

"Nor to me. Don't worry."

"I am not worrying. I'm thinking that you and I have something in common. And for that reason I am tempted to ask if a few thousand would be of any use to you?"

Wilmot smiled with engaging candor. "Fifteen thousand would."

"You shall have them," said the beggar shortly. He pointed to a glazed door across which was printed in gilt letters:

BLIZZARD—MFR.

HATS

"That," said the beggar, "is my name, and that is my place of business. Come in."

Wilmot followed the beggar through the glass door, which at opening and closing caused a bell to clang. The front of the establishment was occupied by a dust-ridden salesroom, and an office with yellow-pine partitions. As he followed the beggar into this, Wilmot caught a glimpse in the distance of fifteen or twenty young girls who sat at a long table industriously plaiting straw hats. He lifted his own hat a little mechanically, and thought that he had never seen so many pretty girls at one time under one roof.