MYST of the BOU CA'BI TON E. STEVENSON

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longs to Armand & Son."

of excitement.

morrow."

ensily enough."

that endinet. M. Armand?"

"We believe it to have been made eyes narrowing. "Yes, I thought he'd for Mme. de Montespan by M. Boule be around for it, though I hardly himself," he answered "It is the thought he'd come so soon. Who does original of one now in the Louvre | It happen to be Lester?" which is known to have belonged to the Grand Louis."

"It was Mr. Vantine's correct guess at the history of the cabinet." I explained. "which gave me the basis for then?" he queried, with a little flush my theory A cabluet belonging to Mme de Montespan would, of course, have a secret drawer What more nat- fike you to meet him, Godfrey He is ural than that it should be guarded by Fellx Armand, the 'son' of the firm, a poisoned mechanism?"

What more natural, indeed! It is men I ever met." good reasoning. Mr Lester," he agreed engerly, his eyes burning like two conisof fire, so intense was his interest. "I have been from boyhood a lover of tales of mystery. I am fascinated." ter?" "Perhaps you can assist us," I sug-

gested. "for that theory of mine has been completely disproved." "Disproved? In what way?" he de-

manded. "The secret drawer has been found." "How?" he cried, his voice sharp with surprise. "Found? The secret

drawer has been found?" "Yes, and there was no poisoned mechanism guarding it." He breathed deeply for an instant;

then he pulled himself together with a little laugh. "Really," he said, "I must not in-

dulge myself in this way. Was the drawer empty?" "No; there was a packet of letters

in it." "Delleious! Love letters, of a certaluty! From the Great Louis to the

Montespan, perhaps? "No, unfortunately, they were of a much more recent date. They have been restored to their owner. I hope that you agree with me that that was the right thing to do?"

"Since the letters have been returned." he sold at last, a little dryly, "it ever known him to admit himself deis useless to discuss the matter Has feated. "Perhaps I'll see you tomornor other explanation been found for row," he added, and we parted at the

his mine "Yes. Ills unine is flodfrey."

"A mun of the law, like yourself?" "On, no, a newspaperman. But be had been a member of the detective force before that He is extraordinarily keen. But that combination was too much for him' M. Armund snapped the drawer back

into place with a little crash. "I am glad, at any rate, that it was discovered," he said. "I will not conceal from you, Mr. Lester, that it adds not a little to the value of the cabi-

net.' "What is its value?" I asked. "Mr Vantine wanted me to buy it for him and named a most extravagant figure as the fimit he was willing to pay."

"Really," M. Armand answered affer an instant's hesitation. "I would not cure to nume a figure. Mr. Lester. without further consultation with my further."

"What is it, Parks?" I said as that

worthy appeared at the door "There's a van outside, sir," he said. and a couple of men are unloading a slece of furniture. Is it all right, sir?" "Yes." I answered. "Have them bring it in here, and ask the man in charge of the inventory to step over here a minute. Mr. Vantine left his ollection of art objects to the Metropolitan Museum." I explained to M Armand, "and I should like the representative of the museum to be present when the exchange is made." "Certainly," he assented. "That is

very just."

Parks was back in a moment, pllot "To its owner?" he repeated, his ing two men who carried between them an object swathed in buriap,

and the Metropolitan man followed them in "I am Mr Lester," I said to him. "Why," I sold, a little impatiently, "Mr. Vanthe's executor, and this is "you know as well as I do that it be-

M. Fellx Armand of Armand & Sen of Paris We are correcting an error "You've seen their representative, which was made just before Mr. Vantine died. That cubinet yonder was shipped him by mistake in place of "He came to see me yesterday. I'd one which he had bought M. Armand has caused the right one to be sent and one of the most finished gentle-

over and will take away the one which belongs to him. I have already spoken to the museum's attorney about the matter, but I wished you to be presen when the exchange was made "That is a very tandsome piece."

said the Metropolitan man "1 nm sorry the museum is not to get it." The two men meanwhile, under M.

Arinand's direction, had been strip ping the wrappings from the other cab inet, and it finally stood revealed. It, too, was a beautiful plece of furniture, but even my untrained eye could

see how greatly it fell below the other "The other cabinet is yours," I said "I shall hope to see you again, Mr

Lester," he said, with a cordiality which dattered me. "and to renew our very pleasant acqualatance When ever you are in Paris I trust you will not full to honor me by letting me know

"Thank you," I said "I shall cer tainly remember that invitation And meanwhile, since you are here in New York" "You are most kind," he broke in,

"and I was myself hoping that we might at least dine together. But I am competied to proceed to Roston this eventug, and from there I shall goon to Quebec." Then he signed to the two men to

take up the cabluet and himself laid mounting steeply to the story overhead, and after that moment's amazed a protecting hand upon it as it was hesitation Godfrey sat down on the carried through the door and down the steps to the van which was back | bottom step and removed his shoes quietly, motioning us to do the same. ed up to the curb It was lifted care-Simmonds obeyed phieguntically, but fully inside, the two men clambered my hands were trembling. In beskle it, the driver spoke to the When I tooked up Godfrey and Simhorses, and the van rolled slowly away monds were stealing slowly up the up the avenue M Armand watched it for a moment. stair, revolver in hand. I followed knocking together, for there was somewalting, waved a inst farewell to me and followed after the van. We thing weird and chilling in that voice watched it until it turned westward at going on and on. It sounded like the voice of a madman. There was somethe first cross street. "Mr. Godfrey's occupation will be thing about it at once ferocious and gone," said Parks, with a fittle hough | triumphant. "He has fairly lived with that cabinet Godfrey paused an instant at the for the past three or four days. He stair bend, listening intently, Then he moved cautiously forward toward was here just night for quite awhile." "Last night?" I echoed, surprised. an open door, from which the voice second to come, motioning us at the "I was sure he would be here today." same time to stay where we were. I milded. The next instant I was jumping And as I knelt, butted in perspiration, down the steps two at a time, for a I caught one word, repeated over and cab in which two men were sitting came down the avenue and rolled slow-"Revenge, revenge, revengel" ly around the corner in the direction taken by the van One of its occu CHAPTER XII. pants turned toward me and waved "Death." tris hand, and I recognized Jim God-ODFREY, on hands and knees. frey. was peering into the room. It was with a certain vexation of U Then he drew back and mo spirit that I found myself racing after tioned us forward. Golfrey's can, for I reallyed that he In the middle of the floor stood the had not been entirely frank with me Boule endinet, and before it, with his Certainly he had dropped no that of back to the door, stord a man ripping his intention to follow Around. savagely away the states of burlap in And it suddenly dawned upon me that even I did not know the cabinet's which it and been as quied, talking to himself the while in a sort of any destination. M Around and volumage singsong and passing from me teered bo information. I reached the corner is time to see mont to moment to groups at a hud died buildle lying on the floor against the van turn northward lato Sixth avenne. At Sisteenth street it turned the opposite wall. For a fime I could not under out what this bundle was westward ugali, and then northward. Then, straining my eyes, I saw that it Into Seventh avenue. was the body of a man wrapped. What could Armand be doing in this part of the town? I asked myself. Did. round and round in some weblike spose to leave that priceless cabinid in this dingy quarter? And then fabric I paused abruptly and allpped into an And as I stared at him I caught the archway, for the van had stopped some glitter of his eyes as he watched the distance ahead and was backing up to man working at the cabinet- a glitter the curb not to be mistaken the same glitter Leking out discreetly, I saw the cab which had so frightened me or containing Armand stop also, and that fore. What was the meaning of this gentleman allulated and paid the driv ferocious scene? The other call ratiosi on at a My heart leaped into my throat, for good pace and disappeared up the av. Godfrey, with a sharp cry of "Stop!" nut. Then the two porters lifted out spring to his feet and dashed into the the cabinet and, with Armand show- room, Simmonds at his beels ing them the way, carried it into the I suppose two seconds elapsed before building before which the van had I reached the threshold, and I stopped there, staring, clutching at the wall to storiged. They were gone perhaps five min- steady myself. utes, from which I argued that they There was the cabinet with its wrapwere carrying it mystairs; then they plags torn sway, but the figure on the reappeared, with Armond accompany- floor had disappeared, and before an out also to the the driver of the rate a man, a glast of a turn, his hunds Then the porters slimbed abound, and shore his head, his face working with It ratifed away out of sight Armand fear and rage, while Golfrey, his lips stood far a moment on the step look- curling into a mocking smile, pressed ing up and down the ovenue, theo dis- a pistoi against his bacast.

An instant infer 1 saw Godfrey and another man whom I recognized as Simmonds come out of a shop across

1 HL

Q.

nicker in the air above the man's head. and he screamed shrilly. "Death!" he shricked. "Death!"

For one dreadful instant longer he stood there motionless; then, with a strangled cry, he pitched forward heav-Hy at Godfrey's feet I have a confused remembrance of Godfrey stoeping for an instant above the body, staring at it, and then, with a sharp cry, hurting himself through that open doorway. In a moment Godfrey was back in the room, crossed it at a bound and dashed to the door opening into the hall, just as it was slammed in his face.

I saw him tear desperately at the knob, then retreat two steps and hurl himself against it. But it held firm, and from the hall outside came a burst of mocking hughter that fairly froze my blood.

Simmonds was quicker than I, and together they threw themselves at the door It cracked ominously, but still held Again they tried, and this time it split from top to bottom. Godfrey kicked the pieces to either side and slipped between them, Simmonds after

I reached the statr head in time to see Godfrey try the front door and then turn along the lower hall leading to the back of the house. An instant later a chorus of frenzied women's shricks made my hair stand on end. How 1 got down the stairs I do not cnow. But I, too, turned back along the lower hall, expecting any instant to come upon I knew not what horror. I reached an open door, passed through it and found myself in the laundry in the midst of a group of excited and indignant women, who greeted my appearance with a fresh series of screams. Unable to go farther, I sat limply lown upon a box and looked at them was still sitting there when Godfrey enme back, breathing heavily, chagrin and anger In his eyes

"A crime has been committed apstairs." he said to the manager. "This gentleman with me is Mr Simmonds of the detective bureau," and at the words Simmonds showed his shield. 'We shall have to notify headquarters," Godfrey went on, "and I would advise that you keep your girls at their work. I don't suppose you want to be mixed up in it."

"Sure not," agreed the manager promptly, and while Simmonds went to the phone and called up police headquarters the manager had the girls suck at their work in short order. Godfrey came over to me and laid his hand on my shoulder.

"Why. Lester." he said. "you look as though you were at your last gasp." "I am." I said. "I'm going to have ervous prostration if this thing keeps

ap You're not looking particularly happy yourself." "I'm not happy. I've let that fellow

dill a man right under my nose-literally under my nose-and then get IWHY!" "Kill a man!" I repeated. "Do you

nenn''-"Go upstairs and look at the right hand of the man lying there," sold Godfrey curtly, "and you'll see what 1

> Simmonds joined us with a twisted smile on his lips, and I saw that even he was considerably shaken.

"I got Grady," he said, "and told him what had happened. He says he's too busy to come up and that I'm to take charge of things. The ambuinnce will be around at once. We'd

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"I'd like to meet him," said Godfrey, smilling queerly. "Perhaps I shall, some day. I hope so, anyway. But how did he explain the blunder, Les-"In some way they shipped the wrong cabinet to Vantine. The right one will get here on La Provence to-"It is all most interesting," Godfrey commented. "Godfrey," I added, "I felt yesterday when I was talking with him that

perhaps he knew more about this affair to M Armand than he would admit. I could see that be guessed in an instant who the owner of the letters was, and what they contained. Do you think I ought to hold on to the cabinet a while longer? I could invent some pretext for delay,

"Why, no: let him have his cabinet." said Godfrey, with an alacrity that sur-"If your theory about it prised me. has been exploded, what's the use of hanging on to it?"

"I don't see any use in doing so." I admitted, "but I thought perhaps you might want more time to examine it." "I've examined it all I'm going to." Godfrey answered, and I told myself that this was the first time I had

Armand. But he was not there, and then mounted into the cab which was them, but 1 confess my knees were "Very ciever, indead," he said. "I ing them He iljoed them and went open doorway into another room stood

Saw the Cab Containing Armand Stop.

the street and dush over to the house into which the cabinet had been taken. They were standing on the doorstep when I joined them.

it was a dingy building, entirely typical of the dingy neighborhood. The ground floor was occupied by a laundry which the sign on the front window declared to be French, and the room which the window lighted extended the whole width of the building except for a door which opened presumably on the stairway. leading to the upper stories

Godfrey's face was flaming with exdiement as he turned the knob of this door gently-gently. The door was locked. He stooped and applied an eye to the keyhole.

"The key is in the lock," he whispered. Simmonds took from his pocket a

pair of slender pliers and passed them OVEL. Godfrey inserted the pliers in the

keyhole, grasped the end of the key and turned it slowly. "Now !" he said, softly opened the

door and slipped inside. I followed, and Simmonds came after me like a shadow, closing the door carefully be hind him.

Then we all stopped, and my heart, at least, was in my month, for from somewhere overhead came the sound

of a man's volce talking excitedly. Even in the seludarkness I could see the look of astonishment and alarm on Godfrey's face as he stood for a moment motionless, listening to that

mean. volce. I also stood with ears astrain. but I could make nothing of what it was saying. Then suddenly I realized that it was sponking in French. And set it was not Armand's voice-of that

I was certain Fronting as was a narrow stair better get our shoes on and go back



the death of Mr. Vantine and of this corner. But I did not see him on the morrow stranger? You do not even know who he was?"

"Oh, yes, we have discovered that, He was a worthless fellow named de la Huchette, la Paris."

M. Armand had been gazing at me Intently, but now his look relaxed, and as a man might do when relieved of a before. burden.

"You did not, by any chance, know him?" I asked carelessly.

"No, I think not But I do not understand what this Dronet, as you call him, was doing in the house of Mr. Vantine."

"He was trying to get possession of anticipated in getting the cabinet off the letters." I sold "What none of the boat and through the customs, and us understands, M. Armand, is how he It was not yet 2 o'clock when we reachwas killed. Who or what killed him ed the Vantine house. How was that poison administered. Can you suggest an explanation?"

"It is a nice problem," he said, "a most interesting one I will think it over, Mr Lester I shull see you again Wednesday If it is agreeable | that the inventory was already in progto you we can meet at the house of Mr. Vantine and exchange the cabi nets

"At what time?"

"I do not know with exactness. There may be some delay in getting the cabinet from the ship Perhaps It would be better if I called for you?" "Very well," I assented

CHAPTER XI.

I Part With the Boule Cabinet.

HE coroner's inquest was held next day. The police had discovered practically no new evidence, none certainly which shed any light on the way in which Drouet and Philip Vantine had met death.

Police Commissioner Grady did not go on the stand He was not at the in quest. The case had been placed in Simmonds' hands, and it was he who testified on behalf of the police, admitting candidly that they were all at sea. But he had not abandoned hope and was still working on the case.

The end of the bearing was that the jury brought in a verdict that Philip Vantine and Georges Drouet had died from the effects of a poison administered by a person or persons unknown. Godfrey joined me at the door as 1 was leaving

"I was giad to bear Stmmonds confess that the police are up a tree." he said. "Of course Grady is trying to sneak out of it. I'll see that Sim monds gets a square deal."

"We're all up a tree, aren't we?" 1 said "Since my theory about the Boule cabinet exploded 1 have given up hope Ry the way. I'm going to turn the calinet over to its owner to it." I said. COLLOW.

I was rather expecting a call from him during the morning, and when none came I was certain I should find him Drouet, living in an attle in the Rue awaiting me when I arrived at the Vanthe house, in company with M when I asked for him Parks told me I fancied that he drew a deep breath that he had not seen him since the day

> I confess that Godfrey's indifference to the fate of the cabinet surprised me greatly; besides, I was hoping that he would wish to meer the fascinating Frenchman-more fuscinating, if possible, than he had been on Monday There had been less delay than he had

"I haven't seen Mr. Godfrey." Parks repeated. "but there's others here as it

fair breaks my heart to see." He motioned toward the door of the music room, and, stepping to it, I saw

"The cabinet is in the room across the hall." I said to M. Armand, and led the way through the anteroom into the room beyond.

Parks switched on the lights for us. and my companion ginuced with surprise at the heavy shutters covering the windows. "We put those up for a protection,"

I explained. "We had an idea that some one would try to enter. in fact, one evening we did find a wire connecting with the burgiar alarm cut. and, later on, saw some one peering in through the hole in that shutter youder.'

"You did?" M. Arinand queried quickty. "Would you recognize the man, if you were to meet him again?"

"Oh, no: you see the hole is quite small. There was nothing visible ex-cept a pair of eyes. Yet i might know them again. for I never before saw such eyes-so bright, so burning." M. Armand was gazing at the cabinct apparently only half listening.

"Will you show me how the secret drawer is operated. Mr. Lester?" he said. "I am most curious about it." I placed my hand upon the table and pressed the three points which the veiled indy had shown as. The little

handle fell forward with a click, and I pulled the drawer open. He examined it with much interest: pushed it back into plaze and then opened it himself

have never seen another so well concenled.

"My friend and I went over the cabtnet very curefully and could not find

"Your friend-1 think you mentioned "presed inducts.

to see Just above the knuckles were two tiny incidens, with a drop or two of blood oozing away from them. . and the flesh about them swollen and discolored.

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Then, as I stood there staring, it seemed to me that there was a soft of

rs and see if anything car done for that fellow " Simmonds knelt beside the body and held up the Huip right hand for us

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