

Thomas Narcejac: *The Oliveira Affair*
(translated by Lawrence G. Blochman)

Parisians have never forgotten the Oliveira affair which, at the time, aroused great excitement and noisy public controversy. For years, the mystery surrounding it remained impenetrable, and it is only now that the details of its more surprising episodes can be revealed.

Ramon Oliveira was a dark little man, petulant and talkative. He was a frequent customer of the Léthé cabaret, where he was pampered and fawned upon. He was rumored to be very rich—at least, he spent money with an open hand. He danced little, but he drank much, and the percentage-girls were always welcome at his table.

He would arrive at eleven o'clock, sit at a table near the band, order a light supper, and drink champagne. He would not leave until the small hours, very drunk, very talkative in a deep, sonorous voice, and not very steady on his feet. A luxurious Daimler awaited him, and he would disappear until the following evening.

Nobody knew where he had come from. Some said South America, others thought the Antilles. Lili and Kate tried hard to make him talk, but he was very good at keeping his own business to himself. All they knew, after a month of trying, was that he had a ward named Incarnacion, and that he was traveling in Europe to escape some obscure danger.

When he would not specify what danger, Kate made fun of him. This was a mistake, because one night, he was actually attacked at the very door of the Léthé. With incredible boldness, an unidentified assailant went after him with a knife, and then disappeared in the maze of narrow streets around the cabaret. Oliveira would have been killed had it not been for the intervention of handsome Maurice de Castel-Bernac, who saw what was about to happen and lunged at the would-be murderer. The knife was deflected so that it merely ripped open Oliveira's overcoat and slashed his evening jacket.

Very much upset, Oliveira thanked Castel-Bernac warmly. The latter modestly waved away all demonstration and invited Oliveira to come back into the café and have a drink at his table. The two men became friends at once. Castel-Bernac was such a poised, courteous, and gracious gentleman. He was not a regular at the Léthé. He would come in for five or six nights running, usually alone. Suddenly, he would disappear and next, news of him would come from the society columns of the *Figaro*, reporting that he had been among the guests at Duchess de X's garden party in London or at Baroness de Z's ball in Vienna. He traveled considerably, had had many adventures, and fought occasional duels. There was much whispering behind his back but, significantly, never to his face. All gossip stopped short when he raised his monocle and his deep brown eyes took on a cold, hard expression.

Castel-Bernac and Oliveira met often at the Léthé. They exchanged reminiscences, but not on an even basis. Castel-Bernac still clung to his reserve, while Oliveira grew loquacious, talking freely of his plantations and his wealth. The name of Incarnacion came up frequently in his remarks. Little by little, Castel-Bernac learned that she was a blonde, nearing her majority, that she had been carefully brought up at home, and spoke French fluently. Although Oliveira was supposed to be only her legal guardian, he spoke of Incarnacion with such fierce passion that Castel-Bernac wondered. When, at last, Oliveira showed his friend Incarnacion's photograph, Castel-Bernac was dazzled by her seductive charm.

Castel-Bernac tried to learn something of the danger which was apparently hanging over Oliveira, but in vain. On such occasions, Oliveira would lapse into silence, suddenly suspicious and frightened. He refused to say what he was doing in Paris—until the night someone fired a shot at him.

Oliveira and Castel-Bernac had just left the Léthé together and were walking on the sidewalk as the Daimler drove up to the curb. A detonation shattered the silence of the night. Oliveira's top hat spun off and fell to the ground. Oliveira picked up his topper, noted the bullet hole in the tall silken crown, looked about wildly, but saw nobody in the deserted street, then suddenly went to pieces. Castel-Bernac barely had time to slip an arm around him and help him to the Daimler.

Once inside the car, Oliveira fainted.

Castel-Bernac gave the chauffeur the address of his bachelor apartment.

"Drive us to 8 Avenue de l'Observatoire, quickly," he said. "Where does my friend live?"

“The Claridge, Monsieur.”

“Very well. After we get to my address, you may go home. I’ll drive your master to the Claridge in the morning.”

Gradually, as he drank his whiskey neat, Oliveira recovered. He was still badly shaken, however, and his tanned face remained a curious gray. Castel-Bernac went to great pains to make him comfortable.

“You may stay here and rest as long as you like,” said the host. “I will have my man prepare your bed.”

Oliveira declined the invitation. He was afraid that Rudolph, his secretary, to whom he was greatly attached, would worry about him. He insisted so much that Castel-Bernac called Antoine, his own chauffeur, to get out the Delahaye, and insisted in turn on accompanying his friend to the safety of the Claridge.

As the powerful car sped along the empty, silent avenues, a grateful and disturbed Oliveira told Castel-Bernac his story. He was being pursued, he said, by the gang of The Coyote, a dangerous bandit who had once tried to kidnap him for ransom in Rio de Janeiro. He had fled to Europe, and was living in Paris temporarily until the arrival of Incarnacion, who was due the following month to celebrate her 21st birthday. Oliveira was giving her a fabulous pearl necklace as a present. Although Castel-Bernac was not easily impressed, he was obviously startled when his friend mentioned the price of the necklace.

By the time they reached the Claridge, Oliveira had regained his loquacious gaiety. Rudolph was obviously anxious and nervous as he thanked Castel-Bernac, who liked him at once. The secretary seemed definitely older than Oliveira. Tall, thin, with alert gray eyes, he bustled about his employer like a mother hen.

“He’s worth two Antoinnes,” Castel-Bernac said to himself as he got back into his car.

The next evening, as Castel-Bernac was finishing his supper at the L  th  , Rudolph made an unexpected entrance. Hurrying to Castel-Bernac’s table, he bent over to whisper:

“Monsieur Oliveira would like to see you immediately, Monsieur. He’s not well and seems quite upset.”

“Very well,” Castel-Bernac replied. “I’ll follow you.”

The waiters, the maitre d’h  tel, and Kate all told the newspaper reporters later that Castel-Bernac wore a worried expression when he left the L  th  .

The two men got into the Daimler.

A few hours later, the “storm” broke.

The afternoon papers were on the street by mid-morning with extra editions. The headlines screamed: *Mystery Killing at the Hotel Claridge... Brazilian Millionaire Murdered... Police Baffled...*

Parisians snatched papers from the hands of the newsboys and besieged the news kiosks to read about the mystery. The story in *L’Echo de France* was a typical report:

A double crime has thrown the Hotel Claridge into a state of unusual confusion.

At eight o’clock this morning, a phone call came to the fashionable Champs-Ellys  es hostelry for M. Oliveira. When the operator rang the rich Brazilian’s suite and got no response, a groom was sent to alert M. Oliveira’s private secretary. The boy found the doors locked and got no answer to his repeating knocking. He reported to the office that he thought he heard a muffled groan behind the closed doors, and the management immediately summoned the police.

Detectives entering the millionaire’s suite found a dreadful scene. M. Oliveira was lying in a pool of blood, dying of stab wounds. Vicomte Maurice de Castel-Bernac, the well-known young clubman, was lying unconscious nearby. The Vicomte had been badly beaten about the head.

Rudolph Binger, M. Oliveira’s private secretary, was lying on the floor of his own room, tightly bound and gagged. The secretary’s first statements cast little light upon the mystery. M. Oliveira had not been feeling well the night before, he said, and sent him to the L  th   night club for M. de Castel-Bernac, with whom he had become very friendly. Rudolph Binger brought the Vicomte to the Hotel and left him alone with M. Oliveira, while the secretary returned to another room where he was working. He had heard no suspicious noises during the next few hours, he said.

A little after half-past one in the morning, he said, his employer—at least, he had assumed it was his employer—rang for him. As he stepped into the study where the two men were talking, he was

knocked down from behind, bound and gagged, and dragged into his own room. He struggled to free himself, and had managed to loosen some of the ropes when he lost consciousness. He could not describe his attacker except to say that it was a large, muscular man. .

M. Oliveira died before the arrival of an ambulance summoned by the police. Vicomte de Castel-Bernac is still in a coma, but doctors believe he will survive.

The well-known and popular detective, Inspector Ganimard, in charge of the investigation, told reporters he believed that robbery was the motive for the crime.

Noon editions of the newspapers hinted that the Oliveira murder case was about to take a dramatic turn, and crowds of Parisians haunted the kiosks on the Boulevards, awaiting developments. They came with the late afternoon papers—and they were indeed sensational:

Arsène Lupin Arrested! screamed the headlines. *Was Posing as Castel-Bernac. Did He Kill Oliveira?*

That was the question that bothered Inspector Ganimard: Had Arsène Lupin killed Oliveira?

“See here, my dear Ganimard,” said M. Formerie, the Investigating Magistrate assigned to the case. “Are you sure of what you are saying? Did Oliveira actually murmur before dying, ‘Maurice... Outremer...’?”¹

“I’m positive. He said it three times. Even the doctor heard it. And of course ‘Maurice’ can only be Maurice de Castel-Bernac. The scene is easy to re-enact. The two men must have quarreled, Lupin stabbed Oliveira, and Oliveira struck back with the bronze candlestick we found on the rug. This theory, however, would involve the presence of an accomplice. Who rang for the secretary? Who tied up Rudolph Binger? And finally, who ransacked the study?”

“No money was found?”

“That’s another mystery. Oliveira had been liquidating a large part of his fortune. Within the last month, he had cashed drafts on the Bank of the Netherlands for a total of more than ten million gold francs. We’ve been unable to put our hands on any of this money. I’ve gone through the apartment twenty times, down to the most obscure corner. Nothing. The money has simply disappeared.”

“Have you searched Lupin’s bachelor hideout at the Avenue de l’Observatoire?”

“Naturally. We found nothing there. The chauffeur has disappeared with Lupin’s car, but we’ll pick him up soon. It’s hard to conceal a Delahaye.”

“Can’t we assume that both Lupin and Oliveira were attacked by the mysterious enemies who have been pursuing the Brazilian?”

“It’s a possibility, of course. But the more I dig into this thing, the more I see Lupin at the bottom of the whole tricky business. Doesn’t the word ‘Outremer’ pronounced by the dying man indicate that Lupin might very well be the head of an international gang that operates overseas? And, in view of what’s happened, don’t the two attempts on Oliveira’s life in the immediate vicinity of the L  th   seem suspicious to you? Oliveira was afraid of something and, within a short time, he was stabbed in the overcoat and shot through his silk hat. And who is the sole witness to each attack? Lupin in person. Curious coincidence, don’t you think?”

“I agree. But coincidences do turn up, and not always in fiction.”

“Never when Ars  ne Lupin is concerned, Monsieur le Juge. Let’s look at the record. When Duchess Anthor lost her jewels, Lupin—or Castel-Bernac, if you prefer—was among the guests. When burglars broke into the Villa Riviera of Prince Caraccioli, who was his constant companion? Again, Castel-Bernac. No, believe me, Monsieur le Juge, he’s the culprit.”

“How is he, by the way?”

“Lupin? To tell the truth, not terribly well. He seems to be delirious. He talks incoherently. The blow on the head could have affected him mentally.”

“The Devil! This is not going to make our job any easier. What does he seem to talk about?”

“Nothing that makes sense. He’s always talking about a drawer and a key. And over and over again, he repeats the name of Incarnacion.”

“Let’s pay a visit to him.”

¹ The term “outre-mer,” usually spelled with a hyphen, means “overseas” and is notably used for the overseas departments and territories of France.

Castel-Bernac was lying on a narrow cot. He seemed to be dozing. As Ganimard and the Investigating Magistrate approached, he started to groan, lifting his hand to his bandage-swathed head. His unfocused eyes stared at Ganimard. Then he smiled and said, "Incarnacion, you will be rich, very rich."

Suddenly, he sat up and screamed. His eyes, now feverish, focused on some distant point, far beyond his cell, beyond the prison.

"Robber!" he yelled. "Thief! Swindler! So you thought you hid the key to the drawer, did you? Well, I've got it and it's mine. Mine!"

He laughed insanely as the orderly forced him to lie down again. Then, Castel-Bernac turned his face to the wall and began to cry softly.

"Horrible!" said the Investigating Magistrate. As the two men stepped into the corridor, he added, "Suppose it's not Lupin?"

"Not Lupin? Ah, no, Monsieur le Juge, don't say such a thing!" Ganimard blanched. "I know Lupin and I'm certain this is the man. True, we don't have his prints or his anthropometric measurements, but I know his features so well that I'm sure this is Lupin."

The prison resembled a besieged fortress. The guards were doubled. All journalists were strictly excluded, but the tone of the press grew more excited daily. The investigation dragged. *L'Echo de France's* editorials attacked the police and held Inspector Ganimard up to ridicule.

The Inspector concealed the fact that Arsène Lupin had gone mad. He stubbornly denied all rumors. He feared the reactions of Parisians, who had always been in sympathy with Lupin, and would surely accuse the police of having driven their Public Hero Number One insane with their third-degree methods. And Ganimard, perplexed, returned again and again to the cell where Castel-Bernac still laughed and cried and repeated the same incoherent phrases over and over.

"See here, Lupin, you hear me, don't you? Now listen: Oliveira attacked you, didn't he? Yes, he must have attacked you... Answer me, Sacrebleu! I know you're shamming, but you may as well stop acting. You can't make a monkey out of an old bull like me..."

But Castel-Bernac went on with his low-pitched monotone: "The key... the drawer... I've got it now! I've got it!"

Each time Ganimard left the prison, he was a wreck, exhausted, and tortured by doubt. Between visits, he was still convinced that the man was Lupin, but the prisoner had changed so much that it was easy to become uncertain while listening to his ravings. The prisoner had lost much weight; his cheeks were sunken and his nose seemed longer. Fleeting expressions still marked the man as Lupin, but an instant later, his features seemed to change, and, as Ganimard watched the head tossing pitifully on the pillow, his doubts grew... And yet, Castel-Bernac's wound had healed completely. Why, then...?

Ganimard returned to the Hotel Claridge to start all over again.

There were plenty of keys and drawers in the murder apartment, but the keys were all honest keys and there was nothing mysterious about any of the drawers. None contained a false bottom or secret compartment.

Ganimard himself was going mad. He sent for Rudolph Binger who, from the beginning, had done all he could to help the police.

Poor Binger was sure he was being watched and didn't dare go out. He had shut himself up in his room, either reading or painting water colors. And he was apprehensive about the arrival of Incarnacion who, informed of her guardian's death, was due in Bordeaux in two days, aboard the *Rio de la Plata*.

The mystery remained as deep as ever. The Delahaye was still missing, as was Lupin's chauffeur, Antoine. Investigating Magistrate Formerie began to lose patience. *L'Echo de France* published a cartoon captioned *The Hare and the Tortoise*. The hare's profile bore a striking resemblance to the unhappy Ganimard, while the tortoise's smile was unmistakably that of Arsène Lupin.

This was the last straw. Formerie summoned Ganimard to his chambers. The interview proved a stormy one.

"We must release him," insisted the magistrate. "We don't have enough evidence against him to hold him for the Court of Assizes."

"How can you think of such a thing!" Ganimard protested hotly.

Finally, Ganimard came up with an idea, the only idea which might get them out of their dilemma. And even he made the proposition with some hesitancy.

“Monsieur le Juge, let us re-enact the crime. Rudolph will play Oliveira and Lupin, finding himself in the same situation and surroundings as on the night of the tragedy, may regain his sanity.”

It was a tempting suggestion, although the execution might prove difficult. However, there was no time to lose.

“Very well, proceed,” said the Magistrate.

Preparations were made in complete secrecy. In order not to attract public attention, a police van would not be used. When Castel-Bernac, thin and pale, reached the sidewalk outside the prison, a Daimler awaited him. He got in without a word and Ganimard followed to sit beside him. Behind the Daimler was a big Renault, crowded with armed policemen in plain clothes.

The two cars reached the Claridge without incident. Night was closing in. When Castel-Bernac was nudged into the suite, Rudolph was stretched out on a divan, resting. Ganimard joined Formerie, who had preceded him, and the two men retired to a corner. All doors were guarded by the police.

Castel-Bernac sat down, obviously surprised. His eyes roved about the room, without focusing. He had aged and seemed very tired. Rudolph spoke to him, but he did not answer. He did not appear to be listening. He sat quietly, clasping and unclasping his hands automatically.

Once Ganimard saw a gleam of hope when Castel-Bernac reached out his hand toward a mahogany desk, but the gesture was not completed. Castel-Bernac resumed his pose of dejection and resignation.

“Damn it!” Ganimard mumbled between his teeth and signaled to Rudolph.

Rudolph got up, grasped a heavy bronze candlestick, and lifting it threateningly, advanced toward Castel-Bernac. Then came the shock Ganimard had been counting on. The Vicomte sprang to his feet and rushed at his adversary. Rudolph fell to the floor, as he had been instructed, but Castel-Bernac, instead of being calmed by his apparent victory, grew more and more excited. His eyes bulged. He shot out his fist. His voice shrill with rage, he shouted the words that so often came to his lips: “Robber! Thief! Swindler! So you thought you hid the key to the drawer, did you? Well, I’ve got it and it’s mine. Mine!”

Suddenly, he whirled and rushed to the desk, pulling out drawers, and searching them with feverish fingers. Ganimard and the Magistrate approached on tiptoe as Castel-Bernac opened boxes, rummaged in cartons, and scattered papers, muttering all the while in a muffled voice: “I’ve got it, I’ve got it!”

Then, Castel-Bernac stopped abruptly and sighed. His glance surveyed the pile of letters, bills, and cardboard boxes that littered the desk before him. He picked up a blank sheet of paper, folded it carefully in four, and stuffed it into an old envelope that had been lying on top of the desk. He held out the envelope to Ganimard.

“Have this delivered at once,” he said. Then, he changed his mind. “No, give it back.”

Ganimard obeyed with a shrug.

There was a groan from the floor. Rudolph, tired of playing dead, was squirming into a fresh posture. Ganimard silenced him with a wave of the hand. Castel-Bernac had just picked up the telephone.

“Give me Grenelle 00-44.”

Ganimard and the Magistrate were all ears.

“Hello? Hello? The carrots are cooked.” He hung up, yawned, then called, “Antoine.”

A policeman came to the door.

“Breakfast at nine,” said Castel-Bernac. Then, he stretched out on the divan and closed his eyes. Ganimard and the Magistrate looked at each other in consternation.

“He’s crazy, all right,” Ganimard sighed, and roughly ordered Rudolph to get up from the floor and leave. The Inspector was both furious and mortified.

“So what do we do next?” asked the Magistrate.

“What is there to do? I’ll take him back!” Ganimard shook Castel-Bernac who stood up and followed him docilely to the Daimler.

The experiment had failed. The two cars drove back towards the Santé prison.

Ganimard was scarcely aware of the prisoner beside him. He was searching the pattern of early evening traffic, the flashing of electric signs, the slow, dark flow of the Paris crowds. The auto progressed slowly, apparently rocking the prisoner to sleep.

Ganimard was thinking, trying to make sense of the scene at the Claridge, when a burst of young, fresh, almost insolent laughter exploded almost in his ear. A shiver ran down his spine. *Mon Dieu!* He knew that laugh! And he knew the voice, that mocking, sarcastic voice.

And when Cartel-Bernac ripped off the bandage that still hid his forehead, there was no further doubt, the burning eyes, the chin, especially the jeering, playful expression.

“*Nom d’une pipe!*” exclaimed Ganimard. “Arsène Lupin!”

“Yes, my good Ganimard, and how did you like my little spell of madness? Well acted, wasn’t it? You lock up poor Lupin. You watch him day and night. Then, one fine evening, you unlock him, let him out of his cell for the simple reason that Ganimard doesn’t know what’s going on. Ganimard gives Lupin the keys to the city. He ought to get the Prix de Rome for such a work of imagination, don’t you think?”

“You scoundrel!” said Ganimard.

“Now, don’t get angry. After all, I had to go through the painful process of arrest and incarceration in order to be able to search Oliveira’s study without being disturbed.”

“You what?” Ganimard started.

“Yes. And will you please stop jiggling. You make me seasick.” Then, Lupin, imitating the voice he used as a maniac, said, “Robber! Thief! Swindler! So you thought you hid the key to the drawer, did you? Well, I’ve got it and it’s mine! Mine!”

He laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks.

“I had both of you fooled, didn’t I? You examined me with a stethoscope and microscope. Is it really he? Is it or isn’t it? Yes or no? Perhaps or maybe? You don’t know how hard it was for me to keep from laughing.”

“Scoundrel!”

“Again? Please try to be polite!” His eyes sparkled audaciously as he looked at Ganimard. “Now, listen well, Ganimard: *the carrots are cooked.*”

“What does that mean—the carrots are cooked?”

“That means that, in five minutes, dear old Lupin will be free-and wealthy!”

A wave of anger surged up inside Ganimard. He lunged at Arsène Lupin—but there was no struggle. Ganimard fell back, gasping for breath, while Lupin pocketed the Inspector’s pistol.

“Were you going to be a bad boy? Did you want to hurt poor old Lupin? But Lupin knows a few things that the police never learn. How did you like that jab to the solar plexus?”

Ganimard, his mouth wide open, was still gasping for breath. The auto had crossed the Seine and was heading toward the Santé Prison. The chauffeur had not even turned his head. Suddenly Arsène Lupin changed his tone.

“Listen, Ganimard, and try to understand. You must know that I didn’t kill that poor imbecile, Oliveira. I was blackjacked from behind by a charming fellow whom I know and who will soon have to settle with me. It was he who killed Oliveira and falsified the scene of the crime. Very neat, that candlestick business. A few centimeters more and I would have had it. *Sapristi!* What a blow to the skull! I was just coming to when you arrived. So I played dead while waiting for the chance to play the madman. You thought I was out cold, didn’t you? Very convenient—it gave me time for reflection.

“‘*Maurice... Outremer...*’ What does that mean—Maurice? Well, you know that Oliveira had liquidated his fortune. I knew it, too—I have my own sources. I heard you searching Oliveira’s suite, and that saved me much time and trouble. If the money was not there, where could it be, eh, Ganimard?”

Ganimard was so anxious to learn the solution to the enigma that he forgot for a moment that he was practically a prisoner of Arsène Lupin.

“Where?” he asked meekly.

“The answer is so clear that you must be blind not to see it. Oliveira must have bought something of very small dimensions, but of very great value—a jewel, perhaps, or maybe a diamond—I saw the connection immediately. From that point on, my plan was simple. The police would place seals on the suite and set a watch on the Claridge. Impossible for me, therefore, to get back into Oliveira’s study. What would you have done in my place?”

Ganimard mumbled something unintelligible, but probably rude.

Lupin’s taunting laughter again rang out.

“Ganimard, you are a dolt, a blockhead, and a mooncalf. All I had to do was to get myself arrested, simulate madness, and wait for a reenactment of the crime. The police needed Lupin. Lupin was the only witness to the murder. So Ganimard, with motherly care, had to take Lupin to Oliveira’s study and turn him loose.”

Ganimard clenched his fists.

“So Lupin was able to conduct his search quietly under the very nose of his guardian angel. He immediately lay hands on the thing he was looking for. The business of the key and the drawer was of course just window-dressing to lead you on, my dear accomplice. But this, my friend, is more to the point...”

Lupin drew from his pocket the old envelope he had given to Ganimard in Oliveira’s study and then taken back.

“You had millions in your hand, Ganimard!”

The Inspector roared with anger.

“Control yourself, Ganimard. It’s not your fault that you were born without the power of intelligent observation. See this envelope? And the two postage stamps on it? Don’t you recognize them? *Maurice! As in île Maurice!*² The two stamps are copies of the first postage stamps issued by the island—the Queen Victoria issue of 1847³—and what beauties they are! In absolutely superb condition, with extra-wide margins—what the dealers on the stamp exchange would call ‘mint.’ Their value? Fabulous, my dear Ganimard, almost priceless—who can say how much a fanatical collector would pay for two such brilliant and immaculate copies? Where Oliveira obtained them, I don’t know. He hid them in the most natural place in the world—on an old envelope lying on the desk, where anybody and everybody could see it. Injured? Oh, no, the two stamps are stickered on very lightly and very, very carefully. And there they were, Ganimard, my pet, in front of your eyes all the time, staring you in the face. So simple, so neat, eh?”

“Give me that envelope, you thief!” roared Ganimard.

“Watch your language, Ganimard. Is that the way to thank good-old Lupin who takes the trouble to explain everything so clearly to you?”

“Then keep on explaining. What does ‘Outremer’ mean?”

“Ah, that is something I will explain later. What about tomorrow evening? I’ll see you in the railway station at Poitiers, let’s say. It’s not far-less than two hundred miles.”

Ganimard was not happy with Lupin’s mockery. He took refuge in sullen silence. Lupin looked about him.

“Well, Ganimard, I must say good night now.”

“Don’t, I warn you. If you make the slightest move, I’ll shout. There are six armed men following us. You’ll be shot down like a dog.”

“Idiot! What about my phone call? *The carrots are cooked*: A prearranged signal, Ganimard, to alert a few friends who must be in the immediate vicinity at this very moment.”

As though on cue from Lupin, two cars crashed into each other almost in front of the Daimler. There were cries, the shrill sounds of a police whistle. For an instant Ganimard turned his head in the direction of the accident.

In that instant, Arsène Lupin was in the street, gun barrel, aimed at Ganimard. Recklessly, the Inspector jumped out after him, but too late. A passing Delahaye snatched up Lupin on the fly and disappeared into the night.

TO BE CONTIUNUED IN THE BOOK...

² In English, Mauritius, an island nation off the southeast coast of Africa. Since it was French until they ceded it to Britain in 1814, the French still call it ‘île Maurice.’

³ The first two Mauritius stamps were the first stamps authorized by the British colonial government. A local engraver named Joseph O. Barnard prepared the two designs, which showed the image of Queen Victoria. One peculiarity of the two stamps is that they are inscribed with the words *POST OFFICE* along the left edge of the design. (Later issues of nearly identical design were marked *POST PAID* instead.) Only 500 each of the Mauritius Post Office stamps were printed and most have been lost forever. A few rare covers bearing one or both of the stamps also survive, and they command enormous sums when they are sold. The only known cover bearing one each of the two Mauritius Post Office stamps sold at the 1993 Feldman auction for \$3,8 million, the highest price ever paid for a single philatelic item.