

A.E.W. MASON



At the Villa Rose

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by A.E.W. Mason (1865-1948)

Harry Wethermill, brilliant scientist, graduate of Oxford and Munich, has made a fortune from his inventions and is taking a vacation at Aix-les-Bains. There he falls in love with the beautiful Celia Harland, who serves as companion to the aging, warm-hearted Madam Dauvray. All this is observed by Julius Ricardo, a retired financier from London who spends every August at Aix, expecting there to find a pleasant and peaceful life. Imagine his consternation when he learns that Mme. Dauvray has been brutally murdered, and imagine Harry Wethermill's consternation when he learns that every finger of suspicion is pointed at the now vanished Celia Harland.

Wethermill implores Ricardo to ask his friend Inspector Hanaud, the great detective of the Paris Sûreté (who is also vacationing in Aix) to involve himself in the case so that the truth may come out. Hanaud agrees to do so and goes to work. Will he be up to the job? And will Harry Wethermill ultimately be glad that he called in the great man? Surely Hanaud will exercise his powerful little grey cells – one of several characteristics he shares with a famous Belgian detective of later decades, and indeed some scholars of mystery suggest that Agatha Christie, in her invention of Hercule Poirot, owes a debt to Mason.

Total running time: 7:22:17
Read by Nicholas Clifford

Cover design by Kathryn Delaney
Photograph by Daderot

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