

my appointment, as I heard of your illness, and guessed the cause of it. I honour you—'pon my soul I admire you for your pluck, your devotedness to my interests—and, judging by your presence here, for your generosity of spirit. Shall we shake hands? No!" as I drew myself back from him, "Well, be it so; but you are unwise."

"What is your business, sir?" interrupted Mr. Ashcroft angrily.

"My business! Egad, a pertinent question, a very pertinent question. My business, my good sir, lies not with you. The mountain (for which read Ralph Brabazon) would not come to Mohammed (for which read Anthony Bletsoe), so Mohammed comes to the mountain."

"This is no answer, sir. Your business, pray!"

"I have informed you my business lies with your master; our business, I should say," pointing to Snellgrove, "for the practical portion of the matter lies mainly with him. Egad!" he grinned; "Mr. Snellgrove, if you will believe me, is a trifle incredulous on some points known to a select few, and is willing to back his opinion by doing a certain duty unaided. I admire pluck, as my dear friend Doctor Emanuel can tell you, but I deplore rashness. However, Mr. Snellgrove is a gentleman not to be gainsayed."

"Is Mr. Brabazon in the house?" asked Mr. Snellgrove meekly.

"He is, he is," replied Mr. Ashcroft slowly, a heaving motion of the chest agitating him.