CASE 113

... By ...

Emile Gaboriau

CHAPTER I.

IN the Paris evening papers of Tuesday, Feb. 28, 1866, the following announcement appeared:

"A great robbery, committed against one of our most honorable bankers, M. Andre Fauvel, caused intense excitement this morning throughout the neighborhood of the Rue de Provence. The robbers with extraordinary skill and boldness succeeded in making an entrance to the offices, in forcing the lock of a safe that has heretofore been considered impregnable and in getting away with the enormous sum of 350,000 francs in bank notes. The police, immediately informed of the robbery, displayed their accustomed zeal, and their investigations have been crowned with success. Already, it is said, one P. B., a clerk in the bank, has been arrested, and there is every reason to hope that his accomplices will be soon overtaken by the hand of justice."

But this time the newspapers were inaccurate in their information. The sum of 350,000 francs certainly had been stolen from M. Andre Fauvel's bank, but not in the manner described. The following are the facts as they were related with scrupulous exactness at the preliminary examination:

The banking house of Andre Fauvel, 87 Rue de Provence, is an important establishment and, owing to its large force of clerks, presents very much the appearance of a government department. On the ground floor are the offices, with windows on the street, protected by strong iron bars, sufficiently large and close together to discourage all burglarious attempts. M. Fauvel's private office is on the first floor over the offices and leads into his private apartments. This private office communicates directly with the bank by means of a narrow staircase, which opens into the room occupied by the head cashier. This room, which in the bank goes by the name of the "cashier's office," is proof against all attacks, no matter how skillfully planned. Fastened in the wall by enormous iron clamps is a safe, a formidable and fantastic piece of furniture, calculated to fill with envy the poor devil who easily carries his fortune in a pocketbook.

The safe is opened by a curious little key. But this is the least important part of the mechanism. Five movable steel buttons, upon which are engraved all the letters of the alphabet, constitute the real power of this ingenious piece of furniture. Before inserting the key into the lock the letters on the buttons must be in the exact position in which they were placed when the safe was locked. In M. Fauvel's bank, as everywhere, the safe was always closed with a word which was changed from time to time. This word was known only to the head of the bank and the cashier. They each had also a key. There was but one danger—that of forgetting the word which was indispensable.

On the morning of the 28th of February the employees were all busy at their various desks about half past 9 o'clock when a middle aged man of very dark complexion and military bearing, in deep mourning, presented himself in the office adjoining the safe, where he found five or six employees. He asked to see the cashier. He was told that the cashier had not yet arrived and that the cashroom was not opened till 10 o'clock, a notice of which was posted in the entry.

"I thought," he said in a tone of cool impertinence, "to find some one here ready to attend to my business, having arranged the matter with M. Fauvel yesterday. I am Count Louis de Clameran, an iron master at Oloron, and have come to draw 300,000 francs deposited in this bank by my late brother, whose heir I am. It is surprising that no orders were given about it."

Neither the title of the noble manufacturer nor his explanations appeared to affect the clerks.

"The cashier has not yet arrived," they repeated, "and we can do nothing for you."

"Then conduct me to M. Fauvel."

There was some hesitation, then a clerk named Cavaillon, who was writing near a window, said:

"The chief is always out at this hour."

"Then I will call again," said M. de Clameran. And he departed without saying "Good morning" or even touching his hat.

"Not very polite," said little Cavaillon. "But here comes Prosper."

Prosper Bertomy, cashier of Fauvel's banking house, was a tall, handsome man of thirty, with light hair and blue eyes, and dressed in the height of the fashion.

"Ah, here you are!" cried Cavaillon. "Some one has just been inquiring for you."

"Who? An iron manufacturer, was it not?"

"Precisely."

"Well, he will return. Thinking that I would be late this morning, I attended to the matter yesterday."

Prosper had unlocked his office and [illegible] finished speaking and entered [illegible]ed the door behind him.

"There is a cashier," exclaimed one [illegible] clerks, "who never lets anything disturb him. The chief has quarreled with him twenty times for being tardy, but his remonstrances have no effect upon him whatever."

"And with reason—he knows he can get anything he wants out of the chief. Besides, how could he come any sooner? He sits up all night and leads a fast life. Have you noticed how pale he looks this morning?"

The cashroom door opened, and the cashier appeared before them with tottering step.

"Robbed!" he gasped out. "I have been robbed!"

Prosper's expression, his hollow voice and trembling limbs betrayed such fearful suffering that the clerks got up from their desks and ran toward him. He almost dropped into their arms. He was sick and faint and fell into a chair.

His companions surrounded him and begged him to explain himself.

"Robbed?" they said. "Where? How? By whom?"

Gradually Prosper recovered himself.

"All I had in the safe."

"All?"

"Yes, all—three packages, each containing 100 notes of a thousand francs, and one package of 50,000. The four packages were wrapped in a sheet of paper and tied together."

With the rapidity of lightning the news of the robbery spread throughout the bank. The curious clerks rushed in.

"Did you find the safe broken open?" said young Cavaillon.

"No; it is untouched."

"Yesterday I put 350,000 francs in the safe, and this morning it is gone."

A messenger had already informed M. Fauvel of the disaster, and at this moment he entered the room. M. Andre Fauvel appeared to be a man of fifty, inclined to corpulency, of medium height, with iron gray hair, and, like all hard workers, he had a slight stoop. Never did he by a single action belie the kindly expression of his face. He had an open countenance and a lively, frank eye.

"What's this I hear?" he said to the clerks, who stood before him respectfully. "What's happened?"

The sound of M. Fauvel's voice inspired the cashier with the energy of a great crisis. The dreaded and decisive moment had come. He arose and advanced toward his chief.

"Monsieur," he began, "having, as you know, a payment to make this morning, I yesterday drew from the Bank of France 350,000 francs."

"Why yesterday, monsieur?" interrupted the banker. "It seems to me that I have a hundred times ordered you to wait until the day of the payment."

"I know, monsieur, and I did wrong to disobey you. But the evil is done. Yesterday evening I locked up the funds. They have disappeared, and yet the safe has not been forced."

"You are crazy," exclaimed M. Fauvel, "or you are dreaming!"

"I am not crazy, neither, unfortunately, am I dreaming. I am simply saying what is true."

This calmness at such a moment appeared to exasperate M. Fauvel. He seized Prosper by the arm and shook him roughly.

"Speak!" he cried out. "Speak! Who do you say opened the safe? Answer me!"

"I cannot say."

"No one but you and I knew the secret word. No one but you and I had keys."

This was a formal accusation. At least, all the auditors present so understood it. Yet the cashier's strange calmness did not leave him. He gently released himself from the chief's grasp and said:

"In fact, monsieur, I am the only one who could have taken this money."

"Unhappy man!"

Prosper drew himself up and, looking M. Fauvel full in the face, added:

"Or you!"

The banker made a threatening gesture, and there is no knowing what would have happened if they had not been interrupted by loud and angry voices in the entry. A man insisted upon entering in spite of the protestations of the employees and succeeded in forcing his way in. It was M. de Clameran. The clerks stood looking on, bewildered, motionless, in profound silence. It was easy to see that some terrible question—a question of life or death—was being weighed by all these men. The iron founder did not appear to observe anything unusual. He advanced, his hat on his head, and said in the same impertinent tone:

"It is after 10 o'clock, gentlemen."

No one answered, and M. de Clameran was about to continue when he for the first time saw the banker. He went straight to him.

"Well, monsieur," he said, "I congratulate myself upon finding you in at last. I have been here once before this morning and found the cashroom not opened, the cashier not arrived; you were absent."

"You are mistaken, monsieur; I was in my office."

"I return, and this time not only the cashroom is closed, but I am refused admittance to the office. I am compelled to force my way in. Will you tell me, yes or no, can I have my money?"

M. Fauvel listened, trembling with anger, yet he controlled himself.

"I would be obliged to you, monsieur, for a short delay."

"I thought you said"—

"Yes, yesterday, but this morning, this very instant, I find I have been robbed of 350,000 francs."

M. de Clameran bowed ironically and said:

"Shall I have to wait long?"

"Long enough for me to send to the bank."

Then, turning his back on the iron maker, M. Fauvel said to his cashier:

"Write a note to the bank for a loan of 300,000 francs. Send at once. Let the messenger take a carriage."

Prosper did not move.

"Do you hear me?" said the banker angrily.

The cashier trembled. He seemed as if he was in a stupor.

"It is useless to send," he said. "There is a credit to this gentleman of 300,000 francs, and we have less than 100,000 in the bank."

M. de Clameran evidently expected this answer, for he muttered:

"Naturally."

Although he only pronounced this word, his voice, his manner, his face, clearly said:

"This comedy is well acted, but nevertheless it is a comedy, and I don't intend to be duped by it."

"Oh, don't be alarmed, monsieur," said the banker. "This house has other resources. Have patience till my return."

He went out and up the narrow steps leading to his study and at the end of five minutes returned, holding in his hand a letter and a bundle of securities.

"Here, quick, Couturier," he said to one of his clerks, "take my carriage, which is waiting, and go with monsieur to M. de Rothschild's. Give him this letter and these securities. In exchange you will receive 300,000 francs, which you will hand to this gentleman."

The iron founder was visibly disappointed. He seemed to wish to apologize for his impertinence.

"I assure you, monsieur, that I had no intention of offending. For some years our relations have been such that I"—

"Enough, monsieur," interrupted the banker. "I desire no apologies. In business friendship counts for nothing. I owe you money. I am not ready to pay you. You are pressing. You have a right to demand what is your own. Follow my clerk. He will pay you your money."

Then he turned to his clerks who stood curiously gazing on and said, "As for you, gentlemen, resume your desks."

In a moment the room was cleared of every one except those who belonged there, and they sat at their desks with their noses almost touching the paper before them, as if absorbed in their work. Still excited by the events so rapidly succeeding each other, M. Andre Fauvel walked up and down the room with quick, nervous steps, occasionally uttering some low exclamation. Prosper remained leaning against the door, with pale face and fixed eyes, looking as if he had lost the faculty of thinking. Finally the banker, after a long silence, stopped short before Prosper. He had determined upon his line of conduct.

"We must have an explanation," he said. "Let us go into your office."

The cashier obeyed without a word, and his chief followed him, taking the precaution to shut the door after them.

Nothing in the cashroom bore evidence of the entrance of burglars. Everything was in perfect order. Not even a paper was misplaced. The safe was open, and on the top shelf lay several rouleaus of gold, overlooked or disdained by the thieves. M. Fauvel, without troubling himself to examine anything, took a chair and ordered his cashier to be seated. He had entirely recovered his equanimity, and his countenance wore its usual kind expression.

"Now that we are alone, Prosper," he said, "have you nothing to tell me?"

The cashier started, as if the question surprised him. "Nothing, monsieur, that I have not already told you."

"What? Nothing? Do you persist in asserting a fable so absurd and ridiculous that no one can possibly believe it? It is folly! Confide in me. It is your only chance of salvation. I am your chief, it is true, but I am, above all, your friend—your best and truest friend. I cannot forget that here fifteen years ago you were intrusted to me by your father, and ever since that day have I had cause to congratulate myself on possessing your faithful service. Yes, it is fifteen years since you came to me. I was then just commencing to build my fortune, and you have seen it gradually grow step by step from almost nothing to its present size. As my wealth increased I endeavored to better your condition, you who, although so young, are the oldest of my clerks. At each inventory I increased your salary."

Never had Prosper heard his chief express himself in so feeling and paternal a manner. Prosper was silent with astonishment.

"Answer!" pursued M. Fauvel. "Have I not always been like a father to you? From the first day my house has been open to you. You were treated as a member of my family. My niece, Madeleine, and my sons looked upon you as a brother. But you grew weary of this peaceful life. One day a year ago you suddenly began to shun us, and since then"—

The memories of the past thus evoked by the banker seemed too much for the unhappy cashier. He buried his face in his hands and burst into tears.

"One can confide everything to his father without fear," resumed M. Fauvel. "A father not only pardons, but forgets. Do I not know the terrible temptations that in a city like Paris beset a young man? There are some inordinate desires which break down the firmest principles. Speak, Prosper, speak!"

"What do you wish me to say?"

"The truth. An honorable man may yield to temptation, but his first step toward atonement is confession. Say to me: Yes, I have been tempted, dazzled. The sight of these piles of gold turned my brain. I am young. I have passions."

"I!" murmured Prosper. "I!"

"Poor boy!" said the banker sadly. He paused, as if hoping for a confession, which, however, did not come.

"Come, Prosper, have courage. Make a clean breast of it. I will go up stairs. Go again to the safe. I am sure that in your agitation you did not search thoroughly. This evening I will return, and I am sure that during the day you will have found, if not the 350,000 francs, at least the greater portion of it. And neither you nor I will tomorrow remember anything about this false alarm."

M. Fauvel had risen and was about to leave the room when Prosper arose and held him by the arm.

"Your generosity is useless, monsieur," he said bitterly. "Having taken nothing, I can restore nothing. I have searched carefully. The bank notes have been stolen."

"But by whom, poor fool? By whom?"

"By all that is sacred, I swear that it was not by me."

The banker's face turned crimson. "Miserable wretch," cried he, "do you mean to say that it was I?"

Prosper bowed his head and did not answer.

"Ah, it is thus, then," said M. Fauvel, unable to contain himself any longer. "You dare— Then between you and me, M. Prosper Bertomy, justice shall decide. God is my witness that I have done all I could to save you. You will have yourself to thank for what follows. I have sent for the commissary of police. He must be waiting in my study. Shall I call him?"

Prosper, with the fearful resignation of a man who abandons himself, replied in a stifled voice:

"Do as you will."

The banker was near the door. He opened it and after giving the cashier a last searching look said to an office boy:

"Anselme, ask the commissary of police to step down."

CHAPTER II.

THE commissary sent for by M. Fauvel soon made his appearance. A short man dressed in a full suit of black, which was slightly relieved by a crumpled collar, followed him. The banker, scarcely bowing to him, said:

"Doubtless, monsieur, you have been apprised of the painful circumstance which compels me to have recourse to your assistance?"

"It is about a robbery, I believe."

"Yes; an infamous and mysterious robbery committed in this office, from the safe you see open there, of which my cashier"—he pointed to Prosper—"alone possesses the key and the word."

This declaration seemed to arouse the unfortunate cashier from his stupor.

"Pardon me, monsieur," he said to the commissary in a low tone. "My chief also has the word and the key."

"I should have said so."

The commissary at once understood that these two men accused each other.

"Well," he said, "a robbery has been perpetrated, but by whom? Did the robber enter from without?"

The banker hesitated a moment.

"I think not," he said at last.

"And I am certain he did not," said Prosper.

The commissary was prepared for those answers, but it did not suit his purpose to follow them up immediately.

"However," said he, "we must make ourselves sure of it." Turning toward his companion, "M. Fanferlot," he said, "go and see if you cannot discover some traces that may have escaped the attention of these gentlemen."

M. Fanferlot, nicknamed "The Squirrel," was indebted to his prodigious agility for this title, of which he was not a little proud. Slim and insignificant in appearance, he might, in spite of his iron muscles, be taken for a bailiff's under clerk as he walked along buttoned up to the chin in his thin black overcoat. He had one of those faces that impress us disagreeably—an odiously turned up nose, thin lips and little restless black eyes. Fanferlot, who had been on the police force for five years, burned to distinguish himself, to make for himself a name. He was ambitious. Alas, he was unsuccessful, lacking opportunity or genius.

Already, before the commissary spoke to him, he had ferreted everywhere—studied the doors, sounded the partitions, examined the wicket and stirred up the ashes in the fireplace.

"It would be very difficult," said he, "for a stranger to enter here."

He walked around the office.

"Is this door closed at night?" he inquired.

"It is always locked."

"And who keeps the key?"

"The office boy, to whom I always give it in charge before leaving the bank," said Prosper.

"This boy," said M. Fauvel, "sleeps in the outer room on a sofa bedstead, which he unfolds at night and folds up in the morning."

"Is he here?" inquired the commissary.

"Yes, monsieur," answered the banker.

He opened the door and called:

"Anselme!"

This boy had been a confidential servant of M. Fauvel for ten years. He knew that he would not be suspected, but the idea of being connected with a robbery is terrible, and he entered the room trembling like a leaf.

"Did you sleep in the next room last night?" asked the commissary of police.

"Yes, monsieur; as usual."

"At what hour did you go to bed?"

"About half past 10. I had spent the evening at a cafe near by with monsieur's valet."

"Did you hear no noise during the night?"

"No, and still I sleep so lightly that if monsieur comes down to the cashroom when I am asleep I am instantly awakened by the sound of his footsteps."

"Does M. Fauvel often come to the cashroom at night?"

"No, monsieur; very seldom."

"Did he come last night?"

"No, monsieur; I am very certain he did not, for I was kept awake nearly all night by the strong coffee I had drunk with the valet."

"That will do," said the commissary. "You may retire."

When Anselme had left the room, Fanferlot resumed his search.

He opened the door of the banker's private staircase.

"Where do these stairs lead to?" he asked.

"To my private office," replied M. Fauvel.

"Is not that the room," asked the commissary, "to which I was conducted when I first came?"

"Precisely."

"I would like to see it," said Fanferlot, "and examine the entrances to it."

"Nothing is more easy," said M. Fauvel eagerly. "Come, gentlemen, and you come, too, Prosper."

M. Fauvel's private office consisted of two rooms—the waiting room, sumptuously decorated, and the study, where he transacted business. The furniture in this room was composed of a large office desk, several leather covered chairs and on either side of the fireplace a secretary and a bookshelf. These two rooms had three doors. One opened on the private stairway, another into the banker's bedroom, and the third into the main vestibule. It was through this last door that the banker's clients and visitors were admitted. M. Fanferlot examined the study. He seemed puzzled like a man who had flattered himself with the hope of discovering something and had found nothing.

To be Continued

CAUSES OF STOMACH TROUBLES.

Four Professors Claim That Quick Lunches Bring on Diseases.

The "business lunch" threatens to accomplish the destruction of the human race—or so much of it as dwells in large American cities—if the statistics adduced by eminent physicians and surgeons at a meeting of the Chicago Medical Society, are found to be the unfailing mirrors of destiny that the doctors promise.

In the alarming increase of intestinal or "gastric" ulcers such eminent practitioners as Drs. N. S. Davis, Jr., W. A. Evans, J. B. Herrick and E. W. Andrews announced in a symposium that they feared the American stomach would give out in the course of time unless the public becomes wise enough to curb and regulate the lunch counter method of hasty eating.

It would seem that danger from gastric ulceration is not confined alone to the men, who are the consumers of the business lunches, but that women are also threatened. To the women's habit of eating a few bites at many hours of the day their imminent peril is ascribed.

Everyone should counteract the danger brought about by too hasty or overeating by taking at meal times Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin and Herb Laxative Compound. This wonderful medicine will keep the stomach in a perfectly healthy condition, preventing and permanently curing indigestion, constipation, biliousness, sick headache, and all complications arising from stomach troubles. Try it today. It's pleasant taste and almost immediate effect will be a revelation to you. 50c and $1.00 bottles. Charles B. Spencer, Iola, Kansas, Kinne & Son, Moran, Kansas, W. J. Waters & Co., La Harpe, Kansas.

A mule hung himself in the barn of an Ottawa negro recently. When life gets beyond the endurance of the proverbially patient mule it must be something terrible. An explanation is due from Ottawa.

Strikes A Rich Find.

"I was troubled for seaeral years with chronic indigestion and nervous debility," writes F. J. Green, of Lancaster, N. H. "No remedy helped me until I began using Electric Bitters, which did me more good than all the medicines I ever used. They also kept my wife in excellent health for years. She says Electric Bitters are just splendid for female troubles; that they are a grand tonic and invigorator for weak, run down women. No other medicine can take its place in our family." Try them. Only 50c. Satisfaction guaranteed by Evans Bros.

The Hiawatha Academy has passed into the hands of the Baptists and will receive a $10,000 endowment from John D. Rockfeller.

When you wake up with a bad taste in your mouth you may know that you need a dose of Chamberlain's Stomach & Liver Tablets. They will cleanse your stomach, improve your appetite and make you feel like a new man. They are easy to take, being sugar coated and pleasant in effect. For sale by W. L. Crabb & Co. and Campbel & Burrell.

BRIGHT'S DISEASE.

The largest sum ever paid for a prescription, changed hands in San Francisco, Aug. 30, 1901. The transfer involved in coin and stock $112,500.00 and was paid by a party of business men for a specific for Bright's Disease and Diabetes, hitherto incurable diseases.

They commenced the serious investigation of the specific Nov. 15, 1900. They interviewed scores of the cured and tried it out on its merits by putting over three dozen cases on the treatment and watching them. They also got physicians to name chronic, incurable cases and administered it with the physicians for judges. Up to Aug. 25, eighty-seven per cent of the test cases were either well or progressing favorably.

There being but thirteen per cent of failures, the parties were satisfied and closed the transaction. The proceedings of the investigating committee and the clinical report of the test cases were published and will be mailed free on application. Address JOHN J. FULTON COMPANY, 420 Montgomery St. San Francisco, Cal.