

"No credit belongs to me," said Townes, "if I happened to be born brilliant instead of good-looking."

"I'll ponder it," said Peter; and stretching out his great hand with a gesture which banished the subject, he pushed a service button and begged Townes to be so kind as to name his poison.

Outside in the hall a voice just then called his name, and Maginnis answered.

A young man in evening dress strolled through the doorway, a tallish, lithe young man with a pleasant clean-cut face and very light hair. It was evident enough that he patronized a good tailor. He glanced at the two men, nodded absently, and dropped without speech into a chair near the door. Townes eyed him somewhat quizzically.

"Evening, Larry. A little introspective to-night, yes?"

Peter said: "By bull luck you have stumbled into a company of gentlemen about to place an order. Go ahead. Mention a preference."

The young man, unseeing eyes on Peter, did not answer. Instead, he sprang up, as though struck by a thought of marked interest and bolted out the door. They saw him vanish into the telephone booth across the hall and bang the glass door shut behind him.

"Forgot an engagement."

"You mean remembered one," said Peter.

"It all figures out to the same answer," said Townes; and glancing presently at his watch, he announced that he must be trotting on.