

The Mystery of The Yellow Room

By GASTON LEROUX

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Roulettable very slowly filled his pipe and lit it. That meant an interesting story. At that moment we heard some one walking in the gallery and passing before our door. Roulettable listened. The sound of the footsteps died away in the distance.

"Is Frederic Larsan in his room?" I asked, pointing to the partition.

"No," my friend answered. "He went to Paris this morning, still on the scent of Darzac who also left for Paris. That matter will turn out badly. I expect that M. Darzac will be arrested in the course of the next week. The worst of it is that everything seems to be in league against him—circumstances, things, people. Not an hour passes without bringing some new evidence against him. The examining magistrate is overwhelmed by it and blind."

"Frederic Larsan, however, is not a novice," I said.

"I thought so," said Roulettable, with a slightly contemptuous turn of his lips. "I fancied he was a much abler man. I had, indeed, a great admiration for him before I got to know his method of working. It's deplorable. He owes his reputation solely to his ability, but he lacks reasoning power. The mathematics of his ideas are very poor."

I looked closely at Roulettable and could not help smiling on hearing this boy of eighteen talking of a man who has proved to the world that he was the finest police sleuth bound in Europe.

"You smile," he said. "You are wrong. I swear I will outwit him and in a striking way. But I must make haste about it, for he has an enormous staff of men given him by M. Robert Darzac, who is this evening going to increase it still more. Think of it, every time the murderer comes to the chateau M. Darzac by a strange fatality absents himself and refuses to give any account of how he employs his time."

"Every time the assassin comes to the chateau!" I cried. "Has he returned, then?"

"Yes, during that famous night when the strange phenomenon occurred."

I was now going to learn about the astonishing phenomenon to which Roulettable had made allusion half an hour earlier without giving me any explanation of it. At last, in short, rapid phrases he acquainted me with things which plunged me into a state bordering on complete bewilderment. Indeed, the results of that still unknown science known as hypnotism, for example, were not more inexplicable than the disappearance of the matter of the murderer at the moment when four persons were within touch of him. I speak of hypnotism as I would of electricity, for of the nature of both we are ignorant, and we know little of their laws. I cite these examples because at the time the case appeared to me to be only explicable by the inexplicable—that is to say, by an event outside of known natural laws. And yet if I had had Roulettable's brain I should, like him, have had a presentiment of the natural explanation, for the most curious thing about all the mysteries of the Glandier case was the natural manner in which he explained them.

I have among the papers that were sent me by the young man after the affair was over a notebook of his, in which a complete account is given of the phenomenon of the disappearance of the "matter" of the assassin and the thoughts to which it gave rise in the mind of my young friend. It is preferable, I think, to give the reader this account rather than to continue to reproduce my conversation with Roulettable.

CHAPTER XV.

The Trap.

LAST night, the night between the 29th and the 30th of October," wrote Joseph Roulettable, "I woke up toward 1 o'clock in the morning. Was it sleeplessness or noise without? The cry of the Bete du Bon Dieu rang out with sinister loudness from the end of the park. I rose and opened the window. Cold wind and rain, opaque darkness, silence. I reclosed my window. Again the sound of the cat's weird cry in the distance. I partly dressed in haste. The weather was too bad for even a cat to be turned out in it. What did it mean, then—that intimating of the mewling of Mother Angenoux's cat so near the chateau? I seized a good sized stick, the only weapon I had, and without making any noise opened my door.

"The gallery into which I went was well lit by a lamp with a reflector. I felt a keen current of air and on turning found the window open at the extreme end of the gallery, which I call the 'off turning' gallery to distinguish it from the 'right' gallery, on to which the apartment of Mlle. Stangerson opened. These two galleries cross each other at right angles. Who had left that window open or who had come to open it? I went to the window and leaned out. Five feet below me there was a sort of terrace over the semi-circular projection of a room on the ground floor. One could if one wanted

jump from the window on to the terrace and allow oneself to drop from it into the court of the chateau. Whoever had entered by this road had evidently not had a key to the vestibule door. But why should I be thinking of my previous night's attempt with the ladder? Because of the open window, left open perhaps by the negligence of a servant? I reclosed it, smiling at the ease with which I built a drama on the mere suggestion of an open window.

"Again the cry of the Bete du Bon Dieu and then silence. The rain ceased to beat on the window. All in the chateau slept. I walked with infinite precaution on the carpet of the gallery. On reaching the corner of the 'right' gallery I peered round it cautiously. There was another lamp there with a reflector which quite lit up the several objects in it, three chairs and some pictures hanging on the wall. What was I doing there? Perfect silence reigned throughout. Everything was sunk in repose. What was the instinct that urged me toward Mlle. Stangerson's chamber? Why did a voice within me cry, 'Go on to the chamber of Mlle. Stangerson?' I cast my eyes down upon the carpet on which I was treading and saw that my steps were being directed toward Mlle. Stangerson's chamber by the marks of steps that had already been made there. Yes, on the carpet were traces of footsteps stained with mud leading to the chamber of Mlle. Stangerson. Horror, horror! I recognized in those footprints the impression of the neat boots of the murderer. He had come, then, from without in this wretched night. If you could descend from the gallery by way of the window, by means of the terrace, then you could get into the chateau by the same means.

"The murderer was still in the chateau, for here were marks of returning footsteps. He had entered by the open window at the extremity of the 'off turning' gallery; he had passed Frederic Larsan's door and mine, had turned to the right and had entered Mlle. Stangerson's room. I am before the door of her anteroom. It is open. I push it without making the least noise. Under the door of the room itself I see a streak of light. I listen. No sound, not even of breathing. Ah, if I only knew what was passing in the silence that is behind that door! I find the door locked and the key turned on the inner side. And the murderer is there perhaps. He must be there. Will he escape this time? All depends on me. I must be calm, and above all I must make no false steps. I must see into that room. I can enter it by Mlle. Stangerson's drawing room. But to do that I should have to cross her boudoir, and while I am there the murderer may escape by the gallery door, the door in front of which I am now standing.

"I am sure that no other crime is being committed on this night, for there is complete silence in the boudoir, where two nurses are taking care of Mlle. Stangerson until she is restored to health.

"As I am almost sure that the murderer is there, why do I not at once give the alarm? The murderer may perhaps escape, but perhaps I may be able to save Mlle. Stangerson's life. Suppose the murderer on this occasion is not here to murder? The door has been opened to allow him to enter—by whom? Mlle. Stangerson shuts herself up in her apartment with her nurses every night. Who turned the key of that chamber to allow the murderer to enter? The nurses, two faithful domestics? The old chambermaid, Sylvia? It is very improbable. Besides, they slept in the boudoir, and Mlle. Stangerson, very nervous and careful, M. Robert Darzac told me, sees to her own safety since she has been well enough to move about in her room, which I have not yet seen her leave. This nervousness and sudden care on her part, which had struck M. Darzac, had given me also food for thought. At the time of the crime in the yellow room there can be no doubt that she expected this night? Was it she herself who had opened her door to him? Had she some reason for doing so? Was she obliged to do it? Was it a meeting for purposes of crime? Certainly it was not a lover's meeting, for I believe Mlle. Stangerson adores M. Darzac.

"It is possible that there was some reason for the awful silence. My intervention might do more harm than good. How could I tell? How could I know I might not any moment cause another crime? If I could only see and know without breaking that silence.

"I left the anteroom and descended the central stairs to the vestibule and as silently as possible made my way to the little room on the ground floor where Daddy Jacques had been sleeping since the attack made at the pavilion.

"I found him dressed, his eyes wide open, almost haggard. He did not seem surprised to see me. He told me that he had got up because he had heard the cry of the Bete du Bon Dieu and because he had heard footsteps in the park close to his window, out of which he had looked and just then

had seen a black shadow pass by. I asked him whether he had a firearm of any kind. No, he no longer kept one since the examining magistrate had taken his revolver from him. We went out together by a little back door into the park and stole along the chateau to the point which is just below Mlle. Stangerson's window.

"I placed Daddy Jacques against the wall, ordering him not to stir from the spot, while I, taking advantage of a moment when the moon was hidden by a cloud, moved to the front of the window out of the patch of light which came from it, for the window was half open. If I could only know what was passing in that silent chamber! I returned to Daddy Jacques and whispered the word 'ladder' in his ear. At first I had thought of the tree which a week ago served me for an observatory, but I immediately saw that from the way the window was half opened I should not be able to see from that point of view anything that was passing in the room, and I wanted not only to see, but to hear, and to act.

"Greatly agitated, almost trembling, Daddy Jacques disappeared for a moment and returned without the ladder, but making signs to me with his arms as signals to me to come quickly to him. When I got near him he gasped, 'Come!'

"He led me round the chateau, past the donjon. Arrived there, he said: 'I went to the donjon in search of my ladder, and in the lower part of the donjon which serves me and the garden for a lumber room I found the door open and the ladder gone. On coming out that's what I caught sight of by the light of the moon.'

"And he pointed to the farther end of the chateau, where a ladder stood resting against the stone brackets supporting the terrace, under the window which I had found open. The projection of the terrace had prevented my seeing it. Thanks to that ladder, it was quite easy to get into the 'off turning' gallery of the first floor, and I had no doubt of it having been the road taken by the unknown.

"We ran to the ladder, but at the moment of reaching it Daddy Jacques drew my attention to the half open door of the little semicircular room situated under the terrace at the extremity of the right wing of the chateau, having the terrace for its roof. Daddy Jacques pushed the door open a little farther and looked in.

"'He's not there!' he whispered.

"'Who is not there?'

"'The forest keeper.'

"'With his lips once more to my ear he added:

"'Do you know that he has slept in the upper room of the donjon ever since it was restored? And with the same gesture he pointed to the half open door, the ladder, the terrace and the window in the 'off turning' gallery, which a little while before I had reclosed.

"'What were my thoughts then? I had no time to think. I felt more than I thought.

"'Evidently I felt if the forest keeper is up there in the chamber (I say if because at this moment, apart from the presence of the ladder and his vacant room, there are no evidences which permit me even to suspect him)—if he is there he has been obliged to pass by the ladder, and the rooms which lie behind his in his new lodging are occupied by the family of the steward and by the cook and by the kitchen, which bar the way by the vestibule to the interior of the chateau. And if he had been there during the evening on any pretext it would have been easy for him to go into the gallery and see that the window could be simply pushed open from the outside. This question of the unfastened window easily narrowed the field of search for the murderer. He must belong to the house unless he had an accomplice, which I do not believe he had; unless—unless Mlle. Stangerson herself had seen that that window was not fastened from the inside. But, then, what could be the frightful secret which put her under the necessity of doing away with obstacles that separated her from the murderer?

"I seized hold of the ladder, and we returned to the back of the chateau to see if the window of the chamber was still half open. The blind was drawn, but did not join and allowed a bright stream of light to escape and fall upon the path at our feet. I planted the ladder under the window. I am almost sure that I made no noise, and while Daddy Jacques remained at the foot of the ladder I mounted it very quietly, my stout stick in my hand. I held my breath and lifted my feet with the greatest care. Suddenly a heavy cloud discharged itself at that moment in a fresh downpour of rain.

"At the same instant the sinister cry of the Bete du Bon Dieu arrested me in my ascent. It seemed to me to have come from close by me, only a few yards away. Was the cry a signal? Had some accomplice of the man seen me on the ladder? Would the cry bring the man to the window? Perhaps. Ah, there he was at the window! I felt his head above me. I heard the sound of his breath! I could not look up toward him. The least movement

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Helping Him.
"Mr. Chairman," began the man who is unaccustomed to public speaking. "I—er—I—er—er—"
"Well," interrupted the chairman kindly, "to err is human."—Washington Herald.

A Wet Blanket.
Peckem—You are not married yet, are you? Youngbach—No, but I'm engaged, and that's as good as being married. Peckem—It's a whole lot better, if only you knew.—London Answers.

Wit should be used as a shield for defense rather than as a sword to wound others.—Fuller.

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of my head and I might be lost. Would he see me? Would he peer into the darkness? No; he went away. He had seen nothing. I felt rather than heard him moving on tiptoe in the room, and I mounted a few steps higher. My head reached to the level of the window sill; my forehead rose above it; my eyes looked between the opening in the blinds, and I saw—

"A man seated at Mlle. Stangerson's little desk writing. His back was turned toward me. A candle was lit before him, and he bent over the flame, the light from it projecting shapeless shadows. I saw nothing but a monstrous, stooping back.

"Mlle. Stangerson herself was not there! Her bed had not been lain on! Where, then, was she sleeping that night? Doubtless in the side room with her women. Perhaps this was but a guess. I must content myself with the joy of finding the man alone. I must be calm to prepare my trap.

"But who, then, is this man writing there before my eyes, seated at the desk, as if he were in his own home? If there had not been that ladder under the window, if there had not been those footprints on the carpet in the gallery, if there had not been that open window, I might have been led to think that this man had a right to be there and that he was there as a matter of course and for reasons about which as yet I knew nothing. But there was no doubt that this mysterious unknown was the man of the yellow room, the man to whose murderous assault Mlle. Stangerson without denouncing him had had to submit. If I could but see his face! Surprise and capture him!

"If I spring into the room at this moment he will escape by the right hand door opening into the boudoir, or, crossing the drawing room, he will reach the gallery and I shall lose him. I have him now, and in five minutes more he'll be safer than I had him in a cage. What is he doing there, alone in Mlle. Stangerson's room? What is he writing? I descend and place the ladder on the ground. Daddy Jacques follows me. We re-enter the chateau. I send Daddy Jacques to wake M. Stangerson and instruct him to await my coming in Mlle. Stangerson's room and to say nothing definite to him before my arrival. I will go and awaken Frederic Larsan. It's a bore to have to do it, for I should have liked to work alone and to have carried off all the honors of this affair myself right under the very nose of the sleeping detective. But Daddy Jacques and M. Stangerson are old men, and I am not yet fully developed. I might not be strong enough. Larsan is used to wrestling and putting on the handcuffs. He opened his eyes, swollen with sleep, ready to send me flying without in the least believing in my reporter's fantasies. I had to assure him that *ta ta ta* was there.

"That's strange," he said, "I thought I left him this afternoon in Paris."

"He dressed himself in haste and armed himself with a revolver. We stole quietly into the gallery.

"Where is he? Larsan asked.

"In Mlle. Stangerson's room."

"And Mlle. Stangerson?"

"She is not in there."

"Let's go in."

"Don't go there. On the least alarm the man will escape. He has four ways by which to do it—the door, the window, the boudoir or the room in which the women are sleeping."

"I'll draw him from below."

"And if you fail? If you only succeed in wounding him he'll escape again without reckoning that he is certainly armed. No; let me direct the expedition, and I'll answer for everything."

"As you like," he replied, with fairly good grace.

"Then after satisfying myself that all the windows of the two galleries were thoroughly secure I placed Frederic Larsan at the end of the 'off turning' gallery, before the window which I had found open and had reclosed.

"Under no consideration," I said to him, "must you stir from this post till I call you. The chances are even that the man when he is pursued will return to this window and try to save himself that way, for it is by that way he came in and made a way ready for his flight. You have a dangerous post."

"What will be yours?" asked Fred. "I shall spring into the room and knock him over for you."

"Take my revolver," said Fred, "and I'll take your stick."

"Thanks," I said. "You are a brave man."

"I accepted his offer. I was going to be alone with the man in the room writing and was really thankful to have the weapon.

"I left Fred, having posted him at the window, and, with the greatest precaution, went toward M. Stangerson's apartment in the left wing of the chateau. I found him with Daddy Jacques, who had faithfully obeyed my directions, confining himself to asking his master to dress as quickly as possible. In a few words I explained to M. Stangerson what was passing. He armed himself with a revolver, followed me, and we were all three speedily in the gallery. Since I had seen the murderer seated at the desk ten minutes had elapsed. M. Stangerson wished to spring upon the assassin at once and kill him. I made him understand that, above all, he must not miss him.

"When I had sworn to him that his daughter was not in the room and in no danger he conquered his impatience and left me to direct the operations. I told them that they must come to me the moment I called to them or when I fired my revolver. I then sent Daddy Jacques to place himself before the window at the end of the 'right' gallery. I chose that position for Daddy Jacques because I believed that the murderer, tracked on leaving the room, would run through the gallery toward the window which he had left open and, instantly seeing that he was guarded by Larsan, would pursue his course along the 'right' gallery. There he would encounter Daddy Jacques, who would prevent his springing out of the window into the park. Under that window there was a sort of buttress, while all the other windows in the galleries were at such a height from the ground that it was almost impossible to jump from them without breaking one's neck. All the doors and windows, including those of the lumber room at the end of the 'right' gallery—as I had rapidly assured myself—were strongly secured.

"Having indicated to Daddy Jacques the post he was to occupy and having seen him take up his position, I placed M. Stangerson on the landing at the head of the stairs not far from the door of his daughter's anteroom. Everything led me to suppose that when I surprised the murderer in the room he would run by way of the anteroom rather than the boudoir, where the women were, and of which the door must have been locked by Mlle. Stangerson herself if, as I thought, she had taken refuge in the boudoir for the purpose of avoiding the murderer who was coming to see her. In any case he must return to the gallery where my people were awaiting him at every possible issue.

"On coming there he would see on his left M. Stangerson. He would turn to the right, toward the 'off turning' gallery, the way he had prearranged for flight, where at the intersection of the two galleries he would see at once, as I have explained, on his left Frederic Larsan at the end of the 'off turning' gallery and in front Daddy Jacques at the end of the 'right' gallery. M. Stangerson and myself would arrive by way of the back of the chateau. He is ours! He can no longer escape us! I was sure of that.

"The plan I had formed seemed to me the best, the surest and the most simple. It would, no doubt, have been simpler still if we had been able to place some one directly behind the door of mademoiselle's boudoir, which opened out of her bedchamber, and in that way had been in a position to besiege the two doors of the room in which the man was. But we could not penetrate the boudoir except by way of the drawing room, the door of which had been locked on the inside by Mlle. Stangerson. But even if I had had the free disposition of the boudoir I should have held to the plan I had formed, because any other plan of attack would have separated us at the moment of the struggle with the man, while my plan united us all for the attack at a spot which I had selected with almost mathematical precision, the intersec-

tion in the two galleries. Having so placed my people, I again left the chateau, hurried to my ladder and, replacing it, climbed up, revolver in hand.

"If there be any inclined to smile at my timing so many precautionary measures I refer them to the mystery of the yellow room and to all the proofs we have of the weird cunning of the murderer. Further, if there be some who think my observations needlessly minute at a moment when they ought to be completely held by rapidity of movement and decision of action I reply that I have wished to report here at length and completely all the details of a plan of attack conceived so rapidly that it is only the slowness of my pen that gives an appearance of slowness to the execution. I have wished by this slowness and precision to be certain that nothing should be omitted from the conditions under which the strange phenomenon was produced, which, until some natural explanation of it is forthcoming, seems to me to prove, even better than the theories of Professor Stangerson, the dissociation of matter—I will even say the instantaneous dissociation of matter."

(Continued next week.)

Good Cough Medicine for Children.
The season for coughs and colds is now at hand and too much care cannot be used to protect the children. A child is much more likely to contract diphtheria or scarlet fever when he has a cold. The quicker you cure his cold the less the risk. Chamberlain's Cough Remedy is the sole reliance of many mothers, and few of those who have tried it are willing to use any other. Mrs. F. F. Starcher, of Ripley, W. Va., says: "I have never used anything other than Chamberlain's Cough Remedy for my children, and it has always given good satisfaction." This remedy contains no opium or other narcotic and may be given as confidently to a child as to an adult. For sale by Burnham & Mayfield.

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION.

Department of the Interior, U. S. Land Office at La Grande, Oregon, January 11, 1909.

Notice is hereby given that Albert L. Childers, of Enterprise, Oregon, on October 16, 1902, made Homestead Entry, No. 12940, for W 1/2 NE 1/4, N 1/2 SE 1/4, Section 15, Township 1 North, Range 44 East, Willamette Meridian, has filed notice of intention to make Final Five Year Proof to establish claim to the land above described, before D. W. Sheahan, U. S. Commissioner, at his office at Enterprise, Oregon, on the 20th day of February, 1909.

Claimant names as witnesses Frank W. Heskett, of Wallowa, Oregon; David H. Hearing, of Wallowa, Oregon; Nicolas W. Ownbey, of Enterprise, Oregon; James W. Childers, of Enterprise, Oregon.

F. C. Bramwell, Register.

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION (Isolated Tract.)
PUBLIC LAND SALE.

Department of the Interior, U. S. Land Office at La Grande, Oregon, January 16, 1909.

Notice is hereby given that, as directed by the Commissioner of the General Land Office, under provisions of Act of Congress approved June 27, 1906, (34 Stats., 517), we will offer at public sale, to the highest bidder, at ten o'clock a. m., on the 9th day of March, 1909, at this office, the following described land: SE 1/4 NE 1/4 Section 24, Township 1 South, Range 44, East Willamette Meridian, Serial No. 9837.

Any persons claiming adversely the above-described land are advised to file their claims, or objections, on or before the time designated for sale. F. C. Bramwell, Register. 235