



# **THE MÉLAMARE MYSTERY**

**MAURICE LEBLANC**

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**BY  
MAURICE LEBLANC**

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*The Mélamare Mystery By Maurice Leblanc.*

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“Oh, do you know Béchoux?” asked d’Enneris, on a note of genuine interest. “Let’s see, wasn’t Béchoux the Inspector who won fame by his collaboration with the mysterious Jim Barnett<sup>1</sup>—The Barnett Agency man?”

“For goodness’ sake don’t mention Barnett to the Inspector or you’ll upset the poor chap thoroughly. Apparently Barnett made rings round Béchoux!”

“I think I remember hearing about it. . . . There was that business of the Man with the Gold Teeth, and the disappearance of the Twelve Little Nigger Boys. . . . So Béchoux is looking after your diamonds for you?”

“Yes. As a matter of fact, Béchoux himself has had to leave Paris for a fortnight, but he’s detailed three ex-policemen to keep guard outside. Signed them up, and then sent the bill in to me!”

With a pitying smile, d’Enneris remarked: “My dear Van Houben, if you’d signed up an entire regiment you would still have been powerless against certain—er—tactics. . . .”

As they spoke, Régine swept out. Accompanied by her stalwart bodyguard of detectives, she passed from the front of the house into the wings. As she was the eleventh turn and there was a short interval after the tenth, a kind of breathless, solemn pause preceded her entrance. A hush fell on the brilliant audience. All eyes were riveted on the stage. Suddenly there came a great burst of clapping as Régine walked slowly down to the footlights and stood there for a second, motionless.

The crowd is always swayed by beauty. The peerless Régine and her splendid *toilette* were in that absolute harmony which defies analysis. But more compelling than even Régine’s own loveliness was the glitter of the jewels she wore. The silver tunic was caught in at the waist by a shining belt, and merged into a corselet which seemed entirely composed of diamonds. They were quite dazzling. Their glancing, reflecting lights played around the actress like a shimmering, rainbow flame.

“Good Lord,” said Van Houben, “those blessed stones are even finer than I thought. And doesn’t the little devil show them off! Fine filly, eh? Regular queen!” He waxed confidential. “See here, d’Enneris, I’ll let you into a secret. Can you guess why I tricked Régine out in all those sparklers? Well, one reason was that I wanted to mark an—auspicious occasion, shall we say? And the other reason was that it made an excuse for giving her a bodyguard, which pleases her and helps me keep track of her movements. It’s not that I’m scared of rivals, but I believe in keeping a weather eye open!”

He brought one big hand lightly down on his friend’s shoulder, as much as to say: “Keep off the grass, my lad. . . .”

<sup>1</sup> See *Jim Barnett Intervenes* (Mills & Boon, 7s. 6d.).











































































































































































































































































































































