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"What became of Plung Pete?" asked the visitor at Crimson Gulch.
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"That he was too old to fight."
"He was. But he was such a fighter that nobody dast to tell him so."

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THE TEETH OF THE TIGER

BY
MAURICE LEBLANC

TRANSLATED BY
ALEXANDER TEIXEIRA DE MATTOS

CHAPTER FIFTEEN. (Continued.)

"You know it as well as I do. Confess! It's possible that, during the last ten days, you've brought yourself, for love of that woman, to look upon her as innocent in spite of the overwhelming proofs against her. But today the truth hits you in the eye. I feel it, I'm sure of it. Isn't it so, Chief? I'm right, am I not? You see it for yourself?"

This time Don Luis did not protest. With a drawn face and set eyes he watched the motor bus, which at that moment was standing still at the corner of the Boulevard Haussmann.

"Stop!" he shouted to the driver.

The girl alighted. It was easy to recognize Florence Levasseur under her nurse's uniform. She cast round her eyes as if to make sure that she was not being followed, and then took a cab and drove down the boulevard and the Rue de la Pepiniere, to the Gare Saint-Lagare.

Don Luis saw her from a distance climbing the steps that run up from the Cour de Rome; and, on following her, caught sight of her again at the ticket office at the end of the waiting hall.

"Quick, Mazeroux!" he said. "Get out your detective card and ask the clerk what ticket she's taken. Run, before another passenger comes."

Mazeroux hurried and questioned the ticket clerk and returned:

"Second class for Rouen."

"Take one for yourself."

Mazeroux did so. They found that there was an express due to start in a minute. When they reached the platform Florence was stepping into a compartment in the middle of the train.

The engine whistled.

"Get in," said Don Luis, hiding himself as best he could. "Telegraph to me from Rouen; and I'll join you this evening. Above all, keep your eyes on her. Don't let her slip between your fingers. She's very clever, you know."

"But why don't you come yourself, Chief? It would be much better—"

"Out of the question. The train doesn't stop before Rouen; and I couldn't be back till this evening. The meeting at the Perfect's at five o'clock."

"And you insist on going?"

"More than ever. There, jump in!"

He pushed him into one of the end carriages. The train started and soon disappeared in the tunnel.

Then Don Luis flung himself on a bench in a waiting room and remained there for two hours, pretending to read the newspapers. But his eyes wandered and his mind was haunted by the agonizing question that once more forced itself upon him: was Florence guilty or not?

It was five o'clock when Major Comte d'Astrignac, Maitre Lepertuis, and the secretary of the American Embassy were shown into M. Desmalions's office. At the same moment some one entered the messengers' room and landed in his card.

The messenger on duty glanced at the pasteboard, turned his head quickly toward a group of men talking in a corner, and then asked the newcomer:

"Have you an appointment, sir?"

"It's not necessary. Just say that I'm here: Don Luis Perenna."

A kind of electric shock ran through the little group in the corner; and one of the persons forming it came forward. It was Weber, the deputy chief detective.

The two men looked each other in the eyes. Don Luis smiled amiably. Weber was livid; he shook in every limb and was plainly striving to contain himself.

Near him stood a couple of journalists and four detectives.

"By Jove! the beggars are there for me!" thought Don Luis. "But their confusion shows that they did not believe that I should have the cheek to come. Are they going to arrest me?"

Weber did not move, but in the

end his face expressed a certain satisfaction as though he were saying:

"I've got you this time, my fine fellow, and you shan't escape me."

The office messenger returned and, without a word, led the way for Don Luis. Perenna passed in front of Weber with the politest of bows, bestowed a friendly little nod on the detectives, and entered.

The Comte d'Astrignac hurried up to him at once, with hands outstretched, thus showing that all the tittle-tattle in no way affected the esteem in which he continued to hold Private Perenna of the Foreign Legion. But the Perfect of Police maintained an attitude of reserve which was very significant. He went on turning over the papers which he was examining and conversed in a low voice with the solicitor and the American Secretary of Embassy.

Don Luis thought to himself: "My dear Lupin, there's some one going to leave this room with the bracelets on his wrists." If it's not the real culprit, it'll be you, my poor old chap."

And he remembered the early part of the case, when he was in the workroom at Fauville's house before the magistrates, and had either to deliver the criminal to justice or to incur the penalty of immediate arrest. In the same way, from the start to the finish of the struggle, he had been obliged, while fighting the invisible enemy, to expose himself to the attacks of the law with no means of defending himself except by indispensable victories.

Harassed by constant onslaughts, never out of danger, he had successively hurried to their deaths Marie, Fauville and Gaston Sauverand, two innocent people sacrificed to the cruel laws of war. Was he at last about to fight the real enemy, or would he himself succumb at the decisive moment?

He rubbed his hands with such a cheerful gesture that M. Desmalions could not help looking at him. Don Luis wore the radiant air of a man who is experiencing a pure joy and who is preparing to taste others even greater.

The Perfect of Police remained silent for a moment, as though asking himself what that devil of a fellow could be so pleased with; then he fumbled through his papers once more and, in the end, said:

"We have met again, gentlemen, as we did two months ago, to come to a definite conclusion about the Mornington inheritance. Senor Caceres, the attache of the Peruvian legation, will not be here. I have received a telegram from Italy to tell me that Senor Caceres is seriously ill. However, his presence was not indispensable. There is no one lacking, therefore—except those, alas, whose claims this meeting would gladly have sanctioned, that is to say, Cosmo Mornington's heirs."

"There is one other person absent, Monsieur le Prefet."

M. Desmalions looked up. The speaker was Don Luis. The Prefet hesitated and then decided to ask him to explain.

"Whom do you mean? What person?"

"The murderer of the Mornington heirs."

This time again Don Luis compelled attention and, in spite of the resistance which he encountered, obliged the others to take notice of his presence and to yield to his ascendancy. Whatever happened, they had to listen to him. Whatever happened, they had to discuss with him things which seemed incredible, but which were possible because he put them into words.

"Monsieur le Prefet," he asked, "will you allow me to set forth the facts of the matter as it now stands? They will form a natural sequel and conclusion of the interview which we had after the explosion on the Boulevard Suchet."

M. Desmalions's silence gave Don Luis leave to speak. He at once continued:

"It will not take long, Mon-

sieur le Prefet. It will not take long for two reasons: first, because M. Fauville's confessions remain at our disposal and we know definitely the monstrous part which he played; and, secondly, because, after all, the truth, however complicated it may seem, is really very simple.

"It all lies in the objection which you, Monsieur le Prefet, made to me on leaving the wrecked house on the Boulevard Suchet: 'How is it,' you asked, 'that the Mornington inheritance is not mentioned in Hippolyte Fauville's confession?' It all lies in that, Monsieur le Prefet. Hippolyte Fauville did not say a word about the inheritance; and the reason evidently is that he did not know of it.

"And the reason why Gaston Sauverand was able to tell me his whole sensational story without making the least allusion to the inheritance was that the inheritance played no sort of part in Gaston Sauverand's story. He, too, knew nothing of it before those events, any more than Marie Fauville did, or Florence Levasseur. There is no denying the fact: Hippolyte Fauville was guided by revenge and by revenge alone. If not, why should he have acted as he did, seeing that Cosmo Mornington's millions reverted to him by the fullest of rights? Besides, if he had wished to enjoy those millions, he would not have begun by killing himself.

"One thing, therefore, is certain: the inheritance in no way affected Hippolyte Fauville's resolves or actions. And, nevertheless, one after the other, with inflexible regularity, as if they had been struck down in the very order called for by the terms of the Mornington inheritance, they all disappeared: Cosmo Mornington, then Hippolyte Fauville, then Edmond Fauville, then Marie Fauville, then Gaston Sauverand. First, the possessor of the fortune; next, all those whom he had appointed his legatees; and, I repeat, in the very order in which the will enabled them to lay claim to the fortune!

"Is it not strange?" asked Perenna, "and are we not bound to suppose that there was a controlling mind at the back of it all? Are we not bound to admit that the formidable contest was influenced by that inheritance, and that, above the hatred and jealousy of the loathsome Fauville, there loomed a being endowed with even more tremendous energy, pursuing a tangible aim and driving to their deaths, one by one, like so many numbered victims, all the unconscious actors in the tragedy of which he tied and of which he is now untying the threads?"

Don Luis leaned forward and continued earnestly:

"Monsieur le Prefet, the public instinct so thoroughly agrees with me, a section of the police, with M. Weber, the deputy chief at his head, argues in a manner so exactly identical with my own, that the existence of that being is at once confirmed in every mind. There had to be some one to act as the controlling brain, to provide the will and the energy. That some one was myself. After all, why not? Did not I possess the condition which was indispensable to make any one interested in the murders? Was I not Cosmo Mornington's heir?"

"I will not defend myself. It may be that outside interference, it may be that circumstances, will oblige you, Monsieur le Prefet, to take unjustifiable measures against me; but I will not insult you by believing for one second that you can imagine the man whose acts you have been able to judge for the last two months capable of such crimes. And yet the public instinct is right in accusing me.

"Apart from Hippolyte Fauville, there is necessarily a criminal; and that criminal is necessarily Cosmo Mornington's heir. As I am not the man, another heir of Cosmo Mornington exists. It is he whom I accuse, Monsieur le Prefet.

"There is something more than a dead man's will in the wicked business that is being enacted before us. We thought for a time that there was only that; but there is something more. I have not been fighting a dead man all the time; more than once I have felt the very breath of life strike against my face. More than once I have felt the teeth of the tiger seeking to tear me.

"The dead man did much, but he did not do everything. And even then, was he alone in doing what he did? Was the being of whom I speak merely one who executed his orders? Or was he also the accomplice who helped him in his scheme? I do not know. But he certainly contin-

ued a work which he perhaps began by inspiring and which, in any case, he turned to his own profit, resolutely completed and carried out to the very end. And he did so because he knew of Cosmo Mornington's will. It is he whom I accuse, Monsieur le Prefet.

"I accuse him at the very least of that part of the crimes and felonies which cannot be attributed to Hippolyte Fauville. I accuse him of breaking open the drawer of the desk in which Maitre Lepertuis, Cosmo Mornington's solicitor, had put his client's will. I accuse him of entering Cosmo Mornington's room and substituting a phial containing a toxic fluid for one of the phials of glycerophosphate which Cosmo Mornington used for his hypodermic injections. I accuse him of playing the part of a doctor who came to certify Cosmo Mornington's death and of delivering a false certificate. I accuse him of supplying Hippolyte Fauville with the poison which killed successively Inspector Verot, Edmond Fauville, and Hippolyte Fauville himself. I accuse him of arming and turning against me the hand of Gaston Sauverand, who, acting under his advice and instructions, tried three times to take my life and ended by causing the death of my chauffeur. I accuse him of profiting by the relations which Gaston Sauverand had established with the infirmarium in order to communicate with Marie Fauville, and of arranging for Marie Fauville to receive the hypodermic syringe and the phial of poison with which the poor woman was able to carry out her plans of suicide."

Perenna paused to note the effect of these charges. Then he went on:

"I accuse him of conveying to Gaston Sauverand, by some unknown means, the newspaper cuttings about Marie Fauville's death and, at the same time, foreseeing the inevitable results of his act. To sum up, therefore, without mentioning his share in the other crimes—the death of Inspector Verot, the death of my chauffeur—I accuse him of killing Cosmo Mornington, Edmond Fauville, Hippolyte Fauville, Marie Fauville, and Gaston Sauverand; in plain words, of killing all those who stood between the millions and himself. These last words, Monsieur le Prefet, will tell you clearly what I have in my mind.

"When a man does away with five of his fellow creatures in order to secure a certain number of millions, it means that he is convinced that this proceeding will positively and mathematically insure his entering into possession of the millions. In short, when a man does away with a millionaire and his four successive heirs, it means that he himself is the millionaire's fifth heir. The man will be here in a moment."

"What!"

It was a spontaneous exclamation on the part of the Prefet of Police, who was forgetting the whole of Don Luis Perenna's powerful and closely reasoned argument, and thinking only of the stupefying apparition which Don Luis announced. Don Luis replied:

"Monsieur le Prefet, his visit is the logical outcome of my accusations. Remember that Cosmo Mornington's will explicitly states that no heir's claim will be valid unless he is present at today's meeting.

"And suppose he does not come?" asked the Prefet, thus showing that Don Luis' conviction had gradually got the better of his doubts.

"He will come, Monsieur le Prefet. If not, there would have been no sense in all this business. Limited to the crimes and other actions of Hippolyte Fauville, it could be looked upon as the preposterous work of a madman. Continued to the details of Marie Fauville and Gaston Sauverand, it demands, as its inevitable outcome, the appearance of a person who, as the last descendant of the Roussels of Saint-Etienne and consequently as Cosmo Mornington's absolute heir, taking precedence of myself, will come to claim the hundred millions which he has won by means of his incredible audacity."

"And suppose he does not come?" M. Desmalions once more exclaimed, in a more vehement tone.

(Continued Next Week.)

Major-General Davidson, who was elected to parliament recently, left general headquarters in France by airplane, motored from his landing place to Westminster, took the oath and sat in the house of commons a while. Then he went back as he had come. He was anxious to take his seat before recess, could get only a few hours off, and there was no other way to go.