

AT CROSS-PURPOSES.

(Continued.)

An up-town car came rattling along just then, the driver's whistle and the conductor's bell chiming forth together in the vain endeavor to induce an obdurate truck just ahead to pull aside off the track. Paul pushed his way through the crowd on the back platform and entered the car. He was greeted with the universal scowl of welcome which every new comer in a public conveyance has a right to expect. He muttered his perfunctory apology to the old gentleman who had tripped him up with his umbrella, and by a frantic clutch at a strap and an exertion of unusual agility he saved himself from falling when the car started again. He hung to the roof of the vehicle in as complete a state of comfort and security as any New York street passenger may hope to attain. And now, having paid the conductor and declined the wares of several news-boys, he was at leisure to think again. He had made up his mind to see Zalinski from the moment that Duncan had mentioned the man's name and business. It was an unpleasant interview to look forward to; but for Charley's sake Paul was ready to do things more unpleasant than this. With this strange man Charley seemed to be mixed up somehow, just how or why Paul did not know, and he scarcely dared conjecture.

The connection of a "fence" with the outside world, so Paul argued, must needs be twofold. The receiver of stolen goods is the manager of the jobbing and commission house of crime. Like other commission houses, it must buy from the producer to sell to the consumer. Therefore he will pay money to the one and receive it from the other. James Butt, the house-breaker, is a producer; that is plain enough, and nothing was more natural than that Zalinski should pay him money,—Charley's check, for instance. This reasoning was a relief to Stuyvesant's mind. Of course he did not suspect Charley of anything wrong; he would have scoffed at any one who should have suggested that he might come to believe that the young artist was guilty of any evil; yet it was a relief to remember that because a man pays money to a receiver of stolen goods, there is no reason to suppose that he has been selling plunder. Unless—

"Bleecker—r—r!"

A fat woman, with two small children and a large basket, struggled to her feet. The conductor, having awakened the echoes of the car with his stentorian announcement, relapsed into indifference. The fat woman made frantic gestures, and the car rolled on. Stuyvesant gave the bell strap a vicious jerk, and proceeded to thread his mazy way out. The conductor scowled at him, and muttered something that sounded like "Fresh," the passengers who had further to go gazed indignantly at the man who had presumed to interrupt their journey, as the car slowed up and stopped about the middle of the block, and Paul descended into a neatly assorted compound of mud and water.

As he reached the curb-stone he looked back and saw the fat woman still standing on the platform and gesticulating angrily as she pointed to the miniature lake in the midst of which the car had halted. The two children, more aquatic in their habits, or more indifferent to dirt, were paddling gleefully to the sidewalk. They shrieked with laughter as they watched "granny a-givin' it to the conductor," but their triumph was short lived, for that autocrat quietly pulled the bell strap and the car proceeded. Thus was a family party broken up.

Stuyvesant turned and retraced his steps to Bleecker Street, while the youngsters, yelling like Comanches, raced along the sidewalk, evidently bent on keeping pace with the car till the next block, where they expected to reclaim their relative.

By name Stuyvesant knew Bleecker Street well enough, but it is one of those mid-way streets, neither up town nor down town, with which a great many well informed New Yorkers are hopelessly unfamiliar. As it debouched on Broadway, it was not amiss; two large stores occupied the corners, and if they had fronts on Bleecker Street they had fronts on Broadway also, and seemed determined to live up to the pretensions of that renowned thoroughfare. The first glance at the street which M. Zalinski had selected as his residence was satisfactory enough; but before Paul had taken many steps westward he changed his opinion.

What was the matter with the street? It would have puzzled him to say. Dirty it certainly was; but a dirty street is not so uncommon in New York as of itself to create a prejudice. The houses were mostly substantial and old-fashioned buildings, now apparently a little run to seed, but no more than was natural in a region left so far behind by the march of fashion. Cleaned and painted and repaired, many of them would not have disgraced an up town street, but here they looked tawdry and out of place despite the dignity of their architecture. Paul thought that they had something of the incongruous effect of magnificent rings on a coarse and dirty hand.

Another thing struck him as not a little unusual. While he walked along, running over the numbers as he passed them, he could not fail to remark that most of the doors stood open. This was peculiar on a wintry day; to a man of Paul's ideas, it was peculiar at any time. Neither did these open doors all belong to drinking saloons, and this reflection caused him to observe that there certainly was a superabundance of sample rooms,—as we Americans are wont to call them euphemistically. Neither were all houses with the open doors restaurants of a certain class, though it was undeniable that, on the whole, there was a plethora of restaurants of a certain class. Neither were they all pawnbrokers' shops, although in his short walk Stuyvesant had already passed two of these exchanges of poverty, and could see the three gilded balls of a third, glimmering in the wintry sunshine, ahead of him. There seemed to be no other business transacted than that of eating, drinking, and making temporary loans on

personal property. A street car passed along, but it did not halt either to take up or set down passengers. There were a great many children in the street, and a select contingent of these followed him at a short distance with audible comments. Evidently a tall man with a handsome overcoat and seal skin gloves was an unfrequent sight in that part of Bleecker Street.

Paul found himself wondering whether Charley often had occasion to visit this quarter in the course of his mysterious dealings with Zalinski and if so, whether the place was as odd and foreign and as unsavory to the artist as it was to the lawyer. Perhaps he might meet Charley when he reached his destination. On second thoughts he acknowledged that this was unlikely. Then he fell to wondering what Zalinski's store or office might be like. Did the "fence" carry on his nefarious operations behind one of those open doors, almost on the sidewalk, so to speak, or did he lurk in an attic room secured by bolts and bars, and accessible only under proper introduction and by the aid of a whispered pass word? The latter seemed the more likely supposition; and if it were right, how was he, Paul Stuyvesant, to gain admittance? He might use Charley's name; but he was determined that this should be a last resort. How Charley had gained his introduction was a question he did not like to ask himself. All was mystery and uncertainty. The only thing to be done was to wait—or rather to go on—and see.

Of course Stuyvesant had read "Oliver Twist," and he had seen the play which has been made out of it. Fagin, he assumed, was a tolerably correct portrait of a typical "fence"; but Fagin belonged to the London of half a century ago, while Zalinski belonged to the New York of to-day. A change of climate and an advance of forty years or more would naturally make many a modification in Fagin.

These mental queries were idle, he confessed to himself, for he would soon know what manner of man Zalinski might be. There were only two more numbers to be passed. Paul looked up. He unbuttoned his coat and refreshed his memory with another glance at the card. Here was the number. He stopped in surprise and doubt, staring hard at the house in front of him, as though he had made a mistake.

Opposite him one of the inevitable unfastened doors swung and creaked as some one passed out. Over his head glittered the arms of Lombardy, and beneath a legend in tarnished gilding set forth—

M. ZALINSKI,

LICENSED PAWNBROKER.

LIBERAL ADVANCES ON ALL KINDS OF PERSONAL PROPERTY.

UNREDEEMED PLEDGES FOR SALE.

Stuyvesant had never bargained for this. The "fence" was bad enough, but, in a way, the pawnbroker seemed infinitely worse. Around the one had hung the halo of some sort of mystery, while the other stood boldly confessed as the licensed conductor of a shabby, sordid, and (in Paul's eyes) degraded trade. And Charley had paid this man money,—not once, nor twice, but several, perhaps many, times. And Duncan, ignoring the ostensible business altogether, had spoken of him as a "fence." Clearly, this matter was one to be investigated further.

The door swung back once more, and then hung, quivering and complaining, in its normal position, half open, half shut.

Two young men passed out. One of them was attaching a latch-key to his watch chain as he came down the steps.

"Time's up," he remarked, with a coarse, reckless laugh.

"And it's likely to be up for a while," responded the other. "D'ye see those three balls?" and he pointed upwards. "D'ye know what they stand for?"

"Do I?" said the first speaker, somewhat bitterly. "I think I've had a good chance to learn."

"They mean that it's two to one you don't get anything out, once you put it in."

"Double the odds and it's a safe bet still," said the young man, buttoning his coat so as still to display the watch chain. "Devil may care, for all of me. Come on, we've got the boodle now, let's go somewhere and get a ball for ourselves."

"I'm with you," replied the other, with evident alacrity.

Stuyvesant watched them as they passed down the street until the nearest saloon swallowed them up. They had not far to go.

Then he turned again to inspect the building. It was a narrow high-stooped four story house. Evidently built for a dwelling, originally, the change had been deemed necessary to adapt it to its present uses. A spring long since out of order, had been fitted to the front door; a sign had been hung above it; and that was all.

The windows were coated thick with dirt and cobwebs. The gas was lighted on the first floor and in the hall, although it was still early in the afternoon and the day was clear and bright. The whole house had a rakish, dissolute look, and most of the men and women who went in and came out as Stuyvesant stood watching, were people whose habitual residence was seemingly on the shady side of Queer Street.

He walked away to the next corner and paused there for a moment. He felt an almost invincible repugnance to enter the place. It seemed to him as if he would leave something of his self-respect behind him. What would Kitty think if she were to see him going into a low, disreputable pawn shop or coming out of it? Then he laughed to himself, as he glanced up and down the street, it did not seem a likely promenade for a fashionable young lady.

He wished earnestly that he were fairly inside. He had a nervous dread of being seen, not by his acquaintances, but by the strangers who passed him on the street. It appeared to him that they all turned and