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## CHAPTER I.

### A REJECTED PROPOSAL.

"No, Frank, most decidedly not. I must say that I am more than surprised that you should have had the audacity to even think for an instant that such a thing could be."

"But we love each other most sincerely, Mr. Callister, and you know as well as I do that there was a time when, with your approval, I was allowed to consider Edna as my future wife."

"That may be, young man, that may be—I will even go so far as to admit that such was the case. But circumstances alter cases, and I am inclined to think that I could do somewhat better than to bestow the hand of my only daughter upon a bank clerk at a beggarly salary of twelve hundred a year."

"I am assistant cashier of Webster National Bank, and my salary is quite enough for a young couple to get along on with economy; besides, I have prospects of promotion—"

"Had, you mean. A year ago such was the case, Frank Mansfield. From what I have recently heard of your career, your drinking, gambling and nightly carousals, I am inclined to doubt if your prospects amount to much now."

It was Mr. Elijah Callister, the rich Wall street stock operator, who spoke these words, the person to whom they were addressed being Frank Mansfield, a handsome youth of twenty-one.

The scene was Mr. Callister's office on Broad street, in one of the nine-story buildings just below Wall, and the time the close of the short winter's day, December 22, 1884.

Now, in thus demanding the hand of Miss Edna Callister, Frank Mansfield was by no means as presumptuous as at first glance might seem.

But little less than five years previous to the date just mentioned, the father of this young man had been a wealthy and honored merchant, and the stock operator's most intimate friend.

Their business interests to a great extent in common, their elegant residences on Fifth avenue side by side, and their children—in each case the only child the friends possessed—had been taught to look forward to the day when they should marry with their parent's full consent.

To-day all was different, and Edgar Mansfield lay in a dishonored grave, his wife, driven mad by the reverses of fortune and the loss of a kind and loving husband, had disappeared from the circle of friends in which she had long figured as a leading spirit, while Frank had been thrown to

shift for himself upon the cold charity of an unsympathizing world.

All this happened in the spring of 1879, which, all will be seen, was five years before our story begins.

Meanwhile, Elijah Callister had flourished, even as his friend Mansfield had slipped and fallen.

While Frank, who had obtained a position in the Webster National Bank, had been working hard to advance himself, with occasional slips and frequent lapses into dissipation and folly—always bitterly repented of when committed and it was too late—the father of Edna Callister had steadily increased in influence and wealth.

He was honored among business men, a pillar in the church, and high in social circles, and yet he had turned his back completely upon the son of his old-time friend, having even gone so far as to forbid him entrance to his home.

That the course he had pursued had not prevented the love which had existed from childhood between the youthful pair from developing as time went on, is evident from the conversation in which we now find the highly respectable Mr. Callister and the son of his former friend engaged.

"I am hardly as bad a fellow as you would make me out, Mr. Callister," answered Frank, flushing to the eyes at the stock speculator's last remark. "I have been a little wild and imprudent, I'll admit, but I've made up my mind to reform, and with Edna for my wife——"

"Stop!"

Mr. Callister had brought his fist down upon the desk with a bang.

"My daughter shall marry no pauper, Mr. Mansfield!" he exclaimed, with emphasis. "Come to me with proof that you are possessed of at least ten thousand dollars of your own, and I will listen to you—not before. At the present time I doubt if you can produce ten thousand cents."

"And this is final?"

The face of Frank Mansfield was very pale as he spoke.

"It is. Reform your habits of life, go to work and advance yourself, make money somehow, anyhow, so that you make it, and then, if Edna has not previously found some one more worthy of her, as I have no doubt she will, I will give your proposal the consideration it deserves. Now I must bid you good-night."

Without a word the young man turned upon his heel and passed out of the office.

Listening for a moment to his retreating footsteps as they died away through the corridor, Mr. Elijah Callister arose, drew on his overcoat, adjusted his shiny beaver at the proper angle upon his head, and taking up his walking stick, prepared to start for his palatial home with a general air of respectable business solidity standing forth from every portion of his portly presence from the crown of his hat to the soles of his well-polished shoes.

"That settles him for the day," he muttered, as he cast his eye about the office to see that everything was as it should be for the night; "by to-morrow, unless I greatly mistake, the young gentleman will have most effectually settled himself. I have nothing against Frank, nothing in the world, but of late he has become altogether too inquisitive, and there is nothing for it but to remove him from my path."

"Though I don't doubt in the least," he added, meditatively, as he locked the office door behind him, "that when she hears what has happened, she will kick up a deuce of a row."

And the respectable Mr. Callister, the last man in the world who among the brethren of the Tenth Baptist Church on Murray Hill, in which he was a bright and shining light, would have been suspected of such a thing, stepped into the elevator, passed out of the nine-story building into Broad street, and, slipping around the corner into a little alley, hurriedly descended the steps of a basement groggery, and walking up to the bar, called for as stiff a glass of brandy as any old toper in the land.

"Has Billy Cutts, the detective, been in here this evening, Joe?" he asked of the white-aproned bartender, as he set down the brandy glass which he had drained to the last drop.

"No, he hasn't, Mr. Callister," was the man's reply. "I haven't seen Billy in more'n a—— By gracious! talk of angels, and they are right on top of you! Here's Billy Cutts comin' now."

As he spoke a young man, comfortably dressed in a dark overcoat and ordinary business suit, entered the saloon.

He was to all appearance not over twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, but his face bore indelibly stamped upon it a knowledge of the crooked ways of the great city not usually looked for in a man of his years.

He shook hands with the stock operator upon his entrance, with a familiar, easy-going air, both withdrawing at once to a table in a remote corner of the saloon, upon which, by the order of the elder man, the bartender placed a bottle and glasses between them.

"Well, Billy, is it all fixed?" said Mr. Callister, pouring out a stiff glass of liquor for his companion and another for himself.

"All O. K.," was the reply. "The old man an' his pals got the plans all right, an' will be on hand, you can bet. I saw Detective Hook not an hour ago and gave him the tip. He swallowed the bait whole, the shallow fool, and now all that remains is to get the feller to consent, an' that I consider

about fixed."

"How did you do it?"

"Oh, through the help of a couple friends of his an' tools of mine. They've been workin' on him for the best part of a week, an' have pretty well brought him round. I want them in the thing, too, don't yer see, to give the racket a natural air."

"Of course neither of them suspect the truth?"

"What d'ye take me for, boss? I guess I know what I'm about as a general thing. When I tell you a thing is fixed, it's fixed; you can bet yer life on that every time."

"I hope so, and I believe so," replied the other, in a fierce whisper. "That boy Frank Mansfield is in my way, Billy. He must and shall be removed from my path. Your scheme is a good one, and I believe it will work; if I read of his arrest in the morning papers you can count on five thousand dollars any time you have a mind to call round to my office and get it."

Mr. Callister arose abruptly as he spoke, and buttoned up his overcoat as though to depart.

"You'll see me to-morrow mornin', then, fer sure," replied Cutts, likewise rising. "So you'd better be ready with the cash."

"I will, Billy, never fear. How's your father, by the way?"

"Oh, the old man's all right, but confoundedly nervous till this little spec is over."

"Well, give him my regards when you see him, and I shall expect to see you with your work accomplished at my office to-morrow by noon."

And the respectable Mr. Callister with a face so smiling that, as the saying goes, butter would not have melted in his mouth, shook hands with Detective Cutts and moved off in the direction of the nearest station on the elevated road.

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## CHAPTER II.

### DYBALL'S CLUB.

Dyball's Club-room was not the most high-toned of the New York clubs, nor is it frequented by what are, as a rule, termed the highest of high-toned men.

Situated on the second floor of a building on the Bowery, not far from the corner of Canal street, its nightly patrons were those of a decidedly low-toned sort.

Small clerks in wholesale stores, small sporting men, not yet arrived at the dignity of the more fashionable clubs, and small—oh, very small—card-flippers and poker playing cheats, who considered the ability to store aces and kings, *ad libitum*, in the sleeves of their small-tailed coats, the very highest touch of art, and who used their skill, as may be readily believed, to fleece such of the small clerks who were bold enough to challenge them to a friendly game.

For card-playing—and that means plain poker and nothing else—was all they did at Dyball's Club-room, except to consume the vile liquor and smoke *Regalia de Avenue B* cigars served over the bar; but, although limited in variety, the entertainment furnished made up in quantity what it otherwise lacked; nor did the votaries at the Dyball shrine often separate until morning had well-nigh dawned.

Upon the evening referred to in the last chapter, at a few minutes after eleven o'clock, just as the sidewalks along the brilliantly-lighted Bowery were beginning to whiten with what promised to be a heavy fall of snow, there entered Dyball's club room no less celebrated a person than Mr. Detective Cutts, a young but already popular special on the force of the New York police.

He was in citizen's dress, of course—in fact, the same in which we have already met him on this night once before—and as he pushed his way among the card tables, a long cigar stuck in one corner of his mouth, his cane under his left arm, and his Derby hat set rakishly upon the side of his head, several of the small clerks rejoicing in a speaking acquaintance with so prominent an official, greeted him with an air of great respect, their less fortunate companions regarding them with feelings of envy not unmingled with awe.

But the young detective paid little attention to any of the players at the card tables.

Pushing his way among them through the stifling atmosphere, fairly blue with tobacco smoke, and reeking with the stale odors of whisky and beer, he approached a small table in a remote corner of the room, where sat four young men who, if the chips upon its green baize top and the anxious faces of the players themselves could be taken as a guide, were indulging in a pretty stiff sort of game.

"Frank, I want to see you," he said, quietly, placing his hand lightly upon the shoulder of the youngest man of the four.

"All right, Billy, I'll be with you when I finish this hand."

"I'll wait for you in the wine-room."

"Very good. Two jacks and two queens—I'll take that pot, boys. I'll be with you in a second, Billy—just one hand more."

It is Frank Mansfield, and no one else, we are sorry to say, who again deals the cards around, and with flushed face, being evidently considerably the worse for drink, a moment later joins Detective Cutts in the private wine-room, to the left of Mr. Dyball's bar.

What brings the boy to a place like this?

Disappointment and a fatal love of exciting pleasures, yielded to too often—far too often—in the past.

Firm in his resolution to reform his ways, Frank, who loved the daughter of Elijah Callister, and was devotedly loved by her in return, had, at her own suggestion, asked of the stock operator the hand of his daughter in marriage with the ill success already told.

Now, instead of meeting that refusal like a man—instead of returning to the object of his affections at the house of a mutual friend, who loved them both, and where they had been in the habit of meeting at intervals in the past—Frank had sought to drown his sorrows by that fatal method—recourse to the whisky bottle and glass.

One drink had been followed by another, the second by a third, until, reckless of the consequences, the boy had yielded to a temptation which he had for days been struggling to resist, and which— But that brings us back to Detective Cutts again!

"Well, young fellow, what shall it be?" asked that individual, touching the little call bell upon the table by which he had seated himself the moment Frank appeared.

"Oh! I don't care—whisky, I suppose. What do you want of me? The same old scheme?"

"Of course. What else should it be?" answered the detective, calling for the drinks, which were speedily produced and consumed. "You can't do better than to join me in that, and I suppose you have made up your mind to do so, since you are here by the appointment we made."

"I don't know about that. I want to make money as well as any one, and I'm more than ever in the mood for it to-night; but I'm afraid of your scheme, Billy, and I don't deny it. I'm afraid it'll get me in a hole."

"No, it won't—nothing of the sort. I don't want to get you in no hole, nor to land in one myself. I'm just as honest as any one else, but I'm bound to look out for No. 1 every time, and you owe it to yourself to do the same."

"But this letting a man into the bank at night is something that has a very nasty look."

"Well, I ain't a-goin' to steal nothin', am I? All I want is to look at a name in a book. Upon my word, young feller, you're a deal too squeamish. I can't see where's the possibility of harm comin' to you from a move like that."

"But it's against all rules. If it were known that I had shown the signatures of our depositors to an outsider, I'd lose my place before I knew where I was."

"Perhaps you would. But whose a-goin' to give you away? To show you that I mean to be perfectly square with you, I've asked Jim Morrow and Ed Wilson to meet us down by the bank and go and see the thing done."

"You have?"

"Yes. They are both good friends of yours, and in case anything was brought up against you, you could prove that you did nothing wrong. Come, now, what do you say? It's getting late, and if it's to be done at all it must be done to-night. All I want is to copy the signature of old Thomas Hendrickson. If you will help me to do it I'll give you five hundred dollars as soon as we leave the bank."

"But I don't understand what your man wants it for. Why can't he get it by some other means?"

"Because he can't, that's all I know, and I don't want to know any more. Hendrickson never leaves his room, and will see no one and answer no letters; my man has got them deeds I told you about, and wants to be sure that the old miser's signature is all O. K.; why, he don't tell me, and I'm sure I don't care to know, so long as he is willing to pay for the job he wants done."

Now this was not the first time Frank Mansfield had had this proposition made to him by Detective Cutts, nor the second nor the third.

He had been introduced to this individual about a month before, by two of his fast companions, the Jim Morrow and Ed Wilson the detective had just named, and in their presence this strange request had been first made, to be renewed upon several occasions since.

At first the proposal had been rejected outright.

Frank had positively refused to have anything to do with it at all.

But, upon its repetition, the boy had been more inclined to lend a willing ear.

He was more inclined than ever to do so upon this night.

To be sure, he did not more than half believe the detective's statement as to the reason of his singular request; but, after all, he was a member of the police force, an officer of the law, although little older than Frank himself.

Detectives were obliged, as he knew well enough, to attain their ends by all sorts of singular means. Surely, in these days of defaulting cashiers and pilfering tellers, there could be no serious harm in letting a police detective copy a signature from the bank's books.

Nor was the promised reward without its full weight in the mind of the boy.

"Come to me with proof that you are possessed of at least ten thousand dollars, and I will listen to you, and not before," the father of the girl he so devotedly loved had said.

Money makes money.

With five hundred dollars he would at least obtain a start.

Visions of successful speculations in the institutions known as "bucket shops," which cluster around the Stock Exchange, floated through his brain.

If he had luck, as many of his acquaintances had had before him, his five hundred might be doubled in no time at all, and the thousand thus increased to ten in a comparative short space of time.

And then——

"Well, Cutts, I'll do it!" he exclaimed at last; "but, mind, if you go back on me, I can make it as hot for you at police headquarters as you can for me at the bank. I'll show you the signature-book of the Webster Bank, and let you trace old Hendrickson's autograph from it—but don't expect me to do anything else."

"I shan't, my boy, for that's all I want," replied the detective, with an air of triumph. "Now let's have another drink."

There were two doors connecting with the private wine room of Dyball's club.

One opened into the main or card room, and the other out into the hallway, from which descended the stairs leading to the street.

Had Detective Cutts been a little older in the business, and a little more observing withal, he might have noticed that during all his conversation with Frank Mansfield this hall door stood open on the crack.

No sooner had the young men left Dyball's by the regular entrance, and gaining the stairs, descended to the street, than from the floor of the hall close to the wine room there arose the form of a woman.

She was of somewhat above the ordinary stature, but of withered features and attenuated form, while her long gray hair, hanging in a tangled mass down her neck and shoulders, and a pair of wild, restless eyes ever moving in their shrunken sockets, lent to her whole appearance an air of hopeless misery painful to behold.

Her dress neat, but shabby and worn; a faded shawl and a cheap woolen hood being the only outer wraps she wore.

And this strange creature crept after the two young men in the darkness and storm, dogging their steps as they moved down the Bowery towards Chatham Square never taking her restless eyes from their moving figures for so much as a moment of time.

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## CHAPTER III.

### AN UNHEEDED WARNING—FRANK MANSFIELD FINDS HIMSELF IN A BAD FIX.

The storm had now greatly increased, and the whitened flakes were rapidly covering sidewalk and street, as well as the forms of such belated pedestrians as hurried past, while the glass in the lighted store fronts glistened with frost like so many diamonds in the light of the flickering street lamps scattered here and there.

Now, the Webster National Bank, as is well known to every one, is located on the corner of Rector street and Broadway, directly opposite the high wall, ever rising as the street descends, upon the top of which lies the ancient burial ground surrounding Trinity Church.

Bustling with life and activity during the business hours of the day, at night no more lonely spot can be found in all New York than this.

Standing a little back from the street rises the mighty spire of this, New York's most famous house of worship, surrounded on three sides by the crumbling head-stones of a century ago, and marking the last resting-place of many a famous citizen of the days gone by.

Rising above these stones, the many dingy tombs scattered among them, clusters of noble trees raise their spreading branches toward the sky above, overshadowing this time-honored burial place of the dead.

Brick and mortar everywhere, gigantic structures upon every hand, the old Trinity church-yard has remained untouched by the hand of Time—remained the one green spot in lower New York, even as it was in the days when the great city was young.

It was upon this sight that Frank Mansfield daily looked forth, for his desk in the bank commanded a full view of the church-yard from the Rector street side.

It was by the side of the wall that, with his companion, he now stands, contemplating an act, which, if not criminal, is a breach of the implicit trust placed in him by the officers of the Webster National Bank, at least.

And now the old church-yard is robed in white, the snow flakes bearing downward the branches of the spreading trees, covering the tombs and graves of the dead—we doubt very much if the souls of many who lie beneath are as white as the ground above their mouldering bones.

Detective Cutts turned the corner of Rector street, and moved silently along the church-yard wall.

It was now twelve o'clock and after—in fact, the bell of Old Trinity had rung out the midnight hour before they passed the corner of Fulton street and Broadway.

The storm had increased as the night advanced, Broadway was deserted, and not a soul could be seen moving on Rector street from end to end.

For the evil-doer no better night could be found than this—even the policemen had sought shelter in friendly doorways from the pitiless storm.

"By George! but this is a nasty night!" said the detective, in a low whisper, coming to a halt beneath the shadow of the wall. "Now, where in thunder are those fellows, I'd like to know? They promised to be on the corner at midnight and wait until we came."

"Well, we can do without them," said Frank, uneasily, beginning already to repent of the step he had taken.

"For my part, I can't see what we want with them, anyhow. The thing don't amount to anything, after all."

The liquor of which he had partaken so freely was beginning to tell on him.

He mistrusted his companion, he mistrusted himself; he was anxious to do what he had undertaken and begun.

After all, it was but a little thing, and with the money he could do so much.

He had been trying to persuade himself, but with ill success, during the walk down-town, that it amounted to just nothing, after all.

"Why, I only want them with us for your own protection, my dear boy," replied Cutts. "I'm as square as a die myself, and I want you to see that everything I do is entirely open and above the board.

"By the way, you've got a key to the side door of the bank, I suppose?"

"Yes; the cashier and myself carry that."

"And you tell me there's no watchman in the bank?"

"No; otherwise I should not be here, of course. This corner is so prominent that they never thought it worth their while to keep one employed. It's lucky for you, Cutts, that they think as they do."

"I should say so," replied the detective, with a slightly marked emphasis. "And that being the case, we can slip in that side door and through the hall as easily as you please."

Now, there are two entrances to the Webster National Bank.

One from Broadway and one from Rector street.

It was to the latter that Detective Cutts referred.

"I say, Frank," said that individual, in a whisper, "we may be observed if we stand waiting here. I move we jump over the church-yard fence and wait on the inside until Jim and Ed show up."

Careless now of what he did, and too much muddled in his brain through the fumes of the liquor to give the matter very much thought, Frank followed Cutts as he lightly leaped upon the low wall and vaulted the fence, landing inside among the snow-covered stones.

At the same instant from among the trees in the shadow of the great church beyond a low whistle was heard, which was presently followed by the appearance of two dark forms moving cautiously toward the spot where they stood.

"Hello, is that you, Billy?"

The voice came from the advancing figures, now emerging from the trees.

"Yes," called Cutts, in a whisper. "Is that you, Ed—you and Jim?"

How came these two in the Trinity church-yard at this hour of the night?

The strangeness of the thing struck the boy at once, as he stood leaning against the rail.

"What the mischief are you fellows doing there?" he exclaimed, peering forward into the darkness. "Cutts, what does this thing mean?"

"It means villainy, it means wickedness!" cried a feeble voice from the sidewalk below. "It means ruin to you, my son, if you persist in what you are about to do."

There, kneeling upon the snow-covered pavement beneath the wall, Frank, turning suddenly and pressing his face against the iron palings, perceived a strange and weird form.

It was a woman, old, faded and gray, who, with upturned features and hands clasped above her head now met his astonished gaze.

It was the singular creature who had followed him from the gambling hall.

Not for one moment had the boy been lost from her view.

"Pause, my son!" she exclaimed, raising her clasped hands aloft with a supplicating air, as she knelt before him in the pure white snow. "Remember your dead father—I ask you not to remember me—pause before it is too late."

"Hello!" cried Cutts, placing his hand on Frank's shoulder as he spoke, "who the mischief have we here?"

As though stung by an adder, the boy shrank back from that aged form.

"Mother!" he cried, in husky tones, "for God's sake, what brings you here? Have they let you escape again?"

"Escape!" said the woman, in feeble tones. "Can doors hold a mother when danger besets her son? No, no, bolts and bars cannot keep me in. Locks amount to nothing for me. I roam the streets by night and by day, and I watch over you, my son."

"She is mad, Cutts!" cried the boy angrily; "mad for years, and has escaped from those by whom she was confined. Follow me, and let's be done with this thing at once. With her on my hands I need the money more than ever now."

He leaped the fence railing as he spoke with the lightness of a cat, landing by the woman's side.

Cutts instantly followed him, as did the two young men, who had during this strange scene come to a halt a little in the rear of the spot where Frank and the detective had stood.

"No, no, you shall not go! You shall not rob the bank!" shrieked the woman, seizing Frank by the skirts of his coat. "Don't listen to these wicked men, my son; they only seek your harm!"

"Confound the old hag!" muttered the detective, angrily. "What are we going to do? If we don't stop her mouth she will ruin all."

"Hold her where she is and stop her mouth; but gently, boys," said Frank, in a hoarse voice. "Cutts, you follow me and the thing is done. I've gone too far to back out now. I want your pay, and as I am wronging no one, have it I must and will."

He sprang across the street as he spoke, followed by the young detective, while the woman, feebly struggling in the arms of the two young fellows, still knelt moaning beneath the church yard wall.

"I'll have to take care of her, Cutts," said Frank, producing a key and fitting it into the lock of the door of the bank. "She's hopelessly crazy, poor thing, and God only knows by what strange chance she came to be here to-night."

He turned the key in the lock as he spoke and threw open the door leading into a dark hallway in the great building on the corner of Rector street and Broadway, in the rear of the offices occupied by the Webster National Bank.

"Follow me," he added, entering the passage as he spoke, "and shut the door behind you—it won't take a moment, and the thing is done."

He moved through the passage and opened an inner door, supposing the detective to be close behind.

Great heavens! What sight was this?

There, before his astonished gaze in the dim light of the gas, kept burning through the entire night in this, as in other banks, lay the great doors of the money vault blown out of all shape, disclosing the vault within.

A burglar's jimmy, a crowbar, and a powder-can lay mingled with a pile of books and papers—the contents of the rifled vault—upon the floor.

"Cutts, Cutts! For Heaven's sake look here!"

Frank Mansfield sprang out into the dark hall, calling the detective's name.

There was no reply.

The outer door stood open, the dark outlines of Trinity Church appeared beyond, but Detective Cutts was nowhere to be seen.

With one bound Frank Mansfield leaped toward that open door.

"Stop!" cried a stern voice. "Young man, what are you doing here?"

And the form of a large and powerful man was interposed before him, who seized the boy by the arm.

"This way, men!" he cried, as three policemen came running down Rector street from Broadway. "Here's one of the rascals now. We are here just in the nick of time!"

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE BENEATH THE CHURCH-YARD WALL.



"Come, speak up! Are you dumb? What are you doing at the door of the Webster Bank at this hour of the night?"

It was Mr. Caleb Hook, the famous New York detective, who spoke, as he seized Frank Mansfield by the coat-collar and jerked him violently into the dark hallway which formed the rear entrance to the bank.

At the same instant the forms of the three policemen were to be seen filling the open door.

Even as he spoke the detective threw the full glare of a dark lantern upon the pale and frightened countenance of the boy who stood trembling in his grasp.

"I—I—work in the bank," he stammered, brokenly. "I wanted—— I am the assistant cashier. I came here with my friend, Detective Cutts, to try the door and see that all was right."

It was a bold stroke, but a useless one.

Detective Hook laughed in his face.

"Well, and where is Cutts?" he asked, sneeringly.

"He was here a moment ago, just outside the door. I went into the bank and found that the vault had been blown open, and turned to call him in as you seized me on the steps."

"I don't see him anywhere around," said the detective, coolly, at the same time pulling Frank toward the door, and looking quickly up and down Rector street.

It was deserted.

Cutts, the strange woman, and the two young fellows who held her down had alike disappeared.

There was nothing to be seen save the dark outlines of Trinity Church, the old burial ground about it, and the white flakes of the ever falling snow.

And the heart of Frank Mansfield sank within him as the full meaning of his perilous position burst upon his bewildered brain.

The bank robbed—Cutts and his companions gone.

Who would believe his story, now that he had been caught almost in front of the rifled vault?

"Now look here, young fellow," said the detective, "you might just as well own up and tell the truth. Where are your pals? Who are you? What's your name?"

"My name is Frank Mansfield. I'm assistant cashier of the bank."

There was nothing to be gained by attempting to conceal his identity; Frank saw that at a glance.

"I thought as much," replied the detective grimly, "and I'm a little behind time, I see. But you don't answer my other question. Where are your pals?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"Spread yourself, you Jones and Brady," exclaimed the detective, turning suddenly upon the officers. "Examine every doorway, one of you, the other make for the church-yard wall. Schneider, you come with me. We'll soon see what's been going on in here. This comes from the folly of the chief in keeping me so long engaged. I might have been here an hour ago at the very least."

He turned quickly upon the boy as he spoke, and without a word of warning snapped a pair of handcuffs about his wrists.

"Move on ahead there," he exclaimed, pushing Frank before him into the hall. "You say this bank has been robbed. I believe you. Show me what you have done."

The vault door, wrenched out of all shape and hanging by one hinge, the burglar's tools, the books and papers scattered upon the floor around, were quite answer enough without a word from the wretched Frank, who stood trembling by his side.

The detective surveyed the scene grimly.

"I was born a day too late, it seems," was all he said.

Then, turning toward his youthful prisoner, he gazed intently upon his face.

"You and your friends have made a clean job of it here, young man," he said, at length.

Frank stared at him dumbly.

Could he hope to win the hand of Edna Callister after such a fatal slip as this?

What was he to do?

What should he say?

Ah, if he had but heeded the warning voice of that mother who had knelt before him in the snow!

But no! He had for the meanest of motives, money, been willing to violate the confidence and trust reposed in him by the officers of the bank, and this was his reward.

Not without his fair share of natural shrewdness, Frank at once perceived that his only hope lay in silence and a strict adherence to the story he had told, which to a certain extent was true.

He had come to the bank with Cutts—as for his reason for so doing, he determined to keep that to himself, for the present, at least.

"Well," said the detective, "why don't you speak?"

"Because I've nothing to say. I've told you all I know."

"Do you persist in the statement that you came here with Mr. Cutts?"

"I do."

"For what reason?"

"I've already told you that."

"To see that all was right about the bank?"

"Yes."

"Is that your business?"

"Not particularly. We had been spending the evening together, and happened to be passing, and I thought I would try the door."

"Mistake added to wrong doing."

Lies never yet availed any man in an emergency.

Better by far would it have been for the boy if he had confessed his fault and told the simple truth.

"And upon entering you found things as we see them now?" continued the detective, with an incredulous air.

"Yes."

"Do you carry a key to those doors?"

"Yes. Both the cashier and myself have keys."

"Suppose you give them to me."

Frank motioned toward his pocket, into which Detective Hook now thrust his hand, drawing forth the keys, and embracing the opportunity to search the boy thoroughly at the same time, but finding, as a matter of course, nothing to further indicate any connection with the affair.

He examined the keys attentively, and turning, tried them in the lock of the door.

One of them fitted perfectly.

The detective appeared surprised.

"You told the truth, then, my boy," he said, regarding the handsome face of the youth before him meditatively as he spoke. "I don't know what to make of this. Either you are other than what you seem to be, or I've been most outrageously sold."

"I assure you, sir," exclaimed Frank, plucking up a spirit, "that I am just what I tell you, as any officer of the bank can testify, if you will take the trouble to ask. The janitor of this building knows me. Were it only daylight, I could prove my identity in a dozen ways. What has become of Cutts and those who were with him, I am sure is more than I can tell, but I——"

"Ha! Then there were others here besides Cutts and yourself?"

A deep flush overspread the countenance of the boy.

Here was a fatal slip.

Until now he had relied upon Cutts' desire to shield himself to be cautious in what he might say, but as for Ed Wilson and Jim Morrow, who were nothing more or less than two very fast young clerks in a neighboring steamship office, he saw instinctively that he could hope to exercise no control whatever with them.

But there was no use in trying to conceal anything from the keen eyes of the detective, now fixed upon him as though seeking to read his inmost thoughts.

"Yes, there were two other fellows with us," he answered, with evident reluctance.

"Who were they?"

"Acquaintances of mine."

"And their names?"

"Wilson and Morrow."

"Hem! And they, likewise, seem to have disappeared, most unluckily for you."

"So it seems," said Frank, gloomily. "I'm sure I don't understand it any more than you."

"We'll understand it better by and by," replied the detective, quietly. "Meanwhile, think the matter over, if you will allow me to offer my advice, and make up your mind to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. You'll find it will pay you better in the end."

"Schneider," he added, turning abruptly to the policeman who had been a silent witness to the scene, "take this young man to the New Church street station, and let him be held until I come."

"Very good, Mr. Hook," replied the officer.

Without another word he took Frank by the arm and led him through the hall and out into the street.

The snow was still falling, sidewalk and roofs, church-yard and wall, everything within range of the eye, was clothed in a mantle of white.

"Now, den, de nex' question is how ve not our necks already break," muttered the officer, with a strong German accent, as he moved heavily down the sloping sidewalk toward New Church street, which skirts the rear of the burial ground at the bottom of the hill.

For he was a clumsy man, and had evidently no wish to measure the length of his Teutonic form upon the slippery walk beneath his feet.

"Keep close beside me, young feller," he added, releasing his hold upon Frank's arm, the better to steady himself by aid of the hand-rail separating the sidewalk from the sunken areas before the basement shops with which this block on Rector street is lined. "You notings can do mit tem pracelets on your hands, so dere's no use in trying to run."

"I'm not running to-night," replied Frank, shortly. "Lead on, I shall follow; you need have no fear."

"Nein, you go ahead, den I keeps you in sight," said the policeman, pushing the boy before him. "You gets not pehind me ef I knows vat I do."

Frank made no reply, but plowed his way on through the snow, Officer Schneider following close in his rear.

At a word from that individual, upon reaching New Church street, he turned to the right and moved slowly along the wall of Trinity church-yard, here rising high above their heads.

To the left rose the structure of the elevated railroad, to the right the wall itself, the iron railing still surmounting it, from which hung, depending, clusters of the snow-covered vines.

Not a soul was to be seen moving about them.

The street was deserted for as great a distance as the eye could reach.

They had hardly proceeded half the length of the wall, when, proceeding apparently from the clustered vines above them, a shrill, piping sound was heard.

It was precisely such a sound as bats are sometimes heard to make just at nightfall as they go whizzing through the air.

"Vat in tonder ish dat?" exclaimed Officer Schneider, coming to a sudden halt, and looking up into the air.

Again the strange sound broke upon the stillness of the night a little ahead of them through the thick mass of falling snow.

Both Frank and the policeman had now checked their steps close to the church-yard wall.

At the recurrence of the sound, forgetting for the instant that he had a prisoner on his hands, Officer Schneider moved a few steps in advance of the boy, and raising his head, tried to peer in among the clustered vines, all laden with snow, which overhung the iron fence upon the top of the wall, leaving the boy standing behind.

"I can't see notings," he muttered, "but dere's something crooked going on up dere. Dis is not de first time nor de second I hear dot sound. Who goes up mit dem valls on top, I'd schust like to know?"

Now this was a little private mystery of the officer's own, this self-same bat-like sound.

Several times previous to the present occasion had he heard it, and—

Hello!

And what ails Officer Schneider now?

Enough to make him stare as he does, and shower all the German imprecations known to his vocabulary upon the air around.

For the handcuffed prisoner, whom he supposed to be standing so close to him that it was only necessary to reach out and touch him, had during that one moment in which he had raised his head to the top of the wall above him, from which proceeded the bat-like sound, most mysteriously vanished.

There were his footprints on the snow-covered walk, nor was there other prints anywhere to be seen upon the smooth surface of the street, save those made by the boy and himself, and pointing up—not down the street.

And this was all.

His handcuffed prisoner, who could not by any possibility have advanced a dozen steps through the snow in the brief space of time during which the policeman's attention had been withdrawn, had strangely, marvelously disappeared.

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## CHAPTER V.

### BATS IN THE WALL.

Left to himself within the banking-room, Detective Hook, with the closest scrutiny, began a

systematic examination of the rifled vault and its surroundings.

There was no evidence that the bank had been entered other than by the rear doors from the Rector street side.

And these doors, strange to relate, were unprotected, save by ordinary spring locks.

Evidently the officers of the Webster Bank had relied upon the solidity of their vault doors for protection, and upon the fact that with plate glass windows upon two sides, facing Rector street and Broadway, the policeman on the beat could see the entire front of the vault as plainly as though it had been standing in the street itself, by the light of the gas-burner, kept burning the entire night directly in front of the combination lock.

And, after all, no better protection could be devised than this, providing always, the policeman of the beat is true to his trust.

And yet the deed had been done, and, stranger still the officer in whose charge this portion of Broadway lay had put in no appearance yet.

Crowbar and jimmy, powder-can and fuse, and the shattered door itself, told with startling plainness the methods by which the bank-robbers had attained their end.

Detective Hook examined each point with close attention.

Nothing of value remained in the vault.

It might have contained millions—it might have contained cents—the bank officers alone could tell.

"There is something altogether out of the usual order in this affair," he muttered to himself, as he stood musing before the rifled vault.

"The strange hints received by me from Cutts have proved both true and false. Instead of this clerk and a gang of desperate burglars, I find the vault already robbed and this young man with his strange story, involving Cutts himself, standing here alone.

"I don't like the look of it. I believe this boy is as innocent as I am, Caleb Hook; there is something else at the bottom of all this. If I don't greatly mistake—"

"Hello! Well, what have you discovered?"

"Nothing," replied Policeman Jones, now appearing at the door. "There's not a soul anywhere about, except an old crazy woman walking up and down before Trinity Church, muttering to herself. I questioned her closely, but she knows nothing at all."

"Did you see anything of Officer Flaherty, who ought to be on this beat?"

"Not a thing, and I've searched for him everywhere, too."

"I'll see that he is provided for, the careless rascal," muttered the detective, "and you, Brady"—addressing the second policeman who had also appeared—"what luck in the church-yard? Any tracks in the snow?"

"The tracks of two men, Mr. Hook, but they are pointing this way. Just over the fence are others, too. I should say several persons had been tramping around there."

"Remain here and guard what is left," said the detective, briefly. "I'll examine into this for myself."

He hastily passed to the street, leaving the two policemen in charge.

"Now for the Trinity church-yard," he muttered, as he sprang toward the low wall at the point before which the strange woman had kneeled but a few moments before. "I've got a genuine mystery on my hands at last, I fancy, and that's what I've been sighing for these last three months — Ha, Schneider, where's your prisoner? Surely you are not back from the station as soon as this?"

The stout German policeman, panting for a breath, stood trembling by his side.

"Dunder und blitzen! now mebbe you kills me, Mr. Hook. I swear it vos not my fault."

"Not your fault! Have you lost your prisoner—but that is impossible! Speak, you Dutch scoundrel! Where is the boy I gave into your charge?"

"Gone, Mr. Hook! Disappeared unter mein very nose. I take not mein eyes from him, und I looks for him und he ish not dere. I tink dere's some devil vork mit dis, by shiminy, I do!"

A moment later, and Detective Hook, with the frightened German by his side, stood beneath the high wall skirting Trinity church-yard on the New Church street side, at the spot where Frank Mansfield had so strangely disappeared.

Twice over had the wretched Schneider told his tale, without rendering matters in the least more clear.

If he told the truth—and he related the facts so circumstantially that there could be no doubt of that—there was absolutely no explanation to be had.

There was the dead wall upon one side broken only by the iron doors, leading to the vaults beneath the bank, which had not been opened, perhaps in a century, filled with the moldering bones of the long-forgotten dead, and the structure of the elevated railroad upon the other, with the dark outlines of the building upon the opposite side of the street rising just beyond.

That the boy could have crossed the street was a simple impossibility.

Not a trace of human foot was visible in the freshly fallen snow.

Upon the sidewalk beneath the wall the detective had no difficulty in tracing his footsteps.

But this only served to double the mystery.

They all pointed one way—in the direction of the station toward which they had been going, and at the precise point where the boy had halted when the attention of his conductor had been attracted by the bat-like cry from the wall above they ceased to appear at all.

It was impossible that the vanished prisoner could have advanced or retreated, crossed the street—moved up or down.

Deeply puzzled, the detective hurried to Rector street again, and leaped the iron fence at the first available point, landing among the stones of the grave-yard beyond.

Nor did he leave it until an hour had passed, and but little the wiser then.

The tracks of two men crossing toward the Rector street side of the grave-yard from a point overlooking the place where Frank had disappeared were found and carefully measured.

At this point, also, the snow was found to be much disturbed, both on the ground itself and upon the vines overhanging the wall.

To all appearance, a number of persons had been moving about here, but their foot-prints seemed to lead nowhere, extending simply up and down the wall.

What did it mean?

Detective Hook had been called upon to solve many mysteries in his time, but never before had he encountered one so deep as this.

He was baffled; he could not deny it.

Accompanied by the crestfallen Schneider, he repaired to the station at last, and reported the occurrences of the night.

In a short space of time every newspaper in the city was preparing for their morning issues an account of the bold robbery of the Webster National Bank.

The great clock in Trinity steeple had rang out the hour of four, when Detective Hook, still hovering about the scene of his late defeat, turned, for the twentieth time that night, the corner of Rector street and Broadway.

As he did so there brushed past him the figure of a woman, plainly but neatly dressed, with gray hair hanging down from beneath her worsted hood, and wild, roving eyes, moving restlessly from one object to another as she walked along.

"Bats in the wall! Bats in the wall!" she muttered, as she passed. "Blessed be the bats in the wall for what they have done for my erring boy this night!"

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## CHAPTER VI.

### WHAT HAPPENED AT THE CATHERINE MARKET.

Of all the quaint old landmarks still standing in the city of New York that serve to remind the more ancient of its inhabitants of the days when they were young, surely none so quaint and curious as the old Catherine Market and its surroundings can be said anywhere to exist.

It stood there at the foot of the street whose name it bears when the writer was a boy—and many long years before—and will, no doubt, stand there long after he is dead and gone, a low, narrow shed of rotten wood, in color a dingy brown, with three half-round windows on the ferry side—we mean the ones over the oyster booth, where they used to give a round dozen saddle-rocks to every stew, and over the coffee and cake saloon, where the butter-cakes were always fresh on the pan—looking like the eyes of some great monster standing majestically alone in the center of the little square, calmly watching the crowds that pour out of the ferry-gates as the sun rises up, and pour in again as it goes down.

Now there is nothing stylish about the Catherine Market, nothing in any way smacking of "tone."

It is not one-third the size of the Washington Market, nor does it profess to have that far-famed celebrity for succulent meats, fat turtle, fish, oysters and clams to which Fulton Market lays claim.

But it does a driving, thriving business of its own, just the same, does the Catherine Market—make no mistake about that!

For here come to purchase their daily supplies the denizens of Water, Cherry and Oliver streets, of Madison, Monroe and Hamilton streets, to say nothing of East Broadway, equal in number, when taken all in all, to the population of a good-sized city in themselves.

If one wants to see the Catherine Market in the full tide of its bustling trade, Sunday morning is the time to come—when the fish peddlers cluster outside its walls, between the hours of four and five.

They spread themselves up South street; they stand beside their pails, tubs and baskets on the sidewalk facing the old tumble-down rookeries on the side of Catherine street to the right of the market itself, and before the second hand clothing stores on the left.

Blue-fish, white-fish, weak-fish, porgies, twisting eels, and soft clams strung on strings, lobsters alive and lobsters boiled, soft-shell crabs, packed in moss-lined boxes, hard-shell crabs, not packed at all—all are spread about outside of this singular building on the sidewalk in the gutter—yes, even in the very street itself, while the bawling of the fishermen as they cry the merits of their wares, the cackle of housewives, moving about here and there with giant market baskets on their arms, are all mingled in one unearthly clatter and din.

Nor is this all.

Other branches of trade must needs elbow their way into this busy spot as well, all carried on from baskets in the open streets, be it plainly understood, whose owners sit or stand beside them on the pavement as best they can.

But waste no time in seeking what is new.

This is most emphatically the bartering-place of the worn and old.

Second-hand coats, trousers, hats and shoes. Damaged crockery, rusty cutlery, half-worn articles of ladies' apparel, whose uses we would, of course, not even dare to name. Lace curtains, kitchen pots and pans, cheap chromos, candlesticks and beads, all are represented here, while small peddlers, whose stock in trade is carried in their hands, move here and there in the crowd, adding, with their various cries, to the strangeness of the scene.

We left Detective Hook by the church-yard wall at the moment of his encounter with the woman who with strange mutterings hurried past.

We find him at the early hour of half-past four moving down Catherine street in the direction of the singular scene we have just described.

And just before him is the woman, still treading wearily along the snow-covered sidewalk, her wild eyes ever roving here and there, now to the right and now to the left, never resting for even one moment of time.

The storm has ceased at last. The clouds have rolled away to the eastward; the stars shine brightly in the cold, wintry sky.

And the busy market is teeming with activity and life while the remainder of the great city is still locked in slumber and repose.

Who is this strange creature with her singular mutterings concerning "bats in the wall?"

It is just this that the detective sought to learn; and in the endeavor to learn it had not suffered the woman to pass from his observation from the moment of their first encounter until now.

At the instant of their meeting he had stopped her and questioned her sharply.

That she was beyond all question insane was perfectly clear.

Her remarks were most incoherent, and yet they bore direct reference to the subject weighing most heavily upon the mind of Detective Hook: the robbery of the Webster Bank.

"He robbed the bank! He robbed the bank! I warned him, but he would not heed."

This was her sole answer to the questions the detective had pressed upon her, mingled with muttered words of thankfulness to the "bats in the wall."

Now nine men out of ten, under similar circumstances, would have arrested this woman at once.

Detective Hook was of a different sort.

Let him arrest this woman mad beyond a doubt—and, save for such vague information as could be drawn from her muttered ravings, her usefulness would at once be destroyed.

Follow her, and there was no telling where she might lead him—possibly to the abode of the bank-robbers themselves.

That she had seen those who blew open the vault, either enter or leave the bank, from her rambling words the detective became firmly convinced; so he let her go, and, dropping all else, followed her through the streets on that Sabbath morning. If nothing came of it he could at least arrest her whenever he pleased.

And a long road she had led him, until at the Catherine Market we find them now, with Caleb Hook seriously debating in his mind whether it would not be best to take her in charge at once and end this so far useless chase.

Crossing Cherry street, the woman pushed her way among the old clothes dealers and second-hand venders whose baskets were crowded together in the snow-covered street upon this side, and passing along the wall of the market itself, paused among the fish-mongers who cluster opposite the ferry gate.

"Fresh fish this morning, ma'am?" cried a runty vender, well wrapped up in a coat that looked as though it might have done service in the days of Noah's flood. "Blue-fish, weak-fish, flounders, sea-bass, eels. Any kind you want you'll find right here!"

But the woman did not heed him.

Moving slowly on among the baskets, she passed the front of the market and crossed the street to

the other side.

There she turned, and proceeding perhaps half way up the block, stopped before the window of a low rum-shop, and, raising her hand to her forehead, stood peering in behind the corner of the battered curtain which shielded its lighted interior from the gaze of an over-inquisitive outer world.

"At last she stops," muttered the detective to himself, as he took his station by the side of the old hotel on the corner of Catherine street and South, watching to see what her next move would be. "Now, whose place is that, I wonder, and what does she expect to see?"

He glanced at the sign above the door of the groggery.

"The Donegal Shades, by P. Slattery," was the way it read.

It was evidently a saloon for the accommodation of the marketmen, open at this early hour on Sunday morning in defiance of the law.

As he did so his attention was attracted by two figures advancing toward the saloon from the street above.

One was a youth of twenty or twenty-one, the other a boy, his junior, perhaps, by a year or two.

Both were roughly dressed in cheap, worn clothes, the younger of the pair carrying a bundle of newspapers under his arm.

At the same instant the woman, having seemingly satisfied her curiosity, opened the door and entered the saloon.

"Now, then," muttered the detective, "this has gone as far as it must. Unless I greatly mistake, there's business inside there for me."

He moved rapidly forward as he spoke toward the door of P. Slattery's Shades.

At the same moment the two boys came to a halt beneath a street lamp before the saloon, toward which the younger of the pair pointed with his raised right hand, addressing his companion in hurried words, spoken in too low a tone for the detective to hear.

As he did so, in the light of the lamp above their heads Detective Hook, glancing carelessly at them, obtained a good view of the features of both.

With a smothered exclamation of surprise he came to a sudden halt—stood staring for an instant only at the features of the elder boy.

It was Frank Mansfield who stood before him—the youthful clerk of the Webster Bank, who had so strangely vanished from beside the Trinity church-yard wall.

Fatal pause!

In that instant of hesitation the eyes of the boy met his own.

Seizing his companion by the arm, he turned and sped along the icy walk like a deer.

"Stop there!" cried Hook, springing forward with a bound. "Halt! you young rascal!" and he reached forth his hand to catch the flying boy by the tails of his coat, now almost within his grasp.

But a sudden obstacle intervened.

At this identical moment a roughly dressed individual emerged hastily from the Donegal Shades, carrying upon his arm a large open basket loaded with fish, thrusting himself inadvertently directly in the detective's path.

It all happened in an instant, and indeed, it is difficult to explain how it happened at all.

But the foot of the detective slipping beneath him, he came in sudden and violent contact with the basket of fish, throwing the owner backward in the snow, falling himself at full length by his side, while Frank Mansfield and his newsboy companion sped up the street with the speed of the wind.

In an instant they had turned the corner of Cherry street and were lost to view.

The owner of the basket leaped to his feet, and sprang away up the street with a bound.

He paid not the slightest heed to the fish scattered around him—stopped for nothing at all.

"Confound the luck," muttered Detective Hook, scrambling up as best he could. "If I ain't a clumsy ass, there never was one! Where's the——"

He paused suddenly, and stood staring down at the wreck of the fish-basket beneath his feet.

There, mingled with the fish upon the surface of the snow, lay a heap of bright silver dollars—not one, but ten, twenty—a hundred or more, with three or four bags beside the pile, evidently filled with the same sort of coin.

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## CHAPTER VII.

A STILL GREATER CRIME UNEARTHED.

Detective Hook stared at the strange sight before him in dumb amazement.

There could be no question concerning the genuineness of the coins displayed before him among the masses of frozen fish scattered over the snow-covered walk.

They were silver dollars, and brand new ones at that, as fresh as on the day which they left the coiner's hands.

Meanwhile, the man who had borne this most singular variety of fish had disappeared around the corner of Cherry street with all possible speed, as had the two boys but a moment before, never pausing even to look behind him, to all appearance utterly heedless of the loss of his coin.

"Well, upon my word, this is a night of adventures for a positive fact," muttered Hook, stooping down and examining this singular find. "There's something crooked here, or I'm no judge; and as I could not catch those boys if I tried, I had best——"

"Hello! What's this?" he added, half aloud, examining each of the unbroken bags of dollars in turn. "Webster National Bank, as I'm a sinner, stamped on the bottom of each of these bags. Here's some of the plunder now—there can be no mistake about that."

It was even as he said.

Upon each bag, in plain black letters, the name of the Webster Bank was plainly stamped.

Without a word he seized the basket and emptied out the remainder of the fish on the snow.

Two other bags of smaller size appeared, one evidently containing gold.

Meanwhile several persons, early purchasers in the Catherine Market, had stopped to gaze upon the strange sight of a well-dressed man picking dollars out of the snow, for the detective was now tossing into the basket the contents of the broken bag, placing the others upon the top of the shining heap thus formed.

"Here, officer," he exclaimed, beckoning to a policeman who now suddenly appeared, bustling out of the side door of the market opposite with an air of authority, which suddenly changed into one of meekness as he recognized in the man before him one of the most noted detectives on the New York force.

"I want you to take charge of these. Take them to the Oak street station. They are part of the haul made in a down-town bank last night."

The words were spoken in a tone calculated to reach the officer's ears alone, while the little crowd which had now gathered around stood staring wonderingly on.

"Very good, Mr. Hook," replied the policeman, nervously. "I just went inside the market for a moment to——"

"Never mind that," returned the detective, quickly. "I have no interest in your private affairs, and you need have no fear of me. Now, tell me quick, what sort of a place is that saloon before us—the Donegal Shades? Who is this Slattery? What sort of shop does he keep?"

Evidently a most law-abiding establishment, so far as all outward appearance was concerned, for the interior of the saloon, a moment ago ablaze with light behind the curtains, was now totally dark, showing no signs of life within at all.

"Bad lot in there," replied the officer, briefly.

"Do you know them?"

"Some of them."

"Anything going on outside of regular business?"

"I think so, but I never could get a charge agin 'em. There's a mighty crooked lot goes in there, Mr. Hook; river thieves and confidence men, to say nothing of a whole lot of dirty loafers always hanging round inside."

"Just so," answered the detective, coolly. "Now go on with your basket. Tell the captain I'll be around in a little while."

He had kept his gaze fixed upon the darkened windows of the worthy Mr. Slattery's establishment during this brief conversation, and though he felt that he might be mistaken, it certainly seemed to him that he saw an eye appear at the open space at the edge of the curtain, and as suddenly disappear within.

He stepped to the door and tried the knob.

The door was locked, as he had supposed.

He raised his fist and struck blow after blow upon it, with an evident intention of making himself heard.

To attempt to conceal his identity he knew perfectly well would be a simple impossibility.

He had been observed by entirely too many persons for that.

Presently the door was noisily unlocked from within, and a head covered with a fiery red shock of tousled hair thrust outside.

"Well, an' what d'ye want?"

"To come in," replied the detective, sternly, throwing the weight of his body against the door. "I



have a few questions for you, my man, and don't propose to ask them here on the street."

"An' who are yez, entering the house of an honest man on the Sabbath morn? This place is closed, I'd have ye know."

"Nonsense!" cried Hook, pushing his way boldly in. "I'm a detective officer, and have no time to waste in idle words. Your place was running full blast a moment ago, and but for what has just occurred would be running now. Shut that door."

The man obeyed.

Caleb Hook stood alone in the darkened saloon with its ruffianly-looking proprietor by his side.

Few men would have cared to place themselves in such a position, but his was a nature which knew not the meaning of the word fear.

Coolly striking a match upon the bar, he touched the gas burner above his head, and in the light which followed glanced around him.

He stood within a low groggery of the ordinary type found in this part of the city—there was nothing singular in its appearance at all.

He and the red-headed individual occupied the place alone.

"What's your name, my man?" he asked, at the same time carelessly showing his shield.

"Slattery," was the gruff reply, "and I'll bet it's good for more money nor yours."

"Very likely, but it may be good for less if you should happen to lose your license. Who was that old man with the basket of fish that just went out of here?"

"No one went out of here. The place is closed. I'm just after getting up out of me bed."

"You lie, Slattery, and you know it!" exclaimed the detective, sternly. "Now, answer my questions, and I promise that you shall not be interfered with in any way; refuse, and I shall make it warm for you, now you may depend."

"Well, then, I don't know him from a crow. He just stopped in here for a sup of beer."

"You saw what happened to him outside?"

"Suppose I did?"

"How long before was it that he entered your place?"

"Tin minutes, mebbe—mebbe not more nor five."

"And you don't know him?"

"I do not. I tould ye that before."

"And how about the old woman in the worsted hood that entered this place a moment before this man came out? Who was she, and where is she now?"

"That? Oh, that was Mrs. Marley," replied the saloon-keeper, with the air of a man relieved to be questioned on a point upon which he could answer freely at last.

"And who is Mrs. Marley?"

"The woman what lives on the top flure of the house in the rear; she passed through by way of the store, as she often does."

"What sort of a person is she?"

"Faix, an' ye'd better ax hersilf; I've as much as I can do to attind to me own concerns. She lives all alone by hersilf, pays her rint promptly, and goes an' comes whin she likes. The neighbors say she's mad, and mebbe she is—it's no business at all of mine."

"Show me her room," said Caleb Hook, abruptly. "I'll question her for myself."

"Well, then, go through the back dure, cross the yard, and you see a house in the rear—"

"I shall do nothing of the sort. You will go ahead and show me the way to this woman's room. Come, be lively, I've no time to waste."

The saloon-keeper hesitated for an instant, and then moved towards the room beyond.

That the detective was a man not to be trifled with he now fully realized.

"Come, then," he said, gruffly. "I want to be through with this business as soon as I can, for I've something else to do beside wasting me time like this."

He opened a rear door and led the way across a narrow courtyard.

A small frame dwelling stood before them. Connecting with the street was a narrow alley, now choked up with snow.

In the hurried survey of the scene taken by the detective, he observed that the snow was much trodden down by feet, as though several persons had passed in and out, notwithstanding the earliness of the hour.

"This way," said P. Slattery, opening the door of the rear house and advancing up a pair of rickety stairs.

The detective followed in silence.

Arriving at the top of the flight, the proprietor of the Donegal Shades knocked at the door opening immediately from the head of the stairs.

There was no answer from within.

An ominous stillness seemed to pervade the place, which was totally dark, save for the dim starlight which found its way through a broken window at the end of the hall.

"This is blamed strange!" muttered the man, rapping smartly again. "She can't be asleep, for it's only just now she went in."

But if the strange woman whom Caleb Hook had shadowed was within and awake, she did not reply.

Except the muttered words of the man beside him, not a sound fell upon the detective's ear.

A strange feeling of creeping horror seemed to come over him—a wholly unaccountable feeling, something which he had never experienced before.

Without being able to explain why, even to himself, he was seized with a sudden desire to penetrate behind that plain deal door, upon which his companion was still exercising his knuckles wholly without avail.

Pushing the saloon-keeper to one side, he rapped smartly himself, at the same time grasping the knob in his hand.

It yielded to his grasp—yielded so suddenly and unexpectedly that both the detective and P. Slattery were precipitated forward into the room.

With a cry of horror bursting from his lips the saloon-keeper sprang back toward the door.

"Holy Mother! what mutherin' work is this?" he ejaculated, every several hair upon his fiery pate seeming to rise with terror as he stared at the sight which met the gaze of both Detective Hook and himself.

For there, stretched upon the uncarpeted boards before them, amid surroundings the most poverty stricken, lay a fearful, sickening sight, rendered more plainly visible by the light of a guttering candle standing upon a plain wooden table, which, with a bed and a chair or two, formed the sole furniture of the room.

Nor was the detective scarcely less affected, for the sight which he now beheld was one calculated to move the strongest man.

The strange woman whose steps he had followed through the streets lay before him in the dim light of that cheerless room—dead upon the floor.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE SECRET OF THE IRON DOOR.

The feeling uppermost in the mind of Frank Mansfield, as handcuffed and helpless, caught under the most suspicious circumstances on the very spot where a great crime had been committed, he accompanied Officer Schneider on the short journey to New Church street station, was one of hopeless despair.

What was the true meaning of these strange happenings?

What has become of Cutts, of his unhappy mother, and of the two boys who had detained her beneath the church-yard wall as he himself entered the bank?

He did not know.

He could not form even the faintest idea.

Until now the thought that Cutts had been other than sincere in his request to examine the signature book of the bank had never entered his mind, but as he began to think serious doubts found place therein.

Was not this very like a conspiracy? Did not the whole affair bear the appearance of what is commonly termed a put-up job?

Most decidedly it was so, and yet, so far as he was aware, the boy, in spite of his misfortunes, did not possess an enemy in the world.

Who, then, would be likely to go out of their way to plot against an individual so insignificant as himself?

It was at the precise moment in which Frank, propounding that question to his troubled mind, heard above the heads of the officer and himself that strange, bat-like cry.

Again the cry was repeated, his conductor advancing before him to ascertain its cause, as has already been described.

Now, such a thought as trying to escape had never once entered into Frank Mansfield's head.

Handcuffed as he stood, to attempt to run with any hope of distancing his pursuer would have been simple folly at best.

Moreover, such an action upon his part he knew perfectly well would only add to the appearance of guilt, quite strong enough against him as matters already stood.

The German policeman had advanced before him, and was peering up among the vines clustered about the top of the Trinity church-yard wall, when Frank, also looking about, perceived close by his side one of the great iron doors, of which there are several at this point set in the wall, opening to the tombs built beneath the bank which rose behind.

Now Frank had often noticed these doors, and as often had carelessly wondered what sort of looking places they might conceal.

Just now he gave the one before which he stood no thought at all, his mind being occupied by his unfortunate situation, and his immediate attention attracted by the bat-like cry from above.

His surprise was, therefore, intense when he suddenly perceived the iron door softly open to an extent sufficient to admit the body of a man.

In the aperture stood a boyish form, rendered plainly visible by the light of a street lamp which stood directly opposite the door itself.

Nor was his surprise less in recognizing in the face before him that of a bootblack who had every afternoon for more than a year past polished his shoes at the close of business hours at the bank.

With a quick movement the boy extended his hand and silently beckoned to him to come in.

The policeman was still skirmishing along the foot of the wall with his head in the air, for that the whole thing occupied but the space of an instant must be distinctly understood, and yielding to an uncontrollable impulse, without the slightest thought of what the result of such action might be, Frank stepped within the iron door by the bootblack's side.

In an instant the door was noiselessly closed behind him, rendering the darkness entire.

The boy, without a word, took Frank by the arm and led him forward, up several steps, and opening a second door of iron like the first, ushered him into a low-vaulted apartment not higher than his head.

"There you are, Mr. Mansfield," said the boy, respectfully. "I tought I could do it, an' I have. I'd like to see the cop as could catch onto yer now!"

"Why, you're Barney, the bootblack, ain't you?" demanded Frank, glancing about him in curious surprise.

Within the vault—for it was nothing more, nor larger than a small-sized bedroom—was a table with dishes upon it, a lamp burning in their midst, a chair or two standing about, and piles of old carpets and faded blankets rolled out upon the stone floor.

Nothing else was to be seen about this strange dwelling-place save a short ladder leading up toward the vaulted brick arch above their heads, down which at this moment two ragged boys came scrambling with all possible speed.

At the same instant Frank heard just such a sound as that which a heavy stone dropped upon frozen ground might make.

The two boys sprang from the ladder to the floor of the vault, laughing aloud.

"We fixed him, Barney!" cried one, giving utterance at the same time to the strange, bat-like cry which had so puzzled the worthy Schneider. "He's running up and down the wall, swearing every Dutch swear he knows. An' dis is your friend, is it? I suppose de fellers will kill us for what we've done, but it's too late to help it now."

"Bully for you, Sandy! Garibaldi, you're a trump! Dere's nothing mean about this gent wot I've been a-shinin' of fer more nor a year, you bet. They've jest been a-playin' it onto him, an' I knew it. In course I couldn't stand by quiet like and see him took'n in."

"Barney, what does all this mean?" cried Frank, regarding the boys and their strange surroundings with looks of unfeigned surprise.

"It means that those two fellows, Ed Wilson and Jim Morrow, have gone back on you, Mr. Mansfield, and put up the job with Cutts, the detective to get you into a hole. You are wid the bats now and dey'll see yer all right, and don't make no mistake."

"Put up a job on me! What do you mean?"

"Look at dem bracelets wot you have on yer hands and then ax me. Cutts paid Jim and Ed to rope you in, an' I s'pose somebody's a-payin' of him. We fellers seen the bank robbers go out, an' one of de bats is a-follerin' of 'em now to spot where dey live. If you don't believe me, look a-here—here's a hull lot of things wot dey dropped!"

The boy stooped, and from beneath the pile of old carpet and blankets in one corner of the vault drew out a small tin box filled with a number of documents, which he emptied upon the table among a mass of broken dishes, bread and scraps of meat, with which the table was already covered.

"There dey am," said Barney, triumphantly. "You've been kind to me, Mister Mansfield, and I'm not the feller to go back on you. The boss of de gang dropped 'em, an' me an' Sandy picked 'em up. An' we didn't say nuthin' to them two sick bats, Jim Morrow an' Ed Wilson, about our find, an' now I'm mighty glad of it, too."

The box was marked "Webster National Bank" in black letters painted upon its side.

Instantly Frank recognized it as a box filled with various private documents, intrusted for safe-keeping to the bank, which he had often seen quietly reposing within the rifled vault.

And his heart bounded for joy as he gazed upon it.

If these boys, whoever and whatever they might be, had witnessed the robbery, then with the aid of their testimony, and this box to corroborate it, he would have no trouble in proving his own innocence before the world.

"Speak, Barney!" he exclaimed, eagerly. "What place is this—what do you know of the robbery of the bank? Tell me all about it, and tell me slowly, so that I may be able to understand."

"Well, den, Mister Mansfield, it's jest like dis," replied the bootblack, with the air of one who had suddenly attained greatness, and was fully aware of it, his companions gazing admiringly at him as he spoke.

"Fust we fellers are wot dey call de 'bats in de wall,' or, in plain United States, a lot of chaps wot find it more convenient to live in dis here snug little hole than to sleep on the trucks when the winter-time comes on. Ter-night, as Sandy an' me an' another feller was a-comin' in from the thayter, we happened to see three fellers a-comin' out of the side door of the bank."

"The Webster Bank?" cried Frank, trembling with excitement.

"Of course. Wot other do you s'pose? We was a-comin' down Rector street just as these three fellers come a-sneakin' out.

"We skinned over the church-yard fence, an' give 'em the bat-call, wot we gives to de fellers of our gang to let dem know we're around.

"Giminnetti! you'd orter see 'em cut round the corner, an' the foremost of them dropped this here box in the snow."

"I see it all!" cried Frank, bitterly. "Cutts knew of this intended robbery, and planned to have suspicion thrown upon me. Fool that I was to listen to his lying words!"

"Betcher life," replied Barney, sententiously. "Hold up fer a minute, an' I'll tell you all about that, too."

But Frank Mansfield failed to reply.

Moving toward the pile of documents, he had, as well as his manacled hands would allow him, opened the one nearest the edge of the table, and was now examining it by the uncertain light of the lamp.

What was this?

Surely there must be some mistake!

But no—here it was all down in black and white.

"And I do give and bequeath to the said Frank Mansfield, when he shall have reached the age of twenty-two, all of the property herein described, the exact location of which will be found fully set down in the sealed parchment which accompanies this will.

"Witness my hand and seal,

"JEREMIAH MANSFIELD.

"Witnesses:

"ELIJAH CALLISTER. }  
"HENRY SMITH. } New York, 1879."

It was the will of the boy's paternal grandfather, dated five years back, and on the very day preceding the old gentleman's death, as he had good cause to remember, and drawn in favor of himself.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### IN WHICH FRANK MANSFIELD MAKES AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY.

Had it occurred to Officer Schneider to remain quietly in the precise spot at which his prisoner had disappeared until the Trinity Church clock struck the hour of four, his patience would have been rewarded by seeing the iron door in the grave-yard wall cautiously open, and the head and shoulders of a boy thrust out into the silent street.

But as neither that exceedingly astute member of the New York police force—the finest in America, we believe it has been said—nor any one else was about at the time, the head and shoulders were followed by a well-developed pair of arms and legs, and a boy stepped out upon the snow.

Instantly this boy was followed by another, after which the iron door was softly closed from within.

Turning their faces toward the north, both boys started upon the dead run up New Church street, and whipping around the corner of Cedar street like a flash, suddenly slackened their steps, and

began slowly to ascend the hill in the direction of Broadway.

In the stillness of the Sabbath morning not a sound is to be heard.

The great city sleeps, its ceaseless roar is hushed.

Even as the virtue of charity covereth a multitude of sins, so has covered the pure snow everything in and about these silent streets with an unbroken mantle of white.

Let us glance at these two solitary travelers as they move along, and seek to learn who and what they may be.

As to the larger of the pair there can be no doubt.

Frank Mansfield disguised or Frank Mansfield in his usual dress must to the reader, who has free admission to all our secrets, be Frank Mansfield still.

And we find him now clad in a rough, well-worn suit of clothes, with a blue woolen shirt and a low, slouch, felt hat, not unlike the garments which a few hours since we saw adorning the person of Barney, the bootblack, one of the "bats" in the vault of the church-yard wall.

But his hands are free—there is no doubt of that, for he has one inserted in each side-pocket of his short monkey-coat as he hurries along by the side of his companion through the snow.

And for this relief, one may as well say right here, Frank had to thank a sharp file, procured by one of his new-found friends and Master Barney's strength of arm.

As to the second boy, he is likewise a "bat from the wall."

The special "bat," in fact, mentioned by Barney in his graphic description of the robbery of the Webster Bank as having taken upon himself to track the burglars to their home.

He was a well-built fellow of some eighteen or nineteen years, rough and uncouth in his dress and speech, but immeasurably superior, as could be seen at a glance, to either of his companions encountered by Frank in the vault.

He rejoiced among his fellow "bats" in the short and easily-remembered appellation of "Jerry Buck."

"Are you sure you'd know the place again, Jerry?" asked Frank, as they walked along.

It was for the purpose of pointing out the house into which the three bank-robbers had disappeared that the two boys had now sallied forth.

"Positive," replied the boy, quickly. "It was down in Cherry street, just behind the Catherine Market. I never let up on 'em till I seed 'em go in."

"There were three of them, you say?"

"Yes—one big feller with a carpet-bag, his head all tied up in a comforter, and two others, one with a big bag over his shoulder, an' the other with nothin' at all."

As Frank said nothing further, and his companion evinced an equal disinclination to talk, the boys, having now turned into Broadway, moved along in silence until they reached the newspaper offices which line the right-hand side of Park Row and Printing House Square.

At each one of these they made a halt, Jerry Buck entering at the basement doors, and elbowing his way among a crowd of men and boys, emerged with an ever increasing bundle of morning papers under his arm.

For Jerry was a newsboy as well as a "bat in the wall," and had his living to get on Sunday as upon the other days of the week.

"Now, we won't stop no more," he said briefly, as his complement of papers was completed at last. "Let's hurry up, for as soon as it's light I've got to get to work."

He turned into Frankfort street as he spoke, and leading the way past the great arches of the Brooklyn Bridge, entered Cherry street at its junction with Franklin square.

Continuing along that thoroughfare, clean to the eye at least for once, the boys passed the end of the Catherine Market, and at a sign from Jerry came to a halt before a dirty brick tenement.

"That's the place," he said. "I saw them all three go in that door."

"You are sure?"

"Certain. I can't make no mistake about it, for I used to live in that house once myself."

"And I suppose they are there now, the miserable scoundrels," exclaimed Frank, looking up at the house. "Jerry, I think the best thing I can do is to go directly and inform the police."

"Maybe it is. You've got education and ought to know better than I, but there's another road out of this place by way of the alley in the rear. Perhaps I'd better show you that first."

He led the way around the corner into Catherine street, and paused before an old tumble-down rookery bearing the sign "The Donegal Shades, by P. Slattery," above the door.

Here in the neighborhood of the busy market there were signs of abundant life.

Men, women and boys were moving up and down the sidewalk, to and fro, bent on their various affairs.

"That's the place," said Jerry, pointing toward an alley leading to the rear of the saloon.

As Frank raised his eyes in response to the sign a man sprang toward them with a loud shout.

It was the detective who had arrested him at the bank that night.

By the light of a neighboring street-lamp Frank recognized him at a glance.

With an exclamation he sprang away just as the man's hand was stretched out to grasp his coat, and, followed by Jerry Buck, who did not comprehend the situation at all, dashed up the street with the speed of the wind, without pausing to look behind.

But Jerry was possessed of no such fears as at that moment filled our hero's breast.

As they turned the corner of Cherry street he shot a hurried glance behind him and beheld the singular accident already described, which served to bring the detective to a sudden halt.

"Hist! hist!" he whispered, seizing Frank by the arm. "He's down, and there comes one of the bank burglars now!"

Even as he spoke the man who had dropped the basket of fish dashed round the corner and past them up Cherry street at the top of his speed.

"That's the one wot carried the bag!" whispered the boy, excitedly. "Who's the feller that made you cut an' run?"

"The detective what arrested me—I don't know his name."

"The deuce? Well, you don't want him to see you, and there's no danger of it. I can give him the slip twenty times in this neighborhood—never you fear. If yer a-goin' to give yerself up you' better do it. Don't let that fellow take you in, or they won't believe a word you say."

But the detective on whom their eyes were fixed from around the corner of the building by the side of which they stood, showed no disposition to follow.

On the contrary.

He remained stooping over the basket dropped by the flying man in the snow.

As the boys watched him there emerged from the alley at the side of the Donegal Shades two men, who, moving unobserved through the crowd which had now gathered about the building, hurried up Catherine street, passed within two feet of the spot where the boys now were.

"I know the big fellow," whispered Jerry Buck, seizing Frank by the arm. "That's another of them—that's the fellow who carried the carpet-bag away from the bank."

But Frank Mansfield made no response.

He stood staring at the vanishing forms like one in a trance.

If the larger of the two men was one of the robbers of the Webster Bank, what was his companion doing in such company as his?

For the man who walked by the burglar's side was the old-time friend of the boy himself—was the father of the girl he loved—that most respectable stock operator and member of the Tenth Baptist Church, Elijah Callister, and no one else!

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## CHAPTER X.

### IN THE CHAMBER OF DEATH.

Caleb Hook stared at the fearful sight which in that darkened chamber met his gaze with feelings of mingled horror and surprise.

Could this, indeed, be the strange creature whose footsteps he had followed—who but a few short moments before he had seen in life.

It was hard to realize it, but there could be no doubt that such was the fact.

There lay the same attenuated form, the same pale and worn features, the thin gray hair, now falling in a tangled mass to the floor, behind the head.

And the restless eyes had ceased their wandering at last, stilled by the cold hand of death.

Upon the woman's forehead a fearful bruise was plainly to be seen as the detective stooped, and, by the light of the candle which he had seized from the table, examined the inanimate form.

It was such a mark as a man's fist might make upon the right temple above the eye.

There was nothing save this fearful bruise, which in itself would have been enough to have felled the strongest man, far less a frail woman like this.

Caleb Hook set the candle upon the floor, and taking the woman's hand in his own, silently felt her pulse.

It had ceased to beat—the hand was already cold.

"Is she dead?" demanded the saloon-keeper, in a frightened whisper.

"She certainly is," replied the detective. "Can you look at her and ask? That blow must have been the work of a powerful man—coward, I should rather say, whoever he was, to use a woman so."

"God save us! an' yer right," exclaimed Slattery, with a shudder. "An' she was a dacent body, if she war mad. Bad luck to the murtherin' spalpane who raised his hand agin her. I would I had me own two hands about his throat!"

As the warm-hearted Irishman uttered these words, with some evidence of deep feeling, the sound of footsteps was heard on the stairs without, and a stout woman, bare-headed and so lightly dressed as to leave a strong suspicion in the minds of the two men who beheld her that she had just left her bed, now bustled into the room.

"An' what's all the row up here?" she demanded. "There's noise enough to wake the dead."

"But not enough to wake yon poor crayter, Mrs. O'Brien!" exclaimed Slattery, grimly, pointing at the same time toward the body of the woman on the floor. "D'ye know what's been goin' on up here? Poor Mrs. Marley's after bein' murdered."

"Holy Vargin! an' is it murther that's been done?" cried the woman, who, having caught sight of the body, now sprang toward the door, extending her hands before her, as if to ward off the sight.

"Help! Murder! Perlice! Och, an' it's bad luck that's overtook me respectible house!"

Before the hand of the detective could be raised to stay her, the frightened creature had rushed down the stairs, through the alley and out into the street, causing the air to ring with her cries of murder and her shouts for the police.

"It's the woman down stairs," said Slattery aghast. "Sure, an' it's the whole worruld we'll have in to join us now."

Caleb Hook made no reply.

He cared little, in fact, who entered this chamber of death and who stayed away.

He could not be everywhere, and had no desire to take charge of the case.

The woman was dead, and her knowledge concerning the robbery of the Webster Bank must remain forever untold.

Nevertheless, he realized fully that between the robbery and this murder there was unquestionably a connecting link.

In all human probability the secrets possessed by this unfortunate creature had cost her life.

He kneeled beside the body and made a hurried examination of her clothes, Slattery talking volubly as he did so, and, professing his entire innocence of any knowledge of the affair.

But the search was fruitless.

Save for a few cheap personal belongings, there was nothing found upon the woman of any interest at all.

He had scarce completed his work, before the sound of many footsteps was heard upon the stairs, and a motley crowd pressed their way into the room.

Men from the market, men from the street.

Butchers, fishmongers, and housewives with their baskets, on their way to purchase their morning supplies.

Close behind them came a policeman, who elbowed his way through the crowd.

Into the hands of this man the detective resigned the case, informing him of his own identity and of the facts connected with the discovery of the body.

"I'll go around to the Oak street station at once, officer," he added in a whisper, "and send you help. Meanwhile, keep an eye on that man Slattery, if you want my advice. Better keep him in here with you—I'll send these people away."

"Get back there!" he said, sternly, facing the crowd now pressing about the door. "Get back, every one of you! The law will attend to this matter without your help!"

He pushed back a brawny butcher as he spoke, who, with his check frock hanging to his heels, had pushed his way beyond the rest within the little room.

At the same instant a slight stir was observed among those beyond, and a young man with pallid features and whitened lips tightly set pushed his way into the room.

He was followed by a second youth but little younger than himself, who held a bundle of newspapers beneath his arm.

Detective Hook started back with an exclamation of surprise.

Before him stood the very pair who had eluded his grasp in the street but a few moments before.

It was Frank Mansfield and his newsboy companion, Jerry Buck.

Attracted by the outcry in the street and impelled by a desire for which he was wholly unable to account, Frank had followed the crowd through the alley and up the rickety stairs, wholly regardless of results.

Springing forward, he now sank beside the body of the unfortunate woman with a low, horror-stricken cry.

Instantly the detective's hand was upon his shoulder and had gently, but firmly, raised him to his feet.

The boy stared at him wildly.

"Let me go," he said hoarsely, pulling himself away. "Send away these people! leave me alone with my dead!"

"Your dead, young man? Is that woman anything to you?"

"She is my mother!" cried Frank, kneeling by the side of the body, and taking the cold, white hand within his own.

"She is my mother, and I, who basely left her to the hands of others, am responsible for this—I, her most unworthy son!"

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## CHAPTER XI.

### AN UNEXPECTED ALLY.

For a moment no one spoke.

The kneeling boy wept by the side of the woman's body upon the floor, the crowd falling back to make way for him of their own accord.

"Come, my boy," said Detective Hook, at length, laying his hand with womanly tenderness upon Frank's shoulder, "this is no place for you. The coroner has a duty here; meanwhile you had better come with me."

The boy arose obediently.

Forcing back the crowd, the detective closed the door of the little room behind him, and taking Frank by the arm, he led him to the street without speaking a word.

To Jerry Buck, who had followed them through the alley and now stood with his bundle of newspapers under his arm staring at them wonderingly, he paid no attention at all.

At this moment the policeman who, at the detective's orders, had taken the stolen dollars to the Oak Street station, came hurrying up.

Releasing his hold on Frank's arm, Caleb Hook drew the man aside and whispered a few hurried words in his ear.

The policeman turned abruptly and hurried back in the direction from which he had come.

"That man will see that all proper steps are taken for the care of the remains of your unfortunate mother," said the detective, quietly, "which leaves me free to attend to you."

"Now, my boy, I want to talk with you. I know you to be the same person who has twice given me the slip to-night, and by right ought to handcuff you and take you to the station at once. But, although it may surprise you, I don't propose to do anything of the sort, for I think it unnecessary to resort to such means."

"I'll go with you now, sir," replied Frank, in a broken voice. "I was just going to give myself up. I shall not try to escape again."

"Good!" replied the man, putting his arm through that of the boy and moving up Catherine street as he spoke. "I flatter myself I can read men's faces as well as the next, and that is why I have determined to place confidence in you. I may deem it my duty to arrest you yet. Very likely I shall; but before I do so I am going to have a quiet talk with you, when I'm certain you'll see the advantage of telling me the whole truth about this bank affair, and in order that we may be undisturbed I propose to take you to my own room, which, fortunately, is not far off."

Now the room occupied by Caleb Hook—for he was a bachelor, and had no one to care for but himself—was situated in a respectable lodging-house in Madison street, between Montgomery and Clinton.

Ten minutes later the detective himself entered the apartment, followed by the youthful assistant cashier of the Webster National Bank.

It was a large room on the second floor of the house.

The furniture was modern and abundant, giving to the interior a thoroughly comfortable air.

Locking the door behind him and lighting a handsome drop-light, Detective Hook touched a match to a fire already laid in the open grate, which in a moment broke into a cheerful blaze.

"Now then, young man," he said, pulling off his overcoat, and drawing up a comfortable easy chair, "you are my guest for the present, whether I conclude to turn you over to the authorities later on or not. Sit down there, and make yourself at home."

Frank seated himself wearily and remained gazing at the fire without reply.

Meanwhile, Caleb Hook studied his face in silence.

"Was that woman really your mother?" he said at length.

"Yes."

The boy had burst into tears, burying his face in his hands.



"Poor fellow!" said the detective, sympathizingly, putting his hand gently upon his shoulder, "I had a mother once, whom I loved better than any one in the world. Dear me! she died a dozen years ago.

"You've had a great deal of trouble," he added, after a short pause. "I can see that at a glance. Now, do you know, Frank, that two-thirds of the scrapes people get themselves into come from lying? Suppose your mother were to speak to you now? Don't you think she would advise you to tell me all you know about this bank affair? Come, now, I'm sure she would."

"She would as she once was," replied Frank, bitterly; "but my mother has been insane for the last five years, and in an asylum. God only knows how she came to escape to meet her death to-night."

"Tell me all about it, my boy, tell me all about it," said Hook, familiarly, and in the most sympathizing tones. "If there is any way in the world to help you, count on me every time."

It was the favorite motto of this famous man that to understand the motive of a criminal it was only necessary to lead him to believe that your sympathy lay wholly with himself.

Personally, he fully believed the boy before him to have had a hand in the bank robbery.

Nor was this strange.

Had he not caught him almost in the act?

If he could, by working upon his feelings in these, the first moments of his bitter sorrow, bring him to confess, much trouble to himself and much expense to the police in working out a troublesome case might thus be saved.

It was with this end in view that he had adopted this unusual course.

Nor were his efforts unrewarded.

Frank opened his heart without further pressure, and related truthfully all that had occurred.

One thing only he concealed—the secret of the "Bats in the Wall."

The boys had befriended him in his moment of need.

He was firmly resolved that no amount of pressure should draw from him the secret of their hiding-place, which through their kindness to himself he had learned.

"Upon my word, this is a most remarkable story," exclaimed the detective, gazing at Frank with a puzzled air as he completed his tale. "But you have omitted to tell me how it is that having handcuffed you myself, and delivered you into the charge of an officer, you managed to escape as you did."

"I can't tell you that, sir," replied the boy, firmly. "It would not help you any so far as tracing the bank-robbers are concerned to know."

"You say you met some boys who saw the burglars, who showed you a box of papers, which they had dropped in their flight, from which you took this will of which you have given me so strange an account. Did these boys have anything to do with your escape?"

"Perhaps they did and perhaps they didn't—they proved my friends, and I shan't give them away."

"That's right, never go back on your friends. Now, then, Frank Mansfield, do you know who I am?"

"I know you are a detective."

"So I am. My name is Caleb Hook."

"I've often heard of you," said Frank, regarding him with some curiosity.

And who has not!

The name of Caleb Hook has for years been the most famous of the New York force.

"No doubt," replied that individual, quietly. "But to return to our subject in which I am becoming more interested every moment. I see deeper into things than you can expect to, my boy, and let me tell you in what you have related I see evidences of a deep and carefully laid scheme, of which this bank robbery forms only a part. Let me see that will you found in the box."

Frank took the document from his pocket and placed it in his hands.

"I've had no time to read it through," he said.

The detective opened the paper, the seals of which had already been broken when Frank first found it, and perused it in silence.

"My boy," said he, as he came to the end, "let me tell you that this document is likely to prove of the greatest value to you. In it the testator—your grandfather, you say he is—relates that he has converted all his property, valued at over half a million, into gold and gems and has buried it in a place described in a sealed parchment which ought to accompany this will. All of this is to be yours at the age of twenty-two, under certain conditions; until then the document is to be secret, and its contents remain unknown. Now, where is that sealed parchment? That's the question before the house!"

"I'm sure I can't tell," replied Frank, in astonishment. "It may be with the other papers in the box. Half a million! and all for me! And we all thought my grandfather died poor!"

"It is very evident he did nothing of the sort. Jeremiah Mansfield—Jeremiah Mansfield—let me see—wasn't that the miserly old fellow who was murdered in Harlem some five years ago?"

"Yes: his house was entered by burglars in the night. They killed him, and no property except the old house was ever found, although until then my father thought him to be rich."

"And it seems he was right," replied Hook, musingly. "Then your father was Francis Mansfield, the foreign importer, who was said—who——"

"They said he stole one hundred thousand dollars of the funds of a European house intrusted to his keeping!" cried Frank, with deeply flushed face, "but it was false. The money arrived too late for deposit, father put it over night in his safe. Burglars entered the store that night, blew up the safe and stole every cent. It killed my father to be thought a defaulter, drove my mother mad, and ruined us all."

"Just so," answered the detective; "I remember it all perfectly well. It was a sad case, indeed."

For a few moments he remained silently musing, still holding the open paper in his hand.

"Who is this man Callister?" he asked, at length. "Is it the Wall street speculator of that name?"

"Yes. He was my father's best friend."

"And it was he whom you saw coming out of that alley with the other man that Jerry Buck, the newsboy, told you was one of the burglars?"

"Yes, I'm sure of it. I know him too well to make a mistake."

"And I know him, too," muttered Hook, "and I propose to know him better by and by. You observe that he is one of the witnesses to your grandfather's will!" he added, aloud.

"Yes."

"Now, Frank, let me tell you something you don't know, but might have known if you had taken the trouble to read this document carefully. Listen to this clause in your grandfather's will, which has a most important bearing on this case:

"And if, at the age of twenty-two, my grandson, the said Frank Mansfield, shall be found to be honest and upright, and in every way a reputable member of society, the sealed parchment, together with the buried treasure which it represents, which I deem unsafe, in these days of fraud, to intrust to the keeping of any bank, shall be delivered to him, and shall become his sole property by virtue of this my last will. If, however, the said Frank Mansfield shall have become deceased, or if he shall have been at any time proven guilty of any unlawful act, then this, my last will and testament, together with the accompanying parchment and the buried treasure it represents, shall be given to my good friend, Elijah Callister, of the City of New York, to become his sole property, under the provisions of this will."

"And knowing this, Mr. Callister tried to have me convicted of crime!" cried Frank, springing to his feet in great excitement. "Can it be possible that the man is so base?"

"Young man, it looks tremendously like it," said Caleb Hook, decidedly, folding up the will and putting it in his own pocket.

"You tell me that Cutts led you into this affair—and I want you to understand for what you proposed to do you are most decidedly to blame—that he agreed to pay these boys, Ed Wilson and Jim Morrow, who, according to the story told by them to that boy Barney, have undoubtedly left already in the early morning train for California, where, had the plot succeeded, they could never have been reached to prove your innocence, even had they been so disposed.

"Now, if Cutts paid them—and Cutts is crooked, if he is a detective; I've known that this long while—the question is who was to pay Cutts? My answer would be this man Callister, whose direct interest it is to have you convicted of crime."

"Mr. Hook," exclaimed the boy, lost in astonishment, "I am completely bewildered. What would you advise me to do?"

"To place yourself in my hands, if you will," answered the detective, decidedly. "I will take up your case if you wish me to do so, for it is just the sort of an affair I like.

"I now fully believe your story, my boy, and shall not place you under arrest. In working for your interests I shall also be doing my duty in unearthing the robbers of the Webster Bank."

"Of course I shall be only too glad of your help," said Frank, eagerly. "I have been foolish—I see it now. Whatever you say I'll do."

"Then, inasmuch as you have mysteriously disappeared, remain so. I've reported your disappearance to the police; let it be your care not to reappear until I say the word.

"Disguise yourself, watch Callister, see your bootblacks and newsboys, and procure from them the tin box and all it contains. I will do for your unfortunate mother all that can be done. When you want money come to me. We will work together, Frank, and as I don't work for nothing, you can repay me when you come into your own."

"I can never repay you, sir!" cried the boy, with tears in his eyes, grasping the detective's outstretched hand.

"Yes, you can, and I'm sure you will. Here are a few dollars now. When you need it you shall have more. Now go, and don't be seen in the streets so dressed that any one will recognize you again. You can meet me—let me see—I've got to go out of town this afternoon on important business,

and won't return until late to-night. Meet me where I saw you first—on the corner of Rector street and Broadway—to-night, as the clock of old Trinity strikes twelve."

## CHAPTER XII.

### WHAT WAS SEEN BY THE CHURCH-YARD WALL.

The Sabbath has passed, and night has fallen upon the city once more.

The busy streets are growing deserted, and the great business thoroughfares about lower Broadway, silent at all hours on this the day of rest, have, as the night wears on, become almost entirely abandoned by pedestrians, and have sunk into obscurity and gloom.

As the midnight hour approached, the figure of a young man, roughly dressed in garments of the commonest sort, his face concealed beneath a low slouch hat, his mouth by a heavy black mustache, might have been observed to briskly ascend the Rector street hill, which rises along the church-yard wall, and to take his station at the corner of Broadway, close by the side of the iron fence which divides the old burial ground from the street.

He was evidently waiting for some one, for as he paced up and down beneath the cold light of the glittering stars his eye was from time to time turned upon the clock in the church tower, now about to strike the hour of twelve.

No one that had ever known Frank Mansfield would have recognized the neatly dressed young bank clerk in this rough looking youth who now strode uneasily up and down.

And yet it was none other than Frank himself, cleverly disguised, prompt on the hour of his appointment with Detective Hook.

Nor was that famous officer at all behindhand.

Just as the clock of old Trinity rang out the midnight hour the boy perceived him moving at a rapid pace down Broadway.

Clever as was Frank's disguise, it did not deceive the detective for an instant.

"Well, young man, you are on time, I see?" he said, abruptly, peering beneath the low slouched hat. "What have you learned? You have got the sealed parchment that should accompany the will, I hope? Otherwise, your chances of finding your legacy are mighty slim."

"I have learned nothing, excepting the fact that my mother escaped from the private asylum up-town where she had been confined over a week ago."

"And the parchment?"

"Was not in the box, Mr. Hook. Here it is, with all the papers it contained. I have examined every one of them, and it is not there."

He drew a small tin box from beneath his coat as he spoke and placed it in the detective's hands.

"That's bad for us," replied Caleb Hook, opening the box and examining the papers one by one. "These seem to relate to all sorts of matters. Surely this cannot be the box in which the will was originally contained."

"I can't say—it is all that was found by the boys. I——"

"Seek not the parchment. Watch and wait, for the day of vengeance is at hand!"

Plainly heard by both the man and the boy, these words rang out upon the silence of the deserted street.

"Who spoke?" exclaimed the detective, springing back from the church-yard rail against which he had been leaning.

Save himself and his companion, not a soul was to be seen either on Rector street or Broadway.

With a low cry the boy had seized him by the arm.

"There—there!" he whispered, trembling with excitement, pointing, at the same time to the open expanse of the Trinity church-yard within the rail, by the side of which they stood.

The eyes of Caleb Hook followed the direction indicated by Frank's hand.

There, moving among the headstones in the shadow of the church itself, was the form of a woman, cheaply dressed in a faded calico, an old shawl and a woolen hood.

She was tall and thin, and her long gray hair hung in a tangled mass down her neck and shoulders.

"Great God! if it ain't——"

"My mother!" cried the boy aloud, springing toward the rail. "It is! It is! Look! she faces us now. God have mercy! What can this mean?"

The form had paused, and, turning, gazed sorrowfully toward the astonished pair beneath the stars which glistened above.

But, feeble as was their light, Detective Hook recognized in that care-worn face, at a glance, the

features of the strange woman whom he had tracked through the streets on the previous night, and who, to his positive knowledge now lay dead in the city morgue!

## CHAPTER XIII.

### IN CAGNEY'S SANCTUM.

We never heard it claimed that Oliver street was fashionable.

If such a claim was made, many who know that narrow lane, extending from Chatham square down to the East River front, would be inclined to dispute its truth.

Crossing Cherry street, Water and Front, passing directly through the heart of the densely populated Fourth Ward, long known as the home of the toughest of the "toughs" who infest the City of New York, it would be useless for us to pretend that Oliver street was anything else than just what it is—as bad as bad can be.

Not that many excellent people cannot be found within its limits.

That is true of every city street, no matter how poor its seeming; but Michael J. Cagney was certainly not one of these, nor was his saloon—"The Fourth Ward Shades"—any better than it ought to be, if common rumor was to be believed.

And yet Cagney did a flourishing business—there could be no doubt as to that.

It was open all day, it could be entered at night, nor upon the Sabbath were the thirsty turned away.

How Mr. Michael J. Cagney managed to arrange matters with the excise commissioners is no concern of ours.

In the present stage of the events of this narrative we are concerned only with two individuals, who, at the hour of daybreak on the particular Sunday morning of the visit of Frank Mansfield and Jerry Buck to the Catherine Market, entered quietly at Cagney's little side door.

They were none other than the two men who had emerged from the alley at the side of the Donegal Shades, one of whom it will be recollected, Frank recognized as that most reputable member of society, Mr. Elijah Callister, the well-known operator on the stock exchange, and the other the man pointed out by Jerry Buck as one of the burglars of the Webster Bank.

Pushing against the door, to all appearance tightly fastened, but which instantly yielded to their touch, the two men found themselves within a dirty bar-room.

Bottles and demijohns lined the grimy shelves, great casks and barrels were piled from the level of the sawdust-covered floor in double tiers around two sides of the room.

Upon the top of these barrels lay four or five ragged men, some young, some old, all sprawled out without reference to the gracefulness of the position shown and all sound asleep.

These were the drunkards of the Saturday night previous, taken from the floor, to which they had fallen under the influence of the vile poison imbibed at this and other bars, and thrown upon the top of these barrels to sleep off the effects of their debauch.

The two men paid no attention to this—a common Sunday morning spectacle in many low saloons—but with a nod to the sleepy, red-eyed bartender passed through a swinging half door, which formed to a certain extent at least, a dividing line between Cagney's proper and Cagney's private sanctum beyond.

It was only a little 7x8 affair, in the center of which stood a table, and one or two hard wooden chairs, all a shade less dirty than the room beyond.

The stock operator seated himself at the table upon entering.

His companion, sinking into a chair and burying his face in his hands, groaned aloud.

For a moment Mr. Callister regarded him gloomily.

Then, extending his hand, he grasped his shoulder and shook the man with some violence.

"Rube, Rube, I say!"

"Well, what is it, Lije? Why the deuce can't you let me be?"

"But there's no use in this kind of business. What's done is done, and can't be helped. Brace up man, and try to look as near like yourself as you can. Here comes Paddy to see what we'll take."

The burglar raised his head and was staring fixedly before him, as the half door swung inward and the sleepy bartender entered the room.

"What's your liquor, gents?" he demanded, with an air of indifference.

They must pay for their use of the apartment by an order of some kind.

So that they did this, their presence in the place, be their business, lawful or unlawful, was a matter of no moment to him.

"A bottle of Cagney's particular and two glasses, Paddy, and you may keep the change," said

Callister, throwing down a five-dollar bill. "We have a little business to transact together—don't let us be disturbed."

"O. K., gents," replied the sleepy bartender, with a gleam of intelligence in his blinking red eyes. "I'll look out for yez, and if ye want anything else, wy jest tap that ere bell."

He presently returned with bottle and glasses and having placed them upon the table, withdrew.

"Here, Rube, drink this. It will give you some heart," said the stock operator, pouring out a portion of the liquor and passing it to his friend.

The man seized the glass eagerly and drained it to the last drop.

"My God—my God! Lije, what a terrible thing this is!" he exclaimed, in a hoarse whisper, as he set the glass upon the table again. "I can see her face before me now, so white and worn! It will never leave me—I feel it—I know it! It will haunt me as long as I live!"

"Nonsense, man! You have been guilty of a piece of tremendous folly, but we've too much at stake to break all to pieces over such a slip."

"Poor Maria! poor girl!" groaned the man Rube, again burying his face in his hands and groaning aloud. "It was all my vile temper, Lije. I swear to God I never meant to kill her, and now——"

"And now she's dead," returned Callister, with an air of hardened indifference. "She was hopelessly mad, and a nuisance to herself and to us. She's dead, and it can't be helped. You let your temper get the better of you, and you killed her. That's all there is to be said."

"For which act may God forgive me," groaned Rube again. "Oh, Lije, it seems but yesterday since I married her! Do you remember what beautiful girls they were when you and I and Frank Mansfield went a-courting them? Do you remember——"

"No, I don't remember, and I don't want to. All the love I had for them was turned to hate long ago. She's dead, and let her go. What I'm interested in just now is the whereabouts of those papers. You thought she had them, and because she wouldn't give them up——"

"I killed her. God forgive me! I killed her! Oh, Lije, if I had only listened to Maria's advice, I'd be a different man to-day from what I am!"

A soft-hearted bank burglar, surely. A strange murderer, for a fact.

The man had buried his face in his hand again, which rests upon the table now, and is crying like a child.

"Rube Tisdale, you are a fool. If you give way like this, no power on earth can keep you from being nabbed. You thought Maria had old Mansfield's will and the paper telling where he buried his fortune. She refused to give it up, and you killed her with your fist. We searched her, and the papers were not to be found. No one suspects your connection with the woman. If you will but keep a stiff lip you are as safe in New York as anywhere else; but if you are going to give way like this, why the sooner you skip——"

"Sun, Herald, Journal, World! Papers, gents—papers!"

A head was thrust through the swinging door; a ragged boy, carrying a bundle of newspapers under his arm entered the room.

"Get out, you young imp, or I'll throw this glass at you!" cried Callister, picking up the glass and swinging it above his head.

The boy sprang back, the half-door, which worked on a spring, closing noiselessly after him.

Then the leading light in the Tenth Baptist Church turned to the remorse-stricken man again.

Now, if there was one thing upon which Mr. Elijah Callister prided himself more than another, it was upon his shrewdness at all times and seasons—no matter how engrossing the business for the moment occupying his mind.

But if possessed of this quality to any startling extent, he surely has failed to display it now, for had he but taken the precaution to open the half door and look out into the bar-room, he would have perceived that the sleepy bartender, yielding to his sleepiness at last, was as firmly locked in the arms of Morpheus as any of the drunkards stretched upon the barrels, his head resting upon his hands, his hands upon the bar.

He might have seen also—for of this we are not so certain—the youthful figure of a ragged newsboy, crouching in the shadow of a tier of great whisky-barrels in such a position that, while he could obtain a view of the feet only of the two men who occupied Cagney's sanctum beneath the closed half door, he could, by simply placing his ear close to the jamb, hear plainly every word spoken within.

Thus matters stood in the saloon as the conversation within the sanctum was renewed.

"Rube Tisdale," said the stock operator, fiercely, "stop this child's business and listen to me."

"Well, I'm listening."

Though he replied, the man did not raise his head.

"Our scheme with the Webster Bank has proved a miserable failure in every particular."

"You don't need to remind me of that."

"But I chose to, and that is enough. First, all the money we got was five thousand dollars, for the

bonds and securities are utterly useless; and second, the will of old Mansfield, which I was most anxious to secure, by your stupidity is lost, perhaps forever, and the secret of the hiding-place of a fortune in solid cash is gone with it, I suppose you understand."

"Well, it ain't my fault. You drew the plans for the job. You said there was a hundred thousand in specie in the vault of the bank."

"So there was at noon. How was I to tell that they would send it all to the Sub-Treasury in Wall street for security before three o'clock?"

"That's your business. It ain't mine."

"But the Mansfield will and the parchment telling the hiding-place of the buried treasure—who botched that job, may I ask?"

"I took the box of papers you told me about. I was particular enough to break open the lid to assure myself that all was right. I had it in my hand when we heard those infernal bats whistling in Trinity church-yard. It scared the life out of us, I want you to understand, for how were we to know they were bats or what they were? I must have dropped the box in the snow as we ran up Broadway."

"And because you happened to see Maria wandering about, you thought she picked it up, and killed her, only to find out your mistake. Well, Rube, upon my life you are a precious fool. Next time I let you into a scheme like this I'll know it, I guess."

"Come, you've called me names enough," replied the burglar, gruffly, raising his head and facing the man before him. "You are as deep in the mud as I am in the mire, I want you to understand. The detectives will turn New York upside down for this affair. Now, what do you propose to do? They've got Joe Dutton, and they've got a part of the swag. It's my opinion that the best thing we can do is to skip."

"Nonsense! Joe is all right. I shall make it my business to send some one to him at once. Have no fear, Rube. He'll never blow."

"And the—the body?"

"We can't do anything about that. Matters must take their course. I agree with you that it would be wiser for us to leave town for a while—not that I have any serious fears, but only as a matter of precaution—but I intend to have that Mansfield money before I go, make no mistake about that."

"But how do you propose to get it? Without the parchment you don't know anything more about its hiding-place than you did before."

"Rube, it is concealed somewhere about the old house, I'll be willing to bet all I'm worth. It was there on the night that—but no matter about that—and I'm sure it is there now. We never wanted that hidden wealth half as much as we do now. Frank Mansfield is almost of age; my scheme to convict him of crime may have worked and may not. We can't tell into whose hands the papers may fall. What we want is the money now."

"All very true, but how are you going to get it, when you don't know where it is?"

"I'm going to search for it, Rube!" cried Callister bringing his fist down upon the table with a bang. "I'm going to search for it, and I'll find it if I have to tear the old rookery to pieces bit by bit. Come, we've been here too long already. Wherever you think yourself the safest, there hide for the next few days until we see what comes of this affair. Meanwhile, I'll go home. To-morrow, at midnight, meet me at the gate of the Three Oaks, and we'll search for this hidden treasure as we never searched before. I've no notion of seeing it drop like a ripe cherry into the open mouth of that cub of a boy while I can raise a hand to prevent it."

The pair arose and passed out of the saloon.

The sleeping Paddy did not attract their attention—they did not perceive the boy behind the barrels at all.

Once in the street they separated, the man Tisdale going down Cherry street, Elijah Callister up Oliver street to Chatham Square.

He had hardly passed Henry street before a ragged newsboy went past him on the run.

"Sun—Herald—World!" he cried. "Morning papers! Herald—Sun—World—Journal!"

If Frank Mansfield could have seen the newsboy then he would have unquestionably recognized in him Jerry Buck, his companion of the old church-yard vault.

Had an elephant crossed the path of the scheming villain, or a dog, or even a mouse, he might have turned aside and looked upon either one.

Mr. Elijah Callister, however, paid no attention to the flying Bat at all.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### AN INTRUDER IN THE HOME OF THE BATS.

We left Frank Mansfield standing in company with Detective Hook before the fence of Trinity

church-yard, beyond which moved the form of the woman who had tracked his footsteps to the bank upon the night previous—of his mother, whom both he and his companion knew to have met her death in the upper room of the little rear house behind the Donegal Shades.

It was for an instant only that the figure faced them.

Had the warning words spoken behind them proceeded from those pale, set lips?

Such undoubtedly was the case.

And as if to make the matter still more plain, even as they gazed upon the apparition through the palings of the graveyard fence, the words were repeated again.

"Again I say to you, my son, seek not the parchment. Watch and wait, for the day of vengeance is at hand."

Suddenly the figure of the woman had come to a halt.

Raising one thin hand aloft to the starlit sky above, these words escaped her lips.

Then advancing with a gliding movement among the crumbling stones of the old burial ground, the outline of her form seemed to fade away in the darkness, to mingle with the shadows of the great church, of the snow-capped tombs.

It was all the work of an instant. Not half the time was consumed in the happening that has elapsed in telling the tale.

As though animated by a common thought, the detective and young Frank Mansfield had leaped toward the church-yard wall.

The fence offered no obstacle.

They dropped in the snow among the headstones.

"After her, boy!" whispered Hook. "After her without an instant's delay; there's some crooked work going on here, and it will go hard with some one, but I'll find out what it is."

But Frank Mansfield did not heed him.

He no more believed in ghosts than did Caleb Hook.

If the woman by the side of whose dead body he had knelt in the house on Catherine street had been his poor, insane mother, driven mad by such a combination of afflictions as woman is seldom called upon to bear, then who was this?

He needed no encouragement from the man by his side to spur him on to solve the mystery for himself.

The day had been clear and more than unusually warm, causing the snow to soften considerably, but as night had approached the thermometer had fallen, forming a hard crust upon the smooth surface among the stones.

With a bound Frank reached the point in the church-yard at which the apparition had appeared, Detective Hook pressing close behind.

It was unoccupied by human form.

The headstones were there, the shadows of the church were there, the leafless branches of the great trees rattled gloomily above their heads.

But the woman whose warning words had fallen so plainly upon their ears was nowhere to be seen.

She had disappeared—disappeared, leaving no trace behind.

There was not so much as the outline of her footsteps to be seen upon the hardened crust of the snow.

"Come," whispered Hook, "this is the way she went, over toward the New Church street wall. She cannot get out; there are but two gates, and both are locked at night; it is twenty feet to the ground on the side towards which she disappeared, to say nothing of the fence she would have to climb."

They picked their way among the tombs to the rear of the church.

Here, in the cold starlight, the entire expanse of the church-yard was plainly visible from the fence on the Rector street side to the wall of the great Trinity Building at the upper end.

Not the faintest trace of the woman could be seen.

Footsteps there were in abundance, but the hardened crust had formed over them, showing plainly that they were the footsteps of persons who had passed over the snow some time before.

As it was Sunday, and service had been held in the Trinity Church twice at least during the day, there was nothing strange in this.

A score of people might have amused themselves wandering about among the moldering tombs, as the church-yard is free to all.

Detective Hook examined these footprints carefully.

Among them he recognized his own and those measured by him the night before.

At one point he observed also many smaller than the rest, as though made by the feet of boys;

and these were particularly numerous in the vicinity of a great flat tomb-stone, embedded apparently in the solid earth, about which the snow had all been cleared away.

"Mr. Hook," whispered Frank, nervously, "what can this mean?"

"My boy, you have me there. I can't tell any more than yourself."

"It is very, very strange. I saw my mother as plainly as I see you now. I heard her words spoken in her own voice."

"You are positive that it was your mother, Frank?" said the detective, musingly, as he stood contemplating the great flat stone.

"Positive? Of course I am. It is almost enough to make me feel that I am going mad myself. I should doubt my own vision, my hearing even, had you not both seen and heard too."

"There is nothing to doubt," replied Hook with sudden emphasis, turning his gaze at the same time upon the boy, who stood trembling with excitement before him.

"What you saw I saw, what you heard was heard also by me. No, no, my boy, there is no madness in this case. If you are positive that the woman murdered in Catherine street was your mother, that the woman I followed through the streets last night was your mother, then, although I am an utter disbeliever in spiritual manifestations of all kinds, I see but one conclusion to draw——"

As the detective paused, staring about the church-yard in deep perplexity, Frank felt a shudder pass through his frame from his head to his feet.

If the man by his side did not believe in ghosts, no more did he.

And yet——

Well, the woman seen by them both was gone, and that was all there was to it.

The whole expanse of the rear of the Trinity church-yard, toward which she had moved, now lay spread out before them.

If her gliding figure had vanished into thin air it could not have disappeared more effectually than it had.

"Come," said Hook, abruptly moving at the same time toward the low wall on the Rector street side, "there's no use in remaining longer; we shall learn nothing here to-night."

Gaining the fence, he vaulted lightly to the street.

Frank, following his example, stood by his side.

"Well, which way are you going?" asked the detective. "I am tired, and off for home."

"Oh, I stay with some friends to-night."

"Friends! What friends? Be careful. If we are going to work together, you must follow my instructions to the letter. Are you sure of these friends of yours? Won't they give you away?"

"I have no fear of that," replied the boy, quietly. "I've had some experience with treacherous friends. I know that I can depend on these."

"Very well. Go to them, then, and meet me—let me see—you can meet me to-morrow at my house at four o'clock, if you don't see me before that time. Meanwhile, I'll keep this box and these papers, including your grandfather's will. We'll lay out a regular course of action together next time we meet. If we only had that parchment, the way would be plain; but it seems that we are obliged to follow the advice we have received so strangely to-night, whether we want to or not—to watch and wait."

Pressing Frank warmly by the hand, Caleb Hook turned abruptly and walked off up Broadway.

He did not look behind him, nor even turn his head.

Passing Trinity Church and the grave-yard beyond, his form was presently lost to view among the high buildings which line either side of the street.

And not until then did Frank Mansfield move from the place where the detective had left him, but remained leaning against the iron fence at the corner of Rector street and Broadway.

No sooner had Caleb Hook disappeared, than he turned, and keeping close within the shadow of the wall, moved down Rector street in the direction of New Church.

As he passed opposite the Webster Bank he turned and gazed upon it with feelings of mingled shame and an utter despoliation of himself.

If he had had no hand in the robbery, he had at least been ready to betray the secrets of those who had trusted him for hope of paltry gain.

Within the banking-room lights were burning, and the boy could see his fellow clerks poring over books and papers in the endeavor to discover the extent of the bank's loss before opening for business next day.

Deeply depressed, and with a sense of utter self-contempt strong upon him, Frank slunk by those lighted windows, and turning the corner of New Church street, still keeping close to the grave-yard wall, paused before the great iron door.

Leaning against it, he cast a hasty glance up and down.

The street was deserted. Not a soul was anywhere visible.



But stay!

It might have been fancy, but as he looked a second time it seemed to the boy, in his excited state of mind, that a woman's form at that moment turned the corner of Rector street upon the opposite side of the way and disappeared from view.

Darting to the corner at the top of his speed, he swept the short street at one glance.

That he had been mistaken was evident.

From Broadway above to the river front below not a living thing was to be seen.

"If this thing keeps up I shall go mad myself," he muttered, brokenly. "I see my dead mother now at every turn."

Pausing once more in front of the iron door in the church-yard wall, he gave utterance to a peculiar bat-like cry.

Presently, as though from a great distance, the cry was repeated.

Whether from above or below no one could have told.

Indeed, it seemed as much as anywhere to come from out of the wall itself.

Frank remained silently waiting.

Presently the great iron door swung slowly back, and a boy's head appeared in the opening.

"Is that you, Frank Mansfield?"

"Yes. Is that you, Jerry Buck?"

"Slide in, young feller," said the boy, in a whisper. "I'm a-scared to hold the door open long. After all that happened last night I'm expecting every minute that some one will catch onto our hole in the wall."

His sentence was completed within the old tomb itself, for Frank had entered at the first word, the door being closed behind him and securely barred.

"Come up to the den," said Jerry, leading the way up the steps. "Most of the fellers is in to-night and are abed long ago. I know'd you'd keep your promise and come, so me and Barney sat up to let you in."

Entering the inner apartment of the tomb, Frank found that the boy had spoken the truth.

Barney the boot-black sat smoking a clay pipe by the side of the table, upon which was a loaf of bread and a mug.

"Hello! I know'd you'd come!" said the bootblack, springing up. "Have you had your supper? I kept some in case you didn't."

"Thank you. I've had all I want," replied Frank, sinking wearily upon an old stool. "I'm tremendously obliged to you fellows for your kindness to me. Mebbe I shall be able to return it some of these days."

"That's all right," put in Jerry Buck. "If I can help any friend of Barney's, I'm glad to do it."

"Hush!" cried Barney, holding up his finger warningly as Frank was about to reply. "Jerry, as true as I live there's some one up above. I didn't hear no signal, did you?"

The three boys stood motionless.

Above their heads, at the top of the ladder, down which Frank had seen the two boys descend upon the occasion of his first visit to the tomb, a grating sound was heard—such a sound as might be made by the rising of a tightly-fitting trap-door.

At the same instant two feet were seen upon the top round of the ladder, which, descending, were followed by the legs and body of a man.

"Twigged at last, by thunder!" exclaimed Jerry Buck, uttering a warning cry, which had the effect of instantly arousing several sleeping boyish forms stretched upon pieces of old carpet at various angles upon the floor.

At the same instant a man sprang from the ladder and stood in their midst.

"Good-evening, boys," he said, quietly. "So this is where you hang out? Upon my word, now, it ain't half a bad place. I've slept in many a worse one myself."

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## CHAPTER XV.

### CALEB HOOK MAKES HIMSELF AT HOME.

The boys stared at the man who had leaped among them from off the ladder with feelings of alarmed surprise.

Nor was the surprise of Frank Mansfield less than the others.

It was Detective Hook who stood before him—Detective Hook, whom he had supposed to be already far upon his homeward way.

"So these are your friends?" he said, quietly, as the boys gathered about him, with faces expressive of anything but welcome. "I rather thought I should tumble on something like this. Introduce me, Frank. It will take off the awkwardness a bit."

"Oh, we don't want to know you, boss," spoke up one of the boys, with a threatening air. "We don't allow no visitors, we don't, and we're going to show yer, too, blame quick."

"Yes," growled Garibaldi, the Italian boy, "disa whata coma from taka in de stranger among us."

As for Jerry Buck, Barney the bootblack, and Frank himself, they stared at one another, the two Bats surveying the boy whom they had befriended with angry looks, Frank regarding them with a face upon which was seen plainly imprinted every evidence of innocent surprise.

He did not dare to offend the detective, who could, as he was well aware, throw him into the hands of the law at any moment. He felt both sorry and ashamed to think that the kind-hearted boys who had befriended him in his trouble should for a moment think that he had betrayed their hiding-place to a member of the police.

"Is this feller a friend of yourn?" demanded Barney, in no pleasant tone.

"It is Detective Hook, boys," replied Frank, with as much firmness as he could muster. "I swear to you all that I never breathed a word."

"I knowed it," muttered Jerry beneath his breath.

But Caleb Hook, with a keen realization of the way matters stood, gave no opportunity for further words.

He had suspected the existence of just such a place as this from the first moment of Frank's mysterious disappearance on the previous night.

Now, it was a life rule of this remarkable man that no suspicion worthy of entertaining at all should be abandoned until either its truth or its falsity had been proved.

It was for that reason he had chosen for his meeting with this boy, in whose strange case he was becoming hourly more interested, the time and place he had.

"Hold on, boys," he said, a broad smile breaking over his face, "before you fire me out of here, before that little Italian sticks a tooth-pick into me or you condemn Frank Mansfield for a traitor, hear what the detective has got to say."

"Well, say on, den, blame quick!" exclaimed Sandy the Bat, who had first spoken, "for we fellers is a-goin' to pound the life outer yer in jest about a minit and a half."

"Indeed! Well, I'm not afraid. In the first place I swear now, without being asked, never to give this place away, provided I catch none of you boys transgressing the law. Second, I tell you now, and tell you the truth when I say it, that this young man, Frank Mansfield, never by so much as a word told me anything about this place, any boy here present, or gave me the slightest clew how to enter it as I did."

All the boys stared at the detective in surprise.

"I knowed it," growled Jerry Buck again. "How could Frank Mansfield tell him about the up-stairs way, fellers, when he didn't know nothing about it himself?"

"Well, what do you want with us, anyhow?" asked Barney, with a somewhat mollified air. "We're only a lot of poor kids as hasn't got no better place to tie up in winter-time nor this. We don't do no one any harm."

"I know that," answered Hook, pleasantly, "and that's why I propose to let you alone. I found the entrance beneath the flat tombstone in the church-yard entirely by itself. If you wished to conceal it you were foolish to clear the snow away. But you need have no fears of me, not one of you. All I want now is that you answer me a few questions, and then I'll be off about my business and forget that I was ever here."

"Well, that depends upon de questions," replied Barney, taking upon himself the duty of spokesman. "Maybe we'll answer and maybe we won't."

"They concern Frank Mansfield only and can't harm you."

"Fire away, den," said Barney, shortly.

Frank, meanwhile, maintained a discreet silence.

It was plainly evident that nothing he could say or do would help matters at all.

"Who was the woman that passed through here just now by the way I came in?"

The detective had seated himself carelessly upon the table, with one foot resting upon the ground.

As he propounded the question he coolly lighted a cigar, and passed one to each of the boys.

"I don't know wot yer mean," replied Barney, with some slight evidence of embarrassment. "Dere's no woman comes in here, is dere, Jerry?"

"Not much!" said Jerry, shortly, as he produced matches and lit his cigar.

"Well, I'll try again. Which of you boys found the box last night?"

He held up the tin box of papers handed him by Frank Mansfield a short time before.

"I found it first. And I gave it to Barney to take care of," replied Jerry. "I picked it up on Rector street, right in front of the bank, after I see'd the burglars run."

"Oh, you saw the burglars, did you? By the way, you are the newspaper boy that was with Frank at the Catherine Market this morning?"

"Yes."

"What's your name?"

"Jerry Buck."

"How did you come to see these fellows?"

"Why, I was coming down Rector street on my way here just as they were comin' out of the bank."

"Did they see you?"

"Not much," replied the boy, laughing and showing his teeth. "I'm too fly for that, mister. I hid in the shadow of the wall, and give them the bat call. Gosh! you orter seen them run! There was three of 'em—one had a big bag, another a carpet sack. It was the big feller wot dropped that box."

"What do you mean by the 'bat call?'"

"I didn't mean to say nothin' 'bout that," answered Jerry, hesitatingly, seeing that the Bats were regarding him with no pleasant eyes.

"Well, never mind," said the detective, indifferently. "I don't want to pry into your secrets, boys. All I want is to bring these bank robbers to justice, and remove suspicion from our young friend here. That's my business here to-night, and I've nothing to do with any other matters at all. I suppose you are all friends of his, or he wouldn't be among you. By the way, that was a mighty sharp trick, getting him away from the officer who had him in charge last night."

"Oh, we're fly every time, boss," replied Barney, with an air of conscious pride. "You can just bet your life on that."

Caleb Hook laughed pleasantly, and took an extra puff at his cigar.

"Frank, here's one witness to prove that you didn't rob the bank," he said, pointing carelessly to Jerry Buck.

"An' here's anoder," put in Barney. "I seen the fellers too."

"I'm sure both of them will testify to what they know, Mr. Hook," said Frank, somewhat puzzled to discern the detective's aim.

"Of course we will," exclaimed Barney. "Me an' Jerry has undertook to set you right, and we're de kind as goes de whole hog or none."

The reply came heartily, nor was the assent of Jerry Buck any less strong.

It seemed strange that these wild street Arabs had taken up his cause in the manner they had.

Strange to Caleb Hook as he sat scanning the faces of the "bats" about him. Doubly strange to Frank himself the more he turned it over in his mind.

But his situation was such that there was nothing for it but to drift helplessly with the tide, with Detective Hook for his rudder, to steer him to whatever haven of safety he might choose.

And the boy did well to place his reliance where he did.

Had he searched New York from end to end, he could not have found a shrewder ally or a better man.

"Good!" exclaimed the detective. "The testimony of two is better than that of one. Would either of you know the three men again?"

"Every one on 'em," said Jerry, decidedly.

"Good again. You saw the man over whom I tumbled in Catherine street this morning, when I tried to catch hold of your coat. Was he one of them?"

"Yes, he was, boss, an' a minute after another—the big feller wot dropped the box—went up the street."

"He did?"

"Sure's yer born. I know'd him the minute I saw him."

"I saw him, too, Mr. Hook," said Frank, eagerly, "and with him——"

"One moment," said the detective, throwing a warning look toward Frank. "I'm listening to Jerry now. You can tell your story by and by. Where did the man go, Jerry? Do you know?"

"No," replied the newsboy, shaking his head. "I went down to the house where the woman was murdered. You seen me there, you know."

This, of course, was true.

And yet the reader knows, as well as did Jerry Buck himself, that it was far, very far, from being the whole truth.

Of his subsequent adventures in Cagney's sanctum, of the conversation he had overheard while crouched behind the whisky barrels outside the half door, he said nothing at all.

Nor did he mention the little fact—and this the reader does not know—of his having followed the respectable Mr. Elijah Callister to the very door of his Fifth avenue mansion before allowing him to pass from before his eyes.

For reasons best known to himself Jerry Buck was silent in all these points, neither Frank nor the detective, as a matter of course, dreaming of the knowledge he thus held in reserve.

But whatever had been the motive of Caleb Hook in thus penetrating the retreat of the Bats in the Wall—the entrance to which let us say right here, his keen eyes had detected from the suspicious circumstances of the snow being cleared away around the great flat tombstone by the side of which he had come to a halt, when in company with Frank he had followed the strange apparition through the Trinity church-yard—whatever had been his motive, we repeat, it was evident that he had satisfied it now, for he leaped from the table and moved toward the foot of the ladder leading to the church-yard above.

"Well, good-bye, boys," he exclaimed, as carelessly as though his unexpected visit had been an every-day affair. "I'll call upon you fellows when I want your testimony. Never mind opening the door; I can raise the stone myself. Frank Mansfield, I want you. Come along with me."

He sprang up the ladder, Frank following him.

Completely carried away by the manner of the man, not one of the Bats even thought of interfering.

The flat tombstone was raised and lowered as they passed out.

It was of sandstone, much decayed, and only a light affair, after all.

What Caleb Hook had to say to Frank as they once more vaulted the fence, this time walking up Broadway together, we do not know, but it is a fact that the boy, who, had he fallen into the hands of a detective of the average density of skull, would at that moment, in all probability have been an inmate of the Tombs, spent the short remainder of the night upon a lounge in Detective Hook's own room, as comfortably as you pleased.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE THREE OAKS.

The Three Oaks was haunted.

At least every one said so, and what every one says is supposed to be true.

To be sure, it would have been difficult to have found any person who had actually seen the ghost.

Nor was this necessary.

Strange lights moving about the old house at night, flitting from window to window, from the great parlor panes upon the first floor to the little diamond-shaped panes up under the roof, had been seen by the passers-by on the Fort Washington road at night, over and over again, and was quite enough for the neighbors who dwelt outside its crumbling walls.

But what was Three Oaks and where was it?

These are both proper questions, and should be answered at once.

Three Oaks was a house, and an old one at that. It still stands to-day on the road mentioned above, which is, as every one knows, in the north-west corner of Manhattan Island, and extends from the little village whose name it bears to the 155th street station of the elevated road.

It was a large house and an old house; it stood in the center of a thick growth of oaks, surrounded by a stretch of uncultivated ground, and divided from the road by a high stone wall.

A more gloomy, desolate-looking old rookery it would have been difficult to have found. And yet Three Oaks had been a handsome place in its day.

But that day had long since passed.

For ten years, at least, old Jeremiah Mansfield, its former owner had lived there alone. It was five years since he had been found murdered in his bed.

This was the work of burglars.

They had broken into the old house in the night, in the hope of obtaining a large sum in money, of which the strange old man, little better than a miser, was supposed to be possessed.

Whether they had succeeded in finding it no one ever knew.

The burglars were not caught—the dead lips of the murdered man never told the tale.

From that night Three Oaks had remained deserted, and was fast sinking to ruin and decay.

To whom it belonged few in the neighborhood could have told, but every one had seen the lights—seen them not only once, but again and again. And who but the ghost of old Miser Mansfield himself would think of prowling about the dust-laden rooms of Three Oaks at midnight?

That was precisely what the neighbors wanted to know.

You could not have hired one of them to have approached the old house after dark.

Indeed, some timid persons objected even to passing it on the public road after the shades of night had begun to fall.

Upon the evening of the day following the events of the last few chapters, at a little before midnight, a solitary pedestrian might have been observed picking his way gingerly along the Fort Washington road, opposite the moldering stone wall surrounding Three Oaks, sheltering himself beneath a large alpaca umbrella from the rain which all day long had been falling in torrents, rendering the snow of two days before a slushy mass beneath the feet.

Might have been observed, did we say?

The qualification was well put.

Surely no one save a person whose errand was most pressing would venture out in a spot so lonely upon a night like this.

The wind whirling down the road from the Hudson and the heights of the Palisades beyond played with the alpaca umbrella as with some child's toy, the rain coming down in what appeared in the darkness an almost unbroken sheet, has drenched the clothes of this unfortunate traveler as to make them cling like so many plasters to his body.

Indeed, so utterly saturated has he become, that it seems a matter of wonder that he does not abandon the umbrella altogether and boldly face the storm.

Slump! Slump! Slump!

As he raises one foot from the pasty, dripping mass of melting snow the other sinks through it to the very stones of the road beneath.

As he approached the broken gate leading up to the clump of oaks behind which the dark outlines of the old Mansfield house could be dimly seen, the man paused, leaned for a moment against the dripping wall, and gave utterance to a single word:

"Rube!"

There was no answer.

"He has not come," muttered the man, impatiently. "Can anything have happened? Rube is generally punctual. Perhaps the wind sighing through those gloomy old oaks has deadened the sound of my voice."

Again he called more distinctly than before:

"Rube! Rube!"

At the same instant from out of the clump of oaks a man's form appeared.

"All right. Come on," a voice was heard to say.

Pushing up the avenue leading to the mansion, which now more nearly resembled a rushing river than the smooth graveled road its builder had intended, he of the umbrella joined the man from among the trees, and both ascending the steps of the piazza, stood before the door of Three Oaks, sheltered from the storm at last.

"Pah! what a beast of a night!" exclaimed the owner of the alpaca umbrella, petulantly, shaking the water from his garments and closing it with a vicious snap. "I've had Satan's own time getting here, Rube. But it's just the night for our work. No fear of interruption from any inquisitive neighbors in a storm like this."

"You are right, Lije," replied the other, striking a match upon his trousers and touching it to a cigar. "But somehow I wish we had chosen any other night myself. It reminds one of the night the old man pegged out. You remember—it rained harder even than this."

Dim as is the light of the match, it is sufficient to show us the faces of these midnight visitors to old Jeremiah Mansfield's former home.

It is Mr. Elijah Callister who grasps the alpaca umbrella, it is his friend the bank burglar who now puffs away at the cigar—Reuben Tisdale by name.

"Well, upon my word, if you ain't the greatest fellow to bring up unpleasant memories I ever saw," exclaimed the stock-broker, crossly, as he produced a large key from his pocket, and inserting it in the rusty lock, threw open the hall door. "Why the mischief can't you let sleeping dogs lie? No man wants to be reminded of his past sins."

"I need no reminding of mine, Lije," replied the man gloomily, as the door was closed behind him and the broker proceeded to light a lantern, which he took with apparent familiarity from one corner of the carpetless hall. "They are before me night and day. If I had the courage I'd kill myself, but I have no more than a mouse. I'm a doomed man, Lije Callister, I feel it more and more, but being past redemption must go on sinning to the end."

"Well, if you ain't positively the worst," exclaimed Callister, impatiently. "What ails you?"

"I should think enough ailed me. With poor Maria's blood upon my hands calling for vengeance—ain't that enough?"

"You ought to have thought of that before you struck her. What's done is done. Be your old self, Rube. We are likely to want all our courage before this bank affair quiets down."

"What's the latest, Lije?" asked Tisdale, in a low tone, and with some expression of anxiety. "I

have not seen a paper to-day."

"Oh, you may speak as loud as you wish," replied Callister, taking off the top of the lantern, and picking up the wick with a pin. "There's no one within a quarter of a mile of us. There's no special news other than what you know, except so far as concerns Frank Mansfield."

"And what of him? Did the plan of Billy Cutts succeed?"

"Yes, and no. Frank was arrested just as he was entering the bank, but on the way to the police station he managed to escape."

"The deuce! How was that?"

"No one seems to know. I sent a party to interview the detective who arrested him—a fellow by the name of Hook—but could only learn that somewhere in the neighborhood of the wall of Trinity church-yard he managed to give the officer the slip."

"Was he handcuffed?"

"Yes, so I understand."

"And has not been caught since?"

"No."

"That is most mysterious."

"So I say."

"What do they say about the bank robbery?"

"They all believe Frank was in the job, of course. The bank has offered a reward of a thousand dollars for his arrest."

"And what about Joe Dutton?"

"He was sent to the Tombs this morning. My party saw him, and he swears by all that's holy he'll die before he gives us away by so much as a word."

"He'd better," muttered Tisdale, fiercely. "He'll be a dead Joe if he attempts to speak—don't let him forget that."

"That's all very true, Rube," replied the stock broker, "but all the same his arrest is mighty bad for us. He's the first of our gang who ever fell into the hands of the law. When one goes, all goes—that's the old saying, you know."

"Then so much the more reason why we should succeed to-night. I tell you, Lije, as I told you yesterday. It would be healthier for us to leave town for awhile."

"Yes, or to put Joe Dutton where he can't do us any harm," replied Callister, in a fierce whisper.

"What! you wouldn't—"

"Wouldn't I? Well, never mind. Let's attend to the business we have in hand. Rube, old Mansfield's money is in this house. You know how the will reads. If Frank can be convicted of crime before he is old enough to inherit, which will now be in a very short time, the money comes to me in a regular course, and the parchment containing the secret of its hiding-place would have been delivered into my hand."

"Exactly. And not satisfied with the job you put upon the boy, you must rope me into a bank robbery, where all we get is five thousand for our pains. You must have that parchment, and this is the result."

"The result would have been quite different if you had managed to hold on to it instead of dropping it in the street," replied Callister, crossly. "That's where the folly comes in. But come, we've wasted time enough in talking. Let us go up-stairs to the old man's chamber. I've an idea that the treasure is hidden somewhere about the hearth."

He picked up the lantern and began to ascend the broad staircase leading to the rooms above.

"So you've thought twenty times before, but could never find it," growled Tisdale, following. "Didn't you examine this blessed old rookery from garret to cellar, not over a year ago?"

They ascended the stairs, and entered a large room at the rear of the house upon the floor above.

Ruin and desolation met their gaze wherever the feeble rays of the lantern fell.

Filled with rich and costly furniture, adorned with pictures, expensive cabinets, and rich hangings about the windows and doors, the chamber—once that of the master of the mansion—was a forcible illustration of the truth of that memorable warning against riches.

Upon earth Jeremiah Mansfield had heaped up treasures.

Moth and rust had corrupted—thieves had broken in to steal.

The rich carpet, the elegant hangings were worn and faded, the costly furniture heaped up in the corners rotting with dampness and decay.

From one side of the wall a large strip of heavy gilt had fallen away, green with mold, displaying the discolored plaster behind, dust covered the picture frames, the floor, the ceiling—in fact, everything in and about the room, and more than all the bedstead upon which the old miser had met his end.

This cumbrous piece of mahogany, tilted forward into the room, from the lapse of one decaying leg, was a dust heap in itself.

Tisdale looked about him shudderingly.

"Lije, it's enough to give a man the horrors!" he mutteringly said.

But the stock broker made no reply.

That he was in this chilling apartment for work, not talk, was evident from every motion he made.

Throwing aside his coat and hat, he placed the lantern by the side of the fire-place, and with a hammer and cold chisel, taken from the pockets of his overcoat, began to remove its back, brick by brick.

"Hold the lantern, Rube," he whispered, as he struck upon the back of the fire-place with the hammer. "There is a hollow space back of this—don't you hear? I tell you, man, we've struck it at last!"

Tisdale seized the lantern and stooped forward toward the fire-place, Callister ringing blow after blow upon the chisel, and prying out the bricks right and left.

Suddenly the whole back of the fire-place fell inward with a crash, raising a cloud of dust which nearly blinded them both.

Seizing the lantern from the hand of his companion, the broker thrust his head into the space revealed, a hollow in the chimney, large enough to hold a million in gold.

It was empty!

Save for the broken bricks and bits of mortar, the rays of the lantern shone upon empty space alone.

With a smothered curse, Elijah Callister drew back into the room.

"Fooled again!" he muttered, fiercely. "If the builders of this infernal den had constructed that place on purpose to raise my hopes, they could not have succeeded better. We'll have to try again."

The words had scarcely left his lips, when from the gloom behind them a strange sound fell upon their ears.

It was half-sigh—half-groan.

It seemed to come from behind the bed.

"My God! Lije, did you hear that?" exclaimed Tisdale, in a hoarse whisper, seizing his companion by the arm.

At the same instant from behind the bed there emerged the form of a woman, tall and thin, with pinched features, wild, restless eyes, and long gray hair hanging down her neck and shoulders.

Coarse, worn garments hung loosely about her, a cheap shawl was thrown carelessly about the shoulders and pinned across her breast.

With one long, white finger extended before her, she advanced slowly toward the villainous pair without uttering a word.

Could Frank Mansfield have seen her, he would have instantly recognized the mother whose death he mourned.

Could Detective Hook have seen her, not for one instant could he have doubted that Mrs. Marley, whose dead body he had raised with his own hands from the floor of that wretched upper chamber in the rear of the Donegal Shades, and this woman were one and the same.

With a cry of horror Reuben Tisdale sprang backward toward the fire-place.

"Keep back, woman!" he yelled, his eyes starting from his head in terror. "God have mercy! 'Tis the spirit of my murdered wife!"

With a deep sigh the specter, with a gliding motion, moved backward, disappearing in the gloom beyond.

And even as the last glimpse of her shadowy form had disappeared from the gaze of Elijah Callister, who, with whitened face, stood still, grasping the lantern in his hand, his companion fell forward with a deep groan, motionless upon the floor.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### AN ADVERTISEMENT.

When Frank Mansfield awoke next morning he found Detective Hook standing by his side.

Indeed, it was the pressure of the detective's hand upon his forehead that had called him from sleep.

"Good-morning, my boy," he said, pleasantly. "It's time you were stirring, if you intend taking breakfast with me."

Frank sprang off of the lounge and began putting on his clothes.

"I could sleep all day, I think," he said, rubbing his eyes. "I never felt so sleepy in my life."

"No wonder, after the strain you have been under for the last forty-eight hours. That was one reason why I insisted upon your coming home with me. I want you to get thoroughly rested and refreshed; then you will be able to show what you are made of in working out our scheme. That hole in the wall may do well enough for newsboys and bootblacks, but it is no place for a boy like you."

"It served me a good turn the other night, all the same."

"I don't dispute that. By the way, how did you manage to get into the vault that night? Through the iron door on the New Church street side?"

"Yes, that was the way."

"I thought as much. I took a good look at the place and its surroundings before I entered. I thought I had sized it up pretty well."

"But how did you come to guess the entrance lay beneath that particular tombstone?" asked Frank, stooping to tie his shoes. "I didn't know myself where it was, although I knew there was some way of getting in from above."

The detective smiled.

"If I told you all I knew," he replied, pleasantly, "why, then you'd know as much as I do myself, and would have no further use for my services. No, no, young man, I am working for money. Under the will of your grandfather you are justly entitled to a large fortune, which through your own folly and the machinations of that man Callister has come mighty near slipping through your hands, if it has not already done so. My work now is to help you to the recovery of this fortune. Once you are in possession of it, I shall expect to be paid. Then ask me for my secrets, and I may tell you; meanwhile, we will see what kind of a breakfast my landlady has sent us up this morning, talk matters over together, and decide what is the first step to take."

He led the way into the room immediately behind the sleeping chamber, where a comfortable breakfast for two was already spread.

"I prefer to take my meals in private," said the detective, proceeding to help Frank to beefsteak, rolls, coffee and eggs. "It avoids all gossip among the boarders as to my movements and enables me to come and go as I please without exciting comment from any one, which is just the sort of an arrangement I need. Make yourself at home; if you don't see what you want, ask for it. There are the morning papers for you if you want to read."

Frank appropriated one paper, the detective taking another.

The first thing that struck the boy's eye was a full account of the robbery of the Webster Bank and the reward offered by the bank officials for his own arrest.

And over his mind there crept a feeling of renewed shame for the wretched position into which he had been led by his own folly.

He inwardly resolved that once out of this scrape—once clear before the world—that never, so long as he lived, should a drop of liquor pass his lips again.

"The papers seem to be making quite a stir about you, don't they?" said the detective, laying down the one he had been reading, and plying his knife and fork. "Wouldn't there be a fine kick-up if they knew I had you concealed here?"

"I suppose there would. I am entirely in your power, Mr. Hook. You can handle me as you please."

"Don't say power, Frank. I don't like the word. I know you to be innocent of any intention to rob the bank. Were it not so, I should give you up at once."

"And claim the reward?"

"Most assuredly. That's the way I earn my living; but I have no such intention. I feel interested in your case, and would like to see you righted, if I can. Besides, it will pay me better to help you recover the money than to choose any other course. I make no secret of my motives. They are purely mercenary, you see."

"I am just as much obliged to you, all the same."

"You have reasons to be. The ordinary detective would have marched you off to the station-house. False witnesses would have been brought against you beyond a doubt; you would have been convicted, and under the provisions of your grandfather's will could never have inherited a cent."

"I don't seem likely to in any case, now that the parchment describing the hiding-place of his buried money is lost."

"Don't be too sure. I have a feeling that we shall yet succeed in finding that parchment. But now for a question or two. How came those boys—what do they call themselves—to lend you a helping hand?"

"They call themselves the 'Bats in the Wall.' Barney has been in the habit of blacking my boots at the bank. That was the reason he gave for helping me as he did."

"'Bats in the Wall,' eh? A good name. That accounts for the bat-like cry Officer Schneider heard. As for the reason, that don't amount to anything. Depend upon it, these boys would never had let



you into their secret for any such reason as that."

"What do you think was the reason?"

"Blest if I know. If I did, I am certain that I would have the key to much that is now mysterious about this strange affair. What do you know about this Jerry Buck?"

"Nothing at all, except meeting him in the wall as I did."

"There is something that boy is keeping back," said the detective, musingly. "Now what is it? That's the question. Have you noticed, Frank, how much he resembles you?"

"No, I'm sure, I haven't. Do you mean to say he looks like me?"

"Enough like you to be your twin brother. I never saw a more marked resemblance in my life. But that is always the way. A man can rarely see a resemblance to himself in the face of any one else."

"Well, now you speak of it, I can see some points in which we are alike. His hair is the color of mine; his eyes are not unlike——"

"Eyes, nose, mouth, everything," replied the detective, quickly. "But never mind that now. Tell me something of your own past—something concerning that mother of yours."

Tears gathered in the boy's eyes.

"It is a sad, sad story, Mr. Hook," he replied, brokenly. "After my father's misfortunes she lost her reason, as I have already told you. Mr. Callister, who had charge of our affairs, had her removed to a private asylum, where she has been most of the time ever since."

"What asylum was it?"

"Dr. Belding's, St. Nicholas avenue and 150th street, up near the Fort Washington road."

"I know the locality. You say you went there yesterday, and they told you she had escaped."

"Yes. She disappeared one night, some three weeks ago."

"And you were not informed?"

"No. Mr. Callister had the matter in charge. I visited the asylum from time to time, but they would rarely allow me to see my mother, and never at any time leave us alone."

"Was she very bad?"

"Well, pretty bad at times. She was particularly violent in the presence of Mr. Callister."

"Humph!" muttered the detective, "I'm not much surprised at that."

"She always had the idea that he was the cause of my father's misfortunes, though I'm sure I don't know why."

For a few moments the detective maintained silence.

"What was the name of your mother before your father married her, Frank?" he asked at length.

"Helen Dupont."

"Where was she from?"

"She was born in the upper part of New York, in what was then the village of Fort Washington."

"Has she any relatives?"

"I don't know. I never heard her speak of her past life at all."

"Then you have no idea why she should seek such quarters as that house in the rear of the Catherine Market, where we found her?"

"Not the slightest, Mr. Hook. When I first saw her in the street on that terrible night I never was more surprised in my life. I ought not to have left her even for a moment. I never would have done so had I been myself."

"There, there. Don't think anything more about it," said the detective, kindly, seeing that Frank could no longer restrain the tears. "Whisky makes fools of us all, my boy. Finish your breakfast and we'll talk about these matters later on."

He resumed the paper, leaving Frank to his own bitter thoughts.

For the space of a few moments neither spoke.

Suddenly, with an exclamation of surprise and satisfaction, Caleb Hook brought his hand down upon the table with a thump which made the dishes rattle.

"The very thing!" he exclaimed, excitedly. "Frank Mansfield, fate is playing into our hands."

He passed over the paper to Frank, with one finger pressed upon the advertising columns.

"Read that," he said briefly, "and tell me what you think of it."

It was an advertisement under the head of "Clerks Wanted."

This was the way it read:

"WANTED—A young man for a responsible position in a broker's office. One familiar with a general stock brokerage business preferred. Apply to Elijah Callister, Room 62, ——"

Building, Broad street."

"What do you think of it?" asked the detective.

"It's Mr. Callister, certainly; but I don't see how it concerns me?"

"You don't? What we want in this little scheme of ours more than anything else is to set a watch on this man; to trace out his movements, to learn who his associates are, and what interest he has with bank burglars and thieves, such as the man in whose company you saw him at the Catherine Market yesterday morning."

"Do you propose to send one of your men to apply for the place?"

"One of my men! Why, I mean that you shall apply for it, and get it, too."

Frank laughed.

"He'd know me at a glance," he said.

"Would he? We'll see about that. After a certain costumer with whom I am acquainted is through with you I don't think he would. But, supposing you were so effectually disguised that he could never recognize you, do you think you could fill the position and play your part?"

"Yes, I'm sure I could. At all events I'm not afraid to try."

"Good! That's the way to talk. I've been studying you closely, my boy, and feel sure that you could carry the thing through as well as any actor living."

"Always providing that I can get the place. I have no references, you know."

"That is easily fixed. The president of the Stock Exchange is a cousin of mine. You shall apply for that position this very morning with a letter from him. Do you understand the duties of such a position well enough to fill it?"

"Oh, perfectly. I learned all that in the bank."

"Then come with me at once," exclaimed Detective Hook, springing to his feet. "If you want to clear your name before the world—if you want to avenge the wrong done by that man Callister to you and yours—embrace this opportunity which fate has thrown in your path, and never rest until you have read his secrets through and through."

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE GHOST OF THREE OAKS APPEARS AGAIN.

For an instant Elijah Callister stood riveted to the floor.

Then, springing forward with a fierce imprecation upon his lips, he approached the door of the deserted chamber in the direction of which the ghostly figure of the dead Mrs. Marley had disappeared.

It was firmly locked.

He had himself thus locked it upon their first entrance, not from fear of intrusion—that was not to be expected in a mansion so utterly given over to rats and the dust of neglect as this—but from the natural tendency of a suspicious evil-doer to perform his acts behind barred doors.

And even as he had left it so remained that great oaken door now.

There had not been sufficient time for the woman, were she living, to have even turned the key, providing it had been in the lock.

But the key was not in the lock—it snugly reposed at that very moment in the pocket of the man himself.

Now, Elijah Callister did not believe in ghosts.

Search the length and breadth of New York City over, and in all probability no less superstitious man than the stock broker himself could have been found.

He shook the latch fiercely.

It had not been disturbed—there could be no doubt of that.

No other means of entrance to the chamber existed save by one of the windows, forty feet from the ground, at least.

A strange sense of fear seemed to creep over him—a tightness about the heart.

There lay his villainous companion stretched senseless upon the floor.

Neither window could have been approached without passing directly by the place where the man lay, where he himself had stood.

And yet the appearance had been a reality.

The figure of Mrs. Marley had advanced from behind the broken bedstead, whose high headboard offered an effective shield to the movements of any object behind it, had moved forward across the room, and retreated in the direction from whence it came.

Seizing the lantern, Mr. Callister swept its light underneath the bed.

The dust that everywhere filled the room was there plentiful enough, but that was all.

There were no signs of its having been recently disturbed—it lay in one unbroken sheet upon the floor.

At that instant a terrific gust of wind swept the rain fiercely against the panes.

And amid its moaning of the oaks without, and the rattling of the rain upon the glass, a low, mocking laugh was heard, seemingly from the floor itself, which sent a chill to the very marrow of his bones.

"This thing must be investigated," muttered the man, striding toward the fire-place. "Either that woman lives, or—but, pshaw! Don't I know she is dead? I saw her killed with my own eyes. I know that at this very moment her body lies waiting identification in the Morgue. There is some infernal trickery in all this; what it means I must know and will."

Setting down the lantern by the side of the hearth-stone, he seized the shoulder of the unconscious man and shook it with all the violence he could exert.

"Rube, Rube!" he cried, "what ails you, man? For Heaven's sake, stop this nonsense and try to be something like yourself!"

Slowly the eyes opened and Reuben Tisdale, raising himself to a sitting posture, looked wildly around.

"Lije, did you see her, or was it only meant for me?"

"See her! Of course I saw her. There's some infernal jugglery going on in this house, and I propose to find out what it is."

The man shook his head.

"No, no. It was Maria's spirit," he muttered. "I killed her and she haunts me, and no wonder, in this evil room."

"Well, and what's the matter with this room?"

"Can you ask?" said the man, shudderingly, rising with difficulty to his feet. "After the crime committed here on this very bed, can you ask why this room should be evil to me?"

"I don't see what that has to do with it. If that is your mode of reasoning it ought to be the ghost of old man Mansfield, not of your wife, that should appear to you here."

Again the man shuddered, glancing at the same time nervously about him.

"I don't know what came over me," he muttered. "I believe I must have fainted for the first time since I was a boy. Lije, for heaven's sake let's get out of this. I shall be of no more use to you in this house to-night."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," replied the stock-broker, decidedly. "I shan't leave the house until I've searched it from garret to cellar and found out what this thing means. If it were not that I know that she is closely confined I might almost think——"

But what Mr. Callister might have almost thought was destined never to find expression in words, for, at that moment, his companion pressing his hand to his forehead, reeled heavily forward and would have fallen again had not the broker caught him in his arms.

"Rube, for Heaven's sake," he exclaimed, "what on earth ails you, man? One would take you for a nervous woman instead of the man you are from the way you act. Here, drink this. It will put some heart in you, and then we'll search this old barn together. If there is a ghost in it, I'll warrant you I'll have it out."

He passed a whisky flask to the trembling Tisdale, who pressed it to his lips.

"There, do you feel better?"

"Yes, somewhat, but I'm as weak as a rat still."

"Well, then, come along. I'm bound to see this out."

Striding toward the bedstead, he seized hold of the headboard and tried to move it out into the center of the room.

Weak and decayed before, this action proved too much for the dilapidated piece of furniture.

With a loud crash it fell a mass of broken rubbish to the floor, causing Tisdale to spring back with a startled cry.

"Confound the old trap!" exclaimed Callister. "But one thing is settled—what we saw is neither under it nor behind it, that is clear. Where the mischief it could have found means to hide beats me. The door is locked, and the rest of the room is all clear before us. There is no place in which a cat could lie concealed."

He flung open the door of the closet as he spoke.

It was empty.

Nothing but a heap of dust met his gaze.

"Come," he said, shortly, picking up the lantern and producing the key from his pocket; "there are rooms below and above. Let us examine them all, and see if we can find trace of her

ghostship there."

He unlocked the door and led the way out into the deserted hall.

To the right and left opened other doors, connecting with the various chambers upon the floor.

Opening each in turn, Callister and his companion examined the rooms in silence.

One was a large guest chamber, containing various articles of antique furniture; another was a small bedroom, entirely vacant, and another still a bath-room, filled with rubbish of various kinds.

In neither one nor the other was there the slightest trace of the form of the woman which had appeared before them, nor evidence that the dust which covered everything had been disturbed for years.

Nor was their examination of the floor above better rewarded.

Here piles of old lumber were found, broken furniture, boxes, and bales.

Evidently years had passed since this portion of the house had been occupied. From the appearance presented there could be little doubt that it had been used for storage purposes by its miserly owner, who met death by violence on the floor below.

The parlor floor, the kitchen, and even the cellar itself, did not escape examination.

Equally to no purpose.

Some of the rooms were furnished, others were not.

Everywhere the furnishings were green with mold and sinking rapidly to decay.

No trace, not even so much as a footprint on the dust-covered floors of the ghostly visitant was anywhere found.

"It's no use, Lije," said Tisdale, hoarsely, as they paused at length in the great hall at the foot of the staircase which they had ascended upon their first entrance to the house. "You may search all night, but you'll find nothing. It was poor Maria's spirit that we saw."

"Nonsense, Reuben Tisdale! Do you mean to tell me that at your time of life you are going to give way to a belief in ghosts?"

"I didn't believe in them any more than you until to-night, but, after what we saw, what is a man to think?"

"I tell you it's a trick. This house has the reputation of being haunted, brought about by my own nocturnal searches within its walls. Some one saw us enter, and followed us to give us a scare."

Tisdale shook his head incredulously.

"Absurd," he said, with emphasis. "You saw the thing as well as I. What did it look like? Answer me that."

"Well, I must admit that it looked like Maria."

"I should say so. Wasn't it her face, her form, her dress? Do you suppose a man can forget the form of his wife? I tell you no. Not if he lived to be a thousand years old. Besides, I saw the mark of my fist upon her forehead, poor girl. Great God, to think that I should have struck her dead at my feet! She who once loved me more than all else on earth."

"Rube, you are acting like a perfect child!" exclaimed Callister, impatiently. "Here we are standing directly upon the verge of a precipice, as it were, and you give way like this. Detectives are on our track, man; the capture of Joe Dutton, unless he can be silenced most effectually, is likely to prove a fatal blow to us, and what we want is money—money alone will pull us through; without it all my influence in the business world will go for naught."

"Well, you have money, folks say. Use it—it is as much to your interest as the rest of us."

"Have I? So you say. Let me tell you, Rube Tisdale, that my stock operations of the last year have left me a well-nigh ruined man. I depended upon this bank affair to put me on my feet again. It has failed. If you had only preserved that parchment more carefully, every dollar of old Mansfield's wealth would now be within our grasp."

"Oh! stow that!" cried Tisdale, angrily. "What's the use of throwing all the blame on me? The bank affair proved a failure, didn't it! The parchment was lost, through my carelessness, I'll admit. Let's face matters as they are, and make the best of them we can. Come, let's be off out of this. We can do no more here to-night."

Callister blew out the lantern and opened the door.

"I go," he said, sulkily, "but, mark you, Rube, I shall return again. In a month's time, under the will of Jeremiah Mansfield, which fortunately is recorded in the Surrogate's office, even if you did lose the original, this house and all it contains belongs to me, if I can only catch that cub of a boy and turn him over to the law. Once in my possession, I'll raze it to the foundation stones but I'll discover the secret hidden by its moldering walls."

He slammed the door behind them, and descending the piazza steps, started down the avenue leading to the Fort Washington road beyond, regardless of the pelting rain, his companion following without a word.

Hard as it had poured all day long, and now far into the night, not at any time had the storm assumed such violence as now.

The water fell about them in torrents, the wind swept through the tops of the tall oak-trees with a wild, unearthly moan.

Now what possessed the man Tisdale to pause before he had advanced ten paces from the old mansion, and turn to survey its gloomy front once more, is something we cannot tell.

But turn he did, and simultaneously with the movement there broke from his lips a wild, unearthly yell.

"Lije! For God's sake! There she is again!"

And Elijah Callister also turned.

From out of the darkness before him there shot a blaze of light.

The door of the old mansion stood wide open.

The piazza, the great hall, and even the staircase beyond, were to be seen illuminated with the brightness of day.

And there, in the midst of that blaze of light, upon the threshold of the door itself, stood the form of the dead Mrs. Marley, pale and rigid, with one thin, white finger pointing directly toward himself and his frightened companion who with chattering teeth stood trembling by his side.

For one instant only the apparition maintained its place.

The next, and all was darkness again.

With a loud cry of terror Reuben Tisdale sprang down the avenue, and was lost from view among the trees, while his companion, now scarcely less alarmed, hurriedly followed in the direction of the gate.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### MR. CALLISTER'S CLERK.

"Ketchum & Bustem, eight hundred Wabash common, buyer three!"

"All right, Ketchum & Bustem—there you are."

Out of a little hole in the glass partition, which divided the interior of Mr. Elijah Callister's office, Room 62, — Building, Broad street, from the portion which was open to the outside public, a hand was thrust, passing back a receipt book to the waiting messenger of the well-known firm of Ketchum & Bustem, brokers on Broadway.

As no further messengers appeared, the transactions of Mr. Callister upon the board that day having been small, the door of the glass partition was presently thrown open, and a young man, neatly dressed, with a pen thrust behind his ear appeared, and began to walk up and down the office with a meditative air.

He was to all appearance of some twenty-eight or twenty-nine years of age, certainly not over thirty at the most.

Tall and straight, with light hair, which he wore long about the neck, and mustache and side whiskers, trimmed in the latest style.

Now, as the office was vacant, save for his own presence, this new stock clerk of Mr. Callister's—for it is this young man who has secured the position in the stock broker's office, the advertisement of which had attracted the keen eyes of Detective Hook, fell to thinking, and, as is the foolish custom of some people when alone, thinking aloud:

"And so this is the beginning of my third week here," he muttered, as he paced the office floor up and down, in momentary expectation of the return of his employer from the closing of the Stock Exchange, "and so far all goes well. Mr. Callister certainly does not suspect me—has not from the first. That letter of Hook's procured from his cousin, the president of the Exchange, did the business; he hired me without the least suspicion in the world.

"And to think that I should have been able to play this part for two whole weeks," he continued; "but I have done it, and I flatter myself that it has been well performed. Not for a moment has this man mistrusted that I am other than what I seem, while on my part I have learned much that will be invaluable——"

Here his reflections were interrupted by the entry of the broker himself.

He was as suave and sleek as ever. To use an old-fashioned expression, butter could not have melted in his mouth.

"Ah, Mr. Maxwell, you are alone, I see. Although forced by circumstances to remain indoors, you are enjoying the beautiful afternoon, I trust?"

"I am, Mr. Callister, as well as one can from the window away up here above the street."

"Just so, Mr. Maxwell. My offices are somewhat elevated, but so much nearer to Heaven, my dear sir—so much nearer to Heaven—and when you come to consider, there is much that is beautiful in the thought. Have Ketchum & Bustem reported that lot of Wabash?"

"Yes, sir."

"And Brownell & Popkins the Brazilian sixes?"

"Yes, Mr. Callister. Those were reported an hour ago."

"Very good, Mr. Maxwell—very good, indeed. I have some important papers to prepare, and shall now retire to my private office. If any one calls, show them in."

"Very well, Mr. Callister."

"And, Maxwell?"

"Sir."

"Should you feel so inclined, I should be pleased to see you at our prayer-meeting to-morrow night, at the Tenth Baptist Church. I take the deepest interest in the welfare of all young men."

Thereupon, Mr. Elijah Callister, smiling blandly, entered his private office, closed and locked the door.

"You old hypocrite!" muttered the clerk, shaking his fist at the oaken panels. "You miserable, canting fraud. Never would I have believed you to be what you are had I not witnessed your duplicity and double dealing now daily for the past two weeks with my own eyes."

And the assumed Mr. Maxwell, in whom no one, not even, we venture to say, Caleb Hook himself, had he not been in the secret, would have recognized our young friend, Frank Mansfield, resumed his seat at the desk behind the glass partition, and began figuring away upon a large book of accounts.

Yes, it was Frank Mansfield.

Detective Hook's plan had succeeded to the letter.

For two weeks he had been an inmate of the business office of the man who had plotted his ruin.

And during that short lapse of time many things had occurred.

Let us narrate them briefly, as they are highly essential to a correct understanding of subsequent events.

In the first place, the matter of the Webster bank robbery remains still a mystery. It is generally believed that Frank Mansfield was at least a participant in the crime, a guilty tool of the thieves.

From the moment of his escape from Officer Schneider, the whereabouts of that young gentleman have been a matter of mystery to the world.

When, through the accident which had happened to Detective Hook, the burglar Joe Dutton had been captured with his basket of stolen dollars at the Catherine Market, it had been thought by the police authorities that a speedy solution of the mystery was at hand.

They were mistaken.

During the four days of his confinement in the Tombs the captured criminal could not be persuaded to utter a word.

On the morning of the fifth day burglar Joe Dutton was found lying dead upon the floor of his cell.

Upon the same day occurred the funeral of the murdered Mrs. Marley.

Through some unknown source a lot had been purchased in a suburban cemetery. Detective Hook and Frank Mansfield, concealed within a closed carriage, were the sole mourners who followed to the grave.

Not the slightest clew to the perpetrator of this cowardly murder had been obtained by the police, but then they had not exerted themselves very violently, you see.

Mrs. Marley was only a poor, half crazy woman—there was no money in the case.

But in the busy rush of New York already were these matters well-nigh forgotten.

The robbery of the Webster bank, the disappearance of Frank Mansfield, and the murder of Mrs. Marley were all things of the past.

Maxwell, the clerk, had been engaged at his books not over an hour—and even that short space of time had sufficed to bring the short winter's day nearly to a close—when the office door again opened and a flashily dressed young man smoking a long cigar entered.

"Callister about?" he asked, with an air of general proprietorship of the whole establishment.

Mr. Maxwell peeped through the little round opening in the glass partition and immediately opened the door.

"He's in, but very busy," he replied, stepping into the outer room.

"Tell him Detective Cutts wants to see him, will you, young feller?" said the individual with the cigar.

Now the appearance of Mr. Billy Cutts, police detective, as a visitor at the stock broker's office caused the newly engaged clerk no surprise.

The fact was, Detective Cutts had been a daily caller upon Mr. Callister for more than a week.

Of the nature of the man's business Maxwell, the clerk, was unaware, but it appeared to be involved in much mystery, and was invariably conducted behind locked doors.

"Mr. Cutts, sir," said the clerk, as the door of the broker's office was opened in response to his knock.

"Show him in, Mr. Maxwell. Show him in," was the bland reply.

And during that momentary glimpse of the interior of the private office, the assumed Maxwell saw that the desk was littered with papers and large drawings, closely resembling architects' plans, strange things to be seen in a stock broker's office, to say the least.

Detective Cutts had not been closeted with Mr. Callister ten minutes, when the door of the outer office opened again, and a sweet, womanly voice was heard inquiring for the broker without the glass partition.

As the voice fell upon the ears of the disguised Frank Mansfield his heart seemed to rise in his throat.

It was the voice of Miss Edna Callister, loved by him as deeply as her father was despised.

By the earnest advice of Detective Hook, to whom the young man had confided his tender feelings for this beautiful girl, Frank had refrained from visiting the object of his affection or holding any communication with her at all.

Difficult and trying as this had been, it was certainly a wise precaution, as can be readily seen.

How much under the influence of her father the girl might be it was impossible to tell.

Not that Frank loved her the less for the wrong that parent had attempted to do him. But he now saw things by a new and less selfish light than ever before.

Had he the right to aspire to the affections of the daughter, when against the father he was working night and day?

The severest test to which his disguise had yet been subjected was now about to occur.

Could the eyes of love be deceived?

There was no time to hesitate, and Frank, mastering all his self-control, stepped from behind the glass partition into the office beyond.

"Mr. Callister is engaged just at present, miss. Will you please to give me your name, and I will let him know that you are here."

"Say to him that Miss Callister would like to see him," replied the young lady, her clear blue eyes resting upon the face of the clerk.

"Please be seated. I will inform him at once."

"Edna, you here!" exclaimed the broker, in tones of surprise, as he hurriedly emerged from the office, closing the door carefully behind him, not, however, without enabling the watchful eyes of the disguised clerk to catch a glimpse of Detective Cutts poring over the plans upon the desk within.

"Yes, father," replied the girl, coldly, "I am here, as you see."

"Mr. Maxwell, oblige me by stepping out into the hall a moment," said the broker, hurriedly. "I wish to speak with my daughter alone, and Mr. Cutts is too busy to be disturbed."

Frank obeyed.

Evidently Mr. Callister had forgotten the open fan-light above the door, which afforded ample opportunity for any one in the hall outside who chose to stand close beneath it and listen to hear every loud word spoken within. Otherwise he might have lowered his voice a trifle, perhaps even have spoken less harshly than he did.

"What brings you here, girl?" were the first words the listener heard. "How many times have I told you not to come to this office?"

"It makes no difference," was the reply of the daughter, in clear, ringing tones. "I come here because I choose to come. Knowing you as I do, father, I have long since ceased to love you. Can you then expect me to obey?"

"I'll find means to force obedience if you don't give it willingly. What do you want?"

"To know what you have done with Frank Mansfield."

"Impertinent jade! Why do you come to inquire of the movements of that young rascal from me? I have told you already that I know nothing of him at all. His companions, the bank robbers, could tell you, perhaps. Hunt them out and ask them."

"I am convinced from the remark you let fall in my presence last night that you know more of Frank than you choose to tell. He left me to come to you for the purpose of asking your consent to our marriage, and has not been seen since. What have you done with him, I ask again?"

"Oh, yes, he has. You forgot the trifling fact that your beloved was caught in the act of robbing the Webster Bank."

"I don't believe it—I will never believe it. I demand to know what you have done with Frank. I know only too well that it is for your interest to put him out of the way."

"You are a silly fool!" the voice of the father was heard to angrily exclaim. "Go back to your dolls and your playthings. If I catch you here again I will lock you up on bread and water for a month."

To this speech there was no reply, but at the same instant the door of the office opened.

The disguised listener drew hurriedly back.

He was not quick enough, however, to avoid coming face to face with the daughter of his employer.

Their eyes met.

It was for an instant only, but in that instant the pale face of the girl blushed rosy red.

Love penetrates all disguises.

Frank saw instantly that his was no longer of avail so far as those loving eyes were concerned.

"Shall I assist you to the elevator, Miss Callister?" he asked, quietly, stepping to her side.

"If you please, sir."

And they stood together by the door of the elevator shaft, the car at that moment being seen descending from the story above.

Suddenly the girl, extending her dainty, gloved hand grasped that of the youth within her own.

"I still visit the old place," she whispered, hurriedly. "Oh, Frank, to know that you are alive and well lifts a great load from my heart. Never doubt that it still beats alone for you."

The door is flung open—the elevator has come.

The door is closed—the elevator has gone.

And Frank Mansfield, turning, beheld the tall form of Elijah Callister regarding him malevolently from the threshold of the open office beyond.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### JERRY BUCK PLAYS THE PART OF A DETECTIVE AGAIN.

It was after eight o'clock when Mr. Elijah Callister left the ——— Building, Broad street, by the side door opening upon Exchange Place, and the night had turned off cold.

Detective Cutts was still with him, and buttoning their overcoats about them, both hurried off in the direction of William Street, with the air of men having business on hand.

As for Frank Mansfield, he had left the office of the stock-broker a good three hours before, with his mind full of doubts and fears.

"My daughter is quite capable of taking care of herself, Mr. Maxwell," the broker had said in his usual oily tones, as Frank returned to the office after the little scene enacted at the elevator door. "In future I beg you will be less attentive to any ladies who may chance to favor my office with a visit."

With this rebuke he had shut himself up in the private office with Mr. Billy Cutts again, and was seen no more up to the usual hour for closing the office, when Frank, without attempting to even say good-night, simply put on his hat and walked out, wholly undetermined as to whether his hasty communication with Miss Edna Callister had been overheard.

As the stock broker and the detective hurried along the southerly side of Exchange place—we mean the side where the street dealers in government bonds spend their entire time during business hours in leaning against the iron railings of the basement offices awaiting customers for their wares—there crept out from a doorway a ragged, shivering newsboy, hugging a great bundle of the evening papers tightly under his arm.

Shooting a hasty glance at the men before him, he bounded ahead over the icy sidewalk, shouting at the top of his voice:

"Fo'rt Commercial, Nooiz or Telegram! Evenin' papers, gents?"

Evidently the "gents" were disinclined for the evening paper, for Callister, rudely pushing the boy aside, crossed William street and paused opposite the great stone building occupied by the Lispenard Bank, one of the wealthiest of the wealthy financial institutions in New York.

For an instant only the pause was made; but during that instant the stock broker, with a hurried glance up and down the street—there was no one but the newsboy in sight, and he was half a block away—unrolled a stiff paper plan which he took from under his coat, and giving one end of it to Cutts to hold, pointed first at the plan and then at the building of the Lispenard Bank again.

"Fo'rt Commercial! Nooiz! Telegram or German! Evenin' paper, gents?"

Again the newsboy stood by their side, looking almost over their shoulder at the plan they held between them, as he thrust his bunch of papers in the broker's face.

"No, you young imp!" exclaimed Callister. "These newsboys are thicker than flies about here. I tell you, Billy, there's no trouble about it—no trouble at all. An entrance can be effected as easy as rolling off a log. And as to money, why, good Lord, it's the clearing house, you know, and there's always money there. Come, let's get down and show these to your father, and see what he thinks of the idea."



He rolled up the plans hastily, and putting them under his overcoat, moved off up William street toward Wall, the detective keeping pace by his side.

At that moment the newsboy crept out from under the shadows of the Custom House fence and followed them, dodging from one side of the street to the other, calling his papers, and occasionally stopping to sell one, but always keeping the forms of Messrs. Cutts and Callister plainly in view.

"I've got yer now, yer sly old rat!" he muttered, as he crossed Wall street close at their heels. "An', by gracious, I orter after all the time I spent a-watchin'. I seen them papers wat's got the picter of the Lisenard bank onter them. If she an' me don't spoil yer little game this time 'twon't be no faalt of Jerry Buck's, an' don't yer forget it!"

Who "she was" did not appear as yet.

Certainly, in his present position, Master Jerry Buck was playing the part of a detective quite alone.

Down William street to Liberty, down Liberty to its junction with Malden Lane, down Malden Lane to Pearl street the men advanced, all unconscious of the ragged youth who followed close at their heels.

Turning to the left, they kept along Pearl street, beneath the shadows of the great structure of the elevated railroad, nor did they make another turn until Franklin Square was reached.

And when they passed beneath the roadway of the Brooklyn Bridge and entered Cherry street, smelling of a thousand and one ill odors, suggestive of anything save the luscious fruit from which its name is derived, Jerry Buck was still behind them.

He had ceased to call his papers now, but stood silently watching them from between two empty trucks drawn up by the side of the curbstone, as they entered the very house on the easterly side of Cherry street, just beyond Catherine, which he had pointed out to Frank Mansfield upon the occasion of their Sunday morning visit to the Catherine Market as the one into which the burglars of the Webster Bank had disappeared.

No sooner had the two men passed through the doorway than the newsboy, pulling his tattered felt hat low down over his eyes, quietly crossed the street, entered the house himself, and crept silently after them up the rickety stairs, just in time to see Detective Cutts, the man paid by the City for the detection of crime, and Mr. Elijah Callister, the pious brother of the Tenth Baptist Church, disappear within the rear room on the second landing of the tenement, the door of which was immediately closed.

Then Jerry Buck, giving utterance to a peculiar chuckle, slipped past the door, mounted still another pair of stairs and tapped lightly upon the panels of the door of the room immediately above.

It was presently opened, and a woman's head and shoulders thrust out into the hall.

"Is that you, Jerry?"

"Yes, missus, it's me."

The door was softly opened wide and closed again, the boy slipping into the room.

"Them fellers meets down-stairs again to-night, missus. They means business this time, and no mistake."

"Is he there?" asked the woman.

"You bet! Didn't I jest see him go in! I've been a-layin' for him, a-followin' of him since five o'clock. Cutts the detective is with him, too."

"You are a good boy, Jerry," said the woman, tears springing to her eyes. "God will reward you for what you've done for me."

"Do you think so, missus? 'Twan't much, after all. When I seend you a-tryin' to jump inter the river I stopped you. When you told me yer troubles, an' how that old mean snide, Callister, had robbed your husband and killed him, an' how he had treated you an' was a-tryin' to treat yer boy, why I jest took a-holt an' helped yer, an' the rest has come about of itself."

For reply, the woman stroked the boy's tumbled hair, and then, as if moved by some sudden impulse, stooped and kissed him.

"Looka here!" exclaimed Jerry, half pleased, half ashamed. "I never had no one do that to me before, but then you seem somehow jest as though you were my own mother, so I suppose it's all right."

"And you never knew your mother?" asked the woman, regarding the boy with a wistful air.

She was a person who had evidently seen much sorrow.

Tall and thin, with gray hair tied tightly in a knot behind her head, poorly but respectably dressed, there was about her an unmistakable air of refinement, indicative of quite a different position in life from the one in which we now find her.

For surely the carpetless room, cheap table and chairs, the little stove and scanty display of common dishes through the half open closet door were indicative of anything but plenty and comfort, to say the least.

But they were miles and miles ahead of anything Jerry Buck was accustomed to, and he regarded them with an almost respectful air, as he replied:

"No, missus, I never had no father nor mother as I remember. I've always lived about the streets."

"But you must have some early remembrances," continued the woman. "Can't you tell me what they are?"

"Yes, some other time. Them fellers have been in the room below for full five minutes. If we are a-goin' to ketch onto their racket, we'd better be about it, I should say."

And as he spoke Jerry Buck, creeping behind the stove, threw himself flat on his stomach upon the uncarpeted floor, close by the mouth of a small round hole, through which in some former time, when the house had been occupied by the old Quaker families once resident in this part of New York, a stove-pipe had passed, conveying heat to this upper chamber from the room beneath.

A thin sheet of paper covered the opening upon the ceiling in the room below them, through which a light could be seen shining dimly and the sounds of men's voices distinctly heard.

The woman now seated herself likewise upon the floor, and, in common with the boy, bent over the hole.

Had they been in the chamber beneath them, they could not have heard the words of its occupants more plainly.

Sound rises, as is well known to every one. Through the round opening every syllable uttered fell with startling distinctness upon their ears.

"I tell you the job's an immense one, Rube, whether Sam Cutts can see it or not."

"That's old Callister," murmured Jerry in a low whisper.

"Hush!" replied the woman, speaking in tones equally low, at the same time holding up her hand. "I know his wicked voice only too well, I'm not likely to forget the voice of one who has brought the ruin he has done upon me and mine."

"Well, I'm not kicking," came a man's voice up the tube.

"The plan looks all right, and Lije talks all right. It's a big scheme on paper, but the question is, won't it prove another Webster bank affair? Providin' it works, will there be enough shug in the vault to pay us for our trouble? That's what I want to know in advance."

"Why, it's the Clearing House for all the other banks, man," replied Callister's voice, impatiently. "There's always money, thousands upon thousands, in the vaults of the Lispenard bank, I'm a director in it myself, and I guess I ought to know."

"And these plans——"

"Are drawn from personal knowledge of the interior of the bank and its vault. Let me tell you, Sam Cutts, this is the biggest thing of the kind I ever put you on to. Billy here knows that I'm giving it to you straight."

"Rat-tat-tat! Rat-tat-tat!" Both Jerry Buck and the woman were upon their feet in an instant.

The rapping was upon the door of the room in which the listeners were.

"Who can it be!" whispered the woman, turning pale.

"Give it up. Better throw suthin over the hole while I open the door an' see. It's some of the neighbors have come to borry suthin', most like, or a peddler mebbe."

"Rat-tat-tat! Rat-tat-tat!"

The boy hastily crossed the room, and turning the key, cautiously opened the door upon the crack.

Instantly a man sprang into the room, and seizing Jerry by the shoulders with a vise-like grip, clapped one hand over his mouth.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### FRANK VISITS COTTAGE PLACE.

Cottage Place is one of the by-ways.

No man in his sober senses would attempt to describe it otherwise.

Starting from Bleecker street, and running in a winding manner south-easterly to Houston, it affords with its snug little dwellings, its blossoming gardens in the grass-plat centers before the low, red brick cottages, from which it derives its name, a quiet abode for a few old-time families of moderate means, whose necessities compel them to live and maintain some show of respectability in this most undesirable quarter of New York.

But the flowers do not blossom in the winter before the brick dwellings of Cottage Place, and as the evening we are about to speak of is that of the day upon which Miss Edna Callister visited her father's office in Broad street, winter is the season with which we have to deal.

It was still early—the factory whistles had not yet blown for six, when the lithe, well-dressed figure of Maxwell, Mr. Callister's new clerk might have been seen to drop from a Bleecker street car, and, turning into Cottage Place, enter the gate of the snug little cottage bearing the number "9" over its doorway, and hastily ring the bell.

Notwithstanding the fact that it was already dark, he seemed to display a familiarity with the house and its surroundings which indicated with perfect plainness that this was by no means his first visit.

Standing upon the little stoop while awaiting the answer to his ring, the eyes of the young man wandered toward the windows of the first or parlor floor, which, as the house was without basement, stood but slightly raised from the level of the ground.

The blinds were thrown back, but the curtains were drawn, a light burning brightly, suggesting a comfortable, home-like interior within.

"I wonder if she's there," escaped the young man's lips as he gazed upon the curtains. "I feel sure she is, and though I am acting in direct opposition to Mr. Hook's express instructions, I know, I could stand it no longer—I had to come.

"Dear Edna! Never did I fully realize the depth of love until now. Never——"

The door was opened suddenly.

A stout, motherly-looking woman stood gazing inquiringly upon his face.

"Mrs. Brown! It's an age since I've seen you. Is Edna here to-night!"

The young man had sprung eagerly forward, extending his hand toward the woman as he spoke.

"Edna! Who are you, sir? I don't know what you mean."

Frank Mansfield laughed.

All eagerness to meet once more the girl he loved, he had for the moment forgotten his disguise.

"Mrs. Brown, don't you know me?"

"It's Frank Mansfield's voice. Can this be you?"

"It's no one else, auntie," replied Frank, laughing, at the same time closing the door behind him. "I forgot that my face had changed."

"I should have never known you," replied the woman, doubtfully. "She's inside, and expecting you, Frank. But, good gracious me! I don't know whether I'm doing right or wrong to let you meet here so. What a terrible scrape you've got yourself into! We thought you had run away."

"Not yet, auntie, not yet. When I get ready to do such a thing as that I shall let you, my dear old nurse, into the secret first, now you may depend. But where is she? In the little parlor as usual? I'm just dying to hold my darling in my arms again."

The woman threw open a door without a word, displaying a small but neatly furnished room.

"Edna!"

The daughter of Elijah Callister stood before the open grate.

Frank rushed toward her with extended hand.

"My love! my darling!" he cried, impetuously. "Thank God, we are together again!"

The young girl drew back.

Her face was pale, her bosom heaved—there were tears resting in her eyes.

"One moment," she said, with an evident struggle. "It seems to me, Frank Mansfield, that, before admitting you to your old-time place in my heart, some explanation is due to me."

At the same instant the door was heard to close.

Mrs. Brown had discreetly retired, leaving the lovers alone.

Frank drew back abashed.

"I thought after what you said this afternoon—" he began, hesitatingly.

"That I stood ready to receive you, without explanation, on your old footing? No, sir, nothing of the sort! I have some questions to put to you before that can be done."

"Edna, I am yours—yours body and soul! Ask me what questions you please."

"Then, sir, where have you been during all these weeks? You stand accused of a terrible crime before the world. If you are innocent, why have you not communicated with me? Why have you not come to tell me so before?"

"Edna, I am innocent. I swear it before Almighty God and you, the woman I love."

"I believe it. I maintained it against my father, against all the sneers and reproaches that he heaped upon your name. But when day after day passed, and I heard nothing from you, what was I to believe? What am I to believe now, finding you in my father's office and in disguise?"

For the space of a moment Frank stood gazing upon her beautiful form in a maze of perplexity and doubt.

What should he do? What should he say?

To betray his plans to the daughter of his enemy was to frustrate them. He could see it at a glance.

"Hook was right," he thought, bitterly. "I have made a mistake. I ought not to have come at all."

He gazed sadly upon the girl for an instant, and then taking his hat from the table upon which he had thrown it, motioned to withdraw.

"Edna, I—I——"

He stood hesitating now, his hand upon the knob of the door.

Instantly the girl's manner changed.

Springing forward, she threw herself in the arms of her lover, and burst into a flood of tears.

"Frank! Frank! Don't go. I can forgive anything, everything, but your slight to me."

"My slight to you, dearest?"

He led her gently toward a sofa near the window, and seated himself by her side.

"It's weeks since I have seen you, Frank. In your trouble could you not trust me?"

"Can you trust me, little girl?" he cried, clasping both her hands within his own.

"Can you trust me, when I tell you that I did not rob the Webster Bank, that I am not guilty of the terrible crime with which the newspapers have had me charged?"

"Frank, I can trust you in anything; but only think! It is three weeks since you left me in this very room—left me to seek my father and ask his consent to our marriage. I have not seen you since."

"Dearest. I could not help it. I saw your father. He refused my request. I—I—that is—I have been so situated that I could neither see nor communicate with you since."

The cheeks of the youth blushed red as he spoke.

The memory of his dissipation and folly in the presence of this innocent girl seemed to crowd upon him with crushing force.

How unworthy he was of love like this? How——

But his thoughts were interrupted.

Edna Callister had spoken again.

"Frank, I believe your innocence firmly," she said, in clear, decided tones, "I believe it first because I know your heart, second, because—because—oh, how can I say it! Because—Frank, you will not betray me—because my father tries to make me think you guilty, and I know my father to be a very wicked man."

"Edna!"

"It is true, Frank. You know it is true. It is my firm belief that he is at the bottom of a plot against you, and that you know this to be the fact. Is it not so?"

"Edna, I cannot tell you."

"But you must. I insist upon knowing. It is because you have discovered his baseness at last, because you know what I say to be true that you have kept away from me, and hate me for all I know. It is for this reason that you are watching him in his office in this disguise."

"Edna, I love you and shall love you always, no matter what your father may be to me. I promise faithfully—— Hark! what noise was that?"

It was the sound of some one without the window tapping gently upon the pane.

Rising hastily, Frank strode to the window and raised the shade.

"Great Heaven! again!"

With face the color of death the young man leaped back from the window, the perspiration starting in great drops from his pallid brow.

"Look—look! Do you see her?" he breathed, hoarsely, pointing with one finger toward the window facing which both the lovers now stood.

"Why, Frank, it's your mother! What in the world can she be doing here?"

It was a woman who stood in the little courtyard without, her face pressed against the pane.

It was the strange woman who has already figured very prominently in this tale—the mother of Frank Mansfield, whom he believed as firmly as he believed in his own existence to be now lying in her grave.

The face, form, figure were all the same.

The apparition of Trinity church-yard stood before him now.

With one hand, she struck the window feebly as with the other she raised what appeared to be a piece of paper before the eyes of the astonished pair.

Then, laying the paper against the glass, she drew back into the darkness and disappeared.

"Remain where you are, Edna!" cried Frank, springing toward the door. "In a moment I will return."

He was in the street in an instant.

Too late!

The woman was nowhere to be seen.

But there upon the window-sill, leaning against the glass, still rested a folded parchment, affording the most positive evidence of her presence before the house.

Search was useless.

Whoever the strange creature might be—if a being of this world indeed—she had but to turn the corner of Bleecker street to lose herself in the crowd.

With his mind filled with a thousand doubts and fears, Frank seized the parchment and returned to the room.

Without speaking a word he strode toward the table, and spread it out beneath the lighted lamp.

His eyes had scarce rested upon it than he uttered an exclamation of joyful surprise.

And no wonder.

It was the description of the treasure hidden by old Jeremiah Mansfield, his grandfather, which lay before him.

As though a gift from Heaven, it had been restored to him.

He had watched and waited.

The missing parchment had been placed in his hands.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### AN UNTIMELY OCCURRENCE—CALEB HOOK DISCOVERED.

"Hist—hist, Jerry Buck!" whispered Detective Hook as he slipped through the door opened by the newsboy. "You are a smart lad—a bright lad—to track those fellows as you have. I watched you do it, but, having got them into close quarters, we must put our heads together and find out what's going on in the room below."

Both Jerry Buck and the woman drew back in startled surprise.

The appearance of the detective thus unexpectedly, was, to judge from the countenances of both, anything but welcome to them.

For the moment even the ready wit of the Bat seemed to desert him, and he glanced from the face of the woman, who stood motionless behind the stove with her foot covering the hole in the floor, to that of Caleb Hook with an appearance of deep perplexity, not unmingled with fear.

"I don't know what you mean, mister. I——"

"Stop, Jerry. This is no time to lie. You know me well enough. Have you forgotten the morning at the Catherine Market—my visit to the Bats in the Wall?"

"Well, s'pose I hain't? What's that got to do with it? This here's a private room. What call have you got to run your nose in here?"

"One moment, Jerry," said the detective, coolly pushing the boy aside and advancing into the room.

"Madam, your most obedient," he continued, bowing respectfully to the woman. "My name is Hook. I am a police detective and the best friend Frank Mansfield has got. May I trouble you to tell me who and what you are?"

The woman trembled before him.

A wild, hunted look overshadowed her face; her eyes wandered restlessly about the room.

"I harm no one, sir," she murmured. "I only wish to be let alone that I may complete the work of vengeance which I have begun against the man who has brought so much misery to me and mine."

"Just so, madam, just so," answered Caleb Hook, soothingly. "You refer to Mr. Callister, no doubt, who is now in the room below. I stand ready to help you in your work if I can."

"But you are the detective who arrested my—Frank, I mean."

"I did, but I have stood his friend from that night until now. I am anxious to help him and all belonging to him. Are you not the person to whom I spoke at the Trinity church-yard wall on the night of the arrest? Did you not tell me that Frank Mansfield was your son, and that he robbed the Webster bank?"

"No, no, I was mistaken. I was mad!" exclaimed the woman, springing forward wildly. "I have no son, he robbed no bank. Go away and leave me alone."

"'Tain't no use to make him mad, missus," whispered the newsboy. "Frank trusts him an' I guess the best thing will be for us to trust him too."

"You are right, Jerry," said the detective quietly. "Neither this good lady nor yourself have anything to fear from me."

"Ha! ha! ha! Ha! ha! ha! You can just bet your life the detective will never get into this little racket—never in the world."

From the room below these words, accompanied by loud and boisterous laughter, suddenly burst forth, the sound finding easy passage through the uncovered stove pipe hole in the floor.

The effect upon the woman was electrical.

Advancing quickly toward Caleb Hook, she grasped him by the hand.

"That's his voice," she whispered wildly. "Help me to bring that man to the hangman's scaffold and I'll fall down and bless you on my bended knees. It is Elijah Callister that robbed me of my husband; it is he who robbed me of my reason, and would have robbed me of my son. Oh, if I could only trust you, sir! If I could only trust you! How can a weak woman like myself, with no other help than that of this faithful boy, hope to bring justice upon his sinful head alone."

"You may trust me fully, madam. I too have a grievance against Elijah Callister. Will you help me to bring him into the grasp of the law which he has so long defied?"

"Yes—yes! Let them hang him as high as Haman! Oh, that I could only dance on his grave!"

She spoke wildly—excitedly. That her mind was far from clear was plainly to be seen.

That she hated Elijah Callister with a deep and bitter hatred was equally plain.

Caleb Hook, watching her closely, saw all this, and understanding that his opportunity had come, proceeded to grasp it at once.

"Tell me what you know, and you shall do it!" he said, emphatically. "I swear that your desire shall be fulfilled! Who and what is this smooth-spoken Callister—that's what I want to know?"

"Who is he?" cried the woman. "He is a hypocrite, a liar, a murderer, a thief! I have been watching him for weeks, and I know what I say is true. He is the man who concocted the robbery at the Webster bank, and tried to throw the crime upon my son."

"Ah! Then you are Mrs. Mansfield, the mother of Frank? I thought as much from the first."

"Yes—yes; they locked me in an asylum, but I outwitted them and got away, but too late to save my boy from harm. They drew the net around him, but I will tear it off. I will live to see those wretches swing for their crimes when Frank is rich and prosperous. I say it, sir, and I mean it. God will grant a mother's prayer!"

She fumbled at her dress as she spoke these words, and producing a package of greasy, worn papers, thrust them into the detective's hand.

"Read—read!" she exclaimed, her eyes darting to the right and left more wildly than before. "I have written it all down for the world to read when my work is done. But you, who love my boy, shall read it now."

"Say, mister, don't try to talk to her no more," whispered the boy, pulling Hook slyly by the coat. "She always goes on like that when she gets talking about these here things. It's my opinion she's a little off."

"I'll read them carefully, and return them in due time, my dear lady," replied the detective, in a quiet tone, taking the hint. "What we have to do now is to find out what's going on in the room below if we can. It's my belief those fellows are up to no good."

"You can just bet your life on that, Mr. Hook," whispered the newsboy. "They're concocting a scheme to rob the Lisenard bank. I caught on to it through the hole. Just you come over here and listen for yerself. Look a-here, missus, it's all right; you can just set down there and be as quiet as you can. Him an' me'll attend to this here business alone."

Sinking into a chair, the woman, burying her face in her hands, began muttering wildly to herself, while Jerry, taking the detective by the arm, drew him toward the hole behind the stove.

"There, boss, just you put your ear down there," he whispered. "There's a hull raft of them fellers down below, and them that busted the vault of the Webster Bank's among 'em too. I seed 'em an' I know 'em. I was a-tryin' fer to foller 'em up meself fer ter help her along"—he gave a jerk with his thumb toward the woman behind them—"but since you've dropped onto me an' are disposed to help, I'll just turn the hull business over to you, fer you ought to understand it better nor me."

"Quite right, Jerry," whispered Hook, throwing himself flat upon his stomach and bending over the hole in the floor, while the newsboy, less clumsily, did the same.

Beneath, voices in earnest discussion could be plainly heard; the voice of that pious and most excellent man, Mr. Callister, being prominent above the rest.

"And so it's fixed for the day after to-morrow. We are to meet at Cagney's at eleven o'clock, where I shall await your return from the bank with a bigger haul, unless I'm greatly mistaken, than we ever made before."

A look of triumph overspread the face of Caleb Hook as those words, spoken in the voice of the stock-broker, fell upon his ear.

"Jerry!" he whispered, softly.

"Well, boss?"

"Run around to the Oak street station and tell Captain McGinty to send me five of his best men without an instant's delay. Quiet now! Not a particle of noise as you value your life."

"I'm fly, boss," whispered the boy, drawing himself cautiously into an upright position.

As he did so his legs swept over the hole.

Crash! Bang!

A heavy body had fallen through the stove-pipe hole, into the room below.

It was the iron stove-lifter, which a moment before had rested quietly upon the floor by Jerry's side.

In his movement to rise the legs of the boy had come in contact with it, sweeping it across the hole.

The intervening covering of thin paper was broken on the instant.

With a loud crash the stove-lifter, sweeping down through the opening, had fallen like a bomb-shell into the midst of the men assembled in the room below.

There was a sudden exclamation in the voice of Callister.

Then all was as silent as the grave.

Like a flash Caleb Hook was upon his feet.

"Take care of her, Jerry," he whispered. "Lock the door after me and open to no one. I shall head them off at the front entrance. Great Cæsar! how unfortunate! But I'll clap the bracelets on that villain Callister even if the rest escape."

He flung open the door and darted toward the stairs, Jerry Buck locking it behind him as he passed.

Scarce had he descended half the flight connecting with the floor below, when a door was suddenly flung open and four men sprang out into the passage dimly illuminated by a single hanging lamp.

"There he is!" exclaimed one of the men—the smallest, in whom the detective instantly recognized his companion on the force, Mr. Billy Cutts—"there's the fellow who dropped us his card. Gentlemen, this is my friend, Detective Hook. He has come to pay us an evening call!"

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A DETECTIVE IN A BAD FIX.

Detective Hook flung his hand behind him.

Instantly a revolver, grasped firmly between his fingers, glittered in the rays of the hanging lamp which shed its feeble light through the hall of the Cherry street tenement in which he now stood at bay.

"Stand off, there, you fellows!" he shouted, sternly. "One step forward and some one bites the dust!"

Crack!

The warning was unheeded.

In the wild western towns the rule is, "Shoot first and explanations afterward."

With fatal result Caleb Hook had chosen the course in direct reverse of this.

With the quickness of thought—in fact, even as the words had passed his lips, a short, thick-set fellow, from the shelter of the doorway connecting the passage with the room from which the men had emerged, had drawn a revolver of the smallest caliber and discharged it at the detective's head.

It made no more noise than an ordinary popgun, but, notwithstanding, accomplished its fatal work.

A low cry escaped the lips of Caleb Hook. The revolver dropped from his nerveless hand.

With one arm outstretched he clutched at the banisters, missed them, clutched again, and pitched headlong to the foot of the stairs.

"Three cheers and a tiger for the man who fired that shot!" whispered Callister, as all hands crowded about the inanimate form of the fallen man. "Sam Cutts, old man, there's some life left in you yet. Now, what's to be done with the carcass before the whole neighborhood comes piling in?"

"Into the room with him—quick!" exclaimed Billy Cutts. "We are safe there for a while, at all events. We do not even know that he is dead, meddling fool that he is."

His instructions were instantly obeyed.

The body of the unfortunate detective was unceremoniously dragged into the room adjoining, the door of which was immediately bolted from within.

"Is he dead?" asked Billy Cutts, hoarsely. "By thunder, father, I suppose you had to do it, but his death will kick up a Satan's own row upon the force. The chief of police will never rest night or day until he has run us down."

"Do it! Why, of course I had to do it!" replied the elder Cutts—a grizzled reproduction of his hopeful son in appearance. "It's my belief, gents, that that there iron lifter dropped down upon us by mistake. He knew it, and was off to give us and the whole business away to the captain of the nearest station before we had time to escape."

"Sam's about right," growled Reuben Tisdale. "I tell you, boys, this is a serious snap. We've doctored this spy with a leaden pill, but who can tell how many more of the same kind of cattle there is in hiding in that room overhead? Who lives up there, anyway? Does any one know? Why were we not told of that stovepipe hole?"

"Blest if I know," said Callister. "Cutts, you ought to be able to tell—these are your rooms."

"Tell! I don't know no more about them what lives in the house than the dead. I reckon it would pay to have some on us slip up and see."

"No, no!" whispered Callister, breathlessly. "What's done is done, and can't be helped. It is my opinion the whole scheme has been overheard through that confounded hole in the floor."

"Hold on, you fellows," put in Billy Cutts. "I'll go up-stairs and reconnoiter. I'm a detective, don't you know, and if I catch on to anything in the shape of the police I'll knock with my heel once hard upon the floor. If you hear the signal light out, every mother's son of you. Of course they won't think anything strange at seeing me come snooping round."

Silently unbolting the door, he crept up the stairs, the others listening breathlessly for the signal he proposed to give.

Through their own door—open on the crack—they could hear Cutts open the door of the room above.

Evidently he had met with no opposition, for the sound of his footsteps could be heard overhead walking about the room.

"Blame me if I don't think it was this cuss that was up there alone, and no one else," muttered the elder Cutts, indicating the detective, who lay white and still, dead to all appearance, in the midst of the little group.

"He's wrong, Lije," whispered Tisdale to the stock-broker, who stood by his side, a little apart from the rest. "I heard the footsteps of two persons, at least, overhead there before that iron thing came down. Luck has deserted us since my—my—you know what. I'm doomed to be the Jonah of the gang."

"Hush, Rube, for Heaven's sake! Can't you let up on your infernal croaking even in a strait like this? If the police are upon us, why, we'll do the best thing that offers. If it's only this fellow, Hook, why, Sam Cutts' bullet has settled him. But not another word now. Here's Billy coming back."

The young detective, if one so unfaithful to his trust can truthfully be so termed, entered at this moment with a smile of satisfaction on his face.

"It's all right," he exclaimed, closing the door. "There ain't a soul in the room up-stairs. It's fixed up roughly to look like housekeeping, but it's my belief that it was hired by Hook for the simple purpose of catching us. It's a common method with the profesh."

"Hadn't some one better inquire of the agent on the first floor?" put in one of the men who had not spoken before.

"Some other time will do for that," said Callister, hurriedly. "What we want to do now is to dispose of this body without further delay. We can investigate later on."

"Well, and how do you propose to do it?"

"I rather guess we can fix that if we can get it through the alley to the Donegal Shades—eh, Rube?" replied the broker, with a smile. "After we've finished with Mr. Hook, he'll trouble us no more, I fancy. It's too bad to deprive the New York police force of such a bright and shining light, but then he had better have minded his own affairs."

"So I say," growled another of the gang—a rough-looking fellow. "These blamed detectives don't give a hard working man no kinder show."

"Better be sure he's actually croaked before we bury him," grumbled Tisdale, in his characteristic way.

"That's soon done," returned Callister. "I guess I'm doctor enough for that."

He knelt beside the body and unbuttoned the coat and vest.

Placing his ear upon the detective's breast, he listened to the beating of the heart.

But the heart of Caleb Hook had apparently ceased to beat. Nor did his pulse give sign of any movement whatever.

"Dead as a door nail!" said the broker, laconically. "Say, Sam Cutts, have you got such a thing as a big bag?"

"No, an' you don't want it," answered Cutts. "To carry that body down-stairs in a bag! You must



be crazy, man. That would never do at all. We'll take him by the shoulders, two of us, and drag him along as though he was blind drunk—paralyzed, don't you see—then no one will suspect anything at all."

"Good! That's the very scheme. Now, then, gents, as it ain't always best for a man to know too much, you had better say good-night, and leave the management of this affair to Rube, Cutts and myself. I feel sure that we have nothing to be afraid of now, for I am confident that this fellow was working alone. If I find that I am wrong, some of us will notify you, you may rest assured. Meanwhile, the appointment remains the same as before, unless you hear to the contrary—Cagney's sanctum, day after to-morrow night."

Several of the men now silently withdrew, leaving the two Cutts—father and son—Callister and Tisdale with their victim.

The sound of their footsteps had scarce died away upon the carpetless stairs when the stock-broker spoke again.

"Are you ready?"

"Yes," answered Cutts, the elder; "I should say we were."

"Then you slip round and give Pat the tip. We mustn't lose a moment, once we start, and you are to see that all is prepared."

Billy Cutts, opening the door cautiously, left the room without a word.

For the space of perhaps ten minutes the three men stood motionless, listening to every sound.

Overhead all was silent. There was no unusual noise about the house.

"That pop of yours is a daisy, Sam," whispered Callister. "It's my opinion that the report of that shot was not heard on this floor. Come, time's up. You take one arm, Rube, and I'll attend to the other. Sam can give us a lift down the stairs."

Two minutes later a peculiar but by no means unusual sight might have been observed in the alley leading from the side of the Cherry street tenement through, by means of the gate pointed out by Jerry Buck to Frank Mansfield, to the rear of the Donegal Shades on Catherine street, opposite the old market building.

It was two men dragging between them a third, apparently in a state of helpless intoxication, while a fourth man—a short, thick-set fellow—brought up the rear.

If they were observed by any of the dwellers in the adjoining tenements, it is safe to say that their appearance attracted no attention at all, for such sights are far too common in that part of the city to excite even passing remark.

The passage of the alley was made in safety—the gate was opened by Cutts—in another moment they had entered the yard facing the residence of the unfortunate Mrs. Marley, and in the rear of the Donegal Shades.

Two men stood ready to receive them by the side of a little flight of steps leading down to an open cellar door.

One was Billy Cutts, the other P. Slattery, the proprietor of the saloon, whose fiery shock of hair betrayed his identity at a glance.

"All O. K., Pat?" said Callister, in a whisper.

"You're right, it is; run him down, an' I'm wid yez in a jiffy. Begobs! if it ain't that fly detective what shook me up on the Sunday morning poor Mrs. Marley was murdered—an' phat ails you, Mister Tisdale? Howly Mother, but you're as white as though you'd seen a ghost!"

"Hold your jaw and lead the way!" muttered the burglar, fiercely.

Slattery made no attempt at reply.

Running down the cellar steps, he motioned to the others to follow without a word.

No sooner had they entered than he closed and locked the door, and producing a match, lit a lantern which he held in his hand.

"This way, gents," he said, briefly, advancing through the cellar among a heterogeneous mass of barrels and boxes and rubbish of all kinds.

Dragging the body of the detective between them, the others followed.

Suddenly the man Slattery paused, and stooping down, seized a great iron ring in the floor.

A trap-door was lifted, disclosing a dark opening leading to unknown depths below, out of which rushed a noisome stench causing the men by its side to draw back with exclamations of disgust.

"Now, then, down wid him," whispered the proprietor of the Donegal Shades. "It's as putty a grave as wan might ax for. Drop him in, byes, an' it's done nice an' handy, only there's niver a praste to shrive him—worse luck. We must bury the poor cuss widout book nor bell."

Raising the inanimate form of the detective between them, Callister, Tisdale and Cutts dropped it into the darkness of the open trap, while P. Slattery, letting go the iron ring, jumped heavily upon the lid.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### TREASURE HUNTING.

"Hey, you Garibaldi!"

"Ay, ay! Alla righta!"

"Coast clear?"

"Beta your lifa!"

"Come on, then, fellers," said Barney, the bootblack. "If it's all right outside, we may just as well moosy along."

And the iron door of the old tomb set in the wall on the Trinity church-yard opened and closed with a bang—three "Bats in the Wall" stood upon the street.

They were our old acquaintances, Barney the bootblack and Sandy, the third being none other than Frank Mansfield himself.

Instantly a fourth lad came running across New Church street and joined them.

It proved to be Garibaldi, the Italian bat, who had been sent out of the wall to reconnoiter and report whether or no the coast was clear.

Evidently the "Bats" are bound upon some expedition, for Barney carries a spade, to conceal the true character of which a faint attempt has been made by winding newspapers about its blade; Sandy a similar package, while Frank Mansfield has under his arm that which greatly resembles a pick ax, tied up in a similar way.

To all outward appearance our hero stands upon a social level with his companions, and looks as little like Mr. Maxwell, Mr. Callister's new clerk, as that individual looks like the young man who was once assistant cashier of the Webster National Bank.

One day has elapsed since the visit of Frank to Miss Edna Callister at the house in Cottage Place, upon which occasion, the reader will remember, the missing parchment containing the secret of the hiding-place of the treasure buried by his grandfather was strangely placed in his hands.

Upon further examination, the parchment placed by the mysterious woman upon the window-sill proved to be the document named in the will of Jeremiah Mansfield.

Bidding farewell to the faithful girl—not, however, without having promised to see her again at the very first opportunity afforded him—Frank hurried to the Police Headquarters, where at this hour in the evening it sometimes happened that Detective Hook could be found.

The parchment, which he studied carefully, gave the most minute instructions as to where the buried treasure could be found.

With his soul filled with triumph, Frank hurried through the broad corridors of the Mulberry street building and entered the office where Mr. Hook was usually to be found when not engaged on duty elsewhere.

He was all eagerness to tell of his discovery and ask what, under the circumstances, had best be done.

But Frank was doomed to disappointment.

Caleb Hook had not been seen at headquarters since the night before.

Nor did he appear next day.

Frank, employing the messenger boys of the district telegraph freely, was unable to find the slightest trace of his whereabouts.

Mr. Callister was at his office as usual, and appeared more sleek and urbane than ever before.

He made no reference to the little affair at the elevator, treating the disguised Mr. Maxwell with even more politeness and consideration than was ordinarily the case.

Considerably alarmed by the unexplained absence of Detective Hook—doubly so from the fact that he had neglected several most important engagements that day—Frank resolved to confide the situation in part to Barney the Bootblack, and assisted by the Bats, whom he had learned to trust fully as the rough but honest lads that they were, to investigate the truth of the statements contained in the parchment for himself.

After the close of the day's business, therefore, he paid a visit to the vault and arranged to start upon their expedition that very night.

Thus it happened that we find the "Bats" leaving the wall in the manner described just as the clock of old Trinity rings out the hour of twelve.

"Now, then, where's de place?" asked Barney, as the four boys hurried along New Church street in the direction of the Rector street station of the Sixth avenue elevated road.

"It's at Fort Washington," replied Frank—"a good mile beyond the 155th street station. Up the steps, boys, and we'll start at once. Remember, Barney, if I succeed in this undertaking and in clearing my name before the world the 'Bats in the Wall' will never have occasion to regret their kindness to me."

An hour later the little party moving along the Fort Washington road might have been seen to

steal quietly through the gateway leading up to the half ruined mansion once the home of old Jeremiah Mansfield, known as the Three Oaks.

The night was cold and cheerless—the wind sighed mournfully among the trees of the park-like inclosure—not a star was to be seen in the clouded sky.

Pursuing their way up the avenue, the boys came suddenly upon the house itself, standing half ruined and deserted among the overshadowing trees.

It was not without feelings of emotion that Frank Mansfield gazed upon it.

Many and many were the pleasant hours spent within the old mansion during the more prosperous days of his boyhood—days not to be forgotten so long as he lived.

And if that prosperity could be but in a measure restored? If the name of his dead father, to say nothing of his own, could but be cleared before the world?

The finding of this money would place a powerful weapon against the enemies surrounding him at once in his hands.

No wonder that his soul burned with impatience to grasp it. That he ought not to have moved in the matter without first consulting Detective Hook he instinctively felt, and yet—

But the impatience of youth is proverbial—than that no more need be said.

Familiar with the premises from boyhood, Frank, making no effort to enter the house by the regular way, and conducting his companions to the rear of the building, removed without difficulty a small window sash set in the wall close to the ground.

A moment later the four boys stood in the great cellar beneath Three Oaks, gazing about them by the light of a lantern which he carried in his hand.

It was festooned with cobwebs and green with mold. The floor was littered with boxes, old barrels, and rubbish of every sort.

Frank, setting the lantern upon a box, turned to Sandy and Garibaldi, who, not having been informed as to the nature of the undertaking in which they had engaged, were looking about them in a decidedly mystified way.

Barney he had taken into confidence, leaving him to tell the other "bats" what he pleased.

Having now reached the scene of their labors, however, it seemed necessary to make some explanation to these boys, who had come willingly with Barney to help him, and he accordingly briefly informed them of what he was about to do.

The eyes of the two boys open wildly.

"What! diga for golda?" exclaimed Garibaldi, in surprise.

"That's the size of it, boys, and it belongs to me by rights. How, it would take too long to explain; but help me out, and I promise that you shall have your share."

"You beta we willa!" cried the little Italian, throwing aside his jacket and seizing one of the spades. "Showa whera diga, I finda him, donta forget it."

Sandy likewise gave full assent.

"Then listen, boys," said Frank, pulling a paper from his pocket, and holding it up to the lantern on the box—it was a copy of a portion of the contents of the parchment—"this will tell us what to do."

He read as follows:

"Descend to the cellar. Measure ten feet from the north chimney, then five due west. Here a flat stone will be found, beneath which the treasure lies. It is for my grandson if he be found worthy, for my friend, Elijah Callister, if he is not. If it shall fall into the hands of Frank Mansfield, let him so dispose of it as to shed luster upon the name he bears.

"JEREMIAH MANSFIELD.

"THREE OAKS, January 1, 1879."

"Now for it, boys!" he exclaimed, excitedly. "This is the cellar, and we are here ready to work. Barney, the tape-line. Lay over to that chimney, now, while I run out ten feet."

The distance was measured off and marked upon the cellar floor.

"Now, then, five feet to the west. That's the idea! By gracious! here's the flat stone just as the paper says!"

It was as Frank had said.

Buried in the earth which composed the cellar floor a flat stone of a grayish color was discovered, above which all now stood.

"The spades, Barney and Sandy!" cried Frank, seizing the pick-ax himself. "Hold the light, Garibaldi, that we may see what we are about. Make what noise you like, boys, there's no one to hear us—this house has been deserted for years."

He struck the ground with the pick-ax as he spoke, the sound echoing upon the rafters of the

floor above.

The earth once loosened, Barney and Sandy made short work of it with their spades.

It was of a light and sandy character, and yielded so readily to their efforts that Frank, finding the pick-ax useless, soon threw it to one side, and taking the spade from the hands of Sandy, joined Barney in the hole, now rapidly deepening.

Both boys had removed their coats, and were working with a will.

Around them the little mound of earth thrown out by their spades steadily grew, until a depth of four feet or more was reached.

And yet, they had found nothing. Nor was there any appearance that the earth had been ever disturbed.

"By thunder, but this is tough work!" growled Barney, straightening himself up. "How much further do you think we've got to go?"

"It is impossible to tell," answered Frank, working away vigorously. "It may be one foot, it may be ten— By gracious! here's something now. I've just struck it with my spade."

A sharp, ringing sound was heard. The spade had struck something of a metallic nature at the bottom of the hole.

"I've found it, boys," he cried, in great excitement, stooping down and with his hands brushing back the loose earth from the lid of a great iron chest at the bottom of the hole. "The treasure is mine—mine at last! Let that wretched Callister now beware!"

"And 'that wretched Callister' bids you say your prayers, young man!" cried a deep voice behind them. "In digging that hole you have dug your grave. Prepare to lie in it now."

The four boys sprang back, Frank leaping from the hole.

There, amid the old boxes and barrels in the dim light, the forms of two men could be seen with cocked revolvers pointed—one directly at the head of Barney, the bootblack, the other at the head of Frank.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE MYSTERY OF TRINITY CHURCH-YARD EXPLAINED AT LAST.

At the sight of Elijah Callister and his companion standing before him with cocked pistols in their hands amid the shadows of the cellar, Frank Mansfield sprang from the hole in which he stood.

Seizing the pick-ax, he advanced bravely toward the man who long had been the persecutor of himself and his afflicted family, heedless of the glittering muzzles of the revolvers pointed directly at his head.

Barney the Bootblack, Garibaldi and Sandy had meanwhile sought refuge among the boxes and barrels, the little Italian making the cellar ring again with his cries of fear.

"Shoot, if you dare, Elijah Callister!" cried Frank, with proudly curling lip. "You helped to kill my father, you drove my mother mad. Murder me, if you dare! There is justice for such as you. As God hears me, it will descend swift and sure upon your sinful head."

"Be careful, Lije," whispered the man by his side. "There are three of them—we can't kill them all. By Heaven! the lad is right, there has been murder enough. Beside, he is my nephew, poor Helen's son, and I say he shan't be killed!"

It was Reuben Tisdale, the burglar, the husband of the dead Mrs. Marley, by whose hand that unfortunate creature came to her untimely end in the little house in the rear of the Donegal Shades.

As he spoke these words, with one blow he struck the pistol from the hands of Elijah Callister, his own hand falling to his side.

"Meddling fool!" cried the broker, fiercely, springing upon him. "The treasure for which we have risked so much lies uncovered before us at last, and now you would spoil it all! That boy must die or we are ruined! I tell you he has been a spy upon us; he has——"

"Stop! He is my son, Elijah Callister, and he shall live! Harm one hair of his head at the peril of your life!"

Through the dark passages of the cellar the words resounded.

Instantly there burst upon the scene a blaze of light.

It rested upon the boxes and barrels, it fell upon the cobweb-hung beams overhead, and, glancing back, lit up the faces of Callister, Tisdale and Frank with a strange, unearthly glare.

With a loud cry the bank burglar, heedless of the blow aimed at him by his infuriated companion, sprang back.

"Lije! Lije! Look! look! It is Maria's ghost again!" he cried, frantically, clapping his hands before his face to shut out the light which met his gaze.

Before them standing by the side of the hole in which the buried treasure lay hidden, was the form of the mysterious woman who had played so stirring a part in this tale.

With one warning finger outstretched before her she glided forward and placed her form in front of Frank.

"Go, vile wretches!" she fiercely cried. "Go and work evil no more to me and mine! May Heaven's vengeance fall upon you both for your many crimes."

For an instant Elijah Callister stood regarding her with set teeth and eyes filled with snake-like glittering.

As he did so a mist seemed to rise before them, obscuring the woman and the youth, who now held her clasped tightly in his arms, from view.

And the light increased.

Through the cellar a loud crackling noise was heard as the light increased.

One glance behind him explained the sounds.

The rubbish which filled the cellar had burst out into a sheet of flame.

"It's all up with us, Rube, curses on your folly!" he whispered fiercely, as, grasping by the collar the man who had crouched cowering by his side, he dragged him toward the cellar stairs.

"Fire! Fire! Oh! missus! I've dropped the pan! and the hull business is a-burnin' up!"

Out from among the burning rubbish sprang a frightened boy.

It was Jerry Buck, with every hair standing up in horror, his jacket all ablaze.

"Take her through the window, boys!" cried Frank, springing toward the fleeing men. "Save her and save yourselves while I deal with these villains fate has thrown into my hands!"

He sprang toward Callister and seized him by the collar of his coat.

Too late!

With a sudden twist the stock-broker jerked himself free, and leaving the coat in the hands of Frank, had followed Reuben Tisdale up the cellar stairs.

To attempt to follow them was useless.

A wall of seething flames, bursting forth from the rubbish of years accumulated beneath the stairs, now intervened.

Meanwhile, Barney and Sandy had assisted the woman through the open window, gaining a place of safety without, while little Garibaldi was bravely but vainly endeavoring to pull the burning jacket from the back of Jerry Buck that he might be able to escape.

All attempt to follow Callister was useless.

Frank saw that at a glance.

"Let him go," he muttered. "Heaven will deal with him according to his deserts. After all, I cannot harm him, for he is the father of the girl I love."

He sprang toward Jerry, and wrapping the coat left in his hands by the fleeing stock broker about him, thus smothering the flames, drew him hastily through the cellar window, Garibaldi, the Italian, following with all possible speed.

The mysterious woman, Barney and Sandy stood upon the snow covered ground awaiting them.

With a low cry of joy the woman threw herself into Frank Mansfield's arms.

"My son—my darling boy!" she cried, wildly kissing his cheeks and stroking his hair. "Thank God I hold you in my arms once more! I have sought to prove your innocence, and though I have so far failed, come what will, we must not part again."

As she spoke these words behind the little group the roaring of the flames increased.

From the window of the first floor of the old mansion they now burst forth, illuminating the landscape for yards around.

"Mother, can this indeed be you?" cried Frank, gazing upon the worn features of the woman in mingled astonishment and surprise.

"It is, my son. And did you think me dead?"

"I most certainly did. I left you beneath the church-yard wall when—when I went into the bank. When I came out you were gone, and next morning I saw that which I could have sworn was your dead body lying in a house in Catherine street in the rear of a place they call the Donegal Shades."

The woman smiled sadly.

"Listen, Frank," she said, with more calmness than she had before displayed. "Listen to my story, to be told in a few brief words, and you will understand this mystery which has been puzzling you for weeks."

Here Barney was seen to glance at Jerry Buck, who stood quietly by, still wrapped in Mr. Callister's coat.

Neither spoke, however, and Frank stood breathlessly listening to what his mother was about to

tell.

"I escaped from the asylum where Mr. Callister had placed me," began the unfortunate Mrs. Mansfield, "some weeks since as you know. I had been mad, but was so no longer, although no one would believe me when I told them so. My first care was to look for you, my son. With sorrow I heard of your dissipation and wrong-doing, and knowing well the interest Mr. Callister had at stake in leading you into crime, I determined to watch over you in secret and save you if I could. But this was after the time when, in desperation at what I had heard, I attempted to commit suicide by jumping into the river, from which I was rescued by this brave boy, known to you as Jerry Buck, but instantly recognized by me as the outcast son of my unfortunate twin sister, Maria Tisdale, the wife of that man who a moment ago stood in the cellar of yonder burning house by Elijah Callister's side. Stop! Do not interrupt me!" she exclaimed, seeing that Frank was about to speak. "A crowd will gather here before many minutes. Before it comes we must be far away. I knew the lad's features at a glance, and I told him who and what I was. In return he took me to the home of the 'Bats' in the old tomb beneath the church-yard wall.

"On the night of the bank robbery I followed you from the time you left Mr. Callister's office until I spoke to you in the street by the side of the fence which surrounds the grave-yard of Trinity Church.

"You would not heed my warning—you left me in the hands of those two young ruffians while you entered the bank to do the wrong into which you had been led by that young villain, Cutts, whom I knew to be a thief and an associate of thieves.

"No sooner had you entered than Cutts sprang back, and joining the two young men who had held me down, all three ran off down Rector street and disappeared.

"Meanwhile I slipped across the street and crawled beneath an empty truck, determined to follow you in secret the instant you appeared.

"There I found this good boy, Barney, who told me of the bank robbery and just how it had occurred. He had with him the tin box, also, which the burglars had dropped in the street. Examining the papers I recognized your grandfather's will at a glance.

"This I left with Barney, with instructions to give it to you, while I took the parchment myself, that by no combination of circumstances might it be lost.

"It was by my directions that Barney rescued you and took you into the vault, and when I knew you were safe I started to meet my unfortunate sister, Mrs. Tisdale—who had long been suffering from insanity from the brutal treatment of her husband—whom I had just succeeded in finding upon the morning of the day in which these events occurred.

"At the corner of Rector street and Broadway I met Detective Hook.

"He followed me, but at Park Row and Frankfort street, seeing my sister, who exactly resembled me, awaiting me, I slipped away while his eyes were for the moment turned, and saw him following her in my stead."

"Then it was she who was murdered?" cried Frank, lost in wonder and surprise.

"It was," replied Mrs. Mansfield, sadly. "Murdered beyond all doubt by the husband who drove her mad and made her life a curse."

"And he's the man I'll hang, even if he is my father!" exclaimed Jerry Buck, who, with whitened features and firmly-set teeth, had been listening attentively to the woman's tale.

"See here," he added, stretching out his hand in which a bundle of papers was grasped. "I've been looking at these 'ere while you two have been talking, an' can read well enough to know that they'll give me the grip on him an' his pal."

"Where did you find them?" cried Frank, eagerly.

He had seized the papers from Jerry Buck, and hastily examined them in the light of the burning house from which the flames were now pouring, illuminating the surrounding scene with the brightness of day.

They were small, but well-executed plans of the vaults of the Lisperard Bank, all marked "duplicate," and bearing upon them Elijah Callister's name.

"Where did I find them?" cried the boy. "Why, in the pocket of this here coat to be sure. Come, we must take 'em to the chief of police. If they ain't the fixin' of him what killed my mother an' the feller what's runnin' you down to earth, why, it won't be for want of tryin' on the part of the 'Bats in the Wall'—that's all I've got to say."

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

### ELIJAH CALLISTER ADDS STILL ANOTHER CRIME TO THE LIST.

It was well on toward three o'clock in the morning when P. Slattery, the red-headed proprietor of the Donegal Shades, was aroused from his sleep in the back room behind his saloon by a loud knocking upon the outer door.

"Now who the blazes can that be?" he muttered. "It's too early for the market-men, I'm sure.

Must be some drunken tramp who hain't got full enough widout disturbin' an honest man in his bed. Go way wid yez, ye spalpeen! It's not Pat Slattery that'll open the dure for yez the night."

Thump—thump—thump!

Upon the door the knocks were rained with redoubled strength.

"Begorra, an' I'm afeard it's break me dure in he'll be after doin'," muttered the saloon-keeper, tumbling sleepily out of bed.

He crept across the darkened bar-room, and pulling aside the curtains cautiously, peered out into the deserted street.

Two men stood without.

P. Slattery recognized in their faces Messrs. Callister and Tisdale at a glance.

The stock-broker was in his shirt sleeves and hatless. He was shivering with the cold, while Reuben Tisdale, pale and haggard, stood to one side with his eyes fixed upon the ground.

The sound of the movement at the curtain, slight as it had been, had not escaped Mr. Callister's ears.

"Open the door, Pat, for God's sake!" he whispered, pressing his face to the glass. "Rube's gone crazy, I think, and I'm almost perished with the cold."

"Be the pipers! an's there's suthin' gone wrong!" muttered the saloon-keeper. "It's the ould boy himself that's to pay, I'm afeard."

He hastily undid the fastening of the door.

Callister and Tisdale entered the saloon.

"Some whisky, quick, Pat," exclaimed the former, his teeth chattering as he spoke. "We have had Satan's own time of it getting here, and you must give us a shake down for the balance of the night."

"An' I'll do that same wid pleasure, Mr. Callister," cried the Irishman, with the good nature proverbial of his race, as he bustled behind the bar. "Howly mother! but yer gills is as blue as indigo. What happened ye that ye lost the coat an' the hat?"

"It's a story that'll take too long to tell, Pat. There, that's better"—he had emptied the glass of raw spirits at a gulp. "Now show us where we can sleep."

"It's no use, Lije," said Tisdale gloomily. "You had best light out and save yourself while you can. I shall have no peace until poor Maria's death is avenged. I'm going now to give myself up to the police; to see the spirit of my murdered wife again would kill me. I can't stand it any longer and I won't. As I told you before, I'm the Jonah of the gang."

The eyes of Elijah Callister blazed with evil light.

"You are, eh?" he hissed between his tightly set teeth. "So you are going to give yourself up, and ruin your friends, you soft-hearted fool—you man of putty—you—you— Ain't it enough to have lost these plans, to have gone through what we have, without—"

He stopped, backed toward the bar, and, glaring at his companion, leaned heavily against it.

Unseen by either Slattery or Tisdale, his hand stole behind him like a flash, grasping a large cheese-knife which lay upon the bar of the "Donegal Shades," carelessly left there by the proprietor himself after cutting up the free lunch which it was his custom each night to spread.

"Is your mind made up, Reuben Tisdale? Will no argument bring you to reason? Speak—you had best be quick."

"No—I am resolved to do it, Lije, no matter what you say. I tell you still again I can't help it; I'm doomed to be the Jonah of the gang."

He stood dejectedly by the stove, his eyes fixed upon the sanded floor.

With measured step the man at the bar advanced toward him, one hand still held behind his back.

"And do you know what the men on the ship did to Jonah?" he hissed. "No? Then I'll tell you—they threw him overboard, as I now throw you, Reuben Tisdale, and the pit beneath this house, which already numbers its victims by the score, is the whale, and will swallow up the Jonah of the gang to which you and I belong, and you can bet your sweet life that from out of the depths of that whale's belly you'll never come forth to give my secrets away!"

The words had not fully left his lips when with a sudden spring, his now upraised hand descended, and Reuben Tisdale fell to the floor with a groan.

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And while these events are transpiring how fares it with our old friend, Mr. Detective Hook.

"Why, he is dead!" did we hear some one exclaim?

Not at all.

Detectives, as a race, are hard to kill, and Caleb Hook offers no exception to his class!

Beneath the cellar of the Donegal Shades lies that brave man, neither dead nor helpless, but able

to stand erect and move about, eagerly longing to escape.

And no wonder.

The foul pit in which he found himself confined was damp and slimy—filled with a thousand noisome smells.

For an hour and more after the body of the unconscious detective had been dropped through the trap-door by Callister and Cutts he remained lying unconscious upon the muddy floor of the place into which he had fallen, an old sub-cellar, used in former days by the occupants of the building, but long since abandoned on account of its dampness and from the fact that it was filled to the brim with the water of the East River at every tide rising above the usual height.

But Caleb Hook was not dead.

No.

By a merciful Providence the ball from the burglar's pistol, missing by a hair's breadth a vital part, touched a certain nerve, well understood by the medical profession, glanced from the accompanying muscle and buried itself in a fleshy spot, leaving its victim in a state of suspended animation, practically unharmed.

Its action upon that nerve spent, and the eyes of Caleb Hook opened to life once more.

Where he was or how he came there were two questions which he was unable to decide.

Matches which he always carried soon revealed to him the nature of the place—damp, foul-smelling cellar that it was, with the only outlet the trap-door through which he had fallen, a good five feet above his head.

Beyond a feeling of great weakness, he felt neither fear nor pain.

That he had been thrown there as dead he understood perfectly well, and yet—brave heart that he was—he refused to banish hope.

The hours passed.

Caleb Hook has exhausted every means to reach that trap above him, but in vain.

Crouched in a corner we see him now, his head buried in his hands.

Through the foul place the rats scurry past, but he heeds them not—his thoughts are upon the strange case in following which he has come to this living death.

The robbery of the Webster bank—the following of the strange woman—the murder of Mrs. Marley and her singular reappearance in the church-yard later on, passed one after another in hopeless procession through his mind.

The capture of the burglar, Joe Dutton, the man who dropped the dollars at the Catherine Market—whom we should have stated before was arrested by a policeman on Cherry street before he had run a dozen yards—and his untimely death also rose up before him.

That he had been poisoned by his associates in crime the detective could not doubt.

And the thought gave him no courage.

If these scoundrels had no mercy to spare to their own what hope was there for him?

Hark! What sound was that?

Surely there are footsteps walking on the floor above?

Springing to his feet he stares wildly at the trap-door above his head.

It moves! It opens! But alas! it opens not in aid to him!

There is a low murmuring of voices, and suddenly the body of a large and powerful man drops through the open trap, falling heavily at the detective's feet.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE JONAH.

As the body of the falling man struck the slimy floor of the old sub-cellar beneath the Donegal Shades, Detective Hook sprang back against the damp and dripping wall.

It was well that he did so.

With a heavy thud the man fell at his feet half buried in the foul and pasty mud.

Instantly the trap-door was heard to close above him, followed by the sound of feet moving away.

"Oh, God—oh, God, have mercy on my sinful soul! Must I die here like a dog?"

From the man at his feet the sound went forth.

Caleb Hook knelt by his side.

"Courage, friend!" he whispered. "Courage! God may help us yet!"

"Ah—ah! Keep off—keep off!" shrieked the dying man. "Is not one ghost enough to haunt me, that



the voice of the man I helped to bury in this devil's den must come ringing in my ears? Keep off, I say! Detective Hook, I know your voice! I did not raise a hand to kill you! You know it well enough!"

Crack!

The last match possessed by the detective is lighted—he holds it to the face before him.

"Reuben Tisdale, you, the most successful maker of burglars' tools known among the crooks of New York!"

The man raised himself with difficulty, gazing with wild, staring eyes upon the detective's face.

"Alive—alive!" he gasped. "It is hours since we threw you here, dead, as we all supposed."

"But I still live, Reuben Tisdale, and so perhaps may you. Answer, man! Beside that trap-door overhead, is there no way out of this?"

"Yes—yes," murmured the burglar, sinking back upon the muddy floor. "There is a secret passage, and you shall escape; for me there is no hope; Callister has settled me; foul fiend that he is. But I will be revenged—I swear it! I will tell the truth, as I hope to meet my poor wife above. Ha—ha! Elijah Callister, did I not speak the truth? There is fate in this—it is written that I should live to be the Jonah of the crowd!"

"Speak!" cried the detective. "Show me the way out of this and I will save you if it costs my life!"

"No, no," moaned the dying man. "It's no use—it's all up with Rube Tisdale at last, but you shall be saved: the secret passage leading from this place can be opened by a pressure of hand. It shall be opened, and you shall live, it is within my reach to do it, even as I lay here now."

"Then do it! Do one good action before you die."

"I will, do not fear, but listen first to the confession of a dying man."

"Speak, I am listening," said the detective, quietly, raising the head of the sufferer and supporting it on his arm.

"Caleb Hook," began the burglar. "I am a man of many evil deeds. Listen to the story of my life."

"In my youth I was a machinist; I had two friends; Frank Mansfield was the name of one, Elijah Callister, the other.

"Our home was in the upper part of New York, now known as High Bridge.

"Near us lived two twin sisters, beautiful girls, both. Their names were Helen and Maria Dupont.

"I married Maria, my friend Mansfield Helen, and then the trouble began.

"Little by little, by Callister I was led into crime, and for years we have worked together, he making plans for burglaries, I furnishing the tools and assisting to carry them out.

"Frank Mansfield—I speak now of the father of the lad you know by that name—would not join us. In fact, he never suspected Callister, although he knew well what I was about myself.

"Time passed and he prospered, our families were separated and never met.

"Callister hated him. He had himself loved Helen Dupont, and when she married Mansfield swore to be avenged.

"By trickery and device he so worked upon Mansfield's father as to cause him to make a singular will——

"Yes, yes," interrupted the detective, "I know all about that, you need not stop to explain."

"Do you? It may be so, but you do not know that it was Callister and myself who killed old Jeremiah Mansfield in his bed hoping to gain the buried treasure which we never found. You do not know that we robbed Mansfield's store of the funds intrusted to his care, and casting suspicion upon him drove his wife mad as was mine already, and sent him with a blackened name down to a defaulter's grave.

"We did that, Caleb Hook, and more. We robbed the Webster bank, and concocted the conspiracy to throw the burden of that crime on Frank Mansfield's son, the lad arrested by you."

"And you did all this," said the detective, sternly. "Reuben Tisdale, you are justly punished, you \_\_\_"

"Hush, hush! If that were all I might still wish to live.

"Listen, for my breath grows short. You saw a woman dead in an upper room in the house in the rear of this evil den?"

"Yes, yes, Mrs. Marley—what of her?"

"Mrs. Marley was not her name. She was Maria Tisdale—my wife. Detective Hook, it was my hand that struck her down. I did it in anger, God forgive me, poor insane creature that she was. I saw her hovering about the Webster bank—I thought she had found in the street certain papers which I dropped, and——"

"And you killed her?"

"I did; I—ah! Take her off! take her off! There she is bending over me! Her hand is above my throat now!"

"Hush! hush!" whispered the detective. "There is no one here but ourselves.

"My God, the man is dying!" he exclaimed, as the eyes of Reuben Tisdale closed and the head rested more heavily on his arm.

"No—I—I—still live."

The words came faintly from the parted lips.

"Drag me to the wall—there—right—behind—you. Stop—them—they rob the—Lispenard bank—at—twelve—to-night. Callister—made plans—I—revenge—revenge—oh! God have mercy on my sinful soul!"

They were the last words of Reuben Tisdale on earth.

Even as they were uttered, dragged across the slimy floor of the cellar by the detective, he stretched forth his hand and pressed a groove in what appeared to be a wall of solid stone.

It moved, it opened, a door flew back, displaying a dark and narrow passage at the very moment the man breathed his last.

Laying him gently down. Caleb Hook, trembling with weakness and excitement, moved toward the secret passage now disclosed.

"Saved—saved!" he murmured, faintly. "Means of escape are open before me, but—oh, God! how weak I am! This mist before my eyes—this trembling in my limbs! I—I—help—oh, help!"

The "Jonah" has spoken.

Have his revelations come too late?

Apparently, for the trembling form of Caleb Hook sinks lifeless across the very entrance to the secret passage.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### A FRUSTRATED CRIME—THE END.

Since the startling events at the Three Oaks, terminating with the complete destruction of that gloomy old mansion by fire, another day has passed, and night has settled down upon the city of New York once more.

It has been an eventful day for many, no doubt; of its events for our hero, Frank Mansfield, his mother restored to reason and the world, and his faithful friends, the "Bats in the Wall," we have no time to speak.

Meanwhile, the virtuous Mr. Callister appeared at his office as usual, and figured prominently in several large transactions on the floor of the Stock Exchange.

The new clerk, Mr. Maxwell, however, did not appear at the office, nor had Detective Hook been seen by any one.

The police authorities, now thoroughly alarmed by his continued absence, caused a general alarm to be sent out, and during the entire day his brother detectives searched for him in all directions, but in vain.

Now, upon the night of the day in question, had any one chanced to stand upon the bulkhead of the East river front at a point somewhere between Catherine street and the Market slip, they might have observed a man of most singular appearance creep apparently out of the solid wall of the bulkhead itself, and, with evident effort, leap to the deck of a little sloop lying within arm's-length of the street line.

Once upon the deck of the sloop, he did not pause, but seizing the string-piece of the bulkhead, drew himself to the ground above, and standing erect, gave vent to a sigh of relief.

And no wonder.

From head to foot he was a mass of dripping mud.

"Safe—safe at last!" he muttered; "safe and free to act once more. It still lacks something of twelve—if my strength holds out I may make it yet. I will make it. Let Elijah Callister beware, for the day of his reckoning at last has come."

Turning abruptly he crossed South street and disappeared in the dark shadows of the great warehouses which cluster around the East river shore.

Who is this man who swears vengeance upon so worthy, so pious a member of society as Mr. Elijah Callister of the Tenth Baptist Church?

His name is Caleb Hook.

His business is that of a police detective.

Reuben Tisdale was right.

Out of the whale's belly the avenger has come.

Fate had indeed willed that he should prove the Jonah of the band.

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"Now, then, Billy, you slip up the steps and try the door. If the watchman has not gone back on us, it ought to open at the first touch."

Before the Lispenard Bank stood three men, well disguised in great coats and low slouch hats, one carrying a small grip-sack in his hand.

They are Elijah Callister and the two Cutts—father and son.

It is the stock broker who speaks, and Billy Cutts, the renegade detective, is the one who creeps up the steps of the Lispenard Bank in obedience to his command.

"Is it all right, Billy?" whispered Cutts, the elder. "We want to get off the street as soon as we possibly can."

"All right, dad, come on."

The two men moved stealthily toward the steps of the bank.

"Squeak! squeak! squeak!"

Behind them a low, bat-like cry went up for one instant only, and then all was still.

"What the deuce was that?" whispered Callister, drawing back in alarm.

For the space of a minute all three stood motionless, Billy Cutts at the top of the steps, Callister and Cutts the elder at the foot.

The street was utterly deserted.

Nor was this strange.

Lower New York is always deserted at night, and the hour of twelve had already passed.

Before them rose the grim stone walls of the Custom House on William street—that upon which the Lispenard bank is situated—from Wall to Beaver, as far as the eye could reach, not a living thing could be seen.

"Come on; it's only a blasted bat!" whispered Billy Cutts, from the top of the steps. "We have no time to fool away, I tell you. First thing we know a cop will be along. The goose is ready for the plucking, and we want to be about it. It's blame strange Rube didn't show up!"

"Oh, never mind him!" answered Callister, hastily. "Probably he's off on some other lay. Open the door, Billy, and we are with you. We must and shall put this job through successfully. There's enough in that vault to make us all independent for life!"

"Go on—go on, you make too much talk," whispered Sam Cutts, leading the way up the steps. "Lead on there, Billy, if the door is open. We've nothing to fear."

Billy Cutts opened the door softly without reply.

Followed by his companions, he entered the bank.

"Hey, Mike!" he whispered, hoarsely.

It was the bank watchman he called who, faithless to his trust, had been bribed to assist them in their work.

There was no reply.

Within the bank all was dark; by the feeble rays of the street lamp without the outlines of the desks could be just discerned.

"Hey, Mike! Mike!" whispered Billy Cutts again, stealthily advancing.

The words had scarcely left his lips, than through the interior of the Lispenard Bank there shot out a blaze of light.

"Throw up your hands, there!" cried a stern voice before them. "Up with them, or you are dead men!"

With a low cry, Elijah Callister sprang toward the door.

Before them, in the full blaze of the lighted gas, stood Frank Mansfield and five policemen at his side, with glittering revolvers in their outstretched hands, aimed directly at the burglars' heads.

"Halt, there!"

Behind them, entering by the door through which Callister had turned to flee, a second posse of police was seen, headed by the pale determined figure of Detective Hook, while following close behind were three ragged street boys, easily recognized as our old friends Barney, the bootblack, Sandy and Garibaldi the Bats in the Wall.

"Those are your men, officers!" cried Frank, in clear, ringing tones. "That's Callister—the tall one by the door—that's the head of the gang who robbed the Webster bank, and sought to throw the crime on me!"

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Morning dawned upon the city of New York with clearer skies so far as Frank Mansfield was concerned, than he had known for months.

The end had come.

The mystery of the robbery of the Webster bank was a mystery no more.

The rising sun found the virtuous Mr. Callister and the two Cutts snugly ensconced in the Tombs.

Before a force so overwhelming they had not even tried to resist.

And then the whole thing came out, and the newspapers rang with it next day.

It appeared that the first information of the intended robbery of the Lispenard bank had been given by Frank Mansfield, who walked boldly into the office of the Chief of Police, told his whole story and placed the plans found in the coat of Callister in his hands.

It was upon information thus received that the police secreted themselves in the bank after nightfall, stationing the "Bats" to watch outside and sound the alarm of the approach of the burglars by their usual cry.

The arrival of Detective Hook had been an entirely independent affair.

Reviving at last from his swoon, this brave officer had escaped by the secret passage—an old sewer beneath the Donegal Shades, used doubtless by the scoundrels who frequented that den for the conveyance of stolen goods—as we have seen, and hurrying to the Oak street station had made his story known, and started with a number of policemen for the Lispenard bank.

Of their timely arrival we are already informed.

That the arrest of Callister made a tremendous stir in financial circles need not be told.

But Frank Mansfield stands to-day rich, happy and prosperous, his name justified before the world.

The officers of the Webster bank now understand his innocence, and would be only too glad to receive him again into their employ.

But Frank has no need for further toil.

From beneath the ruins of the Three Oaks there came forth a golden treasure which has placed him beyond all fear of want.

For a round half million will do that and leave some to spare, even in these expensive days, and such proved to be the value of the gold and gems buried by that strange old man, Jeremiah Mansfield, in the cellar of the great house where for so many years he dwelt alone.

During the search which took place at the ruins, both Detective Hook and Frank's new-found cousin, Jerry Buck, whose true name proved to be Dupont Tisdale, assisted.

By Jerry the presence of Mrs. Mansfield at the Three Oaks was made perfectly plain.

Familiar with the house and its secret passages for years, she had, assisted by the boy, played the ghost most successfully, gliding in and out of the chamber of its former owner by means of a secret panel set in the wall, while the light—nothing more than the usual stage fire—was used to add effect to the scene at the suggestion of Jerry himself.

They found the iron chest without difficulty, and the will having been placed in the hands of the Surrogate of New York County, its contents were turned over to that official to be dealt with according to the law.

By the confession of Tisdale, all stain being removed from the name of our hero, in due time he came into his own.

And these two important points being settled, nothing remains but to dispose of the principal actors in this strange but true narrative of events growing out of the robbery of the Webster bank.

The body of Reuben Tisdale was recovered from the sub-cellar beneath the Donegal Shades upon the morning of the burglars' arrest.

In some unexplained manner, P. Slattery had got wind of the affair, and deserting his saloon, has never since been seen.

In due time, Elijah Callister, exposed in his true colors before the world, paid the penalty of his many crimes upon the scaffold in the yard of the Tombs, which event occurring as it did only a few months since, after a long and much talked of trial, must still be fresh in the minds of all who read this tale.

The Cutts, father and son, were sentenced to Sing Sing on the testimony of Caleb Hook, for a term of years.

Between the detective and Mr. Billy Cutts this most effectually squared accounts.

For his services, so kindly and faithfully rendered, as may be well believed, Frank Mansfield saw this brave member of the New York detective force fully repaid.

Indeed, it is rumored that so liberal was this compensation, that there is no actual need for Caleb Hook to continue on the force.

The papers given by Mrs. Mansfield to the detective in the room in Cherry street proved to be simply a desultory description of the history of that unfortunate woman's past life.

Before his final resignation of the case he turned them over to Frank, who having revised them in the light of later disclosures, gave them to the press, thereby clearing the name of his dead

father from all stain, Tisdale's confession rendering it absolutely certain that the funds placed in the hands of that unfortunate gentleman for safe-keeping had been stolen by Callister and himself.

The watchman of the Lisenard Bank, and Flaherty, the "crooked" policeman on the beat covering the Webster Bank, were tried together for aiding and abetting the gang of burglars.

Against Mike, the watchman, the evidence was conclusive, and he was sent to Sing Sing to keep company with his friend Detective Cutts, but Flaherty escaped for want of evidence, although he was dismissed from the police force in disgrace.

Jim Morrow and Ed Wilson, Frank's fast companions, who assisted Billy Cutts to betray him, we presume remain still in California—at all events we have heard nothing of them since.

Nor is this to be regretted.

Frank plays poker no more, and has no use for any of their sort.

In an elegant mansion on one of the avenues, Frank Mansfield lives with his mother, whose reason is now fully restored.

With them dwells a young lady who seldom appears in public, and dresses in the deepest black.

It is Miss Edna Callister, who, while admitting the justice of her father's punishment, still deplores his fate.

Time, which cures all things, has, however, already done its work for her, and it is commonly rumored that at the expiration of the prescribed year of mourning, her marriage with our hero will be duly announced.

With them also dwells Jerry Buck, who is now attending school, and endeavoring to make up by hard study for the time lost during the years spent as a waif in New York's streets.

The old vault beneath the grave-yard of Trinity Church is deserted now—restored to its original use, a burial place of the dead.

After the newspaper disclosures the boys could not return there, of course, and Frank, mindful of his promise, not only rewarded Barney, the bootblack, Sandy and Garibaldi by a substantial gift from his newly acquired wealth, but provided for all the boys a comfortable home.

"For the result of these strange events," as he remarked to us the other day, when we visited him at his elegant home for additional particulars to be incorporated in this tale, "might have proved to be a very different affair had it not been for the timely assistance afforded my mother and myself by those kind-hearted street boys, the 'BATS IN THE WALL.'"

[THE END.]

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## Transcriber's notes:

Added table of contents.

Retained some inconsistent hyphenation (e.g. second hand vs. second-hand).

Changed Lige to Lije for consistency (twice).

Removed unnecessary quote before "Now, in thus demanding...."

Changed "neerest" to "nearest."

Changed "to night" to "to-night" for consistency.

Changed "Detetective" to "Detective."

Changed comma to period after "she will ruin all."

Added missing quotes after "try the door" and before "Mistake added...."

Added missing comma after "better by and by."

Changed "Schnieder" to "Schneider" (twice).

Added missing quote after "bats in the wall?"

Removed unnecessary quote after "P. Slattery's Shades."

Changed "That was the true meaning" to "What was the true meaning."

Changed "clastered" to "clustered."

Changed "fasionable" to "fashionable."

Changed "suddenly appear within" to "suddenly disappear within" (error found in *New York Detective Library* edition but not in *Boys of New York* text).

Added missing "it" to "Frank took the document from his pocket and placed it in his hands" (based on consultation of original *Boys of New York* appearance).

Added missing long dash after "who was said--who" (based on consultation of original *Boys of New York* appearance).

Changed "churchyard" to "church-yard" for consistency (twice).  
Changed "cotemplating" to "contemplating."  
Removed unnecessary quote after "And yet——."  
Changed "boys's" to "boy's."  
Added missing quote after "return it some of these days."  
Changed "Garabaldi" to "Garibaldi."  
Changed "familiarity" to "familiarity."  
Removed duplicate word from "clump of of oaks."  
Removed unnecessary quote after "Reuben Tisdale by name."  
Removed unnecessary quote after "even had they been so disposed" and "sort of an affair I like."  
Added missing quote before "exclaimed the stock-broker."  
Changed "familiarity" to "familiarity."  
Changed "but the name" to "by the name."  
Added missing quote after "this is the result."  
Changed "Mansfied" to "Mansfield."  
Swapped ? and ! in "Now, where is that sealed parchment? That's the question before the house!"  
Changed "supposing your" to "supposing you."  
Changed "couse" to "course."  
Added missing quote after "what's the matter with this room?"  
Changed "forhead" to "forehead."  
Added missing quote after "within our grasp."  
Changed "suburbam" to "suburban."  
Changed "goverment" to "government."  
Removed superfluous quote after "Who are you, sir?"  
Removed unnecessary quote after "How——."  
Added missing quote before "there's the fellow."  
Changed "monment" to "moment."  
Changed "got got" to "got."  
Changed "Are your not" to "Are you not."  
Changed "similiar" to "similar."  
Changed "that was ordinarily" to "than was ordinarily."  
Changed "weeke" to "weeks."  
Changed "at steak" to "at stake."  
Changed "cuting" to "cutting."  
Changed "Hook Spring" to "Hook sprang."  
Changed "murder" to "murderer" in "A strange murderer, for a fact." (Based on consultation of original *Boys of New York* appearance).  
Changed "Deeective" to "Detective."  
Changed "tremling" to "trembling."  
Changed ! to ? in "Well, which way are you going?" and "Won't they give you away?"  
Changed "Tree Oaks" to "Three Oaks."  
Changed "floor" to "door" in "The rapping was upon the door..." (Based on consultation of original *Boys of New York* appearance).  
Changed "seen" to "seen."  
Changed "Ruben" and "Rueben" to "Reuben."  
Removed unnecessary comma from "Elijah, Callister."  
Added missing comma in "Rube, Cutts and myself."  
Changed "Mansfied" to "Mansfield."  
Changed ! to ? in "My slight to you, dearest?"  
Removed unnecessary quote before "With them dwells...."  
Added missing end single quote to final "Bats in the Wall."

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

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