He had no doubt that it contained the instructions as to the treasure. It was of Indian manufacture. He emptied the snuff from it, but it contained nothing else. He was convinced that the secret must be hidden there, and after in vain endeavoring to find a spring, he took a poker and hammered it, and as it bent a spring gave way, and showed a very shallow false bottom.

In this was a thin gold coin, evidently of considerable antiquity, and a small piece of paper, on which was written the word "Masulipatam." John Thorndyke looked at it in bewilderment; that it was connected with the secret he felt certain, but alone it was absolutely useless. Doubtless his brother had intended to give him the key of the riddle when he had so desperately striven to speak. After in vain thinking the matter over he said:

"Well, thank goodness, there is nothing to be done about the matter for another thirteen or fourteen years; it is of no use worrying about it now." He went to an old-fashioned cabinet, and placed the coin and piece of paper in a very cunningly devised secret drawer. The next morning he went out into the garden and dropped the battered snuffbox into the well, and then dismissed the subject from his mind.

CHAPTER II

STANDING some two miles out of Reigate is the village of Crowswood, a quiet place and fairly well-to-do, thanks in no small degree to Squire Thorndyke, who owned the whole of the parish, and by whom and his tenants the greater portion of the village were employed.

Greatly had the closing of the Manor House, after the death of old Squire Thorndyke, been felt. There were no more jellies, soups, and other comforts to be looked for in time of sickness, no abatement of rent when the breadwinner was sick or disabled, no check to the drunkards, whom the knowledge that they would be turned out of their cottage at a week's notice kept in some sort of order. When, therefore, after ten years of absence of all government, John Thorndyke, after the death of his brother, the Colonel, came down and took possession, he found the place sadly changed from what it had been when he had left it twenty years before. His first act was to dismiss Newman, who, completely unchecked, had, he found, been sadly mismanaging affairs.

It was not long, however, before his hand made itself felt. Two out of the three public houses were shut up in six months, a score of their habitual frequenters had, weeks before, been turned out of their houses, an order had been issued that unless a cottage was kept in good order and the garden bright and blooming with flowers in the summer a fresh tenant would be found for it. Every child must be sent to the village school; the Squire was ready to do what there was to be done in the way of thatching and whitewashing, repairing palings and painting doors and windows, but, as he told the people, the village had to be kept clean and decent, and anyone who would not conform to the rules was at liberty to leave without a day's notice.

Many of the villagers grumbled under their breath, but

public opinion was, on the whole, favorable. There was someone to look after them now, someone who would see that the geater portion of the wages was not spent at the alehouse, who would take an interest in the people, and would lend a helping hand in bad times. There was a feeling of regret that the Squire was a widower, but the post of visitor and almoner was well supplied by the lady who acted as companion and governess to the Squire's little ward and regulated the affairs of his household.

John Thorndyke had never had much occasion for the display of energy before, but he had an abundance of it, although hitherto latent. He had come into this business against his will, but he took it up with a determination to do well in it. The income was legally his until his niece came of age, but he was determined he would take nothing out of the estate beyond the necessary expenses of the position, and that all surplus should be expended in improving it in every way possible, so that he could hand it over to her in the most perfect condition. Therefore, when he came into possession he made a close inspection of the farms, with their houses, barns, and other tenements. Where he saw that the men were doing their best, that the hedges and fields were in good order, he did everything that was necessary without a word; but where there were slovenly farming and signs of neglect and carelessness, he spoke out his mind sharply.

"This has all got to be amended," he said. "What must be done I will do, but unless I see things well kept up, the fences in good order, the hedges cut, the cattle in good condition, and everything going on as it ought to be, out you go next Christmas. The estate at present is a disgrace to the county, but it shall not be so any longer if I can help it. I shall do my share, and anyone who is not prepared to do the same had better look out for another holding at once."

No one rejoiced more at the coming home of the Squire than Mr. Bastow, the Rector. He had had a pleasant time of it during the life of the old Squire. He was always a welcome guest at the house; Mr. Thorndyke had been every ready to put his hand into his pocket for any

repairs needed for the church, and bore on his shoulders almost the entire expense of the village school. In the latter respect there had been no falling off, he having given explicit instructions to his soldiers to pay his usual annual subscriptions to the school until his son's return from India. But with the death of the Squire the Rector had gradually lost all authority in the village.

For a time force of habit had had its effect, but as this wore out and the people recognized that he had no real authority things went from bad to worse. Drunken men would shout jeeringly as they passed the Rectory on their way home from the alehouse; women no longer feared reproof for the untidiness of their houses and children; the school was half emptied and the church almost wholly so.

For seven or eight years Mr. Bastow had a hard time of it. It was, then, both with pleasure as an old friend, and with renewed hopefulness for the village, that he visited John Thorndyke on his return.

The change in the state of affairs was almost instantaneous. As soon as it became known that the Rector was backed, heart and soul, by the Squire's authority, and that a complaint from him was followed the next day by a notice to quit at the end of a week, his own authority was established as firmly as it had been in the old Squire's time, and in a couple of years Crowswood became quite a model village. Every garden blossomed with flowers; roses and eglantine clustered over the cottages, neatness and order prevailed everywhere. The children were tidily dressed and respectful in manner, the women bright and cheerful, and the solitary alehouse remaining had but few customers, and those few were never allowed to transgress the bounds of moderation. The Squire had a talk with the landlord a fortnight after his arrival.

"I am not going to turn you out, Peters," he said. "I hear that you make some efforts to keep your house decently; the other two I shall send packing directly their terms are up. Whether you remain permanently must depend upon yourself. I will do up your house for you, and build a bar parlor alongside, where quiet men can sit and smoke their pipes and talk and take their beer in

comfort, and have liberty to enjoy themselves as long as their enjoyment does not cause annoyance to other people or keep their wives and children in rags. I will do anything for you if I find the place well conducted; but I warn you that I will have no drunkenness. A man who, to my knowledge, gets drunk twice, will not get drunk a third time in this parish, and if you let men get drunk here it is your fault as much as theirs. Now we understand each other."

Things once placed on a satisfactory footing, the Squire had but little more trouble, and it soon came to be understood that he was not to be trifled with, and that Crowswood was no longer a place for the idle or shiftless. Two or three of the farmers left at the termination of their year, but better men took their places, and John Thorndyke, having settled matters to his satisfaction, now began to attend more to other affairs. He had been, when he first came back, welcomed with great heartiness by all the gentry of the neighborhood; his father had been a popular man, and young Thorndyke had been regarded as a pleasant young fellow, and would in any case have been welcomed, if only because Crowswood had become a nuisance to the whole district. It was, indeed, a sort of rendezvous for poachers and bad characters, it was more than suspected that gangs of thieves and burglars made it their headquarters, and that even highwaymen found it a convenient and quiet resort.

Thus, then, the transformation effected within a few months of Mr. Thorndyke's return caused general and lively satisfaction, and a year later he was put on the Commission of the Peace, and became one of the most regular attendants at the Bench of Magistrates. Reluctantly as he had taken up his present position, he found it, as time went on, a pleasant one. He had not been conscious before that time hung somewhat heavily on his hands, but here he had duties to perform and ample employment. His nature was naturally somewhat a masterful one, and both as a magistrate and a landlord he had scope and power of action. Occasionally he went up to London, always driving his gig, with a pair of fast trotting horses, and was known to the frequenters of the

coffee-houses chiefly patronized by country gentlemen. Altogether, John Thorndyke became quite a notable person in the district, and men were inclined to congratulate themselves upon the fact that he, and not the Indian officer, his brother, had come into the estate.

The idea of an old Indian officer in those days was that he was almost of necessity an invalid, and an irritable one, with a liver hopelessly deranged, a yellow complexion, and a hatred of the English climate. The fact that, instead of leaving the army and coming home at his father's death, George Thorndyke had chosen to remain abroad and leave the estate to the management of agents, had specially prejudiced him in the eyes of the people of that part, and had heightened the warmth with which they had received his brother. John Thorndyke had upon the occasion of his first visit to the family solicitors spoken his mind with much freedom as to the manner in which Newman had been allowed a free hand.

"Another ten years," he said, "and there would not have been a cottage habitable on the estate, nor a farm worth cultivating. He did absolutely nothing beyond collecting the rents. He let the whole place go to rack and ruin. The first day I arrived I sent him out of the house, with a talking-to that he won't forget as long as he lives."

"We never heard any complaints about him, Mr. Thorndyke, except that I think we did once hear from the Rector of the place that his conduct was not satisfactory. I remember that we wrote to him about it, and he said that the Rector was a malignant fellow, on bad terms with all his parishioners."

"If I had the scoundrel here," John Thorndyke said with indignation, "I would let him have a taste of the lash of my dog-whip. You should not have taken the fellow's word; you should have sent down someone to find out the true state of things. Why, the place has been an eyesore to the whole neighborhood, the resort of poaching, thieving rascals; by gad, if my brother George had gone down there I don't know what would have happened! It will cost a couple of years' rent to get things put straight."

When the Squire was at home there was scarce an evening when the Rector did not come up to smoke a pipe and take his glass of old Jamaica or Hollands with him.

"Look here, Bastow," the latter said, some three years after his return, "what are you going to do with that boy of yours? I hear bad reports of him from everyone; he gets into broils at the alehouse, and I hear that he consorts with a bad lot of fellows down at Reigate. One of my tenants—I won't mention names—complained to me that he had persecuted his daughter with his attentions. They say he was recognized among that poaching gang that had an affray with Sir James Hartrop's keepers. The thing is becoming a gross scandal."

"I don't know what to do about him, Squire; the boy has always been a trouble to me. You see, before you came home, he got into bad hands in the village here. Of course they have all gone, but several of them only moved as far as Reigate, and he kept up their acquaintance. I thrashed him again and again, but he has got beyond that now, you see; he is nearly eighteen, and openly scoffs at my authority. Upon my word, I don't know what to do in the matter."

"He is growing up a thorough young ruffian," the Squire said indignantly, "and one of these mornings I expect to see him brought up before us charged with some serious offense. We had to fine him last week for being drunk and making a disturbance down at Reigate. Why do you let him have money? You may have no authority over him, but at least you should refuse to open your purse to him. Don't you see that this sort of thing is not only a disgrace to him, but very prejudicial to the village? What authority can you have for speaking against vice and drunkenness, when your son is constantly intoxicated?"

"I see that, Squire—none better; and I have thought of resigning my cure."

"Stuff and nonsense, Parson! If the young fellow persists in his present course he must leave the village, that is clear enough; but that is no reason why you should. The question is what is to be done with him? The best thing he could do would be to enlist. He might be of some service to his country, in India or the American Colonies, but so far as I can see he is only qualifying himself for a jail here."

"I have told him as much, Squire," Mr. Bastow said, in a depressed voice, "and he has simply laughed in my face, and said that he was very comfortable where he was, and had no idea whatever of moving."

"What time does he go out in the morning?" John Thorndyke asked abruptly.

"He never gets up till twelve o'clock, and has his breakfast when I take my dinner."

"Well, I will come in to-morrow morning and have a talk with him myself."

The next day the Squire rode up to the door of the Rectory soon after one o'clock. Mr. Bastow had just finished his meal; his son, a young fellow of between seventeen and eighteen, was lolling in an easy-chair.

"I have come in principally to speak to you, young sir," John Thorndyke said quietly. "I have been asking your father what you intend to do with yourself. He says he does not know."

The young fellow looked up with an air of insolent effrontery.

"I don't know that it is any business of yours, Mr. Thorndyke, what I do with myself."

"Oh, yes, it is," the Squire replied. "This village and the people in it are mine. You are disturbing the village with your blackguard conduct; you are annoying some of the girls on the estate, and altogether you are making yourself a nuisance. I stopped at the alehouse as I came here, and have ordered the landlord to draw no more liquor for you, and unless you amend your conduct, and that quickly, I will have you out of the village altogether."

"I fancy, Mr. Thorndyke, that, even as a justice of the peace, you have not the power to dictate to my father who shall be the occupant of this house."

"What you say is perfectly true; but as you make your father's life a burden to him, and he is desirous of your absence, I can and will order the village constable to remove you from his house by force, if necessary."

The young fellow cast an evil glance at his father.

"He has not been complaining, has he?" he said, with a sneer.

"He has not, sir," John Thorndyke said indignantly. "It is I who have been complaining to him, and he admits that you are altogether beyond his authority. I have pointed out to him that he is in no way obliged to support you at your age in idleness and dissipation, and that it were best for him and all concerned that he should close his doors to you. I don't want to have to send the son of my old friend to prison, but I can see well enough that that is what it will come to if you don't give up your evil courses. I should think you know by this time that I am a man of my word. I have taken some pains to purge this village of all bad characters, and I do not intend to have an exception made of the son of the clergyman, who, in his family as well as in his own person, is bound to set an example."

"Well, Mr. Thorndyke, I utterly decline to obey your orders or to be guided by your advice."

"Very well, sir," the magistrate said sternly. "Mr. Bastow, do I understand that you desire that your son shall no longer remain an inmate of your house?"

"I do," the clergyman said firmly; "and if he does so I have no other course before me but to resign my living: my position here has become absolutely unbearable."

"Very well, sir, then you will please lock your doors to-night, and if he attempts to enter, I, as a magistrate, should know how to deal with him. Now, young sir, you understand your position; you may not take my advice, nevertheless, I shall give it you. The best thing you can do is to take your place for town on the outside of the coach that comes through Reigate this afternoon, and to-morrow morning proceed either to the recruiting officer for His Majesty's service, or to that for the East India Company's. You have health and strength, you will get rid at once of your bad associates, and will start afresh in a life in which you may redeem your past and be useful to your king and country."

Young Bastow smiled.

"Thanks," he said sarcastically. "I have my own plans, and shall follow them."

"I think, Mr. Bastow," the Squire said quietly, "it would just be as well for you to come home with me. I don't think that the leave-taking is likely to be an affectionate one."

The Rector rose at once.

"I will come with you, Squire. I may tell you now, what I have not told you before, that my son has more than once raised his hand against me, and that I do not care to be left alone with him."

"I judged him capable even of that, Mr. Bastow."

"Good-by, Arthur," his father said. "My heart is ready to break that it has come to this; but for both our sakes it is better so. Good-by, my son, and may Heaven lead you to better ways! If ever you come to me and say, 'Father, I have turned over a new leaf, and heartily repent the trouble I have caused you,' you will receive a hearty welcome from me, and no words of reproach for the past."

The young man paid no attention to the offered hand, but laughed scornfully.

"You have not got rid of me yet," he said. "As for you, Squire Thorndyke, I shall not forget your meddlesome interference, and some day, maybe, you will be sorry for it."

"I think not," John Thorndyke said gravely. "I am doing my duty to the village, and still more I am doing my duty to an old friend, and I am not likely ever to feel any regret that I have so acted. Now, Parson, let's be off."

After leaving the house with the clergyman, the Squire stopped at the house of Knapp, the village constable, and said a few words to him, then, leading his horse, walked home with Mr. Bastow.

"Don't be cast down, old friend," he said. "It is a terrible trial to you; but it is one sharp wrench, and then it will be over. Anything is better than what you must have been suffering for some time."

"I quite feel that, Squire; my life has indeed been intolerable of late. I had a painful time before, but

always looked forward with hope to your brother coming home. Since you returned, and matters in the parish have been put straight, this trouble has come in to take the place of the other, and I have felt that I would rather resign and beg for charity than see my son going from bad to worse, a scandal to the parish, and a hindrance to all good work."

"It is a bad business, Bastow, and it seems to me that two or three years in prison would be the best thing for him, as he will not take up the only trade open to him. At any rate, it would separate him from his evil associates, and give you peace while he is behind the bars. Where does he get his money?"

"That I know not, Squire. He takes some from me—it used to be done secretly, now it is done with threats, and, as I told you, with violence—but that would not account for his always having money. He must get it somewhere else, for when I have paid my bills, as I always do the hour that I receive money, there is but little over for him to take. He is often away all night, sometimes for two or three days together, and I dare not think what he does with himself; but certainly he gets money somehow, and I am afraid that I cannot hope it is honestly obtained."

"I do not well see how it can be," the Squire agreed. "If I had before known as much as you tell me now, I would have taken some steps to have him watched, and to nip the matter before it went too far. Do you think that he will take your notice, and come no more to the house?"

Mr. Bastow shook his head.

"I fear that the only effect will be to make him worse; even when he was quite a small boy punishment only had that effect with him. He will come back to-night probably half-drunk, and certainly furious at my having ventured to lay the case before you."

"You must lock the doors and bar the windows."

"I did that when he first took to being out at night, but he always managed to get in somehow."

"Well, it must be all put a stop to, Bastow; and I will come back with you this evening, and if this young rascal

breaks into the house I will have him down at Reigate to-morrow on the charge of housebreaking; or, at any rate, I will threaten to do so if he does not give a promise that he will in future keep away from you altogether."

"I shall be glad, at any rate, if you will come down, Squire, for, to say the truth, I feel uneasy as to the steps he may take in his fury at our conversation just now."

John Thorndyke took down from a wall a heavy hunting-whip, as he went out with the parson at nine o'clock. He had in vain endeavored to cheer his old friend as they sat over their steaming glasses of Jamaica. The parson had never been a strong man; he was of a kindly disposition, and an unwearied worker when there was an opportunity for work, but he had always shrunk from unpleasantness, and was ready to yield rather than bring about trouble. He had for a long time suffered in silence, and had not the Squire himself approached the subject of his son's delinquencies, he would have never opened his mouth about it. Now, however, that he had done so, and the Squire had taken the matter in hand, and had laid down what was to be done, though he trembled at the prospect, he did not even think of opposing his plan, and indeed could think of no alternative for it.

"I have told John Knapp to be here," the Squire said, as they reached the house. "It is just as well that he should be present if your son comes back again. He is a quiet, trustworthy fellow, and will keep his mouth shut if I tell him."

Mr. Bastow made no reply. It was terrible to him that there should be another witness to his son's conduct, but he saw that the Squire was right.

An old woman opened the door.

"Are all the shutters closed and barred?" John Thorndyke asked her.

"Yes, sir; I always sees to that as soon as it gets dark."

"Very well; you can go to bed now, Eliza," her master said. "Is John Knapp here?"

"Yes, he came an hour ago, and is sitting in the kitchen."

"I will call him in myself when I want to speak to him."

As soon as the old servant had gone upstairs the Squire went into the kitchen, Mr. Bastow having gone to the cellar to fetch up a bottle of old brandy that was part of a two-dozen case given to him by the old Squire fifteen years before.

"Do you go round the house, John, and see that everything is properly fastened up. I see that you have got a jug of beer there. You had better get a couple of hours' sleep on that settle. I shall keep watch till I am sleepy, and then I will call you. Let me know if you find any of the doors or windows unbarred."

Five minutes later the constable knocked at the door of the parlor.

"The door opening into the stable-yard was unbarred, Squire."

"I thought it likely that it would be so, Knapp. You have made it fast now, I suppose? That is right. Now lie down and get an hour or two of sleep; it is scarce likely that he will be back until late. That was the old woman, of course," he went on to his companion, when the door closed behind the constable. "I thought it likely enough that he might tell her to leave a way for him to come in. You told me that she had been with you a good many years. I dare say she has left that door unbarred for him many a time. I should advise you to get a man to sleep in the house regularly; there are plenty of fellows who will be glad to do it for a shilling or two a week, and I do not think that it is safe for you to be here alone."

An hour later he said to the Rector:

"Now, Bastow, you had best go to bed. I have taken the matter into my own hands, and will carry it through. However, I won't have him taken away without your being present, and will call you when we want you. Of course, if he will give a solemn promise not to molest you, and, even if he won't enlist, to leave this part of the country altogether, I shall let him off."

"There is one thing, Mr. Thorndyke, that I have not told you," the Rector said hesitatingly. "Sometimes, when he comes home late, he brings someone with him; I have heard voices downstairs. I have never seen who

it was—for what could I have done if I went down?—but I have heard horses brought round to the stable-yard, and heard them ride away."

"It is just as well you told me," the Squire said dryly. "If you had told me this evening at the house, I would have dropped a brace of pistols into my pocket. However, this hunting crop is a good weapon; but I don't suppose they will show fight, even if anyone is with him. Besides, Knapp has a stout oaken cudgel with him—I noticed it standing against his chair as I went in—and as he is a strong active fellow, and we shall have the advantage of a surprise, I fancy we should be a match even for three or four of them."

At one o'clock the Squire roused John Knapp.

"It is one o'clock, John; now take off your boots. I don't want him to know that there is anyone in the house till we get hold of him. I am going to lie down on the sofa in the parlor. The moment you hear footsteps you come and wake me."

The clock in the kitchen had just struck two when the constable shook John Thorndyke.

"There are two horses just coming into the yard."

"All right. I opened a window in the room looking down into the yard before I lay down. I will go up and see what they are going to do. If they try to break in anywhere down here, do you come at once quietly up to me."

The Squire had taken off his boots before he lay down, and, holding his heavy hunting crop in his hand, he went quietly upstairs. As he went to the window he heard Arthur Bastow say angrily:

"Confound the old woman! she has locked the door; she has never played me that trick before. There is a ladder in the stable, and I will get in at that window up there and open it for you. Or you may as well come up that way, too, and then you can stow the things away in my room at once, and have done with it."

The Squire went hastily down.

"Come upstairs, Knapp," he whispered to the constable. "There are three of them, and I fancy the two mounted men are highwaymen. Let them all get in,

keeping yourself well back from the window. The moon is round on the other side of the house, but it will be light enough for us to see them as they get in. I will take the last fellow, and I will warrant that he will give no trouble; then I will fall upon the second, and do you spring on young Bastow. The two highwaymen are sure to have pistols, and he may have some also. Give him a clip with that cudgel of yours first, then spring on him, and hold his arms tightly by his side. If I call you give him a back heel and throw him smartly, and then come to my aid. I don't think I shall want it, but it is as well to prepare for everything."

They went upstairs and took their places, one on each side of the window, standing three or four feet back. Just as they took up their positions the top of the stable ladder appeared above the sill of the window. Half a minute later young Bastow's head appeared, and he threw up the sash still higher, and stepped into the room; then he turned and helped two men in, one after the other.

"Follow me," he said, "then you won't tumble over the furniture."

As they turned, the heavy handle of John's Thorndyke's whip fell with tremendous force on the head of the last man.

"What the devil is that?" the other exclaimed, snatching out a pistol and turning round, as the falling body struck him, but he got no further. Again the heavy whip descended, this time on his right arm; it dropped useless by his side, and the pistol fell from his hand. Then John Thorndyke fell upon him and bore him to the ground, snatched the other pistol from his belt, and held it to his head.

"Now, my man," he said quietly, "if you don't surrender I will blow out your brains."

"I surrender," the man moaned. "I believe that you have broken my arm. Curse you, whoever you are."

The struggle between John Knapp and young Bastow was soon over. The young fellow was lithe and sinewy, but he was no match for the constable, who, indeed, had

almost overpowered him before he was aware what had happened.

"Has he got pistols, Knapp?" the Squire asked.

"Yes, sir, a brace of them; I have got them both safely in my pocket. There," he went on, as a sharp click was heard, "I have got the darbys on him. Now shall I help you, sir?"

"You had better run downstairs first and light a couple of candles at the kitchen fire: you will find a pair standing on the parlor table. Don't be long about it; the first fellow I hit was stunned, and he may come round any moment."

"I will make sure of him before I go, Squire. I have got another pair of darbys in my pocket."

As soon as he had fastened these upon the wrists of the insensible man he ran downstairs, and in a minute returned with the candles.

"I am glad that you are back," the Squire said. "I was afraid that young rascal would try to escape."

"I took good care of that, Squire; you see I put one of his arms round the bedpost before I slipped the darbys on, and he cannot get away unless he takes the whole bed with him; and as I don't think he would get it out either by the window or the door, he is as safe here as he would be in Newgate. What is the next thing to do, Squire?"

"You had better tie this fellow's legs. I will leave you a candle here, and you can keep guard over them while I go and wake Mr. Bastow."

The Rector needed no waking; he was walking up and down his room in great distress. He had not undressed, but had thrown himself upon his bed.

"What has happened, Thorndyke?" he asked as the Squire entered. "I heard two heavy falls, and I felt that something terrible had taken place."

"Well, it has been a serious matter—very serious. That unfortunate son of yours is not hurt, but I don't know but that the best thing that could have happened would have been for him to have got a bullet through his head. He brought home with him two men who are, I have little doubt, highwaymen; anyhow, they each had

a brace of pistols in their belt, and from what he said I think they have been stopping a coach. At any rate, they have something with them that they were going to hide here, and I fancy it is not the first time that it has been done. I don't expect your son had anything to do with the robbery, though he was carrying a brace of pistols, too; however, we have got them all three.

"Now, you see, Bastow, this takes the affair altogether out of our hands. I had hoped that when we caught your son in the act of breaking into your house after you had ordered him from it, we should be able to frighten him into enlisting, or, at any rate, into promising to disturb you no more, for even if we had taken him before the bench, nothing could have been done to him, for under such circumstances his re-entering the house could not be looked upon as an act of burglary. As it is, the affair is altogether changed. Even if I wished to do so, as a magistrate I could not release those two highwaymen; they must appear as prisoners in court. I shall hear down in the town to-morrow morning what coach has been stopped, and I have no doubt that they have on them the proceeds of the robbery. Your son was consorting with and aiding them, and acting as a receiver of stolen goods, and as you have heard horses here before it is probable that when his room is thoroughly searched we shall come upon a number of articles of the same sort. I am sorry that I ever meddled in the matter; but it is too late for that now. You had better come downstairs with me, and we will take a turn in the garden, and try to see what had best be done."

CHAPTER III.

JOHN THORNDYKE opened the shutters of the parlor window, and stepped out into the garden alone, for the Rector was too unnerved and shattered to go out with him, but threw himself on the sofa, completely prostrated. Half an hour later the Squire re-entered the room. The morning was just beginning to break. Mr. Bastow raised his head and looked sadly at him.

"I can see no way out of it, old friend. Were it not that he is in charge of the constable, I should have said that your only course was to aid your son to escape; but Knapp is a shrewd fellow as well as an honest one. You cannot possibly get your son away without his assistance, for he is handcuffed to the bed, and Knapp, in so serious a matter as this, would not, I am sure, lend himself to an escape. I have no doubt that with my influence with the other magistrates, and, indeed, on the circumstances of the case, they will commit him on a minor charge only, as the passengers of the coach will, I hope, give evidence that it was stopped by mounted men alone. I think, therefore, that he would only be charged with consorting with and aiding the highwaymen after the event, and of aiding them to conceal stolen goods—that is, if any are found in his room.

"That much stolen property has been hidden there, there is little reason to doubt, but it may have been removed shortly afterwards. It was, of course, very convenient for them to have some place where they could take things at once, and then ride on quietly to London the next day, for, if arrested, nothing would be found upon them, and it would be impossible to connect them with the robbery. Later on they might come back again and get them from him. Of course, if nothing is found in his room, we get rid of the charge of receiving altogether, and there would be nothing but harboring, aiding,