

The Mystery of The Yellow Room

By GASTON LEROUX

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A movement of chairs in the court, with a rustling of dresses and an energetic whispering of "Hush!" showed the curiosity that had been aroused.

"It seems to me," said the president, "that the mystery of the yellow room, M. Rouletabille, is wholly explained by your hypothesis. Frederic Larsan is the explanation. We have merely to substitute him for M. Robert Darzac. Evidently the door of the yellow room was open at the time M. Stangerson was alone and that he allowed the man who was coming out of his daughter's chamber to pass without arresting him—perhaps at her entreaty to avoid all scandal."

"No, M. President," protested the young man. "You forget that, stunned by the attack made on her, Mlle. Stangerson was not in a condition to have made such an appeal. Nor could she have locked and bolted herself in her room. You must also remember that M. Stangerson has sworn that the door was not open."

"That, however, is the only way in which it can be explained. The yellow room was as closely shut as an iron safe. To use your own expression, it was impossible for the murderer to make his escape either naturally or supernaturally. When the room was broken into he was not there! He must, therefore, have escaped."

"That does not follow."
"What do you mean?"
"There was no need for him to escape—if he was not there!"

"Not there!"
"Evidently not. He could not have been there if he were not found there."

"But what about the evidences of his presence?" asked the president.

"That, M. President, is where we have taken hold of the wrong end. From the time Mlle. Stangerson shut herself in her room to the time her door was burst open it was impossible for the murderer to escape. He was not found because he was not there during that time."

"But the evidences?"
"They have led us astray. In reasoning on this mystery we must not take them to mean what they apparently mean. Why do we conclude the murderer was there? Because he left his tracks in the room! Good! But may he not have been there before the room was locked? Nay; he must have been there before. Let us look into the matter of these traces and see if they do not point to my conclusion."

"After the publication of the article in the *Matin* and my conversation with the examining magistrate on the journey from Paris to Epinay-sur-Orge I was certain that the yellow room had been hermetically sealed, so to speak, and that consequently the murderer had escaped before Mlle. Stangerson had gone into her chamber at midnight."

"At the time I was much puzzled. Mlle. Stangerson could not have been her own murderer, since the evidences pointed to some other person. The assassin, then, had come before. If that were so, how was it that mademoiselle had been attacked after, or rather, that she appeared to have been attacked after? It was necessary for me to reconstruct the occurrence and make of it two phases, each separated from the other in time by the space of several hours—one phase in which Mlle. Stangerson had really been attacked, the other phase in which those who heard her cries thought she was being attacked. I had not then examined the yellow room. What were the marks on Mlle. Stangerson? There were marks of strangulation and the wound from a hard blow on the temple. The marks of strangulation did not interest me much. They might have been made before, and Mlle. Stangerson could have concealed them by a corset or any similar article of apparel. I had to suppose the moment I was compelled to reconstruct the occurrence by two phases. Mlle. Stangerson had, no doubt, her own reasons for so doing, since she had told her father nothing of it and had made it understood to the examining magistrate that the attack had taken place in the night during the second phase. She was forced to say that; otherwise her father would have questioned her as to her reason for having said nothing about it."

"But I could not explain the blow on the temple. I understood it even less when I learned that the mutton bone had been found in her room. She could not hide the fact that she had been struck on the head, and yet that wound appeared evidently to have been inflicted during the first phase, since it required the presence of the murderer! I thought Mlle. Stangerson had hidden the wound by arranging her hair in bands on her forehead."

"As to the mark of the hand on the wall, that had evidently been made during the first phase—when the murderer was really there. All the traces of his presence had naturally been left during the first phase—the mutton bone, the black footprints, the Basque cap, the handkerchief, the blood on the wall, on the door and on the floor. If those traces were still all there they showed that Mlle. Stangerson, who desired that nothing should be known

had not yet had time to clear them away. This led me to the conclusion that the two phases had taken place one shortly after the other. She had not had the opportunity, after leaving her room and going back to the laboratory to her father, to get back again to her room and put it in order. Her father was all the time with her, working. So that after the first phase she did not re-enter her chamber till midnight. Daddy Jacques was there at 10 o'clock, as he was every night, but he went in merely to close the blinds and light the night light. Owing to her disturbed state of mind she had forgotten that Daddy Jacques would go into her room and had begged him not to trouble himself. All this was set forth in the article in the *Matin*. Daddy Jacques did go, however, and in the dim light of the room saw nothing."

"Mlle. Stangerson must have lived some anxious moments while Daddy Jacques was absent, but I think she was not aware that so many evidences had been left. After she had been attacked she had only time to hide the traces of the man's fingers on her neck and to hurry to the laboratory. Had she known of the bone, the cap and the handkerchief she would have made away with them after she had gone back to her chamber at midnight. She did not see them and undressed by the uncertain glimmer of the night light. She went to bed worn out by anxiety and fear—a fear that had made her remain in the laboratory as late as possible."

"My reasoning had thus brought me to the second phase of the tragedy when Mlle. Stangerson was alone in the room. I had now to explain the revolver shots fired during the second phase. Cries of 'Help! Murder!' had been heard. How to explain these? As to the cries, I was in no difficulty; since she was alone in her room these could result from nightmare only. My explanation of the struggle and noise that were heard is simply that in her nightmare she was haunted by the terrible experience she had passed through in the afternoon. In her dream she sees the murderer about to spring upon her, and she cries, 'Help! Murder!' Her hand wildly seeks the revolver she had placed within her reach on the night table by the side of her bed, but her hand, striking the table, overturns it, and the revolver, falling to the floor, discharges itself, the bullet lodging in the ceiling. I knew from the first that the bullet in the ceiling must have resulted from an accident. Its very position suggested an accident to my mind and so fell in with my theory of a nightmare. I no longer doubted that the attack had taken place before mademoiselle had retired for the night. After waking from her frightful dream and crying aloud for help she had fainted."

"My theory, based on the evidence of the shots that were heard at midnight, demanded two shots—one which wounded the murderer at the time of his attack and one fired at the time of the nightmare. The evidence given by the Berniers before the examining magistrate was to the effect that only one shot had been heard. M. Stangerson testified to hearing a dull sound first, followed by a sharp ringing sound. The dull sound I explained by the falling of the marble topped table; the ringing sound was the shot from the revolver. I was now convinced I was right. The shot that had wounded the hand of the murderer and had caused it to bleed so that he left the bloody imprint on the wall was fired by mademoiselle in self defense before the second phase, when she had been really attacked. The shot in the ceiling which the Berniers heard was the accidental shot during the nightmare."

"I had now to explain the wound on the temple. It was not severe enough to have been made by means of the mutton bone, and mademoiselle had not attempted to hide it. It must have been made during the second phase. It was to find this out that I went to the yellow room, and I obtained my answer there."

Rouletabille drew a piece of white folded paper from his pocket and drew out of it an almost invisible object which he held between his thumb and forefinger.

"This, M. President," he said, "is a hair—a blond hair stained with blood. It is a hair from the head of Mlle. Stangerson. I found it sticking to one of the corners of the overturned table. The corner of the table was itself stained with blood—a tiny stain—hardly visible, but it told me that on rising from her bed Mlle. Stangerson had fallen heavily and had struck her head on the corner of its marble top."

"I had still to learn, in addition to the name of the assassin, which I did later, the time of the original attack. I learned this from the examination of Mlle. Stangerson and her father, though the answers given by the former were well calculated to deceive the examining magistrate. Mlle. Stangerson had stated very minutely how she had spent the whole of her time that day. We established the fact that the murderer had introduced himself into the pavilion between 5 and 6 o'clock. At a quarter past 6 the professor and his daughter had resumed their work. At 6 the professor had been with his

daughter, and since the attack took place in the professor's absence from his daughter I had to find out just when he left her. The professor had stated that at the time when he and his daughter were about to re-enter the laboratory he was met by the keeper and held in conversation about the cutting of some wood and the poachers. Mlle. Stangerson was not with him then, since the professor said, 'I left the keeper and rejoined my daughter, who was at work in the laboratory.'

"It was during that short interval of time that the tragedy took place. That is certain. In my mind's eye I saw Mlle. Stangerson re-enter the pavilion, go to her room to take off her hat and find herself faced by the murderer. He had been in the pavilion for some time waiting for her. He had arranged to pass the whole night there. He had taken off Daddy Jacques' boots, he had removed the papers from the cabinet and had then slipped under the bed. Finding the time long, he had risen, gone again into the laboratory, then into the vestibule, looked into the garden and had seen, coming toward the pavilion, Mlle. Stangerson—alone. He would never have dared to attack her at that hour if he had not found her alone. His mind was made up. He would be more at ease alone with Mlle. Stangerson in the pavilion than he would have been in the middle of the night, with Daddy Jacques sleeping in the attic. So he shut the vestibule window. That explains why neither M. Stangerson nor the keeper, who were at some distance from the pavilion, had heard the revolver shot."

"Then he went back to the yellow room. Mlle. Stangerson came in. What passed must have taken place very quickly. Mademoiselle tried to call for help, but the man had seized her by the throat. Her hand had sought and grasped the revolver which she had been keeping in the drawer of her night table, since she had come to fear the threats of her pursuer. The murderer was about to strike her on the head with the mutton bone, a terrible weapon in the hands of a Larsan or a Mallmeyer, but she fired in time, and the shot wounded the hand that held the weapon. The bone fell to the floor covered with the blood of the murderer, who staggered, clutched at the wall for support, imprinting on it the red marks, and, fearing another bullet, fled."

"She saw him pass through the laboratory and listened. He was long at the window. At length he jumped from the floor. She flew to it and shut it. The danger past, all her thoughts were of her father. Had he either seen or heard? At any cost to herself she must keep this from him. Thus when M. Stangerson returned he found the door of the yellow room closed and his daughter in the laboratory bending over her desk at work."

"Turning toward M. Darzac, Rouletabille cried:
"You know the truth! Tell us, then, if that is not how things happened."
"I don't know anything about it," replied M. Darzac.

"I admire you for your silence," said Rouletabille, "but if Mlle. Stangerson knew of your danger she would release you from your oath. She would beg of you to tell all she has confided to you. She would be here to defend you?"

M. Darzac made no movement nor uttered a word. He looked at Rouletabille sadly.

"However," said the young reporter, "since mademoiselle is not here I must do it myself. But, believe me, M. Darzac, the only means to save Mlle. Stangerson and restore her to her reason is to secure your acquittal."

"What is this secret motive that compels Mlle. Stangerson to hide her knowledge from her father?" asked the president.

"That, monsieur, I do not know," said Rouletabille. "It is no business of mine."
The president, turning to M. Darzac, endeavored to induce him to tell what he knew.

"Do you still refuse, monsieur, to tell us how you employed your time during the attempts on the life of Mlle. Stangerson?"

"I cannot tell you anything, monsieur."
The president turned to Rouletabille as if appealing for an explanation.

"We must assume, M. President, that M. Robert Darzac's absences are closely connected with Mlle. Stangerson's secret and that M. Darzac feels himself in honor bound to remain silent. It may be that Larsan, who since his three attempts has had everything in training to cast suspicion on M. Darzac, had fixed on just those occasions for a meeting with M. Darzac at a spot most compromising. Larsan is cunning enough to have done that."

The president seemed partly convinced; but, still curious, he asked:
"But what is this secret of Mlle. Stangerson?"

"That I cannot tell you," said Rouletabille. "I think, however, you know enough now to acquit M. Robert Darzac, unless Larsan should return, and I don't think he will," he added, with a laugh.

"One question more," said the president, "admitting your explanation, we know that Larsan wished to turn suspicion on M. Robert Darzac, but why should he throw suspicion on Daddy Jacques also?"
"There came in the professional detective, monsieur, who proves himself an unraveler of mysteries, by annihilating the very proofs he had accumulated. He's a very cunning man, and a similar trick had often enabled him to turn suspicion from himself. He proved the innocence of one before accusing the other. You can easily believe, monsieur, that so complicated a scheme as this must have been long and carefully thought out in advance by Larsan. He found the opportunity to rob Daddy Jacques of a pair of old boots and a castoff Basque cap, which the servant had tied up in a handkerchief with the intention of carrying them to a friend, a charcoal burner on the road to Epinay. When the crime was discovered Daddy Jacques had immediately recognized these objects as his. They were extremely compromising, which explains his distress at the time when we spoke to him about them. Larsan confessed it all to me."

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C. T. HOCKETT, M. D.
PHYSICIAN AND SURGEON
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W. C. KETCHUM
DENTIST - ENTERPRISE
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CONAWAY & CORKINS,
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354 THOS. MORGAN, Secretary.

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Just look at me, my dear, and see An object for your charity!
Last night I dipped my pen in ink And sat and mused and strove to link My heart with yours in poetry.
But not one rhyme would come to me, Although I fumed till half past three— What! Sleep? I didn't get a wink. Just look at me!

What dainty valentine could be More eloquent of love than he Who thus would muse and brood and think Till he's completely on the blink? Say, if you doubt my constancy, Just look at me!
—T. A. Daly in Catholic Standard and Times.

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—Detroit Tribune.

Mr. F. G. Fritts, Oneonta, N. Y., writes: "My little girl was greatly benefitted by taking Foley's Orino Laxative, and I think it is the best remedy for constipation and liver trouble." Foley's Orino Laxative is best for women and children, as it is mild, pleasant and effective, and is a splendid spring medicine, as it cleanses the system and clears the complexion. Burnaugh & Mayfield.

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A student in college drank some (Whenever he drank he drank some) Till the pungent aroma O'erwhelmed his diploma. And later he turned out a bore.
—Puck.

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Wonderful!
Mrs. Blunder has just received a telegram from India. "What an admirable invention the telegram is," she exclaimed, "when you come to consider that this message has come a distance of thousands of miles and the gum on the envelope isn't dry yet!"—Tit-Bits.

"Most ordinary colds will yield to the simplest treatment," says the Chicago Tribune, "moderate laxatives, hot foot baths, a free perspiration and an avoidance of exposure to cold and wet after treatment." While this treatment is simple, it requires considerable trouble and the one adopting it must remain in doors for a day or two, or a fresh cold is almost sure to be contracted, and in many instances pneumonia follows. Is it not better to pin your faith to an old reliable preparation like Chamberlain's Cough Remedy, that is famous for its cures of colds and can always be depended upon? For sale by Burnaugh & Mayfield.

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