

THE TUNNEL

PART I

I

THE New York season reached its climax with the opening concert in the newly-built Madison Square Palace. There was an orchestra of two hundred and twenty performers, every single one of whom was a musician of repute. The most famous living composer had been secured specially for the occasion as conductor. The unprecedented fee of six thousand dollars was to be paid him for the evening.

The prices of the tickets astonished even New York. No places were to be had for less than thirty dollars, and the speculators in seats had driven the price of a single box up to two hundred dollars and more. The figure would not frighten away anybody who needed, or wanted, to cut a dash!

Towards eight o'clock Madison Avenue and Twenty-Sixth, Twenty-Seventh and Twenty-Eighth Streets were crammed with motor-cars. The dealers in tickets, their hands full of dollar bills, their faces streaming with perspiration despite a temperature below freezing-point, darted in and out recklessly between the wheels. They sprang up on the steps, and on the seats by the chauffeurs, sometimes even on the roofs of the cars, their harsh voices rising above the din of the traffic: "Here you are! Here you are! Two stalls, second row! Two Grand Circle seats! Here you are!" . . . A sharp hailstorm swept down upon the moving mass like grape shot.