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CLOSE QUARTERS;

OR, THE HOUSE IN THE RUE BARBETTE

CHAPTER XI.—(Cont'd)

At 1.30 a.m. Brett and Fairholme were ushered forth from the doors of the prefecture and stood in freedom in the street.

"Where now?" said Fairholme.

"To the hotel," replied Brett, wearily. "I must have sleep, so I consign the Turks, and the Sultan's diamonds, and every one concerned with the Albert Gate mystery, to perdition for the next eight hours."

Notwithstanding his weariness, Brett rose early next morning. His companion slept like a top, and the barrister had to shake the earl soundly by the shoulder before the latter woke into conscious existence and sat up in bed sleepily demanding—

"What's up? Where's the fire?"

"I want you to dress at once," said Brett cheerily, "and join me at breakfast. You must leave for London by the 11.50 train."

"Am I such a nuisance then that I have to be packed off at a moment's notice?" said the earl.

"By no means. Decidedly the contrary, in fact. As matters in France evidently require persistent attention on my part for many days, perhaps weeks, I think it is hardly fair to leave Talbot in confinement any longer. Your mission is to restore your prospective brother-in-law to the bosom of his family, and I regret that it is impossible for me to accompany you."

"Are you serious, old chap?" was the startled answer. "What has happened since one o'clock this morning to make you so confident?"

"Nothing that is not already known to you. Had I succeeded last night in following Mdlle. Beaucaire to her destination I might have been able to accompany you to London this morning. As it is, Heaven alone knows what sort of dance she may lead me. However, you complete your toilette, my dear fellow. I have ordered breakfast to be served in a quarter of an hour. Then you can eat and listen."

During the first portion of the repast Brett seemed too busily engaged to unburden his mind. It was not until he had lit a cigarette and pushed his chair away from the table, so that he could assume a posture of complete ease, that he commenced—

"You slept so soundly, Fairholme, that you have not had time to review all the circumstances of yesterday's adventures. Otherwise I am sure you would have reached the same conclusions as suggest themselves to me. Curiously enough, although dog-tired when I went to bed, I woke about seven o'clock feeling thoroughly rested both in mind and body. I procured some coffee, took a bath, and went out for a stroll, with the result that I returned and aroused you after reaching finality in some of my conclusions, and deciding on a definite plan of action for both of us."

"It is really very decent of you, Brett, constantly to assume that I can see as far through a brick wall as you can, especially as you know quite well that, although I am fairly well acquainted with all that happened yesterday, the only tangible opinion I can offer is that the Paris police interfered with you at a most inopportune moment."

Brett smiled. "That is because you have not accustomed yourself to analysis," he said. "However, I will summarize my views, and if you can find any flaws in my reasoning I will be glad. The first thing to observe is that the diminutive Frenchman drew on himself the special vengeance of the Turks when I exposed the attempt to foist on them a collection of dummy diamonds. Yet he actually had the nerve to return to the Rue Barbette later in the day. He has not been seen since, so the little scoundrel is either dead or a prisoner in Hussein-ul-Mulk's flat. As I cannot permit myself to participate in a murder or even in an illegal imprisonment, I am regretfully compelled this morning to take the police into my confidence and inform them of an obvious fact which escaped their penetration yesterday."

Fairholme whistled.

"I must say," he cried, "I gave a passing thought to the incident myself last evening when your spy reported that the Frenchman remained in No. 11 after the Turks had quitted it."

"Yes," said Brett. "You see, all you need to cultivate is the habit of deduction, and you will soon become a capital detective."

"Well," said the earl dubiously, "that is a new point of view for me at any rate."

"It is a fact nevertheless. But we have not much time, so we must reserve any further consideration of your abilities. The fate of the Frenchman must be determined today, and to decide the question I must act through the police, so a conversation with our friend the commissary becomes inevitable, and now to return to the hypothetical part of my conclusions. I began by assuming that the individual who planned the Albert Gate outrage and subsequently sought to bamboozle his employers by palming off on them a set of spurious diamonds, is far too acute to attempt to dispose of the real gems for many months yet to come. He obtained sufficient funds from the Turks, in pursuance of what may be termed the legitimate part of his contract, to enable him to live for a considerable period without further excitement. Closely associated with him in the present adventure is La Belle Chasseuse. Neither would endeavor to procure safety by flight to a foreign country. They will seek insignificance by living in a normal and commonplace manner. What more easy, for instance, for Mademoiselle than to return to the life of the circus, whilst her lover—granted that he wished to remain in her company—will obtain some suitable employment in the same circle. There is a suspicion of a joke in the statement, but I am quite serious. The mere consciousness that they have in their possession a vast fortune, which time alone will enable them to realize, will serve as an inducement to undergo the period of hard work which means safety. You remember that the lady's father, Gros Jean, visited the Gare de Lyon yesterday?"

Fairholme nodded.

"I think you will find that he was depositing there the necessary luggage for a contemplated trip into the interior, so that Mademoiselle might slip out late at night quietly and unnoticed and join her lover at some preconcerted rendezvous, a thing which we now know she did. I cannot, of course, be certain whether the Frenchman who signalled to her in the Cafe Noir was himself the favored individual. It is possible. By the way, what height is Talbot?"

"About five feet nine."

Brett pondered for a little while.

"Yes," he communed aloud, "I think I am right. That pink-and-white Frenchman is the master mind in this conspiracy. And to think that the unintelligent muscles of a couple of thick-headed French policemen should have crudely interfered with me at such a moment!" He sighed deeply.

"Never mind," he went on, "it cannot be helped. I must keep to the thread of my story. Mademoiselle Beaucaire left the Cabaret shortly after eleven o'clock. We cannot be certain that she went to the Gare de Lyon, but the cab unquestionably set off in that direction. It is a long drive from Montmarte to the Lyons station. We will give her, say, until twelve o'clock to reach there. Now, unless she was journeying to some suburban district—a contingency which upsets the whole of my theory—there was no main line train leaving for the south until 1.05 a.m., and that is a slow train, stopping at nearly every station south of Melun. Let us suppose that they guard against every contingency. I imagine that the pair, providing the two travelled together, would break their journey south at some quiet town in the interior early in the morning, and subsequently proceed to their destination by easy stages."

"I am still fogged as to what you mean by their destination?" said Fairholme.

"I mean the circus, the music-hall, the cafe chantant, or whatever place mademoiselle and her astute adviser may select as a safe haven wherein to avoid police espionage during many months which must ensue before they dare to make the slightest effort to dispose of the purloined diamonds."

"The third item," continued Brett, "which demands attention in Paris is the whereabouts of the Turks. They must be found and observed. My chief difficulty will be to keep that delightful commissary from imprisoning them, if, as I imagine, we find the little thief a captive in the Rue Barbette. So you see my actions are speculative. Yours, on the other hand, will be definite."

"Ah!" said Fairholme, "I am glad to hear that. If you expect me to analyze and deduce and find out the probable movements of intelligent rascals, I am sure I shall make a mess of things."

"You will reach London," said Brett, "at 7.30 p.m. I suppose you have in your service a reliable servant, endowed with a fair amount of physical strength?"

"Rather," cried the earl. "My butler is a splendid chap. He has been fined half a dozen times for his exceeding willingness to settle disputes with his fists."

"Telegraph him to meet you at Charing Cross Station. I can depend upon my man Smith to use his nerve and discretion. Moreover, he knows Inspector Winter, of Scotland Yard, and should trouble arise, which I do not anticipate, this acquaintance may be useful to you. The third person who will meet you will be the ex-sergeant of police, whose report to me you heard yesterday. He will point out to you the flat tenanted by the invalid lady. You speak French well, and after a few questions you should be able to satisfy yourself whether or not the person who opens the door to you when you visit that flat is acting a genuine part. You can pretend what you like, but if admission is denied to you I want you to force your way inside and see that invalid lady at all costs. In the event of a gross mistake having been committed you must apologize most abjectly and assuage the wounded feelings of the servants with a liberal donation, whilst the ex-sergeant of police will advise you as to any other place which may demand personal inspection. I do not conceal from you the difficulties of your task, or the chance that you may get into trouble with the police. But the fact remains that Talbot, alive or dead, is concealed somewhat in the neighborhood of the Carlton Hotel, and it is high time that this portion of the mystery attending his disappearance should be made clear. Do you follow me?"

"Precisely," said Fairholme. "My programme appears to be very simple. I am to kick down any door that is pointed out by the ex-policeman, provided I am refused admission by fair means."

Brett laughed. "I think," he cried, "you have put my instructions in very direct and succinct form. All I hope is that the invalid lady may prove to be an elderly fraud. It only remains for me to give you my blessing and say good-bye."

"But what about you?" said the earl anxiously. "Suppose we come across Talbot to-night, as you anticipate, where shall I find you to-morrow?"

"You must telegraph to me here," was the answer, "and you must possess your soul in patience until you hear from me."

"No, don't protest," he went on, as Fairholme gave indications of impatience. "You need not fear that you will be left out of the denouement, whatever it be. I am sure to need your help before long, and I will cable you at the first possible moment. For that reason, should you leave your house for more than an hour or so, I hope you will make special arrangements for telegrams to reach you without delay."

"You may rely on that," was the hearty answer. "But look here, Brett. It is 10.45 a.m. now. If I have to catch that 11.50 train from the Gare du Nord I have no time to lose. By the way," he added, turning at the door, "is there any reason why I should not wire to Edith to expect me to-night?"

(To be continued.)

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HEALTH

OPSONIC TREATMENT.

In the language of present-day medicine, immunity is the power that a person has to resist the attack of the microbes of any particular disease. This immunity may be racial—man, for example, is not subject to a number of the diseases of the domestic animals. Or it may be peculiar to the individual—some persons, for example, seem never to suffer from infectious diseases. In the case of the individual, immunity may be conferred by one attack of the disease.

Why one attack of a disease should make a person safe from another attack, at least for a time, is not always readily explained. It is probable that immunity may be acquired in different ways that vary in different disorders. One explanation is that in the fight of the system against disease a certain substance is elaborated that draws the bacteria and the bacteria-destroying cells of the body together, to the discomfiture of the former. A form of this substance, which is always present in the blood, enables the person to resist the first attack of the invading germs, and so gain time to elaborate the other form, which is more powerful, but acts only on the special microbe present. The formation of this second variety of protecting substance is stimulated by the presence of the bacteria in moderate numbers in the blood, and is protective because it throws the bicrobes into the jaws of the devouring cells, or rather, as its name, opsonin, from a Greek word meaning sauce, indicates, makes them palatable.

In most infectious diseases a few microbes at a time enter the blood, and so the production of opsonin is brought about. But as in disease these bacteria in the blood are living, there is always the danger that they may be so virulent or present in such numbers as to overcome the attacking cells, and so bring about the death of the sufferer. Physicians, however, have now learned to produce the saving opsonin by injecting the bacteria of the same kind that have first been killed by heat, so that they cannot grow and do harm in the body. Their only action then is to cause the elaboration of the opsonin, which they do as well dead as living. The opinion thus produced acts on the living bacteria and attracts to them the cells which by destroying them will put an end to the trouble.—Youth's Companion.

HEALTH NOTES.

Sleeplessness is sometimes prevented by a hot foot bath just before going to bed.

Hiccough can generally be stopped at once by eating a lump of sugar soaked in vinegar.

A bag of hot sand applied to the part of the body affected with neuralgia will bring relief.

In the early stages of quinsy or tonsilitis a gargle made by adding a teaspoonful of powdered alum to a tumblerful of warm water is to be recommended.

THE LITTLE WIDOW

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SUGAR TO FURNISH LIGHT.

On several sides the suggestion has been put forward that there is every possibility that in the near future sugar will play an important part in the provision of a new method of artificial lighting. Experiments have shown that when discs of loaf sugar are placed on a lathe and rapidly rotated whilst a hammer plays lightly against them, there is an almost continuous radiation of articifial light. At present the practical value of the discovery is nil, but it is quite within the bounds of possibility that discoveries will soon be made that will render its practical application a certainty. The cause of the phenomena is not at present correctly understood, but it is probably due to some change in the formation of the sugar crystals. Cases where the act of crystalization is accompanied by flashes of light are not unknown, and probably this is due to some similar cause. At any rate, this appears to be the only feasible explanation, as it has been proved that the light is not caused by the heating of the sugar during the experiment.

"Odd thing about flattery." "What?" "It makes everybody sick except those who swallow it."

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