CLOSE QUARTERS;

OR, THE HOUSE IN THE RUE BARBETTE

CHAPTER I.—(Cont'd)

His lordship knitted his brows and smoked in silence. At last he found utterance.

"That's a good idea of yours. It makes things easier. Well, first of all, Edith and I became engaged. Edith is the daughter of the late Admiral Talbot. She and Jack, her brother, live with their uncle, General Sir Hubert Fitzjames, at 118, Ulster Gardens. Jack is in the Foreign Office; he is just like Edith, awfully clever and that sort of thing, an assistant secretary I think they call him. Now we're getting on, aren't we?"

"Splendidly."

"That's all right. About a month ago a chap turns up from Constantinople, a kind of special Envoy from the Sultan, and he explains to the Foreign Office that he has in his possession a lot of uncut diamonds of terrific value, including one as big as a duck's egg, to which no figures would give a price. Do you follow me?"

"Each word."

"Good. Well—I can't tell you why, because I don't know, and I could not understand it if I did—there was some political importance attached to these gems, and the Sultan roped our Foreign Office into it. So the Foreign Office placed Jack in charge of the business. He fixed up the Envoy in the house at Albert Gate, got a lot of diamond cutters, and machinery for him, gave him into the charge of all the smart policemen in London; and what do you think is the upshot?"

"What?"

"The Envoy, his two secretaries, and a confidential servant were murdered the night before last, the diamonds were stolen, and Jack has vanished—absolutely gone clean into space, not a sign of him to be found anywhere. Yesterday Edith sends for me, cries for half an hour, tells me I'm the best fellow that ever lived, and then I'm jiggered if she didn't wind up by saying that she couldn't marry me."

The earl of Fairholme was now worked up to fever heat. He would not calm down for an appreciable period, so Brett resolved to try the effect of curiosity.

He wrote a telegram to Lord Northallerton:—

"Very sorry, but I cannot leave town at present. Please ask me later. Will explain reason for postponement when we meet."

He had touched the dominant note in mankind.

"Surely!" cried the earl, "you have not already decided upon a course of action?"

"Not exactly. I am wiring to postpone a shooting fixture."

"What a beastly shame!" exclaimed the other, in whom the sporting instinct was at once aroused. "I'm awfully sorry my affairs should interefere with your arrangements in this way."

"Not a bit," cried Brett. "I make it a sacred rule of my life to put pleasure before business. I mean," he explained, as a look of bewilderment crossed his hearer's face, "that this quest of ours promises to be the most remarkable affair I have ever been engaged in. That pleases me. Pleasant-shooting is a serious business, governed by the callendar and arranged by the head-keeper."

An electric bell summoned Smith. The barrister handed him the telegram and a sovereign.

"Read that message," he said. "Ponder over it. Send it, and give the change of the sovereign to Mrs. Smith's brother, with my compliments and regrets."

CHAPTER II.

Then he turned to Lord Fairholme.

"Just one question," he said, "before I send you off to bed. No, you must not protest. I want you to meet me here this evening at seven, with your brain clear and your nerves restored by a good, sound sleep. We will dine, here or elsewhere, and act subsequently. But at this moment I want you to know the name of the person most readily accessible who can tell me all about Mr. Talbot's connection with the Sultan's agent."

"His sister, undoubtedly. Where can I find her?"

"At Ulster Gardens. I will drive you there."

The barrister smiled. "You are going to bed, I tell you. Give me a few lines of introduction to Miss Talbot."

The earl's face had brightened at the prospect of meeting his fiancee under the favorable conditions of Brett's presence. But he yielded with good grace, and promptly sat down to write a brief note explaintory of the barrister's identity and position in the inquiry.

The two parted at the door, and a hansom rapidly brought Brett to the residence of Sir Hubert Fitzjames.

A stately footman took Reggie's card and its accompanying letter, placed them on a salver with a graceful turn of his wrist, which oddly suggested a similar turn in his nose, and said:

"Miss Talbot is not at home, sir."

"Yes, she is," answered Brett, paying the driver of the hansom.

The footman deigned to exhibit astonishment. Here was a gentleman—one obviously accustomed to the manners of Society—who declined to accept the courteous disclaimer of an unexpected visit.

"Miss Talbot is not receiving visitors," he explained.

"Exactly. Take that card and the letter to Miss Talbot and bring me the answer."

Jeames was no match for his antagonist. He silently showed the way into a reception room and disappeared. A minute later he announced, with much deference, that Miss Talbot would see Mr. Brett in the library, and he conducted this mysterious visitor upstairs.

On rejoining Buttons in the hall he solemnly observed:

"That's a swell cop who is with the missus—shining topper, buttonhole, buckskin gloves, patent leathers, all complete. Footmen ain't in it with the force, nowadays."

Jeames expanded his magnificent waistcoat with a heavy sigh over this philosophical dictum, the poignancy of which was enhanced by his knowledge that the upper housemaid had taken to conversing with a mounted policeman in the Park during her afternoons off.

The apartment in which Brett found himself gave ready indications of the character of its tenants. Tod's "Rajasthan" jostled a volume of the Badminton Library on the bookshelves, a copy of the Allahabad Pioneer lay beside the Field and the Times on the table, and many varieties of horns made trophies with quaint weapons on the walls.

A complete edition of Ruskin, and some exquisite prints of Rossetti's best known works, supplied a different set of emblems whilst the room generally showed signs of daily occupation.

"An Anglo-Indian uncle, artistic niece," was the barrister's rapid comment, but further analysis was prevented by the entrance of Miss Edith Talbot.

The surprise of the pair was mutual.

Brett expected to see a young, pretty and clever girl, vain enough to believe she had brains, and sufficiently well endowed with that rare commodity to be able to twist the good-natured Earl of Fairholme round her little finger.

Young, not more than twenty—unquestionably beautiful, with the graceful contour and delicacy balanced features of a portrait by Romney—Edith Talbot bore few of the marks that pass current as the outward and visble signs of a modern woman of Society. That she should be self-possessed and dressed in perfect taste were as obvious adjuncts of her character as that each phase of her clear thought should reflect itself in a singularly mobile face.

To such a woman pretence was impossible, the polite fictions of fashionable life impossible. Brett readily understood why the Earl of Fairholme had fallen in love with this fair creature. He had simply bent in worship before a goddess of his own creed.

To the girl, Brett was equally a revelation.

Fairholme's introductory note described the barrister as "the smartest criminal lawyer in London—one whose aid would be invaluable." She expected to meet a sharp-featured, wizened, elderly man, with gold-rimmed eye-glasses, a queer voice and a nasty habit of asking unexpected questions.

In place of this commonplace personality, she encountered a handsome, well-groomed gentleman—one who won confidence by his intellectual face, and detained it by invisibly establishing a social equality. Fortunately, there is yet in Britain an aristocracy wherein good birth is synonymous with good breeding—a freemasonry whose passwords cannot be simulated, nor its membership bought.

Brett read the wonder in the girl's eyes, and hastened to explain.

"The Earl of Fairholme," said Brett, "thought I might be of some service in the matter of your brother's strange disappearance, Miss Talbot. I am not a professional detective, but my friends are good enough to believe that I am very successful in unravelling mysteries that are beyond the ken of Scotland Yard. I have heard something of the facts in this present affair. Will you trust me so far as to tell me all the facts that is known to you personally?"

"My uncle, General Fitzjames, has just gone to Scotland Yard," she began timidly.

"Quite so. Perhaps you prefer to await his return?"

"Oh, no, I do not mean that. But it is so hard to know how best to act. Uncle expects the police to accomplish impossibilities. He says that they should long since have found out what has become of Jack. Perhaps they may resent my interference."

"My interference, to be exact," said Reggie, with the pleasant smile that had fascinated so many women. Even Edith Talbot was not wholly proof against its magic.

"I personally have little faith in them," she confessed.

"I have none."

"Well, I will do as you advise."

"Then I recommend you to take me into your confidence. I know Scotland Yard and its methods. We do not follow the same path."

"I believe in you and trust you," said the girl.

So ingenuous was the look from the large, deep eyes which accompanied this declaration of confidence, that many men would have pronounced Miss Talbot to be an experienced flirt. Brett knew better. He simply bowed his acknowledgments.

"What is it that you want to know?" she continued. "We ourselves are no better informed than the newspapers as to what has actually happened, save that four men have been killed as the result of a carefully planned robbery. As for my brother——"

She paused and strove hard to force back her tears.

"Your brother has simply vanished, Miss Talbot. If the criminals did not scruple to leave four dead men behind, they would not draw the line at a fifth. The clear inference is that your brother is alive, but under restraint."

"I can see that it is possible he was alive until some time after the tragedy at Albert Gate. But—but—what connection can Jack have with the theft of diamonds worth millions? These people used him as their tool in some manner. Why should they spare him when success had crowned their efforts?"

"We are conversing in riddles. Will you explain?"

"You know that my brother is an assistant Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office?" "Yes."

"Well, early in September his chief placed him in charge of a special undertaking. The Sultan had decided to have a large number of rough diamonds cut and polished by the best Turopean experts. They were all magnificent gems, exceedingly valuable it seems, being rare both in size and purity; but one of them was larger than any known diamond. Jack told me it was quite as big as a good-sized hen's egg. Both it and the others, he said, had the appearance of lumps of alum; but the experts said that the smaller stones were worth more than a million sterling, whilst the price of the large one could not be fixed. No one but an Emperor or Sultan would buy it. His Excellency Mehemet Ali Pasha was the especial envoy charged with this mission, and he brought credentials to the Foreign Office asking for facilities to be given for its execution. He and the two secretaries who accompanied him have been killed."

"Yes?" said Brett, whose eyes were fixed on the hearthrug.

"Jack was given the especial duty of looking after Mehemet Ali and his companions during their residence in London. It was his business to afford them every assistance in his power, to procure them police protection, obtain for them the best advice attainable in the diamond trade, and generally place at their disposal all the resources which the British Government itself could command if it undertook such a curious task. He had been with them about a month—not hourly engaged, you understand, as once the preliminary arrangements were made, he had little further trouble—but he used to call there every morning and afternoon to see if he could render any assistance. Matters had progressed so favorably until the day before yesterday, that in another month he hoped to see the last of them. He was always saying that he would be glad when the business was ended, as he did not like to be officially connected with the fate of a few little bits of stone that happened to be so immensely valuable."

(To be continued.)

THEORIES IN WHEAT.

Experiments Being Made With Sixty-Three Varieties.

There is a touch suggestive of Omar Khayyam in the idea of three-and-sixty conflicting varieties of wheat, but in the quiet heart of agricultural Essex, England, there has been proceeding with silent intensity throughout the present summer a singular combat, says the London Standard. The parties are two rival theories of agriculture, the weapon is wheat, and the fields of battle are of various points on the seven experimental farms of Messrs. John K. King and Sons, the Essex seed growers. The Mendelian theory of cross breeding has recently been making great headway among agriculturists as well as stock rearers, and this season Messrs. King have been growing experimentally two new varieties of wheat produced on the Mendelian system by Professor Biffin of Cambridge, one of Mendel's foremost disciples in England. But Messrs. King believe themselves in the system of pedigree election and not intercrossing and side by side with Professor Biffin's new varieties is growing a new one of their own, produced by selection over a number of years. Professor Biffin's wheats were Red Joss and Burgoynes, and certainly in this particular soil and under the peculiar climatic conditions of the summer their appearance was not a kind to shake Messers King's belief in the older systems, which was represented by Snowdrop, a new white-chaffed red wheat with a good close head. The Mendelian varieties are smaller in the ear, shorter in straw, and grew less closely together, while they are said also not to remain true to type.

Messrs. Kings hold it to be a clear triumph for pedigree selection; but, on the other hand, of several agricultural experts with whom one of our representatives went over the ground, those adhering to Professor Biffin of Cambridge are not disturbed. In two or three of the various trials the Mendelian wheats certainly get the worst of it, but the Cambridge men point out that many factors enter into the consideration, that on another soil and in another kind of weather the results may be altogether different, and that the rival wheats are after all not yet harvested and weighed against each other. Another excellent wheat among the 63 trial growths on the same ground is a new selection from Squareheads Master which has not yet received a name.

Those of the unsophisticated to whom wheat is wheat merely would have been struck by the sight of these sixty-three varieties, growing in strips side by sde, of all colors, from greenish white to deep old gold and orange red, square-headed wheat and long-eared wheat, bearded wheat and plain wheat, wheat from France, Flanders, Egypt, from all over England. The constant search for new and better varieties which goes on throughout the country is slowly making wheat better and better, but the chief reason for the activity in experimental growing is that all varieties tend to degenerate after a few years, and need to be regenerated again by special selection. One attempt which the Mendelians are now making is being closely watched by farmers. English wheat usually fetches a few shillings less per quarter in Mark lane than wheat from California, and certain kinds from Canada. The reason is that these foreign wheats are "stronger," that is, rise better in the loaf, than English wheats. The explanation is believed to lie in the difference of climate, but the secret is not yet definitely known, and the Mendelians are now trying to breed a new English variety, which shall equal Californian wheat in strength.

SCIENTIFIC DRY-FARMING.

That dry-farming methods, when properly followed, are successful has just been demonstrated by Professor Briggs, Kearney and Shantz, of the Department of Agriculture, who in behalf of the department, have completed an investigation of the dry farm in Idaho, U. S. Professor Briggs, before leaving this city, stated that in all of the travels of the committee it has not seen either irrigated or non-irrigated farming which produced better results than were to be found on the dry farms here, in the face of the fact that the year has been one of severe drought.

The Woodsmansee and Webster Farm of 5,000 acres is producing 2,400 acres of Turkey red wheat, that will average not less than 40 bushels when threshed. This result is obtained under dry-farming tillage methods, and the use of 30 pounds of seed to the acre.

Mr. C. H. Woodsmansee of Rexburg, Idaho, has been invited to address The Sixth International Dry-Farming Congress to be held in Colorado Springs, October 16 to 20, explaining his methods of tillage and business, utilized on his big ranch. Mr. Woodmansee is said to be one of the most exacting farm operators in the West, and is able to tell at the close of each year to a fraction of a cent. the cost of ploughing, harvesting and handling his crop.

In the vicinity of Idaho Falls Government men found 50,000 acres of dry land grown grain that will run from 30 to 50 bushels to the acre. In addition to this, the valley is now harvesting 150,000 acres of diversified dry-farmed crops, all of which are producing heavily. The valley already has about 200,000 acres of dry-farmed land under what is known as summer tillage or fallow, which will be seeded this Fall.

Give the average man half a chance and he'll want the other half.

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.]

No. 2.

Winnipeg, Aug. 20th, 1911.

My Dear Dad:—

I am a long way from home now, but I didn't remember it when I got off the train here, and almost the first person I ran into was Bill Dodson, who used to keep store over at the corners. He's been out here three years now, and he has a fine house on one of the best streets in town and drives an automobile. He took me in it up to his house to dinner and asked about all the folks round home. He may be east next winter. He has done pretty well contracting.

My last letter was from Heron Bay, after our first glimpse of Lake Superior. That same night, before it got dark, we stopped at Jackfish to take on coal. The C. P. R. has an immense coaling place here perched by the side of the line on the steep slope of a hill. While we were waiting there we could see a large steamer lying at the wharf below us. The coal was hauled up out of its hold in great buckets, which were hoisted by cables far above our heads to where dump cars were standing on a track on a lofty trestle. As soon as the cars were full they were run off down the track to a pocket or hopper, where they were automatically emptied. These pockets have chutes over a siding on which coal cars are put to be loaded. These cars are sent east to supply the engines of the C. P. R. on the long run through places where coal is not obtainable.

After leaving Jackfish we passed round a most remarkable horseshoe where the track looped right round the bay on a bank built up a long way above the water. While going round the curve I could see the engine and the first six cars of our train from my window. At first I thought the engine belonged to another train.

That night I waked about one o'clock and found that the train was standing still. I raised the blind at my window—that is one advantage of having a lower berth—and looked out of the window. Two giant buildings of a grey color towered up right outside my window, and I recognized them at once from pictures as the grain elevators of Fort William. They are tremendous buildings and they reminded me from the outlines that I could see dimly against the night sky, of the pictures of Notre Dame cathedral in Montreal. Our barn wouldn't be knee high to a grasshopper beside one of these elevators. They are enormous. They were the first thing to remind me that we were getting pretty near the West and its great wheat fields, and you may be sure I was pretty interested. I just gazed at them till we started off again, which was not long, and the last I saw of Fort William was a great black rugged hill standing out against the sky with electric lights twinkling in the town beneath it. I am told that this mountain was thought by the Indians to be a sleeping giant. Well, he will sure be a surprised giant if he ever wakes up and sees Fort William and Port Arthur at his feet, for they must be pretty busy places from what I could see from the window, and they say that their development has practically all been in the last ten years.

I woke up at Dryden, where the Ontario Government has an experimental farm, so you can judge that there must be some quantity of good agricultural land in this end of the Province. It is in a good lumbering district, too, and the large piles of lumber in a wood yard near the station are the most prominent things to be seen from the train. There is a brick yard here, too, that seems to turn out quite a lot of bricks for the country round.

I was up and ready for breakfast by eight o'clock by my watch. I thought I would have breakfast in the dining car for a change, but I found that I was an hour too early, as at Fort William the watches of westbound travellers must all be put back an hour. It is the nearest thing to living your life over again that can be imagined. I would rather not live it over again just before meals, and I decided not to wait, so got my own breakfast out of the grub mother put up in the telescope valise for me.

We stopped at Kenora, which used to be called Rat Portage, in the morning. It's quite a town, with substantial brick buildings. It has a large brick Railway Y. M. C. A. building, close to the station. The place is right close to Keewatin, and both are on the Lake of the Woods. There are lots of islands in the lake, and there are pretty houses on them, half hidden by the trees. A school teacher who was in our car says that twenty-one Frenchmen were massacred by the Indians on this lake by the Sioux Indians in 1736. An exploring party discovered the bones of the victims in 1907. You don't think of Indians and scalping when you look at the pretty, quiet lake to-day.

I saw the shops the Government is building for the transcontinental railway at Transcona, ust six miles out of Winnipeg. They are tremendous shops—everything seems to be on a big scale out here—and quite a town has grown up round them. We got to Winnipeg not long after noon. The teacher said that the first European to put foot on the present site of Winnipeg was a Frenchman named La Verendrye, who came here 180 years ago. They say that there are 170,000 people here now, and the place looks to be going ahead at a great rate. Building is going on in every direction, and some great buildings are being added to those which already line Portage and Main streets. The Bank of Montreal certainly thinks that the West is going to have lots of money, for they are putting up a fine building that I saw, right in the heart of the town, and it is to have a vault about a hundred feet square, the floor of which will be eighty feet below the street. That will hold a considerable amount of money and valuables.

You meet all sorts of people on the streets of Winnipeg. You can tell what a mixed population there is when the word "Office" at the Emigration bureau has to be written in eight languages. I took a copy of it. Here it is:

OFFICE.

SKRFSTOFA	KONTOR
BUREAU	KANZELEI
URIAD	KONTOOR

IRODA

Everybody seems to get along with English, however, so I guess the foreigners must mostly be sent out to the prairies.

Good-bye for the present. Loving son

JIM.

KING GEORGE A CRICKETER

As a "Middy" He Used to Indulge in the Game and Subsequently Played in a Match

There is only one occasion recorded in which the late King took part in a formal match, namely, when in 1861 he assisted I Zingari to defeat the Gentlemen of Norfolk at Sandringham and was bowled by the first ball he received.

Early in the 'sixties, when the professional cricketer attached to Eton College was the well-gnown Cambridgeshire player, F. Bell, he was not infrequently summoned to Windsor Castle to bowl to the Prince of Wales and the other young and Royal members of the household. But, alas! it has to be recorded that on his return from one of these expeditions he made the direful announcement that he "couldn't make a job of 'em at all."

King George, as well as his brother, the late Duke of Clarence, took an active interest in the game. His Majesty, indeed, who as a "middy" used to indulge in the game on the deck of the Bacchante, at the conclusion of one day's racing at Goodwood some years ago played in a match in Goodwood Park that was got up between the guests at Goodwood House. The team included His Majesty and an eleven captained by M. Cannon, the famous jockey. The former is credited with having possessed one of the most expensive bats in existence, the blade being of walnut and the bat being mounted in silver. A peculiarity with regard to the King's favorite bat, by the way, lies in the fact that high up on the blade on either side of the splice appear the famous three feathers that form the crest of the Prince of Wales.

Queen Victoria witnessed more than one cricket match, but never one that may with accuracy be described as a first-class fixture. On August 3rd, 1866, she, together with the Prince and Princess of Wales and other members of the Royal Family, witnessed a very close game at Osborne between the Royal Household at Osborne and the officers and men of the Royal yacht, which was won by the former by the narrow margin of twelve runs. The match was particularly interesting for the reason that the late Prince Leopold undertook the duties of scorer, whilst figuring on the side of the sailors we find the late Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, one line of the score-sheet reading:—

H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh, b Head, 10; c Ccle, b Archer, 2.

THE BEST PRESERVES

DURING THE PRESERVING SEASON

Redpath Extra Granulated Sugar

IS DAILY WINNING FRESH LAURELS.

Its uniform high quality commends itself to all good housekeepers.

"BEST FRUIT, BEST SUGAR, BEST PRESERVES."

Ask your Grocer for Redpath Extra Granuated Sugar

The Canada Sugar Refining Co., Limited, Montreal

Established in 1854 by John Redpath.