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ABOUT AUTHOR



Maurice Leblanc (1864-1941)

"The Mastermind Behind the Gentleman-Burglar"

Maurice Marie Émile Leblanc was a profound French novelist and short story writer whose creation of the charming, elusive master thief Arsène Lupin left an indelible mark on world detective fiction. Operating during the vibrant era of Belle Époque France, Leblanc redefined the boundaries of crime literature by introducing a protagonist who was not a defender of the law, but a brilliant outlaw with a strict moral code.

Early Life and Literary Ambitions:

Born on December 11, 1864, in Rouen, Normandy, Leblanc was the son of a wealthy Italian ship-owner. Growing up in a prosperous household, he was deeply influenced by the rich cultural atmosphere of 19th-century France. Although his father strongly pushed him to pursue a practical career in the local manufacturing industry, Leblanc's heart belonged entirely to literature.

In his twenties, he abandoned his studies and moved to Paris to immerse himself in the bohemian literary scene. His early works consisted of psychological novels and short stories heavily influenced by masters of French realism, such as Gustave Flaubert and Guy de Maupassant. While these early efforts earned him critical praise and respect from fellow intellectuals, they achieved very little commercial success, leaving Leblanc struggling financially for nearly two decades.

The Birth of Arsène Lupin:

Leblanc's destiny changed forever in 1905. Pierre Lafitte, the editor of the newly launched popular magazine *Je sais tout*, approached Leblanc with a specific request: to write a crime story modeled after the immense British success of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes.

Instead of creating another brilliant detective, Leblanc turned the concept completely on its head. In July 1905, he published ***The Arrest of Arsène Lupin*** (*L'Arrestation d'Arsène Lupin*). The story introduced a charismatic, aristocratic thief who stole only from the corrupt, rich, and elite, using wit, disguise, and immaculate manners instead of violence. The character was an instant, overwhelming sensation. Readers demanded more, and what was meant to be a single short story quickly transformed into a lifelong literary phenomenon.

The Literary World of Lupin:

Leblanc's writing perfectly captured the spirit of his time. The *Arsène Lupin* universe combined the romance of the fading 19th century with the rapid technological advances of the early 20th century, featuring automobiles, wireless telegraphs, and modern steamships.

Leblanc famously blurred the lines between fictional universes by introducing Arthur Conan Doyle's famous detective into his stories. Following legal threats from Doyle's lawyers, Leblanc cleverly rearranged the letters to create **"Sherlock Holmes"**, turning the British detective into a brilliant but frequently outsmarted rival to Lupin.

Over the course of nearly thirty years, Leblanc dedicated his career to expanding this universe, writing over twenty novels and numerous short story collections featuring the gentleman-burglar.

In recognition of his immense contributions to French literature and cultural export, Maurice Leblanc was awarded the prestigious *Légion d'honneur* by the French government.

Most Notable Works:

While Leblanc wrote several standalone science-fiction and mystery novels, his legacy rests primarily on the following masterpieces:

- ***The Extraordinary Adventures of Arsène Lupin, Gentleman-Burglar*** **(1907)**: The foundational collection of the first nine short stories that introduced Lupin’s genius, disguises, and daring escapes to the world.
- ***Arsène Lupin versus Sherlock Holmes*** **(1908)**: A legendary battle of wits between the world’s greatest detective and France's most elusive thief.
- ***The Hollow Needle*** **(1909)**: Widely considered Leblanc's finest novel, where Lupin uncovers a historic secret chamber used by the kings of France, hidden inside a famous rock formation in Normandy.
- ***813*** **(1910)**: A darker, epic, and complex masterpiece that sees Lupin entangled in international politics, secret treaties, and a mysterious murder plot.
- ***The Crystal Stopper*** **(1912)**: A high-stakes

political thriller where a vulnerable Lupin must use every ounce of his intellect to save his accomplices from the guillotine.

Later Years and Legacy:

As the years progressed, Leblanc grew somewhat resentful of his creation, feeling that Lupin had completely overshadowed his serious psychological fiction. Yet, he continued to write for his millions of devoted fans worldwide. In 1939, following the outbreak of World War II, Leblanc fled Paris and moved to the safety of Perpignan in southern France. He passed away there from pneumonia on November 6, 1941, at the age of 76.

Today, Maurice Leblanc is celebrated as a pioneer of the caper story and the anti-hero archetype. His creation, Arsène Lupin, remains an immortal pop-culture icon, continuously adapted into global television series, anime, movies, and video games, proving that the charm of the gentleman-burglar is truly timeless.

PREFACE

An Ancient Fortress. A Royal Enigma.

The Greatest Secret of the Kings of France.

When a daring night-time robbery at the château of Count de Gesvres leaves behind a wounded accomplice and a series of impossible clues, the Paris police find themselves completely outmatched. But the true challenger to Arsène Lupin is not a veteran inspector; it is Isidore Beautrelet, a brilliant, teenage high-school student with an analytical mind that rivals the master thief himself. As the young prodigy untangles Lupin's flawless misdirections, he uncovers a cryptic phrase that has been passed down through centuries: the secret of the Hollow Needle.

This is not a simple hunt for stolen diamonds. Beautrelet’s relentless pursuit forces Lupin to play a high-stakes, defensive game that threatens his entire empire and his carefully guarded anonymity. The trail leads directly to a massive, needle-shaped rock formation on the coast of Normandy—a legendary, hollow fortress that has hidden the immense treasures, crown jewels, and

darkest secrets of the French monarchy since the days of Julius Caesar. For Lupin, this place is not just a hideout; it is his sanctuary and his ultimate pride.

Experience the absolute peak of Maurice Leblanc’s legendary series and a towering classic of the mystery genre. Packed with breathtaking twists, historical conspiracies, and a deeply emotional rivalry, this definitive masterpiece delivers a fast-paced intellectual duel, building toward a tragic and unforgettable climax that will change the gentleman-burglar's life forever.

I

THE SHOT

Raymonde listened. The noise was repeated twice over, clearly enough to be distinguished from the medley of vague sounds that formed the great silence of the night and yet too faintly to enable her to tell whether it was near or far, within the walls of the big country-house, or outside, among the murky recesses of the park.

She rose softly. Her window was half open: she flung it back wide. The moonlight lay over a peaceful landscape of lawns and thickets, against which the straggling ruins of the old abbey stood out in tragic outlines, truncated columns, mutilated arches, fragments of porches and shreds of flying buttresses. A light breeze hovered over the face of things, gliding noiselessly through the bare motionless branches of the trees, but shaking the tiny budding leaves of the shrubs.

And, suddenly, she heard the same sound again. It was on the left and on the floor below her, in the living rooms, therefore, that occupied the left wing of the house. Brave and plucky though she was, the girl felt afraid. She slipped on her dressing gown and took the matches.

"Raymonde—Raymonde!"

A voice as low as a breath was calling to her from the next room, the door of which had not been closed. She was

feeling her way there, when Suzanne, her cousin, came out of the room and fell into her arms:

"Raymonde—is that you? Did you hear—?"

"Yes. So you're not asleep?"

"I suppose the dog woke me—some time ago. But he's not barking now. What time is it?"

"About four."

"Listen! Surely, someone's walking in the drawing room!"

"There's no danger, your father is down there, Suzanne."

"But there is danger for him. His room is next to the boudoir."

"M. Daval is there too—"

"At the other end of the house. He could never hear."

They hesitated, not knowing what course to decide upon. Should they call out? Cry for help? They dared not; they were frightened of the sound of their own voices. But Suzanne, who had gone to the window, suppressed a scream:

"Look!—A man!—Near the fountain!"

A man was walking away at a rapid pace. He carried under his arm a fairly large load, the nature of which they were unable to distinguish: it knocked against his leg and impeded his progress. They saw him pass near the old chapel and turn toward a little door in the wall. The door must have been open, for the man disappeared suddenly from view and they failed to hear the usual grating of the hinges.

“He came from the drawing room,” whispered Suzanne.

“No, the stairs and the hall would have brought him out more to the left—Unless—”

The same idea struck them both. They leant out. Below them, a ladder stood against the front of the house, resting on the first floor. A glimmer lit up the stone balcony. And another man, who was also carrying something, bestrode the baluster, slid down the ladder and ran away by the same road as the first.

Suzanne, scared to the verge of swooning, fell on her knees, stammering:

“Let us call out—let us call for help—”

“Who would come? Your father—and if there are more of them left—and they throw themselves upon him—?”

“Then—then—we might call the servants—Your bell rings on their floor.”

“Yes—yes—perhaps, that’s better. If only they come in time!”

Raymonde felt for the electric push near her bed and pressed it with her finger. They heard the bell ring upstairs and had an impression that its shrill sound must also reach anyone below.

They waited. The silence became terrifying and the very breeze no longer shook the leaves of the shrubs.

“I’m frightened—frightened,” said Suzanne.

And, suddenly, from the profound darkness below them, came the sound of a struggle, a crash of furniture

overturned, words, exclamations and then, horrible and ominous, a hoarse groan, the gurgle of a man who is being murdered—

Raymonde leapt toward the door. Suzanne clung desperately to her arm:

"No—no—don't leave me—I'm frightened—"

Raymonde pushed her aside and darted down the corridor, followed by Suzanne, who staggered from wall to wall, screaming as she went. Raymonde reached the staircase, flew down the stairs, flung herself upon the door of the big drawing room and stopped short, rooted to the threshold, while Suzanne sank in a heap by her side. Facing them, at three steps' distance, stood a man, with a lantern in his hand. He turned it upon the two girls, blinding them with the light, stared long at their pale faces, and then, without hurrying, with the calmest movements in the world, took his cap, picked up a scrap of paper and two bits of straw, removed some footmarks from the carpet, went to the balcony, turned to the girls, made them a deep bow and disappeared.

Suzanne was the first to run to the little boudoir which separated the big drawing-room from her father's bedroom. But, at the entrance, a hideous sight appalled her. By the slanting rays of the moon, she saw two apparently lifeless bodies lying close to each other on the floor. She leaned over one of them:

"Father!—Father!—Is it you? What has happened to you?" she cried, distractedly.

After a moment, the Comte de Gesvres moved. In a

broken voice, he said:

"Don't be afraid—I am not wounded—Daval?—Is he alive?—The knife?—The knife?—"

Two menservants now arrived with candles. Raymonde flung herself down before the other body and recognized Jean Daval, the count's private secretary. A little stream of blood trickled from his neck. His face already wore the pallor of death.

Then she rose, returned to the drawing room, took a gun that hung in a trophy of arms on the wall and went out on the balcony. Not more than fifty or sixty seconds had elapsed since the man had set his foot on the top rung of the ladder. He could not, therefore, be very far away, the more so as he had taken the precaution to remove the ladder, in order to prevent the inmates of the house from using it. And soon she saw him skirting the remains of the old cloister. She put the gun to her shoulder, calmly took aim and fired. The man fell.

"That's done it! That's done it!" said one of the servants. "We've got this one. I'll run down."

"No, Victor, he's getting up. … You had better go down by the staircase and make straight for the little door in the wall. That's the only way he can escape."

Victor hurried off, but, before he reached the park, the man fell down again. Raymonde called the other servant:

"Albert, do you see him down there? Near the main cloister?—"

"Yes, he's crawling in the grass. He's done for—"

“Watch him from here.”

“There’s no way of escape for him. On the right of the ruins is the open lawn—”

“And, Victor, do you guard the door, on the left,” she said, taking up her gun.

“But, surely, you are not going down, miss?”

“Yes, yes,” she said, with a resolute accent and abrupt movements; “let me be—I have a cartridge left—If he stirs—”

She went out. A moment later, Albert saw her going toward the ruins. He called to her from the window:

“He’s dragged himself behind the cloister. I can’t see him. Be careful, miss—”

Raymonde went round the old cloisters, to cut off the man’s retreat, and Albert soon lost sight of her. After a few minutes, as he did not see her return, he became uneasy and, keeping his eye on the ruins, instead of going down by the stairs he made an effort to reach the ladder. When he had succeeded, he scrambled down and ran straight to the cloisters near which he had seen the man last. Thirty paces farther, he found Raymonde, who was searching with Victor.

“Well?” he asked.

“There’s no laying one’s hands on him,” replied Victor.

“The little door?”

“I’ve been there; here’s the key.”

“Still—he must—”

“Oh, we’ve got him safe enough, the scoundrel—He’ll be ours in ten minutes.”

The farmer and his son, awakened by the shot, now came from the farm buildings, which were at some distance on the right, but within the circuit of the walls. They had met no one.

“Of course not,” said Albert. “The ruffian can’t have left the ruins—We’ll dig him out of some hole or other.”

They organized a methodical search, beating every bush, pulling aside the heavy masses of ivy rolled round the shafts of the columns. They made sure that the chapel was properly locked and that none of the panes were broken. They went round the cloisters and examined every nook and corner. The search was fruitless.

There was but one discovery: at the place where the man had fallen under Raymonde’s gun, they picked up a chauffeur’s cap, in very soft buff leather; besides that, nothing.

The gendarmerie of Ouville-la-Rivière were informed at six o’clock in the morning and at once proceeded to the spot, after sending an express to the authorities at Dieppe with a note describing the circumstances of the crime, the imminent capture of the chief criminal and “the discovery of his headgear and of the dagger with which the crime had been committed.”

At ten o’clock, two hired conveyances came down the gentle slope that led to the house. One of them, an old-fashioned calash, contained the deputy public prosecutor

and the examining magistrate, accompanied by his clerk. In the other, a humble fly, were seated two reporters, representing the *Journal de Rouen* and a great Paris paper.

The old château came into view—once the abbey residence of the priors of Ambrumésy, mutilated under the Revolution, both restored by the Comte de Gesvres, who had now owned it for some twenty years. It consists of a main building, surmounted by a pinnacled clock-tower, and two wings, each of which is surrounded by a flight of steps with a stone balustrade. Looking across the walls of the park and beyond the upland supported by the high Norman cliffs, you catch a glimpse of the blue line of the Channel between the villages of Sainte-Marguerite and Varengeville.

Here the Comte de Gesvres lived with his daughter Suzanne, a delicate, fair-haired, pretty creature, and his niece Raymonde de Saint-Véran, whom he had taken to live with him two years before, when the simultaneous death of her father and mother left Raymonde an orphan. Life at the château was peaceful and regular. A few neighbors paid an occasional visit. In the summer, the count took the two girls almost every day to Dieppe. He was a tall man, with a handsome, serious face and hair that was turning gray. He was very rich, managed his fortune himself and looked after his extensive estates with the assistance of his secretary, Jean Daval.

Immediately upon his arrival, the examining magistrate took down the first observations of Sergeant Quevillon of the gendarmes. The capture of the criminal, imminent though it might be, had not yet been effected, but every outlet of the park was held. Escape was impossible.

The little company next crossed the chapter-hall and the refectory, both of which are on the ground floor, and went up to the first story. They at once remarked the perfect order that prevailed in the drawing room. Not a piece of furniture, not an ornament but appeared to occupy its usual place; nor was there any gap among the ornaments or furniture. On the right and left walls hung magnificent Flemish tapestries with figures. On the panels of the wall facing the windows were four fine canvases, in contemporary frames, representing mythological scenes. These were the famous pictures by Rubens which had been left to the Comte de Gesvres, together with the Flemish tapestries, by his maternal uncle, the Marqués de Bobadilla, a Spanish grandee.

M. Filleul remarked:

“If the motive of the crime was theft, this drawing room, at any rate, was not the object of it.”

“You can’t tell!” said the deputy, who spoke little, but who, when he did, invariably opposed the magistrate’s views.

“Why, my dear sir, the first thought of a burglar would be to carry off those pictures and tapestries, which are universally renowned.”

“Perhaps there was no time.”

“We shall see.”

At that moment, the Comte de Gesvres entered, accompanied by the doctor. The count, who did not seem to feel the effects of the attack to which he had been subjected, welcomed the two officials. Then he opened the door of the

boudoir.

This room, which no one had been allowed to enter since the discovery of the crime, differed from the drawing room inasmuch as it presented a scene of the greatest disorder. Two chairs were overturned, one of the tables smashed to pieces and several objects—a traveling-clock, a portfolio, a box of stationery—lay on the floor. And there was blood on some of the scattered pieces of notepaper.

The doctor turned back the sheet that covered the corpse. Jean Daval, dressed in his usual velvet suit, with a pair of nailed boots on his feet, lay stretched on his back, with one arm folded beneath him. His collar and tie had been removed and his shirt opened, revealing a large wound in the chest.

“Death must have been instantaneous,” declared the doctor. “One blow of the knife was enough.”

“It was, no doubt, the knife which I saw on the drawing-room mantelpiece, next to a leather cap?” said the examining magistrate.

“Yes,” said the Comte de Gesvres, “the knife was picked up here. It comes from the same trophy in the drawing room from which my niece, Mlle. de Saint-Véran, snatched the gun. As for the chauffeur’s cap, that evidently belongs to the murderer.”

M. Filleul examined certain further details in the room, put a few questions to the doctor and then asked M. de Gesvres to tell him what he had seen and heard. The count worded his story as follows:

“Jean Daval woke me up. I had been sleeping badly, for

that matter, with gleams of consciousness in which I seemed to hear noises, when, suddenly opening my eyes, I saw Daval standing at the foot of my bed, with his candle in his hand and fully dressed—as he is now, for he often worked late into the night. He seemed greatly excited and said, in a low voice: 'There's someone in the drawing room.' I heard a noise myself. I got up and softly pushed the door leading to this boudoir. At the same moment, the door over there, which opens into the big drawing room, was thrown back and a man appeared who leaped at me and stunned me with a blow on the temple. I am telling you this without any details, Monsieur le Juge d'Instruction, for the simple reason that I remember only the principal facts, and that these facts followed upon one another with extraordinary swiftness."

"And after that?—"

"After that, I don't know—I fainted. When I came to, Daval lay stretched by my side, mortally wounded."

"At first sight, do you suspect no one?"

"No one."

"You have no enemy?"

"I know of none."

"Nor M. Daval either?"

"Daval! An enemy? He was the best creature that ever lived. M. Daval was my secretary for twenty years and, I may say, my confidant; and I have never seen him surrounded with anything but love and friendship."

"Still, there has been a burglary and there has been a murder: there must be a motive for all that."

“The motive? Why, it was robbery pure and simple.”

“Robbery? Have you been robbed of something, then?”

“No, nothing.”

“In that case—?”

“In that case, if they have stolen nothing and if nothing is missing, they at least took something away.”

“What?”

“I don’t know. But my daughter and my niece will tell you, with absolute certainty, that they saw two men in succession cross the park and that those two men were carrying fairly heavy loads.”

“The young ladies—”

“The young ladies may have been dreaming, you think? I should be tempted to believe it, for I have been exhausting myself in inquiries and suppositions ever since this morning. However, it is easy enough to question them.”

The two cousins were sent for to the big drawing room. Suzanne, still quite pale and trembling, could hardly speak. Raymonde, who was more energetic, more of a man, better looking, too, with the golden glint in her brown eyes, described the events of the night and the part which she had played in them.

“So I may take it, mademoiselle, that your evidence is positive?”

“Absolutely. The men who went across the park were carrying things away with them.”

“And the third man?”

“He went from here empty-handed.”

“Could you describe him to us?”

“He kept on dazzling us with the light of his lantern. All that I could say is that he is tall and heavily built.”

“Is that how he appeared to you, mademoiselle?” asked the magistrate, turning to Suzanne de Gesvres.

“Yes—or, rather, no,” said Suzanne, reflecting. “I thought he was about the middle height and slender.”

M. Filleul smiled; he was accustomed to differences of opinion and sight in witnesses to one and the same fact:

“So we have to do, on the one hand, with a man, the one in the drawing room, who is, at the same time, tall and short, stout and thin, and, on the other, with two men, those in the park, who are accused of removing from that drawing room objects—which are still here!”

M. Filleul was a magistrate of the ironic school, as he himself would say. He was also a very ambitious magistrate and one who did not object to an audience nor to an occasion to display his tactful resource in public, as was shown by the increasing number of persons who now crowded into the room. The journalists had been joined by the farmer and his son, the gardener and his wife, the indoor servants of the château and the two cabmen who had driven the flies from Dieppe.

M. Filleul continued:

“There is also the question of agreeing upon the way in which the third person disappeared. Was this the gun you fired, mademoiselle, and from this window?”

“Yes. The man reached the tombstone which is almost buried under the brambles, to the left of the cloisters.”

“But he got up again?”

“Only half. Victor ran down at once to guard the little door and I followed him, leaving the second footman, Albert, to keep watch here.”

Albert now gave his evidence and the magistrate concluded:

“So, according to you, the wounded man was not able to escape on the left, because your fellow-servant was watching the door, nor on the right, because you would have seen him cross the lawn. Logically, therefore, he is, at the present moment, in the comparatively restricted space that lies before our eyes.”

“I am sure of it.”

“And you, mademoiselle?”

“Yes.”

“And I, too,” said Victor.

The deputy prosecutor exclaimed, with a leer:

“The field of inquiry is quite narrow. We have only to continue the search commenced four hours ago.”

“We may be more fortunate.”

M. Filleul took the leather cap from the mantel, examined it and, beckoning to the sergeant of gendarmes, whispered:

“Sergeant, send one of your men to Dieppe at once. Tell him to go to Maigret, the hatter, in the Rue de la Barre, and ask M. Maigret to tell him, if possible, to whom this cap was

sold."

The "field of inquiry," in the deputy's phrase, was limited to the space contained between the house, the lawn on the right and the angle formed by the left wall and the wall opposite the house, that is to say, a quadrilateral of about a hundred yards each way, in which the ruins of Ambrumésy, the famous medieval monastery, stood out at intervals.

They at once noticed the traces left by the fugitive in the trampled grass. In two places, marks of blackened blood, now almost dried up, were observed. After the turn at the end of the cloisters, there was nothing more to be seen, as the nature of the ground, here covered with pine-needles, did not lend itself to the imprint of a body. But, in that case, how had the wounded man succeeded in escaping the eyes of Raymonde, Victor and Albert? There was nothing but a few brakes, which the servants and the gendarmes had beaten over and over again, and a number of tombstones, under which they had explored. The examining magistrate made the gardener, who had the key, open the chapel, a real gem of carving, a shrine in stone which had been respected by time and the revolutionaries, and which, with the delicate sculpture work of its porch and its miniature population of statuettes, was always looked upon as a marvelous specimen of the Norman-Gothic style. The chapel, which was very simple in the interior, with no other ornament than its marble altar, offered no hiding-place. Besides, the fugitive would have had to obtain admission. And by what means?

The inspection brought them to the little door in the wall that served as an entrance for the visitors to the ruins. It

opened on a sunk road running between the park wall and a copsewood containing some abandoned quarries. M. Filleul stooped forward: the dust of the road bore marks of anti-skid pneumatic tires. Raymonde and Victor remembered that, after the shot, they had seemed to hear the throb of a motorcar.

The magistrate suggested:

"The man must have joined his confederates."

"Impossible!" cried Victor. "I was here while mademoiselle and Albert still had him in view."

"Nonsense, he must be somewhere! Outside or inside: we have no choice!"

"He is here," the servants insisted, obstinately.

The magistrate shrugged his shoulders and went back to the house in a more or less sullen mood. There was no doubt that it was an unpromising case. A theft in which nothing had been stolen; an invisible prisoner: what could be less satisfactory?

It was late. M. de Gesvres asked the officials and the two journalists to stay to lunch. They ate in silence and then M. Filleul returned to the drawing room, where he questioned the servants. But the sound of a horse's hoofs came from the courtyard and, a moment after, the gendarme who had been sent to Dieppe entered.

"Well, did you see the hatter?" exclaimed the magistrate, eager at last to obtain some positive information.

"I saw M. Maigret. The cap was sold to a cabdriver."

"A cabdriver!"

“Yes, a driver who stopped his fly before the shop and asked to be supplied with a yellow-leather chauffeur’s cap for one of his customers. This was the only one left. He paid for it, without troubling about the size, and drove off. He was in a great hurry.”

“What sort of fly was it?”

“A calash.”

“And on what day did this happen?”

“On what day? Why, today, at eight o’clock this morning.”

“This morning? What are you talking about?”

“The cap was bought this morning.”

“But that’s impossible, because it was found last night in the park. If it was found there, it must have been there; and, consequently, it must have been bought before.”

“The hatter told me it was bought this morning.”

There was a moment of general bewilderment. The nonplussed magistrate strove to understand. Suddenly, he started, as though struck with a gleam of light:

“Fetch the cabman who brought us here this morning! The man who drove the calash! Fetch him at once!”

The sergeant of gendarmes and his subordinate ran off to the stables. In a few minutes, the sergeant returned alone.

“Where’s the cabman?”

“He asked for food in the kitchen, ate his lunch and then—”

“And then—?”

"He went off."

"With his fly?"

"No. Pretending that he wanted to go and see a relation at Ouville, he borrowed the groom's bicycle. Here are his hat and greatcoat."

"But did he leave bareheaded?"

"No, he took a cap from his pocket and put it on."

"A cap?"

"Yes, a yellow leather cap, it seems."

"A yellow leather cap? Why, no, we've got it here!"

"That's true, Monsieur le Juge d'Instruction, but his is just like it."

The deputy sniggered:

"Very funny! Most amusing! There are two caps—One, the real one, which constituted our only piece of evidence, has gone off on the head of the sham flyman! The other, the false one, is in your hands. Oh, the fellow has had us nicely!"

"Catch him! Fetch him back!" cried M. Filleul. "Two of your men on horseback, Sergeant Quevillon, and at full speed!"

"He is far away by this time," said the deputy.

"He can be as far as he pleases, but still we must lay hold of him."

"I hope so; but I think, Monsieur le Juge d'Instruction, that your efforts should be concentrated here above all. Would you mind reading this scrap of paper, which I have just

found in the pocket of the coat?"

"Which coat?"

"The driver's."

And the deputy prosecutor handed M. Filleul a piece of paper, folded in four, containing these few words written in pencil, in a more or less common hand:

"Woe betide the young lady, if she has killed the governor!"

The incident caused a certain stir.

"A word to the wise!" muttered the deputy. "We are now forewarned."

"Monsieur le Comte," said the examining magistrate, "I beg you not to be alarmed. Nor you either, mademoiselle. This threat is of no importance, as the police are on the spot. We shall take every precaution and I will answer for your safety. As for you, gentlemen. I rely on your discretion. You have been present at this inquiry, thanks to my excessive kindness toward the Press, and it would be making me an ill return—"

He interrupted himself, as though an idea had struck him, looked at the two young men, one after the other, and, going up to the first, asked:

"What paper do you represent, sir?"

"The *Journal de Rouen*."

"Have you your credentials?"

"Here."

The card was in order. There was no more to be said. M.

Filleul turned to the other reporter:

"And you, sir?"

"I?"

"Yes, you: what paper do you belong to?"

"Why, Monsieur le Juge d'Instruction, I write for a number of papers—all over the place—"

"Your credentials?"

"I haven't any."

"Oh! How is that?"

"For a newspaper to give you a card, you have to be on its regular staff."

"Well?"

"Well, I am only an occasional contributor, a freelance. I send articles to this newspaper and that. They are published or declined according to circumstances."

"In that case, what is your name? Where are your papers?"

"My name would tell you nothing. As for papers, I have none."

"You have no paper of any kind to prove your profession!"

"I have no profession."

"But look here, sir," cried the magistrate, with a certain asperity, "you can't expect to preserve your incognito after introducing yourself here by a trick and surprising the secrets of the police!"

"I beg to remark, Monsieur le Juge d'Instruction, that you