

**THE CITY OF  
REFUGE, IN THREE  
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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The City of Refuge, in Three Volumes, Vol. II by Walter Besant

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**WALTER BESANT**

**THE CITY OF  
REFUGE, IN THREE  
VOLUMES, VOL. II**



# THE CITY OF REFUGE

BY  
WALTER BESANT

AUTHOR OF  
"ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN," "CHILDREN OF GIBION,"  
"THE MASTER CRAFTSMAN," ETC.



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## CHAPTER I.

STRAWBERRIES ! FINE STRAWBERRIES !

ONE afternoon, about four weeks after these beginnings, a certain English traveller, whose gray hair and gray moustache proclaimed his more than fifty summers, was standing in the portico of the first hotel of Aldermanbury City, New York State. Aldermanbury is not a very important place, but a good many thousand people worry through life there ; it possesses at least one fine street ; it has its public buildings—which are new and ambitious ; it has a beautiful park ; it has a noble river, which flows past its quays and wharves ; it holds a daily



exhibition of activity and industry ; it boasts an electric tram as well as a horse tram ; it has two, or perhaps ten, daily papers ; there is a lecture-hall ; there is a college for men and women ; and it is old enough to have a few houses of the eighteenth century, with a church, wooden pillars and all, actually of the seventeenth century. In all America you cannot very well expect to find a church much older than that.

It was a sizzling hot day in June ; the outlines of things quivered in the heat ; the electric cars ran clicking noisily up and down, looking like red-hot furnaces for the accommodation of the wicked ; if any man chose to walk on the sunny side it was equivalent to committing suicide—the coroner's inquest would certainly bring in that verdict ; the broad shady hall of the hotel was filled with citizens sitting about and transacting business ; they all drank iced water ; the young men tried to preserve the

stiffness of their collars scientifically by sticking a handkerchief between collar and neck. The heat, which overcomes the body and brings limpness and languor to the limbs, has in America, apparently, no such effect on the mind; the flow of business was not arrested; in the shops the electric fans went whizzing round and round, and then went whizzing back again; they fanned the cheek with the burning air, but they could not cool it.

The Englishman looked up and down the street lazily. It was his second day in the place: he had seen everything there was to see; he felt like going on to the next place. Why should he not go on? On the other hand, why should he go on? He had been going on for the best part of a twelvemonth. To one who goes about the world for so long there cometh in the end satiety of newness—enough of new places and new sights. This American city interested him not: on the

other hand, if he went on to Boston or New York it would be hotter and noisier, and not much more interesting. Perhaps he might as well stay there—continuance of heat when there is not noise therewith is not unpleasant, and in the evening one can drive.

The Park of Aldermanbury is a mighty pretty place—much prettier than Hyde Park, or Green Park, or even St. James's Park—with its ornamental water, its bridges, its islands and its hanging woods, and, after sunset, its countless points of fire in its millions of fireflies. The soft, cool air of this park, and stillness therewith, would be far better, he reflected, than the noise of New York, even with a drive in Central Park. Perhaps he would stay. In this irresolute condition of mind, he looked up the street and down the street, expecting nothing. He looked into the twilight of the hall, and he considered with pity the energy of drummers and those who hunt the nimble