

The Duke Decides

still owed—as many guineas for a pair of dancing-pumps.

“I don’t suppose they’d sell me half a pair, for that’s all it runs to,” he muttered, turning regretfully away from the vamped-up frauds, and in so doing jerking the elbow of a passer-by. The victim of his sudden move—a stout, fair man in a light frock-coat and a Panama straw hat—stopped, and seemed inclined to resent the awkwardness.

“I really beg your pardon,” the culprit said with easy politeness. “I was so absorbed in my reflections that I forgot for the moment that the Bowery requires cautious steering.”

“You are an Englishman?” returned the other, with a milder countenance. “So am I. No need to apologize. As a fellow-countryman in foreign parts, permit me to offer you some liquid refreshment. In other words, come into that dive next door and have a drink.”

With an imperceptible shrug, Mr. Hanbury allowed himself to be persuaded. He would lose his supper at his boarding-house by the irregularity, but dissipation seldom came his way nowadays, and the prospect of whisky at some one else’s expense was tempting. Yes, he had fallen low enough for that! The stout