

But, with all his instinct, with all his nervous force, Lupin saw the movements of the enemy and guessed the very sequence of his ideas.

He himself did not budge, but remained propped against the wall, almost on his knees, ready to spring.

He felt that the figure was touching, feeling the bed-clothes, to find the spot at which it must strike. Lupin heard its breath. He even thought that he heard the beating of its heart. And he noticed with pride that his own heart beat no louder than before . . . whereas the heart of the other . . . oh, yes, he could hear it now, that disordered, mad heart, knocking, like a clapper of a bell, against the cavity of the chest!

The hand of the other rose. . . .

A second, two seconds. . . .

Was he hesitating? Was he once more going to spare his adversary?

And Lupin, in the great silence, said:

"But strike! Why don't you strike?"

A yell of rage. . . . The arm fell as though moved by a spring.

Then came a moan.

Lupin had caught the arm in mid-air at the level of the wrist. . . . And, leaping out of bed, tremendous, irresistible, he clutched the man by the throat and threw him.

That was all. There was no struggle. There was no possibility even of a struggle. The man lay on the floor, nailed, pinned by two steel rivets, which were Lupin's hands. And there was not a man in the world strong enough to release himself from that grip.

And not a word. Lupin uttered none of those