## HOME AND FARM MAGAZINE SECTION SERIAL.

he Secret of the Night

By Gaston Leroux THRILLING MYSTERY STORY OF RUSSIAN INTRIGUE BY NOTED FRENCH AUTHOR.

OPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS,

DOFNS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS,

1997 Joseph Rouletabille, ostensibly a

1997 Joseph Rouletabille accurate to the life of

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1998 Joseph Rouletabille

g dinner, where Matrona, Natacha and salelabilie were together again, was dy. The young man having declared was more and more convinced that tery of the bomb in the bouquet was a play of the police, Natacha reinhis epinion, and following that they themselves in agreement on about his else. For himself, the reporter g that conversation hid a real horror rists tranquillity with which the recriate tranquillity with which the glady received all surgestions that set the police or that assumed the genus longer ran any immediate danger, but, he worked, or at least believed sorked to clear Natacha as he had relations, so that there would develop desire necessity of assuming a third set intervention in the facts disclosed softly it Kohirriane where Matrona or all seemed alone to be possible agents, effected to Natacha Rentetabilic commot be doubt in Auguste Just as he had threat do. The more he looked into situe of Natacha the dissier he grew, attends obscurities were there in situe.

0.

sitre!

stig interesting happened during diaseres! times, in spite of Rouletaseres! times, in spite of Rouletaseriols impationed with her for do"Marcas went up to the general. She
and saying. "He is quiet. He doesn't
Ils doesn't wish anything. He has
as is prepare his narcotic. It is too
He has tried in vain, he cannot get
as too manual, ought to take

tox mamma, ought to take some-

make you sleep. very good. ir me," said Ros

is very good.

for me," anid Rouletabille, whose for some few minutes had been dropnew toward one shoulder and now 
d asother. "I have no need of any 
the make me siesp. If you will 
im I will set to bed at once." 
wy little domeved doubth, I am going 
try you there in my arms."

large round arms to take Resterabille as though he

na baby.

na I will get up there all right
said Rouletabille, rising stupidly
making ashumed of his excessive

appearing ashamed of his excessive speed.

A well let us hoth accompany him to deathers," said Natacha, "and I will have been night. I'm eager for hed aff. We will all make a good night it. Emolal and Griagnia will watch it Emolal and Griagnia will watch it exhibited in the lodge. Things misonally arranged now."

For all ascended the stairs. Rouletase it is even go to see the general, three himself on his bed. Natacha got is the bed beside her father, embraced a dearn times, and went downstairs a Mairena followed behind her, closed a mad wishows, went upatairs again to sthe door of the landing-place and if Rosleiabile seated on his bed, his a reside, not appearing to have any it for deep at all. His face was so sail pensive also that the anxiety of the had been able to mike nothing the had been able to mike nothing a preside and looks all day, came tages her instantly in greater force a size. She touched his arm in order a size that he knew she was there. She touched his arm in order a size that he knew she was there. She in the repelled at once. "Sit that he knew she was the said a chart and listen to the There."

is now?

In madame," he replied at once, "Sit hat chair and laten to me. There are from the many that the state once, because we stacked a dangerous hour," its hatpins first. The hatpins?" the hatpins first, the hatpins of the bed facing her, but watching something the her, said:

heing her,

cessary you should know

an election of the bound of the same almost immediately is going to a the attempt of the boundate. If the boundate is going to the same and the same as the bad been told there was a bomb te cat of the chair. She made her said from again, however, in obedience to shallly a organit look commanding the sulet.

the gulet.

Sees the attempt of the bouquet!" she meet in a stiffed voice. "But there is a flower in the general's chamber."

Le alm madame. Understand me and fir mer. You heard the tick-tack from lengter while you were in your own mer?

Let the doors open, naturally."

Let told me the persons who came to

say good night to the general. At that time there was no noise of tick-tack?" "No, no."

"Do you think that if there had been any tick-tack then you would have heard it, with all those persons talking in the room?"

"I hear everything. I hear everything."
"Did you go downstairs at the same time those people did,"
"No, no; I remained near the general for some time, until he was sound asiesp."
"And you heard nothing?"
"Nothing."
"You closed the doors behind those persons?"

"Yes, the door to the great staircase. The door of the servants' stairway was condemned a long time ago, it has been locked by me, I alone have the key and on the inside of the door opening into the general's chamber there is also a bolt which is always shot. All the other doors of the chamber have been condemned by me. In order to enter any of the four rooms on this floor it is necessary now to pass by the door of my chamber, which gives in the main staircase."

my chamber, which gives in the main staircase."
"Perfect Then, no one has been able to enter the apartment. No one had been in the apartment for at least two hours excepting you and the general, when you heard the clockwork. From that the only conclusion is that only the general and you could have started it going."
"What are you trying to may?" Matrena demanded, astounded.
"I wish to prove to you by this absurd conclusion, madame, that it is necessary never—nevel, you understand? Never—to reason solely upon even the most evident external evidence when those seemingly conclusive appearances are in conflict with certain meral truths that also are clear as the light of day. The light of day for me, malame, is that the general does not desire to commit suicide and, above all, that he would not choose the strange method of suicide by clockwork. The light of day for me is that you after your husband and that you are ready to sacrifice your life for his."
"Now! Here!" exclusmed Matrena, whose tears, always ready in smotional moments, flowed freely. "But, Holy Mary, why do

"Now! Here!" exclaimed Matreau, whose tears, always ready in smotional moments, flowed freely. "But, Holy Mary, why do you speak to me without looking at me? What is it? What is it?" "Don't turn! Don't make a movement! You hear—not a move! And speak low, vary low. And don't cry, for the love of God!"
"But you."

Ged!"
"But you say at once . . . the bouquet! Come to the general's room?"
"Not a move. And continue listening to me without interrupting," said he, still inclining his ear, and still without looking at her. "It is because these things were as the light of day to me that I say to myself, 'It is impossible that it should be impossible for a third person not to have placed the bomb in the bouquet. Someone is able to enter the general's chamber even when the general is watching and all the doors are locked."

'Ob, no. No one could possibly enter, I swear it to you."

As she swore it a little too loudly, Rou-

As she swore it a little too loudly, Rou-letabille seized her arm so that she almost cried out, but she understood instantly that it was to keep her quiet.

"I tell you not to interrupt me, once for

"But, then, tell me what you are looking at like that,"
"I am watching the corner where someone is going to enter the general's chamlier when everything is locked, madame. Do not move!"

Mairena, her teeth chattering, recalled that when she entered Rouletabilie's chamber she had found all the doors open that communicated with the chain of rooms: the young man's chamber with hers, the dressing-room and the general's chamber. She tried, under Rouletabilie's took, to keep calm, but in spite of all the reporter's exhortations she could not hold her tongue.

"But which way? Where will they entere"

"By the door,"

"Hy the door."

"Which door."

"That of the chamber giving on the servants' stairway."

"Why, hew? The key! The belt!"

"They have made a key."

"But the bolt is drawn this side."

"They will draw it back from the other cide."

"What! That is impossible."

Rouletabilie laid his two hands on Matrona's strong shoulders and repeated, detaching each syllable. "They will draw it back from the other side."

"It is impossible. I repeat it."

"Madame, your Nibilists haven't invented anything. It is a trick much in vogue with sneak theyes in hotels. All it needs is a little hole the size of a pin bored in the

anything. It is a trick much in vogue with aneak thieves in hotels. All it needs is a little hole the size of a pin bored in the panel of the door above the bolt."

"God!" quavered Matrena. "I don't understand what you mean by your little hole. Explain to me, little demoyol."

"Pollow me carefully, then," continued claewhere. "The person who wishes to enter sticks through the hole a brass wire that he has already given the necessary curve to and which is fitted on its end with a light point of steel curved inward. With such an instrument it is child's play, if the hole has been made where it ought to be, to touch the hole on the inside from the cutside, pick the knob on it, withdraw it, and open the door if the boit is like this one, a small door-bolt."

"Oh, oh, oh," meaned Matrena, who paled visibly. "And that hole?"

"You have discovered it?"

"You have discovered it?"

"You, demovoi! But how did you do that when you never entered the general's chamber until tonight?"

"Doubtless, but I went up that servants' staircase much earlier than that. And I will tell you why. When I was brought into the villa the first time, and you

watched me, hidden behind the door, do you know what I was watching myself, while I appeared to be solely occupied diggles out the caviare? The fresh print of hoot-nails which left the carpet near the table, where someone had spilled beer (the beer was atili running down the cloth.) Someone had stepped in the beer. The boot-print was not clearly visible excepting there. But from there it went to the door of the servants stairway and mounted the stairs. That boot was too fine to be mounting a stairway reserved to servants and that Kouprains told me had been condemned, and it was that made me notice it in a moment; but just then you entered."

"You never told me anything about it, of course if I had known there was a boot-print."

or course if I had known there was a bootprint.

"I didn't tell you anything about it because I had my reasons for that, and, anyway, the trace dried while I was telling you
shout my journey."

"Ah, why not have told me later?"

"Heesause I didn't know you yet."

"Subile devil! You will kill me. I can
no longer, . . Let us go into the general's chamber. We will wake him."

"Remain here. Remain here. I have not
teld you shything. That boot-print preoccupled me, and later, when I could get away
from the dining-room, I was not easy until
I had climbed that stairway myself and
gone to see that door, where I discovered
what I have just told you and what I am
going to tell you now."

"What? What? In all you have said
there has been nothing about the hat-pins."

"We have come to them now."

"And the bouquet attack, which is going
to happen again? Why? Why?

"This is it. When this evening you let me
ge to the general's chamber, I examined the
boit of the door without your suspecting it.
My opinion was confirmed. It was that
way that the bomb was brought, and it is
by that way that someone has prepared to
return."

"But how? You are sure the little hele
is the way someone

by that way that someone has prepared to return."

"But how? You are sure the little hole is the way someone came? But what makes you think that is how they mean to return? You know well enough that, not having succeeded in the general's chamber, they are at work in the dining-room."

"Madame, it is probable, it is certain that they have given up the work in the dining-room since they have commenced this very day working again in the general's chamber. Yes, someone returned, returned that way, and I was so sure of that, of the forth-coming return, that I removed the police in order to be able to study everything more at my ease. Do you understand now my confidence and why I have been able to assume so heavy a responsibility? It is hecause I knew I had only one thing to watch, one little hat-pin."

water, one fittle hat-pin. It is not difficult, madam, to watch a single little hatpin."

"A mistake," said Matrena, in a low voice,
"Miserable little done-voi who told me nothing, me whom you let go to sieep on my
mattress, in front of that door that might
open any moment."

"No, madame. For I was behind it?"

"Ah dear little holy angel! But what
were you thinking of! That door has not
isen watched this afternoon. In our abscarce it could have been epened. If someone has placed a bomb during our absence!"

"That is why I sent you at once in to the
dining-room on that search that I thought
would be fruitless, dear madame. And that
is why I hurried upstairs to the bedroom. I had
went to the stairway door instantly. I had
went to the stairway door instantly. I had

went to the stairway door instantly. I had prepared for proof positive if anyone had pushed it open even half a millimeter. No, no one had touched the door in our ab-

sence."
"Ah, dear heroic little friend of Jesus!

But listen to me, Lissen to me, my angel,
Ah, I don't know where I am or what to
say. My brain is no more than a flabby
balloon punctured with pins, with little
holes of hat-pins. Tell me about the hatpins. Hight off! No, at first, what is it
that makes you believe—good God!—that
someone will return by that door? How
ran you see that, all that, in a poor little
bat-pin?

"Material"

"Madame, it is not a single hat-pin hole; there are two of them."

"Two hat-pin holes?"

"Yes, two. An old one and a new one. One guite new. Why this second hole? Because the old one was judged a little too narrow and they wished to enlarge it, and in enlarging it they broke off the point of a hat-pin in it. Madame, the point is there yet, filling up the little old hole and the piece of metal is very sharp and very bright."

bright."

"Ah, now I understand the examination of the hat-pins. Then it is so easy as that to get through a door with a hat-pin?"

"Nothing easier, especially if the panel is of pine. Hometimes one happens to break the point of a pin in the first hole. Then of necessity one makes a second. In order to commence the second hole, the point of the pin being broken, they have used the point of a penknife, that have finished the hole with the hat-pin. The second hole is still nearer the boil than the first one. Don't move like that, madame."

"But they are going to come! They are going to come?"

"I believe so."

"I believe no."

"But I can't understand how you can re-main so quiet with such a certainty. Great heavenst what proof have you that they have not been there already?"

have not been there already?"
"Just an ordinary pin, medame, not a
hat-pin this time. Don't confuse the pins,
I will show you in a little while."
"He will drive me distracted with his
pins, dear light of my eyes! Bounty of
Heaven! God's envoy! Dear little happiness-bearer?"

In her transport she tried to take him in er trembling arms, but he waved her back, he caught her breath and resumed;

"Did the examination of all the hat-pins teil you anything?"
"Yes. The fifth hat-pin of Mademoiselle Natacha's, the one in the toque out in the veranda, has the tip newly broken off,"
"O misery!" cried Matrens, crumpling in her chair.

chair. Roufetabille raised her.

"What would you have? I have exam-ined your own hat-pins. Do you think I would have suspected you if I had found one of them broken? I would simply have thought that someone had used your prop-erty for an abominable purpose, that is all."

"Oh, that is true, that is true. Pardon me. Mother of Christ, this boy crazes me! He consoles me and he horrifles me. He makes me think of such dreadful things, and then he reassures me. He does what he wishes with me. What should I become without him?"

And this time she succeeded in taking his head in her two hands and kissing him passionately. Rouletabille pushed her back roughly.

roughly.

You keep me from seeing," he sald. She was in lears over his rebuff. She understood now. Rouletabilic during all this conversation had not ceased to watch through the open doors of Matrena's room and the dressing-room the farther fatal door whose brass bolt shone in the yellow light of the night lamp.

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