

BARR ROBERT

THE TRIUMPHS
OF EUGÈNE
VALMONT

Robert Barr
The Triumphs of Eugène Valmont

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=36362174

The Triumphs of Eugène Valmont:

Содержание

1. The Mystery of the Five Hundred Diamonds	4
2. The Siamese Twin of a Bomb-Thrower	43
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	85

Robert Barr

The Triumphs of Eugène Valmont

1. The Mystery of the Five Hundred Diamonds

When I say I am called Valmont, the name will convey no impression to the reader, one way or another. My occupation is that of private detective in London, but if you ask any policeman in Paris who Valmont was he will likely be able to tell you, unless he is a recent recruit. If you ask him where Valmont is now, he may not know, yet I have a good deal to do with the Parisian police.

For a period of seven years I was chief detective to the Government of France, and if I am unable to prove myself a great crime hunter, it is because the record of my career is in the secret archives of Paris.

I may admit at the outset that I have no grievances to air. The French Government considered itself justified in dismissing me, and it did so. In this action it was quite within its right, and I should be the last to dispute that right; but, on the other hand, I

consider myself justified in publishing the following account of what actually occurred, especially as so many false rumours have been put abroad concerning the case. However, as I said at the beginning, I hold no grievance, because my worldly affairs are now much more prosperous than they were in Paris, my intimate knowledge of that city and the country of which it is the capital bringing to me many cases with which I have dealt more or less successfully since I established myself in London.

Without further preliminary I shall at once plunge into an account of the case which riveted the attention of the whole world a little more than a decade ago.

The year 1893 was a prosperous twelve months for France. The weather was good, the harvest excellent, and the wine of that vintage is celebrated to this day. Everyone was well off and reasonably happy, a marked contrast to the state of things a few years later, when dissension over the Dreyfus case rent the country in twain.

Newspaper readers may remember that in 1893 the Government of France fell heir to an unexpected treasure which set the civilised world agog, especially those inhabitants of it who are interested in historical relics. This was the finding of the diamond necklace in the Château de Chaumont, where it had rested undiscovered for a century in a rubbish heap of an attic. I believe it has not been questioned that this was the veritable necklace which the court jeweller, Boehmer, hoped to sell to Marie Antoinette, although how it came to be in the Château

de Chaumont no one has been able to form even a conjecture. For a hundred years it was supposed that the necklace had been broken up in London, and its half a thousand stones, great and small, sold separately. It has always seemed strange to me that the Countess de Lamotte-Valois, who was thought to have profited by the sale of these jewels, should not have abandoned France if she possessed money to leave that country, for exposure was inevitable if she remained. Indeed, the unfortunate woman was branded and imprisoned, and afterwards was dashed to death from the third storey of a London house, when, in the direst poverty, she sought escape from the consequences of the debts she had incurred.

I am not superstitious in the least, yet this celebrated piece of treasure-trove seems actually to have exerted a malign influence over everyone who had the misfortune to be connected with it. Indeed, in a small way, I who write these words suffered dismissal and disgrace, though I caught but one glimpse of this dazzling scintillation of jewels. The jeweller who made the necklace met financial ruin; the Queen for whom it was constructed was beheaded; that high-born Prince Louis René Edouard, Cardinal de Rohan, who purchased it, was flung into prison; the unfortunate Countess, who said she acted as go-between until the transfer was concluded, clung for five awful minutes to a London window-sill before dropping to her death to the flags below; and now, a hundred and eight years later, up comes this devil's display of fireworks to the light again!

Droulliard, the working man who found the ancient box, seems to have prised it open, and ignorant though he was—he had probably never seen a diamond in his life before—realised that a fortune was in his grasp. The baleful glitter from the combination must have sent madness into his brain, working havoc therein as though the shafts of brightness were those mysterious rays which scientists have recently discovered. He might quite easily have walked through the main gate of the Château unsuspected and unquestioned with the diamonds concealed about his person, but instead of this he crept from the attic window on to the steep roof, slipped to the eaves, fell to the ground, and lay dead with a broken neck, while the necklace, intact, shimmered in the sunlight beside his body. No matter where these jewels had been found the Government would have insisted that they belonged to the Treasury of the Republic; but as the Château de Chaumont was a historical monument, and the property of France, there could be no question regarding the ownership of the necklace. The Government at once claimed it, and ordered it to be sent by a trustworthy military man to Paris. It was carried safely and delivered promptly to the authorities by Alfred Dreyfus, a young captain of artillery, to whom its custody had been entrusted.

In spite of its fall from the tall tower neither case nor jewels were perceptibly damaged. The lock of the box had apparently been forced by Droulliard's hatchet, or perhaps by the clasp knife found on his body. On reaching the ground the lid had flown

open, and the necklace was thrown out.

I believe there was some discussion in the Cabinet regarding the fate of this ill-omened trophy, one section wishing it to be placed in a museum on account of its historical interest, another advocating the breaking up of the necklace and the selling of the diamonds for what they would fetch. But a third party maintained that the method to get the most money into the coffers of the country was to sell the necklace as it stood, for as the world now contains so many rich amateurs who collect undoubted rarities, regardless of expense, the historic associations of the jewelled collar would enhance the intrinsic value of the stones; and, this view prevailing, it was announced that the necklace would be sold by auction a month later in the rooms of Meyer, Renault and Co., in the Boulevard des Italiens, near the Bank of the Crédit-Lyonnais.

This announcement elicited much comment from the newspapers of all countries, and it seemed that, from a financial point of view at least, the decision of the Government had been wise, for it speedily became evident that a notable coterie of wealthy buyers would be congregated in Paris on the thirteenth (unlucky day for me!) when the sale was to take place. But we of the inner circle were made aware of another result somewhat more disquieting, which was that the most expert criminals in the world were also gathering like vultures upon the fair city. The honour of France was at stake. Whoever bought that necklace must be assured of a safe conduct out of the country. We might

view with equanimity whatever happened afterwards, but while he was a resident of France his life and property must not be endangered. Thus it came about that I was given full authority to ensure that neither murder nor theft nor both combined should be committed while the purchaser of the necklace remained within our boundaries, and for this purpose the police resources of France were placed unreservedly at my disposal. If I failed there should be no one to blame but myself; consequently, as I have remarked before, I do not complain of my dismissal by the Government.

The broken lock of the jewel-case had been very deftly repaired by an expert locksmith, who in executing his task was so unfortunate as to scratch a finger on the broken metal, whereupon blood poisoning set in, and although his life was saved, he was dismissed from the hospital with his right arm gone and his usefulness destroyed.

When the jeweller Boehmer made the necklace he asked a hundred and sixty thousand pounds for it, but after years of disappointment he was content to sell it to Cardinal de Rohan for sixty-four thousand pounds, to be liquidated in three instalments, not one of which was ever paid. This latter amount was probably somewhere near the value of the five hundred and sixteen separate stones, one of which was of tremendous size, a very monarch of diamonds, holding its court among seventeen brilliants each as large as a filbert. This iridescent concentration of wealth was, as one might say, placed in my care, and I had to

see to it that no harm came to the necklace or to its prospective owner until they were safely across the boundaries of France.

The four weeks previous to the thirteenth proved a busy and anxious time for me. Thousands, most of whom were actuated by mere curiosity, wished to view the diamonds. We were compelled to discriminate, and sometimes discriminated against the wrong person, which caused unpleasantness. Three distinct attempts were made to rob the safe, but luckily these criminal efforts were frustrated, and so we came unscathed to the eventful thirteenth of the month.

The sale was to begin at two o'clock, and on the morning of that day I took the somewhat tyrannical precaution of having the more dangerous of our own malefactors, and as many of the foreign thieves as I could trump up charges against, laid by the heels, yet I knew very well it was not these rascals I had most to fear, but the suave, well-groomed gentlemen, amply supplied with unimpeachable credentials, stopping at our fine hotels and living like princes. Many of these were foreigners against whom we could prove nothing, and whose arrest might land us into temporary international difficulties. Nevertheless, I had each of them shadowed, and on the morning of the thirteenth if one of them had even disputed a cab fare I should have had him in prison half an hour later, and taken the consequences, but these gentlemen are very shrewd and do not commit mistakes.

I made up a list of all the men in the world who were able or likely to purchase the necklace. Many of them would not

be present in person at the auction rooms; their bidding would be done by agents. This simplified matters a good deal, for the agents kept me duly informed of their purposes, and, besides, an agent who handles treasure every week is an adept at the business, and does not need the protection which must surround an amateur, who in nine cases out of ten has but scant idea of the dangers that threaten him, beyond knowing that if he goes down a dark street in a dangerous quarter he is likely to be maltreated and robbed.

There were no less than sixteen clients all told, whom we learned were to attend personally on the day of the sale, any one of whom might well have made the purchase. The Marquis of Warlingham and Lord Oxted from England were well-known jewel fanciers, while at least half a dozen millionaires were expected from the United States, with a smattering from Germany, Austria, and Russia, and one each from Italy, Belgium, and Holland.

Admission to the auction rooms was allowed by ticket only, to be applied for at least a week in advance, applications to be accompanied by satisfactory testimonials. It would possibly have surprised many of the rich men collected there to know that they sat cheek by jowl with some of the most noted thieves of England and America, but I allowed this for two reasons: first, I wished to keep these sharpers under my own eye until I knew who had bought the necklace; and, secondly, I was desirous that they should not know they were suspected.

I stationed trusty men outside on the Boulevard des Italians, each of whom knew by sight most of the probable purchasers of the necklace. It was arranged that when the sale was over I should walk out to the boulevard alongside the man who was the new owner of the diamonds, and from that moment until he quitted France my men were not to lose sight of him if he took personal custody of the stones, instead of doing the sensible and proper thing of having them insured and forwarded to his residence by some responsible transit company, or depositing them in the bank. In fact, I took every precaution that occurred to me. All police Paris was on the *qui vive*, and felt itself pitted against the scoundrelism of the world.

For one reason or another it was nearly half-past two before the sale began. There had been considerable delay because of forged tickets, and, indeed, each order for admittance was so closely scrutinised that this in itself took a good deal more time than we anticipated. Every chair was occupied, and still a number of the visitors were compelled to stand. I stationed myself by the swinging doors at the entrance end of the hall, where I could command a view of the entire assemblage. Some of my men were placed with backs against the wall, whilst others were distributed amongst the chairs, all in plain clothes. During the sale the diamonds themselves were not displayed, but the box containing them rested in front of the auctioneer and three policemen in uniform stood guard on either side.

Very quietly the auctioneer began by saying that there was no

need for him to expatiate on the notable character of the treasure he was privileged to offer for sale, and with this preliminary, he requested those present to bid. Someone offered twenty thousand francs, which was received with much laughter; then the bidding went steadily on until it reached nine hundred thousand francs, which I knew to be less than half the reserve the Government had placed upon the necklace. The contest advanced more slowly until the million and a half was touched, and there it hung fire for a time, while the auctioneer remarked that this sum did not equal that which the maker of the necklace had been finally forced to accept for it. After another pause he added that, as the reserve was not exceeded, the necklace would be withdrawn, and probably never again offered for sale. He therefore urged those who were holding back to make their bids now. At this the contest livened until the sum of two million three hundred thousand francs had been offered, and now I knew the necklace would be sold. Nearing the three million mark the competition thinned down to a few dealers from Hamburg and the Marquis of Warlingham, from England, when a voice that had not yet been heard in the auction room was lifted in a tone of some impatience:—

'One million dollars!'

There was an instant hush, followed by the scribbling of pencils, as each person present reduced the sum to its equivalent in his own currency—pounds for the English, francs for the French, marks for the German, and so on. The aggressive tone

and the clear-cut face of the bidder proclaimed him an American, not less than the financial denomination he had used. In a moment it was realised that his bid was a clear leap of more than two million francs, and a sigh went up from the audience as if this settled it, and the great sale was done. Nevertheless the auctioneer's hammer hovered over the lid of his desk, and he looked up and down the long line of faces turned towards him. He seemed reluctant to tap the board, but no one ventured to compete against this tremendous sum, and with a sharp click the mallet fell.

'What name?' he asked, bending over towards the customer.

'Cash,' replied the American; 'here's a cheque for the amount. I'll take the diamonds with me.'

'Your request is somewhat unusual,' protested the auctioneer mildly.

'I know what you mean,' interrupted the American; 'you think the cheque may not be cashed. You will notice it is drawn on the *Crédit-Lyonnais*, which is practically next door. I must have the jewels with me. Send round your messenger with the cheque; it will take only a few minutes to find out whether or not the money is there to meet it. The necklace is mine, and I insist on having it.'

The auctioneer with some demur handed the cheque to the representative of the French Government who was present, and this official himself went to the bank. There were some other things to be sold and the auctioneer endeavoured to go on through the list, but no one paid the slightest attention to him.

Meanwhile I was studying the countenance of the man who had made the astounding bid, when I should instead have adjusted my preparations to meet the new conditions now confronting me. Here was a man about whom we knew nothing whatever. I had come to the instant conclusion that he was a prince of criminals, and that a sinister design, not at that moment fathomed by me, was on foot to get possession of the jewels. The handing up of the cheque was clearly a trick of some sort, and I fully expected the official to return and say the draft was good. I determined to prevent this man from getting the jewel box until I knew more of his game. Quickly I removed from my place near the door to the auctioneer's desk, having two objects in view; first, to warn the auctioneer not to part with the treasure too easily; and, second, to study the suspected man at closer range. Of all evil-doers the American is most to be feared; he uses more ingenuity in the planning of his projects, and will take greater risks in carrying them out than any other malefactor on earth.

From my new station I saw there were two men to deal with. The bidder's face was keen and intellectual; his hands refined, lady-like, clean and white, showing they were long divorced from manual labour, if indeed they had ever done any useful work. Coolness and imperturbability were his beyond a doubt. The companion who sat at his right was of an entirely different stamp. His hands were hairy and sun-tanned; his face bore the stamp of grim determination and unflinching bravery. I knew that these two types usually hunted in couples—the one to scheme,

the other to execute, and they always formed a combination dangerous to encounter and difficult to circumvent.

There was a buzz of conversation up and down the hall as these two men talked together in low tones. I knew now that I was face to face with the most hazardous problem of my life.

I whispered to the auctioneer, who bent his head to listen. He knew very well who I was, of course.

'You must not give up the necklace,' I began.

He shrugged his shoulders.

'I am under the orders of the official from the Ministry of the Interior. You must speak to him.'

'I shall not fail to do so,' I replied. 'Nevertheless, do not give up the box too readily.'

'I am helpless,' he protested with another shrug. 'I obey the orders of the Government.'

Seeing it was useless to parley further with the auctioneer, I set my wits to work to meet the new emergency. I felt convinced that the cheque would prove to be genuine, and that the fraud, wherever it lay, might not be disclosed in time to aid the authorities. My duty, therefore, was to make sure we lost sight neither of the buyer nor the thing bought. Of course I could not arrest the purchaser merely on suspicion; besides, it would make the Government the laughing-stock of the world if they sold a case of jewels and immediately placed the buyer in custody when they themselves had handed over his goods to him. Ridicule kills in France. A breath of laughter may blow a Government out of

existence in Paris much more effectually than will a whiff of cannon smoke. My duty then was to give the Government full warning, and never lose sight of my man until he was clear of France; then my responsibility ended.

I took aside one of my own men in plain clothes and said to him,—

'You have seen the American who has bought the necklace?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Very well. Go outside quietly, and station yourself there. He is likely to emerge presently with the jewels in his possession. You are not to lose sight of either the man or the casket. I shall follow him and be close behind him as he emerges, and you are to shadow us. If he parts with the case you must be ready at a sign from me to follow either the man or the jewels. Do you understand?' 'Yes, sir,' he answered, and left the room.

It is ever the unforeseen that baffles us; it is easy to be wise after the event. I should have sent two men, and I have often thought since how admirable is the regulation of the Italian Government which sends out its policemen in pairs. Or I should have given my man power to call for help, but even as it was he did only half as well as I had a right to expect of him, and the blunder he committed by a moment's dull-witted hesitation—ah, well! there is no use of scolding. After all the result might have been the same.

Just as my man disappeared between the two folding doors the official from the Ministry of the Interior entered. I intercepted

him about half-way on his journey from the door to the auctioneer.

'Possibly the cheque appears to be genuine,' I whispered to him.

'But certainly,' he replied pompously. He was an individual greatly impressed with his own importance; a kind of character with which it is always difficult to deal. Afterwards the Government asserted that this official had warned me, and the utterances of an empty-headed ass dressed in a little brief authority, as the English poet says, were looked upon as the epitome of wisdom.

'I advise you strongly not to hand over the necklace as has been requested,' I went on.

'Why?' he asked.

'Because I am convinced the bidder is a criminal.'

'If you have proof of that, arrest him.'

'I have no proof at the present moment, but I request you to delay the delivery of the goods.'

'That is absurd,' he cried impatiently. 'The necklace is his, not ours. The money has already been transferred to the account of the Government; we cannot retain the five million francs, and refuse to hand over to him what he has bought with them,' and so the man left me standing there, nonplussed and anxious. The eyes of everyone in the room had been turned on us during our brief conversation, and now the official proceeded ostentatiously up the room with a grand air of importance; then, with a bow

and a flourish of the hand, he said, dramatically,—

'The jewels belong to Monsieur.'

The two Americans rose simultaneously, the taller holding out his hand while the auctioneer passed to him the case he had apparently paid so highly for. The American nonchalantly opened the box and for the first time the electric radiance of the jewels burst upon that audience, each member of which craned his neck to behold it. It seemed to me a most reckless thing to do. He examined the jewels minutely for a few moments, then snapped the lid shut again, and calmly put the box in his outside pocket, and I could not help noticing that the light overcoat he wore possessed pockets made extraordinarily large, as if on purpose for this very case. And now this amazing man walked serenely down the room past miscreants who joyfully would have cut his throat for even the smallest diamond in that conglomeration; yet he did not take the trouble to put his hand on the pocket which contained the case, or in any way attempt to protect it. The assemblage seemed stricken dumb by his audacity. His friend followed closely at his heels, and the tall man disappeared through the folding doors. Not so the other. He turned quickly, and whipped two revolvers out of his pockets, which he presented at the astonished crowd. There had been a movement on the part of every one to leave the room, but the sight of these deadly weapons confronting them made each one shrink into his place again.

The man with his back to the door spoke in a loud and

domineering voice, asking the auctioneer to translate what he had to say into French and German; he spoke in English.

'These here shiners are valuable; they belong to my friend who has just gone out. Casting no reflections on the generality of people in this room, there are, nevertheless, half a dozen "crooks" among us whom my friend wishes to avoid. Now, no honest man here will object to giving the buyer of that there trinket five clear minutes in which to get away. It's only the "crooks" that can kick. I ask these five minutes as a favour, but if they are not granted I am going to take them as a right. Any man who moves will get shot.'

'I am an honest man,' I cried, 'and I object. I am chief detective of the French Government. Stand aside; the police will protect your friend.'

'Hold on, my son,' warned the American, turning one weapon directly upon me, while the other held a sort of roving commission, pointing all over the room. 'My friend is from New York and he distrusts the police as much as he does the grafters. You may be twenty detectives, but if you move before that clock strikes three, I'll bring you down, and don't you forget it.'

It is one thing to face death in a fierce struggle, but quite another to advance coldly upon it toward the muzzle of a pistol held so steadily that there could be no chance of escape. The gleam of determination in the man's eyes convinced me he meant what he said. I did not consider then, nor have I considered since, that the next five minutes, precious as they were, would be worth

paying my life for. Apparently everyone else was of my opinion, for none moved hand or foot until the clock slowly struck three.

'Thank you, gentlemen,' said the American, as he vanished between the spring-doors. When I say vanished, I mean that word and no other, because my men outside saw nothing of this individual then or later. He vanished as if he had never existed, and it was some hours before we found how this had been accomplished.

I rushed out almost on his heels, as one might say, and hurriedly questioned my waiting men. They had all seen the tall American come out with the greatest leisure and stroll towards the west. As he was not the man any of them were looking for they paid no further attention to him, as, indeed, is the custom with our Parisian force. They have eyes for nothing but what they are sent to look for, and this trait has its drawbacks for their superiors.

I ran up the boulevard, my whole thought intent on the diamonds and their owner. I knew my subordinate in command of the men inside the hall would look after the scoundrel with the pistols. A short distance up I found the stupid fellow I had sent out, standing in a dazed manner at the corner of the Rue Michodière, gazing alternately down that short street and towards the Place de l'Opéra. The very fact that he was there furnished proof that he had failed.

'Where is the American?' I demanded.

'He went down this street, sir.'

'Then why are you standing here like a fool?'

'I followed him this far, when a man came up the Rue Michodière, and without a word the American handed him the jewel-box, turning instantly down the street up which the other had come. The other jumped into a cab, and drove towards the Place de l'Opéra.'

'And what did you do? Stood here like a post, I suppose?'

'I didn't know what to do, sir. It all happened in a moment.'

'Why didn't you follow the cab?'

'I didn't know which to follow, sir, and the cab was gone instantly while I watched the American.'

'What was its number?'

'I don't know, sir.'

'You clod! Why didn't you call one of our men, whoever was nearest, and leave him to shadow the American while you followed the cab?'

'I did shout to the nearest man, sir, but he said you told him to stay there and watch the English lord, and even before he had spoken both American and cabman were out of sight.'

'Was the man to whom he gave the box an American also?'

'No, sir, he was French.'

'How do you know?'

'By his appearance and the words he spoke.'

'I thought you said he didn't speak.'

'He did not speak to the American, sir, but he said to the cabman, "Drive to the Madeleine as quickly as you can."''

'Describe the man.'

'He was a head shorter than the American, wore a black beard and moustache rather neatly trimmed, and seemed to be a superior sort of artisan.'

'You did not take the number of the cab. Should you know the cabman if you saw him again?'

'Yes, sir, I think so.'

Taking this fellow with me I returned to the now nearly empty auction room and there gathered all my men about me. Each in his notebook took down particulars of the cabman and his passenger from the lips of my incompetent spy; next I dictated a full description of the two Americans, then scattered my men to the various railway stations of the lines leading out of Paris, with orders to make inquiries of the police on duty there, and to arrest one or more of the four persons described should they be so fortunate as to find any of them.

I now learned how the rogue with the pistols vanished so completely as he did. My subordinate in the auction room had speedily solved the mystery. To the left of the main entrance of the auction room was a door that gave private access to the rear of the premises. As the attendant in charge confessed when questioned, he had been bribed by the American earlier in the day to leave this side door open and to allow the man to escape by the goods entrance. Thus the ruffian did not appear on the boulevard at all, and so had not been observed by any of my men.

Taking my futile spy with me I returned to my own office,

and sent an order throughout the city that every cabman who had been in the Boulevard des Italiens between half-past two and half-past three that afternoon, should report immediately to me. The examination of these men proved a very tedious business indeed, but whatever other countries may say of us, we French are patient, and if the haystack is searched long enough, the needle will be found. I did not discover the needle I was looking for, but I came upon one quite as important, if not more so.

It was nearly ten o'clock at night when a cabman answered my oft-repeated questions in the affirmative.

'Did you take up a passenger a few minutes past three o'clock on the Boulevard des Italiens, near the Crédit-Lyonnais? Had he a short black beard? Did he carry a small box in his hand and order you to drive to the Madeleine?'

The cabman seemed puzzled.

'He wore a short black beard when he got out of the cab,' he replied.

'What do you mean by that?'

'I drive a closed cab, sir. When he got in he was a smooth-faced gentleman; when he got out he wore a short black beard.'

'Was he a Frenchman?'

'No, sir; he was a foreigner, either English or American.'

'Was he carrying a box?'

'No, sir; he held in his hand a small leather bag.'

'Where did he tell you to drive?'

'He told me to follow the cab in front, which had just driven

off very rapidly towards the Madeleine. In fact, I heard the man, such as you describe, order the other cabman to drive to the Madeleine. I had come alongside the curb when this man held up his hand for a cab, but the open cab cut in ahead of me. Just then my passenger stepped up and said in French, but with a foreign accent: "Follow that cab wherever it goes."

I turned with some indignation to my inefficient spy.

'You told me,' I said, 'that the American had gone down a side street. Yet he evidently met a second man, obtained from him the handbag, turned back, and got into the closed cab directly behind you.'

'Well, sir,' stammered the spy, 'I could not look in two directions at the same time. The American certainly went down the side street, but of course I watched the cab which contained the jewels.'

'And you saw nothing of the closed cab right at your elbow?'

'The boulevard was full of cabs, sir, and the pavement crowded with passers-by, as it always is at that hour of the day, and I have only two eyes in my head.'

'I am glad to know you had that many, for I was beginning to think you were blind.'

Although I said this, I knew in my heart it was useless to censure the poor wretch, for the fault was entirely my own in not sending two men, and in failing to guess the possibility of the jewels and their owner being separated. Besides, here was a clue to my hand at last, and no time must be lost in following it up.

So I continued my interrogation of the cabman.

'The other cab was an open vehicle, you say?'

'Yes, sir.'

'You succeeded in following it?'

'Oh, yes, sir. At the Madeleine the man in front redirected the coachman, who turned to the left and drove to the Place de la Concorde, then up the Champs-Élysées to the Arch and so down the Avenue de la Grande Armée, and the Avenue de Neuilly, to the Pont de Neuilly, where it came to a standstill. My fare got out, and I saw he now wore a short black beard, which he had evidently put on inside the cab. He gave me a ten-franc piece, which was very satisfactory.

'And the fare you were following? What did he do?'

'He also stepped out, paid the cabman, went down the bank of the river and got on board a steam launch that seemed to be waiting for him.'

'Did he look behind, or appear to know that he was being followed?'

'No, sir.'

'And your fare?'

'He ran after the first man, and also went aboard the steam launch, which instantly started down the river.'

'And that was the last you saw of them?'

'Yes, sir.'

'At what time did you reach the Pont de Neuilly?'

'I do not know, sir; I was compelled to drive rather fast, but

the distance is seven to eight kilometres.'

'You would do it under the hour?'

'But certainly, under the hour.'

'Then you must have reached Neuilly bridge about four o'clock?'

'It is very likely, sir.'

The plan of the tall American was now perfectly clear to me, and it comprised nothing that was contrary to law. He had evidently placed his luggage on board the steam launch in the morning. The handbag had contained various materials which would enable him to disguise himself, and this bag he had probably left in some shop down the side street, or else someone was waiting with it for him. The giving of the treasure to another man was not so risky as it had at first appeared, because he instantly followed that man, who was probably his confidential servant. Despite the windings of the river there was ample time for the launch to reach Havre before the American steamer sailed on Saturday morning. I surmised it was his intention to come alongside the steamer before she left her berth in Havre harbour, and thus transfer himself and his belongings unperceived by anyone on watch at the land side of the liner.

All this, of course, was perfectly justifiable, and seemed, in truth, merely a well-laid scheme for escaping observation. His only danger of being tracked was when he got into the cab. Once away from the neighbourhood of the Boulevard des Italiens he was reasonably sure to evade pursuit, and the five minutes which

his friend with the pistols had won for him afforded just the time he needed to get so far as the Place Madeleine, and after that everything was easy. Yet, if it had not been for those five minutes secured by coercion, I should not have found the slightest excuse for arresting him. But he was accessory after the act in that piece of illegality—in fact, it was absolutely certain that he had been accessory before the act, and guilty of conspiracy with the man who had presented firearms to the auctioneer's audience, and who had interfered with an officer in the discharge of his duty by threatening me and my men. So I was now legally in the right if I arrested every person on board that steam launch.

With a map of the river before me I proceeded to make some calculations. It was now nearly ten o'clock at night. The launch had had six hours in which to travel at its utmost speed. It was doubtful if so small a vessel could make ten miles an hour, even with the current in its favour, which is rather sluggish because of the locks and the level country. Sixty miles would place her beyond Meulan, which is fifty-eight miles from the Pont Royal, and, of course, a lesser distance from the Pont de Neuilly. But the navigation of the river is difficult at all times, and almost impossible after dark. There were chances of the boat running aground, and then there was the inevitable delay at the locks. So I estimated that the launch could not yet have reached Meulan, which was less than twenty-five miles from Paris by rail. Looking up the timetable I saw there were still two trains to Meulan, the next at 10.25, which reached Meulan at 11.40. I

therefore had time to reach St. Lazare station, and accomplish some telegraphing before the train left.

With three of my assistants I got into a cab and drove to the station. On arrival I sent one of my men to hold the train while I went into the telegraph office, cleared the wires, and got into communication with the lock master at Meulan. He replied that no steam launch had passed down since an hour before sunset. I then instructed him to allow the yacht to enter the lock, close the upper gate, let half of the water out, and hold the vessel there until I came. I also ordered the local Meulan police to send enough men to the lock to enforce this command. Lastly, I sent messages all along the river asking the police to report to me on the train the passage of the steam launch.

The 10.25 is a slow train, stopping at every station. However, every drawback has its compensation, and these stoppages enabled me to receive and to send telegraphic messages. I was quite well aware that I might be on a fool's errand in going to Meulan. The yacht could have put about before it had steamed a mile, and so returned back to Paris. There had been no time to learn whether this was so or not if I was to catch the 10.25. Also, it might have landed its passengers anywhere along the river. I may say at once that neither of these two things happened, and my calculations regarding her movements were accurate to the letter. But a trap most carefully set may be prematurely sprung by inadvertence, or more often by the over-zeal of some stupid ass who fails to understand his instructions, or oversteps them if

they are understood. I received a most annoying telegram from Denouval, a lock about thirteen miles above that of Meulan. The local policeman, arriving at the lock, found that the yacht had just cleared. The fool shouted to the captain to return, threatening him with all the pains and penalties of the law if he refused. The captain did refuse, rung on full speed ahead, and disappeared in the darkness. Through this well-meant blunder of an understrapper those on board the launch had received warning that we were on their track. I telegraphed to the lock-keeper at Denouval to allow no craft to pass toward Paris until further orders. We thus held the launch in a thirteen-mile stretch of water, but the night was pitch dark, and passengers might be landed on either bank with all France before them, over which to effect their escape in any direction.

It was midnight when I reached the lock at Meulan, and, as was to be expected, nothing had been seen or heard of the launch. It gave me some satisfaction to telegraph to that dunderhead at Denouval to walk along the river bank to Meulan, and report if he learnt the launch's whereabouts. We took up our quarters in the lodgekeeper's house and waited. There was little sense in sending men to scour the country at this time of night, for the pursued were on the alert, and very unlikely to allow themselves to be caught if they had gone ashore. On the other hand, there was every chance that the captain would refuse to let them land, because he must know his vessel was in a trap from which it could not escape, and although the demand of the policeman at

Denouval was quite unauthorised, nevertheless the captain could not know that, while he must be well aware of his danger in refusing to obey a command from the authorities. Even if he got away for the moment he must know that arrest was certain, and that his punishment would be severe. His only plea could be that he had not heard and understood the order to return. But this plea would be invalidated if he aided in the escape of two men, whom he must know were wanted by the police. I was therefore very confident that if his passengers asked to be set ashore, the captain would refuse when he had had time to think about his own danger. My estimate proved accurate, for towards one o'clock the lock-keeper came in and said the green and red lights of an approaching craft were visible, and as he spoke the yacht whistled for the opening of the lock. I stood by the lock-keeper while he opened the gates; my men and the local police were concealed on each side of the lock. The launch came slowly in, and as soon as it had done so I asked the captain to step ashore, which he did.

'I wish a word with you,' I said. 'Follow me.'

I took him into the lock-keeper's house and closed the door.

'Where are you going?'

'To Havre.'

'Where did you come from?'

'Paris.'

'From what quay?'

'From the Pont de Neuilly.'

'When did you leave there?'

'At five minutes to four o'clock this afternoon.'

'Yesterday afternoon, you mean?'

'Yesterday afternoon.'

'Who engaged you to make this voyage?'

'An American; I do not know his name.'

'He paid you well, I suppose?'

'He paid me what I asked.'

'Have you received the money?'

'Yes, sir.'

'I may inform you, captain, that I am Eugène Valmont, chief detective of the French Government, and that all the police of France at this moment are under my control. I ask you, therefore, to be careful of your answers. You were ordered by a policeman at Denouval to return. Why did you not do so?'

'The lock-keeper ordered me to return, but as he had no right to order me, I went on.'

'You knew very well it was the police who ordered you, and you ignored the command. Again I ask you why you did so.'

'I did not know it was the police.'

'I thought you would say that. You knew very well, but were paid to take the risk, and it is likely to cost you dear. You had two passengers aboard?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Did you put them ashore between here and Denouval?'

'No, sir; but one of them went overboard, and we couldn't find

him again.'

'Which one?'

'The short man.'

'Then the American is still aboard?'

'What American, sir?'

'Captain, you must not trifle with me. The man who engaged you is still aboard?'

'Oh, no, sir; he has never been aboard.'

'Do you mean to tell me that the second man who came on your launch at the Pont de Neuilly is not the American who engaged you?'

'No, sir; the American was a smooth-faced man; this man wore a black beard.'

'Yes, a false beard.'

'I did not know that, sir. I understood from the American that I was to take but one passenger. One came aboard with a small box in his hand; the other with a small bag. Each declared himself to be the passenger in question. I did not know what to do, so I left Paris with both of them on board.'

'Then the tall man with the black beard is still with you?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Well, captain, is there anything else you have to tell me? I think you will find it better in the end to make a clean breast of it.'

The captain hesitated, turning his cap about in his hands for a few moments, then he said,—

'I am not sure that the first passenger went overboard of his

own accord. When the police hailed us at Denouval—'

'Ah, you knew it was the police, then?'

'I was afraid after I left it might have been. You see, when the bargain was made with me the American said that if I reached Havre at a certain time a thousand francs extra would be paid to me, so I was anxious to get along as quickly as I could. I told him it was dangerous to navigate the Seine at night, but he paid me well for attempting it. After the policeman called to us at Denouval the man with the small box became very much excited, and asked me to put him ashore, which I refused to do. The tall man appeared to be watching him, never letting him get far away. When I heard the splash in the water I ran aft, and I saw the tall man putting the box which the other had held into his handbag, although I said nothing of it at the time. We cruised back and forward about the spot where the other man had gone overboard, but saw nothing more of him. Then I came on to Meulan, intending to give information about what I had seen. That is all I know of the matter, sir.'

'Was the man who had the jewels a Frenchman?'

'What jewels, sir?'

'The man with the small box.'

'Oh, yes, sir; he was French.'

'You have hinted that the foreigner threw him overboard. What grounds have you for such a belief if you did not see the struggle?'

'The night is very dark, sir, and I did not see what happened.'

I was at the wheel in the forward part of the launch, with my back turned to these two. I heard a scream, then a splash. If the man had jumped overboard as the other said he did, he would not have screamed. Besides, as I told you, when I ran aft I saw the foreigner put the little box in his handbag, which he shut up quickly as if he did not wish me to notice.'

'Very good, captain. If you have told the truth it will go easier with you in the investigation that is to follow.'

I now turned the captain over to one of my men, and ordered in the foreigner with his bag and bogus black whiskers. Before questioning him I ordered him to open the handbag, which he did with evident reluctance. It was filled with false whiskers, false moustaches, and various bottles, but on top of them all lay the jewel case. I raised the lid and displayed that accursed necklace. I looked up at the man, who stood there calmly enough, saying nothing in spite of the overwhelming evidence against him.

'Will you oblige me by removing your false beard?'

He did so at once, throwing it into the open bag. I knew the moment I saw him that he was not the American, and thus my theory had broken down, in one very important part at least. Informing him who I was, and cautioning him to speak the truth, I asked how he came in possession of the jewels.

'Am I under arrest?' he asked.

'But certainly,' I replied.

'Of what am I accused?'

'You are accused, in the first place, of being in possession of

property which does not belong to you.'

'I plead guilty to that. What in the second place?'

'In the second place, you may find yourself accused of murder.'

'I am innocent of the second charge. The man jumped overboard.'

'If that is true, why did he scream as he went over?'

'Because, too late to recover his balance, I seized this box and held it.'

'He was in rightful possession of the box; the owner gave it to him.'

'I admit that; I saw the owner give it to him.'

'Then why should he jump overboard?'

'I do not know. He seemed to become panic-stricken when the police at the last lock ordered us to return. He implored the captain to put him ashore, and from that moment I watched him keenly, expecting that if we drew near to the land he would attempt to escape, as the captain had refused to beach the launch. He remained quiet for about half an hour, seated on a camp chair by the rail, with his eyes turned toward the shore, trying, as I imagined, to penetrate the darkness and estimate the distance. Then suddenly he sprung up and made his dash. I was prepared for this, and instantly caught the box from his hand. He gave a half turn, trying either to save himself or to retain the box; then with a scream went down shoulders first into the water. It all happened within a second after he leaped from his chair.'

'You admit yourself, then, indirectly responsible for his drowning, at least?'

'I see no reason to suppose that the man was drowned. If able to swim he could easily have reached the river bank. If unable to swim, why should he attempt it encumbered by the box?'

'You believe he escaped, then?'

'I think so.'

'It will be lucky for you should that prove to be the case.'

'Certainly.'

'How did you come to be in the yacht at all?' 'I shall give you a full account of the affair, concealing nothing. I am a private detective, with an office in London. I was certain that some attempt would be made, probably by the most expert criminals at large, to rob the possessor of this necklace. I came over to Paris, anticipating trouble, determined to keep an eye upon the jewel case if this proved possible. If the jewels were stolen the crime was bound to be one of the most celebrated in legal annals. I was present during the sale, and saw the buyer of the necklace. I followed the official who went to the bank, and thus learned that the money was behind the cheque. I then stopped outside and waited for the buyer to appear. He held the case in his hand.'

'In his pocket, you mean?' I interrupted.

'He had it in his hand when I saw him. Then the man who afterwards jumped overboard approached him, took the case without a word, held up his hand for a cab, and when an open vehicle approached the curb he stepped in, saying, "The

Madeleine." I hailed a closed cab, instructed the cabman to follow the first, disguising myself with whiskers as near like those the man in front wore as I had in my collection.'

'Why did you do that?'

'As a detective you should know why I did it. I wished as nearly as possible to resemble the man in front, so that if necessity arose I could pretend that I was the person commissioned to carry the jewel case. As a matter of fact, the crisis arose when we came to the end of our cab journey. The captain did not know which was his true passenger, and so let us both remain aboard the launch. And now you have the whole story.'

'An extremely improbable one, sir. Even by your own account you had no right to interfere in this business at all.'

'I quite agree with you there,' he replied, with great nonchalance, taking a card from his pocket-book, which he handed to me.

'That is my London address; you may make inquiries, and you will find I am exactly what I represent myself to be.'

The first train for Paris left Meulan at eleven minutes past four in the morning. It was now a quarter after two. I left the captain, crew, and launch in charge of two of my men, with orders to proceed to Paris as soon as it was daylight. I, supported by the third man, waited at the station with our English prisoner, and reached Paris at half-past five in the morning.

The English prisoner, though severely interrogated by the judge, stood by his story. Inquiry by the police in London proved

that what he said of himself was true. His case, however, began to look very serious when two of the men from the launch asserted that they had seen him push the Frenchman overboard, and their statement could not be shaken. All our energies were bent for the next two weeks on trying to find something of the identity of the missing man, or to get any trace of the two Americans. If the tall American were alive, it seemed incredible that he should not have made application for the valuable property he had lost. All attempts to trace him by means of the cheque on the Crédit-Lyonnais proved futile. The bank pretended to give me every assistance, but I sometimes doubt if it actually did so. It had evidently been well paid for its services, and evinced no impetuous desire to betray so good a customer.

We made inquiries about every missing man in Paris, but also without result.

The case had excited much attention throughout the world, and doubtless was published in full in the American papers. The Englishman had been in custody three weeks when the chief of police in Paris received the following letter:—

'Dear Sir,—On my arrival in New York by the English steamer *Lucania*, I was much amused to read in the papers accounts of the exploits of detectives, French and English. I am sorry that only one of them seems to be in prison; I think his French *confrère* ought to be there also. I regret exceedingly, however, that there is the rumour of the death by drowning of my friend Martin Dubois, of 375 Rue aux Juifs, Rouen. If this

is indeed the case he has met his death through the blunders of the police. Nevertheless, I wish you would communicate with his family at the address I have given, and assure them that I will make arrangements for their future support.

I beg to inform you that I am a manufacturer of imitation diamonds, and through extensive advertising succeeded in accumulating a fortune of many millions. I was in Europe when the necklace was found, and had in my possession over a thousand imitation diamonds of my own manufacture. It occurred to me that here was the opportunity of the most magnificent advertisement in the world. I saw the necklace, received its measurements, and also obtained photographs of it taken by the French Government. Then I set my expert friend Martin Dubois at work, and, with the artificial stones I gave him, he made an imitation necklace so closely resembling the original that you apparently do not know it is the unreal you have in your possession. I did not fear the villainy of the crooks as much as the blundering of the police, who would have protected me with brass-band vehemence if I could not elude them. I knew that the detectives would overlook the obvious, but would at once follow a clue if I provided one for them. Consequently, I laid my plans, just as you have discovered, and got Martin Dubois up from Rouen to carry the case I gave him down to Havre. I had had another box prepared and wrapped in brown paper, with my address in New York written thereon. The moment I emerged from the auction room, while my friend the cowboy was

holding up the audience, I turned my face to the door, took out the genuine diamonds from the case and slipped it into the box I had prepared for mailing. Into the genuine case I put the bogus diamonds. After handing the box to Dubois, I turned down a side street, and then into another whose name I do not know, and there in a shop with sealing wax and string did up the real diamonds for posting. I labelled the package "Books", went to the nearest post office, paid letter postage, and handed it over unregistered as if it were of no particular value. After this I went to my rooms in the Grand Hotel where I had been staying under my own name for more than a month. Next morning I took train for London, and the day after sailed from Liverpool on the *Lucania*. I arrived before the *Gascoigne*, which sailed from Havre on Saturday, met my box at the Customs house, paid duty, and it now reposes in my safe. I intend to construct an imitation necklace which will be so like the genuine one that nobody can tell the two apart; then I shall come to Europe and exhibit the pair, for the publication of the truth of this matter will give me the greatest advertisement that ever was.

'Yours truly,

'John P Hazard.'

I at once communicated with Rouen and found Martin Dubois alive and well. His first words were:—'I swear I did not steal the jewels.'

He had swum ashore, tramped to Rouen, and kept quiet in great fear while I was fruitlessly searching Paris for him. It

took Mr. Hazard longer to make his imitation necklace than he supposed, and several years later he booked his passage with the two necklaces on the ill-fated steamer *Burgoyne*, and now rests beside them at the bottom of the Atlantic.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear.

2. The Siamese Twin of a Bomb-Thrower

The events previously related in 'The Mystery of the Five Hundred Diamonds' led to my dismissal by the French Government. It was not because I had arrested an innocent man; I had done that dozens of times before, with nothing said about it. It was not because I had followed a wrong clue, or because I had failed to solve the mystery of the five hundred diamonds. Every detective follows a wrong clue now and then, and every detective fails more often than he cares to admit. No. All these things would not have shaken my position, but the newspapers were so fortunate as to find something humorous in the case, and for weeks Paris rang with laughter over my exploits and my defeat. The fact that the chief French detective had placed the most celebrated English detective into prison, and that each of them were busily sleuth-hounding a bogus clue, deliberately flung across their path by an amateur, roused all France to great hilarity. The Government was furious. The Englishman was released and I was dismissed. Since the year 1893 I have been a resident of London.

When a man is, as one might say, the guest of a country, it does not become him to criticise that country. I have studied this strange people with interest, and often with astonishment, and if I now set down some of the differences between the English and the French, I trust that no note of criticism of the

former will appear, even when my sympathies are entirely with the latter. These differences have sunk deeply into my mind, because, during the first years of my stay in London my lack of understanding them was often a cause of my own failure when I thought I had success in hand. Many a time did I come to the verge of starvation in Soho, through not appreciating the peculiar trend of mind which causes an Englishman to do inexplicable things—that is, of course, from my Gallic standpoint.

For instance, an arrested man is presumed to be innocent until he is proved guilty. In England, if a murderer is caught red-handed over his victim, he is held guiltless until the judge sentences him. In France we make no such foolish assumption, and although I admit that innocent men have sometimes been punished, my experience enables me to state very emphatically that this happens not nearly so often as the public imagines. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred an innocent man can at once prove his innocence without the least difficulty. I hold it is his duty towards the State to run the very slight risk of unjust imprisonment in order that obstacles may not be thrown in the way of the conviction of real criminals. But it is impossible to persuade an Englishman of this. *Mon Dieu!* I have tried it often enough.

Never shall I forget the bitterness of my disappointment when I captured Felini, the Italian anarchist, in connection with the Greenwich Park murder. At this time—it gives me no shame to confess it—I was myself living in Soho, in a

state of extreme poverty. Having been employed so long by the French Government, I had formed the absurd idea that the future depended on my getting, not exactly a similar connection with Scotland Yard, but at least a subordinate position on the police force which would enable me to prove my capabilities, and lead to promotion. I had no knowledge, at that time, of the immense income which awaited me entirely outside the Government circle. Whether it is contempt for the foreigner, as has often been stated, or that native stolidity which spells complacency, the British official of any class rarely thinks it worth his while to discover the real cause of things in France, or Germany, or Russia, but plods heavily on from one mistake to another. Take, for example, those periodical outbursts of hatred against England which appear in the Continental Press. They create a dangerous international situation, and more than once have brought Britain to the verge of a serious war. Britain sternly spends millions in defence and preparation, whereas, if she would place in my hand half a million pounds I would guarantee to cause Britannia to be proclaimed an angel with white wings in every European country.

When I attempted to arrive at some connection with Scotland Yard, I was invariably asked for my credentials. When I proclaimed that I had been chief detective to the Republic of France, I could see that this announcement made a serious impression, but when I added that the Government of France had dismissed me without credentials, recommendation, or pension,

official sympathy with officialism at once turned the tables against me. And here I may be pardoned for pointing out another portentous dissimilarity between the two lands which I think is not at all to the credit of my countrymen.

I was summarily dismissed. You may say it was because I failed, and it is true that in the case of the Queen's necklace I had undoubtedly failed, but, on the other hand, I had followed unerringly the clue which lay in my path, and although the conclusion was not in accordance with the facts, it was in accordance with logic. No, I was not dismissed because I failed. I had failed on various occasions before, as might happen to any man in any profession. I was dismissed because I made France for the moment the laughing-stock of Europe and America. France dismissed me because France had been laughed at. No Frenchman can endure the turning of a joke against him, but the Englishman does not appear to care in the least. So far as failure is concerned, never had any man failed so egregiously as I did with Felini, a slippery criminal who possessed all the bravery of a Frenchman and all the subtlety of an Italian. Three times he was in my hands—twice in Paris, once in Marseilles—and each time he escaped me; yet I was not dismissed.

When I say that Signor Felini was as brave as a Frenchman, perhaps I do him a little more than justice. He was desperately afraid of one man, and that man was myself. Our last interview in France he is not likely to forget, and although he eluded me, he took good care to get into England as fast as train and boat

could carry him, and never again, while I was at the head of the French detective force, did he set foot on French soil. He was an educated villain, a graduate of the University of Turin, who spoke Spanish, French, and English as well as his own language, and this education made him all the more dangerous when he turned his talents to crime.

Now, I knew Felini's handiwork, either in murder or in housebreaking, as well as I know my own signature on a piece of white paper, and as soon as I saw the body of the murdered man in Greenwich Park I was certain Felini was the murderer. The English authorities at that time looked upon me with a tolerant, good-natured contempt.

Inspector Standish assumed the manner of a man placing at my disposal plenty of rope with which I might entangle myself. He appeared to think me excitable, and used soothing expressions as if I were a fractious child to be calmed, rather than a sane equal to be reasoned with. On many occasions I had the facts at my finger ends, while he remained in a state of most complacent ignorance, and though this attitude of lowering himself to deal gently with one whom he evidently looked upon as an irresponsible lunatic was most exasperating, I nevertheless claim great credit for having kept my temper with him. However, it turned out to be impossible for me to overcome his insular prejudice. He always supposed me to be a frivolous, volatile person, and so I was unable to prove myself of any value to him in his arduous duties.

The Felini instance was my last endeavour to win his favour. Inspector Standish appeared in his most amiable mood when I was admitted to his presence, and this in spite of the fact that all London was ringing with the Greenwich Park tragedy, while the police possessed not the faintest idea regarding the crime or its perpetrator. I judged from Inspector Standish's benevolent smile that I was somewhat excited when I spoke to him, and perhaps used many gestures which seemed superfluous to a large man whom I should describe as immovable, and who spoke slowly, with no motion of the hand, as if his utterances were the condensed wisdom of the ages.

'Inspector Standish,' I cried, 'is it within your power to arrest a man on suspicion?'

'Of course it is,' he replied; 'but we must harbour the suspicion before we make the arrest.'

'Have confidence in me,' I exclaimed. 'The man who committed the Greenwich Park murder is an Italian named Felini.'

I gave the address of the exact room in which he was to be found, with cautions regarding the elusive nature of this individual. I said that he had been three times in my custody, and those three times he had slipped through my fingers. I have since thought that Inspector Standish did not credit a word I had spoken.

'What is your proof against this Italian?' asked the Inspector slowly.

'The proof is on the body of the murdered man, but, nevertheless, if you suddenly confront Felini with me without giving him any hint of whom he is going to meet, you shall have the evidence from his own lips before he recovers from his surprise and fright.'

Something of my confidence must have impressed the official, for the order of arrest was made. Now, during the absence of the constable sent to bring in Felini, I explained to the inspector fully the details of my plan. Practically he did not listen to me, for his head was bent over a writing-pad on which I thought he was taking down my remarks, but when I had finished he went on writing as before, so I saw I had flattered myself unnecessarily. More than two hours passed before the constable returned, bringing with him the trembling Italian. I swung round in front of him, and cried, in a menacing voice:—

'Felini! Regard me! You know Valmont too well to trifle with him! What have you to say of the murder in Greenwich Park?'

I give you my word that the Italian collapsed, and would have fallen to the floor in a heap had not the constables upheld him with hands under each arm. His face became of a pasty whiteness, and he began to stammer his confession, when this incredible thing happened, which could not be believed in France. Inspector Standish held up his finger.

'One moment,' he cautioned solemnly, 'remember that whatever you say will be used against you!'

The quick, beady black eyes of the Italian shot from Standish

to me, and from me to Standish. In an instant his alert mind grasped the situation. Metaphorically I had been waved aside. I was not there in any official capacity, and he saw in a moment with what an opaque intellect he had to deal. The Italian closed his mouth like a steel trap, and refused to utter a word. Shortly after he was liberated, as there was no evidence against him. When at last complete proof was in the tardy hands of the British authorities, the agile Felini was safe in the Apennine mountains, and today is serving a life sentence in Italy for the assassination of a senator whose name I have forgotten.

Is it any wonder that I threw up my hands in despair at finding myself amongst such a people. But this was in the early days, and now that I have greater experience of the English, many of my first opinions have been modified.

I mention all this to explain why, in a private capacity, I often did what no English official would dare to do. A people who will send a policeman, without even a pistol to protect him, to arrest a desperate criminal in the most dangerous quarter of London, cannot be comprehended by any native of France, Italy, Spain, or Germany. When I began to succeed as a private detective in London, and had accumulated money enough for my project, I determined not to be hampered by this unexplainable softness of the English toward an accused person. I therefore reconstructed my flat, and placed in the centre of it a dark room strong as any Bastille cell. It was twelve feet square, and contained no furniture except a number of shelves, a lavatory in one corner,

and a pallet on the floor. It was ventilated by two flues from the centre of the ceiling, in one of which operated an electric fan, which, when the room was occupied, sent the foul air up that flue, and drew down fresh air through the other. The entrance to this cell opened out from my bedroom, and the most minute inspection would have failed to reveal the door, which was of massive steel, and was opened and shut by electric buttons that were partially concealed by the head of my bed. Even if they had been discovered, they would have revealed nothing, because the first turn of the button lit the electric light at the head of my bed; the second turn put it out; and this would happen as often as the button was turned to the right. But turn it three times slowly to the left, and the steel door opened. Its juncture was completely concealed by panelling. I have brought many a scoundrel to reason within the impregnable walls of that small room.

Those who know the building regulations of London will wonder how it was possible for me to delude the Government inspector during the erection of this section of the Bastille in the midst of the modern metropolis. It was the simplest thing in the world. Liberty of the subject is the first great rule with the English people, and thus many a criminal is allowed to escape. Here was I laying plans for the contravening of this first great rule, and to do so I took advantage of the second great rule of the English people, which is, that property is sacred. I told the building authorities I was a rich man with a great distrust of

banks, and I wished to build in my flat a safe or strong-room in which to deposit my valuables. I built then such a room as may be found in every bank, and many private premises of the City, and a tenant might have lived in my flat for a year and never suspected the existence of this prison. A railway engine might have screeched its whistle within it, and not a sound would have penetrated the apartments that surrounded it unless the door were open.

But besides M. Eugène Valmont, dressed in elegant attire as if he were still a boulevardier of Paris, occupier of the top floor in the Imperial Flats, there was another Frenchman in London to whom I must introduce you, namely, Professor Paul Ducharme, who occupied a squalid back room in the cheapest and most undesirable quarter of Soho. Valmont flatters himself he is not yet middle-aged, but poor Ducharme does not need his sparse gray beard to proclaim his advancing years. Valmont vaunts an air of prosperity; Ducharme wears the shabby habiliments and the shoulder-stoop of hopeless poverty. He shuffles cringingly along the street, a compatriot not to be proud of. There are so many Frenchmen anxious to give lessons in their language, that merely a small living is to be picked up by any one of them. You will never see the spruce Valmont walking alongside the dejected Ducharme.

'Ah!' you exclaim, 'Valmont in his prosperity has forgotten those less fortunate of his nationality.'

Pardon, my friends, it is not so. Behold, I proclaim to you,

the exquisite Valmont and the threadbare Ducharme are one and the same person. That is why they do not promenade together. And, indeed, it requires no great histrionic art on my part to act the rôle of the miserable Ducharme, for when I first came to London, I warded off starvation in this wretched room, and my hand it was that nailed to the door the painted sign 'Professor Paul Ducharme, Teacher of the French Language'. I never gave up the room, even when I became prosperous and moved to Imperial Flats, with its concealed chamber of horrors unknown to British authority. I did not give up the Soho chamber principally for this reason: Paul Ducharme, if the truth were known about him, would have been regarded as a dangerous character; yet this was a character sometimes necessary for me to assume. He was a member of the very inner circle of the International, an anarchist of the anarchists. This malign organisation has its real headquarters in London, and we who were officials connected with the Secret Service of the Continent have more than once cursed the complacency of the British Government which allows such a nest of vipers to exist practically unmolested. I confess that before I came to know the English people as well as I do now, I thought that this complacency was due to utter selfishness, because the anarchists never commit an outrage in England. England is the one spot on the map of Europe where an anarchist cannot be laid by the heels unless there is evidence against him that will stand the test of open court. Anarchists take advantage of this fact, and plots are hatched in London which

are executed in Paris, Berlin, Petersburg, or Madrid. I know now that this leniency on the part of the British Government does not arise from craft, but from their unexplainable devotion to their shibboleth—'The liberty of the subject.' Time and again France has demanded the extradition of an anarchist, always to be met with the question,—

'Where is your proof?'

I know many instances where our certainty was absolute, and also cases where we possessed legal proof as well, but legal proof which, for one reason or another, we dared not use in public; yet all this had no effect on the British authorities. They would never give up even the vilest criminal except on publicly attested legal evidence, and not even then, if the crime were political.

During my term of office under the French Government, no part of my duties caused me more anxiety than that which pertained to the political secret societies. Of course, with a large portion of the Secret Service fund at my disposal, I was able to buy expert assistance, and even to get information from anarchists themselves. This latter device, however, was always more or less unreliable. I have never yet met an anarchist I could believe on oath, and when one of them offered to sell exclusive information to the police, we rarely knew whether he was merely trying to get a few francs to keep himself from starving, or whether he was giving us false particulars which would lead us into a trap. I have always regarded our dealings with nihilists, anarchists, or other secret associations for the perpetrating of

murder as the most dangerous service a detective is called upon to perform. Yet it is absolutely necessary that the authorities should know what is going on in these secret conclaves. There are three methods of getting this intelligence. First, periodical raids upon the suspected, accompanied by confiscation and search of all papers found. This method is much in favour with the Russian police. I have always regarded it as largely futile; first, because the anarchists are not such fools, speaking generally, as to commit their purposes to writing; and, second, because it leads to reprisal. Each raid is usually followed by a fresh outbreak of activity on the part of those left free. The second method is to bribe an anarchist to betray his comrades. I have never found any difficulty in getting these gentry to accept money. They are eternally in need, but I usually find the information they give in return to be either unimportant or inaccurate. There remains, then, the third method, which is to place a spy among them. The spy battalion is the forlorn hope of the detective service. In one year I lost three men on anarchist duty, among the victims being my most valuable helper, Henri Brisson. Poor Brisson's fate was an example of how a man may follow a perilous occupation for months with safety, and then by a slight mistake bring disaster on himself. At the last gathering Brisson attended he received news of such immediate and fateful import that on emerging from the cellar where the gathering was held, he made directly for my residence instead of going to his own squalid room in the Rue Falgarie. My concierge said that he arrived shortly after one

o'clock in the morning, and it would seem that at this hour he could easily have made himself acquainted with the fact that he was followed. Still, as there was on his track that human panther, Felini, it is not strange poor Brisson failed to elude him.

Arriving at the tall building in which my flat was then situated, Brisson rang the bell, and the concierge, as usual, in that strange state of semi-somnolence which envelops concierges during the night, pulled the looped wire at the head of his bed, and unbolted the door. Brisson assuredly closed the huge door behind him, and yet the moment before he did so, Felini must have slipped in unnoticed to the stone-paved courtyard. If Brisson had not spoken and announced himself, the concierge would have been wide awake in an instant. If he had given a name unknown to the concierge, the same result would have ensued. As it was he cried aloud 'Brisson,' whereupon the concierge of the famous chief of the French detective staff, Valmont, muttered '*Bon!*' and was instantly asleep again.

Now Felini had known Brisson well, but it was under the name of Revensky, and as an exiled Russian. Brisson had spent all his early years in Russia, and spoke the language like a native. The moment Brisson had uttered his true name he had pronounced his own death warrant. Felini followed him up to the first landing—my rooms were on the second floor—and there placed his sign manual on the unfortunate man, which was the swift downward stroke of a long, narrow, sharp poniard, entering the body below the shoulders, and piercing the heart. The advantage presented

by this terrible blow is that the victim sinks instantly in a heap at the feet of his slayer, without uttering a moan. The wound left is a scarcely perceptible blue mark which rarely even bleeds. It was this mark I saw on the body of the Maire of Marseilles, and afterwards on one other in Paris besides poor Brisson. It was the mark found on the man in Greenwich Park; always just below the left shoulder-blade, struck from behind. Felini's comrades claim that there was this nobility in his action, namely, he allowed the traitor to prove himself before he struck the blow. I should be sorry to take away this poor shred of credit from Felini's character, but the reason he followed Brisson into the courtyard was to give himself time to escape. He knew perfectly the ways of the concierge. He knew that the body would lie there until the morning, as it actually did, and that this would give him hours in which to effect his retreat. And this was the man whom British law warned not to incriminate himself! What a people! What a people!

After Brisson's tragic death, I resolved to set no more valuable men on the track of the anarchists, but to place upon myself the task in my moments of relaxation. I became very much interested in the underground workings of the International. I joined the organisation under the name of Paul Ducharme, a professor of advanced opinions, who because of them had been dismissed his situation in Nantes. As a matter of fact there had been such a Paul Ducharme, who had been so dismissed, but he had drowned himself in the Loire, at Orleans, as the records

show. I adopted the precaution of getting a photograph of this foolish old man from the police at Nantes, and made myself up to resemble him. It says much for my disguise that I was recognised as the professor by a delegate from Nantes, at the annual Convention held in Paris, which I attended, and although we conversed for some time together he never suspected that I was not the professor, whose fate was known to no one but the police of Orleans. I gained much credit among my comrades because of this encounter, which, during its first few moments, filled me with dismay, for the delegate from Nantes held me up as an example of a man well off, who had deliberately sacrificed his worldly position for the sake of principle. Shortly after this I was chosen delegate to carry a message to our comrades in London, and this delicate undertaking passed off without mishap.

It was perhaps natural then, that when I came to London after my dismissal by the French Government, I should assume the name and appearance of Paul Ducharme, and adopt the profession of French teacher. This profession gave me great advantages. I could be absent from my rooms for hours at a time without attracting the least attention, because a teacher goes wherever there are pupils. If any of my anarchist comrades saw me emerging shabbily from the grand Imperial Flats where Valmont lived, he greeted me affably, thinking I was coming from a pupil.

The sumptuous flat was therefore the office in which I received my rich clients, while the squalid room in Soho was

often the workshop in which the tasks entrusted to me were brought to completion.

I now come to very modern days indeed, when I spent much time with the emissaries of the International.

It will be remembered that the King of England made a round of visits to European capitals, the far-reaching results of which in the interest of peace we perhaps do not yet fully understand and appreciate. His visit to Paris was the beginning of the present *entente cordiale*, and I betray no confidence when I say that this brief official call at the French capital was the occasion of great anxiety to the Government of my own country and also of that in which I was domiciled. Anarchists are against all government, and would like to see each one destroyed, not even excepting that of Great Britain.

My task in connection with the visit of King Edward to Paris was entirely unofficial. A nobleman, for whom on a previous occasion I had been so happy as to solve a little mystery which troubled him, complimented me by calling at my flat about two weeks before the King's entry into the French capital. I know I shall be pardoned if I fail to mention this nobleman's name. I gathered that the intended visit of the King met with his disapproval. He asked if I knew anything, or could discover anything, of the purposes animating the anarchist clubs of Paris, and their attitude towards the royal function, which was now the chief topic in the newspapers. I replied that within four days I would be able to submit to him a complete report on the subject.

He bowed coldly and withdrew. On the evening of the fourth day I permitted myself the happiness of waiting upon his lordship at his West End London mansion.

'I have the honour to report to your lordship,' I began, 'that the anarchists of Paris are somewhat divided in their opinions regarding His Majesty's forthcoming progress through that city. A minority, contemptible in point of number, but important so far as the extremity of their opinions are concerned, has been trying—'

'Excuse me,' interrupted the nobleman, with some severity of tone, 'are they going to attempt to injure the King or not?'

'They are not, your lordship,' I replied, with what, I trust, is my usual urbanity of manner, despite his curt interpolation. 'His most gracious Majesty will suffer no molestation, and their reason for quiescence—'

'Their reasons do not interest me,' put in his lordship gruffly. 'You are sure of what you say?'

'Perfectly sure, your lordship.'

'No precautions need be taken?'

'None in the least, your lordship.'

'Very well,' concluded the nobleman shortly, 'if you tell my secretary in the next room as you go out how much I owe you, he will hand you a cheque,' and with that I was dismissed.

I may say that, mixing as I do with the highest in two lands, and meeting invariably such courtesy as I myself am always eager to bestow, a feeling almost of resentment arose at this cavalier

treatment. However, I merely bowed somewhat ceremoniously in silence, and availed myself of the opportunity in the next room to double my bill, which was paid without demur.

Now, if this nobleman had but listened, he would have heard much that might interest an ordinary man, although I must say that during my three conversations with him his mind seemed closed to all outward impressions save and except the grandeur of his line, which he traced back unblemished into the northern part of my own country.

The King's visit had come as a surprise to the anarchists, and they did not quite know what to do about it. The Paris Reds were rather in favour of a demonstration, while London bade them, in God's name, to hold their hands, for, as they pointed out, England is the only refuge in which an anarchist is safe until some particular crime can be imputed to him, and what is more, proven up to the hilt.

It will be remembered that the visit of the King to Paris passed off without incident, as did the return visit of the President to London. On the surface all was peace and goodwill, but under the surface seethed plot and counterplot, and behind the scenes two great governments were extremely anxious, and high officials in the Secret Service spent sleepless nights. As no 'untoward incident' had happened, the vigilance of the authorities on both sides of the Channel relaxed at the very moment when, if they had known their adversaries, it should have been redoubled. Always beware of the anarchist when he has been good: look out

for the reaction. It annoys him to be compelled to remain quiet when there is a grand opportunity for strutting across the world's stage, and when he misses the psychological moment, he is apt to turn 'nasty', as the English say.

When it first became known that there was to be a Royal procession through the streets of Paris, a few fanatical hot-heads, both in that city and in London, wished to take action, but they were overruled by the saner members of the organisation. It must not be supposed that anarchists are a band of lunatics. There are able brains among them, and these born leaders as naturally assume control in the underground world of anarchy as would have been the case if they had devoted their talents to affairs in ordinary life. They were men whose minds, at one period, had taken the wrong turning. These people, although they calmed the frenzy of the extremists, nevertheless regarded the possible *rapprochement* between England and France with grave apprehension. If France and England became as friendly as France and Russia, might not the refuge which England had given to anarchy become a thing of the past? I may say here that my own weight as an anarchist while attending these meetings in disguise under the name of Paul Ducharme was invariably thrown in to help the cause of moderation. My rôle, of course, was not to talk too much; not to make myself prominent, yet in such a gathering a man cannot remain wholly a spectator. Care for my own safety led me to be as inconspicuous as possible, for members of communities banded together against the laws

of the land in which they live, are extremely suspicious of one another, and an inadvertent word may cause disaster to the person speaking it.

Perhaps it was this conservatism on my part that caused my advice to be sought after by the inner circle; what you might term the governing body of the anarchists; for, strange as it may appear, this organisation, sworn to put down all law and order, was itself most rigidly governed, with a Russian prince elected as its chairman, a man of striking ability, who, nevertheless, I believe, owed his election more to the fact that he was a nobleman than to the recognition of his intrinsic worth. And another point which interested me much was that this prince ruled his obstreperous subjects after the fashion of Russian despotism, rather than according to the liberal ideas of the country in which he was domiciled. I have known him more than once ruthlessly overturn the action of the majority, stamp his foot, smite his huge fist on the table, and declare so and so should not be done, no matter what the vote was. And the thing was not done, either.

At the more recent period of which I speak, the chairmanship of the London anarchists was held by a weak, vacillating man, and the mob had got somewhat out of hand. In the crisis that confronted us, I yearned for the firm fist and dominant boot of the uncompromising Russian. I spoke only once during this time, and assured my listeners that they had nothing to fear from the coming friendship of the two nations. I said the Englishman was so wedded to his grotesque ideas regarding the liberty of the

subject he so worshipped absolute legal evidence, that we would never find our comrades disappear mysteriously from England as had been the case in continental countries.

Although restless during the exchange of visits between King and President, I believe I could have carried the English phalanx with me, if the international courtesies had ended there. But after it was announced that members of the British Parliament were to meet the members of the French Legislature, the Paris circle became alarmed, and when that conference did not end the *entente*, but merely paved the way for a meeting of business men belonging to the two countries in Paris, the French anarchists sent a delegate over to us, who made a wild speech one night, waving continually the red flag. This aroused all our own malcontents to a frenzy. The French speaker practically charged the English contingent with cowardice; said that as they were safe from molestation, they felt no sympathy for their comrades in Paris, at any time liable to summary arrest and the torture of the secret cross-examination. This Anglo-French love-feast must be wafted to the heavens in a halo of dynamite. The Paris anarchists were determined, and although they wished the co-operation of their London brethren, yet if the speaker did not bring back with him assurance of such co-operation, Paris would act on its own initiative.

The Russian despot would have made short work of this blood-blinded rhetoric, but alas, he was absent, and an overwhelming vote in favour of force was carried and accepted

by the trembling chairman. My French *confrère* took back with him to Paris the unanimous consent of the English comrades to whom he had appealed. All that was asked of the English contingent was that it should arrange for the escape and safe keeping of the assassin who flung the bomb into the midst of the English visitors, and after the oratorical madman had departed, I, to my horror, was chosen to arrange for the safe transport and future custody of the bomb-thrower. It is not etiquette in anarchist circles for any member to decline whatever task is given him by the vote of his comrades. He knows the alternative, which is suicide. If he declines the task and still remains upon earth, the dilemma is solved for him, as the Italian Felini solved it through the back of my unfortunate helper Brisson. I therefore accepted the unwelcome office in silence, and received from the treasurer the money necessary for carrying out the same.

I realised for the first time since joining the anarchist association years before that I was in genuine danger. A single false step, a single inadvertent word, might close the career of Eugène Valmont, and at the same moment terminate the existence of the quiet, inoffensive Paul Ducharme, teacher of the French language. I knew perfectly well I should be followed. The moment I received the money the French delegate asked when they were to expect me in Paris. He wished to know so that all the resources of their organisation might be placed at my disposal. I replied calmly enough that I could not state definitely on what day I should leave England. There was plenty of time, as the business

men's representatives from London would not reach Paris for another two weeks. I was well known to the majority of the Paris organisation, and would present myself before them on the first night of my arrival. The Paris delegate exhibited all the energy of a new recruit, and he seemed dissatisfied with my vagueness, but I went on without heeding his displeasure. He was not personally known to me, nor I to him, but if I may say so, Paul Ducharme was well thought of by all the rest of those present.

I had learned a great lesson during the episode of the Queen's Necklace, which resulted in my dismissal by the French Government. I had learned that if you expect pursuit it is always well to leave a clue for the pursuer to follow. Therefore I continued in a low conversational tone:—

'I shall want the whole of tomorrow for myself: I must notify my pupils of my absence. Even if my pupils leave me it will not so much matter. I can probably get others. But what does matter is my secretarial work with Monsieur Valmont of the Imperial Flats. I am just finishing for him the translation of a volume from French into English, and tomorrow I can complete the work, and get his permission to leave for a fortnight. This man, who is a compatriot of my own, has given me employment ever since I came to London. From him I have received the bulk of my income, and if it had not been for his patronage, I do not know what I should have done. I not only have no desire to offend him, but I wish the secretarial work to continue when I return to London.'

There was a murmur of approval at this. It was generally recognised that a man's living should not be interfered with, if possible. Anarchists are not poverty-stricken individuals, as most people think, for many of them hold excellent situations, some occupying positions of great trust, which is rarely betrayed.

It is recognised that a man's duty, not only to himself, but to the organisation, is to make all the money he can, and thus not be liable to fall back on the relief fund. This frank admission of my dependence on Valmont made it all the more impossible that anyone there listening should suspect that it was Valmont himself who was addressing the conclave.

'You will then take the night train tomorrow for Paris?' persisted the inquisitive French delegate.

'Yes, and no. I shall take the night train, and it shall be for Paris, but not from Charing Cross, Victoria, or Waterloo. I shall travel on the 8.30 Continental express from Liverpool Street to Harwich, cross to the Hook of Holland, and from there make my way to Paris through Holland and Belgium. I wish to investigate that route as a possible path for our comrade to escape. After the blow is struck, Calais, Boulogne, Dieppe, and Havre will be closely watched. I shall perhaps bring him to London by way of Antwerp and the Hook.'

These amiable disclosures were so fully in keeping with Paul Ducharme's reputation for candour and caution that I saw they made an excellent impression on my audience, and here the chairman intervened, putting an end to further cross-examination

by saying they all had the utmost confidence in the judgment of Monsieur Paul Ducharme, and the Paris delegate might advise his friends to be on the lookout for the London representative within the next three or four days.

I left the meeting and went directly to my room in Soho, without even taking the trouble to observe whether I was watched or not. There I stayed all night, and in the morning quitted Soho as Ducharme, with a gray beard and bowed shoulders, walked west to the Imperial Flats, took the lift to the top, and, seeing the corridor was clear, let myself in to my own flat. I departed from my flat promptly at six o'clock, again as Paul Ducharme, carrying this time a bundle done up in brown paper under my arm, and proceeded directly to my room in Soho. Later I took a bus, still carrying my brown paper parcel, and reached Liverpool Street in ample time for the Continental train. By a little private arrangement with the guard, I secured a compartment for myself, although up to the moment the train left the station, I could not be sure but that I might be compelled to take the trip to the Hook of Holland after all. If any one had insisted on coming into my compartment, I should have crossed the North Sea that night. I knew I should be followed from Soho to the station, and that probably the spy would go as far as Harwich, and see me on the boat. It was doubtful if he would cross. I had chosen this route for the reason that we have no organisation in Holland: the nearest circle is in Brussels, and if there had been time, the Brussels circle would have been warned to keep an eye on me.

There was, however, no time for a letter, and anarchists never use the telegraph, especially so far as the Continent is concerned, unless in cases of the greatest emergency. If they telegraphed my description to Brussels the chances were it would not be an anarchist who watched my landing, but a member of the Belgian police force.

The 8.30 Continental express does not stop between Liverpool Street and Parkeston Quay, which it is timed to reach three minutes before ten. This gave me an hour and a half in which to change my apparel. The garments of the poor old professor I rolled up into a ball one by one and flung out through the open window, far into the marsh past which we were flying in a pitch dark night. Coat, trousers, and waistcoat rested in separate swamps at least ten miles apart. Gray whiskers and gray wig I tore into little pieces, and dropped the bits out of the open window.

I had taken the precaution to secure a compartment in the front of the train, and when it came to rest at Parkeston Quay Station, the crowd, eager for the steamer, rushed past me, and I stepped out into the midst of it, a dapper, well-dressed young man, with black beard and moustaches, my own closely cropped black hair covered by a new bowler hat. Anyone looking for Paul Ducharme would have paid small attention to me, and to any friend of Valmont's I was equally unrecognisable.

I strolled in leisurely manner to the Great Eastern Hotel on the Quay, and asked the clerk if a portmanteau addressed to Mr. John Wilkins had arrived that day from London. He said 'Yes,'

whereupon I secured a room for the night, as the last train had already left for the metropolis.

Next morning, Mr. John Wilkins, accompanied by a brand new and rather expensive portmanteau, took the 8.57 train for Liverpool Street, where he arrived at half-past ten, stepped into a cab, and drove to the Savoy Restaurant, lunching there with the portmanteau deposited in the cloak room. When John Wilkins had finished an excellent lunch in a leisurely manner at the Café Parisien of the Savoy, and had paid his bill, he did not go out into the Strand over the rubber-paved court by which he had entered, but went through the hotel and down the stairs, and so out into the thoroughfare facing the Embankment. Then turning to his right he reached the Embankment entrance of the Hotel Cecil. This leads into a long, dark corridor, at the end of which the lift may be rung for. It does not come lower than the floor above unless specially summoned. In this dark corridor, which was empty, John Wilkins took off the black beard and moustache, hid it in the inside pocket of his coat, and there went up into the lift a few moments later to the office floor, I, Eugène Valmont, myself for the first time in several days.

Even then I did not take a cab to my flat, but passed under the arched Strand front of the 'Cecil' in a cab, bound for the residence of that nobleman who had formerly engaged me to see after the safety of the King.

You will say that this was all very elaborate precaution to take when a man was not even sure he was followed. To tell you the

truth, I do not know to this day whether anyone watched me or not, nor do I care. I live in the present: when once the past is done with, it ceases to exist for me. It is quite possible, nay, entirely probable, that no one tracked me farther than Liverpool Street Station the night before, yet it was for lack of such precaution that my assistant Brisson received the Italian's dagger under his shoulder blade fifteen years before. The present moment is ever the critical time; the future is merely for intelligent forethought. It was to prepare for the future that I was now in a cab on the way to my lord's residence. It was not the French anarchists I feared during the contest in which I was about to become engaged, but the Paris police. I knew French officialdom too well not to understand the futility of going to the authorities there and proclaiming my object. If I ventured to approach the chief of police with the information that I, in London, had discovered what it was his business in Paris to know, my reception would be far from cordial, even though, or rather because, I announced myself as Eugène Valmont. The exploits of Eugène had become part of the legends of Paris, and these legends were extremely distasteful to those men in power. My doings have frequently been made the subject of feuilletons in the columns of the Paris Press, and were, of course, exaggerated by the imagination of the writers, yet, nevertheless, I admit I did some good strokes of detection during my service with the French Government. It is but natural, then, that the present authorities should listen with some impatience when the name of Eugène Valmont is

mentioned. I recognise this as quite in the order of things to be expected, and am honest enough to confess that in my own time I often hearkened to narratives regarding the performances of Lecocq with a doubting shrug of the shoulders.

Now, if the French police knew anything of this anarchist plot, which was quite within the bounds of possibility, and if I were in surreptitious communication with the anarchists, more especially with the man who was to fling the bomb, there was every chance I might find myself in the grip of French justice. I must, then, provide myself with credentials to show that I was acting, not against the peace and quiet of my country, but on the side of law and order. I therefore wished to get from the nobleman a commission in writing, similar to that command which he had placed upon me during the King's visit. This commission I should lodge at my bank in Paris, to be a voucher for me at the last extremity. I had no doubt his lordship would empower me to act in this instance as I had acted on two former occasions.

Perhaps if I had not lunched so well I might have approached his lordship with greater deference than was the case; but when ordering lunch I permitted a bottle of Château du Tertre, 1878, a most delicious claret, to be decanted carefully for my delectation at the table, and this caused a genial glow to permeate throughout my system, inducing a mental optimism which left me ready to salute the greatest of earth on a plane of absolute equality. Besides, after all, I am the citizen of a Republic.

The nobleman received me with frigid correctness, implying

disapproval of my unauthorised visit, rather than expressing it. Our interview was extremely brief.

'I had the felicity of serving your lordship upon two occasions,' I began.

'They are well within my recollection,' he interrupted, 'but I do not remember sending for you a third time.'

'I have taken the liberty of coming unrequested, my lord, because of the importance of the news I carry. I surmise that you are interested in the promotion of friendship between France and England.'

'Your surmise, sir, is incorrect. I care not a button about it. My only anxiety was for the safety of the King.'

Even the superb claret was not enough to fortify me against words so harsh, and tones so discourteous, as those his lordship permitted himself to use.

'Sir,' said I, dropping the title in my rising anger, 'it may interest you to know that a number of your countrymen run the risk of being blown to eternity by an anarchist bomb in less than two weeks from today. A party of business men, true representatives of a class to which the pre-eminence of your Empire is due, are about to proceed—'

'Pray spare me,' interpolated his lordship wearily, 'I have read that sort of thing so often in the newspapers. If all these estimable City men are blown up, the Empire would doubtless miss them, as you hint, but I should not, and their fate does not interest me in the least, although you did me the credit of believing that it

would. Thompson, you will show this person out? Sir, if I desire your presence here in future I will send for you.'

'You may send for the devil!' I cried, now thoroughly enraged, the wine getting the better of me.

'You express my meaning more tersely than I cared to do,' he replied coldly, and that was the last I ever saw of him.

Entering the cab I now drove to my flat, indignant at the reception I had met with. However, I knew the English people too well to malign them for the action of one of their number, and resentment never dwells long with me. Arriving at my rooms I looked through the newspapers to learn all I could of the proposed business men's excursion to Paris, and in reading the names of those most prominent in carrying out the necessary arrangements, I came across that of W. Raymond White, which caused me to sit back in my chair and wrinkle my brow in an endeavour to stir my memory. Unless I was much mistaken, I had been so happy as to oblige this gentleman some dozen or thirteen years before. As I remembered him, he was a business man who engaged in large transactions with France, dealing especially in Lyons and that district. His address was given in the newspaper as Old Change, so at once I resolved to see him. Although I could not recall the details of our previous meeting, if, indeed, he should turn out to be the same person, yet the mere sight of the name had produced a mental pleasure, as a chance chord struck may bring a grateful harmony to the mind. I determined to get my credentials from Mr. White if possible, for his recommendation

would in truth be much more valuable than that of the gruff old nobleman to whom I had first applied, because, if I got into trouble with the police of Paris, I was well enough acquainted with the natural politeness of the authorities to know that a letter from one of the city's guests would secure my instant release.

I took a hansom to the head of that narrow thoroughfare known as Old Change, and there dismissed my cab. I was so fortunate as to recognise Mr. White coming out of his office. A moment later, and I should have missed him.

'Mr. White,' I accosted him, 'I desire to enjoy both the pleasure and the honour of introducing myself to you.'

'Monsieur,' replied Mr. White with a smile, 'the introduction is not necessary, and the pleasure and honour are mine. Unless I am very much mistaken, this is Monsieur Valmont of Paris?'

'Late of Paris,' I corrected.

'Are you no longer in Government service then?'

'For a little more than ten years I have been a resident of London.'

'What, and have never let me know? That is something the diplomatists call an unfriendly act, monsieur. Now, shall we return to my office, or go to a café?'

'To your office, if you please, Mr. White. I come on rather important business.'

Entering his private office the merchant closed the door, offered me a chair, and sat down himself by his desk. From the first he had addressed me in French, which he spoke with an

accent so pure that it did my lonesome heart good to hear it.

'I called upon you half a dozen years ago,' he went on, 'when I was over in Paris on a festive occasion, where I hoped to secure your company, but I could not learn definitely whether you were still with the Government or not.'

'It is the way of the French officialism,' I replied. 'If they knew my whereabouts they would keep the knowledge to themselves.'

'Well, if you have been ten years in London, Monsieur Valmont, we may now perhaps have the pleasure of claiming you as an Englishman; so I beg you will accompany us on another festive occasion to Paris next week. Perhaps you have seen that a number of us are going over there to make the welkin ring.'

'Yes; I have read all about the business men's excursion to Paris, and it is with reference to this journey that I wish to consult you,' and here I gave Mr. White in detail the plot of the anarchists against the growing cordiality of the two countries. The merchant listened quietly without interruption until I had finished; then he said,—'I suppose it will be rather useless to inform the police of Paris?'

'Indeed, Mr. White, it is the police of Paris I fear more than the anarchists. They would resent information coming to them from the outside, especially from an ex-official, the inference being that they were not up to their own duties. Friction and delay would ensue until the deed was inevitable. It is quite on the cards that the police of Paris may have some inkling of the plot, and in that case, just before the event, they are reasonably certain

to arrest the wrong men. I shall be moving about Paris, not as Eugène Valmont, but as Paul Ducharme, the anarchist; therefore, there is some danger that as a stranger and a suspect I may be laid by the heels at the critical moment. If you would be so good as to furnish me with credentials which I can deposit somewhere in Paris in case of need, I may thus be able to convince the authorities that they have taken the wrong man.'

Mr. White, entirely unperturbed by the prospect of having a bomb thrown at him within two weeks, calmly wrote several documents, then turned his untroubled face to me, and said, in a very confidential, winning tone:—'Monsieur Valmont, you have stated the case with that clear comprehensiveness pertaining to a nation which understands the meaning of words, and the correct adjustment of them; that felicity of language which has given France the first place in the literature of nations. Consequently, I think I see very clearly the delicacies of the situation. We may expect hindrances, rather than help, from officials on either side of the Channel. Secrecy is essential to success. Have you spoken of this to anyone but me?'

'Only to Lord Blank,' I replied; 'and now I deeply regret having made a confidant of him.'

'That does not in the least matter,' said Mr. White, with a smile; 'Lord Blank's mind is entirely occupied by his own greatness. Chemists tell me that you cannot add a new ingredient to a saturated solution; therefore your revelation will have made no impression upon his lordship's intellect. He has already

forgotten all about it. Am I right in supposing that everything hinges on the man who is to throw the bomb?'

'Quite right, sir. He may be venal, he may be traitorous, he may be a coward, he may be revengeful, he may be a drunkard. Before I am in conversation with him for ten minutes, I shall know what his weak spot is. It is upon that spot I must act, and my action must be delayed till the very last moment; for, if he disappears too long before the event, his first, second, or third substitute will instantly step into his place.'

'Precisely. So you cannot complete your plans until you have met this man?'

'Parfaitement.'

'Then I propose,' continued Mr. White, 'that we take no one into our confidence. In a case like this there is little use in going before a committee. I can see that you do not need any advice, and my own part shall be to remain in the background, content to support the most competent man that could have been chosen to grapple with a very difficult crisis.'

I bowed profoundly. There was a compliment in his glance as well as in his words. Never before had I met so charming a man.

'Here,' he continued, handing me one of the papers he had written, 'is a letter to whom it may concern, appointing you my agent for the next three weeks, and holding myself responsible for all you see fit to do. Here,' he went on, passing to me a second sheet, 'is a letter of introduction to Monsieur Largent, the manager of my bank in Paris, a man well known and highly

respected in all circles, both official and commercial. I suggest that you introduce yourself to him, and he will hold himself in readiness to respond to any call you may make, night or day. I assure you that his mere presence before the authorities will at once remove any ordinary difficulty. And now,' he added, taking in hand the third slip of paper, speaking with some hesitation, and choosing his words with care, 'I come to a point which cannot be ignored. Money is a magician's wand, which, like faith, will remove mountains. It may also remove an anarchist hovering about the route of a business man's procession.'

He now handed to me what I saw was a draft on Paris for a thousand pounds.

'I assure you, monsieur,' I protested, covered with confusion, 'that no thought of money was in my mind when I took the liberty of presenting myself to you. I have already received more than I could have expected in the generous confidence you were good enough to repose in me, as exhibited by these credentials, and especially the letter to your banker. Thanks to the generosity of your countrymen, Mr White, of which you are a most notable example, I am in no need of money.'

'Monsieur Valmont, I am delighted to hear that you have got on well amongst us. This money is for two purposes. First, you will use what you need. I know Paris very well, monsieur, and have never found gold an embarrassment there. The second purpose is this: I suggest that when you present the letter of introduction to Monsieur Largent, you will casually place this

amount to your account in his bank. He will thus see that besides writing you a letter of introduction, I transfer a certain amount of my own balance to your credit. That will do you no harm with him, I assure you. And now, Monsieur Valmont, it only remains for me to thank you for the opportunity you have given me, and to assure you that I shall march from the Gare du Nord without a tremor, knowing the outcome is in such capable custody.'

And then this estimable man shook hands with me in action the most cordial. I walked away from Old Change as if I trod upon air; a feeling vastly different from that with which I departed from the residence of the old nobleman in the West End but a few hours before.

Next morning I was in Paris, and next night I attended the underground meeting of the anarchists, held within a quarter of a mile of the Luxembourg. I was known to many there assembled, but my acquaintance of course was not so large as with the London circle. They had half expected me the night before, knowing that even going by the Hook of Holland I might have reached Paris in time for the conclave. I was introduced generally to the assemblage as the emissary from England, who was to assist the bomb-throwing brother to escape either to that country, or to such other point of safety as I might choose. No questions were asked me regarding my doings of the day before, nor was I required to divulge the plans for my fellow-member's escape. I was responsible; that was enough. If I failed through no fault of my own, it was but part of the ill-luck we were all prepared

to face. If I failed through treachery, then a dagger in the back at the earliest possible moment. We all knew the conditions of our sinister contract, and we all recognised that the least said the better.

The cellar was dimly lighted by one oil lamp depending from the ceiling. From this hung a cord attached to an extinguisher, and one jerk of the cord would put out the light. Then, while the main entry doors were being battered down by police, the occupants of the room escaped through one of three or four human rat-holes provided for that purpose.

If any Parisian anarchist does me the honour to read these jottings, I beg to inform him that while I remained in office under the Government of France there was never a time when I did not know the exit of each of these underground passages, and could during any night there was conference have bagged the whole lot of those there assembled. It was never my purpose, however, to shake the anarchists' confidence in their system, for that merely meant the removal of the gathering to another spot, thus giving us the additional trouble of mapping out their new exits and entrances. When I did make a raid on anarchist headquarters in Paris, it was always to secure some particular man. I had my emissaries in plain clothes stationed at each exit. In any case, the rats were allowed to escape unmolested, sneaking forth with great caution into the night, but we always spotted the man we wanted, and almost invariably arrested him elsewhere, having followed him from his kennel. In each case my uniformed

officers found a dark and empty cellar, and retired apparently baffled. But the coincidence that on the night of every raid some member there present was secretly arrested in another quarter of Paris, and perhaps given a free passage to Russia, never seemed to awaken suspicion in the minds of the conspirators.

I think the London anarchists' method is much better, and I have ever considered the English nihilist the most dangerous of this fraternity, for he is cool-headed and not carried away by his own enthusiasm, and consequently rarely carried away by his own police. The authorities of London meet no opposition in making a raid. They find a well-lighted room containing a more or less shabby coterie playing cards at cheap pine tables. There is no money visible, and, indeed, very little coin would be brought to light if the whole party were searched; so the police are unable to convict the players under the Gambling Act. Besides, it is difficult in any case to obtain a conviction under the Gambling Act, because the accused has the sympathy of the whole country with him. It has always been to me one of the anomalies of the English nature that a magistrate can keep a straight face while he fines some poor wretch for gambling, knowing that next race day (if the court is not sitting) the magistrate himself, in correct sporting costume, with binoculars hanging at his hip, will be on the lawn by the course backing his favourite horse.

After my reception at the anarchists' club of Paris, I remained seated unobtrusively on a bench waiting until routine business was finished, after which I expected an introduction to the man

selected to throw the bomb. I am a very sensitive person, and sitting there quietly I became aware that I was being scrutinised with more than ordinary intensity by someone, which gave me a feeling of uneasiness. At last, in the semi-obscurity opposite me I saw a pair of eyes as luminous as those of a tiger peering fixedly at me. I returned the stare with such composure as I could bring to my aid, and the man, as if fascinated by a look as steady as his own, leaned forward, and came more and more into the circle of light.

Then I received a shock which it required my utmost self-control to conceal. The face, haggard and drawn, was none other than that of Adolph Simard, who had been my second assistant in the Secret Service of France during my last year in office. He was a most capable and rising young man at that time, and, of course, he knew me well. Had he, then, penetrated my disguise? Such an event seemed impossible; he could not have recognised my voice, for I had said nothing aloud since entering the room, my few words to the president being spoken in a whisper. Simard's presence there bewildered me; by this time he should be high up in the Secret Service. If he were now a spy, he would, of course, wish to familiarise himself with every particular of my appearance, as in my hands lay the escape of the criminal. Yet, if such were his mission, why did he attract the attention of all members by this open-eyed scrutiny? That he recognised me as Valmont I had not the least fear; my disguise was too perfect; and, even if I were there in my own proper person, I had not

seen Simard, nor he me, for ten years, and great changes occur in a man's appearance during so long a period. Yet I remembered with disquietude that Mr. White recognised me, and here tonight I had recognised Simard. I could not move my bench farther back because it stood already against the wall.

Simard, on the contrary, was seated on one of the few chairs in the room, and this he periodically hitched forward, the better to continue his examination, which now attracted the notice of others besides myself. As he came forward, I could not help admiring the completeness of his disguise so far as apparel was concerned. He was a perfect picture of the Paris wastrel, and what was more, he wore on his head a cap of the Apaches, the most dangerous band of cut-throats that have ever cursed a civilised city. I could understand that even among lawless anarchists this badge of membership of the Apache band might well strike terror. I felt that before the meeting adjourned I must speak with him, and I determined to begin our conversation by asking him why he stared so fixedly at me. Yet even then I should have made little progress. I did not dare to hint that he belonged to the Secret Service; nevertheless, if the authorities had this plot in charge, it was absolutely necessary we should work together, or, at least, that I should know they were in the secret, and steer my course accordingly. The fact that Simard appeared with undisguised face was not so important as might appear to an outsider.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.