

noting the masterful tug given by the early visitor to the dingy brass bell-handle—third of a row of six sticking out like organ-stops on the right of the heavy, low-browed outer door. “And again! . . . Don’t be shy!” said the porter, who was something of a cynic: “Break the bell-wire, and then you won’t have done no good to yourself!—supposing you to be a client or a creditor of Mustey and Son—though you’re over-young to be the first and over-cheerful to be the second, it strikes me! Good-day, Mr. Chown!” And the porter touched his hat to a lean, mild-looking, elderly man in black, who turned in at that moment beneath the smaller archway. “You’re not the first this morning, early as you are. There’s a young chap who don’t seem in the mind to take no answer—has been ringing ten minutes without stopping at Mr. Mustey’s bell.”

“Pressing business, I suppose, to bring him out so early!” said the person addressed.

A glance of intelligence may have been exchanged between Mr. Chown and the porter, but there were no further words. Mr. Chown passed on, and joined the younger man on the doorstep under the fourth portico on the left side, as he prepared to fulfil the porter’s prophecy about breaking the bell-wire; and said, shifting his umbrella to the hand that held a shiny bag of legal appearance, and drawing a shabby latch-key from the pocket of his vest:

“Excuse me, but if it is a business appointment with Mr. Mustey Junior,”—he tapped the key upon the tarnished brass door-handle as though to knock some grains of dust out of the wards, and went on, punctuating his utterances with more tapping—“I happen to know”—*tap-tap-tap*—“that he won’t be here to-day.” He added, as he took a brief, comprehensive survey of the healthy, square-shouldered, well-built youngster of some five feet eight (with a hopeful promise of more inches in the breadth of the shoulders, and the depth of the chest), buttoned up in