CLOSE QUARTERS;

OR, THE HOUSE IN THE RUE BARBETTE

CHAPTER I.

Reginald Brett, barrister-at-law and amateur detective, had seldom been more at peace with the world and his own conscience than when he entered the dining-room of his cosy flat this bright October morning.

Since the famous affair of Lady Delia Lyle's disappearance and death, he had not been busy, and the joy of healthy idleness is only known to the hard worker. Again, while dressing, he had received a letter inviting him to a quiet shoot at a delightful place in the country.

All these things blended with happy inconsequence to render Brett contented in mind and affable in manner.

"It's a fine morning, Smith," he said cheerily, as he settled himself at the table where his "man" was already pouring out the coffee.

"Bee-utiful, sir," said Smith.

"Smith!"

"Yessir."

"Not even the best English autumn weather can stand being called 'bee-utiful.' Don't do it. You will open the flood-gates of heaven."

Smith laughed decorously. He had not the slightest idea what his master meant, but if it pleased Mr. Brett to be jocose, it was the duty of a servant who knew his place to be responsive.

The barrister fully understood Smith's delicate appreciation—and its limits. He instantly noticed that the morning paper, instead of reposing next to his folded napkin, was placed out of reach on a sideboard, and that the eggs and bacon made their appearance half a minute too soon.

As an expert swordsman delights to execute a pass en tierce with an umbrella, so did the cleverest analytical detective of the age resolve to amaze his servitor.

"Smith," he said suddenly, composing his features to their most severe cross-examination aspect, "I think the arrangement is an excellent one."

"What arrangement, sir."

"That Mrs. Smith and yourself should have a few days' holiday, while Mrs. Smith's brother takes your place during my forthcoming visit to Lord Northallerton's—why, man, what is the matter? Is it too hot?"—for the cover Smith had lifted off the bacon and eggs clattered violently on the table.

"'Ot, sir. 'Ot isn't the word. You're a fair licker, that's what you are."

Smith invariably dropped his h's when he became excited.

"Smith, I insist that you shall not call me names. Pass the paper."

"But, sir——"

"Pass the paper. Utter another word and I refuse to accept Mrs. Smith's brother as your locum tenens."

Smith was silenced by the last terrible epithet. Yet he was so manifestly nervous that Brett resolved to enlighten him before plunging into the day's news.

"For the last time, Smith," he said, "I will explain to you why it is hopeless for you to think of concealing tradesmen's commissions from me."

The shot went home, but the enemy was acquainted with this method of attack, and did not wince.

"You knew that Lord Northallerton had recently invited me to his October pheasant-shooting. During the last few days a youth, who grotesquely reproduces Mrs. Smith's most prominent features, has mysteriously tenanted the kitchen, ill-cleaned my boots, and bungled over the studs in my shirts. This morning a letter came with the crest and the Northallerton postmark. Really, Smith, considering that you have now breathed the same air as myself for eight long years, I did not expect to be called on for an explanation. Besides, you have destroyed a masterpiece."

"Sir—" began Smith.

"Oh, I understand; there is nothing broken but your reputation. Don't you see that the mere placing of the newspaper at a distance, so that you might have a chance to speak before I opened it, was a subtle stroke, worthy of Lecoca. Yet you demand feeble words. What a pity! Know, Smith, that true genius is dumb. Speech may be silvern, but silence is surely golden."

The barrister solemnly unfolded the paper, and Smith faded from the room. On a page usually devoted to important announcements, the following paragraphs stood forth in the boldness of leaded type:—

"MYSTERIOUS OCCURRENCE IN THE WEST END."

"An affair of some magnitude—perhaps a remarkable crime—has taken place in an Albert Gate mansion.

"Owing to the reticence of the authorities, it is at present impossible to arrive at a definite conclusion as to the nature or extent of the incident, but it is quite certain that public interest will be much excited when details are forthcoming. All sorts of rumors attain credence in the locality, the murder of several prominent persons being not the least persistent of these. Without, however, giving currency to idle speculation several authentic statements may be grouped into a connected form.

"Four weeks ago a party of Turkish gentlemen of high rank in Constantinople, arrived in London and took up their abode in the house in question, after some structural alterations, pointing at great security within and without, had been planned and executed.

"Attending these Turkish gentlemen, or officials, was a numerous suite of Moslem guards and servants, whilst, immediately following their arrival, came from Amsterdam some dozen noted experts in the diamond-cutting industry. These were lodged in a neighboring private hotel, where they were extremely uncommunicative as to their business in London. They were employed during the day at the Albert Gate house. The presence in the mansion, both day and night, of a strong force of Metropolitan police, tended to excite local curiosity to an intense degree, but no clear conception of the business of the occupants was allowed to reach the public.

"Whatever it was that took place, the full particulars were not only well known to the authorities—the presence of the police hints even at Governmental sanction—but matters proceeded on normal lines until yesterday morning.

"Then it became clear that a remarkable development must have occurred during the preceding night, as the whole of the Dutch workmen and the Turkish attendants were taken off in cabs by the police, not to Morton Street Police Station, but to Scotland Yard; this in itself being a most unusual course to adopt. They are unquestionably detained in custody, but they have not yet been charged before a magistrate.

"The police, later in the day, carried off some of these men's personal belongings, from both hotel and mansion.

"A sinister aspect was given to the foregoing mysterious proceedings by the presence at Albert Gate, early in the day, of two police surgeons, who were followed, about twelve o'clock, by Dr. Tennyson Coke, the greatest living authority on toxicology.

"Dr. Coke and the other medical gentlemen subsequently refused to impart the slightest information as to the reasons that led the police to seek their services, and the Scotland Yard authorities are adamant in the matter.

"The representative of a news agency was threatened with arrest for trespass when he endeavored to gain admission to the Albert Gate house, and it is quite evident that the police are determined to prevent the facts from leaking out at present—if they can by any means accomplish their wishes."

Brett read this interesting statement twice slowly. It fascinated him. Its very vagueness, its admissions of inability to tell what had really happened, its adroit use of such phrases as "Turkish gentlemen of high rank," "Noted experts in the diamond-cutting industry," "The greatest living authority on toxicology," betrayed the hand of the disappointed journalistic artist.

"Excellent!" he murmured aloud. "It is the breath of battle to my nostrils. I ought to tip Smith for my breakfast. Had I read this earlier, I would not have eaten a morsel."

He carefully examined the page at the back. It contained matter of no consequence—a London County Council debate—so he took a pair of scissors from his pocket and cut out the complete item, placing the slip as a votive offering in front of a finely executed bust of Edgar Allen Poe, that stood on a bookcase behind him.

Within three minutes the scissors were again employed. The new cutting ran—

"There is trouble at Yildiz Kiosk. A Reuter's telegram from Constantinople states that a near relative of the Sultan has fled to France. The Porte have asked the French Government to apprehend him, but the French Ambassador has informed Riez Pasha that this course is impracticable in the absence of any criminal charge."

"These two are one," said the barrister, as he turned towards Poe's bust and laid the slip by the side of its predecessor. This time he had mutilated a critique of an Ibsenite drama.

The rest of the newspaper's contents had no special interest for him, and he soon threw aside the journal in order to rise, light a cigarette, and muster sufficient energy to write a telegram accepting Lord Northallerton's invitation for the following day.

He was on the point of reaching for a telegraph form when Smith entered with a card. It bore the name and address—

"The Earl of Fairholme, Stanhope Gate."

"Curious," thought Brett, "Where is his lordship?" he said aloud—"at the door, or in the street?"

(His flat was on the second floor).

"In a keb, sir."

"Bring his lordship up."

A rapid glance at "Debrett" revealed that the Earl of Fairholme was thirty, unmarried, the fourteenth of his line, and the possessor of country seats at Fairholme, Warwickshire, and Glen Spey, Inverness.

The earl entered, an athletic, well-groomed man, one whose lines were usually cast in pleasant places, but who was now in an unwonted state of flurry and annoyance.

Each man was favorably impressed by the other. His lordship produced an introductory card, and Brett was astonished to find that it bore the name of the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

"I have come——" commenced his lordship hesitatingly.

But the barrister broke in. "You have had a bad night, Lord Fairholme. You wish for a long and comfortable chat. Now, won't you start with a whisky and soda, light a cigar, and draw an easy chair near the fire?"

"'Pon my honor, Mr. Brett, you begin well. You give me confidence. Those are the first cheerful words I have heard during twenty-four hours."

The earl was easily manoeuvred into a strong light. Then he made a fresh start.

"You have doubtless heard of this Albert Gate affair, Mr. Brett?"

"You mean this?" said the other, rising and handing to his visitor the longer paragraph of the two he had selected from the newspaper.

"That is very curious," said the earl, momentarily startled. But he was too preoccupied by his thoughts to pay much heed to the incident. He merely glanced at the cutting and went on:

"Yes, that is it. Well, Edith—Miss Talbot, I mean—vows that she won't marry me until this beastly business is cleared up. Of course, we all know that Jack didn't slope with the diamonds. He's tied up or dead, for sure. But—no matter what may have become of him—why the dickens that should stop Edith from marrying me is more than I can fathom. Just look at some of the women in Society. They don't leave it to their relatives to be mixed up in a scandal, I can tell you. Still, there you are. Edith is jolly clever and awfully determined, so you've got to find him, Mr. Brett. Dead or alive, he must be found, and cleared."

"He shall," said Brett, gazing into the fire.

The quiet, self-reliant voice steadied the young peer. He checked an imminent flow of words, picked up the newspaper slip again, and this time read it. Then he blushed.

"You must think me very stupid, Mr. Brett, to burst out in such a manner when you probably have never heard of the people I am talking about."

"You will tell me, Lord Fairholme, if you get quietly to work, and try to speak, so far as you find it possible, in chronological sequence."

(To be continued.)

A fellow never suffers from ennui till he gets tired doing nothing.

In society it is much easier to do the proper thing than the right thing.

Every church has a nave, but, unfortunately, it isn't always spelled that way.

If misery loves company it's up to everybody to get married.

Many a man starves to-day while feeding on the hopes of to-morrow.

If the average man has any virtues he feels like apologizing for them.

There's nothing like the knife of candor for severing the bonds of friendship.

Only a wise man knows how little he actually knows of that which may be known.

A woman's idea of a man's respectability depends on how he is dressed.

LETTERS OF A SON IN THE MAKING TO HIS DAD.

—By REX McEVOY

[Mr. McEvoy will write for this paper a series of letters from the west. They will appear from time to time under the above heading, and will give a picture of the great Canadian west from the standpoint of a young Ontario man going out there to make his way. These letters should be full of interest for every Ontario father.]

Heron Bay, Ont., Aug. 9th.

My Dear Father,—

Perhaps it would be well to explain the shakiness of my handwriting before going any further in this letter. Although everybody in our car is in excellent spirits, we are all sober. The fact is, however, that in spite of the little movable table which the porter has fitted up for me, the motion of the car occasionally makes my writing rather shaky. They are great little tables that fit into the side of the car near the windows and they are supported at the other end on one leg. They come in useful for all sorts of things. We use them as dining tables, and just now an old man and his three sons just across the aisle are playing a game of cards on their little table. They are going out to take up some of the irrigated lands of Alberta which are watered by the C .P. R. irrigation canal. I got acquainted with them through mother not putting a cup in my valise when she packed the grub for me to eat on the trip. I borrowed a cup from them and traded two bananas for a cup of coffee and some dried beef. They are a fine jolly crowd in this car, and there is all sorts of fun all the time, especially at meal times.

I am mighty glad already that we decided I should come out west this summer, even if I don't stop here. Why, I never realized before what a big place Ontario is. Of course, that big map of the Dominion hanging on the schoolhouse wall, showed that the Province was some size, but here I have been travelling along for pretty near twenty-four hours, and we have to go over fourteen hours more before we get to Manitoba. We cross the boundary at Rennie, just 1161 miles from the Union Station, Toronto, where you saw me off when I climbed up into this car in the Canadian Pacific train for Vancouver.

Do you know, Dad, for all they talk of the West, we have a good line of country in Ontario. We didn't see much of Muskoka, as we passed through there at night, but I woke at Muskoka station and raised the blind at my window and saw the trunks of the nearest trees looking ghostly in the electric lights of the station. Behind them was black mystery. Of course, I couldn't see much, but it looked as though the folks that go there for their holidays ought to get a pretty good change from the cities. At breakfast time, on the first morning of our trip, we were in the Sudbury district, and it's something to make us throw out our chests, and feel proud to think that the richest nickel and copper deposits in the whole world are right here in Ontario. Moose Mountain Range is close here, too—the greatest known iron range in Canada. This ought to be a great manufacturing district some day.

There is not much timber round the line just near Sudbury. The trees die when they get to be six or nine inches through. Poplar trees grow about twenty feet high and then they die, and everywhere you can see these young trees covered with dead, shrivelled leaves. Low bushes give the only touch of green to be seen, and everywhere there are rocks of all kinds, sizes and shapes. There are rocks that you could play duck on the rock with, and others that are bigger than our barn at home, with all sizes in between. It must have been a tremendous job putting the railroad through here. It seems like railroad building was what mother says woman's work is—it's never finished. Every little while we pass a gang of men who are busy doing something to the track. They build culverts of concrete sections and turn streams through them, then they fill in solid all round them, so that a number of little bridges have been done away with. Long trestles have been filled in the same way with solid banks in some places thirty or forty feet high. The line crosses deep valleys on these high banks, and if there is a stream in the bottom of it, the railway may cut a new channel for it through the solid rock. I would like to see how they managed to get over this country in the days when they used to go to Winnipeg by ox-cart.

I saw my first real live Indian to-day. There are lots of lakes all through this country, you are hardly ever out of sight of water in this part of Ontario, and just as we passed one lake I caught sight of an Indian tepee on an island, with a squaw bending over a fire. There was a birch-bark canoe—the genuine thing—drawn out of the water and lying upside down, close to the tepee. You go for miles and miles in the train without seeing anybody, and then you may come on a little clearing with a little bit of a wooden house, unpainted and looking more like a box with windows than a house. But there may be a flag-pole alongside, where the Union Jack is run up on holidays. The children who run out of these cabins and wave at the train, as it goes by, seem quite glad to see someone, even if it's only to shout "howdy," as the train rushes by.

We passed a grave to-day, where, I suppose, some settler is buried. It was all alone in a small cleared space among the trees and bushes. It looked awfully lonely in that wilderness, but there must have been someone to think kindly of the man who is taking his last rest there, for a wooden picket fence had been built round the grave, and a weather-worn wooden cross stood at its head.

Say, Dad, I do wish you could have been with me this last half hour. We have just come into view of Lake Superior. All day we have been rolling along between fairly high hills. Just as the shadows of evening were coming on we turned down the valley of a river, and suddenly came in full view of the wide expanse of Lake Superior. It was grand. The lake was a bright blue, far out to the horizon, where a blue mountainous island loomed up. In shore, a hundred feet or so below us, the waves were dashing in snowy breakers on the rocks. All about the lake were high, rolling hills, their wooded sides bathed in the mellow ruddy light of sunset. The track here winds in and out around the hills, and sometimes goes through tunnels, while at other times it runs along a precipitous wall, at the foot of which the waves constantly dash.

For some reason, the view of those great hills, and the mighty lake in the sunset light made me think of us singing "Abide With Me" in the church at home, especially that verse:

"Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou, Who changest not, abide with me."

Perhaps it was the thought that the waves of this lake were dashing about that distant island, and at the feet of those hills, for untold centuries without change, that made me think of the hymn. It was a sort of glimpse of eternity.

We are running on with constantly changing views of the lake, which is disappearing in the gathering night. It is immense. I would sort of like to hear the hum of the separator at home now, and I can imagine that you are about hitching up Nellie to go to the post office. Well, I must say good-bye now as the porter is beginning to make up the beds. Tell mother I will write to her.

Your loving son,

JIM.

UPSET HIM.

Hub (angrily)—"What! Thirty-five dollars for that new hat? You told me hats could be bought from $4 up."

Wifey—"Yes, dear, this is one of the 'ups.'"

HEAD ACHE

Stop it in 30 minutes, without any harm to any part of your system, by taking "NA-DRU-CO" Headache Wafers 25c. a box, at all druggists'.

NATIONAL DRUG AND CHEMICAL CO. OF CANADA LIMITED. MONTREAL. 27

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These are made by rightly combining luscious fresh fruits with

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EXTRA GRANULATED SUGAR

The best results are then assured.

Ask your grocer for Redpath Extra Granulated Sugar. He knows then that you want the best.

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WAR AND BRITISH CREDIT.

Boer War Increased Debt Eight Hundred Million Dollars.

In 1899 the debt of Great Britain stood at the lowest point since the Napoleonic wars, and for four years Government bonds bearing two and three-quarter per cent interest had sold at a premium averaging about ten per cent. Then came the Boer War, increasing the debt by eight hundred million dollars and making the total nearly four billions. "This," the editor of the Economist recently observed, "was the highest point since 1867; so that the national savings of thirty-six years of peace were swept away by national borrowings during three years of war." And in April, 1903, interest on consols was reduced to two and a half per cent.

For a good while consols have been selling at a discount of about twenty per cent., and in the middle of July they dropped to seventy-eight and a quarter—the lowest price in eighty years. The drop was attributed to apprehension over the Morocco situation—which naturally raises a question as to what would become of consols if there were a real war scare.

Money cannot be had at two and a half per cent. because there are too many competitors for the world's savings. The relative prices of British two and a half per cents and French three per cents suggests that investors do not like a very low-rate bond, even at a discount.

The more important point is that about a year of actual fighting with a handful of Boers caused Britain's debt to increase three-fourths as much as twelve years of fighting with Napoleon at the height of his power. That suggests the colossal destructiveness of modern warfare.

GET POWER.

The Supply Comes From Food.

If we get power from food why not strive to get all the power we can. That is only possible by use of skilfully selected food that exactly fits the requirements of the body.

Poor fuel makes a poor fire and a poor fire is not a good steam producer.

"From not knowing how to select the right food to fit my needs, I suffered grievously for a long time from stomach troubles," writes a lady from a little town in Missouri.

"It seemed as if I would never be able to find out the sort of food that was best for me. Hardly anything that I could eat would stay on my stomach. Every attempt gave me heartburn and filled my stomach with gas. I got thinner and thinner until I literally became a living skeleton and in time was compelled to keep to my bed.

"A few months ago I was persuaded to try Grape-Nuts food, and it had such good effect from the very beginning that I have kept up its use ever since. I was surprised at the ease with which I digested it. It proved to be just what I needed.

"All my unpleasant symptoms, the heartburn, the inflated feeling which gave me so much pain disappeared. My weight gradually increased from 98 to 116 pounds, my figure rounded out, my strength came back, and I am now able to do my housework and enjoy it. Grape-Nuts food did it." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

A ten days' trial will show anyone some facts about food.

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest

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It is easier to accept a position than it is to hold a job.