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"Oho!" said M. Dudouis. "My congratulations, Ganimard!"

"I've something for you, Chief, that's even better than that!"

M. Dudouis gave a start.

"Do you really mean to say—"

"That Lupin is here, in disguise. He's the manservant."

This time, M. Dudouis did not utter a word nor make a gesture. The audacity of the thing confounded him.

Ganimard chuckled: "Edith Swan-Neck might have blundered. The master's presence was necessary; and he had the nerve to return. For three weeks, he has been beside me during my inquiry, calmly following the progress made."

"Did you recognize him?"

"One does n't recognize him. He has a knack of making-up his face and altering the proportions of his body, so as to prevent any one from knowing him. But, this evening, I heard Sonia call the manservant, 'Dearie.' A light flashed in upon me."

M. Dudouis seemed flustered, in his turn, by the presence of the enemy, so often pursued and always so intangible:

"We've got him, this time," he said, between his teeth. "Where are he and the women?"

"Sonia and the other are on the second floor; Lupin is on the third."

M. Dudouis suddenly became anxious.

"Why, it was through the windows of one of those floors that the tapestries were passed when they disappeared!"

"Of course; but I have taken my precautions. The moment you arrived, I sent four of our men to keep watch under the windows in the Rue Dufresnoy. They have strict instructions to shoot, if any one tries to climb down. Blank cartridges for the first shot, ball cartridges for the next."

"Good! You have thought of everything. We'll wait here; and, immediately after sunrise . . ."

"Wait, Chief! Stand on ceremony with that rascal! Both about rules and regulations, legal hours and all that rot? And suppose he's not quite so polite to us, and gives us the slip meanwhile? Suppose he plays us one of his Lupin tricks? No, no, we must act at once."

And Ganimard, all a-quiver with indignant impatience, went out, walked across the garden and presently returned with six men.

This was not effected without a certain amount of noise, which was bound to be heard by the inhabitants of the house. M. Dudouis felt that his hand was forced.

"Come on, then," he said.

The thing did not take long. The eight of them, revolvers in hand, went up the stairs without overmuch precaution, eager to surprise Lupin before he had time to organize his defenses.

"Open!" roared Ganimard, rushing at the door of Mme. Sparminto's bedroom. A policeman smashed in the door with his shoulder.

There was no one in the room; and no one in the old woman's bedroom.

"They're upstairs!" shouted Ganimard. "They've gone up to Lupin in his attic. Be careful, now!"

All the eight ran up the third flight of stairs. To his great astonishment, Ganimard found the door of the attic open and the attic empty. The other rooms on the floor were deserted, also.

"Curse them!" he roared. "What's become of them?"

But the Chief called him. M. Dudouis, who had gone down again to the second floor, noticed that one of the windows was not latched.

"There," he said, to Ganimard, "that's the road they took, the road of the tapestries. I told you as much."

"But our men would have fired on them," protested Ganimard, grinding his teeth with rage. "The street's guarded."

"They must have gone while you were waiting for me in the garden."

"But why? Why? There was no reason why they should go today rather than tomorrow, or the next day, or next week, for that matter, when they had pocketed all the insurance-money!"

Nevertheless, there was a reason; and Ganimard knew it when he saw on the table a letter addressed to himself. The letter was worded in the style of the



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