

of bells; he stared at me with such stony Sphinx-like eyes, as though he would say: 'Rish mortal, perceive the Genius thou has idly summoned. What wouldst thou at mine hand? Speak, speak, but beware!'

'I wish,' said I, in steady but, I hope, respectful tones, 'to see X and Y.'

The majestic being answered me nothing, but I perceived his eye roll up and down Half-moon Street in an unmistakably urgent manner. It was evident that he was looking for a policeman.

'You had better go away,' said he in awful tones; 'you had better go away before there's a row. None of your larks here, if you please.'

'I want either X or Y, my good man: look at this,' and I produced the copy of the *Times*, with the advertisement in it, which I had taken the precaution to bring away with me.

'Oh, *that's* your little game, is it,' observed the servitor; not without a touch of pity; 'why, you don't suppose that in our fifth year of credit we are going to be caught by such chaff as that! You must be a young 'un in the business, you must. You must have taken to it late in life, after failing as a gentleman.'

He pulled a bell which rang upstairs, and a young and cherry voice called over the banisters; 'Who is it now, John Thomas? You must shew the gentleman to the attic, for I suppose he's come to sleep. His friends have sat the bottoms out of all the hall-chairs already. What can he want at this time of night, when sleep is about to knit up the ravelled sleeve of care, and even tailors let us alone: a time when the very dun devotes himself to repentance and digestion.'

'It's a party as I don't know, sir,' replied the servant, regarding me with a sort of malignant curiosity, as though I were the Beast with a Bill itself; 'he has got some 'unbugging story about a Hex and a Whyr.'

There was a noise above stairs as though some person or persons were struggling with some internal emotion, such as laughter, and then a grave and almost solemn voice addressed John Thomas thus:

'Shew up our respected Advertiser at once, you idiot; then leave the house, nor venture to darken its door again till you have been powdered with ashes, and plushed in sackcloth.'

The discomfited flunkey led the way to the drawing-room, an apartment luxuriously rather than elegantly furnished; there were no knickknacks distributed with elaborate carelessness, no splendidly worked cushions protected by the hateful antimacassar, no traces of female tyranny of any kind. The sofas were meant for weary legs and *shoes*; the arm-chair to be lolled in; and there was also an exquisite aroma of tobacco-smoke which established the denomination of the male beyond a doubt. Two young gentlemen, of five-and-twenty or so, advanced as I entered, and received me with much politeness. The one who introduced himself as X had a frank Saxon face, and an air particularly ingenuous; the other was a handsomer man, of an almost Spanish complexion, but with a jaded expression that scarcely ever left his features.

'You do not object to tobacco, I trust,' said the former.

I smiled my ready toleration of that weed, the virtues of which no man who has not lived in solitude, and hardships, and want of all social solaces can ever rightly know.

'He does not object to tobacco,' exclaimed Y, with a sigh of relief; 'then the rest of the negotiation will be comparatively easy.'

This second gentleman, to whom conversation appeared to be an almost intolerable exertion, here subsided on an ottoman, and waved his hand, as though to dissipate any remnant of responsibility that might be supposed to cling to him with respect to the business on which I had called.

'Very well,' resumed the first speaker, accepting the position thus imposed upon him, 'let X—it is like a charming equation, I declare—let X—be the party that is empowered to treat with—with Stokes, Esq. That is satisfactory, and this Madena—the last of a most excellent bin; these are Havannahs, and these Manilla cheroots. Permit me to assist you with a light; complete combustion is essential.'

The young man dipped a silver sponge-holder into the flame of a spirit-lamp, and applied it to my cigar with all the cue that a surgeon takes with a taper wound.

My dear Y, our Advertiser was about to use a lucifer—a brimstone lucifer!

The gent. on the ottoman shuddered.