

**THE  
MANHATTANERS; A  
STORY OF THE HOUR**

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The Manhattaners; a story of the hour by Edward S. Van Zile

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**EDWARD S. VAN ZILE**

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# THE MANHATTANERS

*A Story of the Hour*

BY

EDWARD S. VAN ZILE

AUTHOR OF

"A MAGNETIC MAN," "LAST OF THE VAN SLACKS,"  
ETC., ETC.

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## THE MANHATTANERS.

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### CHAPTER I.

"I DON'T want to discourage you, my boy, but, as our 'brevier writers' are so fond of saying, there is 'food for reflection' in that historic figure."

It was half an hour after midnight, and two men were standing at the south-west corner of City Hall park, gazing at the statue of Nathan Hale. The taller of the two was a man who, having passed the portentous age of forty, no longer referred to his birthday when he reached it. He had maintained silence on this subject for several years, and his friends were not certain whether he was forty-one or forty-five; but his face seemed to indicate the latter age. It was a strong face, marked with lines of care, perhaps of dissipation, and about the mouth

lurked an expression of discontent. That he had grown rather weary of the battle of life was indicated by his dress, which possessed that indefinable characteristic that may be expressed as careless shabbiness. His beard was untrimmed, and a slouch hat covered a head of iron-gray hair that would have been picturesque had it not been constantly neglected.

His companion was a youth of not more than three-and-twenty, slender, carefully attired, and with a delicately-moulded face that was strikingly handsome when he smiled. He was showing his perfect teeth at this moment, as he glanced first at the statue of the martyred hero, and then at the sarcastic countenance of his companion.

"Why do you say that, Fenton? Surely there is inspiration in the sight. Does not the figure prove that the time-worn slur regarding the ingratitude of republics is false?"

"Hardly that, Richard — *Richard Cœur de Lion* I shall dub you for awhile. It simply shows that somebody, at a very late day, had an attack of spasmodic sentimentality. There



are other heroes of the Revolution, who were as self-sacrificing and patriotic as Nathan Hale, who are still forgotten by a republic that is grateful only in spots. Immortality, my dear youngster, is, to a great extent, a matter of chance. But, to waive that point, don't you see how this figure of enthusiastic youth, this doomed martyr — this complete tie-up on Broadway, as a flippant friend of mine once called the statue — illustrates the dangers that beset your path?"

"I must acknowledge," answered Richard Stoughton good-naturedly, as he placed his arm in Fenton's and walked westward toward the Sixth Avenue elevated station at Park Place, "I must acknowledge that I have seen nothing in the park that tended to dampen my natural enthusiasm, unless it was the sign, 'Keep off the grass.'"

"That's just it," returned John Fenton in his deep, penetrating voice. "That statue of Nathan Hale is what might be called an emphasis in bronze of the warning, — a warning as old as human tyranny, — to keep off the

grass. Hale failed to obey it, and went to an early death. Take warning, Richard, by the lesson the statue teaches. Don't let your dreamy and unpractical enthusiasm carry you into the enemy's camp. They'll hang you if you do."

"Your words are enigmatical," commented Stoughton, as the two men scated themselves in an elevated train bound up-town. "I had looked to you for comfort and warmth, and you give me a shower-bath."

"Poor boy!" smiled Fenton, less cynically than was his wont. "When did the youthful warrior ever gain anything of value by consulting the battle-scarred and defeated veteran? I have the decayed root of a conscience somewhere that troubles me now and then. It gave a little twinge just now, and causes me to doubt the wisdom and justice of my effort to open your eyes to the truth."

"But why," asked the younger man earnestly, "should there be anything to offend your conscience in telling me the truth?"

"Ah, there, my boy, you ask a question that

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the wisest men have failed to answer. There are certain truths that the universe holds in its secret heart and refuses to divulge. As a microcosm, every man cherishes in his innermost being some bitter certainty that he must defend from the gaze of the curious. If he draws the veil, even by a hair's-breadth, that exposed nerve known as conscience will throb for an instant, and close his mouth."

"But," persisted the younger man, whose clear-cut face looked, in contrast with his companion's, like a delicate cameo beside a mediæval gargoyle, "I had placed so much value on your advice and sympathy."

"My sympathy you certainly have," said Fenton rather harshly; "but giving you my advice would be—to take a liberty with a time-honored illustration—like casting swine among pearls. Is it not some word-juggler, who uses epigrams to conceal the truth, who says that the only vice that does not cling to youth is advice?"

Richard Stoughton's face flushed, and his dark gray eyes glanced questioningly at his companion.