

CHAPTER III

THE CITY OF MASKS

NEW YORK is not merely a melting pot for the poor and the humble of the lands of the earth. In its capacious depths, unknown and unsuspected, float atoms of an entirely different sort: human beings with the blood of the high-born and lofty in their veins, derelicts swept up by the varying winds of adversity, adventure, injustice, lawlessness, fear and independence.

Lords and ladies, dukes and duchesses, counts and countesses, swarm to the Metropolis in the course of the speeding year, heralded by every newspaper in the land, fêted and feasted and glorified by a capricious and easily impressed public; they pass with pomp and panoply and we let them go with reluctance and a vociferous invitation to come again. They come and they go, and we are informed each morning and evening of every move they have made during the day and night. We are told what they eat for breakfast, luncheon and dinner; what they wear and what they do not wear; where they are entertained and by whom; who they are and why; what they think of New York and — but why go on? We deny them privacy, and they think we are a wonderful, considerate and hospitable people. They go back to their homes in far-off lands,— and that is the end of them so far as we are concerned.

They merely pause on the lip of the melting pot,