

**THE STURGIS
WAGER:
A DETECTIVE STORY**

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The Sturgis Wager: A Detective Story by Edgar Morette

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EDGAR MORETTE

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A DETECTIVE STORY**

THE STURGIS WAGER

A Detective Story

BY
EDGAR MORETTE



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The Sturgis Wager.

CHAPTER I.

THE CABMAN'S FARE.

IT was bitterly cold. The keen December wind swept down the crowded thoroughfare, nipping the noses and ears of the gay pedestrians, comfortably muffled in their warm wraps.

Broadway was thronged with the usual holiday shoppers and pleasure-seekers. Cabs with their jaded steeds driven by weatherbeaten jehus, and private carriages behind well-groomed horses handled by liveried coachmen, deftly made their way through the crowds and deposited their fares at the entrances of the brightly lighted theaters or fashionable restaurants. A wizened hag, seated on the curbstone at the corner, seemed to shrink into herself with the cold as she turned the crank of her tiny barrel-organ and ground out a dismal and scarcely audible ca-

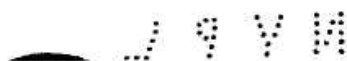


cophony; while an anxious-eyed newsboy, not yet in his teens, shivered on the opposite side of the way, as, with tremulous lips, he solicited a purchaser for his unsold stock. One could hardly be expected to open a warm overcoat on such a night, at the risk of taking cold, for the sake of throwing a cent to an old beggar woman, or of buying a newspaper from a ragged urchin. Even the gaily decorated shop windows failed to arrest the idle passersby; for it required perpetual motion to keep the blood in circulation.

The giant policeman on the crossing, representing the majesty of the law, swayed the crowd of vehicles and pedestrians with the authoritative gestures of his ponderous hands, and gallantly escorted bands of timid women through the inextricable moving maze.

And withal, the cable cars, with their discordant clangor, rumbled rapidly to and fro, like noisy shuttles, shooting the woof of the many-hued fabric which is the life of a great city.

Presently from one of the side streets there came a cab, which started leisurely to cross Broadway. The big policeman, with his eyes fixed upon an approaching car, held up a warning hand, to which the driver seemed to pay no at-



tention, for the reins remained slack and the listless horse continued to move slowly across the avenue.

Several people turned to look with mild curiosity at the bold cabman who dared thus to disregard the authority of blue cloth and brass buttons. Their surprise changed quickly to amazement and dismay when their eyes rested upon him; for his head had fallen forward upon his chest and his limp body swayed upon the box with every motion of the cab. He seemed unconscious of his surroundings, like one drunk or in a stupor.

At his side sat a young man closely muffled in his overcoat, and with a sealskin cap pulled well down over his ears. His face was deathly pale. Those who caught sight of his features saw that his bloodless lips were firmly set, and that his eyes glittered with a feverish light. He carried one hand in the lapel of his coat. With the other he shook the inert form of the unconscious cabman, in a vain effort to arouse him to a sense of the impending danger.

The situation flashed upon the gripman on the car. Instantly he threw his weight upon the brakewheel, at the same time loudly sounding