CLOSE QUARTERS;

OR, THE HOUSE IN THE RUE BARBETTE

CHAPTER II.—(Cont'd)

"Did your brother call there as usual on Monday afternoon?" said Brett.

"Yes; he came straight here from Albert Gate, and had tea with uncle and myself. He sat in the very chair and in the very position you now occupy. I can remember him saying: 'By Jove! the hen's egg'—that is what he used to call the big diamond—'is turning out in fine style.' He even discussed the possibility of bringing us to see the collection when it was finished and before it left this country."

"Did your brother say why the diamonds were brought to this country in the first instance?"

"Yes; the Sultan and his advisers seemed to think the work of cutting them could be performed more safely and expeditiously here than anywhere else. Even the Turk has a high regard for the manner in which law and order are maintained in Britain. Yet the sequel has shown that the diamonds and their guardians were perhaps in greater danger here than they would have been in Constantinople."

"Was that the only reason?" said Brett, who had apparently made up his mind with the reference to the pattern of the carpet and was now gazing into the bright fire which danced merrily in the grate, for the day though fine was chilly.

The girl wrinkled her brows in thought before she answered: "I think I do remember Jack saying that he believed there was some State business mixed up in the affair, but I am quite sure he did not know the exact facts himself."

"Can you recollect any of the special precautions taken to protect the gems? Your brother may have mentioned some details in conversation, you know."

"Oh, I think I know all about them. In the first instance, the house at Albert Gate had previously been tenanted by a rich banker, and it was well defended by all ordinary means against the attacks of ordinary burglars. But, in addition to this, before the diamonds left the safe at the Bank of England, the building was practically torn to pieces inside by workmen acting under the direction of the Commissioner of Police. It was absolutely impossible for any one to enter except through the front door, unless they flew out of the second story window. Servants and workmen, like everybody else, had to use this door alone, as the windows and doors in the basement had all been bricked up. Inside the entrance hall there were always twelve policemen, and an inspector in charge.

"Every one who left the house was searched by the inspector on duty, and Jack used to say that he was very glad he invariably insisted upon this examination, although the police were at first disinclined to meet his wishes in the matter, he being, so to speak, their direct superior for the time. Beneath the entrance-hall were rooms occupied by several Turkish and other servants. Mehemet Ali himself, in the presence of his secretaries, used to open the door leading to the suite of apartments in which the diamond cutters worked and two of the Turkish gentlemen would remain there all day until the men left in the evening. The Envoy and both secretaries used to meet Jack when he visited the place, and for the last three weeks he had nothing to do but see the diamonds, count them, drink an excellent cup of coffee, and smoke a wonderful cigarette, made of some special Turkish tobacco, cultivated and prepared only for the Imperial household."

"Ah!" sighed Brett, with a note of almost unconscious envy in his voice. He knew exactly what that coffee and those cigarettes would be like. "I beg your pardon," he went on, perceiving that Miss Talbot did not understand his exclamation. "Will you tell me as nearly as you can the occurrences of Monday evening?"

"They were simple enough," said the girl. "My brother dined at home. We had one or two guests, and were all in the drawing-room about 10.15, when a note came for him from Mehemet Ali. I know exactly what was in it. I looked over his shoulder whilst he read it. The words were: 'I wish to see you tonight on important business. Come, if possible, at once.' I have to tell you that it was in French, but this is an exact translation."

"Your brother was quite sure that it was from Mehemet Ali himself?" said Brett.

"Quite sure," was the reply. "He knew his handwriting well, having had several communications from him during the progress of the business."

"Did your brother leave the house immediately?" asked Brett.

"That instant. He went downstairs, put on his overcoat and hat, and got into a cab with the messenger who brought the note."

"Do you know who this messenger was?"

"One of the policemen on duty in the house itself."

A slight pause ensued, and Brett was about to take his departure, having no further questions to ask at the moment, when some one was heard hastily ascending the stairs, talking to a companion as he advanced.

"This is my uncle," exclaimed Miss Talbot, rising to go to the door. Before she could reach it an elderly gentleman entered, bearing upon him all those distinguished tokens that stamp a man as a retired major general. He exclaimed impetuously—

"I have brought a gentleman from Scotland Yard, my dear." Then he caught sight of Brett. "Who is this?"

Edith was about to explain, when another man entered—a strongly-built, bullet-headed man, with keen eyes and firm mouth, and a curious suggestion in his appearance of having combined pugilism with process-serving as a professional means of existence. His face extended into a smile when his eyes fell upon the barrister.

"Ah, Mr. Brett," he cried. "Now we have something to do that is up to your mark. You are on the spot first, as usual, but this time I can honestly say that I am glad to see you."

Sir Hubert Fitzjames glanced in astonishment from his niece to the barrister. He could find nothing better to say than—

"This, my dear, is Mr. Winter, of Scotland Yard."

CHAPTER III.

Brett promptly cleared the situation by explaining to Sir Hubert, in a few words, the reason for his unexpected presence, and when the Major-General learnt the name of the distinguished personage who had sent Lord Fairholme to the barrister he expressed a ready acquiescence in the desire to utilize his srvices. Nor was the effect of such a notable introduction lost on Mr. Winter, whose earlier knowledge of the barrister's remarkable achievements in unravelling the tangle skein of criminal investigation was now supplemented by a certain amount of awe for a man who commanded the confidence of his Majesty's Government.

"Well," said Sir Hubert Fitzjames, with the brisk animation of one accustomed to utter commands that must be instantly obeyed, "we will now proceed to business."

For a moment no one spoke. The Scotland Yard detective evidently wished his distinguished colleague to take the lead. No sooner did Brett perceive this than he rose, bowed politely to Miss Talbot and her uncle, and said—

"The first thing to do is to trace the whereabouts of Mr. Talbot and this should be a comparatively easy task. The other features of this strange occurrence impress me as highly complex, but it is far too early a stage in the investigation to permit any definite opinion being expressed at this moment."

Every one seemed to be surprised by Brett's attitude.

"Where are you going to, sir?" asked Mr. Winter.

"That depends largely upon you," was the smiling reply. "If you come with me we will go direct to Albert Gate, but if you decide to prosecute further inquiries here, I will await your arrival at my flat."

"That is as much as saying that there are no facts worth inquiring into to be learnt here?"

"Exactly so. Miss Talbot has told me all that is material to our purpose. Her brother was unexpectedly sent for after dinner on Monday night, and left the house hurriedly, without affording any clue to his subsequent proceedings beyond that contained in a brief note sent to him by Mehemet Ali Pasha. Indeed, it was impossible for him to afford any explanation, as he himself was quite unprepared for the summons. Meanwhile, every moment lost in the endeavor to follow up his movements is precious time wasted."

The barrister's manner, no less than his words, impressed Mr. Winter so greatly that he too rose from the seat which he had occupied, with the intention of conducting a long and careful examination of each member of the household.

"Then I will come with you at once," he said.

"Oh," cried the Major-General, "I understood you to say as we came here that there were many questions which required immediate inquiry in this house, on the principle that the movements of the missing man should be minutely traced from the very commencement."

Mr. Winter looked somewhat confused, but Edith Talbot broke in—

"I think, uncle dear, it would be well to defer to Mr. Brett's judgment."

"Do you really believe," she said, turning to the barrister, "that you will soon be able to find my brother?"

"I am quite sure of it," he replied, and the conviction in his tone astonished the professional detective, whilst it carried a message of hope to the others. Even Sir Hubert, for some reason which he could not explain, suddenly experienced a strong sense of confidence in this reserved, distinguished-looking man. He stepped forward eagerly and held out his hand, saying—

"Then we will not detain you, Mr. Brett. Act as you think fit in all things, but do let us have all possible information at the earliest moment."

Brett and Mr. Winter quitted the house; they hailed a hansom and drove rapidly towards Albert Gate.

"Do you know," said the man from Scotland Yard, breaking in on his companion's reverie, "whenever I happen to meet you, Mr. Brett, in the course of an inquiry, I always start by being very angry with you."

"Why?" There was an amused twinkle in Brett's eyes, which might have warned the other of a possible pitfall.

"Because you treat me as if I were a precocious youth. You listen to my theories with a sort of pitying indulgence, yet I have the reputation of being one of the best men in Scotland Yard, or I should not have been put on this job. And I am older than you, too."

"I may surely pity you," said Brett, "even if I don't indulge you too much."

"There you go again," snapped the detective. "Now, what is there silly about my theory of the crime, I should like to know?"

"You shall know, and before you are much older. Bear with me for a little while, I beg you. You may be right, and I may be quite wrong, but I think there is much beneath the surface in the investigations we are now pursuing. My advice to you is to drop all preconceived theories, to note every circumstance, however remote it may appear in its bearing upon events, and in any case not to act precipitately. Whatever you do don't arrest anybody."

"But," said the other, somewhat mollified by Brett's earnestness, "half a dozen people may be arrested at any moment."

"Pray tell me how?"

"Descriptions of the stolen diamonds and of the suspected persons are in every police office in Great Britain and in most Continental centres by this time. Passengers by all steamers are most carefully scrutinized. Every pawnbroker and diamond merchant in the country is on the lookout, and, generally speaking, it will be odd if somebody does not drop into the net before many hours have passed."

"It will, indeed," murmured Brett; "and no doubt the somebody in question will experience a certain amount of inconvenience before he proves to you that he had nothing whatever to do with the matter. Now, don't answer me, Winter, but ponder seriously over this question: Do you really think that the intelligence which planned and successfully carried through an operation of such magnitude will be trapped by plain clothes constables watching the gangways of steamships, or by any pawnbroker who has ever lent half the value of a pledge?"

Almost impatiently the barrister waived the subject out of the hansom, and the detective had sense enough to leave him alone during the few remaining minutes before the vehicle pulled up near the Albert Gate mansion.

(To be continued.)

SCOTCH LOGIC.

Donald (who is seeing his more prosperous cousin off by the train—Ye micht like tae leave me a bob or two tae drink ye a safe journey, Wullie.

Wullie (feigning regret)—Man, I canna. A' my spare shullin's I gie tae my auld mither."

Donald—That's strange. Because yer mither told me ye never gie her onything.

Wullie—Weel, if I dinna gie my auld mither onything, what sort o' chance dae ye think you've got?

Perhaps there is nothing grander in this world than a newly-promoted foreman, and Richard, whose appointment was but one day old, fully appreciated his position. A lady happening to visit the works approached him. "And who might be in charge of this department?" she asked. "I am, mum," said Richard, proudly. "Really?" she said in surprise, which Richard took as homage to his position. "Yes," he said, puffing out his chest, "and I'll prove it. Kelly," addressing one of the workers, "you're sacked."

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.]

Calgary, Aug. 27th, 1911

My Dear Dad:—

Since I wrote you from Winnipeg I have left the prairies behind me. To-day, about forty-five miles before reaching Calgary, I had my first sight of the Rocky Mountains. They lay low along the Western horizon, like clouds. The only way you could tell they were not clouds was because they did not change their shape. On the prairies I saw Indians, looking very civilized with their Bain waggons, cowboys, and mounted policemen, but I must tell everything in its turn. Before I go any further, I want to ask you to be sure to send me the newspaper from home. I feel just like Bill Dodson, whom I met in Winnipeg. He was telling me that whenever he got a paper from home, it was just like meeting an old friend, because it told him all about the folks he knew. His father gave him a subscription for a year as a Christmas present, and he said he couldn't have had anything that would have pleased him more. If I decide to stay out here, and anybody at home should want to give me something for Christmas, they might think about this. Don't wait till Christmas to send me the paper, though, please.

Say, Dad, if you saw the threshing machines that were round the railroad sidings at Winnipeg waiting to be shipped to the prairies you wouldn't wonder that people in the west boom their country. These machines, loaded on flat cars, or standing like batteries of guns waiting to be shipped, reminded me of the South African war pictures of shipping guns and ammunition to the front. There is just as much hustle here. At the station, all along the line, are more machines waiting to be unloaded, and empty box cars are being collected on the sidings to move the crop out. Everybody says that it is to be a bumper crop this year, and bigger than ever before. What you can see from the train certainly looks good. They have got cutting well under way now.

It's funny the way the towns out west advertise. You frequently come to towns where sign boards have been erected at the stations telling of the advantages the towns have to offer settlers. Back at Port Arthur they had an attractive little one-story brick building, what is called a kiosk, which is a bureau of information. At Fort William there was a big sign: "Fort William the Pulse of the Dominion: the bulk of East and West traffic passes through this town." There is another big sign there, but there is so much crowded on it, and the print was so small that I could not read it from the train. Indian Head is another place that advertises in this way. On one side of the track is the sign: "Indian Head, Saskatchewan's Beauty Spot. Good land $20 to $50 per acre." Across the track on the other side is a sign which reads. "Dominion Government forest nursery, 480 acres, one mile from town: Distributed annually, 3,000,000 trees free to settlers. Visitors can inspect at any time." You would think that if these towns wanted to advertise they would do it in Ontario papers. Of course, thousands of people read the signs by the railroad track, but by the time they see them they have tickets to their destination and are not likely to stop off.

Out from Winnipeg the country is as flat as a table, and the horizon is as straight as the edge of a ruler. It surprised me to find out that between Winnipeg and Portage La Prairie, which is fifty-six miles west, there is a rise of 100 feet. Portage has a population of 7,000, and is quite a town, and one of Manitoba's principal grain markets. There are elevators there, of course, and from there west for a long way there are elevators at all the stations. There will be two or three elevators at each station, belonging to different companies. To a new-comer from Ontario these elevators, so many of them, are strange, and they are all the more noticeable because the country is so flat and there are no big trees. The elevators can be seen for miles.

At Brandon I laid eyes on the first Northwest Mounted policeman I ever saw. They wear red coats, just like those of the dragoons we saw in Toronto, and cow-boy hats. It is said that the red coats were made part of the uniform of the police by Sir John Macdonald because the Indians among whom the police had their most difficult work always looked on the soldiers of the Queen as their friends. A red-coat would be trusted where anyone else would meet only distrust and suspicion. The most prominent building, from the Brandon station, is a seed warehouse, and this is another indication of the character of the West. And the fact that they go in for agriculture wholesale is shown by the advertisements to be seen offering "plowing engines" for sale. The plowing is done by engines on the big farms. Out on the prairies I saw great big galvanized iron tanks, which I thought must be for holding gasoline for running the plowing engines, but a man on the train said that these were portable granaries into which the grain is put as it is threshed, until it can be taken in to the elevators.

My, the prairies are lonely. You can look from the train window and get a wide sweep for miles and miles, and perhaps there will only be one house in the whole landscape. And there are no fences to show that anybody has made their home there. The rail fences, such as we have about the old place, you never see out here; wood is too scarce. Why, the only place about which there was a fence in some of the towns was the lumber-yard, and this was sure to be protected with a high fence. Wood is so valuable that they say people lock their kindling in safes before going to bed.

By-bye for the present.

Your loving son,

JIM.

A New Head In 30 Minutes

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NA-DRU-CO Headache Wafer

25c. a box at your druggists' or by mail from National Drug and Chemical Co. of Canada, Limited, Montreal. 28

THE TREASURY.

Mark 12: 41-44.

The Building was admired by all
Who in their father's footsteps trod:
It was the house they loved to call
The Temple of the Living God.

But on that day they little knew
That He who owned the house was there:
Of Him they did not seek a view:
To Him they breathed no word of prayer.

Against the treasury sat He
Who is of heaven and earth the King:
His all-discerning eye could see
All those who came their gifts to bring.

And He whose hand the veil uplifts
That He may hidden things unfold
Perceived amongst their varied gifts
The worthless dross and purest gold.

While some brought gifts with boastful air,
As if they gloried in their rights,
A widow, with a silent prayer,
Brought all she had—two single mites.

Then to His own said Christ the Lord,
"Their gifts which seem so great are small;
They gave what they could well afford;
But this poor widow gave her all."

Beside the treasury to-day
There sits the Lord of earth and heaven;
To those who do His word obey
The riches of His grace is given.

He honors those who for His sake
Unto each urgent call attend:
He knows the sacrifice those make
Who seek His kingdom to extend.

May love enrich the gifts we give
And cleanse our gold from sordid dross:
The life of service may we live
And always glory in the cross.

T. WATSON.

Iona Station, Ont., 1911.

WHEN BRITANNIA RULED.

An Episode on Board a Steamer Bound for South Africa.

A fancy-dress ball in celebration of "crossing the line," given on board a steamer bound for South Africa, is described by Lady Elizabeth Butler in her book, "From Sketch-Book and Diary." On this occasion the passengers of the second-class cabin were invited to join those of the first on the gaily decorated promenade-deck. Before quoting directly from her diary the account of the "catastrophe," the author inserts some words of explanation.

Here I must interpolate the statement of certain facts which will enable you more fully to sympathize with me in the catastrophe that closes this mid-ocean episode.

You must know that white servants were impossible to find at the Cape, and one must bring all one's staff out with one, "for better, for worse," it may be for three, four, five years. If any turn out badly, it is true you may send them home, but—who is to replace them?

I could not persuade my cook at Dover Castle to undertake this expatriation, her courage failing her at the last moment, and I had to find an untried substitue. She was a Dane with the blood of generations of bellicose vikings coursing through her veins, and from afar I had watched her daily on the other deck with apprehensions.

"The ball is over and I feel decidedly limp. I thought I was going to have a pleasant evening. I was sitting with Lady——and all the others who were not masquerading, enjoying the sight of the figures in all kinds of extempore costumes appearing on the deck from below and mustering prior to setting to, the band playing a spirited waltz, when there slowly emerged from the saloon stairway, as if rising from the waves she rules—Britannia!

"First a high brass helmet with scarlet crest, then a trident held in the other, and the folds of the union jack draping her commanding form. She stepped on deck.

"'I say, said a voice, 'this is the success of the evening. Who it it?'

"'Who is it?' you heard on every side.

"'Who is it?' asked Lady——, turning to me.

"'My cook,' I faintly answered.

"The last speaker knew her South Africa, and all the possibilities of the future might have spoken in my face, to judge by the choking laughter that caused her precipitate withdrawal. Each time she ventured back within sight of my smileless face, the fit seized her again.

"Later on I saw Britannia dancing in a small set of Lancers, hand in hand with the Marchioness. Shall I ever get her harnessed now?

"I went back to hang over the bulwarks and lose myself among the stars."

FOUND RIGHT PATH.

After a False Start.

"In 1890 I began to drink coffee.

"At that time I was healthy and enjoyed life. At first I noticed no bad effects from the indulgence, but in course of time found that various troubles were coming upon me.

"Palpitation of the heart took unto itself sick and nervous headaches, kidney troubles followed and eventually my stomach became so deranged that even a light meal caused me serious distress.

"Our physician's prescriptions failed to help me and then I dosed myself with patent medicines till I was thoroughly disgusted and hopeless.

"Finally I began to suspect that coffee was the cause of my troubles. I experimented by leaving it off, except for one small cup at breakfast. This helped some, but did not altogether relieve my distress. It satisfied me, however, that I was on the right track.

"So I gave up coffee altogether and began to use Postum. In ten days I found myself greatly improved, my nerves steady, my head clear, my kidneys working better and better, my heart's action rapidly improving, my appetite improved and the ability to eat a hearty meal without subsequent suffering restored to me. And this condition remains.

"Leaving off coffee and using Postum did this, with no help from drugs as I abandoned the use of medicines when I began to use the food drink." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

"There's a reason," and it is explained in the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

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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