



CLASSICS TO GO

**A BATTLE
FOR THE RIGHT
OR, A CLASH OF WITS
NICHOLAS CARTER**

A Battle for Right

Or, A Clash of Wits

Nicholas Carter

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CHAPTER I. AT A GAME OF POKER.

Five men were playing cards in a room in the Old Pike Inn.

It was a road house, on a well-traveled highway—a great favorite with automobiles—in one of the picturesque valleys that alternate with towering heights within easy motoring distance of New York City.

The Old Pike Inn had its spacious verandas, its big restaurant, its smaller dining rooms for private parties, and its great reception hall, with polished floor, in which dances, formal and informal, were in progress every evening during most of the year.

It was a place to which wealthy New Yorkers often brought their wives and daughters for luncheon or dinner, and its “tone” was regarded as above criticism. Everything suggested refinement, the lavish expenditure of money for the comfort and entertainment of guests, and an artistic atmosphere that was both subtle and unmistakable. Captain Brown, who managed the Old Pike Inn, knew his business.

Only a privileged number of his patrons were aware that they could play a quiet game of “draw” in secluded rooms, with the assurance that there could be no interference, and where their occupation would never be suspected by anybody not in the secret.

The five men playing were all young, and every one showed in the flushed countenance that something more than the excitement of the game had heated his blood and rendered his speech at times somewhat thick.

Other evidence along this line was the fact that a glass stood near each man, on a separate stand, while bottles of liquor on a table within arm's length of the players were frequently brought into use by the two soft-footed waiters, who were the only persons in the room besides the gamblers.

There was very little talking. Men who play poker are not apt to say much. Their attention must be concentrated on the game, if they expect to hold their own.

An occasional remark on some general topic was uttered, but as a rule each player, holding his cards well concealed in the hollow of his hand, watched the play of the others, and sought, by strained vigilance, to get the better of the struggle. Silence is a good thing in a poker game.

Suddenly, just as one of the waiters leaned over to pour some liquor into one of the glasses, the person for whom it was intended jumped to his feet and sent the light stand to the floor with a crash—bottle, glass and all. At the same time he pointed an accusing finger at the man opposite him.

“Cheat!” he shouted.

At the ominous word, the other four men were also on their feet.

“What’s that, Howard?” demanded one of them.

“He heard what I said, Jack!” thundered the other. “Look at him! He knows he brought up an ace of clubs from under the table. I saw him do it. He was so clumsy that I actually was able to make out what the card was.”

“You’re a liar!” cried the man accused.

It was useless for the others to try to keep the two apart after that.

With a mighty sweep, he who had cried “Cheat!” pushed the rather heavy table, with its green baize top and its

stacks of chips and scattered cards, to one side, and leaped upon the man he had denounced.

The two waiters were big fellows, notwithstanding their ability to move noiselessly about the room. They hurled themselves between the combatants.

Their interference was only just in time to prevent a straight left from landing on the chin of the player who had been charged with cheating, and at that, one of them got the fist himself in the back of his neck.

“Don’t, Mr. Milmarsh!” begged the other waiter, as he wound his arms around the waist of the infuriated owner of the fist. “Don’t make a noise! They’ll hear it downstairs. It’s a mistake! It must be!”

But Howard Milmarsh cared only for vengeance just then.

“Get away, will you?” was all he replied. “If you don’t, I’ll break your skull with a bottle. I’m going to make that scoundrel over there confess, and then I’ll thrash him till he won’t know that he ever had a face. It never *will* be the same face again,” he added grimly.

But the waiter hung on to the young fellow, while his comrade tried to push the other man back toward the door of an anteroom where hung the coats and hats of the players, and which was also fitted up as a lavatory.

“Come back here, you white-livered cur!” shouted Milmarsh. “You, I mean—Richard Jarvis! The fellow who calls himself a cousin of mine! Come back and let us look at what you have inside your cuff!”

The man he had called Richard Jarvis, who had been slinking behind the others, as if he had changed his mind about fighting, and desired only to get away, made a quick move toward the door leading to the other part of the house.

“Stop him!” shouted Milmarsh. “If once he gets out of that door he’ll destroy the evidence.”

“What do you mean by evidence?” asked Jack Denby. “Do you think Jarvis is hiding cards about him now?”

“I know he is,” was the hot reply.

“Bring him back, then!” cried Denby. “Let’s look!”

The two waiters and the three other players, including Jack Denby, surrounded Jarvis, keeping a wary eye on Howard Milmarsh, to see that he did not take the cowering wretch by the throat.

“His left cuff!” cried Milmarsh. “Look inside!”

“By Jove!” broke out Jack Denby.

He had thrust his fingers inside the stiff shirt cuff of the accused man and brought out three cards. They were the ace of hearts, the king of diamonds, and the king of clubs.

He threw them upon the table, faces upward, with a grunt of disgust.

“There you are, boys!” exclaimed Howard Milmarsh. “He brought out the other ace, as I told you—and I saw him do it. His idea was to ‘sweeten’ his hand, of course. He meant to do the same thing with these other cards you’ve just taken from him. He may have others about him—in his pockets, down the back of his neck, or anywhere. He seems to have the trick of hiding cards down fine.”

“I haven’t any other cards,” protested Richard Jarvis.

“You had those,” Jack Denby reminded him.

“I don’t know how they got caught in my cuff.”

A burst of laughter from Denby and the three other men rang through the room.

“You don’t know how they got ‘caught,’ eh?” sneered Denby. “Cards don’t often get ‘caught’ inside a man’s shirt cuff without some help. I guess you’d better give up all the money you have won to-night, and we’ll divide it among the rest of us. I don’t know which has lost the most, but it is

quite sure that all you have is not your own—as an honest man. Eh, Milmarsh?”

“I don’t care what is done with the money he cheated us out of,” returned Howard Milmarsh coldly. “That is not of any importance to me.”

“It is to me,” declared Denby, laughing. “I was about broke. I should have had to drop out before the next hand.”

“All right, Jack! You can have my share, and welcome,” said Howard indifferently. “You have earned it by holding that rascal back when he was going to sneak away. What he has to answer to me for are two things.”

“That so? What are they?”

“In the first place, he is a cheat—a blackleg—and he insulted me by presuming to sit in a poker game with me.”

“Well, he insulted us all in that respect, old man,” observed Denby.

“In the next place, he applied a word to me that he must answer for, and which can be done only in one way,” continued Howard Milmarsh. “That way is to stand up and take his thrashing. Or, if he prefers, to take it lying down. It is immaterial to me.”

Milmarsh threw off his coat and continued to walk toward Jarvis, who was hiding behind the two big serving men.

“Come out of that, Jarvis! Stand aside there, you two!” commanded Milmarsh, addressing the waiters.

The men shrugged their shoulders. They were supposed to keep order if any persons unknown to the management of the Old Pike Inn happened to intrude. But these five young men were all members of wealthy and prominent families, and were not to be treated like mere brawlers, of no social standing.

Howard pushed past them, and they stepped out of his way. They did not care much for Richard Jarvis, anyhow.

When Jarvis saw that he could not avoid an encounter with his cousin, he tried to pull himself together, and made a show of putting up his hands.

Hardly had he done so, when Milmarsh sent a crashing swing into his chest. The blow was intended for the chin, but Jarvis, by quick defense, diverted it, thus saving the vulnerable part of his person.

Jarvis knew something about boxing, and he retaliated to Milmarsh's onslaught with a glancing blow on the forehead that made his cousin mad. The consequence was a feint to the chest, which Jarvis blocked, and then a tremendous jab at the chin that stretched the latter across the floor, senseless.

"By George, Milmarsh! He's dead!" cried one of the other players, in startled tones, as he knelt by the side of the prostrate Jarvis. "You gave him a tap that settled him."

The speaker was Budworth Clarke, a young doctor, who had lately taken his diploma and hung out his shingle, and he delivered himself with authority.

"It can't be, Bud," protested Milmarsh. "I only landed an ordinary knock-out."

"You thought you did," was the reply. "But he must have had a weak heart. Now, the thing for you to do is to get a lawyer, quick. We may show that it was an accident, but we can't get over the fact that he has passed out."

Howard Milmarsh did not wait for the end of this oration. He walked deliberately to the outer door of the room, unlocked it with the key that had never been removed from the keyhole, and went down the two flights of stairs which led to the great reception room.

The usual nightly "hop" was in progress. But Milmarsh was in evening dress, and, though a close observer might have noted his flushed face and guessed the cause to be

drink, he was able to pass around the throng without particular regard from anybody.

“I’ll go right home,” he muttered. “It’s the only thing I can do. Then I will see.”

It was just as he reached the outer door—where half a dozen automobiles were drawn up on the great asphalt space where visitors to the Old Pike Inn could park their machines when they did not care to have them run into the garage—that he exchanged a cheerful good evening with a handsome man, in evening clothes, whose keen eyes followed him as he passed out.

“Young Milmarsh!” observed this gentleman to himself. “He’s been drinking again! Great pity! A fine young fellow! And owner of more property than any one in this part of the country. That is, he *will* own it when his father dies. Well, I suppose he feels that he must have his fling. But I’m sorry.”

The maker of these observations was a person known the world over as a great detective. His name was Nick Carter.

He watched Howard Milmarsh go to a handsome car, in which the chauffeur was sitting half asleep, and get in. The young man himself took the wheel. Then, after one quick glance in the detective’s direction, he drove hurriedly away up the winding road that led to the great Milmarsh mansion on the hill.

CHAPTER II. REMORSE.

The great steel-manufacturing firm of Howard Milmarsh & Son, with its immense plant in western Pennsylvania and its palatial offices in New York, was not any better known in business circles than was the palatial home of the head of the house among the Westchester hills.

It had been the custom of Howard Milmarsh, the elder, to entertain lavishly for years, his brilliant wife being an acknowledged leader of society. Then, one night, she took cold in her limousine, riding from a ball in New York to their home, dressed only in the light ball gown, with a flimsy lace scarf over her bare shoulders.

It is unnecessary to go into the details of her illness. Pneumonia is a swift disease. In ten days she was dead, and a pall settled over the spacious and luxurious mansion.

There was a large funeral, of course. That was the last large gathering of the friends and acquaintances of the Milmarshes the house saw. Her husband became a broken man, physically and mentally. He had an efficient and honest manager at the head of his vast business interests, so that there was no lack of money. But he seemed to lose all care for the world after his wife passed away.

Howard Milmarsh, the younger—the personage who struck down his cheating cousin, Richard Jarvis, in the poker game at the Old Pike Inn—lived alone with his father, and was the only comfort the elder man had.

But young Howard was full of life and youth, and it was natural for him to desire entertainment away from the great,

gloomy house.

Thus it was that he often spent days and nights in the gay districts of New York City, and often drank rather more than was good for him. He was not a drunkard. In fact, most persons would have said that he did not drink at all, measuring him by other young men of his social position and wealth. Nevertheless, he did give way occasionally—as he had done on this night in the Inn—and there was always danger that he might plunge deeper into dissipation if he were left to himself.

“But never again!” he muttered, as he drove the high-powered car up the winding hill, while the chauffeur nodded beside him. “I’ve played my last card and I’ve taken my last drink. I wish I’d made that resolution before I went into that cardroom to-night.”

“Beg pardon, sir!” interrupted the chauffeur drowsily. “Did you tell me to take the wheel?”

“I didn’t speak.”

“Oh, didn’t you, sir? I beg your pardon.”

“But we are nearly up to the house. You can take hold now.”

They changed places. Then, when the machine was again making its way up the road, Howard Milmarsh—who had been trying to collect his thoughts in the cool night air, and who had so far succeeded that he had managed to throw off the effects of the liquor he had consumed—directed the chauffeur to keep the car in front of the entrance, under the porte-cochère, while he went inside.

“I am going out again,” he added briefly, as the car drew up at the doorway.

Howard hastened, first of all, to his own room, where he found his valet, busy brushing some clothes.

“Fill two traveling bags with clothes and things for a week, Simpkins,” he ordered briefly. “But first help me into a business suit, with a soft hat. Give me my automatic revolver, and that heavy hickory stick I use for walking in the country.”

“Very good, sir,” replied the imperturbable Simpkins.

In five minutes Howard Milmarsh had changed his clothes, with the help of the valet, and, telling the latter to place the bags in the car at the door, the young man went to his father’s private room adjoining his bedroom, and knocked at the door.

“Why, Howard, what’s the matter?” demanded the millionaire, as his son entered hastily, before his father could tell him to come in. “You look excited. Haven’t been drinking, have you?”

“Not much. I’ve killed Richard Jarvis.”

The young man said this coolly, but it was the coolness of desperation. His wild eyes and haggard cheeks told their own story. No further confirmation of his startling confession was necessary.

Howard Milmarsh, the elder, was a slender man, with a pale face and hollow cheeks. He arose from the cushioned chair with difficulty, and, as he moved toward his son, he swayed, as if he had not complete command of his limbs.

“How was it?” he gasped at last.

“He cheated at cards.”

“Ah! That has been charged against him before.”

“And we fought.”

“Yes?”

“I struck him a blow harder than I had intended. It killed him. He had a weak heart, Budworth Clarke said. But—father, he called me a liar.”

“I see. And you struck him.”

“Yes. He had been caught with aces up his sleeve, inside his shirt cuff. That was the beginning of the trouble. Then, when he was accused of what there was actual proof of, he applied the word to me that I could not take. I killed him!”

“Killed him!” echoed the older man vacantly, as he sank back into his chair.

“So, now, father, I am going away. I cannot stay here and face a trial for murder.”

“You would be acquitted,” his father put in quickly. “The provocation was one you could not pass over. Then, again, his death was an accident. If his heart was weak——”

“I know, father. We can make all the excuses we please, and, perhaps, they might convince a jury. But the disgrace on our name would remain, and I should still feel that I had become a murderer—even though I did not mean it. So, good-bye, father! Good-bye! I will let you hear from me when I can. I do not know where I am going, and, if I did, I would not tell you, so that you would not have to say what was not true when you said to people that you did not know.”

The manufacturer went to a safe that stood at one side of his room and took out a package of bank notes. He handed them to his son.

“There are ten thousand dollars, Howard. When you need more, let me know. And now, good-bye, my son. I may never see you again. I am not well. But come back soon, if you can. You will know what the result of the inquiry into the death of Dick Jarvis is if you watch the papers.”

“I may be where I cannot easily get New York papers, father. I intend to go as far away from what we call civilization as I can. I don’t know where. But it doesn’t matter. There is one thing I want to say in your presence, father, before I go away—one vow I mean to make.”

“Yes?”

“I will not raise my hand in anger against anybody again. I don’t care what the provocation, I will not fight.”

“I don’t see how you can make such a resolution as that, my son. Sometimes an occasion will arise when you cannot avoid fighting.”

“I know that. But I will avoid it, even under such conditions as those,” declared Howard resolutely. “Don’t you see, father, that that will be my punishment for what I did to-night to Dick Jarvis?”

The millionaire shook his head. It seemed to him that his son was making a vow that he would find it impossible to keep.

“I do not think you should hold yourself to such a pledge as that,” he said. “Anyhow, I believe I shall be able to smooth matters over for you so that you can soon return home. I only have you, now that your mother is gone, and I want you with me for the little time I have to live.”

“Nonsense, father,” returned Howard affectionately. “You will be alive twenty years from now. Long before that I hope I shall have found a way to come home and be a decent citizen, but I confess I don’t see my way clear now. Good-bye!”

With a hearty clasp of his father’s hand, Howard Milmarsh turned away and fairly ran from the room.

The head of the great steel firm—whom so many thousands envied for his wealth, and presumably his happiness—sank back in his deep chair, and let the tears trickle slowly down his worn cheeks. The widower felt as if his heart had been broken for the second time.

Meanwhile, the son dashed down the wide staircase and hurried into the waiting machine.

The traveling bags were already stowed away in the back of the car, and Simpkins stood at the side of it, overcoat and hat on, to go with his employer.

“I shan’t want you, Simpkins,” said Howard calmly. “Tomorrow morning go in and see my father. He will make arrangements with you. I shall be away for a week—perhaps much longer. I am going to New York. Drive on, Gustave!” he added, to his chauffeur. “Take the road straight into New York and stop at the Hotel Supremacy. You know where that is.”

“Yes, sir,” replied Gustave briefly, as he threw on the power.

The road Gustave took did not lead past the Old Pike Inn. Howard Milmarsh had remembered that when he gave the direction. He did not want to run right into the arms of the law, and he did not forget that he had seen Nick Carter watching him from the porch of the popular resort.

It was not the habit of Carter to take up any ordinary murder case, even when it came immediately under his notice. But Howard Milmarsh had a feeling that the great detective would surely concern himself in this one, for he had long been a friend of Howard’s father.

While Howard Milmarsh skimmed along at thirty miles an hour and more in the direction of New York, Nick was hurrying up to the Milmarsh mansion in the large, gray car that he generally used for his country excursions, and which had brought him to the Old Pike Inn that evening.

“Mr. Nick Carter would like to see you, sir,” announced a wooden-visaged servant in livery to the millionaire, not more than twenty minutes after the departure of his son. “He will not detain you long, he told me to say.”

“Show him in, of course!” ordered Milmarsh, arousing himself and preparing to receive his caller smilingly.

“Hello, Carter!” was his warm greeting. “I’m very glad to see you. Did you just run up from New York?”

“No,” was the grave reply. “I’ve been at the Old Pike Inn most of the evening. I came up to speak to you about your

son Howard!”

The millionaire jumped forward and held up a hand close to the detective’s face to silence him, while an expression of agonized terror appeared on his haggard, aristocratic face.

“Hush!”

CHAPTER III. WHO KILLED JARVIS?

"You know that Howard had a fight in the Inn to-night?" asked Nick, in a low tone.

"Yes. He has told me. But—but it was an accident. He did not mean to do it. You know my son too well to believe anything else."

"I know he is hot-tempered, and that he had been drinking to-night," was the response. "But I want to tell you ___"

"No, no! Don't tell me! I know all about—"

"I don't think you do."

"Yes, I do. My boy told me. What is the use of repeating ___"

The detective smiled protestingly, as he took the millionaire's wrist in his fist, to keep him quiet.

"Let me speak, Mr. Milmarsh. I came to tell you that your son did *not* kill Richard Jarvis."

"Not kill him? Are you sure of that? Is he alive?"

"He was alive for ten minutes after your son struck him. In fact, he was as well as ever. The blow on the chin was only one of the sleep-producing kind that are dealt at many boxing matches. What they call a 'knock-out.' Jarvis had entirely recovered from that almost before Howard was out of the Inn."

"Then Dick Jarvis is alive?" asked Milmarsh eagerly.

"*No, he is dead!*"

Howard Milmarsh fell back, his mouth dropping open and a terrified light gathering in his eyes.

“Dead?”

“Yes. But, as I have told you, your boy did not kill him. You need have no fear about that. Where is your son? I should like to tell him. I have no doubt he is nearly out of his mind over the belief that he has committed murder.”

“He is. But he is not at home. He has gone away—to New York, I believe. I hope he will be back in the morning. Tell me how it is that Richard Jarvis is dead. I have had no communication with him or his father since long before my wife died, but I am sorry Richard is dead.”

“He was not really a cousin of your son’s, was he?” asked Carter.

“No. His father was my wife’s half brother, so that I never considered him a relative, in the true sense of the word. And yet, if I had no son——”

“I know all about that,” interrupted the detective. “Don’t think of it. You have a son, and a good one, take him altogether. As for Richard Jarvis’ death, it is not easily explained. After your son left the Inn, Thomas Jarvis, Richard’s father, appeared there, in a rage, asking for his son.”

“They always quarrel a great deal, I believe,” remarked the millionaire. “Richard’s drinking and gambling is the cause of it, I’ve been told. They have not any too much money, and it makes Thomas Jarvis angry when Richard wastes any in dissipation. But go on.”

“Thomas Jarvis forced his way upstairs, to the poker room, and there was a hot dispute between father and son. One of the waiters was the only other person in the room. He says that, in the midst of the fuss, Richard made a lunge at his father with his fist, but, being stupid with drink—for he had a lot more after the trouble with Howard—he stumbled

over the disordered rug and pitched headlong on an iron fender in front of the open fireplace.”

“And it killed him?”

“Fractured the skull. I saw him. He was quite dead. But—there was a peculiar little circumstance that I have not said anything about, and shan’t, unless the coroner brings it up.”

“What was that?”

“Some small fragments of glass were in the wound, and a broken champagne bottle lay at his side. It may have been that he fell upon the bits of glass, if the bottle had been previously broken. But—if the coroner is suspicious, he might make an exhaustive inquiry in the hope of proving that the bottle had been used as a weapon and that Thomas Jarvis had killed his son. That is all I came to tell you,” added the detective. “I hope your son will be home in the morning. If not, he’ll come as soon as he learns the truth, anyhow. I don’t know just what the papers will publish about it to-morrow. I don’t think they will have anything.”

The detective said this with a curious smile that caused the millionaire to ask him why he thought so.

“There are ways of holding back news from even the liveliest papers—if you know how to do it, and have a little influence,” he admitted significantly.

“I wish you would stay and smoke a cigar with me, Carter,” said the millionaire, as the detective got up to go. “There is something I wanted to speak to you about.”

Carter nodded and took the seat proffered by his host. He accepted a cigar from the humidor at his elbow. Then, as he lighted up and blew a ring of smoke from his lips, he glanced inquiringly at the millionaire.

“It is only about my health, Carter,” explained Milmarsh. “I don’t believe I shall live very long. When I die, of course Howard will succeed me, and I have little doubt he will take an active part in managing the business. He won’t have to

change the title of the firm. It will continue to be Howard Milmarsh & Son. That is my desire, expressed in my will."

"I know Howard wouldn't want to change that," declared the detective. "Howard has considerable respect for the name you both bear. But I don't believe you are going to die for many years."

"I know better," returned the other. "I know the symptoms, unfortunately, too well. That is why I am not smoking this evening. All I want to ask of you is that you will see Howard gets his birthright."

"You have made all proper, legal arrangements, have you not? Your will is in a safe place, I suppose?"

"Yes. That is not it. One copy of my will is in my safe-deposit box in my New York bank, and another is in the possession of my attorneys, Johnson, Robertson & Judkins, of New York. What has always troubled me is that Howard is a little wild, and that he might do something which would give enemies an opportunity to rob him of his inheritance."

"How could anybody do that?" queried Nick, smoking steadily. "Even if you had not made a will, Howard is your only child, and he would succeed as heir at law."

"But, suppose he were not to claim his inheritance? Suppose, for some reason, he could not be found?"

"What do you mean?" asked the detective. "Don't you know where he is now? If he went to New York, we could hear of him at the Hotel Supremacy, I have no doubt. That is where he generally goes when he's in the city. Of course, he may have gone to one of his clubs. But, even then, it would not be hard to find him."

Nick Carter smoked in silence for a full minute before he spoke again. Then he asked, more earnestly than he had spoken hitherto:

"Do you think Howard has gone farther than New York—that he has sailed to some foreign country, for instance?"

“I don’t know where he is,” replied the millionaire. “What I do know,” he continued slowly, and with his breath coming fast between his words, “is that I am not well to-night, and that a presentiment hangs over me that I should have taken better care of my boy.”

“Pshaw! You have nothing to reproach yourself with in that respect. I can testify to that,” said Carter encouragingly. “You have been excited over this unfortunate affair at the Old Pike Inn, and it has got on your nerves. Howard deserves to be spanked for upsetting his father in this way. Let me give you a little brandy.”

He went to the handsome mahogany cellaret at one side of the room, and brought out a decanter of brandy.

The detective had visited Howard Milmarsh many times, and he knew just where to find anything that might be wanted in this room. He poured out a little of the liquor and gave it to the millionaire.

“Thanks!” gasped Milmarsh. “That will do me good. Now, Carter, will you promise me that in case anything happens to me before Howard comes back, you will see that he is not defrauded in any way?”

“Upon my word, I don’t see the necessity,” laughed the detective. “But, of course, I will do it.”

“That is not all,” went on the millionaire, who seemed to be stronger now than at any time since Carter had been with him. “I have already taken legal measures to give you the authority you might require. The papers are in the hands of Johnson, Robertson & Judkins, all properly drawn up.”

“What papers?”

“Making you the legal guardian of my son until he is in full possession of my estate. After that, he can take care of himself.”

“Rather a queer—or, at least, an unusual—proceeding,” remarked the detective.

“Possibly. But it will make Howard safer. Now, I know you would do anything for Howard or his father. We have been friends too long for me to doubt that. But I like to do matters of business in a businesslike way. Therefore I have provided that you shall receive five per cent of the value of the whole estate when Howard takes legal possession. Will that be satisfactory?”

“Satisfactory?” repeated Nick. “Why, you are rated at ten million dollars—perhaps more. Five per cent of that would be——”

“Never mind about figuring it up,” interrupted Howard Milmarsh, smiling wanly. “You will accept the trust?”

“Of course.”

“Thanks, old friend! I felt sure you would. I hope I shall hear something about my boy by the morning.”

“You shall if I can do anything to bring it about,” said Nick, rising. “I am going to New York now, and I think I know about all the places in which Howard is likely to take refuge in the great city of light.”

He went over to Milmarsh and shook hands. It struck the detective that the millionaire’s hands had never been quite so thin before, and that he had never noted such a weary look in the hollow eyes. But he made no comment, of course.

“Good night,” he called out from the door. “I’ll telephone the house as soon as I find the boy. Good night!”

“Good night!” was the response. “I’ll have some of the servants take the message. I’m going to bed. I feel that I need rest—a long rest!”

Nick Carter had not reached the bottom of the hill leading from the Milmarsh mansion to the State road, when he saw the lights of a car coming toward them, and he knew it must be the car in which young Howard had gone to New York.

“Stop!”

As the detective gave this order to his chauffeur and his big car came to a halt, the other car drew up alongside and also stopped as the driver perceived they were waiting for him.

“Where is Mr. Milmarsh in New York?” asked Carter imperatively.

“I put him down at the Hotel Supremacy,” was the reply.

“Did he put up there?” asked Nick, as the other driver pushed his lever forward, preparatory to going on. “Don’t be in a hurry, please. You know me, don’t you?”

“Yes, Mr. Carter!”

“Then you know you’d better answer me without any quibbling. I asked whether Mr. Howard Milmarsh went into the Hotel Supremacy, to stop there for the night?”

“I don’t think he did, sir.”

“Why don’t you think so?”

“Because he stood just inside the lobby after getting out of the car, and wouldn’t let any of the porters take his bags.”

“Well?”

“As I turned my car around, I had a view of the doorway, and I saw Mr. Milmarsh come out and get into a taxi.”

“Where did the taxi go?”

“I don’t know, sir. I didn’t think of following it. That would not have been any of my business. It vanished among all the other taxis and motor cars in the avenue. I shouldn’t have thought anything of it at all if you hadn’t asked me.”

“I suppose that’s true,” remarked Carter, half to himself. Then, louder: “That will do. Good night!”

The detective called up every club, hotel, restaurant, and private home in which it might be possible to hear of