

ENTER TWO VAGRANTS

"Sir, that man is the chief of a great private detective system—the 'Frailty.'"

"What—Doctor Clewston?"

"Yes, sir; Doctor Rex Clewston is a man of whom the United States is real proud."

"You say"—Brand's voice trembled with excitement—"that Doctor Rex Clewston was the wrecker who tried to murder Gault? Come, I'll put you to the test. If he is the man, I shall know him. Show me this man!"

But the Colonel laughed until he was seized with a paroxysm of coughing. "Show you—Rex Clewston!" He choked, gasped, laughed, wiping tears from his eyes with the back of his gloved hand. "I tell you, young man, that nobody has ever met Rex Clewston face to face. He suffers from ophthalmia—wears a green shade over his eyes; lives in darkened rooms; never goes out; doesn't admit one visitor in a week. Sir, I admire the modesty of your demands. Show you Rex Clewston!"

"Then," said Brand, turning indifferently away, "what can you know about him?"

"Know I know, sir! I was, until a few months ago, one of his ten chief officers, head of the Frailty Record Department, inventor and controller of his famous Exchange."

"What's that?" Say, where were you brought up? Were you raised on the moon, or some barbarian planet? Sir, I should admire!"

"I will expound. All information received by an up-to-date detective office is filed away for reference; because a bureau without records is like a groundling ape without a tail, unable to gesticulate, to admonish, to pervade the branches of the knowledge tree. But no one bureau can produce the pedigrees of all known criminals, or trot out the skeleton from every family closet; so that while the detective systems were busy