

THE TRAITOR

about a quarter or ten minutes to three. He also gave me the names of the three gentlemen he had been with in the Café de la Paix, at twenty minutes to three—the time he was supposed to have been in the bank. In brief, he said he had been impersonated and his signature forged.

The manager of the bank, Monsieur de Tonancourt, was naturally anxious to have the mystery solved and the thief captured before he could do away with the money.

After making a few more enquiries, I drove to the office of the prefect of police with the two cheques in my possession.

On learning the gravity of the case, the prefect summoned Detective Vital Jodoin, my friend, who plays such an important part in this history. We were told to unravel the mystery together.

Jodoin was a singularly handsome man of twenty-eight, almost six feet in height, perfectly proportioned, and had muscles as hard as iron. Had he been born as plain a man as I, the feminine temptation which came to him through this case, I believe, would never have beset him.

After discussing the facts, we arrived at the following conclusions: That the impersonator—if there had been one—must have had accomplices, or he would never have dared to cash the cheque so near the time usually chosen by M. Tourville. Again, to have impersonated him so successfully, it would have been necessary for the forger to have been personally acquainted with the merchant.