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KILL THE COUGH AND CURE THE LUNGS WITH Dr. King's New Discovery

The Perfume of the Lady In Black

By GASTON LEROUX, Author of "The Mystery of the Yellow Room" Copyright, 1909, by Brentano's

CHAPTER I—Robert Darzac and Mlle. Stangerson celebrate their wedding quietly in a Paris church on April 6, 1895. Among the few present is Rouletabille, 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 Rousset—his then name—was no other than the notorious scoundrel Ballmeyer, now posing as Larsan. II. Rouletabille and his best friend, who is relating this story, decide to go to the Castle of Hercules at Rochers Rouges to visit the Rances together with the newly married Darzacs. Rouletabille 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 Rouletabille 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—Rouletabille traces Larsan and one Brignoles on a mysterious journey. At a luncheon Rouletabille and his friend realize the presence of Larsan at the castle and are horrified. X—Rouletabille 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. XII—Darzac and Pere Bernier, a servant of Rance's in the dead of night are seen to carry off a quivering body in a bloody potato sack. Rouletabille admits that he believes the body to be that of Larsan. XIII—Mme. Darzac tells how Larsan sprang into the apartment of herself and her husband from behind a panel and how after a furious struggle Darzac killed Larsan. XIV—Old Bob disappears. A stable boy appears with a bloody sack in which the body was carried away. Suddenly the portals flew open, and the stable boy, Walter, Old Bob's faithful servant, rushed into our midst. His clothing was torn and muddy, his hair was in disorder, and his face wore an expression of rage mingled with terror. He carried in his hand a dirty rag which he threw upon the table. This repulsive object, stained with great blotches of reddish brown, was nothing other than the sack which had served to carry off the mysterious body. With a harsh voice and savage gestures Walter howled forth a thousand incomprehensible things in his broken jumble of French and English. Rance interrupted him from time to time, while Walter shook his fists menacingly at Darzac. Once for a moment it seemed as though he intended to seize Darzac by the throat. When he finished speaking Rance translated his words for us. "He says that this morning he noticed blood stains on the English cart and saw that they seemed very greatly fatigued. This puzzled him so much that he decided to speak of it at once to Old Bob, but he sought his master in vain. Then, seized by a dark foreboding, he followed the prints of the horse's feet and the wheels of the vehicle, which he could easily do because the road was muddy and the wheels had sunk deep. Finally he reached the old Castellon and noticed that the wheels led up to a deep chasm into which he descended, believing that he should find the body of his master, but he saw merely this empty sack, which may have contained the corpse of Old Bob, and now, having caught a ride in a peasant's wagon, he has returned to ask for his master, but learn whether any one has seen him, and if he is not found, to accuse Darzac of having caused his death. We stood confounded. But, to our great astonishment, Mme. Edith was the first to recover her self possession. She quieted Walter by promising him that she would soon bring him face to face with Old Bob perfectly safe and well. And she said to Rouletabille: "You have twenty-four hours, monsieur. Make the best use of it." Mme. Edith cast a withering glance at him and left the room, followed by her husband. The sight of the sack struck Darzac speechless. He had thrown the bag into an abyss, and it was brought back empty. Rouletabille spoke: "Larsan is not dead, be sure of that! Never has the situation been so frightful as it is today, and I must hurry away at once. I have not a minute to lose. In twenty-four hours I shall be back." He pressed us to his heart. M. Darzac first, then myself, and then, falling into the arms of the Lady in Black, he burst into a passion of sobs.

CHAPTER XV.

Darzac or Larsan?

TWO o'clock in the morning! Every person and every thing in the castle seemed wrapped in slumber. Silence brooded over the heavens and the earth. While I stood at my window, my forehead burning and my heart frozen, the sea yielded its last sigh and in a moment the moon appeared riding like a queen in the cloudless sky. There, in that vast, motionless slumber with seemed to envelope all the world, I heard the words of the Lithuanian folk song, "But his glance seeks in vain for the beautiful unknown who has covered her head with a veil and whose voice he has never heard." The words were carried to my ear, clear and distinct, in the still air of the night. What should the prince of the Black Lands be doing on the azure shore with his Lithuanian melodies? Why was Mme. Edith attracted toward him? He was ridiculous with his melancholy eyes and his long lashes and his Lithuanian songs! The emo-

Darzac remained standing in the same spot, looking after her. Suddenly he said violently: "Yes, happiness must come! It must!" My thought took form. As I beheld the gesture of defiance and rapture I dared to say to myself, "If he should be Larsan!" To the gesture of this man my mind answered with the cry, "This is Larsan!" I was white with terror, and when I saw Darzac coming in my direction I could not refrain from a movement which revealed my presence while I was trying to conceal it. He saw me and recognized me, and, grasping me by the arm, he exclaimed: "You were there, Sainclair—you were watching. We are all watching, my friend. And you heard what she said. Her grief is too great. I can bear no more. We would have been so happy. She imagines that she is to be punished by eternal punishment. It was necessary for the frightful tragedy of last night to prove to me that this woman did love me once. Yes, for one moment all her fears were for me, and I, alas, have blood on my hands only because of her. Now she has returned to her old indifference. She cares no longer. Her only desire is that the old man shall be kept in ignorance."

He sighed so sorrowfully and so sincerely the abominable idea which it had harbored fled from my mind. I thought only of what he was saying to me—the sorrow of this man, who seemed to have lost completely the woman whom he loved in the moment when the woman had found a son of whose existence the husband continued to be ignorant. In fact, he had in no way been able to understand the attitude of the Lady in Black as regards the faculty with which she had detached herself from him, and he found no explanation for this cruel metamorphosis other than the love heightened by remorse of Professor Stangerson's daughter for her father. Then the frightful fancy that he was Larsan assailed me, and I demanded: "How did it happen that the sack was empty?" He was not in the least taken aback. He replied simply: "Rouletabille must tell us that." Then he pressed my hand and wandered away through the undergrowth of the garden. I looked after him and said to myself: "I have gone mad!" Now he was standing erect upon the western boulevard, which looked like a pedestal beneath his feet. The rays of the moon enveloped him with a cold and mournful light. Is it you, Darzac, or your specter or the ghost of Larsan come back from the house of death? I speak as though it were years since we had been locked up in the chateau, and it was now just four days.

He began to walk again. I was certain no longer. There is something in his walk which is not Darzac's, something in which I seem to recognize Larsan, but what? He was almost upon me. He passed by. He had not seen me. "It is Larsan! I could swear that it was Larsan!" But he paused for a second and gazed sorrowfully upon all nature suffering as in loneliness and solitude—and a groan escaped his lips, unhappy soul that he was!

And then he was gone, and I remained there behind my hedge overwhelmed with the horror of the thought which I had dared to harbor. I was still beneath the arch of the gardener's postern, and I was just about to enter the Court of the Bold when it seemed to me that I heard something moving. It sounded as though a door might have been closed. Then there was a sound as of wood striking on iron. I thrust my head out

from under the arch, and I believed that I could see the shadow of a person near the door of the new castle. I snatched my revolver from my pocket and with three steps was at the place where I believed I had seen the shape. But it was there no longer. I could see nothing but darkness. The door of the castle was closed, and I was certain that I had left it open. I was disturbed and anxious. I felt that I was not alone. Who, then, could be near me? I listened attentively for more than five minutes without making the slightest sound. Nothing! I must have been mistaken. But nevertheless I did not even strike a match, and as silently as I could I ascended the staircase which led to my chamber. When I reached it I locked myself in and only then began to breathe freely. The effect on my mind was so strong that at last I said to myself: "I shall never know peace again until I am certain that Darzac is not Larsan. And I shall take means to make myself certain one way or the other on the first occasion."

Yes, but how? Pull his beard off? Suddenly I threw off the bedclothes, jumped up and cried almost aloud, "Australia!" An episode had returned to my mind of which I have spoken at the beginning of this story. The reader may remember that at the time of the accident in the laboratory I had accompanied M. Robert Darzac to a druggist. While his injuries were being attended to he had been obliged to remove his study coat, and the sleeve of his shirt had fallen back, leaving his arm bare through the entire session with the druggist and placing in full view just above the right elbow a large birthmark, the shape of which resembled that of Australia as it appears on the maps in the geographical. Mentally while the chemist was at work I had amused myself by trying to locate upon the arm in the positions which they occupied on an actual map the cities of Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, etc., and directly beneath this large mark there was another smaller one which was situated like the country known as Tasmania. And in this sleepless night it was the thought of Australia that came to me. I had scarcely had time to congratulate myself upon having found a means to prove decisively the identity of Darzac and to try to devise some way of bringing it to an immediate test when a singular sound made me prick up my ears.

Breathless, I hurried to my door, and with my ear at the keyhole, I listened. Some one was now ascending the staircase, and some one who desired his presence to be unknown. All at once, as I was leaning on the broken balustrade, I saw the shadow again. It was lighted up by the moonbeams as though it were a flame. And I recognized Robert Darzac. He raised his head and looked in my direction as though he felt the weight of my eyes upon him. Instinctively I drew back. And then I returned to my post of observation just in time to see him disappear into a corridor which led to another staircase winding up to the battlements. What could this mean? Was Darzac spending the night in the new castle? Why did he take such precautions not to be seen? A thousand suspicions crossed my mind, and I felt that I must set my spirit at rest immediately. I must follow Robert Darzac and discover "Australia."

I reached this door, and, finding it locked, I gave three little taps, certain that he was inside. And I waited. My heart was beating wildly. All these rooms were uninhabited, abandoned. What should M. Darzac be doing in one of these haunted chambers? "Is it you, Sainclair? What is it, my friend?" I wanted to know what you could be doing here at such an hour? I replied, and it seemed to me that my

voice was that of another man, so great was my terror. "You see, I am preparing for bed." And he lit a candle, which was placed on a chair, for there was no night stand in this dilapidated apartment. A bed in one corner—an iron bed, which must have been brought there during the day—and a single chair comprised all the furnishings. "I thought that you were going to sleep near Mme. Darzac and the professor on the first floor of la Louve?" "The rooms are too small. I was afraid of inconveniencing Mme. Darzac," answered the unhappy man bitterly. "I asked Bernier to fetch me a bed here. And then what difference does it make where I am, since I do not sleep?" We were both silent for a moment. I was ashamed of myself and of my wretched suspicions. And, frankly, my remorse was so great that I could not refrain from giving it expression. I confessed everything to him—my infamously ideas and how I had even been moved when I saw him wandering so mysteriously over the new castle that it was upon some evil errand, and so had decided to go and look for the "Australia" birthmark. He listened to me with such an expression of reproachful sorrow that it wrung my heart; then he quietly rolled up his shirt sleeve, and, bringing his bare arm close to the light, he showed me the birthmark, which made a sane man of me once more. "You may rub it as much as you choose," said Darzac gently. "It will not come off."

I begged his pardon a thousand times over, with tears in my eyes, but he would not forgive me until he had me pull at his beard, which remained firmly attached to his chin, instead of coming off in my hand. "Then only allowed me to go back to my room, which I did, cursing myself for an idiot." [CONTINUED.]

A Story of Beau Brummel. He was encountered in Calais by an old friend. "My dear Brummel," exclaimed the Englishman, "I am so glad to see you, for we had heard in England that you were dead! The report, I assure you, was in general circulation when I left." Quick as lightning the Beau replied, "More stockjobbing, my dear fellow; mere stockjobbing."—Lewis Melville's "Beaux of the Regency."

Worse Still. "Don't you hate to find a worm when eating fruit?" "Well, not so much as finding half a worm!"—Puck.

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