

THE TEETH OF THE TIGER

BY MAURICE LEBLANC

TRANSLATED BY ALEXANDER TEIXEIRA DE MATTOS

CHAPTER FOUR. (Continued.)

"I don't know. They have been there a long time."
"Mazeroux," said M. Desmaliens, "try them on that door."
Mazeroux did so. The door opened.
"Yes," said Mme. Fauville. "I remember now, my husband gave them to me. They were duplicates of his own keys."
The words were uttered in the most natural tone and as though the speaker did not even suspect the terrible charge that was forming against her.
And nothing was more agonizing than this tranquility. Was it a sign of absolute innocence, or the infernal craft of a criminal whom nothing is able to stir? Did she realize nothing of the tragedy which was taking place and of which she was the unconscious heroine? Or did she guess the terrible accusation which was gradually closing in upon her on every side and which threatened her with the most awful danger? But, in that case, how could she have been guilty of the extraordinary blunder of keeping those two keys?
A series of questions suggested itself to the minds of all those present. The prefect of police put them as follows:
"You were out, madame, were you not, when the murders were committed?"
"Yes."
"You were at the opera?"
"Yes; and I went on to a party at the house of one of my friends, Mme. d'Ersingen."
"Did your chauffeur drive you?"
"To the opera, yes. But I sent him back to his garage; and he came to fetch me at the party."
"I see," said M. Desmaliens. "But how did you go from the opera to Mme. d'Ersingen's?"
For the first time Mme. Fauville seemed to understand that she was the victim of a regular cross examination; and her look and attitude betrayed a certain uneasiness. She replied:
"I took a motor cab."
"In the street?"
"On the Place de l'Opera."
"At 12 o'clock, therefore?"
"No, at 11:30; I left before the opera was over."
"You were in a hurry to get to your friend's?"
"Yes . . . or rather—" . . .
She stopped; her cheeks were scarlet; her lips and chin trembled; and she asked:
"Why do you ask me all these questions?"
"They are necessary, madame. They may throw a light on what we want to know. I beg you, therefore, to answer them. At what time did you reach your friend's house?"
"I hardly know. I did not notice the time."
"Did you go straight there?"
"Almost."
"How do you mean, almost?"
"I had a little headache and told the driver to go up the Champs Elysees and the Avenue du Bois—very slowly—and then down the Champs Elysees again."
She was becoming more and more embarrassed. Her voice grew indistinct. She lowered her head and was silent.
Certainly her silence contained no confession, and there was nothing entitling any one to believe that her dejection was other than a consequence of her grief. But yet she seemed so weary as to give the impression that, feeling herself lost, she was giving up the fight. And it was almost a feeling of pity that was entertained for this woman against whom all the circumstances seemed to be conspiring, and who defended herself so badly that her cross examiner hesitated to press her yet further.
M. Desmaliens, in fact, wore an irresolute air, as if the victory had been too easy, and as if he had some scruple about pursuing it.
Mechanically he observed Perenna, who passed him a slip of paper, saying:
"Mme. d'Ersingen's telephone number."
M. Desmaliens murmured:
"Yes, true, they may know—"
And, taking down the receiver, he asked for number 325.04. He

was connected at once and continued:
"Who is that speaking? . . . The butler? Ah! Is Mme. d'Ersingen at home? . . . No? . . . Or monsieur? . . . Not he, either? . . . Never mind, you can tell me what I want to know. I am M. Desmaliens, the prefect of police, and I need certain information. At what time did Mme. Fauville come last night? . . . What do you say? . . . Are you sure? . . . At 2 o'clock in the morning? . . . Not before? . . . And she went away? . . . In 10 minutes' time? . . . Good. . . . But you're certain you are not mistaken about the time when she arrived? I must know this positively: it is most important. . . . You say it was 2 o'clock in the morning? Two o'clock in the morning? . . . Very well. . . . Thank you."
When M. Desmaliens turned round, he saw Mme. Fauville standing beside him and looking at him with an expression of mad anguish. And one and the same idea occurred to the mind of all the onlookers. They were in the presence either of an absolutely innocent woman or else of an exceptional actress whose face lent itself to the most perfect simulation of innocence.
"What do you want?" she stammered. "What does this mean? Explain yourself!"
Then M. Desmaliens asked simply:
"What were you doing last night between 11:30 in the evening and 2 o'clock in the morning?"
It was a terrifying question at the stage which the examination had reached, a fatal question implying:
"If you cannot give us an exact and strict account of the way in which you employed your time while the crime was being committed, we have the right to conclude that you were not alien to the murder of your husband and stepson."
She understood it in this sense and staggered on her feet, moaning:
"It's horrible! . . . horrible!"
The prefect repeated:
"What were you doing? The question must be quite easy to answer."
"Oh," she cried, in the same piteous tone, "how can you believe! . . . Oh, no, no, it's not possible! How can you believe!"
"I believe nothing yet," he said. "Besides, you can establish the truth with a single word."
It seemed, from the movement of her lips and the sudden gesture of resolution that shook her frame, as though she were about to speak that word. But all at once she appeared stupefied and dumfounded, pronounced a few unintelligible syllables, and fell huddled into a chair, sobbing convulsively and uttering cries of despair.
It was tantamount to a confession. At the very least, it was a confession of her inability to supply the plausible explanation which would have put an end to the disquisition.
The prefect of police moved away from her and spoke in a low voice to the examining magistrate and the public prosecutor. Perenna and Sergeant Mazeroux were left alone together, side by side.
Mazeroux whispered:
"What did I tell you? I know you would find out! Oh, what a man you are! The way you managed!"
He was beaming at the thought that the chief was clear of the matter and that he had no more crows to pluck with his, Mazeroux's, superiors, whom he revered almost as much as he did the chief. Everybody was now agreed; they were "friends all round," and Mazeroux was choking with delight.
"They'll lock her up, eh?"
"No," said Perenna. "There's not enough 'hold' on her for them to issue a warrant."
"What!" growled Mazeroux indignantly. "Not enough hold? I hope, in any case, that you won't let her go. She made no bones, you know, about attacking you! Come, chief, polish her off, a she devil like that!"
Don Luis remained pensive. He

was thinking of the unheard of coincidences, the accumulation of facts that bore down on Mme. Fauville from every side. And the decisive proof which would join all these different facts together and give to the accusation the grounds which it still lacked was one which Perenna was able to supply. This was the marks of the teeth in the apple hidden among the shrubs in the garden. To the police these would be as good as any fingerprint, all the more as they could compare the marks with those on the cake of chocolate.
Nevertheless, he hesitated; and, concentrating his anxious attention, he watched, with mingled feelings of pity and repulsion, that woman who, to all seeming, had killed her husband and her husband's son. Was he to give her the finishing stroke? Had he the right to play the part of judge? And supposing he were wrong?
Meantime, M. Desmaliens had walked up to him and, while pretending to speak to Mazeroux, was really asking Perenna:
"What do you think of it?"
Mazeroux shook his head. Perenna replied:
"I think, Monsieur le Prefet, that, if this woman is guilty, she is defending herself, for all her cleverness, with inconceivable lack of skill."
"Meaning—?"
"Meaning that she was doubtless only a tool in the hands of an accomplice."
"An accomplice?"
"Remember, Monsieur le Prefet, her husband's exclamation in your office yesterday: 'Oh, the scoundrels! the scoundrels!' There is, therefore, at least one accomplice, who perhaps is the same as the man who was present, as Sergeant Mazeroux must have told you, in the Cafe du Pont-Neuf when Inspector Verot was last there: a man with a reddish brown beard, carrying an ebony walking stick with a silver handle. So that—"
"So that," said M. Desmaliens, completing the sentence, "by arresting Mme. Fauville today, merely on suspicion, we have a chance of laying our hands on the accomplice."
Perenna did not reply. The prefect continued, thoughtfully:
"Arrest her . . . arrest her . . . We should need a proof for that. . . . Did you receive no clue?"
"None at all, Monsieur le Prefet. True, my search was only summary."
"But ours was most minute. We have been through every corner of the room."
"And the garden, Monsieur le Prefet?"
"The garden also."
"With the same care?"
"Perhaps not. . . . But I think—"
"I think, on the contrary, Monsieur le Prefet, that, as the murderers passed through the garden in coming and going, there might be a chance—"
"Mazeroux," said M. Desmaliens, "go outside and make a more thorough inspection."
The sergeant went out. Perenna, who was once more standing at one side, heard the prefect of police repeating to the examining magistrate:
"Ah, if we only had a proof, just one! The woman is evidently guilty. The presumption against her is too great! . . . And then there are Cosmo Mornington's millions. . . . But, on the other hand, look at her . . . look at all the honesty in that pretty face of hers, look at all the sincerity of her grief."
She was still crying, with fitful sobs and starts of indignant protest that made her clench her fists. At one moment she took her ear soaked handkerchief, bit it with her teeth and tore it, after the manner of certain actresses.
Perenna saw those beautiful white teeth, a little wide, moist and gleaming, rending the dainty cambric. And he thought of the marks of teeth on the apple. And he was seized with an extreme longing to know the truth. Was it the same pair of jaws that had left its impress in the pulp of the fruit?
Mazeroux returned. M. Desmaliens moved briskly toward the sergeant, who showed him the apple which he had found under the ivy. And Perenna at once realized the supreme importance which the prefect of police attached to Mazeroux's explanations and to his unexpected discovery.
A conversation of some length took place between the magistrates and ended in the decision which Don Luis foresaw. M. Desmaliens walked across the room to Mme. Fauville. It was the catastrophe. He reflected for a second on the manner in which he should open this final contest, and then he asked:
"Are you still unable, madame, to tell us now you employed your time last night?"
She made an effort and whispered:
"Yes, yes. . . . I took a taxi and drove about. . . . I also walked a little—"
"That is a fact which we can easily verify when we have found the driver of the taxi. Meanwhile, there is an opportunity of removing the somewhat . . . grievous impression which your silence has left on our minds."
"I am quite ready—"
"It is this: the person or one of the persons who took part in the crime appears to have bitten into an apple which was afterward thrown away in the garden and which has just been found. To put an end to any suppositions concerning yourself, we should like you to perform the same action."
"Oh, certainly!" she cried, eagerly. "If this is all you need to convince you—"
She took one of the three apples which Desmaliens handed her from the dish and lifted it to her mouth.
It was a decisive act. If the two marks resembled each other, the proof existed, assured and undeniable.
Before completing her movement, she stopped short, as though seized with a sudden fear. . . . Fear of what? Fear of the monstrous chance that might be her undoing? Or fear rather of the dread weapon which she was about to deliver against herself? In any case nothing accused her with greater directness than this last hesitation, which was incomprehensible, if she was innocent, but clear as day if she was guilty!
"What are you afraid of, madame?" asked M. Desmaliens.
"Nothing, nothing," she said, shuddering. "I don't know. . . . I am afraid of everything. . . . It is all so horrible—"
"But, madame, I assure you that what we are asking of you has no sort of importance and, I am persuaded, can only have a fortunate result for you. If you don't mind, therefore—"
She raised her hand higher and yet higher, with a slowness that betrayed her uneasiness. And really, in the fashion in which things were happening, the scene was marked by a certain solemnity and tragedy that wrung every heart.
"And, if I refuse?" she asked, suddenly.
"You are absolutely entitled to refuse," said the prefect of police. "But is it worth while, madame? I am sure that your counsel would be the first to advise you—"
"My counsel?" she stammered, understanding the formidable meaning conveyed by that reply.
And, suddenly, with a fierce resolve and the almost ferocious air that contorts the face when great dangers threaten, she made the movement which they were pressing her to make. She opened her mouth. They saw the gleam of the white teeth. At one bite, the white teeth dug into the fruit.
"There you are, monsieur," she said.
M. Desmaliens turned to the examining magistrate.
"Have you the apple found in the garden?"
"Here, Monsieur le Prefet."
M. Desmaliens put the two apples side by side.
And those who crowded round him, anxiously looking on, all uttered one exclamation.
The two marks of teeth were identical!
Identical! Certainly, before declaring the identity of every detail, the absolute analogy of the marks of each tooth, they must wait for the results of the expert's report. But there was one thing which there was no mistaking and that was the complete similarity of the two curves.
In either fruit the rounded arch was bent according to the same inflection. The two semicircles could have fitted one into the other, both very narrow, both a little long shaped and oval and of a restricted radius which was the very character of the jaw.
The men did not speak a word. M. Desmaliens raised his head. Mme. Fauville did not move, stood livid and mad with terror. But all the sentiments of terror, stupor and indignation that she might simulate with her mobile face and her immense gifts as an actress did not prevail against the compelling proof that presented itself to every eye.
The two imprints were identical! The same teeth had bitten into both apples!
"Madame—" the prefect of police began.
"No, no," she cried, seized with a fit of fury, "no, it's not true. . . . This is all just a nightmare. . . . No, you are never going to arrest me! I in prison! Why, it's horrible! . . . What have I done? Oh, I swear that you are mistaken—"
(Continued Next Week.)

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To The American People

There is no foundation for the alleged violations of law attributed to our Company by agents of the Federal Trade Commission and I want to say emphatically that Swift & Company is not a party to any conspiracy to defraud the Government. Nor has Swift & Company been guilty of improperly storing foods or of making false entries or reports.

Conferences of packers, where prices have been discussed, have been held at the urgent request and in the presence of representatives of either the Food Administration or the Council of National Defense. And yet the packers have been accused of committing a felony by acting in collusion on Government bids!

We have done our best, with other packers, large and small, to comply with the directions of the United States Food Administration in all particulars, including the furnishing of food supplies for the U.S. Army and Navy and the Allies, now being handled through the Food Administration.

We will continue to do our utmost, under Government direction, to increase our production and assist the Food Administration. We consider that the opportunity to co-operate whole-heartedly and to our fullest powers with this branch of the Government is our plain and most pressing duty.

The Trade Commission Attorney has, by false inference and misplaced emphasis, given to disconnected portions of the correspondence taken from our private files and read into the Record, a false and sinister meaning with the plain purpose of creating antagonistic public opinion.

The services of the packers of the United States are most urgently needed, and I regret exceedingly that we should at this time have to spend our efforts in defending ourselves against unfounded, unproved, and unfair assertions such as are being daily made public.

L. J. Swift, President

Swift & Company, U.S.A.

Equal to the Emergency.
Mrs. Flatbush—I met Mrs. Gabb at the funeral today.
Mr. Flatbush—Oh, that talkative woman?
"Yes; and she kept talking all the time, and I was afraid she would disturb the service."
"Why didn't you tell her to keep still?"
"I did, but she said it wasn't her funeral."
Little fleas have smaller fleas to bite them. Don't imagine you have all the trouble there is.

Those Technical Motor Terms.
"Charley is simply wonderful," exclaimed young Mrs. Torkins. "I never dreamed that anyone could run a motorcar the way he can!"
"What has happened?"
"We took a ride yesterday and went along beautifully in spite of the fact that he had forgotten some of the machinery."
"Running without machinery?"
"Yes. We had gone at least eleven miles before Charley discovered that his engine was missing!"

Between Girls.
Betty Wilde—Jack declares he'll go crazy if I don't marry him.
Her Friend—Ah! Then there's no hope for him either way.

Win the War by Preparing the Land Sowing the Seed and Producing Bigger Crops

Work in Joint Effort the Soil of the United States and Canada
CO-OPERATIVE FARMING IN MAN POWER NECESSARY
TO WIN THE BATTLE FOR LIBERTY

The Food Controllers of the United States and Canada are asking for greater food production. Scarcely 100,000,000 bushels of wheat are available to be sent to the allies overseas before the crop harvest. Upon the efforts of the United States and Canada rests the burden of supply.

Every Available Tillable Acre Must Contribute; Every Available Farmer and Farm Hand Must Assist

Western Canada has an enormous acreage to be seeded, but man power is short, and an appeal to the United States allies is for more men for seedling operation.

Canada's Wheat Production Last Year was 225,000,000 Bushels; the Demand From Canada Alone for 1918 is 400,000,000 Bushels

To secure this she must have assistance. She has the land but needs the men. The Government of the United States wants every man who can effectively help, to do farm work this year. It wants the land in the United States developed first of course; but it also wants to help Canada. Whenever we find a man we can spare to Canada's fields after ours are supplied, we want to direct him there.

Apply to our Employment Service, and we will tell you where you can best serve the combined interests.

Western Canada's help will be required not later than April 5th. Wages to competent help, \$50.00 a month and up, board and lodging.

Those who respond to this appeal will get a warm welcome, good wages, good board and find comfortable homes. They will get a rate of one cent a mile from Canadian boundary points to destination and return.

For particulars as to routes and places where employment may be had apply to:

**U. S. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
DES MOINES, IOWA**