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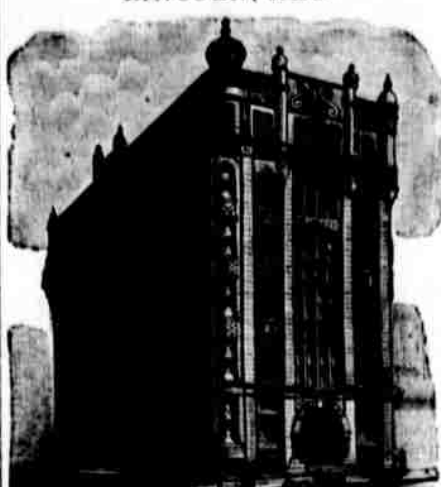
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CHAPTER I
THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT.

"Kill me if you will, but spare my life!" The shrieking voice of a young girl rang out upon the night on Chatham square. There was a sound of hurrying feet, then all was still.
Then the quick, sharp sound of a policeman's club clattering on the stone pavement was heard, and dusky forms were seen hurrying through the darkness. From Gible's concert hall, across the way, the sound of dreamy music floated out upon the night. The shrill cry of the waiter, "Two up and one down, and certain death with seltzer on the outside," rang across the silent street. The figure of a man crouched in the doorway as by shrank further back into the darkness. None heard the low mocking laugh he uttered. The brave policeman fought his way through the empty street and reached the scene of the struggle. There was nothing there.
The mocking laugh of the man crouched in the doorway rang out again as the policeman stooped down and picked up an anvil that had been dropped in the struggle.
"What could it mean?"

CHAPTER II
THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

The scene is the Cherry Hill hotel. In the handsome and spacious office a dozen clerks sit dozing during the busy day. "Has there been a bass drum left here for me?" inquires a voice.
The hotel clerk quits rubbing his diamond with the office blotter and looks up. The speaker is a short, thick set man, very tall and thin.
"No bass drum has been left here," answered the clerk, after searching the safe. "Heaven! have I been misled?" mutters the man. "But no, she dare not play me false." Then he turns to the hotel clerk, and adds:
"Should a bass drum be left here, wrap it up carefully, and send a messenger at once to William Williams, 210 Bowery. I will call for it myself."
Then he walks briskly away. A bright featured lad in the uniform of a bellboy gazes suspiciously at the stranger. "It is Billy the Bilk," he mutters.

Upstairs in room 31 a man of middle age sits back at his ease smoking a cigarette. A smile of self-satisfied complacency is upon his face. There is a knock at the door. The man goes to it. There is no one in the corridor, but on the threshold lies a note. It is addressed to Mr. Douglas Blanchard. The man opens it and reads: "Beware! Billy the Bilk has called for the bass drum." His face changes deadly white. He throws up his hands and falls forward in a swoon.

CHAPTER III
THE MISSING LINK.

Irene Blanchard sat in her boudoir reading a volume of Emerson, a glad, wild girl of thirty-five. What was this change that had lately come over her? What had embittered her life? "What use to live?" she murmured. "My young life made a curse, my father a stranger to his family." Then she read the poet's lines:
It was the sad noon of the night
Each lamp post heaved a sigh.
The pavement lay as still as death.
A tear stood in each eye.
"It is like the anguish echo of mine own life," she said.
At this moment the loud beating of a bass drum sounded through the night. "It is the serenade," she said. "Why will he dare come when he knows he endangers his life and my happiness. I can never love him, even though he hold my father in his power."

CHAPTER IV
THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

It is the night of St. Patrick's Day. The Bowery is a blaze of light. Laughing crowds pass by upon the street. A sweet faced girl, scantily protected from the biting March wind, stands on the corner of Baxter street singing "Cruiskeen Lawn." The careless passerby does not note the pinched appearance of her face, upon which her nose, so long and sharp that it would pick a lock, stands out in bold relief. A man clutches her on the shoulder. "What have you made?" he says. "Cruiskeen Lawn" is a tack number, nothing but "Sweet Katie Connor" and "Comrades" goes on the Bowery now.
"You lie, you jade!" he hisses. "I staggered a bloke giving you tenpence," and he strikes her a cruel blow.
The next instant he feels himself clutched in the strong grasp of a tall young man in a full dress suit. It is Shelton Langdon, an active member of the Manhattan Athletic club.
"You cur!" he says, "to strike a lady." Billy the Bilk, for it is he, utters a shrill whistle. In a few moments Langdon is dragged into a den near by, and a seventy nine cent suit replaces his costly garments. Held by a dozen men he is helpless, but above him he can see the sneering face of Billy the Bilk.
"Ed Mortimer should be here now with the police," says the young man. "Glory, then, Billy the Bilk, in your short lived triumph."
At that instant the crashing sound of an iron anvil is heard against the door. The luffed bandits crouch against the wall as they hear the ringing voice of Ed Mortimer at the door. Another crash and the structure totters and falls, and Iron Bound Ed springs into the room, saying—
The continuation of this story will be found in No. 4,114 of The Messenger Boys' Journal. Price, five cents. All newsdealers.—New York Evening Sun.

Nobility.

True worth is in being, not seeming—
In doing, each day that goes by.
Some little good, not in dreaming
Of great things to do by and by.
For whatever men say in their blindness,
And spite of the fancies of youth,
There is nothing so kingly as kindness,
And nothing so royal as truth.
—Alice Cary.

Too Late.

What silence we keep year after year,
With those who are most near to us and dear:
We live beside each other day by day,
And speak of myriad things, but seldom say
The full, sweet word that lies just in our reach
Beneath the commonplace or common speech.
—Nora Perry.

Charity.

He erred, no doubt, perhaps he sinned;
Shall I then dare to cast a stone?
Perhaps this blotch on a garment white
Counts less than the dingy robes I own.
—George W. W. Houghton.

A Child's Definition.
The strong but indirect value of education suggests a child's view of it in regard to drawing. Her estimate of it was the natural outcome of childish imagination. She wrote of herself: "Drawing is my favorite play. When I was littler I'd go off by myself and make up a story and illustrate it as I went along, carrying it for several weeks, remembering it by the pictures which I kept. I never told any one else the stories, for I got tired of them if I did." Another child defined drawing as "thinking and drawing round the think."
—Boston Traveller.



Not a Fit Subject.

A pale person applied for admittance to a public hospital. "It will be necessary," said the resident physician, "for you to undergo a medical examination." When the examination had been made the resident physician said: "I am very sorry, sir, but you are by no means a sound and able bodied man. You are, in fact, so ill that you are likely to die any day. We cannot admit you."
—San Francisco Examiner.

Shutting Him Up.

Our friend Cadet was buttonholed on the Boulevard by a bore, who said to him: "You don't look at all this morning."
"I dare say not; I have been lying insensible for eight hours."
"Dear me! What was the matter with you?"
"I was asleep. Ta-ta!"—Le Patriote.

Equal to Anything.

"Is the smoke of this cigar offensive to you?" politely inquired the youth on the platform of the crowded street car to the young woman who had been unable to get inside.
"No, sir," she said. "I can stand anything in that line. I am the cashier at a twenty-five cent restaurant."
—Chicago Tribune.

A Pleasant Prospect.

African King (to a missionary who has been explaining to him the duties of a ruler, and especially inculcating the love of justice)—You are a sincere man. I like you. I will make you my grand vizier.
"But what about the old grand vizier?"
"He shall be beheaded, so that he shall not stand in our way."
—Fliegende Blatter.

No Let Up.

Harassed Father—My boy, your tastes will be your ruin. Nothing seems too expensive for you. This thing has got to stop.
Extravagant Son (languidly)—Can't do it, governor; must keep right on. Going to marry the dearest girl in the world.—Pittsburg Bulletin.

A Case of Bounce.

"You see, it was this way. The india rubber man struck the ossified man and broke him."
"What did he strike him for?"
"Five dollars. When the manager found it out the india rubber man was bounced."
—Indianapolis Journal.

A Curious Epitaph.

The following inscription has been discovered on a tomb in an old churchyard: Here lies the body of Jonathan Ram. His soul's in the bosom of Abraham. That's all very well for Jonathan Ram—But, say, how about poor Abraham?
—Tagliche Rundschau.

Changed His Vocation.

Boggs—Since the ossified man fell down stairs and broke himself in two he doesn't stay in the museum.
Foggs—How does he support himself?
Boggs—He writes credentials for a glue firm.—New York Herald.

Particular.

Miss V. (fond of music and the drama)—You are fond of Rossini, Mr. F.?
Mr. F.—Passionately.
Miss V.—Know his "Barber?"
Mr. F.—No, I do not. I never patronize any but my own.—Life.

Phew!

Flattering—I'm sure Mr. Storer spoke very flatteringly of me.
Kate—Of course. Whatever anybody says of you, Arthur, cannot be otherwise than flattering.—Boston Transcript.

Unjust to the Glasses.

John Jay—Seems like these glasses ain't right for my eyes. I see double.
Optician—Well, you don't expect to have your sight troubled for seventy-five cents, do you?
—Jewelers' Weekly.

From the New Hamlet.

Hamlet—'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother.
The Queen—Dear me, Hammy, I do hope you haven't spilled any on our new parlor throne!—New York Herald.

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