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By virtue of an Order of the Superior Court in the case of Chas. C. Thompson, administrator of Estate of Chas. C. Thompson, deceased, vs. Laura B. Thompson and R. H. Taylor, Jr., Defendants, and Estate of Edgar S. Thompson, Jr., Plaintiff, at the entry house door in Graham, Alamance County, N. C., this 2nd day of March, 1910, at 10 o'clock a. m., the highest bidder, at 12:30 o'clock m.

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The Perfume of the Lady In Black
By GASTON LEROUX,
Author of "The Mystery of the Yellow Room"
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CHAPTER I—Robert Darzac and Mlle. Stangerson celebrate their wedding quietly in a Paris church on April 5, 1895. Among the few present is Roulettable, the reporter-detective, who has his doubts about the alleged death of Larsan, the government secret service official who is said to have been lost in the wreck of La Dordogne. Mlle. Stangerson had married him when she was a mere girl, ignorant that her Jan Roussel—his then name—was no other than the notorious scoundrel Balmeyer, now posing as Larsan. II. Roulettable and his best friend, who is relating this story, decide to go to the Castle of Heroules at Rochers Rouges to visit the Rances together with the newly married Darzacs. Roulettable is revealed as the son of the now Mme. Darzac and Larsan, her former husband. III—Darzac describes how his wife receives a severe shock at seeing the face of Larsan in a mirror at a railway compartment. IV, V and VI—Larsan is seen outside the castle at Rochers Rouges, and Roulettable establishes guards and fortifies the place against him. VII—Old Bob, a professor, exhibits what he describes as "the oldest skull in the world." VIII and IX—Roulettable traces Larsan and one Brignoles on a mysterious journey. At a luncheon Roulettable and his friend realize the presence of Larsan at the castle and are horrified. X—Roulettable calls his friends' attention to the haunting odor of the perfume used by "the Lady in Black," Mme. Darzac. XI—A mysterious pistol shot is heard in the night.

CHAPTER XI.
A Pistol Shot in the Night.
It was a gloomy meal enough. Arthur Rance looked every moment in the direction of the Lady in Black. All the windows were open. A flash of lightning and a heavy clap of thunder came in rapid succession, and then the deluge. Mme. Edith repeated just in time to escape being drenched by the furious rain, which beat down like cannon balls.

The young woman told in excited tones and with her hands clasped how she had found Old Bob bending over his desk with his head buried in his hands. He had refused to have anything to say to her. She had spoken to him affectionately, and he had treated her like a bear. Then, as he had held his hands to his ears, she had picked one of his fingers with a little pin set with rubies which she used to fasten in the lace scarf which she wore in the evening. Her uncle had turned upon her like a madman, had snatched the little pin from her and thrown it upon the desk. And then he had spoken to her—brutally, rudely, she ejaculated. "Get out of here and leave me alone!" he said to her. She had turned her head for a last look at her old uncle and had been almost struck dumb by what she saw.

"Why did he not throw himself into my arms when I opened them to him?" she moaned. "Ah, my God! If he refuses to pay me, will he never consent to be mine?"
"I was almost beside myself. I kissed her hands and expressed pardon for Roulettable. Here was the result of my friend's schemes to save her pain. Under the pretext of saving her from Larsan he had plunged a knife into her heart. I felt as though I had no wish to know any more of the story. I went out of the square tower cursing and shouting. I went to the court to look for him, but found it deserted."
At the postern gate Mattoni had come to take the 10 o'clock watch. I saw a light in Roulettable's room, and I hastened up the rickety stairway of the new castle and quickly found myself outside his door. I opened it without knocking. Roulettable looked up. I told him all that I had heard and my opinion of him for his actions.
"She didn't tell you everything, my friend," he replied coldly. "She did not tell you that she forbade me to touch that man. Do you know what she said to me yesterday? She ordered me to go away. She would rather die than see me take issue against my father."
And he laughed, laughed! Such laughter I hope not to hear again. His face was not a pleasant sight to see as he uttered the words, but suddenly it seemed to be transformed.

"Listen, Sainclair! Bernier told you about our little accident. It is not worth mentioning to any one unless some one should speak of it to you. The others perhaps have not heard the shot. It would be useless to frighten all these good people. Don't you think so? Now I have a little favor to ask of you. It is only to persuade Roulettable to go to bed. When he is gone my wife will calm herself and will try to get the rest that she needs. Every one of us has need of rest—and silence."
I pressed his hand with a force which attested my sentiments toward him. I was persuaded that both he and Bernier were concealing something from us—something very grave.

Darzac re-entered his room, and I went to find Roulettable in the sitting room of Old Bob.
But upon the threshold of the apartment I jostled against the Lady in Black and her son, who were passing out. They were both so silent and wore an expression so unaccounted for, who had overheard their exclamations of love and joy only a few moments before, that I stood before them without saying a word or making a movement. The ecstasy which inspired them, I judged, to have Roulettable so soon under such extraordinary circumstances as those which had attended their reunion pushed me greatly. Mathilde pressed a kiss upon the lady's forehead and murmured "Good night, my darling," in a voice so soft, so sweet and at the same time so solemn that it seemed to me that it must resemble the leave-taking of one who was about to die. Roulettable with out answering his mother took my arm and led me out of the tower. He was trembling like a leaf.

It was the Lady in Black herself who closed the door of the square tower. I was sure that something strange was passing within those walls. The account of the pistol shot which had been given me satisfied me not at all. We were at the moment in front of the five windows in which a light was still burning and which opened upon the sitting room of Old Bob and sloped out upon the sea. This window was not closed, and it was this, doubtless, which had permitted us to hear so distinctly in spite of the thickness of the walls of the tower the pistol shot and the cry of agony that had followed it. The storm was past, but the waters were not yet appeased, and the waves broke on the rocks of the peninsula with a violence that would have rendered the approach of any vessel impossible. The thought of a vessel crossed my mind, because I believed for an instant that I could see the shadow of a vessel of some sort appearing or disappearing in the gloom. But what could it be?

CHAPTER XII.
The Quivering Body in the Potato Sack.
DREADING against the parapet, our heads stretched toward that window through which there had come to us that sigh of agony, we listened. Roulettable pointed out the window of his own room, the new castle, which was still illuminated. I understood it was necessary to extinguish this light and return. Five minutes later I was back again with the light in the court of the tower. The ray which told of the vigil of Old Bob in the basement of the round tower and the light at the garden's postern were distinctly visible.
I had scarcely time to steal back to Roulettable before we distinctly heard the door of the square tower moving softly upon its hinges. As I attempted to lean farther out of my corner and see further down into the court, Roulettable pointed out the window of his own room, the new castle, which was still illuminated. I understood it was necessary to extinguish this light and return. Five minutes later I was back again with the light in the court of the tower. The ray which told of the vigil of Old Bob in the basement of the round tower and the light at the garden's postern were distinctly visible.

"Where—in Old Bob's bedroom?" Bernier asked.
"No," Bernier shook his head.
"Hidden in your room?"
Bernier shook his head vehemently.
"Well, where was he then? He could certainly not have been in the apartments of M. and Mme. Darzac?"
Bernier bowed his head.
"What! You acknowledge that he was in the apartment of M. and Mme. Darzac! Who, then, gained him entrance to that apartment? No one but yourself—yourself, the only person who had access to the room?"
"M. Roulettable, do you accuse me of being an accomplice of Larsan?"
"I forbid you to pronounce that name!" shouted the reporter. "You know very well that Larsan is dead and has been dead for months!"
"For months?" echoed Bernier ironically. "Yes, that is true. I was wrong to forget it."
"Listen to me, Bernier. I know that you are a brave man, and I respect you for your good faith that I question, but I am censuring your negligence."
"My negligence?" Bernier, as pale as his face had been, dashed crimson. "My negligence! I have not budged from my lodge, not even from the corridor. I have always worn the key in my breast pocket, and I swear to you that no one entered that room, no one at all, after you were there at 6 o'clock, except M. and Mme. Darzac themselves."
"What?" exclaimed Roulettable. "Do you want me to believe that this individual—let us call him 'the man'—that the man was killed in M. Darzac's room if he was not there?"
"I do not. I can swear to you that he was there."
"Yes. But how could he have been? That is what I ask you, Bernier. And you are the only one who can answer me. Tell me, Bernier, did you see with him he left the room, and no one could have got into the room to hide while he was there?"
"That is the mystery, monsieur. That is what puzzles M. Darzac more than all the rest. But I have only been able to answer him as I have answered you. There is the mystery."
"When you left the room with M. Darzac, M. Sainclair and myself did you lock the door immediately?"
"Yes, monsieur."
"When did you open it after that?"
"Not at all."
"And where were you in the meantime?"
Bernier quickly explained.

"In front of the door of my lodge, watching the door of the apartment. My wife and I took our dinner in that spot at about half after 4, on a little table in the corridor, because on account of the storm the tower table was unusable. After dinner I sat in the doorway of the lodge, smoking a cigarette and chatting with my wife. We were so seated that, even if we had wished to do so, we would not have been able to withdraw our eyes from M. Darzac's room. It is a mystery—a mystery more extraordinary than 'The Mystery of the Yellow Room.'"
"And from 5 o'clock until the moment of the lightning you declare that you never quit the corridor?"
"Ah, pardon, monsieur—there was no moment—the moment that you asked me, but I was not away from my post more than an instant or two, and M. Darzac was in his room then. He did not leave it while I was gone."
"How do you know that M. Darzac didn't go during those moments?"
"Why, because if he had done so, my wife, who was in the lodge, must have seen him. No one has entered that room except M. Darzac at 5 o'clock and you two at 6, and no person got in between the time that M. Darzac went out and the time when he came in at night with Mme. Darzac. He was like you—he did not want to believe me. I swear to him upon the corpse that lay before us."
"Where was the corpse?"
"In M. Darzac's bedroom."
"It was really a dead body?"
"Oh, he was breathing still—heard him."
"Then it was not a corpse, Pere Bernier."
"Where was the difference? He had a bullet in his heart."
He told us that he was going to his lodge, feeling drowsy, when he and Mme. Bernier heard a commotion in the apartment of M. Darzac. The furniture was being thrown about and blows rained on the walls.
They heard the voice of Mme. Darzac shouting "Help, help!" This was the cry that we, too, had heard in the new chateau. Pere Bernier rushed to the door of M. Darzac's room and beat against it. He heard the labored breathing of two men, and he recognized the voice of Larsan when he heard the words, "With this blow I shall have your life!" Then he heard Darzac, who called his wife to his aid in a voice almost stifled, as though he were gagged. "Mathilde, Mathilde! Evidently he and Larsan must have been engaged in a life and death struggle when suddenly the pistol shot had saved him. One would have thought that Mme. Darzac, who had then uttered a cry, had been mortally wounded. Why did she not admit him to help her husband? Finally the door was opened. The room was dark. It was Mme. Darzac who had opened the door, and Bernier could distinguish through the gloom the form of M. Darzac leaning over something which the conclave knew was a dying man. Bernier had called to his wife to bring a light, but Mme. Darzac had cried: "No, no! No light, no light! And, above all, be sure that he knows nothing!" And immediately she had rushed to the door of the tower, calling out: "He is coming, he is coming! I hear him! Open the door, Pere Bernier! I must go and meet him!" And Pere Bernier had opened the door, the while she kept on moaning: "Hide yourself! Go! Don't let him know anything!"
Pere Bernier went on:
"You came like a waterspout, M. Roulettable. And she drew you into Old Bob's sitting room. You saw nothing. I stayed with M. Darzac. The rattle in the throat of the man on the floor had ceased. Darzac, still bending over him, said to me, 'Get a sack, Bernier—a sack and a stone—and we will throw him into the sea, and no one will ever hear his voice again.'"
"Then," Bernier went on, "I thought of my sack of potatoes. My wife had gathered them up and put them back in the sack after you had emptied them out. I emptied the bag again and brought it to him. We made as little noise as possible. Moving very quietly, we had slipped the body, which Darzac had tied up, into the sack. But I said to Darzac: 'Let me beg of you not to throw it into the water. It is not deep enough to hide it.' 'What shall we do, then?' inquired M. Darzac. I answered, 'Heaven help me, I know of nothing.' And I went out of the room and found you in the lodge, M. Sainclair. And then you went for M. Roulettable at the request of M. Darzac, who had come out of his own apartment. As for my wife, she was almost swooning with terror when she suddenly saw that both M. Darzac and myself were covered with blood. See, monsieur, my hands are red! Fray heaven, it doesn't bring me a moment's rest. But we have done our duty. Oh, he was a miserable wretch! Why should he hide the facts? Isn't it an honor to have killed Larsan? Mme. Darzac promised me a fortune if I would keep silence. What do I care for that? Why should she have feared? I asked her when we thought that you had gone to bed and that we three were all alone in the square tower with our corpses. I said to her: 'Tell every one that you have killed him! All the world will praise you!' She answered: 'There has been too much scandal already, Bernier, and as much as it depends on me to do as much as it is possible I will hide this new horror forever! It would kill my father!'"
Bernier turned toward the door, showing us his hands.
"I must rid myself of the blood of the accused pig!" he said dryly.
Roulettable stopped him.
"And what was M. Darzac saying all this time? What was his opinion?"
"He repeated: 'What Mme. Darzac says is right. She must be obeyed.' His shirt was torn, and he had a slight wound in his throat, but it did not seem to bother him at all, and indeed there was only one thing in which he seemed interested, and that was as to how the miserable wretch had got into his room. I told him what I had told you—that he could not have entered without my seeing him."
"And the body? Where was it?"
"It lay in the sleeping room of M. Darzac."
"And how was it decided that it should be disposed of?"
"I can't say as to that for certain, but the accused pig," he said dryly, "Mme. Darzac said to me: 'Bernier, I am going to ask of you one last service—get the English cart and harness Toby to it. If you wake Walter and I for M. Darzac, who must be at Castelar at 4 o'clock in the morning to see the tournament in the Alps.' Mme. Darzac said also, 'If you meet M. Roulettable say nothing to him and do nothing that may attract his attention. Now you know as much as I. God help us!'"
"Well," I said when we were alone, "Larsan is dead!"
"Yes," answered Roulettable. "I fear so."
"You fear so? Why?"
"Because the death of Larsan, who is carried out dead from a place which he never entered dead or alive, terrifies me more than his life!"



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