TRUTH ABOUT THE CASE

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

Edited by Albert Keyzer

A HOTEL MYSTERY

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floor, they found the body of a young

woman stabbed to the heart. On a

piece of paper pinned to her dress the

following lines were scribbled in pen-

"This woman, a wretched spy in the em-

ploy of the Russian police, has for a long

studying at the Paris universities. Two

girls who recently returned to Russia

were, on that woman's information, ar-

heard of since. There are, we know, oth-

er female sples now carrying on their ne-

farious work in some of the French wa-

tering places, and their turn will soon

"The police are investigating the affair,

which has created a tremendous sensation

There was a moment's silence when

had finished, and then two or three

of the guests remarked that it was a

terrible business. The count remained

silent. He soon after went to bed,

The next morning after breakfast I

sat outside the hotel smoking my

cigarette. The guests were at the

springs or strolling about, while the

countess had gone on one of her usual

peregrinations. Toward two the count

one of his formal nods. I went up to

"Pardon me," I said; "I owe you an

apology for interrupting you some-

what rudely last night; but I took the

diatribe against the Russian authori-

that a political spy was sitting within

"Yes, a spy, in the person of that

good-looking girl, Mlle. Eugenie Arco.

So, now, you will perhaps accept my

"M. Guibert," he laughed, "I don't

know whether to challenge you to

fight or to ask you to do me the

"There is no necessity for either,"

I replied. "I am only too happy to

"How did you know she was a spy?"

"No, only strong suspicion. But we

The head waiter was standing at

"I have not seen Mile. Arco this

"She has gone away," the man re-

The count looked puzzled. We

"I had my doubts about that girl

morning," I called out to him, "I hope

plied. "She left early this morning."

walked a little way down the road,

from the start; she is a bungler, a

novice in the business. Fancy her

suspecting me, a native of Brittany, of

being a Russian Nihilist! Political

spying is dirty work; but it you do it

you must do it well or it becomes dan-

gerous, especially to the spy. And

that is why I tried to knock the fear

into that young creature by reading

"Yes, about those unfortunate girls.

"Reserve your pity for another oc-

"M. Guibert!" he cried, "I compli-

"Well," he laughed, "you would have

"You are very kind. But for every-

After the spy incident the count be-

The countess undoubtedly neglected

Visitors kept pouring in, many of

them members of the so-called "smart

set." I did not like the appearance of

glad my cure was drawing to an end.

Then a remarkable incident occurred.

her excursions with her male and fe-

male followers, the organizer of the

party, as usual, being Rene Soudier.

Bright, witty, excelling in all sports,

Soud'or was adored by the women and

popular with the men, except with the

count. The latter disliked him cor-

dially, and rarely or never spoke to

The party had left after luncheon.

and was not expected back before

o'clock. At three in the afternoon, as

I returned from a walk, I saw the

count walking up and down in front

of the hotel. Something evidently had

gone wrong. The moment he saw me

he gripped my arm and led me to a

"M. Guibert," he began in an ex-

cited tone which he tried hard to con-

trol; "M. Guibert, you proved yourself

very shrewd when you dealt with that

Russian girl. Allow me to apply to

you for advice. My wife's pearl neck-

lace has been stolen. Do you mind

The apartments the count occupied

in the hotel consisted of a drawing-

their two dressing-rooms. Marfa, the

countess' maid, slept at the end of the

secluded spot in the garden.

accompanying me up-stairs?"

The countess had gone on one of

came very friendly and talked freely

body's sake it will be well not to men-

casion, count. I invented that story."

ment you on your perspicacity. May

out that paragraph last night."

I ask what your profession is?"

The count nodded assent.

made a fine detective."

to me on many subjects.

tion this affair."

her husband.

"I am a commission agent."

have rendered you a slight service."

he asked. "Have you any proof?"

shall now have proofs."

honor to lunch with me today."

"A spy!" he gasped.

apology."

the door.

she is not ill."

and then I said:

Poor things!"

among the Russian students here."

and I followed his example.

URRIED meals, taken at im- Delambre, in the Montparnasse quarpossible hours, are apt to ter, where, in a bedroom on the fifth cause dyspepsia. This I found out; and Dr. Thibaut, my medical adviser and friend, fearing I might not obey his injunctions, took the trouble to escort me to a small watering-place in the Dauphine, whence, he assured me, I should

emerge perfectly cured. I did not at all relish the idea of becoming—even for a short time—a fashionable idler. But afterward I had reason to be thankful, for the adventure I met with added a curious chapter to my experiences.

I went to that little place a few weeks after the execution of Eyraud, the murderer of the luckless Gouffe, most sensational crime, which for several months kept the whole European press at fever heat. And, in order to escape interviewers and kodak flends, I decided to travel incognito, entering myself in the hotel books as M. Guilbert; a wise precaution, as I soon discovered.

The most important guests in our hotel where Count M-, a Russian, a fine-looking man of about sixty-five, appeared, and, passing me, gave me and his wife, a pretty woman quite forty years his junior. The countess. a restless young creature, was constantly organizing excursions in the mountains, leaving her husband at home to amuse himself.

Two days after my arrival I noticed | liberty of stopping you from launching a newcomer at our table d'hote, Mile. into what looked very much like a Eugenie Arco, an attractive young woman with dark eyes and jet-black | ties. You were apparently not aware hair. Her hands were small and aristocratic, and her appearance would a yard of you." have been in every way refined but for her ears. These were too large and stood rather far from her head. The girl fascinated, yet at the same time repelled, me.

It had been raining all the morning, and I was in the reading-room glancing at an illustrated paper, when a voice near said.

"Pardon me, monsieur, I see you are a Russian."

It was Mlle. Arco. "No," I replied, "I am not."

"I thought you were," she continued. "because I saw you reading a Russian periodical."

"I was not reading it," I retorted, "I was only looking at the pictures." "Oh, I see!" she explaimed. But the look she gave me said she did not believe me.

I did not care to continue the conversation, and she soon left the room. From that moment, however, I noticed she never ceased to observe me, and many a time when I pretended to be asleep in one of the armchairs in the hall her large black eyes were fastened on me as if they were trying to pierce my thoughts.

With the officials in the hotel Mile. Arco was a persona grata, for, unlike most women, who in money matters are inclined to be niggardly, she tipped the waiters and chambermaids most liberally. The manager of the hotel and his wife had also taken a great fancy to her, and she was always warmly welcomed by them in their sanctum, where she would sit and smoke cigarette after cigarette.

Feeling myself closely watched by her, I returned the compliment, and noticed that she would repair to the office at those hours when the post came in, and look over the clerk's shoulder at the letters he sorted. And then it struck me that no missive ever came addressed to her, although one afternoon, happening to pass her room at the moment the maid opened her door, I saw her deeply engaged in correspondence, with several letters in front of her.

The next morning, when Mile, Arco left the hotel I went out at the back, made quickly for the post office by another road, and hid myself behind the hedge of an empty cottage opposite. saw her enter the post office and leave it a few minutes later. She looked up and down the road, and, nobody being in sight, she took a letter out of her pocket, opened it, and read it eagerly.

"Bah." I said to myself, "you are not clever, my girl. A child could have seen through your game. Now we shall have some fun."

That same evening after dinner rain fell in torrents, and most of the guests were in the drawing-room. A few were him. indulging in a harmless game of cards; two girls were at the piano singing sentimental songs, and Mile. Arco reclined in a rocking-chair, a book in her lap. The count, a very reserved man, with whom I had thus far exchanged only a few words, was talking to a retired naval officer who

had spent some years in Russia. "Yes," I heard the count say, "we want a thorough change. It is a disgraceful state of things. These grand dukes--'

"Talking of Russia," I cut in, "allow me to read to you something that just happened in Paris."

I took a paper from my pocket, and I unfolded it I noticed the count, whom I had interrupted in the middle of his speech, gaze at me with any- room, his and his wife's bedroom, and thing but pleasure.

"Look at that!" he exclaimed, point-

ng to a dressing-bag on the floor, its lock forced open, and many of the things it had contained scattered around.

"The countees," he continueud, kept her jewelry locked in that. The thief or thieves must have sneaked in after she left. What do you advise me to do?"

"I think you had better wait for the countess' return before taking any steps; she will not be long. In the meantime you might question the maid."

But Marfa had obtained her mistress' permission to go for a donkeyride to the monastery a few miles distant. So we waited till she came in. When the count told her of the robbery she looked thunderstruck.

"I swear," she cried, "that when madame went out the bag was safely locked. I did not go into her room after she left."

time past watched young men and girls A loud noise down-stairs announced the cavalcade had returned from their excursion. The countess entered the rested at the frontier, and have not been hotel and her husband went quickly up to her. I strolled down the road leading to the station, when a carriage drove up and a man jumped out, shouting:

> "Goron, Goron! How are you, old chap?"

> It was Dr. Thibaut, "Hold your tongue, you stupid!" I said. "What do you mean by bawling out my name? Have you forgotten that I am M. Guibert? I hope the driver has not heard you."

"That's all right," he rejoined: "he's as deaf as a post. I have taken a is he? Who is he? Can one find week's holiday. I want to spend it that out? I have my reasons for askwith you here, after which we will re- ing you this." turn to Paris together. What do you say to this arrangement?"

"You have come at a good moment," I remarked: "there is plenty of excitement at the hotel;" and I related to him the story of the robbery. His eyes sparkled with delight.

"That will be glorious sport to witness," he laughed.

"For you, perhaps, you heartless

vent straight to his wife's dressing. knock at my door. To my surprise the count entered.

"Pardon my intruding upon you," he sighed. "I am very much annoyed. This police commissary is not making any headway. He clings to the idea that the maid committed the deed, or that she is an accomplice; and he thinks he is on the right trail. M. Guibert, I must discover the culprit, and am willing to offer a reward that may tempt any one to help me in my search. The hotel proprietor suggested me writing to M. Goron, asking him to come to our assistance, as these local detectives seem unable to few moments. clear up the mystery."

"It is useless to write to M. Goron." I replied. "Remember that this is beyond his sphere of action; and that with the work on his hands in Paris you cannot expect him to attend to crimes committed in the provinces." "I dare say you are right," groaned

the old gentleman "besides-He stopped, and moved uneasily in

his chair.

"M. Guibert," he burst out rather suddenly, "I repeat, I am particularly anxious to lay my hands on the robber. Yet, at the same time, I dread disclosures that might-that mightpossibly cause annoyance to the countess. My wife is young, very young, and inexperienced; and only too inclined to give her friendship to people of whom she knows very little. Look at that noisy crowd who follow her on her long rides or drives. Who are they? She made their acquaintance only since we came here. Some of the women of that set are as bad as the men. There is that Soudier always dangling after her. What

"I do not know the man any more than you do, but it will be easy to find out all about him through my Paris friends." "Please, M. Guibert, do this for me.

shall be deeply grateful." "Frankly, do you think of him in

connection with the robbery?" "I suspect that whole fast gang, and feel certain one of them is the thief

committed the deed."

whom she does not want to compromise because---"

"Because she loves him?" "Yes."

"These things do occur." "What about the man with the shaven upper lip? I have not seen Paris." him within the last few days." "No: but I have."

Thibaut gazed at me intently for

clue. What is it?" "My dear Thibaut, you have halfbut not from professional pride. It is in, I foresee a disaster."

"Is it as serious as that?" "It may become so. That is what

want to avoid." "Can I help you?"

"Yes, by not asking me any questions, even when I absent myself, Understand me well, Thibaut, I must remain M. Guibert to the end. Nobedy, including M. Julien, must know I am Goron. An indiscreet word from you would defeat all my plans."

"You can rely on me." "I know I can. When, as I hope, I shall have brought my task to a satisfactory ending you shall know all the details of the case. This much I will tell you. The necklace has mysteriously disappeared; I shall try to have it spirited back in the same mysteri-

ous way." A week after the foregoing conversation a cab drove up at the door of the hotel. Thibaut's and my luggage was hoisted on the top; and we shook hands with some of the guests, including the count, who witnessed our departure for Paris

Half-way to the station we met the countess on her bicycle, some 50 yards shead of her party.

"Bon voyage, M. Guibert!" she shouted, her face beaming with joy.

satred of him and his desire to sadher husband says, I gather she is con- fle him with the robbery rather told vinced that a stranger to the place against the former, and gave rise to ugly presumptions. I am, however, as "I have a theory," said Thibaut, you know, a pretty good reader of that the countess knows the thief, character, and I did not believe the count capable of a villany. There remained the countess, with whom during my stay at the hotel I had not ex-

changed half a dozen words. Do you remember my three days' absence?" "Yes; I guessed you had gone to

"You guessed right. I arrived there in the early morning, and two hours later I knew that the countess' father, a broken-down absinthe-drinker, was "Goron," he cried eagerly, "you've clerk to a money-changer and moneydiscovered something. You have a lender in the Boulevard St. Martin, who was once seriously compromised in a case of stolen Bonds. I took a guessed the truth. Yes, I scent a cab, and slowly drove past the place, mystery, and I wish to clear it up; when I saw our friend with the shaven upper lip emerge from the office, a from a sense of duty, for, unless I step small traveling bag in his hand, and jump on a 'bus. His name, I was told at the hotel, is Ballu. I did not besttate a second. I had seen through the window that the principal's private room at the back was empty, and that in the office were only a young man behind a desk and a girl at a typewriter. I went in and asked for M. S .-- , the countess' father.

"'He has left us,' said the clerk. "Returning to the station, I saw Ballu on the platform, and, unseen by him, we both arrived at the botel at the same time.

"I had already noticed that although Ballu and the countess never exchanged a word when others were present, their eyes often met, and when on the night of my return we sat down at the table d'hote a hardly perceptible sign passed between them, Keeping them both well in sight, I saw Ballu at 9 o'clock stroil toward the end of the garden. He disappeared in the darkness, but I felt sure he had gone to the little summer-house facing the tennis-lawn,

"I soon arrived at the back of the little wooden structure, and felt relieved when I heard some one move inside. Half an hour later there came a light step. It was the counters. whispers, did not last many minutes. Ballu's voice sounded hard, almost threatening, while that of the countess was imploring. Although I could not catch every word they said, I heard quite enough to be able to reconstruct the whole case. The moment to act had arrived.

"The following morning as the countess crossed the hall I walked up to her and said:

"'Please go to the library. I want to speak to you at once.' "She gave me a look of surprise and fear, and entered the room.

"'Madame,' I said, 'to you and you alone I will divulge who I am. I am M. Goron, chief of the Paris detective force. My object is to help you. I know your father has appropriatedor is accused of having done somoney belonging to his employer, M. H- I know you wanted to save him, and, not having the ready cash, you handed to M. H-, through his understudy, M. Ballu, your pearl necklace as security. In order to do this you have probably at this man's suggestion-made it appear you had been robbed. M. H-, being afraid to dispose of the pearls, is now pressing you to redeem them, and for a larger sum than your father owes him. Am I

"The poor lady sat motionless. Her very lips had turned white.

"'Fear nothing,' I continued; 'I am here to save you. But you must promise to follow my instructions implicitly. Will you?"

"'Yes,' she whispered.

"Very well. Can you invent a reason that will satisfy your husband why you should go to Paris, returning the following day?"

"She nodded. "Then leave tomorrow early by the express, having first wired to M. H--- to make an appointment at his office. Go there straight, Tell him you have seen me-letting him, of course, think I am in Paris-and that you have come to me for advice. Explain that you know from me that his attitude toward you places him in a serious position, from which he can extricate himself in one way only. Having agreed to let you refund him the money due to him by your father -always supposing that story to be true—he must at once return you the necklace, on your promise to pay him a fixed sum on account every month. You can manage that, can you not?

"'Yes, M. Goron,' she said, putting her hand on mine, 'I will.' "'Hush! Don't pronounce my name.

"Oh, I shall conceal nothing. But, Should that fellow H- make any although I did not act in an official fuss, you can tell him he will soon hear from me." "She went, and returned the follow-

ing evening. I purposely stood at the door as she passed out of the dining-"It is a strange business, and was room, when she slipped a note into my hand. Here it is:

"H— accepts. Promises to return thing tomorrow by B—. God bless you." "Before we left I had the satisfaction of knowing that Ballu had returned the necklace, and that it was

once more in her possession." "When she threw that rose?"

"Yes."

"And the count? How will his wife explain the reappearance of the neck-"She will manage that. Women have

inventive brains." "And the great Julien?"

"Ah! The great Julien will, till the end of his days, believe it was Marta tion with that case. And it was that



The poor lady sat motionless Her very lips turned white.

man, but not for the count and I hinted at this to M. Julien, but he

Having dressed for dinner, we found the guests in the hall eagerly discussing the affair, trying to extract particulars from the waiters and chambermaids. All at once there was a hush, for the door of the manager's room opened, and out came the count and his wife followed by a stout, redseveral of the newcomers, and I was faced, short man with gray whiskers.

"That's M. Julien, the police commissary," some one said behind me.

"I wonder," whispered Thibaut, "how that M. Julien will set to work?" "So do I. With your permission, however, I shall remain in the background. M. Julien, fortunately, does not know me, but one of his subordinates might; and I do not want to depart from my position of spectator. This is M. Julien's domain. I also see new faces. Look at that close-shaven youth with the flower in his buttonhole. Do you notice anything particu-

lar about him?" "No. I don't."

"Look again." "I see nothing except that he gives me the impression of being a cad." "Watch his mouth."

"Well, he seems to want with his teeth to catch something on his upper | Marfa, and in the meantime he is

"Yes, his moustache. It must have The count is jealous, and would, if he been there quite recently, and he is could, at once clap the handcuffs on not yet accustomed to its absence." "It seems strange."

"This may not be of any importance, but if I were M. Julien I should take note of it."

For two days I heard no news about the robbery, and was wondering how mention her. What does she say?" things were progressing, when I was "I have not exchanged a word with

apparently thinks that well-dressed ladies and gentlemen cannot commit crimes."

The next morning we heard that M Julien was looking for a man, a waiter, discharged from the hotel for dishonesty, who, on the afternoon of the robbery, had been seen loitering near the house. He had since disappeared; and, as he had been on friendly terms with Marfa, M. Julien would certainly have arrested the girl if the countess had not interposed and vouched for her innocence.

In accordance with my promise to the count I had written to Paris, and the reply I received concerning Soudier was:

"Heavily in debt. Loose morals, Raises money wherever he can." When I communicated this to the count his eyes lit up with a cruel fire.

"This confirms my suspicions, M Guibert Remember my words-Soudier is the thief." Thibaut was waiting for me down-

stairs. "Affairs seem at a standstill," he remarked to me.

"Very much so. M. Julien is obstinate. He keeps a close watch on searching for a poor devil of a waiter. the fascinating Soudier. The guests eye one another suspiciously, and so do the hotel officials. What a ghastly mess they are making of this business!"

"And the counters? You don't were called to a house in the Rue passage on the same floor. The count aroused in the morning by a loud her on the matter. But from what

and threw a rose into our carriage. I placed it in my buttonhole and gave a sigh of relief. "I suppose that sigh has something

to do with the case," said my ob-

servant friend. We had the compartment to ourselves, and the train was scarcely out of the station when Thibaut called

"And now please tell me all that occurred. You, too, must be anxious to unbosom yourself," he added with a mischievous smile.

capacity, the story is of a delicate nature and I must request you not to divulge it." "I give you my word."

even deeper than I conjectured. The first thing that struck me as odd. when the count took me to his wife's dressing-room, was that forced lock of the dressing-bag; I wondered who the lunatic thief could be who lost precious time over that lock, when, with an ordinary penknife, he could have cut the leather in less than a minute.

"You will, however, understand my difficulty, not having had charge of the case, and not having been-like lace?" the police commissary-able to investigate closely and question those likely to throw light upon the matter. I had to be guided partly by reasoning. partly by intuition; and the inferences drew were that the necklace had not who stole and returned the pearle: been stolen, and that either the count while the count will think the same or the countess-possibly both-had thing of Soudier. But Julien cannot reasons for spreading that story of the | now arrest innocent people in connecrobbery.

"I assure you I never for an instant | my dear Thibaut, I wanted to avoid." suspected Soudier; and the count's