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DAVID GRAHAM ADEE

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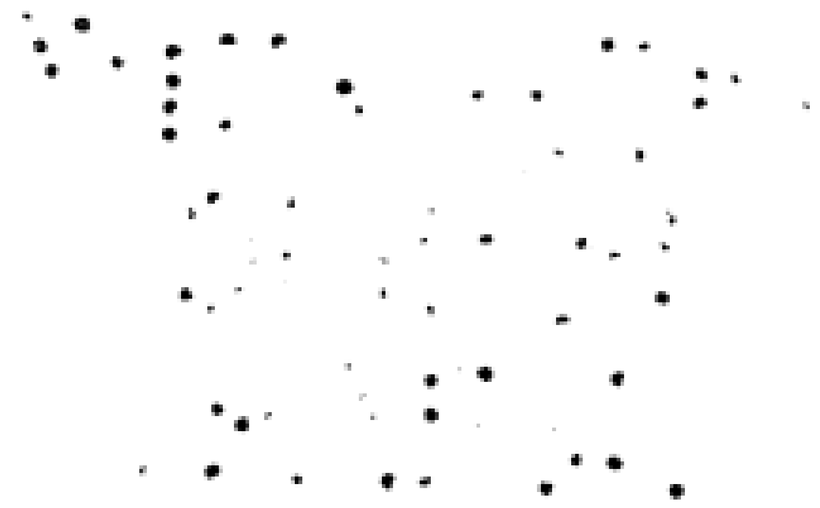

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THE BLUE SCARAB

CHAPTER I

GIL GRUNT AND I

"In my hot youth."
—*Don Juan.*

My name is Gaston Brashe, and I am the son of an English literary hack, though learned man, from whom I inherited an irresistible propensity for scribbling. My father, Ambrose Brashe, married my mother, Belinda Nettle, a Cheshire barmaid of great beauty employed in London, when the worthy but impecunious gentleman was diligently penny-a-lining in the seclusion and salubrity of a Fleet Street attic. He lived over a printer's and publisher's, and that worthy soul often hired him to write topical ballads for the music halls, striking them off on loose sheets for sale, and paying the needy author a liberal royalty for the wear and tear of his brain.

At the infantile age of five years I was left alone in the world, but for the fatherly offices of a friend of ours—one Gil Grunt. And who and what was Gil Grunt? it may be asked.

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Gil Grunt was nothing else than a comic singer and circus-clown—the general funny man of a cheap show. But Gil Grunt had a heart.

When my poor father fell ill of starvation, in our humble lodgings in St. Martin's Lane, our room chanced to be the very next one to Grunt's room in the garret. On our initial journey up the stairs, my father bearing me in his fast-weakening arms, Gil, dear old faithful Gil, had met us, "a sick and hungry man, and a feather-weight," as he afterward said, tenderly adding, "And your lively crow, my lad, and sweet puny smile, won my love in a hinstant, and sang a baby-ballad in my disreputable breast."

Be that as it may, during the last long illness of my father (alas, for literary Bohemians everywhere), our next-door neighbor and the best of friends had patiently fed and nursed the failing invalid, bought drugs for him for weeks out of his own scanty means, sat with him at night on returning from the distant music-hall where he performed, tenderly closed his dim and wandering eyes, and buried him decently, at his own expense; and had finally most cheerfully and devotedly adopted me as his sacred trust—a holy, dying bequest—at the greatest personal inconvenience possible, I should suppose. And where was my lovely and affectionate mother throughout that pain-

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ful period of vicissitude and trial? Heaven only knows! For three years before, when the ballad business was becoming attenuated, and I daily cried for breakfast, with no food at all in the cupboard, the blooming and beautiful Cheshire belle eloped—to my father's relief—to Paris, with a French dancing-master, it was said, and was never heard of afterward. God forgive me that I should have to tell so sad a story!

Gil Grunt, being a bachelor and man of the world, was by all means averse to having me grow up an idle young man about town—and London town at that; so, seeing me safely through the measles, croup, whooping-cough, mumps, a cheap city school and academy—where my guardian was most particular to have me taught "Latin and halgebra like a gentleman," he said—he likewise saw me through a course of scientific boxing at the hands of the then famous "London Pet." Not contented with all this unmerited generosity, on the day that I attained the mature age of eighteen, Gil placed at my sweet will and disposal an account-book at a London banker's, recording divers entries to the amount, at date, of five hundred pounds sterling, which neat sum the dear old soul had somehow saved out of his various small salaries as public singer and buffoon, for his darling and undeserving ward's

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behest. Of course I absolutely compelled the devoted chap to have the snug balance invested in our joint names in the Funds, share and share alike, which was, indeed, the very least I could have done under the circumstances.

My faithful friend had urged me to embark a portion of this money in some profitable business or enterprise; but I, boy-like, yet with an eye to prudence and the avoidance of money-risk, had strenuously elected to practice the art of glove-boxing in schools, gymnasiums, and friendly exhibitions. I was a small fellow, a light-weight in the ring, but the practice of this manly exercise for years had given me great strength, health and agility, of which prowess I was not unduly vain.

When I was turned twenty, Gil Grunt, a man of forty-five, persuaded me to try our fortunes in the States; so together we took passage in the Collins' steamer Atlantic for New York. Here we met with ready enough engagements, Gil as a comic singer and clown in Stout's perambulating circus—a grand and mammoth caravansary then performing in Boston for the winter, but soon to remove to New York for the spring and summer—and I in the capacity of teacher of sparring in Colton's gymnasium in Bleecker Street.

In Gotham, then, I was thus haply settled, when I received, one dull and rainy day, the

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following note from an occasional pupil of mine at the gymnasium, Dr. Howard Madesby of the Eleemosynary Hospital:

"March 24th, 185–.

"MY DEAR BRASHE:—Can you do me a favor for which I shall be only too grateful? Meet me to-night at eleven o'clock at the hospital, and accompany me on a peculiar if not perilous errand to a lonely grave-yard. More when we meet, my boy.

"In haste, yours ever,

"H. MADESBY.'

Of course I at once decided to go, and this was the first step in the direction which changed the whole current of my life.

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CHAPTER II

THE POTTER'S FIELD

"An obscure grave."
—*King Richard II.*

A group of three men were standing about a narrow hole, the men muffled in worsted comforters to the ears; and while a workman dug out the damp earth, throwing it in quite a regular pile on one side of the excavation opposite the group, another held a lantern, like a stable-light, high overhead, with its clearest side turned towards the digger. There was some soft snow mingled with the loose-lying dirt, and the slush of later winter lay, soiled and thawing, on the uneven surface. The laborers worked patiently; the lookers-on waited impatiently; and both idlers and employed alike were silent and absorbed in the gradual process methodically going on before them. It was certainly not an exhilarating scene.

"Glory!" at length said the toiler with the spade, in a low tone; "Glory, I've touched boards."

"Good!" replied the idler with the light, speaking equally low; "Good, have you struck oil?"

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"Got to bones, sure enough, Bill Glory."

"A skull or a thigh, Tom Good?"

"Ribs, Bill, ribs!"

From this conversation it may be gathered that the words Good and Glory were not mere interjections, but the surnames of two living men and grave-diggers.

"More light, Bill!"

"More light, Tom!"

The man in the hole then was Thomas Good; the man with the lantern William Glory; and the lantern, it may be added, was a peculiar one, painted black, opaque on three sides, the fourth pane alone of the square being transparent. Tom Good was leaning for a moment on his pick, carefully regarding the results of his excavations.

"Steady!" exclaimed a member of the party, standing upon the margin, in an eager whisper, anxiously peering over the shoulders of the others into the well; "Steady, my man, or you'll break something below there! Easy!"

"All right, doctor! We've got on so far right enough," answered Glory.

"Right as a trevet!" growled the miner with the pick. "I've broken through the lid, and no mistake, without mussing a hair of the corpse's head."

"It's in the bosom of the shroud," said the one designated "doctor;" "in the front somewhere, if the stuff's not given way!"

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"You put it there yourself, with your own hands, didn't you?" hissed a hoarse voice, in the doctor's ear.

"Safe!" said the latter; "safe and fast with my own hands, as you say; I am positive as to that."

"Can it have been stolen from the grave?" croaked the other.

"Has this grave ever been opened before, men?" asked the doctor.

"Not with such a sod a-top of it as this 'ere," replied both workmen simultaneously.

"Bah!" spoke the gruff tones, "I don't believe you, not a syllable."

"It's awful dark down here," said Tom Good, in the pit; "Point the light below, Bill." In a moment more he added:

"Dry rot here—nothing else, but an old flannel shirt!"

"Look sharp and grope around, boys," whispered the gruff voice again. "Twenty dollars—thirty—if you find it."

"The scarab must be in there, somewhere," said the doctor; "I'm sure I stuck it in the breast in order to identify the old man's body. It was the last thing I did in the case."

The first grave-digger continued to grope and gaze among the contents of the box in vain, and then the second grave-digger jumped in beside him, lantern and all, the better to

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afford him light and help, no doubt. All to no purpose, however, for the report came at length: "Nothing; nothing here but dust and ashes."

"Fifty dollars—a hundred dollars!" cried the saw-like voice in great excitement; "Two hundred dollars if you find the pin! Flash the light around, men! Grope about lively! Look sharp! God! Is it gone?" with trepidation.

A rapid, violent tossing of the broken boards, a shuffling of the pack of bones within, a riotous hunting after something lost, exclamations of disappointment from the men below and of unbridled passion from the angry man above, the latter ending with a raging oath. Then the cry, "Captain," (calling the doctor "captain") "have you gone and lied to me? Do you take me for a fool?"

"Sir, you must not talk to me in that way! I told you the solemn truth, and I am not here to be insulted. The trinket you seek, which seemed a pretty enough, though worthless, bauble, was duly interred with the remains."

"Curses!" cried the other wildly, grating his teeth so that we could hear them grit; "it is not here. You have mistaken the mound. It is in some other place; or it is gone, I say. You have blundered."

"There is no mistake. The thing was buried there."

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"Then some thief has stolen it, curse the luck!"

So wrought up by this time was the owner of the rasping voice, that, shouting, "Out of the way, men, you are blind!" (forgetting all caution), he leaped into the black hole fairly on top of the surprised workmen, and snatching up the lantern, suddenly clutched at the hodge-podge of earth and boards around bones now unarticulated, peering the while with eager eyes down into the dirt for the valuable or useless object of his earnest quest. In vain.

"Gone! Gone!" yelled the voice with the tones of a mate or boatswain in a storm at sea; "Stolen!"

"Is it diamonds," sneered Bill Glory, mockingly, "from Araby?

"Or gold-dust from Californy?" echoed Tom Good, in accents of the deepest disdain.

These taunts were too much for the endurance of the infuriated seeker. Scarcely were the words out of the last speaker's mouth, when the former hurled himself upon him and his astonished mate in gross assault. Striking, kicking, wrestling, biting with his strong teeth, and grating out oaths and curses all the while, the powerful creature beat first one and then the other into the earth at the bottom of the grave; finally, with one prodigious effort of ferocity and fury, jumping upon the prostrate

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men with all his cruel might and weight. Then said the patient doctor to me:

"Let him have it hard, Brashe."

This was enough. Dropping lightly into the pit, I, who had been one of the outside group hitherto, let fly my dexterous right with the seasoned vigor of experience and proficiency, landed my ambidextrous left on *caro firma*, and straightway grappling with the maddened ruffian, flung him heavily on the broad of his back, flat among the clay and chalky grit.

As the stranger and I thus pleasantly scuffled together, the laborers, Glory and Good, slowly crawled to their feet (for they were both somewhat scared and sore) and crept lamely over the sides of the dug-out to a safe distance from the fray, where they stood, panting and wiping their faces on their muddy sleeves in mute alarm. Dr. Madesby, meanwhile, had boldly sprung to my assistance in the grave, where we together were holding down our exasperated adversary by main force. But that deft foeman was not to be so easily overcome. Finding that he had doubtless met his masters in the pugilistic art—ugly brute as he was and an antagonist not to be despised—he formed the rash resolve of daring at one throw the desperate hazard of the die. Shaking us successfully off, he half struggled to his feet, and suddenly made a spring for the surface. I was too quick

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for him, however, and hit at him again (determined to obey orders and discharge my duty to the letter) with a swinging knock-down blow. It felled him like an ox.

"We have no right to maltreat or detain him," interceded the doctor, "but simply to protect ourselves from undue violence, and conserve the peace. I feared some brutal performance such as this from the ill looks and bad manners of the fellow, and took these cautious steps accordingly. I confess I see no reason for so outrageous an outbreak, however. But you'd better look out, old boy, or you'll have the rascal in the hospital. Let him go! Although, why, in conscience's name, did he want to attack those men?"

"They have stolen the token," said the man, getting up and gathering himself together. "How the devil am I to identify the body now? The thieves!"

"Not at all," answered the doctor with warmth in their behalf, "they have only not succeeded in recovering it!"

"Did you ever bury it?" defiantly asked the fellow; insultingly adding, "Somebody's stolen it, first or last. That's sure!"

"You scoundrel!" impulsively exclaimed the doctor, with natural indignation at the man's unshaken obstinacy.

"What!" cried the other; and, without an

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instant's warning, the wretch sprang like a shark at the surgeon's throat, with a weapon of some sort in his brawny fist, before the doctor, a brave but little gentleman, could put himself on his guard; but I succeeded again in catching the assailant square on the skull, which beautiful thump (pardon my professional pride) laid him low at once, happily saving my kind, good friend from further harm. This effort finished the fellow, and the two workmen laughed aloud and uproariously at the fun. By this the man seemed to realize that I possessed some unusual pugilistic skill, and rising, said more respectfully:

"You're game—I'll go."

"You've raised row enough," remarked Bill Glory, "for a riot."

"Or a mutiny, you cantankerous catamount!" joined in Tom Good, with a will.

"Let him alone," said the good-natured doctor, "I myself was to blame for accompanying him here at this late hour of the night. Be off, you brute, and thank your stars!"

"I beg your pardon, captain, and thank *you* anyhow," returned the man, with unacountable docility. "I was betrayed into an attack of temper by those two thieves there. I'm sorry. As for this young sprig of a fighter, I'm blowed, my dandy, if I won't be square with you yet, curse you! Good night, Cap; I'm off!"

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"And good riddance to bad rubbidge," said Glory with relief.

"A black pirate if ever there was one!" said Tom Good. "A.reg'lar raw-head and bloody-bones!"

"Dr. Madesby," I said inquisitively, as we watched the outlines of our curious and unaccountable acquaintance fade out, like a specter-demon on the stage, in the deepening fog and gloom; "Dr. Madesby, what—may I ask—was the trinket, or token, or whatever it may have been, that our impulsive friend was so ardently in search of? Is it a talisman, like Aladdin's ring?"

"By no means, Brashe, but I hardly know myself," rejoined my honored pupil, who, by the way, I had been sorry to see, during our late tussle, had grown sadly rusty at sparring, and fat and scant of breath.

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CHAPTER III

MY ENEMY

"Give me the avow'd, the erect, the manly foe."
—*New Morality.*

"Well, you see," said Dr. Madesby, "yesterday morning, that fellow—a coarse, rough-looking specimen truly, calling himself Hugh Gormon—came to the hospital, stating to the steward that he had inquiries to make in respect to whether a decrepit, aged man, a foreigner named Joel Lazarus, had been admitted or had died there some four years before; and, if so, whether any nurse or doctor was still employed within who might by any possibility have known the patient, and would be willing to speak with the visitor on the subject. The steward reported his request to me; and sending for the inquirer to my office, I had a long conversation with him, or rather listened for half an hour to his strange side of the matter, after he ascertained that it was I who had attended the old man during his last illness. His statement was to the following effect:

"One Joel Lazarus, a French Hebrew, had kept a pawn-shop for some months somewhere

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in the lower Bowery. He had grown very old and miserly, at length denying himself even the common necessaries of life. Finally, he had become childish and almost helpless, according to the sad account he had received, my visitor said. One night, a rainy autumn night, some four or five years before, the poor old man had escaped from his home, eluding the vigilance of his hired keepers, and wandered out alone into the deserted streets at a late hour, entirely vanishing from mortal ken. Search was made in every direction, but in vain. The old man had never been heard of again alive.

"'What relation are you to the old man,'" I asked, 'or how are you so deeply interested in his affairs?'

"'I am his only son,' declared the man, 'and that is relation enough, I should say; isn't it, captain?'

"I acknowledged that it was, but added with a smile of incredulity, '*His* surname was Lazarus, by your assurance; *yours* you have stated to be Gorman. How do you explain such a discrepancy?'

"'I quarreled with my father many years ago, was the fellow's explanation, and have borne my mother's maiden name ever since. I know no other.'

"'Good!' said I, in doubt though.

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"'He had with him when he stole off,' continued the man, who persisted in addressing me as captain, 'a singular piece of jewelry—pinchbeck-ware—a breast-pin in the shape of a beetle, made of metal, blue or burnished silver, about the size of a small hen's-egg, an ornament of extrordinary weight and substance, which he invariably wore about him concealed under his clothes from view. If he had it on at the date of his decease, it may serve to identify the remains, in the absence of any additional proof.'

"'Steward,' I called to my orderly, 'bring me my hospital register of the fall of four years since—in 184—. Ask Dr. Reeder to please find it for me.'

"There was no delay—no difficulty in the way. The book was immediately brought. Sure enough, among the entries of medical cases for the month of September of that year, we read the name of Joel Lazarus, duly registered, the age of patient eighty-two, the disease debility and general breaking-up of the system, the direct cause of death old age, the place of burial Potter's Field, and the mark of identification, buried with the body at the deceased's urgent and repeated request, a *blue metal scarab* of the size of a walnut, having a pin to fasten it to the dress, and possessing an unusual weight, as though of pure gold.

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"'You see,' said I, 'that you are on the right track. You are a first-class guesser, my friend —an adept at second-sight.'

" 'The trifle was buried with him,' said the man, 'of course I can read that for myself. Are you sure that it is there yet?'

"'Not likely to have been disturbed.

"His furtive eyes glittered like stars in an October sky, and he all at once quivered as an aspen in an April breeze. It was the emotion of a man whose hope and expectation had long been bridled up, and whose certainty now sprang forward in exultation. I rejoiced in his success and happiness, I do assure you.

" 'Captain,' he said, almost inaudibly, at length, 'Captain, I must be assured that I have found my father. The identification must be complete. The sight of the breastpin, poor little toy, will clinch the business. Will you have the old pauper's grave shown to me and opened?'

"Moved by the man's profound emotion, a son's affection for his father, I made answer: 'Yes! I will go with you to the field myself and point out the mound where your parent lies. I can go at once.'

"'Thanks! Thanks!' said the man, with a shade of hesitation. 'It is now high noon. I must not be seen about the place in person in the daylight. Captain, if you will consent to

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go with me to-night, I will give you one hundred dollars.'

"'I shall accept no pay for doing my duty,' I replied; 'but it is an inconvenience to me to go out at night. I am employed here night and day.'

"'Let me whisper to you, cap," he said in his harsh bass voice, approaching my ear. 'Listen! I will give you a thousand dollars, gladly, to know the exact bearing of that grave—to see with my own eyes the nonsensical blue beetle that the old man carried. I want the breastpin as a keepsake, a remembrance."

"I frowned and shook my head indignantly, turning on my heel; but curiosity, I admit—weakest of human traits—got full possession of me, and I finally decided to accede to the stranger's wishes, but without the thousand dollar bribe. Determined to secure a suitable ally if I went with such an odd being after dark to so lonely and out-of-the-way a spot as Potter's Field, I accordingly settled upon you to accompany me.

"'You will have to hire a couple of men to dig,' said I.

"'Here are ten dollars, Cap. Is that enough?' said he.

'"Quite. We'll set out at eleven o'clock, to-night. I will notify our two men to be at the grave-yard, sharp. Meet me here at the

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door of the hospital. We will go together. Good-bye!'

"'Good-day, cap! I'm your man.' And off he went, well pleased. There, Brashe, I believe that is about all I have to tell. You know the rest. We have together witnessed the strange result. It is inexplicable to me, I must confess."

The doctor and I had quit, during his short recital, the mournful scene of our late exploits, and were bent upon our route along the bleak and misty street, with flickering, flaring gas-lights on either side, toward the hospital, leaving Good and Glory to fill in the desecrated grave at their leisure; and now the sound of their loud laughter at the stranger's queer freaks followed us upon the muggy air. The weather was thickening fast; the clouds were lowering as if for settled rain; the night hung black and heavy. We had reached the well-known hospital, amid the somber chill and dampness of the city, and to the doctor's cordial, pressing invitation that I should help him wash down the abominable weather with a drop of hot brandy and water, in mutual good-fellowship, I only too gladly acquiesced. Accordingly we went to the cosy little study, with a kettle of hot water comfortably simmering on the hob beside the fire, and dressing-gown and slippers spread conveniently upon the arm of an easy-

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chair, my mind still keeping to the theme so recently discussed.

The doctor, however, vouchsafed not a word more to me on the subject, but poked the fire lazily, snuffed the ashes from his pipe, drained his glass of grog to the sugared dregs, and significantly yawned. It was plain that I was boring him. Taking the hint in amiable part, I bade the plucky little surgeon good night to his good morning.

It was nearly one o'clock when I went away. My head swam badly, unaccustomed as I was to strong spirits. Upon my solitary road homeward, along Broadway to Bleecker Street, I instinctively reviewed the past events of the night, and the later details of the doctor's, or rather the stranger's, statement.

I felt that I was a little unsteady in the legs; but was also conscious that, notwithstanding, I had my wits fully about me. Thus I had gained the corner of Bleecker Street and Broadway. I was to turn down Bleecker, and keep on past Green and Mercer Streets. I was to pass through a foreign and quite questionable quarter of the town. Moses Moss, the janitor and door-keeper of the gymnasium, would be gone to bed; but I had a latch-key in my pocket, as I slept upstairs. I felt that I was all right, thus recalling all these things. I was jolly—nothing else in the world. I sang the stave of a song. I tried to dance.

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In my early childhood, and at troubled periods, usually after long intervals, in my youth, a strange, wild dream of sands and sea-shore, and sedges waving in the wind, would visit my restless pillow, bringing me pain and a sense of loss and sadness. It came to me suddenly then, laying a load of grief upon my breast, and pressing my brow with a heavy hand. I know now what it meant, alas, that years have sped, as the bitter sequel of this tale will show.

* * * * *

A crash of thunder in my ears! a flash of lightning in my eyes! a shower of rain upon my face and neck in streams! I sank to the sidewalk in a swoon. What was this? The thunder was lead; the light was in my brain; the rain was my own blood. I had been struck on the head, from behind, with some hard or heavy substance—a deadly missile.

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CHAPTER IV

OUR GYMNASIUM

"The wise for cure on exercise depend."
—*Cymon and Iphigenia.*

When I rallied from my stupor, occasioned by an ugly knock on the head which meant murder, I found myself in a small, roughly-furnished room with sanded floor, and wooden benches about the walls, lying upon a cot or camp-bed and covered with a heavy quilt. The room was warm, and dimly lighted by a couple of candles on a small table in the corner. A policeman stood beside the bed regarding me rather intently, while another sat smoking an over-fragrant pipe near the door. By fits and starts they talked confidentially together.

"He's coming round," said the one beside my couch, with a long look at me; "I guess he'll pull through. A close shave, though. Gosh! I thought he was gone when I first see him drop. He went down under the blow like a plummet. It seemed to my eyes as how he were reeling a bit afore he were hit, but when he got it, he dropped without a stagger."

"You gave chase to the assaulter before you

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looked after the victim, didn't you?" inquired the other; who, I observed, wore a comical air of superior authority.

"Yes, oh, yes! I first took notice to this one knocked down here, agoing along in a lively sort of way, as if he had been on a spree. Directly following him I see the other chap a-sneaking up close to him; when, in the flash of a gun, I see he hit him a sledge-hammerer straight on top of his hat, and run. In a wink I gave chase up Bleecker and down Broadway at his heels, but he were a racer to go, and distanced me in the space of a couple of blocks. Of a sudden he just about doubled his speed; I sounded an alarm on the sidewalk, and whistled like a steam-engine. Donovan ran up, and seeing the game, put after him, while I drew off and went back to look after the hurt one. Mike came back in ten minutes, saying that the mean cuss had stolen away; was clean gone out of sight."

"What was the appearance of the assaulter, Gelding?"

"Hard to tell in the fog, Sergeant Monsoon; but I should say, from the glimpse I caught of him, skylooting along, that he was a big fellow, light in the flank, with a broad back and neck. He wore a soft hat and tippet, and from the fact of his making no more noise when he ran than a streak of greased lightning, I should suppose he had on Ingee rubbers."

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"Did you see what he hit him with?"

"A black-jack, I should think."

Feeling myself so comfortably situated, I naturally encouraged a disposition to sleep, and was soon in a healthy state of sound insensibility. It was sunlight when I awoke, much better—indeed, quite well—barring a sore skull and a cut scalp, a flesh-wound which the police-surgeon had sewed up and dressed at the time I was brought in on a shutter by Officers Gelding and Donovan on the preceding night. I was very weak, but hungry, which was a good sign; and upon getting up, and after a searching semi-legal examination by Justice Clough of that precinct, and a favorable report by the doctor, left the hospitable station-house (for such had been my friendly refuge), and looked about me for a proper place to breakfast. This I happily found in a convenient eating-house near by.

My lessons in sparring on that day, and for several days thereafter, had to be wholly omitted, in consequence of a bad headache accompanied by constant dizziness—the result of my ugly hurt. A man cannot be knocked senseless without suffering more or less inconvenience from the shock, and I had been almost brained by my assailant. But on the third day after the delivery of the blow, I was able to quit

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my room, on the upper floor of the building, and to descend to the gymnasium in the second story in order to show the gentlemen patrons of the place that my cracked pate was duly mending, in readiness for active business. The gymnasium was a very capacious hall, extending throughout the length and breadth of the edifice, brightly lighted with gas. It was suitably furnished with all the paraphernalia of physical exercise, including vaulting-horses, tight and slack ropes, horizontal bars, hauling-ropes and pulleys, dumb-bells, jumping bars, swings, braces, boxing-gloves, fencing-foils, clubs, weighing scales and sawdust; and it was a pretty and pleasant sight enough of an evening, that scene of active life, the brilliant hall with the gymnasts in their colored garbs at exercise on every side.

As I put in that first appearance after the attack upon me, I was welcomed and greeted with a general huzza and shaking of hands, information of my adventure having got in the daily press among the local news items. I felt quite like a lion or a hero.

"Hello, Brashe!" shouted a ringing, manly voice; "Gad! I'm awfully glad to see you down again. You've greatly mended since I saw you in your room yesterday evening, old boy. Give us a fin!"

The speaker was an exceedingly prepossessing

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young gentleman of five or six and twenty, a person of an extraordinarily fine and elegant presence. Five feet ten, a graceful poise, a jaunty figure, eleven-stone weight, the face and neck of a Byron, the sloping shoulders and slim waist of a Brummel, the easy carriage and gallant bearing of a D'Orsay—all these corporeal advantages combined to make up the distinguished personal appearance of Mr. Jack Listir, Jr., playwright and light comedian—"Handsome Jack Listir," as he was often called—the most symmetrical figure, dashing hero of stage romance, and incomparable exquisite, of his day.

"Gad, sir!" he rattled on with champagne sparkle; "you've had a mighty narrow escape. Such a tap on the head has often done for a chap, I can tell you. It was an ugly, cowardly thing to do."

Jack Listir always liked, or rather relished with a zest, to talk or play before a good-sized audience, as he also did to show himself daintily in the promenades. "I remember," he went on with great vivacity, "in London, in the year '49, Sir James Ramsay, a noted Scotch laird of his day, of rank and fashion, being on his way home from a ball at the Horse Guards, when spang! he was hit on the knob, as you were the other night, by a drunken peeler who mistook him for a cabman, and brained like a

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bullock. Dick Manson, of Child's Hospital, a medical friend of mine, trepanned him and sewed up the wound. But Sir James was dead, gentlemen, stone dead, before he began the operation."

"Panned out before he was trepanned, eh!" said Mr. Frank Wandel, an inveterate diner-out, punster, and man of the world—chief member and ornament of the celebrated Macaroni Club of Clinton Place.

Strange, *outré* characters, eccentric personages, mostly foreigners, French, Italian, German, would drift into our gymnasium; and it was an interesting study to watch and note their several peculiarities of mind and manner. They generally came to take fencing lessons from old Pentz, who was esteemed extremely adroit and able in that art.

They would give great attention to their work, as if their very lives depended upon their excellence with the small sword; and, indeed, it was not at all unlikely that it had been so during some past experience and adventure in their checkered careers. One of these gentlemen was a Frenchman, a certain, or uncertain, titled nobleman of the then new empire, Count Philippe de Soudan, a very singular person, indeed.

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CHAPTER V

NEWS OF THE ASSAILANT

"*Bonjour, messieurs!*" "*Bonsoir, messieurs!*" were the count's uniform salutes day and evening, coming and going, politely rendered, hat in hand. Evidently a French gentleman of travel and education, his extreme if not excessive courtesy implied an intimacy with the higher social circles, if not with foreign courts. The count attended the gymnasium, evidently for purposes of practice in fencing alone. In this science he was an adept, one of the finest fencers I had ever seen. He was more than an amateur, he was a master-at-arms. Our big Swiss professor, Karl Pentz, ex-corporal and ex-courier of his own country, would grow wildly exasperated, sluggish nature though he was, at the Frenchman's lithe and furious stampings, defiances, poises, mock onsets and amusing bravado, with the rest of the marvelous rigmarole of single-stick, until that burly swordsman and ex-warrior was constrained into making a mad rush at the cool and wary count, and plunging the point of his weapon straight

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for that adversary's heart, when he would suddenly find himself helplessly disarmed, his foil flung ten feet into the air, and his life completely at the mercy of his foe. Yes, Count Philippe de Soudan was a perfect expert in the assault at arms.

Then, old Pentz would rage and roar out German oaths at the top of his lungs, to the civil but sinister smiles and bows of the polite count, whose pale eyes would snap fire until the big Swiss blurted out, "*Erlauben Sie,*" with a funny grimace.

The antecedents of the count I had never been able to fathom. He was perhaps forty, yet as wiry and as firm of wrist and step as a man of thirty. His person was of middle size and sinewy, his bearing soldierly and distinguished, so that I assumed that he had been a military officer, at some stage or other of his career. He wore an iron-gray mustache closely trimmed, his hair was short and grizzly, his face spare, furrowed and bronzed, and his eye was one of the most remarkable that I have ever seen in a human head. It was small and sharp, and of such a very light shade of blue or gray that it seemed almost white, like an opal —nay, so near was the iris in color, or absence of color, to the white of the eye, that it appeared to be but a faint yellowish blur. I once observed him when his eyes were blood-shot,

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and the iris and pupil were alike blood-red.

He was reserved and haughty, yet invariably polite, dressed with scrupulous care, wearing a silk hat and gloves and carrying a costly cane, which by accident I discovered to be a sword cane of the finest make. He had an order, the rosette of a decoration, in his lapel, some foreign token of distinction, doubtless. The scar of an old and ugly wound ran along the side of his left cheek to the chin, which must have laid open the face to the bone and been a very dangerous gash, at its infliction. In fact, the count could have appropriately sat for the portrait of one of the stereotyped soldiers-of-fortune and valiant gentlemen-of-the-sword of the age of Louis XIII.

Once, a lady closely veiled and expensively dressed, had stopped at the door of our gymnasium, and asked to see the count, as if she knew that he was there. She insisted on remaining outside, sending up a message that she wished to speak with him, and the count, putting on his coat (he had been fencing with Pentz) skipped spryly down stairs, forgetting to touch his hat to us as was his wont, and went away with her in quite a hurry. Moss, our door-keeper, reported that the lady seemed young from her figure, and "awful excited," and that she ran at once to the "shentleman" and "vispered avay like anything."

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She might have been his niece or his daughter, or even something nearer and dearer, we speculated, which was, indeed, none of our business in the least. This was the only instance when any light had been shed upon the count's domestic affairs, and it was but a fitful glimpse at the best.

Upon the afternoon in question, I was disqualified by my injury from sparring, having to remain stationary on a stool in the corner and view inactively the passing scene. Jack Listir, desiring to box, (in which science he excelled) looked sadly disconsolate. Mr. Wandel laughed.

"I'm sorry, for you, Jack," said he; "You'd better take a turn at the bars with me."

"I believe I'll take to the foils, myself," said Jack Listir, impatiently.

"I'll not foil you, I am sure," said the execrable punster.

Pentz had overheard poor Listir's exclamation, and immediately made answer:

"Why you no learn, heh? You make splendid fencer. You joost the build, well soot-up, and you have the wrist and eye. The sword is the only weapon for a gentleman like you. The glooves are for the loafer in the street, hah! Come, try a bout with me, *mein Herr!*"

"Boxing is British and not Swiss," I jeered; for Pentz and I were rival professors in our respective callings, and very jealous of the hon-

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ors, he invariably decrying the manly art, and I frequently belittling the noble one.

"*Ja!* And so is beef-eating British, and plum-pudding," sneered the irate swordsman.

"And beer-drinking is Dutch," said I in dudgeon; for if you call a Swiss or a German a Dutchman, you are apt to make him an enemy for life.

"Bah, you are a boxer!" snapped out Pentz, flushing up and turning on his heel, contemptuously.

"I believe I'll have a few lessons in fencing although I am a Briton," said Listir gaily, "at least, until the little game-cock's comb gets well, eh, bantam, and he can use his gaffs again."

"Good!" cried Pentz, much elated at his triumph, and quickly growing good-natured as before.

I gave a playful crow of defiance, slapping my hands against my thighs to sound like wings.

The padded jackets, wire masks and leather gauntlets were put on, the foils taken up and tried, and wildly swished in the air to the risk and peril of our noses. Then they went at it with a will (for Jack Listir had acquired a knowledge of theatrical fencing, such as it is) —ding-dong, hammer-and-tongs, pell-mell, crash! Grunt, grunt! Stamp, stamp, and slide

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forward and back. Stamp and pass and parry, and parry and pass and stamp; slide and strike fire-works with your foils. Stamp! (your left arm in the air) plunge, and twist, with a quick wrench, your adversary's foil out of his grasp, flinging it far behind him or you, greatly to his chagrin and surprise. Hah! A palpable hit! Bravo! and the duel is over! And a man run through, in theory. And that is what the French call fun!

"And how, pray, can you compare such child's play, such arrant nonsense, such a game of jack-straws, with the manly, healthful, plucky English art of self-defense? No French foils and frogs for me. Give me honest fists, a fair field and no favor. That's sport!"

"*Pardon, monsieur!*" somebody said in my ear. "You seem to be out of humor. Ah, ver vell! But zat is not fencing. *Mais non!* Zat is ze make-believe; zat is child's play. *Mais, pardonnez moi, monsieur!* I intrude, I fear."

"I was only joking a little at Pentz's expense," I instinctively explained; and turning, beheld, grinning and scraping at my elbow, the French count himself, his little white eyes peering sharply into mine as if to charm me with their magnetism. He calmly blew away the thin smoke of his cigarette, politely saying:

"*Certainement, monsieur*, I am avare of zat. You vere in choke. You are fond of ze choke,

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eh? I vas in chest, also. *Pardon!*" And he grinned more, and bowed lower than ever—the very grimmest-looking joker and jester I ever saw in my life.

I felt really ashamed of myself for my obtrusive, rude remarks upon a favorite national custom, in the presence of a foreigner and a true lover of the foil and rapier. But I had put my foot into it, and it was but right that I should feel like a goose. Besides, the Frenchman was a patron of our place.

"I beg your pardon for my folly, and apologize," I said, impulsively, to the smiling and scraping count, in my confusion.

"Sare," replied the latter, holding out his hand (for at heart I think he had some admiration for my vulgar John Bull dexterity of the fist), "Sare, I am not offended in ze least. If I vere, you sincerely have my pardon. You are young; you have not seen ze vorld—*Mais oui!* You should see me fence. I could kill zat German bungler in an instant. *Parbleu!* An assault, a parry, a pass, and my point is in his heart. *Hélas!*"

I seized the opportune chance to interrogate him upon his past history.

"You learned to use the sword in the army?" I insinuated with feigned indifference. But my wary friend was not to be pumped by me. He was drier than ever, in an instant.

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"I am an enigma to all my acquaintances," he said carelessly. "I learn everyting everywhere. I am a sphinx."

"You look like a soldier," I pertinaciously persisted.

"Or a sailor," he said with a frown, drawing himself up stiffly. "I may be an officer of horse-marines, who knows?"

'Or a general of gendarmes," I dauntlessly persevered, a little provoked at the coolness of his rebuff.

He swept me swiftly with his small white eyes, a rapid reading of my soul, and I thought I had broken through his superb *sang froid* for once, but he only said:

"You shall see me fence some day, *monsieur*, perhaps," and walked deliberately away. I little knew at that moment how prophetic his words would ultimately prove, or what terrible significance lay concealed within them, like a stinging viper coiled venomously in a basket of fruit or flowers.

Jack Listir and Karl Pentz had finished their lesson at single combat.

"Good!" ejaculated the professor in ecstasy; "*Herr* Listir, you have promise. You are soople. You have nerve, you have guard. Your pass is goot, very goot. You will do, as the Americans say. But enough for once, *mein Herr!*"

Twilight having set in, Moss came in, lit the

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gas, and, looking searchingly around the room, espied Count de Soudan engaged in a difficult passage-at-arms with the big Swiss. He hastily went up to the former, holding out a piece of paper, a rumpled scrap, which he handed him at a pause in the match. The count glanced over the note and said to Moss, "Anyone waiting?" (Moss nodding that there *was*, with a perfect air of mystery) proceeded with the bout to its conclusion, put on his coat, lighted a çigarette, tore up the scrap of paper, tossing carelessly the fragments into a corner of the staircase, and bowing with his usual politeness, said, "*Bonne nuit, messieurs*," and left. There was nothing unusual in his manner of departure.

However, I had narrowly watched the countenance of the Frenchman, during his perusal of the letter, and had seen it slightly change. Something disturbing had occurred, I was sure of that. The colorless eyes had flashed fire, the bronzed cheeks had paled perceptibly, his grip had tightened on the shreds of paper as he tore them fairly to tatters and flung them from him. What had happened to ruffle or perturb so invariable and confirmed an equanimity?

I am about to make confession of a fault, perhaps a grievous one, and to cast myself, for condonation, upon human charity. Overcome by curiosity to acquire more knowledge of the

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count, and further impelled by an impulse which I cannot explain, except upon the convenient hypothesis of inspiration, as soon as he had gone, and believing that I was unnoticed, I sauntered over to the corner where the count had strewn the torn scraps of paper, and surreptitiously picking them up, fitted them piece to piece upon the palm of my open hand.

In a moment I was in possession of the subject-matter of the writing. The characters were cramped and scrawled in illiterate chirography, but the crooked, misspelled words were sufficiently intelligible to yield their occult meaning to me at a glance. They ran as follows:

"Captin. sanmans tomorrow nite ten toosday. the gren grashoper is lost. gott.

"h. GRATZ."

The note was written in ink, and to me, bore undefinable evidences that the lines had been indited by a far less ignorant penman than it was designed to appear from the style of writing and the spelling. It looked like a woman's writing, yet it read like a man's. Was it intended to deceive?—if so, whom and why? And where was "Sanman's?" I had a sudden idea! *Was the green grasshopper the blue beetle?*

The address of "captain" was the same that the man Gorman had applied to Dr. Madesby

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at the hospital, and at Potter's Field. Nearly every word was singularly misspelled, and there was a studied avoidance of capitals. "Sanman's" was no other than Sandmann's Hall in the Bowery, I believed, a place of foreign resort and equivocal repute, where meals and music were served of an equally satisfactory quality and quantity throughout the day and night. The note bearing the date Tuesday, the appointed hour for meeting would probably be Wednesday, at 10 P. M.

While I was meditating upon these evident clews to the possible discovery of my deadly enemy, I felt the fanning of a warm breath upon the side of my neck, and, turning rapidly, surprised Pentz in the act of reading the mussed fragments over my left shoulder, and I saw in his face that he also had mastered the hidden meaning of the message.

"You have read that?" said I reproachfully.

"I tought you had found someting, some manner of jewelry on der floor," he coolly replied, with a lazy stretch and yawn of assumed indifference.

"But you know the words?" I repeated.

"*Nein;* I only oonderstand goot English; dot is bad."

I felt that he lied to me, and that he was as well aware of the contents of the paper as I was myself. Why had he deceived me? I had

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always believed him to be the very soul of honest frankness. Was he ashamed of being caught peeping? But that was not quite like the old Swiss either. He walked off sheepishly while I cast after him a withering glance of contempt and scorn.

The old mustache is abashed at his own inquisitiveness," I thought, forgetting that I was in the same predicament myself.

Going downstairs I found Moss at his accustomed station by the door.

"Moses," I said, "tell me who it was that brought the letter to the count?"

"A lady, the shame lady vot fetched a meshage for the Frenchy a month ago."

"Did you see her face this time?"

"Sho help me gracious, she kep her green veil close over her face shust the same, Mishter Brashe!"

"What did she say to you, Moss?"

"She rang the bell, and ven I go to the door, she shay, 'Shir, Colonel Soudan ish upstairsh ish he not? I am sure he ish.' 'Yesh,' I shesh, 'he ish in the gymnashium a fenching, Mish.' 'Well,' she shesh, 'you pleashe shust step up and shlip thish little note into hish hand—and hurry, pleash, shir'—vhich I did."

"What took place, Moss, when the count went down? Did the lady come in?"

"She sthay standing outshide on the shide-

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walk till Frenchy come down to the door when she shay shortly, 'A meshenger brung that letter to the hotel at shix o'clock sharp. I recognished,' said she, 'the handwriting, and run around wish the note to you at once.' She shpoke in a whishper, but I overheard her.

"That's all, eh, Moss?"

"Every bleshed shircumstance, sho help me gracious!"

"Have you any idea (you are shrewd, Moses, and know a thing or two), which hotel she meant?"

"Bleshed if I have, shir. They go toward Broadway." Moses Moss evidently could tell no more.

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CHAPTER VI

FEELING FOR A CLUE

"And the poor beetle that we tread upon."
—*Measure for Measure.*

Leaving the gymnasium the next day about noon, I first went around to the police-station in Wooster street, in order to inquire whether any information had there been furnished or procured as to the personality or whereabouts of my assailant; but the last place to ascertain any news of the sort, or to acquire intelligence generally upon the subject of wily crime and criminals, I am fully persuaded from actual experience, is a police-station; for the sagacity with which those vigilant officers of the law disguise their ignorance or indifference upon any desired point is truly masterly.

Sergeant Monsoon and several patiently-abiding privates of the force were taking things easy and comfortable in the outer chamber of administrative justice when I entered.

"It's my opinion," volunteered the former, vaguely recognizing me, "that your assaulter did not intend to rob you, Mr. Cash. It's my

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opinion, with sage-like lucidity, "that his sole object was to injure you, to hurt your head. Your assaulter, in my opinion, was an old offender or an ex-convict, and he meant revenge. He had dogged your footsteps with the intention of doing you bodily harm, and your assaulter knows enough to make his escape and keep himself out of the way."

"You have heard nothing further of him, then, I take it, sergeant," said I, quite well knowing that he had not.

"No, sir, not a word, not a word," said the sergeant solemnly. "But we have our eyes open; we are vigilant; we never sleep. Your assaulter is in great jeopardy; his personal liberty is in danger; he can go to Sing Sing for seven years. It was an outrageous assault, sir, outrageous!"

"As soon as you catch him, you will let me know, so that I may appear against him, won't you, serjeant?"

"Of course, sir, of course. It's sure conviction, sir; and sentence will surely follow. He's a gone coon, surelie."

I had my own doubts about that, however; for, first, the man was to be caught; and, second, he was to be identified by either the police or by me; and I didn't believe that they had any more knowledge of him than I had, and mine was next to none.

Taking a Broadway omnibus up-town to the

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side-street where I alighted, I proceeded on foot to the Eleemosynary Hospital, that whilom worthy charity of the city. Dr. Madesby was busy in his study, but inviting me through an attendant to come in, welcomed me with his habitual warmth.

"Glad to see you, Brashe! Saw by the '*Herald*' that a man of your name had got a knock on the head the other night, and meant to call and see you to-day. Was it that bilious chap whom you punished? He said he'd get square with you, you know; but who'd have thought he'd try it so soon? A regular marine monster, eh? A grampus!"

"He took leg-bail," said I, "whoever he was, and he was pretty prompt in getting even. However, the game's not over yet. But I want to have your aid in the matter."

In five minutes I had put the doctor in possession of my purpose to overhaul the grave of Joel Lazarus by daylight, and my wish that he would give me an order to Good and Glory to extend their needed help. "The breastpin may be there still," I concluded, "in among the debris and overlooked."

"It must be there still," said Dr. Madesby with warmth; "I have no doubt that it was overlooked. That fellow went off at half-cock. No one would have stolen it or even picked it up in the street. A mere piece of pinchbeck-

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ware in the form of a scarabæus, inherently not worth a quarter. You see a hundred such trifles in every cheap Jacob's shop in Chatham street as you pass along any day of the week. The design, I admit, was peculiar, but the thing was almost worthless in itself."

"Not to fatigue the reader with unnecessary details, it is sufficient to state that Dr. Madesby and I obtained the services of Bill Glory and Tom Good; that they turned up the sod and again dug down to the old Hebrew's grave in Potter's Field in the most thorough manner possible; that the doctor and I examined the grave, the box, and the dust therein with microscopical scrutiny; that we picked over every visible sliver of the interred skeleton and every shred of the decaying shroud, a heavy flannel shirt; that we spent a couple of hours at least in this exhaustive work; and, as a result, that not a trace of the blue beetle could we discover with this solitary exception; in the bosom of the burial shirt, in the very spot where Dr. Madesby had said that he had placed the breastpin, there were, sure enough, two rusty punctures, a couple of inches apart, of a pin—large and well-defined marks, which must have been there for years undisturbed.

"Brashe," said the surgeon, with a puzzled air, pointing to the holes in the stout stuff, "from this I am forced to the conclusion that

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the breastpin that I fastened there has lately been filched from the body. If it had broken loose from the shirt, it would have fallen somewhere within the box which, saving the cover, is intact. The thing has certainly been taken."

'You are sure," said I with sternness, addressing the two grave-diggers, "that you, or neither of you, saw anything of the lost article, a pin in the form of a beetle something bigger than a pigeon's egg?"

"I saw or found nothing of the sort," said Good, with honest fervor and simplicity.

"I have never set eyes or hands on anything of the kind," said Glory, in a tone of unmistakable truth. And I was satisfied that the two workmen spoke with the strictest honor and veracity.

"I believe you both," said I.

"And I, too," said the doctor, "with all my heart."

"This sod, sir," said Tom Good, "I am sure has not been disturbed for months and months until I raised it with a pick four nights ago."

"It was as solid as a stone, sir," said Bill Glory, "I'll answer for it."

"Well," exclaimed the doctor as we parted; "this bothers me—I am knocked over altogether."

When I reached the gymnasium, Moss hand-

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ed me a letter in the well-known handwriting of my faithful guardian, Gil Grunt, with the aside in a stage-whisper:

"Mr. Pentsh came down a while ago and oxed me if you vas in or out. I told him I didn't know, for I thought it was none of hish bloody business. I never blab, I don't, so blesh me! He noses around too much, doesh old Pentsh, for a Christian. And look here, Mr. Brashe, I shuspect that his right name ish not Pentsh at all."

"Why do you think so, Moses?"

"Vhy, sometimes vhen I shay to him 'Mr. Pentsh!' he pays no more attention to me than if I didn't spheak or he didn't hear me, and he ishn't deaf, either."

"A sharp conclusion, Moss."

"Yaas," laughed Moss with a waggish shake of the head, "old Pentsh ishn't absent-minded, neither. A knowing old fox ish Pentsh, let me tell you, or I'm an assh."

"He's getting old," said I, "as you and I will be some day, Moss."

"He'sh not so old as he looksh," said Moss slily; "He's a cute un, shir, and don't you forget it!"

As I passed through the gymnasium I encountered the master of fencing himself. Had he been awaiting my return? He cast a quick glance at me saying, "Moss has a letter

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for you, *mein Herr*. I ask him if you are in your room, and he tell me, *nein*."

"Thanks, professor," I answered, "I have the letter."

"*Jawohl*," said he with a nod, and left me.

Had he merely conjectured that Moss would tell me of his questioning about me, or had he been eavesdropping at the head of the stairs and overheard what he had actually said to me? Moses Moss was a smart little Yankee Jew, and I had known him to make many a shrewd and happy guess, at times. I had scanned Karl Pentz intently but his cast-iron countenance had imparted nothing to my mind. He was a stolid, big-jointed Swiss, who had served in some European army early in life, he had said, subsequently becoming a traveling courier. Finally, coming to the States, he had given fencing lessons for a living, and had now been a teacher at Colton's for some three years. He was very steady in his habits, rather retiring and taciturn generally, though at odd times the reverse; a most reliable person to deal with and a capital swordsman. Though I often quarreled with him in a quiet way, about the relative merits of boxing and fencing, after a stout passage-at-arms we were always excellent friends again, his red, irascible face glowing with good-nature, his dull eyes growing as sleepy as ever, and his wiry white beard bushed

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out on end by the muscular force of his broad śmile.

On reaching my room I eagerly sat down to read my dear old Gil's fondly welcome epistle, which bore the date "Boston, March 29, 185—". After enjoining me to look after my 'ealth and be 'appy, and to be careful not to tackle the big 'uns and 'eavy weights if I could 'elp it, the screed went on to impart the following important bit of information:

"And now, my dear boy, aving a bad cold in the ead, that hincapacitates me for vocal exercise in the ring, and being hoff juty in consekense, I shall put in the time writing of you a P. S. Stout breaks up ere on the 5th of April, and begins to show in New York on the 10th. Ow appy I'll be to be with my dear Gassie again. We will ave the Halambray on Broadway near Prince street, and a stable for the orses halso. But I ave a little private haffair of my own. I clipt the haccompanying hadvertisement from the N. Y. 'Herald' of yesterday for you to read and keep, my boy, against my seeing you, when you and I will join in a hunited heffort to unt the jewelry up and get the reward."

$1,000 REWARD—LOST—In Bleecker Street, between Broadway and Mercer St., on the south side of the way, a German-plated breastpin, of about the size of a small hen's egg; the whole being in the shape of a scarab or beetle and of a light blue color, shade of a sapphire. The above reward will be paid to the finder for the return of the same, it having been preserved and valued as a death-relic of a beloved friend. The material is either iron

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or lead and of no intrinsic value whatever. Dropped on the night of March 24th, last past. Please apply for reward at office of Claus Volckmar, 13 Maiden Lane. No questions asked. Safety guaranteed. Absolute confidence and good faith. In order to insure strict secrecy, a call may be made after business hours.

I perused this printed clipping several times before I was able to digest its substance, so bewildered was I at its startling import.

The night of the 24th of March was the very night of our strange adventure at the burial-ground; and, if the wonderful blue beetle had been lost in the locality designated in the advertisement, then our theory to the effect that Hugh Gormon had seen and snatched up the pin at the moment of his attack upon the two workmen, and of his having run away with it fraudulently, was strictly true; for he had undoubtedly dropped the beetle during the excitement and intensity of his murderous assault on me, and, feeling for it as he fled toward Broadway, had discovered it gone and doubtless had duly notified the advertiser of the loss.

At the present instant it was plainer sailing than at any period since my search for the beetle had begun, for I was in possession of actual proofs in confirmation of certain or uncertain probabilities. But the hours were passing on, and I must be on deck to box my pupils between the hours of five and nine P. M. I put on my yellow shirt, accordingly, and descended to the gymnasium for active work.

"Ha, ha!" Jack loudly greeted me, "still

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alive, eh! No more street-ruffianism or late hours! How's your head?"

"Mr. Listir," said I, "I have a little favor to ask of you. It is a matter, too, in which I request your utmost secrecy. It is necessary for me to disguise myself. I have reason to think that I am on the track of that fellow who assailed me in the street the other night, and I shall have to hunt him up, or down, in person. Can you lend me a suitable make-up from the stock of the theater if I call there this evening about nine?"

"Certainly, my dear fellow. What shall it be? A rag-picker, a general-of-brigade, or a juggling mountebank? And will you have red whiskers and a wig? Or a black beard and a bald pate? Speak the word, and we are able to serve you with anything and everything in that line of business."

"Let me see!" said I; "I believe it best to get myself up in a very quiet fashion. A gray-headed Long-Island farmer out seeing the elephant would do, would it not?"

"It's yours, Brashe, and welcome. Drop in to-night at nine, then. I only appear in the opening farce, 'Lend Me Five Shillings'—Mr. Golightly, you know—I shall be free at the end of an hour, and can give you the rest of the night if you want it. And so you are up to some secret service work, are you? I remem-

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ber a case of that kind when I was playing at the Haymarket in '47."

The count had meanwhile come in and, being on the alert in that direction, I observed him and Pentz watching each other very narrowly and stealthily; nor did I take my attention off them during the entire evening.

"Those men are enemies, I suspect," thought I, "and have some mutual cause of hatred and revenge. It's a wonder they have not run one another through and through during a fencing bout. They are sworn foes, or I'm a Dutchman."

Indeed, so conscious must each one have been of the ill-will of the other, that, in avoidance of personal peril, they refrained from their usual set-to that evening, the count loitering idly hither and thither, seemingly engaged in protracted reflection, and smoking cigarettes, while the big Swiss fenced quite viciously for him (for he was generally good-natured under arms, unless it were with the Frenchman), tossing his adversaries' foils about, lunging heavily at their breasts, and snorting blood and battle in all directions.

"What a terrible chap old Pentz is when he's awake!" drawled Wandel, "a regular rouser; that is, if you arouse him. I say, Jack, why don't you go for him to-night? His pentz have grown to pounds, you see!"

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The count withdrew as the clock struck eight, and I thought that Pentz looked knowingly at me as the door swung to upon him. The professor was fully cognizant, I was aware, of the contents of Gratz' note, and of just where the Frenchman was bound to be at ten o'clock that night.

I am much mistaken, my friend," said I to myself, "if we do not all meet at ten P. M. at Sandmann's."

The gymnasium was deserted earlier than usual that evening, Mr. Colton having had a professional engagement elsewhere, and his aid, Pinner, not being considered an adequate compensation for the chief. My special line of pupils gave out, too; Pentz sat down on a rope to rest; Moss partly turned off the gas; and gladly I found myself at liberty.

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CHAPTER VI

SANDMANN'S HALL

"These troublesome disguises which we wear."
—*Paradise Lost.*

The old Broadway Theater was situated on the east side of the greatest thoroughfare of Gotham, at the southerly corner of Anthony street. It was a large, brown, brick structure, with a spacious entrance and vestibule.

Betaking myself at nine o'clock to the stage-door, I inquired of the door-keeper for Mr. Jack Listir, and I was bidden "to please walk up to the green-room," where, accepting the invitation, a heterogeneous scene enough met my eye. Sitting or standing, hither and thither about a large, square apartment, with a dressing-room on either side (one for ladies, the other for gentlemen), were gathered miscellaneous groups of actors and actresses, accoutred in theatrical dresses for the play.

Some were laughing and talking pleasantly, others were busy conning their parts before going on, and not a few, especially of the fairer sex, were daintily prinking up and posturing

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to themselves in some tall mirrors, as if they were engaged in a game of peek-a-boo, or hide-and-seek, or were amiably mincing and flirting in unison with their doubles.

"Hello!" said a well-known voice, while a welcome hand was cordially held out to me; "Hello! glad to see you, Brashe! Step in with me to the dressing-room—I've secured a rig for you—and when we come out, I'll engage that your own mother wouldn't know you. Come on!"

Jack was but just "off," clad in the evening-dress of a London swell, as the rollicking, hard-up, but ever lucky Mr. Golightly. "You couldn't lend me five shillings, Brashe, my dear boy, for a couple of hours, could you? But stop, I don't want them. I am only so full of the careless character I've just been acting, that I'd as leave borrow as not. Walk in, old man!"

"I'll walk in a young man and walk out an old man, thanks to you, old fellow," said I with a laugh.

"Yes, Farmer Grub of Grubsville," said Jack, "down to see the sights in York."

The dressing-room was shelved around with lockers like bunks in a ship's cabin, one of which, number seven, Listir unlocked, taking therefrom a roll of rough stage clothes.

"Here you are!" said he; "a felt hat that has

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seen the sun of many summers; a gray top-coat to your knees; a homespun waistcoat; a stand-up collar none too clean; a pair of stout shoes with country blacking; and a Jackson hickory cane. You'll fairly reek of the plough when you get those on. And then, Brashe," he hastily added, as I proceeded to equip myself, "for a finishing touch, we'll have old Cowles in to put on the paint and fit you with a wig. You'll do, my boy," he concluded, as I duly climbed into the yellow inexpressibles, stained with the country soil; "now do you know, you are accurately arrayed for the part of Squire Hayseed, in 'The Honest Bumpkin?' You'd pass for old Hadaway himself."

"Mr. Listir," I suddenly exclaimed, "I wish you would disguise yourself, also, and accompany me. I do, indeed."

"I've been hoping all the while that you would ask me," returned Jack, "but I was diffident about suggesting it myself, for I dote on adventure and am well aware that you always mean business. I'll be ready in half a jiffy."

Jack called at once for Cowles, the men's dresser, and in a trice was supplied with the costume of a "Bowery Boy," which consisted of shabby black coat, trowsers with polished boots outside, a checked shirt and blue spotted scarf, a red or blue handkerchief worn conspicuously in an outer pocket, and a shiny silk hat.

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"Now to make up our heads," said Jack, "so as even to defy the detectives!"

Old Cowles had already caught the cue by instinct, and was close at hand with a grizzly wig and false eyebrows for me, which, with a tuft of gray hair under the chin, tied around the neck behind, and rouge rubbed over the face and hands to represent sunburning, metamorphosed me completely.

"You need have no apprehensions, sir," said the costumer, quite proud of his job; "you can be perfectly at your ease and not think of your personal appearance, I assure you, sir; for your individuality is entirely obscured, sir."

Jack Listir was the more difficult to disguise for the reason that his make-up was so exceedingly simple; but a black wig with soap-locks, and plenty of jet rubbed into his handsome brown mustache, and rouge about his cheeks and neck, together with an old scar on the left side of his nose, finally did the business.

"Bet your life!" said he in a drawling tone, in clever imitation of the stereotyped swagger of the Chatham-street "b'hoy."

"I want to go to Grand street," said I, aping the manner of a rural visitor to Gotham timidly inquiring his way.

Then why in thunder don't you go?" replied Jack, aggressively, in exactly the same words used by Mr. Chanfrau in his famous char-

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acter of Mose, in "The Streets of New York," then playing at Mitchell's Olympic Theater further up Broadway, near Grand street. The effect was irresistibly ludicrous.

Cowles, exploding with laughter, led us through the green-room, amid the smiles and stares of the surprised company there assembled in readiness for the speedy summons of the call-boy.

"Come," I exclaimed, "are you aware that it is a quarter to ten o'clock, and that we have several blocks to go? Hurry, if you please!"

"I'm your master," said Jack Listir briskly, and we hastened out through the stage-door into the street, while Cowles, the costumer, was laughingly explaining who such queer birds were, to the door-keeper and his assistant

It was a fine starlit evening, frosty but kindly, and the street-lamps flickered wildly in the occasional fresh blasts. Leaving Broadway behind us, we went through Baxter street and the Five Points, then dark and dreary enough, struck into Center street at the Tombs, and, keeping rapidly on, reached the Bowery near Broome street, within three minutes of the designated hour.

"Now for it!" said my friend, in the reckless spirit of adventure.

Sandmann's Hall stood on the south-east corner of a certain cross street and the Bowery,

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nearly opposite the old Bowery Savings Bank. It was a four-story brick building, of some forty feet front and some sixty feet depth. The first floor contained the bar, a large, square beer-hall full of small tables, a raised platform for an orchestra, and a diminutive garden or greenhouse (the former in summer and the latter in winter) at the back.

The second floor consisted of a dancing-hall with a refreshment counter and stationary seats against the walls. The third floor was made up of small private supper rooms for the use of more select parties. These were the public parts of the building, and they were usually thronged with French, German and Italian customers at every hour of the afternoon and evening until midnight.

Sauntering on among the groups at the tables, I kept my eyes wide open for a sign of Count Philippe and my would-be murderer, but without success.

I had not confided to Listir the purpose of my visit further that that I had some hopes of tracking my brutal assailant, and I think that Jack was full of the idea of our having a wild and desperate personal encounter to effect his capture. Indeed, the defiance of my companion's counterfeit demeanor was most amusing.

No Mose or Sykes of the streets was ever more exasperating. The *sang froid*, the inscru-

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table self-poise, the provoking swagger, the sullen scowl, all these were done to the life with the ease and pliability of the accomplished actor. And how Jack liked it!

"Call me Ben Secker when you speak to me, Squire Grub," he whispered, buying a cheap cigar at the bar, lighting it by the fuse, and introducing it between his lips at an angle of forty-five degrees.

After exhausting the resources of the beer-hall in vain we mounted to the dance-hall on the second story and gazed attentively about us.

A German band was playing at one end of the room; countless couples were gliding and circling in the mazy whirl; numerous spectators were idly viewing the lightsome dancers from the chairs; while white-capped waiters dashed hither and thither bearing trays of ice-cream of inviting colors, and generous glasses of ruby or golden liquors, or goblets of amber wine and beer, to cool and refresh the inner man and woman after the other wilder intoxications of the floor.

We took seats in order to better regard the scene of vanity.

"Glorious!" exclaimed Jack Listir, forgetting, for the moment, in his ecstasy at the life-full sight, his ungracious part; "Glorious! It's like a night-scene out of Faust and Marguerite.

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See that pale, flaxen-haired Dutch beauty with the pink sash and ribbons! And yonder little French grisette as graceful as a fairy! And see that gallant young German there who looks the perfect picture of a Heidelberg student off on a college lark! I remember, by gad, in the year—but we have no time for reminiscences now, my dear boy. Do you see that long-haired fellow leaning against the wall over there, thoughtfully looking on at the fun? Well, that's the story-writer, Ned Towline, editor of 'Ned Towline's Own'. He led the charge of the mob of Forrest-men upon the Astor Place Opera House, during the riot, when poor Macready was playing inside, driving him in panic from the boards. And, by Jove, there's Yankee Sullivan (that's in your line, Brashe), who fought Tom Hyer the other day. What a lithe, well-built chap he is, barring his broken nose! And there stand two other notabilities of New York—Captain Reindeer of the Empire Club, and Pat Sterne, the gambler, he of the inimitable air and ineffable smile. What a red-faced rascal it is! And there's Manly, Marcus Cicero Manly, you know, one of the editors of the 'Police Gazette,' a dead-shot with the pistol and the best-groomed newspaper-man in town. Why, all the sports have come to Sandmann's Hall to-night, to share the fun."

I had listlessly listened to Jack's lively ha-

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rangue, my senses on the stretch to catch a view of Count de Soudan upon his entrance, nor was my patient scrutiny in vain. I saw him enter presently, hasten through the hall, and hurry up the stairs to the private rooms above. He was not alone. Upon his arm hung a woman of a handsome, though buxom, figure, elegantly dressed, but closely veiled. I nudged Listir, who, checking his eloquence, beheld them too. A quick thought struck me! Could it be that the veiled female was no other than the expected Gratz or Gorman, in deep disguise? But I soon arrived at the conclusion that I must be mistaken in this conjecture, and that the lady was probably the count's female friend who had brought him his letter, the day before, at the gymnasium.

"It's old Soudan!" exclaimed Jack; "and that must be the woman Moss talks to me about. A gay Lothario, eh!"

"Ben Secker," said I in a quivering voice; "stay right here where you are; I am going upstairs for a few minutes to spy out the ground. I'll meet you anon."

"Anon, anon, sir!" replied Jack, in the words of good Dame Quickly.

I strolled feebly, in simulated decrepitude, to the third floor of the house of entertainment. It was partitioned off into a great many separate stalls, or small closets, to which a gentle-

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man could escort a lady to a *tete-a-tete* tea. There were no doors to these apartments, but in some cases chintz curtains concealed the interior. Many of the chambers were occupied; waiters were carrying refreshments to and fro; and the rattle of plates and knives was loud and continuous.

Scrupulously staring and gawking around like a provincial greenhorn, I soon descried the count and his companion cosily ensconced in one of these private boxes. A waiter was in attendance for their order, which the count was apparently about to give. I looked intently at the lady. She was now unveiled and sitting placidly in still repose. She was a fine, fair sample of womankind. Perhaps forty, she seemed to be five years younger, so sprightly were her movements and so fresh and comely her complexion. Of medium height, with a trim, slight waist and an almost girlish form, dressed with faultless taste as a person of fashion dresses, she appeared to me at first sight to be a thoroughly distinguished woman of the world.

As she spoke in answer to the count, her full, red lips disclosed a set of superb and brilliant teeth. Such magnificent eyes of soft dark violet I had never noticed before in any mortal head; they were fairly luminous with intelligence and intensity of expression. Her hair

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was a rich, glossy auburn and very abundant, curling out under her neat French bonnet in clusters of rare luxuriance.

"What a truly beautiful and lovely creature!" I found myself repeating, *sotto voce*, over and over again.

Sidling closer to the stall, I saw Count Philippe turn his small white eyes toward his companion, and heard him say:

"A strawberry ice, you'd prefare, countess? Very vell. *Garcon*, one strawberry ice and a glass of *eau-de-vie;* and for me a bottle of claret and a plate of wine biscuit. Some vat you call sponge-cake, beside, for madame! And, garcon, some cigarettes!"

"Vhat a pity, madame," said the count to the lady when the waiter was gone, "Vhat a pity zat you do not speak ze French, zen it would be more agreeable. But ve must take ze gifts of ze gods visout complaints. *Vous etes fatigude?*"

"A little," answered the countess with a suppressed yawn; "It is very warm in here."

"I vonder vhy ze deuce zat rascal no here!" said the count, with a searching stare about the room.

"Vhat you vant, old man? Go vay!"

This last remark was roughly addressed to me who, in my eagerness to hear, had drawn nearer to them than I should have done.

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However, I was entranced to perceive that my disguise was impenetrable to the only one whose recognition I mistrusted. The lady I had never previously met, to my knowledge, and the brawny scoundrel I had encountered only in the darkness of a March night. So, deceiving the Frenchman, I was safe.

Fearing to excite suspicion, if I lingered in their vicinity, I lounged away stupidly as the waiter returned with the order.

"Then that lady is his wife," I thought. "He called her 'countess' and they are quite at home together. Jove! she's a beauty and no mistake! "

Deeming it best not to leave Jack Listir, my daring fellow conspirator, too long to his own devices, for Jack was as impulsive and impetuous as a school-boy, I descended to the dance-hall and rejoined him over in our corner.

"Who was that pretty petticoat with the count?" was my friend's first query.

"His countess," I made answer.

"Then I haven't the ghost of a chance," laughed Jack; "I surmised that it might be his daughter or niece, perhaps. Rich violet eyes —ripe velvet cheeks—a screamer!"

My eye was next caught by a strange fat figure, the expression of whose face somehow reminded me of Karl Pentz, but the form was far too gross and unwieldly for that tremendous master of fence.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE ACROBAT

"A lean and hungry look."
—*Julius Cæsar.*

There was a crowd of dancers and spectators collecting at the opposite end of the hall, which now attracted our attention and curiosity.

Joining the pressing, elbowing assemblage, we gained the margin of the forming ring, and craning on tiptoe, sought for the immediate cause of the commotion.

An acrobat had arrived, whether by accident or previous arrangement I could not say, carrying a roll of carpet upon his shoulder, and wearing a long, loose ulster over his spangled tights. Spreading the carpet at full length upon the floor and removing his long coat, he stood at once revealed in all his splendor. A muscular, well-built man of middle-height, of thirty-five, having a pale, clean-shaven face, very black eyes and brows, a firm wide mouth, square chin, and clean-cut features—thus appeared the traveling tumbler to the expectant throng there gathered to observe him. Extracting from the pocket of the coat a pink skull-cap

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to match the tint of his flashy suit of tights, he drew it on over his short-cropped, jet-black hair, and, putting on a pair of spangled slippers which he had also taken from his pocket, he lightly executed a few preliminary skips and capers, and, poising himself for an instant on his toes, proceeded to give the company an excellent acrobatic exhibition such as drew forth rounds of appreciative applause at every pause in the performance. Indeed, so superior was the work to much that we see in the regular circus-ring, that the audience, ever cruelly exacting toward first-class talent in a public show, refused to release him from his labors until he had repeated his entire repertoire, when Jack Listir, quite in harmony with his real and assumed character; exclaimed: "What an infernal shame!" grabbed off his own silk hat (nearly taking his wig with it) and passed it around among the throng for the express benfit of the poor, weary, patient creature. The public (never niggardly, however inconsiderate) responded nobly on this occasion with its money, as it always does, and the grateful fellow's black eyes glistened with tears of thanks as he poured the liberal silver into his gaping pockets. At the end of the entertainment, the band of stringed instruments struck up a familiar and favorite Strauss waltz, and the wild whirl went merrily on again as before with re-

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doubled vigor. And how those Dutchmen danced and swung and ogled in the swell of that sea of breezy melody!

The hungry glare of the tumbler's gaze still haunted me, and my glances followed him until I saw him stop at the counter at the proprietor's expense, after which he went upstairs to enact his fatiguing part before the occupants of the private boxes, the eminent *quality* of the place.

"Let us go up," I said, "and, in the tumult of the show, have a closer look at the Count and Countess of Soudan."

"At the countess only, you mean," retorted Listir roguishly; "for which of us two cares a continental for the limp and liverless count?"

"The Frenchman is both your and Pentz' pet *bete noire*, I believe," rejoińed I, with a little laugh.

"No Englishman can abide the monkey-shines of those frog-eating Jean Crapauds," laughed my cockney companion, as we climbed the wide, steep stairs together.

The poor acrobat had no doubt shown off his attainments in the first-floor bar-room, to more than one *encore*, before the display of his skill in the crowded dance-hall; and now, weary with his work, he had to go through with it all over again, for the special entertainment of the third-story exclusives

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Already he was spreading his carpet, having removed his top-coat, almost directly in front of the stall where sat the count and countess, who were rakishly engaged in smoking cigarettes and sipping brandy. As the performance proceeded they appeared to be greatly interested in the twists, contortions, leaps, somersaults, and gyrations of the India-rubber mountebank, and loudly clapped him to a repetition of his feats, as did the rest of the amused and diversified audience, also.

When the man had concluded his cheap show, and collected the various dimes and quarters of the company, we were pleased as well as surprised, to see the count politely beckon him to his box and despatch the waiter for some refreshment for him as the humble, cringing guest of the nobility.

"A magnanimous man, the count," said Jack Listir, with a rather cynical smile for him; "Pats Poor Tray on the back and generously compliments him with a bone, and the plaudit 'Good old dog!'"

"I must hear their talk," said I, "even at the risk of being kicked down stairs by the fiery count. It may be of the utmost moment in this matter."

Stealing on tiptoe to the edge of the stall, I listened to their words most eagerly. The countess was speaking in clear, ringing accents

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like a bell. And how strangely those musical notes moved me!

"Woe to him if he prove treacherous or dishonest! I know him too well of old! Beware!"

"No living man shall delude me!" declared the irate count.

"I swear I have told you the truth," muttered the acrobat, in fear and trembling; "I do not lie! So help me! The dear blue beetle rescued from the grave was unluckily lost in the way that I have stated! So swears Heinrich."

"Your damned galley's tempers could not keep cool even with the grand prize in your pocket," cried the count, now beside himself with rage. "You could not vait for your revenge avhile. And vat vas it, anyvay? Pah, you fools!"

"Do as you will," placated the man, "the thing is done. I am not guilty."

"It may yet be regained," said the lady, but I felt that she did not believe it. "Come!"

The trio arouse to go, angrily parting at the private box. Jack and I hastened in their wake.

"Mr. Listir," said I, when again in the open street; "by all that I hold sacred, I recognized in the croaking voice of that stray acrobat, my deadly assailant of the other night, although

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by art much changed, as much as you or I."

"Bless me!" cried Jack, "let us arrest him straightway."

"Later!" I returned, "later!" and we separated for our respective homes. I had seen H. Gratz at last, and his first name must be *Heinrich*, from what I had just heard. That night the wind moaned fitfully, in my dreams, among the sedges, as of yore.

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CHAPTER IX

CLAUS VOLCKMAR

"Whose merchants are princes."
—*Isaiah.*

In Maiden Lane, just out of Broadway to the eastward, many of the wholesale jewelers and diamond-merchants of New York have their sales-houses; and, among the latter, pre-eminently prominent, was the store of Claus Volckmar, the prince of foreign dealers.

But few of the business men of New York were unacquainted, at least by name, with the great and far-famed merchant millionaire.

It was to the counting-house of this wealthy gentleman that I betook myself, in answer to the blue-beetle advertisement aforementioned, on the morning succeeding the notable surprise at Sandmann's Hall, as I had deemed it best to apply at once in the matter to headquarters.

Ascending a flight of steep steps, I stood before a broad glass door having the words inscribed on it, in gilt letters, "Claus Volckmar, Dealer in Diamonds."

In response to my summons, the massive door was swung back, and a slight, blonde

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young man, wearing glasses and fashionably attired, bade me enter, with an air of perfect composure and politeness.

"May I see Mr. Volckmar?" I inquired, with my best address.

"To be sure! Please step in! My father will be at leisure in a minute."

I had a few moments in which to scan my surroundings, to become acquainted with a place that was thenceforth, for a season, to be very familiar to me.

The outer room was of good size and square, with a high ceiling and immaculately white walls. A long glass counter ran the whole length of the room, inside of whose frame covers lay, displayed to the eyes of purchasers, many rows of silk and velvet cases containing a brilliant assortment of magnificent diamonds, with here and there a rare and costly emerald, a valuable sapphire, or a prodigious pearl. It fairly made one's mouth water, like the sight of delicate confections, colored creams, *blanc mange*, sugar plums and candied fruits, that wonderful collection of precious stones of all the shades and primitive colors of the rainbow, openly exposed for sale beneath the crystal covers of the counters. At the rear end of the store was another door, which, I presumed, led into the proprietor's private office. There were vast Herring's safes behind the counter, for the re-

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ception and security of the precious stones at night.

"Rudolph!" presently called a pleasant voice from the next room, as the iron door was drawn ajar. The young man at once went toward the private room.

"Did I hear some one come in and ask to see me?" inquired the amiable voice.

"Yes, father; a young person is here to see you."

"Show him in," was the prompt and explicit direction.

"Father will see you, sir," said the extremely civil young gentleman to me; "Please pass in."

The office into which I was admitted was a much smaller apartment than the other room, quite sumptuously furnished with an Axminster carpet, two comfortable sofas, a couple of easy chairs, a rosewood wardrobe or bookcase, a huge, round center-table with a damask cloth, and a writing-desk inlaid with ivory, having a few gilt-edged books upon it. An immense mirror was suspended over an open fire-place, and, on the opposite side of the room, was a solid wrought-iron Marvin safe, polished like steel, and with handsome silver trimmings or mountings at the front and ends.

By the round table sat a slight, straight man in a revolving chair, who placidly pursued his

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absorbing occupation of the pen without raising his spectacled eyes from the paper until I was close beside him, when he suddenly lifted his head with a snap, and absolutely flung the focus of his glance upon me. He read me over from head to foot in an instant.

"Well, my friend," he said, quickly throwing down his quill-pen and wheeling toward me in his chair, "and what do you want with me?"

"I called," I replied, "in respect to an advertisement that I read in the 'Herald' yesterday—"

"The blue beetle?" he snapped out at once, though in the most affable tone. "Have you found it? Do you know where it is?"

"Not at all," said, "but I may possibly shed some light on the affair, or I will try to do so."

"Go on," said he curtly, "go on!"

Without any reserve I informed him of my experience in Potter's Field, of the deadly attack upon me, in Bleecker street, of my subsequent search on my own account for the blue beetle, of the French Count's letter signed "H. Gratz," of my masquerading visit to Sandmann's hall, and of my possible identification of the strolling acrobat, the guest of the count and countess, with Hugh Gorman, the ruffianly ransacker of Joel Lazarus' neglected grave. I further mentioned, as competent witnesses to the truth and accuracy of my statement, Dr.

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Howard Madesby of the Eleemosynary Hospital, Mr. Jack Listir of the Broadway Theater, the police of Wooster Street station-house, Moses Moss at Colton's Gymnasium, Prof. Karl Pentz, (who no doubt had read the communication from Gratz,) and, lastly, the two lowly grave-diggers, Good and Glory.

"What is your motive, dear sir, for coming to me?" asked my auditor abruptly.

"First, to trace up my quondam assailant," answered I, "and, second, to gratify a very natural curiosity to learn the secret of the lost blue beetle."

"Why do you think there is a secret?" plied my interrogator.

"There must be some mysterious reason for so much interest being taken by so many persons in the fate of such a very trifling piece of jewelry, "said I, respectfully adding, "Why do you yourself offer so large and disproportionate a reward for its recovery?"

"A family heirloom," retorted my *vis-a-vis;* "Isn't that enough?"

He had scrutinized me thoroughly throughout the interview, and at this point inquired intently:

"Who are you, my friend?"

"A young Englishman," I made answer, "who has been in America but a few months." And I went on to tell him that I was master of

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boxing in Colton's Bleecker Street Gymnasium.

"Have you any one to vouch for your character?" he inquired.

"Only my employer, and my old friend Gil Grunt," replied I, quite offended.

"And who is Gil Grunt?" he asked.

In as brief a manner as possible I gave him the story of that devoted guardian and incomparable comic singer's honest but humble career, and of his care of me. My hearer laughed outright at my eulogy, saying:

"Do you like your calling?"

"I like it well enough," said I, "but not its disreputable associations. But I can do nothing else or better here."

The wealthy gentleman bent his gaze fixedly on my face for a few seconds, finally saying with indifference:

"You read and write?"

"Of course I do," said I.

"And cipher?"

"Oh, yes, fairly—I have been through Bourdon's Algebra."

"You speak French?"

"A little, and German less; Latin I read easily. But why do you ask?"

"By and by I will tell you. Now, I wish to say something else, something important to yourself, my son. Your name is Gaston Brashe, I think you told me?"

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I bowed in frank assent. He added rapidly:

"Gaston, I like your looks, I believe you faithful. What salary do you get at the gymnasium?"

"Fifty dollars a month," I answered wondering, "a room, and keep myself."

"Very well! I want to hire you, and I will pay you a hundred dollars a month if you will serve me."

"In what capacity?" I said.

"My confidential clerk."

"And my duties?"

"To be ever at my elbow, to do just as I direct, to sleep every night in this inner chamber, to guard all my interests. You are a boxer—I want a boxer. You are a brave youth—I want a brave youth. You are to be always armed with fire-arms. I may need you at any hour of the day. You may have to use your pistol at any moment of the night. I employ your nerve—your mettle. What say you to the bargain, my son?"

"I am selfish, sir, and I wish to better myself. I desire to be a gentleman. Sparring is vulgar—common; a clerkship is genteel. I pine for respectability and higher pay. You will double my income. I am yours."

"And when," he asked, with a pleasant laugh, "shall we begin?"

"At once," I answered; "I am paid off to-day."

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"Agreed!" said he, in earnest.

'Done!" said I.

It was a bargain clinched between us on the spot, and I began to feel, at the instant, that I had passed out of the realm of the gloves and prize-ring, to that of the office and a decent life.

"Report to me to-day at five o'clock," said my employer. "And once for all I say to you that you must dress as a gentleman invariably, a young gentleman of education and refinement, who has a good position in society. Here are fifty dollars in advance. Go to Brooks Brothers and buy yourself as good a suit as you can get for the money. But, no, put that cash in your pocket for ready use, and direct them to send the bill to me for the clothes. You need also shirts, cravats and shoes; buy them, and a silk hat. Also a cane and an eyeglass and gloves.'"

"But, my dear sir, excuse me," I interrupted; "I like to know exactly how I stand, for I make it a *sine qua non* to keep within my means."

"I know, I know!" he said impatiently; "Your twelve hundred is for your subsistence solely. But have your bills for necessaries sent in to me. You must keep up the style of a gentleman worth twenty-five hundred a year, at least. It is for reasons of my own. Now

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go, and commit to memory the conditions I have made and named."

Bowing, I turned to leave the luxurious room.

"Stop!" exclaimed the merchant, with great seriousness, and a quick flash of the glass eyes straight at me. "There is one thing more. Ours is a solemn compact. Swear that you will serve me faithfully, with all your might."

"I hold my word," said I, "as holy as my oath."

"You promise, then, to be ever secret, steadfast, and true to me, upon your sacred word and honor."

"I do," said I with fervor.

'Enough! Now go till five P. M."

Good-bye, sir!"

He nodded.

As I re-entered the outer store, I observed that another young man was busy behind the counter, a dusky, olive-hued young fellow, having a sweeping jet mustache and glorious black eyes; and that an Irish porter was employed in making up the fire in a huge heater, the weather being still rather sharp for the spring season. The proprietor's son had gone out, during my absence with his father in the office.

Not to weary the reader with needless details, suffice it to say that I received my past

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month's pay from Mr. Colton and resigned my place in the gymnasium; that I shook hands in parting with my late employer and with Professors Pinner and Pentz, casually letting fall the fact that I was quitting my craft of private boxer forever; and then, packing in my portmanteau my few effects of value, and presenting the debris of my property to Moses Moss, I walked away from the gymnasium with the self-sufficient air of a man who had received his deserved promotion to a superior sphere at last.

"You von't forget poor Moses," Moss howled after me, in an amusing manner, "vill you, my lord, now that you have come into hereditary possession of your eshtate?"

"By no means," said I with condescension.

Duly provided with a neat, gentlemanly outfit in the character of a wealthy favorite of fortune, and with cane, umbrella and portmanteau in hand, I promptly reported myself for duty at No. 13 Maiden Lane, the precise instant that Saint Paul's church-bell had begun the stroke of five.

Mr. Volckmar, wrapped in a costly great-coat of the finest fur, and carrying an expensive gold-mounted cane, met me at the door, smiling blandly, and I was surprised to see what a splendid, dapper little figure he looked in street-costume, like a miniature field-mar-

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shal, field-glasses and all, distinguished, commanding, and with a most valiant air of war.

"Punctuality and exactitude are the essentials of success," he said, grandly; "step in, Sir Sentinel, and assume your post."

"I am glad to do so," said I, with deference and willingness.

"You will, if you please, put this latch-key in your pocket in case you go out, and lose it at your peril. Be in by nine o'clock, no later, and be sure you snap the latch after you, going and coming. My son and your brother-clerk are now gone home, but the fires will be made up to keep you warm for the night, at eight. The janitor, whom I have already told about you, lives in the basement, but has a key to these two rooms. You will sleep on either of the sofas you prefer, and on no account undress yourself during the night, but rest in your clothes. Here are a couple of revolvers, Colt's largest, for defense against marauders. You know how to use them—for there are many thousand dollars' worth of diamonds in these safes. Your fellow-clerk will be in at nine in the morning, when you can go out and get your breakfast. Is there anything else you want to ask before I go?"

"You have the keys of the safes yourself, Mr. Volckmar?" said I, that I might run no extra risk of blame, in case of accident.

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"The locks are combination locks," he answered, "and I and my son Rudolph, or the other clerk sometimes, alone have the word to open them."

"And in case of fire, sir?"

"Call the janitor, or the police, who will sound the alarm."

"If I go out for an hour in the evening, as you permit, do you consider the place quite safe, sir?"

"Yes. Look to your lights and the doors; but you must summon the janitor to let you out and in. He always minds his outer door, the street-door of the building. Is that all?"

"I believe so, sir; I can think of nothing more."

"Well, good day or good night, my son, and pleasant dreams. Don't get frightened."

"I'll try not," said I, as he marched off in the most military and mighty fashion.

The door was shut and I was locked in, with all my elation, but little better than a diamond-dealer's private watchman; but my employer was a very pleasant diamond-dealer, and undoubtedly my circumstances and prospects in life had materially improved since morning.

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CHAPTER X

A CALL FROM HERR PENTZ

"What a warning for a thoughtless man."
—*The Excursion.*

It was about eight o'clock when the janitor knocked at the door, with a fresh supply of coal to replenish the failing fire. As he entered, he said: "A gintleman to see you, sir!" and, to my amazement, Professor Karl Pentz's big, lumbering form blocked up the doorway.

"Why, how did you know I was here?" I cried, not over-pleased by the visit of my quondam associate of Colton's at so inopportune an hour and in so rich and respectable a place as my new quarters.

"*Ach!* Glad to see you, *mein Herr!* You are not overjoyed with my call, *Herr* Brashe? But I come to do you a service;" and a bristling-out of his hedgehog beard indicated that he was blandly smiling at me. "How I find you, *mein freund?* You left your address with Moss, you may remember, to have any letters forvarded to you, and Moss gives it to me. Dot vas all. It vas very simple."

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"And have you brought me any letters?" I asked, with an air of thorough annoyance.

"By no means," replied the Swiss, "but I have brought meinself, and if I may come in and sit down I have something to say to you."

"Certainly, Mr. Pentz; make yourself comfortable by the stove, and I will listen to what you have to say with readiness."

"But not with pleasure or patience, eh? But no matter; you will be glad dot I come, by and by."

I waited for him to begin his explanation, but he twitched his elbow toward the loitering janitor and sat in silence until the man had departed with his empty scuttles, and the iron door was shut. Then he deliberately arose, beckoned me into the inner office, and, mysteriously closing the door, rapidly made a careful survey of the chamber from corner to corner and under every chair and table, not omitting to try the wardrobe, at the end of which thorough *reconnaissance* the old master-at-arms subsided on the sofa and said:

"Is it against the regulations to smoke in this apartment?"

"Not that I am aware of in my short sojourn here. Here is some Virginia fine-cut. You can smoke if you wish. I have been doing so."

I must confess that if it had not been for

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my knowledge of Pentz's well-known honesty and singleness of purpose, I should have regarded his unaccountable presence and conduct with alarm and suspicion, custodian as I was of such a priceless quantity of treasure, but I was too well acquainted with the old sergeant's straightforward character to mistrust him for a moment. But what could be the object of the old man's visit to me? In order to make him feel at home, despite his unwelcome coming, I lit my pipe again likewise, and joined him in a friendly smoke.

"*Mein Herr*," said the Swiss at length to me, after we had warmed together the well-colored bowls of our meerschaums; "*mein Herr* Brashe, relying upon your nerve and secrecy, I shall inform you of an important fact, especially to you, *mein freund!* Well, then, your life is in danger!"

"What do you mean?" said I, "and how do you know that?"

"I may not tell you dot, but I came here to warn you of your great danger to yourself. You notice that this inner door has no key to the lock—a trifling circumstance, but significant to you. Very well! Being an old armorer to bend and beat straight my swords and foils in the army, I will make you a private key to zat lock. Und you make me your bromise never to sleep in dis rhum mitout you lock up dot door."

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Whenever Pentz waxed emphatic or excited I had often observed that his English became more broken than in his quieter moods, and now he grew almost unintelligible in any known tongue whatsoever.

I assented to my old friend's demand, perceiving that he could have no motive but an unselfish one in having me well locked in in my headquarters. But from what source in the wide world could peril possibly emanate, particularly to poor, worthless, unimportant me?

"Who is it that has a design upon my life?" I bluntly asked.

"I cannot tell you dot, *mein freund*, said Pentz kindly, "but with your bermission I will broceed to make you dot key, and you keep mum dot you got it."

Taking from his pocket a pair of small files and a piece of metal, he removed his coat, produced a fragment of wire with which he felt in the key-hole for the size and shape of the wards, and, adroitly ascertaining their position, speedily fashioned a key out of the steel with his files, which exactly fitted the lock with the aid of a little oil.

"Dot vill do," said he, gaily handing me the key: "*Und* now I have another word to add. You never go to sleep mitout seeing dot dere is no one in dot vardrobe yonder. *Und* dis,

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you bet your life, *mein freund*—lock your door, dot big door, on de inside, ven you go to bed, und leave de key in de key-hole. You see, I make de shank very short so dot nobody can turn de key from de outside mit de nippers, mind dot! *Herr* Brashe, I teach you a ting or two, *mein freund.*"

"Am I to fear another attack upon my life from my former assailant?" I inquired.

"Der Bleecker-street man, you mean? Vell, sir, dot I shall not say. But you know there are desperate robbers in dis big city, and you are the night vatchman of a diamond-shop, *mein freund.* Dot's all."

He got up to go. I approached him and offered him my hand. He took it cordially and shook it. "Well, old man!" said I, with gratitude, "I never knew before that we were such good friends. We used to quarrel a good deal about the respective merits of fencing and boxing, though I admit I didn't mean half what I said upon the subject."

"No matter for dot. I may call again. Be on your guard, *mein* boy!"

"Good night, Herr Pentz!"

"*Gute nacht!*"

He was off, and I heard the janitor let him out and fasten up after him. Without bothering my brain with further fruitless conjectures I turned old Pentz's extemporized key in the

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iron lock, put out the German student's lamp, and, throwing myself on one of the soft sofas, was quickly fast asleep.

The Blue Scarab
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CHAPTER XI

A DIAMOND MERCHANT'S CLERK

"A clerk foredoomed."
—*Pope's Epistles.*

When I awoke, my quarters were so close and dark, that my first idea was that it was still night; but, upon opening the inner door, the spring sunshine streamed cheerily in at the windows at the front of the store, the shutters were thrown wide open, and the rosy Irish janitor was busy brushing up the dust, and raking out the stove, humming a merry tune the while.

"Och, whack! Cupid's a mannikin!" he warbled, as I hailed him drowsily.

"A fine morning!" said I, wiping the sleep out of my eyes.

"Faith, and you're right! an' it's a sound sleeper and a brave snorer ye are, going it like a tom-cat—I mean a tom-tom. Sure, I heard ye in here."

Having made the fire and straightened up the shop, O'Rourke withdrew, and I took a seat by the window to await the arrival of my fellow-clerk.

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Down town in the early morning, is a marked contrast to down town during business hours. The sparsely peopled streets, the janitors and porters dusting the steps and sidewalks with their brooms, the occasional clattering past of an empty hack or dray, the clash and clang of opening doors and shutters, the shrill cries of the milkmen and the newsboys, the lumbering along of omnibuses in adjacent thoroughfares, these awakening sights and sounds of a mighty city sometimes suggest more vivid and sensitive impressions than the rapid, earnest, bustling crowds of business hours, somehow—as the shadows of the clouds fall more plainly on the fields than bursts of sunshine.

Such furtive meditations were put to flight by the rather abrupt appearance of my fellow employe, at nine o'clock, or about one second before nine.

"Sharp nine, you see," he observed with a laugh, and a sweet though feeble smile; "the governor likes his clerks to be on time."

"That's right," said I laughing likewise, in response to his informal greeting.

As he took off and hung up his hat and topcoat, I made a hasty study of my new companion. Some twenty-three or four, slight of build, with somewhat stooping shoulders, of middle size, his forehead high and wide, with black curls at the temples, the features straight

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