhaling the odor. "There is opium and opium. The murderer smoked a cheap brand; I am familiar with it from New York."

"What does that signify?"

"Just this. People like Mlle. Lantaigne use only the best sort of poppy-juice. To them the little pipe is a pleasant luxury, a pleasant vice if you prefer, and there are lots of drug-stores where they can buy the expensive stuff they want. On the other hand, those who smoke cheap opium do so because they have got to get the stuff somehow; because they buy any stuff they can lay their hands on. This goes to prove—"

"What?"

"That, as I told you before, I would like to get the finger-prints of the apache who gave that last yell, 'Down with the army!'"

"*Tonnerre de Dieu!*" Ducastel threw up his hands in a gesture of supreme annoyance. "There's that same mysterious allusion again! What do you mean by it?"

Tennant smiled boyishly.

"I won't tell you, chief. If I am wrong, you'll josh me about it to the end of my days. And if I am right—" He turned to resume his walk up and down the length of the room. "But then I know I am right," he added under his breath.

A few minutes later Tennant turned to Ducastel, who had been quietly laughing to himself.

"What's up?" he inquired.

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"A joke! A joke on you, my friend! A scream of a joke on your confounded American cocksureness!"

"Darned good thing to have—when you have cause for it."

"Aha—*when!* And now, just to punish you for not listening to the advice of an old man, a detective who has grown gray in the profession, I shall tell you one or two little things which you have overlooked. One is, you didn't see—"

"Those marks on the table?" Tennant indicated some fresh abrasions on the oak table to the right of the dead man. "You bet I saw them."

"Oh!" Ducastel was taken aback, but he returned to the charge at once. "What about the other marks?" he asked softly.

"What others?"

"The scratches on Jarvet's hands!" the Frenchman announced triumphantly. But again he failed to impress the American who said with a drawl: "I thought right along those marks would be on Jarvet's hands, too. I really did not take the trouble to look for them."

"Ah! You didn't, did you?" Ducastel cracked his finger joints in his excitement. "That's what you call bluff in your own country! The great American bluff, *hein?* For those scratches are most important clews. They will help to convict Mlle. Lantaigne, in spite of the opium, in spite of what you say about her being too weak to strangle a man like Jarvet. She made them with her hatpin when she attacked Jarvet, before she strangled him. The police discovered blood spots on the point of her hatpin. It dovetails, *mon vieux!*"

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"Ducastel," he said, "the police are fools."

"To be sure; but not in this particular case. You say yourself that you saw the marks on the table. Now look at Jarvet's hands and convince yourself."

"What's the use? I know what they look like. Same as those on the table, aren't they?"

"Yes."

"Exactly the same?"

"Yes, yes—"

"All right. Now *you* look at those marks on the table and on Jarvet's palms. What do you see?"

Ducastel did as he was told, and said they were cuts freshly made with an instrument. "*Mademoiselle's* hatpin," he repeated.

"What else did you see?" continued Tennant, and when the other did not reply, he pointed out that the cuts on the table as well as on the dead man's palms were symmetrical, arranged in a distinct pattern like the flat segment of a circle, each cut about a fourth of an inch from the next, and all the same depth. To a few of them minute bits of rough, fibrous cloth were sticking. Tennant picked these out with his pocketknife and put them into his purse.

"Don't you see?" He turned to the other. "If Mlle. Lantaigne had attacked him with her hatpin she would hardly have taken the trouble to cut a symmetrical pattern into the table—and his hands. She wouldn't have had the time nor the presence of mind. Those cuts—"

"Well?"

"Were made inadvertently—by the man who bent over Jarvet from behind, a little to the right, strangling

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him. Notice those bits of fibrous cloth I picked out?"

"Yes; what about them?"

"They prove that I am right. No, no!" Tennant laughed. "I shan't tell you till my whole case is complete. I told you I didn't want you to josh me, if I *should* be wrong. And now," he went on, walking to the hall door and opening it, "let's hear what the witnesses for the police have got to say for themselves. Doumay!" he called. "Oh, Doumay!"

"*Monsieur?*" came the subagent's metallic voice from below.

He received his instructions and, a minute later, ushered into the room M. Xavier Roux, captain of police, a tall, fair, mustached man who looked well in his tight-fitting uniform, and an old woman with the short, voluminous, pleated skirt, the tiny lace bonnet, and the heavy shoes of a Norman peasant. Norman, too, were her pale-blue eyes, the thin, compressed mouth, and the huge nose beaking away from the sunken cheeks.

Roux greeted Tennant civilly. He knew him from former cases. He had no liking for him, considering him a foreign interloper; but he knew from experience that the American had usually an ace up his sleeve, and he knew, furthermore, that Henri Ducastel, the honored dean of his craft in Paris, perhaps in the whole of Europe, had supreme faith in this young man, though at times he was inclined to criticize his unorthodox and negligent methods.

"I am very sorry about Mlle. Lantaigne," began Roux, his lips curling in a thin smile. "I know that your friend, Lord Menzies-Kerr, takes a great deal of

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interest in her. Too, she is the daughter of M. Lantaigne, the chief of the secret police. We would have done anything in our power to—"

"Oh, no, you wouldn't!" Tennant broke in curtly. "I am an American, but I have a hatful of information about the more muddy spots of French politics. I know, for instance, that the political police—Lantaigne's branch—and the regular, metropolitan police to which you belong, aren't exactly on kissing terms, and that you weren't so very damned sorry when you thought you could fasten this crime on M. Lantaigne's daughter."

"We have proof, *monsieur!*"

"Proof, poppycock! Don't believe much in proof myself. Proof lies like the devil at times. By the way, have you notified *mademoiselle's* father?"

"Of course not. The law says nothing about notifying the parents of suspected criminals over twenty-one years of age!" The answer was heated; then he added, more mildly: "Too, we have hardly had time. The murder occurred to-day around six. *Mademoiselle* was arrested twenty minutes later. Quick work, eh?"

"You bet. Yet you called in the Agence Ducastel."

"Yes, yes." Roux blushed. "We—"

"You aren't as sure as you'd like to be. All right. Let's hear this woman. Who is she?" and Roux told him that she was the housekeeper of the late M. Anatole Jarvet, that her name was Anne Houlbrecque, and that she was an old Norman who had worked for the politician a lifetime.

"Any other servants?" asked Tennant.

"No. She was here alone. Even attended to the garden."

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"Yet Jarvet had money?"

"I believe so."

Tennant looked about the room. There were some splendid paintings, good books, including precious early French editions, well-chosen bits of bric-à-brac, handsome rugs.

"Funny," he said, half to himself, "Jarvet had money, was not afraid to spend it—and had only one servant." He turned to Roux. "All right. I'll ask her a question or two."

"You must talk loud to her," said the police captain. "She is deaf."

"She is? Good. Let's find out about her deafness."

"What has that to do with the case? You are wasting time, *monsieur!*"

"I am wasting my time, not yours!" came Tennant's sharp reply, and he turned to the old servant, who stepped forward with an old-fashioned curtsy.

"*Madame,*" he asked with a loud voice, "you are deaf?"

"Yes, *monsieur.*"

"Always have been deaf?"

"Since I was a child."

"So you were deaf when you entered M. Jarvet's service?"

"To be sure. We are from the same Norman village."

"And he engaged you in spite of your deafness?"

"To be sure, *monsieur.* M. Jarvet always said that he preferred a servant who cannot hear to one who hears too well."

"Mark that!" Tennant turned to Ducastel. "It's all in keeping with the fact that he had money, wasn't

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afraid to spend it, and yet employed only one servant. It's in keeping, too, with—"

"With what?"

"The Apache who gave that last yell!" Tennant whispered in his chief's ear.

Then he returned to Anne Houlbrecque.

"*Madame*," he asked, "tell me exactly what you saw and heard between five and six o'clock to-day."

"I was out this afternoon, shopping."

"How long were you gone?"

"Over an hour. I had to go quite a distance to buy fresh mushrooms. M. Jarvet was very fond of mushrooms and pimientos stewed in olive oil, Provençal style. I returned about ten minutes before six."

"What did you do then?"

"I crossed the garden. Then I saw that M. Jarvet had a visitor."

"How did you see that?"

"I saw the visitor silhouetted through the window of the library, a little to one side of M. Jarvet, who was seated at his desk."

"Who was the visitor; a man or a woman?"

"A woman, *monsieur*."

"Aha!" exclaimed Roux triumphantly, but Tennant paid no attention to him.

"Are you positive it was a woman?" he asked the servant.

"Yes."

"How can you be positive since you only saw a silhouette?"

"*Monsieur*, I am enough of a woman myself to be able to tell a woman's coat; the outline of it, I mean."

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"So you only know that the visitor was a woman by the outline of a coat?"

"And the hat. I saw that, too. Both coat and hat were sharply silhouetted."

"You could not see below the knee, nor could you recognize the features?"

"No, *monsieur*. But I know a woman's coat and a woman's hat," she insisted stubbornly.

"What was the coat like?"

"Very loose."

"Loose? Where?" continued Tennant, disregarding Roux's impatient protest. "Around the shoulders, the arms, the hips?"

"Around the hips," came the old woman's answer. "Very loose, indeed."

"And yet"—Tennant turned to Roux—"coats this year are worn very tight around the hips. Just take a look along the boulevards and see."

"Well?"

"Mlle. Lantaigne is one of the best-dressed women in Paris. Do you think she would wear a coat out of fashion?" and he turned again to Anne Houlbrecque with the question of what the visitor's hat had been like. He received the answer that, again judging by the outline, it had been a broad, flapping felt hat.

"Any feathers sticking out?"

"I only saw the shadow, and that was perfectly plain. Just a broad-brimmed felt hat."

"Therefore the only reason for your statement that your master's visitor was a woman is the fact that you saw the outlines of a coat that was loose around the hips and a broad hat?"

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"Yes, *monsieur*."

"All right. Did you see the visitor leave the house?"

"No. I went direct to the kitchen and was busy for a good half-hour. Then I went to the library to ask M. Jarvet a question, and found him—" her voice quavered and she pointed at the inert figure.

"You heard nothing?"

"I am deaf, *monsieur*."

"Did M. Jarvet wear jewelry?" came the next question, apparently illogical; and when the servant had replied that Jarvet had always worn a handsome gold watch, a seal ring, and a diamond stick-pin, the next question seemed even more preposterous to the fuming Roux. For Tennant asked if Jarvet had lunched at home that day.

"But—*monsieur!*" boomed Roux's protesting bass, cut through by Mme. Houlbrecque's shrill accents: "Yes. M. Jarvet lunched here to-day."

"He wore his jewelry then?" with a side smile at Ducastel, who was beginning to see daylight.

"Yes."

"Sure of that?"

"But yes, *monsieur!* I am not blind, though I am deaf."

"Did he leave the house after lunch?"

"No. He said he was going to stay in all afternoon. He"—she pointed a shaking finger at the stark figure in the armchair—"he has his slippers on."

"Do you think he might have gone for a stroll while you were away shopping?"

"Oh, no, *monsieur*."

"Why not?"

"Because he always wore his patent leathers when he

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went for afternoon walks, and they are still in the kitchen. I have not cleaned them since yesterday."

"Bully! Perfectly bully!" A boyish smile lit up Tennant's features. He dismissed Mme. Houlbrecque with a courteous word of thanks, and immediately was ready to reply to Xavier Roux, who, with an ill-concealed snarl, demanded to know if M. l'Américain considered it smart to have discovered that the murdered man's jewelry was missing.

"I myself discovered that as soon as I saw the corpse!" he wound up. "I used my eyes! I didn't have to put the servant through a cross-examination to arrive at so wonderful a result!"

"Sure you discovered it," laughed Tennant. "And I tell you something else you did, my friend. You concocted a pretty theory by which you are trying to prove that Mlle. Angele Lantaigne stole those jewels on purpose so as to mislead the police, to make the police believe it was a robber who killed Jarvet, and not she. Didn't you, now? 'Fess up!"

"How—how did you-guess?"

"Old dope," replied Tennant. "Same in Paris as in New York. Prove your case by hook or by crook. That's the maxim of the police the world over."

"It is not!" cried Roux. "We of the police are positive that *mademoiselle* is guilty. We are positive that *mademoiselle* took the jewels—for the very reasons you mentioned. *Nom d'une pipe!*" he thundered, thoroughly exasperated, "she tried even more than that! Have you looked at the safe, M. Tennant?"

"That thing over there?" asked Tennant, pointing to the small, squat safe in a corner. "I looked at it in passing. Why?"

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"Because *mademoiselle* endeavored to make doubly sure. She tried to open the safe. Look here!" he concluded triumphantly, indicating a symmetrical pattern of scratches on the painted steel surface. "Just like the scratches on the table, on Jarvet's palms. She sought to—"

"Open the safe with that wicked, powerful, ubiquitous, extraordinary weapon of hers, that hatpin. I get you. Very womanlike, I call it."

"I know it sounds ridiculous," insisted the police captain. "But you don't know what a woman might do in a moment of supreme excitement."

"Right you are. But I *do* know that this safe has been opened—most likely rifled—and then closed again."

"Preposterous."

"Preposterous, your eye! See that edge of white paper sticking out, caught in the safe door?"

"Jarvet might have slammed the door on it."

"No. Men like Jarvet, men who play with the most inflammable material of politics—anarchy, pacifism, internationalism—know better than to leave anything written or printed, any scrap of paper, exposed. On the other hand, if a stranger—the murderer—had tried to open the safe, had not succeeded, and had seen this bit of paper, he would have tried to pull it out."

"Why?"

"Natural reaction following disappointment," replied the American in dry, didactic tones. "This bit of paper, since the edge is clean-cut and not torn and ragged, proves to me that the safe was opened by somebody other than Jarvet, presumably rifled, and that the party who did it slammed the door in a hurry."

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"How do you know all that?" Roux inquired sarcastically, and before Tennant could frame a reply, Ducastel, who was beginning to enjoy himself hugely when he saw that the American, in spite of his negligent methods, was getting the best of the police, chuckled:

"Applied psychology, M. Roux!"

"Right, chief!" agreed Tennant, while Roux exclaimed that he would have a safe expert in at once. "I shall have the safe opened. I shall prove that you are wrong."

"You'll prove most likely that I am right—and that'll make you sorer than ever. But let's wait with that till I have had a stab at the other witnesses."

"There is only one more."

"Who?"

"A certain Guillaume Nordeg, a butcher who has his shop on the corner of the Rue Férou."

"Send for him."

"Impossible. I took his deposition, and then allowed him to go. He had some business this evening. His testimony was straight and to the point."

"Let's hear it if you don't mind."

"Nordeg said that at half-past five this afternoon he saw a woman enter this house; that she looked like Mlle. Angele Lantaigne, whom he has frequently seen on the stage; and that he did not see her leave the house, although he was seated in front of his shop, until after six."

"How did you happen to get a hold of this butcher, this Guillaume Nordeg?"

"He came to us voluntarily."

"What do you mean by that?"

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"He saw the police enter the house after Mme. Houlbrecque had given the alarm. He stepped right over and told me what he had seen."

"Before he knew why the police were there? Before he knew that murder had occurred, and that Mlle. Lantaigne was suspected?"

"Why, yes; that's one of the main reasons why we arrested *mademoiselle!* The butcher's testimony! *Mon Dieu!*" as he saw Tennant raise his eyebrows quizzically. "Are you going to try and discard the butcher's testimony, too?"

"Don't you yourself think it rather strange that this butcher, ignorant of why the police had entered the house, ignorant of the fact that murder had been committed, should come over of his free will and say that he had seen Mlle. Lantaigne enter—and had not seen her leave?"

And, when Roux did not reply, he continued:

"Don't think that I believe the butcher to be the murderer. I am not such a fool. Neither is the butcher. Only, take my advice, keep a close watch on M. Nordeg, and—yes," he added, after a short pause, "take a good look at his passport. For I lay you odds he comes from across the border; from Alsace, most likely."

"Good Lord, he—he does!" stammered Roux, thoroughly mystified. "However did you guess?"

"Habit of mine. Very annoying habit. Ask the chief," said Tennant, pointing at Ducastel who was grinning into his gray beard. "And now, please have somebody up who knows how to open a safe"; and while the police captain was out of the room, Tennant turned

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to Ducastel and asked him to have a look at the big white blotter in front of the dead man.

"Some marks on it," he said. "See if you can make them out. You are said to be an expert at that sort of reverse-English graphology."

"I used to be, my boy," the older man replied, flattered; and he picked up the blotter, moistened it, held it against the mirror, and read out the result a moment later:

"'My dear Lant,' then a few words missing. 'Unless by Saturday noon I receive'—another hiatus—'the gentleman with the limp will pay the penalty'—that's all, Tennant. What do you make of it?" He put the blotter back on the table.

"Don't know—yet. Aha," as the door opened, "here is Captain Roux and our expert safe-cracker. What—you, Doumay?" to the subagent who followed Roux into the room. "Are you an expert?"

"Yes, M. Tennant," replied the blushing Doumay. "I used to be a cracksman before I became a detective," and he went to work, twirling the steel knob to right and left, stopping, listening close to the click and drop of the tumblers, making little notes, figuring, computing, finally swinging the safe-door open with a dramatic:

"Here you are, gentlemen!"

The others crowded around, and it was evident at once that Tennant's deductions had been right. The safe had been opened, rifled, and closed again. It was completely empty. There was nothing left except the bit of paper which had caught in the slamming of the door.

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Roux picked it up and read it.

Then, suddenly, the expression of discomfiture on his face changed into one of triumph.

"*Monsieur*—see for yourself, *monsieur*," he cried, giving the scrap of paper to Tennant. "Read what is written there!"

Tennant read:

"'I love you with all my heart and all my soul, Anatole!'"

And the signature was plain:

"Angele Lantaigne."

"It is clear—clear!" exulted Xavier Roux. "She asked Jarvet to return her love-letters to him because your friend, Lord Menzies-Kerr, was paying court to her. Jarvet refused. She killed him. She took the letters—you know the old French quotation: '*Cherchez la femme!*'"

"Sure—look for the woman—fine and dandy advice for a Frenchman," replied Tennant. "But I am an American."

"And?"

"Well, I reckon I'm going to look for the man!" Tennant drawled as he left the room.

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CHAPTER IV

He walked back rapidly up the Rue Férou.

Evening had died, with a gray, purple-nicked veil pierced by the crimson lights reflected on innumerable window panes and the dull, white lights of the street lamps, and melting farther south into a drab cosmos where the brown, moist haze from the Seine drifted up, twisting and turning, to the call of the river wind. Night had come as it comes in that part of Paris, with the tinkling of tinny pianos, the acrid odor of potatoes bobbing up and down in iron pots filled with rancid mutton suet, the smell of black tobacco, or soft coal, of stale wine, the tail-end of an obscene gutter song jerked out challengingly:

"*D'puis c'est moi le souteneur naturel de ma p'tit' soeur—*"

Night! On the other side of the Seine, the boulevards were greeting its advent with the popping of champagne corks, light phrases, gayety, and the clapping of white-gloved hands; while here, in the ancient, tragic quarter that clustered around Saint-Sulpice, the cordon of blue-coated policemen still faced the bottle-like opening of the Rue Férou. Still, just beyond the reach of a saber-point, groups of apaches were at their grim death watch, staring down the street, trying to

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catch a glimpse of the house where their beloved leader and deputy, Anatole Jarvet, lay in his last sleep.

Talk ran free though it had changed from harsh cries and wicked curses to a low, hushed undertone of minatory mutterings. It passed from mouth to mouth. It was taken up, spiced, sharpened, and flung back again to the men in the street by frowzy women who were hanging from the windows of neighboring houses, dirty children at their bosoms, and always the refrain was the same—like the reply in some satanic litany:

"He was murdered by order of the government! Down with the government!"

Tennant stopped for a moment. He listened close. He wondered if he would hear that other cry again—thin, slightly halting, jerked out by a single throat:

"Down with the army!"

And, smiling at the thought, he said to himself that it would be a good thing for special investigators of baffling crimes if a new Bertillon should discover a way of registering and filing voices instead of finger-prints.

At the corner of the street he stopped once more. He looked. There was a small shop-window lit up by a single electric bulb and showing a meager assortment of meat—*andouilles* and *boudins* and other culinary specialties of the neighborhood—and above it a gleaming sign:

GUILLAUME NORDEG.
CHARCUTIER

Nordeg! The Alsatian butcher who, without knowing the reason for the police visit, had introduced him-

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self to Capt. Xavier Roux and had testified that he had seen Mlle. Lantaigne enter the Jarvet house!

"Clairvoyant son-of-a-gun, aren't you?" Tennant smiled up at the sign, and stood undecided. There was evidently nobody in the shop, and he wondered if he should ask the police to force open the door, if he should go in and investigate—find what he might find.

No use—he thought the next moment—it would be labor and effort wasted. Capt. Roux had told him that the butcher had gone away on some business, and he was quite sure that this unknown butcher was no fool, quite sure that the man had left nothing incriminating behind him. Perhaps the man had in fact purposely left his shop to give the police a chance to enter there during his absence, to find nothing.

But when Tennant turned to go he found his way barred by a knot of gangsters who had come down the Rue Palatine and to whom his immaculate clothes, clean-shaven face, polished shoes, and general atmosphere of tub, soap, and brush was as a red rag to a bull.

They gathered about him.

"*Ho, bourgeois!*" growled one of them, lean, wizen, underfed, undersized, vicious. "I say, down with the government!"—and with a threatening purr: "What dost thou say, *mon bougre?*"

Without hesitation Tennant returned the call.

"Down with the government—by all means!" he replied, and when the others elaborated the slogan with a deep-throated: "The government of assassins!" he agreed to that too with a disarming American smile.

"Sure," he said, "the government of assassins!"

But though he smiled, he felt in his heart the latent, potential danger of the cry. For he knew Paris. He

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knew how the streets and cafés and salons of Paris snatch at a ball of rumor, how they gild and tinsel and emboss it, how they fling it wide and catch it again.

Paris does not feed on sensations. But it needs and uses sensations to spice its workaday food, to give tang to it, to whet the appetite. Standing as it does at the very core of humanity, of civilization, of culture, of history past, present, and future, embracing the sins and virtues of all the world with its generous arms, carrying on its tortured, stony shoulders the glory, the faith, the sufferings, the infamies, the hopes, and the promises of two thousand years, carrying it all bravely but with a jest on its lips, Paris needs sensations, as food needs salt.

But Tennant knew how such a sensation grows. Grows like a snow-ball, from a tiny, white flake to a sweeping avalanche, a Juggernaut of brutal, unreasoning force, killing, destroying, maiming, wrecking. Dynasties had been ousted and revolutions had reddened the land for less original cause than the Jarvet mystery and Tennant knew, too, that Europe was a powder-barrel. A match might flare—somewhere—overnight—and then—

"The assassins of the government!" growled the lean apache. "Thy political principles are more sound than thy aristocratic clothes, *mon vieux!*"—and Tennant, who had the trick of talking about one thing and thinking of another, while engaging the apache in a slightly joshing conversation, remembered the mysterious words which Ducastel had pieced and read from Jarvet's blotting-paper.

"*My dear Lant*"—it had begun, and there was no doubt in his mind that "Lant" stood for Lantaigne, the

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chief of the secret political police, the trusted agent of the government; nor was there a doubt that the rest of the mutilated message held a threat—a grave threat against the "gentleman with the limp."

And then he considered that Menzies-Kerr walked with a limp; Menzies-Kerr who went on nightly visits to this very part of Paris. He considered the friendship between him and Angele Lantaigne. He considered how the news of the murder had startled him, and—

He must see his friend at once. Doubtless he was at this very moment with Lantaigne, telling him what had happened to his daughter.

"A government of butchers!" he said out loud to the rough, and then, pointing at the shop: "Speaking about butchers, this is a new shop, isn't it?"

A random shot which happened to hit.

"Yes," replied the gangster, "and a good butcher. A sound citizen, this Guillaume Nordeg, a hater of blood-sucking capitalists—"

"An enemy of the army!"

"To be sure!"

"Doing well in business?" casually went on Tennant.

"Not much money in the neighborhood. Still, our butcher does not seem to have to live on dried snails and stinking gray wine from the west. He has a jolly little paunch, has our butcher, two jolly, twinkling blue eyes; a jolly, rosy fatness of hand—and I doubt that he gets all his income across the wooden counter. There are ways and ways of making money in this part of town with which Joan of Arc would have been decidedly unfamiliar."

"You mean—oh!" Tennant jerked a thumb at a

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couple of girls dressed in tight black alpaca, garish, improbable flowers waving from huge hats, who just then were entering a drinking-shop with a slow undulation of hips and of arms held akimbo.

"Women? *La traite des blanches?* No, no! Our butcher is of those extraordinary creatures called celibates. But there are other ways around Saint-Sulpice."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning that Nordeg and M. Jarvet—"

"Shut up, you fool!" hoarsely whispered another gangster into the ear of his loquacious friend, who shut up at once. And with a wink and a parting curse against the government, he swaggered up the street, followed by his comrades, while Tennant turned south toward the house of M. Lantaigne.

"Is Lord Menzies-Kerr here?" he asked of the elderly servant who came to the door, sleepy, rubbing his eyes, his feet in knitted bedroom slippers, his head crowned with a mid-Victorian nightcap, spluttering candle held high, after he had rung several times.

"No. Milord is not here."

"When did he leave?"

"He has not been here all evening."

"He has not?" Tennant was utterly amazed. He had been quite sure that the Scotchman had gone to consult with the girl's father as soon as he had heard that Angele had been arrested for murder. It would have been the natural, logical thing to do.

"And M. Lantaigne?" he went on. "Does he know?"

"What, *monsieur?*"

"But—about his daughter, man!"

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The old servant nearly dropped the candle-stick.

"What—what has happened?" he asked in a flat, dazed voice.

"You mean to say you don't know?"

"Ye-yes—" He clutched Tennant by the arm. "Is she wounded? Is she dead? Oh, *Sainte Vierge!*" His voice rose in a shrill, cracked sob; then he called up the long, dark landing: "*Monsieur!* M. Lantaigne!" and, following a slamming of doors, a cough, a hurried footstep, Lantaigne himself rushed out on the corridor.

"Yes. Yes. What is it?"

He recognized Tennant, whom he had met once or twice before. He was an old man with a shrewd, rather waspish face whose sharpness was still more emphasized by the bushy eyebrows and the supercilious up-sweep of an immense, snowy-white mustache. He was dressed in the costume in which the Paris cartoonists loved to picture him: the flat Basque cap with the silken tassel roguishly over the left ear, a suit of velveteens of an indescribable yellowish brown, with short, tight jacket and voluminous, Zouavelike trousers; a costume which made him look more like an elderly slapstick comedian than like the chief of the secret political police, and which was strangely in contrast with his shrewdness, his marvelous insight, his superb pluck and immense political influence.

"What is the matter, M. Tennant?" he asked. "All right," as the American pointed at the half-open door of the library, "let's go in there. And now," as he closed the door and waved his visitor into a seat, "what is it?"

"You—you really do not know?"

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"No, no, no! I do not know. Go ahead and say what you came to say. *Enfin*—it is late—and I am very tired."

And then Tennant blurted out, leaning forward, gripping the arm-rests of his chair:

"Your daughter has been arrested; late this afternoon!"

"Arrested?" Lantaigne dropped the match with which he was about to light his cigarette. "Angele—my little Angele? And for what, pray?"

"For murder!" replied the American, and he told the other exactly what had happened. He was surprised and, too, a little shocked when Lantaigne burst into loud laughter instead of giving way to sorrow or indignation.

"Those silly fools!" he cried. "Oh, those silly fools! They have less use for brains than a professional atheist has for a chapter out of the Book of Ecclesiastes! By all the curly-tailed guinea-pigs, what monumental fools!"

"Who?" Tennant was becoming exasperated.

"The gentlemen of the metropolitan police! The blue-coated, brass-gallooned popinjays of the Palais de Justice! The human fungi of the *gendarmerie!* They, they"—again he broke into harsh, ungracious laughter—"do they think they can play a trick on me; on me because I have the ear of the government, because I am not affected by the inane regulations of the municipality? *Nom d'une pipe!* I shall—"

Then, seeing the look of amazement on Tennant's face, he cut short his flood of verbosity and said very quietly:

"*Monsieur*, you are a brilliant detective. Your de-

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ductions were correct. My daughter is as innocent of murder as—ah—as a little fluffy, white rabbit is of eating raw meat!"

"I kno" that," came the dry reply, "but the police refuse to believe me. Captain Roux—"

"Captain Roux is an ass who should be spanked. Suppose they do refuse to believe you, *monsieur*—nor your Scotch friend."

"What do you mean?"

"Just this. You said that the murder is supposed to have occurred about six in the evening?"

"Yes."

"You said, furthermore, that Jarvet's housekeeper saw the silhouette of a visitor in her master's library about ten minutes before six." Receiving an affirmative reply, he continued: "The police of course connect the visitor with the murder?"

"To be sure."

"*Eh bien*, my friend, what would you say if I told you that this afternoon, between five and six, I was sipping a grenadine in the company of my daughter and Lord Menzies-Kerr at the Café des Reines?"

"You mean the café at—"

"At the corner of the Rue Férou—just a few doors away from the Jarvet house. True! And a most conspicuous circumstance—made yet more suspicious when I tell you that my daughter was not with us all the time."

"But—the alibi—"

"Is perfect just the same, my dear Tennant. Angele left our table at half-past five—"

"The time when the butcher said he saw her enter the Jarvet house!"

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"Yes. But she returned to our table ten minutes later, and Jarvet's housekeeper saw the silhouette of the mysterious visitor at ten minutes to six. There is thus a hiatus of ten minutes, *monsieur!* And these ten minutes spell my daughter's innocence, and—" he rose and walked over to the desk telephone—"her immediate release from the clutches of these amorphous and ill-bred hyenas of the criminal police—curse them for a pack of simpering, cross-eyed, bristly-haired idiots!"

He took the receiver from the hook, gave several frantic "*Ello-ello-ello's,*" and asked central to be connected immediately with the headquarters of the criminal police.

"You, there," he said a moment later in a low, threatening rumble, "I wish to speak to Captain Roux. Yes! Who am I? I am Lantaigne—ah!" And shortly afterward Tennant was treated to the most explosive and vituperative French he had ever heard in all his life, Lantaigne finally slamming back the receiver, turning and announcing triumphantly: "The little matter is settled. My daughter will be released at once. Roux is apologizing—he is on his knees, at the other end of the wire, of course—imploring forgiveness, and—What is the matter, M. Tennant?" he asked suddenly, seeing the strange, tense expression in the other's steely eyes.

Tennant did not speak. There was a deep silence broken only by the ticking of the clock from the ormolu mantelpiece.

"M. Lantaigne," the American asked finally, "you said that Lord Menzies-Kerr was with you this afternoon at the Café des Reines?"

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"Yes"—puzzled.

"Was he with you all the time? Did he leave the table at all between five and six, either before or after your daughter?"

Lantaigne did not reply for a few seconds; then he walked up to Tennant and looked at him straight.

"*Monsieur*," he said, "I like you personally. But our paths of life and endeavor lie in different directions. I am of the political police, while you are a private detective. A great private detective, I know," he said with a generous gesture, "one of the greatest. But—"

"But?"

"We of the political police play with the destinies of nations, while you gentlemen of the detective agencies play with the destinies of individuals."

"The lines cross at times," came Tennant's hard answer; but when the other did not reply, only shrugging his expressive shoulders, he bowed and walked to the door.

"I get you," he said brusquely, as he left the room, but on his way back to his apartment he said to himself that he had not really "got" Lantaigne; had only understood that for some reason the man was unwilling to speak about Menzies-Kerr.

But why? What was the peculiar connection between Lantaigne and Menzies-Kerr—and the murdered Jarvet—and the butcher who did not make his living by selling sausages? There was some connection, he had no doubt of it. And so, wondering, probing, he walked back toward the Place Fontenoy, turning up the collar of his ulster against the driving sleet that cut through the night like a vibrating screen of swift, gray, horizontal lines.

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"Lord Menzies-Kerr come back?" he asked George W. Brown, his faithful darky servant who was greeting him with a toothy smile, with slippers carefully warmed, a pipe cleaned and filled, and a glass of Kentucky's best, heated and spiced.

"No, suh," he replied. "He left shortly after you did; a few minutes befo' seven, I reckon."

"H-m. By the way, George, do you recollect what time Lord Menzies-Kerr came home this afternoon?"

"Yes, suh. About twenty minutes after six. You came back a few minutes after he did."

"That's so. And I talked to him for about ten or fifteen minutes, and then Doumay came with the news of the murder. I do wonder where Menzies-Kerr was at six!" he mused, speaking to himself.

"I beg yo' pa'don, suh?"

"That's all right, George. Go to bed."

"Good night, suh."

"Good night," and Tennant walked into the library.

The books there belonged mostly to his friend. He himself had little leisure to read, and an American magazine bought at a ruinous price at Neale's book-and-tea shop, or a yellow-backed French novel was all the mental food he could stand after the day's grind. But the Scotchman was different. He had a great collection of books, and Tennant, considering suddenly that during the seventeen years' separation his old friend had really become a stranger to him, considering, too, that the surest clew to a man's character is an intimate look at the sort of literature he prefers, turned to the center table where a mass of books was piled up in disorder, just as Menzies-Kerr had left them.

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He looked, and what he found was interesting, and puzzling.

For cheek by jowl with heavy tomes on the ethnology and topography of French Indo-China—the exotic land where the Scotchman had taken his last flier after the picturesque and adventurous—was an official report of the governor of the French convict settlement of New Caledonia. There were some volumes on military tactics, an Italian cyclopedia dealing with political economics, and then a mass of German books; some memoirs of great German statesmen, others bound volumes of the *Preussische Jahrbücher*, others again virulent, bombastic, jingoistic pamphlets and brochures of the Pan-German party and the German Navy League.

A crazy mixture of reading matter, thought Tennant. But they were all well thumbed, their margins covered with notes in a fine, cramped handwriting. They had been read and reread.

He opened one of the German books at random. A letter fell out and before he realized what he was doing his eyes had seen and read, his brain had caught and registered.

Just a few lines. And they were like lines of fire:

And so, my dear Menzies-Kerr, you will see that Anatole Jarvet has sworn revenge against the man with the limp unless—

Tennant rose, excited, ashamed.

"Good Lord," he whispered. "I didn't mean it; I didn't intend—"

But it was done. There was no receding now. He had read and, though he tried to forget what he had read, his brain refused to give it up.

He held the letter at arm's length, afraid even to

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look at the outside. The words he had read seemed to correspond, somehow, to the cryptic, broken message which Ducastel had read from Jarvet's blotting-paper. By reading the letter through he would be able to solve the whole mystery.

His mind was in a whirl. The struggle was great. Menzies-Kerr was his friend. On the other hand, he was a detective, sworn to do his duty. From the position in which he found himself there was no issue without loss of honor—and he was a South Carolinian. He knew that as long as that letter was under his eyes—no!—as long as it was in this apartment, as long as it was in existence, the temptation would be there, the detective side of his brain and character would urge him on to read, to find out, to solve!

And—

Yes! One course lay open. He acted on it at once. He lit a match and held the letter to the crimson flame. A moment later it had burned to a flaky heap of ash.

And immediately afterward Tennant cursed himself for a maudlin fool.

"Lord, I should have read to the end!" he said, looking down at the gray ashes.

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CHAPTER V

MORNING came with a cold wintry blast that dropped on the Seine with a thin coating of ice, whirled down the boulevards in a flurry of frozen dew, and clad the tracery of the elm trees that border the Place Fontenoy with a romantic vestment of hoarfrost.

It came with coffee and hominy and sausage and buckwheat cakes prepared by George W. Brown's plum-colored paws—a daily shock and grievance to the fat Burgundian cook who presided over the culinary destinies of the apartment shared by Tennant and Lord Menzies-Kerr. It came with a bundle of newspapers, of which Tennant read a number of different political persuasions so as to keep in contact with "the business, the society, and the crimes of Paris," as he expressed it.

Every one of them, from the aristocratic *Gaulois* beloved by the Faubourg Saint Germain to the *Petit Parisien* beloved by janitor and workman, head-lined the Jarvet murder, the arrest of Mlle. Angele Lantaigne, and—very last news, slipped in after a violent wrangle between the night editors and the foreman of the printing rooms—her subsequent release, thanks to the alibi provided by her father, the chief of the secret political police.

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One or two of the more serious papers devoted short editorials to speculating about the political consequences of Jarvet's sudden death, reminding their readers that the day before the murder Anatole Jarvet had been reëlected to the House of Deputies; that he was the most dangerous enemy of the Republican Party in the saddle, the leader of the Internationalists, and that without him—"a man as ruthless as Aristogeiton, as coldly logical as Herbert Spencer, as energetic as Pope Sixtus the Fifth, as shrewd as Jacques Cujas, as impassioned as Demosthenes, as scholastic as Descartes, and as foully venal as Judas Iscariot," as the *Temps* put it in a riot of hyperbole—the International Party would be thrown into chaos.

A frivolous boulevard sheet, mostly devoted to frocks and frills, suggested that, while the murder had really happened, the arrest of Mlle. Angele Lantaigne, the popular ingénue of the Théâtre Alexandre, was a Machiavellian press-agent's trick. But most of the morning papers simply reported and treated the murder as a sensational mystery.

Breakfast over, Tennant devoted his early morning's clear-headedness to vain attempts at a solution of the crime. He had certain well-defined ideas as to the motive behind it—too, as to some of the forces which had been at work. What bothered him was the connection between the late Jarvet, Lantaigne, and Menzies-Kerr—"the gentleman with the limp." For by that last appellation nobody could be meant except the latter, and it was proved not only by Menzies-Kerr's strange behavior at the time when Subagent Doumay had come with news of the murder, but also by the letter which had dropped from between the pages of

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the German book and a few lines of which he had read —without meaning to.

Menzies-Kerr had not returned from the evening before, but the American banished whatever anxiety he felt by telling himself that the Scotchman, after all, was eccentric and erratic, and that this was not the first time he had spent whole days and nights away from home.

He had never vouchsafed any explanations for his absences in the past—beyond saying, with a grim laugh, that it was *not* a woman who had kept him away—and Tennant doubted if he would in the present case; and the incriminating letter destroyed, his own lips automatically sealed as to its contents, he wondered how he would be able to approach his friend and ask him straight out what was the matter—what he had had to do with the murdered Jarvet and with Lantaigne.

Too, it would be hard to cross-examine the other in an indirect manner, for he knew that Menzies-Kerr was cursed with Celtic supersensitiveness and was quick at smelling insults—imagined ones as often as not.

He put on his ulster and called the darky.

"I'm off," he said. "If Lord Menzies-Kerr comes back, ask him to look me up at the office, George." As an after-thought, thinking that he would trust to circumstances and the moment's inspiration to put the question to his friend in the right manner, he added: "Tell him it's very urgent."

"Yes, suh."

Fifteen minutes later Tennant's roadster was buzzing and slipping across the bridge and up into the gray, stolid, burgess respectability of the streets in back

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of the Rue Rougemont, where the great Agence Ducastel showed its modest little brass plate to the passing throng, surrounded by wholesale houses, the Paris purchasing agencies of English and American department stores, and a few boarding-houses catering to the trade of clerks and the students of the nearby Conservatory of Music.

He exchanged greetings with the stenographers and subagents in the outer offices.

"Doumay in?" he asked.

"No. He sent word. He remained on watch all last night at the Jarvet house—until six o'clock this morning."

"Guess he's making up for lost sleep, now," said Tennant, and went to his private office in the rear, which was protected by a double layer of steel walls and doors though only a thin board partition separated it from that of M. Ducastel.

He had a mass of routine work to go through, and it was nearly noon when he heard Henri Ducastel open the door of his holiest of holies, where he sat enthroned amid a splendor of Cordova wall-hangings, carved mahogany, steel filing-cabinets, Turkey carpets, and framed autographed pictures of prominent men and women, some of them crowned heads, whom he had helped out of misfortunes and scrapes during the fifty years of his eventful career—where he sat by the hour, engaged in melancholy contemplation of the past; where, when the mood took him, he gave of the marvelous store of his former experiences in the criminal annals of the world; and where at times, quite suddenly, he would turn his canny old brain on a project, an intrigue, a mystery, and solve it in the

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twinkling of an eye—to Tennant's professional, unenvying joy.

He heard Ducastel cough, then hum, then sing to himself snatches of a song which had been popular during the days of the third empire and Cora Pearl, and, familiar with the old gentleman's habits, he was not surprised when a moment later he saw him at the door, a broad grin on his face, a twinkle in his eyes, his thumbs in the arm holes of his white, brocaded waistcoat.

"Why this expression of ghoulish delight, chief?" he greeted him.

Ducastel smiled more than ever.

"*Bien!*" he said. "You can tell by my face? More —ah—applied psychology?" he added mockingly.

"No," came the dry, logical answer. "Physiology —this time. Take a good look at your face, chief. There's a mirror over there."

Ducastel did as he was told.

"You are right," he said. "My forehead, my nostrils, my lips, the sweep of my mustache express a feeling of delight—of triumph, if you wish—and the reason—"

"I suppose you got the best of me in something?"

"Right, *mon sympatique Américain!*" exclaimed Ducastel, sitting down across from the other. "You remember, doubtless, your splendid psychological deductions which proved the lamblike innocence of little Angele Lantaigne?"

"You bet—and my deductions were borne out by the alibi supplied by her father."

"Yes—and yet—Tennant, I have it! I, the hoary old man, the weak, defenseless old man whom you

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youngsters use as—*enfin*—as a machine to pay your preposterous salaries—I have put it over you, the youngest, sharpest, brightest, most celebrated detective from across the Atlantic! *Vive la France!* I did not believe Mlle. Lantaigne innocent last night, though you endeavored to ram your mad psychological deductions down my throat in that brutal cowboy manner of yours"—anything American was characterized as "cowboy" by M. Ducastel—"and, by the fifteen thousand pale-blue guinea-pigs!—I was right. And you—*mon pauvre petit*—" he snapped his fingers with a gesture of pitying contempt.

"You see," he continued, "you will remember that the day before yesterday Anatole Jarvet was re-elected, and that yesterday morning the President of the Republic called the House of Deputies to an extra session—a secret session—to discuss most important national affairs."

"Yes—increase of the standing army—supposed to be, wasn't it? Bigger military budget, aeroplanes, strengthening of the Paris fortifications—"

"Yes, yes. Well, this morning I was sipping my glass of *coffee-au-kirsch* at the Café de Naples, when, at the next table, I see some members of the Internationalist, Jarvet's party—Lamotte, Palmier, Brouin, and some others. We converse; and then Steynard comes in and joins us. Raoul Steynard, you know, the editor of the *Etoile*."

"I know. Filthy anarchist sheet; and Raoul Steynard is the biggest blackguard who ever came out of Alsace and said farewell to the German eagle to make his fortune in long-suffering Paris."

"Possibly so. But the *Etoile* is the party organ of

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the Internationalists, and Steynard was the close chum and associate of the late M. Jarvet. Well, this same Steynard tells me in that wretched Alsatian accent of his that for to-day—the day following the murder of Jarvet—the latter had been expected by his party to deliver a speech in the House of Deputies which would have blown the government sky-high, and"—Ducastel's voice rose and he gesticulated violently—"the government knew it, my boy! Lantaigne had warned the government!"

"How did he know?"

"Ask him; and he won't tell you. It's his business. He is the head of the secret political police. At all events, he knew, and—"

"Well?"

"Jarvet is assassinated! A danger to the state is providentially removed!"

"Proving what, according to your opinion?"

"According to my opinion?" snorted the older man in disgust. "According to the opinion of every thinking man except obstinate Americans! It proves that Angele Lantaigne murdered Jarvet with her father's full knowledge. Perhaps he supervised the crime himself. You yourself told me that he was at the Café des Reines, three doors from the Jarvet house, at the time of the murder!"

"Coincidence," suggested Tennant, and the other picked up the word like a battle gauge.

"Coincidence is the argument of poor theologians; and of fools!"

"Not always, M. Ducastel. Yesterday I was told that Mlle. Lantaigne murdered Jarvet to get possession of some letters she had written to him, and now I hear

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that she killed him so as to eliminate a danger to the republic. A little slip there somewhere, isn't it?"

"Not a bit of it. She is emotional, high-strung, romantic. Jarvet had loved her, and deceived her. She meets Menzies-Kerr, falls in love with him, is afraid that Jarvet—for he has done the same thing in the past—will blackmail her with the help of her indiscreet letters. She asks for their return. He refuses. She decides to kill him. All right. Somehow, her father learns of her intention. Does he dissuade her? No! He encourages her. He helps her. He knows that, by removing her former lover, she will also remove an enemy of the republic!"

Tennant did not reply. He stared moodily in front of him. What Ducastel said seemed to dovetail; and even suppose he was wrong in so far that it was not she who had done the actual killing, but that—

He was afraid to complete the thought. But he could not forget the cryptic letter marked on Jarvet's blotter, nor Lantaigne's strange refusal to tell him if Menzies-Kerr had been with him every minute of the time between five and six—the afternoon of the murder.

But the next moment he remembered some other things—and they gave him back his good humor and his confidence. He could not be mistaken. Of course there were some missing links in the chain of events as he had thought them out, but fundamentally he was right. He was convinced of it; and presently he would solve the whole wretched mystery.

He turned to Ducastel, who was quietly smiling to himself, pleased with the thought that his old brains were still in working order, and that, for once, he had got the better of his young American investigator.

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"Chief!" he said.

Ducastel looked up, suspicious. He knew that tone as a cavalry mount knows the battle trumpet.

"Well?" he asked rather meekly.

"Your reasoning is bully. It dovetails. But you are overlooking a lot of negative testimony. For what about the apache who cried 'Down with the army'?"

And, though Ducastel with a burst of rage declared that he was sick of these mysterious allusions that meant nothing and led nowhere, Tennant continued calmly:

"What about the strange, symmetrical pattern of scratches on the table, on Jarvet's palms, and on the safe? What about the butcher—who came over to testify against Mlle. Lantaigne before he could possibly have known that Jarvet had been murdered? And the letter on the blotter."

Suddenly he paused.

"'The gentleman with the limp,'" he said, as if to himself; and then, rising: "I guess I'll take another look at that blotter," and he left the room.

But when he arrived at the house in the Rue Férou and walked into the library, he found to his surprise that the blotter was not there. He wondered if the headquarters detectives might have removed it, and, seeing Doumay just then coming up the stairs, he asked him what had happened to it.

Doumay laughed.

"But, *monsieur!*" he exclaimed. "You took it yourself last night when I was on watch."

"I took it?"

Again Doumay laughed.

"You are overworked, *monsieur*. Your memory is

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playing you tricks. Don't you remember that you came here late last night—after midnight. You wore your heavy American ulster; not the one you are wearing now, but the other one, the dark-blue one. And don't you remember that you had hurt your foot; that you walked with a limp; and that you would hardly talk to me. Said you had a bad cough?"

"Of course, of course!" replied Tennant, and, sending Doumay on a rapidly improvised errand, he telephoned to his apartment.

"Yes, suh?" came George's voice across the wire a moment later.

"Has Lord Menzies-Kerr returned?"

"Yes, suh."

"You gave him my message?"

"Yes. But he said as he wasn't gwine roun' to your office, suh; didn't have the time."

"That so? By the way, did Lord Menzies-Kerr wear his fur coat?"

"No, suh; he's wearing your blue ulster, suh."

"All right. Thanks," and Tennant rang off with a smothered curse.

The early afternoon editions took up the tale of the Jarvet murder where the morning papers had left it. As yet not one of them breathed a word about the fact that the death of the deputy had come at a most opportune moment for the government.

But the French press is even less afraid of contempt of court and of influencing public opinion before the trial than the American, and Tennant was less surprised than disgusted when the *Intransigeant*, yellowest of yellow sheets, took it upon its editorial conscience to investigate, riddle, and destroy the alibi through

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which the chief of the secret political police had caused his daughter's release.

It appeared that one of their brilliant young reporters had discovered that the Café des Reines had been empty of other visitors at the time when M. Lantaigne claimed that he had been there in the company of Angele and Lord Allistair Menzies-Kerr, and that neither Mme. la Patronne, behind the cash register, nor the solitary waiter, could remember at what time Angele had left the table, nor when she had returned.

"Thus," continued the article, "the alibi of Mlle. Angele Lantaigne stands and falls by the testimony of two gentlemen, both of whom are directly interested in her fate. Her father, and her lover, Lord Menzies-Kerr! Of course the latter, when interviewed shortly before twelve just as he was about to leave the apartment which he shares with M. James Tennant, the celebrated American detective, by our intrepid reporter, objected strenuously to having his name mentioned in connection with that of Mlle. Lantaigne and, with characteristic Anglo-Saxon brutality, proposed to throw our reporter out of the window and to chop his body into small pieces of flesh which a self-respecting ostrich would refuse to swallow if ever again he should dare show his face in milord's apartment.

"Milord!" wound up the editorial in a direct appeal, "it is not by such arguments—the arguments of a hairy and uncouth troglodyte who has chilblains in the place which nature provided for his gray matter—that you will be able to establish the innocence of the woman you love!"

Even the more decent of the papers said *sub rosa*

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that they considered Angele guilty in spite of her father's alibi, though they sugared the pill in a typically French manner by suggesting that she had doubtless been justified and should promptly be acquitted. For was she not twenty-one? Was she not as fair as wheat and as blue-eyed as a cloudless summer sky? Was she not a charming girl and a great actress? On the other hand, had not the late M. Anatole Jarvet been a hyena in human form who—to quote the *Petit Canard Quotidien*—had "fattened his obese and nasty body by feeding on the reputations of the women whom first he had loved, then abandoned, and finally blackmailed?"

But the real sensation boomed along when the *aperitif* hour emptied the offices and counting-houses and filled the boulevard cafés with men eager for various-colored drinks to sluice the office dust from their throats, more eager for spiced talk to clear the cobwebs of ledger and catalogue from the corners of their vivacious Gallic minds.

It was then that for the first time the whisper ran from mouth to mouth—from costumer to Mme. la Patronne, from her to aproned, hustling waiter, and back again to the latest silk-hatted arrival—that perhaps the government knew more about the Jarvet affair than appeared on the surface—talk peppered with hushed allusions to former political mysteries, with such names as Dreyfus, Esterhazy, Béranger, Déroulède, and Félix Faure.

And it was then that Tennant, walking down the Boulevard des Italiens in search of Menzies-Kerr, who usually strolled as far as the Madeleine as a before-dinner constitutional, realized that the snowball of

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gossip and rumor and scandal was about to assume threatening proportions.

He had no doubt that, if he wanted to, he would be able to trace the beginning of the rumor to the office of the *Etoile*, the organ of the Internationalists, edited by Jarvet's friend, Raoul Steynard. He saw him, a short, squat, hook-nosed, black-bearded man, at the entrance to the Café Riche, surrounded by a group of admirers. The man was talking and gesticulating violently, and Tennant caught a few words; just what he had expected to hear:

"The government, they did it, my friends—"

He walked on, looking to right and left for his friend. Steadily the crowds were becoming thicker. Steadily the undercurrent of rumor and gossip grew and bloated; and when a stream of ragged newspaper boys careened into the boulevards from a side street, crying their wares, it was like oil on flames.

"*La Patrie!*"

"*La Presse!*"

"Scandal in the House of Deputies!"

"Deputy accuses the government of murder!"

"Lantaigne implicated!"

An excited crowd was asking and answering questions. Papers were snatched, read, commented upon.

"What is it?"

"It appears that the government gave orders to have Jarvet assassinated!"

"Lantaigne turned the trick!"

"Shame! This is worthy of Russia!"

"Ah—our little republican czars!"

Tennant smiled grimly. Here was the echo of the cries which he had heard the evening before near Saint

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Sulpice. Already it had swept across the bridges; already it was whirling down the great boulevards. Another hour and it would drift into the salons of the Faubourg where politics were made, into the embassies of the foreign powers, the offices of foreign newspaper correspondents to be flashed around the globe. Evidently something very grave had happened in the House of Deputies to give substance to it.

He bought a paper, and read that a deputy of the Internationalist Party had halted the secret deliberations of the house by accusing the government point-blank of having ordered the assassination of Jarvet—and he had added that M. Lantaigne had been the instrument of the government.

The minister of the interior had denied the charge indignantly, had declared his supreme faith in the chief of the secret political police, and had demanded a vote of confidence; and the result of the vote, though favorable to the administration, had been obtained by a dangerously close margin.

Tennant felt curiously ill at ease. Nor was it because of his friend, Lord Menzies-Kerr. He knew that, whatever the latter's connection with the whole affair, and though it might cause him a lot of trouble and ugly suspicion, his motives would finally be proved to have been entirely honorable, though perhaps quixotic. Menzies-Kerr would be cleared in the end. Tennant knew it, not because his friendship for the man forced his brain to believe as his heart would like him to, but because his sixth sense—his detective sense—told him so.

What disturbed him was the thought that France—which he loved next only to his native America—

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was about to stew some ghastly mess in her political caldron, was on the eve of one of her usual internal turmoils, at the same moment that the rest of Europe, not to speak of the rest of the world, was trembling on the brink of a volcano; a volcano that had belched out evil odors during the Dreyfus trial, that had rumbled threateningly during the Algeciras convention, that had shown its fiery head two years earlier when Germany—speaking suavely about the Russian danger on her eastern marshes—had suddenly increased her military establishment by twenty divisions of horse, foot, and guns.

France had read the sign—a little late, naturally, being a democracy with a thousand heads—and finally the government had called the house to a secret session to debate on how to strengthen the steel walls which protected French civilization from German kultur.

And, at that very moment, came the Jarvet murder; came one of France's chronic political nerve fits. The boulevards enjoyed it; so did the newspapers, the salons, the foyers of hotel and theater, and the people of France knew that it was nothing but a storm in a tea-pot. But what about the iron-fisted hordes across the Rhine, those hordes, thinking and acting to the will of a handful of men? They were not such experts at national psychology as he, James Oliver Tennant, was at individual. They might misread the signs, and then—

Decidedly he must get to the bottom of the affair, and so he returned to the Rue Férou. Excitement there had died down somewhat, and the cordon of policemen at the opening of the street had been thinned to half a platoon. In passing, Tennant noticed that

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the butcher-shop of Guillaume Nordeg had its blinds down.

"Nordeg come back?" he asked a bluecoat.

"Yes, and left again."

"All right. Look out for him, and slip me the word as soon as you see him."

The Jarvet house was empty but for Mme. Anne Houlbrecque, the deaf old housekeeper who had received permission to stay until further orders, Captain Xavier Roux, and Subagent Doumay.

"Anybody been here to-day?" he asked the police captain whom he met in the lower hall.

"Only M. Raoul Steynard."

"The editor of the *Etoile?*"

"The same, *monsieur.*"

"What did he want?" asked Tennant, rather surprised.

"Certain documents. Certain very important documents which belong to him and which he had left in M. Jarvet's hands a few days back."

"And he had to have them in a hurry, I suppose?"

"Exactly."

Tennant grinned.

"Good Lord," he said, "Steynard might have thought of something more original. That trick is so old it's got whiskers. I don't suppose you fell for it, Roux, did you?" he asked casually.

"What do you mean, *monsieur?*"

Tennant looked up sharply.

"I mean you weren't enough of a damned fool to let him in; to allow him to look for those important documents and carry them off?"

"Of course I let him in!" came the belligerent reply.

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"Of course I allowed him to take his own property! Why shouldn't I?"

Tennant gave a low exclamation of rage. He took the other by the shoulders and shook him.

"What?" he cried. "You let him into the house? You mean to say you let Raoul Steynard in? Steynard; Jarvet's old side-kick? You allowed him to search the premises, you infernal, muddle-brained idiot? You let him take away—*papers?*" He brought out the last word as if it choked him.

"I could not say 'no'!" the police captain defended himself. "Steynard is the editor of the *Etoile.* He is an important member of the Internationalist Party."

"But that's just why you should have kept him away from here; why you should have stalled him! Lord, man, you've got as much use for common sense as a hog has for hip-pockets! You, you—"

"Monsieur Tennant! One moment, please!"

It was Doumay speaking. He had come from upstairs, and pulled the American into the little salon which opened on the garden.

"I—" he began, but at once Tennant whirled on him.

"And you?" he said. "Why did you let Roux make such a blunder? Couldn't you phone me or Ducastel? What have you got to say for yourself?"

Doumay smiled.

"Monsieur Tennant," he said, "shortly after you came from America and entered the Agence Ducastel, you were kind enough to tell me it is a good idea in criminal cases to give a man all the rope he wants—if you can get a hold of the rope afterward. Do you remember?"

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"Yes; something of the sort," Tennant said, puzzled. "What's that got to do with Steynard?"

"You remember also that before I became a private detective, I was—"

"A cracksman, I believe."

"Yes. But not always. One does not become a cracksman in a day nor a week nor a year. One starts lower down. I"—he smiled reminiscently—"I went through the whole gamut of crimes, *enfin!* When I was very small I was an expert pickpocket—the best in Paris," he added with a peculiar mixture of pride and shame.

"And—" impatiently from Tennant.

"I allowed M. Raoul Steynard to search the premises. He searched and searched and searched. The library, the down-stairs salon, the dining-room—everywhere. It was warm in the house and he took off his overcoat and searched some more. I did not watch him. I did not want him to suspect. But afterward, when he returned to the hall where he had left his coat, after he had found what he was after, I—being a Frenchman and of manners most exquisite—I helped him on with his coat, and—"

"I get you!" broke in Tennant, with a ringing laugh. "You went through his pockets while you did the polite act. Doumay, my boy, if I were a Frenchman I would plant a smack on your noble forehead. Being an American I'll content myself with telling you that you are all to the mustard. And now, hand over what you swiped from friend Steynard!"

"Here, *monsieur*," and the subagent gave Tennant a small package wrapped in oil paper.

Tennant opened it, spread it out, smoothed the

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creases, and looked. At first he was disappointed, for the "important document" of M. Steynard was nothing but a printed small-scale map of the Far-Eastern French colony of Indo-China.

Looking at it more closely, he noticed that certain portions of the map had been underlined in red ink, and all in the southern part of the colony, Cambodia and Cochin-China. Then he saw that double red lines marked certain rivers, such as the lower Mekong, the Prek Té, and the Vaico; while a number of towns, for instance Kampot, Camau, and Bac Lieu, were accentuated by small red crosses. Finally he noticed that a fine network of red lines ran from the southwest, near Kampsala, toward the northeast, in the direction of the province of Annam.

"What do you make of it?" he asked Doumay. "I mean what do you make of it taken in connection with the fact that very evidently Steynard considered this map most important?"

"I don't know," mused the other. "Of course Jarvet was the head of the Internationalist Party, and Steynard was his chum and associate, and all the world knows that the Internationalists are opposed to colonies, to imperialism. *Monsieur*," he went on, "there have been rumors before this that some of the native rebellions out there were financed right here, in Paris, by the Internationalists. Perhaps these"—he pointed at the red crosses—"mark hidden ammunition depots, and the thin lines are meant for lines of attack and communication."

Tennant shook his head.

"Sounds reasonable enough," he said. "Only, look here! Kampot and Camau and Bac Lieu are not the

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sort of places where anybody with half an ounce of sense would hide guns and ammunitions. Swampy land down there; unhealthy, malarial. Nor would a rebellion spread from the south toward the northeast. Just look at the rivers and the roads. The lines of communication would be all wrong. Such a rebellion could never succeed with Saigon and the French garrison commanding the southeast, and Jarvet wasn't exactly a fool! These red lines mean something entirely different. I am sure of it."

He turned the map over; and gave a low whistle of intense surprise.

"Doumay!" he said. "Look!" He pointed at a small printed square which said: "*Verlag von Velhagen & Klasing, Bielefeld und Leipzig*"—"Doumay, this map was made in Germany!"

"And?"

"Why should it have been?" continued Tennant. "Suppose Jarvet or Steynard had wanted a map of Indo-China, they could—would naturally have bought one made in Paris. All the bookstores carry those bully government maps. Why the devil did he buy a German map?"

"Perhaps he was in Germany and bought it while there."

"Must have been there recently. Look here; this is dated 1913. Wait; I'll find out." He called to Captain Roux and asked him to send Madame Houlbrecque.

"*Madame*," he said when the old housekeeper had shuffled into the room, her hand to her ear, "had your late master been in Germany recently?"

"No. He has not been beyond the fortifications of Paris for over three years. He was a very busy

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man—" and she went on with a lot of senile recollections how M. Jarvet could never be prevailed upon to take a vacation which Tennant cut short with the brusque question if, as far as she knew, M. Jarvet had had any German friends. Had she ever heard German spoken in the house?

Anne Houlbrecque smiled.

"I am deaf, *monsieur*. I could not have heard. But I know what German squareheads look like. There were never any in *this* house! M. Jarvet received but few visitors."

"Do you recollect any of them?"

"Yes; my memory is better than my hearing. I remember them all. There was M. Steynard and the Deputies of M. Jarvet's party. There was that butcher, Guillaume Nordeg—"

"Was he here often?"

"Yes. He and M. Jarvet knew each other well. And there was another man whom I did not know. He used to come late at night, two or three times a week. He walked with a limp."

"A man about my height?" asked Tennant, thinking of Menzies-Kerr and hoping that the answer would be in the negative.

But the reply was a decisive:

"Yes. Just your height, *monsieur*. He wore a felt hat pulled well over his eyes—"

"And a loose coat?" Tennant could hardly keep his voice from trembling.

"Yes."

"As loose as that of the visitor—the woman as you said—whom you saw in M. Jarvet's library a few minutes before the murder?"

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"But, yes, *monsieur*," replied the old woman astonished. Tennant dismissed her and turned his thoughts to his friend, Lord Menzies-Kerr.

Could Menzies-Kerr have been the murderer after all? The Scotchman had been in Indo-China not so long ago, and here was a map of Indo-China made in Germany! What did it all signify?

"Doumay." He turned to the subagent. "This is a prize mystery."

The little Frenchman smiled.

"You'll solve it, *monsieur*, I have no doubt!"

"Solve it?" Tennant gave a strange, cracked laugh. "I keep on solving it and my solution is right; but every time I solve it, it pops up again with a new kink in its cursed tail and—"

"*Monsieur?*"

"I am afraid of the last kink—out there." And he pointed due east, in the direction of the frontier, where the sky was reddening as if a mouth of blood had kissed and stained it.

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CHAPTER VI

THERE was an unconscious wistfulness upon the face which Mademoiselle Angele Lantaigne turned on Tennant, who was sitting across from her in the little rose-and-silver salon of her father's house.

"I am so glad you called on me, Monsieur Tennant," she said, "even without a formal introduction. Lord Menzies-Kerr speaks of you often, and of course all Paris knows you, the celebrated American detective. And father, too, has spoken of you. He admires you."

Tennant looked at her: the low, broad, white forehead; the slightly curved, sensitive nose; the chin, soft in outline yet indicating strength and courage; the great blue eyes showing deep beneath boldly-hooded lids; the mobile lips, coral rather than cherry; the statuesque sweep of the golden hair, accentuating the square contours of the temples and resting on the small, well-shaped head like a glittering crown of curled sun-rays; the head poised with dignity upon a full, white throat; the lithe, girlish body, clad in a loose house-gown of dark-blue silk shot with emerald and dull-silver.

She was very lovely, very appealing, very sympathetic; and Tennant, being a decent, clean man and thus quite unashamed of natural emotions and reac-

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tions, said to himself that he liked her tremendously. Paradoxically, he was sorry that he did; for he had come on an unpleasant errand.

"*Mademoiselle*," he said brusquely, "I wish you had not given me such a charming welcome."

"Why?" she smiled.

"Because I have come here not as a friend, but as a detective."

She looked straight at him. Her lips quivered. Then she turned on him with a sudden flash of violence.

"I understand, *monsieur!*" she said in a low voice. "It is because of that murder—Jarvet! You, *monsieur*, know that I was arrested, suspected, accused. But you know also that I was released immediately, that it was all a mistake. But suppose my father had not been able to prove my alibi, suppose I were still in prison, even then you should know that I am innocent if you have one tiny particle of that psychological insight for which you are so famous!"

She said the last words with undisguised sarcasm; and when Tennant tried to justify himself, saying he knew she was innocent and had said so from the first, she went on more vehemently, her small white hands clenched tight, her blue eyes flashing.

"*Monsieur*, I have heard so much about chivalrous American gentlemen that, *bon sang!* I used to believe it!"

"But, my dear lady!"

"Why do you come here as a detective?" she insisted. "It is none of your business to ask me questions about that Jarvet affair, nor is it mine to answer. You do not belong to the police; you are a private detective; you have no right!"

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Silently Tennant waived the point that he had the right to ask her questions, since the police had given a free hand to the Agence Ducastel. He preferred putting it on moral instead of legal grounds. He knew that the latter antagonized people, innocent as well as guilty, less than the former. He had made a habit of it throughout his detective career and owed part of his success to it.

"Mademoiselle Lantaigne," he admitted, "I have no right to be here nor to cross-examine you. But I have more than a right. I have the duty to do it. The duty!" he repeated emphatically, "and it is your duty to answer!"

"I do not see it."

"You will presently. Just hear me out. I repeat that it is both your duty and mine, because"—he lowered his voice—"because we are both of us friends of Lord Allistair Menzies-Kerr, who would not like to see him harmed."

"You mean—" she stammered, afraid to finish the thought.

He did it for her.

"I mean that by refusing to answer the questions which I am going to ask you, you will indirectly cause Lord Menzies-Kerr to be suspected, perhaps arrested, and ultimately—who knows?" He leaned forward in his chair. "I am not a theologian, *mademoiselle*. I have always believed it wise to let sleeping dogmas lie. I merely believe in fair play, plain, average, strictly human fair play. That's all the theology of which I am capable. I guess you, too, believe in being fair and square."

Her deep low voice came like an echo.

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"Ask your questions, *monsieur*. I shall answer—fair and square," she added in an undertone.

"Bully for you! Now, first of all, you are not engaged to Lord Menzies-Kerr? All that newspaper talk—"

"Is newspaper talk, *monsieur*. Chaff in the wind. I like Lord Menzies-Kerr. I admire and respect him. So does my father. He is our friend."

"Fine and dandy!"

There was so much boyish, naïve enthusiasm in the exclamation that Angele looked up; and then blushed prettily. It did not need a chart and a signal code to be able to tell that Tennant was, somehow, very glad that Angele and Menzies-Kerr were just friends.

The next moment Tennant called himself an impressionable fool. It wouldn't do, he thought, to let his personal feelings get mixed up with a criminal investigation. Straight and to the point: that was the slogan. He turned to her with the calm question:

"*Mademoiselle*, is it true that the late M. Jarvet was also a friend of yours?"

She did not lower her eyes.

"We were more than friends," came her brave reply. "I loved Anatole Jarvet; and I thought that he returned my love."

Tennant murmured an indistinct apology, but she went on, fairly and squarely, as she had promised:

"I met him at a grand opera ball a little over a year ago. And I—after all, *monsieur*, I am not very old."

"Wouldn't exactly call you a Miss Rip Van Winkle," he put in smilingly.

"I had heard about him. I knew how the people around Saint Sulpice followed him; how they obeyed

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and loved and adored him. How they called him the modern Robespierre who would lead the Internationale to victory; who would bring real freedom and democracy, an end to all strife and war and misery and hunger, peace and plenty and happiness to everybody! And, *monsieur*"—there was the ghost of a smile on her lips—"you know the young. We are world-stormers. We believe in change, in revolution, in reform. Revolution against everything—God and the dear saints included. It is both the sweetness and the penalty of youth.

"I made a hero of Anatole Jarvet. I read his articles and his pamphlets. I listened to his speeches. Once in a while, it is true, I would hear a whisper of gossip about him. If it was something nice, I would believe it; if it was something not so nice I would call it a lie and forget it. For he was my hero! Then I met him at the opera ball, and Anatole Jarvet was a very handsome man."

Tennant inclined his head as he thought of how he had seen Jarvet last, crumpled up in his chair, dead, but still with that satanic beauty on the heavy features.

"We met often," she continued. "We talked of love and I wrote him letters; the awkward, passionate, foolish letters of a young girl who does not know. He loved those letters; he told me so. And then one evening as I walked to the theater I saw him with another woman; a woman of the streets. I met him the next day. I reproached him and, *bon Dieu!* I would have forgiven him had he said the word, for I loved him so. But he laughed at me; he told me insulting things."

"I understand," Tennant said gently.

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She shook her head.

"No. You do not understand. You are a decent man, a clean man. You do not know what a man like Jarvet is. You do not know what he told me—"

There was a sob in her voice. Tennant felt sorry and guilty, too. He took her hand and petted it.

"Never mind, child," he whispered. "I didn't ask you to crucify yourself."

She swallowed hard. She was determined to go through with her confession, and there was that in Tennant's face, his voice, and the cool touch of his long, brown hands which made it easier for her than she had thought.

She thanked him with a look, and went on:

"Then I heard from a friend of mine, an older actress at the Théâtre Alexandre, that for years Anatole Jarvet had made it a business—yes, a regular business—to make love to women, to have them write to him, and, afterward, to blackmail them with the help of their foolish, pitiful letters. And so I made up my mind to get mine back. I went to him."

Tennant sat up, tense, alert.

"You went to him on the afternoon of the murder?"

"Yes. I was with my father and Lord Menzies-Kerr at the Café des Reines. At half past five I excused myself for a few minutes. M. Jarvet's house is only a step from the little café. I went to him and asked him to return my letters.

"He refused. I insisted. He said they were worth money, more than I could possibly raise; that Lord Menzies-Kerr was very wealthy and I should ask him to lend me the money; and when I said I could not

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ask him for money, Jarvet replied: 'Never mind the money then. I will give you back your letters if you persuade his lordship to help me with Indo-China. Tell him that!'"

"Were those Jarvet's exact words?"

"Yes. I thought them very strange. I remember them exactly."

Tennant felt tremendously excited. Here was an important piece of news. But, the next moment, his trained detective mind told him that he must not forget the smaller points which, in criminal cases, are apt to suddenly loom large. So he continued his questions.

"Did you notice if M. Jarvet's safe was open while you were there?"

"He opened it just before I left. He showed me my letters, tied together, and again told me he would return them if I could persuade Lord Menzies-Kerr to help him with Indo-China. Then I left and returned to the café. I was not gone over ten minutes."

"One more question, *mademoiselle*, though it may strike you as irrelevant. You know about the butcher Guillaume Nordeg's incriminating testimony against you?"

"Yes."

"Had he any reason to wish you harm?"

"Why, no," came her puzzled reply.

"You knew him?"

"I have seen him."

"Where?"

"When I called on Anatole Jarvet, several weeks ago. They were together in the library. They were looking at something that looked like—"

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Angele smiled.

"You are not a detective, *monsieur*; you are a clairvoyant. Yes; it looked like an automobile map."

"Good! Good! And now—a final question—when you returned to your table, was Lord Menzies-Kerr still there?"

"Yes."

"When did he leave the café?"

"About—"

"Angele, I forbid you to answer!" came a sharp voice from the door.

It was Lantaigne, the chief of the secret political police, who had come into the room.

Lantaigne shook hands cordially with Tennant, and told him, with slight mockery, how sorry he was that he had come home at such an inopportune moment.

"Opportune for you!" grimly corrected Tennant, who, being an American, enjoyed a joke even when it was on himself.

Lantaigne smiled a fleeting, hard smile, like the curly glitter on steel.

"M. Tennant," he said, "we decided the other day that the work of the secret political police and that of private detective agencies run on different lines."

"It was you who decided that; not I!" cut in Tennant; but the other went on, unheeding:

"For reasons which I have no intention of communicating to you, I also decided that the question which you asked my daughter as I came into the room—at what time Lord Menzies-Kerr left our table at the café on the evening of the murder—belongs to those where your and my branch of criminal investigation are at odds. I have refused to answer that question. I re-

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fuse now. I shall always refuse—without an explanation of any sort. And that applies to you, too, Angele!" He walked up to her and petted her cheek. "Promise me, child, that you will not answer this question, ever, unless I give you permission."

The girl looked from her father to Tennant, confused, apologetic; then she whispered the desired promise, and her father kissed her gently.

"You are a good daughter; and now it is time for you to go to the theater."

Angele shook her head.

"I am not going, father."

"Why not?"

"I cannot. My name has been in all the papers, with all sorts of comment. Some try to be decent; try to excuse me. But they all think the same thing. They all still suspect me of this—this horrible crime."

Lantaigne drew her to him.

"That is just why you must go, child. If you do not appear on the boards to-night people will say that you are afraid, and will conclude that you are guilty. It's human nature. Prove to them with voice and gesture that you are innocent. You are brave; you have always been brave. Go!"

The girl smiled. She picked up a large, silver-framed photograph of a young man, about twenty-five, which stood on the center-table. Tennant had noticed the striking likeness between it and Angele.

"Am I as brave as Marcel was, father?" she asked.

"Yes." The man's voice was hushed, as with the memory of grief. "You are as brave as Marcel—who died in the Alps, trying to save a friend's life. You must never forget that, daughter," and Tennant was

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surprised at the rather hectic note which crept into Lantaigne's voice as he continued: "You must never forget that your brother was a clean, honorable gentleman, who died an honorable death."

"I was very young when he died, and he was so much older than I. I hardly remember him."

The older man had regained his composure.

"But you are as brave as he was," he said, "and to-night you must prove it to all the world. Go to the theater; your friends will be there to applaud you."

"You bet!" exclaimed Tennant. "I'll be one of them. I'll be there to-night with the number nine gloves and the lusty voice, and you'll hear me. I learned rooting at football games back home."

When the girl had left the room, smiling her thanks, Tennant turned suddenly to Lantaigne, who was standing beside the door, very polite, but evidently expecting his visitor to leave.

"Close the door," said the American calmly. "My finer sensibilities are hard-boiled and my tact is above the freezing point when I am asking questions."

"I told you I wouldn't reply."

"To that about Menzies-Kerr. Sure. I know. But there's something else I've got to ask you, and you might as well make up your mind right now to reply. For it affects you really more than me!"

"Is that so?" Lantaigne tried to appear bored, but did not succeed, and Tennant pressed the slight advantage sharply home, telling him about the blotter which he had found on Jarvet's library table and which Ducastel had read to him.

"That letter was addressed to you. 'Lant' stands for Lantaigne. And look at the rest of the message—

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cut and broken, but not so very blamed cryptic. 'Unless by Saturday I receive—' and 'the gentleman with the limp will pay the penalty.' It's both a warning and a threat; that's clear, isn't it?"

"I never received such a letter in my life!" cried the other. "Jarvet has not written to me for years!"

"Is that the truth?" Tennant demanded brutally, and Lantaigne replied with a violent flood of words, objurgations, protestations, but clear through it was a note of utter sincerity:

"I received no such letter. I give you my word of honor as a gentleman!"

"I believe you, and I beg your pardon." Tennant bowed.

Rapidly, on the spur of the moment, he concluded that Jarvet must have been killed while he was writing that very letter, and that the assassin must have carried away the unfinished letter as well as the love-letters written to Jarvet by Angele.

But the next minute he returned to the attack with another question about another letter: the one which had slipped from between the pages of one of Menzies-Kerr's German books.

Without meaning to, he had read a few lines. But he had not seen the signature. All right. He would bluff. He would try a shot into the blue, and see if he could wing something.

"*Monsieur*," he said to the chief of the secret political police, "I repeat that I believe you, and once more I offer you my humble apologies. But," lending his words the emphasis of a suddenly lowered voice—"why did you write to Lord Menzies-Kerr? Why did you warn him? Don't deny it. I saw the letter in which

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you told him that Jarvet had sworn revenge against—"

Lantaigne interrupted him with a quick gesture and a laugh.

"I do not deny it. I did write that letter. Only"—again he laughed—"it is evident that you did not read the whole letter. It was not a warning meant for Menzies-Kerr. It was a warning to be communicated by him to—ah—to the gentleman with the limp!"

"And he is—"

"*Monsieur*," smiled Lantaigne, opening the door, "I understand that you are a famous American detective. Find out, *monsieur!* Find out!"

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CHAPTER VII

It was on his way back to his apartment to dress for the theater that Tennant ran across the wizen apache of the Saint-Sulpice gang who had told him a day or two earlier that Guillaume Nordeg, the butcher, had "ways of earning money with which the late lamented Joan of Arc would have been decidedly unfamiliar."

He met him as he was taking a short-cut through one of those packed, crowded, noisy alleys on that side of the Seine where tumble-down mansions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries lean against each other for mutual support, and echo to the shrill sounds and shouts and laughter of its motley population; bookbinders and cobblers, news-venders and fruiterers, dealers in all kinds of second-hand odds and ends, locksmiths and knife-sharpeners and wheelwrights.

The meeting was rather violent. For Tennant, thinking deeply with puckered eyes searching the ground as if for the master-key to the Jarvet mystery, bumped smartly against the apache who came shuffling along from the opposite direction, slightly the worse for his evening libations of the cloudy, green liquor, the high-peaked cap pushed back on his round, close-cropped skull at a rakish, devil-may-care angle, velveteen peg-

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