

CHAPTER XXXII

THE MAN UPON THE PAVEMENT

A WELL-MEANING stage-door keeper for once had told the plain truth, and there had been a man upon the pavement when Alban quitted the Regent Theatre.

Little more than six months ago, this identical fellow had been commissioned by Richard Gessner to seek Alban out and report upon his habits. He had visited the great shipbuilding yard, had made a hundred inquiries in Thrawl Street and the Commercial Road, had tracked his quarry to the Caves, and carried his news thereafter triumphantly to Hampstead and his employer. To-night his purpose was otherwise. He sought not gossip, but a man and that man now appeared before him upon the pavement, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, his head bent, his attitude that of utter dejection and despair !

“ Mr. Kennedy, if you please ! ”

The stranger spoke beneath the shadow of a great lamp in the Charing Cross Road. Not hearing him immediately, Alban had arrived at the next lamp before the earnest entreaty arrested him and found him erect and watchful in a moment.

“ I beg your pardon, sir ; you are Mr. Kennedy, are you not ? ”