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CLOSE QUARTERS;

OR, THE HOUSE IN THE RUE BARBETTE

CHAPTER XXI.-(Cont'd)

"We are equal in that respect if in no other," retorted Talbot. An evil smile lit up the Frenchman's pallid face. He pulled out his knife with a flourish and hissed -"Then die yourself, you fool!"

He advanced upon Jack with a murderous look in his face. Talbot awaited him, and he, too, smiled. "You are a liar and a coward to the end!" he cried.

At that instant a cold, clear voice rang out among the trees, close be-

hind the two men. "Halt!" it cried.

whence came this strange interruption. Brett quietly came a few paces nearer.

at Dubois' breast.

"Drop that knife," he said with from off his insensible foe. an icy determination in tone and

through his hearer's spine. "Drop it, or I will shoot you this

instant!"

Dubois felt that the game was up He flung down the knife and tried even then to laugh.

"Of course," he sneered, "as I am cornered on all sides I give in." Brett still advanced until he reached the spot where the knife lay. He picked it up, and at the same instant lowered the revolver.

Then he observed, with the easy indifference of one who remarks upon the weather-

"Now, you can fight, monsieur. My young friend here is determined to thrash you, and you richly deserve it. So I will not interfere. But just one word before you begin. Two can play at the game of bluff. This is your own pistol. It is, as you know, unloaded."

Dubois' cry of rage at the trick which had been played on him was smothered by his efforts to close with Talbot, who immediately flung himself upon him with an impetuosity not to be denied.

The fight, while it lasted, was fast and furious.

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each other on the ground-one striving to choke the life out of his opponent, the other seeking to rend intoxicated sailors. with teeth and nails.

bodies, locked together in a dead- posal of the Englishman for the ly struggle, suddenly there came a proper custody of their captive. sharp snap. The Frenchman's Brett thanked him, but declined right arm was broken near the the proffered assistance.

his vengeance on him. Unques- vere injuries during the struggle tionably he would have strangled which he brought on himself that the man had not Brett interfered, he will be quite unable to be moved for with his left hand he clutched for several days. His right arm is Dubois' throat, whilst with the broken, and his face has been reand turned their eyes to learn right he endeavored to demolish his duced to a pulp. There is a stout features. But the barrister, as- Frenchman named Beaucaire and sisted by the Italian pilot-whose three Turks who accompanied him, after-life was cheered by his ability He held a revolver significantly to relate the details of this Hom- custody. We bring no charge eric fight-pulled the young man against them, but it would be as

Talbot regained his feet. Pant- key until we have left Palermo." manner that sent a cold shiver ing with exertion, he glared down at the prostrate form, but Brett, being practical-minded, knelt by the Frenchman's side, tore open his shirt, and unfastened the preci-

ous belt. "At last!" he murmured.

Peering into one of the pockets, which by the way of its bulging he thought would contain the "Imperial diamond," he looked up at Talbot with the words-

"Now, Jack, we are even with

It was the first time he had addressed Talbot by his familiar and Christian name. The very sound brought back the other man to a conscious state of his surroundings, and in the same instant a great weakness came over him, for the terrible exertions of the past few minutes had utterly exhausted

"I can not even thank you, for I am done up. But I owe it all to you, old man. If it had not been for you we should never have found

Brett's grave face wrinkled in a

kindly smile. "I think," he said, "we are even on that score. If you had not followed this rascal he might have escaped at the finish, and my pride would never have recovered from the shock. However, go and sit down for a minute or two and you

will soon pull yourself together. The Frenchman regained consciousness.

"Be good enough to remain quite still, M. Dubois," said Brett soothingly. "You have reached the end of your rope, and we do not even need to tie you."

With the aid of some handkerchief's and a couple of saplings cutby the Italian he managed roughly to bind the fractured limb. Then

he assisted Dubois to his feet. "Come," he said, "we are regretfully compelled to bring you back to town, but we will endeavor to make the journey as comfortable as possible for you. In any event, the horses will not travel so fast."

In the roadway they found the carriages where they had left them, whilst three wondering cocchieri were exchanging opinions as to the mad behaviour of the foreigners.

Brett and the Frenchman entered one vehicle, Talbot and the pilot the other.

"But, gentlemen," moaned the disconsolate- cabman who had headed the procession from Palermo, "and who will pay me for my dead horse?"

"I know not," replied Brett. "In any event you had better occupy the vacant seat and drive those two gentleman to the city, where you can secure the means of bringing back your carriage."

In this guise the party returned to Palermo, evoking much wonderment all the way through the Corso Vittorio Emmanuele, whence no fewer than six outraged policemen followed them to the Hotel de France to obtain their names and addresses.

CHAPTER XXII.

Palermo was in a perfect ferment. Not since the last revolution had people seen such a pitched battle in the streets, for Macpherson and his myrmidons had used no gentle means to pacify Gros Jean and the Turks, whilst the crew of the Belles Soeurs would not be in a fit state to go to sea for many days.

An excited mob of people surrounded the hotel when Brett and Talbot arrived with their wounded prisoner. Fortunately the Chief of Police came in person to ascertain the cause of all this turmoil. The first alarmist report that reached his ears made out that a species of international warfare had broken out in the harbor.

He told his subordinates to clear away the crowd, and explanations by Brett and Winter soon demonstrated the wisdom of an official The two men rolled over and over communique to the Press that the row on the pier was merely the outcome of a quarrel between some

The Chief of Police politely of-From the writhing, convulsive fered to place detectives at the dis-

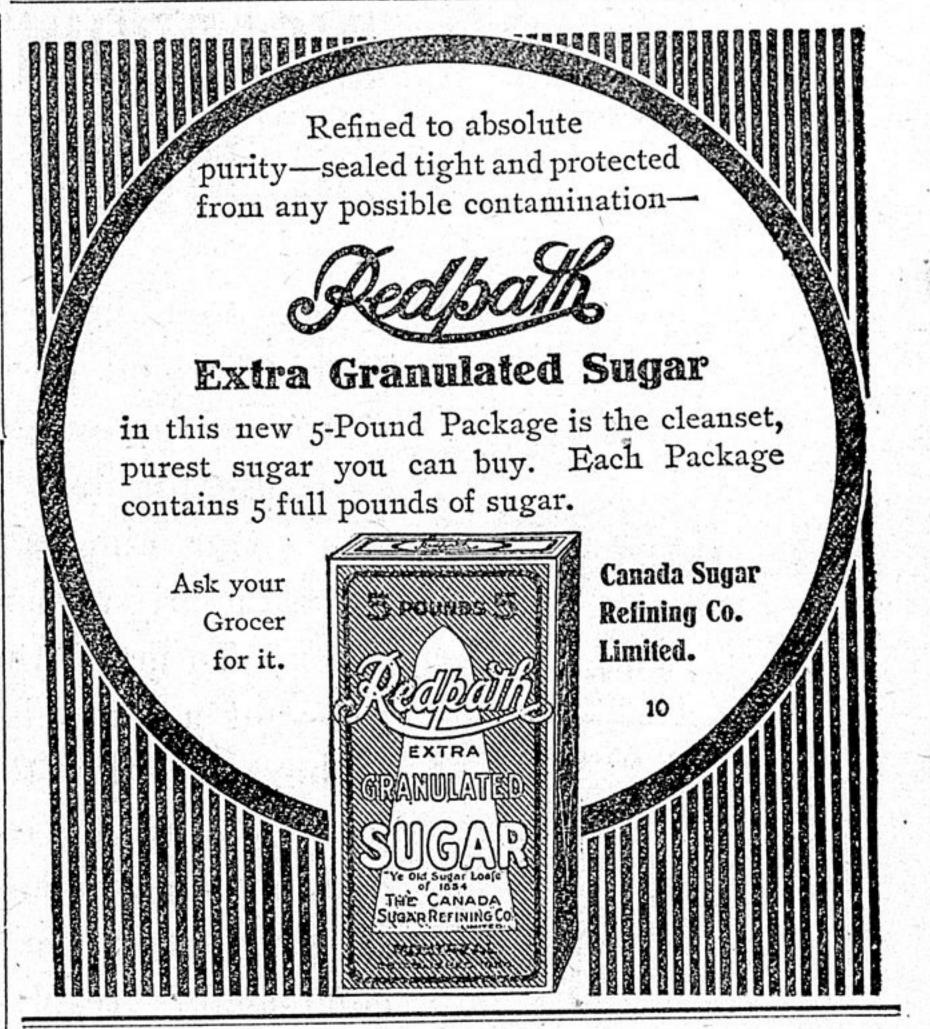
"The only prisoner of interest." Then Talbot proceeded to wreak he explained, "received such sewhom I recommend to your safe well to keep them under lock and (To be continued.)

ADB OF

IMITATIONS ABOUND

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They had apparently all been killed with a hatchet during their sleep, and as no one was alive to give any information, a so-called police hound was sent for from Odessa. The animal, which is a cross between a dog and a wolf, picked up the scent at once from the farm door, and led the police straight to a cottage in a neighboring village, where it sprang on a peasant named Woowiensky, who was lying in bed.

The man was arrested, and subsequently confessed to having mur-

dered the farmer out of revenge for having been dismissed. He said he then killed all the others in the house for fear that some of them might have seen him enter.

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