

The Mystery of The Yellow Room

By GASTON LEROUX

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CHAPTER III.

"A Man Has Passed Like a Shadow Through the Blinds."

HALF an hour later Rouletabille and I were on the platform of the Orleans station, awaiting the departure of the train which was to take us to Epiney-sur-Orge.

On the platform we found M. de Marquet and his registrar, who represented the judicial court of Corbell, M. de Marquet had spent the night in Paris, assisting in the final rehearsal at the Scala of a little play of which he was the unknown author, signing himself simply "Castigat Ridendo."

M. Marquet was beginning to be a "noble old gentleman." Generally he was extremely polite and full of gay humor and in all his life had but one passion—that of dramatic art.

Because of the mystery which shrouded it the case of the yellow room was certain to fascinate so theatrical a mind.

At the moment of meeting him I heard M. de Marquet say to the registrar with a sigh:

"I hope, my dear M. Maleine, this bulldog with his pickax will not destroy so fine a mystery."

"Have no fear," replied M. Maleine. "His pickax may demolish the pavilion perhaps, but it will leave our case intact. I have sounded the walls and examined the ceiling and floor, and I know all about it. I am not to be deceived."

Having thus reassured his chief, M. Maleine, with a discreet movement of the head, drew M. de Marquet's attention to us. The face of that gentleman clouded, and as he saw Rouletabille approaching, had in hand, he sprang into one of the empty carriages, saying half aloud to his registrar as he did so, "Above all, no journalists!"

M. Maleine replied in the same tone, "I understand," and then tried to prevent Rouletabille from entering the same compartment with the examining magistrate.

"Excuse me, gentlemen, this compartment is reserved."

"I am a journalist, monsieur, engaged on the Epique," said my young friend, with a great show of gesture and politeness, "and I have a word or two to say to M. de Marquet."

"Monsieur is very much engaged with the inquiry he has in hand."

"Ah! His inquiry, pray believe me, is absolutely a matter of indifference to me. I am no scavenger of odds and ends," he went on, with infinite contempt in his lower lip; "I am a theatrical reporter, and this evening I shall have to give a little account of the play at the Scala."

"Get in, sir, please," said the registrar.

Rouletabille was already in the compartment. I went in after him and seated myself by his side. The registrar followed and closed the carriage door.

M. de Marquet looked at him.

"Ah, sir," Rouletabille began, "you must not be angry with M. Maleine. It is not with M. de Marquet that I desire to have the honor of speaking, but with M. 'Castigat Ridendo.' Permit me to congratulate you—personally, as well as the writer for the Epique." And Rouletabille, having first introduced me, introduced himself.

M. de Marquet, with a nervous gesture, caressed his beard into a point.

"The work of the dramatic author may interfere," he said, after a slight hesitation, "with that of the magistrate, especially in a province where one's labors are little more than routine."

"Oh, you may rely on my discretion!" cried Rouletabille.

The train was in motion.

"We have started!" said the examining magistrate, surprised at seeing us still in the carriage.

"Yes, monsieur, truth has started," said Rouletabille, smiling amiably, "on its way to the Chateau du Glandier. A fine case, M. de Marquet, a fine case!"

"An obscure, incredible, unfathomable, inexplicable affair, and there is only one thing I fear, M. Rouletabille, that the journalists will be trying to explain it."

My friend felt this a rap on his knuckles.

"Yes," he said simply, "that is to be feared. They meddle in everything. As for my interest, monsieur, I only referred to it by mere chance—the mere chance of finding myself in the same train with you and in the same compartment of the same carriage."

"Where are you going, then?" asked M. de Marquet.

and seemed ready to relapse into obstinate silence. He only relaxed a little when Rouletabille no longer left him in ignorance of the fact that we were going to the Glandier for the purpose of shaking hands with an "old and intimate friend." M. Robert Darzac—a man whom Rouletabille had perhaps seen once in his life.

"Poor Robert!" continued the young reporter, "this dreadful affair may be his death—he is so deeply in love with Mile. Stangerson. It is to be hoped that Mile. Stangerson's life will be saved."

"Let us hope so. Her father told me yesterday that if she does not recover it will not be long before he joins her in the grave. What an incalculable loss to science his death would be!"

"The wound on her temple is serious, is it not?"

"Evidently, but by a wonderful chance it has not proved mortal. The blow was given with great force."

"Then it was not with the revolver she was wounded," said Rouletabille, glancing at me in triumph.

M. de Marquet appeared greatly embarrassed.

"I didn't say anything, I don't want to say anything, I will not say anything," he said. And he turned toward his registrar as if he no longer knew us.

But Rouletabille was not to be so easily shaken off. He moved nearer to the examining magistrate and, drawing a copy of the *Matin* from his pocket, he showed it to him and said:

"There is one thing, monsieur, which I may inquire of you without committing an indiscretion. You have, of course, seen the account given in the *Matin*? It is absurd, is it not?"

"Not in the slightest, monsieur."

"What! The yellow room has but one barred window, the bars of which have not been moved, and only one door, which had to be broken open, and the assassin was not found?"

"That's so, monsieur; that's so. That's how the matter stands."

Rouletabille said no more, but plunged into thought. A quarter of an hour thus passed.

Coming back to himself again, he said, addressing the magistrate:

"How did Mile. Stangerson wear her hair on that evening?"

"I don't know," replied M. de Marquet.

"That's a very important point," said Rouletabille. "Her hair was done up in bands, wasn't it? I feel sure that on that evening, the evening of the crime, she had her hair arranged in bands."

"Then you are mistaken, M. Rouletabille," replied the magistrate. "Mile. Stangerson that evening had her hair drawn up in a knot on the top of her head, her usual way of arranging it, her forehead completely uncovered. I can assure you, for we have carefully examined the wound. There was no blood on the hair, and the arrangement of it has not been disturbed since the crime was committed."

"You are sure? You are sure that on the night of the crime she had not her hair in bands?"

"Quite sure," the magistrate continued, smiling, "because I remember the doctor saying to me while he was examining the wound: 'It is a great pity Mile. Stangerson was in the habit of drawing her hair back from her forehead. If she had worn it in bands the blow she received on the temple would have been weakened.' It seems strange to me that you should attach so much importance to this point."

"Oh, if she had not her hair in bands I give it up," said Rouletabille, with a despairing gesture.

"And was the wound on her temple a bad one?" he asked presently.

"Terrible."

"With what weapon was it made?"

"That is a secret of the investigation."

"Have you found the weapon—whatever it was?"

"The magistrate did not answer."

"And the wound in the throat?"

Here the examining magistrate readily confirmed the decision of the doctor that, if the murderer had pressed her throat a few seconds longer, Mile. Stangerson would have died of strangulation.

"The affair as reported in the *Matin*," said Rouletabille eagerly, "seems to me more and more inexplicable. Can you tell me, monsieur, how many openings there are in the pavilion? I mean doors and windows."

"There are five," replied Monsieur de Marquet, after having coughed once or twice, but no longer resisting the desire he felt to talk of the whole of the incredible mystery of the affair he was investigating. "There are five, of which the door of the vestibule is the only entrance to the pavilion—a door always automatically closed, which cannot be opened, either from the outer or inside, except with the two special keys which are never out of the possession of either Daddy Jacques or M. Stangerson. Mile. Stangerson had no need for me, since Daddy Jacques lodged in the pavilion and because, during the daytime, she never left her father. When they, all four, rushed into the yellow room, after breaking open the door of the laboratory, the door in the vestibule re-

mained closed as usual and of the two keys for opening it Daddy Jacques had one in his pocket and M. Stangerson the other. As to the windows of the pavilion, there are four, the one window of the yellow room and those of the laboratory looking out on to the country, the window in the vestibule looking into the park."

"It is by that window that he escaped from the pavilion!" cried Rouletabille.

"How do you know that?"

"How? Oh, the thing is simple enough! As soon as he found he could not escape by the door of the pavilion his only way out was by the window in the vestibule, unless he could pass through a grated window. The window of the yellow room is secured by iron bars, because it looks out upon the open country; the two windows of the laboratory have to be protected in like manner for the same reason. As the murderer got away I conceive that he found a window that was not barred—that of the vestibule, which opens on to the park—that is to say, into the interior of the estate. There's not much magic in all that."

"Yes," said M. de Marquet, "but what you have not guessed is that this single window in the vestibule, though it has no iron bars, has solid iron blinds. Now, these iron blinds have remained fastened by their iron latch, and yet we have proof that the murderer made his escape from the pavilion by that window! Traces of blood on the inside wall and on the blinds as well as on the floor, and footmarks, of which I have taken the measurements, attest the fact that the murderer made his escape that way. But, then, how did he do it, seeing that the blinds remained fastened on the inside? He passed through them like a shadow. But what is more bewildering than all, is that it is impossible to form any idea as to how the murderer got out of the yellow room or how he got across the laboratory to reach the vestibule!"

"Could that window have been closed and refastened after the flight of the assassin?" asked Rouletabille.

"That is what occurred to me for a moment, but it would imply an accomplice or accomplices, and I don't see—"

After a short silence he added:

"Ah, if Mile. Stangerson were only well enough today to allow of her being questioned!"

Rouletabille, following up his thought, asked:

"And the attic? There must be some opening to that?"

"Yes; there is a window or, rather, skylight in it, which, as it looks out toward the country, M. Stangerson has had barred, like the rest of the windows. These bars, as in the other windows, have remained intact, and the blinds, which naturally open inward, have not been unfastened. For the rest, we have not discovered anything to lead us to suspect that the murderer had passed through the attic."

"It seems clear to you, then, monsieur, that the murderer escaped—no body knows how—by the window in the vestibule?"

"Everything goes to prove it."

"I think so, too," confessed Rouletabille gravely.

After a brief silence he continued:

"If you have not found any traces of the murderer in the attic, such as the dirty footmarks similar to those on the floor of the yellow room, you must come to the conclusion that it was not he who stole Daddy Jacques' revolver."

"There are no footmarks in the attic other than those of Daddy Jacques himself," said the magistrate with a significant turn of his head. Then, after an apparent decision, he added, "Daddy Jacques was with M. Stangerson in the laboratory, and it was lucky for him he was."

"Then what part did his revolver play in the tragedy? It seems very clear that this weapon did less harm to Mile. Stangerson than it did to the murderer."

The magistrate made no reply to this question, which doubtless embarrassed him. "M. Stangerson," he said, "tells us that the two bullets have been found in the yellow room, one embedded in the wall stained with the impression of a red hand—a man's large hand—and the other in the ceiling."

"Oh, oh, in the ceiling!" muttered Rouletabille. "In the ceiling! That's very curious! In the ceiling!"

He puffed awhile in silence at his pipe, enveloping himself in the smoke. When he reached Epiney-sur-Orge I had to tap him on the shoulder to arouse him from his dream and come out on to the platform of the station.

There the magistrate and his registrar bowed to us and, by rapidly getting into a cab that was awaiting them, made us understand that they had seen enough of us.

"How long will it take to walk to the Chateau du Glandier?" Rouletabille asked one of the railway porters.

"An hour and a half or an hour and three-quarters—easy walking," the man replied.

Rouletabille looked up at the sky and, no doubt finding its appearance satisfactory, took my arm and said:

"Come on! I need a walk. It was a

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<p>E. T. ANDERSON, M. D. PHYSICIAN AND SURGEON Calls attended to day or night. Home phone, Enterprise, Ore.</p>	<p>RESULT OF MILL MEETING. From Flora Journal. At the meeting of the stockholders of the Flora Milling Co., Monday afternoon, the following officers were elected: F. S. Johnson, president; L. Austin, manager; W. H. Baker, treasurer; T. M. Gilmore, secretary; J. Doran, director. The Milling company so far in erecting the mill have been to the expense of \$9000. The building is number one and the machinery is as good as new. The arrangement in building could not be better. Everything is lovely and in a week will be making flour.</p>	

bit of luck our falling in with that examining magistrate and his registrar, eh? What did I tell you about that revolver?"

His head was bent down, he had his hands in his pockets, and he was whistling. After awhile I heard him murmur:

"Poor woman!"

"Is it Mile. Stangerson you are pitying?"

"Yes. She's a noble woman and worthy of being pitied—a woman of a great, a very great, character. I imagine—I imagine."

"You know her, then?"

"Not at all. I have never seen her but once."

"Why, then, do you say that she is a woman of great character?"

"Because she bravely faced the murderer, because she courageously defended herself, and, above all, because of the bullet in the ceiling."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THROUGH TO MEXICO CITY

Harriman's Extensions in Mexico Will Make Unbroken 3500-Mile Trip.

Chicago, Jan. 11.—Within a very short time it will be possible to travel in a Pullman sleeper without changing from Portland to Seattle to Mexico City through Sacramento, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Mazatlan and Guadalajara, a distance of 3500 miles. This remarkable journey will be made possible by the extensive railroad construction which E. H. Harriman is rapidly prosecuting to a completion in Old Mexico.

When the main line of this work is completed, Mr. Harriman will have the longest north and south railroad in the entire world. Its importance is greatly enhanced by the semi-official announcement that he is to construct a road from a point east of El Paso through the new oil fields of the state of Chihuahua, and then on to a connection with this north and south line on the west coast. The new north and south line through Old Mexico joins the Southern Pacific at Tucson, Arizona, and within a short time, probably less than a month, through sleeping-car service will be established between that city and Mazatlan, a distance of 900 miles.

LABOR MEN GATHER

Cases of Leaders Before Federation Council in Washington

Washington, Jan. 11.—One of the most important assemblages in the history of union labor in the United States is the meeting today of the executive council of the American Federation of Labor, called to consider the sentencing of three leaders of union men to jail for contempt of court.

Just what action the federation will take in the cases of Samuel Gompers, its president; Frank Morrison, its secretary, and John Mitchell, its second vice-president, is not definitely known. It is safe to say, however, that a vigorous protest will be made against the imposition of the jail sentence pronounced by Judge Wright of the District of Columbia supreme court.

Fines Harvester Trust

Topeka, Kan., Jan. 11.—The Kansas supreme court, in decision handed down Saturday, affirmed the verdict and fine of the district court for Shawnee county against the International Harvester Company. The company must pay a fine of \$12,500 on 42 counts, each count being a violation of the criminal section of the Kansas anti-trust laws.

ADMIRAL SPERRY AT NAPLES

Commander of Atlantic Fleet Arrives in Italian Harbor.

Naples, Jan. 11.—The United States battleship Connecticut arrived here Saturday. Her sister ships of the special squadron sent to the relief of the earthquake sufferers, the Vermont, Kansas and Minnesota, accom-

panied the Connecticut to Messina, but did not come to Naples. They proceeded to Villefranche, where they arrived today. Owing to the fact that the whole country is in mourning, no salutes were fired. The sailors manned the sides of the Connecticut and the flags were dipped. Ambassador Griseom was on board.

The Italian port officers visited the Connecticut to pay their respects to Rear-Admiral Sperry and express appreciation for American sympathy and aid.

Taft Puts Lid on Secrets.

Augusta, Ga., Jan. 10.—Beyond the reiteration of the announcement that P. C. Knox will be secretary of state and Frank H. Hitchcock, postmaster-general, President-elect Taft has determined that no other cabinet appointments shall be made known until March 4. To make this determination effective, he will deny all cabinet rumors, predictions or announcements from any source or quarters whatever. In the statement attention was directed to the announcement of the Knox appointment made on the day Mr. Knox arrived in Augusta, and to the statement by the Associated Press from Hot Springs, Va., of the selection of Mr. Hitchcock as postmaster-general both of which were pronounced correct by Mr. Taft.

Park, of the Asbury Methodist Episcopal church, chased a burglar from his residence last night, fell during the chase and badly sprained his knee. Then he had to call for help from the members of his congregation, assembled in the church nearby. The church was quickly emptied and the men took up the chase.

Spurred on by the belief that the burglar was running away with his only overcoat, Rev. Mr. Park attempted to get up three times after he had fallen. Through his persistent efforts Mr. Park forced the burglar to drop the coat.

When the garment was taken into the minister's house it was found to be the property of the burglar and not the pastor.

12-Year-Old Boy Speaks From Pulpit
New York, Jan. 11.—Michael Rued, a boy of 12 years, is perhaps the youngest preacher in the city. He delivered a sermon last night in an East Side Catholic church, taking for his text, "Behold, I Bring You Tidings of Great Joy." The child composed the sermon himself and was well received.

"You know, dear," cooed a young married woman, "you promised to let me have all the pin money I wanted."

"Yes, love, and you shall have it."

"Oh, you dear thing! Well, I saw a pin today, with diamonds and pearls in it, and I do want it so!"—London Express.

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