

THE PERFUME OF THE LADY IN BLACK

By GASTON LEROUX, Author of "The Mystery of the Yellow Room."

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CHAPTER VI.

Fortifying Against a Weird Fate.

PROFESSOR STANGERSON since he had learned the cruel truth had not for one moment been able to free himself from the thought of it. In truth, the first victim of the affair at the Glandier and the most unfortunate was this good old man. He had lost everything—his faith in science, his love of work and his belief in his daughter. His faith in her had been his religion, joy and pride. And while he was thinking of her almost with reverence he discovered that the reason that his daughter refused to marry was because she was already the wife of Baltimore. The day in which Mathilde had decided to tell him the story of the past, which must clear up the present with a tragic light to the eyes of the professor, already warned by the mysteries of the Glandier—the day when, falling at his feet, she had told him the story of her youth, Professor StangerSON had raised the form of his beloved child from the ground and had pressed her to his heart; he had mingled his tears with the sobs of her whose fault had been so bitterly expiated and had sworn that she had never been more precious than since he had known how she had suffered. But he when she left his presence was another man—a man alone, all alone. Professor StangerSON had lost his daughter and his goddess.

He had experienced only indifference in regard to her marriage to Robert Darzac, although the latter had been the best beloved of his pupils. In vain Mathilde, with the warmest tenderness, had endeavored to rekindle the old feeling in the heart of her father. She knew well that he had changed toward her. The professor could work no longer. The great secret of the dis-solution of matter which he had promised to reveal to mankind had returned to the unknown from which for a moment the scientist had drawn it, and men will go on, repeating for centuries to come the imbecile phrase, "From nothing, nothing."

Evidently she was instinctively drawn toward Rouletabille by all the mysterious forces of maternal affection. In spite of the fact that she had every reason to believe that her child had died years before.

She showed for her husband the most charming solicitude. She was attentive to him at every moment, serving him herself, and smiling gently at him as she did so.

If the design of Larsan in showing himself had been to deal a frightful blow to a happiness which had yet scarcely begun, he had completely succeeded. Mathilde had given Darzac at once to understand that she did not regard herself as his wife, since the man to whom she had pledged herself in her early girlhood was still living.

I have said that Mathilde StangerSON had been brought up in a very religious manner, not by her father, who cared little for such things, but by her female relatives, especially her old aunt in Cincinnati. I might have passed over these religious beliefs of Mathilde in silence if they had not had so strong an influence on the resolution which she had taken in regard to her second husband when she discovered that her first husband was still alive. It had seemed to her that Larsan's death had been proved beyond the slightest doubt, and she had gone to her new husband as a widow with the approval of her confessor. And now she learned that in the sight of heaven she was not a widow, but a bigamist!

Leaving the Darzacs, my eyes wandered to the neighbor of Mme. Darzac, M. Arthur William Rance, when they were suddenly arrested by the butler's coming to say that Bernier, the concierge, requested to speak to Rouletabille. My friend left the room.

"What!" I cried. "The Berniers are no longer at the Glandier?"

Readers of "The Mystery of the Yellow Room" will recall that these Berniers—the man and his wife—were the concierges of M. StangerSON at Ste. Genevieve des Bois. I have told how Rouletabille had had them set at liberty when they were accused. Rouletabille had been ever since the object of their devotion. As the Rances had need of concierges for the Fort of Hercules, the professor had been glad to send them his faithful domestics, of whom he had never had reason to complain except for one slight infraction of the game laws, which had turned out most unfortunately for them. Now they were lodged in one of the towers of the postern, where they kept the gate.

The unexpected exit of Rouletabille sent a chill to my heart and seemed to spread a general sensation of alarm throughout the company. Mme. Darzac was very restless. And because Mathilde showed herself to be disturbed and nervous I fancied that Arthur Rance thought that it behooved him to display some little anxiety. Arthur Rance and his wife were not aware of the whole of the unfortunate story. It had seemed useless to inform them of the fact of Mathilde's secret marriage to Jean Roussel, afterward known as Larsan. That was some-

thing which concerned only the family. But they were fully aware of the way in which the secret service agent had pursued Mme. Darzac. The crimes of Larsan were explained in the eyes of Arthur Rance by a mad passion for Mathilde, the indications of an insane and hopeless love. As to Mme. Edith, her thoughts, which I read without her suspecting it, ran about in this way: "But what on earth is there about this woman which could inspire such an insane passion, lasting for years and years, in the heart of any man? Here is a woman for whose sake a detective officer becomes a murderer, for whom a temperate man becomes a drunkard and for whom an innocent man permits himself to be pronounced guilty of a felony. What is there about her more than there is about myself, who owe my husband to the fact that she refused him before he ever saw me? What is the charm about her? And yet even now my husband forgets all about me while he is looking at her." That was what I read in Edith's eyes as she watched her husband gazing at Mathilde. Ah, those black eyes of gentle Mme. Edith!

Mathilde asked me where I thought Rouletabille had gone. As she left the dining room I walked with her to the entrance to the fort. Darzac and Mme. Edith followed us. StangerSON had hidden us good night. Arthur Rance, who had disappeared for a moment, joined us while we were at the passageway. The night was clear, and the moon shone brightly. As we passed beneath the arch we heard Rouletabille's voice.

"Come on! One more effort!" he cried, and the voice which answered him was husky and panting. The two portals of the immense iron doors slammed. They were closed for the first time in a hundred years.

Mme. Edith looked astonished at the act of her guest and asked what had happened to the gate, which had always served in place of the doors. But Arthur Rance caught her arm, impressing upon her that she must keep silence.

Rouletabille announced that if any of us had any desire to make a trip to the village we must give it up, for the order had gone forth, and no one could leave the chateau or enter it. Pere Jacques was charged with the carrying out of the command, and every one knew that it was impossible to bribe the faithful old serritor. Pere Jacques, whom I had known so well at the Glandier, had accompanied Professor StangerSON as his valet. That night he was sleeping in a tiny closet in "la Louve," near his master's bedroom, but Rouletabille had changed that, and it was Pere Jacques who took the place of the concierges in the tower marked A.

"But where are the Berniers?" cried Mme. Edith.

"They are installed in the square tower in the room on the left, near the entrance. They are to act as caretakers of the square tower," replied Rouletabille.

"But the square tower doesn't need any caretakers," exclaimed Edith.

"That, madame," returned the young reporter, "is what we cannot be sure of."

He made no further explanations, but he took Arthur Rance to one side and informed him that he ought to tell his wife about the reappearance of Larsan. If there was to be the slightest chance of hiding the truth from StangerSON it could scarcely be accomplished without the aid and intelligence of Mme. Edith. And, then, too, it would be as well henceforward for all of those in the Fort of Hercules to be prepared for everything and surprised at nothing.

The next act of Rouletabille was to make us walk across the court and place ourselves at the postern which commanded the entrance to the inner court, but at that point the moat had been filled up. Rouletabille declared that he intended to have the moat dug out and to replace the drawbridge.

At the newly fortified postern Rouletabille had stationed no one, for he reserved that place that night for himself. From there he could obtain a complete view of both the inner and outer courts. One could reach the apartment of the Darzacs only after passing by Pere Jacques in A, by Rouletabille at H and by the Berniers, who guarded the square tower at the door marked K. The young man had decided that it would be better for those on guard not to retire that night. As we passed by the ouhlette I saw that some one had displaced the circular board which covered it. I saw also on the margin a flask attached to a cord. Rouletabille explained to me that he had wished to know if this ouhlette, which was really nothing but a well, corresponded with the sea and that he had found that the water was clear and sweet, a proof that it had nothing to do with the Mediterranean.

He walked for a few steps with Mme. Darzac, who immediately took leave of us and entered the square tower. Darzac and Arthur Rance, at the request of Rouletabille, remained with us. Some words of excuse addressed to Mme. Edith made her understand that she was being politely asked to retire, and she made us good night with a nonchalant grace. Rouletabille beckoned us—the men—toward the postern into the little room of the gardener, a dark, low-ceiled apartment. There Arthur Rance, Robert Darzac, Rouletabille and myself without even lighting a lamp held our first council of war.

"We may make our plans here in tranquillity," began Rouletabille. "No one can hear us, and we shall not be surprised by any one. If any person should attempt to pass the first gate, which Jacques is guarding, without the old man seeing him we shall be immediately warned by the sentinel whom I have stationed in the very middle of the court, hidden in the ruins of the chapel. I have placed your

garden, Mattoni, at that point, M. Rance."

I listened to Rouletabille with admiration. Mme. Edith was right. He had indeed constituted himself a captain, and he had not left one impregnable spot without defense.

Rouletabille lit his pipe, took three or four puffs and said: "Well, here we are. Can we hope that Larsan, after having so insolently flaunted himself before us, at our very doors, in order to defy us, will confine himself to such a platonic manifestation? And, content with what he has done, will he go away? I hardly think so, first, because such a thing would be foreign to his character, for he loves a fight and is never satisfied with a partial success, and, second, because no one of us has the power to drive him off. We have, of course, no hope of any help from outside. And he knows it well. That is what makes him so bold and audacious. Whom can we call to our aid?"

"The authorities," suggested Arthur Rance.

"The reporter looked at his host with an air of pity which was not entirely free from reproach. And he said in a chilly tone, which showed plainly to Arthur Rance how little value there was in his proposition: "You ought to understand, monsieur, that I did not save Larsan from French justice at Versailles to deliver him over to Italian justice at Rochers Rouges."

M. Darzac said: "This man must disappear, but in silence, whether we move him by our entreaties or bribe him or kill him. But the first condition of his disappearance is to keep the fact that he has reappeared at all a secret. Above all—and I am speaking of the heartiest wish of Mme. Darzac as well as my own—M. StangerSON must never know that we are exposed by the blows of this monster."

"Mme. Darzac's wishes are commands," replied Rouletabille. "M. StangerSON shall know nothing."

Rouletabille arose and exchanged through the window a signal with Bernier, who was standing erect upon the threshold of the square tower. Then he came back to us and sat down again.

"Larsan probably is not far off," he said. "Bernier is on the most friendly terms with these worthy people, and I am going with him to talk to them. The Italian customs officer speaks only Italian, but the French officer speaks both languages as well as the patois of the country, and it is this man, whom Bernier tells me is called Michael, to whom I look to be of the greatest use to us. Through his means we have already learned that the two revenue posts are much interested in the maneuvers of the boat belonging to Tullio, the fisherman, whom they call 'the hangman of the sea.' Old Tullio is an acquaintance of the customs men—the most skillful of smugglers. He had with him this evening in his boat an individual whom the revenue officers had never seen. The boat, Tullio and the passenger all disappeared at the Pointe de Garibaldi. I have been there and found nothing. However, Larsan must have landed. I am sure that Tullio's little boat is anchored near the Pointe de Garibaldi."

"Larsan certainly landed," repeated M. Darzac. "He is at Rochers Rouges."

"In any case, if the boat has been left at Rochers Rouges, he has not come back here," exclaimed Rouletabille. "The two revenue posts are placed in such a manner that no one can pass by, whether by day or by night, without being seen. The sentinel passes between the rocks and the sea. The rocks are steep and form a terrace sixty meters high."

"That is true," said Arthur Rance. "It is not easy to scale the rocks."

"He will have hidden himself in the grottoes," said Darzac. "There are some deep pockets in the terrace."

"I thought of that," said Rouletabille. "and I went back alone to Rochers Rouges after I left Pere Bernier. I had some things to say to Larsan which I did not wish a third party to hear. Well, I went back to Rochers Rouges and called Larsan's name through all the caves. But, whether it was that he heard me and saw my white flag or not, he did not answer."

"Perhaps he was not there," I suggested.

"Perhaps not. I don't know. But I heard a noise in the grotto."

"And you did not enter?" demanded Arthur Rance.

"No," replied Rouletabille quietly. "But you do not think that it was because I was afraid of him, do you?"

"Let us run!" we all cried in one breath, rising at the same moment. "Let us go and finish up the business immediately."

"I don't think that we shall ever have a better chance of meeting Larsan," said Arthur Rance. "We can do what we like with him at the bottom of Rochers Rouges."

"Doubtless," replied Rouletabille, "my promise to Rochers Rouges produced no result because I was all alone, but if we all go I can assure you that we shall find some results on our return."

"On our return?" echoed Darzac, who did not understand.

"Yes," replied Rouletabille, "on our return to the chateau, where we have left Mme. Darzac all alone and where perhaps we may not find her. Oh, of course," he added as a general silence fell upon his companions, "it is only a hypothesis. But at this time we have no other means of reasoning than by hypothesis."

We looked at each other, and this hypothesis overwhelmed us. Rouletabille continued: "You see, tonight there is nothing that we can do except to barricade ourselves. It is only a temporary barricade, for I want the place put in an absolutely unassailable state tomorrow. The vigil will be hard tonight because we are not yet organized. To-

morrow we shall draw up a set of rules for our little garrison, a list of the trustworthy domestics upon whom we may depend with security.

"You will bring here to this cell all the arms which you can gather—rifles and revolvers. We will divide them among those who do guard duty. At 7 o'clock every night the iron doors will be closed. Tomorrow morning M. Arthur Rance will send for butlers. Every person on the place will be counted and no one allowed to pass the door of the second court. Before 7 o'clock in the evening every one will be counted again and the work people allowed to go out. In one day the men must finish their work. After that I shall be tranquil, and, Mme. Darzac, who is forbidden to leave the chateau under the new order, having been placed in security, I may attempt a sortie and enter seriously into the search for the camp of Larsan. Come, M. Rance, to arms! Bring me some weapons to pass around this evening. I have lent my own revolver to Pere Bernier, who is keeping guard before the door of Mme. Darzac's apartments."

(To be continued.)

ST. LOUIS ATHLETES WILL INVADE THE NORTHWEST

SPOKANE, Wash., Jan. 7.—Six fast boxers and wrestlers, representing the St. Louis Athletic club, are coming to Spokane next February in an effort to disprove the claim that Northwestern amateurs are superior to those in the middle states. Cisco Bullivant, of the Spokane Amateur Athletic Club, has been advised that the St. Louis club will send one 125-pound and one 158-pound boxer, two others and a pair of its best wrestlers on a tour of the Northwest, the

sextette also entering the contests of strength and skill at Seattle and Vancouver. St. Louis sent two men to the A. A. U. meet at Seattle this year, but both failed to score a point in the contests. They declared afterward they were given a "raw deal" by the men on Puget Sound, adding that with an even break they would have made a better showing. The Seattle men laugh at the charges, saying it is widely known that every contestant was on an equal footing.

MARSHALL DYING, RESULT OF A DRUNKEN CAROUSAL

AUBURN, Wash., Jan. 7.—City Marshall August Roethl is dying to-day and two youths, Howard Williams and C. Hilderth, of Sumner, are under arrest for the shooting, as the result of a drunken carousal here last night. Williams and Hilderth were arrested in Sumner at 7 o'clock this morning by a posse of deputies after a chase lasting since midnight.

Both lads fled to their homes after Williams fired the shot which will probably cost the life of the marshal. Badly frightened, they were easily captured after the posse had trailed them. They are now in the Auburn jail and will be taken to Seattle to-day to be arraigned.

Roethl cannot recover, according to the physicians attending him.

CLEOPATRA SAID TO LIE BURIED IN PARIS

PARIS, Jan. 7.—Cleopatra, the "Serpent of Old Nile," is buried in

Paris, a few hundred yards from the Bourse, the Parisian Wall street. This is the archaeological bombshell dropped among the savants by an anonymous writer who asserts that the great Egyptian queen now lies in a gloomy little garden attached to the national library.

His story is that Cleopatra's mummy was buried there 40 years ago by the library officials, who did not know what else to do with it. It had been brought to Paris from Egypt enclosed in a sarcophagus, which is still on view in the library. But after some months it became impossible to keep the mummy itself within the building, so it was secretly buried in the little garden outside the library walls.

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marks the spot where Cleopatra is buried, which is divided by merely an iron railing from the busy Rue Vivienne, leading to the Paris Stock Exchange.

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