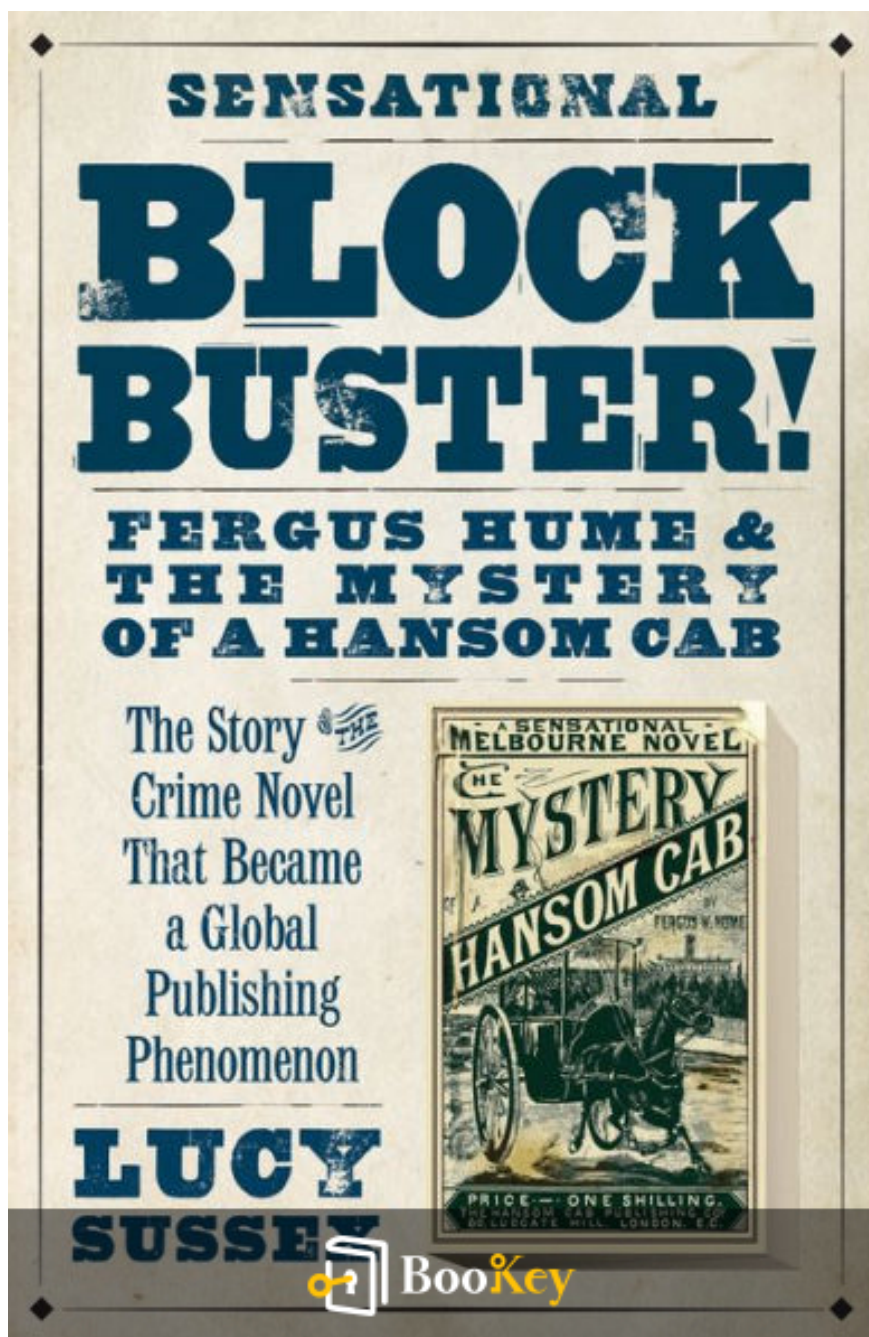


Blockbuster! PDF (Limited Copy)

Lucy Sussex



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Blockbuster! Summary

Unveiling the Birth of Australia's First Literary Blockbuster

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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About the book

Blockbuster! by Lucy Sussex offers a fascinating exploration of the cultural and literary significance of Fergus Hume's **The Mystery of a Hansom Cab**, a landmark piece in the detective fiction genre, released in the late 1800s. Before the rise of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, Hume's novel emerged as Australia's first major literary success, reshaping the narrative landscape.

Initially, Hume was an aspiring playwright in Melbourne, seeking recognition through the theater scene. Disappointed by a lack of success in drama, he turned to writing a novel. His ambition was to create a gripping story that would capture theatrical interest. Instead, **The Mystery of a Hansom Cab** became an unexpected bestseller, resonating with readers and igniting a literary craze that established detective fiction as a popular genre. Hume's talent for weaving suspense and intrigue captivated the public, but he lamentably sold the rights to the book for only fifty pounds, never fully reaping the rewards of his success.

In her meticulous research, Sussex highlights how Hume's groundbreaking work paved the way for future detective stories, emphasizing its innovative structure and character development. The book introduces readers to a vividly depicted Melbourne, teeming with life and intriguing social dynamics, providing a rich backdrop for the unfolding mystery.

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Through **Blockbuster!**, Sussex not only chronicles the creation and impact of Hume's novel but also situates it within the broader context of literary history, illustrating its role in the evolution of crime fiction and its lasting legacy. This engaging narrative is essential for anyone interested in the origins of detective storytelling, the landscapes of 19th-century Australia, and the interplay between art, commerce, and cultural phenomenon.

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About the author

Lucy Sussex, an esteemed author with a diverse literary portfolio, captures readers with her adept storytelling across genres. Among her notable works is "Blockbuster! Fergus Hume and The Mystery of a Hansom Cab," a compelling exploration of classic detective narratives that earned her the 2015 Victorian Community History Award. Sussex's scholarly contributions, such as "Women Writers and Detectives in the Nineteenth Century" and "Saltwater in the Ink: Voices from the Australian Seas," highlight her deep engagement with historical contexts and underrepresented voices in literature. With a PhD from the University of Wales and a role as an honorary fellow at La Trobe University, Sussex's intellectual expertise enriches her writing. Her anticipated book, "Outrageous Fortunes," promises to showcase her literary prowess further, drawing on her unique insights into storytelling and character development. Through her works, Sussex not only entertains but also invites readers to consider broader cultural and social themes, establishing herself as a significant figure in contemporary literature.

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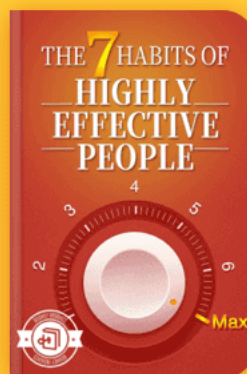
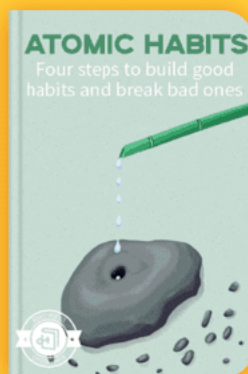
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Chapter 1 Summary: THE MAN WITH A SECRET

Chapter 1 Summary: The Man with a Secret

Set against the backdrop of 1861 England, the inaugural chapter introduces Myles Desmond, a writer for a scandal magazine, who encounters Mr. Dowker, a detective. This interaction serves as a springboard for an exploration of the intricate connections between detectives and the pursuit of secrets. The term "detective" traces its roots to the Latin word **detegere**, meaning "to unroof," a concept that resonates with the hidden truths that lie beneath the surface of everyday life. This is whimsically illustrated through the figure of Asmodeus from historical literature, a demon who physically lifts roofs to reveal what is concealed.

The narrative delves into Victorian society, marked by anxieties surrounding domesticity, where homes appearing idyllic often hid disturbing realities, including infidelity and even murder. The chapter positions the rise of detective fiction within this context, highlighting how true crime stories of the period provided rich inspiration for authors like Charles Dickens, who reflected societal scandals in their works.

A focal point of the chapter is the 1861 Census, which serves as a metaphorical tool for social "unroofing." It unveils the hidden lives of

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notable crime writers, such as Wilkie Collins and Mary Braddon, whose personal entanglements often stood in stark contrast to their public images. Both authors were pivotal to the "Sensation" genre, which captivated readers with tales of crime and intrigue.

The chapter also foreshadows the future of detective fiction by recognizing two young boys—Arthur Conan Doyle and Ferguson Wright Hume—born in 1859, who would grow to become influential crime authors. Their formative experiences, particularly Hume's upbringing within a lunatic asylum, are noted for their potential impact on their storytelling. As the chapter concludes, it leaves readers with the somber yet hopeful image of these two children peacefully asleep, each harboring the seeds of literary ingenuity that would shape the emerging genre of detective fiction.

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Chapter 2 Summary: CRAZY-QUILT

Chapter 2 Summary: Crazy-Quilt

This chapter delves into the multifaceted background of Fergus Hume, who is portrayed as a "crazy-quilt"—a metaphor that captures the disparate influences and formative experiences of his early life. The rich tapestry of his upbringing plays a pivotal role in shaping his character and creativity, mirroring the way a quilt is composed of diverse fabric pieces.

Migration to New Zealand

Fergus Hume's journey began in the context of the 1861 gold rush, which prompted his family to emigrate from England to Dunedin, New Zealand. This chapter accentuates the bravery exhibited by 19th-century migrants, who undertook lengthy, perilous voyages to the Pacific Islands, often facing harsh conditions. In contrast, the regulated journeys to New Zealand offered more support than the tumultuous trips taken by many to America.

Dunedin's Development and Hume Family Background

The narrative shifts to Dunedin's evolution, a city established by Scottish settlers that flourished during the gold rush, evolving into a hub of cultural



and educational significance. The Hume family, especially the patriarch, James Hume, embraced this new environment, recognizing the importance of education. Their commitment to learning served as a vital foundation for Fergus's future endeavors.

James Hume's Role at the Asylum

James Hume's appointment as the Superintendent of the Dunedin Lunatic Asylum marks a significant turn in the family's social standing. His background in working-class struggles fortified his ability to navigate the demands of managing a facility that cared for mentally ill patients. This role not only improved the family's financial status but also immersed them in a complex social environment.

Life in the Asylum

Living adjacent to the asylum deeply influenced Fergus and his siblings, who grew up in a household heavily involved with mental health care. Their mother, Mary Hume, acted as Matron, further intertwining their personal and familial lives with the patients and their needs. This unique upbringing fostered a sense of compassion in the children and an awareness of the intricacies of human behavior.

Cultural Life and Family Activities

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Despite the challenging circumstances, the Humes cultivated a vibrant cultural life. Artistic expression flourished within the asylum, with the family participating in theatrical and musical performances. James Hume organized various entertainment events, seamlessly blending professional and amateur talent, which enriched the community and provided moments of joy amidst the difficulties of their environment.

Fergus Hume's Education and Early Achievements

Fergus exhibited exceptional academic promise from a young age, garnering praise for his writing talents. The blend of a nurturing family environment and a solid educational foundation was instrumental in paving the way for his future literary achievements.

Legacy and Visual Depictions

The chapter concludes with reflections on the visual representations of the Hume family, particularly portraits that captured their refined appearances despite the stigmas attached to their roles in mental health care. These images, coupled with familial narratives, contribute significantly to understanding Fergus Hume's identity and the influences that shaped his life's work.



In summary, this chapter elucidates how Fergus Hume's unconventional upbringing within a complex and stimulating environment formed a rich patchwork of experiences that profoundly influenced his literary career.

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Chapter 3 Summary: A COLONIAL BANSHEE

Chapter 3: A Colonial Banshee

Setting the Scene: Dunedin, 1870s

In the winter of 1877, the town of Dunedin, New Zealand, prepared for its inaugural fancy-dress ball organized by the local rugby club. This event, a significant social gathering, attracted around two hundred attendees dressed in a variety of costumes. Among these participants were the five Hume children, accompanied by their uncle Marcus, who worked in a local hospital. The boys opted for military uniforms, while the girls dared to wear elaborate outfits inspired by operatic characters. Their bold choices were particularly striking within the conservative confines of Victorian Dunedin, reflecting a blend of youthful spirit and a desire for social acceptance.

Family Dynamics and Challenges

The Hume family, though aspiring towards middle-class respectability, faced numerous challenges. James Hume Sr., the father and a keeper at the asylum, was often absorbed in his work, leaving little time for family



interaction. His commitment led him on a comical misadventure when he and a colleague became lost while scouting for a new asylum location. Despite these familial absences, the Hume children seized opportunities for education and social interaction, navigating the limitations imposed by their socio-economic background.

Fergus Hume: An Aspiring Author

Fergus Hume, the most unconventional of the siblings, harbored dreams of becoming an author, defying the expectations his family held for him. He attended Otago Boys' High School, where the curriculum was balanced with recreational activities, with rugby being introduced to the school's culture around 1871. Despite facing social challenges due to his family's standing, Fergus demonstrated academic aptitude and a deep interest in both classic literature and the arts.

Guided by supportive mentors, including the school rector, Stuart Hawthorne, who promoted morality alongside academics, Fergus's intellectual curiosity flourished. While balancing his studies with a part-time job at a law firm, he crafted a stylish, dandy persona that made him a prominent figure in Dunedin. His conversations often delved into profound themes of existence and identity, revealing his rich inner life shaped by his educational pursuits and the complexities of being a colonial subject. As



Fergus strived to carve out his own path, he embodied the aspirations and struggles of a young man caught between tradition and modernity in a rapidly changing society.

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Chapter 4: THE FATAL SONG

Chapter 4: The Fatal Song

Set against the backdrop of Dunedin in the 1880s, this chapter centers on the Hume family, particularly the artistic aspirations and setbacks faced by Kitty Marchurst and her sisters, Bessie and Mary Hume. Despite her initial promise as an operatic star, Kitty chooses to retire from the stage, setting a different trajectory for her sisters.

In an era where opera captures the imagination of many, the Hume sisters embark on their own musical journey. With the guidance of Signor Carmini Morli, an esteemed opera mentor, they make a successful debut in grand opera, quickly becoming celebrated figures in Dunedin's vibrant music scene. Their performances not only elevate their status but also contribute significantly to New Zealand's cultural landscape.

Meanwhile, the patriarch of the family, James Hume, faces professional turmoil. As the tide turns against non-medical superintendents in mental health care, James finds himself demoted. Undeterred, he collaborates with Dr. E. W. Alexander and Matron Janet Fergusson to establish Ashburn Hall, a private asylum recognized for its compassionate treatment of patients, showcasing James's entrepreneurial spirit and resilience.



The chapter also introduces Fergus Hume, James's son, who juggles his legal studies with burgeoning literary ambitions. His early work, "Professor Brankel's Secret," published in a local newspaper, demonstrates his unique blend of gothic and sensational narratives, hinting at the creative potential that will define his future.

Family dynamics become strained as James expresses disapproval of Fergus's literary pursuits, reflecting the generational clash between stability and artistic freedom. However, after qualifying as a lawyer, Fergus asserts his independence and celebrates the death of composer Richard Wagner with a poignant poem, marking his public departure from traditional family expectations.

Tragedy strikes the Hume family when Bessie suffers a grave injury during a storm at sea. Her recovery is slow, both physically and emotionally, which casts a shadow over her once-promising musical career. This left Mary as the sole aspiring singer, carrying the hopes of the family on her shoulders and intensifying the pressure on her artistic journey.

As the Hume family navigates their triumphs and tragedies, Fergus stands poised at a significant juncture. He is ready to pursue his literary ambitions while also offering support to his sisters as they grapple with their own challenges. This chapter emphasizes the resilience of the Hume family



amidst the complexities of ambition, loss, and the unyielding pursuit of art.

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Chapter 5 Summary: ACROSS THE FOOTLIGHTS

Chapter 5: ACROSS THE FOOTLIGHTS: Dunedin, 1885

The chapter opens with Willy, a twenty-one-year-old aspiring actor, whose dreams clash with the pragmatic views of his older sister Beryl. Recognizing Willy's fragile character, Beryl urges him to choose a steady career in law over the unpredictable chaos of acting. She believes the legal profession will provide the structure he needs to succeed.

The narrative weaves in the emergence of notable New Zealand crime writers, specifically Ngaio Marsh and Fergus Hume. Both authors hail from the South Island of New Zealand and showcase the influence of their backgrounds, particularly their familial ties to the mental health field, which contributed to their literary creativity. Hume's grandfather, Edward Seager, had connections to performing arts in a mental asylum, a lineage that seemingly impacted both Hume and Marsh, enhancing their understanding of theatricality in their narratives.

The cultural landscape of Dunedin during the time is shaped by a burgeoning theatre scene that blossomed after the gold rush in the 1860s. It began when a horse bazaar was converted into a theatre, setting the stage for professional performances and original local productions, fostering a vibrant

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artistic community.

Fergus Hume, actively participating in this community, sought to establish himself within theatre. He began attending performances and looking for opportunities to showcase his scripts, leading to his debut in 1883 with a series of short plays that captured the attention of audiences and critics alike.

However, the Victorian era's perception of theatre, particularly its ambivalence towards actresses, rendered the stage a controversial space. Yet, it simultaneously offered an escape where conventional gender and class roles could be challenged and redefined. Hume cleverly navigated this landscape, using his characters and plots to explore gender ambiguity and the complexities of sexual identity through theatrical performance.

Hume's efforts culminated in the successful premiere of his play "A Woman Scorned" in 1885, earning him recognition despite facing some criticism. This success positioned him for broader artistic endeavors beyond New Zealand's shores.

Eager for greater opportunities, Hume decided to leave New Zealand for Australia in 1885, accompanied by his sister Mary. This departure marked a pivotal moment in his career as he aspired to thrive in a more prominent theatrical environment.

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As Hume established his career in Australia, the influence of his New Zealand roots remained significant. His works continued to echo back home, contributing to his enduring legacy as he sought both personal fulfillment and artistic success away from his native land.

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Chapter 6 Summary: WHEN I LIVED IN BOHEMIA

Chapter 6 Summary: When I Lived in Bohemia

Introduction to Melbourne in 1885

In May 1885, Fergus and Mary Hume arrived in Melbourne, a city undergoing a remarkable transformation due to the gold rush. Known as the largest urban center in Australasia, Melbourne showcased impressive architecture and a vibrant, cosmopolitan atmosphere driven by ambition and a passion for sports.

Cultural and Social Climate

The city presented a tapestry of contrasts, where the affluent mingled with the less fortunate against a backdrop of pollution and poverty. Despite these challenges, Melbourne's residents exuded energy and style, fostering a thriving cultural scene filled with art, music, and progressive movements, including the emerging Victorian Women's Suffrage Society advocating for women's rights.

Life as New Arrivals

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The Humes settled in East Melbourne, finding a modest yet comfortable home shared with other lodgers. Fergus immersed himself in the city's life, capturing its dual nature in his writings, which reflected both its allure and its imperfections. Their journey in Melbourne intertwined artistic aspirations with the trials of financial instability.

Mary Hume's Musical Aspirations

Dedicated to her musical career, Mary quickly sought opportunities to perform, making her debut at notable concerts. However, she faced intense competition from talents like Nellie Melba, a prominent soprano who would later achieve international fame. Meanwhile, Fergus, inspired by the Bohemian lifestyle he admired, pursued his passion for playwriting while remaining steadfast in his desire to achieve success without falling prey to the city's darker influences.

Employment and Literary Pursuits

To support their artistic ambitions, Fergus balanced various writing projects, contributing journalism to the weekly magazine *Table Talk* while also working as a managing clerk for a lawyer. This dual commitment highlighted his determination to establish himself as a dramatist in Melbourne's bustling cultural scene, as he sought to make a name for himself amid the city's intensity.



Conclusion

Chapter 6 offers a vivid depiction of Melbourne as a bustling and multifaceted urban landscape, where the Humes navigated the complexities of ambition, creativity, and social expectations, enriching both their personal and professional lives in this rapidly changing metropolis.

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Chapter 7 Summary: ACROSS THE FOOTLIGHTS II

Chapter 7: Across the Footlights II

In this chapter, we delve into the complexities of being a colonial playwright in the vibrant yet challenging theatrical scene of 19th-century Melbourne. The contrast between the idyllic aspirations held by playwrights and the bustling reality of urban life is vividly illustrated.

Melbourne's Theatrical Landscape

During this era, Melbourne stands out as a vital hub for drama enthusiasts, featuring a variety of theaters, including the renowned Princess and Her Majesty's Theatres. Additionally, smaller venues like the Bijou offer an intimate setting that focuses on farcical comedy and operatic performances, attracting local and international talent alike.

However, the landscape is heavily dominated by established theatrical powerhouses, most notably the J. C. Williamson & Co. Triumvirate, which creates a formidable barrier for newcomers vying for recognition in this competitive environment.

Challenges for Aspiring Dramatists

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Aspiring playwrights face significant hurdles in this closed theater market, which is largely controlled by a handful of affluent managers. The cultural climate further exacerbates these challenges, driven by a prevalent "cultural cringe" that devalues homegrown Australian works. This bias leads to a preference for foreign plays, stifling local talent and their capacity to shine.

Hume's Narrative in Miss Mephistopheles

Central to this chapter is Hume's character, Keith Stewart, who mirrors the playwright's own struggles. Stewart's journey underscores the difficulties of staging a production in Melbourne. Despite his efforts to collaborate with local artists, achieving success proves difficult without the endorsement of influential figures within the theater community.

An innovative twist occurs when Stewart secures a performance by offering his assistance to a prominent actress, demonstrating how personal relationships significantly influence theatrical success.

The Theatrical Year in Melbourne (1885)

The chapter also highlights the theatrical season of 1885, characterized by a mix of pantomimes and imported productions. This *mélange* underscores the limited exposure afforded to local stories, with a dominant preference for



English adaptations that overshadow original Australian plays. The protagonist's frustration is palpable as talented playwrights like him find it increasingly difficult to make their mark in a landscape favoring established works.

The Path Forward for Hume

In the wake of continued rejection from the theater scene, Hume contemplates pivoting towards novel writing as a new channel for expressing his artistic vision and gaining public attention. He believes that crafting a successful literary work could eventually pave the way for his aspirations in drama, highlighting the necessity of recognition and exposure in pursuing one's artistic ambitions.

In essence, Hume's journey through this inhospitable theatrical landscape epitomizes the resilience and determination required to navigate the barriers faced by local talent. As he explores new avenues for creative expression, the chapter serves as a poignant reminder of the struggles and triumphs inherent in the artistic pursuit.



Chapter 8: A CENTENNIAL SONG

Chapter 8: A Centennial Song

Hume's Crime Forerunners

Fergus Hume's **Hansom Cab** emerged from a burgeoning public fascination with detective stories, particularly influenced by the works of Émile Gaboriau, a French author recognized for refining the police procedural format. Although Hume had not initially encountered Gaboriau, his exploration into the realm of crime fiction revealed the genre's evolution and its significance within literature, particularly in Australia, which has a deep-rooted history tied to its origins as a penal colony.

The roots of crime fiction can be traced back to various traditions, including true crime and early detective narratives. Edgar Allan Poe is often credited as a pioneer of the genre, blending elements of melodrama and Gothic storytelling, yet the landscape of crime fiction evolved through a tapestry of influences, with significant contributions from Gaboriau, who helped popularize the form among English-speaking audiences. Despite facing skepticism regarding its literary merit, Gaboriau's work spurred British publishers to recognize and market this emerging genre as "Detective Fiction."



In Australia, crime fiction began to flourish as early as the mid-1800s, catalyzed by the gold rush and a surge of immigrants bringing diverse reading preferences. Key figures like John Lang and Mary Fortune were instrumental in shaping local literary landscapes, often intertwining their

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Chapter 9 Summary: THE SPIDER

Chapter 9: The Spider

Spinning the Plot

In crafting a compelling detective novel, it's crucial to pay close attention to the intricacies of police procedures, legal standards, and medical examinations. The author must skillfully manipulate the reader's perception of the true culprit, only to deliver a satisfying revelation at the climax that explains the criminal's guilt through logical deductions.

Hume's Writing Process

Fergus Hume entered the realm of crime fiction at a time when few guidelines existed. His background in law and keen understanding of narrative structure set him apart from his contemporaries. The inspiration for his first significant work, "The Mystery of a Hansom Cab," struck him during a cab ride in Melbourne, where he first envisioned the narrative's central premise.

Concept Development

Hume's concept emerged organically, as he recognized the hansom cab as an ideal murder scene. Its structure allowed for passenger privacy while simultaneously isolating the driver, creating an intriguing environment for



suspense. The anonymity afforded to characters within this confined space served as a core element in building tension throughout the story.

Crafting the Narrative

Drawing from real crime reports, Hume structured the beginning of his novel similarly to a newspaper article, lending authenticity to his tale. His strong narrative techniques, lively dialogue, and strategic placement of clues effectively heightened the suspense and maintained reader engagement.

Work Routine

Hume likely devoted his evenings and weekends to writing amidst his social obligations. Over the course of two months, he meticulously plotted out his story, utilizing a detailed outline essential for the intricate whodunnit format. Unlike many of his peers who favored a solitary detective, Hume's focus on multiple characters added layers to the investigation and reflected contemporary social hierarchies.

Character and Structure

By integrating a diverse cast involved in solving the mystery, Hume broke away from the singular detective narrative prevalent at the time. This choice not only enriched the storytelling but also allowed for a commentary on class perceptions within society.

Revision and Research

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A perfectionist by nature, Hume extensively revised his manuscript, ensuring that mystery and credibility were preserved throughout the text. He often consulted friends regarding plot development, emphasizing how critical the setting and context were in shaping a successful detective narrative.

Culmination of Effort

Despite dealing with illness and financial hardships, Hume completed "The Mystery of a Hansom Cab" by the end of 1885 with a strong sense of pride in his work. This novel represented a significant literary accomplishment, merging his legal insights with well-crafted characters and dynamic dialogue.

Publishing Aspirations

Hume's final hurdle was finding a publisher—a challenge he had hoped would be less formidable than securing performances for his earlier works on the Melbourne stage. His determination and unique perspective on crime fiction were poised to attract attention in the literary marketplace.



Chapter 10 Summary: NOT WANTED

Chapter 10 Summary: "Not Wanted: Booksellers, Readers & Publishers - Melbourne, 1886"

In the vibrant atmosphere of Melbourne during the years 1885-1886, the literary scene was marked by the presence of two contrasting booksellers: George Robertson and Edward Cole. Robertson embodied the conventional approach to book selling, providing a stable foundation for the literary market, while Cole, with his innovative and somewhat eccentric marketing strategies, operated Cole's Book Arcade, which served as both a bookstore and an entertainment hub promoting reading as a leisurely activity.

This period saw a flourishing book market, propelled by compulsory education that resulted in a remarkable 90% adult literacy rate. Fiction became a popular genre among the masses, despite concerns regarding its moral implications. The rise of serialized fiction in newspapers fostered a culture where leisurely reading thrived, particularly during train journeys, giving birth to the genre of "railway novels." However, many local authors struggled to publish their works, a reality starkly illustrated by the case of Fergus Hume, who faced multiple rejections while attempting to get his novel, *Hansom Cab*, into print.

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Hume's experience exemplified a broader challenge known as the “colonial cringe”—a dismissive attitude towards the quality of colonial literature. This skepticism often made it difficult for colonial authors to gain recognition, despite the successes of some like Marcus Clarke and Ada Cambridge. The major publishers, including Robertson, were hesitant to take risks on local talent, reinforcing the barriers that hindered new voices from emerging in the literary arena.

Facing repeated setbacks, Hume's determination led him to explore self-publishing avenues, an action that reflected the tensions within Melbourne's colonial publishing landscape. This struggle highlighted an ongoing clash between traditional literary gatekeeping and the entrepreneurial spirit of local writers eager to share their stories. Ultimately, Hume's journey reveals the complexities of navigating an evolving market, the challenge of gaining acceptance as a colonial writer, and how these factors significantly influenced the trajectory of Australian literature, paving the way for future generations of writers seeking to define their literary identity.

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Chapter 11 Summary: ACROSS THE FOOTLIGHTS III

Summary of Chapter 11: ACROSS THE FOOTLIGHTS III

Theatrical Scene in 1886

During the autumn-winter of 1886, the theatrical landscape was vibrant, showcasing a variety of performances, from light-hearted farces to emotional melodramas. This period marked a turning point for playwright Fergus Hume, whose career began to gain momentum against the backdrop of the bustling Australian theatre scene.

Hume's Rising Fame

Initially, Hume faced challenges in selling his play "Hansom Cab," despite an intriguing forecast from a clairvoyant predicting his imminent success. His fortunes began to change when he leveraged his connections within the theatre community, particularly after actress Amy Horton offered him a position in her burlesque company. This opportunity opened new doors for Hume and allowed him to further explore his craft.

Localization of Plays

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Hume further distinguished himself by adapting imported plays to incorporate local color, enhancing their relatability to Australian audiences. Through works like "Little Don Giovanni" and "Dr Faustus," he not only earned income but also infused the colonial theatre with creative innovations that reflected the regional context.

Introduction of Philip Beck

In April 1886, Hume crossed paths with British actor Philip Beck, who was making a name for himself in Australia. Their first encounter suggested a fruitful partnership, with Hume eager to collaborate and sell his plays. However, Beck quickly aligned himself with prominent producer J.C. Williamson for theatrical projects beyond Melbourne, complicating Hume's aspirations for collaboration.

The Illness and Contract Narrative

As Hume worked diligently on "Hansom Cab," he was struck by a severe illness that hampered his progress. A notable incident with Beck highlighted the complexities of their relationship; Beck allegedly offered Hume financial help in return for profit-sharing on his plays. Though details of this interaction are somewhat embellished, it hints at a developing camaraderie that would ultimately shape Hume's trajectory.



Speculation on the Relationship Between Hume and Beck

The dynamics between Hume and Beck remain somewhat enigmatic. Their relationship was characterized by both artistic collaboration and intricate financial discussions, underscoring Hume's health struggles alongside Beck's keen business acumen. This blend of personal and professional intrigue fostered a partnership that may have greatly influenced Hume's writing career.

Beck's Theatrical Success and Their Collaboration

As Beck achieved acclaim in various roles, evidence suggests that he and Hume collaborated on several plays, though not necessarily novels. Their partnership generated both support and a competitive atmosphere, propelling Hume's creative journey during this pivotal chapter of his life. Through their intertwined paths, the complexities of friendship and rivalry illustrated the dynamic nature of theatrical success during this spirited era.

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Chapter 12: THE MASTERMIND

Chapter 12: The Mastermind Frederick Trischler

This chapter delves into the life and impact of Frederick Alfred Sheppard Trischler, a pivotal yet enigmatic figure in the publication of Hume's work, "Hansom Cab." Trischler, often affectionately dubbed "Little Trischler," was known for his charm and boundless energy. His complex background played a crucial role in shaping his unconventional approach to the publishing industry.

Trischler's Background

Trischler's origins are shrouded in a mix of self-invention and reality; he was fundamentally a Londoner who crafted a persona reminiscent of colonial figures. Born in 1856 to a widowed mother with limited means, Trischler's family faced constant financial constraints, which influenced his drive for success. Beginning his career in the Merchant Marine, he later shifted to business, experiencing ups and downs as an accountant and broker in Christchurch, New Zealand, and Melbourne.

Publishing Journey

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After encountering repeated setbacks in various business ventures, including a failing grain brokerage, Trischler relocated to Melbourne in search of new prospects. It was during this period that he met Hume and uncovered the manuscript of "Hansom Cab." Recognizing the story's potential, he was inspired to launch his own publishing venture aimed at bringing Hume's work to the public.

Publishing Model

Trischler's collaboration with Hume likely followed a profit-sharing model, reflecting his experience in the American publishing scene where fairness in author royalties was emphasized. Despite facing substantial production challenges—primarily a lack of capital and partnering with a printing firm inexperienced in crime novels—Trischler published the book with notable ambition.

Trischler's Vision

Drawing from innovative publishing models he observed in America, such as dime novels and the rise of paperbacks, Trischler sought to carve a niche

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in the commercial fiction market. His efforts in publishing "Hansom Cab" represented a significant shift in the Australian literary landscape, highlighting Trischler's dual role as both an opportunistic entrepreneur and a genuine supporter of Hume's literary passion.

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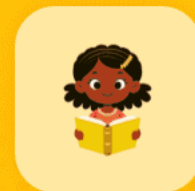
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Chapter 13 Summary: MADAME MIDAS

Chapter 13: Madame Midas - Summary

In this chapter, the narrative pivots around the changing fortunes of Fergus Hume, author of "Hansom Cab," and his unexpected success following a profitable investment in the Pactoclus claim on the share market. This financial windfall not only buoyed Hume's spirits but also significantly impacted the sales performance of his novel.

First Print Run Insights

The initial print run of "Hansom Cab" generates considerable debate among experts. Hume claims it was five thousand copies, a figure often deemed inflated given the historical context of 1880s Australian publishing—where print runs typically ranged much smaller. Scholars like Jeff Prentice challenge Hume's assertion, positing that self-publishing at the time faced considerable obstacles, which further supported the theory of a modest print run.

Economic Considerations

The chapter delves into the economic landscape of 19th-century publishing,

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emphasizing the substantial initial costs involved in printing. Comparative analysis with established publishing houses such as Angus & Robertson indicates that smaller runs were the norm, further casting doubt on Hume's claims.

Role of Alice Cornwell

Central to Hume's rise is Alice Cornwell, referred to as "Madame Midas." Her background as a businesswoman and miner adds depth to her influence, suggesting that her insights into the stock market may have played a crucial role in supporting Hume's literary endeavors. Her involvement illustrates the intersection of business acumen and art, highlighting the networks that supported authors like Hume in this era.

Speculation and Financial Risks

Hume's foray into the stock market appears to be motivated by a need to fund his literary aspirations, adding a layer of risk to his financial strategy. Furthermore, the chapter critiques the multiple errors found within "Hansom Cab," reflecting Hume's inexperience and the challenges faced by novice authors and their teams in the publishing industry, particularly regarding proofreading and editing.

Copyright Issues

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Significantly, Hume's failure to register the copyright for "Hansom Cab" within six months of its publication underscores his naivety about the publishing industry's legal framework. The chapter discusses the broader implications of copyright laws in Australia during this period, stressing the vulnerabilities that authors faced in protecting their work.

Conclusion

As "Hansom Cab" approaches its release, Hume remains steadfast in his ambition to transition into the theater, believing that the novel could garner enough attention to propel his career in drama. The chapter implies that while contemporary critics may have overlooked Hume's talent, external factors—most notably the influence of figures like Cornwell—ultimately recognized and harnessed his potential, setting the stage for his future endeavors.



Chapter 14 Summary: THE UNEXPECTED

Chapter 14: The Unexpected

This chapter explores the early journey and reception of *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*, highlighting the strategic decisions made by its author, Fergus Hume, and publisher, Trischler. Fanks opens by comparing the detective work depicted in the novel to gambling, reflecting the excitement that readers could find within its pages. The first edition of the novel, characterized by its simple octavo format and modest paper cover, was distinctly different from the lavish leather-bound books of its time. This choice not only indicated a more affordable market positioning but also aligned with the sensationalist style popular among Victorian readers, promising them a gripping tale of murder and mystery.

The design of the book itself played a key role in its appeal. The stitching rather than gluing of the pages suggested a level of quality that distinguished it from other low-cost publications. Intriguingly, the spine featured advertising for Chipperfield, an ironmonger, instead of the book's title, indicative of marketing strategies employed by early publishers. The absence of Hume's name on the cover, at a time when he was still an unknown author, emphasized a focus on the genre and the novel's connection to Melbourne, thus tapping into local pride and identity.

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With a limited advertising budget compared to larger publishing firms, Hume and Trischler relied on word-of-mouth strategies to create buzz around *Hansom Cab*. They recognized the power of community influence in boosting awareness and sales, employing tactics reminiscent of earlier publishers like Cole, who would send review copies to newspapers and utilize various advertising channels. This grassroots approach became pivotal in a social environment like 1886 Melbourne, where community interactions were robust even without modern social media.

The chapter concludes by underscoring the novel's impressive sales performance, attributed largely to Hume and Trischler's initial efforts and community enthusiasm. Nick Hudson, former CEO of Heinemann Australia, reinforces the notion that while positive reviews can spark initial interest, the enduring success of a book is ultimately tied to its quality and the satisfaction of its readers. This dynamic interplay between community engagement and public enthusiasm underscores the significance of grassroots marketing in the literary landscape of the time, illustrating how *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* emerged as a pillar of success amidst the bustling backdrop of 19th-century Melbourne.

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Chapter 15 Summary: ANSWERED

Chapter 15 Summary: The Success of "Hansom Cab"

In this chapter, we delve into the triumphant launch of "Hansom Cab," a novel by Hume, which marked a significant milestone in Australian literature. The success can be attributed to a well-thought-out publication strategy that aligned with the festive spirit of the Christmas season and the excitement surrounding the Melbourne Cup, a major horse racing event. By scheduling the release at this strategic time, the publisher, Cole, ensured heightened visibility and sales potential for the novel.

To further amplify interest, innovative marketing tactics were employed. The protagonist engaged in a form of promotional outreach reminiscent of contemporary marketing techniques; he delivered copies in a hansom cab, generating buzz and directly connecting with potential readers. Prior to the book's official launch, advance review copies were circulated to key media outlets, successfully leveraging their influence to build anticipation and curiosity among the public.

While the initial reviews were somewhat mixed, they played a crucial role in elevating the book's profile. Critics acknowledged "Hansom Cab" for its realistic portrayal of life in Melbourne, although some drew unfavorable



comparisons to the more sensational literature popular at the time. Nevertheless, the varied responses created a dialogue around the novel, igniting curiosity and encouraging readers to explore it for themselves.

Upon its release, "Hansom Cab" experienced extraordinary sales, with reports indicating thousands of copies sold almost immediately. This surge not only solidified its status as a bestseller but also marked a noteworthy achievement in the landscape of Australian literature, placing it alongside other celebrated works of the era.

In conclusion, the success of "Hansom Cab" represented a pivotal moment for both Hume and his publisher, Trischler. It underscored the impact that effective marketing strategies and timely releases can have on literary success, paving the way for the novel's enduring popularity and establishing its place in literary history.

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Chapter 16: THREE READERS

In Chapter 16 of **Hansom Cab**, the narrative centers on three women readers—G. Maudie Manton, Edith, and Minnie Trischler—whose diverse backgrounds and experiences converge through their shared appreciation for the novel.

Maudie Manton hails from a distinguished family in Melbourne, with a rich multicultural heritage. She purchased **Hansom Cab** in 1886 and eagerly shared her enthusiasm by lending it to friends, showcasing its popularity within her social circle. Her husband, Joseph Tompson, known for his serious demeanor, may have found himself captivated by the book's thrilling crime narrative, which intriguingly unfolds near his workplace, adding a layer of personal relevance to their reading experience.

In contrast, Edith emerges as a more obscure figure, her connection to **Hansom Cab** hinted at through a name scrawled in pencil within the pages of the book. Her story is enshrouded in mystery, accentuated by the discovery of a dark hair resting between the chapters, suggesting a deeper personal investment in the narrative.

Minnie Trischler's journey is particularly poignant. An Irish immigrant, Minnie faced many early adversities in her marriage to Walter Trischler, who lacked ambition. Despite starting with illiteracy, her husband dedicated

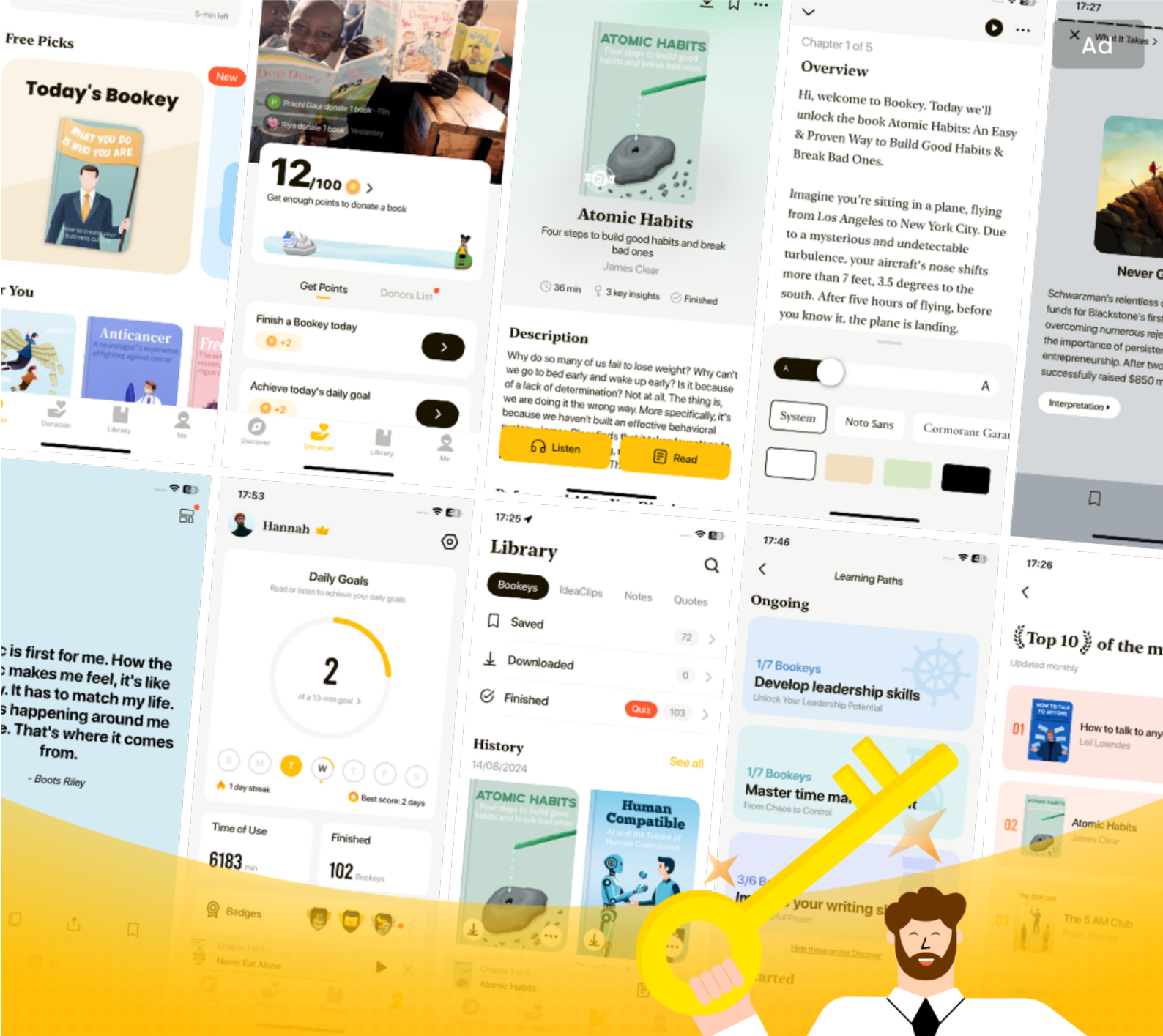


himself to her education, igniting her passion for reading. As a result, Minnie cultivated a personal library and became a devoted reader. *Hansom Cab*, possibly gifted to her from friends across the Tasman Sea, played a crucial role in her educational journey. She cherished a familial myth proposing a connection between her brother-in-law Frederick and the book's

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Chapter 17 Summary: THE YEAR OF MIRACLE

Chapter 17: The Year of Miracle

As 1886 drew to a close, Fergus Hume's **Hansom Cab** experienced an unexpected surge in popularity, transforming from a slow seller into a bestseller that captivated readers and critics alike. This rise took even publisher Trischler by surprise, as reports of multiple editions flooded in, though some claims about the number of prints were likely inflated for publicity's sake. At the heart of this success was an effective marketing strategy that tapped into the competitive landscape of Melbourne, showcasing the influence of commodity capitalism on literary trends.

Critics noted the ambiguity surrounding the actual sales figures, with many suggesting that Trischler exaggerated the numbers to bolster the book's brand. Anecdotes from the time illustrated the powerful role of advertising in book promotion, which not only propelled **Hansom Cab** into the spotlight but also opened avenues for other writers and entrepreneurs within the vibrant Melbourne literary scene.

Inspired by the success of his debut, Hume turned to collaborate on a new manuscript titled **Madame Midas**. This project was significant for him, as it recognized and aligned with the ambitions of local mining magnate Alice

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Cornwell. Through *Madame Midas*, Hume began to explore themes reflective of the changing social fabric, particularly in relation to theosophy and the evolving roles women played in society during this transformative period.

Hume's literary journey was deeply influenced by collaborative relationships with women writers and activists, like Janet Michie. Their support provided him with critical feedback and nurtured his explorations of complex narratives. The emergence of strong, multifaceted female characters in Hume's works mirrored the broader societal shifts toward women asserting their rights and agency.

As the new year approached, *Madame Midas* further emphasized these cultural shifts, hinting at the new dynamics of gender and commerce, and setting the stage for a future where women's perspectives were increasingly recognized in literature. With an international release of *Hansom Cab* on the horizon, Hume stood at the threshold of greater success, marking 1886 as a year of miraculous change for him, his publishers, and his supporters. This chapter encapsulated the evolution of Hume's career, illustrating how the literary landscape was becoming a reflection of the dynamic societal transformations of the time.



Chapter 18 Summary: THE PICCADILLY PUZZLE

Chapter 18: The Piccadilly Puzzle: How Hansom Cab Became an International Success

Introduction to the Publishing Journey

The novel **Hansom Cab** embarked on a tumultuous path in the literary world, shaped by the pervasive misconceptions about the profitability of novel-writing. Despite these obstacles, the book eventually became an international sensation, demonstrating the complexities of the publishing landscape in the late 19th century.

Trischler's Strategies

Trischler, the novel's determined publisher, recounted various strategies that led to **Hansom Cab**'s global acclaim. Initially negotiating with established London publishers proved unfruitful; however, he recognized the untapped potential of the English market. This realization prompted him to seek alternative publishing houses, leading to successful partnerships that would drive the book's success.

Hume's Perspective

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The original author, Hume, failed to grasp the commercial potential of his work when he sold the international rights for a lower sum than deserved. In hindsight, he lamented this decision, pondering the substantial financial gains that could have been reaped with a deeper belief in the novel's appeal to the English audience.

The Taylors' Involvement

Jessie Taylor and her husband, George, became pivotal supporters in the book's publication. Jessie, equipped with both business savvy and literary passion, contributed financially and strategically to ensure that *Hansom Cab* reached its audience.

Trischler's Operations in England

Once in London, Trischler implemented a multifaceted marketing strategy, incorporating theatrical adaptations to enhance revenue streams. He also secured copyright registration for *Hansom Cab*, setting the stage for a strategic release that would coincide with the holiday shopping season, further capitalizing on consumer interest.

Publishing Tactics and Market Reception

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The English version of **Hansom Cab** underwent modifications, including text corrections and the softening of language to better suit British sensibilities. Inspired by successful methods from Australia, Trischler's innovative marketing approach galvanized the book's popularity, catapulting it to bestseller status through aggressive promotion and efficient distribution.

Clement Scott's Review

Clement Scott, a reviewer with prior connections to Hume, offered a glowing review that highlighted the novel's engaging storyline. Scott's endorsement played a crucial role in boosting the book's visibility, contributing significantly to its commercial triumph.

Innovative Advertising and Sales Triumph

Trischler's clever advertising campaigns claimed remarkable sales figures that only fueled the book's rising fame, culminating in the sale of hundreds of thousands of copies. His techniques set a benchmark for future publishing endeavors, exemplifying the economic principles of commodity capitalism and successful market exploitation.

Comparison with Sherlock Holmes

Amidst the success of **Hansom Cab**, Arthur Conan Doyle was navigating

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his own literary challenges with **A Study in Scarlet**. While Hume's work flourished, Doyle's remained overshadowed, illustrating the unpredictable nature of literary success and the varying paths authors could tread.

Conclusion

The saga of **Hansom Cab** encapsulates the complexities of publishing during a transformative era, highlighting themes of ambition, market forces, and the often fickle nature of success in literature. Through the multifaceted efforts of its supporters, particularly Trischler and the Taylors, the novel's journey underscores the intricate dance between creativity and commerce that defines the literary world.

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Chapter 19 Summary: ACROSS THE FOOTLIGHTS IV

Summary of Chapter 19 from "Blockbuster!"

In Chapter 19, readers follow Fergus Hume as he ventures deeper into the theatrical world following the triumph of his novel **Hansom Cab.** Initially met with hurdles, including a struggle for recognition and battles against theatrical piracy, Hume's career gradually gains momentum.

Theatrical Ventures and Challenges

Hume, drawn to the artistic side of theatre rather than its commercial potential, immerses himself in the vibrant theatrical scene of Melbourne. During this period, he crafts the play **The Bigamist.** After enduring several rejections, the play finds success when performed by a touring company in New Zealand, opening doors for potential productions in London.

Piracy and Adaptation Issues

Despite his successes, Hume faces the harsh reality of piracy, which undermines the financial rewards from **Hansom Cab.** Unauthorized adaptations spread throughout Australia, eroding his profits. Additionally, his original work faces further jeopardy when a poorly managed adaptation



renamed **The Mormon** is produced by Mallaby, a figure in the theatrical community, who neglects to attribute proper credit to Hume.

The London Production

In 1888, Hume's ambition leads to the London opening of **Hansom Cab.** However, the production is marred by significant changes from another playwright, complicating its reception. Reviews prove to be a mixed bag, with critics pointing out inherent flaws within the play, yet it manages to secure a successful run, reflecting Hume's resilience amidst challenges.

Cultural Reflections

The narrative underscores themes of colonial identity and the quest for acknowledgment within the British theatre landscape. Hume's experiences resonate with the broader issue of financial exploitation through piracy, mirrored in his fictional portrayal of the Wopples family, emblematic of the darker realities of theatrical life.

Ending and Future Aspirations

As Hume prepares for his return to England, he reflects on his journey, considering both the artistic growth it has fostered and the testing of his perseverance. The chapter closes on a poignant note, hinting at the future

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challenges he may encounter in London, despite the accolades and success he has achieved in Australia.

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Chapter 20: ALADDIN IN LONDON

Chapter 20: Aladdin in London

Consequences

In April 1888, Fergus Hume and journalist Beck board the steamship Oceana, returning to England where they embrace their newfound fame. As they traverse the bustling, vibrant seas aboard the ship, they entertain fellow passengers with amateur theatrics. Upon their arrival in London, Hume feels a mix of excitement and alienation; although he finds the city unattractive, its role as the Empire's heart intrigues him. This complex reaction casts a shadow over his experiences in Melbourne, contrasting the two worlds.

Quickly immersing themselves in the bustling theater scene, Hume and Beck adapt to their surroundings and produce a stage adaptation of Hume's novel "Madame Midas" in just twelve days. The play's success surprises them, with advance orders reaching over 84,000 copies before its official release—a clear indication of the vast appetite for their stories. Beck's villain emerges as a captivating focal point, receiving acclaim for embodying vice and moral ambiguity, which resonates deeply with audiences.

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However, their triumph quickly leads to unforeseen consequences. The popularity of "Madame Midas" spawns a wave of unauthorized adaptations and crude parodies, reflecting the common cultural phenomenon where success in the arts often invites imitation. Alarming, this surge in demand for sensational narratives also correlates with a rise in crime, leading to public concerns and media speculation that Hume's work might be influencing real-life criminal behavior.

As Hume navigates his newfound fame, he becomes a target for conmen, who exploit his reputation to trick the public. One noteworthy incident involves an imposter who attempts to cash a forged cheque under Hume's name, capturing the attention of the press and leading to sensational headlines that latch onto his celebrity status.

Tragedy strikes with the notorious "Hansom Cab" crime, where John Fletcher is drugged and killed, sparking outrage and connecting the crime to themes present in Hume's narratives. This incident brings attention to emerging criminals like Charles Parton, who resorts to using chloral hydrate—an element intriguingly similar to the nefarious plots within Hume's novels. The media sensationalizes these connections, drawing parallels between the author's fiction and the darker realities of the world.

Despite the frenzied interpretations linking Hume's works to actual criminal acts, it becomes increasingly clear that the violent realities of the criminal



underworld often bear little resemblance to the carefully crafted tales he spins. This chapter underscores a complicated relationship between art and society, revealing how fiction can ignite real-life reactions and repercussions while recognizing the inherent differences between dramatic storytelling and true experiences.

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Chapter 21 Summary: A TRAITOR IN LONDON

Chapter 21: A Traitor in London - The End of Friendships

As 1892 came to a close, Madame Midas found herself in deep emotional turmoil following a wave of betrayals by those she once trusted. The tension surrounding Hume's life, often likened to a tragic play, unfolded in the wake of the initial triumph brought by his successful production, *Hansom Cab*. However, the cheers of early acclaim soon gave way to bitter discord among collaborators, marking a profound shift in Hume's personal and professional relationships.

Madame Midas' Struggles

Madame Midas embodied the heartbreak of a once-thriving author facing the stark realities of betrayal. Hume, the playwright behind her story, became embroiled in conflicts that punctured his sense of success, leading to the unraveling of critical partnerships.

Falling Out with Beck

Among the most significant ruptures was Hume's relationship with Phil Beck, a key collaborator in his early London endeavors. Once a boon to

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Hume's success, Beck's increasing struggles with self-worth and financial pressure resulted in a dramatic falling out. He felt entitled to compensation for his contributions and pursued the Australian theatrical rights for a tour, igniting further discord. This friction highlighted the fragility of their friendship, revealing how ambition can lead to estrangement.

Beck's Decline and Death

Beck's journey took him back to Australia in hopes of performing in a production devoid of Hume's input. This decision was met with public disapproval, and soon his professional life spiraled into chaos. Personal scandals worsened, and an ill-fated marriage only deepened his distress. The tragic culmination of his struggles was suicide, an event that left Hume grappling with conflicting emotions—relief at the end of Beck's turmoil and regret for the loss of their friendship.

Conflict with Trischler

Hume's strife was not limited to Beck; it extended to his publisher, Trischler. After disparaging remarks about their partnership leaked, Hume felt deeply insulted. Despite relishing his time in London, he sensed a tarnished reputation fueled by rampant gossip, prompting him to sever ties with Trischler in search of more fruitful publishing relationships.



Decline of Trischler & Co.

Trischler's publishing house faltered in Hume's absence, grappling with fierce competition and poor financial decisions. The company's overproduction strategies backfired, leading to bankruptcy. As Trischler shifted his focus from publishing to investment management, he continued to face challenges, showcasing the heavy toll of losing a successful author.

Strained Relations with Cornwell

Hume also endured a falling out with Alice Cornwell, a former supporter who had since aligned herself with the upper echelons of society. Changes in their personal situations and misunderstandings resulted in strained relations, shattering any camaraderie that had once defined their collaboration.

Consequences of Betrayal

By year's end, Hume stood at a crossroads, facing the consequences of numerous fractured friendships. His literary output remained vigorous, yet the crushing weight of betrayal left an indelible mark. The shadows of lost connections with Beck, Trischler, and Cornwell loomed large, complicating both his personal life and his broader artistic network. Each betrayal served as a stark reminder of the cost of ambition in the treacherous world of theater and literature.



Chapter 22 Summary: THE MILLIONAIRE MYSTERY

Chapter 22: The Millionaire Mystery: The Fall of Marvellous Melbourne

Overview of Financial Disaster in Melbourne

Fergus Hume's relocation to London in 1888 allowed him to sidestep the financial disaster that ravaged Melbourne. The city's decline was not due to external forces but from an economic downturn that primarily affected its affluent speculators. Hume's narratives often celebrated Melbourne's prosperity but also alluded to the underlying anxieties of its residents, particularly their concerns regarding identity and financial stability.

Economic Conditions and Speculation

During the 1880s, Melbourne thrived within a bubble of affluence, underpinned by high business confidence and a surge of immigrant labor. This period of growth was heavily reliant on borrowed funds from British investors, fostering a deceptive sense of security. However, rampant speculation in land values set the stage for a catastrophic collapse, as the stability of the economy was built on unsustainable practices.

Key Players and Financial Maneuvering

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Central to the financial turmoil was the Land Credit Bank, headed by George Nicholson Taylor. Alongside him, share-broker Charles Ernest Clarke engaged in risky ventures fueled by greed, and the lack of regulatory oversight further exacerbated the crisis. Their manipulative tactics and questionable accounting practices masked significant fraud, contributing to the impending financial nightmare.

Collapse of the Financial Market

The optimism of the land boom came crashing down in the early 1890s, culminating in the collapse of several banks, including the Land Credit. This financial implosion left countless investors and depositors financially devastated. The ensuing economic depression resulted in widespread unemployment and social unrest, prompting a significant exodus from Melbourne as people sought better prospects elsewhere.

Legal Consequences and Public Discontent

In the wake of the collapse, legal action was taken against Taylor and Clarke for their roles in the debacle, leading to severe penalties for Taylor. Public anger towards financial institutions surged, especially against those elite individuals who managed to evade dire consequences through bankruptcy laws. This period of turmoil ignited a movement for societal reform as the

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public began to demand greater accountability from the financial sector.

Role of "Hansom Cab" in the Economic Downfall

Hume's literary success with "Hansom Cab" was intricately linked to the speculative frenzy dominating Melbourne's economy. Key figures, including the Taylors, played significant roles in financing the narrative, drawing funds from the Land Credit Bank. While Hume's story celebrated the city's peak, it also reflected the moral decline and financial impropriety pervading society, capturing the complexities of the era.

Conclusion: Interplay of Fiction and Financial Reality

In essence, "Hansom Cab" transcended mere crime fiction; it mirrored the genuine transgressions taking place within Melbourne's financial landscape. Hume's unexpected literary acclaim became intertwined with the collapse of a city built on speculation, revealing the darker themes of ambition and greed that ultimately led to the downfall of Marvellous Melbourne.

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Chapter 23 Summary: THE QUEER STORY OF ADAM LIND

23 THE QUEER STORY OF ADAM LIND

Overview of Adam Lind

Adam Lind, a 25-year-old gay bank clerk from Melbourne, serves as the focal point for examining the evolving language surrounding queer identities. His experiences illuminate the intricate realities of Victorian life, where same-sex attraction existed within the constraints of societal norms.

Historical Context of LGBTQ+ Terms

The lexicon of sexuality, particularly the terms ‘queer’ and ‘gay,’ has undergone significant transformations over time, much like other words in the English language, such as ‘detective.’ This chapter references the literary milieu of Fergus Hume, a contemporary of Oscar Wilde, highlighting that homosexuality was an undercurrent in their circles, often shrouded in secrecy. The acceptance of these terms has shifted dramatically, mirroring broader societal changes regarding sexual identity.

Victorian Morality and Same-Sex Attraction

In the Victorian era, a strict adherence to heterosexual norms prevailed, yet this same society managed to cultivate spaces for same-sex relationships and



friendships, especially among same-gender individuals. The chapter illustrates this paradox with examples of same-sex affection that faced leniency from society until they edged toward romantic expression, subsequently resulting in heightened scrutiny.

Cross-Dressing and Criminalization

The narrative delves into the lives of cross-dressing individuals, particularly focusing on figures like Gordon Lawrence, who performed under the guise of “Carry Swain.” Their fates present a stark contrast; while Lawrence faced arrest following a public performance, others crafted their identities with much greater caution. These stories reveal the complex landscape of LGBTQ+ existence against the backdrop of a repressive society, underscoring the diverse experiences within queer identities.

Connections Between Hume and Lawrence

The chapter explores the intriguing relationship between Fergus Hume and Gordon Lawrence, suggesting possible threads of infatuation or even blackmail, especially in light of Hume’s financial support to Lawrence. This connection serves to highlight the fragility of queer love under legal threats, revealing how personal and professional lives were often intertwined in a clandestine dance of desire and secrecy.

Literary Reflections of Queer Identity

Hume’s body of work, including his text “The Island of Fantasy,” is



analyzed for its subtle homoerotic themes and implications of a queer identity. The influence of classical literature and the portrayal of love within his narratives act as reflections of his own identity struggles, enabling him to weave complex layers of meaning into his storytelling while navigating the treacherous waters of societal expectations.

Speculations on Hume's Private Life

In conclusion, the chapter contemplates the enigmatic aspects of Hume's private life, suggesting that his relationships with male contemporaries and recurring themes of reincarnation in his writing hint at a profound understanding of desire and companionship. These reflections showcase Hume as a figure grappling with the constraints of his time, where open expressions of love were fraught with risk. Through this careful examination, Hume's life and works emerge as rich texts, revealing deeper truths while maintaining an air of protective ambiguity.



Chapter 24: HAGAR OF THE PAWN SHOP

Chapter 24: Hagar of the Pawn Shop

In this chapter, we delve into the world of book collecting, epitomized by the character of Sir Gilbert Harkness, whose passionate obsession with rare books illustrates a wider cultural passion for physical literature. He embodies the archetype of a dedicated bibliophile, engrossed in the pursuit of ownership and the thrill that comes with the possession of valuable first editions. The chapter particularly focuses on Fergus Hume's **Hansom Cab**, revealing its early editions as objects of desire for collectors.

The narrative recounts a serendipitous moment at Young's Auction House, where a book collector discovers a first edition of **Hansom Cab** amidst a pile of unremarkable books. The description highlights the emotional tension during the bidding process that culminates in the exhilarating confirmation of his purchase—a purchase that has since gained immense value. This part of the chapter illuminates the intricacies involved in identifying a true first edition, which is characterized by specific pagination and distinctive features, thus enhancing its rarity and desirability.

Moreover, the chapter sheds light on the book collecting culture, predominantly male-driven, which has evolved from an appreciation of



reading to an obsession with ownership and uniqueness. It illustrates how books have transitioned from simple reading materials to prized possessions, as seen through the stories of various collectors, including Cyril Goode—an earnest working-class poet—and J.K. Moir, an accountant who broke social barriers to indulge in rare book collecting. Their experiences reflect the democratization of this hobby throughout the 20th century, demonstrating how economic circumstances often intertwine with the pursuit of literary treasures.

The narrative details the historical journey of **Hansom Cab**, tracing its passage through diverse owners and the libraries that have housed it. The chapter emphasizes the substantial impact that rarity has on a book's value and captivates readers with anecdotes about the most sought-after copies, highlighting the legacies they carry with them.

As the chapter draws to a close, it offers philosophical reflections on the importance of tangible books in an increasingly digital world. Hume's **Hansom Cab** serves as a symbol of the enduring allure of physical literature, a reminder of the iconic status such books hold in our cultural landscape. The chapter concludes with a contemplation on the dreams of bibliophiles for lost editions and the unquenchable thirst for rare finds that continues to drive collectors in their relentless pursuit. Through its narrative, the chapter beautifully intertwines themes of obsession, legacy, and the cherished nature of books, affirming their lasting impact in an ever-evolving



society.

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