



Sherlock Holmes v. Arsène Lupin

A comparison of the men and their methods

Prepared by Brian Clark; presented to the John Openshaw Society in Houston, Texas, USA on 21st April 2024

Characterizations

Name	Sherlock Holmes	Arsène Lupin
Occupation	Consulting Detective	Gentleman Burgler
Residence	London, then Sussex	Paris
Skills	Detection Master of disguise	Evasion Master of disguise
Opinions	Patriotic Dismissive of police	Patriotic Dismissive of police

Characterizations

Name	Sherlock Holmes	Arsène Lupin
Born	January 6th, 1854	1874, the Yvelines
Parents	[unmentioned]	[detailed backstory]
Education	Probably chemistry, some biology, and criminal law	Lycée Corneille: 1875 to 1882 (?)
Partners	Unmarried; Watson	Numerous affairs
Children	None	At least four children

...as described by their creators

Sherlock Holmes

“In height he was rather over six feet, and so excessively lean that he seemed to be considerably taller. His eyes were sharp and piercing, save during those intervals of torpor to which I have alluded; and his thin, hawk-like nose gave his whole expression an air of alertness and decision. His chin, too, had the prominence and squareness which mark the man of determination. His hands were invariably blotted with ink and stained with chemicals, yet he was possessed of extraordinary delicacy of touch, as I frequently had occasion to observe when I watched him manipulating his fragile philosophical instruments.” [STUD]

Arsène Lupin

“Arsene Lupin, the man of a thousand disguises: in turn a chauffeur, detective, bookmaker, Russian physician, Spanish bull-fighter, commercial traveler, robust youth, or decrepit old man.”
[Arsène Lupin, Gentleman-Thief]

“I have seen him twenty times and each time he was a different person; even he himself said to me on one occasion: ‘I no longer know who I am. I cannot recognize myself in the mirror.’ Certainly, he was a great actor, and possessed a marvelous faculty for disguising himself. Without the slightest effort, he could adopt the voice, gestures and mannerisms of another person.”
[Arsène Lupin, Gentleman-Thief]

The Authors



Sir Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle
22 May 1859 – 7 July 1930
Age 71



Maurice Marie Émile Leblanc
11 December 1864 – 6 November 1941
Age 62

Arthur Conan Doyle.

Maurice Leblanc

Birthplace	Edinburgh, Scotland	Rouen, France
Education	Irish Catholic schools as an adolescent; studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh	Lycée Pierre Corneille (1875–1882) Unknown; eventually dropped out of law school
Family	Married twice: first in 1895 at age 36, but his wife died of TB in 1906; 2 children. He married again 1907; she lived until 1940; 3 children. 5 children in all.	Married twice: Marie-Ernestine Flannel (1889–1895) and Marguerite Wormser (after 1895, married 1906). One daughter, Louise Amélie Marie Leblanc (1889–1974)
Professions	Medical doctor, ship's surgeon, ophthalmologist, author, poet, playwright, politician	Journalist, novelist, storyteller, playwright
Faith(s)	Baptized Roman Catholic; became agnostic in his late teens, then an ardent spiritualist later in life	Unknown
Politics	Ran for Parliament twice as a Liberal Unionist, never elected; pro-Boer War; pro-Congo Free State; advocate for judicial justice	Free-thinker in his younger years, and a supporter of the radical socialists; became more bourgeois after his ascent to the aristocracy in 1908 and through WWI
Honours	Knight Bachelor; Knight of Grace of the Order of Saint John; Deputy-Lieutenant of Surrey	Légion d'Honneur
Burial	All Saints Churchyard, Minstead	Montparnasse Cemetery, Paris

Literary Output

Sherlock Holmes

- 56 short stories, 5 collections
- 4 novels
- First published in 1886
- Last published in 1927
- Setting: 1880 - 1914

Doyle's Total Production

~30 novels, 160+ short stories, 81 poems
(in 3 volumes), 13 plays, 000s of letters

Arsène Lupin

- 17 novels, 39 novellas
- 24 books [#25 posthumously]
- 5 plays
- First published in 1905
- Last published in 1939/41
- Setting: early 1900s

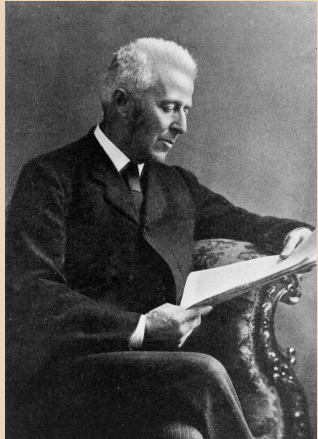
LeBlanc's Total Production

~34 books, all Lupin

Inspirations

Dr. Joseph Bell

- Scottish lecturer in the medical school at the University of Edinburgh
- Justice of the Peace
- Early promoter of forensic pathology
- Doyle served as Bell's clerk at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary



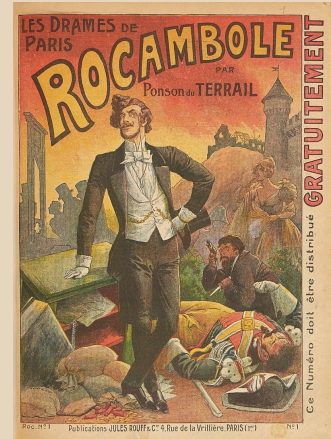
"It is most certainly to you that I owe Sherlock Holmes ... round the centre of deduction and inference and observation which I have heard you inculcate I have tried to build up a man."

Alexandre Marius Jacob

- French anarchist who founded a gang of thieves ("the workers of the night") with principles
- 150 burglaries attributed to him, many with mocking notes left behind
- Sentenced to forced labour in a sensational trial in 1905; sent to the Salvation Islands

Rocamboles (fictional character)

- Created by Pierre Alexis Ponson du Terrail
- 9 books, 1857 - 1870
- Orphan trained by criminals who becomes a fearless adventurer and hero mastermind



Controversy!

Leblanc's first Lupin story was "L'Arrestation d'Arsène Lupin", published during July 1905 in *Je sais tout* ("I Know Everything"), a Paris-based magazine edited by a journalist friend, Pierre Lafitte.

In Leblanc's second story, Lupin gives a back-handed compliment to the detective who arrested him in the debut. He says that Ganimard is "almost as clever as Sherlock Holmes."



Sherlock Holmes Arrives Too Late!



UNE RENCONTRE INATTENDUE

C'était un homme d'une cinquantaine d'années peut-être, très mince, aux longues jambes et dont le costume précisait l'aspect étranger. Il portait à la main une lourde canne et une sacoche pendait à son cou.
(Page 550, col. 1.)

La Vie extraordinaire d'Arsène Lupin (2)
par Maurice LEBLANC

Sherlock Holmes arrive trop tard

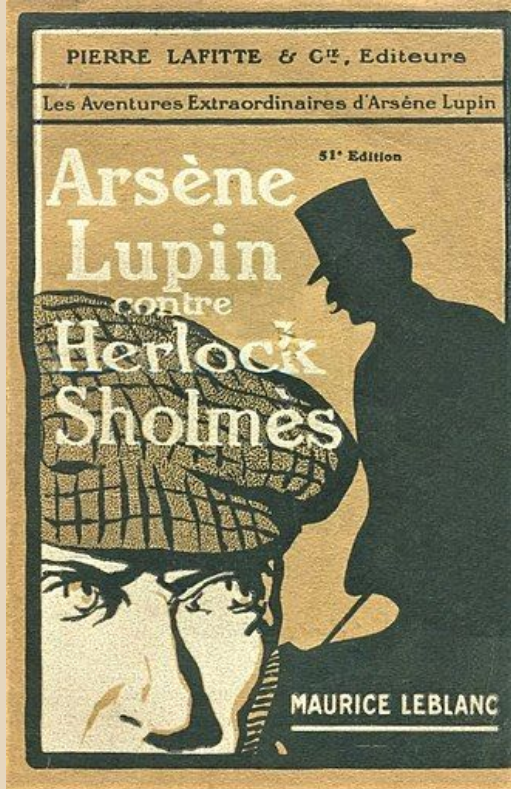
In June 1906, Leblanc published another Lupin story in *Je sais tout* called “La vie extraordinaire d’Arsène Lupin: Sherlock Holmes arrive trop tard” (“Sherlock Holmes Arrives Too Late”)

Spoiler: Lupin bests Holmes

ACD was not amused by the unauthorized use of his character. He threatened legal action.

Use of “Sherlock Holmes” by Leblanc stopped in 1907 after two stories had been published.

Enter: Herlock Sholmes



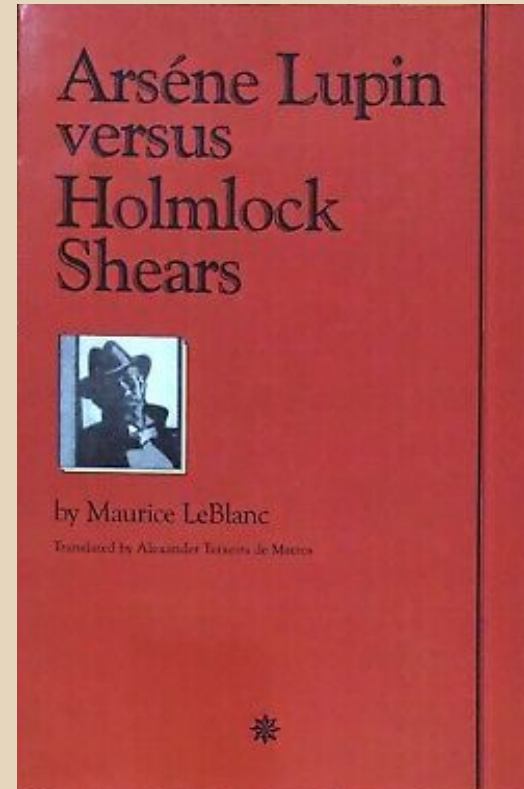
Leblanc's solution for subsequent Lupin stories was to (occasionally) pit his anti-hero against “Herlock Sholmes”, a cheeky sobriquet first used by Sherlockian fans in 1894.

“Dr. Wilson” is Herlock's partner.

One 1910 UK translation changed it to “Holmlock Shears”.

“The Blonde Lady” is the classic Herlock Sholmes story.

Spoiler: Lupin gets away again!





Philosophical Parallels?



“The ideal reasoner,” he remarked, “would, when he had once been shown a single fact in all its bearings, deduce from it not only the chain of events which led up to it but also all the results which would follow from it.” [FIVE]

“The most disparate effects often come from a single cause.”

[Arsène Lupin, Gentleman-Thief]

“Circumstantial evidence is a very tricky thing. It may seem to point very straight to one thing, but if you shift your own point of view a little, you may find it pointing in an equally uncompromising manner to something entirely different.” [BOSC]

“Officers of the law frequently form a hasty conviction as to the guilt of a suspected person, and then distort all subsequent discoveries to conform to their established theory.”

[Arsène Lupin, Gentleman-Thief]



Critical Contrasts



"Eliminate all other factors, and the one which remains must be the truth."
[SIGN]

"Perhaps when a man has special knowledge and special powers like my own, it rather encourages him to seek a complex explanation when a simpler one is at hand."
[ABBE]

"Detection is, or ought to be, an exact science, and should be treated in the same cold and unemotional manner."
[SIGN]

"Difficult, yes, but possible, therefore certain."
[Arsène Lupin, Gentleman-Thief]

"What a pity that I am not an honest man!"
[Arsène Lupin, Gentleman-Thief]

"A woman was looking at me, Ganimard, and I loved her. Do you fully understand what that means: to be under the eyes of a woman that one loves?
I cared for nothing in the world but that."
[The Extraordinary Adventures of Arsene Lupin, Gentleman Burglar]

Selected Bibliography

- Arsène Lupin, Gentleman-Thief
- Arsène Lupin versus Herlock Sholmes
- The Hollow Needle: Further Adventures of Arsène Lupin
- 813
- The Crystal Stopper
- The Confessions of Arsène Lupin
- The Golden Triangle