1. The Arrest of Arsene Lupin

It was a strange ending to a voyage that had commenced in a most auspicious manner. The transatlantic steamship La Provence was a swift and comfortable vessel under the command of a most affable man. The passengers constituted a select and delightful society. The charm of new acquaintances and improvised amusements served to make the time pass agreeably. We enjoyed the pleasant sensation of being separated from the world and living upon an unknown island, consequently obliged to be sociable with each other.

Have you ever stopped to consider how much originality and spontaneity emanates from these various individuals who, on the preceding evening, did not even know each other, and who are now, for several days, condemned to lead a life of extreme intimacy, jointly defying the anger of the ocean? Such a life becomes a sort of tragic existence, with its stuns and its grandeurs, its monotony and its diversity. That is why, perhaps, we embark upon that short voyage with mingled feelings of pleasure and fear.

During the past few years, a new sensation has been added to the life of the transatlantic traveler. The little floating island is now attached to the world from which it was once quite free. A bond united them, even in the very heart of the watery wastes of the Atlantic. That bond is the wireless telegraph, through which we receive news most mysteriously. We know full well that the message is not transported by the medium of a hollow wire. No, the mystery is even more inexplicable, more romantic, and we must have recourse to the wings of the air to explain this new miracle. During the first day of the voyage, we felt that we were being followed, escorted, and preceded by that distant voice, which whispered to one of us a few words from the receding world. Two friends spoke to me. Ten, twenty others sent gay or somber words of parting to other passengers.

On the second day, at a distance of five hundred miles from the French coast, amid a violent storm, we received the following message through the wireless telegraph:

"Arsene Lupin is on your vessel, first cabin, blonde hair, wounded right forearm, traveling alone under the name of R—"

At that moment, a terrible flash of lightning rang the stormy skies. The electric waves were interrupted. The remainder of the dispatch never reached us. Of the name under which Arsene Lupin was concealing himself, we knew only the initial.

If the news had been of some other character, I have no doubt that the secret would have been carefully guarded by the telegraph operator as well as by the officers of the vessel. But it was one of those events calculated to escape from the most rigorous discretion. The same day, the incident became a matter of current gossip, and every passenger was aware that the famous Arsene Lupin was hiding in our midst.

Arsene Lupin in our midst! The irresponsible burglar whose exploits had been narrated in all the newspapers during the past few months! The mysterious individual with whom Ganimard, our shrewdest detective, had been engaged in an implacable conflict amidst interesting and picturesque surroundings. Arsene Lupin, the eccentric gentleman who operates only in the chateaux and salons, and who, one night, entered the residence of Baron Schormann, but emerged empty-handed, leaving his card on which he had scribbled these words: "Arsene Lupin, gentleman-burglar, will return when the furniture is genuine." Arsene Lupin.

The man of a thousand disguises: a chauffeur, detective, bookmaker, Russian physician, Spanish bullfighter, commercial traveler, robust youth, or decrepit old man.

Then consider this startling situation: Arsene Lupin was wandering about within the limited bounds of a transatlantic steamer; in that very small corner of the world, in that dining salon, in that smoking room, in that music room! Arsene Lupin was, perhaps, this gentleman or that one, my neighbor at the table, the sharer of my stateroom.

"And this condition of affairs will last for five days!" exclaimed Miss Nelly Underdown, the next morning. "It is unbearable! I hope he will be arrested."

Then, addressing me, she added, "And you, Monsieur d'Andrezy, you are on intimate terms with the captain. Surely you know something?"

I would have been delighted had I possessed any information that would interest Miss Nelly. She was one of those magnificent creatures who inevitably attracts attention in every assembly. Wealth and beauty form an irresistible combination, and Nelly possessed both. Educated in Paris under the care of a French mother, she was now going to visit her father, the millionaire Underdown of Chicago. She was accompanied by one of her friends, Lady Jerland.

At first, I had decided to open a flirtation with her. But in the rapidly growing intimacy of the voyage, I was soon impressed by her charming manner, and my feelings became too deep and reverential for a mere flirtation. Moreover, she accepted my attentions with a certain degree of favor. She condescended to laugh at my witticisms and display an interest in my stories.

Yet I felt that I had a rival in the person of a young man with quiet and refined tastes, and it struck me, at times, that she preferred his taciturn humor to my Parisian frivolity. He formed one in the circle of admirers that surrounded Miss Nelly at the time she addressed me with the foregoing question. We were all comfortably seated in our deck chairs. The storm of the preceding evening had cleared the sky. The weather was now delightful.

"I have no definite knowledge, Mademoiselle," I replied. "But cannot we, ourselves, investigate the mystery quite as well as the detective Ganimard, the personal enemy of Arsene Lupin?"

"Oh! oh! You are progressing very fast, Monsieur."

"Not at all, Mademoiselle. In the first place, let me ask, do you find the problem a complicated one?"

"Very complicated."

"Have you forgotten the key we hold for the solution to the problem?"

"What key?"

"In the first place, Lupin calls himself Monsieur R—"

"Rather vague information," she replied.

"Secondly, he is traveling alone."

"Does that help you?" she asked.

"Thirdly, he is blonde."

"Well?"

"Then we have only to peruse the passenger list and proceed by process of elimination."

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

Then I remarked, "I find that there are only thirteen men on the passenger list whose names begin with the letter R."

"Only thirteen?"

"Yes, in the first cabin. And of those thirteen, I find that nine of them are accompanied by women, children, or servants. That leaves only four who are traveling alone. First: The Marquis de Raverdan."

"Secretary to the American Ambassador," interrupted Miss Nelly. "I know him."

"Major Rawson," I continued.

"He is my uncle," someone said. "Mon. Rivolta."

"Here!" exclaimed an Italian, whose face was concealed beneath a heavy black beard.

Miss Nelly burst into laughter and exclaimed, "That gentleman can scarcely be called a blonde."

"Very well, then," I said. "We are forced to the conclusion that the guilty party is the last one on the list."

"What is his name?"

"Mon. Rozaine. Does anyone know him?"

No one answered. But Miss Nelly turned to the taciturn young man, whose attentions to her had annoyed me, and said, "Well, Monsieur Rozaine, why do you not answer?"

All eyes were now turned upon him. He was blonde. I must confess that I felt a shock of surprise, and the profound silence that followed her question indicated that the others present also viewed the situation with a feeling of sudden alarm. However, the idea was an absurd one, because the gentleman in question presented an air of the most perfect innocence.

"Why do I not answer?" he said. "Because, considering my name, my position as a solitary traveler and the color of my hair, I have already reached the same conclusion, and now think that I should be arrested."

He presented a strange appearance as he uttered these words. His thin lips were drawn closer than usual, and his face was ghastly pale, whilst his eyes were streaked with blood. Of course, he was joking, yet his appearance and attitude impressed us strangely.

"But you have not the wound?" said Miss Nelly, naively.

"That is true," he replied. "I lack the wound."

Then he pulled up his sleeve, removing his cuff, and showed us his arm. But that action did not deceive me. He had shown us his left arm, and I was about to call his attention to the fact when another incident diverted our attention.

Lady Jerland, Miss Nelly's friend, came running towards us in a state of great excitement, exclaiming, "My jewels, my pearls! Someone has stolen them all."

No, they were not all gone, as we soon found out. The thief had taken only part of them, which was a very curious thing. Of the diamond sunbursts, jeweled pendants, bracelets, and necklaces, the thief had taken not the largest, but the finest and most valuable stones. The mountings were lying upon the table. I saw them there, despoiled of their jewels, like flowers from which the beautiful colored petals had been ruthlessly plucked. This theft must have been committed at the time Lady Jerland was taking her tea,in broad daylight, in a stateroom opening on a much-frequented corridor. Moreover, the thief had been obliged to force open the door of the state room, search for the jewel case, which was hidden at the bottom of a bat box, open it, select his booty, and remove it from the mountings.

Of course, all the passengers instantly reached the same conclusion: it was the work of Arsene Lupin.

That day at the dinner table, the seats to the right and left of Rozaine remained vacant. During the evening, it was rumored that the captain had placed him under arrest, which produced a feeling of safety and relief. We breathed once more. That evening, we resumed our games and dances. Miss Elly especially displayed a spirit of thoughtless gaiety, which convinced me that if Rozaine's attentions had been agreeable to her in the beginning, she had already forgotten them. Her charm and good humor completed my conquest. At midnight, under a bright moon, I declared my devotion with an ardor that did not seem to displease her.

But the next day, to our general amazement, Rozaine was at liberty. We learned that the evidence against him was not sufficient. He had produced perfectly regular documents, which showed that he was the son of a wealthy merchant of Bordeaux. Besides, his arms did not bear the slightest trace of a wound.

"Documents! Certificates of Birth!" exclaimed the enemies of Rozaine. "Of course, Arsene Lupin will furnish you as many as you desire. And as to the wound, he never had it, or he has removed it."

Then it was proven that, at the time of the theft, Rozaine was promenading on the deck. To this, his enemies replied that a man like Arsene Lupin could commit a crime without being present. And then, apart from all other circumstances, there remained one point which even the most skeptical could not answer. Who, except Rozaine, was traveling alone, was a blonde, and bore a name beginning with R? To whom did the telegram point, if it were not Rozaine?

And when Rozaine, a few minutes before breakfast, came boldly toward our group, Miss Nelly and Lady Jerland rose and walked away.

An hour later, a manuscript circular was passed from hand to hand amongst the sailors, the stewards, and the passengers of all classes. It announced that Mon. Louis Rozaine offered a reward of ten thousand francs for the discovery of Arsene Lupin or other person in possession of the stolen jewels.

"And if no one assists me, I will unmask the scoundrel myself," declared Rozaine.

Rozaine against Arsene Lupin, or rather, according to current opinion, Arsene Lupin himself against Arsene Lupin; the contest promised to be interesting.

Nothing developed during the next two days. We saw Rozaine wandering about, day and night, searching, questioning, and investigating. The captain also displayed commendable activity. He caused the vessel to be searched from stern to stern, and ransacked every stateroom under the plausible theory that the jewels might be concealed anywhere - except in the thief’s own room.

"I suppose they will find out something soon," remarked Miss Nelly to me. "He may be a wizard, but he cannot make diamonds and pearls become invisible."

"Certainly not," I replied. "But we should examine the lining of our hats and vests and everything we carry with us."

Then, exhibiting my Kodak, a 9x12 with which I had been photographing her in various poses, I added, "In an apparatus no larger than that, a person could hide all of Lady Jerland's jewels. He could pretend to take pictures, and no one would suspect the game."

"But I have heard it said that every thief leaves some clue behind him."

"That may be generally true," I replied. "But there is one exception: Arsene Lupin."

"Why?"

“Because he concentrates his thoughts not only on the theft, but on all the circumstances connected with it that could serve as a clue to his identity," I said.

"A few days ago, you were more confident."

"Yes, but since I have seen him at work."

"And what do you think about it now?" she asked.

"Well, in my opinion, we are wasting our time."

And, as a matter of fact, the investigation had produced no results. But, in the meantime, the captain’s watch had been stolen. He was furious. He quickened his efforts and watched Rozaine more closely than before. But on the following day, the watch was found in the second officer's collar box.

This incident caused considerable astonishment and displayed the humorous side of Arsene Lupin, burglar though he was, but dilettante as well. He combined business with pleasure. He reminded us of the author who almost died in a fit of laughter provoked by his own play.

Certainly, he was an artist in his line of work, and whenever I saw Rozaine, gloomy and reserved, and thought of the double role that he was playing, I accorded him a certain measure of admiration.

On the following evening, the officer on deck duty heard groans emanating from the darkest corner of the ship. He approached and found a man lying there, his beard enveloped in a thick gray scarf and his hands tied together with a heavy cord. It was Rozaine. He had been assaulted, thrown down, and robbed. A card, pinned to his coat, bore these words: "Arsene Lupin accepts with pleasure the ten thousand francs offered by Mon. Rozaine." As a matter of fact, the stolen pocketbook contained twenty thousand francs.

Of course, some accused the unfortunate man of having simulated this attack on himself. But apart from the fact that he could not have bound himself in that manner, it was established that the writing on the card was entirely different from that of Rozaine. It resembled the handwriting of Arsene Lupin as it was reproduced in an old newspaper found on board.

Thus, it appeared that Rozaine was not Arsene Lupin, but the son of a Bordeaux merchant. And the presence of Arsene Lupin was once more affirmed, and that in a most alarming manner.

Such was the state of terror amongst the passengers that none would remain alone in a stateroom or wander singly in unfrequented parts of the vessel. We clung together as a matter of safety. And yet the most intimate acquaintances were estranged by a mutual feeling of

distrust. Now Arsene Lupin was anybody and everybody. Our excited imaginations attributed to him miraculous and unlimited power. We supposed him capable of assuming the most unexpected disguises; of being, by turns, the highly respectable Major Rawson or the noble Marquis de Raverdan, or even-for we no longer stopped with the accusing letter of R-or even such or such a person well known to all of us, and having a wife, children, and servants.

The first wireless dispatches from America brought no news. At least, the captain did not communicate any to us. The silence was not reassuring.

Our last day on the steamer seemed interminable. We lived in constant fear of some disaster. This time, it would not be a simple theft or a comparatively harmless assault. It would be a crime, perhaps a murder. No one imagined that Arsene Lupin would confine himself to those two trifling offenses. Absolute master of the ship, the authorities powerless, he could do whatever he pleased; our property and lives were at his mercy.

Yet those were delightful hours for me, since they secured for me the confidence of Miss Nelly. Deeply moved by those startling events and being of a highly nervous nature, she spontaneously sought at my side a protection and security that I was pleased to give her. Inwardly, I blessed Arsene Lupin. Had he not been the means of bringing me and Miss Nelly closer to each other? Thanks to him, I could now indulge in delicious dreams of love and happiness-dreams that, I felt, were not unwelcome to Miss Nelly. Her smiling eyes authorized me to make them, and the softness of her voice bade me hope.

As we approached the American shore, the active search for the thief was apparently abandoned, and we were anxiously awaiting a supreme moment in which the mysterious enigma would be explained. Who was Arsene Lupin? Under what name, under what disguise was the famous Arsene Lupin concealing himself? And, at last, that supreme moment arrived. If I live one hundred years, I shall not forget the slightest details of it.

"How pale you are, Miss Nelly," I said to my companion, as she leaned upon my arm, almost fainting.

"And you!" she replied. "Ah! You are so changed."

"Just think! This is a most exciting moment, and I am delighted to spend it with you, Miss Nelly. I hope that your memory will sometimes revert— "

But she was not listening. She was nervous and excited. The gangway was placed in position, but before we could use it, the uniformed customs officers came on board.

Miss Nelly murmured, "I shouldn’t be surprised to hear that Arsene Lupin escaped from the vessel during the voyage."

"Perhaps he preferred death to dishonor and plunged into the Atlantic rather than be arrested."

"Oh, do not laugh," she said.

Suddenly, I started, and in answer to her question, I said, "Do you see that little old man standing at the bottom of the gangway? With an umbrella and an olive-green coat? It is Ganimard.”

"Ganimard?"

“Yes, the celebrated detective who has sworn to capture Arsene Lupin. Ah! I can understand now why we did not receive any news from this side of the Atlantic. Ganimard was here! And he always keeps his business secret."

"Then you think he will arrest Arsene Lupin?"

"Who can tell? The unexpected always happens when Arsene Lupin is concerned in the affair."

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "I should like to see him arrested."

"You will have to be patient. No doubt, Arsene Lupin has already seen his enemy and will not be in a hurry to leave the steamer."

The passengers were now leaving the steamer. Leaning on his umbrella, with an air of careless indifference, Ganimard appeared to be paying no attention to the crowd that was hurrying down the gangway. The Marquis de Raverdan, Major Rawson, the Italian Rivolta, and many others had already left the vessel before Rozaine appeared. Poor Rozaine!

"Perhaps it is he, after all," said Miss Nelly to me. "What do you think?"

"I think it would be very interesting to have Ganimard and Rozaine in the same picture. You take the camera; I am loaded down."

l gave her the camera, but too late for her to use it. Rozaine was already passing the detective. An American officer, standing behind Ganimard, leaned forward and whispered in his ear.

The French detective shrugged his shoulders, and Rozaine passed on. Then, my God, who was Arsene Lupin?

"Yes," said Miss Nelly, aloud. "Who can it be?"

Not more than twenty people now remained on board. She scrutinized them one by one, fearful that Arsene Lupin was not amongst them.

"We cannot wait much longer," I said to her.

She started toward the gangway. I followed. But we had not taken ten steps when Ganimard barred our passage.

"Well, what is it?" I exclaimed.

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

"I am escorting Mademoiselle."

"One moment," he repeated, in a tone of authority. Then, gazing into my eyes, he said,"Arsene Lupin, is it not?"

I laughed and replied, "No, simply Bernard d'Andrezy."

"Bernard d'Andrezy died in Macedonia three years ago."

"If Bernard d'Andrezy were dead, I should not be here. But you are mistaken. Here are my papers."

"They are his, and I can tell you exactly how they came into your possession."

“You are a fool!" I exclaimed. "Arsene Lupin sailed under the name of R—"

"Yes, another of your tricks: a false scent that deceived them at Havre. You played a good game, my boy. But this time luck is against you."

I hesitated a moment. Then he hit me with a sharp blow on the right arm, which caused me to utter a cry of pain. He had struck the wound, yet unhealed, referred to in the telegram.

I was obliged to surrender. There was no alternative. I turned to Miss Nelly, who had heard everything. Our eyes met, then she glanced at the Kodak I had placed in her hands. She made a gesture that conveyed to me the impression that she understood everything. Yes, there, between the narrow folds of black leather, in the hollow center of the small object that I had taken the precaution to place in her hands before Ganimard arrested me, it was there I had deposited Rozaine's twenty-thousand francs and Lady Jerland's pearls and diamonds.

Oh! I pledge my oath that, at that solemn moment, when I was in the grasp of Ganimard and his two assistants, I was perfectly indifferent to everything, to my arrest, the hostility of the people, everything except this one question: “What will Miss Nelly do with the things I had confided to her?”

In the absence of that material and conclusive proof, I had nothing to fear, but would Miss Nelly decide to furnish that proof? Would she betray me? Would she act the part of an enemy who cannot forgive, or that of a woman whose scorn is softened by feelings of indulgence and involuntary sympathy?

She passed in front of me. I said nothing but bowed very low. Mingled with the other passengers, she advanced to the gangway with my Kodak in her hand. It occurred to me that she would not dare to expose me publicly, but she might do so when she reached a more private place. However, when she had passed only a few feet down the gangway, with a movement of simulated awkwardness, she let the camera fall into the water between the vessel and the pier. Then she walked down the gangway and was quickly lost to sight in the crowd. She had passed out of my life forever.

For a moment, I stood motionless. Then to Ganimard's great astonishment, I muttered,"What a pity that l am not an honest man!"

Such was the story of his arrest as narrated to me by Arsene Lupin himself. The various incidents, which I shall record in writing at a later day, have established between us certain ties, shall I say of friendship? Yes, I venture to believe that Arsene Lupin honors me with his friendship. It is through friendship that he occasionally calls on me and brings into the silence of my library his youthful exuberance of spirits, the contagion of his enthusiasm, and the mirth of a man for whom destiny has naught but favors and smiles. His portrait? How can I describe him? I have seen him twenty times, and each time he was a different person. Even he himself said to me on one occasion: "I no longer know who I am. I cannot recognize myself in the mirror." Certainly, he was a great actor and possessed a marvelous faculty for disguising himself. Without the slightest effort, he could adopt the voice, gestures, and mannerisms of another person.

"Why," said he, "Why should I retain a definite form and feature? Why not avoid the danger of a personality that is ever the same? My actions will serve to identify me. So much the better if no one can ever say with absolute certainty: ‘There is Arsene Lupin!’ The essential point is that the public may be able to refer to my work and say, without fear of mistake, Arsene Lupin did that!’"

2. Arsene Lupin in Prison

There is no tourist worthy of the name who does not know the banks of the Seine, and has not noticed in passing, the little feudal castle of the Malaquis, built upon a rock in the center of the river. An arched bridge connects it with the shore. All around it, the cairn waters of the great river play peacefully amongst the reeds, and the wagtails flutter over the moist crests of the stones.

The history of the Malaquis castle is stormy, like its name, harsh like its outlines. It has passed through a long series of combats, sieges, assaults, rapines, and massacres. A recital of the crimes committed there would cause the stoutest heart to tremble. There are many mysterious legends connected with the castle, and they tell us of a famous subterranean tunnel that formerly led to the abbey of Jumieges and the manor of Agnes Sorel, mistress of Charles VII.

In that ancient habitation of heroes and brigands, the baron Nathan Caborn now lived, or Baron Satan as he was formerly called on the Bourse, where he had acquired a fortune with incredible rapidity. The Lords of Malaquis, absolutely ruined, had been obliged to sell the ancient castle at a great sacrifice. It contained an admirable collection of furniture, pictures, wood carvings, and faience. The baron lived there alone, attended by three old servants. No one ever enters the place. No one had ever beheld the three Rubens that he possessed, his two Watteau, his Jean Goujon pulpit, and the many other treasures that he had acquired by a vast expenditure of money at public sales.

Baron Satan lived in constant fear, not for himself, but for the treasures that he had accumulated with such an earnest devotion, and with so much perspicacity that the shrewdest merchant could not say that the baron had ever erred in his taste or judgment. He loved them—his bibelots. He loved them intensely like a miser, jealously like a lover. Every day, at sunset, the iron gates at either end of the bridge and the entrance to the court of honor are closed and barred. At the least touch on these gates, electric bells will ring throughout the castle.

One Thursday in September, a letter-carrier presented himself at the gate at the head of the bridge, and as usual, it was the baron himself who partially opened the heavy portal. He scrutinized the man as minutely as if he were a stranger, although the honest face and twinkling eyes of the postman had been familiar to the baron for many years.

The man laughed as he said, "It is only Monsieur le Baron. It is not another man wearing my cap and blouse."

“One can never tell," muttered the baron.

The man handed him several newspapers, and then said, “And now, Monsieur le Baron, here is something new."

"Something new?""

"Yes, a letter. A registered letter."

Living as a recluse without friends or business relations, the Baron never received any letters, and the one now presented to him immediately aroused within him a feeling of suspicion and distrust. It was like an evil omen. Who was this mysterious correspondent who dared to disturb the tranquility of his retreat?

"You must sign for it, Monsieur le Baron."

He signed, then took the letter, waited until the postman had disappeared beyond the bend in the road, and after walking nervously to and fro for a few minutes, he leaned against the parapet of the bridge and opened the envelope. It contained a sheet of paper, bearing this heading: Prison de la Sante, Paris. He looked at the signature: Arsene Lupin. Then he read:

"Monsieur le Baron,

"There is, in the gallery in your castle, a picture of Philippe de Champaigne, of exquisite finish, which pleases me beyond measure. Your Rubens are also to my taste, as well as your smallest Waueau. In the salon to the right, I have noticed the Louis XIII cadence-cable, the tapestries of Beauvais, the Empire gueridon signed 'Jacob, and the Renaissance chest. In the salon to the left, all the cabinets are full of jewels and miniatures.

"For the present, I will content myself with those articles that can be conveniently removed. I will here fore ask you to pack them carefully and ship them to me, charges prepaid, to the station al Batignolles, within eight days. Otherwise, I shall be obliged to remove them myself during the night of 27 September, but, under those circumstances, I shall content myself with the articles above mentioned.

"Accept my apologies for any inconvenience I may cause you and believe me to be your humble servant.

—Arsene Lupin.

"P.S. Please do not send the largest Watteau. Although you paid thirty thousand francs for it, it is only a copy, the original having been burned under the Directoire by Barras during a night of debauchery. Consult the memoirs of Gara!

"I do not care for the Louis XV Chatelaine, as I doubt its authenticity."

That letter completely upset the Baron. Had it borne any other signature, he would have been greatly alarmed. But signed by Arsene Lupin!

As a habitual reader of the newspapers, he was versed in the history of recent crimes and was therefore well acquainted with the exploits of the mysterious burglar. Of course, he knew that Lupin had been arrested in America by his enemy Ganimard and was at present incarcerated in the Prison de la Sante. But he knew also that any miracle might be expected from Arsene Lupin. Moreover, that exact knowledge of the castle, and the location of the pictures and furniture, gave the affair an alarming aspect. How could he have acquired that information concerning things that no one had ever seen?

The Baron raised his eyes and contemplated the stem outlines of the castle:its steep rocky pedestal, the depth of the surrounding water and shrugged his shoulders. Certainly, there was no danger. No one in the world could force an entrance to the sanctuary that contained his priceless treasures.

No one, perhaps, but Arsene Lupin! For him, gates, walls, and drawbridges did not exist. What use were the most formidable obstacles or the most careful precautions, if Arsene Lupin had decided to affect an entrance?

That evening, he wrote to the Procurer of the Republique at Rouen. He enclosed the threatening letter and solicited aid and protection.

The reply came at once to the effect that Arsene Lupin was in custody in the Prison de la Sante under close surveillance, with no opportunity to write such a letter, which was, no doubt, the work of some imposter. But as an act of precaution, the Procurer had submitted

the letter to an expert in handwriting, who declared that, despite certain resemblances, the writing was not that of the prisoner.

But the words "despite certain resemblances" caught the attention of the Baron. In them he read the possibility of a doubt, which appeared to him quite sufficient to warrant the intervention of the law. His fears increased. He read Lupin's letter repeatedly. "I shall be obliged to remove them myself." And then there was the fixed date: the night of 27 September.

To confide in his servants was a proceeding repugnant to his nature, but now, for the first time in many years, he experienced the necessity of seeking counsel with someone.

Abandoned by the legal official of his district and feeling unable to defend himself with his resources, he was at the point of going to Paris to engage the services of a detective.

Two days passed. On the third day, he was filled with hope and joy as he read the following item in the 'Reveil de Caudebec', a newspaper published in a neighboring town:

"We have the pleasure of entertaining in our city, at present, the veteran detective Mon. Ganimard, who acquired a worldwide reputation by his clever capture of Arsene Lupin. He has come here for rest and recreation, and being an enthusiastic fisherman, he threatens to capture all the fish in our river."

Ganimard! Ah, here is the assistance desired by Baron Caborn! Who could baffle the schemes of Arsene Lupin better than Ganimard, the patient and astute detective? He was the man for the place.

The baron did not hesitate. The town of Caudebec was only six kilometers from the castle, a short distance to a man whose step was accelerated by the hope of safety.

After several fruitless attempts to ascertain the detective's address, the baron visited the office of the 'Reveil,' situated on the quai. There he found the writer of the article who, approaching the window, exclaimed, "Ganimard? Why, you are sure to see him somewhere on the quai with his fishing pole. I met him there and chanced to read his name engraved on his rod. Ah, there he is now, under the trees."

"That little man, wearing a straw hat?" I asked.

"Exactly. He is a gruff fellow with little to say."

Five minutes later, the baron approached the celebrated Ganimard, introduced himself, and sought to commence a conversation, but that was a failure. Then he broached the real object of his interview and briefly stated his case. The other listened, motionless, with his attention riveted on his fishing rod. When the baron had finished his story, the fisherman turned with an air of profound pity and said, “Monsieur, it is not customary for thieves to warn people they are about to rob. Arsene Lupin, especially, would not commit such a folly."

"But—"

"Monsieur, if I had the least doubt, believe me, the pleasure of again capturing Arsene Lupin would place me at your disposal. But unfortunately, that young man is already under lock and key."

"He may have escaped."

"No one ever escapes from the Sante."

"But he—"

"He, no more than any other."

"Yet—"

"Well, if he escapes, so much the better. I will catch him again. Meanwhile, you go home and sleep soundly. That will do for the present. You frighten the fish."

The conversation ended. The baron returned to the castle reassured to some extent by Ganimard's indifference. He examined the bolts, watched the servants, and during the next forty-eight hours, he became almost persuaded that his fears were groundless. Certainly, as Ganimard had said, thieves do not warn people they are about to rob.

The fateful day was close at hand. It was now the twenty-sixth of September, and nothing had happened. But at three o'clock the bell rang. A boy brought this telegram:

"No goods at Batignolles station. Prepare everything for tomorrow night. Arsene."

This telegram threw the Baron into such a state of excitement that he even considered the advisability of yielding to Lupin's demands.

However, he listened to Caudebec. Ganimard was fishing at the same place, seated on a camp stool. Without a word, he handed him the telegram.

"Well, what of it?” said the detective.

"What of it? But it is tomorrow."

"What is tomorrow?"

"The robbery! The pillage of my collections!"

Ganimard laid down his fishing rod, turned to the baron, and exclaimed, in a tone of impatience, "Ah! Do you think I am going to bother myself about such a silly story as that! How much do you ask to pass tomorrow night in the castle?"

"Not a sou. Now, leave me alone."

"Name your price. I am rich and can pay it."

This offer disconcerted Ganimard, who replied calmly, "I am here on vacation. I have no right to undertake such work. No one will know. I promise to keep it secret."

"Oh! Nothing will happen."

"Come! Three thousand francs. Will that be enough?"

The detective, after a moment's reflection, said, "Very well. But I must warn you that you are throwing your money out of the window."

"I do not care."

"In that case... but, after all, what do we know about this devil Lupin! He may have quite a numerous band of robbers with him. Are you sure of your servants?"

"My faith—"

"Better not count on them. I will telegraph for two of my men to help me. And now, go! It is better for us not to be seen together. Tomorrow evening, about nine o'clock."

The following day-the date fixed by Arsene Lupin-Baron Caborn arranged all his panoply of war, furbished his weapons, and like a sentinel, paced to and fro in front of the castle. He saw nothing, heard nothing. At half-past eight o'clock in the evening, he dismissed his servants. They occupied rooms in a wing of the building in a retired spot, well removed from the main portion of the castle. Shortly thereafter, the baron heard the sound of approaching footsteps. It was Ganimard and his two assistants-great, powerful fellows with immense hands, and necks like bulls. After asking a few questions relating to the location of the various entrances and rooms, Ganimard carefully closed and barricaded all the doors and windows through which one could gain access to the threatened rooms. He inspected the walls, raised the tapestries, and finally installed his assistants in the central gallery, which was located between the two salons.

"No nonsense! We are not here to sleep. At the slightest sound, open the windows of the court and call me. Pay attention also to the waterside. Ten meters of perpendicular rock is no obstacle to those devils."

Ganimard locked his assistants in the gallery, carried away the keys, and said to the baron, "And now, to our post."

He had chosen for himself a small room located in the thick outer wall between the two principal doors, and which, in former years, had been the watchman's quarters. A peephole opened upon the bridge, another on the court. In one corner, there was an opening to a tunnel.

"I believe you told me, Monsieur le Baron, that this tunnel is the only subterranean entrance to the castle, and that it has been closed up for time immemorial?"

"Yes."

"Then, unless there is some other entrance known only to Arsene Lupin, we are quite safe."

He placed three chairs together, stretched himself upon them, lit his pipe, and sighed.

"Monsieur le Baron, I feel ashamed to accept your money for such a sinecure as this. I will tell the story to my friend Lupin. He will enjoy it immensely."

The baron did not laugh. He was anxiously listening, but heard nothing save the beating of his own heart. From time to time, he leaned over the tunnel and cast a fearful eye into its depths. He heard the clock strike eleven, twelve, then one.

Suddenly, he seized Ganimard's hand. The latter leaped up, awakened from his sleep.

"Do you hear?" asked the baron, in a whisper.

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"I was snoring, I suppose."

"No, no, listen."

"Ah! Yes, it is the horn of an automobile."

"Well?"

"Well! It is very improbable that Lupin would use an automobile like a battering ram to demolish your castle. Come, Monsieur le Baron, return to your post. I am going to sleep. Good night."

That was the only alarm. Ganimard resumed his interrupted slumbers, and the baron heard nothing except the regular snoring of his companion. At the break of day, they left the room. The castle was enveloped in a profound calm, it was a peaceful dawn on the bosom of a tranquil river. They mounted the stairs, Cahorn radiant with joy, Ganimard calm as usual. They heard no sound; they saw nothing to arouse suspicion.

"What did I tell you, Monsieur le Baron? I should not have accepted your offer. I am ashamed."

He unlocked the door and entered the gallery. Upon two chairs, with drooping heads and pendent arms, the detective's two assistants were asleep.

"Tonnerre de nom d'un chien!" exclaimed Ganimard.

At the same moment, the baron cried out, "The pictures! The credence!"

He stammered and choked, with arms outstretched toward the empty places, toward the denuded walls where naught remained but the useless nails and cords. The Watteau, disappeared! The Rubens, carried away! The tapestries have been taken down! The cabinets, despoiled of their jewels!

"And my Louis XVI candelabra! And the Regent chandelier! And my twelfth-century Virgin!"

He ran from one spot to another in wildest despair. He recalled the purchase price of each article, added up the figures, and counted his losses, pell-mell, in confused words and unfinished phrases. He stamped with rage; he groaned with grief. He acted like a ruined man whose only hope is suicide.

If anything could have consoled him, it would have been the stupefaction displayed by Ganimard. The famous detective did not move. He appeared to be petrified; he examined the room in a listless manner. The windows? Closed. The locks on the doors? Intact. Not a break in the ceiling; not a hole in the floor. Everything was in perfect order. The theft had been carried out methodically, according to a logical and inexorable plan.

"Arsene Lupin. Arsene Lupin," he muttered.

Suddenly, as if moved by anger, he rushed upon his two assistants and shook them violently. They did not awaken.

"The devil!" he cried. "Can it be possible?"

He leaned over them and, in turn, examined them closely. They were asleep, but their response was unnatural.

"They have been drugged," he said to the baron.

"By whom?"

"By him, of course, or his men under his discretion. That work bears his stamp."

"In that case, I am lost. Nothing can be done."

"Nothing," assented Ganimard. "It is dreadful; it is monstrous.”

"Lodge a complaint."

"What good will that do?"

"Oh, it is well to try it. The law has some resources."

"The law! Bah! It is useless. You represent the law, and at this moment, when you should be looking for a clue and trying to discover something, you do not even stir."

"Discover something with Arsene Lupin! Why, my dear monsieur, Arsene Lupin never leaves any clue behind him. He leaves nothing to chance. Sometimes, I think he put himself in my way and simply allowed me to arrest him in America."

"Then I must renounce my pictures! He has taken the gems of my collection. I would give a fortune to recover them. If there is no other way, let him name his price."

Ganimard regarded the baron attentively as he said, "Now that is sensible. Will you stick to it?"

"Yes, yes. But why?"

"An idea that I have."

"What is it?"

"We will discuss it later, if the official examination does not succeed. But not one word about me, if you wish my assistance." He added, between his teeth, "It is true I have nothing to boast of in this affair."

The assistants were gradually regaining consciousness, with the bewildered air of people who come out of a hypnotic sleep. They opened their eyes and looked about them in astonishment. Ganimard questioned them; they remembered nothing.

"But you must have seen someone?"

"No."

"Can't you remember?"

"No, no."

"Did you drink anything?"

They considered a moment, and then one of them replied, "Yes, I drank a little water."

"Out of that carafe?"

"Yes."

"So did I," declared the other.

Ganimard smelled and tasted it. It had no taste and no odor.

"Come," he said, "We are wasting our time here. One can't decide an Arsene Lupin problem in five minutes. But morbleu! I swear I will catch him again."

The same day, a charge of burglary was duly performed by Baron Caborn against Arsene Lupin, a prisoner in the Prison de la Sante.

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The baron afterwards regretted making the charge against Lupin when he saw his castle delivered over to the gendarmes, the procureur, the judge d'instruction, the newspaper reporters and photographers, and a throng of idle curiosity seekers.

The affair soon became a topic of general discussion, and the name of Arsene Lupin excited the public imagination to such an extent that the newspapers filled their columns with the most fantastic stories of his exploits, which found ready credence amongst their readers.

But the letter of Arsene Lupin that was published in the 'Echo de France': No one ever knew how the newspaper obtained it- that letter in which Baron Caborn was impudently warned of the coming theft- and it caused considerable excitement. The most fabulous theories were advanced. Some recalled the existence of the famous subterranean tunnels, and that was the line of research pursued by the officers of the law, who searched the house from top to bottom, questioned every stone, studied the wainscoting and the chimneys, the window frames, and the girders in the ceilings. By the light of torches, they examined the immense cellars where the lords of Malaquis were wont to store their munitions and provisions. They sounded the rocky foundation to its very center. But it was all in vain. They discovered no trace of a subterranean tunnel. No secret passage existed.

But the eager public declared that the pictures and furniture could not vanish like so many ghosts. They are substantial, material things, and require doors and windows for their exits and their entrances. So do the people who remove them. Who were those people? How did they gain access to the castle? And how did they leave it?

The police officers of Rouen, convinced of their importance, solicited the assistance of the Parisian detective force. Mon. Dudouis, chief of the Surete, sent the best sleuths of the iron brigade. He spent forty-eight hours at the castle but met with no success. Then he sent for Ganimard, whose past services had proved so useful when all else failed.

Ganimard listened in silence to the instructions of his superior, then, shaking his head, he said, “In my opinion, it is useless to ransack the castle. The solution to the problem lies elsewhere."

"Where, then?"

"With Arsene Lupin."

"With Arsene Lupin! To support that theory, we must admit his intervention."

"I do admit it. In fact, I consider it quite certain."

"Come, Ganimard, that is absurd. Arsene Lupin is in prison."

"I grant you that Arsene Lupin is in prison, closely guarded, but he must have fetters on his feet, manacles on his wrists, and a gag in his mouth before I change my opinion."

"Why so obstinate, Ganimard?"

"Because Arsene Lupin is the only man in France of sufficient caliber to invent and carry out a scheme of that magnitude."

"Mere words, Ganimard."

"But true ones. Look! What are they doing? Searching for subterranean passages, stones swinging on pivots, and other nonsense of that kind. But Lupin doesn't employ such old-fashioned methods. He is a modem cracksman, right up to date."

"And how would you proceed?"

"I should ask your permission to spend an hour with him."

"In his cell?"

"Yes. During the return trip from America, we became very friendly, and I venture to say that if he can give me any information without compromising himself, he will not hesitate to save me from incurring useless trouble."

It was shortly after noon when Ganimard entered the cell of Arsene Lupin. The latter, who was lying on his bed, raised his head and uttered a cry of apparent joy.

"Ah! This is a real surprise. My dear Ganimard, here!"

"Ganimard himself."

"In my chosen retreat, I have felt a desire for many things, but my fondest wish was to receive you here."

"Very kind of you, I am sure."

"Not at all. You know I hold you in the highest regard."

"I am proud of it."

"I have always said, “Ganimard is our best detective. He is almost -you see how candid I am- he is almost as clever as Sherlock Holmes. But I am sorry that I cannot offer you anything better than this hard stool. And no refreshments! Not even a glass of beer! Of course, you will excuse me, as I am here only temporarily."

Ganimard smiled and accepted the proffered seat.

Then the prisoner continued, "Mon Dieu, how pleased I am to see the face of an honest man. I am so tired of those devils of spies who come here ten times a day to ransack my pockets and my cell to satisfy themselves that I am not preparing to escape. The government is very solicitous on my account."

"It is quite right."

"Why so? I should be quite contented if they would allow me to live in my quiet way."

"On other people's money."

"Quite so. That would be so simple. But here I am joking, and you are, no doubt, in a hurry. So let us come to business, Ganimard. To what do I owe the honor of this visit?”

"The Caborn affair," declared Ganimard, frankly.

"Ah! Wait, one moment. You see, I have had so many affairs! First, let me fix in my mind the circumstances of this particular case. Ah! Yes, now I have it. The Caborn affair, Malaquis Castle, Seine-lnferieure, Two Rubens, a Watteau, and a few trifling articles.”

"Trifling!"

"Oh! Ma foi, all that is of slight importance. But it suffices to know that the affair interests you. How can I serve you, Ganimard?"

"Must I explain to you what steps the authorities have taken in the matter?"

"Not at all. I have read the newspapers, and I will frankly state that you have made very little progress."

"And that is the reason I have come to see you."

"I am entirely at your service.”

"In the first place, the Caborn affair was managed by you?"

"From A to Z."

"The letter of warning? The telegram?"

"All mine. I ought to have the receipts somewhere."

Arsene opened the drawer of a small table of plain white wood, which, with the bed and stool, constituted all the furniture in his cell, and took from there two scraps of paper which he handed to Ganimard.

"Ah!" exclaimed the detective in surprise. "I thought you were closely guarded and searched, and I find that you read the newspapers and collect postal receipts."

"Bah! These people are so stupid! They open the lining of my vest, examine the soles of my shoes, sound the walls of my cell, but they never imagine that Arsene Lupin would be foolish enough to choose such a simple hiding place."

Ganimard laughed as he said, "What a droll fellow you are! Really. You bewilder me. But, come now, tell me about the Caborn affair."

"Oh! Oh! Not quite so fast! You would rob me of all my secrets, expose all my little tricks. That is a very serious matter."

"Was I wrong to count on your complaisance?"

"No, Ganimard, and since you insist—"

Arsene Lupin paced his cell two or three times, then, stopping before Ganimard, he asked, "What do you think of my letter to the baron?"

"I think you were amusing yourself by playing to the gallery."

"Ah! Playing to the gallery! Come, Ganimard. I thought you knew me better. Do I, Arsene Lupin, ever waste my time on such puerilities? Would I have written that letter if I could have robbed the baron without writing to him? I want you to understand that the letter was indispensable; it was the motor that set the whole machine in motion. Now, let us discuss together a scheme for the robbery of the Malaquis Castle. Are you willing?"

"Yes, proceed."

"Well, let us suppose a castle carefully closed and barricaded like that of the Baron Caborn. Am I to abandon my scheme and renounce the treasures that I covet, upon the pretext that the castle which holds them is inaccessible?"

"Evidently not."

"Should I assault the castle at the head of a band of adventurers as they did in ancient times?"

"That would be foolish."

"Can I gain admittance by stealth or cunning?"

"Impossible."

"Then there is only one way open to me. I must have the owner of the castle invite me to it."

"That is surely an original method."

"And how easy! Let us suppose that one day the owner receives a letter warning him that a notorious burglar known as Arsene Lupin is plotting to rob him. What will he do?"

"Send a letter to the Procureur."

"Who will laugh at him, because the said Arsene Lupin is actually in prison. Then, in his anxiety and fear, the simple man will ask for the assistance of the first comer. Will he not?"

"Very likely."

"And if he happens to read in a country newspaper that a celebrated detective is spending his vacation in a neighboring town…"

"He will seek that detective."

"Of course. But on the other hand, let us presume that, having foreseen that situation, the said Arsene Lupin has requested one of his friends to visit Caudebec, make the acquaintance of the editor of the 'Reveil' -a newspaper to which the baron is a subscriber- and let said editor understand that such person is the celebrated detective. Then, what will happen?"

"The editor will announce in the 'Reveil' the presence in Caudebec of said detective."

"Exactly. And one of two things will happen: either the fish-I mean Caborn-will not bite, and nothing will happen, or what is more likely, he will run and greedily swallow the bait. Thus, behold my Baron Caborn imploring the assistance of one of my friends against me."

"Original, indeed!"

"Of course, the pseudo-detective at first refuses to give any assistance. On top of that comes the telegram from Arsene Lupin. The frightened baron rushes once more to my friend and offers him a definite sum of money for his services. My friend accepts and summons two members of our band, who, during the night, whilst Caborn is under the watchful eye of his protector, remove certain articles by way of the window and lower them with ropes into a nice little launch chartered for the occasion. Simple, isn't it?"

"Marvelous! Marvelous!" exclaimed Ganimard. "The boldness of the scheme and the ingenuity of all its details are beyond criticism. But who is the detective whose name and fame served as a magnet to attract the baron and draw him into your net?"

"There is only one name that could do it. Only one."

"And that is?"

"Arsene Lupin's personal enemy: the most illustrious Ganimard."

"Yourself, Ganimard. And it is very funny. If you go there and the baron decides to talk, you will find that it will be your duty to arrest yourself, just as you arrested me in America. Hein! The revenge is amusing. I cause Ganimard to arrest Ganimard."

Arsene Lupin laughed heartily. The detective, greatly vexed, bit his lips. To him, the joke was quite devoid of humor. The arrival of a prison guard allowed Ganimard to recover himself. The man brought Arsene Lupin's lunch, furnished by a neighboring restaurant. After depositing the tray upon the table, the guard retired.

Lupin broke his bread, ate a few morsels, and continued, "But rest easy, my dear Ganimard, you will not go to Malaquis. I can tell you something that will astonish you. The Caborn affair is at the point of being settled."

"Excuse me, I have just seen the Chief of the Surete."

"What of that? Does Mon. Dudouis know my business better than I do myself? You will learn that Ganimard—excuse me - that the pseudo-Ganimard - remains on very good terms with the baron. The latter has authorized him to negotiate a very delicate transaction with me, now, in consideration of a certain sum. It is probable that the baron has recovered possession of his pictures and other treasures. And on their return, he will withdraw his complaint. Thus, there is no longer any theft, and the law must abandon the case."

Ganimard regarded the prisoner with a bewildered air.

"And how do you know all that?"

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

"You have just received a telegram?"

"This very moment, my dear friend. Out of politeness, I did not wish to read it in your presence. But if you will permit me--"

"You are joking, Lupin."

"My dear friend, if you will be so kind as to break that egg, you will learn for yourself that I

am not joking."

Mechanically, Ganimard obeyed and cracked the eggshell with the blade of a knife. He uttered a cry of surprise. The shell contained nothing but a small piece of blue paper. At the request of Arsene, he unfolded it. It was a telegram, or rather a portion of a telegram from which the postmarks had been removed.

It read as follows: "Contract closed. Hundred thousand balls delivered. All well."

"One hundred thousand balls?" said Ganimard.

"Yes, one hundred thousand francs. Very little, but then, you know, these are hard times, and I have some heavy bills to meet. If you only knew my budget. Living in the city comes very high."

Ganimard arose. His ill humor had disappeared. He reflected for a moment, glancing over the whole affair in an effort to discover a weak point. Then, in a tone and manner that betrayed his admiration of the prisoner, he said, "Fortunately, we do not have a dozen such as you to deal with; if we did, we would have to close up shop."

Arsene Lupin assumed a modest air as he replied, "Bah! A person must have some diversion to occupy his leisure hours, especially when he is in prison."

“What!" exclaimed Ganimard. "Your trial, your defense, the examination—isn't that sufficient to occupy your mind?"

"No, because I have decided not to be present at my trial."

"Oh! Oh!"

Arsene Lupin repeated, positively, "I shall not be present at my trial."

"Really?”

"Ah! My dear monsieur. Do you suppose I am going to rot upon the wet straw? You insult me. Arsene Lupin remains in prison just as long as it pleases him, and not one minute more."

"Perhaps it would have been more prudent if you had avoided getting there," said the detective, ironically.

"Ah! Monsieur jests? Monsieur must remember that he had the honor to affect my arrest. Know then, my worthy friend, that no one-not even you-could have placed a hand upon me if a much more important event had not occupied my attention at that critical moment."

"You astonish me."

"A woman was looking at me, Ganimard, and I loved her. Do you fully understand what that means: to be under the eyes of a woman that one loves? I cared for nothing in the world but that. And that is why I am here."

"Permit me to say, you have been here a long time."

"In the first place, I wished to forget. Do not laugh; it was a delightful adventure, and it is still a tender memory. Besides, I have been suffering from neurasthenia. Life is so feverish these days that it is necessary to take the 'rest cure' occasionally, and I find this spot a sovereign remedy for my tired nerves."

"Arsene Lupin, you are not a bad fellow, after all."

"Thank you," said Lupin. "Ganimard, this is Friday. On Wednesday next, at four o'clock in the afternoon, I will smoke my cigar at your house in the rue Pergolcse."

"Arsene Lupin, I will expect you."

They shook hands like two old friends who valued each other at their true worth, then the detective stepped to the door.

"Ganimard!"

"What is it?" asked Ganimard, as he turned back.

"You have forgotten your watch."

"My watch?"

"Yes, it strayed into my pocket."

He returned the watch, excusing himself.

"Pardon me. A bad habit. Because they have taken mine is no reason why I should take

yours. Besides, I have a chronometer here that satisfies me fairly well."

He took from the drawer a large gold watch and a heavy chain.

"From whose pocket did that come?" asked Ganimard.

Arsene Lupin gave a hasty glance at the initials engraved on the watch.

"J.B. Who the devil can that be? Ah! Yes, I remember. Jules Bouvier, the judge who conducted my examination. A charming fellow!"

3. The Escape of Arsene Lupin

Arsene Lupin had just finished his repast and taken from his pocket an excellent cigar with a gold band, which he was examining with unusual care, when the door of his cell was opened. He had barely time to throw the cigar into the drawer and move away from the table. The guard entered. It was the hour for exercise.

"I was waiting for you, my dear boy," exclaimed Lupin, in his accustomed good humor.

They went out together. As soon as they had disappeared at a turn in the corridor, two men entered the cell and commenced a minute examination of it. One was Inspector Dieuzy; the other was Inspector Folenfant. They wished to verify their suspicion that Arsene Lupin was in communication with his accomplices outside of the prison. On the preceding evening, the 'Grand Journal' had published these lines addressed to its court reporter:

"Monsieur,

In a recent article, you referred to me in the most unjustifiable terms. Some days before the opening of my trial, I will call you to account.

Arsene Lupin."

The handwriting was certainly that of Arsene Lupin. Consequently, he sent letters, and, no doubt, received letters. It was certain that he was preparing for that escape, thus arrogantly announced by him.

The situation had become intolerable. Acting in conjunction with the examining judge, the chief of the Surete, Mon. Dudouis, had visited the prison and instructed the jailer regarding the precautions necessary to ensure Lupin's safety. At the same time, he sent the two men to examine the prisoner's cell. They raised every stone, ransacked the bed, did everything customary in such a case, but they discovered nothing.

They were about to abandon their investigation when the guard entered hastily and said, "The drawer. Look in the table drawer. When I entered just now, he was closing it."

They opened the drawer, and Dieuzy exclaimed, "Ah! We have him this time."

Folenfant stopped him.

"Wait a moment. The chief will want to make an inventory."

"This is a very choice cigar."

"Leave it there and notify the chief."

Two minutes later, Mon. Dudouis examined the contents of the drawer. First, he discovered a bundle of newspaper clippings relating to Arsene Lupin taken from the 'Argus de la Presse,' then a tobacco box, a pipe, some paper called "onion-peel," and two books. He read the titles of the books. One was an English edition of Carlyle's "Hero-worship"; the other was a charming clzevir, in modern binding, the "Manual of Epictetus," a German translation published at Leyden in 1634. On examining the books, he found that all the pages were underlined and annotated. Were they prepared as a code for correspondence, or did they simply express the studious character of the reader? Then he examined the tobacco box and the pipe. Finally, he took up the famous cigar with its gold band.

"Fichtre!" he exclaimed. "Our friend smokes a good cigar. It's a Henry Clay."

With the mechanical action of a habitual smoker, he placed the cigar close to his ear and squeezed it to make it crack. Immediately, he uttered a cry of surprise. The cigar had yielded under the pressure of his fingers. He examined it more closely and quickly discovered something white between the leaves of tobacco. Delicately, with the aid of a pin, he withdrew a roll of very thin paper, scarcely larger than a toothpick. It was a letter. He unrolled it and found these words, written in a feminine handwriting:

"The basket has taken the place of the others. Eight out of ten are ready. On pressing the outer foot, the plate goes downward. From twelve to sixteen every day, H-P will wait. But where? Reply at once. Rest easy; your friend is watching over you."

Mon. Dudouis reflected a moment, then said, "It is quite clear... the basket... the eight compartments…From twelve to sixteen means from twelve to four o'clock."

"But this H-P, that will wait?"

"H-P must mean automobile. H-P — horsepower— is the way they indicate the strength of the motor. A twenty-four H-P is an automobile of twenty-four horsepower."

Then he rose and asked, "Had the prisoner finished his breakfast?"

“Yes."

"And as he has not yet read the message, which is proved by the condition of the cigar, it is probable that he had just received it."

“How?"

In his food. Concealed in his bread or a potato, perhaps."

"Impossible. His food was allowed to be brought in simply to trap him, but we have never found anything in it."

"We will look for Lupin's reply this evening. Detain him outside for a few minutes. I shall take this to the examining judge and, if he agrees with me, we will have the letter photographed at once. In an hour, you can replace the letter in the drawer with a cigar like this. The prisoner must have no cause for suspicion."

It was not without a certain curiosity that Mon. Dudouis returned to the prison. In the evening, accompanied by Inspector Dieuzy, three empty plates were sitting on the stove in the corner.

"He has eaten?"

"Yes," replied Lheguard.

"Dieuzy, please cut that macaroni into very small pieces, and open that bread roll. Nothing?"

"No, chief."

Mon. Dudouis examined the plates, the fork, the spoon, and the knife - an ordinary knife with a rounded blade. He turned the handle to the left, then to the right. It yielded and unscrewed. The knife was hollow and served as a hiding place for a sheet of paper.

"Peuh!" he said, "That is not very clever for a man like Arsene. But we mustn't lose any time. You, Dicuzy, go and search the restaurant."

Then he read the note:

"I trust to you, H-P will follow at a distance every day. I will go ahead. Au revoir, dear friend."

"At last," cried Mon. Dudouis, rubbing his hands gleefully. "I think we have the affair in our hands. A little strategy on our part, and the escape will be a success insofar as the arrest of his confederates are concerned."

"But if Arsene Lupin slips through your fingers?" suggested the guard.

"We will have a sufficient number of men to prevent that. If he displays too much cleverness, ma foi, so much the worse for him! As torus band of robbers, since the cruef refuses to speak, the others must."

•••

And as a matter of fact, Arsene Lupin had very little to say. For several months, Mon. Jules Bouvier, the examining judge, had exerted himself in vain. The investigation had been reduced to a few uninteresting arguments between the judge and the advocate, Maitre Danval, one of the leaders of the bar. From time to time, through courtesy, Arsene Lupin would speak.

One day he said, "Yes, monsieur, le judge, I quite agree with you — the robbery of the Credit Lyonnais, the theft in the rue de Babylone, the issue of the counterfeit banknotes, the burglaries at the various chateaux, Annesnil, Gouret, Imblevain, Groseillers, Malaquis — all my work, monsieur. I did it all."

"Then will you explain to me—"

"It is useless. I confess everything in a lump. Everything, and even ten times more than you know nothing about."

Wearied by his fruitless task, the judge suspended his examinations, but he resumed them after the two intercepted messages were brought to his attention. Regularly at midday, Arsene Lupin was taken from the prison to the Depot in the prison van with a certain number of other prisoners. They returned about three or four o'clock.

One afternoon, this return trip was made under unusual conditions. The other prisoners had not been examined, and it was decided to take back Arsene Lupin first, thus, he found himself alone in the vehicle.

These prison vans, vulgarly called *panniers asalade*, or salad baskets, are divided lengthwise by a central corridor from which open ten compartments, five on either side. Each compartment is so arranged that the occupant must assume and retain a sitting posture, and consequently, the five prisoners are seated one upon the other, yet separated one from the other by partitions. A municipal guard, standing at one end, watches over the corridor.

Arsene was placed in the third cell on the right, and the heavy vehicle started. He calculated when they left the quai de l'Horloge and when they passed the Palais de Justice. Then, about the center of the bridge Saint Michel, with his outer right foot, he pressed upon the metal plate that closed his cell. Immediately something clicked, and the metal plate moved. He was able to ascertain that he was located between the two wheels.

He waited, keeping a sharp lookout. The vehicle was proceeding slowly along the boulevard Saint-Michel. At the corner of Saint Gennain, it stopped. A truck horse had fallen. The traffic had been interrupted; a vast throng of fiacres and omnibuses had gathered there. Arsene Lupin looked out. Another prison van had stopped close to the one he occupied. He moved the plate still farther, put his foot on one of the spokes of the wheel, and leaped to the ground.

A coaclunan saw him, roared with laughter, then tried to raise an outcry. But his voice was lost in the noise of the traffic that had commenced to move again. Moreover, Arsene Lupin was already far away.

He had run for a few steps, but once upon the sidewalk, he turned and looked around. He seemed to smell the wind like a person who is uncertain which direction to take. Then, having decided, he put his hands in his pockets, and with the careless air of an idle stroller, he proceeded up the boulevard. It was a warm, bright autumn day, and the cafes were full. He took a seat on the terrace of one of them. He ordered a Bock and a package of cigarettes. He emptied his glass slowly, smoked one cigarette, and lit a second. Then he asked the waiter to send the proprietor to him. When the proprietor came, Arsene spoke to him in a voice loud enough to be heard by everyone.

"I regret to say, monsieur, I have forgotten my pocketbook. Perhaps, on the strength of my name, you will be pleased to give me credit for a few days. I am Arsene Lupin."

The proprietor looked at him, thinking he was joking. But Arsene repeated, "Lupin, prisoner at the Sante, but now a fugitive. I assume that the name inspires you with perfect confidence in me."

And he walked away, amidst shouts of laughter, whilst the proprietor stood amazed.

Lupin strolled along the rue Soufflot and turned into the rue Saint Jacques. He pursued his way slowly, smoking his cigarettes and looking into the shop windows. At the Boulevard de Port Royal, he took his bearings, discovered where he was, and then walked in the direction of the rue de la Santé. The high forbidding walls of the prison were now before him. He pulled his hat forward to shade his face.

Then, approaching the sentinel, he asked, "Is this the prison de la Sante?"

"Yes."

"I wish to regain my cell. The van left me on the way, and I would not abuse—"

"Now, young man, move along. Quick!" growled the sentinel.

"Pardon me, but I must pass through that gate. And if you prevent Arsene Lupin from entering the prison, it will cost you dear, my friend."

"Arsene Lupin! What are you talking about?"

"I am sorry I haven't a card with me," said Arsene, fumbling in his pockets.

The sentinel eyed him from head to foot in astonishment. Then, without a word, he rang a bell. The iron gate was partly opened, and Arsene stepped inside. Almost immediately, he encountered the keeper of the prison, gesticulating and feigning a violent anger.

Arsene smiled and said, "Come, monsieur, don't play that game with me. What! They take the precaution to carry me alone in the van, prepare a nice little obstruction, and imagine I am going to take to my heels and rejoin my friends. Well, and what about the twenty agents of the Surete who accompanied us on foot, in fiacres, and on bicycles? Oh, the arrangement did not please me. I should not have gotten away alive. Tell me, monsieur, did they count on that?”

He shrugged his shoulders and added, "I beg of you. monsieur, not to worry about me. When I wish to escape, I shall not require any assistance."

On the second day thereafter, the 'Echo de France,' which had apparently become the official reporter of the exploits of Arsene Lupin—it was said that he was one of its principal shareholders—published a most complete account of this attempted escape. The exact wording of the messages exchanged between the prisoner and his mysterious friend, how correspondence was constructed, the complicity of the police, the promenade on the Boulevard Saint Michel, and the incident at the cafe Souffiot, was disclosed. It was known that the search of the restaurant and its waiters by Inspector Dieuzy had been fruitless. And the public also learned an extraordinary thing which demonstrated the infinite variety of resources that Lupin possessed: the prison van, in which he was being carried, was prepared for the occasion and substituted by his accomplices for one of the six vans which did service at the prison.

The next escape of Arsene Lupin was not doubted by anyone. He announced it himself, in categorical terms, in a reply to Mon. Bouvier on the day following his attempted escape. The judge made a jest about the affair, and Arsene was annoyed.

Firmly eyeing the judge, he said emphatically, "Listen to me, monsieur! I give you my word of honor that this attempted flight was simply preliminary to my general plan of escape."

"I do not understand," said the judge.

"It is not necessary that you should understand."

And when the judge, during that examination which was reported at length in the columns of the 'Echo de Fronce,' sought to resume his investigation, Arsene Lupin exclaimed with an assumed air of lassitude, “Mon Dieu, Mon Dieu, what's the use! All these questions are of no importance!"

“What! No importance?" cried the judge.

"No, because I shall not be present at the trial."

“You will not be present?"

"No. I have fully decided on that, and nothing will change my mind."

Such assurance, combined with the inexplicable indiscretions that Arsene committed every day, served to annoy and mystify the officers of the law. There were secrets known only to Arsene Lupin, secrets that he alone could divulge. But for what purpose did he reveal them? And how?

Arsene Lupin was changed to another cell. The judge closed his preliminary investigation.

No further proceedings were taken in his case for a period of two months, during which time Arsene was seen almost constantly lying on his bed with his face turned toward the wall. The changing of his cell seemed to discourage him. He refused to see his advocate. He exchanged only a few necessary words with his keepers.

During the fortnight preceding his trial, he resumed his vigorous life. He complained of a want of air. Consequently, early every morning he was allowed to exercise in the courtyard, guarded by two men.

Public curiosity had not died out. Every day, they expected to be regaled with news of his escape, and he had gained a considerable amount of public sympathy by reason of his verve, his gaiety, his diversity, his inventive genius, and the mystery of his life. Arsene Lupin must escape. It was his inevitable fate. The public expected it and was surprised that the event had been delayed so long.

Every morning, the Prefect of Police asked his secretary, "Well, has he escaped yet?"

"No, Monsieur le Prefect."

"Tomorrow, probably."

And on the day before the trial, a gentleman called at the office of the 'Grand Journal,' asked to see the court reporter, threw his card in the reporter's face, and walked rapidly away.

These words were written on the card: "Arsene Lupin always keeps his promises."

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It was under these conditions that the trial commenced. An enormous crowd gathered at the court. Everybody wished to see the famous Arsene Lupin. They had a gleeful anticipation that the prisoner would play some audacious pranks upon the judge. Advocates and magistrates, reporters and men of the world, actresses and society women were crowded together on the benches provided for the public.

It was a dark, somber day, with a steady downpour of rain. Only a dim light pervaded the courtroom, and the spectators caught a very indistinct view of the prisoner when the guards brought him in. But his heavy, shambling walk, the way he slumped into his seat, and his passive, stupid appearance were not at all prepossessing. Several times his advocate, one of Mon. Danval's assistants spoke to him, but he simply shook his head and said nothing.

The clerk read the indictment, then the judge spoke, "Prisoner at the bar, stand up. Your name, age, and occupation?"

Not receiving any reply, the judge repeated, "Your name? I ask you your name?"

A thick, slow voice muttered, "Baudru, Desire."

A murmur of surprise pervaded the courtroom.

But the judge proceeded, "Baudru, Desire? Ah, a new alias! Well, as you have already assumed a dozen different names and this one is, no doubt, as imaginary as the others, we will adhere to the name of Arsene Lupin, by which you are more generally known."

The judge referred to his notes and continued, "For, despite the most diligent search, your history remains unknown. Your case is unique in the annals of crime. We know not who you are, whence you came, your birth and breeding all are a mystery to us. Three years ago, you appeared in our midst as Arsene Lupin, presenting to us a strange combination of intelligence and perversion, immorality and generosity. Our knowledge of your life before that date is vague and problematic. It may be that the man called Rostat, who, eight years ago, worked with Dickson, the prestidigitator, was none other than Arsene Lupin. It is probable that the Russian student who, six years ago, attended the laboratory of Doctor Altier at the Saint Louis Hospital, and who often astonished the doctor by the ingenuity of his hypotheses on subjects of bacteriology and the boldness of his experiments in diseases of the skin, was none other than Arsene Lupin. It is probable, also, that Arsene Lupin was the professor who introduced the Japanese art of jiu-jitsu to the Parisian public. We have some reason to believe that Arsene Lupin was the bicyclist who won the Grand Prix de 'Exposition, received his ten thousand francs, and was never heard of again. Arsene Lupin may have been, also, the person who saved so many lives through the Li1lle donner-window at the Charity Bazaar, and, at the same time, picked their pockets.

The judge paused for a moment, then continued, "Such is that epoch which seems to have been utilized by you in a thorough preparation for the warfare you have since waged against society, a methodical apprenticeship in which you developed your strength, energy, and skill to the highest point possible. Do you acknowledge the accuracy of these facts?"

During this discourse, the prisoner had stood balancing himself, first on one foot, then on the other, with shoulders stooped and arms inert. Under the strongest light, one could observe his extreme thinness, his hollow cheeks, his projecting cheekbones, his earthen-colored face dotted with small red spots and framed in a rough, straggling beard. Prison life had caused him to age and wither. He had lost the youthful face and elegant figure we had seen portrayed so often in the newspapers.

It appeared as if he had not heard the question propounded by the judge. Twice it was repeated to him.

Then he raised his eyes, seemed to reflect, then, making a desperate effort, he murmured, “Baudru, Desire."

The judge smiled as he said, "I do not understand the theory of your defense, Arsene Lupin. If you are seeking to avoid responsibility for your crimes on the ground of imbecility, such a line of defense is open to you. But I shall proceed with the trial and pay no heed to your vagaries."

He then narrated at length the various thefts, swindles, and forgeries charged against Lupin. Sometimes he questioned the prisoner, but the latter simply grunted or remained silent. The examination of witnesses commenced. Some of the evidence given was immaterial; other portions of it seemed more important. But through all of it, there ran a vein of contradictions and inconsistencies. A wearisome obscurity enveloped the proceedings until Detective Ganimard was called as a witness, then interest was revived.

From the beginning, the actions of the veteran detective appeared strange and unaccountable. He was nervous and ill at ease. Several times, he looked at the prisoner with obvious doubt and anxiety. Then, with his hands resting on the rail in front of him, he recounted the events in which he had participated, including his pursuit of the prisoner across Europe and his arrival in America. He was listened to with great avidity, as his capture of Arsene Lupin was well known to everyone through the medium of the press. Toward the close of his testimony, after referring to his conversations with Arsene Lupin, he stopped, twice, embarrassed and undecided. It was apparent that he was possessed of some thought which he feared to uncurl.

The judge said to him, sympathetically, "If you are ill, you may retire for the present."

"No, no, but…”

He stopped, looked sharply at the prisoner, and said, "I ask permission to scrutinize the prisoner at closer range. There is some mystery about him that I must solve."

He approached the accused man and examined him attentively for several minutes. Then he returned to the witness stand, and, in an almost solemn voice, said, “I declare, on oath, that the prisoner now before me is not Arsene Lupin.”

A profound silence followed the statement. The judge, nonplused for a moment, exclaimed, "Ah! What do you mean? That is absurd!"

The detective continued, "At first sight, there is a certain resemblance, but if you carefully consider the nose, the mouth, the hair, the color of skin, you will see that it is not Arsene Lupin. And the eyes! Did he ever have those alcoholic eyes!"

"Come, come, witness! What do you mean? Do you pretend to say that we are trying the wrong man?"

"In my opinion, yes. Arsene Lupin has, in some manner, contrived to put this poor devil in his place, unless this man is a willing accomplice."

This dramatic denouement caused much laughter and excitement amongst the spectators. The judge adjourned the trial and sent for Mon. Bouvier, the jailer, and the guards employed in the prison.

When the trial was resumed, Mon. Bouvier and the jailer examined the accused and declared that there was only a very slight resemblance between the prisoner and Arsene Lupin.

"Well, then!" exclaimed the judge. “Who is this man? Where does he come from? What is he in prison for?"

Two of the prison guards were called, and both declared that the prisoner was Arsene Lupin. The judge breathed once more.

But one of the guards then said, “Yes. Yes, I think it is he."

"What!" cried the judge, impatiently. "You *think* it is he! What do you mean by that?"

"Well, I saw very little of the prisoner. He was placed in my charge in the evening and, for two months, he seldom stirred but lay on his bed with his face to the wall."

"What about the time prior to those two months?"

"Before that, he occupied a cell in another part of the prison. He was not in cell 24."

Here, the head jailer interrupted and said, "We changed him to another cell after his attempted escape."

"But you, monsieur, you have seen him during those two months?"

"I had no occasion to see him. He was always quiet and orderly."

"And this prisoner is not Arsene Lupin?"

"No."

"Then who is he?" demanded the judge.

"I do not know."

"Then we have before us a man who was substituted for Arsene Lupin two months ago. How do you explain that?"

"I cannot."

In absolute despair, the judge turned to the accused and addressed him in a conciliatory tone, "Prisoner, can you tell me how, and since when, you became an inmate of the Prison de la Sante?"

The engaging manner of the judge was calculated to disarm the mistrust and awaken the understanding of the accused man. He tried to reply. Finally, under clever and gentle questioning, he succeeded in framing a few phrases from which the following story was gleaned:

Two months ago, he had been taken to the Depot, examined, and released. As he was leaving the building as a free man, he was seized by two guards and placed in the prison van. Since then, he had occupied cell 24. He was content there, with plenty to eat, and he slept well. So, he did not complain.

All that seemed probable, and, amidst the mirth and excitement of the spectators, the judge adjourned the trial until the story could be investigated and verified.

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The following facts were at once established by an examination of the prison records:

Eight weeks before, a man named Baudru Desire had slept at the Depot. He was released the next day and left the Depot at two o'clock in the afternoon. On the same day at two o'clock, having been examined for the last time, Arsene Lupin left the Depot in a prison van.

Had the guards made a mistake? Had they been deceived by the resemblance and carelessly substituted this man for their prisoner?

Another question suggested itself: Had the substitution been arranged in advance? In that event, Baudru must have been an accomplice and must have caused his own arrest for the express purpose of taking Lupin's place. But then, by what miracle had such a plan, based on a series of improbable chances, been carried to success?

Baudru Desire was turned over to the anthropological service; they had never seen anything like him. However, they easily traced his history. He was known at Courbevois, at Asnieres and at Levallois. He lived on alms and slept in one of those rag-picker's buts near the barrier de Ternes. He had disappeared from there a year ago.

Had he been enticed away by Arsene Lupin? There was no evidence to that effect. And even if that was so, it did not explain the flight of the prisoner. That remained a mystery.

Among twenty theories that sought to explain it, not one was satisfactory. Of the escape itself, there was no doubt, an escape that was incomprehensible, sensational, in which the public, as well as the officers of the law, could detect a carefully prepared plan, a combination of circumstances marvelously dove-tailed, whereof the denouement folly justified the confident prediction of Arsene Lupin: "I shall not be present at my trial."

After a month of patient investigation, the problem remained unsolved. The poor devil of a Baudru could not be kept in prison indefinitely, and to place him on trial would be ridiculous. There was no charge against him. Consequently, he was released, but the chief of the Sorte resolved to keep him under surveillance. This idea originated with Ganimard. From his point of view, there was neither complicity nor chance. Baudru was an instrument upon which Arsene Lupin had played with his extraordinary skill. Baudru, when set at liberty, would lead them to Arsene Lupin or, at least, to some of his accomplices. The two inspectors, Folenfant and Dicuzy, were assigned to assist Ganimard.

One foggy morning in January, the prison gates opened and Baudru Desire stepped forth a free man. At first, he appeared to be quite embarrassed and walked like a person who had no precise idea whither he was going. He followed the rue de la Sante and the rue Saint Jacques. He stopped in front of an old clothes shop, removed his jacket and his vest, and sold them for a few sous. Then, replacing his jacket, he proceeded on his way. He crossed

the Seine. At the Chatelet, an omnibus passed him. He wished to enter it, but there was no place. The controller advised him to secure a number, so he entered the waiting room.

Ganimard called to his two assistants, and, without removing his eyes from the waiting room, he said to them, “Stop a carriage. No, two. That will be better. I will go with one of you, and we will follow him."

The men obeyed. Yet Baudru did not appear. Ganimard entered the waiting room. It was empty.

"Idiot that I am!" he muttered. "I forgot there was another exit."

There was an interior corridor extending from the waiting room to the rue Saint Martin. Ganimard rushed through it and arrived just in time to observe Baudru upon the top of the Batigoolles-Jardinde Plates omnibus as it was turning the corner of the rue de Rivoli. He ran and caught the omnibus. But he had lost his two assistants. He must continue the pursuit alone. In his anger, he was inclined to seize the man by the collar without ceremony. Was it not with premeditation and by means of an ingenious ruse that his pretended imbecile had separated him from his assistants?

He looked at Baudru. The latter was asleep on the bench, his head rolling from side to side, his mouth half-opened, and an incredible expression of stupidity on his blotched face. No, such an adversary was incapable of deceiving old Ganimard. It was a stroke of luck. Nothing more.

At the Galleries-Lafayette, the man leaped from the omnibus and took the La Muette tramway, following the boulevard Haussmann and the avenue Victor Hugo. Baudru alighted at La Muette station and, with a nonchalant air, strolled into the Bois de Boulogne.

He wandered through one path after another and sometimes retraced his steps. What was he seeking? Had he any definite object? At the end of an hour, he appeared to be faint from fatigue, and noticing a bench, he sat down. The spot, not far from Auteuil, on the edge of a pond hidden amongst the trees, was deserted. After the lapse of another half-hour, Ganimard became impatient and resolved to speak to the man.

He approached and took a seat beside Baudru, lit a cigarette, traced some figures in the sand with the end of his cane, and said, "It's a pleasant day."

No response. But suddenly the man burst into laughter — a happy, mirthful laugh, spontaneous and irresistible. Ganimard felt his hair stand on end in horror and surprise. It was that laugh, that infernal laugh he knew so well!

With a sudden movement, he seized the man by the collar and looked at him with a keen, penetrating gaze, and found that he no longer saw the man Baudru. To be sure, he saw Baudru, but, at the same time, he saw the other, the real man, Lupin. He discovered the intense life in the eyes, he filled up the sunken features, he perceived the real flesh beneath the flabby skin, the real mouth through the grimaces that deformed it. Those were the eyes and mouth of the other, and especially his keen, alert, mocking expression — so clear and youthful!

"Arsene Lupin, Arsene Lupin," he stammered.

Then, in a sudden fit of rage, he seized Lupin by the throat and tried to hold him down. Despite his fifty years, he still possessed unusual strength, whilst his adversary was

apparently, in a weak condition. But the struggle was a brief one. Arsene Lupin made only a slight movement, and as suddenly as he had made the attack, Ganimard released his hold. His right arm felt inert, useless.

"If you had taken lessons in jiu-jitsu at the quai des Orfevres," said Lupin, "you would know that that blow is called *udi-sbi-ghi* in Japanese. A second more, and I would have broken your arm, and that would have been just what you deserved. I am surprised that you, an old friend whom I respect and before whom I voluntarily expose my incognito, should abuse my confidence in that violent manner. It is unworthy — Ah! What's the matter?"

Ganimard did not reply. That escape for which he deemed himself responsible — was it not he, Ganimard, who, by his sensational evidence, had led the court into serious error? That escape appeared to him like a dark cloud on his professional career. A tear rolled down his cheek to his gray moustache.

“Oh! Mon Dieu, Ganimard, don't take it to heart. If you had not spoken, I would have arranged for someone else to do it. I couldn't allow poor Baudru Desire to be convicted."

"Then," murmured Ganimard, "it was you who was there? And now you are here?"

“It is I, always I, only I."

"Can it be possible?"

“Oh, it is not the work of a sorcerer. Simply, as the judge remarked at the trial, the apprenticeship of a dozen years equips a man to cope successfully with all the obstacles in life."

"But your face? Your eyes?"

"You can understand that if I worked eighteen months with Doctor Altier at the Saint-Louis hospital, it was not out of love for the work. I considered that he, who would one day have the honor of calling himself Arsene Lupin, ought to be exempt from the ordinary laws governing appearance and identity. Appearance? That can be modified at will. For instance, a hypodermic injection of paraffine will puff up the skin at the desired spot. Pyrogallic acid will change your skin to that of an Indian. The juice of the greater celandine will adorn you with the most beautiful eruptions and tumors. Another chemical affects the growth of your beard and hair, another changes the tone of your voice. Add to those two months of dieting in cell 24, exercises repeated a thousand times to enable me to hold my features in a certain grimace, to carry my head at a certain inclination, and adapt my back and shoulders to a stooping posture. Then five drops of atropine in the eyes to make them haggard and wild, and the trick is done."

"I do not understand how you deceived the guards."

"The change was progressive. The evolution was so gradual that they failed to notice it."

“But Baudru Desire?"

"Baudru exists. He is a poor, homeless fellow whom I met last year, and really, he bears a certain resemblance to me. Considering my arrest as a possible event, I took charge of Baudru and studied the points wherein we differed in appearance with a view to correcting them in my own person. My friends caused him to remain at the Depot overnight, and to leave there the next day about the same hour as I did — a coincidence easily arranged. Of course, it was necessary to have a record of his detention at the Depot to establish the fact that such a person was a reality. Otherwise, the police would have sought elsewhere to find out my identity. But, in offering to them this excellent Baudru, it was inevitable, you understand.

Inevitable that they would seize upon him, and, despite the insurmountable difficulties of a substitution, they would prefer to believe in a substitution than confess their ignorance."

"Yes, yes, of course," said Ganimard.

"And then," exclaimed Arsene Lupin, "I held in my hands a trump card: an anxious public watching and waiting for my escape. And that is the fatal error into which you fell, you and the others, in the course of that fascinating game pending between me and the officers of the law wherein the stake was my liberty. And you supposed that I was playing to the gallery, that I was intoxicated with my success. I, Arsene Lupin, guilty of such weakness! Oh, no!

And no longer ago than the Cahom affair, you said, "When Arsene Lupin cries from the housetops that he will escape, he has some object in view." But sapristi, you must understand that in order to escape, I must create, in advance, a public belief in that escape, a belief amounting to an article of faith, an absolute conviction, a reality as glittering as the sun. And I did create that belief that Arsene Lupin would escape, that Arsene Lupin would not be present at his trial. And when you gave your evidence and said, "That man is not Arsene Lupin," everybody was prepared to believe you. Had one person doubted it, had anyone uttered this simple restriction, “Suppose it is Arsene Lupin?” from that moment, I would have been lost. If anyone had scrutinized my face, not imbued with the idea that I was not Arsene Lupin, as you and the others did at my trial, but with the idea that I might be Arsene Lupin, then, despite all my precautions, I should have been recognized. But I had no fear. Logically, psychologically, no one could entertain the idea that I was Arsene Lupin."

He grasped Ganimard's hand.

"Come, Ganimard, confess chat on the Wednesday after our conversation in the prison de la Sante, you expected me at your house at four o'clock, exactly as I said I would go."

"And your prison van?" said Ganimard, evading the question.

"A btum some of my friends secured that old unused van and wished to make the attempt. But I considered it impractical without the concurrence of several unusual circumstances. However, I found it useful to carry out that attempted escape and give it the widest publicity. An audaciously planned escape, though not completed, gave to the succeeding one the character of reality simply by anticipation."

"So that the cigar —,"

"Hollowed by myself, as well as the knife."

“And the letters?"

"Written by me."

"And the mysterious correspondent?"

"Did not exist."

Ganimard reacted a moment, then said, "When the anthropological service had Baudru's case under consideration, why did they not perceive that his measurements coincided with those of Arsene Lupin?"

"My measurements are not in existence."

"Indeed!"

"At least, they are false. I have given considerable attention to that question. In the first place, the Bertillon system records the visible marks of identification, and you have seen that

they are not infallible. After that, the measurements of the head, the fingers, the ears, etc., are more or less infallible."

"Absolutely."

"But it costs money to get around them. Before we left America, one of the employees of the service there accepted so much money to insert false figures in my measurements. Consequently, Baudru's measurements should not agree with those of Arsene Lupin."

After a short silence, Ganimard asked, "What are you going to do now?"

"Now," replied Lupin, "I am going to take a rest, enjoy the best of food and drink, and gradually recover my former healthy condition. It is all very well to become Baudru or some other person, on occasion, and to change your personality as you do your shirt, but you soon grow weary of the change. I feel exactly as I imagine the man who lost his shadow must have felt, and I shall be glad to be Arsene Lupin once more."

He walked to and fro for a few minutes. Then, stopping in front of Ganimard, he said, "You have nothing more to say, I suppose?"

"Yes. I should like to know if you intend to reveal the true state of facts connected with your escape. The mistake that I made—"

"Oh! No one will ever know that it was Arsene Lupin who was discharged. It is to my own interest to surround myself with my tcry, and therefore I shall permit my escape to retain its almost miraculous character. So have no fear on that score, my dear friend. I shall say nothing. And now, good-bye. I am going out to dinner this evening and have only sufficient time to dress."

"I thought you wanted a rest."

"Ah! There are duties to society that one cannot avoid. Tomorrow, I shall rest."

"Where do you dine tonight?"

"With the British Ambassador!"

3. The Mysterious Traveler

The evening before, I had sent my automobile to Rouen by the highway. I was to travel to Rouen by rail, on my way to visit some friends who live on the banks of the Seine.

In Paris, a few minutes before the train started, seven gentlemen entered my compartment, and five of them were smoking. No matter that the journey was a short one, the thought of traveling with such a company was not agreeable to me, especially as the car was built on the old model, without a corridor. I picked up my overcoat, my newspapers, and my timetable, and sought refuge in a neighboring compartment.

It was occupied by a lady, who, at sight of me, made a gesture of annoyance that did not escape my notice, and she leaned toward a gentleman who was standing on the step and was, no doubt, her husband. The gentleman scrutinized me closely, and apparently, my appearance did not displease him, for he smiled as he spoke to his wife with the air of one who reassures a frightened child. She smiled also and gave me a friendly glance as if she now understood that I was one of those gallant men with whom a woman can remain shut up for two hours in a little box, six feet square, and have nothing to fear.

Her husband said to her, "I have an important appointment, my dear, and cannot wait any longer. Adieu."

He kissed her affectionately and went away. His wife threw him a few kisses and waved her handkerchief. The whistle sounded, and the train started.

At that precise moment, and despite the protests of the guards, the door was opened, and a man rushed into our compartment. My companion, who was standing and arranging her luggage, uttered a cry of terror and fell upon the seat. I am not a coward-far from it-but I confess that such intrusions at the last minute are always disconcerting. They have a suspicious, unnatural aspect.

However, the appearance of the new arrival greatly modified the unfavorable impression produced by his precipitant action. He was correctly and elegantly dressed, wore a tasteful cravat, correct gloves, and his face was refined and intelligent. But where the devil had I seen that face before? Because, beyond all possible doubt, I had seen it. And yet, the memory of it was so vague and indistinct that I felt it would be useless to try to recall it at that time.

Then, directing my attention to the lady, I was amazed at the pallor and anxiety I saw in her face. She was looking at her neighbor - they occupied seats on the same side of the compartment - with an expression of intense alarm, and I perceived that one of her trembling hands was slowly gliding toward a little traveling bag that was lying on the seat about twenty inches from her. She finished by seizing it and nervously drawing it to her. Our eyes met, and I read in hers so much anxiety and fear that I could not refrain from speaking to her.

“Are you ill, madame? Shall I open the window?"

Her only reply was a gesture indicating that she was afraid of our companion. I smiled, as her husband had done, shrugged my shoulders, and explained to her, in pantomime, that she had nothing to fear; that I was there, and the gentleman appeared to be a very harmless individual. At that moment, he turned toward us, scrutinized both of us from head to foot, then settled down in his corner and paid us no more attention.

After a short silence, the lady, as if she had mustered all her energy to perform a desperate act, said to me, in an almost inaudible voice, "Do you know who is on our train?"

"Who?"

"He... he... I assure you…"

"Who is he?"

"Arsene Lupin!"

She had not taken her eyes off our companion, and it was to him rather than to me that she uttered the syllables of that disquieting name. He drew his hat over his face. Was that to conceal his agitation or, simply, to arrange himself for sleep?

Then I said to her, "Yesterday, through contumacy, Arsene Lupin was sentenced to twenty years imprisonment at hard labor. Therefore, it is improbable that he would be so imprudent today as to show himself in public. Moreover, the newspapers have announced his appearance in Turkey since his escape from the Sante."

"But he is on this train at the present moment," the lady proclaimed, with the obvious intention of being heard by our companion. "My husband is one of the directors in the penitentiary service, and it was the station master himself who told us that a search was being made for Arsene Lupin."

"They may have been mistaken."

"No, he was seen in the waiting room. He bought a first-class ticket for Rouen."

"He has disappeared. The guard at the waiting room door did not see him pass, and it is supposed that he had got into the express that leaves ten minutes after us."

"In that case, they will be sure to catch him."

"Unless, at the last moment, he leaped from that train to come here, into our train, which is quite probable, which is almost certain."

"If so, he will be arrested just the same, for the employees and guards would no doubt observe his passage from one train to the other, and when we arrive at Rouen, they will arrest him there."

"Him? Never! He will find some means of escape."

“In that case, I wish him 'Bon Voyage.'"

"But, in the meantime, think what he may do!"

“What?"

“I don't know. He may do anything."

She was greatly agitated, and truly, the situation justified, to some extent, her nervous excitement.

I was impelled to say to her, "Of course, there are many strange coincidences, but you need have no fear. Admitting that Arsene Lupin is on this train, he will not commit any indiscretion; he will be only too happy to escape the peril that already threatens him."

My words did not reassure her, but she remained silent for a time. I unfolded my newspapers and read reports of Arsene Lupin's trial. But as they contained nothing that was new to me, I

was not greatly interested. Moreover, I was tired and sleepy. I felt my eyelids close and my head drop.

"But, monsieur, you are not going to sleep!"

She seized my newspaper and looked at me with indignation.

"Certainly not," I said.

"That would be very imprudent."

"Of course," I assented.

I struggled to keep awake. I looked through the window at the landscape and the fleeting clouds, but in a short time all that became confused and indistinct; the image of the nervous lady and the drowsy gentleman were effaced from my memory, and I was buried in the soothing depths of a profound sleep. The tranquility of my response was soon disturbed by disquieting dreams wherein a creature that had played the part and bore the name of Arsene Lupin held an important place. He appeared to me with his back laden with articles of value; he leaped over walls and plundered castles. But the outlines of that creature, who was no longer Arsene Lupin, assumed a more definite form. He came toward me, growing larger and larger, leaped into the compartment with incredible agility, and landed squarely on my chest. With a cry of fright and pain, I awoke. The man, the traveler, our companion, with his knee on my breast, held me by the throat.

My sight was very indistinct, for my eyes were suffused with blood. I could see the lady, in a corner of the compartment, convulsed with fright. I tried not to resist. Besides, I did not have the strength. My temples throbbed; I was almost strangled. One minute more, and I would have breathed my last. The man must have realized it, for he relaxed his grip, but did not remove his hand. Then he took a cord, in which he had prepared a slipknot, and tied my wrists together. In an instant, I was bound, gagged, and helpless.

Certainly, he accomplished the trick with an ease and skill that revealed the hand of a master; he was, no doubt, a professional thief. Not a word, not a nervous movement, only coolness and audacity. And I was there, lying on the bench, bound like a mummy. I, Arsene Lupin!

It was anything but a laughing matter, and yet despite the gravity of the situation, I keenly appreciated the humor and irony that it involved. Arsene Lupin seized and bound like a novice! Robbed as if I were an unsophisticated rustic — for the scoundrel had deprived me of my purse and wallet! Arsene Lupin, a victim, duped, and vanquished. What an adventure!

The lady did not move. He did not even notice her. He contented himself with picking up her traveling bag that had fallen to the floor and taking from it the jewels, purse, and gold and silver trinkets that it contained. The lady opened her eyes, trembled with fear, drew the rings from her fingers, and handed them to the man as if she wished to spare him unnecessary trouble. He took the rings and looked at her. She swooned.

Then, quite unruffled, he resumed his seat, lit a cigarette, and proceeded to examine the treasure that he had acquired. The examination appeared to give him perfect satisfaction.

But I was not so well satisfied. I do not speak of the twelve thousand francs of which I had been unduly deprived. That was only a temporary loss because I was certain that I would recover possession of that money after a very brief delay, together with the important papers contained in my wallet: plans, specifications, addresses, lists of correspondents, and compromising letters. But for the moment, a more immediate and more serious question troubled me: How would this affair end? What would be the outcome of this adventure?

As you can imagine, the disturbance created by my passage through the Saint-Lazare station has not escaped my notice. Going to visit friends who knew me under the name of Guillaume Berlat, and amongst whom my resemblance to Arsene Lupin was a subject of many innocent jests, I could not assume a disguise, and my presence had been remarked. So, beyond question, the commissary of police at Rouen, notified by telegraph and assisted by numerous agents, would be awaiting the train, would question all suspicious passengers, and proceed to search the cars.

Of course, I had foreseen all that, but it had not disturbed me, as I was certain that the police of Rouen would not be any shrewder than the police of Paris, and that I could escape recognition. Would it not be sufficient for me to carelessly display my card as "depute," thanks to which I had inspired complete confidence in the gatekeeper at Saint-Lazare? But the situation was greatly changed. I was no longer free. It was impossible to attempt one of my usual tricks. In one of the compartments, the commissary of police would find Mon.

Arsene Lupin, bound hand and foot, as docile as a lamb, packed up, all ready to be dumped into a prison van. He would have simply to accept delivery of the parcel, the same as if it were so much merchandise or a basket of fruit and vegetables. Yet, to avoid that shameful denouement, what could I do? I was bound and gagged, and the train was rushing on toward Rouen, the next and only station.

Another problem was presented in which I was less interested, but the solution to which aroused my professional curiosity. What were the intentions of my rascally companion? Of course, if I had been alone, he could, on our arrival at Rauen, leave the car slowly and fearlessly. But the lady? As soon as the door of the compartment was opened, the lady, now so quiet and humble, would scream and call for help. That was the dilemma that perplexed me! Why had he not reduced her to a helpless condition like mine? That would have given him ample time to disappear before his double crime was discovered.

He was still smoking, with his eyes fixed upon the window that was now being streaked with drops of rain. Once he turned, he picked up my timetable and consulted it.

The lady had to feign a continued lack of consciousness to deceive the enemy. But fits of coughing, provoked by the smoke, exposed her true condition. As for me, I was very uncomfortable and very tired. And I meditated; I plotted.

The train was rushing on, joyously, intoxicated with its own speed.

Saint Etienne! At that moment, the man arose and took two steps toward us, which caused the lady to utter a cry of alarm and fall into a genuine swoon. What was the man about to do? He lowered the window on our side. A heavy rain was now falling, and, by a gesture, the man expressed his annoyance at his not having an umbrella or an overcoat. He glanced at the rack. The lady's umbrella was there. He took it. He also took my overcoat and put it on.

We were now crossing tl1eSei11e. He turned up the bottoms of his trousers, then leaned over and raised the exterior latch of the door. Was he going to throw himself upon the track? At that speed, it would have been instant death. We now entered a tunnel. The man opened the door halfway and stood on the upper step. What folly! The darkness, the smoke, and the noise all gave a fantastic appearance to his actions. But suddenly, the train diminished its speed. A moment later, it increased its speed, then slowed up again. Probably, some repairs were being made in that part of the tunnel which obliged the trains to diminish their speed, and the man was aware of the fact. He immediately stepped down to the lower step, closed the door behind him, and leaped to the ground. He was gone.

The lady immediately recovered her wits, and her first act was to lament the loss of her jewels. I gave her an imploring look. She understood and quickly removed the gag that restrained me. She wished to untie the cords that bound me, but I prevented her.

“No, no, the police must see everything exactly as it stands. I want them to see what the rascal did to us."

"Suppose I pull the alarm bell?"

“Too late. You should have done that when he made the attack on me."

"But he would have killed me. Ah! Monsieur, didn't I tell you that he was on this train. I recognized him from his portrait. And now he has gone off with my jewels."

"Don't worry. The police will catch him."

"Catch Arsene Lupin! Never."

“That depends on you, madame. Listen: When we arrive at Rouen, beat the door and call. Make a noise. The police and the railway employees will come. Tell them what you have seen: the assault made on me and the flight of Arsene Lupin. Give a description of him: soft hat, umbrella (yours), gray overcoat."

"Yours," said she.

"What! Mine? Not at all. It was his. I didn't have any."

"It seems to me he didn't have one when he came in."

"Yes. Yes, unless the coat was one that someone had forgotten and left in the rack. At all events, he had it when he went away, and that is the essential point. A gray overcoat - remember! Ah! I forgot. You must tell your name, the first thing you do. Your husband’s official position will stimulate the zeal of the police."

We arrived at the station. I gave her some further instructions in a rather imperious tone.

“Tell them my name: Guillaume Berlat. If necessary, say that you know me. That will save time. We must expedite the preliminary investigation. The important thing is the pursuit of Arsene Lupin. Your jewels. remember! Let there be no mistake. Guillaume Berlat, a friend of your husband."

“I understand. Guillaume Berlat."

She was already calling and gesticulating. As soon as the train stopped, several men entered the compartment. The critical moment had come.

Panting for breath, the lady exclaimed, “Arsene Lupin.... he attacked us.... he stole my jewels.... I am Madame Renaud. My husband is a director of the penitentiary service. Ah! Here is my brother, Georges Ardelle, director of the Credit Rouennais.... you must know."

She embraced a young man who had just joined us, and whom the commissary saluted.

Then she continued, weeping, "Yes, Arsene Lupin.... while monsieur was sleeping, he seized him by the throat. Mon. Berlat, a friend of my husband."

The commissary asked, "But where is Arsene Lupin?"

"He leaped from the train when passing through the tunnel.”

"Are you sure that it was he?"

"Am I sure! I recognized him perfectly. Besides, he was seen at the Saint-Lazare station. He wore a soft hat-"

"No. A hard felt, like that," said the commissary, pointing to my hat.

"He had a soft hat. I am sure," repeated Madame Renaud. "And a gray overcoat."

"Yes, that is right," replied the commissary. "The telegram says he wore a gray overcoat with a black velvet collar."

"Exactly, a black velvet collar," exclaimed Madame Renaud, triumphantly.

I breathed freely. Ah! The excellent friend I had in that little woman.

The police agents had now released me. I bit my lips until they ran blood. Stooping over, with my handkerchief over my mouth, an attitude quite natural in a person who has remained for a long time in an uncomfortable position, and whose mouth shows the bloody marks of the gag, I addressed the commissary, in a weak voice, "Monsieur, it was Arsene Lupin. There is no doubt about that. If we make haste, he can be caught. Yet I think I may be of some service to you."

The railway car, in which the crime occurred, was detached from the train to serve as a mute witness at the official investigation. The train continued on its way to Havre. We were then conducted to the station master's office through a crowd of curious spectators.

Then, I had a sudden access of doubt and discretion. Under some pretext or other, I must gain my automobile and escape. To remain there was dangerous. Something might happen. For instance, a telegram from Paris, and I would be lost.

Yes, but what about my thief? Abandoned to my own resources, in an unfamiliar country, I could not hope to catch him.

"Bah! I must make the attempt," I said to myself. "It may be a difficult game, but an amusing one, and the stake is well worth the trouble."

And when the commissary asked us to repeat the story of the robbery, I exclaimed, “Monsieur, really, Arsene Lupin is getting the start of us. My automobile is waiting in the courtyard. If you will be so kind as to use it, we can try."

The commissary smiled and replied, “The idea is a good one, so good indeed, that it is already being carried out. Two of my men have set out on bicycles. They have been gone for some time."

"Where did they go?"

"To the entrance of the tunnel. There, they will gather evidence, secure witnesses, and follow on the track of Arsene Lupin."

I could not refrain from shrugging my shoulders as I replied, "Your men will not secure any evidence or any witnesses."

“Really!"

"Arsene Lupin will not allow anyone to see him emerge from the tunnel. He will take the first road-"

“To Rouen, where we will arrest him."