CLOSE QUARTERS;

OR, THE HOUSE IN THE RUE BARBETTE

CHAPTER XIII.—(Cont'd)

"With a mock bow of much politeness he took his leave, carrying with him the case of diamonds. I have never seen him since. Last night in the Foreign Office I met Captain Gaultier, who told me of the rencontre on the steamer. I readily forgave him for the mistake he had made with reference to my appearance, but it was too bad that he should imagine I would bolt to Paris with a lady of theatrical appearance in broad daylight."

"Yes," cried Fairholme, "if it had been the night steamer——"

"Bobby!" exclaimed Edith.

"Oh, I meant, of course," stammered Fairholme, "that by night Gaultier might have been more easily mistaken."

"Well, and what happened at the Foreign Office?"

Brett's question recalled the younger people to the gravity of the conclave.

"First of all," said Talbot, "Fairholme drove me straight home, where it was necessary to give some slight preliminary explanation before I made a too sudden appearance, so I remained in the cab outside whilst Fairholme went in and found Edith."

"Ah!" said Brett, still surveying the ceiling; but there was so much meaning in his voice that this time it was the turn of the young couple to blush.

"We did not take long to explain matters," continued Talbot. "I sent off messengers posthaste to the Under-Secretary and others suggesting that if possible we should meet at the Foreign Office. Within an hour my chiefs were good enough to fall in with my views, and therefore I had an opportunity to tell them my story exactly as I have repeated it to you. The result is that I carry with me a letter from the Under-Secretary in which he explains his views. I am already acquainted with his reasons, but I have no doubt that he puts them before you quite clearly.

He handed a letter to Brett. Its contents were laconic, but unmistakable——

"The inquiry in which you are engaged," it read, "must be conducted with the utmost secrecy and discretion. The gravest political importance is attached to its outcome. No trouble or expense should be allowed to interfere with the restoration of the diamonds to their rightful owner. The British Government will regard this as a most valuable service to the State, and Mr. Talbot is commissioned to place at your disposal the full resources of the Foreign Office. You will also find that his Majesty's Ministers throughout Europe have been advised to give you every assistance, whilst there is little reason to doubt that the various European Governments will be ready to offer you all possible support. The first consideration is the restoration of the gems instact to the Sultan; the second, absolute secrecy as to the whole of the circumstances."

"Whew!" whistled Brett. "Read between the lines, this communication shows the serious nature of our quest. If those diamonds are not recovered, a revolution in Turkey is the almost certain outcome, and Heaven alone knows what that means to the European Powers most concerned."

"If you succeed," said Sir Hubert Fitzjames, "the Government will make you a baronet."

"If you succeed," growled Talbot, "I will get even with that Frenchman."

"And when you succeed," said Fairholme, in a matter-of-fact tone that indicated the wild improbability of any other outcome, "Edith and I will get married!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Brett now deemed it advisable to take the commissary of police fully into his confidence. The official promptly suggested that every personage in Paris connected even remotely with the mystery—Gros Jean, the Turks, the waiter at the Cafe Noir, and even the little thief "Le Ver"—should be arrested and subjected to a proces verbal.

But Brett would not hear of this proceeding.

He quite firmly reminded the commissary that the wishes of the British Government must be respected in this matter, and the proposed wholesale arrests of persons, some of whom were in no way cogisant of the crime, would assuredly lead to publicity and the appearance of sensational statements in the Press.

"But, monsieur," cried the Frenchman, "something must be done. Even you, I presume, intend to lay hands on the principal men. While they are wandering about the country each hour makes it easier for them to secrete the diamonds so effectually that no matter what may be the result the Sultan will never recover his property."

"Calm yourself, I beg," said the barrister, with difficulty compelling himself to reason with this excitable policeman. "You speak as though we had in our hands every jot of evidence to secure the conviction of Dubois and his associates before a judge."

"But is it not so?" screamed the other.

"No; it is very far from being so."

"Then what are we to do?" said the commissary, piteously throwing out his hands and shrugging his shoulders with the eloquent French gesture that betokens utter bewilderment.

"Difficulty though it may be, we must first accomplish the main part of our work. In other words, we must secure the diamonds before we collar the murderers."

The Frenchman was silent for a moment. At last he said submissively—"In what way can I help?"

"By procuring for me from the chief of your department an authorization to call in the aid of the police when and where I may desire their assistance."

"But what of the house of the Rue Bonbonnerie?"

"You anticipated my next request. Whilst you are looking to that letter you must place at my disposal two of your most trusty agents. In their company Lord Fairholme and I purpose visiting the house to-night."

They were conversing in the commissary's office at a late hour after Brett had quitted his friend in the Grand Hotel.

Within a few minutes the two Englishmen and their French companions were standing outside No. 41, Rue Bonbonnerie, and they found that Monsieur de Lisle kept a small shop, whose only significant feature was a placard announcing that letters might be addressed there.

"Oh," said Brett, when he noticed this legend, "this is simple. We need not waste much time here."

The four men walked inside, crowding the narrow space before a diminutive counter. The proprietor was supping in style, as they could perceive through the glass top of the door which communicated with the sitting-room at the back. His feast consisted of a tankard of thin wine, half a loaf of black bread, and two herrings.

The man was surprised by the sudden incursion of customers. He came out looking puzzled and alarmed.

"Have you any letters here for Monsieur Jean Beaujolais?" said Brett.

"No, monsieur."

"Have you received any letters for a person of that name?"

"No, monsieur."

"I suppose you never heard the name of Jean Beaujolais before in your life?"

"I think not, monsieur."

"Then," exclaimed Brett, turning quietly away, "I fear you must be arrested. These two gentlemen"—and he nodded towards the detectives—"will take you to the Prefecture, where perhaps your memory may improve."

The man blanched visibly. His teeth chattered, and his hands shook as if with ague, whilst he nervously arranged some small objects on the counter.

"I cry your pardon, monsieur," he stammered, "but you will understand that I receive letters at my shop for a small fee, and I cannot remember the names of all my customers. I will search with pleasure among those now in my possession to see if there are any for Mr. Beaujolais."

"You are simply incriminating yourself," said Brett sternly. "If your excuse were a genuine one you would first have looked among your letters before answering so glibly that the name of Beaujolais was unfamiliar."

"I beg of you to listen," cried the dismayed shopkeeper. "I had no idea you were from the Prefecture, otherwise I would have answered you in the first instance. There have been letters here for Monsieur Beaujolais. They came from London. He called for them three or four times. The last letter arrived yesterday morning. It is here now. I have not seen Monsieur Beaujolais since the previous evening."

He took from a drawer a packet of letters tied together with string, and the handwriting betrayed the contents of most of them.

One of he detectives did not trust to Monsieur de Lisle's examination. He seized the bundle and went through its contents carefully, but this time Monsieur de Lisle was speaking the truth.

There was only one letter addressed to Beaujolais, and it bore a foreign postmark. Brett tore it open. It contained a single sheet of notepaper, without a date or address, or any words save these scrawled across the centre—"Tout va bein."

He placed the document and its envelope in his pocket-book, and then fixed his keen glance on the shopkeeper's pallid face.

"What sort of a person is Monsieur Beaujolais? Was he a Frenchman, about my height, elegant in appearance, well built, with long thin hands and straight tapering fingers, with very fair skin and high color, dark hair and large eyes set deeply beneath well-marked eyebrows?"

"That is he to the life," cried the shopkeeper. "Monsieur must know him well. I recall him now exactly, but I could not for a hundred francs have described him so accurately."

"How long have you known him?" broke in Brett.

"Let me think," mused the man, who had now somewhat recovered from his alarm. "He came here one day last week—I think it was Thursday, because that day my daughter Marie—no matter what Marie did, I remember the date quite well now. He came in and asked if I did not receive letters for a fee. I said 'Yes,' and told him that I charged ten centimes per letter. He gave me his name. He always handed me half a franc and would never take any change."

"Was he alone?"

"Invariably, monsieur."

"Thank you. You will not be arrested to-night. I think you have told the truth."

The shopkeeper's protestations that he had given every assistance in his power followed them into the street.

Brett dismissed the two detectives and returned to the hotel, where he and Fairholme found Edith and her brother sitting up for them. When Talbot heard the contents of the letter he remarked: "I suppose that 'All goes well' means that I am still a prisoner?"

"Undoubtedly," said the barrister. "The letter was posted in the Haymarket. It came from your French host. I wonder what he will write now? By the way, where is he? Did you lose sight of the couple after your escape?"

"I did," laughed Talbot. "But Inspector Winter did not. By some mysterious means he learnt all about Fairholme's action in smashing the door. Whilst I was at the Foreign Office that night he arrested the man and the woman."

"Winter is a perfect terror," said Brett. "He dreams of handcuffs and penal servitude. I hope this couple will not be brought to trial or at any rate that your name will not be mixed up in it."

"Oh, no. As soon as I heard the Under-Secretary's wishes, I promply communicated with Scotland Yard. The Frenchman and his wife will be remanded on a mysterious charge of abetting a felony and held in durance vile until their testimony is wanted, should we ever capture Dubois."

At Brett's request detectives were hunting through Paris all that night and the next day for a sign of Hussein-ul-Mulk and his Turkish friends. But these gentlemen had vanished as completely as if the earth had swallowed them up.

It was not until Brett and his four companions quitted the train at Marseilles late at night and the barrister received a telegram from the commissary announcing that the search made by the police had yielded no results, that he suddenly recalled the existence of a doorless and windowless room in the Cafe Noir.

Curiously enough he had omitted to make any mention of this strange apartment in his recital to the official. He would not trust to the discretion of the Telegraph Department, so on reaching the Hotel du Louvre et de la Paix he succeeded, after some difficulty, in ringing up the commissary on the long-distance telephone.

(To be continued.)

Manures, fertilizers and crop rotations will not compensate for a lack of underdrainage of the soil; in fact, they only add to the real expense of growing crops without recompense.

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READY FOR MORE.

Bishop Burgess of Long Island, apropos of his crusade against Sunday flying, said at a luncheon in Garden City:

"I am against the formation of bad habits, whether they be habits of laziness, of selfishness, or of Sunday flying. 'Be sure,' we are told

Bishop Burgess.

—'be sure your sin will find you out.' That is true, but it is also true that, when your sin pays you a second, third, and fourth call, it generally finds you in."

THE SECOND MARRIAGE.

Little Plea For the Much Maligned Stepmother.

At the outset it would seem that a second marriage must be easier to succeed in than a first. Nothing of the sort. Indeed, matters tend in a contrary direction. The novelty which characterises and pardons faults in early wedded days is missing at the second marriage.

A great deal of stuff—sense and nonsense—is talked about this matter. In reality, it is out of the question to generalise upon it. Everything depends upon individual circumstances. Some second marriages are wise, others are not. There is no broad reasons against such unions, and often there is much to commend them. This latter fact is abundantly proved by the immense number of lightly successful second marriages which exist.

But it is equally true that many second marriages are not successful. Some are marked to fail from the very beginning. F r example. take the case of a man who re-marries and yet wants to keep the memory of his first wife perennially green.

There are many men who object to their second wife exercising her individuality in their home. The place is probably dominated by the memory, the influence, the tastes of his first wife. Is it fair to expect the second wife to have all things unchanged—to live in a place which in every direction breathes the memory of her predecessor? No. A second marriage must mean a fresh start.

But the general cause for a second marriage failing is when it creates a stepmother. It is a most lamentable thing that there are so many people in the world who glory in making a terrible bugbear of a stepmother. They commence the onslaught. The future stepmother is condemned wholesale to the children. Servants, neighbors, friends. relatives—all join in trying to poison the minds of the boys and girls against their father's second wife. Small enough wonder if under such pressure the children get perverted ideas. When the stepmother comes they look upon her with suspicion as being their natural enemy. z

It is enough to harden the heart of the kindest and best-intentioned stepmother when she has all her advances repulsed—when her husband's children treat her with distrust and dislike. It is only natural, too, that where such is the state of affairs a strained feeling results all round. The marriage cannot be happy one.

Of course, things ought to be different. It is obviously unjust for people to prejudice children against their stepmother, just because in fairy-tales stepmothers are sometimes cruel. The cases in real life where stepmothers resemble the storybook ogres taken by silly people as a model, are few and very far between. The majority of stepmothers are ready and eager to help and love their husband's children, if they are allowed to. And when the children are allowed to meet their stepmother with an unbiassed mind, they will usually learn to respect and like or love her.

The lot of a stepmother is no enviable one, and only a brave woman will undertake it. Then surely people should help rather than hinder. Second marriages can be very happy ones, and very helpful also. When they do not succeed. failure is due frequently to the mischief-making and interference of people who, in reality, are not at all concerned.

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THE FARM

Useful Hints for the Tiller of the Soil

AN UNDESCRIBED DISEASE OF BLACKBERRY.

(By Dr. J. B. Dandeno, Bowmanville.)

By Blackberry is here meant what some people call thimbleberry, and what others call the long blackberry. The disease appeared here and there in this locality in 1911, in June and July. It affected the canes only, and seemed most destructive where the plants were crowded or otherwise shaded.

Description—The surface of the canes became first brownish, then darker brown, and later whitish with minute black points scattered here and there in the surface. While the fungus was working on on the cane, the leaves stopped growing and turned lighter green, and later yellowish. The fruit development was also arrested and the general condition easily apparent to even a casual observer.

The Fungus—The minute black dots proved to be perithecia of a fungus belonging to one of the subdivisions of the ascomycetes. These perithecia are open and contain many asci and each ascus contains eight spores. The wall of the ascus is very hyaline and can not be seen readily except with careful staining. The asci are shaped much like those of Plowrightia morbosa, and the asco-spores are two-celled. The paraphyses are also very hyaline, about the same length as the asci and one-fourth the width.

Remedy—All the diseased plants should be cut out and burned as soon as the disease is manifest. From my observations the disease will not likely be very destructive unless the plants are crowded.

COMMERCIAL FERTILIZERS.

The use of commercial fertilizers has been one of the most baffling questions with which the farmer has had to deal. If the application of commercial fertilizers to the land had generally resulted in success, there need be very little said, because they have been in somewhat general use for a quarter of a century or more. It is easy to find farmers who are not loud in their praises of such fertilizers, and the reason probably is that they have not always been a success. Millions of dollars are spent annually in the United States, and hundreds of thousands in Canada for commercial fertilizers, and it is safe to say that at least half of this large amount is wasted, not because the fertilizers have, or have not, certain elements in their composition, but because they are not always suitable to the land to which they have been applied.

There is generally an erroneous notion regarding infertile soil, exhausted soil, or over-cropped soil. The prevailing idea is that such soil in infertile because it lacks plant food, (I have never yet met a man who could give a fair definition of "plant food") whatever that is. This is in nearly all cases entirely wrong. Soil is infertile because of something it has, rather than because of something it lacks. Plant excretions are the chief cause of infertility, and it is in the decomposition of such material that the application of fertilizers of any kind proves of value. Commercial fertilizers may remedy such conditions but, in the majority of cases, they do not, hence a loss and waste of time.

To apply a commercial fertilizer with some prospect of success at least three things are necessary, (1) a knowledge of the effect of the previous crop on the soil, (2) a knowledge of the crop now to be grown and its relation to the excreta of the previous crop, (3) a knowledge of the biology of the soil.

Up to the present time these things are only very vaguely known, consequently the use of commercial fertilizers is more or less like the use of patent medicine. The defect is only occasionally remedied.

Moreover, many of the commercial fertilizers, in the process of manufacture, have been heated to a temperature so high as to be destructive of all bacterial life. Such are of very doubtful value. In the sale of, and in the inspection of, commercial fertilizers, the chemical composition is usually given, i.e., so much phosphoric acid, so much potash and so much nitrogen, as if the value depended upon these things. The value depends chiefly upon whether the original bacterial life has been preserved, and whether the constituents of the fertilizer are favorable to the development of nitrifying bacteria of the soil, and to those organisms which prey upon plant excretions.

Certain fertilizers are adapted to certain crops, and to certain soils, and the only way to find out which is to try them by using them on part of the field so as to compare.

Another common error in this connection that organic matter is taken in by the plant roots. As a matter of fact roots absorb inorganic matter and water, but no organic matter excepting possibly in the rarest cases, or under the most peculiar circumstances. There is no question as to the benefit to be derived from barnyard manure, and this is not because it contains "plant food" (for you could carry in your vest pocket all the "plant food" that a load of barnyard manure contains) but because it always supplies abundant favorable bacteria, and abundant nutritive material for them. It has also a neutralizing effect on all plant excreta, and it produces in the soil a good phpsical condition relative to the water supply.

No mistake is made in applying barnyard manure or other excreta, but in bringing and using commercial fertilizers, "patent medicine chances" are taken. Following this will appear an article on fertilizing the apple orchard.—Bowmanville Statesman.

Royal Bank of Canada Had Record Year

Net Profits amounted to 18.58% on Stock, while Liquid Assets now stand at 49½% of Total Liabilities to the Public.

Once more The Royal Bank of Canada is able to report in its Forty-second Annual Statement all previous records broken.

Deposits increased over $16,000,000, which brings the total up to $88,294,000. Liquid assets amount to $47,738,000, being 49½ per cent of the total liabilities to the public. Actual cash on hand, balances on deposit with other banks, and call loans in New York and London, England, exceed 32 per cent. of the total liabilities to the public. Total assets increased during the year from $92,510,000 to $110,528,000. Net profits amounted to $1,152,249, showing an increase of $200,913 over the previous year—equal to 18.58 per cent. on the capital stock of $6,200,000. Commercial loans amount to $59,646,000, being 67.55 per cent. of the deposits.

As will be seen from these comparisons, the Bank has experienced a wonderfully prosperous year.

THE SERIOUS OBJECTION.

Mrs. Snoops—"Stop that fiendish racket, children. Your papa is talking to some one over the telephone and I can's hear a word he says."