

The following is an excerpt from *Arsène Lupin*, a play by Maurice Leblanc and Francis de Croisset, translation by Frank J. Morlock. Copyright © 2002, all rights reserved. *Arsène Lupin* follows the exploits of a “gentleman burglar,” France’s “national thief.” The complete text is available from Rogue Publishing at www.roguepublishing.com.

DUKE But you are right. The track is clear.

GUERCHARD Yes, indeed! The other was childish. Traces of steps in the garden, the ladder, the table against the window ledge. It’s a track that doesn’t stand up. It’s a track for an investigating judge. We’ve wasted a whole day.

DUKE Then, the real track—?

GUERCHARD We’ve just seen it together. The two mansions. This one here and the neighboring building which is unoccupied—they communicate.

DUKE In a manner of speaking. . . . They communicate by the opening Lupin and his gang have forced open in the body of the chimney.

GUERCHARD Yes. It’s a well-known trick. Thefts of large jewelry shops sometimes are performed in this way. But what gives this proceeding a new stamp and at first sight is disconcerting is that the bandits had the audacity to drill through three meters of chimney an opening large enough to be able to steal all the furniture.

DUKE It’s true, the opening emerges like a bay window in a room of the neighboring building, on the second floor. These burglars are capable of anything, even a work of masonry.

GUERCHARD Oh, all this has been prepared by a long hand; but now I’ll follow the track with my eyes closed. For we have all the evidence. Fragments of gilded frames, threads of tapestry, etc. Once the burglary was effected, the neighboring building being empty, they could calmly go down the stairway and leave by the large door.

DUKE They came down by the stairway, you think?

GUERCHARD I don’t think; I’m sure of it. Here, these flowers, I found them on the stairs. They’re still fresh.

DUKE Huh! Why, I picked similar flowers yesterday at Charmerace. It’s salvia.

GUERCHARD Pink salvia, Your Grace! I know only one gardener who has succeeded in obtaining this shade. It’s the gardener of Mr. Gournay-Martin.

DUKE Why, then—the thieves last night. Why, yes. —That cannot be!

GUERCHARD Go on. Say your idea.

DUKE The Charolais.

GUERCHARD By Jove!

DUKE It's true. . . . It's exciting. Ah, if we could prove it!

GUERCHARD We'll be able to soon.

DUKE How's that?

GUERCHARD Yes, I telephoned to Charmerace. The gardener was absent, but on his return he will call me on the telephone; we will then know who has penetrated into the greenhouse.

DUKE It's fascinating! These clues, these tracks that cross . . . Each one bit by bit resumes its normal place. Fascinating! . . . A cigarette?

GUERCHARD Is it Caporal?

DUKE No. Yellow tobacco, from Mercedes.

GUERCHARD Thanks.

DUKE (*lighting a cigarette*) Yes, fascinating. Then, the thieves came from Charmerace. That was the Charolais. . . . They came from the neighboring mansion and that's the way they got in.

GUERCHARD Ah! No.

DUKE No?

GUERCHARD No, they got in through the door of the mansion we are in.

DUKE But who could have opened for them? An accomplice, then?

GUERCHARD Yes.

DUKE Who?

GUERCHARD (*ringing; to Boursin, who enters*) Bring in the housekeeper, Victoria. (*Boursin leaves.*)

DUKE What! Victoria! The investigating judge questioned her this afternoon. He seemed to believe in her innocence.

GUERCHARD Yes. As he also seemed to give only secondary importance to the track in the chimney, which we just verified together. Innocent Victoria! Your Grace, there's certainly an innocent in all this. Do you know who it is?

DUKE No.

GUERCHARD The investigating judge.