

The MYSTERY of the BOULE CABINET

BY BURTON E. STEVENSON

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"I knew what it was the instant he pulled 'Death', said Godfrey quickly. 'And he knew what it was the instant he felt the stroke. It is evident enough that he had seen it used before or heard of it and knew that it meant instant death.'

I sat down, staring at the dead man and tried to collect my senses. I saw a man roughly dressed, with bushy black hair and tangled beard; a very giant of a man.

A sudden thought brought me bolt upright.

'But Armand?' I cried. 'Where is Armand?'

Godfrey looked at me with a hat plying onto.

'What? Lester?' he said. 'Don't you understand even yet? It was your friend M. Armand who did that, and he was in the dead man's hands. I saw through it. I had been struck a heavy blow upon the head; black circles whirled before my eyes.'

'Was it Armand?' I asked. 'Who lay there in the corner?'

'Certainly it was,' Godfrey answered. 'Who else could it be?'

'Godfrey!' I cried, remembering suddenly. 'Did you see his eyes as he lay there watching the man at the cabinet?'

'Yes; saw them.'

'They were the same eyes?'

'The same eyes.'

'And the laugh—did you hear that laugh?'

'Certainly I heard it.'

'I heard it once before,' I said, 'and you thought it was a case of nerves.'

I felt silent a moment, shivering a little at the remembrance.

'But why did Armand lie there so quietly?' I asked at last. 'Was he injured?'

Godfrey made a little gesture toward the corner.

'Go see for yourself,' he said. 'Something lay along the wall, on the spot where I had seen that figure, and



as I bent over I saw that it was a large net, finely meshed, but very strong.

'That was dropped over Armand's head as he came up the stairs,' said Godfrey. 'or flung over him as he came into the room. Then the dead man ponder jumped upon him and trussed him up with those ropes.'

'Pushing the net aside, I saw upon the floor a little pile of severed cords.'

'Yes,' I agreed; 'he would be able to do that. Have you noticed his size, Godfrey? He was almost a giant!'

'He couldn't have done it if Armand hadn't been willing that he should,' retorted Godfrey curtly. 'You see he had no difficulty in getting away, and he held up the net and pointed to the great rents in it. He cut his way out while he was lying here. I ought to have known.'

He threw the net down upon the floor with a gesture of disgust and despair. Then he stopped in front of the Boule cabinet and looked down at it unseeing, and, after a moment, his face brightened. The tawny wrappings had been almost wholly torn away.

'But we'll get him,' Simmonds' said Godfrey, and his lips broke into a

'Simply because I had found out he was Armand. Felix Armand is in Paris at this moment. You were too credulous, Lester.'

'Why, I never had any doubt of his being Armand,' I stammered. 'He knew about my cablegram; he knew about the firm's answer.'

'Of course he did, because your cable was never received by the Armands, but by a confederate in this fellow's employ, and it was that confederate who answered it.'

'Then you still believe that the cabinet was sent to Vantime by design and not by accident?'

'Absolutely. It was sent by the Armands in good faith because they believed that it had been purchased by Vantime, all of which had been arranged very carefully by the great unknown.'

'Tell me how you know all this, Godfrey,' I said.

'I cabled our man at Paris to investigate. Our man went at once to the elder Armand and learned a number of very interesting things. One was that the son, Felix Armand, was in Paris; another was that no member of the firm knew anything about your cable or the answer to it; a third was that had the cable been received it would have been understood, because the Armands' books show that this cabinet was bought by Phillip Vantime for the sum of 15,000 francs.'

'Not this one?' I protested.

'Yes, this one, and it was cheap at the price.'

'But Vantime told me himself that he did not buy that cabinet.'

'Nor did he. But somebody bought it in his name and directed that it be sent forward to him.'

'And paid 15,000 francs for it?'

'Certainly. And paid 15,000 francs to the Armands.'

'Rather an expensive present,' I said feebly, for my brain was beginning to whirl again.

'Oh, it wasn't intended as a present. The purchaser planned to reclaim it, but Vantime's death spoiled his plan. What was his object? Was he trying to evade the duty?'

'The other cabinet is the one which Vantime really purchased. It was, of course, sent forward to this other fellow's address here in New York. His plan is evident enough—to call upon Vantime as the representative of the Armands or perhaps as the owner of the Montepan cabinet and make the exchange. Vantime's death spoiled that, and he had to make the exchange through you.'

'And he accomplished all this by means of a confederate in the employ of the Armands?'

'No doubt of it. The clerk who made

the supposed sale to Vantime and got a commission on it resigned suddenly two days ago—just as soon as he had intercepted your cable and answered it. The Paris police are looking for him, but I don't think they'll find him.'

'That's all clear enough,' I said. 'but what is there about that Boule cabinet which makes this unknown willing to do murder for it? Does he think those letters are still in it?'

'He knows they are not in it now—you told him. Before that he knew nothing about the letters. If he had known of them he would have had them out before the cabinet was shipped.'

'What is it, then?' I demanded.

'And, above all, Godfrey, why should this fellow hide himself in Vantime's house and kill two men?'

'I see no reason to believe that he was ever inside the Vantime house,' said Godfrey quietly. 'That is, until you took him there yourself this afternoon.'

'That's nonsense. He must have been in the house or he couldn't have killed Vantime and Drouet.'

'Who said he killed them?'

'If he didn't kill them, who did?'

'Well,' Godfrey answered, 'now I'm going to rattle a little. We will return to your fascinating friend, Armand, as we may as well call him for the present. He is an extraordinary man. In my opinion he is the greatest criminal of modern times.'

'If he is a criminal at all he is undoubtedly a great one,' I conceded.

'And it is hard for me to believe that he is a criminal. He's the most cultured man I ever met.'

'Of course he is. That's why he's so dangerous.'

CHAPTER XIII.

'Crocchard the Invisible.'

'THIS M. Armand,' continued Godfrey, 'is a great criminal and has, of course, various followers, upon whom he must rely for the performance of certain details, since he can be in but one place at a time. Abject and absolute obedience is necessary to success, and he compels obedience in the only way in which it can be compelled among criminals—by fear. For disobedience there is but one punishment—death. And the manner of the death is so certain and so mysterious as to be almost supernatural, for deserters and traitors are found to have died, inevitably and invariably, from the effects of an insidious wound on the right hand, just above the knuckles.'

'It is by this secret,' Godfrey continued, 'that Armand preserves his absolute supremacy. And occasionally the temptation is too great, and one of his men deserts. Armand sends this cabinet to America. He knows that in this case the temptation is very great indeed. He fears treachery, and he arranges in the cabinet a mechanism which will inflict death upon the traitor in precisely the same way in which he himself inflicts it, by means of a poisoned shaft in the right hand, the instant the traitor opens the cabinet and touches the mechanism.'

'I don't see it,' I said helplessly.

'Why, Lester,' protested Godfrey, 'it's as plain as day. Who was that bearded giant who was killed? The traitor, of course. Do you suppose for an instant that Armand was ignorant of his presence in that house? Do you suppose he would have been able to take Armand prisoner if Armand had not been willing that he should?'

'I don't see how Armand could help himself after that fellow got his hands on him.'

'You don't? And you saw yourself that he was not really bound—that he had cut himself loose?'

'That is true,' I said thoughtfully.

'Let us reconstruct the story,' Godfrey went on rapidly. 'The traitor discovers the secret of the cabinet. He follows Armand to New York, shadows him to the house on Seventh avenue, waits for him there and seizes and binds him. He is half-mad with triumph. He chants a crazy slanging about revenge, revenge, revenge! And in order that the triumph may be complete, he does not kill his prisoner at once. He rolls him into a corner and proceeds to rip away the burly. His triumph will be to open the secret drawer before Armand's eyes. And Armand lies there in the corner, his eyes gleaming, because it is really the moment of his triumph which is at hand. The instant the traitor opened the drawer he would be strangled by the poisoned mechanism. It was for that that Armand waited!'

'I lay back in my chair with a gasp of amazement and admiration. I had been blind not to see it!'

'It was not until the last moment,' Godfrey went on, 'when the traitor was bending above the cabinet feeling for the spring that I realized what was about to happen. There was no time for hesitation—I sprang into the room. Armand vanished in an instant, and the giant also tried to escape, but I caught him at the door. I had no idea of his danger; I had no thought that Armand would dare linger. He had to kill that man; there were no two ways about it. Whatever the risk, he had to kill him.'

'But why?' I asked. 'Why?'

'To seal his lips. If we had captured him do you suppose Armand's secret would have been safe for an instant? So he had to kill him—he had to kill him with the poisoned burly—and he did kill him and got away into the bargain!'

'Perhaps he knew that we were there all the time.'

'Of course he did,' asserted Godfrey grimly. 'To think that I could follow him about the streets of New York without his knowing it! He knew from the first that he might be

followed and prepared for it.'

'But how about Armand?' I protested. 'Aren't you going to try to capture him? Are you going to let him get away?'

'He won't get away,' and Godfrey's eyes were gleaming again. 'We don't have to search for him, for we've got our trap, Lester, and it's baited with a bait he can't resist—the Boule cabinet.'

'And you really think he will walk into your trap?'

'I know he will! One of these days he will try to get that cabinet out of the steel cell at the Twenty-third street station in which we have it locked. The only thing I am afraid of is that he'll get away with the cabinet in spite of us.'

Days passed and nothing happened—nothing, that is, in so far as the cabinet was concerned. There was an inquiry, of course, over the victim of the latest tragedy, and once again I was forced to give my evidence before a coroner's jury.

The forensic measurements of the victim had been called in Paris, and he had been instantly identified as a fellow named Morel, well known to the police as a daring and desperate criminal; in fact, M. Lepine considered the matter so important that he solved next day that he was sending Inspector Pigeon to New York to investigate the affair further and to confer with our bureau as to the best methods to be taken to apprehend the murderer. Inspector Pigeon, it was added, would sail at once from Havre on La Savoie.

Meanwhile, Godfrey's men, with Simmonds at their head, strained every nerve to discover the whereabouts of the fugitive; a net was thrown over the entire city, but while a number of fish were captured, the one which the police particularly wished for was not among them. Gladly asserted confidently that he had left New York.

The Boule cabinet remained locked up in a cell at the Twenty-third street station and Simmonds kept the key in his pocket. I was much amused at the pains which Godfrey took to inform the fugitive as to its whereabouts and as to how it was guarded. Over and over again, while the other papers considered at his inability, he told how it had been placed in the strongest cell at the Twenty-third street station; a cell whose bars were made of chrome nickel steel which no saw could bite into; a cell whose lock was worked not only by a key, but by a combination, known to one man only; a cell isolated from the other cells, standing alone in the middle of the third corridor. In full view of the officer on guard, so that no one could approach it, day or night, without being

instantly discovered; a cell whose door was connected with an automatic alarm over the sergeant's desk in the front room.

The Boule cabinet itself Godfrey said little, saving his story for the department which he seemed so sure would come. But the details which I have given above were dwelt upon in the hour, until, impugning to meet Godfrey on the street one day, I protested that he would only succeed in frightening the fugitive away altogether, even if he still had any designs on the cabinet, which I very much doubted. But Godfrey only laughed.

'There's not the slightest danger of frightening him a way,' he said. 'This fellow isn't that kind.'

'But a man would be a fool to attempt to get that cabinet,' I protested.

'It's simply impossible,' I'm free to admit,' he agreed. 'But, just the same, I wake every morning cold with fear and run to the phone to make sure the cabinet's safe. You don't appreciate this fellow as I do. He's a genius. Nothing is impossible to him. He'd do jobs any jobs. When he thinks a job is too easy he makes it harder just as a sporting chance.'

'You know who he is, then?' I demanded.

'I think I do—I hope I do. But I am not going to tell even you till I'm sure. I'll say this: If he is who I think he is it would be a delight to catch one's breath with him. We haven't got any one else like him now, which is a pity.'

I was inclined to doubt this, for I have no romantic admiration for men whose brains, even in fiction, flow ever picturesque and dramatic, a thin is, after all, a thief.

Continued next week

W. C. T. U. COLUMN

The Monitor Assumes no responsibility for the matter in this column. The Editor.

Officers of W. C. T. U.
President, Mrs. Esther Morgan.
Editor, Mrs. Lucy L. Whiteaker.

The children held their usual meeting on Sunday at the M. E. church, 2250 1/2nd street. The new officers were in their places to take charge of the work before them. Mesdames James, Morgan and Whiteaker were present to help in the lessons. New and old songs were sung to inspire new enthusiasm and the lesson (the frame work of the house we live in) was well answered by the children. New names were added to the roll. The membership now reaches near the hundred mark and Mrs. James seems to be the right woman in the right place to superintend this branch of the White Ribbon army. All are welcome to attend the children's meetings.

A farwell social will be given to Mrs. Wilcox at the M. E. church on Monday evening by the members of the W. C. T. U.

Memorial services in honor of Mrs. Edith Hill Booker, president of the Oregon W. C. T. U., who died recently were conducted last night by Rev. W. B. Hinson, pastor of the White

Temple. The title of his sermon was 'The Vacant Chair,' and he told of the great loss that the Oregon W. C. T. U. had sustained through the death of Mrs. Booker. Her work as president of the organization and the importance of it to the temperance cause was dwelt upon by Dr. Hinson. A special musical program was given in connection with the memorial services. A picture of Mrs. Booker, decorated with the insignia of the W. C. T. U., was displayed in front of the pulpit.

Portland, Maine, April 16—By the death here of Mrs. Lillian M. N. Stevens, who for sixteen years was president of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Miss Anna Gordon of Evanston, Ill., who was vice president at large, becomes the head of the movement. Mrs. Stevens was 70 years old. Under her direction the W. C. T. U. grew until it was regularly organized in every State in the Union. There are now about 12,000 local unions with a membership and following, including the children's societies, of about half a million.

The Woman's Christian Union held their meeting with Mrs. Stansbery on Monday with 18 present. Devotional was led by Mrs. Morgan, reading scripture lesson and Mrs. Fitzgerald gave the prayer of uplift and all joined in a hymn of praise to the Great Leader. Petitions were discussed and reports given were very satisfactory to the cause. Letters and messages from state and county officers were inspiring and gave us further plans of work. The funerals exercises held in Portland for our loved President were read, showing Mrs. Booker was a great evangelist and had been a national worker in the White Ribbon army for 20 years and all feel her loss will be great to the state at this time but we rejoice that we have her plans given us to follow. The workers were all informed through the newspapers of the death of Mrs. Stevens our national president and a brief sketch of her life was read and the grand work she had done for our cause giving to the White Ribbon cause before and since Miss Willard's death. It would take volumes to tell of all the grand work this wonderful leader has done to inspire and encourage and bring to pass the wonderful results in the reforms of the world and her 70 years of work done by her influence has not been in vain. She filled the place Miss Willard left for her well and we trust God has another to take the place of those He has called home, who will yet lead on to victory, the coats against wrong. New members were added to the roll and corn items appointed for contest work and publishing our meetings. Unfinished business was left for the next meeting to be held the following Monday at three o'clock in the home of Mrs. P. Clagett. All are invited to come and join these uplifting meetings for God and Home and Native Land.

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