

The TRUTH ABOUT THE CASE

The Experiences of M. F. Goron, Ex-Chief of the Paris Detective Police

Edited by Albert Keyzer

THE STAINED COLLAR

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YES, sir; my mistress left home yesterday afternoon at four o'clock to call on Mme. Meiser, where she stayed till nine in the evening; and from that moment I have not heard of her. I sat up all night, and Brune, the dog, never left off howling. I am certain something has happened."

Two big tears ran down her wrinkled face.

"How long have you been with Mme. Servois?" I asked.

"Twelve years. I came to her a few days after her husband died. This morning at ten I became so nervous that I went down to Nogent-sur-Marne to see Mme. Meiser; and when I learned that my mistress was not there I called on M. Edouard. But he could give me no tidings of her."

"Who is M. Edouard?"

"Mme. Servois's nephew, or, rather, one of her nephews. My dear, good mistress! I am sure she has been murdered!"

I saw the woman was becoming hysterical, and advised her to go home, promising to search for Mme. Servois.

I learned that Mme. Servois was a widow of about forty-five, comfortably off, living in the Rue Labie, a quiet street leading from the Boulevard Pereire. Her only relatives were two nephews, the sons of her deceased sister, Auguste, the elder, a genuine Bohemian, having failed in various professions, took up painting and earned his living by drawing portraits for one franc each in the cafes in Montmartre, where he was well known. His younger brother, Edouard, was a stock-broker's clerk. Both visited their aunt pretty regularly, especially Auguste, who frequently applied to her for small loans. I was also informed that Mme. Servois had made a will bequeathing them the bulk of her property. Mme. Servois entertained very little; but, music-mad, was seen at every concert and matinee. Her closest friend was Mme. Meiser, and during the last two years the two had been inseparable.

Josephine, the woman who came to me, had given me Edouard's address, and I asked him to call. He was a sickly youth, prematurely bald, with an unpleasant rasp in his voice. He could throw no light on the affair and confirmed Josephine's statement that his aunt's day was regulated by the clock. She always went to bed at ten; and the fact of her having stayed out all night certainly looked suspicious.

"She may have met with an accident," he said, "but I dread worse."

"What makes you suppose this?"

He shrugged his lean shoulders, and I repeated by question.

"I don't know. It's a presentiment I have."

"Where is your brother?" I asked.

"My brother!" he rasped; "he and I don't speak. His address is wherever he can obtain lodgings on tick. You'll find him any night knocking about La Butte.\* You don't need a letter of introduction," he added, with a chuckle.

I dismissed my unpleasant visitor and an hour later saw Mme. Meiser, a well-preserved, fashionably dressed woman with dazzling white teeth.

Mme. Servois, she stated, had spent a few hours with her and had left her at about nine o'clock, making an appointment to meet the following afternoon. She was very much distressed, and begged me to do all in my power to discover her missing friend.

"That young Edouard," I said, "did not seem very upset."

"I am not surprised," she retorted; "he is a selfish little brute. My friend always disliked him and preferred Auguste, vagabond as he is."

"Having known Mme. Servois intimately, can you think why she should have gone away?"

"No, I cannot. If there had been a secret in her life she would have confided it to me. It seems extraordinary."

I had already sent the exact description of Mme. Servois to every police commissary in the metropolis; and, that same night after dinner, went to Montmartre to have a talk with Auguste.

His brother had spoken the truth. Auguste was well known in that part of the town, and in less than a quarter of an hour I ascertained where to find him. It was in one of those quaint, small cabarets which abound at Montmartre, where for the price of a glass of beer one can listen to recitations and songs by talented, out-of-elbow artists, to many of whom Montmartre is the first step on the ladder to fame. Mlle. Claire, a pretty girl with Cleopatra hair, who sang some sentimental ballads, was, I had been told, Auguste's particular friend.

It struck eleven o'clock, and there was no sign of Auguste. I saw Claire enter a small room, whence she emerged with her hat and cloak and then walked rapidly to the door.

I followed her, and asked where I could find Auguste. She replied that she had been waiting for him since

ten, and was now going to call at another cafe where, perhaps, he might have found "work."

This cafe, to which she conducted me, was filled with smoke, and the audience roared the refrain of a song delivered by an elderly man with a long red nose and laughing eyes. After a quick glance through the room, my companion walked up to a table occupied by five art students and four girls comfortably squeezed together.

"Have any of you seen Auguste tonight?" asked Claire.

"No; nobody had seen him. The girl after a moment's silence turned to me."

"I will make another try—will you come?"

The next place—with which I was very familiar—was a third-rate night restaurant. Somebody was presiding over an old piano in the corner, but the clatter of plates and the noisy laughter drowned every other sound.

"I wonder what has become of him?" said Claire. "He is not here; nor did I see him last night. I shall wait here a little while."

As I was ordering refreshments, a youth passed.

"Seen Auguste tonight?" Claire called to him.

"No, nor last night. But I caught sight of him yesterday at Nogent-sur-Marne. He was walking down a private road with a young chap who looked like a jockey."

"What on earth was he doing at Nogent-sur-Marne?" remarked Claire. And I asked myself the same question, remembering that Mme. Servois had not been heard of since she went to that place the day before.

Four days elapsed, and every morning and afternoon Josephine came to me, to know whether I had any tidings of her mistress. Mme. Meiser and Edouard likewise called; but none of them could supply any clue. As to Auguste, who, as I discovered, lived in a small bedroom on the sixth floor in the Rue Houdon, he had not been home for several days, nor had Claire seen him.

This is how matters stood when on the fifth day Paris was startled by the news of a horrible discovery in the Fontainebleau Forest. A party of holiday-makers had been picnicking in the neighborhood of Barbizon and had gone for a ramble, when, passing through some bushes, two of them stumbled over a sack. They cut the rope with which it was tied, and beheld the headless body of a woman.

I immediately went to Barbizon to inspect the ghastly find. The head was absent, the arms and legs were mangled beyond recognition, and according to the medical evidence the crime must have been committed a couple of days before. The skirt still clung to the body. It was of a silky material called, I think, foulard, of a dark blue color with little white dots printed all over it.

My first thought, of course, was of Mme. Servois, and I begged Mme. Meiser and Josephine to assist me in my investigations. The condition of the body rendered identification almost impossible, but Mme. Meiser at once recognized the dress as having belonged to her friend; whereupon Josephine shook her head and declared the white spots on her mistress' gown were bigger.

"I swear it is Mme. Servois' dress," said Mme. Meiser.

"I swear it is not!" exclaimed Josephine.

"Where did she buy the material, or who made the dress?" I asked.

Unfortunately neither of them knew. Mme. Servois had the year before made a tour through Germany and had bought the costume there.

The body was transferred to Paris and exposed in the morgue, whereupon matters became still more complicated, for a farmer from Lisieux recognized the dress as that of his sister, who had run away from her home a month ago; and a corn merchant in the Rue Vieille-du-Temple was equally positive that it had belonged to his divorced wife. How, in view of these conflicting statements, could I hope to trace the murderer? I instructed my chief assistant to follow up the vague clues supplied by the farmer and the corn merchant, and imposed upon myself the task of discovering whether there was a connecting link between Mme. Servois' disappearance and the finding of the body.

The coincidence of Auguste having been seen at Nogent-sur-Marne, the day Mme. Servois called there on her friend, had caused me to have his lodgings watched night and day. But, thus far, he had not turned up there nor at his favorite haunt, where Claire was still waiting for him every night. I still saw Mme. Servois' lawyer, who was very anxious about his client.

"Young Edouard," he said, "has already been to see me several times. He knows that in the event of his aunt's death he will inherit a large share of her property, and his thoughts seem to run more on the money than on the fate that may have befallen her. M. Goron, do you really think that the body found is that of Mme. Servois?"

"In the face of all these contradic-

tions," I replied, "I cannot give an opinion. Since the day Mme. Meiser lightly or wrongly recognized the remains as those of the missing woman I have had nothing but supposition to guide me."

At Mme. Servois' bankers, I learned that she kept her securities at home in an iron safe, and regularly with-drew the greater part of the sums collected for her. Neither they nor the lawyers had the faintest idea how much money she had in her possession, as she never volunteered any statement; but they thought the amount must be considerable.

I was growing impatient. Thus far no fact that could in any way assist my search had been brought to light. Certain deductions led me to suppose that Mme. Servois might have been murdered, while at other moments I was inclined to agree with Josephine that the body found in the Fontainebleau Forest was not that of her mistress. But, in that case, what had become of her?

While I was groping my way through this mist it was reported to me, late one afternoon, that Auguste had reappeared. He had gone back to his old lodgings and paid the six weeks' rent he owed. That same evening at nine I entered the cafe where I had first met Claire. Claire was sitting at a little table opposite a tall youth, who, even without the description I had of him, I at once recognized by his likeness to Edouard. But he, who had been portrayed to me as shabbily dressed, wore a new suit of well-fitting clothes, and now and then looked down with evident pride at the gold watch chain that adorned his waistcoat. I waited till it was

sumed, "you are interested in knowing what befell Mme. Servois. She may possibly have been the victim of a foul plot; and I ask you now to reply to my questions."

"I am sorry," he said, after a pause. "I cannot oblige you. My business in Nogent-sur-Marne was of a strictly private nature, and had nothing to do with my aunt's disappearance."

"You will, I am afraid, think me very indiscreet, if I ask you now how it is that you, who for the last three years have not had a five-franc piece in your pocket, are all at once remarkably flush?"

He changed color, and watched me a moment.

"M. Goron," he at last exclaimed, "I have made a lucky stroke; and, I repeat, it is a private matter that does not concern any one."

"I have no right," I retorted, "to pry into your affairs; but you must excuse me if I draw my own conclusions from your attitude. I have no more to say to you. Good night."

He moved toward the door, and then suddenly turned around.

"M. Goron," he cried, "I have not withheld any information from you, because I have none to offer. But let me give you some advice. Beware of my brother. With his sanctimonious airs, he is an unprincipled black-guard!"

I watched him cross the road, white out of the darkness one of my men, dressed like a laborer, emerged, and shadowed him.

I was making no headway. There were no tidings of Mme. Servois; the body at the morgue had not been officially identified. Mme. Meiser and Josephine had nothing but lamenta-

"Yes."

"And you mean to say it is from that stain you draw your inferences?"

"I will explain it all to you after I have found my deductions are true. You might find them now, perhaps, a little too subtle."

Thirteen days elapsed, and I then gave a sigh of relief, for I had solved my problem. I sent a message to Auguste, and he soon put in an appearance, dressed in another new suit of clothes. M. F., anxious to hear the mystery cleared up, had asked to be present at the interview.

"M. Auguste," I began, "can you give me any tidings of your aunt?"

"No, sir."

"Does this not distress you?"

"It does."

"Then put your mind at rest. Mme. Servois is in the best of health, and went to London with a young Englishman, called James Briggs. They have taken a furnished apartment in Baker street. Would you like to know the number?"

Auguste gave a slight start.

"I don't mind telling you, M. Auguste," I continued, "that, although of late I had no misgivings regarding your aunt's fate, I nevertheless was delighted, when searching your apartment, I came upon the truth."

"The collar!" cried M. F.; "we have at last come to it."

"Yes; we have come to it. The crumpled collar was in a drawer hidden behind a lot of handkerchiefs and ribbons. It seemed so out of place that it attracted my attention. I took it up, and at the back discovered a slight stain, which on careful examination proved to have been caused by

at the address he gave. And he made me swear not to divulge anything in case inquiries were made."

"You heard, or course," I remarked to him, "of Mme. Servois' disappearance and the outcry it made?"

"Yes, sir," he sighed; "but the young gentleman said it would be all right, and that the police, being on a wrong scent, would soon tire of their search."

Auguste turned crimson.

"Yes, M. Auguste," I said to that youth, "it was you who tried to bluff me. And you also behaved badly to your aunt by not carrying out her instructions; especially if, as I am sure, she paid you handsomely for your services. Poor M. Auguste, I am afraid she will now strike you out of her will! With Mme. Servois' London address in my possession, the rest was easy. I wrote to one of my Scotland Yard colleagues, and received prompt reply that at that address a Mr. Briggs and a French lady were staying. This Mr. Briggs, they wrote to me, was a trainer's assistant who had come to London in connection with business. I next discovered that he was one of your friends; and it was quite evident that Mme. Servois had lost her heart to that youth, had taken you into her confidence, and, with your assistance, run away with him. Why? That is the only point about which I am not quite certain. You might enlighten me?"

Auguste looked so sheepish that M. F. and I burst out laughing.

"I have nothing to add," groaned Auguste—"you ferreted it all out yourself. As to the reason why my aunt was in such a hurry to go away with Jimmy, that is a question you had better put to her. When a woman of her age loses her heart she usually loses her head as well."

And he stalked out of the room.

Mme. Servois married Mr. Briggs; but left him six months later, after which she returned to Paris, seeking consolation in religion. She bequeathed her fortune to the Church and to charitable institutions. Auguste and Edouard inherited nothing.

WHAT IS THE HARDEST SHOT?

Golfing Experts Find It Hard to Agree As to the Most Difficult Plays on the Links.

It was suggested by Mark Allerton the other day that the most difficult shot in golf is the full cleek shot up to the hole with the following wind.

"Ted Ray writes us that he considers "the most difficult shot is a full shot up to the hole with a cleek, with the ball lying on a hanging lie, and on hard ground."

C. H. Mayo has sympathy for those who find putting on sun baked greens an ordeal from which they shrink. "Personally, I think," he writes, "that the two-foot put is the hardest stroke in the game, as so much depends on it." He might have added that if the put be downhill its terrors are increased a hundredfold.

"The most difficult shot I know," writes George Duncan, "is a full bang up to the hole with the wind blowing in from the back." Duncan does not specify that the full shot is to be made with a cleek nor does he make Ray's stipulation about the kind of lie and the nature of the ground.

Mr. J. Lawrence C. Jenkins, the Scottish international and semi-finalist in last year's Irish championship, replies: "One day, one shot; another day, another shot." He points out that it is difficult to give a straight answer to the question, because "one day you may be playing best the shot you were worst at the previous day."

—Pall Mall Gazette.

To Test Darwin's Theory.

Dr. John B. Watson, director of the psychological laboratory at the Johns Hopkins university, has adopted a unique method of testing the Darwinian theory.

Seven weeks ago a monkey was born at the institution. The parents, who were very intelligent, had been trained carefully by the scientists, and the offspring of such parents is believed to afford an opportunity of determining how near to a human being a monkey can be brought.

The little fellow has not yet been taken from his mother, who fondles and guards him with jealous care. When ready for schooling every effort will be put forth to develop his mind along lines that will tax his mental capacity to assimilate knowledge.

Rejected Ice Cream Suit.

A south side young man, who has a reputation for wearing the sportiest clothes to be obtained, recently decided to give one of his very light suits to the colored houseman. The young man took the suit from his room and went down into the yard where the servant, who is especially black, was working.

"Look here," he said. "I've got a fine suit here which I would like to see you wear."

The colored fellow took one look at the suit and exclaimed:

"Lawsee, boss, I couldn't wear that suit. I would look like a fy in a bottle of milk, and you knows that's a terrible disgusting sight."—Exchange.

Gravel Insinuation.

"Baggs told the boys he was very angry when they put a monkey in the picture with him."

"Yes, and the boys told him they knew it, for anyone could see he was beside himself."

Explaining.

"I know a man whose life is already between two covers, but nobody has ever read it."

"Who is he?"

"The sandwich man."



I AT ONCE RECOGNIZED HIM BY HIS LIKENESS TO EDOUARD

again Claire's turn to sing, and, walking to his table, said:

"Good evening. I am M. Goron, and am anxious to have a chat with you. As it is too noisy here will you come with me to my office, where we can smoke a cigarette?"

He gave a passing nod to Claire, who was in the midst of her song, and we drove together to the Prefecture.

"Do you know," I said, "that your aunt, Mme. Servois, has mysteriously disappeared and that her friends are concerned about her?"

He nodded.

"Do you likewise know that a woman's mangled remains have been found near Barbizon, and that Mme. Meiser firmly believes they are those of your aunt?"

He nodded again.

"Knowing all this," I continued, "how is it that you should have selected this moment to vanish in an inexplicable manner?"

He cleared his throat and said:

"I was compelled to absent myself on an important matter."

"What matter?"

"That's my business. Why do you ask?"

"I will tell you that later. Where did you go?"

"That's also my business."

"Do you know whom your aunt went to see the day she disappeared?"

"Yes, she went to see Mme. Meiser."

"How do you know?"

"I read it in the papers."

"Where were you that day?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because you, too, were at Nogent-sur-Marne, and I thought that you might give me some information about Mme. Servois' movements."

He blew a cloud of smoke and remained silent.

"Does your mistress dye her hair?" I asked Josephine.

"Yes, sir."

"Since when?"

"Only within the last three months."

"Did your mistress take a bag with her the day she went to Nogent-sur-Marne?"

"Yes, sir. The little yellow leather bag she generally takes when she goes there, to carry books and other things."

"I explored every nook and corner, and did not discover a single bottle of hair-dye. And the truth flashed upon me. When a woman—especially one of mature age—starts on a journey, she may forget or leave behind many indispensable things—but her hair dye never. I had not the slightest doubt that Mme. Servois had left Paris for some mysterious reason, and that there was a man in the case. My next step was to discover her whereabouts; and, armed with a list of all the hairdressers in the metropolis, I called every day at a certain number of places, until I came to the shop of M. H., in the Rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs. In reply to my question whether Mme. Servois was one of his clients he shook his head. But I guessed he did not speak the truth and soon frightened him into confessing that he supplied her regularly with hair dye."

"Have you sent her any of late?" I asked.

"He hesitated a second, and burst out:

"I can't help it! I don't see why I should get into trouble over this business. Look here, M. Goron, a young gentleman called and asked for a bottle of my dye. He paid for it, he returned and said that, as he was no hand at making parcels, he begged me to send the stuff to Mme. Servois"

"Do you refer to that little stain?"

\* Paris slang for Montmartre.