

THE MAN WHO FORGOT

PROLOGUE

THE door shook, and there was the dull thump of heavy impact, as if the panels had been struck by a sack of meal. Old Sullivan, reading his paper behind the flat desk in the far corner, did not look up. That was the manner in which most of his guests came in. Simpson, who had signed the register and was on his way to the sleeping quarters, paused and turned his purplish face toward the door that had been shaken by the blow. Keener witted than most of the decrepits who drifted into this house of refuge, he wondered whether the place could furnish him amusement. Also, he was making a mental bet that there could come in nobody more wretched looking than he.

After a short, dead silence outside, there followed the sound of hard flesh and rough finger-nails scraping and clawing on the woodwork. The door swung in very slowly, and that which had sounded like a sack of meal stood wavering in the opening, like a spectre, his right shoulder against the door-jamb, his left hand