

CHAPTER IV

MR. DUGGLEBY

IT is, I suppose, a merciful paradox of human nature that we never are actually in the depths of despair when there is the most to despair about. I had faced the task of outwitting a clever and perfectly unscrupulous villain, and of overpowering two of his hired thugs, with the most buoyant confidence. By scrambling over the wall and stepping out on the highway, a free man for the moment, at least, I had given proof that my confidence was not ill grounded.

My plan had succeeded beyond anything I could have hoped, the surplus being represented by three soiled dollar bills and the handful of change in my pocket, and by the probability that my guard would see it to his interest to take my advice and give me a clear start.

Certainly, if any friendly prophecy could have told me that morning when I had wakened naked and helpless after my drugged sleep, that in so few hours I should be tramping down a highroad,