

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,



and abetting—a much less serious business. Look here, old friend, I will strain a point. I will go out into the garden again and walk about for an hour, and while I am out, if you should take advantage of my absence to creep up to your son's room and to search it thoroughly, examining every board of the floor to see if it is loose, and should you find anything concealed, to take it and hide it, of course I cannot help it. The things, if there are any, might secretly be packed up by you in a box and sent up to Bow Street, with a line inside, saying that they are proceeds of robbery, and that you hope the owners will be traced and their property restored to them. Not, of course, in your own hand, and without a signature. There might be some little trouble in managing it, but it could, no doubt, be done."

John Thorndyke went out into the garden without another word. The hour was nearly up when Mr. Bastow came out; he looked ten years older than he had done on the previous day. He wrung his friend's hand.

"Thank God I have been up there," he said. "I do not think they will find anything."

"Say nothing about it, Bastow; I don't want to know whether you found anything. Now I am going to fetch two or three of the men from the village, to get them to aid the constable in keeping guard, and another to go up to the house at once and order a groom to saddle one of my horses and bring it here."

As it was now past five o'clock, and the Squire found most of the men getting up, he sent one off to the house with the message, and returned with two others to the Rectory. He told them briefly that two highwaymen had been arrested during the night, and that as young Mr. Bastow was in their company at the time, it had been necessary as a matter of form to arrest him also. He went upstairs with them.

"I have brought up two men to sit with you, Knapp, until the Reigate constables come up. You can take those handcuffs off Mr. Bastow, but see that he does not leave the room, and do you yourself sit in a chair against the door, and place one of these men at the window. How about the others?"

"The man you hit first, Squire, did not move until a quarter of an hour ago; he has been muttering to himself since, but I don't think he is sensible. The other one has been quiet enough, but there is no doubt that his arm is broken."

"I am going to ride down to Reigate at once, and will bring back a surgeon with me."

"You will repent this night's business, Thorndyke," Arthur Bastow said threateningly.

"I fancy that you will repent it more than I shall, Bastow; it is likely that you will have plenty of time to do so."

It was not long before the groom with the horse arrived. John Thorndyke rode at a gallop down to Reigate, and first called on the head constable.

"Dawney," he said, as the man came down, partially dressed, at his summons, "has anything taken place during the night?"

"Yes, Squire, the up coach was stopped a mile before it got here, and the passengers robbed. It was due here at one, and did not come in till half an hour later. Of course I was sent for. The guard was shot. There were two of the fellows. He let fly with his blunderbuss, but he does not seem to have hit either of them, and one rode up and shot him dead; then they robbed all the passengers. They got six gold watches, some rings, and, adding up the amounts taken from all the passengers, about a hundred and fifty pounds in money."

"Well, I fancy I have got your two highwaymen safe, Dawney."

"You have, sir?" the constable said in astonishment.

"Yes. I happened to be at the Rectory. Mr. Bastow had had a quarrel with his son, and had forbidden him the house."

The constable shook his head.

"I am afraid he is very bad one, that young chap."

"I am afraid he is, Dawney. However, his father was afraid that he might come in during the night and make a scene, so I said I would stop with him, and I took our village constable with me. At two o'clock this morning the young fellow came with two mounted men, who, I



have no doubt, were highwaymen. We had locked up down below. Bastow took a ladder, and the three got in at a bedroom window on the first floor. Knapp and I were waiting for them there, and, taking them by surprise, succeeded in capturing them before the highwaymen could use their pistols. The constable and two men are looking after them, but as one has not got over a knock I gave him on the head, and the other has a broken arm, there is little fear of their making their escape. You had better go up with two of your men, and take a light cart with you with some straw in the bottom, and bring them all down here. I will ride round myself to Mr. Chetwynde, Sir Charles Harris, and Mr. Merchison, and we will sit at twelve o'clock. You can send round a constable with the usual letters to the others, but those three will be quite enough for the preliminary examination."

"Well, Squire, that is good news indeed. We have had the coach held up so often within five miles of this place during the past three months, that we have been getting quite a bad name. And to think that young Bastow was in it! I have heard some queer stories about him, and fancied before long I should have to put my hand upon his shoulder; but I didn't expect this."

"There is not a shadow of proof that he had anything to do with the robbery, Dawney, but he will have difficulty in proving that he did not afterwards abet them. It is serious enough as it is, and I am terribly grieved for his father's sake."

"Yes, sir; I have always heard him spoken of as a kind gentleman, and one who took a lot of trouble whenever anyone was sick. Well, sir, I will be off in twenty minutes. I will run round at once and send Dr. Hewett up to the Rectory, and a man shall start on horseback at seven o'clock with the summons to the other magistrates."

John Thorndyke rode round to his three fellow-magistrates, who, living nearest to the town, were most regular in their attendance at the meetings. They all listened in surprise to his narrative, and expressed great pleasure at hearing that the men who had been such a pest to the

neighborhood, and had caused them all personally a great deal of trouble, had been captured. All had heard tales, too, to Arthur Bastow's disadvantage, and expressed great commiseration for his father. They agreed to meet at the court half an hour before business began, to talk the matter over together.

"It is out of the question that we can release him on bail," the gentleman who was chairman of the bench said.

"Quite so," John Thorndyke agreed. "In the first place, the matter is too serious; and in the next, he certainly would not be able to find bail; and lastly, for his father's sake, it is unadvisable that he should be let out. At the same time, it appears to me that there is a broad distinction between his case and the others. I fear that there can be no question that he had prior acquaintance with these men, and that he was cognizant of the whole business; something I heard him say, and which, to my regret, I shall have to repeat in court, almost proves that he was so. Still, let us hope none of the stolen property will be found upon him; whether they had intended to pass it over to his care or not is immaterial. If they had not done so, I doubt whether he could be charged with receiving stolen goods, and we might make the charge simply one of aiding these two criminals, and of being so far an accessory after the crime."

"If we could soften it down still further I should, for his father's sake, be glad; but as far as he himself is concerned, I would do nothing to lighten his punishment. He is about as bad a specimen of human nature as I ever came across. His father is in bodily fear of him. I saw the young fellow yesterday, and urged him to enlist, in order to break himself loose from the bad companionship he had fallen into. His reply was insolent and defiant in the highest degree, and it was then that in his father's name I forbade him the house, and as his father was present he confirmed what I said, and told him that he would not have anything more to do with him. This affair may do him good, and save his neck from a noose. A few years at the hulks or a passage to Botany Bay will do him no harm; and, at any rate, his father will have rest and peace, which he never would have if he remained here."



A somewhat similar conversation took place at each house. John Thorndyke breakfasted at Sir Charles Harris', the last of the three upon whom he called, and then mounting rode back to Reigate.

"We have found the plunder on them," the head constable said, coming out of the lock-up as he drew rein before it, "and, fortunately for young Bastow, nothing was found upon him."

"How are the two men?"

"The fellow you hit first is conscious now, sir, but very weak. The doctor says that if he hadn't had a thick hat on, your blow would have killed him to a certainty. The other man's arm is set and bandaged, and he is all right otherwise. We shall be able to have them both in court at twelve o'clock."

The Squire rode up to his house. He was met at the door by his son, in a state of great excitement.

"Is it all true, father? The news has come from the village that you have killed two men, and that they and Arthur Bastow have all been taken away in a cart, guarded by constables."

"As usual, Mark, rumor has exaggerated matters. There are no dead men; one certainly got a crack on the head that rendered him insensible for some time, and another's arm is broken."

"And are they highwaymen, father? They say that two horses were fastened behind the cart."

"That is what we are going to try, Mark. Until their guilt is proved, no one knows whether they are highwaymen or not."

"And why is Arthur Bastow taken, father?"

"Simply because he was in company with the others. Now, you need not ask any more questions, but if you like to get your pony saddled and ride down with me to Reigate at eleven o'clock, I will get you into the court-house, and then you will hear all about it."

At greater length the Squire went into the matter with Mrs. Cunningham, his lady housekeeper, and his ward's governess.

"It is a bad business, Mr. Thorndyke," she said, "and must be terrible for poor Mr. Bastow."

"Yes, it is a bad business altogether, except that it will rid him of this young rascal. If I were in his place I should be ready to suffer a good deal to obtain such a riddance."

"I suppose that you won't sit upon the bench to-day?"

"No; at least I shall take no part in the deliberations. I shall, of course, give evidence. The affair is not likely to last very long; my story will take the longest to tell. Knapp's will be confirmatory of mine, and the Reigate constable will depose to finding the watches, rings, and money upon them; then, of course, the case will be adjourned for the attendance of the coachman and some of the passengers. I don't suppose they will be able to swear to their identity, for no doubt they were masked. But that is immaterial; the discovery of the stolen property upon them will be sufficient to hang them. No doubt we shall have some Bow Streets runners down from town to-morrow or next day, and they will most likely be able to say who the fellows are."

"Will Mr. Bastow have to give evidence against his son?"

"Not before us, I think; but I imagine he will have to appear at the trial."

"It will be terrible for him."

"Yes, terrible. I sincerely hope that they will not summon him, but I am afraid that there is very little doubt about it; they are sure to want to know about his son's general conduct, though possibly the testimony on that point of the constable at Reigate will be sufficient. My own hope is that he will get a long sentence; at any rate, one long enough to insure his not coming back during his father's lifetime. If you had seen his manner when we were talking to him yesterday, you would believe that he is capable of anything. I have had a good many bad characters before me during the year and a half that I have sat upon the bench, but I am bound to say that I never saw one who was to my eyes so thoroughly evil as this young fellow. I don't think," he added with a smile, "that I should feel quite comfortable myself if he were acquitted; it will be a long time before I shall forget the



expression of his face when he said to me this morning, 'You will repent this night's work, Thorndyke.'

"You don't mean that you think he would do you any harm, Mr. Thorndyke?"

"Well, I should not care to meet him in a lonely place if he was armed and I was not. But you need not be nervous, Mrs. Cunningham, there is not the smallest chance of his being out for years; and by that time his blood will have had time to cool down, and he will have learnt, at any rate, that crimes cannot be committed in this country with impunity."

"It is all very shocking," the lady said. "What will poor Mr. Bastow do? I should think that he would not like to remain as clergyman here, where everyone knows about it."

"That must be for him to decide," the Squire said; "but if he wishes to resign I certainly shall not press him to continue to hold the living. He is a very old friend of mine. My father presented the living to him when I was nine or ten years old, and I may say I saw him daily up to the time when I went down into Sussex. If he resigns I should urge him to take up his residence here and to act as Mark's tutor; and he might also relieve you of some of Millicent's lessons. You have plenty to do in looking after the management of things in general. However, that is for the future."

At eleven o'clock the Squire drove down to Reigate, taking Mark with him, as it would save all trouble about putting up the horse and pony.

On arriving he handed Mark over to the head constable, and asked him to pass him into a seat in the courthouse, before the public were let in. Reigate was in a state of unusual excitement. That the coach should have been stopped and robbed was too common an event to excite much interest, but that two highwaymen should have been captured, and, as was rumored, a young gentleman brought in on a charge of being in connection with them, caused a thrill of excitement. Quite a small crowd was assembled before the courthouse, and the name of Squire Thorndyke passed from mouth to mouth.

"There is some talk of his being mixed up with it in some way or other," one said. "I saw him myself ride in here, about half-past five, and I wondered he was about so early. Some do say as he caught the two highwaymen single-handed; but that don't stand to reason. Besides, what could he have been doing out at such an hour as that? He is a good landlord, and they say that Crowswood has been quite a different place since he came to be master. He is a tight hand as a magistrate, and cleared out half the village the first two or three months he was there; but he spent a mint of money on the place, and the people there say that they could not have a better master. Ah, here is Squire Chetwynd. He was sure to be here. There is Sir Charles' gig turning the corner. I expect most of them will be on the bench; they don't get such a case as this every day."

"It may be there will be nothing for us to hear when the court opens," another said. "I hear both the fellows have been shot or knocked about so bad that they cannot be brought up. Of course the court cannot sit if they ain't before it."

"That is not so, Master Jones. I spoke to one of the constables half an hour ago—he lives next door to me—and he said that they would be well enough to appear. Neither of them have been shot, though they have been hurt pretty bad."

All this added to the desire of those around to get into the court, and there was quite a rush when the doors were opened two minutes before twelve, and it was at once crammed, the constable having some difficulty in getting the doors shut, and in persuading those who could not get in that there was not standing-room for another person. There was a buzz of talk in court until the door opened and six magistrates came in. It was observed that John Thorndyke did not seat himself with the others, but moved his chair a little apart from them, thus confirming the report that he was in some way connected with the matter, and did not intend to take any part in the decision.

Then another door opened, and the three prisoners were brought in. The two first were pale and evidently



weak; one had his head wrapped in bandages, the other had the right sleeve of his coat cut off, and his arm bandaged and supported by a sling.

Both made a resolute effort to preserve a careless demeanor. The third, who was some years younger than the others, looked round with a smile on his lips, bowed to the magistrates with an air of insolent bravado when he was placed in the dock, and then leaned easily in the corner, as if indifferent to the whole business. A chair was placed between his comrades for the use of the man whose head was bandaged. Many among those present knew Arthur Bastow by sight, and his name passed from mouth to mouth; but the usher called loudly for silence, and then the magistrates' clerk rose.

"William Smith and John Brown—at least, these are the names given—are charged with stopping the South Coast coach last night, killing the guard, and robbing the passengers; and Arthur Bastow is charged with aiding and abetting the other two prisoners, and with guilty knowledge of their crime."

It was noticed by those who could see the prisoners' faces that, in spite of Bastow's air of indifference, there was an expression of anxiety on his face as the charge was read, and he undoubtedly felt relief as that against himself was mentioned. The first witness was John Knapp, and the constable stepped into the witness-box.

"What do you know of this business, Knapp?" the chairman asked. "Just tell it your own way."

"I am constable of Crowswood, your honor, and yesterday Squire Thorndyke said to me——"

"No, you must not tell it like that, Knapp; you must not repeat what another person said to you. You can say that from information received you did so and so."

"Yes, your honor. From information received I went to the Rev. Mr. Bastow's house, at a quarter to nine last night. At nine o'clock Squire Thorndyke and the Parson came in together. They sent the servant up to bed, and then the Squire sent me round to examine the fastenings of the doors. I found that one back door had been left unfastened, and locked and bolted it. The Squire told me

to lie down until one o'clock, and he would watch, and Mr. Bastow went up to bed."

"Do you know of your own knowledge why these precautions were taken?"

"Only from what I was told, your honor. At one o'clock the Squire woke me, and he lay down in the parlor, telling me to call him if I heard any movement outside. About two o'clock I heard two horses come into the Parson's yard. I called Squire Thorndyke, who went upstairs to an open window; presently someone came and tried the back door. I heard voices outside, but could not hear what was said. The Squire came down and called me upstairs. I went up and took my place at one side of the window, and the Squire took his on the other. I had this cudgel in my hand, and the Squire his riding-whip. A ladder was put up against the window, and then someone came up, lifted the sash up high and got in. There was light enough for me to see it was young Mr. Bastow. Then the two other prisoners came up. When the third had got into the room Mr. Bastow said, 'Follow me, and then you won't tumble over the furniture.'"

"How was it that they did not see you and Mr. Thorndyke?" the chairman asked.

"We were standing well back, your honor. The moon was on the other side of the house. There was light enough for us to see them as they got in at the window, but where we were standing it was quite dark, especially to chaps who had just come in from the moonlight. As they moved, the Squire hit the last of them a clout on the head with his hunting-crop, and down he went, as if shot. The man next to him turned, but I did not see what took place, for, as the Squire had ordered me, I made a rush at Mr. Bastow and got my arms round him pretty tight, so as to prevent him using his pistols, if he had any. He struggled hard, but without saying a word, till I got my heel behind his and threw him on his back. I came down on the top of him; then I got the pistols out of his belt and threw them on the bed, slipped the handcuffs onto one wrist, lifted him up a bit, and then shoved him up against the bedpost, and got the hand-



cuff onto his other wrist, so that he could not shift away, having the post in between his arms.

"Then I went to see if the Squire wanted any help, but he didn't. I first handcuffed the man whose head he had broken, and tied the legs of the other, and then kept guard over them till morning. When the constables came up from town we searched the prisoners, and on two of them found the watches, money, and rings. We found nothing on Mr. Bastow. I went with the head constable to Mr. Bastow's room and searched it thoroughly, but found nothing whatever there."

The evidence created a great sensation in court. John Thorndyke had first intended to ask Knapp not to make any mention of the fact that Arthur Bastow was carrying pistols unless the question was directly put to him. But the more he had thought over the matter, the more convinced was he that the heavier the sentence the better it would be for the Rector; and when he had heard from the latter that there was nothing left in his son's room that could be brought against him, and that he could not be charged with the capital crime of being a receiver, he thought it best to let matters take their course.

The head constable was the next witness. He deposed to the finding of the articles produced upon the two elder prisoners and the unsuccessful search of the younger prisoner's room.

"You did not search the house further?" the chairman inquired.

"No, sir; I wanted to get the prisoners down here as fast as I could, seeing that two of them were seriously hurt."

The chairman nodded.

"You will, of course, make a careful search of the whole house, constable."

"Yes, sir; I left one of my men up there with instructions to allow no one to go upstairs until I returned."

"Quite right."

John Thorndyke was the next witness, and his evidence cleared up what had hitherto been a mystery to the general body of the public, as to how he and the constable

happened to be in the house on watch when the highwaymen arrived. The most important part of his evidence was the repetition of the words young Bastow had used as he mounted the ladder, as they showed that it was arranged between the prisoners that the stolen goods should be hidden in the house. The Squire was only asked one or two questions.

"I suppose, Mr. Thorndyke, that you had no idea whatever that the younger prisoner would be accompanied by anyone else when he returned home?"

"Not the slightest," the Squire replied. "I was there simply to prevent this unfortunate lad from entering the house, when perhaps he might have used violence towards his father. My intention was to seize him if he did so, and to give him the choice of enlisting, as I had urged him to do, or of being brought before this bench for breaking into his father's house. I felt that anything was better than his continuing in the evil courses on which he seemed bent."

"Thank you, Mr. Thorndyke. I must compliment you in the name of my brother magistrates, and I may say of the public, for the manner in which you, at considerable risk to yourself, have effected the capture of the two elder prisoners."

After consulting with the others the head constable was recalled.

"Do you know anything about the character of the youngest prisoner?"

"Yes, sir. We have had our eye upon him for some time. He was brought before your honors a week ago charged with being drunk and disorderly in this town, and was fined £5. He is constantly drinking with some of the worst characters in the place, and is strongly suspected of having been concerned in the fray between the poachers and Sir Charles Harris' gamekeepers. Two of the latter said that they recognized him amongst the poachers, but as they both declined to swear to him we did not arrest him."

John Knapp was then recalled, and testified to Bastow's drinking habits, and that the landlord of the alehouse at Crowwood had been ordered by the Squire not to draw



any liquor for him in future on pain of having the renewal of his license refused.

"Have you any more witnesses to call?" the chairman asked the head constable.

"Not at present, your honor. We have sent up to town, and on the next occasion the coachman will be called to testify to the shooting of the guard, and we hope to have some of the passengers here to identify the articles stolen from them."

"It will be necessary that the Rev. Mr. Bastow should be here. He need not be called to give evidence unless we think it to be of importance, but he had better be in attendance. The prisoners are remanded until this day week."

An hour later the three prisoners, handcuffed, were driven under an escort of three armed constables to Croydon Jail. When again brought up in court the passengers on the coach identified the articles taken from them; the coachman gave evidence of the stopping of the coach, and of the shooting of the guard. The head constable testified that he had searched the Rectory from top to bottom, and found nothing whatever of a suspicious nature. None of the passengers were able to testify to the two elder prisoners as the men who had robbed them, as these had been masked, but the height and dress corresponded to those of the prisoners; and the two Bow Street runners then came forward, and gave evidence that the two elder prisoners were well known to them. They had long been suspected of being highwaymen, and had several times been arrested when riding towards London on occasions when a coach had been stopped the night before, but no stolen goods had ever been found upon them, and in no case had the passengers been able to swear to their identity. One was known among his associates as "Galloping Bill," the other as the "Downy One."

At the conclusion of the evidence the three prisoners were formally committed for trial, the magistrates having retired in consultation for some time upon the question of whether the charge of receiving stolen goods ought to be made against Arthur Bastow.

"I think, gentlemen," the chairman said, after a good deal had been urged on both sides of the question, "in this case we can afford to take a merciful view. In the first place, no stolen goods were discovered upon him or in the house. There is strong presumptive evidence of his intention, but intention is not a crime, and even were the evidence stronger than it is, I should be inclined to take a merciful view. There can be no doubt that the young fellow is thoroughly bad, and the bravado he has exhibited throughout the hearing is at once unbecoming and disgraceful; but we must remember that he is not yet eighteen, and that, in the second place, he is the son of a much respected clergyman, who is our neighbor. The matter is serious enough for him as it stands, and he is certain to have a very heavy sentence.

"Mr. Thorndyke, who takes no part in our deliberations, is most anxious that the prisoner's father should be spared the agony of his son being placed on trial on a capital charge, though I do not think that there would be the smallest chance of his being executed, for the judges would be certain to take his youth into consideration. Had there been *prima-facie* evidence of concealment, we must have done our duty and sent him to trial on that charge; but as there is no such evidence, I think that it will be in all respects better to send him on a charge on which the evidence is as clear as noonday. Moreover, I think that Mr. Thorndyke's wishes should have some weight with us, seeing that it is entirely due to him that the important capture of these highwaymen, who have long been a scourge to this neighborhood, has been effected."

Mr. Bastow had not been called as a witness. John Thorndyke had brought him down to Reigate in a closed carriage, and he had waited in the justices' room while the examination went on; but the magistrates agreed that the evidence given was amply sufficient for them to commit upon without given him the pain of appearing. John Thorndyke had taken him to another room while the magistrates were consulting together, and when he heard the result drove him back again.

"I have fully made up my mind to resign my living,



"Thorndyke. I could not stand up and preach to the villagers of their duties when I myself have failed so signally in training my own son; nor visit their houses and presume to lecture them on their shortcomings when my son is a convicted criminal."

"I quite see that, old friend," the Squire said. "And I had no doubt but that you would decide on this course. I will try not to persuade you to change your decision, for I feel that your power of usefulness is at an end as far as the village is concerned. May I ask what you propose to do? I can hardly suppose that your savings have been large."

"Two years ago I had some hundreds laid by, but they have dwindled away to nothing; you can understand how. For a time it was given freely, then reluctantly; then I declared I would give no more, but he took it all the same—he knew well enough that I could never prosecute him for forgery."

"As bad as that, eh?" Thorndyke said sternly. "Well, we won't talk further of him now; what I propose is that you should take up your abode at the Hall. I am not satisfied with the school where Mark has been for the last two years, and I have been hesitating whether to get a private tutor for him or to send him to one of the public schools. I know that that would be best, but I could not bring myself to do so. I have some troubles of my own that but two or three people know of, and now, that everything is going on smoothly on the estate and in the village, I often feel dull, and the boy's companionship does me much good; and as he knows many lads of his own age in the neighborhood now, I think that he would do just as well at home."

"He will be taking to shooting and hunting before long, and if he is to have a tutor, there is no one I should like to have better than yourself. You know all the people, and we could talk comfortably together of an evening when the house is quiet. Altogether, it will be an excellent arrangement for me. You would have your own room, and if I have company you need not join us unless you like. The house would not seem like itself without you, for you have been associated with it as long

as I can remember. As to your going out into the world at the age of sixty, it would be little short of madness. There—you need not give me an answer now," he went on, seeing that the Rector was too broken down to speak; "but I am sure that when you think it over you will come to the same conclusion as I do, that it will be the best plan possible for us both."