

Secret of the Plundered Safe

By EMILE GABORIAU

CHAPTER I.

The Fauvel Bank, Rue de Provence, is an important institution, and from its large staff, presents the appearance of a government office. In an old-fashioned way the banker's dwelling is under the same roof. His private office is on the first floor over the offices, and leads into his own apartments, which communicate directly with the bank by means of a narrow staircase, opening into the room occupied by the head cashier.

This cashroom is reckoned proof against all attacks, able to stand a siege, being sheathed in steel like an ironclad. A strong gate prevents a burglar coming down through the fireplace. Clamped to the wall is a formidable chest, calculated to fill with long the man whose wealth may be comprised in one little wallet.

This masterpiece of wrought-iron is six feet by four and a half, with triple sides, and divided into separate fireproof compartments. It is opened by a special key, but this cannot be inserted into the lock, or used, unless the five knobs on which are the alphabetical letters, are turned to form a word in combination. This word is often changed, as usual in such cases. The banker and his chief teller alone know it, and they alone have a key in duplicate.

On a certain morning in February the bank clerks were all busy in their departments, at about ten o'clock, when one named Cavillon suddenly raised the warning cry:

"Here comes the cashier!"

Prosper Bertomy, the head cashier of the bank, was a tall, handsome man of about thirty, with fair hair and large, dark blue eyes, scrupulously neat and dressed in the fashion.

"Ah, here you are!" cried Cavillon. "Some one has just been asking for you."

"Who? The iron manufacturer, was it not? Well, he will come back again. Knowing that I would come late this morning, I made all my arrangements yesterday."

Prosper had unlocked his office door, and as he finished speaking, entered and closed it behind him.

"Look!" exclaimed one of the clerks, "there is a man who sits up all night, and doesn't feel like going to work early in the morning. Did you notice how very pale he looked when he came in?"

A moment later the cashroom door suddenly opened, and the teller appeared before them with tottering step and a haggard look on his sallow face.

"Robbed!" he gasped, his horrified expression, hollow voice and trembling lips betraying such fearful suffering that the clerks jumped up from their desks and ran toward him. They gathered round and begged him to explain.

"All the cash in the safe has been taken," said Bertomy, as soon as he had recovered; "three packets each of one hundred thousand franc notes, and one of fifty thousand—all four done up in one paper wrapper, tied and sealed."

With the swiftness of lightning the news had spread, and the main room was crowded with the inquisitive. As Cavillon was about to run and tell the banker, he arrived, having already been notified. M. Andre Fauvel was a man of fifty, inclined to stoutness, medium in height, gray haired, and with a slight stoop like brain workers. The news had extremely agitated him, for his usually florid face was pale.

"What is this I hear has happened?" he said to the clerks, who respectfully stood aside when he entered the room.

"Monsieur," began the cashier, "having, as you know, a payment to make this morning, I yesterday drew from the Bank of France three hundred and fifty thousand francs."

"Why yesterday, monsieur?" interrupted the banker. "I think I have a hundred times ordered you to wait until the pay day."

"I know it, monsieur, and did wrong to disobey you. But the evil is done. Yesterday evening I locked the money up; it has disappeared, and yet the safe has not been broken open."

"You must be mad!" exclaimed M. Fauvel; "speak! Who do you pretend to say opened the safe? Answer me. No one but you and I know the secret word. No one but you and I had keys."

"In other words, monsieur, I am the only person who could have taken this money."

"Unhappy wretch!"

Prosper drew himself to his full height, and, looking M. Fauvel square in the face, added:

"Or you?"

The banker made a threatening gesture, and there is no knowing what would have happened if he had not been interrupted by loud, angry voices at the front door.

A man insisted upon entering, and succeeded in forcing his way in. It was M. de Clameran, the iron founder, who did not appear to observe anything unusual. He advanced, and, without lifting his hat, said in an impertinent tone:

"It is after ten o'clock, gentlemen. I congratulate myself upon finding you in at last. I have been here once before this morning, and now I am refused admittance, and am compelled to force my way in. Be so good as to tell me whether I can have my money."

M. Fauvel's flushed face turned pale with anger, as he listened to this insolence; yet he controlled himself.

"I would be obliged to you, monsieur, for a short delay. This morning, this very instant, I find I have been robbed of three hundred and fifty thousand francs."

Clameran bowed ironically, and said: "Shall I have to wait long?"

"Long enough for me to send to the bank. Write and send as quickly as pos-

sible to the bank an order for three hundred thousand francs. Let the messenger take a hack," he said to the cashier, who trembled, as if trying to shake off a terrible nightmare.

"It is useless to send," he said, in a measured tone; "we owe this gentleman three hundred thousand francs, and we have less than one hundred thousand at the bank."

"Oh, don't be alarmed, monsieur!" said the banker to M. de Clameran; "this house has other resources. Be kind enough to await until my return."

He left the room, went up the narrow steps leading to his office, and in a few minutes returned, holding in his hand a letter and a bundle of securities.

"Here, quick, Countess!" he said to one of his clerks, "take my carriage, waiting at the door, and go with this gentleman to Rothschild's. Hand him this letter and securities; in exchange you will receive three hundred thousand francs, which you will hand to this gentleman."

The ironmaster was visibly disappointed; he seemed desirous of apologizing for his impertinence.

"I assure you, monsieur, that I had no intention of giving offense. Our relations for some years have been such that I hope—"

"Enough, monsieur," interrupted the banker, "I desire no apologies. Follow my clerk; he will pay you," and then turning to his clerks, who stood curiously looking on, he said: "Gentlemen, be good enough to resume your desks."

In an instant the room was cleared of everyone except the clerks belonging there, and they sat at their desks with their noses almost touching the paper before them, as if too absorbed in their work to think of anything else.

"We must have an explanation," said the banker to Prosper. "Let us go into your office."

The cashier mechanically obeyed without a word, and his chief followed him, taking no precaution to close the door after them.

"Now that we are alone, Prosper," he said, "pray, confide in me; it is your only chance of salvation. I am your employer, it is true; but I am before all and above all your friend—your best and truest friend. I cannot forget that in this very room, fifteen years ago, you were entrusted to me by your father; and ever since that day have I had cause to congratulate myself on possessing so faithful and efficient a clerk. Have I not always been like a father to you? From the first day my house has been open to you; you were treated as a member of my family. Madeline and my sons looked upon you as a brother. But you grew weary of this peaceful life. One day, a year ago, you suddenly began to shun us—Ah, do you think I am ignorant of the life you have been leading since you left my roof a year ago?"

The banker paused, as if hoping for a confession, which, however, did not come.

"Come, Prosper, have courage, be frank! I will go upstairs, while you will look again in the safe; I am sure that in your agitation you did not search thoroughly. This evening I will return; and I am confident that, during the day, you will have found, if not the missing sum, the greater portion of it; and tomorrow neither you nor I will remember anything about this false alarm."

"Your generosity is useless, monsieur," said Prosper, bitterly; "having taken nothing, I can restore nothing. I have searched carefully; the bank notes have been stolen, and by all that is sacred, not by me."

"Wretch! Do you mean to say that I took the money? Ah, then!" said M. Fauvel, unable to contain himself any longer, "between you and me, Bertomy, justice shall decide. I have sent for the commissary of police; he must be waiting in my rooms. Shall I call him down?"

"Do as you will."

The banker was near the door, which he opened, and after giving the cashier a last searching look, said to an office boy: "Anselme, ask the commissary of police to come."

CHAPTER II.

The commissary soon made his appearance. He was followed by a short man dressed in black, slightly relieved by a crumpled collar. The banker, scarcely bowing, said:

"Doubtless, monsieur, you have been apprised of the painful circumstance which compels me to have recourse to your assistance. An infamous and mysterious robbery has been committed in this office, from the safe you see open there, of which my cashier alone possesses the key and the word."

"Excuse me, monsieur," said the cashier to the commissary, in a low tone. "My chief also has the word and the key."

The commissary at once drew his own conclusions. These two men accused each other. From their own statements, one or the other was guilty.

"Well," he said, "a robbery has been perpetrated, but by whom? Did the robber enter from without?"

"I am certain he did not," said Prosper.

"However," said the commissary, "we must make sure of it," and turning toward his companion, he said: "M. Fauvelot, see if you cannot discover traces that escaped the attention of these gentlemen."

M. Fauvelot, nicknamed "The Squirrel," was indebted to his prodigious agility for this title, of which he was not a little proud. Already, before the commissary spoke to him, he had ferreted

everywhere; studied the doors, sounded the partitions, examined the wicket, and stirred up the ashes in the fireplace.

"I cannot imagine," said he, "how an outsider could have effected an entry here." He opened the door of the private staircase. "Where do these stairs lead to?" he asked.

"To my private office," replied M. Fauvel. "Follow me, gentlemen. And you come, too, Prosper."

M. Fauvel's office consisted of two rooms; the waiting room, sumptuously furnished and beautifully decorated, and the study where he transacted business. These two rooms had only three doors: one opened on the private staircase, another into the banker's bedroom, and the third into the main vestibule. It was through this last door that the banker's clients and visitors were admitted. M. Fauvelot examined the study at a glance. He seemed puzzled like a man who had flattered himself with the hope of discovering some clew and had found nothing.

"Let us see the adjoining room," he said, and passed into the waiting room, followed by the banker and the commissary.

Prosper remained alone in the study. He was sitting near the fireplace, absorbed in the most gloomy forebodings, when the banker's chamber door suddenly opened and a beautiful girl appeared upon the threshold. Seeing Prosper in the study, where probably she expected to find her uncle alone, she could not refrain from an exclamation of surprise.

"You, Prosper—you!"

These words broke the spell. The cashier dropped the white hand which he had caught, and answered bitterly:

"Yes, this is Prosper, the companion of your childhood—suspected, accused of the most disgraceful theft; Prosper, whom your uncle has just delivered up to justice, and who, before the day is over, will be arrested and thrown into prison."

"Good heaven! Prosper, what are you saying?"

"Alas, mademoiselle!" answered Prosper, "you will only too soon learn my misfortune and my disgrace; then, yes, then you will applaud yourself for what you have done. Your uncle is in the adjoining room, with the commissary of police and a detective. They will soon return. I entreat you to retire that they may not find you here."

As he spoke he gently pushed her through the door and closed it upon her. It was time, for the next moment the commissary and M. Fauvel entered. They had visited the main entrance and waiting room, and had heard nothing of what had passed in the study. But Fauvelot had heard for them.

"I understand the case now," said he, to himself. "This young man loves the young lady, who is really very pretty; and, as he is handsome, I suppose his love is reciprocated. This love affair vexes the banker, who, not knowing how to get rid of the importunate lover by fair means, has to resort to foul ones and plans this imaginary robbery, which is very ingenious."

Meanwhile, the search upstairs completed, M. Fauvel and the commissary returned to where Prosper was waiting. The commissary, so calm when he first came, now looked grave and perplexed.

"You see, gentlemen," he began, "our search has only confirmed our first suspicion. What do you think, M. Fauvelot?"

Fauvelot did not answer. Occupied in studying the safe lock, he manifested signs of surprise. Evidently he had just made an important discovery. M. Fauvel, Prosper and the commissary arose, and surrounded him.

"Have you discovered any clew?" said the banker, eagerly.

"I have merely convinced myself that this safe has been recently opened or shut, I know not which, with great violence and haste. Look at this scratch near the lock."

The commissary stooped down, and carefully examined the safe; he saw a slight scratch several inches long that had removed the outer coat of varnish.

"I see the scratch," said he; "but what does that prove?"

"Oh, nothing at all!" said Fauvelot. "It is of no importance."

Fauvelot said this, but it was not his real opinion. This scratch, undeniably fresh, had for him a signification that occupied the others. He said to himself:

"This confirms my suspicions. If the cashier had stolen millions there was no occasion for his being in a hurry; whereas, the banker creeping down in the dead of the night, for fear of awakening the porter in the anteroom, in order to rob his own safe, had every reason to tremble, to hastily withdraw the key, which, slipping along the lock, scratched off the varnish."

Resolved alone to unravel the tangled thread of this mystery, the detective determined to keep his conjectures to himself, for the same reason he was silent as to the interview between Madeline and Prosper. He hastened to divert attention from the scratch upon the lock.

"To conclude," he said, addressing the commissary, "I am convinced that no one outside of the bank could have obtained access to this room. Those who opened the safe knew the word and possessed the key."

"That being the case," said the commissary, "I must request a few moments' conversation with M. Fauvel."

(To be continued.)

Artful Jane.

"Jane Summers is an artful minx."

"What has she done now?"

"Why, when that handsome Mr. Cobb called there the other night she had a piece of dried mistletoe twisted into the top of that high ivory back comb of hers."

"Did she suppose he'd notice it?"

"Yes. She found out somewhere that he was a botanist."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

He only is exempt from failures who makes no efforts.—Whately.

MODERN METHODS.

Humorous but Striking Review by Congressman J. Adam Bede.

Congressman J. Adam Bede of Minnesota is an optimist and a humorist. He takes a cheerful view of life and radiates sunshine by his quaint language. In a recent speech on Modern Methods he said:

When I was a boy in Ohio they used to have a shoemaker at every crossroads. I used to have him make my boots, because shoes at that time were considered effeminate. If that shoemaker is living to-day he is in a factory. The world has changed. The big factory has come. We used to use a flail for threshing, but to-day in the bright lexicon of youth, there is no such word as flail. Now we have a steam thrasher. And attached to this is a blower which blows out the dust, and even the straw is stacked by hot air, just as we run the business down at Washington by hot air. My good mother used to put the milk in pans and set them on the shelf to allow the cream to rise. Now we have the separator everywhere. Some Yankee figured out that he was losing the interest on his investment while the cream was rising. So he invented a machine to jerk it out at once, and carried the milk to the pigs as a by-product. I can remember when a boy that hens used to set on eggs; but the incubator does that and the hen goes right on with the real business now. We used to keep bees on the farm, and before they made honey the bees had first to make the comb. Now we extract the honey and use the comb over again while the bee goes on buzzing like a laboring man under prosperity. My good old mother, who is now 80 years old, was born on the shores of Lake Erie before the time of railroads, telegraphs and telephones. She has seen more than half the progress of the world and is yet living. We have introduced new methods and these make new problems to solve. There is a woman living in Chicago who can remember when there was no railroad there. In 1868 it cost one dollar to take a bushel of grain from Chicago to Liverpool; to-day it can be done for from 12 to 15 cents.

They used to have street cars out West, little dinky bob cars drawn by mules. When they tried to run them in the winter and the mules faced a blizzard, they would turn around and put their heads inside the door of the car and hold a joint debate with the conductor or take a lunch off the cushions. Now they have large cars propelled by electricity. Rural free delivery of mails has come, and the farmer on a rural free delivery route is better informed on public affairs, political and scientific, than the business men of the cities.

When Lee surrendered to Grant the price of products went up in England for two weeks, because the cable was broken and Europe did not know for two weeks what had occurred. In 1898, when Dewey sank the fleets in Manila, the news went around the world and was heard in the White House in just 25 minutes. It would almost seem as if the world was a new creation, with the electric wires its nervous system. The great world has been coming along most rapidly. The only reason why we cannot at once solve all problems is that we can't quite keep up with the procession.

Cost of Louis' Buttons.

Twenty thousand dollars for a drop-shaped pearl scarfpin, \$15,000 for a pearl stud, \$4,940 for a coat fastener formed of a white bouton pearl with gold bar, \$850 for seven buttons en suite and \$775 for a pair of brilliant sleeve links—these are a few of the prices realized at the recent sale in London of a noble marquis' jewelry.

But, after all, everything is comparative, and the marquis' gems, rare and costly though they are, would have been quite eclipsed by Louis XIV's personal jewelry. The "grand monarque" had many crazes, but for buttons he had a positive mania. In a single year, 1685, he squandered \$900,000 on them, and some of his purchases are well worth gleaning at.

On Aug. 1, 1685, he bought two diamond buttons for 57,996 francs and seventy-five diamond buttons for 586,703 francs. The buttons for a single vest cost Louis \$200,000. Of the 354 "boutonnieres" used 162 contained five diamonds each, while the remainder were single diamonds. In all, the "great monarque" is said to have spent \$5,000,000 on buttons alone.

The Busy Day.

The editor sat at his big oak desk. His manner was far from gay; whenever a caller would show his head No word of welcome the editor said; He'd point to a sign which plainly read: "This, friend, is my busy day."

A measly fly kept buzzing about; He thought that the place was fine; The scribe would drive the torment away. But back it would come all fresh for the fray.

And buzz in his ear: "This is your busy day?"

Well, say! It is also mine!" —Yonkers Statesman.

First Piece of Machinery.

The first piece of genuine mechanism the modern world saw, a clock, was the invention of a Moor.

Plan and Wife.

Buxton, N. York, Sept. 12 (Special).—Mr. B. L. Skriveth of this place has been added to the steadily growing following that Dodd's Kidney Pills have in this part of the country.

M. Skriveth gives two reasons for his faith in the Great American Kidney Cure. The first is that they cured his wife and the second is that they cured himself.

"I must say," says Mr. Skriveth, "that Dodd's Kidney Pills are the best remedy for Kidney Trouble I ever knew. My wife had Kidney Disease for years and she tried all kinds of medicine from doctors but it did not help her any. An advertisement led her to try Dodd's Kidney Pills. The first box helped her so much that she took eight boxes more and now she is cured."

"I also took three boxes myself and they made me feel better and stronger in every way."

Dodd's Kidney Pills have never yet failed to cure any kidney disease from Backache to Rheumatism, Diabetes or Bright's Disease.

Fatal Oversight.

Lazy Lew—De guy wot invented work made one bad mistake. Tired Tim—Wot wuz dat? Lazy Lew—He went an' died afore he got it finished.

Identified.

Jones—We had shortcake for dessert at our boarding house yesterday.

Smith—Are you sure it was shortcake?

Jones—Of course I am. I recognized it by the strawberry mark.

FITS Permanently cured. No other nervousness. After reading of the use of Dr. Kline's Great Nerve Restorer, send for Free 64 trial bottle and treatise. Dr. R. H. Kline, Ltd., 27 Arch St., Philadelphia, Pa.

The total annual revenue of Russia, according to the last report, was \$1,011,128,000.

Mozart is the modest violet—simple, unassuming, but delicious.

Deafness Cannot Be Cured

By local applications as they cannot reach the diseased portion of the ear. There is only one way to cure deafness, and that is by constitutional remedies. Deafness is caused by an inflamed condition of the mucous lining of the Eustachian Tube. When this tube is inflamed you have a rumbling sound or imperfect hearing, and when it is entirely closed, deafness is the result, and unless the inflammation can be taken out and this tube restored to its normal condition, hearing will be destroyed forever; nine cases out of ten are caused by Catarrh, which is nothing but an inflamed condition of the mucous surface.

We will give One Hundred Dollars for any case of deafness (caused by catarrh) that cannot be cured by Hall's Catarrh Cure. Send for circulars, free.

F. J. CHERRY & CO., Toledo, O. Sold by Druggists, etc. Hall's Family Pills are the best.

A Sioux Indian Custom.

Among the Sioux Indians a common custom exists. When one family borrows a kettle from another, it is expected when the kettle is returned a small portion of the food that has been cooked in it will be left in the bottom. Should this custom be disregarded by anyone, that person would never be able to borrow again, as the owner must always know what has been cooked in her kettle. A white woman on one occasion returned a scoured kettle, intending to teach a lesson in cleanliness, but her act became the talk of the camp, as a fresh example of the meanness of the whites.



Miss Rose Hennessy, well known as a poetess and elocutionist, of Lexington, Ky., tells how she was cured of uterine inflammation and ovaritis by the use of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—For years I enjoyed the best of health and thought that I would always do so. I attended parties and receptions thinly clad, and would be suddenly chilled, but I did not think of the results. I caught a bad cold eighteen months ago while menstruating, and this caused inflammation of the womb and congested ovaries. I suffered excruciating pains and kept getting worse. My attention was called to your Vegetable Compound and the wonderful cure it had performed, and I made up my mind to try it for two months and see what it would do for me. Within one month I felt much better, and at the close of the second I was entirely well."

"I have advised a number of my lady friends to use it, and all express themselves as well satisfied with the results as I was."—Miss Rose Nona HENNESSY, 410 S. Broadway, Lexington, Ky. —\$500 for full original of above letter proving genuineness cannot be produced.